VOL. XVII. No. 589. FRANK A. MUNSEY & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS MADISON SQUARE, SOUTH. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

THE ARGOSY

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1894.

Off Burton's Beach.

BY HALBURTON STACEY.

"Say, did you get onto that gawk in chapel this morning?" asked Edgar Speerington, who was monopolizing the only comfortable seat—the leather covered lounge—in the Carr boys' dormitory, one drizzly March morning.

It was Saturday and visiting in rooms was allowable between chapel and dinner in that rather strict institution known as the Pilsbury Academy.

Besides the two cousins who occupied the room jointly (Jack and Ditto they were called), there was the rather supercilious youth before mentioned on the lounge, and Frank Emberly and Bev Knight.

These five were all second class boys, and at the top of the class at that, and their fellows were apt to look up to, and follow the lead of, the quintette in all school matters.

If they sent a boy "to coventry" there was likely to be some cause for it, and a good half of the second class would do likewise.

The two Jacks looked at each other quickly at Speerington's question, and before any one else could reply, Ditto said, in the drawling tone that pointed most of his remarks:

"I dunno, Ed. Which gawk do you mean, eh? Most fellows who enter here are gawks for the first few weeks any way, until old Parsons gets hold of them."

"There wasn't but one that I saw," responded Edgar, half suspicious that Ditto was poking fun at him.

"I guess you must mean that Graham chap who is going to room with Charlie Frost."

"Indeed I don't," declared Edgar, in disgust. "I know Graham myself—he comes from my part of the country. Good family and all that. He'll be no bad addition, let me tell you, to the dances next winter."

"That means he's got the wealth, eh?" queried Frank Emberly, with interest, for he was the treasurer of the society that had arranged for the hops of the past season, and had found some trouble in meeting the obligations of the organization.

"Oh, yes, his folks are well fixed," said Edgar, with satisfaction.

He was just a little inclined to look upon money as the principal quality in one's friends.

"But who was the gawk?" asked Beverly Knight.

"Why, that fellow who sat on Parsons' side of the house. Came last night, I believe. I asked somebody—Tommy Jackson, you know, he knows everybody—and he says his name's Dan Avery, and that he comes from a fishing village, or some such place. Fancy such a chap as that at Pilsbury—just out of a fishing smack, I'll be bound."

"That's where you're mistaken, Ed," said Jack gravely. "He's just out of the hospital."

Speerington sat up.

"Eh?" said he. "Do you know him, Jack?"

"Yes, sir, I know Dan Avery, and proud I am to say so."

"Me, too," added Ditto, with his usual brevity.

"Why, yes," exclaimed Edgar; "come to think of it, Tommy said the fellow came from Burton, and that is where you fellows spent last summer, wasn't it?"

"Hush up, Eddie, and give Jack a chance to talk," remarked Frank. "There's a story connected with this new fellow, gawk or no gawk, and I want to hear it."

"He'll tell it fast enough, if you'll give him a chance," muttered Speerington, lying down again, with the air that he wasn't interested in such a looking chap as Dan Avery, the fisherman's son, any way!

"Spin your yarn, Jack," said Bev, depositing his heavy bulk upon the little table which occupied the center of the space between the two bedsteads. "You've told us several things about your experiences at Burton last summer, but never a word about this Avery."

"Well, first along, there wasn't much hope of his ever getting well enough to enter the Academy, and then, Ditto and I thought he'd better come before we said anything to you fellows about him."

Speerington, on the lounge, yawned loudly, but Jack didn't "phase."

"As for who he is, he's nothing but a fisherman's son, born and brought up right there in Burton; but if bravery and unselfishness show blue blood," he added, with a meaning glance at the outstretched form and closed eyes of Speerington, "Dan Avery must be the descendant of kings."

"Of the Cannibal Islands?" inquired Edgar, smiling a little; but Bev immediately removed his bulk from the table, and "sat on" the obtrusive youth, who subsided for the moment.

"Well, Ditto and I have been spending our vacations with a pack of girls," continued Jack, in a tone of disgust, "for the last five years, and if you fellows had as many sisters (and therefore as many cousins) as we, you'd realize the sufferings we undergo; for we are expected to be at the beck and call of every blessed one of them."

"Well, I wouldn't mind being at the beck and call of that prettiest sister of yours, Jack," interpolated Edgar from beneath the mass of arms and legs which had piled themselves up on the lounge, for Frank had joined Bev in the endeavor to keep the obstreperous Speerington in a state of "innocuous desuetude," as the newspapers have it."

"Huh! Madge wouldn't look at you," declared Ditto, with emphasis.

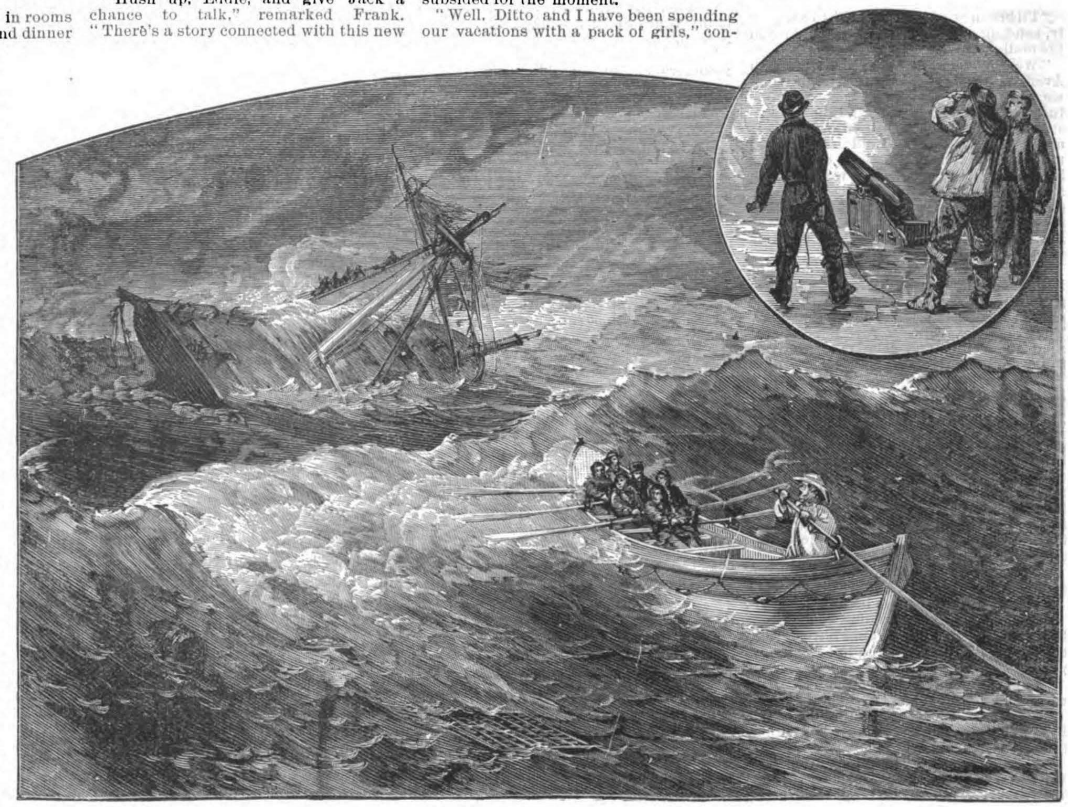
"If you fellows don't keep quiet I don't see how I can tell my story," remarked Jack mildly.

"Well," groaned Edgar, who was still at the bottom of the pile, "if you'll get Fatty and Frank off of me I'll try not to interrupt the ceremony further."

"Get off, Fatty; come away, that's a good fellow, Frank, and let the boy alone,' said Ditto coaxingly.

Bev relaxed his endeavors to flatten his friend out and pulled Frank off the unfortunate Edgar's legs, where he had been reposefully resting.

Order being once more restored, the elder Carr continued:



"THEY PUT OFF AGAIN THROUGH THE BREAKERS, TUGGING AT THE OARS LIKE GIANTS."

"Owing to our many misfortunes of the previous five summers, as general utility men to that raft of girls, we, Ditto and I, determined to strike out for ourselves last summer, and find a place where girls wouldn't want to go.

"We had previously tried camping at Quinibog Beach; but that's such a fine place for bathing, that the girls teased father and Uncle Jack till they established a tent right alongside of ours, and there we were again——"

"In the soup, as it were," suggested Ditto, as his cousin hesitated for a proper ending of his sentence.

Jack looked black at him for that wretched bit of slang, and went on:

"Last summer we determined to find some place where girls wouldn't want to 'tag,' and we struck it when we struck Burton. You'd ought to have seen the girls turn up their noses when we told them where we were going.

"'What! down to that nasty old fishing village!' said they. 'I don't see what you horrid boys can find to amuse you there!'

"But we just did find something to amuse us, didn't we, Ditto?"

The other Jack nodded in acquiescence.

"Why," said Jack, growing enthusiastic over the reminiscence, "you don't know what an immense amount of fun—and grub—we managed to pile in; and I tell you, some of those old fishermen can cook: 'twould surprise you."

"'Twould surprise our stomachs, you mean," suggested Bev gravely.

"Just let me tell you, Master Bev, that you never ate such chowder as those fellows—old Cap'n Iron, for instance—make," declared Ditto, coming to his cousin's rescue. "Drive ahead, Jack."

"Well," said Jack, "we went fishing in almost every boat that went out of the harbor—and there's enough of 'em, from Captain Avery's schooner Walrus to any quantity of dories—and the yarns we heard! You couldn't shake a stick at 'em.

"We fished for everything there is that grows in those waters in the summer time, and learned a whole raft of sea lore. Why, Ditto, there, fairly walked with a 'roll' when he came away, and look at him—he hasn't got the sea tan off his face yet."

"Why," said Edgar, with apparent interest, "I thought he put that on with a brush every morning!"

"I'll brush you!" declared Ditto savagely, sending a "Munn's History" flying in his maligner's direction.

"We became acquainted with Dan Avery—Ditto and I—almost the first day we were down there. He is so good natured that no one could help liking him.

"We went fishing with him in a dory about the first thing, and he knew so much more than we did about everything in the seagoing line, that we began to look upon him in the light of a 'longshore dictionary or encyclopedia. There didn't seem to be any subject relating to fishing, etc., that he wasn't perfectly familiar with.

"You see, he's been brought right up in it, and that is almost all he does know; yet, he's not what you'd call an ignorant fellow; few of them are, down that way. They take several New York papers, and read them too, and keep posted on all that's going on; and the district school in winter—three months, you know—isn't half bad.

"But Dan was awfully eager to learn 'about things,' as he expressed it, and Ditto and I used to tell him lots about the rackets we fellows have here, and about our studies and drills, you know. He was mighty eager to go to school—something better than they afforded at Burton, you know—but the cap'n had such a big family that it didn't look as though he could afford to send Dan away to school."

"He might have had my chance before," groaned Bev dismally.

"Then where would we be in football?" demanded Frank. "Oh, you're some good, Fatty! The Allendales would have surely beaten us last fall if it hadn't been for you."

"Glad I'm some good," responded Bev with relief; "but uncle thinks I'm not."

"Go ahead, Jack; don't mind us," said Frank, finding Jack's black eyes bent upon him with severity.

"Why, 'twas only by his good offices that Ditto and I got that two weeks' trip in the Walrus—'way outside, where the waves were as tall as a house! I don't mean this house, of course," he added quickly, noting the expression of incredulity on the faces of three of his auditors; "but up to the second story windows of the barracks, just the same.

"Well, we got that trip by his coaxing his father to let us go—that's when Ditto caught the big cod he's been blowing about ever since school opened last fall—and take it all 'round, Dan was a pretty good friend to us.

"The girls couldn't see what we wanted to stay down there in Burton for, but we found enough to do, now I tell you.

"And then came the great gale. You read about it in the papers, of course, and about the terrible wrecks it caused along the Atlantic coast, and how many lives were lost; but you could understand mighty little of the awfulness of it, when you didn't see it," and Jack shook his head knowingly.

"We saw it all—Ditto and I—and saw the wreck of the Highland Lassie, too. Odd name for a boat, wasn't it? She belonged to a Scotch firm, and was bound for New York.

"The gale set in early one forenoon down that way, and blew harder and harder till evening. Then it held up a little and went at it again during the night till about three o'clock in the morning it howled and shook the house so, and the noise of the sea was so great that neither Ditto nor I could sleep.

"We boarded with an old sea captain (sea captains are thicker than hops down that way), and the house wasn't much above high water mark—at least, it didn't seem so that night.

"The old man and his wife slept like seven o'clock through it all, but Ditto and I couldn't stand it, and we got up and dressed. As I told Dit at the time, we'd have our duds on so that if the old house should go, we'd land on our feet, as it were.

"But the sea captain snored—we could hear him through the thin partition at every lull in the wind—he snored like all possessed; but just before it began to grow light we heard, during a lull, a dull boom, like the report of a cannon a long distance away.

"'Y jings! but didn't that wake old Cap'n Perkins up! Faint as it was, he heard it. He'd heard that sound too many times to be mistaken in it, too, I reckon.

"He'd been a coast guardsman in his younger days, so he told us, and just as soon as that 'boom!' sounded across the sea he was out of bed.

"'It's the signal, Betsy!' I heard him say to his wife, and then she was out of bed and dressed 'most quick as he was.

"Ditto and I weren't going to be left behind, you can bet, and we hurried into our waterproofs and went out too. I guess the whole of Burton was out on the beach when we got there, weren't they, Dit?"

"Just about," responded his cousin, with confidence.

"Any way, all those that were left at home were either too sick or too old to crawl, for there were even babies in arms right out in that terrific blow. You see, it had stopped raining then, and nobody could stay in the house, knowing that the vessel whose gun we'd heard was just outside of Dead Man's Reef, as they call it."

"Ugh! Delightful name, I must say," muttered Edgar, who was now sitting upright on the lounge, listening to the story with appreciative ears.

"Right you are, Eddie, and a mighty grewsome place it is in a storm, too," said Jack. "The reef's a little spit of rock that pokes its nose right out into the ocean just above Burton Cove, and many a good ship has left her bones there in past times. But there is a coast guard station there—has been for some years—and the lighthouse beyond kind of warns 'em off.

"But somehow or other the cap'n of this Scotch ship got mixed, and as most of her rigging had been carried away before, I reckon he didn't have much control over her, any way.

"Half an hour after we heard the first gun and got down to the beach, life saving crew and all, the Highland Lassie went ashore on the tip end of the reef, and the sea twisted her broadside to the shore just where she got the waves the worst.

"Well, those life saving chaps went to work just as coolly as though a wreck was an everyday occurrence (though they tell me there hadn't been one before in nine months, that they'd had any part in), and of course, first thing they did was to try to throw a line to the ship, so as to run a life car out for the men; but the wind blew so hard in shore that there wasn't powder enough in the place to throw the line more than half the distance.

"And, the worst of it was, the Highland Lassie had tipped so far over on her side, that the poor men had to take to the rigging, and couldn't get a line ashore.

"I tell you, fellows, it was dreadful to see the poor wretches clinging there and dropping off one by one, as the great waves swept over them.

"But those life savers weren't phased, you can just bet! They ran their boat—or one of their boats—right down into the breakers and shinned aboard and grabbed the oars; but something fouled when they weren't more than quarter way to the ship, the boat was caught badly afoul, and the bow and one side were all smashed in by a huge wave.

"The men were all fastened to each other, you know, so there were none of them drowned; but they had to take three of them back to the coastguard house, and when they'd got out the second boat and run it down to the beach, they were short one man.

"'There ain't money 'nough in the State o' Massachusetts to git me into that boat,' I heard old Cap'n Perkins say, and most of them felt that same way; but Cap'n Avery, who'd been doing everything he could to aid and encourage the life savers, stepped out right off and offered to go.

"I heard Mrs. Avery (she was right behind us on the sand) give a kind of scream at that, and some of the men told the captain not to do it; he'd got a family dependent on him, and 'twould be better for some man who was unmarried to go. Oh, I tell you, fellows, it was the fearfulest part of it, to hear those men talk calmly about which could best risk getting drowned!

"I never could do anything but respect those men after that, and I guess Ditto feels the same. We'd kind of turned up our noses at them—just as Edgar did just now at Dan—but though they may be poor and ignorant, they're noble and generous hearted, and the whole country ought to be proud of the fishermen of Burton!"

Jack was growing quite excited, and stopped a moment to control his voice, and hastily mop his glowing face with his handkerchief; but, somehow, even young Speerington did not feel like bantering him about it.

"Well, they couldn't decide who should go; fact was, I guess, nobody but the captain among the men, really had the courage to join the boat's crew. They, poor fellows, had to go anyhow, if they could get together the right number.

"'I tell you, men, it shall never be said that an Avery stood on this beach and watched them poor critters go down without helping them!' the captain shouted, and he looked like one of those old fellows we read about in books on chivalry, when he said it—he's a big man, you know, as big as that awfully big chap in King Arthur and the Round Table book—Sir what's-his-name?

"And then, Dan, he steps out.

"'You mustn't go, father,' says he. 'Remember the youngsters and mother; I'm going myself.'

"'The boy's crazy!' says Cap'n Perkins, but Captain Avery looked at Dan as though he'd like to hug him right then and there, before them all.

"'Go, and God bless ye!' says he, and then turns square round and never looked at them while they ran the boat into the surf.

"Dan's as big as a man, you know; he looks awful peaked and raw boned now, but he'll be a terror next fall in the football field. I've spoken to Captain Cale about him already.

"Well, they put off again through the breakers, tugging at the long oars like giants, and after a fearful struggle we saw the boat round to under the rail of the bark. Then, one by one, the poor fellows dropped from the shrouds into the boat until we on the beach could see but one left. The boat was crowded—overloaded already, in fact—and it didn't seem possible for them to take that last chap aboard.

"The captain of the life saving crew told us all about it afterwards. The sailor left in the rigging was a poor fellow who came from a little town on our own coast, for he had gone to Scotland from New York on the previous trip of the Highland Lassie, and was just coming home.

"He begged them not to leave him, in the most heart rending manner, when he saw the boat filling up; but he was the highest one up in the shrouds, and therefore his chance came last.

"He had a wife and three little children at home, and he begged and prayed that, for their sakes, they'd take him in the boat.

"'We can't do it, man!' Captain May told him (he is the life boat captain). 'We'll come back for you if we can.'

"But Dan—brave, big hearted Dan—couldn't stand the fellow's pleading. Of a sudden he stood up, and put down his oar.

"'Come down here!' he says, quiet like; yet his tones rang above the gale. 'I've got no wife and children—I'll stay in your place.'

Captain May tried to stop him, but the brave fellow leaped over the rail, shinned up the slippery deck, and seizing the exhausted seaman just as he was about to fall, dropped him gently into the pitching boat.

"'Tell mother goodby, if I—I don't come,' he says, and then a driving wave carried the boat inshore, and the men had all they could do to bring her safely to land."

Jack stopped a minute, rising and going to the water cooler for a drink, but really to recover his voice.

The others remained quiet and listened.

"Well," he said at last, "it was awful times ashore. They carried Mrs. Avery home insensible, but the captain never said a word to May against leaving Dan on the wreck.

"He's an Avery,' he said, as quietly as Dan had declared his intention of giving up his chance of life to the poor seaman, and then went to work with the others to do all that they could to rescue the noble fellow.

"But by that time the old Highland Lassie was going to pieces, and the wreckage began to float in. The stump of the mast that had, until this time, stood the fearful strain placed upon it, now parted from the ship and fell over the side, floating in upon the enormous breakers. It was only occasionally that we caught a glimpse of Dan hanging to the cordage left behind.

"The men smashed the second boat trying to launch it again, and although the gale did not appear to increase, the wind did not go down. Finally, about noon, after Dan had clung there for nearly five hours, there was a general breaking up of the old hulk, and poor Dan disappeared.

"A groan went up from the crowd on the beach, and I didn't dare to look out over the tumbling waves; but the old cap'n's sharp eyes never faltered then, and I guess he saw Dan clinging to the drift stuff, on the crest of every wave, as he was borne in to the land.

"At last the men formed in line, clinging hold of hands, and went into the surf for the boy.

"The cap'n was on the end, and it was his hand that grasped him; and then, walking steadily backward, the line returned to the shore, although the terrible undertow almost sucked them off their feet.

"Dan was just about insensible, and the doctor who was down on the shore with the rest, declared his leg to be broken; then he had several other concussions on his body, too. In fact, he was pretty well broken up, and the best thing they could do to him was to send him to the hospital in the city, and he's only been out of that about three weeks. That's why he enters this spring term."

Jack stopped, and the three auditors to whom the story was new, drew a long breath.

"By George!" exclaimed Bev. "That's what I call pluck."

"True nobility that," murmured Frank Emberly.

But Edgar Speerington got up off the lounge, and wiped the suspicious moisture from his eyes.

"I'm sorry I ever called him a gawk," he said.

"No harm done," remarked Ditto gruffly. "Nothing you could say could hurt a fellow like Dan Avery."

But Jack was not willing to have it end in a battle royal, so he hastened to say:

"And that's how he comes here, you see. The captain of the Highland Lassie, sent him a purse of two hundred dollars, and with what his father has managed to scrape together he has started in to get the best kind of an education. Captain Avery declares that if he can do it, Dan shall go through college."

"Where's he going to put up?" asked Speerington abruptly. "The old academy

is crowded now. But my room is large, you know, and Kenny" (Kenny was Speerington's room mate) "will do anything I ask him. He could come in there with us as well as not. I'd be proud to have a fellow like that in my den."

"So would most fellows," said Jack dryly. "But we've looked out for that—Ditto and I. The Doctor told us that if we wanted him to enter old Pilsbury bad enough to take him in with us, we might have him; so that is what that lounge is for, Ed. It's a bed lounge, you see—opens out at night and folds up days—and Dan will share the place with us.

"Hush! here he comes along the corridor now. He's been down talking with the Doctor and tutor Parsons. I'll introduce you fellows."

The door opened and Dan Avery walked in, but although he was still the awkward looking, rather diffident fisherman's son, no fellow was ever given a heartier welcome to old Pilsbury than he.

[*This Story began in No. 582.*]

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 XXII.

THE IRONY OF FATE.

At this critical moment, when the plucky little band seemed doomed to swift and certain annihilation, Pieter was the only one whose presence of mind was equal to the emergency.

"Down!" he yelled. "Down! all of you."

Without waiting to see the command obeyed, he crouched behind a spur of rock, took aim with his rifle, and deliberately picked off the foremost of the foe.

The negro toppled over like a log, and the angry roar of the rifle, combined with the spectacle of sudden death, so terrified the others that they fled precipitately to the cover of the grass. Though out of sight, they kept up a furious yelling that quickly brought responses from all quarters.

"That was a neat shot, sir," cried Raffles. "It drove the blackies back like sheep. They don't seem to cotton to firearms."

"I hated to shed blood," muttered Pieter, "but it was the only chance. A breathing spell is about all we've gained. It's an ugly scrape, and I don't see the way out."

"Nor I, sir," replied Raffles. "There'll be 'undreds of the rascals 'owling about these rocks before long. We're two men short now."

A spasm of agony distorted Pieter's face as he glanced at Clegg, who lay white and bleeding in a little hollow between the rocks.

Fulke bent over him, trying to bandage the wound with a handkerchief.

"Is he dead?" asked Pieter.

"Only unconscious, I think," replied Fulke. "The spear grazed the side of his head, and plowed an ugly furrow. But it is only a skin wound."

A fervent "Thank God" fell from Pieter's lips. Then he wheeled around to confront the Ashantees, who had been demoralized by the death of their comrade, and were on the point of dropping their loads and making off.

"Stop, you cowardly dogs," he cried. "I'll shoot the first man that stirs. Do you want to perish of starvation in the jungle? Your only chance is to fight. Get your guns ready, and trust to me."

The Hollander meant what he said and was prepared to back up his words. Kalcalli threw his influence into the scale, and after a sullen hesitation the Ashantees faced about and prepared for the coming struggle.

Just then a rifle cracked, and Raffles shouted gleefully: "I 'it one of the black fellows in the arm. He was creepin' up through the grass."

"That's right," cried Pieter. "Keep a lookout in front. I'm afraid we'll need you, Fulke."

"I'm ready," replied the lad. "But won't you look at Clegg—just a minute?"

Pieter strode to the spot, and made a brief examination.

"Only stunned," he reported. "He's doing nicely and will pull through all right."

At that instant Clegg opened his eyes, and made a feeble attempt to rise.

"Oh, my head," he groaned. "What has happened?"

"A spear bruised you a little, that's all," replied Fulke.

"Lie still, and don't try to talk," added Pieter. "You'll feel better soon."

Clegg closed his eyes, and his companions quickly carried him to a safe place behind a spur of rock.

"They're coming," yelled Raffles. "The grass is alive with 'em."

He was instantly joined by Pieter and Fulke, and the three gazed anxiously across the smoky glade.

The fire had almost died out, and only in two or three places could elephants be seen fleeing for the jungle, still relentlessly dogged by their cruel pursuers. The greater part of the savages were swarming toward the rocks, and from hundreds of dusky throats came the shrill call to battle.

In the immediate foreground the tall grass was fairly alive with creeping bodies. Here protruded a woolly head, or a glossy black arm; there a leg, or the keen, shiny blade of a spear.

As yet a wholesome dread of firearms kept the savages at a distance; or perhaps they were only waiting to assemble their entire force.

"It means certain death to stay here," declared Fulke. "Such a mob as that will overpower us at the first rush. Can't we escape to the jungle? None of the savages are in our rear."

Pieter shook his head. "In the jungle we will be at the mercy of the fiends. They will trail us like bloodhounds, and compel us to separate. We will be picked off one by one.

"No, lad, retreat is impossible. Here we must make our last stand. If it comes to the worst we will die together, and like men."

Fulke assented to this by grimly setting his lips. His expression was sad and bitter, but showed no trace of fear.

"These negroes are unusually ferocious and bloodthirsty," resumed Pieter. "Doubtless they have suffered in the past from Arab slave raiders, and believe us to have come on the same errand. If we could speak their tongue there might be some hope."

"If only we 'ad Carimoo now," muttered Raffles. "I'll bet 'e could talk their lingo."

At this point Fulke's face lighted up.

"Look!" he cried eagerly. "There are two of the negroes in plain view. They are Carimoo's own people; I am sure of it. They have the same features, and the same bushy mops of hair."

"You are right, lad," exclaimed Pieter, in a tone of unutterable sadness. "Strange we did not discover it before. Well, to know it now only makes death a little harder. We must perish by the hands of those who would eagerly befriend us if they could know the truth. It is the irony of fate."

"Is there no way to tell them?" groaned Fulke. "Oh! why did Carimoo die at such a time? It is hard—bitterly hard."

"Aye, that it is," replied Pieter. "But it is God's will, lad. At least we will sell our lives dearly."

"Like Englishmen," added Raffles, whose bulldog courage knew not the meaning of cowardice. "It's something to be thankful for to 'ave a rifle at such a time. I'll spit my share of these black fiends before the end comes, or my name's not Noah Raffles. It's good by to dear old Lunnon and the sound of the Bow Bells. I'd like to 'ave just one peep into Cheapside. I can fancy the screechin' of them blacks is the roar of 'busses, an' drays an' cabs."

"Don't, Raffles," pleaded Fulke, in a tone of anguish, "or you'll make me want to live. Is there really no hope? Can't we make signs to the negroes, and get them to draw away the elephant? If they see Carimoo they will understand."

"They are massing for the attack," exclaimed Pieter solemnly. "The time has come. Get ready."

He was right.

From three sides the gigantic savages were swarming toward the heap of rocks. The grass was alive with them.

Their hoarse yells of rage seemed to shake the ground.

Kalcalli stationed his Ashantees behind what meager shelter could be found. Pieter chose a shallow rock cleft for himself and two companions. Clegg still lay in a half stupor, oblivious to what was going on around him.

On swept the semicircle of woolly heads and gleaming spears. They were very close now.

"Wait until the first shower of spears," commanded Pieter. "Then aim well, and fire."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CARIMOO COMES INTO HIS OWN.

Less than ten seconds after Pieter had spoken, the shower of spears came, accompanied by a composite yell from more than two hundred lusty throats—for such was the present strength of the foe.

But, thanks to the shelter of the rock crannies, the casualities were slight, and only two in number.

The Ashantee next to Kalcalli saved his head at the cost of a portion of his right ear. Raffles was whacked over the skull by a spear that struck a stone to the left of him and glanced off broadside.

"Ouch! that hurts," he yelled. "Shall we fire now? 'Ere they come swarmin'. They'll be atop of us before we can say Jack Robinson."

Pieter delayed answering for an instant as he glanced at the savage horde, whose swifter advances evidently meant the taking of the rocks by storm.

"Yes, fire," he said. "Rake the front line well—no, stop, stop—don't shoot."

His voice had risen to a husky shout. It checked the triggers that were about to snap with deadly effect.

"Look," he added. "There—do you see?"

With amazed eyes Fulke and Raffles followed Pieter's outstretched hand. So did the Ashantees, and their astonishment found vent in a low excited murmur.

The hand pointed to a spot alongside of the dead elephant, where the tall grass was waving in violent agitation. This was a startling thing, for not a breath of air was stirring.

Then an even stranger thing happened. The line of hooting, bloodthirsting negroes stood still to a man, petrified by the clump of waving grass.

For a few brief seconds the silence was intense and thrilling. Then, out from the grass emerged a woolly head and shoulders, stained and clotted with damp earth.

An arm followed, holding a short, glistening knife.

"It's Carimoo," yelled Raffles. "'urrah! 'urrah!"

"Hurrah!" echoed Fulke. "We are saved."

"Thank God!" cried Pieter, in a voice that shook with emotion.

It was indeed Carimoo. He had risen to his full stature now, and behind was visible the dark cavity by which he had burrowed from under the elephant.

A glance around him revealed the situation. With a truly regal gesture he waved back the line of savage faces.

Then he mounted the carcass of the elephant, and, with flashing eyes and heaving bosom, delivered a brief and stirring address to his people.

The words were unintelligible to the eager listeners on the rocks, but their import was unmistakable.

When Carimoo ceased talking there followed a scene that baffles all description.

The negroes swarmed around him, brandishing their spears, and shouting in tones of keen delight. The excitement spread, and from all sides poured in fresh negroes.

They went fairly mad with joy, and it was all that Carimoo could do to force his way to the front of the rocks.

"Come down," he cried. "You uns safe. These my own people."

There was no hesitation. Pieter and his party quickly descended from their stronghold, taking Clegg with them.

They stood fearlessly amid the savage horde that had been thirsting for their life blood but a few moments before.

Now all was changed. The reception of the strangers was little less enthusiastic than that given to the returned prince.

Scores of spears waved a friendly salute. Scores of voices uttered cheers of welcome. The ebon faces beamed with delight and curiosity.

It was a relief when the excitement died away a little. The Ashantees clustered at the foot of the rocks, still rather dubious of what it all meant.

For the present it was impossible to question Carimoo. His tall form was visible here and there as he moved amid the throng, talking animatedly to the head men of the tribe.

Pieter drew his companions to one side.

"It is worth all our hardships to see the pleasure of these simple people on getting their prince back," he said.

"It's like a transformation scene in a Drury Lane pantomime," declared Raffles. "Will they make us all kings now, and give us a dozen black wives apiece?"

"Hardly," replied Fulke, "but we are sure of royally good treatment. I can scarcely believe it all. A little while ago we were face to face with death."

"And had Carimoo made his appearance about two minutes later our mangled bodies would now be strewing the ground," added Pieter. "We owe our lives to Providence."

"It's queer how Carimoo escaped being crushed," said Clegg, after a pause. "I don't understand it."

"It must 'ave been a 'ole that he fell into," volunteered Raffles, "an' the elephant covered the top of it."

"No doubt," assented Pieter, "and Carimoo had presence of mind enough to dig his way out. Ah! here he comes now."

All noted a change in the negro as he greeted them.

It was not that he was less affectionate or friendly; on the contrary he was more so. But his cowed and saddened manner had disappeared.

He was no longer the rescued slave. He had come into his heritage, and from head to foot he looked every inch a king.

"These my own people," he said. "They glad to have me back. Now we show you uns how Carimoo pay gratitude. Me no forget. Me give you diamonds—everything."

"Then your father is still king?" asked Pieter.

Carimoo shook his head.

"My father die many days ago," he replied. "Bango he king now; he son of my father's brother. He be

hunting off that way with many mens. When Bango come back he find me king. My people say so."

"But won't Bango fight, and try to keep the throne?" asked Pieter.

"No," Carimoo replied, decidedly. "People like me—no like Bango."

There was no time for further questioning. Almost instantly the entire assemblage started across the open glade, leaving squads of men here and there on the way to cut up the slaughtered elephants.

Pieter and his party marched in front with Carimoo and the head men of the tribe. Clegg was able to walk between Raffles and Fulke.

Soon the great forest closed in on all sides, only a narrow, winding path was visible.

Pieter's face wore an anxious, troubled expression that his companions were quick to observe.

Fulke ventured to ask the cause of it.

"I admit that I'm deeply worried, lad," replied Pieter. "I know something about these African monarchies, and I'm afraid that when Bango comes back and finds Carimoo in his place there will be trouble. Bango may be unpopular, but all the same he no doubt has his friends and supporters."

"And will that put our lives in danger?" asked Clegg.

"Only to the extent of our taking part in a bloody war," answered Pieter. "No doubt Carimoo will triumph in the end, but not without great slaughter."

Raffles gave a low whistle, and Clegg and Fulke looked grave.

"However, I don't want to cause you needless alarm," Pieter resumed. "We will persuade Carimoo to give us a guide to the diamond mountain at once, and get away from here before Bango returns."

This plan was further discussed during the march through the jungle. Shortly before sundown a large town was reached.

It was inclosed by a high wall, and appeared to have a population of several thousand. This was Bulo, the chief town of the Basongos—for such was the name of Carimoo's people.

The news had already preceded the party, and they could scarcely force their way through the narrow streets, lined with conical thatched huts.

Men, women, and children swarmed upon them from all sides. Above the din of human voices rose the clang of drums and tom-toms, and the weird blowing of horns.

At last the king's palace was reached—a large hut standing in the center of the town, and surrounded by a circular open space. Bango's wives were ruthlessly turned out, and Carimoo led his friends in.

The palace contained two apartments, lavishly furnished with the undressed skins of wild animals. The white men and the Ashantees were assigned to the rear one, and here they were speedily furnished with a meal that included every sort of food and drink to be had in the town.

Carimoo was seen no more that night. Long after Pieter and his companions were asleep, the new king and his dusky ministers held palavers in the front apartment. Until nearly morning hundreds of negroes surged about the palace, testifying to their approval of the new regime by unearthly yells, and every other noise that their ingenuity could invent.

Palm wine and beer flowed like water.

CHAPTER XXIV.
KING FOR A DAY.

The events of the day following the arrival of the travelers at Bulo may be briefly dwelt upon.

It was the day on which Carimoo was to publicly assume the duties of kingship.

Sunrise found the town in a swirl of mad excitement. Evidently no one had slept.

After breakfast Carimoo gave the white men an audience. He was much disappointed to learn that they wished to start for the diamond mountain as soon as possible, but he promised to aid them in every way on condition that they made him a longer visit on their return to the coast.

He was allowed to remain in ignorance of the causes that prompted their haste, for Pieter was too wise to allude to any possible trouble with Bango.

The ex-king had not yet returned, Carimoo said, and he might be absent for several days.

This piece of news reassured Pieter, and he agreed to postpone his departure for twenty four hours. His companions, as well as himself, were anxious to see the events of the day.

The interview resulted in two stipulations on Carimoo's part. First, that he would dispatch, on the following morning, an armed force to drive John Japp and the Arabs back through the Kong Mountains; secondly, that he would furnish Pieter with a complete guide to the diamond mountain. He offered a strong escort as well, but this was rejected.

The Ashantees prudently refused to leave the palace that day, but the white men wandered freely about the town, enjoying the novel sights that everywhere met the eye.

It must be confessed that the so-called coronation of the king was nothing more than a mad and drunken orgy.

About midday rude ceremonies were observed before the palace, but from that time on, the town was given over to riotous noise and dissipation.

Carimoo stalked among his howling subjects, regally clad in leopard skins, and bearing a huge knotted club. There was feasting, and drinking and an incessant pounding of tom-toms.

When evening came, almost the entire population assembled in a large open square that lay at the extreme southern end of the town.

The pretext was a contest of skill at wrestling and spear throwing. But these sports received scant attention. Great quantities of food, beer, and palm wine were distributed by the king's generosity and the scene was quickly beyond description.

The happiness and exhilaration of the intoxicated negroes turned to ill humor and spite. Weapons were freely drawn, and brawls took place everywhere.

More than one dead body was carried away.

At the height of the festivities Carimoo, sad to relate, fell a victim to the blended effects of palm wine and beer, and was with difficulty persuaded by his ministers to return to the palace.

Fulke and Clegg had already preceded him there, for the latter was still suffering from his wound.

Pieter and Noah Raffles lingered in the square for an hour longer, prudently dodging the blazing bonfires as they moved from one point of vantage to another.

"This 'ere is worse than Donnybrook Fair," said Raffles, "as far as I've 'eard it described. Every nigger is 'owling drunk."

"It's a pretty turbulent crowd," replied Pieter, "but we must remember that a new king is not an every day event in their lives. Come, we'll go back. We need sleep for an early start in the morning."

In order to avoid the drunken revelers they circled around by the town wall. As they came within twenty feet of the main gate, it was thrown open by two half intoxicated guards. The next instant a gigantic negro strode through.

The dim light revealed his brawny muscles, and his ferocious and cruel face. A score of followers came after him in grim silence.

In the rear, instead of spoils of the hunt, were borne three dead bodies on rude litters of palm boughs.

Pieter drew Raffles into the shadow of the wall, and there they crouched, unobserved, while the somber procession passed them.

"If that's the 'unting party it looks as though the wild beasts 'ad done all the 'unting," muttered Raffles.

"It's Bango, beyond a doubt," replied Pieter. "Did you ever see such a ruffianly scoundrel? I fear there is trouble brewing. Look, they are heading straight for the square. Bango has evidently heard of Carimoo's return.

"Stay here, Noah. Don't stir a foot until I return. I must see what this means."

Pieter hurried off in the direction of the riotous crowd, and was absent nearly a quarter of an hour.

When he came back his face was strangely pale.

"The worst has happened," he cried. "Don't you observe how quiet the negroes have become? They are listening to Bango. He is pouring mischief into their ears from the top of a booth. He has the three dead bodies up beside him. There, do you hear that?"

An unmistakable yell of rage rose on the night air and died away in echoes.

"That ain't a pleasant 'owl," said Raffles. "It means danger."

"And danger to Carimoo," replied Pieter. "We must lose no time in getting to the palace. Come."

Side by side they dashed into the network of dark and narrow streets. They sped swiftly on, meeting not a soul by the way. More by chance than skill they tumbled finally upon the palace, and the half drunken guards at the entrance readily admitted them.

A dimly burning lamp of palm oil showed Carimoo asleep on a pile of rugs.

He was alone. His ministers had deserted him, and gone back to the square.

While Pieter roused the stupefied monarch Raffles rushed into the next room, and communicated the tidings to its inmates.

The Ashantees fell into a panic. Fulke and Clegg buckled on their ammunition belts, and seized their rifles.

Meanwhile Pieter had wakened Carimoo, and made him understand the danger that threatened.

The shock was a rude one, and it drove the fumes of liquor from the negro's brain. He seemed at a loss to know what to do.

He seized his club and strode up and down the room, vaguely threatening and storming at Bango.

"You must act at once," thundered Pieter. "Listen, we are ready to help you. Your only chance is to go straight to the square and appeal to your people. Surely they will recognize you as their rightful king.

"But there is no time to lose. Bango is making the most of his slick tongue. The people are listening to his deviltry."

It was already too late to carry out this far from promising plan.

Fleet footsteps were heard outside the palace. There was a commotion at the door, and in rushed a short, middle aged negro.

This was Ruba, Carimoo's chief adviser, and a stanch friend of the deceased king.

He threw himself at Carimoo's feet, panting and breathless. Then he rose and poured a torrent of words into the king's ear.

He beseeched, entreated, gesticulated. He rolled his eyes, and waved his hands, and pointed eagerly to the door.

Carimoo ground his teeth, and uttered a ferocious cry. All the savage instinct of his nature was painted on his dusky face. For the moment he was a bloodthirsty fiend.

Then a quick gleam of terror shone in his eyes, and he took hold of Pieter.

"Carimoo no more be king," he wailed. "This what Ruba say. Bango meet John Japp while go on hunt. John Japp kill three men dead. Now Bango come back. He tell my people you uns be same party with John Japp.

"He say me bring you uns so you take many my people slaves. My people think Bango speak true. They have Bango for king. They kill me, kill you uns. They come now."

This string of husky sentences was readily understood by all.

"I feared so," cried Pieter. "Bango is too clever for us. His lying tongue has pulled him through. It would be madness to try to stem the tide now. There is nothing left but flight. You have been king for a day, Carimoo. That must content you."

The negro's eyes flashed. "Me be king other days," he snarled. "Then Bango die. Now me go hide at diamond mountain. Many caves there. By an by people want Carimoo back."

"Whatever we do must be done at once," replied Pieter. "There is not a moment to lose. Kalcalli, keep your men in hand. See that they are armed. The stores must be abandoned."

For a moment there was excitement and bustle as the little band prepared for flight.

The poisonous effect of Bango's words was shown by the fact that only one man had been loyal enough to bring Carimoo warning.

"How do you feel, Clegg?" asked Fulke. "Can you stand a night march?"

"With the best of you," was the plucky reply. "My headache is gone."

"It will more likely be a race for life than a march," declared Pieter. "Let me caution you now to stick together. Are you all ready?"

"Every man of us," replied Raffles, who had been making the guns and ammunition his particular care. "There, I 'ear the black demons 'owling."

"Yes, they are moving on the palace," said Pieter. "We must start instantly. Let no one despair. God will watch over and protect us."

In a confused group the fugitives hurried out of the palace. They had nothing to fear from the two guards, who were propped stupidly against the door.

The danger was even more imminent than had been supposed. The narrow streets to the south were choked with hordes of yelling negroes carrying flaming torches. The ruddy gleam reached almost to the palace.

The little band set their faces to the north and fled on a trot.

In front ran Carimoo and the faithful Ruba, on whom the safe guidance of the party devolved. The Ashantees came next, marshaled by Kalcalli, Fulke, and Clegg.

Pieter and Raffles brought up the rear.

Less than fifty yards had been covered when a score of dusky figures danced out of a cross street in the rear. They had evidently been dispatched to circle around the palace, and cut off the king's escape.

The trampling feet of the fugitives, as well as the far-reaching gleam of their torches, told them they had come too late.

They instantly set up a yell that was echoed from hundreds of throats in the distance, and brought the main body of the foe on in a mad rush.

The score of impish negroes clung to the heels of the fugitives as they dashed on from street to street.

When they were close enough to hurl spears Pieter and Raffles turned around and opened fire with deadly effect.

This drove the survivors back to the main body of the foe, who were now perilously close.

The only chance lay in reaching the north gate of the town, and escaping to the dark shelter of the forest.

Carimoo and Ruba led the way, while Pieter and Raffles drove the lagging Ashantees on from behind.

Just when the coveted gate was near at hand, something happened that turned hope to despair.

Fifty yards in front of the fugitives, and at one side of the narrow street, one of the dry, thatched huts burst suddenly into flame. Doubtless some drunken negro had overturned a lamp, or dropped a torch.

There chanced to be a strong night breeze blowing from the forest, and with incredible swiftness the flames licked the hut on the opposite side of the street, and presented a red wall of fire and smoke to the oncoming fugitives.

They were caught between two terrible enemies, with no mercy to be hoped for from either.

(To be continued.)

[*This story began last week*]

Trials and Triumphs

OF A YOUNG REPORTER.

BY EARLE E. MARTIN.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OPEN WINDOW.

The journalist's secretary was torn open, and private papers were scattered in confusion about the floor.

Motionless lay the body of the editor, while the boys stood and gazed dumfounded into the room.

Whoever the prowler in the hotel had been, it was evident that the journalist could shed no light upon the matter.

"The enemy!" gasped Grant, as he beheld the still form of Mr. Street and the scene of confusion which the room presented.

He hurried to the bedside, racked by a fear that perhaps the unknown criminal had attempted an assault upon the helpless editor.

"What fools we are!" exclaimed Bob, appalled at the results of their rash pursuit of the face at the window. "Suppose he had murdered Mr. Street?"

Both boys were convinced that the features Grant had seen at the window were of flesh and blood, and they were filled with regret at their heedlessness.

"Why didn't we think?" said Grant. "We ought to have known better than to rush off and leave a sick man like that. What can that fellow have wanted among the papers?"

"It is evident that he cared more for the papers than anything else, even the life of Mr. Street," returned Bob.

The two friends stooped down and gathered up the scattered documents. Grant replaced them in the secretary; but the cover would not close. The lock had been sprung and broken.

"Let us call Treador and tell him what has happened," said Bob.

Accordingly he went down into the office of the hotel, where he found the night clerk dozing in an easy chair.

"I want Mr. Treador," he said, rousing the sleepy clerk who looked at him in amazement.

"Want Mr. Treador! Why, it's midnight."

"I know it's midnight as well as you do," retorted Bob White. "I have important news for him."

Grumbling and as if he doubted the right of it, the night clerk roused Mr. Treador. Five minutes later the hotel keeper appeared, looking very sleepy.

"Will you come up stairs a moment?" Bob asked him.

The night clerk looked at the two in wonder for he did not know, as in fact none of the hotel employees knew, that Mr. Street was even slightly ill.

"Is he dead?" whispered Mr. Treador, as they went up the stairway.

"Oh, no," answered Bob. "He is sleeping very quietly. But the room has been robbed."

"Robbed!" cried the hotel keeper, and he threw up his hands in horror that theft should have been committed in his hostelry.

"Yes," answered Bob; "but come into the room, and we will tell you all about it."

Grant Dudley drew down the curtain on the principle that "it is better late than never," and the boys proceeded to tell Mr. Treador all that had happened during the night.

"You were foolish," said the hotel keeper frankly, "to leave the room if you really did believe you saw some one prowling around the premises. I must go and get a policeman this minute," he added.

"No; don't," Grant begged him. "I am convinced, Mr. Treador, that there is some mystery connected with this whole affair; and if we call the police, or if the matter becomes known to any one but the half dozen who are now acquainted with it, the mystery will never be cleared up."

"Perhaps you are right."

"Not even the people about the hotel must know anything more than that Mr. Street is a trifle indisposed. And we must ferret this thing out without aid, or it will never be ferreted out at all," Grant continued.

Mr. Treador agreed with Grant that his plan of secrecy was the best. He promised that he would do all he could to hide the real state of affairs.

"By the way," he added, "hasn't that night clerk sent up that cot I ordered? I'll go and see about it myself."

Grant and Bob were inexpressibly worried over the result of their negligence. There was no telling what valuable papers had been taken from the secretary.

"I never saw so much deviltry afoot in one day before," muttered Bob, disgusted at the turn affairs had taken. "Here we are minus our burglar, and minus nobody knows how much more."

Grant was visibly worried. Early in the evening he had studied himself almost nervous over the problem which hung like a cloud over the editor. The face at the window, coupled with the robbery of the room and the baffled search for the burglar, tended to make him almost wild.

"Things look decidedly bad," he said. "But I must be going. I will come early in the morning, and we'll talk matters over."

Just as Grant was drawing on his mackintosh—it had ceased raining, to be sure, but Grant preferred to wear the coat rather than carry it—Mr. Treador returned, lugging the cot which the clerk had failed to provide.

"I'll sleep on the floor here," he said to Bob. "It won't be so lonesome, and besides, if the Hanover House is to be robbed in this fashion, I want to be on hand. I'll be back in a minute with some bedding."

Mr. Treador was plainly incensed at the robbery.

"Good night," said Grant to his companions, after he had taken a farewell look at Mr. Street, and seen that the editor was sleeping quietly.

He closed the door and started down the stairway of the hotel.

In the office he was detained by the night clerk, now thoroughly aroused.

"Say," the latter inquired, "what is the matter up there?"

"Mr. Street is somewhat ill," returned Grant.

"Is he very sick?" asked the clerk, anxious to prolong the conversation until he had gathered a better knowledge of affairs.

"It depends entirely upon what you call very sick. Very sick is a comparative term, you know. Perhaps you don't know, but it is," answered Grant.

He was in no mood at half past twelve o'clock that early Friday morning after a hard day's work, a watch with a sick man and a search after a burglar, to be pestered with the petty question of the night clerk.

But the curiosity of the latter was not so easily appeased.

"Well, say, what is the matter with——"

Grant was gone.

The clerk darted a look toward the door, and muttered to himself:

"There's something unusual going on around here. I wonder if I can find out what it is."

Grant Dudley started down the street to his home. He felt sure that there would be a light burning in the window for him; and he rejoiced to think that he would soon be sound asleep.

But the events of the night were not easily to be shaken off; and as Grant trudged home, now and then splashing in some pool of water that remained from the rain, his mind was still occupied with the chain of circumstances which had held him for many hours.

As he came to consider the burglary of the night, he asked himself what would happen next. Would the printing office——

"The printing office!" he said over to himself suddenly.

Why had he not thought of it before? Perhaps there had been burglary going on there as well as at the hotel. Who could tell?

The more he thought of the matter the more he became convinced that there was a possibility of a theft having been attempted at "The Tribune" building.

"I'll see that everything is all right there before I turn in," he resolved; and with this purpose he turned and retraced his steps past the Hanover House.

On his way to the printing office Grant passed a single pedestrian. The sky was clouded, and the night was so dark that he could not recognize the man; but he thought he was one of the night policemen.

Grant walked rapidly, little minding the darkness or the dampness underfoot.

Hope told him that everything would be as it should in the printing office, and fear whispered that perhaps after all he would make some startling and unpleasant discovery.

Such a day as he had had, so he said to himself, was liable to bring forth miracles; and he would not have been severely startled to have found the office of the newspaper turned upside down.

But it was evident as he approached the building that it still stood on its foundations, for he could see the familiar outlines through the gloom.

The office of "The Tribune" was a modern, one story building, erected purposely for the paper. Its windows were low and large; and Grant concluded that he could make a sufficient inspection by passing in a circle around the structure.

Grant paused a moment beneath a tree. He listened intently, but no sound was audible.

How foolish he was, he said to himself, to rob himself of rest and come a quarter of a mile on such a fool's errand!

Nevertheless Grant determined to make matters sure; and he started toward the office.

His heart beat a little faster perhaps as he approached the darkened building; but who can blame him for that? He well remembered the strange scene that the office had presented late that rainy afternoon.

He turned the corner of the building.

Fate decreed that still another surprise was in store for him.

As he passed down the side of the office, he believed he saw one of the windows of the composing room open.

Stealthily he crept up to the place, and found that he was right. Was it a case of carelessness or another evidence of crime, he wondered?

In the inky darkness he could see but little; but climbing into the window he determined to make an investigation as best he could.

He climbed cautiously over the window sill. Just as he planted his feet upon the floor, he heard a footstep and a sound as of a closing door.

CHAPTER V.

A CHASE IN THE DARK.

Were you ever caught in utter darkness, face to face with an unknown enemy? If you have never undergone the experience, you can have no vivid conception of the feelings which possessed Grant Dudley, as at the dead of night he heard footsteps in the office of "The Tribune."

A sense of vague dread came over him; and he realized that he had once more committed a reprehensibly rash act. In fact, it seemed that he had a great propensity on that unlucky night for doing the wrong thing at the wrong time, or the right thing at the wrong time, either of which leads to about the same result.

"I'm in for it," was his mental comment. "There is a burglar in here sure enough."

Grant listened patiently for a moment. The sound of footsteps had startled him so greatly that he did not notice the direction from which it came.

He concluded on second thought that the trespasser must be in the editor's private office.

The young reporter dared not move lest he make a noise and alarm his near and unknown enemy. The silence was oppressive.

"The papers in the safe!" was the thought that flashed across his mind.

"I can't do anything without a weapon," he reasoned; and so with cautious steps he made his way to the imposing stone, where he found Mr. Brown's mallet and planer.

Seizing the mallet, he said to himself:

"Now I am ready! This will make a very good club, but I am glad the range is so short."

Grant felt better able to cope with the man in the editor's office now that he had at least a printer's mallet with which to wage warfare.

"He will come out as he went in," he reasoned. "I'll wait here in the composing room."

The delay was less than Grant expected, for he had no more than grasped the mallet firmly and made ready for the attack before he heard the door open between the editor's sanctum and the composing room. He was convinced that the burglar was coming into the room.

It was so dark in the printing office that he could not distinguish the man's figure.

The darkness was both an advantage and a drawback.

Grant's heart beat fast, but he controlled himself.

When he felt sure that the man was in the composing room, he commanded in severe tones:

"Throw up your hands!"

With an exclamation, half smothered, the burglar turned and ran toward the window by which he had entered the office.

Grant heard rather than saw that his foe was escaping.

Thinking that he would be outwitted a second time, the young editor let fly with his heavy mallet.

It was a narrow shot into the dark; but from the cry which escaped the thief as he reached the window, Grant judged that the missile had not missed its mark.

As the burglar dropped from the window, Grant started in pursuit. By the time the pursuer had sprung from the sill, the pursued was already several rods on his flight.

Grant stood still and listened a moment.

He had to depend entirely upon the sense of sound, for the night was still dark and cloudy.

Faint echoes of a man running down the street came to his ears.

With all speed Grant posted after the law-breaker. His mind was made up that he would catch the criminal, and he ran as hard as he could.

The burglar did not have many rods the start, and Grant ran the first square with such speed that he was in a fair way to overtake his adversary.

Grant paused a second at the street corner to listen and to discover what turn his enemy had taken.

"Straight ahead evidently," concluded Grant; and as he peered into the gloom, he could discern a dim figure outlined against the western sky where a patch of gray was showing.

"Stop, thief!" some one cried suddenly, stepping up out of the darkness, and seizing Grant by the collar of his mackintosh.

"What!" gasped the young editor overcome by surprise.

"I said, stop thief! And you want to come along with me peacefully now! Who are you any way?"

The night watchman flashed his lantern on the boy's face.

"Grant Dudley!" he exclaimed.

"What are you doing out at this time o' night?" he went on, for Tim Meevers had always been a good friend of Grant's. "You'll have to excuse me, Grant, I didn't know you. Not used to seein' you at this time o' day.

"A thief in 'The Tribune' office!" panted Grant. "Come on! He went this way!"

Grant and the policeman ran in the direction the burglar had taken. At the next corner they paused to listen for the footfalls of the fleeing marauder.

No sound was audible. It was evident that Mr. Meever's unfortunate interference had allowed the burglar to escape.

Grant accepted his second defeat of the night as gracefully as he could. The policeman felt truly sorry for his blunder, but all things considered, he was not to blame.

"I'm sorry I didn't get to the corner a minute sooner," said Meevers. "Then I'd have seen that fellow go by, and I'd have nabbed him instead of you."

"Let's go back to the printing office, since we can't catch that fellow now, and see what has been disturbed there," suggested Grant.

Accordingly Meevers and Grant returned to "The Tribune" building.

They entered by the open window; and from the composing room they stepped into the editor's sanctum. The condition of things here revealed the fact that a burglar had recently paid his respects to the place.

The editor's iron safe, in which he kept his accounts and all his private papers and contracts, was wheeled out into the center of the floor.

Grant proceeded to examine it. It was evident at a glance that the thief had been foiled.

The door of the safe had not been opened.

"Nothing gone here," said the policeman. "The fellow went after the safe, but he had to give it up."

"Everything is all right," answered Grant. "Let us go into the composing room, and look around in there."

But a search of several minutes convinced the policeman and the young editor that the thief had directed his entire attention to Mr. Street's sanctum and the safe it contained.

The policeman now suggested a plan that had not occurred to Grant, and which might prove of value.

"Let us go outside, and see if we can find any tracks in the mud there."

A confusion of footprints, they found, led up to the window. After some trouble they succeeded in separating the marks which Grant had made and those left by Mr. Meever from those of a third party, who they took for granted must be the burglar.

"Have you a piece of string?" asked Meevers.

Grant found in his trousers' pocket a piece which he used for galley measuring.

They then cut off two pieces of string, each the length of a footprint. Grant took one and Meevers the other.

"It is the only clew there seems to be," said the policeman. "By the way, how did you come to be at the office so late, Grant?"

Grant hesitated before answering the question. What should he say? How could he explain his presence without revealing something of Mr. Street's secret?

Grant's failure to answer the question made the policeman look at him curiously, and he repeated his inquiry:

"How did you come to be at the office so late?"

"Mr. Street was ill," answered Grant, "and I was anxious to see that everything had been closed for the night."

"Well?" said the policeman, as if he expected to hear some further reason.

But Grant did not continue his explanation. From the tone it was evident that Mr. Meevers did not regard the answer as satisfactory.

Grant himself felt half guilty of wrong doing, because he could not give the officer a better account of his whereabouts and motives.

But Meevers did not say anything further on the subject.

"I'll come round to the office tomorrow afternoon," he announced, "when I go on duty, and we'll compare notes."

And so they parted, Meevers to resume his rounds and Grant Dudley to continue to his home.

His return to the printing office, the chase of the burglar, the search of the office had consumed more time than he realized.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, striking a match and looking at his watch, which showed a quarter to two o'clock. "These late hours will never do."

Five minutes later Grant entered the front door of his home by means of a latch key. A light was burning in the hall way; he extinguished it and went up stairs.

As he hung up his coat and hat, he was very, very tired. The thought of sleep and rest gave him a feeling of pleasure; but he knew that his sleep must be short.

"I'll set the alarm clock for five o'clock," he said.

Two o'clock found him sound asleep in spite of the many exciting events of the day. He was completely worn out, and he slept as only a tired young fellow of eighteen can sleep.

Mingled dreams of the day's happenings came to him as he slept; but little did he see in all visions of the incidents which the future held in store for him as the young editor of "The Salem Tribune."

CHAPTER VI.

AN EDITOR IN TRUTH.

Salem had seldom experienced such a dark and dismal summer day as that on which Mr. Street fell unconscious to the floor of his office. The rain had drizzled from morning till night.

It was an odd occurrence for August; the world seemed to wear her gloomy dress in which she usually mourns the dying autumn.

When Grant Dudley awoke however at five o'clock the next morning, rested and refreshed, the sun was just rising; and a cloudless sky gave promise of a perfect August day.

Grant's father was a master mechanic in one of the factories of the town, and his work required him to be at his post very early in the morning. In the summer season, the family awoke with the birds, and it was no unusual thing for them to breakfast at half past five.

When Grant went down stairs, although the sun was yet low and the day had scarcely begun, he found his father and mother and sister Nell just sitting down at the table.

All looked at him and nodded a pleasant good morning as he entered the room.

"We didn't wake you because we knew you got in so late. Why did you get up so early? You need more rest," said Grant's mother, looking at him over the steaming coffee pot. "It must have been past twelve when you came home?"

"It was two o'clock," returned Grant with tragic seriousness.

"Two o'clock! Why, what in the world was the matter with you?" Nell wanted to know.

As the little family sat at the breakfast table, Grant proceeded to relate the history of the previous night.

He was interrupted at various points in his narrative by interested questions from his hearers, who took a deep concern in the welfare of Mr. Street, since he had become Grant's benefactor and employer.

"Who's going to run the paper?"

"That I don't know," answered Grant. "I shall have to see Mr. Brown. Probably it will fall to my lot."

"It will evidently be hard work," said Mr. Dudley. "If Mr. Street has such bitter enemies in the town. I cannot understand the case."

"Nor I," added Grant.

"Be careful what you do," cautioned Mrs. Dudley with true motherly instinct, and she looked at Grant with a feeling of some alarm.

"Oh, I shall, mother; never fear," he answered gayly, rising from the table. "But I must go down to the Hanover House and relieve Bob and Mr. Treador."

The night had not worn heavily with the watchers at Mr. Street's bedside, so Grant learned.

"I dozed on the cot, and Mr. Treador brought some bedding and slept on the floor. We passed the night very comfortably," repeated Bob, who seemed fresh enough after his long vigil.

"How was Mr. Street?" asked Grant with some anxiety.

"There was some sort of change," replied Bob. "About two o'clock he seemed to gain consciousness. He called Mr. Treador, and inquired where you were. We asked him some questions; but he did not answer them."

Grant went over to Mr. Street's bedside. He noticed that the editor seemed to be sleeping much more naturally than he had the night before.

Mr. Treador now made his appearance, bringing the nurse for whom he had sent.

"This is Mr. Johnson," he said, "the nurse of whom I spoke. Mr. Dudley, Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson, Mr. White."

At Mr. Treador's request Grant made the nurse acquainted with the salient features of the journalist's affliction, and repeated to him the directions which the doctor had given.

The hotel keeper took Bob White down to breakfast with him; and Grant set out for "The Tribune" office, where he intended to see the foreman, and hold a conference on what was to be done regarding the paper.

Grant had gone but a short distance from the Hanover House in the direction of the printing office, when he saw Mr. Brown coming toward him. The foreman was walking rapidly.

"Good morning," he said. "How is Mr. Street? I was just going up to see him."

"He is still unconscious," replied Grant.

"Still unconscious! Is it so bad as that?" asked the foreman. "I might as well turn back, for he won't be able to give me any instructions. I intended to come directly to the hotel last night, but when I got home, I found that my little boy was very sick, and I could not leave."

"Speaking of instructions," said Grant, "I was just coming down to talk matters over with you. From the appearance of things it will be several days—weeks may be—before Mr. Street can take charge of the paper again. In the meantime, what arrangements are we going to make about 'The Tribune' ?"

The foreman and the assistant editor walked on in deep silence for a minute. The face of Mr. Brown was wrinkled in close thought.

"There is only one thing we can do," said Mr. Brown, with emphasis. "You will have to be editor."

Grant had feared as much; and he was both glad and sorry. It was a chance he had longed for, to show what stuff he was made of; yet a place he feared he could not fill to complete satisfaction.

"You've been doing the work, most of it, for two or three weeks—except the advertising and the business management," said Mr. Brown. "I've had some experience as an editor, and I'll help you all I can. But I have my own work, you must remember; and the most of it will depend on you.

"I believe we can get along all right, even if Mr. Street is sick, and we'll try it. We'll have to do it; or from what I know of 'The Tribune's' condition, it'll go under. The least lapse now would be fatal, I believe, Grant. I'll tell the printers this morning that you are in charge temporarily, and they will——"

"But I expect to be under your advice," interposed Grant.

"As you say about that. If you want it, all right. But a printing office must have an editor in charge as well as a foreman."

"There was a burglar in the office last night," said Grant, shifting the conversation.

"How do you know?" asked Mr. Brown.

The foreman listened raptly as Grant told of the face he had seen at the window and of the thief he had encountered in the composing room.

"Does Mr. Street have enemies here?" asked Grant.

"He had one very bitter enemy in Cincinnati, but he died long ago. I know of no others. What sort of a face was it that peered in at the window?"

"That I can't tell. It startled me so that I can't remember a single feature."

Grant's was no uncommon experience. A sudden shock, whether it be of sight or sound, seems to overwhelm the mind and to leave no impress of details on the memory.

Grant and Mr. Brown were still discussing the problems which attended Mr. Street's sudden illness when they reached the printing office.

It was Friday morning; and Friday morning in the office of "The Salem Tribune" was no time for discussion.

The paper was "put to press" late Thursday afternoon, so that the latest news of the day could be inserted; and on Friday morning the force of the office turned to the folding and mailing of the papers. This was a task of two or three hours; and Friday morning and Thursday afternoon were well matched as busy times in the printing office.

The paper had been founded not more than a year before; and as its circulation was only fifteen hundred, Mr. Street had not yet felt justified in purchasing a folding machine. All the folding of the eight paged paper was done by hand—no slight task when one comes to consider the fifteen hundred copies.

The foreman was busy at the forms, taking out the "dead" matter—type of articles which would not appear in the next week's paper—and stowing it in galleys where it awaited distribution to the cases.

The two printers and the apprentice worked away diligently, folding the papers and addressing them on the mailing machine.

By nine o'clock they had finished the work; and the bundles of papers were being carted away to the post office in good time for the outgoing mails, which left at ten o'clock.

While the printers were working to get the edition ready for the mail, Grant sat in Mr. Street's room, pegging away at his new task as an editor in charge.

He had been in Mr. Street's employ since the high school closed in June; and he was tolerably familiar with the methods which the editor used in dispatching his business.

Shortly after seven he went to the post office after the morning mail, and his first duty was to open and read this.

There were two letters from men whose advertisements were about to expire, and who wanted them continued on the old terms. One advertiser ordered his notice discontinued.

These letters Grant placed in a pile on one corner of his table.

Several letters contained contributions to the paper; and Grant placed these together for future examination.

There were a half dozen who sent subscriptions. Grant wrote a letter to each subscriber, acknowledging the receipt of his money.

Then he took a sheet of paper, headed it with the words, "MAIL LIST" and placed on it the names of the new subscribers. The printers were to set the list of names in type and add them to their mailing galleys.

After he had examined all the mail, Grant turned to the safe which he had wheeled back into its place against the wall. He intended to get the book labeled "Advertising" and post in it the changes which the morning mail had brought.

He thought, too, that he would look through the list and see what advertising contracts were about to expire. To advertisers whose time was about finished, he would write letters urging a new contract.

As he stooped down, and reached forth his hand to the combination, which ran he remembered, A to X to M, his eye caught a glimpse of a charred piece of paper which lay between his foot rug and the wall.

The paper was crumpled and twisted tightly. One end was burned; and it was evident that some one had used the scrap of paper to furnish a light.

He made a dart to pick it up.

"Here is a clew to the burglar!" he said to himself; and he believed that the sheet of paper could bring him some aid in unraveling the problem of the identity of the editor's enemy.

He snatched up the crumpled and charred paper, and hastily spreading it upon his desk, bent eagerly over it.

The paper was covered with writing, and Grant thought that the lines would shed some light on the subject of greatest importance just then in the office of "The Salem Tribune."

"I have found the clew!" he told himself exultantly.

(*To be continued.*)

[*This Story began in No. 536.*]

A Rolling Stone.

BY ARTHUR LEE PUTNAM,

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

CHAPTER XI.

UP THE HUDSON.

Wren went upon deck and looked towards the shore not without curiosity.

He had no difficulty in recognizing Cato's wife on the wharf. A stout colored woman, apparently about fifty years of age, with a turban on her head, stood looking towards the boat. She came to the captain and asked, "Have you got a nigger workin' for you on board?"

"Yes," answered Captain Pellet.

"What's his name?"

"Cato."

"Dat's de very one," cried the woman in a triumphant tone. "I'll go on board and see him."

"No you won't. I don't want any visitors on board. We're too busy."

"But I want to see my husband."

"Wren," called out the captain, "tell Cato to come up on deck. There's a lady wants to see him."

Wren plunged down stairs.

"Cato," he said, "the captain says you're to come on deck. Your wife wants to see you."

"Oh golly, this is terrible!" cried Cato. "Do you think she'll come after me?"

"No, the captain won't allow her to come on board."

"What does she want to see me for?"

"Perhaps she wants to kiss you," suggested Wren jocosely.

"No she don't. She wants me to take her back. What I want to know is, will the law make me do it?"

"No. Didn't she leave you ten years ago?"

"Yes."

"With another man?"

"Yes, but he can have her. I don't want her."

"You wouldn't challenge him to fight a duel?"

"No; I'm glad I'm shut of her."

"Then you are safe, Cato. She abandoned you, and the law won't force you to take her back."

"Then I'll go up and see her," said Cato, looking relieved.

When Cato appeared on deck his wife spied him at once.

"Cato, honey, is that you?" she exclaimed in a gushing voice.

"Yes, it's me, but I ain't your honey," answered Cato coldly.

"Oh, my dear, dear husband, how can you be so cruel to me?"

"Don't you try to fool me for you can't do it," replied Cato, unmoved by her words.

"Oh, Cato. I want to come back to you and be your faithful wife once more," continued the woman, clasping her hands.

"You go 'way from here! Go back to Mr. Thompson. I don't want you."

"I don't care shucks for Tim Thompson. He a trifling, ornary nigger."

"You didn't always think so. What made you go off with him?"

"I was very foolish, Cato. I don't care for him any more. I want to come back to you."

"You can't do it."

"Yes, I can. I'm your lawful wedded wife."

"You 'bandoned me ten years ago. I don't have to live with any 'bandoned woman."

"The law will make you."

Cato turned anxiously towards Wren. The latter gave a short nod in the negative, and this reassured the cook.

"You can go try it if you want to, Mis' Thompson," he said coldly.

The woman threw her apron over her face and wept not silently, but boisterously.

"Oh, you cruel, cruel, man!" she cried. "I'll throw myself into the river."

"Go ahead!" said the unfeeling Cato. "I won't jump in after you."

"What's the matter, woman?" asked Captain Pellet.

"My husband—Cato—won't take me back."

"Are you his wife?"

"Yes, sir. I'm his true and faithful wife."

"You look more like his mother."

"I'm only two years older than he is," said the lady indignantly.

"Gad, you look about twenty years older."

"She's twelve years older, cap'n," said Cato. "Besides she ran away with another nigger ten years ago."

"Then, I think, you'd better keep away from Cato, or he might do you harm."

"I ain't afeared of him. Many's the time I've taken a flat iron to him," said the woman looking towards her former husband contemptuously.

"That's true, cap'n," corroborated Cato.

"Then I advise you to have her arrested. Out of the way, woman! The boat is about ready to start."

The woman became quiet. She was rather frightened by the captain's words, and saw that for the present she must desist.

"If I could only get to talk to Cato alone," she soliloquized. "I'd bring him round."

The boat started on its way, and Cato breathed a sigh of relief.

"I was awfully frightened, Wren," he said. "I wouldn't take that woman back for the best farm in Westchester County."

"I don't blame you, Cato. Do you think she'd throw flat irons at you?"

"Yes, Wren, she'd do it. I know her."

"You're safe as long as the captain won't let her come on board."

"It's given me a great shock, Wren. I wonder where that Thompson is. I wish he'd carry her off."

Wren's time was not all taken up with assisting the cook. He scrubbed the floor, washed the dishes, and was expected to make himself generally useful.

He had no more conflicts with Sam, as that young gentleman contented himself with making faces at Wren when he met him, and occasionally addressing him in a contemptuous tone.

But this Wren did not mind. He was comfortable, though he did not altogether like his work. However he liked the excitement of traveling, and enjoyed stopping at different places.

The Peekskill was not a fast boat; more than one steamer passed her on the way up to Albany, and as Wren noticed these floating palaces he could not help sometimes wishing that he could be transferred to them. But Cato, on being questioned, doubted whether there would be any berth on board for him.

At any rate, though making slow progress, he would reach Albany in time, and have a chance to see a city of which he had often heard.

"How long do we stay in Albany, Cato?" he asked.

"Two days it's likely—sometimes three. All 'pends on the cargo."

"Who knows but your wife may be on the wharf? She knows where the boat is going."

"Oh, Wren, don't say that!" murmured Cato, shivering.

"Don't be alarmed, Cato! Even if she is there you won't be obliged to see her."

"You might see her, Wren, and—and don't you think you could scare her. Tell her I've got a sharp knife, and might kill her."

"I had better say that you'll have her arrested for bigamy."

"What's that?"

"Having two husbands."

"Yes, Wren, that's the very thing. That word'll frighten the old woman. She won't know what it means."

Wren had other conversations with Mark Vincent the drummer. This excited some jealousy on the part of Sam who would have liked to make the acquaintance of and become on familiar terms with the passenger. But Vincent did not take to Sam, and did not encourage any intimacy.

Once Sam tried to prejudice him against Wren.

"I shouldn't think," he said, "you'd want to talk with a boy that washes dishes."

"Why not?" asked Vincent.

"He's a low, common sort of fellow."

"I don't agree to that. His business may be common, and perhaps low, but he is a smart and agreeable boy."

"I don't think so."

"Probably not," answered Vincent.

Sam didn't understand what he meant, but he was sharp enough to see that Mr. Vincent liked Wren and did not like him.

This and the castigation he had received from Wren on the first day, excited Sam's bitter enmity. He determined to "get even" with Wren as he expressed it, whenever there was an opportunity.

As a general thing a boy or man who is seeking an opportunity to injure another is pretty apt to find one. A cunning scheme occurred to Sam, and he resolved to carry it out, and that without loss of time.

The last day of the trip arrived. They were approaching Albany.

Wren was pleased to think he should so soon see the capital of New York, and Cato would have been glad, too, if he had not feared to meet his old wife on the wharf.

Wren was at work when Sam, followed by Captain Pellet, entered the galley. The captain's face was stern, and it was evident that something disturbed him.

"Wren," he said, "I have had ten dollars stolen from my desk. Do you know anything about it?"

"No, sir."

"Oh no, of course not," interposed Sam, with a sneer.

"Yes, of course not," said Wren with emphasis.

"Better look into the pockets of his coat," suggested Sam.

Wren's sack coat was hanging from a hook. The captain stepped forward and thrust his hand into one of the outside pockets.

When his hand came out, he held in it several small bank bills.

"Didn't I tell you, Uncle Sim?" cried Sam triumphantly.

CHAPTER XII.

WREN IS VINDICATED.

Wren was astounded. He realized at once that he was in a predicament.

What he could not understand was, how the money got into his pocket.

"So you are a thief!" said Captain Pellet sternly.

"I am no thief," answered Wren, but he looked troubled.

"You will find it hard work to prove that. Will you explain how this money came into your pocket?"

"I can't explain it."

"Do you claim it as yours?"

"No, sir. I haven't as much money as that."

"So I supposed. You are at least entitled to credit for your candor."

"Do you believe that I took this money from you, Captain Pellet?"

"Of course I do. The discovery of it in your pocket, and your inability to account for its presence there seems to be conclusive evidence. But I have other testimony implicating you in the theft."

"What is that, sir?"

"Speak up, Sam."

"I saw Wren go to your desk, Uncle Sim, and take something out."

"Was it money?"

"I couldn't see whether it was or not, and that is the reason I didn't say anything. But when you told me you had lost some money, I knew it must be that."

"You were quite considerate, Sam," observed his uncle approvingly.

"Captain Pellet," said Wren, with flushed face, "I admit that appearances are against me, but I declare solemnly that I know nothing of this money or how it came into my pocket."

"Probably it went there of itself," sneered Sam.

"No; it was placed there."

"Oho, you admit that, do you?"

"I don't know who put it there, I only know that I didn't."

"Perhaps you think Uncle Sim put it there."

"Your uncle wouldn't do such a mean thing."

"Uncle Sim, he is trying to get in with you. Oh, he's sly."

Then for the first time Wren began to suspect who it was that had involved him in this scrape.

"I have an enemy on board this boat," he said slowly.

"Who is that? Cato?"

"No. Cato is a very good friend of mine."

"I suppose you mean me."

"You can tell whether it is true or not. You can tell whether you have treated me as a friend."

"You are a low, common boy, and I don't care what you say. Uncle Sim, what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know," said Captain Pellet. "I confess I am surprised to find Wren guilty of such a mean act."

"How came you to take him?"

"He was recommended to me by an old shipmate, Jack Staples."

"Mr. Staples was probably mistaken in him, just as you were. He's a very artful boy."

"I see, Sam, I couldn't depend on you for a first class recommendation," said Wren, half amused, half indignant.

"I should think not. Uncle Sim, aren't you going to have him arrested when you get to Albany?"

Wren waited anxiously for the captain's reply. He saw at once that it would go hard with him, if he were arrested in a city where he knew no one, and where there would be no friend to speak up for him.

Captain Pellet was considering what to answer. He was not a bad hearted man, and he hesitaated about getting a boy like Wren into serious trouble, but with his nephew to spur him on there is no knowing what he would have decided to do had not an unexpected friend come to Wren's help.

Mark Vincent, the drummer, entered the cabin at this juncture. He saw at once that something was up.

He looked from one to another and asked, "What's the matter?"

"I'll tell you, Mr. Vincent," broke in Sam, with malicious pleasure. "This boy Wren, of whom you have taken so much notice, turns out to be a thief."

"Don't believe it, Mr. Vincent," said Wren.

"How do you make that out, Sam?" asked the drummer quietly.

"Some money disappeared from my uncle's desk. It was found in Wren's coat pocket."

"Who suggested looking there first?"

"I did."

"And why?"

"Because I saw him go to uncle's desk, open it, and take something out. I didn't think much of it till I heard that some money was missing. Then I told Uncle Sim what I had seen."

"What a fine detective you would make, Sam!" said Mr. Vincent.

Sam was not sure whether the drummer was in jest or earnest, but he chose to assume the latter.

"Oh, I don't pretend to be very sharp," he replied, "but I couldn't help putting two and two together."

"So, Captain Pellet, you think Wren to be a thief?" said Mark Vincent.

"I can't believe anything else. The evidence seems to be pretty conclusive. The money couldn't have got into his pocket of itself."

"I agree with you there, captain."

"I thought you'd be convinced, Mr. Vincent," said Sam triumphantly.

"Yes, I generally keep my eyes open, and I see considerable sometimes."

There was something in the drummer's tone which Sam did not exactly understand.

"For instance I saw the money put into Wren's pocket."

Wren looked amazed, and an expression of dismay and alarm overspread the face of Sam Pellet.

He stared at Mr. Vincent with mouth and eyes wide open, wondering what was coming next.

"You saw Wren put the bills into his pocket, Mr. Vincent?" demanded the captain.

"I didn't say that, Captain Pellet."

"I understood you so, Mr. Vincent."

"What I said was, that I saw the bills put into Wren's pocket."

"Isn't that the same thing?"

"There is a slight difference. It was not Wren who put the money in."

"Who was it, then?"

"Your nephew, Sam."

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Sam with dry lips.

"Young man," said Vincent sternly, "If you say that again, I'll knock you down."

"Mr. Vincent, do you accuse my nephew of putting the stolen money into the pocket of Wren's coat?" asked Captain Pellet, astonished.

"I do. He had no idea that there was any one looking on. I suspected his purpose as I knew of his dislike for Wren, and resolved to say nothing but await developments. You will understand at once how it was that he could tell you where the money was."

"What have you to say, Sam?" demanded his uncle sternly.

"Mr. Vincent is mistaken," gasped Sam.

He did not dare a second time charge the drummer with falsehood.

"Mr. Vincent is not mistaken," said the drummer coldly. "Well, Captain Pellet, do you believe me or not?"

"Of course I believe you, but I can't understand Sam's motive."

"I can tell you. He hates Wren, and wanted to do him an injury."

Captain Pellet could not help feeling that he had made a mistake. He was not what would be called a man of suavity or agreeable manners, but he tried to be just.

"Wren," he said, "I have done you injustice, but it was not intentionally. I really thought you had taken my money."

"I can't blame you under the circumstances," returned Wren.

Meantime Sam, mortified and ashamed, not because he had done a mean thing, but because he had been found out, had left the cabin and gone on deck. It is safe to say that much as he had disliked Wren before, he disliked him even more, now that his plot to injure him had failed.

When the captain went on deck Wren turned to Mark Vincent, and said gratefully, "How can I thank you, Mr. Vincent, for standing by me in my time of trouble?"

"I couldn't do otherwise, Wren, when I saw that there was a wicked plot to injure you, and I had it in my power to frustrate it."

"Dat Sam's a mighty mean boy," said Cato.

"There is no doubt about that, Cato," returned the drummer. "Wren, do you intend to remain on board this boat?"

"Would you advise me to, Mr. Vincent?"

"No, I wouldn't."

"I have no fault to find with the captain," said Wren doubtfully, for it seemed to him a serious thing to throw himself out of employment.

"True, but don't you see that one boat isn't large enough to hold you and Sam? It would be very embarrassing after what has happened for you to meet him every day."

"Yes, sir, I see that."

"There never can be any friendship between you. He is the captain's nephew, and he would try to do you harm again when I might not be present to stand by you. If Sam were not related to Captain Pellet, he would probably discharge him. As it is, he could not do that very well."

"I see that, sir. What, then, would you advise me to do?"

"Tell Captain Pellet at the first opportunity that you would like to leave the boat at Albany."

"Do you think I could get work in Albany?"

"I will take you to my hotel—the Delavan—and see what I can do for you."

"Thank you, sir."

(To be continued.)

NOTHING GREAT.

Visitor—"I am most grieved to learn of your mistress's illness. Nothing serious; no great cause for alarm, I trust?" The New French Maid—"No, monsieur; nozzing beeg, nozzing grande. Somezing—what you call leetle, petite." Visitor—"What is it?" The New French Maid—"Eet is what zey call ze little—small—smallpox."—Tid-Bits.

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FRANK A. MUNSEY & COMPANY,
Publishers.
Madison Square, South.
New York

THE MARCH MUNSEY'S.

The new issue of this king of magazines, closing the tenth volume, exceeds its predecessors in picturesqueness, which is saying a great deal. "Fox Hunting" is an article, the illustrations to which are rarely beautiful, showing the hounds in various exciting stages of the chase.

The paper on Charles Dickens is embellished with portraits of the famous novelist taken in various periods of his life, from early boyhood until he was in the zenith of his fame, forming an extremely interesting gallery.

Other illustrated features are "Legends of Wagner's Operas," "English Novelists of the Day," "Modern Artists and Their Work," "A Tribute to George W. Childs," and "The Stage," in which appear the portraits of Margaret Reid, of Bostonians fame, John Drew, Bessie Tyree, Amy Busby, of the Crane company and other well known artists of the theatrical world.

This exquisite number, with its charming cover, now ready and for sale everywhere at 10 cents. Subscription one dollar a year.

MORE ABOUT A BILLION.

Every now and then you hear a boy say: "Oh I've done that a billion times!"

It sounds like a good many to him when he says it, but there are very few people who have anything like an adequate measurement of a billion in their minds when they use it. The Argosy had something to say about these big numbers a few weeks ago.

For example, in all these eighteen hundred years since the beginning of the Christian era, we have not passed through one billion seconds, nor quite one sixteenth of one billion seconds. It takes 31,687 years, seventeen days, twenty two hours, forty five minutes and five seconds to make one billion seconds.

A chain of five dollar gold pieces, placed side by side would go around the globe 763 times, if it contained one billion pieces.

Take the leaves of The Argosy and press them down flat, and then add to them until you have a pile of one billion. The column would reach higher than the tallest mountain, higher than the clouds, away past what we call out atmosphere, out into the ether of the universe. It would reach upward over fifty thousand miles!

GOLF.

Nowadays we read a great deal about golf and golf players, but while every Scotch boy knows all about it, just as every American boy knows baseball, it is probable that nine out of every ten American boys never saw the game played, and have no idea of its rules.

A golf ground is called a link, and is an open place bounded usually by rough country. A golf course varies from two to five miles in length, so you see a boy who plays must have plenty of endurance.

A small gutta percha ball and several clubs of different sizes are used by each player. These clubs are carried by a companion to the player, who is called a "caddie." The necessary clubs are two wooden ones called "the driver" and "the putter," and one iron club called "the cleek." The starting point is "the teeing place," and is marked by two lines across the course.

Holes about four inches in diameter and lined with iron are placed in the course about every 100 yards. The golfing begins at the teeing ground and the players try to put their ball in the holes with the fewest number of strokes.

When one player has holed his ball the players proceed to the next hole. The greatest number of holes wins the game.

THE TWO KINDS OF HEROISM.

It is hard to define what heroism really is. To some people it is jumping into the midst of a fight, and to others it is the quiet endurance of everyday troubles.

The boy who must give up his own inclinations because his duty commands, who must live a life of self sacrifice, is a greater hero than the one who in the enthusiasm of the moment sacrifices his life for another.

The boy who stood by his admiral and went down with the sinking English man of war was a hero who ought to have a tablet in Westminster Abbey where England keeps a record of her greatest men, but he was in no respect greater than a boy we know, whose father has lately died, and who has given up his hope of a college career to go into business and help support his mother. The everyday patient, uncomplaining heroes are the truly great ones.

The other day a man overcome by gas was brought into a Long Island hospital. A young physician named Dr. Franklin M. Kemp, realizing the serious danger that he ran, bared his arm and insisted upon blood from his veins being injected into that of the humble charity patient who lay in imminent danger of death. It was one bare chance that the man had, and the physician's instinct was to save him at all hazards. Here was a hero who was as great as any in history.

BEING IN EARNEST.

A dozen years ago there was a young boy only fifteen years old who lived in Philadelphia. His father was a lawyer who wanted his son to go into his own office.

The boy said that he wished to be an artist. His father objected to this very seriously saying that he wanted no dilly-dallying son, playing with paint.

"Let me be an architect then," said the boy.

"Prove to me that you are in earnest, and I will let you be what you like."

Two days after the boy came in and told the family that he had apprenticed himself to a carpenter and that he was going to learn how to build houses.

His father laughed and said he supposed he intended to have a little education.

The boy answered that he was only going to work with the carpenter afternoons; mornings he was going to school and evenings to art lessons.

Nobody believed that any boy could keep up such a strain, but he did.

He did not go to college, but his father saw that he was in earnest and he allowed him to go on with his art studies.

He spent four years working with the carpenter, and in the great western city where he is the leading architect of the place, they say that he is the only one with any common sense. He knows exactly what can be done with building materials.

The Royal Snuffer,

AND OTHER LEGENDS OF JAPAN.

BY PHILLIPS McCLURE.

In the royal regalia of Japan, one of the great jewels is a crystal which is perfectly clear and round. In curiosity shops you may often see similar jewels, but none so large and beautiful.

This cystal rests upon the back of a great bronze turtle. It is considered sacred, and is looked upon with awe by every one. The story is this:

Once upon a time, long ago, there was a Mikado who had only one son. He was a very beautiful, large eyed boy, who did not seem made for this world. His father and mother looked at him longingly, as though he were already half in the abode of the gods.

They took him from winter palaces to summer palaces, but nowhere could they bring a smile to his face. Once his father went to him in the depths of winter, and asked him what he would have.

"Take me," said the delicate little prince, "to ride through the forests of quince bloom."

Now there was not a quince bloom in all the kingdom, but the Mikado was wise, and he feared to deny the boy anything, so he sent orders to all the makers of silk flowers in the realm, and told them his plight. He added that the life of their future ruler depended upon their haste and skill.

When the fete day of the little prince arrived, he was taken out in a carriage of glass, which was warmed to summer heat, and everywhere along the road, over hill and dale, the orchards were pink with quince bloom.

But the little prince only looked heavy eyed at it all. He supposed that it was all an ordinary affair. How could he know of the millions of yen which had been spent, and the thousands of fingers which had fashioned the silk flowers, and fastened them to the twigs of the quince trees?

All day long the little prince would lie among his silk cushions, never moving. But one day, so the story goes, the prince was looking out of the window, when across the lawn, under a dwarf oak which was thousands of years old, but only four feet high, he saw a sight which made even his thin little body quiver with eagerness.

On the back of a great lazy old turtle, which lay on the edge of the miniature pond, sat a little naked boy. In his hands he held a reed, which he would dip into the little pond, and then put to his lips.

Then would he blow and blow and blow, until his smooth, yellowish cheeks were like two balloons. And from the end of the reed came the most brilliant globes, catching all the colors of the rainbow.

It was a gay sight. The globes seemed clear like water, except that colors ran over and over them in amazing circles, and when the boy gave the reed a flirt in the air and the bubble fell, it did not burst, but rolled along through the grass.

Finally he almost burst his little body, and blew one bubble even larger, oh, much larger than the others.

The little prince could contain himself no longer, but ran out in all his long embroidered silk robes, to play with the wonderful boy.

The bubble blower saw him coming, and giving a backward somersault, went over into the pond, and never has been seen since.

But the solid bubbles were there, the prince was cured of his melancholy, and the biggest glittering ball was set upon the back of the turtle forever.

Once, the great mysterious jewel was lost and found, and this is the story of that:

There lived away back in the provinces a poor peasant, who was a mere laborer. He spent for food and shelter every yen he could scrape together, and was always hungry and suffering and poor, as was all his family.

On one occasion he cried all night and said amid his moanings. "Even the animal, when he dies, leaves his skin for a memory, but I have nothing. If I cannot leave an honorable memory, I will at least live in plenty."

His wife heard him, and she pounded him smartly, and said: "Hush! Thou wilt die a beggar."

Not long after this the Mikado wished a great stone wall built about his house in the country, and laborers came from far and near.

When this poor man started, he said: "Wife, at midday, burn down our house."

"And live in the fields?" asked she.

"Do, dutifully as I bid you," said the poor man, "and know that the advice of your husband is good."

She cried all day, but she never thought of disobeying.

At noon, when the workmen had all stopped to eat their rice the poor man lifted up his face, and began drawing in his breath rapidly.

"The smell of fire!" he cried. "My house is burning up. I can smell it! Come with me and save my house!"

But the other men only laughed at him and his cries.

"You foolish old man!" they said. "Your house is seven miles away. Totu! Totu! You are foolish."

The old man kept up his wailing.

"I will wager you one hundred yen that it is not your house," said one jolly laborer.

"And I!" "And I!" cried others, until they had wagered a thousand, and then they all ran laughing toward the old man's house to witness his foolishness.

But lo! When they reach the place the house is burnt to the ground. And so the old man won the wagers.

When the Mikado heard of it he gave the old man another thousand yen, and the name of "The Snuffer."

But two days after he sent for "The Snuffer" in great haste. Some one had stolen the great crystal jewel and the man with the nose must come and spy out the hiding place by his sense of smell.

Then truly was the poor man troubled. He knew his nose to be no better than any other nose. So he went down to the bank of the river to drown himself, knowing nothing better to do.

As he crept along in the bushes, miserable, he heard a low whisper.

One man spoke to another.

"Let us hide it here under the water," he said. "They will never find its clearness here."

Then "The Snuffer" knew that he listened to the thieves.

He walked back from the river erect, with no thought of killing himself.

On the next day he went snuffing about.

"The scent is faint," he said. "It must be under water," and to the river he led them.

There, true enough was the great crystal lying under the water where the thieves had placed it.

They dressed the poor man in rich robes, and gave him a palace. But the next day he sat in the door weeping.

"Alas! Alas!" said he. "I have lost the fine sense of my nose. I can only smell like others."

He knew when to let well enough alone, did this Snuffer.

A WHOLESOME RHYME.

One day at a time;
It's a wholesome rhyme;
A good one to live by,
A day at a time.

—H. H. Jackson.

In the Grasp of the Swamp Angels.

BY MYRA C. BRECKENRIDGE.

When I was a girl of twelve my family went South—to Florida—and for the next six years my father owned and cultivated a large plantation in that State.

My brother Harry (two years my senior) and myself were treated by "the hands," who had so shortly before been slaves, like a little lord and lady of the olden time.

We were always "Young Mars" and "Lil' Miss" to the negroes, all of whom would have done anything within the range of human possibility for us.

Father was not looked upon with very friendly eyes by some of his neighbors, for he was a Northern man, and at that time Northerners were regarded by the old planters with suspicion.

As I said, the negroes of the plantation were all our friends; but we could not, nor did we wish, to claim the overseer of the place—a man named McHenry—as such.

I presume, if father had listened to Harry and me, and even to mother herself, that McHenry would have stayed but a short time; for he was an ugly, overbearing man, and we all thoroughly disliked him.

He was, however, an excellent overseer in other ways, and father retained him against all our protestations.

Father was called a wealthy man—perhaps there were few wealthier in the county—and was respected in the little business world of that vicinity for that reason, if he was not cordially liked by his brother planters.

His estate was the best cultivated and most productive of any within a day's journey, only a small portion at one end being unfruitful.

This portion bordered on the "Great Swamp," as it was called—was a portion of the swamp itself, in fact—and was inhabited only by moccasins, a few black bears, an occasional panther (thoughts of encountering which struck absolute terror to my feminine soul, but inspired Harry with an enthusiastic desire to hunt them) and several families of poor and disreputable people, who had gained for themselves the sobriquet of "Swamp Angels."

Among these unpleasant human neighbors whose frequent depredations on our plantation made father thoroughly detest them, were not a few of those persons who, during the wartime, had been guerrillas of the Southern army, and who, having lived so many months upon what they could "take without asking," were now greatly opposed to living in any other manner.

Father was often so thoroughly vexed by their thieving that he threatened to "raise the county," have a regular guerrilla hunt, and clean out the whole tribe, or send them all to prison.

A report of these statements having reached the ears of the Swamp Angels, they naturally disliked father above all the other planters in the neighborhood.

These depredators seemed to ever keep themselves informed (by some means unknown, for no one ever saw them outside the fastnesses of the swamp in daylight) upon all the "most likely" places for a raid, at all times, and if there was an especially nice field of corn in the garden plot, or a patch of early melons, the greater part of the crop was sacrificed to these skulkers.

There were boys in the settlement in the swamp, too, and more than once Harry had fallen in with them upon his short hunting expeditions and found them to be in a fair way to lead the same sort of lives as their elders, for each time he had crossed their path, they had relieved him of the contents of his game bag and all the spare ammunition he had about him.

Naturally this put my brother, who was a quick tempered youth, in a furious passion, but that did not mend matters.

Each time they had sprung on him unawares and wrested his gun from his hands; then after appropriating the game and all his ammunition, they discharged the gun, so that, by no possibility, could he get the better of them after they had given him back the weapon. Then they had disappeared in the trackless swamp, which one must live in to be able to follow the blind paths and winding bayous.

One of the boys—the leader of the gang in fact—Harry happened to find in the village one day, and in his impetuous, hot headed fashion, he "sailed into" the youth and administered a well deserved thrashing.

Of course this made it a settled fact that just so sure as Harry went into the swamp he had trouble with the gamins, and after having come home once or twice with marks of pretty rough handling upon his person, mother begged father to command the plucky boy not to enter the forest again until the Swamp Angels were cleaned out.

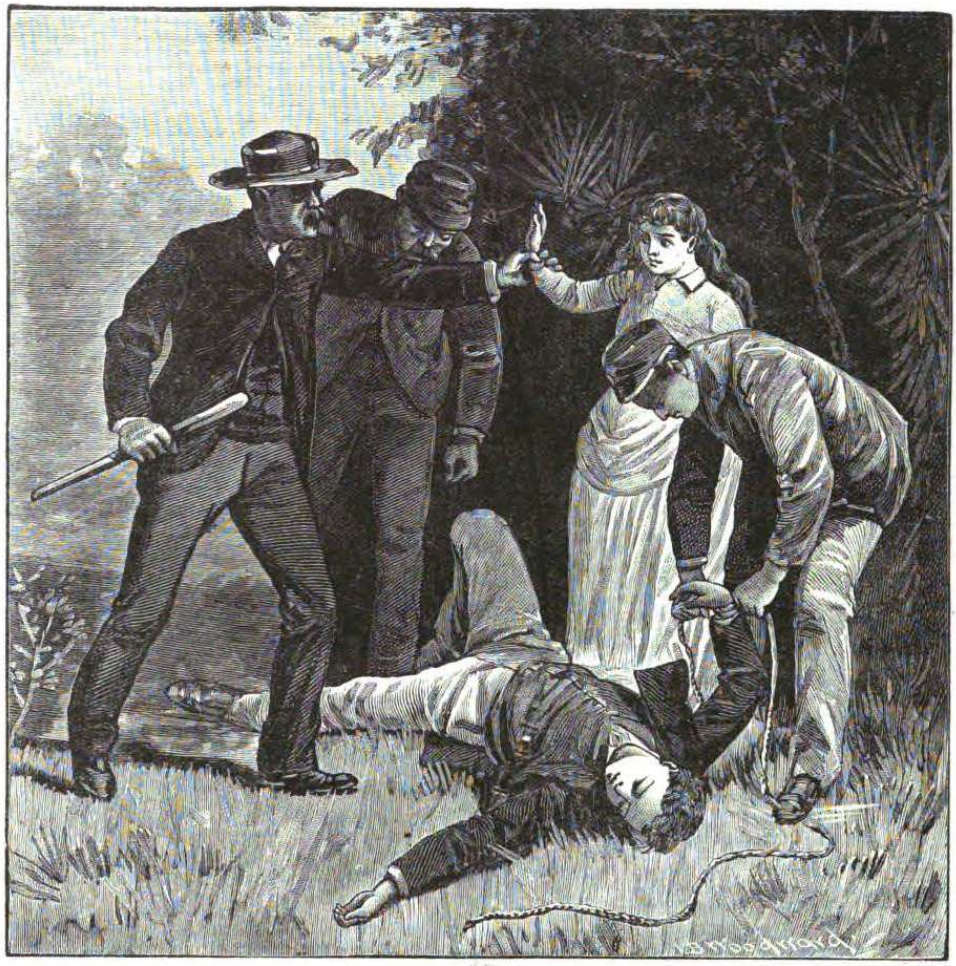
Father did so (much to Harry's disgust) and also promised to see if the authorities of the county would not do something toward abating the depredations of the denizens of the swampy land.

But one thing or another occurred to keep him from doing anything definite about the matter until it became so late in the season and people were so busy, that it would have been impossible to get together a posse large enough to overpower the Swamp Angels.

One evening Harry came up from the stables and beckoned me to join him out under a great cottonwood (the only one on the place) which stood just before the piazza of the house.

He was considerably excited over something, and I wondered if it was not something about either the Swamp Angels or the overseer, McHenry, for those two subjects occupied our youthful minds to a far greater extent than they should, considering the studying we were supposed to do each day.

"What is it, Harry?" I asked, clasping his arm in both my hands and looking up into his face.



AS MCHENRY SEIZED MY WRIST IN HIS POWERFUL GRASP, BUD ROGERS FELL UPON SENSELESS HARRY AND PROCEEDED TO BIND HIM.

"Matter enough, Myra," said. "Whom do you suppose I just saw talking with McHenry down near the lower bars?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"And you'd never guess." Harry declared. "It was that scamp, Bud Rogers—the fellow I thrashed that time—the leader of the gang who robbed me of my game last season."

"And on this farm, too!" I exclaimed in indignation. "How did he dare? I hope you went and ordered him off."

"Well, I didn't, though I wanted to, badly enough, and if I'd had my own way about it I should have added a first class licking to it, too," he said. "But I just kept cool and stayed out of sight, and I believe that there's more between Bud and old Mack than there should be, if Mack is as honest as he pretends."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Harry, with emphasis, "that I believe that there is foul play of some sort between Mack and the Swamp Angels. It's always been a wonder to me how these rascals know just where to strike for the best of everything that's raised in the garden, when nobody ever sees them around, and as I don't believe in spirits, I naturally expected that some person who had access to the plantation in broad daylight was their informant."

"And you believe—" I began.

"That old Mack is the one? Yes, I do. He's just that sneaking—to take the bread that's given him and then snap at the hand that gives it."

"Are you positive it was that Rogers boy?" I asked. "How would they dare be seen talking together near the house?"

"It was just on the edge of the evening, so that unless I had got quite near them as I did, I should not have known them. They were standing right at the corner of that new melon patch.

"Some of the melons were ripe yesterday, and I heard pa suggest to Mack that he pick them today; but Mack told him he wouldn't be able to get at them until tomorrow. Now you mark my words—tomorrow there won't be a ripe melon in the field to pick. The Swamp Angels will be here tonight."

"Why, papa ought to know about it at once," I declared.

"I know it; but you forget that pa's gone over to the Mills to a convention and won't be home till tomorrow noon. You musn't say a word to mother about it 'twould frighten her to death."

"But what can we do?" I cried.

"I can tell you what I shall do," Harry declared. "I'm going to watch tonight and see if what I suspect is true. If Mack has been aiding and abetting the Swamp Angels all this time, the quicker father knows it the better. I believe firmly that if he is sent away a good one half of the

thievery that has been going on on this plantation will stop."

"You won't watch all alone!" I exclaimed. "Suppose they should see you?"

"They'd have to see, that's all."

"Why, they might kill you!" I cried, my terror growing at the thought. "You musn't go all alone. If you watch, I shall watch, too."

"I'd like to know what earthly good you'd be?" said Master Harry, in fine scorn.

"Well," I replied promptly, "what earthly good will you be, if these men should catch you? Any way, I could scream."

"Yes, you could do that, that's a fact," replied Harry, with a grin. "But I'm not going to let them catch me. If you want to come along you can, for it'll be lonesome enough waiting till goodness knows what time, all alone."

The evenings were warm and mild, and there was nothing at all impractible about my watching for the thieves as well as Harry, and after supper was over and we were supposed to have gone to our rooms and mama had gone to hers, my brother and I crept out of the house so carefully that even the house-servants did not see us.

We ran down the long slope to the rear of the stables.

The overseer occupied a small house at one side of the barnyard, as the inclosure about the stables would have been called in the North, and the corner of the patch of melons that were just then getting ripe, was less than ten rods from McHenry's dwelling.

Harry and I hid in the fence corner, where the shadow was deepest, and nibbled some candy, of which I had brought a pocketful, and talked in whispers as we waited for the appearance of the Angels.

They seemed a dreadfully long time coming, and if Harry hadn't been so persevering, I should have given it up before ten o'clock and gone back to the house.

I was so sleepy that I could scarcely keep my eyes open; but my brother was made of sterner stuff, and was determined to catch both McHenry and his disreputable associates in the very act, if possible.

Suddenly, while we lay there on the warm grass whispering together, we were aroused by the long, mournful cry of an owl apparently from a dead oak not far from our position.

"If I had my gun here, I'd have that chap," Harry declared.

Ere I could reply there came another hoot from behind us, as though in answer to the first.

"Two of them," I said, shivering a little in spite of myself, for the hoot of the owl is a most mournful sound.

But Harry did not reply; he got up on his knees instead and peered sharply toward the spot from which the second owl had sounded.

Something out of the ordinary had attracted his attention, and as I looked, too, I saw a dark figure stealing down by the fence from the direction of the overseer's cottage.

At the same moment Harry turned and pressed my arm, pointing down the lane.

There, advancing to meet the first man, were two other figures which we quickly made out to be a man and a boy.

"That's Bud Rogers—the boy," breathed Harry in my ear, as the three persons met just opposite our position.

I needed no one to tell me who the single man was; without doubt it was the untrustworthy overseer, McHenry.

How many months he had been cheating my father! It fairly made my blood boil to think of it, and I could appreciate Harry's feelings when he clenched his fist and shook it silently at the group just across the lane from us.

They were so near that it was really dangerous for us to move until they had gone, had we wished, and so we remained and saw them enter the melon field, and, after a long wait on our part, they returned bearing each a heavy bag of the choice fruit.

Until that time I had had wrapped closely about me a large, dun colored shawl, which completely shielded my dress, and without thinking I allowed the shawl to slip back from my shoulders.

The sharp eyes of the young Swamp Angel saw my white dress instantly.

"Look—a—there—what's that?" he demanded at once, and dropped his melon sack.

Harry, knowing that we had been discovered, seized my hand and jumping up, started to run, dragging me along.

The three marauders dropped their booty and made after us at once, and, hampered by my slowness, even my swift footed brother could not escape them.

The first in the van of our pursuers was McHenry himself, and instead of seizing Harry as he easily might have done, he brutally knocked him down with the club he carried in his hand.

My poor brother fell like a log, and I was too frightened to even scream as I had promised, as McHenry seized my wrist in his powerful grasp and Bud Rogers and the other man fell upon senseless Harry and bound him.

"It's all up with you, Mack, I reckon." I heard the second man say to McHenry, when Harry's wrists and ankles were both securely fastened.

"I'd knock both the sneaking little brats in the head for two pieayunes!" the overseer exclaimed.

"Don't ye get fresh, my lady," he added, to me, with an ugly leer, "or you'll get just what your precious brother's got."

"What had we better do?" demanded the other.

They stepped aside and conversed several moments in low tones, while the boy, who was quite as dreadful to me as either of the men, watched us two prisoners.

I longed to run shrieking up the lane towards the house and the negroes' cabins, but my fear made my feet like lead and I had no strength to cry out.

After a little, McHenry and the other man came back and at a sign from the former, Bud Rogers and the man raised my brother between them, while the hated overseer grasped my wrist again and we started down the lane toward the most distant part of the farm.

Our captors hurried us along at such a break neck speed that Harry was roused from the lethargy into which McHenry's blow had thrown him, and I saw his eyes were open; but the overseer saw it, too.

"Don't you cry out, you little bantam, or I'll give you a worse crack than that," he said uglily.

"Wher—where's Myra?" muttered Harry.

"I'm here!" I sobbed, making an ineffectual attempt to free myself from the man who held me; but Harry seemed satisfied to know that I was alive and closed his eyes again.

In a few moments our captors brought us to the edge of a small lagoon on the very verge of the Great Swamp, and I discovered at once that here they had fastened a huge, lumbering dugout, with which they had doubtless come for the melons.

They tossed Harry into the rude canoe with little ceremony, and then McHenry made me sit down in the end farthest from the shore, and the boy remained to watch us again.

In half an hour or so the two men returned, each with a huge bag of melons, which he deposited in the dugout.

Then the strange man, whom the others called Hank, entered also and took up one of the paddles.

"Tell Bill I'll be over tomorrow night and see him," said McHenry. "Now, you see that them young'uns are treated right; if they ain't you'll hear from me. Make that Bud, there, and his chums, keep their hands off the boy. There's a deal more money in them young'uns than in twenty cartloads o' garden stuff. Now mind yer eye."

"Oh, McHenry," I begged, "don't let them take us off! Let us go home. I'll never tell."

"No, I don't doubt you'd never tell," he returned with an ugly smile. "But that brother of yours is made of different stuff."

"Oh, please——" I began in a louder tone.

McHenry had already shoved the canoe off.

"Throw that girl to the 'gators if she yells again like that," he said harshly. "She'll be having every nigger on the place down here on us if you don't look out."

This threat so frightened me that I could simply sink down into the bottom of the dirty old boat and sob silently to myself.

Harry lay there with his eyes shut and without speaking a word, and I pulled his head up into my lap.

He opened his eyes and looked up at me once, and as I leaned over him his lips brushed my ear as he whispered:

"Don't get scared. I'm not hurt so bad as I seem; but don't give it away."

I was too frightened to understand his reason for playing 'possum, and sat there silently, holding his head in my lap, while the two boatmen, who seemed perfectly familiar with the swamp and all its surroundings, paddled swiftly on.

In two hours we reached a little glade in the middle of the swamp, and upon the higher ground stood several small bark shanties and one house of more pretentious build—a story and a half cottage.

Here our captors landed, and picking up Harry, whom they evidently thought to be badly hurt, they motioned me to follow them toward the cottage.

Evidently their coming was expected. The dogs, of whom a score or more rushed to meet us, set up a terrific howling and barking, and came about me, snapping most unpleasantly.

But I had lived in the South too long to show any fear of the brutes. They were trained to pull down anything that ran from them, and had I shown any fear they would have been upon me at once. Nevertheless my secret terror was great.

Inside the house were three or four slipshod, dragged out looking women, and a man or two.

One was a fellow known as "Big Bill," the leader of the Swamp Angels, who had committed many offenses against the State, and on whose capture the local authorities had set a small reward.

He was a ferocious looking man, with huge, clumsy limbs and body, and a heavily bearded, scarred face.

After the first exclamations of surprise over our appearance, Big Bill ordered us both conveyed to the loft of the house, and after Hank and Bud Rogers had carried up Harry, and I had been hustled up the ladder by one of the women, our captors returned to the kitchen to talk the matter over, I presume.

The loft was a great bare, unpartitioned space, at either end of which was one small window.

The men had thrown Harry down upon a heap of straw, believing him to be too greatly stunned to attempt to escape; and I certainly was too frightened to do the first thing toward it myself.

But my brother was equal to any emergency—at least I thought so in those days.

"Myra," whispered he, as soon as the company were established in the room below, "unfasten my wrists quick!"

After some tugging at the cord which bound him I was enabled to do as he suggested, and he sat up at once and removed the bonds from his ankles.

Then we crawled to the small open trap which was the only entrance to our prison from below, and listened to the conversation of the Swamp Angels in the room beneath.

We learned from their talk that McMenry had suggested that, as his connection with the Swamp Angels had now been found out, they might make one last "stroke of business," as they called it, and clear out.

They were to hold us for ransom for a week or so, allowing McHenry to negotiate with father. Not a man in the county could find the rendevous of the desperadoes they believed and so thought themselves to be perfectly safe.

"It will kill mother," whispered Harry to me, dragging me away from the opening in the floor.

Mother was in every delicate health, and the shock and fright of our disappearance might produce upon her an irreparable injury.

This thought frightened me quite as much as the fact of our being in the hands of the villainous Swamp Angels.

"I'm going to escape this very night, Myra," my brother whispered. "There will never be a better time, for they think I am so dazed that I will be safe enough without a guard till morning, at least. I can find my way back to the plantation from here—I kept my eyes open while we were coming.'

He went to each of the two windows and looked out.

The sills were not more than nine feet from the ground, and under the window nearest the bayou was a heap of refuse straw.

The dogs were all in their kennels on the other side of the house (the Swamp Angels housed the brutes better than they did themselves, I really believe).

"I'm going to drop from the window, Myra," he declared. "You can come, too, if you dare. If not I shall go back home at once and raise the hands to rescue you."

But my fear of the long drop from the window was less than that of being left alone in the clutches of the desperadoes, and I declared my intention of following him.

Harry was a boy of action and to plan with him was to perform.

He took out the narrow sash with its broken panes, and let himself down over the edge of the sill. Thanks to the pile of straw the feat was not dangerous, and inspired by his example I followed him.

He was there to catch me and I do not think we made a solitary sound in leaving the loft and crossing the glade to the landing.

Possibly, however, our easy escape was ue to the fact that our captors were drinking deeply—both women and men—in the kitchen at the other end of the house.

Harry put me in the very dugout which had brought us to the place, and in which the bags of melons still lay, and untying the boat, he pushed off and paddled away from the shore as swiftly as possible.

Despite his declaration that he knew the way home, I think that some watchful and higher power must have guided our clumsy craft, for the lagoons are as intricate as a maze.

It was nearly sunrise when we finally reached a part of the swamp which we knew to be within the boundaries of father's estate, and hiding the boat we hurried to the house, ariving there, I believe, without a single person about the place knowing that we had been absent.

We were too excited to sleep, and beside were afraid that our escape would be made known to the treacherous overseer and he be enabled to leave the place ere we could have him arrested.

So we took mother into our confidence and she showed, weak woman though she was, an energy in punishing the offender that was remarkable.

She sent one of the house servants for two of the biggest and most trustworthy hands on the place and afterwards summoned McHenry.

As soon as the villain entered the breakfast room and saw Harry and me quietly sitting there, he turned to escape; but Sam and Pomp knew their business and grabbed him at once, marching him off to the village jail to the great, if secret joy, of every negro on the plantation.

When father returned from the convention at noon, he at once aroused the neighbors, and, the provocation being so great, they responded in good number and raided the swamp under Harry's guidance.

But the Swamp Angels had taken alarm at our escape and left for parts unknown, and it was years before any of the gang dared venture back to the neighborhood.

But Harry and I never forgot our experience with the desperadoes, and were only sorry that Big Bill and his companions could not join the overseer, McHenry, in the punishment which they so richly deserved.

INFANTILE HAIR SPLITTING.

Mamma—"Now, Pussie, you must go to nurse, and tell her to put you to bed; it's past eight o'clock."

Pussie—"No, mummie, dear, it isn't; cook has just told me it is only half past."

And mamma was quite puzzled for a minute.—Exchange.

RATHER OVERDOING IT.

"I believe in trying to put as good a face as possible on everything in times like these, Maria," said Mr. Billus, looking again at the bill that had just been brought in, "but it does seem to me that $3.75 for complexion wash in one month is putting it on a little too thick!"—Chicago Tribune.

HIS REWARD.

Whoever may
Discern true ends shall grow pure enough
To love them, brave enough to strive for them,
And strong enough to reach them, though the road be rough.
—E. B. Browning.

[*This Story began in No. 58.*]

A Mountain Mystery;

OR,

The Miami Conspiracy.

BY W. BERT FOSTER,

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

CHAPTER XIX.
IN A TIGHT PLACE.

Tom Peterson did not possess Dan Cheney's coolness in time of peril, but his course in the present instance showed him to be by no means lacking in presence of mind and self command. The voices he heard assured him that the speakers were not many yards down the stony path up which he had crept but the moment before; indeed he could already hear their footsteps.

But, nearer still, and filling him with infinitely more terror than the approaching men, sounded the harsh rattle of the snake, which, if he was to judge anything by the volume of sound, was an enormous fellow.

He was, perhaps, between two modes of death, for the men might shoot him on sight and one bite of the snake would doubtless finish him, for its poison is deadly. It was too dark—and there was too little room in the log—to frighten the creature.

Both sides of the situation flashed through Tom's mind in an instant and although without doubt he had never been so terrified in his life, he retained his presence of mind. The angry snake had infinitely more terror for him than any number of smugglers, and he quickly crept out of the log and standing erect, held his rifle at ready, prepared to sell his life dearly.

The men were not yet in sight and were evidently coming quite slowly along the path. He recognized the tones of Captain Ericson's voice which was raised as though in excited discussion.

Were they coming directly to him, or would they branch off in some cross path which he had failed to notice?

This latter hope was quickly denied him. The men were certainly approaching the very spot where he stood at bay.

But in the instant they delayed their coming there appeared another complication in the situation. The rattlesnake was evidently thoroughly aroused, and not satisfied merely with Tom's departure, it followed him into the open air.

Young Peterson sprang aside just in time to avoid the deadly fangs of the reptile and the snake threw half its length flat upon the rock.

In eluding the creature Tom sprang back against the bushes on the west side of the path, and, greatly to his astonishment, they gave way with him and he fell backward, a cunningly concealed gate swinging to one side!

The bushes were not really growing from between the rocks, as they appeared, but were stuck into a narrow piece of plank which swung far enough in to allow the passage of a man.

The bushes were doubtless renewed from time to time to make them appear like the others in the hedge. He had, after all, discovered the real entrance to Ericson's abode!

He was upon feet again like a flash, and pushed the bushes into place with great care. Evidently the men had heard the slight noise he made, however, for they ceased their discussion and one (not Ericson) asked sharply:

"What's that?"

"I don't know," growled the captain savagely. "If one of the sneaking beggars has got in here, I'll shoot him first and then look into it afterward."

Tom looked about him anxiously for some mode of escape. It was apparent that the smuggler was in a very bad mood and his (Tom's) presence then, could certainly not be explained as a joke.

But the men were detained outside the bushes by one who had, heretofore, been Tom's enemy.

Tom distinguishd the angry rattle of the snake and there was a quick exclamation from Ericson's companion.

"Did he strike you, skipper?"

"No. More by good luck than good management that he didn't, though," responded the skipper with a grunt. "It's so confounded dark here I almost stepped on him."

"Come out of that log, I reckon. Ain't he a plucky one? When he coils again rap him over the head * * * * * That's it!"

Tom heard the disturbance attending the finishing of the snake as he sped up the path in which he found himself.

"Everything seems all right," he heard Ericson say. "Guess 'twas the snake we heard."

That part of the path which led from the hollow log to the shore of the basin had been only moderately plain, but after his unexpected plunge through the wall of brush Tom found the way before him as well defined as a city sidewalk.

In fact, it was so plain that there was absolutely no getting out of it without revealing his presence to the two men behind him.

The path on either hand was walled in with huge bowlders and impenetrable clumps of bushes and so crooked that in the fast falling night he could scarcely keep from hitting against the rocks and brush and thus revealing himself to Ericson and the skipper. For several hundred yards it led him forward, seemingly into the very heart of the huge pile of broken rocks.

The wall of gray stone rose higher and higher on either side until he was really walking in a miniature canyon. The trees and bushes were now all behind, and before him was the entrance of what proved to be a good sized cavity, formed by the position of several mammoth slabs of sandstone.

It was dark within the cave, but he had no choice. Ericson and his companion were close behind him and he braved the unknown dangers of the cavern and ventured within.

It was several moments before Tom's eyes became accustomed to the light, or rather the lack of it; then he espied before him a partition made by the stretching of two or three blankets across the room, and carefully eluding the several articles of furniture with which the outer apartment was pretty well filled, he darted behind this curtain just as the occupant of the cave and the skipper entered from without.

"Dark's a pocket," growled the leader, striking a lucifer and stumbling across the room. "Let's have some light on the subject."

He lit a huge lamp which swung from the ceiling and the place was at once revealed.

At one side was a cook stove, to which a long pipe was attached. Near the stove were several shelves on which culinary utensils were arranged, and a long dresser occupied one corner.

Half of the apartment was evidently used by Ericson for a sitting room or parlor—whichever one was pleased to term it, the floor being covered with a heavy and handsome carpet. This was, however, now tracked with muddy boots and showed many a grease spot.

The table compared favorably with it, for it was of solid mahogony and chipped and marred abominably. There were stuffed easy chairs, too, and Captain Ericson motioned his visitor to one of these, throwing himself into a rocker on the other side of the table.

"Just drop that curtain, will you, skipper, and keep out the night air," he said, lighting a cigar which he took from a box on the table, and then pushing the box toward his companion. "The cord's just at your elbow.

"Hello!" he added, presently, "that rascal Joe has been stealing cigars from me again. Joe!" He raised his voice as though expecting the Indian to be within hearing.

"Oh, I forgot," he added; "he went up the bay this morning to hunt up that boat he lost last night; and then I s'pose he took it back where he found it and has been watching there all day for somebody to come for it. Fool!"

"Are you sure it wasn't our boat?"

"Sure? Don't you s'pose I know my own property?" demanded the captain, in disgust.

"Well, an Injun's pretty shrewd usually about such things. I don't see myself how that boy we left back there on the island could follow us in it and get here——"

"Of course you don't, and he didn't," interrupted the other. "Indian Joe's shrewd enough, and he's treacherous enough, too, I reckon," he added.

"I don't see why you have him round here then," said the skipper. "I b'lieve he's the only one of the boys who knows the way to this place."

"I want him for his very treachery," growled Ericson. "He can and will do anything for a dollar. I don't know how many times I've caught him trying to break into that place," and he nodded in the direction of a heavy oaken door, strengthened with bands of iron and studded with nail heads, which seemed to be set into the side of the cave.

The unsuspected eavesdropper behind the blankets had already been attracted by the nuge door, and had wondered at it. It doubtless guarded another recess in the rock, but of what size Tom could not guess.

The frame was as massive as the door itself and fitted tightly to the aperture which, either naturally so, or enlarged by the hand of man, was almost square and quite eight feet high.

Jack Hardwick was nowhere visible in that portion of the cave which he had seen, for certainly he was not in the outer room, and the alcove in which he (Tom) was hidden, only contained a low bunk and a few small articles of furniture; therefore, it was pretty plain, to Tom's mind, that his friend was behind that heavy door, and he listened "with all his ears" to the conversation for something to be dropped which would assure him that his suspicions were correct, or that might aid him in releasing the prisoner.

The skipper, whose lean, sharp face was in the light and therefore directly in the range of Tom's vision, raised his eyebrows oddly at this statement of his superior.

"What did you do to him when you caught him engaged in that occupation?" he asked.

"Kicked him," responded Ericson briefly. "He takes my kicks because he doesn't dare do otherwise. Some time he'll try to knife me."

The skipper shrugged his shoulders.

"If he got in there now, I fancy he would find something a little out of the ordinary, eh?"

Ericson, whose face was turned from his companion, but toward Tom's hiding place smiled rather oddly, as he replied laconically:

"Perhaps."

The next moment he raised his hand, enjoining silence. Stumbling footsteps could be plainly heard upon the path without and Ericson quickly opened a drawer in the table and drawing forth a revolver, cocked it and turned toward the entrance.

CHAPTER XX.
TWO SIGNALS.

Just as Captain Ericson cocked his weapon, a shrill, peculiar whistle disturbed the silence and relief was at once manifest upon his face as he replied to the signal and returned the pistol to the drawer.

"It's Joe," he said, in explanation to the skipper, and the next instant the half breed pushed aside the curtain and, with his peculiar gliding motion, stepped into the cave.

"So you're back," remarked Captain Ericson, by way of salutation. "What's happened to keep you so long?"

"I found de boat an' stay by it," replied the half breed. "Nobody come."

"Just as I supposed. I hope you're satisfied now," said the captain ungraciously.

Indian Joe shook his head with an unsatisfied grunt.

"Bin oder folks here," he said. "In sail boat. Dey anchored off inlet now."

"Sacre! I thought those fools of fishermen would go away by dark. You'll have to signal the canoes to come around the other way," he added, addressing the skipper.

"Very well," responded his lieutenant, rising. "But are you sure those fellows are fishermen?"

"I believe so," Ericson said slowly. "Old Nance thinks so, too, and she isn't usually mistaken. She's talked with one of 'em. But, if they don't clear out tomorrow, I'll get better acquainted with them, and if they can't give a pretty good account of themselves they'll wish they'd never come foolin' around here.

"Have the canoes signaled at once," continued Ericson, rising also, "or they may come blundering in here right under that catboat's nose. Cuisson was crazy to allow them to do so yesterday in broad daylight. Suppose anybody had been fooling around out there—it would have been a dead give away. And Joe," he added, turning to that individual who was making a hearty, if rapid repast off a haunch of cold venison on the dresser, "take your blanket and spend the night over on the point. Keep your eye on that sailboat—and you'd better let Nance know you're about; if you don't she may put a bullet into you by mistake."

Indian Joe nodded his head, his mouth being too full to allow of a verbal reply. Ericson followed the skipper out, but turned back an instant before dropping the curtain.

"See that you let that place alone," he said, jerking his thumb toward the heavy door sunk into the wall of the cavern, and then he went on, leaving the half breed with a terrible scowl upon his face.

Tom stood, pressed close against the blanket partition, waiting with great anxiety for the half breed to leave the cavern.

Should he take it into his head to enter his master's sleeping apartment he would be sure to discover the boy's presence and Tom did not like to think of that. It would be either the half breed's life or his own, and either circumstances was dreadful to contemplate.

Fortunately, however, after disposing of a huge supper, Joe picked up his rifle, put out the light, and departed from the cavern.

Tom saw his form for an instant at the cave's mouth and then the curtain dropped into place; but greatly to his vexation he could not hear the Indian's footsteps upon the rocky pathway without. His feet being shod with moccasins gave forth no sound, and Tom had no means of knowing whether he had moved away from the cavern's entrance or not.

But it would never do to remain where he was and risk the return of Captain Ericson, which might occur at any moment. So, as quietly as possible, he crept across the floor and carefully pushed aside the curtain.

The dim starlight served to illuminate the path sufficiently to assure him that the half breed had moved on, around the first bend in the defile at least. There was imminent danger that either he or Captain Ericson might turn back at any instant; but Tom pressed on nevertheless.

He well knew that he had taken a great risk in seeking to explore the rocky fastness at all, but for Jack Hardwick's sake he would have done much more.

He was pretty confident that his friend was secured in the cavern, behind the huge oaken door—perhaps half starved and ill—and now that he had discovered the place, Tom's active mind was busy with plans for his release.

If the Jeannette would only complete her cargo and sail away, and if the Canadian boatmen also departed, what would prevent his leading his father and Dan Cheney to Ericson's retreat on some favorable opportunity, and wresting Jack from the smuggler's power?

Surely the three ought to be a match for Ericson and the half-breed, and Tom did not believe that there would be any one else at the cave. As for Old Nance, the crazy woman, she would be too far away to assist the enemy.

Then the thought crossed his mind that as long as the catboat lay off the inlet the Jeannette could not depart. It was possible, too, that if his father and Dan remained there for any length of time, Ericson might become suspicious and attack them.

The safest way would be for him to warn them before morning, and have them sail away as soon as it was light, thus giving the schooner an opportunity to complete her cargo and depart. Nothing, he felt sure, could be done toward rescuing Jack Hardwick, until the schooner with her crew were out of the way.

But while Tom Peterson's thoughts were running in this wise, his feet had been moving steadily forward along the rocky defile, and his ears had been strained to catch the first sound from his enemies in front. He had now reached the hedge in which Ericson had hung the gate with such nicety that, did not one know it was there, its presence would never be suspected.

Tom was so close behind the half breed that he heard the slight noise which attended the latter's opening and closing of the gate, and having waited several minutes, to assure himself that Indian Joe had passed on, he crept to the gate, pushed it slowly open, passed through and closed it after him.

Then he traversed the outer path and, after wandering some few minutes among the rocks, reached the shore of the basin.

There, just before him, lay the Jeannette, swinging at her moorings, and not far from his position, on the edge of the basin, stood two men conversing in low tones. One was Captain Ericson without doubt, for occasionally Tom could distinguish the tones of his voice, while the other, he was equally certain, was the half breed, Joe.

But hardly had he discovered these worthies when something occurred to draw both his eyes and thoughts from the smuggler and his satellite.

Across the basin rose the huge promontory which hid the schooner's moorings from the outer bay, wrapped from base to summit in somber shadow; but suddenly there flashed out a light on the top of the cliff, and rising, a pillar of fire, at least ten feet in the air.

It disappeared as quickly as it had appeared, but only to flash out a second and a third time in just the same manner, several seconds intervening between the flashes.

At once Captain Ericson's order to the skipper came to Tom's mind. It was the signal to the waiting boatmen to come into the basin—but by the other passage.

What other way into the basin was there beside the entrance through the inlet? Tom had viewed the entire extent of the basin by daylight, and had seen none.

But he was suddenly interrupted in this line of thought by a movement of the two men on the shore. They separated and while the captain walked further along the basin's edge, Indian Joe came directly towards Tom's place of concealment.

Young Peterson crouched back behind the rock, deeper into the shadow. It had been almost miraculous that his presence about the haunts of the smugglers had not been suspected before this; but he had no wish to have Joe's keen eyes discover him now and spoil it all.

The half breed, however, passed him by unnoticed and after an instant's hesitation Tom stepped out of his hiding place and started to dog the man.

This was an exceedingly dangerous thing to do, for, like other Indians, Joe's faculties would doubtless be keenly alive at such a time, and should he suspect the presence of some one on his trail it would, as Tom mentally expressed it, "be all day with him." But it was quite evident that Indian Joe suspected nothing of the kind, but hurried along in the direction of Old Nance's cabin unconscious of Tom's presence.

After following the path beside the basin's edge for some rods, however, Joe made a move which Tom did not at all understand.

He suddenly turned off the path at right angles with the shore and began to mount the hillside, pressing on without a glance behind him. This was a much more dangerous proceeding than following his man along the beaten trail, for there the way was comparatively clear and there were trees and bushes for the trailer to dodge behind should the half breed turn back; but on the thickly wooded hillside, to follow in Joe's footsteps without betraying himself, was much more difficult.

Tom dared not keep as close to him as before and therefore had ever in his mind the fear of losing the Indian altogether.

It would be such a simple matter, should Indian Joe suspect his presence, for him to step behind a tree, wait until Tom came blundering on, and then knock him on the head.

The thought made young Peterson shiver, although the night was as yet by no means chilly. He kept his eyes fastened upon the figure ahead of him.

There were, however, so many obstructions to dodge that Tom gradually fell so far in the rear that he could only occasionally distinguish Indian Joe's whereabouts, and this fact of course made his position even more dangerous. At any time the half breed might see him and become in turn the trailer.

Tom Peterson was not ready to be shot yet, and upon reaching the summit of the ridge he halted and looked searchingly about him for some sign of Indian Joe's presence; but the half breed had entirely disappeared.

His eyes having failed him, he endeavored to make his ears serve him instead; but although he remained several moments in a listening attitude, straining his ears for the slightest sound to denote the other's presence, nothing but the sighing of the night wind in the trees rewarded him.

As he straightened up, however, there suddenly burst upon the night air a low, silvery whistle, as sweet as the thrilling note of the nightingale. Thrice was the call repeated and then silence fell again upon the forest.

Tom was startled by the sound for, to his mind, it denoted the presence of some one beside Indian Joe and himself on the ridge.

The sound came from so far down the hillside (upon that side further from the smugglers' retreat) that it seemed impossible that the half breed could have made it. And, any way, if the whistle had proceeded from Joe's lips, what could it mean but a signal to somebody in the woods, other than himself?

Tom was greatly nonplused by this incident. He stood for some moments undecided as to his further course in the matter.

Should he go ahead and discover if possible what Indian Joe was up to? or, should he leave the dangerous vicinity for the time and trust to kind fortune to put him on the trail again at a later hour?

While he remained thus undecided he suddenly became aware of the presence of some one near at hand. There was a rustle in the bushes and a figure glided past him like a shadow and descended the hill toward the point from which the signal had sounded.

"That's Joe," Tom said to himself. "He's my meat, and I'll follow him. Perhaps this will lead to a new phase of the situation."

And it did, though in a manner entirely different from anything he would have suspected.

The person he was following was evidently expecting to meet a friend, for he moved on quite carelessly, yet unconsciously his feet sought out the easiest path and he made no sound in passing through the bushes.

Tom clung close to his trail, half expecting at each moment to be detected.

Suddenly the signal again rang out, but this time much nearer at hand. The figure before him halted as though listening intently to the sound.

The faint starlight revealed the outlines of the man more plainly and to Tom's unbounded astonishment he discovered that he had not been following Indian Joe at all, but an entirely different individual!

CHAPTER XXI.

TOM TURNS KNIGHT ERRANT.

The person who now stood so plainly revealed in the starlight was not unlike Indian Joe in point of size and general appearance; but his dress, or rather his lack of dress, was altogether different.

The light, now that the man remained motionless, revealed to Tom Peterson the fact that from his waist upward the man's body was completely bare, the skin being of a dark, coppery hue. The long black hair was gathered up in a rough knot on top of his head, and a single feather was fastened in this "scalp-lock."

Below the waist he wore long leather leggings, moccasins and unmistakably a "breech clout." In fact, he was an Indian in aboriginal dress—something, probably, which these forests had not seen for quite half a century.

For the few moments the red man remained motionless. Tom was too greatly surprised by his discovery to think; but as soon as the fellow moved on again the young American was right behind him.

"There's more in this than I first thought," decided Tom. "This chap seems to be fully 'togged up' and it looks to my mind like one of Ossinike's cranky notions. Can it be that the old fellow is nearer here than either Ericson or we suspected? He's as cute as a fox and it would be a regular Indian trick for him to attack the smugglers' stronghold and wrest Jack from them without paying the sum he had promised the captain. Easy enough, too, if Indian Joe is on his side. Crickey! if this chap leads me right to the encampment what in time will I do?"

But his fear on that score was groundless. In a few moments more the Indian he was trailing entered a small clearing in the center of which was a wide spreading oak tree.

There was but one person there to meet him and that was Indian Joe. Doubtless the signals had proceeded from him.

Tom, feeling relieved that there were no more in the party, remained upon the outskirts of the clearing and watched the traitorous half breed and the other. They remained beneath the oak, conversing earnestly for some time, but if Tom had been within earshot he would probably have been none the wiser, for they doubtless used the guttural language of the Miamis.

At length, however, they made ready to separate. The stranger carefully tightened his apology for clothing, spoke a few last words to Indian Joe, and then set off for the interior at a pace which at once put it out of Tom's thought to follow him.

He doubtless was bent upon returning to Ossinike with some message from the half breed, and Tom turned his attention therefore on Indian Joe and his movements.

As soon as his companions had passed out of sight, the half breed turned back up the side of the ridge, passing almost near enough to Tom for the latter to put out his hand and touch him. He evidently intended to go back to the path which he had left half an hour before.

Tom fell in behind him and pressed as close upon his heels as he dared.

The half breed hurried over the ridge and more by good luck than by good management Tom was enabled to follow him without being discovered.

Evidently Indian Joe was entirely unsuspicious of his shadower's presence. He struck out at once for the point and Old Nance's cabin and this time Tom was pretty sure that that was where he would bring up.

As the young American hurried on a few yards behind the half breed, his attention was attracted by a sudden activity on board the smugglers' schooner, the Jeannette, near the opposite side of the basin. He was not too far away to see the shadowy outline of the vessel or to hear the dull murmur which floated across the water.

Lights began to flash out upon her deck and on the shore where the small boats had been drawn up, and mingled with the sound of hoarse commands he could plainly distinguish the creaking of blocks and the sailors' "yo-heave-ho!" as they pulled on the ropes.

Had Ericson suddenly changed his plans and was he about to get under way?

Tom halted a moment and looked steadily across towards the schooner. The water about the vessel seemed alive with lanterns and each lantern was doubtless in a small boat. Then the true explanation of the proceedings crossed his mind.

Ericson had ordered the skipper to signal the waiting canoes to enter the basin by the hidden passage, wherever that might be, and doubtless they had arrived and the crew of the Jeannette were unloading them. Tom made a mental note of the fact that when daylight came he would make a search for that hidden passage, if only to satisfy his curiosity.

If it was as ingeniously hidden as the path to Ericson's cave, he might find some difficulty in finding it, however.

Tom halted only for a moment to gaze upon the schooner, for he did not propose to lose sight of Indian Joe again until he was settled for the night. What he should do after that he had not yet decided, and as he had not thought to communi-

cate with his father and Dan Cheney earlier in the evening, it might be a good plan to do so as quickly as Indian Joe was "off his mind."

The appearance of the strange Miami in the vicinity worried him, however, not a little, for if, as he had suspected, Ossinike meant to obtain the custody of his nephew without complying with Captain Ericson's terms, the opportunity for his father, Dan and himself to rescue Jack Hardwick, might be narrowed down to a very few hours.

No telling when the old Miami chief would strike; but, so thought Tom, he would probably not attempt such a stratagem until the Jeannette, with all or the greater part of Ericson's body guard, had sailed.

Indian Joe evidently understood the proceedings on board the Jeannette, for he had not stopped an instant and Tom was forced to hurry to catch up with him.

The half breed was making straight for Old Nance's cabin and Tom followed with every expectation that, as soon as the fellow had acquainted the old woman with his presence in the vicinity, as Ericson had warned him to do, he would seek out some sheltered spot in which to pass the night.

But when Joe arrived within sight of the house he did nothing of the kind.

In the first place, instead of advancing to the door of the hut, the half breed made a complete circuit of the premises, scrutinizing the cabin and the open space surrounding it from every side. Then he established himself behind a clump of bushes directly before the cabin door and, half kneeling on the ground, trained his rifle upon the entrance.

Tom began to understand that he meant mischief to one or all of the occupants of the little building.

The youth was completely nonplused by Joe's actions and, being afraid to leave the fellow unwatched, he crouched behind a neighboring bush and trained his weapon upon the half breed.

If somebody should open the cabin door Tom was willing to wager a good deal that he would get in the first shot if Indian Joe attempted to use his rifle.

But nothing stirred in or about the house for a long time. Occasionally the half breed changed his position slightly to break the monotony of this long season of waiting.

Suddenly Joe's rifle came up to his shoulder with a quick movement and its lock clicked slightly. Tom grasped his own weapon feverishly and turned his eyes toward the cabin entrance.

The door was slightly ajar, and as he gazed Tom beheld it pushed open still farther and a figure stepped out. It was not Old Nance, and when the door was once more closed and the figure was limping away from the hut, Tom recognized little wild Net, Old Nance's strange protege.

He glanced quickly at Indian Joe, but that individual had lowered his rifle, and was plainly quite as surprised as himself at the child's appearance. Little Net was certainly not the person he had expected to see.

The child hurried around the corner of the cabin and entered the woods near the shore of the outer bay. She limped painfully but persevered as though having some important task to perform.

Indian Joe seemed to hesitate an instant as he saw her disappear. Tom was crouching where he could see the fellow's face and he noticed that his usually impassive features were working with some strange emotion. Evidently his orders held him to the spot, but for some reason he wished to follow the girl.

Only an instant did he hesitate and then springing up he almost ran across the opening and plunged into the woods at the spot where, but a moment before, little Net had entered.

As rapid as were his movements, however, Tom Peterson was not far behind him. He skirted the clearing, endeavoring to keep as close to the half breed as possible.

What the child had told him that very morning had suddenly flashed across his mind—that Indian Joe treated her differently from the other men, and that she was afraid of him. The scoundrel was following her for no good purpose, and forgetting aught but the danger menacing the girl, Tom pressed on in anxious haste.

In a few moments he caught sight of Indian Joe below him, and he worked his way quietly down the bank towards the fellow's position.

Suddenly Net appeared, having reached the spot by some easier path. Tom saw the man crouch down a little and the next instant his arm shot out and seized the child about her waist.

The scream which rose to her lips was smothered by the great hand of the half breed and despite her struggles he lifted her bodily from the ground and started to bear her further into the forest.

Tom's anger rose to white heat within him. He could see the fellow's face, the eyes blazing with passion as he held the struggling child, and with half a dozen strides the boy stood beside him, his rifle clubbed and swung above his head.

(To be continued.)

[*This Story began in No. 58t.*]

Lloyd Abbott's Friend.

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.,

Author of "A Publisher at Fifteen," "My Mysterious Fortune," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

THE SITUATION GROWS SERIOUS.

"Here, Clem, stand guard over this fellow while I try to calm your aunt."

With these words Lloyd was passed over to the care of the youngest guest at the dinner party, a young gentleman clothed in the most irreproachable attire and afflicted with a dawning mustache which appeared to keep him in fear lest it should fall off unless he held on to it.

"But what'll I do with him, Uncle Chet?" Clement Van Dorn wanted to know.

He was evidently a little afraid of the fellow who was accused of complicity in the abduction of his small cousin.

"You needn't do anything with him," was Mr. Bassett's reply. "Simply see that he doesn't do anything in the getting away line himself."

Left together Lloyd and his new overseer looked each other over for an instant, standing there in the front hall.

"Come on back in the music room," Van Dorn suddenly remarked. "We can smoke there. Have one?" and he took a package of cigarettes from his pocket.

"No, thank you, I don't use them," replied Lloyd, adding: "But of course I'll go to the smoking room with you. It is yours to command, you know."

"I hope aunt won't think I'm heartless, smoking in this fearful crisis of the family history, but I can't do without my after dinner cigarette, you know. Have had to put it off too deucedly long already."

He led the way back through the dining room, where the maids, with frightened faces, were clearing off the table, into a quaintly decorated apartment, containing two pianos and with various other smaller musical instruments scattered about on tables and the divans that lined the walls.

Van Dorn threw himself at full length on one of the latter and exhaled rings of smoke with a sigh of satisfaction.

"What's Uncle Chet keeping you prisoner in this way for?" he drawled out after a minute. "What do you know about this kidnaping any way?"

"Apparently your uncle thinks I know more than any one else."

"But that doesn't make it so?"

"Certainly not. It isn't a case of kidnaping at all. Any moment that nurse ought to be back with the missing baby."

"But you said that before," drawled the dude. "What if she doesn't come back at all?"

"Then I suppose I shall starve to death," Lloyd answered with a little laugh. "I haven't had any dinner today."

"Great Scott, is that so? I suppose you're hungry then?"

There was a world of patronage in the tone, but Lloyd's appetite was by this time too insistent in its appeals to be looked after, to permit him to stand out for his dignity.

"Well, I feel a little bit peckish," he replied, trying to carry the matter off as lightly as he could.

"So do I!" exclaimed the other. "Just hold on a bit. That little excitement your advent threw us into, cheated me out of the last half of my dessert. I'll keep you company and make up for it now."

And reaching around, Van Dorn pressed an electric button just above his head.

A maid appeared in a moment.

"Marie," he said, "just bring two saucers of that ice cream, will you, and some lady fingers. I didn't have a chance to finish mine. On the dead quiet, you understand?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

CLEMENT VAN DORN IMPROVES ON ACQUAINTANCE.

Ice cream and lady fingers! Was it on these that Lloyd must break his long fast?

"But one who doesn't dare be even a beggar," Lloyd told himself, "mustn't be a chooser."

"You look like a good sort of chap," went on Van Dorn condescendingly. "How the mischief did you come to get yourself into a scrape like this?"

Lloyd was not accustomed to being addressed in this way. Perhaps it was imprudent, but he could not resist retorting in kind.

"You appear to be a pretty respectable fellow," he said, "so I don't mind telling you that I got into the scrape, as you call it, from pure kindness of heart."

Van Dorn turned over on the sofa, took the cigarette from his mouth and stared at his companion in amazement. He did not say anything, however, and the servant just then appearing with the ice cream, he motioned for her to serve Lloyd first.

Although it was not very filling, the refreshment was exceedingly welcome to the hungry youth from Willoughby. And in spite of its freezing nature, the absorption of the toothsome compound seemed to thaw Van Dorn into a more genial fellowship.

"Seems to me," he remarked, "it would be more sociable if we knew each other's name. Mine's Van Dorn; what's yours?"

"Abbott."

"Abbott, eh? Got any relatives in Columbia Mines?"

"No."

"Live in New York?"

"No; I came from Willoughby, New Jersey."

"Oh, then perhaps you know the Manns?"

"I should say I did. Charlie and I are great chums."

"And his brother Fred came over on the steamer with me last fall. Nice fellow, too. But great Scott, if you are in good society like this, what in the name of Ward McAllister are you doing sitting on Park benches on Christmas Day?"

In spite of himself, Lloyd flushed at this question. He could not but acknowledge that the fact was a little queer. Should he tell the whole story?

He hesitated. He did want to justify himself, but there was Gordon Marchman. He had been very kind. And yet was not this kindness more than counterbalanced by the evil that had come to him through his association with the rich man's son?

In fact, every unpleasant thing that had happened to him since his encounter with the robber in the woods, Lloyd could trace to his connection with young Marchman.

Meantime Clement Van Dorn was waiting for his answer.

"It doesn't put a man beyond the pale of respectability to sit on a Central Park bench on Christmas, does it?" Lloyd said finally, still putting off a definite decision in the matter.

"Not that alone," replied Van Dorn, "but here you are without any dinner and befriending nurse maids. You must confess it seems queer, eh, Abbott?"

"You think then that I am implicated in this abduction business, do you?" asked Lloyd.

"I don't say that. Hang it all, you seem like a gentleman, Abbott. What is queer about you any way?"

Lloyd had finished his ice cream. He dropped his spoon in the plate with a little tinkle and looked steadily at his companion for an instant.

The latter was showing up to a little better advantage now. Lloyd needed a friend at this crisis of his history if ever he needed one.

"Do you know Gordon Marchman?" he asked suddenly.

"I should say so. Queer duffer, rather, but solid right through. Why, is he a friend of yours, too?"

"Yes, or rather he was. I spent last night with him."

Van Dorn's eyes began to open wider and wider. Then he rose and walked over toward Lloyd.

"By the great 150!" he exclaimed, "are you the fellow who——"

Then appearing to remember Mrs. Bassett's injunction to secrecy, he stopped short and looked a little uncomfortable.

But Lloyd quickly put him at his ease.

"Yes," he said quietly, "I am the scapegoat who was sacrificed to save the Marchman reputation."

Van Dorn was so astounded that for an instant he could do no more than draw in a deep, long breath.

Then he exclaimed:

"By the beard of Vanderbilt, this is the greatest go I ever struck. Uncle Chet ought to know about it at once."

"What difference would it make, to me for instance? His knowing about it, I mean?"

"Why, if you are a friend of the Marchmans, he would certainly not think you capable of kidnaping his baby."

"But the Marchmans thought me capable of stealing four hundred dollars,"

"Ah, but they had a reason for trying to persuade themselves into that opinion. But I say, how did you know that I knew of this affair? It's been kept very quiet."

"I heard Mrs. Bassett tell the whole thing while I was waiting for her in the parlor. I had no suspicion of the truth myself until then. It was a lucky moment for me I decided to befriend that nurse girl."

"Lucky?" repeated Van Dorn, looking mystified.

"To be sure. If it had not been for that I might still have been under the impression that the Marchmans really thought I took that money."

"You won't go and tell them that you found out about it here, will you?" Van Dorn wanted to know, shying the stub of his cigarette into the grate.

"That would get Aunt Laura into an awkward fire," he added, as Lloyd made no answer.

"By Jove," he went on indiscreetly, "you've got the call on the Bassetts and no mistake."

"What do you mean?" asked Lloyd.

"Why, if you want to get away from here, all you've got to do is to announce that you will go to Mrs. Marchman and declare to her what you heard Aunt Laura tell at her dinner table. I am sure uncle and aunt both would ten times rather give you your freedom than that a fact of this nature should come to the Marchmans' ears."

"But what if I prefer to tell this in any case?" said Lloyd. "My imprisonment here is not particularly irksome."

Here Lloyd interrupted himself to bite off the end of a lady finger. Then he continued:

"That nurse maid is sure to turn up within an hour or so with the child. Then there will be no earthly excuse for your worthy uncle to hold me."

Really, until he came to formulate it for another's benefit, Lloyd did not realize what a vantage point he occupied.

To be sure, the advantage had not been gained by any display of skill or ingenuity on his part. But then, on the other hand, he had not deliberately stooped to eavesdropping in order to acquire his information.

It was all pure chance, and he had been the winner in the cast.

"Look here, Abbott," said Van Dorn in a wheedling tone, "you don't want to cut up ugly about this business. You're too much of a gentleman for that, I take it."

"I am too much of a gentleman to suffer my good name to be smirched without making an effort to rub out the stain."

"But you don't want to blacken a lady's name in the process. What if that nurse maid doesn't come back though? You have no assurance that she will. See, it is almost night now."

Sure enough, the wintry dusk was coming on. Already the dancing

flames in the great, open fireplace were beginning to do more to illuminate the room than did the windows.

What if that nurse girl never came back sure enough?

But there was no use in borrowing trouble.

"If she doesn't," Lloyd said, "I think there will be no difficulty in proving that I had absolutely nothing to do with kidnaping the child."

Before Van Dorn could reply, the door was burst open and Mrs. Bassett rushed into the room.

Her two hands were heaped with jewels and money, her hair had escaped from some of the pins, and hung in disordered locks about her face. Her eyes were wild, almost glaring.

"Here," she cried to Lloyd, "take these, take all I have, but tell me how I may get back my boy."

Lloyd was shocked, horrified at this spectacle.

Instinctively he drew back a step or two. He knew not what to say for an instant.

"Aunt Laura!" cried Van Dorn, and started up to draw her to a seat on the divan.

"No, let me be," she cried, turning from him.

Then once more addressing Lloyd, she continued:

"Oh, have pity on a mother's distracted heart. You must know something of Harold. Tell me, tell me where I can find him. On my knees, I implore you."

And dropping the contents of her hands at his feet, this handsome woman in her fashion's gown, sank down on the floor beside them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A VISIT TO THE MURPHY HOME.

Lloyd felt himself to be the basest of mortals, if such a condition could be arrived at without one having had the least opportunity of choice in the matter. A woman kneeling at his feet, imploring him to be merciful! It was a frightful experience.

With Van Dorn to assist him, he raised Mrs. Bassett and placed her on the divan, just as her husband came hurrying into the room. Smelling salts were once more employed, and while these were being applied, an idea struck Lloyd.

Drawing Van Dorn aside, he said to him:

"Has any one thought to go to this nurse maid's home to find out if she is there?"

"Nobody has thought of doing anything except roasting you and going into hysterics. I'll see if I can find out where the girl lived; then you and I might go around there. I'm not particularly stuck on being in at scenes like this."

As soon as it was possible to say anything to Mrs. Bassett with some chance of her taking in its meaning, her nephew mentioned Lloyd's suggestion to her and inquired for the address.

"Yes—yes," she cried. "Some one must go and see her. It is over on the west side somewhere on Washington Street. See the housekeeper; she can tell you the number."

"Abbott and I will go, eh, Uncle Clem," said Van Dorn, on returning from a flying trip to the regions below.

"Yes, yes, anything, only be sure to bring us some news of Harold."

"I can leave my valise here, I suppose," remarked Lloyd, as they passed it, standing by the hat stand in the front hall.

"Well, if you don't come back with me, I'd better not come back myself," replied Van Dorn.

For some inscrutable reason, he was much more agreeable than he had been at first and passers by would never have suspected that of these two fellows, in lively converse, one was supposed to be keeping guard over the other.

They reached the designated number on Washington Street in due course. It was a tall tenement house, with swarms of children on the sidewalk, blowing tin horns, beating drums and making the Christmas twilight hideous generally.

Capturing a drum beater by the shoulder, Lloyd inquired on which floor Ellen Murphy lived.

"She don't live on any flure," was the reply. "She do be workin' in a house on Madison Avenue."

"But don't her people live here?" Lloyd persisted.

"Sure you mane her pop?"

"Yes, her pop will do," put in Van Dorn. "On what floor can we find him?"

"He do be on the flure most of the time," and the boy dropped his drum sticks to put his hands together and simulate drinking from a bottle.

"Horrible!" muttered Van Dorn. "I wish I hadn't come."

Seeing that the young gentlemen did not appear to be impressed with the humorous side of his response, the small boy condescended to add: "Top flure, back," then picking up the sticks, proceeded to beat a tattoo that put out of the question any attempt of further converse with him.

The narrow, sanded hall was not an inviting place to enter, but the two youths plunged boldly in.

Arrived at the top floor, Lloyd knocked on the door nearest the head of the stairs.

A wan faced woman opened it. She started back in surprise when she saw the two young men standing in the hallway.

"Who were you looking for?" she said in a tone that implied they could not possibly be looking for any one in that room.

"We were looking for Ellen Murphy's home," replied Lloyd. "Is she here?"

"No, she ain't here. She's out at service.

The woman held the door open only far enough to talk through. She seemed to be suspicious of the callers.

"Yes, we know that," rejoined Lloyd. "but she has not returned to Mrs. Basset's, although she was due back there from a visit to Central Park, at two o'clock."

"The saints preserve us!" exclaimed the woman. "New trouble is upon us."

"Then she is not here?" interposed Van Dorn.

"No; I tell you she ain't here,"

As she made this assertion the woman attempted to close the door in their faces.

Lloyd quickly seized the knob and held it stationary.

"You are not deceiving us in this matter are you?" he said. "It is very important for us to see Ellen Murphy."

"An' why should I deceive you?" returned the woman, involuntarily, it seemed, casting a nervous look over he shoulder back into the room.

This and her continued pressure on the door strengthened the suspicions that had been already aroused in Lloyd's mind. It was impressed upon him that she was trying to keep them from seeing something, or somebody in the room.

"You might want to deceive us because we happen to know that Ellen Murphy had reason to fear returning to her mistress, Mrs. Bassett. But we mean her no harm. We wish merely to ask a few questions.

"Can't you ask them of me? I'm her mother sure."

"But if she is here, I should greatly prefer to ask her."

"She isn't here, I tell you. Why don't you believe me?"

"Well, to tell the truth, because you seem so afraid that we shall see into the room and discover that you are not telling the truth."

"You think I am holding this door shut because me daughter is here and I'm afeared you'll trip me in a lie? Look for yourselves then."

With a sudden movement the woman threw the door wide open, and then stepped aside, thus affording the youths a full view of the apartment.

What they saw filled them both with mingled feelings of disgust and compassion. In Lloyd's breast there was aroused, moreover, a sense of contrition for the part he had played in bringing about this sad revelation.

For there, prone on the floor, lay the form of a man. That he was in liquor could be seen at a glance.

The bleared eyes, the sodden features, the disordered dress—these and other signs there were to prove that the boy with the drum had spoken only sad truth when he made his little joke.

It was a terrible sight. Even Clement Van Dorn's dudish sensibilities were touched.

"I—I beg your pardon," Lloyd stammered. "I didn't mean to——" and then he stopped.

He scarcely liked to put in words the thought that was in his mind—that he hadn't meant to have her expose her worthless husband's failing.

"Do you believe me now?" returned the woman, raising her voice.

She appeared to have grown reckless.

"Are you satisfied now, that you have seen what I was afther thryin' to kape you from seein'? A noice little joke you can make of it when you go back to your foine brown stone mansion on the avenoo."

Lloyd and Van Dorn stood speechless for an instant. Then Lloyd's compassion took practical form, and he bent over the almost senseless form on the floor.

"Come, Mr. Van Dorn," he said, "can't we lift him on to the——"

But there was no sofa in the room, and Lloyd did not finish the sentence.

Van Dorn did this for him.

"Yes, Mrs. Murphy," he said, "shan't we carry him inside and put him on the bed?"

Mrs. Murphy stood rooted to the floor with astonishment at this offer.

That these well dressed young gentlemen should offer to pick up her drunken husband with their gloved hands, was almost incomprehensible to her.

Taking silence for assent, the two youths bent over and—rather awkwardly it must be confessed, for neither was accustomed to the task—picked up Donald Murphy, whose eyes had closed again sleepily as soon as he had taken his first survey of the new comers.

It is no easy job to carry a grown man who has full possession of his senses. One may imagine then, the difficulties attending the transportation of a limp, inert form like that of Donald Murphy.

But the two volunteers in the work got along all right until they reached the doorway leading into the bedroom. Here, in trying to make the passage backwards, Van Dorn hit his hand smartly against the jamb.

The pain made him forget what he was doing and he let go his hold for an instant with one hand.

But that instant was enough to put too great a strain on the other arm.

Slip went the shoulder of Mr. Murphy from his grasp, and with a thud the heavy man dropped to the floor.

"The saints defind us! Have ye killed him?"

Mrs. Murphy rushed forward and dropped on her knees beside her husband, who was groaning dismally.

Van Dorn was terrified. That the man had sustained serious injury he had not a doubt. And he, Clement Van Dorn, was the cause of it.

"What'll we do, Abbott?" he cried, turning pale. "His arm must be broken or his shoulder displaced, if nothing worse. Do you suppose you could tell whether it is or not?"

"No, we must find a doctor," replied Lloyd. "Can you direct me where to go, Mrs. Murphy?"

"I'm afraid it's an undertaker we'll be needin' instead," was the Irishwoman's startling reply.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH AN AMBULANCE FIGURES.

While conscious that their motives in lifting the Irishman, had been the kindest in the world, Lloyd experienced a thrill of horror when Mrs. Murphy's words suggested to him the possibility that he and Clement Van Dorn had been the means of bringing her husband to his death.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Murphy, it can't be as bad as that!" he exclaimed, and dropped down on one knee beside the man who had stopped groaning and lay there in awful quiet.

Van Dorn had fallen back against the jamb of the door that had wrought all the mischief, his face as white as his collar and the fingers of his hands working over and under each other nervously.

In awful suspense, Lloyd placed his hand over the man's heart. With a bound of his own he found that it was still beating.

He had merely fainted. "He's swooned, that's all," he made haste to announce.

But this was all that he could do. He had never seen any one in a faint before.

Besides, there was the possibility that there were broken bones.

"Where is that doctor, Mrs. Murphy?" Lloyd demanded, springing to his feet. "We ought to have one right off."

"Wait till I think. It's a docther we should be havin' for poor Jimmie, but my man—rest his soul—drinks up all the spare pennies."

"I'll pay the fee," broke in Van Dorn, "only tell us where we can find the doctor."

"On the next block, about half way up, on the other side of the way. Look for the sign."

Lloyd and Van Dorn made a simultaneous dash for the door and collided half way.

"There's no use in our both going," Lloyd said. "Besides, one of us should stay with Mrs. Murphy."

"I'll go; I'll go," cried Van Dorn eagerly.

He was evidently only too anxious to get away from the scene of his mischance.

He flung open the door, leaving it standing wide behind him.

Two women from the other side of the hall made haste to avail themselves of this opportunity.

"Shure, an' what's happened to yez, Mrs. Murphy," exclaimed one, with her companion pressing forward eagerly into the room.

"Nothin' that concerns you, Mrs. Corrigan," retorted Mrs. Murphy, plucking up spirit. She strode up to her neighbors and confronted them with arms akimbo.

"Well," ejaculated Mrs. Corrigan, with a lofty sniff, "I'm thankin' Heaven that I've got no skeleton in my closet I'm afeared somebody will spy out. Come, Mrs. Hogan, let's shake our skirts clear of the contamination."

But Lloyd noticed that both women took a good long look at the man on the floor before they quitted the apartment.

"A sorry Christmas Day I've struck," murmured Mrs. Murphy, bending over her husband again as the door closed.

Lloyd felt that he could echo the sentiment with all his heart—his stomach, too, it might be added, as the latter now began to rebel vigorously at the treatment it was receiving.

When Lloyd looked back over his experience since he returned from that drive up the Riverside, it seemed as if days instead of hours must have been required to complete them all. And from present prospects, the end was not yet.

"Don't you know what to do for people in a faint, Mrs. Murphy?" Lloyd inquired anxiously.

He hated to look down on the man lying there unconscious on the floor. To the wife the sight was not so terrifying. She, poor woman, had been all too long accustomed to seeing him in this position to have her feelings more than ordinarily stirred.

"Donald's never fainted from anythin' but drink before," was her reply, as she dropped on her knees beside the inanimate form.

"I s'pose," Mrs. Murphy continued, "I ought to feel very much beholden to you two young gentlemin for your kind intintions, but it's hard to have the breadwinner put on the shelf in the commincement of a hard winter like this."

"I am awfully sorry, Mrs. Murphy," Lloyd began.

He got no further. "Awfully sorry" seemed such a poor, weak phrase under the circumstances, just as if he had merely stepped on a man's toe or joggled his arm while he was drinking a cup of coffee.

"The doctor won't come! He's sent for an ambulance. There's the gong now!"

Van Dorn burst into the room at this moment, in an even more excited condition than he had gone out of it.

He was panting for breath from having run up the stairs, his necktie was all awry, and his hair, which had been plastered down so carefully in front at the dinner table, was now standing straight up in spots, giving him a particularly wild appearance.

"That's very odd," said Lloyd. "Did you guarantee him his fee?"

"I guaranteed him everything, but when I told him where it was and that the man was drunk and we'd let him drop on the floor, he said he'd be much better off at the hospital."

"I dare say he will, but——" and Lloyd looked at Mrs. Murphy doubtfully.

"He was eating his dinner and they had a lot of company," Van Dorn added. "But I tell you, I gave him a piece of my mind before I came away."

By this time the ambulance surgeon made his appearance, a throng of morbid minded women and children in his train.

"Shoulder dislocated," he reported, after a brief examination of the patient. "Ought to have been attended to at once. Here," beckoning to Van Dorn, "hold him down while I set the thing."

"Oh, I couldn't," and Van Dorn fled to the other side of the room.

"I'll do what I can," Lloyd volunteered, although he by no means relished the job.

(To be continued.)

PRICELESS PELTS.

Enormous fortunes have been made out of the sale of the skins of animals. For example, the pelt of a single sea otter sometimes brings as high as $1,000. Thus far it is used principally in Russia, where it is put on the collars of noblemen's coats.

"White has always been considered a mark of distinction among beasts," said a zoologist to a writer for the Washington "Star." "You will find mention of that fact in the Bible, fifth chapter of Judges. The Indians of this country used to regard a white buffalo hide as of exceptional value, and for one such they would give several horses. Nowadays the aborigines of Alaska set such store by a white marten skin that they will pay five fox skins for it.

"The reverence with which white elephants are regarded in Siam is well known. In Africa King Cetewayo, who was subdued by the British, kept a herd of royal white cattle. They were said to be very beautiful.

"The zebu, or sacred ox of India, is white. Blue, by the way, is most rare in mammals, the only species in which that color is found being the blue faced mandril. The so-called 'blue fox' is rather a deep drab.

"It is a curious fact that many wild animals increase with the settlement of a country, feeding in the cultivated fields and thus procuring food more readily than when the land was unreclaimed. An example of this is afforded by the rabbit, which has increased so enormously in some parts of the world—notably in Australia and New Zealand, into which it was imported.

"In 1891 no less than 8198 bales of rabbit skins from New Zealand and Australia were offered for sale in London. Vast numbers are killed for the use of meat preserving companies, which put them up in cans. In this shape they are sold in great quantities for ships' stores, being a very cheap sort of meat.

"The fur is chiefly used for making soft felt hats. For this purpose the hair is cut off by machinery and passed through a blower, which throws it upon a revolving copper disk. As it accumulates it adheres together, and forms a sort of cloth.

"The greatest fur market of the world is London, where markets are held periodically. These sales, at which pelts of a thousand kinds are disposed of in vast quantities, are attended by merchants from everywhere. They are conducted in silence, save for the voice of the auctioneer, bids being made by nodding the head. Elsewhere in Europe various fairs furnish facilities for trading in furs.

"The prices for skins of all sorts depend much on fashion, and hence are apt to fluctuate considerably from year to year. A fine lion skin with a black mane is worth $300; but the hide from a menagerie specimen of the royal beast, never being so handsome, will hardly bring more than $125.

"Tiger skins cost much less than lion skins, but the hide of a white tiger, which is an albino and extremely rare, will fetch a small fortune. Tiger claws are mounted for pins by jewelers. They are worth one dollar or even more apiece in the rough. There is a woolly tiger of Mongolia which has a fur of great richness. The length and thickness of the hair is due to the fact that the animal lives in a cold region.

"Domestic cats contribute largely to the supplies of the fur markets of the world. Of late they have been turned to commercial account in another shape, many tons of them in the form of mummies, as embalmed by the ancient Egyptians, being carried to England and sold at a high price for manure.

"The substance known in trade as 'civet' is obtained from the so called 'civet cat.' It is of a yellow color and has the consistency of honey. Its smell resembles that of musk. When undiluted the odor is so powerful as to be offensive, but, when properly mixed with other substances, it becomes agreeably aromatic and delicate. It is utilized chiefly for mingling with and improving the bouquet of less costly scents. Civet cats are sometimes kept in wicker cages for the purpose of collecting this secretion, it is said. The latter is used by women in the north of Africa for powdering their necks. It is exported from Aden in horns.

"Wolves furnish many skins to the fur market. In Russia about 170,000 of them are killed annually, a reward of ten roubles a head being offered for them. During 1889 80,000 of them were slain in the province of Wologda alone, the number of persons killed by wolves in the same province that year being 203.

"The Esquimaux of the Arctic practice an ingenious method of slaughtering wolves, planting a stake in the ice with a blade of flint fastened to the upper end. About the flint blade they wrap a piece of blubber, which freezes hard.

"Presently along come some wolves and lick at the blubber until the edges of the flint cut their tongues. Tasting their own blood, they become frantic and attack each other, the fight continuing the until the whole pack lies dead. Next day the artful hunter comes along and skins them. That is one reason why wolfskin rugs are so cheap today.

"Chinese dogs, belonging to a peculiar breed native to that country, supply much material for robes, a good one requiring eight skins. They are exported by way of Shanghai to London and New York. In color they are black, white, fawn and mottled. About 75,000 of the hides are sold in England annually.

"In Manchooria and Eastern Mongolia are housands of dog farms, which rear all the way from a score to hundreds of these canine beasts for market every year. The skins take a brilliant black dye, and make excellent sleigh robes. They are used to a considerable extent in making men's coats in Canada.

"The skins of Siberian dogs are likewise utilized for fur. But the Siberian animal which yields for its size the most costly of all furs is the sable. It is only about nine inches long, including the tail, and in order to trap a single specimen the hunter must often endure many a hard day of exposure and toil. From 12,000 to 25,000 sables are caught annually, many of the pelts being employed in China for the robes of mandarins.

"Another small and valuable fur bearing beast is the marten of Canada and Alaska. For centuries the trapper has sought to capture it in the forests, its precious skin going far to repay him for his long winter's tramp and toil. The pelt, made up into muffs, capes and boas, is commonly but erroneously known under the name of 'sable.'

"The tails are made up separately into garments, which fetch very high prices. They are also used in the manufacture of the finest 'sable' paint brushes. No part of the creature is lost. Even the skins of the paws and throat are sold by the pound to traders, who make them into coat linings and tobacco pouches. The Hudson Bay Company exports to England about 70,000 of the pelts annually.

"Yet another little animal, mostly taken in Siberia, furnishes the ermine fur, which is worn by the Queen of England, and is also utilized for the state robes of British peers.

"Badger skins are largely used nowadays for shaving brushes. For that purpose the hair is cut off close to the pelt and sorted into lengths, being then tied up in neat bundles and sold by weight. The hide itself is employed for glue.

"Skunk fur has come much into favor of late years. In 1891 nearly 700,000 skunk skins were sold in London, though not long ago they were considered valueless."

NOTHING TO FEED UPON THERE

"Have you noticed the change that's come over Mr. Dudelet lately? Something has been preying on his mind for the last two weeks."

"It surely must be starved by this time, whatever it is."—Pick-Me-Up.

THE WAY HE DID IT.

"How is Dykens getting along with the farm he bought?"

"Pretty well. He tells me he made money on it last year."

"How?"

"Rented it to another man."—Washington Star.

A MEMORY OF YOUTH.

"I'll give you your breakfast if you'll saw that wood," she announced in an ultimatum tone of voice.

"Madam," said the tramp, "I'd admire to chop that wood for you, immensely, on'y fur one thing."

"What is that?"

"When I was a little boy my mother used to make me recite fur company, and I said: 'Woodman, Spare That Tree' over an over so many times that the idee of puttin' a axe into anythin' in the shape of wood totally wrecks my nerves."—Washington Star.

AN ABSENT MINDED REJOINDER.

The very polite foreigner had accidentally bumped into a politician on the street.

"Pardon me!" exclaimed the polite foreigner.

"I don't know anything about the case," replied the politician. "But I have no doubt the President will if you ask him."—Washington Star.

UNKIND.

"Here," said the very young man, "is a chamelon."

"Oh, Mr. Callow," she exclaimed, "this is very kind of you. I shall take good care of it."

"I hope you will keep it to remind you of me."

"I shall take the greatest pleasure in doing so." And after a pause she added, "What a pity it doesn't stay green all the time."—Washington Star.

THE PENALTY OF REALISM.

Mr. Critic—"If that's 'A Hunting Scene' why don't the men have guns?"

Mr. Caustic—"Perhaps the artist painted them so naturally that they've gone off."—King's Jester.

THE THREE BY'S.

A little Brooklyn girl astonished her mother the other day by her proficiency in philological pursuits.

"Mamma," said she, "there are three kinds of 'by's,' aren't there?"

"What do you mean, my dear?" responded the mother, in surprise.

"Well," sweetly lisped the little one, "there's one 'by' when you go by some one on the sidewalk, and there's another when you go to the store to buy something, and then there's by gosh?"

The mother was not long in reaching the conclusion that her daughter needed a careful instruction in the minor morals.—New York Tribune.

TURNING THE TABLES.

Aunt Ella—"Here, Mabel is an apple for Willie and you. Be sure you divide it generously with him."

Mabel—"How do you mean generously, auntie?"

Aunt Ella—"Why, give him the largest half."

Mabel—"I think I will let Willie divide it generously, auntie."—Brooklyn Life.

IN THE SPRING.

"How is real estate out your way?"

"Oh," said the moist and weary man, "it's name is mud at present."—Washington Star.