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THE ARGOSY.

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THE THEFT OF A GOD.

BY UPTON B. SINCLAIR, JR.

The thrilling experiences of two Englishmen in India, consequent on the freak of one of them, who conceives the idea of carrying off a native deity. A night of horror in the temple of Lashmi Gar.

(*Complete in This Issue.*)

CHAPTER I.

A HEEDLESS VENTURE.

"WELL, you may try it if you want to, but you won't find it half as much fun as you think."

Morfit Mullen lay flat upon the ground on his back, his feet braced against the trunk of a spreading acacia; he tapped the tree with his heel for a moment or two, and then went on:

"You fellows get out here into India with only one notion in your stupid heads, and that is to kill a tiger; you dream of India as fairly alive with them, and of the people who live here as doing nothing but hunting them. And you've an idea it's lots of sport."

"You needn't preach," laughed his companion. "You tried it."

"Yes, I know I did. And that's why I don't want you to. I see so many of these desperate English sportsmen; after they all get as scared as I did, they don't talk so big. However, old man, a chump's a chump, and no use talking to him; so you go ahead and try your luck at it."

Morfit Mullen and Howard Bland, the two speakers, were cousins. The former was an agent for a trading company in Calcutta, on the outskirts of which town they were sitting at the time. Howard Bland was the son of an English baronet, who was traveling with him.

Lying at anchor in the bay was the trim yacht Baltimore, upon the deck of which, as Howard mused during the lull of the conversation, there were two people, both very dear to him. One was his father, and the other a young lady. In fact, this particular voyage was the wedding trip of the Blands. The Baltimore was to sail that day for Sumatra.

Morfit Mullen lighted a cigar. Then he braced his heels against the tree again and went on with his sermon, between puffs.

"Yes, you had to go tiger hunting here; and you didn't get any, of course, for the simple reason that you couldn't stay away from your wife long enough to go anywhere; what business have people got having wives, anyhow, if they must go after tigers besides? Why don't they do as I do, and——"

"This sermon's on tigers, not wives," interrupted Bland with a yawn and a laugh.

"It's all the same. As I said, you didn't get any. And then, of course, just as soon as you heard that I'd seen one of the beasts in Sumatra, you want to chase there; as if Sumatra were ten miles away!"

"Distance doesn't make any difference. I want a tiger!"

"Well, sir, I saw one there, and I don't want to see another. I told you about it; I went into all that jungle and brush and thicket, hoping every minute I'd see one. And, by jiminy, everything was so wild and lonely, and the crocodiles were so hungry, and the snakes so big, I began to think maybe I wasn't so anxious to see one as I thought I was. Then one came, and I fired an unloaded gun at him and ran home. Every tiger I've seen since has been stuffed."

"Every one I see's going to be stuffed, too," laughed Bland; then glancing down the hill, he added, "Here they come after me now."

"Ahoy, up there!" came a voice from the foot of the hill. "The tide'll go out in half an hour, you people!"

"Well, I can't stop it!" shouted Bland lazily. "I'm only a man. Come up here and rest a while; it's too plagued hot to move yet."

"Hot!" echoed Mullen sarcastically. "You fellows ought to live here a month or two later, when real summer—'Indian summer'—comes!"

"I should die then," muttered the other with a gasp.

"Yet you're willing enough to chase off and leave your old cousin here," grumbled Morfit good naturedly.

"Well, you don't have to stay; I asked you to come."

"I've got my business to attend to, and besides, I think the tigers will make it hotter for you than Calcutta even. Here's your old boatswain, as red as three lobsters."

The sailor, with his two companions, had by this time reached the summit of the hill and the shade of the tree. The three men were clad in white duck suits with blue braid and trimmings.

"How deliciously cool you look, boatswain!" laughed Mullen. "You seem as fresh as a spring bride; as one bride in particular," he added, with a glance at his cousin.

"Well, I don't feel it, sir," panted the other. "But it's really time we were starting."

"Yes, I know—but look what's coming!" exclaimed Bland, pointing down the hill. "To-day is a native holiday, I think."

The others followed the direction of his hand; there was a party of native Hindoos passing between the hill and the shore. They were dressed in fantastic costumes, and were beating musical instruments and dancing as they went.

"What's it all about, any way?" inquired Bland, wonderingly.

"It's 'Hopsum Jupsum' day," volunteered the boatswain, "or some such outlandish name, and these Indian chaps are celebrating."

"Celebrating a holiday!" laughed Bland, "it's the same custom we have—going off on a racket. But tell me, Mr. Boatswain, what are they going to do?"

"I don't know exactly, but they've got their family god with them—that wooden image in the middle—and they'll feast all night to him."

"Come on," said Bland, rising, "let's go down and take in the sight."

At the foot of the hill the five halted to let the strange procession pass. The god was a straight, erect gentleman, about three feet in height, and handsomely colored. He had four humble servants to bear him, and a guard of honor besides.

He stood erect, with the aid of a few props, upon a litter, and stared about him with a stolid, wooden expression—in fact, a look of bored indifference.

Howard Bland's face was working strangely as this part of the procession passed, and there was a glitter of excitement in his eyes.

"Shall I do it? Shall I do it?" he muttered. "It would be immense! Yes, by ginger, I will! Ye gods!"

He brought his hand down upon his knee with a slap that startled the god bearers so that their charge nearly tumbled to the ground; as it was, he lurched and tottered dangerously.

"What on earth's the matter?" queried Mullen. "It's too hot to get excited at high noon."

"We'll take it easy, then," answered Bland, calming down. "Gentlemen, form a 'V,' and get ready."

"Ready for what?"

"Ready to charge."

"Charge what?"

"That crowd!"

"That crowd!" echoed his four companions; "what on earth" (the boatswain mentioned elsewhere) "do you mean to do that for?"

"I want that god," declared Howard, "and I'm going to get him, even if it means fight."

"You're crazy, man!" cried his cousin. "What do you want with it?"

"Same reason that I want the tiger—for fun and for show. Are you ready?"

"You don't really mean, you chump, that you're going to try to steal that god!"

"Surely!"

"The whole crowd will fight to the death. And we haven't a weapon!"

"I have two," laughed the other, now thoroughly alive to the fun of the idea. "I've two fists, a lot of football training, and some sand; you have all but the last. Boatswain, sailors, are you afraid of that crowd?"

"No, sir—not exactly, but——"

"Then, you're willing to fight them? Come on!"

With which parting bit of logic Bland rubbed his hands together and charged like a battering ram upon the unsuspecting procession.

"He's crazy," said the boatswain gruffly, "but we'll stick to him all the same."

And so saying, he followed suit.

"We'll make a thundering row!" grumbled Mullen, "but I suppose it's fun. Anyhow, Howard's a chump, so here goes."

They did not make a "V" formation, but a long line, which was, however, equally effective. The amazement of the Hindoos can scarcely be imagined. If the god himself had developed rush line tendencies, there could not have been more dumb surprise.

Religious liberty is granted the natives of India, and they are never disturbed by Englishmen; so when the charge began the procession was mystified as well as frightened.

Bland, who came first, bowled over several stragglers as a preliminary, and then struck the very center of the crowd. One of the bearers of the litter received the young man's shoulders in the pit of the stomach, and he collapsed considerably, the result being that Howard and the god took a complicated tumble.

The boatswain charged in promiscuously, the two brawny sailors at his heels, with Mullen bringing up a rather uncertain rear.

The Hindoos recoiled from the first shock with cries of alarm; but no sooner did they perceive the object of the attack than their fright became changed to the fury of fanatics. A dozen swords flashed in an instant, and the mob surged in upon the five with cries of rage.

It was a critical moment, and only quick action saved them. Howard leaped to his feet and tucked the god under his arm; the others reached his side at that moment, and one desperate plung swept them through the crowd and out into the open.

There was a race then; the Hindoos were lightly clad and swift, but the Englishmen had a moment's start, which brought them to the boat. Howard flung the god into the bottom and sprang in; the rest followed hastily, the panting boatswain halting just long enough to tumble one "heathen."

A few strokes of the oars put them out of danger—and the god was stolen!

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST SIGN OF PERIL.

THE infuriated Hindoos stood on the shore shaking their fists and hurling imprecations and more dangerous missiles at the boat, or else flung themselves frantically into the sea in a vain attempt to continue the pursuit.

The party on the water became quite merry, when once they knew they were safe. The sailors had enjoyed the brush, and young Bland was delighted with his curious trophy, and with the tale he would have to tell at home. But Mullen was worried, and grew more so every minute.

"It's all very well for you people," he growled. "You are going away in a few moments, and will never come back. But it's a nice muddle you've got me into. You've no idea what crazy fanatics those people are. By George, they'll never forget that! And I've got to go

back to Calcutta in a short while. Suppose they know me, or suppose I should meet them again!"

"That's so," said Bland, looking solemn. "That's so! Why didn't you think of that beforehand?"

"Think of it! How the dickens could anybody think of anything with you breaking out like a wild man?"

"I always was too hasty," muttered the other. "I'm sorry now that I did it—though it was a lot of fun. What are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it? I don't know what I'm going to do about it; I'm stuck!"

"Can't you throw up your place and come tiger hunting with me?"

"No, sir, I can't. I wouldn't trust myself within a thousand miles of a tiger with a hot headed man like you. Besides, you talk as if a situation were a rubber ball. I'm not a baronet's son, with a private yacht and a wife."

"Well, can you go back to Calcutta?"

"I don't know whether I can or not, but I've got to. And if I get killed or worse, I'll have you to thank for it—and that accursed wooden stick."

"It'll be a still more suggestive trophy then," added Bland, laughing in spite of himself. "But, honestly, I'm as sorry as I can be. I wish I could set it straight."

"Well, you can't," said the other. "So that ends it. We're there now."

The yacht was in plain sight, a short distance down the bay; the clank of her anchor chain was audible as the sailors drew it in; and Mullen in the stern could see two figures watching them. One was dressed in a black yachting suit, and the other in a soft white dress.

The former was the baronet, and it was evident as the boat drew near that he was impatient and annoyed. He was a little man with a sharp, black mustache and eye glasses, and an irascible look and manner.

"Why on earth don't you people come on?" he cried; "the tide's half out!"

"We stopped to get this," responded his son, standing the god up in the stern.

In response to the baronet's and his wife's eager questions, the story was all told by the time the boat was made fast. And then the party ascended to the deck, Mullen to say good by.

Helen Bland's sweet face paled somewhat at the story of her husband's rashness, and still more so when the unpleasant plight of his cousin was made known. But Mullen made light of the affair, shook hands all round, and a few moments later was being rowed back to the shore. He was careful, however, to land at the other end of the town.

He stood by the quay to watch the boat return to the yacht, and to watch the yacht herself swing round with the tide. Gradually gaining headway, she disappeared behind a projection of the land; then Mullen turned about, and with an impatient ejaculation about heat and hot places, made his way to his office in the city.

He knew that when he reached the English portion of the town he would be comparatively safe, for there the Hindoos would not be apt to see him, and he thought that they would not dare attack him if they did.

But to reach the European quarter, it was necessary for him to pass through a part occupied by the crowded native houses. He halted on the outskirts and gazed down the narrow streets, which were almost deserted in the midday heat; he did not relish the prospect a bit.

And as he stood there another thought flashed over him—one which was still more alarming.

"By George!" he cried, "I wish I were on the Baltimore!"

Nothing was more probable, he reasoned, than that the Hindoos had stood on the bank to watch the boat carry off their precious idol to the yacht; if they had they must almost certainly have seen the boat put off again and land some one on the other side of the town; and if they had seen that, it was certain that they were hurrying his way even now. And they might put in an appearance at any moment!

Morfit Mullen felt like kicking himself for not having stopped the stupid adventure, which he now felt was almost sure to cause him trouble. But he reasoned that there was nothing to be gained by standing there, and that the best thing he could do was to go home and make himself as inconspicuous as possible.

Accordingly, he started up the street, keeping a wary lookout ahead, however, and prepared to run at the slightest warning. But he did not get very far into the town, and it was fortunate that he did not, for he might never have got out again.

He had scarcely passed a dozen houses before a running figure ahead attracted his attention, and made his heart begin to thump; the figure was that of a native, dressed in a gaily colored holiday costume, his long robe floating out behind him as he ran. Two other figures swept around the corner after him, and suddenly, as Mullen watched them anxiously, the leader caught sight of him, and turned with a cry of fury, his eyes glistening.

As he did so his sword flashed in the sunlight; he was one of those the sailors had attacked!

Mullen wheeled in sudden alarm, and dashed down the street, the three behind him howling with all the power of their lungs.

Whatever their cry was, it proved marvelously effective; the street fairly swarmed with natives in an instant; they sprang out of doorways and from the corners of the buildings—they seemed to leap up from the ground.

And every one of them was shouting furiously, and dashing towards the startled foreigner in the middle of the street!

It was a moment long to be remembered; Mullen saw figures ahead of him, figures on every side of him, and even at the windows, all seizing the first weapon they could lay their hands on and making straight for him.

A huge pot hurled by a yelling fanatic above his head crashed to the road just behind his fleeing figure. He dodged two of the natives as he ran, and then dashed full tilt into another—an enormous man, with a heavy billet of wood in his hand.

The fellow raised it, but before he could strike, Mullen caught him a blow on the chest, and the Hindoo tumbled backwards. Then swerving again suddenly, he dodged the last one, and, to his great relief, saw that the street was clear ahead of him.

He did not look behind, however, where half a hundred furious natives were hotly pursuing, some of them within a few yards, and gaining.

Mullen feared that out in the open country he would quickly be overtaken by the lightly running men; so when he came to the end of the street he swung around the corner and turned up the next street into the town again, where he could have at least a chance of hiding.

It was a desperate race for a few moments; the European was through the narrower part before the cries of his assailants could bring out any one to intercept him, and then he turned again into another street, and another, dodging and twisting, hoping every moment to discover some place where he could hide; for he felt that his breath was going fast.

He did not know this part of the town very well; if it had been more familiar he would never have taken the course he did. As he turned up another street, to his horror and dismay he saw before him a high brick wall, dividing the European quarter from the rest of the town.

It was too late to turn back; he had run half way into the *cul de sac* without looking, and already he saw the leader of the pursuing fanatics turning the corner. He was in a trap!

The Hindoos uttered a shout of triumph as they recognized the fact that the violator of their religion was in their hands at last.

They dashed forward still faster, each striving to be the first to strike him; like a tornado they bore down upon him, and Mullen hesitated for a moment, utterly bewildered.

No expedient suggested itself, and consequently he made no move, but as the crowd drew near he turned instinctively to run towards the wall—to get as far away as he could—to put off his fate until the last second.

The action cleared his mind again. He saw that the houses nearest to the wall overtopped it, and that suggested a way of escape.

Quick as the thought he turned, and bursting open the door of one house, dashed into the dark hallway and sprang swiftly up the stairs. A moment later

the howling mob was at the door, and a dozen of the more active of the pursuers ascending eagerly at the victim's heels, uttering shouts to arouse the native inhabitants of the rickety building.

It was dark as pitch inside, but Mullen lost not a moment; he flung himself against a door in front and dashed wildly into the room. There was a native woman inside, engaged in washing a little baby.

Her scream of terror aroused a man who lay asleep in a corner; he seized a chair and sprang towards the intruder, but the latter had dashed past them both and to the window sill. At the same time a fierce cry swelled up from the crowd, and several of the Hindoos rushed into the room.

Mullen lost not an instant. He stepped out on the ledge, where the sight of him set the crowd half wild with fury and eagerness. They leaped up and down, yelling, reaching after him, flinging missiles; from the windows one of the pursuers aimed a vicious thrust at him with his sword.

But just as he did so, Mullen leaped, with one wild, reckless spring, across the eight foot space to the high wall.

To fall on this side meant to land on a dozen swords; to fall on the other was twenty feet to the hard pavement; but to hesitate was no better, and the young man did not flinch. He landed lightly, checking himself just in time to keep him from going over. Then he turned and ran quickly along the top, while the crowd shook their weapons at him frantically, and filled the air with their cries.

Up the building on the other side a waterspout ran; the fugitive, with one parting glance at the sea of heads below, sprang for that, and as he succeeded in catching it with both hands, slid down. Just as he did so, one of the Hindoos took the leap, and darted across in pursuit.

But the chase was not to last much longer; at the head of the street stood a horse and carriage, and Morfit leaped in.

"Drive! drive!" he shouted to the man on the box. "Anywhere!"

A moment later the carriage rattled away down the street, and the cries of the mob faded in the distance.

CHAPTER III.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

MULLEN sank back in the seat of the carriage, exhausted and panting, yet thankful, as he realized that for the moment at least he was safe.

"That was the dickens of a mess!" he muttered to himself. "And the worst of it is, it isn't over yet!"

"Where do you want to go?" queried the driver, turning around.

Mullen mentioned the name of the street in which he lived, and then as the carriage turned towards it, he lay back and fell to musing over his unpleasant position.

"I don't see how I can stay in Calcutta," he told himself. "I'd be afraid to show myself on the street. It's a fine state of affairs; and all on account of that hot headed cousin of mine!"

Arrived at his place, he paid the driver, and alighting hastily, ran into the house, afraid that every native he saw on the street would recognize him.

Once inside he bolted the door, and went up to his room, breathing freely for the first time since he left the ship.

"And now what am I to do?" he muttered angrily, flinging himself into a chair; "what *am* I to do?"

There was nobody to suggest anything to him, and he could think of nothing himself. The case grew more unpleasant as he thought it over.

"Why, I'm not safe even here," he exclaimed, suddenly springing up in alarm as he began to realize the fact. "Some of those fellows may have known me—everybody knows where the agent of the Burmah Company lives! And my own servants may betray me!"

He went to the window anxiously, and opening the shutters a little, peered out. There was no danger just then, at any rate; the street was kept clear and silent by the burning tropical heat.

"But they may come along at any moment!" he thought. "At any rate they shan't find me quite as helpless as I was before."

He went to the bureau, and opening

the drawer, took out two revolvers and a box of cartridges.

"They were bought for tigers," he mused—"but I don't know of any fiercer ones than those heathen!"

He cleaned the weapons carefully, loaded them, and thrust them into the side pockets of his coat. Then feeling somewhat more at his ease, he set to work on some letters he had to answer, striving to forget his disagreeable plight.

The remainder of the day passed without further incident. The Hindoos, if they knew where he was, at least did not put in an appearance, and their intended victim began to think that possibly he might not be molested after all.

The evening is apt to be the busy part of the day in southern India, for the temperature is a little lower then; the European portion of the town, at any rate, is wide awake, and usually on the street at night.

Morfit Mullen, however, did not go out, for obvious reasons; instead, he wandered restlessly about the house, feeling like an imprisoned animal, and considering seriously various styles of impracticable disguises.

"I might apply to the English governor for protection," he thought, "but all he could do would be to lock me up in jail to keep the Hindoos from me; and he might do that any way, for disturbing the peace. I guess I'll stay at home."

About midnight he had half made up his mind to go out at any cost for a breath of fresh air, and he stood at the window, gazing down into the moonlit street and considering the chances.

But something happened just then which caused him to decide quite suddenly that he would *not* go down.

The first thing which attracted his attention was a group of half a dozen natives, hurrying down the street and pointing excitedly up at the house.

Mullen jerked in his head rather suddenly, but not before the men had caught sight of his face. That view acted as a spark to gunpowder, and the loud and excited talk of the party changed to a series of yells, which were answered almost immediately, seemingly from every quarter.

Morfit knew that he had been seen, and he had no reason for hiding further, so he thrust out his head again and glanced up the street. It was fairly swarming with hurrying, shouting figures, their strangely colored robes looking weird in the moonlight.

Mullen's heart began to thump; he turned his head quickly and gazed down the street in the opposite direction. It was just as thickly crowded, and from both ways the crowd was hurrying towards one common center, filling the still, midnight air with a hoarse roar of shouts and cries.

Mullen sprang back into the room, trembling with alarm; he knew that it would be the work of but a moment for the infuriated creatures to break down the door, and he realized, too, that long before the English military could be summoned—in fact, almost before the alarm could be given—the room would be filled with a hundred of the murderous fanatics, all thirsting for his blood.

One hope was left him; he dashed swiftly across the room and to the rear of the building.

But he had no need to glance out, for the furious shouts told him in a moment that there was a crowd of his foes here, too. He staggered back, dizzy with despair; he was surrounded!

The helpless prisoner stood in the center of the room, like an animal at bay; he knew not which way to turn; he could think of nothing to do. The cries swelled louder in the street below, and above it all rose a series of loud crashes that echoed through the hallway.

The Hindoos were at the door.

A man can do a desperate lot of thinking in a few moments if he has to; and if ever a man had to do this, it was Morfit Mullen. All sorts of wild projects and hopes and ideas passed across his mind.

He thought of the two doors, but the cries of the mob told him clearly that there was no chance of safety there; he thought of the roof, but there was no other roof near, and so his agility could not save him this time.

He thought of hiding, but that, too, was a hopeless chance; they had seen him in the house, and would search him out like bloodhounds.

And if they did not find him, smoke would. Nothing was easier than to fire the place, and it would be in ruins before rescuers could drive off that crowd.

What then? One thing; he gripped the two revolvers in his pocket and waited.

He had been half wandering, half staggering about the room, dazed with the thought of his helplessness, and of his horrible fate. But as he realized that he must die, and as he had resolved to die bravely, the cold touch of the weapons in his pockets seemed to calm him in mind and body.

He placed himself opposite the door, leaning against a table, waiting. He was cool and steady now, reconciled to his fate, but resolved to make some fuss about it.

"I have twelve shots," he muttered grimly; "they ought to lay out twelve Indians."

The roar of the crowd had not ceased for an instant meanwhile, and the crashing at the door grew louder. The air seemed fairly to shake with the sound. And then suddenly the door gave way, and the hammering gave place to a tramping of feet, the noise outside rising to a perfect howl of fury.

"They are in," mused Mullen calmly, tapping his foot on the floor impatiently as he stood waiting. "I wonder how long it'll take 'em to climb the stairs. Ah—so soon?"

This last remark was made as the door of the room was flung open, and the figure of a native burst into the room, a figure with streaming hair and garments, and a wild, excited look.

Mullen whipped the two revolvers from his pockets and raised them; but the next moment, as he saw the man's face, he lowered them again. It was one of his own servants. He came rushing forward, half blinded by fear.

The man stopped short and stood trembling as he caught sight of his master's figure leaning calmly against the table, the two glistening weapons in his hands, and an expression of fierce determination upon his face.

"Sahib!" he cried. "Help me! What shall I do?"

"Go and hide," said Mullen coolly, "and afterwards you can mix with the crowd and help sack the house. They are after *me*."

The man rushed out of the room by a door in the rear, and down the back stairs; and just as his figure disappeared from view, a sound of hurrying feet told the prisoner that the moment was coming. He only gripped his weapons the tighter, and waited for the first assailant to appear.

It seemed an age to him; it was just as long as it took the frenzied men to leap up the stairway, to dash through the hall, and into the room where their hated victim had been seen. There was not one, but a dozen of them in a surging crowd, for every man wanted to be first and strike the blow.

And consequently, when Mullen raised his two weapons, he had a cool aim to take into a mass of rushing, wild eyed men. He fired, one dropped like a log; he fired again, this time with both revolvers, and two more of the mob fell; but he might as well have fired into the wall for all the effect it had on the rest.

Those in front could not have stopped if they wanted to, for the stairs and hall were jammed with a struggling mass.

The man next in front, a tall, bearded fellow, with fierce black eyes and a head wrapped in a bloody bandage, made a savage rush at the white man; Mullen shot him through the arm, and then as the next one came on, he backed slowly across the room to the other stairway.

A sudden idea had occurred to him, and when he reached the door he slammed it to, turned the key, and sprang down the dark stairs to the rear door, at which the crowd was still thumping in rage.

The desperate prisoner had thought of this door and the crowd; the idea had flashed across him that with his two revolvers he might make a sudden rush and cut a gap through his surprised assailants.

At least they could do no more than kill him, and Mullen thought it as well to die at one door as another. He meant to try it.

He paused for a moment to listen to the crashes and shouts outside, and to the noise above as the mob battered in the door he had just locked. Then he

stepped to the door in front of him, and turned the key, springing back again as the barrier swung in before the surging mass.

He had made up his mind to just one thing and acted on the plan. The instant he caught sight of the crowd he opened fire straight into it, sending bullet after bullet as fast as his fingers could move, and at the same time giving vent to a yell which fairly drowned the shouts of the whole party.

It was a desperate attempt, but it seemed for a moment about to succeed. The Hindoos had expected to meet their own party when the door was unlocked, and the fierce and sudden attack disconcerted them.

Those in the rear, seeing nothing, but hearing the rattle of shot, thought that a party were attacking them, and so turned to run; those in front either recoiled or else dropped, and thus the space about the door widened rapidly.

Mullen's heart bounded with newly awakened hope. With all the desperation and fury he could muster, he leaped into the crowd, losing not an instant of his precious advantage.

He had only eight shots when he started; he used six to drive back the mob, and with two more he hoped to cleave a path. He fired both straight ahead, and as the line parted he leaped furiously into the gap.

Two of the confused men he brought low with the weapons as clubs; by the sheer impulse of his dash he tumbled another over, and then he had a clear space ahead.

With a bound he was off down the street, running as he never had run before, the nearest of his amazed pursuers not a yard behind him, and after them shot a train of hundreds, all in full hue and cry. But to Mullen, in the wild sense of freedom, of hope that came, it seemed as if he were a dozen miles ahead.

Residents of that fashionable street saw a rather unusual sight as, alarmed by the sounds of the battle, they glanced out of the windows of their houses.

A single figure, clad in white, and running with a swiftness that made his path seem a streak of light; and behind him a howling mob of fanatics flung out into a long line of color that seemed weird and ghastly in the moonlight.

It took but a moment for the hurrying throng to pass, and then the noise faded in the distance and the street settled down to quiet again. And the residents shut down their windows and wondered what on earth it was all about.

The trouble bid fair to be over for Mullen in just about as short a time. The nearest of his pursuers was a huge, long limbed fellow, with the stride of a Colossus, and a great shining sword in his hand, with which every once in a while he aimed a vicious swing at the Englishman's back. And the Englishman heard it whistle behind his ear, and fell to wondering how many more inches the man would have to gain before he would feel it instead.

It was a desperate race—no stops for turning or twisting this time, but straight ahead, with no one to interfere, and life and death at stake. The two contestants, and the hundreds a few yards behind them, were putting every effort to it; Mullen was running as he had never run before, not even a few hours ago with the same crowd behind him, for the crowd had never been so near or so furious as now.

Flesh and blood can stand very little of such exertion; a man has to train quite a while to stand a hundred yards of it, and Mullen had never trained. His throat began to choke, and his head began to ring on every stride; and then would come that humming sound behind him again, and once more he would nerve himself for another heart breaking sprint, while the crowd sped on, seemingly untiringly, new ones falling in to take the places of the stragglers.

Such a race could not last very long, and no one realized it more keenly than Mullen.

It is trite to say that every moment seemed an age; but those who have ever run a race in dead earnest for just a few seconds know what the feeling is. Every movement is the effort of a lifetime, and the legs grow weaker, and the body heavier, and the chest hotter at every stride.

Mullen began to lag, and he knew it; he heard the whiz of the sword again through all the ringing in his ears, and

yet he could not go faster. He dared not look behind him either; he could only struggle on and wait for the blow.

The street seemed to grow dimmer before him; the roaring in his own head seemed to shut out all sensation; he staggered—and then, from in front came a flash of light. It was a shot from a revolver, and Mullen heard a shout:

"Run! Run for your life!" At the same time, to his utter consternation, he saw a group of white figures running towards him, and recognized them as the sailors of the Baltimore.

How the men had come to be in that street at this time of night Morfit Mullen had no idea, but he staggered towards them with a cry of welcome.

It proved to be somewhat premature, however, for at the very same moment a door in a house just beside him was suddenly flung open, and as Mullen turned he saw a group of natives rushing out, evidently attracted by the shouts of those behind.

The men seemed to take in the situation in an instant, for they rushed upon the fugitive with a yell; the latter swerved, and the English sailors sprinted forward at the top of their speed.

But before Mullen had gone many steps he realized that the rescue party, close as they were, might be too late.

Several natives had got across to block his way, and Mullen saw their swords gleam; he himself was without a weapon, and so he again swerved to one side to avoid them, but in doing so he found himself confronted by another crowd.

What happened after that, in the darkness and confusion, he could not tell; there was a clash of weapons and a fierce struggle in front, and then the howling mass at his rear bore down upon the fugitive.

As he turned, a glancing blow upon the head made him stagger backward, and he fell unconscious in the midst of the tumult.

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

When Morfit Mullen opened his eyes again, his head was ringing, and he was still half dazed, and so weak that he could scarcely raise himself. He gazed around him enough to see that he was in absolute darkness, and then lying motionless he tried to realize where he was, and what had happened to him.

Slowly and laboriously he managed to bring back to mind the events which had occurred up to the moment of his unconsciousness; he had been then, as he knew, in the midst of the struggling combatants, and he had no means of telling into whose hands he had fallen. Naturally, therefore, as soon as this state of affairs was made plain, he began groping around him, in an effort to solve the mystery.

The first thing he discovered, as his mind gradually cleared, was that the wound upon his head had apparently been carefully dressed; at any rate, it was bandaged, and no blood was flowing from it.

That certainly seemed to be a favorable sign, for his enemies would not have been apt to take such pains as that.

"They would probably have killed me the first thing, if they had got hold of me," he thought. "So I must have been rescued by the sailors after all."

The memory of the fearful race which he had run was still vivid in his mind, and the young man shuddered as he thought of it.

"It was a close call," he muttered. "I thought it was all up with me."

A little examination disclosed to him the fact that he was lying upon a stone floor, though the darkness still resisted any effort on his part to see the place.

"I can't imagine where it can be," he thought. "Certainly nowhere on the Baltimore."

It occurred to him that perhaps the English authorities had landed him in prison, meaning to punish him for his wild escapade; this solution of the difficulty seemed a satisfactory one, and Mullen sank down again on the hard floor with a groan.

But after he had lain there a short while longer, feeling himself somewhat stronger, he raised himself to a sitting posture.

"They have left me unbound," he muttered. "I can explore the place any way."

He began groping about him with his

hands, and crawling slowly forward; he had gone but a few feet, however, before he brought up against a stone wall. He turned, and feeling along the side of it made his way gradually about the place.

To his astonishment, he found that he was in a tiny cell, not over ten feet square.

And he found also upon further investigation that there was apparently no entrance or door to the place; nor was there any kind of an object to be discovered in it, though he crawled all about on the floor.

Before he had reflected upon this very long, a horrible possibility flashed over him; he sat up with a start, and reached out with his hand for the roof of the tiny cell. He found that the ceiling of the place was so low that his head touched it as he rose to his feet.

He staggered back against the wall with a cry of horror.

"They must have thought I was dead!" he gasped. "They've buried me alive!"

More alarmed than ever, he began crawling this way and that about the little cell, examining it with trembling anxiety; but his second examination revealed exactly the same state of affairs as the first. He could find no door, and he was convinced that his horrible supposition was true.

"Good heavens, I'll be suffocated in here in a few hours!" he thought.

Yet the more he considered it, the more impossible did it seem; surely his own friends could not have been guilty of such a mistake as that, and the natives would not have been apt to take any such course.

Mullen racked his brains trying to think how long it had been since his night adventure, but he had no means of answering this question.

"It may have been a couple of days ago," he thought. "I may have been unconscious for so long that they gave me up."

He began beating anxiously upon the walls of his prison, both in the hope of possibly attracting some one's attention, and of discovering if any of them seemed hollow; but all rang dead, like solid stone, and the exhausted man at last sank down on the floor in utter despair.

"Why did I ever come to?" he groaned. "I wish they had killed me outright!"

But before very many minutes he again sat up with a start; his sudden action was caused by the fact that lying with his ear to the ground he had noticed a distinct shaking of the stones, as if some one were walking near.

He groped about him wildly, but he found the cell deserted; again, however, as he listened with bated breath, he heard the same sound.

With an excited cry he leaped to his feet, and began once more kicking wildly against the wall.

His heart gave a bound of joy as he heard another sound, perhaps half a minute later, leading him to suppose that his efforts had met with success. There was an audible knock upon the wall at one side, and then a grating noise.

Mullen crouched, waiting anxiously, and it seemed to him at last as if one of the heavy stones was being removed. This continued for a short time longer, Mullen waiting in the most intense excitement to find out what would occur.

He had no doubt that his signals had been heard, and that some one was coming to rescue him, but the question was whether they would prove to be enemies or friends.

When finally this question was answered, it was done very suddenly, and in a most unexpected and startling way.

It seemed to Mullen as if the whole wall in front of him all at once moved outward, as though the heavy masonry were but a door turned by machinery.

Through the crack which was thus disclosed a light gleamed in. For a moment the prisoner was so blinded by it that he could see absolutely nothing, but then gradually, as things grew more distinct, and as the barrier was moved yet further away, a startling scene was presented to his gaze.

Standing outside in front of the tiny cell was a group of at least half a dozen natives, one or two of them carrying flaming torches in their hands, and the foremost of them a gleaming simitar.

The prisoner staggered backward as the vision met his gaze; then followed a dead silence for fully half a minute,

during which none of the parties concerned made a move.

To Mullen what he had seen had been sufficient to deprive him of every hope; it told him that he was in the hands of his ruthless enemies, and that no mercy was to be thought of.

He supposed that they had come to kill him now, but in that supposition he found himself mistaken. For none of the men made a move to enter the cell; and, in fact, the barrier was not opened wide enough to admit of their entrance.

The space sufficed for their purpose, however, and one of them stooped down and shoved a plate and a pitcher into the tomblike apartment; then he stepped back, and as Mullen gazed out the heavy door again slowly came to.

It was soon closed all the way, shutting out the last particle of light.

Then the footsteps died away, and all was deathlike silence, as before.

Morfit Mullen lay where he was, motionless, turning the matter over in his mind and doing his utmost to think of a possible explanation.

"That is evidently food and water," he decided, "so they mean to let me live; but what in the world for I can't make out."

He finally came to the conclusion that his prison was situated among the secret crypts of one of the Hindoo temples.

"And the natives evidently carried me off in the confusion," he thought; "I only hope they didn't get any of the other men."

Mullen had lived in India for so long, and was so familiar with the language and customs of the Hindoos, that it was necessary for him to speculate upon the rest of the problem but a very short time in order to reach a solution.

The shedding of blood is so strictly prohibited by the native religion that it was at once apparent why his wound had been bandaged carefully; and likewise that must be the reason why he had not been killed.

"One would think that they meant to smother me in here," he thought, "but then why in the world have they brought me that food?"

This part of the problem was too much for him; he found, however, that either from loss of blood or from the length of time he had been unconscious, he was exceedingly weak and hungry.

"I might as well take advantage of their generosity," he thought, as he crept towards the place where the plate and pitcher were lying.

The plate he found contained a familiar native dish of prepared rice, and the pitcher was apparently filled with water. Mullen was feverish and thirsty, and so he raised the pitcher to his lips and swallowed a mouthful of the water.

As he did so he leaped back with a horrified gasp, dropping the pitcher, which was shattered upon the stones. Like a flash of lightning the whole matter had been made plain to him in one instant.

The natives could not shed his blood, but they had another and a surer way of getting rid of him. Poison!

At the horrible thought the man's blood turned chill, and he shuddered all over. What had made it plain to him was the taste of the liquid he had drunk, for it was strange and bitter.

And scarcely had it passed his throat before he experienced a sharp burning sensation which caused him to cry out in horror.

He knew that he had made his discovery too late; the trick of the Hindoos had succeeded.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEMPLE OF THE STOLEN GOD.

MULLEN staggered back against the wall of his dungeon, panting for breath and clenching his hands convulsively. Great beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead, and he shuddered all over with dread.

He had swallowed only a very little of the poison, but he had no doubt that it was enough to do the deadly work; the sharp, gnawing pain grew worse and worse, until at last, as it became almost unbearable, the man sank down on the floor, writhing in torture.

The symptoms gradually spread all over his body. He was seized with terrible convulsions; it seemed as if his brain were on fire, or as though a hot band of iron had been placed about his head.

After that he remembered what had occurred only as one might a horrible nightmare. He must have screamed out in his sufferings, for scarcely a minute or two more had passed before the door of the cell was opened in the same way as before, and a bright light shone into the place.

As previously, a group of natives were outside, and they surveyed the scene with the utmost delight, their black eyes sparkling as they watched the swift progress of the poison.

The agonized screams of their unfortunate victim only caused them to grin triumphantly; and then gradually as the man's struggles ceased they opened the barrier yet wider and stepped into the cell.

One of them stooped down to examine the pitcher; it was broken, and its contents had been gradually absorbed by the stone floor.

"He has drunk about half of it," one of them remarked, "so he will soon be quiet."

As he spoke he pushed the Englishman's body gruffly aside with his foot.

It would not be possible to describe Mullen's sufferings at that moment; but convulsed with pain as he was he did not lose consciousness entirely; he saw the light, and in a dim sort of way he heard the voices.

As the first fierce convulsions passed, a sort of numbness crept over his frame. He stared wildly about the place and saw his enemies gazing at him, realizing dimly that perhaps after all he had not drunk enough of the poison to kill him, and that they would have to take some other means of disposing of him.

This thought grew more and more distinct as he found that after several minutes more had passed the pain was gradually passing away.

He lay utterly exhausted and motionless, and then at last he felt himself picked up and carried out of the cell. The heavy barrier was once more closed behind him, and then he was unceremoniously tumbled into a corner by the natives, who stood gazing at him, as much pleased as ever.

The shock of the fall served to arouse Mullen from his stupor. Though he did not know it, this was the critical moment of his fate, and the fact that he was in possession of his faculties proved of more consequence to him than he had any idea of.

For as he lay there the thought occurred to him vaguely that there was no reason why he might not pretend to be dead and deceive his enemies.

He closed his eyes and waited languidly for what would happen next. In a minute or two came the first sign of the success of his plan.

"It is all up with him," laughed one of the natives. "Gungha Lin said it would not take but about two minutes."

Then again fell silence, during which Mullen remained with eyes closed, and without moving a muscle; finally he heard the men move forward, and felt himself lifted by the collar of his coat and dragged roughly across the floor.

He was dropped again, apparently upon some sort of a litter, which was taken up by the natives and carried away. Where he was going Mullen of course had no idea, for he dared not open his eyes; he could tell through the closed lids, however, that one of the torches was flaring close beside him.

A minute or two later, he made out from the slant of the litter that he was being carried up a flight of steps.

He heard a door opened at the top, and then the men went on with him; a breath of cooler air blew in Mullen's face, serving to revive him still more. His heart again beat with excitement as he thought of the possibility that he was being carried out into the open air to be buried somewhere.

"I will give those fellows a fight for it yet," he thought. "I am sure the poison has done its worst by this time."

The bier was set down presently, and then came another silence. Soon, however, Mullen heard footsteps near by, and then a gruff voice speaking the native tongue; he was perfectly familiar with it, and understood every word that was said.

"So you settled him, did you?" the newcomer observed. "Did he drink it all?"

"About half of it," responded one of the men, addressing the other by the name which Mullen had heard before—Gungha Lin.

"That will be enough," the latter responded with a laugh. "He will be all ready to welcome Lashmi Gar."

As Mullen caught the last name, it was all he could do to keep from giving a start, for it was one he had often heard; it was that of perhaps the most famous of the native deities, which, as the Englishman knew, was supposed to dwell in one of the handsomest temples in Calcutta.

The god was famous among the Europeans from the fact that its worshipers were firmly persuaded that it was endowed with the gift of speech, marvelous stories having been circulated throughout all India of the wondrous oracles delivered by it.

"Can it be possible that I am in the temple of Lashmi Gar?" thought Mullen.

It certainly seemed so, from the remark which the priest had just dropped; Mullen had often seen the temple, but as Europeans were never allowed within it, he knew nothing at all about its interior.

A few minutes later came the crucial test of Mullen's ruse, for Gungha Lin stepped forward and raised the cloth which had been flung over the supposed corpse; the young man fairly held his breath with anxiety. He lay motionless, with his eyes closed.

A moment later he found to his delight that the ordeal was past; the cloth was once more dropped.

"He has insulted the gods for the last time," the man muttered. "Take him in."

Once more the litter was raised and carried rapidly forward; Mullen managed to make out through the cloth that the torch no longer accompanied them, and that they were in darkness.

Before they had gone very far, however, a fainter and more subdued light was to be seen, and at the same time came a whispering, shuffling sound, which appeared to be echoed about in a large space.

"Perhaps they are taking me into the temple," he thought. "But they would hardly dare do that," was his next idea, "for surely the news of my fate would become known, and no doubt by this time the English authorities are making a pretty thorough attempt to find out what has become of me."

Mullen had thought over that problem, and had come to the conclusion that he had very little to hope for in the way of rescue from that source; for if, as he expected, he had been dragged off by the mob in the course of the fight, the authorities would have no means of finding out where he had been taken, and naturally no native could be found who would reveal the whereabouts of a desecrator of his religion.

The priests who had got hold of him would no doubt take pains to make sure that everything was kept secret.

The strange sounds still continued, and they were accompanied also by an odor of burning incense, which speedily convinced the Englishman that he was indeed within the temple. What served to assure him still further in the matter was a series of low, chanting cries, which swelled louder and louder as his body was borne forward.

He made out the words which were being sung, and found them a song of triumph to Lashmi Gar, over the fate of his enemies. When finally the litter was set down and he was left unmolested, the sounds of the shuffling feet and voices reached him from every side, broken occasionally by the ringing of a gong.

But nothing else occurred, and the hours dragged slowly by.

Mullen now felt a faint drowsiness steal over him, and as he believed it to be one of the effects of the poison, he struggled against it with all the power of his will. He knew that it was necessary for him to keep his wits about him, in order to be ready at any time to check the next move of his enemies.

"They may attempt to bury me alive," he thought, "and I must escape somehow before that."

But situated as he was, without the power of moving a muscle, the task of keeping himself awake proved to be too much for him, and as time sped on the drowsiness gradually overmastered him.

The voices and sounds in the temple became only a dull murmur in his ears, like the distant hum of bees, and at last he sank off to sleep.

How long he remained unconscious,

he could no more tell than in the previous instance, but he awoke with a start, opened his eyes and gazed about him; he found, however, that he was still covered with the cloth, and could see nothing.

His slumber had been a sort of half stupor, and so his mind was confused, and his brain ringing; but gradually he managed to bring back to his memory all that had occurred, and his heart thumped with excitement as he thought of his situation.

"Good heavens! They may have buried me, and I not know anything about it in the mean time!"

But on the other hand, the possibility that he might still be in the temple, in the midst of the priests, was one to give him pause. He lay for several minutes thinking over the situation and trying to make up his mind what to do.

It was a terrible risk for him to make a move, but he thought that he could not stand the suspense much longer. He strained his ears for the faintest sound, but in vain, for by this time the activities of the temple had entirely ceased, and everything was as silent as if the Englishman had really been buried alive.

Then, too, it seemed to him that he was in darkness, though of this he could not be absolutely sure on account of the cloth; he was determined to settle the matter, however, and he began moving up his hands gradually, for the purpose of taking the cloth from his face.

Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead as he did this, for he realized the fearful risk he was taking. If one of the natives was on guard over the supposed corpse, Mullen's action would mean certain ruin to his hopes.

On the other hand, however, if he were alone it was his chance, and he could not afford to lose it.

Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, he managed to work the cover down from over his eyes; then he darted a stealthy glance around him.

One thing was apparent to him at the first look—he was indeed in the temple; for a high, vaulted roof was above him.

And the glance was enough to apprise Mullen of another fact—that it was night; for the moonbeams were streaming in through the windows at one side.

That was all he could see without turning his head, and before he dare do that he lay, waiting breathlessly, and listening. Still he heard no sounds, and at last he grew bolder.

"It is not likely that any one is in the temple at this time of night," he decided.

Finally he gathered sufficient assurance from the continued silence to turn his head so that he could get a better view of the place in which he was lying. Several dim lamps were burning on different sides, and gradually, after some study, he succeeded in making out his general situation.

He was lying in a dimly lighted alcove of the broad hall; in front of him he could see the tall figure of a man standing, casting a long shadow in the moonlight. At first Mullen thought it was a real human being, but as his eyes grew more accustomed to the place, he found that it was the image of a god, with several lamps burning around it.

It was set before a sort of shrine, upon which incense was burning. Behind this and stretching above it was a concave sort of shelter, studded with precious stones which gleamed in the moonlight.

These objects were the first which caught Mullen's attention, for they lay immediately within his range of vision; then growing more encouraged as he found no trace of his enemies, he raised his head.

He was then able to take in a view of the entire temple, which was silent and deserted, the pillars casting broad black shadows across the moonlit floor.

Mullen found that fortunately he himself was in a dark alcove, where, even if there had been any one in sight, his movements could not have been observed, and so at last he ventured to sit up, his heart thumping excitedly.

He was awed by the silence and mystery of the place, but his own perils were so great that he had very little time to think of this.

"I would never get another such chance as this," he thought, as he began noiselessly to raise himself from the litter.

He was still somewhat dazed and weak, but he was coming more and more into the possession of his faculties every moment. When at last he was on his feet, he spread the cloth over the bier as before, and shoved the litter still farther back into the alcove. Then he himself crept into the shadow of the darkness, and waited for a few moments anxiously.

There were many alcoves and passages to the temple into which Mullen was not able to see, so he had no means of being certain that some of the priests were not near.

"But if there are any around, they are probably all asleep," he thought, "and I don't mean to waken them if I can help it."

His first thought was to stoop down and remove his shoes; he was then able to move about without the slightest noise, and he started forward, pausing at every step to listen. But he crept down in the shadow of the wall, and reached the nearest of the dark alcoves without hearing anything to alarm him.

In the mean time it had become apparent to him that he was not in the main temple, for he knew the building from the outside, and was sure it was much larger than this place, which seemed to him to be a kind of smaller room, off at one side.

"This is probably the secret shrine of the idol, where he does his talking," thought Mullen, "and I have no doubt but that I am the first European that has ever been in here."

He could not help gazing curiously at the wooden figure in its solitary grandeur, as he realized that the latter was doubtless the famous Lashmi Gar.

Mullen was now fairly in front of it, and had a better view; only a glance or two was necessary before another startling thought made its way into his mind. He was struck by certain peculiarities of the figure, both of form and color, and the startling conviction gradually took possession of him that the god was the very one which the party from the Baltimore had carried off!

Once sure of it, Mullen was obliged to lean back against the wall and steady himself while he thought of all which that implied.

"In the first place, we must have stolen Lashmi Gar! Great Cæsar! No wonder those natives were up in arms!"

Mullen was fairly breathless as that fact was made plain to him, knowing as he did the enormous importance which the Hindoos of Calcutta placed upon their wonderful talking image. The fierceness of the riot of which he had been the victim was now easily explainable.

"But can that be the real image, or only a duplicate that the priests have made?" was the Englishman's next thought.

He would, of course, have instantly adopted the latter hypothesis had he not seen the sailors of the Baltimore in Calcutta; this made it at least possible that it might be the same god.

There were two ways in which its presence could be accounted for; either the sailors had been overpowered and had it taken away from them, or the authorities had compelled the baronet to surrender it.

Mullen was convinced that the latter hypothesis was correct, and that Lashmi Gar had been borne in triumph back to his temple.

"And that is why they killed me in front of his altar," Mullen decided. "Well, I shan't try to steal him again!"

He turned and once more began creeping along the wall; he had now, of course, but one object in view, which was to find a door to the place, and make his escape as best he could. He had no means of knowing how long the present silence and solitude of the temple would continue.

He made his way about half way around the room before at last he succeeded in discovering a door. There were several alcoves, containing little shrines and smaller images, but no means of exit.

As Mullen knelt down in front of the door and listened, he knew that he was about to take a desperate risk, for nothing was more likely than that it might lead him into the very midst of a swarm of his enemies, who would almost certainly be awakened.

It was several minutes before he at last made up his mind to take the risk.

He softly turned the knob, holding

his breath with anxiety meantime; he moved the door but a crack, and then again stood listening, straining all his senses. But all was dark and silent within, and at last he opened the door wide enough to see that before him was a dark passageway.

He had no way of telling where it might lead; there was only one means of finding out, and he began creeping swiftly forward.

"I will either meet some priest or an exit," he thought, "and in either case it will end matters."

He had not taken a dozen steps down the passage, however, before he suddenly stopped short and put his hand to his ear to listen; a minute or two passed while he stood there, trembling with anxiety, then he turned and darted swiftly back toward the temple once more.

He had distinctly heard the tread of footsteps in the passage, and as he once more slipped noiselessly around behind the door he shot a swift glance through the crack and saw that he had not been an instant too soon. A light was visible down the narrow hall, and a shuffling of feet was now plainly audible.

Mullen had time for only one glance about the temple to where some curtains against the wall offered him a place of concealment; behind these he crouched, waiting with indescribable anxiety.

Nearer and nearer came the sounds, and it was evident beyond a doubt that some of the priests were coming, for a low chant could be heard accompanying the steps.

"Perhaps it is morning," thought Mullen, "and I am too late!"

He had no kind of a weapon about him, and so knew that he would be helpless in case it came to a fight, so he was trembling all over as he crouched in his place of concealment, waiting for what would occur.

Certainly he could hardly hope that the priests would fail to discover the fact that there was no longer a corpse lying upon the bier; the suspense was almost unbearable, as he was compelled to wait fully two or three minutes before any one finally put in an appearance.

Through the open doorway the light kept getting constantly brighter and brighter, and the sounds more and more distinct, and at last a figure was seen standing in the portal, where it paused for a while, bowing and mumbling incoherently.

As it moved forward again, Mullen, peering out from his hiding place, saw that it was one of the Hindoos—a priest, richly clad in a variegated robe—and with another priest on each side of him, carrying a torch.

The man in the center bore in his hands a tray, on which were some cups and plates; and as the three came still nearer Mullen could see that they were followed by a whole train of priests. These spread themselves out in a sort of semicircle about the shrine, while the three in front went forward.

The ceremony which followed took considerable time, and involved every conceivable variety of bowing and prostration and muttering of prayers. It was at last evident, however, to the anxious watcher that the priests were bringing a meal, probably intended for Lashmi Gar.

The utensils were set out upon the shrine, and then the priest, bowing so low that he seemed almost to crawl, began receding from the image.

Mullen, in the mean time, was staring in breathless expectation, wondering whether the ceremony was over and he was to escape without discovery. It seemed to be so, for gradually the train withdrew, still chanting and mumbling their prayers and steadily approaching the door.

Finally, in just the same way that they had entered, the party made their way out; the high priest and his two torch bearers stopped just long enough for a glance about the sanctuary.

It was all that Mullen could do to restrain a gasp of relief as at last he heard the heavy door close behind them. He stood where he was, waiting until the last sound of the footsteps had died away.

He realized then that he had one more chance to make his escape; and being now more firmly convinced that he was alone in the shrine, he set more boldly to work at his explorations.

"That door appears not to lead out-

side," he muttered; "I will see if I can find another."

He set out and made his way completely around the broad apartment, examining every foot of the wall and all the passages and alcoves; he found them all deserted, and he also found, in the course of his explorations, three other doors.

To his dismay, however, he discovered that they were all tightly fastened; he dared not attempt to force any one of them, and so at last he found himself back at his starting point.

"This is evidently the only way to get out of this temple," he muttered.

By way of making sure, he even turned his eyes upward, in the hope that some of the windows might offer him what he wanted; but they were all so high above the floor that there was no possible chance of his reaching them.

"This one door is all," was his final decision, as he knelt before it to listen.

As before, he heard nothing, and finally he rose to his feet and turned the knob; then slowly he pressed his weight against it. As he did so a rush of despair came over him. This door also was fastened!

CHAPTER VI.

A SECRET OF THE TEMPLE.

MULLEN was rendered so desperate by his discovery that he even ventured to fling himself against the barrier. It resisted all his efforts, however, and as he realized that he would only succeed in bringing some of the priests to the spot, he desisted and turned away.

"I am done for now," he groaned; "I must remain a prisoner here until those devils choose to come and take me."

Rack his brains as he would, he could think of no other expedient.

"I will get some kind of weapon," he muttered grimly, "and they will have to fight to take me."

Nevertheless, it was hard for Mullen to make up his mind that there was no further chance of his escaping, and he paced up and down like a lion at bay. First he would try the doors again, and then gaze up helplessly at the windows.

"If I only had something I could climb on," he thought, "I might get out on the roof, and then I fancy I could let some one know before those fiends could get me."

But there were no means of carrying this desperate plan into effect, and at last Mullen was compelled to reconcile himself to his fate. Exhausted by his efforts, he sank down once more in the corner, and lay impatiently waiting for the next move of his enemies.

It came much sooner than he expected; he had fancied that the ceremony of leaving the repast must have occurred early in the evening, and he did not expect the priests until morning.

As it turned out, however, not half an hour had passed before a most unexpected event took place.

Mullen's attention was first attracted by a slight sound which caused him to raise himself on his elbows and gaze about him eagerly. Then realizing that he could be seen where he was, he rolled swiftly back into the shadow of the wall, where he lay waiting, in a position to see plainly a most extraordinary event.

Directly in front of him, it seemed as if, at its own accord, the wall of the temple, or a small part of it, were moving; with a slight creaking sound it pushed itself further and further outward, and Mullen finally saw that it was a secret door, somewhat resembling that which had shut him in his first prison.

This was flung back, and then, to his consternation, Mullen perceived that through the narrow passage thus disclosed a body was slowly creeping. The face was plainly visible, revealing the fact that it was one of the priests, and the instant the figure had emerged and stood fully revealed in the moonlight, Mullen saw furthermore that it was none other than the high priest who had entered but a short while before, bearing the food for the idol.

"What in the world can he have come for?" thought the Englishman. "I hope it has nothing to do with me!"

His question was soon answered, for once upon his feet the priest glided swiftly forward, and went straight to the shrine. This time Mullen was surprised to notice the difference in his bearing, for he stopped for no bowing or other ceremony.

With the utmost coolness he stopped at the table at the base of the statue, and taking up the pitcher containing drink, he calmly put it to his lips and proceeded to empty it, afterwards devouring the food with a zest which betokened a good appetite.

Mullen's wits had by this time become clear, and he had no difficulty in recognizing the meaning of the action.

"The old schemer!" he thought. "So this is the way he fools them!"

Mullen, of course, knew that the "talking god" was necessarily some kind of a fake carried on by the priests; he had no doubt that an "eating god" was an equally possible phenomenon, and he saw here the explanation of how it was done.

When the last morsel of food had been consumed, the Hindoo rose quietly from his seat and started across the floor once more.

He was soon in front of the entrance to the secret passage. Here he crouched and began crawling in, and in a minute or two more he had disappeared from sight. Mullen saw a hand reach out and close the door; then once again all was silent in the temple.

But interested as Mullen was in discovering the method by which the crafty priest effected that deception, he soon realized that the incident had a far more important significance for him; with a start of delight he recognized the fact that here was another possible way of exit.

Where it might lead him, he had no idea, but he could hardly get into a worse situation than he was in at present.

"It is death in any case," he thought, "so I will try it."

He could control his impatience for only about fifteen minutes, then he rose and glided across the floor; and soon he, too, was in front of the secret portal, trying to open it. At first it resisted his efforts, and it was necessary for him to take one of the plates from the altar of Lashmi Gar; slipping the sharp edge of this between the stones, he was able to pry the door open, and to his delight found that it was swinging back.

His heart was fairly in his throat, for he knew not what might be disclosed to him. He bent down and gazed in, but saw that all was dark.

"There is nothing for me to do but go on and risk it," he decided; so he replaced the plate and then crept in.

The passage broadened, leaving him room enough to turn and close the door, and then, in absolute darkness as he was, he began creeping stealthily forward.

He advanced on hands and knees, feeling his way foot by foot, and prepared for anything.

For all he knew, he might stumble upon the priest himself, and in that case, Mullen determined that there would be a battle, in which he himself would have the advantage from knowing who was his antagonist.

But though he was ready for some such danger, it did not show itself; he crept on, yard after yard, without meeting with any one or hearing a sound. The passage continued barely broad enough to allow him to pass through it, and then at last, as he felt in front of him, he found that he had gone to its end.

What seemed to be another wall confronted him, barring further progress; it was evident, however, that the priest had gone somewhere, and Mullen had made sure that he had passed no exit on his way.

Accordingly, it was certain that the wall in front of him was likewise but a sham door leading him into some other room. If he had had cause for caution before, he was doubly in need of it now, for nothing was more likely than this second passage conducted him into the room of the high priest himself.

Mullen paused to listen as before, but again he discovered that he had no alternative but to trust fortune and open it.

Gripping his hands and shutting his teeth together grimly, he began slowly pushing upon the barrier in front of him, and gradually he found that it was giving way.

It had moved only an inch or two before he let in a faint stream of light, and he knew that now he was face to face with the crisis of his life. Nothing was to be gained by delay, however, and he pushed on, but very gently.

He meant to open the door only on

a small crack, but unfortunately this appeared not to be possible. The barrier was so constructed that once free from the wall it swung wide, and Mullen found the whole situation disclosed to his view in one instant.

And a startling situation it was, too; the high priest was before his very eyes!

The passage had opened into the man's sleeping apartments; in fact, directly in front of his couch, upon which he was lying.

Mullen stared at it, almost paralyzed with consternation; it was fully half a minute before he discovered at last that he had not been seen by his enemy. For the latter was already sound asleep, with no thought of the strange peril which was so near him.

The apartment was a broad and handsomely furnished one, filled with rich tapestry and costly furniture; a night lamp was burning directly by the priest's bedside, and shining upon his upturned face.

It was a hideous face, dark and sinister; but the eyes were closed, and as he realized this fact, trembling all over with anxiety, Morfit Mullen stretched out his arm and slowly drew back the door.

It creaked somewhat, but the form of the priest never moved, and at last Mullen succeeded in drawing the door back so that only a crack was left.

Then the imperiled man lay still and silently thought over his situation, trying to determine what it was best for him to do.

"I certainly could never get out into that room without being discovered," he thought; "I have got to take my chance between trying to hide here all day, or leaping out and making an attack upon that Hindoo."

And Mullen very speedily made up his mind that of those two alternatives, only one was possible; there was not the slightest possibility of his escape remaining undiscovered in the morning.

The first thought of the high priest would be to search that passage.

"If I'm to get out at all, I must do it now," he told himself, clenching his fists, and then he very speedily determined upon his plan of action.

He was not accustomed to waste time in debating any such questions as this; the only thing for him to do was to make one spring and try conclusions in a wrestling match with the priest. To get him by the throat and prevent his giving the alarm was Morfit Mullen's only chance of safety.

And actually the man had gathered his muscles for a spring, and was about to fling the door wide open and rush upon his unsuspecting enemy, when he was suddenly checked by hearing a sound.

It was a footstep in the room, or near it, and a moment later came a knock. It was fortunate that Mullen had the secret door closed, for he made out from the sound that at the same instant the high priest had sat up in bed.

There was a moment's silence, and then his gruff voice called, and the door was opened; and Mullen knew from the sounds that a man was stepping swiftly in.

"Oh, it's you, Ablah," said the high priest; "come in!"

The man who entered addressed the other by the name which was familiar to Mullen, Gungha Lin. Of the conversation which followed he was able to understand almost every word, and it was all of great interest to him.

The newcomer seated himself in a chair by the bedside.

"Well, what's the news?" inquired Gungha Lin anxiously.

"Oh, things have quieted down now," was the reply. "Since Lashmi Gar was returned, the riots have stopped."

"But what about the Englishmen?" inquired Gungha Lin, "what are they doing?"

"They are making a big fuss, of course, but it isn't doing them much good. It seems that one of the men who stole the god was the son of an English nobleman, and the governor is making a fearful row."

Gungha Lin laughed.

"Let him make it," he said. "It will do him no good. He has no idea where the prisoners are?"

"None in the world," replied Ablah. "I heard that everywhere I went about the streets; but they are hunting, and I hear they are thinking of searching the temples."

Gungha Lin uttered an oath of rage; but it was followed by another jeering laugh.

"They may search," he said; "I will have arranged things all right before that."

"Yes, I thought you would," the other replied. "The Englishmen haven't the slightest clue to guide them, for it all happened in the night, and in the crowd no one saw just what occurred."

"Yes, that was my cue," laughed Gungha Lin. "I was able to make the governor believe I didn't know myself."

"You didn't tell me what you said to the governor," continued the other. "You saw him yesterday?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply; "I saw him, and he talked all kinds of nonsense about making trouble if any harm came to the prisoners; but I swore that I had no means of finding out where they were, and that I was making every effort to learn. Ha, ha! And I think he believed me in the end."

The high priest was evidently so much pleased with his own success that it was a long time before he could overcome his merriment enough to go on with his narrative.

"But the crowning stroke was about the god," he continued. "How nicely I managed it about returning it! I made the governor believe that the natives would certainly kill the prisoners if the god were kept back. He wanted to try to hold him as a hostage, but I fooled him all right!"

"Lashmi Gar knows how to take care of his own interests," responded the other, "doesn't he?"

"Yes," laughed Gungha Lin. "About as well as he knows how to talk and eat!"

The two continued to make merry over the situation. From the conversation which followed, Mullen made out that the second man, Ablah, was nephew of the high priest, and was also one of the priests of the temple. It was made plain to him that the two were the conspirators who were working the various deceptions upon the rest of the priests, who believed in all sincerity that the antics of their god were genuine.

Mullen next had the pleasure of hearing his own death described to the newcomer; Gungha Lin told how he had left the body in front of the idol, and narrated how the latter had thanked the awe inspired priests for their devoted services.

"What are you going to do with him when you get through with him?" asked Ablah suddenly.

Gungha Lin laughed softly, and winked at his nephew.

"I will put him in the same place I put that fellow Harrison," he said.

And as Mullen heard these words he gave a gasp of horror, almost forgetting his necessity for remaining hidden.

"Yes," the high priest continued, "and the authorities will hunt for him probably quite as long as they did for Harrison, and they will have no more success in finding him."

It is necessary to explain the effect which these words had upon the Englishman. Apparently, Ablah knew all the circumstances; and it would have been strange indeed if he did not, for the mysterious disappearance of the man whom Gungha Lin named had caused the wildest excitement in Calcutta about five years before.

He was a prominent citizen, and a partner in one of the largest banks; one morning he was missing and the safe of the bank was found open. A large sum of money had been taken, and besides this, what was worth ten times as much—a casket of jewels which had been deposited there by a wealthy merchant, who had purchased them from various native princes in the interior.

In spite of all the investigations by the authorities, absolutely no trace of Harrison had been found, and the opinion of the city was divided as to whether he had been murdered or had made off in disguise with the treasure; and now Morfit Mullen suddenly found himself in possession of the real facts of that long hidden mystery.

"So that was what became of Harrison!" he gasped. "Oh, if I ever get out of here, that scoundrel Gungha Lin will pay for his crime."

Meantime the two priests were continuing their conversation.

"You have often told me that story," laughed Ablah. "It was cleverly done

indeed, but you didn't tell me where you put him."

"He is down below," replied the high priest, with a knowing laugh. "Two flights down—do you recollect?"

"Oh, yes," said Ablah, with a chuckle. "And that will be a first rate place for this Englishman."

"I often think of that night," Gungha Lin continued, in reminiscent mood. "It was, indeed, a splendid stroke, as you say. When those people hired that bank building they knew it had originally been Lashmi Gar's temple, but they probably never suspected anything about secret passages. I thought I was baffled at first when I got in there, because I did not know how to open the safe; but then one night we captured Harrison, and it was all right."

"Did he hold out very long?" inquired Ablah.

"I never saw a man with more endurance," was the reply. "We tortured him nearly all night, and in every conceivable way, before we got him to tell us how to open the safe; but at last he gave in and I got the jewels. He was so near dead then that it didn't take me very long to kill him; and when I had him buried down there, the Englishmen might have hunted a lifetime without knowing it."

As Mullen listened to the foregoing, his blood fairly boiled within him. The details were meager, but he was able to imagine the whole story of the fiendish crime, and he was, if possible, still more anxious to get out of his predicament in order to bring vengeance upon the head of the scoundrel.

But he had no further opportunity to meditate over the matter then, for it was soon driven out of his mind by something he learned as Gungha Lin and Ablah continued their talk.

Several expressions which the men had already used had puzzled him somewhat, but his unfamiliarity with the language left him not quite sure.

Presently, however, Gungha Lin had described in detail how he (Mullen) had been poisoned. Ablah rose up and began strolling up and down the room.

"Well," he remarked with a yawn, "so much for one of them; *and now what is to be done with the other?*"

"Exactly the same," replied Gungha Lin, with a laugh. "I will let you have the pleasure of doing it if you like."

"By all means," was his companion's prompt response. "Where is he?"

"I have got him shut up down the hall here," the high priest answered. "He was not so badly wounded as the first, so you may have more trouble with him."

"I am not afraid of him," was the reply. "Just you let me have some of that poison, and I'll soon fix him; and I'll make all the surer of it because he's the nobleman's son."

CHAPTER VII.

IN FEARFUL PERIL.

MORFIT MULLEN had listened to the words which closed the preceding chapter, almost dazed with consternation, and at first scarcely able to realize their full import. Without thinking what he did, he leaned forward, and gradually opened the door until now the two men were plainly in view through the crack.

The high priest was once more reclining on the couch, with the other man sitting beside him.

Now Gungha Lin rose slowly and stepped over to a cabinet at the other end of the room; this he opened with a key which hung from his girdle, and Mullen saw him take out a tin box.

"You get the food," he said, suddenly turning towards the other; "I will soon have this fixed."

Ablah rose, and as he disappeared from sight, Mullen heard him close the door; in the mean time, however, the high priest was in full view, and the Englishman saw him carefully measuring out the powder which he was taking from the box.

As he realized the villain's purpose, it was all Mullen could do to restrain the impulse to leap out and stop the proceeding then and there.

"Howard captured!" he gasped. "And while he was trying to rescue me. I had no idea of such a possibility."

It was a desperate situation, and Mullen knew that if he was to do anything it would be necessary for him to act at once. What to do was the problem.

To attack the priest would be simple madness, for he had no weapon, and a single cry from the man would surely bring a horde of his followers to the spot; moreover, Mullen did not know the exact whereabouts of the other prisoner.

It seemed a fact that it was not even possible for him to get out of his present hiding place; he was taking a fearful risk as it was, for if the priest's eye had chanced to light upon the open door, he would certainly have seen the face peering in at him.

However, the suspense lasted but a very little while; again a step was heard, and the door was flung open. The high priest looked up from his task of measuring the powder and nodded.

"So you have it?" he said. "Bring it here."

The two men laughed and joked, Gungha Lin in the mean time mixing the powder in the contents of the pitcher and in the plate of rice.

"There it is," he said. "It will fix him up as quickly as it did the other. Come back and let me know when you get it done."

"I will," laughed Ablah; and taking the pitcher and plate in his hands, he turned to leave the room.

Then Mullen knew that the crisis had arrived; if he once let the man get out of sound, he would have absolutely no way of finding him in the darkness of the winding corridors, and while he was spending the precious time searching, the fearful work would be done.

"I might as well get into a fight first as last," he decided, and having made up his mind on the point, he was not the man to waste any further time in hesitation.

He opened the door still wider and gazed out.

Gungha Lin, after his nephew's departure, had turned once more toward the cabinet to replace the powder. Now, if ever, was Mullen's chance.

He heard Ablah close the door, and then as quietly as possible he opened the one to his hiding place and began creeping silently out, with the intention of following him. Never in his life had he had more cause for carefulness, for he knew that the faintest sound—even the scraping of his clothing—might be sufficient to make his deadly enemy aware of his presence.

His heart was beating so loudly with excitement that he felt it must betray him; but though he thought of all this, he did not once waver. He clenched his hands resolutely, keeping his eyes fixed on the figure across the little room.

He was determined that if the man made a move to turn he would leap out and brain him with the first object upon which he could lay his hands. Further and further he crept, inch by inch, and still Gungha Lin was busy at the cabinet.

Fortunately the exit through which Ablah had disappeared was not far away, and Mullen succeeded in reaching it without making a sound. He had had presence of mind enough to close the secret door behind him, and as he crept, step by step, across the floor, he had kept his head turned and his eyes fixed upon the figure of the high priest.

Having reached the door, Mullen opened it softly and in a moment more he had glided outside and was hid in the darkness of the hall. And then without wasting even a moment in thinking of his triumphant escape, he darted swiftly forward.

He was tormented by one thought—the possibility that even the few seconds which his exit had taken might have been enough for Ablah to get out of sight, and he found as it was that he had not an instant to spare. Far down the passageway he caught the gleam of a moving light; at the very instant it met his eye it seemed to vanish from sight, and at the same time the sound of a closing door reached the Englishman's ear.

A dozen steps brought Mullen to the spot; running his hand along the wall he touched a knob.

He opened the door boldly, and found himself gazing down a long flight of stone steps.

The lamp was just turning the corner, and as it disappeared once more, Mullen again followed stealthily, closing the door behind him.

As he reached the foot of the stairway he saw another long corridor, and this time he was sufficiently near to

have a perfectly plain view of the Hindoo whom he was following. It was Ablah for a fact, carrying the two plates in his hands and with the lamp swinging from his arm.

The passage, walled on each side by solid masonry, turned this way and that, so that Mullen soon lost his bearings entirely; he had but one object in mind, however—that of keeping the priest in sight—and in this he did not fail.

He was, as will be remembered, in his stocking feet, and so was able to move quite as silently as his enemy. The latter continued on for some distance further, and then suddenly stopped and turned into a dark alcove on the right.

Mullen was about to follow, but he saw that the light had stopped moving, and he had no doubt but Ablah had reached his destination.

"And it is probably one of those secret cells, like mine," thought the Englishman.

During the pursuit the latter had been making up his mind as to his course of action, and had decided simply to wait until the heavy door was opened, and then give some warning to the prisoner. After that it would be a battle to the death with the priest, all Mullen's energies being concentrated upon the task of keeping his adversary from making an outcry.

He had heard the plate and pitcher as they were set down, and waited for a sign to indicate that the door had been opened.

"It would never do to tackle him before," he thought, "for the door may have some secret spring."

In the mean time an absolute silence prevailed in the dark and damp corridor; it was a gloomy and uncanny place, and one calculated to suggest ghostly thoughts.

Not very many seconds had passed before Mullen was seized with a strange feeling of restlessness, and as it crept over him he felt as if he would not be able to remain in this state of suspense any longer. He was straining his ears, waiting more and more impatiently for the sound of the opening door.

But it did not come, and he found himself speculating as to what that priest could be doing all this while.

"Why should he delay?" he thought. "It is very strange!"

He bent forward still more anxiously, and tried to peer around the corner. Still there came no move. Then all at once Mullen's ear was smitten by a sound which caused his whole body to thrill as with an electric shock.

Some one had set down the plate or pitcher upon the earthen floor! Suddenly a dreadful possibility flashed over the Englishman, causing his very hair to rise on end. He leaped forward at a bound, and a single glance was enough to show him that the fearful possibility was a reality.

The door, instead of being like that of his own cell, had simply an iron grating; and the Hindoo had shoved the vessels through it!

The instant he made the discovery, Mullen cried out in an agonized voice:

"Don't touch that food; it is poisoned!"

CHAPTER VIII.

TOO LATE!

THE effect of that cry of warning was instantaneous. Mullen heard a gasp of horror from the inside of the cell, and at the same instant he saw Ablah whirl about.

The priest was just in time to rise to his feet as the Englishman reached the spot and flung himself upon him with the fierceness of a tiger. A second more and the two were locked in deadly combat.

Mullen gripped both his hands like a vise about the Hindoo's neck, driving the fellow's head back against the bars, and digging his thumbs into the flesh until the man's eyes seemed fairly to start from their sockets and he turned black in the face.

But the priest still preserved his presence of mind; like a flash his hand darted to his side and underneath his robe. When it shot out again Mullen saw a knife gleaming in the light of the lantern.

The man lifted the weapon on high, and aimed a savage blow; but with one hand still gripping the other's throat, Mullen made a grasp for the upraised

wrist with the other. There was a struggle for a minute, in which the Hindoo succeeded in dealing a glancing blow which tore his enemy's shoulder.

Then he succeeded in getting his hand free again and for one second of horror Mullen believed that his end was at hand; for he saw the knife again upraised above him.

But as it turned out, the stroke was not destined to be dealt, for at that very instant another factor appeared in the battle, which changed the entire aspect of the affair.

A white hand shot out through the iron grating and seized the upraised arm in the very nick of time; and then it was all up with the baffled priest. The arm was drawn back with irresistible power, through the iron bars, and Mullen heard a sharp crack which went to show that the work had been well done, and that Ablah would do no more fighting with that arm.

The knife dropped to the floor and instantly Mullen renewed his grip upon the throat of the Hindoo; and it was but a few seconds more before danger from that quarter was over.

The man gave one or two convulsive gasps and then he ceased struggling and Mullen felt his muscles relax. As he loosened his grip the body dropped in a heap to the floor; and Mullen staggered back, almost overpowered with the feeling of relief at the end of the fearful strain.

But this was only for an instant. With redoubled anxiety he leaped again to his feet and sprang toward the bars of the cell. In the struggle the lamp had been knocked over and extinguished, and so he could not see the person who had so promptly helped him.

"Is that you, Howard?" he gasped.

"Is that you, Morfit?" came the answer. It was indeed his cousin!

For a moment the two men gripped each other's hands in a fervor of delight at the strange meeting; but then again a feeling of horror rushed over Mullen as he thought of the poisoned food.

"Tell me, old man," he cried, "you did not touch that stuff they sent you, did you?"

And then from the inside of the cell came a groan which caused the other to stagger back against the wall, pale and trembling with horror.

"No, no!" he half screamed, "it can't be possible! It can't be!"

"But it is!" gasped the other. "Why did you not tell me before?"

"I would have, if I had had any idea," panted Mullen; "what did you take?"

"I drank some of the water!" was the reply.

"How much?"

"Only about a mouthful; I noticed its taste, and I spat out the rest!"

The thought that all the terrible risks had been incurred for nothing almost unmanned Mullen. His cousin's words sounded like a death knell in his ears.

"It is awful, awful," he groaned.

He heard a crashing noise, as his cousin kicked the pitcher across the cell; then Mullen again sprang forward and clutched his hand through the bars.

"We can't be sure, old man," he cried. "Perhaps it was not enough to kill you; if it was the same poison they gave me it will not, for I drank about the same quantity."

A sudden thought occurred to Mullen, and he seized the iron bars in front of him and shook them savagely.

"If I could manage to get you out of here," he said, "it would be something."

But the door remained immovable.

In the hope of finding a key Mullen bent down over the unconscious priest lying on the floor beside him; but on making a search he found nothing.

"Gungha Lin must have the key," he thought. "I am but little better off than I was before."

In a few words he narrated to his cousin the fearful suffering through which he had himself passed, and the other shuddered with horror.

"I never once thought of its being poisoned," he groaned. "I am afraid it's all up with me!"

The two men stood for a few moments in silence, almost overwhelmed at the situation; the most dreadful phase of the matter was that they were unable to tell whether or not the liquid had contained the same kind of poison which had been given to Mullen.

The latter felt Bland's hand tremble, and he himself was almost overcome.

"Tell me," at last he managed to ask, "how did you come to get into this place at all?"

"Oh, it's a long story," was the other's response; "we had a terrible row in the street, and with several of the men I succeeded in fighting my way almost to your side; but we were completely surrounded by those heathen devils. I lost sight of you, and then while I was struggling to get to you, one of them knocked me on the head, and that was the end of it. I was lying here when I came to."

"It was just the same with me," said Mullen, "and I awoke to the same fate."

"I have been hoping that there would be an attempt to rescue us," the other rejoined, "but I suppose that will have to be given up."

"There is hope yet," said Mullen as bravely as he could. "I will stay by you to the end."

Then there was silence for several minutes, Mullen scarcely daring to ask the question which rose to his lips; at last, however, he heard a groan of agony from Bland, which told him that the poison was at last doing its fearful work.

While the unfortunate man still remained in his right mind, Mullen told him of the ruse which he himself had worked, and warned him that whatever happened he must lie still and make the same attempt.

The scene which followed would hardly bear description; suffice it to say that it was not very many minutes longer before Howard Bland was in the throes of the most horrible convulsions, resembling those which had seized Morfit Mullen. The latter did not once relax his hold upon his cousin's hand, although he himself outside was almost ready to faint with horror.

Horrible though the fit was, he dreaded its passing, fearing that at last he might make the awful discovery that the poison had been stronger, or that his cousin's constitution had not stood the strain so well.

The matter finally ended, however, somewhat differently from what Mullen had expected; before the effects of the drug had spent themselves he was startled by suddenly hearing above all his cousin's groans of agony a footstep in the passage near him.

In alarm he turned to listen, and a moment later he heard a voice; it was a familiar voice, which he recognized instantly, calling, "Ablah, Ablah!"

It was Gungha Lin coming to join his nephew!

"What have you put out the light for?" the voice called. "Where are you?"

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE CHAMBER OF GUNGHA LIN.

MULLEN was almost dazed by the unexpected development; it was a fearful call upon his faculties, for he found himself with only a few seconds in which to think out a plan of action which would determine the fate of himself and his cousin.

There were two things which he might do; lying on the ground beside the body of the unconscious Hindoo was the knife he had brought. Mullen might wait and with this despatch his enemy with a single blow when he reached the door.

But there was one very great objection to this plan; it was quite possible that Gungha Lin might not have the key to the cell, and in that case Mullen would be unable to help his cousin. He had no thought of saving his own life upon any other terms, and consequently he at once made up his mind to try the other plan.

There was not a second to be lost, and tearing his hand loose from Howard's convulsive grip, he stopped, and hastily clutching the knife, he put it in his belt. Then he swung the lantern over his arm, and lifting the body of the priest up in his arms, made his way swiftly but silently down the corridor.

In a few seconds he found another turn, into which he disappeared, and there he stood, waiting breathlessly, while behind him he heard the high priest stumbling along and cursing volubly. He was still shouting for his nephew, and was becoming enraged at not receiving any reply.

In perhaps half a minute more, however, he made the discovery that Ablah was not there; for Morfit heard him shaking the door of the cell.

"Where can he have gone?" he muttered in a deep, grumbling tone. "I told him to come back and tell me if he succeeded."

However, there could be no doubt in Gungha Lin's mind of the last mentioned fact, for the prisoner was rolling about on the floor inside, groaning and crying out in agony. Mullen heard the priest chuckle to himself as he stood outside listening.

"He took the bait as easily as the other one," he laughed. "One might have expected them to have more sense."

In the mean time Morfit Mullen was crouching in the alcove over the inert body of Gungha Lin's nephew; he was straining his ears and listening in breathless anxiety, having but the one thought—would Gungha Lin open that door?

If he did so, the Englishman made up his mind that at the very same instant he would leap out from his hiding place and plunge the knife into the high priest's body; and that opportunity he would have welcomed with the wildest joy.

Unfortunately, however, it was not granted him, for Gungha Lin remained for only half a minute longer, meantime shaking the bars of the cell, and this Mullen took to signify that he had left the key behind him.

At last he turned, and with a muttered imprecation on his nephew, made his way down the corridor once more.

Mullen heard his steps receding in the distance, and at last, far off, he heard a door close, which led him to believe that his enemy had returned to his room.

Then Mullen himself crept out, and trembling with anxiety, made his way back to the cell. Inside he still heard occasional low groans, and he reached through and again clutched his cousin by the hand.

"Howard!" he cried. "Howard!"

There came a muttered answer which caused him to give an exclamation of delight; but he still kept hold of his cousin's hand, and for the next fifteen minutes the men remained thus in the silence of the dark crypt. Occasionally Mullen would whisper an anxious inquiry, which always brought some kind of a reply from the suffering man in the cell, and at last Morfit made up his mind that the fearful danger was over, and that the poison had done its worst.

"And now the question is to get him out of here," he told himself.

He had no doubt but that if Howard remained quiet, as he himself had done, Gungha Lin would serve him in about the same way, but the opportunities to escape which would be gained thus did not seem very promising to Mullen. For all he could tell, his own ruse might have already been discovered, and in that case the high priest would not be apt to allow the same trick to be worked twice.

"And it would never do for me to go back and take my place on that bier," he thought, "for in all probability they would bury both bodies some time in the course of the day, and we would have very little chance of escape surrounded by those priests."

Accordingly Mullen made up his mind that the best chance which was offered to them lay in his securing the key and removing his cousin at once.

After considerable thought he came to the conclusion that he would risk everything upon this plan, for wild and impossible as it seemed, it offered the two their only hope.

He hastily explained to his cousin what he intended to do, and the latter signified, by a pressure of his hand, that he comprehended; then Mullen turned and immediately started down the corridor once more.

Another plan had occurred to him, and he proceeded to exchange clothing with Ablah; the priest's robe was long, and had a cape which Mullen found it possible to fling over his head in such a way as to conceal almost all of his face.

Beside that, he had another very distinct advantage in the fact that he now had the knife, and he hoped to make some resistance in the event of his being discovered.

"In case it comes to the worst," he reflected, "we might succeed in keeping the priests at bay and holding out until the promised search of the temple is made."

Mullen was soon stealing down the corridor; it took considerable hunting before he found the stairway, but at last

he succeeded in this, and as there was no one in sight he crept swiftly up and opened the door of the cell above.

It was dark there, as before, and so Mullen crept on without fear of discovery.

He heard no one, and all about the temple was as silent as the grave; it was only when he came within sight of Gungha Lin's room that he found a light or sign of life. The door of this place was half open.

Mullen's first impulse was to turn in that direction, for he judged with good reason that the only key of Howard's cell would probably be in the possession of the high priest.

There was a curtain hanging immediately behind the door, and under cover of this Mullen slipped himself in and peered through the crack. As he did so he found himself almost face to face with his enemy, who was sitting upon the couch near the door, his head in his hands.

The man seemed to be in deep thought, and Mullen wondered if he were thinking up some plan to make away with the victims of his vengeance; he watched him for only a few seconds, however, before he was the witness of another interesting scene.

The Englishman was suddenly startled to hear the sounds of footsteps down the hall; he started back behind the curtain, and at the same time he saw Gungha Lin raise his head and gaze around him. He rose to his feet and wrapped his rich robe about his body.

Lying upon the table near by was a highly embroidered cap, which he placed upon his head; then he folded his arms and waited; meantime the sounds in the hall came nearer.

Mullen did not dare to look, but he made out from the shuffling of the feet that a number of men were approaching; they finally halted before the door, at which they knocked.

The priest called to them to enter, and then the procession moved inside, and as Mullen peered out around the curtain he saw the last of them disappear, and then being alone once more, he ventured to gaze through the crack.

There were six of the priests, all richly arrayed in splendid garments; they had halted directly in front of Gungha Lin, and as one man they bent down before him, mumbling some sort of a salutation. As the high priest signaled them to rise, one by one they came forward, each bearing something in his hand.

Gungha Lin held a tray, which Mullen recognized instantly as the same one which had been set down in front of Lashmi Gar a few hours before, containing the vessels of food and drink which Gungha Lin himself had made away with.

The crafty priest gazed at the tray, which was of gold.

"Lashmi Gar made quite a good meal," he said, and the other priests bowed and mumbled as they stepped back. Mullen could not refrain from smiling as he witnessed the end of that trick.

"I suppose he fools them that way every night," he thought, "and I have no doubt the talking is worked by some equally simple device."

In turn each one of the other men advanced, extending some object to Gungha Lin. Morfit recognized several of them as caskets which he had seen lying in front of the litter. They were all of precious metals, set with jewels, and covered with the most elaborate and costly workmanship.

There was one rather unpleasant thought which came to him as he looked on at this ceremony, which was that it must be nearly morning, and consequently the time for the discovery of his escape was near at hand. He was quite sure, however, that it had not already been made, or the demeanor of the priests would have been quite different.

After delivering their precious chests the six priests proceeded to make their way out of the room, which they did by backing out of the door, bowing humbly and fearfully as before. Once outside, however, they turned and hurried rapidly away.

Then Mullen again ventured a glance through the crack to watch Gungha Lin. The high priest was still standing where the men had left him, his head bowed in thought. Then he suddenly looked up and after glancing about him he made his way over to the couch, upon

which he flung himself with his face to the wall. There was only a dim night lamp left burning in the chamber, which was now wrapped in silence.

Now was Mullen's opportunity, and he very speedily made up his mind what to do.

"If that priest hasn't got the key," he thought, "it must at any rate be in the room; and I am going to set to work to find it."

The plan he formulated was simplicity itself. He decided to creep in, shut the door and begin his search with the knife in one hand. If Gungha Lin remained sleeping, very well; if he turned over, one stroke would be all that was necessary.

"And I must have that key before I leave this room!" muttered Mullen, with which resolution he glided out from behind the curtain and passed into the apartment.

He closed the door silently behind him, and stood with his eyes fixed upon the sleeping form in front of him. Though Gungha Lin's face was turned away, his heavy breathing told Mullen unmistakably that he was asleep.

Without hesitation the Englishman stole across the room, and set to work carrying his plan into effect. He found all the caskets unlocked, and as he opened them one after another it was all he could do to keep back an exclamation as he saw that several were filled with bars of precious metal, which gleamed in the dim light of the chamber.

One of them disclosed to the gaze of the searcher a pile of gleaming diamonds and precious stones of every conceivable size and variety; in all his life Mullen had never seen such jewels, and as he gazed at them the thought flashed over him that here perhaps was another mode of rescuing his cousin.

If he could capture the enormous treasure and hide it, it might be the means of ransoming his cousin from the priests. "I've no doubt anyhow that they're Harrison's," he told himself, "so I ought to take them."

In half a minute more he had transferred the gems to the pockets of his own clothing, which he had retained under the robe of Ablah.

Further search of the caskets revealed to him the fact that they did not contain the one object which was more precious to him than all the jewels; he had to hunt further yet for the key, and so closing the chests he turned away, devoting his attention to the cabinet from which he had seen the priest take the poison.

This proved to be a complicated affair, having a number of drawers and compartments; Mullen went through each one of them with the utmost care, in the mean time watching Gungha Lin closely, and ready to leap upon him at the first move.

But the man evidently had a good conscience for all his misdeeds, and he slept on undisturbed.

Mullen prosecuted his search for fully half an hour more, but unfortunately without any result; he ransacked every place in the room which seemed to him at all likely to yield the desired key, but not a sign of it could he see anywhere.

At last he realized that there was nothing further he could do unless he decided to make the attempt to search Gungha Lin himself.

But Mullen was not prepared to try anything as desperate as that quite yet.

"It will be safer to wait until the priests take him out," he thought. "We may be able to make our escape then."

During his search another thought had occurred to his ready brain, one which, when he found he was not likely to get the key, he determined to attempt to carry out.

He found that his supposition as to its being morning was not correct, for there was still no sign of any further activity about the temple.

"I have yet time to try it," Mullen decided. "If I can succeed in keeping those priests from discovering my absence there will be an excellent chance of helping Howard to escape."

His plan was a very bold one, and yet quite simple. It was to take the body of Gungha Lin's nephew and carry it to the temple before the statue of Lashmi Gar; covered as it would be with a thick cloth, there would be no chance of the change being discovered for some time.

In the mean while there were many things to hope for.

Mullen quickly realized that, next to getting the key, this was the best thing he could do, so he turned and crept toward the door again. He reached it without having made a sound to awaken the high priest, and in a few seconds more he was again out in the dark passageway.

By this time he had got the plan of the temple pretty well in his mind, and he had no difficulty in finding the door which he wanted; he crept down the stairs as before, and was soon in front of the cell where his cousin was confined.

The latter made no sound until he recognized Morfit's voice, and then the latter learned to his joy that Howard, though scarcely strong enough to move, was out of danger from the poison.

Morfit then narrated in a few words what he had done and what he intended to do.

"If I don't succeed in getting back here," he said, "you must lie still, and do nothing until you hear from me."

Very little further time was spent in consultation; Mullen picked up the body of the priest and glided down the corridor once more, and up the steps; in a short while he was once more before Gungha Lin's door, where he found everything still silent.

There were two ways in which Mullen might reach the shrine of Lashmi Gar, one being to drag the body through the secret tunnel; this, however, he did not believe to be possible. The other was to take it down the hall by which the priest had come.

This Mullen fancied would be feasible, for he was of the opinion that the only reason why Gungha Lin had kept all the doors to the shrine locked was to make the rest believe that the god himself had eaten the food.

Upon making his way to the door he found that such was the case; the heavy barrier which had kept him prisoner on the other side for so long was now wide open, and as Mullen glanced in he saw that the shrine was apparently silent and deserted as before, the moonbeams shining brightly in through the windows.

And this time the Englishman lost no time in hesitation; he crept close to the wall of the apartment, and soon reached the alcove where the bier was lying, still scarcely to be seen in the darkness. It was undisturbed, and he stretched the body upon it. Carefully he covered it with the cloth, then turned and crept out of the place.

CHAPTER X.

OUT OF THE TEMPLE AND IN AGAIN.

MULLEN now rested all his hopes upon the chance of his being able to help his cousin to hide after he was carried out of his cell by the priests; then, either by concealment or by force, they would have to keep themselves alive until the rescue which they expected from the authorities was effected.

But Mullen's heart sank as he realized what a very uncertain hope that last one was; knowing as he did the number of native temples in Calcutta, he recognized the fact that the task of his friends would be almost impossible.

True, they might suspect the temple of Lashmi Gar the first place of all; but, on the other hand, as Mullen had learned, Gungha Lin had persuaded the authorities and the governor upon his word that the prisoners were not there, and that he knew nothing about them.

Moreover, Morfit reasoned that after all the excitement which had been caused by the theft of the god, his temple would be the very last one the English would attempt to invade.

"It may be possible for me to find some way of getting out," he told himself finally, "and then Howard and I, if we do get loose, will know where to turn."

He ran less risk than previously in his explorations of the place, for he was clad in the costume of Ablah, and even if he were seen he might not awaken any suspicions.

Exerting his memory, he tried to recall the plan of the great temple of Lashmi Gar as he had seen it from the outside; he was convinced that the shrine in which the god stood was entirely separate from the main body of the edifice.

"I think it is under the main building that all those passages are where Howard and I were hidden," he mut-

tered. "At any rate, what I want to do is to find some window which I can reach."

He crept silently past Gungha Lin's door again. On either side of him down the corridor there were a number of doors, but Mullen hesitated for some time before he ventured to open any of them, as for all he knew he might stumble on the sleeping apartments of some of the priests.

"But if I should do that," he thought finally, "I could answer them in their own tongue, and go out of sight again before they found out that anything was wrong."

With this expedient to fall back upon, he determined to explore some of the rooms. He stooped down before one of the doors and listened for a minute or two.

Then as he heard nothing, he rose and silently turned the knob. The door at first resisted all his efforts, and he came to the conclusion that it must be locked. But suddenly, as he pressed a little harder, it gave way and flew open before him.

Alarmed at the noise, Mullen stood trembling with apprehension, but he heard no sound, and at last he plucked up courage to steal through the portal and glance about the room.

There was no light inside, and he could not quite make out the nature of the place, but as he listened again he heard no sounds of breathing, and therefore concluded that it was deserted. What was of much more importance was that directly opposite the doorway was an open window.

When Mullen caught sight of that he closed the door softly and darted across the room. A single glance out he gave and could scarcely restrain a cry of delight.

At last he had succeeded in arriving within sight of liberty!

He was at one of the side windows of the group of buildings about the great temple, and below him he could see a wall which separated the structure from the dwellings of the town.

He was quite a distance from the ground, but he would have little difficulty in reaching it, for there was another roof starting directly from the window where he was standing. Running along this he saw was a gutter which he knew would be strong enough to support him, and a short distance farther on was a rain spout which was just within reach of the wall.

And now Mullen uttered a groan of despair.

"Oh, if I only had that key! If Howard were only with me!"

He stood there for an instant gazing out at the stars, which he had never expected to see again.

"There is hope yet," he muttered.

But he shuddered as he glanced back into the dark room and thought of the horrible fate which was still impending over his cousin.

Mullen determined that he would make no attempt to escape himself until Howard was also free; but as he turned and gazed out of the window again another thought flashed through his brain, and he gave a start of excitement.

He did not wish to escape alone, but would it not be the very best thing he could do to take advantage of his opportunity to get out and warn his friends of the state of affairs?

"If the baronet only knew where his son was, he'd have the governor immediately send all the troops in Calcutta to the rescue."

From the window he could see that there was still no sign of dawn, and he believed that he had plenty of time to carry out his scheme.

"I will let them know where we are," he muttered grimly, "and then come straight back to this place and stay here until Howard is rescued, or die with him if he is killed!"

And while the words were still on his lips he began silently creeping over the window sill.

In a few moments more he was on the roof and making his way cautiously along. He glanced down over the edge of the wall and at the buildings beyond, but he saw no one to interfere with him; he reached the rain spout in safety, and found it a large one, admirably suited to his purpose.

He had only a few feet to slide before reaching the wall, and then he carefully crawled over upon it. He lay here

for a moment to gather his breath and gaze about him.

The robe which he wore was considerably in his way, but he felt that it was safer to keep it on; he knew nothing about the condition of the streets of Calcutta at that time and thought possibly that the natives might still be up in arms.

Presently he continued his journey, crawling forward along the wall, past the temple and in the direction which he knew would carry him to the street, crouching low and keeping a careful watch.

It was fortunate that he had been so cautious, for when he came within sight of the street a startling condition of affairs was revealed to him. He knew well the importance which was set upon the mysteries of the "talking god" by the Hindoos of the city, and he had seen the riots caused by its theft, but he was not in the least prepared for what he now discovered.

A single glance showed him that the street was simply swarming with natives—in fact, it was packed so densely that it was almost impossible to move about in it; and from the lights which gleamed in the native houses near by Mullen made out that many of the mob had weapons in their hands.

The sight rendered him almost breathless.

"Great Scott!" he gasped, "who would have thought of such a state of things as this?"

He comprehended in an instant the difficulty which the English soldiers would have in forcing their way through to the temple in that crowd; he also realized the unpleasant fate which would have been in store for him even if he had succeeded in getting out by one of the doors of the temple.

Then he turned and crawled back along the wall, in the hope of being able to make his escape in the opposite direction. Here he met with more success, for this part of the wall faced upon the yards of several houses, and these he found to his relief to be free from the crowd.

Somewhat emboldened by this discovery, he rose to his feet and advanced silently, getting further and further away from the temple, until at last he found that the wall came to an end in front of a narrow alley.

This likewise was deserted, and without hesitation Mullen dropped into it and darted swiftly down it, taking a direction which carried him as far as possible from the temple. When he reached the point where the alley opened into the street, he carefully covered his face with the hood of the gown.

He found, however, that this thoroughfare was comparatively deserted, though there were many more people upon it than would ordinarily have been the case.

"Evidently the whole city is awake," thought Mullen; but he never halted for an instant on that account.

He now knew exactly where he was, and once upon the street he broke into a run. After he had started, the thought of his cousin's terrible situation urged him faster and faster, and he was soon dashing along at the very top of his speed.

He had no doubt that the Baltimore was lying at one of the wharves of the town, and as these were much nearer than the government buildings, Mullen determined to seek aid from the yacht.

When he reached his destination he found to his extreme delight that his supposition had been correct, or partially so, for the yacht was lying out in the bay, only a hundred yards away from the shore.

"Perhaps they didn't dare to land for fear of the natives," he reflected.

However, he rushed out on the nearest pier and gazed at the vessel, which was clearly outlined in the moonlight.

He could see several men pacing up and down the deck. Also he noted a number of natives lurking about on the shore, and he wrapped the robe more closely about him.

Still, he did not hesitate, but raised his voice in a loud hail; it was answered almost immediately in a voice which Mullen recognized as being that of the old boatswain who had been one of those who had carried off Lashmi Gar.

He called out to know who was there, and it was only necessary for Mullen to pronounce his name in order to cause the wildest excitement upon the vessel.

He saw the men running this way and that, and almost before he realized it a boat had put off with four sailors in it, and was dashing toward the quay.

Mullen gazed apprehensively at the natives, who by this time were staring at him; if they had had any idea who he was, doubtless he would not have been alive when the party reached the wharf, but they had no way of recognizing him, and the boat was soon rounded up alongside, the first person to leap out being the boatswain.

"Where's Mr. Bland?" he gasped, breathless with anxiety.

Mullen did not answer until he had leaped into the boat and was on his way to the vessel again, for he did not mean to be overheard.

When they were fairly off he narrated to the excited sailors what had befallen himself and his cousin, and inquired as to the whereabouts of the baronet. He was told that he was on shore, with most of the men.

"The governor has called out the troops, and they have been hunting everywhere for you, sir," the boatswain added.

"Well, he must be told of the true situation, and that without delay," Mullen declared.

The matter was soon arranged; Mullen himself had of course determined to return to the temple, and would have sent one of the sailors to notify the baronet at once if he had not known that his conspicuous uniform would speedily make him the victim of the infuriated natives.

But in reply to his suggestion one of the men hastily donned civilian's clothing, and then Mullen carefully instructed him in the message which he had to deliver.

It was simply that the temple of Lashmi Gar must be invaded by the English troops immediately, and at any cost, otherwise Howard Bland would almost certainly perish.

When the boat again set out for the shore, Robinson, the boatswain, declared his desire to return to the temple and share the risks with the two men; and after a moment's consideration of the plan Mullen consented.

"I will take a couple of revolvers," he added, "and a pocketful of cartridges, and you must do the same."

The three men were soon upon the pier, whence they made their way hurriedly up the street. After assuring themselves that they were not being followed by any of the natives, they separated, the sailor setting out to deliver the all important message, while Mullen and Robinson hastened off toward the temple.

Mullen had the two revolvers, one in each hand, in the pockets of the priest's robe, and he therefore felt more at ease than he had at any time during his perilous adventures; certainly he was now able to face his enemies on something like equal terms.

"In fact, if we can only get down there in the vault of that place," he told his companion, "I would be perfectly willing to risk an attempt at holding out until the baronet rescues us."

Before starting he had taken the precaution to see that Robinson was dressed in less conspicuous clothing than the white suit he had worn.

"Perhaps the natives are angry enough to bother you any way," he said, "and so we may have some trouble in reaching the temple. But my disguise may save us from any serious difficulty."

Several times Mullen caught sight of groups of natives passing down the street, but he kept close in the shadows of the buildings, and they passed on without exciting any suspicions.

As they drew near the temple Mullen heard the same murmur from the dense crowd in front of it.

"They are probably gathered there to resist any attempt to enter the place," said Robinson. "All the Hindoos in the city must be up in arms, and I shouldn't wonder if there would be a regular battle when the troops try to get past them."

"They will do it all the same," was Mullen's reply, "or else I don't know the baronet!"

They approached the temple from behind at the same spot where the Englishman had left it, and fortunately found all as silent as before. It was not so easy for them to climb the wall as it had been for Mullen to drop down, but by mounting on the boatswain's

shoulders he succeeded in reaching it, and then, after some efforts, managed to haul the seaman up.

Then the two turned and crept swiftly along. It was a perilous moment for them, as they were in plain sight of any one who chanced to be either in the street or at any of the windows of the temple. The moon had now moved across the sky and was shining full upon the wall; but no one saw the venturesome pair, or at any rate, no outcry was raised.

Half a minute later Mullen was being rapidly assisted up the rain spout by his companion. When he reached the roof it took the other but a short while to join him, for a lifetime on shipboard had made him an expert climber.

The window was still open, and they reached it without any difficulty, Mullen pausing only long enough to dart an anxious glance about inside. He found that it was apparently as deserted as when he left it, and then with a quick spring he swung himself up and climbed in.

The sailor followed a moment later, and the two hurried into the shadow of the wall at one side. They drew their revolvers and waited, listening anxiously. Still they heard nothing, and at last Mullen started forward and glided out into the hall.

"We are in the temple once more," he whispered, "and now comes the tussle!"

CHAPTER XI.

A MOMENT OF PERIL.

FORTUNATELY, the corridors in the temple were still dark, and apparently deserted; moreover, Mullen was emboldened by his success in passing as a native, to say nothing of the fact that he was now armed and prepared to face any danger that might arise.

He was so familiar with the place by this time that he had but little difficulty in finding the right passageway. But before he had gone very far along it, he suddenly caught sight of a light, faintly streaming through an open doorway, and heard footsteps which led him to suppose there were people in the room.

It was necessary for him to pass the spot in order to reach his cousin's cell; on his own account he had no fears, but the boatswain's disguise was by no means adequate.

Mullen's eye was caught by some heavy portières hanging along the wall, and on raising them he discovered a small alcove. Hastily grasping the sailor by the arm, he pushed him behind the curtain.

"You hide here," he whispered, under his breath, "and don't move on any account. I will be back in a few minutes."

With that Mullen turned and made his way as quickly as possible down the hall. As he glided past the open doorway he completely concealed his face in the robe, and so he had no means of telling whether any one saw him or not; but he sped on, and in a few seconds more saw in front of him the door which led down the steps to the vaults below.

He flung it open and slipped inside; here he found all dark, so he ventured to remove the robe from his face in order to take a glance down the hallway.

He saw no one, and concluded that his passing had not been observed, so he closed the door and ran swiftly down the stairs. The location of his cousin's hiding place was graven in his mind by this time, and he had no doubt that he would be able to find it.

As he realized that at last he was near the all important moment Morfit Mullen was half beside himself with excitement and anxiety.

If Howard were still alive Morfit believed that they had nothing more to fear, for even though they were inside the temple, the three men would be able to defend themselves until the arrival of the English rescuers.

Knowing the influence of the baronet and his intense anxiety for his son's safety, Mullen was perfectly certain that the expected help would arrive in a very short time.

He noticed several turns which he recognized as having passed before, and which told him how near he was to the door of the cell. At last he had reached the spot, running at the top of his speed, and breathless with excitement.

He felt his hand touch the iron bars,

and then he ventured a whisper, thrusting his hand inside and groping about him meantime.

"Howard, Howard!" he called. Then for an instant he stood still, all his faculties in suspense.

There was no reply. And as Mullen stood rooted to the spot a sense of horror stole over him which deepened every instant. He raised his voice louder yet.

"Howard, Howard!" he called, but still there came no response.

Wild with apprehension, he raised his voice to a perfect scream, and he hurled himself against the bars of the cell. The next moment he almost fell forward upon his face. The door was open, and gave way before him.

He hastily explored the narrow inclosure; he could touch the walls on every side, and he stooped down, groping about on the floor. Then, completely overcome by his fearful discovery, he sank down.

He was alone! The cell was empty!

Fully half a minute must have passed before Mullen was able to master himself once more.

The situation was a very simple one when finally the man's mind became clear enough to grasp it.

Either his cousin had escaped or he had been carried off by the priests.

The former supposition, however, was impossible, as Mullen very quickly realized.

"He might have got out, but he certainly would have stayed to let me know," he gasped.

Once more he rushed outside and hurried down the passage, groping around on the way down, and whispering his cousin's name; but all was quiet and silent.

"They have taken him away," he decided, "and whether they have found out that he is alive or not, I have no means of knowing."

But the thought served to brace Mullen's faculties once more, and gripping his revolvers under his disguise, he whirled about and started to race down the corridor.

"They have him in their power yet," he told himself, "and at this very second they may be killing him! Heavens, how much time I have wasted!"

So wild with anxiety was he by that time that he sped at the top of his speed down the black passages, and several times rushed wildly against the corners of the walls; but he scarcely felt the shock, and never once stopped until he had reached the foot of the stairs.

Up these he bounded, two at a time, and flung open the door. It was then that he realized the difficulty of the task before him—that of finding his cousin in the labyrinths of the temple.

There was one supposition which seemed to him more plausible than the rest—that the priests might have served Howard Bland in precisely the same way they had served him.

"The very first place for me to go to is the shrine of that god!" he muttered, and he set out boldly down the passageway.

Before him he saw the open doorway, but this time, if possible, he hesitated even less than before; as it turned out, however, he was not destined to meet with as much success.

He was in the very act of stealing by, his face veiled again, when through the tiny opening he had left, he saw a figure step out into the passageway. It was one of the priests, and as he caught sight of the other he started back.

Mullen had his hand on the trigger of a revolver, and he was ready to fire the next instant; but fortunately he did not, for the priest uttered one word which caused the Englishman a pleasant shock of surprise.

"Ablah!" the man cried.

The Englishman stood still for a second, his heart thumping with excitement; he saw several other priests rushing to the doorway, all staring at him eagerly. Evidently the absence of Gungha Lin's nephew had been noticed, and in the semi darkness they had no means of recognizing the deception.

"Where in the world have you been?" one of them cried, springing forward.

Mullen dodged the hand which the man stretched out to him and set out once more down the passage. It was almost absolutely black with the priests by this time, and they ran out to surround him, as if surprised by his strange action.

One of them who was nearest whispered in his ear words which gave him important information.

"Gungha Lin has been looking for you, looking for you everywhere! He has those two prisoners, and he says they are to be sunk in the well down in the cellar; he wants you to attend to it."

At least, his cousin was still alive.

In the excitement of the moment one wild plan flashed over Mullen, and he determined to cast prudence to the winds and venture it.

Lowering his voice into a deep, grumbling whisper, he demanded, "Where are the bodies?"

The reply came instantly.

"In the shrine of Lashmi Gar!"

And then, his pulses throbbing with exultation, Mullen hurried on down the hallway, pushing his way through the crowd of priests who had surrounded him.

He could scarcely believe his good fortune at the discovery which he had made, but as it turned out he was not destined to get out of the adventure quite so easily.

The incident just described had happened in a few seconds, before Mullen came opposite the open doorway. At this instant he was hurrying past it, and the light of a lamp shone in his path.

He felt that this was the crisis of his fate, and he held his breath with anxiety. The issue was the worst that could possibly have been imagined.

Something about his costume attracted the suspicion of the priests. In all probability the drawing up of the robe about his head had left the lower part of his trousers visible; at any rate he suddenly heard a cry behind him, an exclamation of astonishment from the crowd.

He was about to start forward at a run, when he suddenly felt his robe jerked violently backward!

At the same moment several pairs of hands seized him from behind, and there was a yell: "An Englishman!"

Then like a flash Mullen whirled about, and his two revolvers gleamed in the light; abandoning all attempt at disguise, he leveled them at the astounded crowd of priests.

It would not be possible to describe the effect of this move upon the latter, who seemed scarcely able to keep their feet from astonishment.

They gazed at the man with open mouths; and as for Mullen the desperation which he felt must have been written upon his features.

He realized now that he was at the end of his rope, and that everything depended upon his boldness and promptness; he had no care for his own life unless he were able to reach his cousin's side. When he spoke his deep, fierce tones struck terror to the hearts of his cowardly antagonists.

Several of them had snatched knives from their girdles, but apparently no one in the crowd had a revolver.

"The first one of you who moves dies!" Mullen exclaimed, and as the men saw that he meant it the words had the desired effect.

For fully a quarter of a minute the entire crowd remained standing where they were, in absolute silence, the priests apparently trying to grasp the state of affairs in its fullness, and Mullen endeavoring to form his plan.

His first impulse was to turn and make a dash down the corridor to the shrine of the god; once there he would shout to his cousin, and the two could retreat down one of the hallways, and fight to the last gasp.

But a better plan occurred to him a few seconds later, and he advanced slowly upon the trembling natives; the foremost of them—the man who had jerked the robe from Mullen's shoulders—was so overcome with terror that he was scarcely able to keep his balance.

Mullen thrust the muzzle of one of his revolvers directly in the man's face.

"Get back into that room," he muttered hoarsely. "If any one of you makes a sound I will shoot him on the spot!"

And as the men obeyed the command Mullen saw that he was going to succeed in his bold move. The priests were only too glad to get away from the menacing weapon, and like a flock of sheep they gathered in the doorway and crowded back.

It was only a few seconds more before they were all in the room. And then Mullen, casting one quick glance at the

door before him, saw that there were a lock and key to it. And after coolly surveying his crowd of prisoners and making sure that none of them had any intentions of resistance, he thrust one of his revolvers into his belt, and with his free hand put the key on the other side of the door.

"You remain in this room," he said sternly, "and remember, if I hear a cry or a sound, I shall come back here and not a man of you will get out alive."

And then as he saw that his words were understood, he backed slowly out of the doorway, and a moment later turned the key.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS TUNNEL.

MULLEN was exultant over his triumph. He turned and rushed down the hallway to apprize the boatswain.

"Come out, Robinson," he whispered; "quick!"

But there was another unpleasant shock in store for Mullen, on the same order as the previous one.

There was no answer, and as he reached inside and groped about he found that the place was deserted. Robinson had disappeared.

"Can they have captured him?" Mullen asked himself in alarm.

He knew that Robinson was armed, and that he was not the man to give up without a struggle.

"He must have gone of his own accord," Mullen decided.

Wherever he was, Mullen was only a second in concluding that there was no necessity of searching for him, for Robinson was able to take care of himself. The thing to do was to find Howard Bland; and knowing where he was, Mullen believed that it would not take him very long to do this.

He started on once more, arranging the cape about his head as he did so. Only a short distance in front of him was the door which led into the familiar apartments of Gungha Lin; to his right was the passageway which led into the shrine towards which he was bound.

As Morfit stopped there to listen for a moment he made an unpleasant discovery. Down the passageway he saw a light shining and heard voices; they were familar voices by this time, which he recognized as those of the chanting priests.

"Good heavens! it's some more of those infernal fanatics," he thought. "What am I to do?"

He saw the curtain behind which he had concealed himself before, but he hated to adopt that plan; for all he knew, he might already be too late, and accordingly every second was precious.

"It may be that they are carrying off the bodies at this very moment," he thought.

The possibility rendered Mullen as desperate and savage as a tiger; as the lights and the shuffling feet came nearer he suddenly concluded to adopt a desperate measure.

He started forward towards the door of Gungha Lin's room.

"If I only can get into that secret passage," he thought, "all will be well."

Fortunately the door was open on a crack, and Mullen could see inside. He glanced in, and to his delight noted that the room was empty, or at any rate as much of it as he could see. He concluded to take the risk, and gripping his revolvers glided inside.

"If Gungha Lin is here," was his thought, "I will shoot him, and then get into that secret tunnel; nobody can find me until I come out where Howard is, and then I don't care who sees me."

But he found that the room was deserted, so that desperate measure was not necessary. He ran straight to the secret door, and flinging it open, crouched down and slipped inside.

He was just in time to close it once more behind him as the sound of the chanting swelled loud enough to tell him that the priests were opposite the door of the room. Mullen's one thought was to get Howard into this passage, and he wormed his way along with desperate swiftness.

It could not have been more than a minute before his head suddenly struck against something in front, and reaching forward, he found that he had come to the door.

At last the shrine of Lashmi Gar was before him. Here Mullen hesitated

for a second or two to gather his breath, and to decide definitely upon a plan of action.

He believed that the act of opening that door would precipitate him in one instant into the midst of a scene of the wildest excitement; for he knew that the tunnel opened directly into the wall of the shrine, without curtain or any sort of concealment.

In all probability his head would be seen the instant it appeared, and then he would have nothing to do but to draw his weapons and hold his enemies at bay.

But Mullen had been working and fighting long for this very opportunity, and now that it had come, he was not the man to hesitate. All he stopped for was to think over the lay of the land outside, and to determine the best place to which he and his cousin could retreat to make their fight. Then, gripping his weapons tightly and gathering his faculties, he pressed slowly against the door.

For a moment it resisted his efforts, and Mullen believed it must be locked; but at one side he discovered a catch, which was the cause of the trouble, and pulling it down, he again pressed outward.

He gritted his teeth together grimly as he felt it giving way.

It had opened but the slightest crack before faint sounds were borne to his ear; he stopped to listen for a second.

"They are carrying on the same kind of ceremony as before," he thought, "but I'll pretty soon put a stop to that chanting."

Then again he slowly pressed the door farther and farther outward, and in a few seconds he had a view of the rear portion of the temple.

There was nobody in sight, however, though the noises grew louder and Mullen was confident that his enemies were in the place. As the barrier swung open he was expecting at any instant to hear some one give the alarm, and was determined that when that happened he would make his leap.

Still, he pressed on and on, until the heavy stone door was opened fully a foot and he could see half the shrine; still, however, he caught sight of none of the priests, for the image was up at the other end of the temple, which Mullen could not see until he had got out from behind the door.

Suddenly, wearying of the suspense, and determined to end it all at once, he gave the door one push harder than before, so that it swung back almost to the wall; and then the whole situation was plainly disclosed to his view.

He gave one glance, and it was all he could do to master a wild yell of triumph which rose to his lips as he discovered the fact that lying directly in front of the image of Lashmi Gar were two litters, each with a covered body upon it.

"I am in time!" he gasped. "We are saved!"

The situation in the temple in a few words was this: The idol was standing on the platform as before, with the jewel caskets lying in front of it—the same which Mullen had seen and rifled in the priest's room; the two litters were surrounded by a group of perhaps a dozen priests, who were moving up and down in some sort of a mystic dance, and muttering a kind of prayer.

Mullen caught some of the words, and he made out the fact that they were imploring the god to speak and announce his wishes.

"Perhaps it is to tell what is to be done with the prisoners," was his thought.

In the mean time he was engaged in creeping stealthily out of the open doorway, for to his delight he had seen that the priests' backs were all turned towards him, and that there was no one else in the shrine. There seemed to be a chance of his being able to reach a place of concealment without being observed.

"And every second is so much gained," he thought. "Our rescuers are probably on their way now."

But Mullen had no time to lose in getting out of sight, for close beside him was the open doorway leading from the room of Gungha Lin; it was there that he had heard the priests, and now again he heard their footsteps, and voices talking.

For all he knew, some one might come into sight there at any instant, and so it took him but a short while to glide out of the passage.

To close the door swiftly was the work

of only a second more, and then he stole rapidly along; he expected every instant that some of the priests would hear him and turn, but they were apparently too busily engaged in their prayers.

Their cries were now rising in volume and intensity, and it seemed as if the moment when Lashmi Gar would do his talking must be near at hand.

Mullen had gone only about twenty or thirty feet before he came to one of the dark alcoves which he had noticed, and finding it deserted he slipped inside unseen. Then, almost overcome after the intense excitement under which he had labored, he leaned back against the wall and gasped for breath.

At no time in the course of his adventures had Mullen felt quite so secure as now, for he was in possession of his weapons, and he knew that his cousin was safe.

Still, however, the situation was one of desperate peril, as he realized when he thought of the priests he had locked up in the room, and of Robinson, who must be roaming somewhere about the temple.

"The fight can't be put off very long," he thought.

The two bodies still lay motionless, and the priests still kept up their cries.

These had now mounted to a perfect roar of frenzied exclamations; the men were imploring the god to speak, and as Mullen listened he managed to make out more and more of the words. He found that his first supposition was quite correct.

Lashmi Gar was being implored to announce his wish as to what was to be done with the bodies of the two men who had insulted him.

"I suppose they want to get them hidden where there will be no possibility of the authorities finding them, however much they search," thought Mullen.

He did not watch the proceedings much longer, for he found another thing to attend to, his thoughts being still concentrated upon the battle which he knew to be impending.

"I want to discover some place where we can best defend ourselves," he thought, "for no doubt these priests will get firearms themselves very soon."

Mullen glanced around him in the place where he was hidden; it was a dark, narrow hallway, seeming to run back a considerable distance. There was no light, however, and Mullen could not tell what it was like.

He ventured to make his way back a short distance in order to explore.

He groped his way along the wall, and found that the passage grew narrower, running back for fully twenty yards. Then suddenly he came to the end of it, which he discovered to be a flight of steps.

Above was a narrow trap door, and a faint light came down; seeing this, Mullen determined to prosecute his search still further.

"For, if that's a room up there," he thought, "and if this is the only entrance, we are safe, as sure as I am alive; they could never capture us there."

And instantly he began creeping up.

Step by step he ascended, until his head was almost on a level with the trap door. It was rather a risky business—that of peering out into the room—and Mullen hesitated.

But it was only for a moment, for he had no time to lose. Already he began to be haunted by the thought that the priests might be carrying out the body of his cousin.

Accordingly he climbed up one step more, and glanced about him; and as he did so he gave a start of delight.

Just as he had hoped, he found he was in a narrow room, not much larger than the cell in which he had been confined.

"This is the place for us!" he thought.

He noticed, however, another thing which caused him to climb still higher, another opening to the room. It was in the wall, and Mullen found that the light which illuminated the place was streaming in there.

"Where in the world can it come from?" he wondered.

He was still more puzzled when he came to glance in; the tunnel ran slantingly, and seemed to lead directly into the temple; in fact, straight towards the idol's resting place!

"Good heavens!" thought Mullen. "The place seems to be full of secret

tunnels! What in the world can this one mean?"

His astonishment was still greater when he came to glance down the passage. It led directly to the shrine of Lashmi Gar; as if through a huge telescope, Mullen saw the idol and the priests standing in front of it, directly in full view.

Mullen stood there for a moment or two pondering, racking his brains in vain for an explanation of the matter.

The sounds of the priests' voices came to him in a confused murmur, but it was only a short while later that another sound reached his hears, which promptly put an end to his speculations, and caused him to retreat towards the ladder once more.

One of the priests had suddenly turned and raised his arms excitedly.

"Gungha Lin!" he cried; and his voice was echoed by a general cry of welcome.

As Mullen heard this and realized that the high priest must have entered the temple, he turned and darted towards the stairway once more.

"If that fellow's there, it's likely things will begin to happen!" thought the Englishman, "so I must get back."

As Mullen sprang across the room he noticed one other circumstance which sank in his mind, though in the present excitement he had no time to think of it; it was that there was one point at which, when he passed it, the sounds of the cries of the priests swelled out loud and clear, in a peculiar way; but Mullen was so bent on getting down that ladder and in sight of the scene of action once more that he had no thought left for that.

He climbed rapidly down and glided forward to the light at the entrance of the little passage, and as he glanced out once more he was just in time to see the high priest, decked in his very finest robes of state, glittering with jewels from head to foot, and with a towering crown upon his head, advancing in solemn state up the center of the room.

The priests had relapsed into silence, and crowded off to one side. Followed by a train of at least twenty or thirty of his attendants the man advanced towards the throne of the god and the litters where his two victims were still stretched out.

Mullen watched the scene, his heart throbbing with excitement; not a word was spoken until Gungha Lin halted in front of the last named objects, and until the priests of his train had gathered about him on either side.

Then he raised his hands with an imperious gesture, at which the men sank upon their knees; Gungha Lin himself bowed down several times before the shrine, and then in a deep and impressive tone he spoke:

"Has Lashmi Gar yet announced his will?"

There was a moment or two of silence, as if none of the men dared reply; the high priest signaled one of them by a glance, and the man responded:

"For over an hour we have implored him," he said. "No answer has come yet."

"Ye have no faith!" said Gungha Lin rebukingly. "That is why he does not speak!"

There was a murmur of protest among the priests, and then after a minute or two more of silence, Gungha Lin again raised his hands with an imperious gesture.

"Once more I shall try you," he said. "Pray him for the honor of his name; pray him believingly, and he will answer. I will await the issue."

And then slowly and majestically the man turned and walked across the room. The priests waited until he was out of the circle, and then they once more closed about the litter of the god and began their wild cries.

It was only a few seconds more before these had risen to a perfect babel of frenzied implorings; the men flung themselves upon the ground in every conceivable gesture, clutching at the feet of the image, and shrieking to him to honor their prayers.

Under ordinary circumstances, Mullen would have been interested in this strange exhibition of fanatic superstition; but as it was, he scarcely saw or heard anything of it.

All his thoughts were taken up with another fact which had been made evident to him at the same moment. He gave a start of consternation as he real-

ized it, and then, half involuntarily, began shrinking back into the black passage, step by step, crouching and moving with the stealth of a cat.

The fact which had so alarmed him was simply this—Gungha Lin was coming straight towards the passage where he was hiding.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

THE high priest continued his majestic advance across the room, every step he took being duplicated by one on the part of the Englishman, who at last had shrunk back to the very end of the chamber.

"What in the world can he be coming here for?" Mullen asked himself. "It was just my luck to pick out this particular spot!"

However, it seemed likely that the fellow had no other purpose in coming here but to await at the entrance the result of the priests' entreaties.

Mullen buoyed himself up with this thought, and tried to think that he was in no danger of discovery, but when the high priest had reached the portal, he did not stop his advance.

On the contrary, he behaved in a most unexpected and startling manner. Gathering up his robes, he advanced down the hallway almost at a run, evidently without any further thought of his imperial dignity.

Mullen had barely presence of mind and time enough to crouch down in a corner before the man was upon him.

The Englishman had his revolvers gripped tight, and was ready to pull the triggers at the first sign that he had been discovered.

There was an instant or two of suspense, during which the issue hung in the balance, but the crisis passed. Gungha Lin was so absorbed in his own thoughts that though his foot brushed the edge of Mullen's body, he never noticed it.

A second or two later he reached the foot of the ladder, and then Mullen knew from the sounds that he was climbing up; and a second or two later he disappeared from view. The next instant Mullen heard him softly lower the trap door, shutting out all light and sound.

Mullen abandoned the attempt to fathom the mystery, and concentrated his attention once more on the litters before the god.

The prayers of the priests had now about reached their climax, for after the fashion of devotees of the native religion, they had worked themselves into a fierce ecstasy of excitement.

They were dancing about the shrine, or groveling on the floor, shrieking and screaming, and lacerating their bare arms until the blood flowed. The scene was an indescribably weird and uncanny one, taking place as it did in the dimly lighted chamber, and under circumstances of so much anxiety for the onlooker.

He waited in crouching attitude for perhaps three or four seconds more, and then, all of a sudden, the end sought was gained. And as Mullen witnessed the apparent phenomenon, with the suddenness of a thunderbolt the whole truth flashed over him.

One of the priests, who was nearest the image, had faced about, lifting his hands, his face a picture of insane delight.

"Hark, hark!" he shrieked, his voice pealing above the wild uproar. "Listen, he is speaking!"

Every man in that wild mass instantaneously became motionless as a statue.

The silence lasted for several seconds more, during which the faces of the priests were transfixed with frenzied eagerness and expectation; then suddenly the deathlike silence was broken by a voice, deep and solemn, which echoed through the place, and reached even Mullen's ears.

"Your prayers are answered, my children," said the voice. "I will speak my will."

The scene was such an impressive one that even Mullen had been awed for an instant.

As for the priests, the effect upon them was indescribable; they seemed to be stricken in every limb with terror, and to a man sank down upon the ground, hiding their faces.

Again came a long and solemn silence, but at last once more the voice was heard. The sound came unmistakably directly from the figure of Lashmi Gar. And standing, as the latter did, far from any place where the speaker could have been concealed, it was no wonder that every one believed in the miracle.

"My children," said the voice, "you have served me faithfully, and you shall not fail of your reward; the villains who offered me insult have fallen before your vengeance, and I have rejoiced at the sight of their corpses."

Again came a silence, followed by a low murmur from the prostrate men; then the voice went on.

"It is time that they were taken away," it said, "for already their friends are searching. Let them be carried to the lowest vaults of the temple, where there is a secret well, known only to Gungha Lin; let stones be tied about their bodies, and when they are sunk there they will never rise to tell the tale. Upon the man who shall betray their whereabouts shall fall my wrath in countless horrors."

A shudder was heard from the terrified figures upon the temple floor; none of them dared to raise his head, but each stretched out his hands imploringly for mercy. There was a second or two more of silence, and then for the last time the voice muttered, "I have spoken."

After that, though the god did not again make a move, fully half a minute elapsed without one of the priests venturing to rise; it seemed almost as if the men had been struck dead with terror.

When finally an interruption came it was from an entirely different source.

Mullen, who had naturally been watching the scene with the most intense interest, heard a door open, and glancing out, saw a man rush in from the hallway through which Gungha Lin and his procession had entered.

He seemed to be breathless and excited, but he paused for a moment when he saw the state of affairs.

But it appeared that even that was not enough to stop him. He rushed forward, and his excited cry rang through the temple:

"Where is Gungha Lin? Quick! Where is Gungha Lin?"

Several of the priests raised their heads and gazed at him in mingled wrath and astonishment; as for Mullen, he crouched back in the shadow, gripping his revolvers tight.

"Either Robinson has been seen," he muttered grimly, "or else those men are out of the room; in either case it is a fight."

It was several seconds before the man could get any kind of a reply to his questions from the horrified priests, but as he continued his excited cries as to Gungha Lin's whereabouts, one of the men nodded in the direction of the alcove.

The Englishman shrank back just as the newcomer darted toward the spot; at the same time the trap door above was opened once more, and as the faint light shone down again, Mullen made out the figure of the high priest in his jeweled robes in the act of descending.

He seemed to have heard the cries, for he came with great swiftness; as it was, however, he was barely in time to reach the foot of the ladder before the excited messenger had reached his side.

"Gungha Lin," the man gasped, "quick!"

"What is the matter?" cried the high priest.

"The Englishmen," the man panted, "the Englishmen!"

"What about them?" cried the other. "Quick!"

The man was so excited and out of breath that he could only stammer and gasp at first, and Mullen, in his excitement, was leaning forward reckless of the consequences; but neither of the two men had any eyes for him.

After several eager and even fierce demands, the high priest at last managed to learn the facts; Mullen, of course, also heard them, and he found to his wild delight that neither of his previous suppositions was the correct one.

"They are coming," the man panted, "whole crowds of them—the soldiers!"

"Where? What do you mean?" roared Gungha Lin.

"Outside—hundreds of them!—the English troops—and the governor and the sailors——"

"What do they want?" shrieked the

high priest, now almost beside himself with wrath.

"They are looking for the prisoners —they are coming inside!"

"Impossible!" gasped Gungha Lin. "Are not the crowd——"

"They are all there," was the man's reply, "according to your orders; they have surrounded the temple, and there will surely be a fight, for the English are determined to force their way in."

Mullen's state of mind, when he heard this announcement, may be imagined; he knew that a bloody battle was about to take place.

But this, waged without the temple, could do his cousin no good.

"It is I only that can save him," Mullen told himself.

Already Gungha Lin, with a fierce cry of rage, had leaped forward.

"Let them come!" he shrieked, as he bounded across the floor of the temple; "Lashmi Gar has given his commands, and they shall be obeyed!"

The high priest, his face the picture of blazing wrath, was standing directly in front of the image of the god, raising his hands in a wild gesture of triumph.

"They will come!" he shrieked; "they will force their way in here; but before they do that the prisoners will be out of sight forever!"

Then he whirled about on his followers, who had crowded about him, echoing his wishes with triumphant cheers.

"Away with them!" he yelled. "Away with them!"

At the same instant Morfit Mullen made his move; he bounded forward at the very top of his speed, but the direction which he took was not the one which might have been expected—he had turned and was rushing up into the narrow passage.

Three steps sufficed to bring him to the foot of the ladder, and half a dozen more to the top of it; in another second he was inside and had let the trap door fall behind him.

Reaching forward, he gave one glance down the long tunnel into the temple; he saw the priests thronging about the idol, in the very act of lifting the litters upon which the corpses lay, while standing on the steps of the throne was Gungha Lin, yelling to them to be quick.

As his eye took the situation in, Mullen sprang back to the spot he had noticed before in the very center of the tiny apartment.

As he did so, the cries from below swelled to a perfect roar; Mullen faced about, his back towards the idol and his voice directed to the opposite side of the room, which was a smooth and concave surface. Then, in a deep but loud and penetrating voice, he shouted in the native dialect, "Stop!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE GOD'S COMMAND.

An instant later Mullen realized, with a throb of delight, that his plan had succeeded; the fierce roar from below, which had been almost deafening, ceased, and an absolute silence prevailed.

And then, without risking his success by a single second of delay, Mullen continued in the same tone as before:

"Let no man move from the spot where he is standing! Set down the bodies of the two Englishmen! Listen to my words!"

Again Mullen paused for breath, and to collect his thoughts; the absolute silence still continued; by bending forward he saw that he could get a glimpse down the narrow tunnel.

The priests were gazing at the image, trembling in every limb; most prominent of all was the high priest, who had staggered back as if struck by a bolt of lightning, his face the picture of amazement and terror.

Mullen did not believe that he could keep up the deception very long, so he lost no time; his voice deepened as he proceeded:

"Lashmi Gar has had enough of trembling by the priests of his own temple, of being deceived and dishonored by them! The time has come to speak! Let every man listen to my words, and disobey them at the peril of his life! Let no one stir from this room until I have finished!

"There is a traitor in this temple! A traitor who has defied and insulted me beyond belief! The man is the one who now stands at my feet, confident in his own powers! It is Gungha Lin!"

As Mullen again paused he could hear a hoarse murmur of consternation and terror from the crowd below. He darted forward and glanced down into the temple.

He was just in time to see a move which he had expected on the part of the high priest. The man had recovered from his fright; it had at last become clear to him that this was a stroke of his enemies.

He suddenly sprang across the room in the direction of the passage leading to Mullen's vantage point.

Like a flash the Englishman leaped back to the "whispering gallery" and raised his voice for another warning.

"Halt!" he cried. "Who dares to disobey my orders? Stop him! The traitor! Kill him as he runs! Is there no man dare to strike for Lashmi Gar in his own temple?"

At this instant an unexpected sound reached his ears; above all the confusion, hoarse cries, and shuffling footsteps had come a yell, "Halt!"

It was in good old familar English, and Mullen recognized the tone with a thrill of delight; it was that of Boatswain Robinson, and he did not need to see the scene of which that sound was an outcome.

He pictured the sturdy old sailor, his revolver in his hand, leveled at the head of Gungha Lin; but unexpected as this development was, it was not too much for Mullen's wit.

"Ha!" he cried, his voice shrinking back to the former deep and solemn tone. "Is it true that in Lashmi Gar's temple no one dares obey his command but a foreigner? Has it indeed come that I must call in strangers to do my will? There is no one among my servants who wishes to secure my favor!"

Mullen paused again for a moment, and stole forward to take another glance at the scene below. Gungha Lin and the boatswain were not visible.

In front of the image stood fully half a dozen of the priests gazing at it with faces blazing with wrath; they were clutching their knives or swords with determination, and Mullen realized with a sense of triumph that he had no longer anything to fear from Gungha Lin.

"I have conquered at last," he gasped, and again he darted back in front of the concave wall.

"It is well," he said; "I see that you still mean to serve me. I will show you to what depths of villainy this Gungha Lin has sunk. Last night he came into this temple by a secret passage which he alone knows, but which I will show you, and while he thought he was alone he robbed one of the caskets in front of my throne of its most precious jewels."

A subdued murmur of horror broke out among the priests.

"Let some one step forward and open the caskets," Mullen continued, "and see if Lashmi Gar speaks truly."

Mullen ceased and crept forward to watch the scene which followed. Several of the priests leaped up at the same instant, eager to obey the commands of the dreaded deity. They flung open the chests, and instantly one of them started back with a yell of rage. He held up one of the caskets in front of his astounded comrades, to show them that it was indeed empty.

Mullen darted back once more, and the cries of rage which reached him were wild and furious.

"But that is not all," he cried, raising his voice. "Worse than this has he done; one of my faithful followers—Ablah—was watching him; and in order that he might not tell of the crime, Gungha Lin prepared poison for him to drink. Let some one lift the covers from the two bodies!"

Mullen could not observe the result, for the two litters had been carried beyond his view; but he remained where he was, and a second later the shrieks of horror which reached him were enough to tell him of what had happened.

He waited only a few seconds, however, for he wished to make sure that by no chance might Gungha Lin remain to disclose the trick by which the god did his speaking.

Accordingly, his next command sealed the fate of the villainous priest.

"Let some one who honors Lashmi Gar, and will obey his orders, step forward!"

There was a shout from below, and Mullen, looking down, saw that the idol was surrounded by a great crowd of the natives.

"Let six of you take him below," he said in a stern, solemn voice; "the fate which I mean to visit upon him is that which he intended for the strangers. Let a stone be tied about his body, and let him be sunk in the well; if he resists, let him die on the spot, and my favor will rest upon the man who strikes him down. Let no one listen to a word he utters under penalty of my fiercest wrath; I have spoken!"

A perfect yell of rage and vengeance followed this announcement, and as Mullen listened he heard a few seconds later the shrieks of the high priest himself. But they ceased in a very few seconds, and the Englishman knew that the man had been dragged away to his fate. "He is a murderer, and deserves all he gets," was Mullen's thought.

Now there was one other thing he had to do, and again he raised his voice.

"Listen, my children," he said in a quieter tone; "the Englishmen who stole me from the hands of Gungha Lin were really my friends, whom I ordered to take me out of the villain's clutches. They have labored hard in my cause, and they must be shown my highest favor. All night, as you know, one of them has lain before my shrine in the sleep of death; I now restore him once more to life, as the greatest proof of my wondrous power. Raise up the body of the Englishman!"

Mullen could not see what went on, but after a second or two of silence there came a shout of delight from the crowd below, which told him as plainly as anything could have done that his cousin had opened his eyes.

Now, Mullen knew that Howard did not understand a word of the language, and so he ventured in a side speech to relieve his anxiety; he felt assured that none of the natives would understand him, and that his speaking English would only be considered another sign of the god's wonderful power.

"Robinson," he said in a somewhat lower tone, "just explain things to him; this is Mullen, and we are all right!"

Then, without waiting to learn the effect of his venture, he again continued his solemn address to the natives; for the last and most important thing of all was yet to be done.

"There is yet one more of the Englishmen concealed in the temple," he said; "him I will miraculously produce. They must be led out with all honor, as friends of mine, and above all things else the bloodshed which is just now impending outside the temple must be avoided; this is the most important of the commands I lay upon you as your duty. My words must be explained to my followers outside; the Englishmen must be allowed to rejoin their friends, and all must part in peace. Whoever shall dare to offer harm to one of the Englishmen shall be visited with all my wrath; I have spoken!"

Then, pausing only long enough to listen to the murmur of assent which came from the crowd, and to take one glance at the priests who had again prostrated themselves at the feet of the idol, Mullen concluded that his duties had been performed.

"I will now step down and out," he said to himself. "I don't see how anything can trouble us now."

He raised the trap door, slipped through, and in an instant, throwing aside Ablah's robe, he rushed out into the temple.

He came into view just at the moment when the terrified and astonished priests were once more venturing to raise themselves from their attitudes of prostration before the image of Lashmi Gar.

One of them caught sight of him, and with a cry rose to his feet; the rest, hearing his shout, joined in, and in a few seconds more Mullen was surrounded by the throng of fanatic priests.

As he expected, the men could not succeed in showing him honor enough, fairly crouching down before him and imploring his pardon for their treatment of him; but Mullen waved them impatiently aside, and stepped forward to another group, which interested him more.

In the center of the room lay the two litters, one with the form of Ablah, still insensible, upon it. On the other sat Howard Bland, with Boatswain Robinson, his revolvers still in his hand, standing by his side. The two were staring in utter consternation at the apparition which had so suddenly appeared.

Mullen bounded to them and seized

them by the hands; the delight of the three men it would not be possible to describe.

"In heaven's name, old man," gasped Howard, "what does this mean?"

"Hush! Not a word," was the reply, "until we get out of here."

Then he turned and faced the priests; by this time the men had gathered about them in a semicircle, still continuing their groveling salutations.

Mullen did not speak a word, for fear that his voice might be recognized by the natives; but he rose to his feet, and taking his two friends by the arms set out boldly towards the door.

Instantly, as his purpose was made plain, several of the priests rushed before them and humbly begged to be allowed to show the way; by this time the news of Lashmi Gar's astounding announcement had evidently been spread all over the temple, for in the corridor Mullen found a perfect mob, probably including some of the men he had locked up.

They all made way respectfully before them, and the three marched on in what was speedily formed into a procession of triumph; several more turns were made through the winding passageway, and then a wide door was suddenly flung open, and the three Englishmen found themselves standing in front of the main temple of Lashmi Gar.

The tremendous building was fairly packed with a mob of the wild eyed natives, and for a moment Mullen hesitated, uncertain as to what might happen to them there; but he saw that several of the priests had mounted the altar, and had evidently told the astounded multitude of what had taken place inside.

The instant the three put in an appearance a perfect thunder of shouts burst from the throats of the crowd; they waved their hands and danced about in the wildest exultation. As Mullen and his two companions drew nearer, they were seized and lifted upon the shoulders of the mob, and borne in a surging mass towards the door at the other side of the building, which Mullen had no doubt led to the street.

The crush at this point was frightful, for all the mob seemed striving to get near the three men, even to touch the edge of their clothing; at last, however, on the top of the surging mob they were borne outside, and there another throng greeted them.

The scene confronting them was a weird and impressive one. The street was fairly jammed with a howling mass of natives, extending for perhaps fifty yards in either direction. From the vantage point of the high steps, Mullen saw what interested him still more—another small army of men, in the familiar uniform of the English garrison.

In their very forefront were about a score of white costumes, which Mullen had no doubt belonged to the men from the Baltimore.

It was some time, however, before he could get near them, for it was necessary for the two to remain in sight of the shouting natives for some time before, finally, the latter set out to carry them through the crowd in the direction of the troops.

The three were laughing merrily to themselves as they fancied what must be the consternation of their friends at this state of affairs; however, some explanation had been given them in time, and the expected battle was avoided.

The troops were resting upon their arms, watching the scene, when finally upon the shoulders of their new friends the three "heroes" were delivered into the hands of their friends.

"In the name of St. George," the baronet gasped, when at last the three managed to get rid of the natives, "what does this all mean?"

And Howard Bland and the boatswain were equally eager in their inquiries; but Mullen ventured not a word of reply until he was safely away from the crowd.

"Let's get back to the yacht as quickly as we can," he said. "Nobody knows when the trick may be discovered."

And not until the entire party was safely on board the Baltimore did Mullen at last consent to tell the story of his desperate adventures. The chief interest of the narrative naturally centered in his story of how the talking of Lashmi Gar was managed.

"I have often heard of whispering galleries," Mullen explained, "but I never saw one that worked as perfectly

as this; of course, it was made especially for the purpose."

"The principle is a very simple one," said the baronet. "I knew it must be either that or else ventriloquism by which the priests managed their trick. As you say, there is a concave surface behind the idol and another one into which you talk; the two are so arranged that they serve as focuses for the sound waves, and any one who stands within the focus can hear the slightest whisper. It is all a matter of mathematics. It can be done with absolute accuracy, you know."

"I am surprised that any of those natives were clever enough to manage it," said Howard.

Mullen having told his story, and also that of Harrison, was naturally anxious to ask some questions of the rest.

"How did you come to leave your hiding place, boatswain?" he inquired. "Were you discovered?"

"No," the man answered, "but I saw them carrying Mr. Howard's body out; they had had him in one of the rooms, and as I knew that was what you were searching for, I thought I had better follow."

"And where did you stay?" Mullen wanted to know.

"I hid just behind the door in the hallway. When I heard that god begin to talk, I knew it was some trick; and then the second time I recognized your voice. You talk that native dialect with a fearful accent, though I supposed the priests were too frightened to notice it. When I saw that fellow Gungha Lin start for the passageway, I knew just what it meant, and so I stopped him."

"It is precious lucky you had that much presence of mind," said Mullen. "It was just in the nick of time, for I was afraid I was going to fail."

"Fancy what my feelings must have been," laughed Howard, "when I heard that god begin to talk; my hair fairly rose on end, though I understood not a word of what he said. I hadn't the slightest idea what all the rest of the noise was about."

"Well, it's all over now," laughed Mullen. "It was a fearful adventure, and I don't think I would go through it again for all the jewels of Lashmi Gar's temple."

"It was all my fault," added Howard Bland. "By great Scott! I've paid pretty dearly for my fun. I'll never forget my experiences in that cell as long as I live, and it's the last time I shall ever think it sport to steal a god."

THE END.

TO A GULL.

SOUL of bereaved one, troubled and tossed,
Searching the sea for the one that was lost;
Skimming the air or riding the wave,
Seeking forever that precious one's grave;
Bird of the sea, is it true, is it true,
That the soul of some mourning one lives within you?

Whom art thou seeking, some brother or son
Who sank to his rest ere his voyage was done?
Or was it a husband, or lover so brave,
Who found an unmarked and untended grave?
Bird of the sea, is it true, is it true,
That the sea holds the one who is dearest to you?

Bird of the sea, when the dismal winds wail,
And the breast of the ocean is swept by the gale,
When the demons of storm in their fierce anger rave,
And you sink 'neath their wrath to a watery grave,
Bird of the sea, is it true, is it true,
That the loved and the lost you find waiting for you?

Arthur J. Burdick.

AT SHARP BEHEST.

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

A story of the Mohawk Valley, in which an extraordinary ceremony is enacted. This leads to a train of circumstances precipitating exciting times in the lives of those most intimately concerned.

CHAPTER I.

IS IT THE SHADOW OF TRAGEDY?

IT was early in my career for me to feel the weariness of exhaustion. I was scarcely twenty five, and had practised my profession, that of medicine and surgery, for less than three years.

I was robust, full of nervous energy and love for the work I had chosen as my life vocation.

But it happened that in the spring three wealthy families had given me charge of some very difficult cases in which the lives of well loved members of their families depended upon some rather bold experiments, constant attention, and nerve wracking study. Two of these patients, one an elderly man and the other a young lady, had been given up by their regular physicians.

Like all young physicians, I had felt a sense of pride that these difficult cures had been confided to me, and went at them with all the vigor and hope of youth. I bore upon my shoulders a sense of responsibility that older practitioners learn to set aside. My very youth, and the determination to succeed, made me desperate and bold.

I tried the experiments the older heads had advised against. I spent sleepless nights with pencil and paper producing formula after formula. I spent hours in my laboratory testing rare combinations of drugs, some almost unknown and some not yet acknowledged in the field of medicine by the conservatives of my school.

The result of all this, after weeks of the most unremitting toil, was success. My patients got well, and I fell ill. My own attendant, Dr. Thornton, the kind old physician of my family, imperatively forbade all work.

"There's no use, Stagg," he said, as he felt my pulse, looked at my tongue, and shook his gray head sorrowfully. "You've done well for others, but you've nearly killed yourself. Neither your physical being nor your mental powers will stand this strain. You've got to give up for a few months and go away to rest."

"Can't I rest here, doctor?" I asked, "here" being the city of New York, "then I can keep an eye on——"

The old physician snorted.

"Rest here! Yes, you can rest in Woodlawn Cemetery if you want to. I was silly enough to argue from the point of view that you had more or less desire to live."

"Live! Of course, I want to live."

He waved his hand as if that settled the matter conclusively without further argument.

"Then," he continued, "If you want to live, there is just one way to do it. You must obey orders."

I was lying on the sofa in my library. I closed my eyes and reflected.

It was a bitter thing to think of, giving up just when I had begun to hear my name spoken with respect, just as I was learning to know the sweet fame born of success, but what good would all the success, fame, or anything else do me, if I broke down permanently?

The relaxation from practice did not present any financial difficulties, for I had inherited a small fortune, was alone in the world, and could easily afford to take a rest.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked. "Go off on a hunting trip? Start for Europe?"

"Neither!" came the answer rather explosively. "I want you to rest. I know you and your hunting trips,

tramping miles a day after a poor innocent deer, or climbing mountains in pursuit of a miserable, worthless bear. And I know your European trips, shooting from London to Paris, then on to the Mediterranean, to Rome, and—bosh! Is that resting?"

"I've known you to prescribe both," I said weakly.

"True. You have known me to prescribe arsenic. Shall I therefore dose you with some, and kill you? Come, Stagg! don't be a fool. I am going to give you the pleasantest prescription I ever gave anybody."

"Go ahead," I said with a smile.

"Something odd, yet something that brings to my mind sweet visions of bucolic pleasures. There is an invigorating tonic in the very air I breathe as I think of it. You have some cousins in Utica, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Well fixed, keep horses and all that?"

"Yes."

"Fine country round there for riding; no excitement, yet not a trackless wilderness. Fine valley, the Mohawk. Best farms, best milk, good people. Do you begin to see?"

"I've seen."

"Then I peremptorily order you to pack up, go to your cousin's, buy or beg a horse, and spend your time riding or driving around the country."

"But wouldn't Westchester County do? The roads are good, the——"

"That's just it. The roads are too good. Too many people use them. You'll go up to Westchester County, get into golf, and all that tommyrot, and it won't do you a bit of good. Oneida County is a healthful place, abounds in small towns of picturesque nature, good scenery, and is just the place for you. I am not sending you among strangers, because I don't want you to go among strangers. I don't want you to go to a hotel. You are living in one now, and it has just about finished you. Now, am I to talk all night, or are you willing to go?"

"I'll go."

The old doctor chatted a while, left a prescription which I put up myself and never took, and then departed.

Now, to tell the truth, there was a good deal of sense in the old man's orders. James Stagg, my cousin, lived in good style in Utica, and I had visited that quiet city two or three times, leaving always with something of regret. I loved the blue hills that hemmed in the town in the basin, for so it looks, as if completely surrounded by the tree clad heights of Deerfield, Oriskany, and the Sanquoit range on the south.

It did not take long to make arrangements. I wrote James, telling him the circumstances under which I found myself placed, and asked if I would be an unwelcome guest for a few weeks. I received this answer:

MY DEAR ARNOLD:

Your letter could not have come at a less fortunate time as regards making you comfortable, nor a more fortunate one for your purpose of taking a rest. If there is, on the face of the earth, a house where you can find solitude, it is mine at this writing. Emma and the children left me last week for a visit to her father and mother on the farm near Chautauqua Lake. I am so infernally busy that I don't seem to have time to eat or sleep. There are four servants in the house getting fat and lazy with nothing to do. There are five horses in the stable eating their heads off. So, if you can stand the bachelor end of it, and you ought to be able to enjoy a Stagg party, come along and welcome.

I shall enter into no agreement to entertain you. I am too busy. The house is yours, and all that therein is. Come any time. Your affectionate cousin,

JAMES STAGG.

This was just what I wanted, though perhaps not quite what the doctor had in mind.

I went.

My cousin James was a lawyer. His father had been one before him. He was therefore born to the profession, and I am constrained by truth to say that he adorned it. For two years he had been the district attorney of Oneida County.

I found my cousin's house on Genesee Street with shades down, a somber look of vacancy over everything. But in reply to my ring a servant came to the door and admitted me.

James was then in a small town some distance away, on an important case, it being a peculiar fad of his, in criminal prosecutions, to look up evidence himself.

I made myself at home. The first day I did nothing but loll around the well filled library, and smoke his excellent

cigars. The next day I wandered to the stables and looked at a couple of new horses.

One of these was a fine bay, purchased, not because James wanted it, but because a friend had been pushed for money and wished to sell the animal to some one who would be sure to give it a good home.

As its great limpid eyes looked at me from its box stall I experienced a sort of thrill. There was my medicine.

That afternoon I took a short canter down along the Mohawk towards Frankfort. It was a cool day, the air was full of ozone, and I felt that I was already on the road to perfect health.

This became my daily practice.

James came home when I had been there three days. We sat up late that evening, smoking and chatting. He inquired into my case. He nodded wisely when I told him what my physician had said.

"The old gentleman knew a thing or two, Arnold," he remarked. "He knew you wanted rest for a tired brain and gentle exercise for a neglected body. The bay horse is just the creature for you. He is powerful enough to carry you anywhere. He is gentle. You can stroll with the bridle on your arm in shady lanes, and he will follow. You can let him graze, and lie on your back and read your favorite authors.

"Go in and win. Forget everything but the object of the moment—rest. I may appear at times somewhat inhospitable, but I assure you I want you to make this place your home as long as you wish. At any rate, you cannot leave before Em comes back, and that will not be much before September, when school opens."

I thanked James, of course, and felt contented.

Each day, if my cousin was at home, we chatted a bit at breakfast, and then he would hustle off to work, while I would pick out a book from the library, have the bay saddled, and ride away.

James was a marvel to me. He was made of iron, seemingly. He never felt weary. It seemed to me a long time since I had been free from a tired feeling.

I went over all the well known roads. I clattered into and out of quaint villages. I poked my way through pleasant groves and shady valleys. I rode along the beds of shallow streams. I climbed hills with the ever faithful bay at my heels.

For two weeks I led an idle, ideal existence, and grew stronger.

Then I began to explore. I found raw, uncut roads leading through sparsely settled regions. I roamed past farms that seemed cut off from all association with modern progress and throbbing railroads.

As I grew stronger I grew lazy. With strength, there came no fierce desire to return to work. I wanted to spend all my days in those rural scenes with the honest bay.

One morning rain seemed threatening. It was a close, hot day, and the murkiness of the atmosphere took the vigor out of me.

I did not go for my usual ride. By nine o'clock it was raining like the deluge, the air was split by blinding flashes of lightning, and volleys of thunder rolled around overhead with a tremendous acoustic effect.

By noon the clouds had passed away, the sun was shining grandly, a cool breeze made the day enjoyable, and the water that had fallen in the morning had been eagerly drunk up by the parched earth.

I could not resist the temptation to ride. I had the bay saddled, got into my riding boots and jacket, and off I went.

The bay was in great form and spirits. We dashed away up Genesee Street, and out, out into the fair country beyond.

Somewhere between Utica and Clinton I came across a dimly visible track cutting off through some woods. It was evidently a road that had become overrun with grass and weeds after discontinuance. From the general appearance I judged that once it had been quite a thoroughfare.

A farmer passed me on the way to the city with some truck.

"My friend," I said, hailing him, "can you tell me where this road leads?"

"That road don't lead nowhere," he replied promptly. "That is, it don't now. Long time ago that road went to

Pawmuc Mill. But they ain't no mill now, so they ain't no road."

"Is Pawmuc a town?" I asked.

"'Twas a hamlet. 'Tain't nothin' but a ruin now. They's a church, I believe, whar old Parson Lee preaches to them as comes. You know the Lees?"

"I know scarcely any one. I am visiting my cousin in Utica, James Stagg."

The bucolic gentleman opened his eyes wide. Then he laughed.

"I reckon he c'ud tell ye somethin' about the Lees. Ask him about Bob Forrest. Well, good day, mister."

He jogged along, and I sat in the saddle a moment looking at the grass covered road.

The words of the farmer had brought to my mind an imaginary picture. Like those explorers who go thousands of miles from home to poke and dig in ruins at Aztec refuse heaps, I was going to explore a ruin in the heart of Oneida County, one of the most populous counties of New York State.

With a laugh on my lips, I turned the bay's head into the woods and started on my quest.

That which was not a road, having once been a road, was easy of travel to the sure footed bay. We soon reached a stretch of pure country from which nothing of civilization could be seen.

No hint of a town. No sound of the iron horse. Woods stretched away on either side. The music of the birds thrilled me with delight. Even the bay entered into the spirit of the adventure and neighed with pleasure.

Thus we went for miles, through an ever varying beauty of natural scenery. The road wound upward around a hill, and I could see in the far distance, the ribbonlike Mohawk winding its tortuous way towards the Hudson.

The straighter Erie Canal appeared picturesque at that distance, and I caught nothing of its odors. It looked peaceful, as it glistened in the sunlight. It did not seem like the disturbing element it was—the bone at which a horde of hungry politicians were always picking.

I descended again, and found myself in a valley. In former days a stream of some size had gone singing and bubbling over the flat slate bottom. But now a thin, sparkling rivulet was all, and this was lost about half the time in some subterranean course it had stolen for itself under the shade.

At last an exclamation broke from me. I had found the ruin.

There, on the bank of the diminutive stream, were the remains of what had once been a prosperous mill. Not far away there were some houses in which the operatives had dwelt.

One or two, evidently more imposing in other days than their fellows, had no doubt been the homes of owner, superintendent, or manager.

This was the shade of Pawmuc Mills. The tragedy of the play came to me as I looked at the dwindled stream.

The loss of the water power had compelled the removal of the work to a more favored location. Steam power was impracticable in this out of the way place, where coal would have to be carted from a distance.

I dismounted and roamed about among the tumbling ruins. For an hour I speculated on the problem of what had been the result to the various elements that went to make up the working force.

Of course, I knew I could find out all I wanted to know simply by asking James. But I loved to ponder over these things, these simple little tragedies of our quiet country.

What had caused the drying up of the stream? Why had the site for a mill been chosen with so little regard for future possibilities?

Wearying at last of these questions, and finding that it was growing late, I mounted the bay again and started off to return by another path I saw running in another direction from the old mill.

I had scarcely done more than climb out of the valley when the spire of a little white church came into view.

"Ha! The Lees!" I said to myself, or to the bay. "We have chanced upon the church where Parson Lee holds forth. Evidently there is a romance or tragedy touching the Lees. I wonder if the gravestones will give me any clue."

I dismounted at the churchyard gate, now sadly in decay, and allowed the bay to wander by himself and pick up sweet morsels by the roadside.

The church was not locked, nor was

there any evidence that it was used by many. Yet there were fresh wagon tracks to the shed in the rear, showing that Parson Lee still had a congregation, however small.

I wandered first to the little graveyard, and began to read the inscriptions. From where I stood I could see the chimneys of one or two houses, seemingly large and prosperous.

I wondered at this, and resolved to ask James who lived in that almost unknown region.

I did not see the name of Lee on any board or stone. I started, however, when on the costliest, and apparently the newest monument, I read the name "Mary, beloved wife of Robert Forrest."

"Forrest!" I mused. "The farmer said something about Bob Forrest as being connected with the Lees. Was a Lee the murderer of Mary, beloved wife of Robert Forrest? Was she a Lee and did Robert kill her? What is the tragedy that lies hidden under this cold, unspeaking marble?"

Of course, murder was the first thing that came into my mind, because James was district attorney. Then I laughed at the idea of a murder in that peaceful, beautiful spot.

It was growing dusk, but I was in no hurry. I knew it would be a moonlight night, and one of my greatest delights was to canter along on the bay under the rays of the summer moon.

I looked to see where the bay was, and found him contentedly grazing near the fence, and went inside the church.

Two rows of wooden benches, hard and uncomfortable, formed the auditorium. Two oil lamps hung in brackets at the rear, and two more were placed near the little pulpit.

At one side, in front, was a small organ. I wondered what rustic beauty played sweet harmony on that.

I opened it and soon found that sweet harmony was a thing impossible for a rustic beauty or any other kind to extract from it. I shut the thing with a bang, and stood idly looking around.

I was suddenly conscious of a noise. The sound of footsteps came clearly to my ears. It was evident that a man had sprung up out of the earth. How else could one appear so suddenly?

The man was then on the little porch. He was coming in. He passed a window. I could just see in the increasing dusk that he was heavily bearded, and wore rough clothing. Yet he did not seem like a farmer.

At one side there was a window open. Some strange thought flashed into my mind. A feeling that here, in that quiet church, I was to be treated to some whisperings of the tragedy I had imagined.

I leaped through the window, making no noise, and landed on the soft greensward outside.

CHAPTER II.

AN ASTOUNDING PROPOSITION.

No sooner had I effected my retreat than I regretted it. Had I done right, I asked myself, to go out in that fashion and leave the holy edifice at the mercy of a tramp.

Who was the man, that he had business there at that hour? Well, what business had I there?

The bay was still munching away near the fence. I was about to go towards him, when I heard, inside the church, the man's voice.

"Beatrice!" he was calling, "Beatrice, my darling!"

Ah, instead of a tragedy, a romance! Some rustic lover come to keep a tryst with his rural sweetheart.

I walked towards the front of the church. As I came out beyond the corner, I heard the patter of a small horse's hoofs. A moment later I saw a little steed dash up to the old gate, and a woman dismount.

It was by this time too dark for me to tell how old she was, or whether she was plain or handsome. I saw, however, that she wore a neat fitting riding habit, and that she was closely veiled.

A sting of something like suspicion pricked me. The man was rough looking, the woman evidently well bred. What could they have in common?

Yet, again, what business was this of mine? If they were lovers, it surely was not my province to halt her and ask why she preferred such an uncouth creature to one of her own standing.

Perhaps, I thought, she is a New York girl, or one from some large city, having a flirtation with an impressionable countryman. If so, let him thresh his own oats. It was not my duty to look out for him.

The woman entered the church, and I drew back so that she could not see me. I wondered that neither of them seemed at all alarmed at sight of the bay, which certainly argued the presence of a stranger in or near the church.

Suddenly I heard loud sobbing. Surely this was not the orthodox flirtation of a city girl.

"My darling! Oh, my darling!" I heard the man say, and his voice vibrated with some overwhelming emotion.

The woman sobbed, the man caressed. No name was uttered by either, yet my mind reverted unaccountably to the headstone on the monument reading, "Mary, beloved wife of Robert Forrest."

Where were the Lees in this affair, any way? And why was I so interested? Was there a magic influence in that quiet valley that controlled my footsteps, my thoughts, my emotions?

Heavens! The thunder of horses' hoofs beat strong on the grassy road. In the gloom I saw three riders coming full tilt from the direction of one of the large houses I had noticed.

I could hear loud and angry voices.

"An elopement spoiled," I said to myself. "But it's too bad if the man is thrashed."

For a moment I stood irresolute. Then, in the distance, I saw and heard another coming like the wind to overtake the first three.

"It's four to one," I muttered. "I'll just give them a little warning."

I stepped noislessly inside the church. Enough light still came in through the windows for me to see clearly.

The man stood near the pulpit, the girl in a half faint in his arms. She was sobbing convulsively and he was raining kisses on her lips. I saw that her veil was slightly raised.

Her arms were thrown clingingly around his neck. He supported her in his two strong ones.

I coughed.

With an exclamation of alarm, he almost hurled her from him, and made as if to leap from the window. Then he turned and flashed a pistol at my head.

"You'll never, never take me," he said quietly.

"I don't want to take you, fool!" I answered." "I just came to say that four men are riding like the devil this way and——"

"Go! go! For God's sake go at once!" cried the girl.

The man, with a swift look towards the door, bent to the upturned lips of his companion.

"My darling! My darling! Sweet guardian of my life!" he murmured.

"The window!" I said hurriedly. "They are coming in the gate."

Like an athlete he sprang through the open window and disappeared.

The girl swayed as if she were about to sink to the floor. I stepped to her to protect her from injury, for I feared she would fall against the hard seats.

She put out her hands gropingly as if to beg for mercy, or to send me away, I did not know which.

There was a shout in the doorway, and the girl screamed.

"Ha! Caught just in time, young woman!" came a voice, almost unintelligible, so enraged was the speaker.

The men who had entered seemed to me to be two elderly ones and a younger. The fourth had not yet arrived.

The young man and one of the older ones sprang for me, and before I could suspect that I was the object of attack, they had grasped me in an iron grip.

"Now give it to him!" shouted the younger. "Now give him the lash, uncle!"

There was a whistling sound, and a heavy whip descended on my shoulders.

"Unhand me! What do you mean?" I managed to gasp.

"Ha! I'll show you what I mean!" cried the third man, the one who had wielded the whip. "I'll show you what it is to elope with a Lee! Hang you, you cur! Hang you! Hang you!"

At every curse of the enraged man the whip curled around me. I struggled with all the strength I possessed, but the stings of the whip and the iron grip of the two men made a combination that was too much for me.

"You will rue this!" I cried panting-

ly. "You will rue this, you bullies! I am not the man you want!"

"Ha! Give it to him again, uncle!" cried the younger man, administering a kick on his own account. "How do you like your wedding journey, friend?"

"I'll make it your funeral journey!" I gasped, wrenching my right hand free. I caught him fair under the jaw and knocked him up against the pulpit. That wooden structure never heard the fervent utterances that came from him that minute. He cursed and raved and picked himself up and came for me.

Both the older men were on top of me, and I was swaying with them like Atlas with the world on his back.

During the fight the hysterical screams of the girl mingled with the curses of the men.

"Now we've got him!" yelled the young man with an oath, as I fell to the floor. "Kill the wretch! Kill him, do you hear, uncle?"

"No! No! For the sake of Heaven listen! I don't know that man!" cried the girl, flinging herself on the man who seemed to be the leader of the party, and whom the younger called uncle.

"You don't know him!" growled the man. "Well, so much the worse. It's bad enough to run off with a man you do know. Crazy fool!"

"Let me up! I am not the man you want!" I said, thoroughly maddened now. "I'll have you all locked up for this outrage if I don't get a chance to kill you first!"

"Hear him! Kill us! Well!"

"Enough of this nonsense! Stand him up. Let's have a look at the scoundrel."

I was jerked to my feet.

The face that came close to mine was swollen and purple with awful rage. The eyes gleamed like those of a wild beast.

"So, you are Tom Firfin, eh? Well, I don't like the looks of you much."

"I am not Tom Firfin, you old ass!" I yelled. "I am Arnold Stagg, cousin of James Stagg, of Utica."

A wild outburst of savage mirth came from the three.

"Ho! Even so, were it true it would be well. But you lie. I've seen your letters, sir. I've seen the whole shameful plot in black and white. You love my niece, eh? Beatrice, do you love this man?"

"No, uncle," sobbed the girl. "I never saw him before."

The man she called uncle was seized with a perfect paroxysm of rage at this. He left me, and grasping the girl's arm, shook her as a terrier would a rat.

"Don't lie to me, hussy!" he roared. "Don't think you can wool my eyes all the time. I know! I know, do you hear? You have been meeting this man for several nights. You have received letters from him asking you to elope with him. He is not man enough to come right out and say to me he wants you for a wife. Why? Because, hang him, he may have a dozen wives somewhere else. I know the world a little, miss. I have lived a few years. I'll soon fix this fellow. Stagg, the public prosecutor, eh? Well, he'll be glad to know who claimed relationship. Come along home, now!"

"No!" came a sharp reply like the report of a pistol. "I have no home!"

The girl stood like a queen of tragedy. How I wished it had been lighter so that I could see her face! Her voice sounded young.

"I have no home," she went on. "You are a cruel and merciless tyrant. I am surrounded by spies and traitors. And what have I done? What *have* I done?"

The ring of truth was in her voice, and yet I had seen her close in the embrace of the man whose well merited thrashing I was taking.

Before the scene could go further, the fourth individual came limping in. Even in the gloom I saw that he wore a semi clerical garb. This, without doubt, was Parson Lee.

"Have you caught them, John? My horse stumbled back here and threw me. 'Twas enough to make a saint swear, I vow. Well, so they are not far away on their honeymoon, eh?"

The parson, though he had been thrown from his horse, was the calmest of the four. In fact, he was the only calm person in the church.

"Just hold him, John, while I get a light," he went on, limping round to the pulpit. "Too dark to see anything now."

"Let me go, you madmen!" I shouted, struggling again.

"Don't let him go, John," said Parson Lee. "Strike him if he makes much fuss."

I made a good deal of "fuss" and was hit accordingly.

"I tell you," I roared, as mad as the Lees, "I'll make you all suffer for this!"

"Slow, now, Firfin, slow," said the parson. Having lighted the pulpit lamps, he descended and peered into my face.

"I didn't expect to see such a good looking man, John," he said. "Somehow, I got the idea that Firfin had a beard."

The girl was clasping and unclasping her hands in a very agony of despair.

As the light shone on my face she gave me a quick look.

"Oh, sir," she cried, holding her hands out imploringly, "I pray you, in the name of God, do not betray me! I am not what these men would have you believe. I have not met a lover in this place. But do not——"

"Enough of that," said the parson coolly. "You were always good at acting, Beatrice. But you sometimes get your lines mixed. Now, for instance, you just asked this man not to betray you. If you have done nothing wrong, what is there to betray? Answer me that."

"I have done nothing wrong!" replied the girl sullenly.

"Curses upon curses!" now put in the old fellow who had first arrived, and who was called John by the parson. "Have I not the proof with me? Listen to this, William, and see if there is no wrong."

He took some letters from his pocket, and the girl made a convulsive movement as though she would snatch them from his hand. He hurled her away.

"Listen, William. This is a nice, loverlike letter for an innocent girl to receive: 'My dear Beatrice: I missed you this afternoon in the village. Do you not go every day now to teach your scholars? I suppose some of them have turned against you, but I will never do so. I have loved you every day since I first saw your pretty face.' This," said John, "is signed T. Firfin."

"I never——" began the girl.

"Hold your tongue!" roared John. "You never got it, I suppose. You are not the Beatrice meant. You never go to Saugucket to teach music! Oh, no! You—you—you are a liar! Now, William, listen to this."

John read another short note like the first. This mentioned a Norah, who was to receive it and transmit it to the hands of Beatrice.

"So! The negress is in the plot! It is strange she is not on hand to accompany them," remarked the parson.

"I suppose she remains behind to steal the silver and then join them," sneered the young man, whom I now hated with a most cordial hatred.

"But this tops all," said John. "Listen to this, and then say what should be done to these two fools: 'My darling! Meet me at the old church tomorrow evening at dusk. By morning we can be far away from here, and begin a new life with our love to make it holy. Be cautious, for one false move will bring those hounds on our trail. Dress as if you were going for a ride. It will not cause comment at your absence. My darling! Never again will cruel hands separate us.' This," said John, "is not signed. But it speaks for itself, does it not?"

"Let me see it," said the parson.

He took the letter. The girl stood shivering with some new emotion—terror, I thought—and her eyes, flaming with her distress of mind, rested on the parson's face.

The letter spoke for itself so far as I was concerned. I had no doubt it was written by the man whom I had seen in the church. He had called her "My darling! My darling!" in the fervid style of the letter.

Yet, knowing these things, why could I not condemn the girl standing there in her guilt, instead of keeping my mouth dumb as I was doing after her frantic appeal?

"Evidently," said the parson calmly, "the fellow has feared detection, and has disguised his hand. Yet it is from the same man undoubtedly."

A slight heaving of the bosom seemed to indicate to me that for some reason the girl felt distinctly relieved.

We all stood there, in the fitful glare

of the pulpit lamps, a most amazing group: The girl like a doe driven to bay, yet appealing for help rather than taking it upon herself to make a defense; the irate John choking and gasping with his overwhelming rage, which got hotter as the scene became prolonged; the younger man with sneering face in which, as he looked at the girl, there was something like a brutal triumph; the parson, cool, steady, but vindictive and resourceful.

The other man seemed more like a hired hand, and had nothing to say. He gave great assistance, though, with his immense strength, in holding me.

The parson looked coolly at the cowering girl, and then at me. He seemed, on noting my defiant attitude, to come out of his shell somewhat and show his fighting qualities.

"You see, John," he said slowly, "the thing has gone very far, very far indeed. These clandestine meetings in the village; these letters carried to and fro by the negress; this well planned meeting at the church, and the proposed elopement—it will all cause a great deal of unpleasant talk, John. Our house has been mixed up with enough scandal because of these irrational Forrests. The smirch of this affair will cling, no matter what we do. If we take Beatrice home and let this fellow go, what will be the result? She will be ostracized by everybody. She will not——"

"You forget, father," said the young man in alarm. "I love Beatrice, and will——"

"James!"

The parson straightened himself up. His rigid face showed no other emotion than pride and an iron determination to uphold it.

"James! Would you marry a wanton?"

"Oh, no, uncle!" cried the girl, wringing her hands. "Not that!"

"That, and nothing else," said the parson coldly. "Rather than have my son sully his fair name by linking it with yours I would put him in his grave."

James hung his head. He didn't seem to me to be much of a man, and yet somehow the parson had the evidence all his way.

I pitied the girl from the bottom of my heart. She was so young that I felt she was more sinned against than sinning.

"So I think, John," continued the parson, "things being as they are, that the best thing we can do is to marry this wanton and her chosen lover and let them go."

John, Beatrice, and myself stared like three stupid owls at the parson. His plan was so completely a surprise to me that for the instant I could not speak. And to the girl, who had seen me that day for the first time, the parson's speech was a horrible threat.

But I think it was John who showed the most amazement.

"M-m-marry them!" he stammered.

"Certainly," replied the parson coolly. "They were about to elope without that ceremony to sanction their relations. The man is a rascal, I know. But the girl is equally wicked, or she would not be here now. How will you arrange if you take her back? The thing will simply be repeated at some future time."

"But—but I thought we could lock Firfin up," said John.

"On what charge? He has not eloped. Had he abducted the girl, we might have done that. But in the eyes of our ridiculously inadequate laws he is innocent of wrong doing because we have stopped him. But the smirch remains. The scandal will be no less. The busy tongues from Clinton to Utica will not say that we arrived in time to prevent this meeting. They will garble the thing and add nastiness to it, till there is no telling where it will end. Now, if they are married, all that can be said is that they *are* married. It was her choice, let her have it."

"Oh, no!" cried the girl, stung now into some knowledge of the hideous thing they were planning. "This man is innocent. Find the other and I will marry him."

A sardonic laugh came from the parson.

"John," he asked, "was this man with her when you came in?"

"Yes," said John. "He had his arms around her."

"Then that settles it. Young man, are you prepared to marry this girl whose life and future you have ruined?"

"No!" I shouted, again struggling ineffectually. "I have not ruined her life. You fools! Let me go!"

"Beatrice, are you prepared to marry this man you have chosen?"

"Oh, oh!" sobbed the girl, falling on her knees. "Listen to reason! That is not the man I came here to meet. That I met him was not his fault nor mine. I swear it, I swear it."

John seemed to waver, but the parson was firm.

"Who was the man you came to meet—Firfin?" asked John.

"No, no!" answered the girl energetically.

"Ah! Then, there is another. Who was the man you came to meet?"

The parson stepped forward to catch her answer better. She lifted her veil and gave me one long, beseeching look—a look I shall never forget.

Her eyes went wildly from one to the other. She seemed lost. Her former reply had evidently slipped out before she thought.

"Who was the man?" demanded the parson sternly.

"I—I—don't know his name!". said the girl, and she fell in a moaning, shuddering heap on the floor.

"Damme! But this is getting more interesting every minute," said John.

"They have fixed these lies between them," said the parson. "My plan was best, as you now see. Stand them together at the altar. I will make them man and wife."

"You will not!" I said hotly, but, with my arms pinioned in the iron hands of two tormentors, I was looking down the barrel of a revolver held in the hands of John.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

A GUST of wind came in through the open window and made the light from the pulpit lamps dance on the ugly faces around me.

My brain was in such a whirl that clear thought was impossible. Yet I realized the enormity of the error these maddened men were committing.

Their course, from their own point of view, was perhaps permissible. But to make it the thing they thought it was, it was necessary to have the girl's lover in my place.

The girl herself was in a half fainting condition, terror and shame, I thought, depriving her almost of consciousness.

But the determined men knew no halting. They had fixed upon their purpose, and would adhere to it. The purplish rage of John warned me that the finger that rested on the trigger of the revolver would certainly pull if I did not obey.

It flashed over me that the best thing I could do for the girl and myself was to submit. A marriage of that kind, compelled to be gone through at the point of a pistol, was as good as no marriage at all in the eyes of the law. I knew that it could be annulled without difficulty.

Yet it galled me to stand there, the helpless victim of the rage and mistake of these men.

"Stand her by his side," said the parson coldly.

"Hold him!" added John, lowering his pistol and stepping up to the girl.

"No, no! For God's sake, listen!" she cried, leaping from her crouching position on the floor and standing erect before her tormentors.

She threw aside her veil, and I saw with some surprise that she was very young and very beautiful. There was none of the flirt in her face. It was now stained with tears and distorted with anguish, but even in that uncertain light I knew that she was not the wayward creature they had made her out to be.

"Come!" said John roughly, taking her by the arm. "We will soon be rid of you!"

"Oh, I'll go!" she sobbed violently. "I'll go! I won't come back to annoy you! But not this! Don't drag an innocent man into the trouble."

A harsh laugh came from John, and the parson's thin white lips were drawn more tightly together.

"An innocent man would not be in this church with his arms around you," he said coldly. "Come! We are doing that which is best for your own good. You have been meeting this man clandestinely. You were about to run off

with him. Well, you have chosen and you shall have your choice. But when you leave here you will leave as a wife. Come!"

The girl's frame shook with the violence of her sobbing. She was clearly almost beside herself.

Her lithe body swayed to and fro as she looked helplessly upon her accusers. When her eyes met mine a great, heartbroken cry went up and she staggered to the pulpit and leaned against it.

"Oh, why did you come? Why did you come?" she gasped.

"'M! Why did he?" echoed the parson. "Join hands."

"No, oh no!" cried the girl, wringing hers in agony. "Oh, uncles, you are doing wrong. You are committing a crime!"

"In the sight of God we are doing well," said the parson solemnly.

"Beatrice," I put in, not knowing what other name to call her, "be calm. These men, if they are your uncles, are no doubt doing what they consider best. They are now inflamed with passion because you have perhaps deceived them a little. That I am not the man in the case does not seem to make any difference to them. They are mad. But with revolvers at our heads we must submit. I am an honorable man. I shall not seek to annoy you or take advantage of this gross and ridiculous error. This marriage can easily be set aside and at once. You shall go free. No harm will come of it. We must let these madmen have their way."

"Now we are listening to good sense," said the parson grimly. "It really matters not whether you set the marriage aside or not. The thing is, that she must be your wife before she leaves this place in your company. When we have accomplished that we shall have done our duty. After that the funeral is your own."

I bowed ironically.

"I'll make it some other fellow's funeral before I get through with it," I said.

The man called John grunted impatiently.

"Are we to stand here all night as a wedding party?" he asked savagely. "Have it over with and let the girl go."

"Join hands!" said the parson again.

"By the way, father," put in the younger man addressed as James, "is it not necessary to have a marriage certificate?"

"Not especially," replied the cool parson. "Men and women are married by the law, not by a piece of paper. However, if these two desire a certificate, I shall be happy to give them one if they will call at my house and ask for it."

"There will be no urgent demand for it so far as we two are concerned," I said. "Now that you have cooled down somewhat, let me tell you again that you are making a mistake. I did not come here to meet your niece. I have never seen the poor girl before. I do not, however, find any reason to wonder at her choice in leaving such a gang of crazy relatives. I am not the man she chose. Now, if you will let this matter rest till tomorrow I will prove——"

"Yes!" snorted John. "You will prove your ability in running away. No, sir. We've got you now. We know the relations that have existed between you and this shameless creature. Now, William, proceed."

"Place her hand in his," said the parson.

John took the palsied hand of the trembling girl and laid it in mine. It felt cold and the tremor of it sent a thrill of pity to my heart.

The girl was undergoing the most frightful torture. She was not only being covered with shame, but she was being married to a man she had never seen before, while her true lover was no doubt skulking somewhere in the vicinity wondering what was going on in the dimly lighted church.

I strove to comfort her.

"Be calm," I whispered. "The marriage will not hold. You shall be free tomorrow."

"Do you, Thomas Firfin, take this woman to be your wedded wife?" began the parson.

"Look here, you addle headed ass!" I roared, "if I am to be married, I don't want to borrow any name. My name is Arnold Stagg. If I am married under that name, I can easily set this girl free. But I don't want to get mixed up with any other man's identity. My name is Arnold Stagg. Stagg! Do you hear?"

"I suppose Firfin was an assumed

name. Well, Arnold Stagg, do you take this woman to be your wedded wife?"

"At the pistol's point, under protest," I said.

"Do you promise to cherish and protect and——"

"I promise nothing. Omit forms. Get your work done and end the girl's agony."

"Do you, Beatrice Forrest, take this man to be——"

"No, oh, no! For Heaven's sake stop!"

"I pronounce you man and wife. And whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder. Let us pray."

Well, a prayer from a Christian heart is one of the noblest uses of language. But it struck me as a frightful sacrilege when that man, after committing a colossal blunder, bowed his head and lifted up his voice to the Most High.

And it was no contrite prayer. Every sentence exhibited the most vindictive anger against the poor girl and myself. She, now weakened and unresisting, leaned towards me sobbing as if her heart would break. John never took his eyes off me, and his gleaming revolver was ever ready.

"Amen," said the parson, and sighed, as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

"That's all, I guess," remarked John.

"No, there is one other thing," said the parson.

He took some blank sheets of paper from a book he had in his pocket.

"James," he said, "I believe you have a fountain pen. Allow me to use it a moment."

James relaxed his hold on me. My first impulse was to strike him, but I reflected that all the harm these men could do had been done. Any further act of violence on my part might, in the future, make matters worse for the girl.

I held my peace, wondering what the parson was going to do next.

He sat down at the little organ and wrote on the paper.

"Come here and sign this," he said to me. Without hesitation I stepped up to him and read what he had written.

"This is to certify," the paper said, "that I, Arnold Stagg, have this day, June 4th, 1898, taken unto myself as my beloved wife, Beatrice Forrest, of Pawmuc, Oneida County, State of New York. I promise to love and cherish her. I promise that so far as my ability may allow I will support and care for her. I sign in presence of witnesses, who are also witnesses of my marriage to the above Beatrice Forrest."

It was a unique document. Yet I almost admired the wisdom of the parson. The paper, of course, was for them to keep. It would serve in the future as proof that Beatrice had left home as the wife of the man in whose company she went.

"Suppose I refuse to sign that thing?" I asked.

The chill muzzle of John's revolver came against my forehead.

"I don't think you will refuse," said the parson mildly.

Coldly conscious that I was beaten at every point, and wondering how this document would affect the annulment of the absurd marriage, I stooped and signed my name.

"Now, John," said the parson, and John signed as a witness.

"Now, James," and the name of James went down.

"Now, Fitzgerald," and the hired man signed.

Then the parson affixed his signature with a little writing, which I did not see, but which, undoubtedly, was as the officiating clergyman.

"Now, my dear child," he said, taking the cold, passive hand of the girl in his, "you have sinned, but God is merciful. We have seemed harsh, but we have saved you from worse than you know. To you our action should not seem severe, for if you love this man well enough to run away from a good home to accompany him, you should feel gratified to think that now you are bound to him by the legal bond. I hope that no suffering will come to you. You have chosen, and must have your way. God bless you. Come, John; come, James; come, Fitzgerald."

John stalked out without a word to Beatrice, who was now sinking down helplessly at the foot of the altar. I stepped forward and supported her. James came up and looked sheepishly into the white, miserable face.

"Good by, Bee," he said.

"Get your unmanly carcass out of here, or, by God, I'll kill you!" I said. He looked at me in surprise.

"She is my cousin," he said.

"She is my wife!"

He started. John turned quickly. The vehemence of my assumption of authority seemed to surprise them. The parson nodded.

"That's right," he said. "Come, James. Leave man and wife alone."

They stalked forth from the church. At the door John turned and threw some letters inside.

"You might as well have these," he said. "They belong to you."

I was alone with my wife. I did not, of course, consider the girl in that light. The legal tie had been formed under duress, and it would require little effort to annul it. I did not doubt even that the parson, if called upon, would testify to the circumstances.

But just then all my thoughts were centered on the condition of the poor girl who had been through the torture with me.

She had fainted quite dead away. I laid her tenderly down on the pulpit carpet and chafed her hands.

I had been in the habit, since I had begun the practice of riding for health, of carrying with me a small flask of cognac. At first this had been necessary. At times a weakness would come over me, and a pull at the flask would revive my wasted strength. But of late I had not used it, though I still continued to have the bottle with me.

I now took the flask from my pocket and poured a drop or two down the girl's throat. There was no water handy, though I supposed there was a well in the yard.

The cognac sufficed. The girl opened her eyes. She looked up and around, stared vacantly at me, then shuddered convulsively, and shut them again.

I knelt at her side, looking into the pure, white face. I had wiped away the tears. The girl could not, I thought, be more than seventeen or eighteen, so young that an oily tongue might easily win her regard.

I began to feel something of dislike for the bearded man who had taken this underhand way of carrying off his bride. Surely there must be something crooked about him.

I had never seen a sweeter face than that of Beatrice. It was a pure oval, with a most delicate coloring, now, of course, whitened by misery. Her eyelashes were long, her hair a rich brown. I began to envy the man she loved.

Her return to complete consciousness was somewhat sudden. She looked up, gasped, and then sat upright. Her wide open eyes roamed around the church.

"Are they gone?" she whispered.

"Yes," I answered. "Your uncles, having done what they mistakenly believed to be their duty, have left us."

At that the girl rested her lovely head against the altar and burst into a most violent weeping.

"Oh, sir!" she moaned, "what must you think of me?"

"Well," I said, scarcely knowing yet what I did think, "I am sure you are—are—well, you are a pretty girl at any rate, and I don't blame a man for falling in love with you."

Instead of replying to my compliment with coquetry, she wept still faster.

"Of course," I went on, "I appreciate your position. Loving one man, you have been married against your will to another. But rest easy on that score. I have a cousin in Utica who is a great lawyer. He will soon straighten this thing out and set you free. Perhaps you have heard of James Stagg."

She leaped to her feet. Her eyes flashed. Her whole being seemed to rise in stature physically and morally.

"I hate him! I hate him!" she cried. "Had it not been for James Stagg this would never have happened."

Surprise held me spellbound for a moment. I could not imagine for the life of me what poor James, deep in his law cases, loving his wife and family, having no time for flirtation, nor desire for it, could have to do with the absurd error that had been committed in the little Pawmuc church.

"I do not understand," I said with some constraint. "If James has——"

"Oh, no! I did not mean it! He is a good man! Oh, please do not tell him anything to make him angry!" she cried imploringly.

My amazement grew. I stood looking at her in surprise, when I heard a slight rustling in the open window. I looked up. The bearded man was looking in at us with hungry eyes.

"You are rather late," I said with some asperity. "If you had acted like a man you would have had your bride now instead of me."

He gazed with almost imbecile curiosity from Beatrice to myself.

The girl sprang to the window.

"Go, go!" she cried. "This man is a cousin to James Stagg!"

With a muttered curse he disappeared.

I sat weakly down on the pulpit step. Perspiration came out on my forehead in great beads. I wiped my brow and looked at my wife. She was trembling, watching the window and watching me.

"Now, look here," I said, "evidently you fear me. Why, I know not. I do not ask. Never have I heard of such an occurrence as that in which we have been actors tonight. For the present moment, until I can get the law to remove your shackles, you are my wife. Therefore, let us talk plainly.

"You do not want to be my wife, and you need not be There is a way to end it, but it must be by process of law. I must set forth before the court just how we were held at the point of a pistol and compelled to go through the marriage ceremony. It will then be annulled; you will be free. But, since I have seen how young you are, and how attractive, I feel some of the responsibility of your uncles. You are very young to run away with a man. Of course, all girls who run away with men are young. But I do not seek to stand in the way of your happiness. You are old enough to know your own mind. But, to ease my own conscience, let me ask you, do you know this Thomas Firfin well?"

"No," she sobbed.

"But you love him?"

"No."

"But you came here to meet a man and go away with him," I continued, with some severity. "Do you love the man I saw you with when I came in here tonight?"

"Yes, oh, yes!"

"Do you know him well?"

"Yes! Oh, my God, yes!"

"Well enough to throw aside all ties of hope and friendship and brave the world with him?"

"Yes, oh, yes."

"Well," I said, half musingly, "then I have no more to say. Go, and may God in His mercy keep you from harm. Tomorrow I shall take steps to have our ridiculous marriage annulled. Watch the Utica papers. I will publish the fact. You need not come after any release unless you wish. If you do want something to show that you are free, address me at the residence of James Stagg on Genesee Street.

"I will not keep you any longer. Your lover is waiting. As a last request, will you not accept my protection till this thing is settled, and be married in Utica, before you go away?"

In reply the girl sobbed and shook hysterically. "No!" I made out an answer.

"Well, then, shake hands; good by. We have had an exciting time. I am sorry for you."

She put her trembling hand in mine. She did not ask me to hasten the act that would set her free. She seemed only overcome by a strong desire to join the man outside.

"Here," I said, as I reached the door. "These are your letters."

I picked up the letters her uncle had thrown down and gave them to her. Feverishly she looked at them in the lamplight. She threw all but one away. That one she tucked in the bosom of her riding habit.

"Good by," I said again.

"Good—by," came the sobbing answer.

I stepped out into the cool June night. I felt loaded down with responsibility, I knew not why. Surely the love affairs of two strangers did not matter to me. Even though one was now my wife, she would not be by tomorrow.

It was, as I had predicted, a moonlight night. I saw, some distance down the road, the patient bay still nibbling at the clover that grew along the roadside. Not from him was the girl's little horse.

"They have left your horse," I called back to her. "Wait a minute and I'll get it."

I walked down the road to the bay and caught him easily. The little horse was shy of me, but I managed to catch the bridle. I mounted the bay and led the other animal back to the church.

It was empty. My wife was gone with her lover. All that remained to serve as a reminder of the exciting scenes I had gone through with her were two dim lamps on the pulpit and some letters on the floor. Moved by curiosity, I picked these up.

They were all in one hand, and signed Tom Firfin. She had taken the one making the appointment for the elopement.

Musing upon these strange things, and wondering how the romance would end, I turned the deserted pony loose, and rode homeward, the bay impatient for his supper and bed, and I impatient for a talk with James.

The questions that were uppermost in my mind were: To whom had I been married, and what had James Stagg to do with her elopement?

CHAPTER IV.

A NARRATIVE OF UNPLEASANT CHARACTER.

It was almost midnight when the bay turned his impatient nose in at the gate of my cousin's yard. No sooner had his well known step sounded on the gravel of the drive than the library window was thrown open.

"Oh, Arnold, is that you?" came the voice of James. "You seem to have been making a night of it."

"A night of it! I should say I had," I replied as I dismounted and turned the bay over to the sleepy groom.

I went at once into the brilliantly lighted library.

"I was quite alarmed," said James, from his chair by the center table. "I sat up, not knowing what else to—great Heavens, man! What's the matter? You are as white as a ghost! Here, let me give you a glass of sherry."

The good fellow hurried to a little cabinet, took therefrom a decanter and two glasses. He filled both and handed one to me.

"Drink that," he said, "and then for goodness' sake tell me what has happened."

I drained the glass, set it down, and laughed.

"How do you know anything has happened?" I asked.

"How do I know? You come galloping in here at this hour of the night, with the foam on the bay shining in the moonlight, and your own face as pale as chalk. How do I know? Why, it is written on your cheeks, in your eyes, in your trembling hand. Gad! Thornton ought to see you now."

"I don't agree with you," I said, trying to appear at ease. "I wouldn't like Thornton to see me now. But you are right; something has happened. Something very queer. But before I tell you what, just relieve my anxious curiosity. Who are the Lees?"

"Eh? What Lees? Plenty of Lees in Utica."

"I am not concerned with the Lees of Utica. I mean the Lees out near the old Pawmuc Mills."

James stared at me with his eyes and mouth open, denoting the greatest astonishment.

"The Lees of Pawmuc Mills! What, under heaven, have you to do with the Lees of Pawmuc Mills?"

"Oh, well," I said, with a ridiculous effort to appear at ease, "I have just been married to Beatrice Forrest, their niece."

James sprang to his feet as though an electric shock had sent him upward.

"What! Married to—my God! You are mad!"

"I'm not so mad as I was. I've been mad as the devil, I assure you. But what I say is true. For a short time, at least, Beatrice Forrest is my wife."

James sat down again and stretched himself as if he were trying to waken from a bad dream.

"But—but—I did not know you had ever heard of Beatrice Forrest!"

"I never heard of her until about thirty minutes or less before we were married."

James passed his hand over his brow helplessly.

"What is this you are telling me? You are not really married to Bob Forrest's daughter?"

"I don't pretend to know anything about Bob Forrest. I am married to Beatrice, the niece of Parson Lee."

For a whole minute he stared at me.

"My God!" I heard him breathe. "Do you know—did you know what you were doing?"

"Perfectly. I was trying to prevent a bullet going through my head."

He leaped to his feet and began pacing up and down the room, evidently violently agitated.

"You seem to know them," I said. "She—that is—she spoke of you."

A laugh—which seemed at that minute almost sardonic—came from the lips of James.

"Spoke of me, eh! Cursed me, I suppose!"

"Not exactly. But I am not getting any information. Just calm yourself, and remember that I am in a peculiar position. I have a wife and I am asking you who she is."

At that James sat down and laughed. A perfect storm of violent mirth came from him. It shocked and surprised me; for, as a rule, my cousin was one of the most self contained of men.

"You—you—a New Yorker—come up here—for absolute rest—oh, it is too much. But now look here. Before I tell you a thing, you give me your yarn. I don't believe it yet. I cannot believe you have been so mad as to marry the daughter of a convicted murderer."

"A *what?*" I roared, now in my turn springing to my feet.

"A convicted murderer. Bob Forrest is serving a life sentence in Auburn prison for the murder of Jake Brand, of Saugucket."

I sank quivering into my chair. Some feeling of horror swept over me, but with it there came a whisper of caution.

Caution of what? I could not tell. The girl had chosen her own lover. All that remained for me to do was to set her free and let her alone.

My cousin's hand trembled more than mine as he poured out two more glasses of sherry.

"Drink this and tell me," he said. "Drink! One of us will surely collapse. Now go ahead. Tell me what devilish scrape you are in."

I drained the glass, pulled my shattered nerves together, and plunged into the tale.

I began at the beginning, which I fancied must be at the point where I had met the farmer and received his slight information about the old grass covered road that formerly led to Pawmuc Mills. I left out nothing. I told of my strange fancies concerning a tragedy. I told of going into the churchyard and studying the headstones. I told of finding the name of "Mary, beloved wife of Robert Forrest." I told of the appearance of the bearded man, then of the veiled lady.

I told of my sensation of pity, which prompted me to rush in and warn the two lovers when I saw the four horsemen coming towards the church. I told of the awful rage of the uncles when they found me supporting the half fainting girl. I told of the ludicrous mistake they made of insisting that I was Thomas Firfin.

I made it clear that the girl had without doubt come there intending to elope with the man. I remembered every word in the letters, and repeated them.

James sat like one in a trance, with his eyes growing wilder as I advanced. He sat with a rigidity that was painful. His steady, unwavering gaze disconcerted me.

I went on to tell how the parson proposed to send them away man and wife, but, unfortunately, got the wrong man. My efforts to escape, the manner in which they received the information that I was James Stagg's cousin, the whole miserable picture, was presented to James just as it was impressed so vividly on my own mind.

I told how I had asked her if she loved the man with whom she was going to elope, and how I went back with her horse only to find her gone.

When I had finished, James did not move. He sat like one entranced. I grew impatient.

"Well," I said testily, "I have told you the yarn. Now satisfy my curiosity and tell me how to get out of the scrape. Of course, the marriage can be annulled."

"Yes," answered James, struggling up through a weight of some emotion unknown to me. "Yes, the marriage can easily be annulled."

"Then, that is taking the worst of it off. Now go ahead and tell me who this erring young woman is. In short, make me acquainted with my wife."

James shuddered. He reached again for the sherry, and once more braced his nerves. The clock struck the half hour. It was growing late, but neither of us thought of that.

"My dear cousin," he began, calming himself, and now speaking in his usual well modulated voice, "I have been grossly neglectful of you. I should have paid more attention to the demands of hospitality. I feel that I am, in some degree, responsible for this horrible thing that has come upon you."

"Oh, relieve your mind," I said somewhat shortly. "I am, as a rule, perfectly able to take care of myself. Had you trotted around with me twenty hours out of the twenty four, I don't see that it would alter things. I might have happened to be right there just the same. It might even have happened to you. And think how much better it is as it is. I am not married. You, with a wife and family—why—even at the point of a pistol it would be unpleasant."

"Yes, rather," assented my cousin. "But don't interrupt. Let me recall this whole story, and I will acquaint you with the history of the—the—your wife."

A case of cigars lay on the table and I took one. I settled myself in an easy chair, for I knew I was going to hear something interesting.

"Go ahead," I told him.

"I never knew very much about the Lees," said James, "except that they were well to do country people. I learned when the trial took place that John Lee had once been the proprietor of Pawmuc Mills. It was merely a small mill, but any mill around here is called mills. It was a sort of knitting factory, I believe, and gave employment to about two hundred hands. The mill and the houses that sheltered those employees who did not live on farms or in near by villages were all there was to the village of Pawmuc.

"John Lee lived in a fine house—in fact, he lives there yet—on a place called Shadelands. His brother, William Lee, is a clergyman. John Lee built the little white church, and there his brother William, who had really retired from active work some time before, preached every Sunday to the employees. Pawmuc Mills received its power from the little stream of which you saw the remains. When that stream dried up, Lee spoke of removing his works to a more favored locality.

"One day the mill burned down. Lee was rich, and was getting on in years, and modern methods had left him a little behind the procession. So he never reopened anywhere. That ended the village of Pawmuc. There was nothing to keep any one there. But William continued, and still continues, to preach in the little white church to such of the farmers round who wish to go to hear him.

"William Lee is not rich. He lives in a small cottage on a piece of ground John gave him. He has a son, James, rather a shiftless individual, I judge.

"But now we get on a little further. The Lees had a sister, Mary, younger than themselves. Mary Lee lived with John, and was, so far as I can learn, a handsome woman of considerable talent and education. She married a man named Robert Forrest, who was foreman in Jake Brand's woolen mill at Saugucket, in the Sauquoit Valley.

"This Brand was a shrewd, hard headed man, capable in business, and close as a miser. He never employed a cashier, but handled all his money himself, paying off the hands, and all that.

"About five years ago, as you can see by that stone in the churchyard, Mary Forrest died. Your suspicion of a tragedy there was all wrong. She died of natural causes, attended, so I understand, by her brothers and her husband, who had always been a loving and kind family man. Mary left a daughter twelve years of age, a bright, pretty child—now, I believe, according to your story, your wife.

"Forrest, so the tale runs, grew melancholy after his wife's death. He did not marry again. His little girl, Beatrice, was living with her uncle, John Lee, at Shadelands. Forrest grew more and more restless, until at last, about four years ago, one year after his wife's death, he bade his little girl and his

brothers in law good by, packed his grip, and went off to seek his fortune.

"Things went along all right, and the little girl was educated by her uncle, and grew into a very lovely young lady. A very young lady, because she cannot be more than seventeen now. Then, suddenly, Robert Forrest came back.

"He was overjoyed to see his little Beatrice again. He went right to Lee's house, and from his general talk it was gathered that while he had had some success, he had not returned with any great fortune.

"Now we come to the tragedy. Forrest had been home only two days when he went to see his old employer, Jake Brand. But I am getting on too fast. I don't want to tell this part as a story, and then go over it again as testimony. I'll jump here, if you please.

"On the fifteenth of September of last year, Jake Brand left Saugucket, as was his custom twice each month, to drive to the First National Bank of Utica to draw the money to pay his hands. Two weeks' pay for two hundred people, besides such money as Brand would probably need to make payments in business, for private use, and all that, would foot up into a tidy sum.

"His horse trotted into his yard at Saugucket at four o'clock that afternoon, with Brand crouched down in the wagon, dead.

"The satchel in which he usually carried the money was in the wagon, but open and rifled.

"Of course, I was at once notified, and spurred myself and the detective force to find the murderer and robber. This was not at all difficult. It was Robert Forrest."

I was growing uneasy. The story James was telling me was absorbingly interesting. It was altogether too much so.

"You jump to his guilt at once," I said. "What was the evidence?"

James smiled.

"I forgot that he was now your—no, no! Pardon me. I will give you both sides of the argument. Forrest was arrested, and protested that he was innocent. The case for the people, as I presented it, consisted of these salient points:

"Forrest had signified his intention of making a visit to Brand, speaking as if they had been friends, whereas the truth was that Brand had simply been Forrest's employer. He had gone there. He arrived just as Brand was getting ready to drive to the bank at Utica. He either invited himself, or accepted Brand's invitation, to drive with him.

"Brand did go to the bank, where he drew seven thousand five hundred dollars. Forrest drew from his private account twelve hundred. They started back to Saugucket. Brand alone reached there, and he was dead and the seven thousand five hundred dollars were gone.

"Now here you must remember the thread, for when I tell you the people's case I will give you the defense.

"Forrest was arrested on the testimony of his nephew, James Lee, and another young man, Ellis Enland, who had been out shooting that afternoon. They swore on the stand that they saw Brand and Forrest drive past the road that led to Lee's place called Shadelands, where Forrest was stopping. They happened to be on a knoll, from which they had a view of a long stretch of road.

"The two continued along at an easy pace until they had reached a bit of the road sheltered from view by trees, yet perfectly open to the vision of the young men on the hill. Here the wagon stopped, and the two men were acting as if engaged in an altercation.

"Forrest was seen to put out his hand as if touching Brand's shoulder. Brand raised his hands as if to ward off a blow. Then the two were so close together that the eye witnesses could not tell just what was taking place. Then Forrest stepped from the wagon, spent a few minutes fumbling with something in it, and then struck off towards Shadelands—Lee's place—through a coppice of oak that fringed the farm of a hay farmer near Lee's. The horse jogged on and eventually reached Brand's home in Saugucket, where the man was discovered to be dead in the wagon.

"As soon as I learned these things from Lee and Enland I at once arrested Forrest. Something like fourteen hundred dollars was found on him. The remainder was never found.

"Now we come to Forrest's defense. He admitted that he had driven to the bank with Brand. He could not deny it, for he was seen in the bank, he drew money, the tellers remembered it, and he was seen by a thousand people who knew him or Brand on the street. He stated, however, in his defense, that he had gone to see Brand about returning a loan of two thousand dollars which Brand had advanced without security, when he, Forrest, went away two years or three years before.

"He swore that he had taken enough in his pocket to pay the money, but Brand inviting him to ride to Utica, he thought he would go and draw some more money, as he intended to use some the next day in purchasing a small place on the Clifton Road for him and Beatrice to make their home in. He swore, also, that he left Brand, not where Lee and Enland asserted, but at the road which led to Shadelands. He said he did not pass it, but Brand stopped the horse at the road, he stepped from the wagon, and went right home.

"Now, that was all the defense he had. We made mincemeat of it with the two eye witnesses. Another thing against Forrest was that Jake Brand was never known, in the whole course of his life, to do a philanthropic act. He had never lent anybody any money for any purpose, except, of course, in the way of business on good security, or as an investment on bond and mortgage. But such an act as Forrest claimed was entirely foreign to Brand's nature.

"Furthermore, there was nothing found to show that Brand made the loan. Of course, Forrest had nothing to produce, and Brand's executors could find no paper. If Forrest had claimed that he had received back from Brand his note and had destroyed it, that would have had some weight. Had he shown a receipt he would have proven that part of his case, but that would not have freed him from the murder.

"But what Forrest did claim was preposterous. He claimed that when Brand loaned him the money he had signed an acknowledgment of the debt, which Brand had kept. But when he paid the money Brand had mislaid the acknowledgment, and said let it go for a day or two and he would look it up. It wasn't Brand's way of doing business, and would not wash with the court. The paper was never found.

"Forrest was convicted of murder in the second degree and sentenced to life imprisonment. He is serving that sentence at Auburn now."

So this was the story of Bob Forrest. This explained why Beatrice hated James Stagg.

But it did not explain a good many other things. It did not explain how James was the cause of her eloping. It did not explain that terrified cry to the man in the church window, that I was James Stagg's cousin.

The whole thing confused me so that I could not think clearly.

"Did Beatrice maintain her father's innocence?"

"Stoutly. She evidently loved him, and he did her. It was the bitterest part to him that he was forever degrading her."

"But if the two witnesses saw the murder and robbery, how did Forrest escape execution? Why was the verdict not murder in the first degree?"

"Because the witnesses were at such a distance that they could not see the blow struck. Brand was not shot or stabbed. He was killed by a blow on the head with a club."

"Then, as a matter of fact, he was convicted on circumstantial evidence, notwithstanding that your witnesses were eye witnesses."

"Well, I suppose it amounts to that; yes. But, you see, there were discrepancies in Forrest's testimony. He claimed that he left the wagon at the road to Shadelands, while Lee and Enland swore that he went a quarter of a mile past it."

"Who was this Enland?"

"A young man from Syracuse, staying with James Lee."

"Then, the money was never found?"

"No. Forrest had a snug sum in the bank, which he had deposited on the day of his arrival. I suppose it is there yet. John Lee was made guardian of Beatrice, and, as he is rich, I dare say he will take care of it for her."

"Not now," I said, "he is so enraged with her."

"Still, she has legal rights. If he does not do the right thing she can apply for an accounting and have a new guardian appointed."

Somehow that beautiful, white, tear stained face, so full of anguish, came up before me.

"James," I asked, "could a married woman apply for a guardian?"

"Why— I suppose so; but, as a rule, a married woman, whether a minor or not, is supposed to have a husband who will protect her interest."

"Just so," I said, puffing harder on my cigar.

"But she will not be a married woman tomorrow. I will have the marriage annulled."

A wave of unrest swept over me. I pictured that shrinking, delicate girl, left alone to buffet this cold, unfeeling world. If the rich John Lee turned against her, to whom could she apply for a guardian who would protect her interest?

She would, I knew, marry that other man as soon as I set her free. But was it not the money that was serving as a bait to him?

I did not know how much money Beatrice had. I did not care. But the girl had seemed so helpless, so absolutely at the mercy of the more powerful, that I shuddered when I thought what would probably be her end.

We had talked all night. The early dawn was coming in through the library windows. James stretched himself, yawned, and rose to his feet.

"Well," he said, "we have had a most exciting night. I wonder what Thornton would say to your rest. But go to bed now. We'll get a little sleep, and tomorrow I will present your case before Judge Morgan and have the marriage annulled."

He was about to step from the room when there came a peal at the bell. None of the servants was up. James stepped to the door himself. I, full of curiosity, followed him.

I saw him take a telegram from a messenger. He stepped back to the library, opened and read the despatch. Then his face turned the color of chalk. He looked at me with a vacant stare, as if his senses had taken permanent leave of absence.

(To be continued.)

AS THE SOLDIERS PASSED.

BY MAUD HOWARD PETERSON.

The lives of men and how they are looked upon from varying viewpoints. A conversation carried on blindly upon the one side until it is punctuated by an unexpected revelation, brought to light by the passing regiment.

THEY met on the steps of the Army and Navy building—the young civilian in his modest citizen's dress, and the young officer in the uniform of the regulars. He had the swinging stride and the square carriage that told of years of West Point training.

The young civilian, bent on sightseeing, was going up the broad steps; the young West Pointer was coming down. Somewhere in the distance a military band was approaching, and there was a glimmer of a flag. The West Pointer instinctively quickened his steps and the civilian turned to see what the excitement was about.

Undoubtedly the fault of the collision was the civilian's, for what West Pointer, only a year out of the Academy, could be expected to heed any such obstacle in his path when a military band and the banner of the Union hove in sight? Had they not both been his daily diet for four years? Were they not both part and parcel of himself?

"I beg your pardon," said the West Pointer stiffly.

"I beg yours," said the young civilian humbly, evidently impressed by the regular's uniform and shoulder straps.

Below them a crowd began to gather on the curbstone. Teams and carriages

drew to one side. Small boys with sturdy legs that kept creditable time to the nearing patriotic strains marched up the cleared street—the inevitable vanguard to a procession.

The two men on the steps of the Department building paused curiously.

"It's some kind of a parade," said the young civilian.

His eyes were flashing. Involuntarily his hand went to his hat brim, but he withdrew it quickly with a flush as he noted his companion's amused look.

"So it seems," said the young West Pointer a bit patronizingly; "I hadn't heard of anything of the kind taking place today. Ah, they're volunteers—that's why."

A line of men swung into sight. They kept step with a certain precision that was the result of long drills in camp during the hot summer, but their tread lacked the firm defiance of men who had been seasoned with the hardships of enforced marches or a long campaign. They also lacked the symmetry of movement that makes the West Pointers peculiarly distinctive. Their uniforms, too, showed no harder service than that entailed by men who had spent months in the monotony of camp life. The flag the standard bearer carried was not marred by any deeper stain than its own red stripes—it showed no fringed edges where the whirlwind of battle had swept over it. It was quite whole, and only a little faded by the exposure to a sun not even tropical in its heat.

Nevertheless, the crowd enjoyed the sight tremendously, and the small boys with the sturdy legs cheered vociferously as column after column swung in place. The young civilian and the young officer stood watching from their high vantage ground.

It was probably only the young officer who analyzed the whole so closely and with that mathematical nicety that had long ago become second nature to him. When a man on the end of a column got out of step which he vainly tried to recover before it should become discernible, the West Pointer smiled in a superior way.

"One would almost suppose they were regulars returning after years of service," he remarked, "instead of volunteers fresh from camp about to be mustered out without having even put foot in Cuba."

"I imagine it is not because they did not want to," said the civilian slowly. "Heaven knows every man who enlisted tried to get into a fighting regiment."

The West Pointer carefully flicked a speck of dust from his immaculate cuff.

"True, but wasn't it rather foolish of so many to expect it?" he asked.

"I don't catch your point."

"Probably not," remarked the young officer. "Still, can't you see that the government wouldn't be likely to send men to the front who couldn't possibly know anything about military tactics—half of whom spent their lives poring over commercial ledgers and have had only a few weeks of camp training?"

The young fellow paused an instant and then went on hurriedly, as he warmed to his subject, "Do you suppose the government is going to place an important position in the hands of a lot of volunteers, rather than with the regulars, who have been educated on military niceties?"

The civilian smiled faintly.

"Certainly not. The government knows its business in employing officers and men trained to the work. I was only defending those who lacked your opportunity. I never said anything against the regulars. I have the profoundest respect for them."

He made a grave little bow to the West Pointer. The latter laughed.

"I was a bit hot, wasn't I? But it's a point on which all regulars have pretty decided notions. The volunteers imagine they know it all; and—well—what's the use of talking? Opportunities, yes. But we've had to work to utilize them." He glanced significantly at his uniform. "There isn't a man in the Union who hasn't the chance of a West Point training."

"Not quite," said the civilian slowly. "I know one man who passed all the oral and written examinations and failed on the physical. He lacked one inch in height."

"You can't blame that on the government," retorted the West Pointer.

The civilian laughed.

"Nor on the man himself, eh?"

They were silent a moment, then the civilian went on:

"Of course, it was all right—there's got to be a rigid line drawn somewhere." He glanced almost wistfully at the other's uniform. "But, you see, the volunteer examiners are not quite so strict. Now, don't you really think there may be some pretty clever fellows in the volunteers?"

"Of course, but"—the young officer hesitated and laughed—"but they're not West Pointers!"

"No," assented the civilian, "they're not West Pointers—but they're brave men."

"Y-e-s, but sometimes very foolish ones. Do you suppose there was any such sickness in the regular camps last summer as that which made the volunteer ones such a horror? The men had themselves to blame for a good deal. Take, for instance, their flagrant disobedience about drinking water not boiled! You could go all over the country before you'd find a regular disobeying such a command."

The civilian did not answer. He was looking down on the last column as it passed and vanished along the street. He noticed that many of the faces of the men were emaciated as though by fever; that it was not entirely lack of training in active service that caused them to falter in their tread. The West Pointer continued:

"Of course, they all wanted to go to the front, and if the war had been longer, a good many more would have got there; but the regulars had the first chance. Gee! and didn't they make the most of it?"

"You were in Cuba? You were in action?"

The young officer laughed as he looked down at a great scar on his hand which the other had not noticed before. He held it out in front of him and eyed it admiringly.

"Yes," he said, "and brought this away as a credential."

There was a touch of reverence in the look the young civilian gave him.

"A good many men," he said slowly, "would have given half their lives to have that. You were——"

"Ninth United States Infantry. We were at San Juan," replied the other briefly.

The civilian drew in his breath quickly.

"Ah! Weren't there some volunteers there?"

The regular nodded.

"Yes; some of them did credit to their country. Others——"

"Yes?" eagerly.

"Acted like the devil."

"Thanks."

Something in the civilian's voice made the West Pointer turn quickly.

"You are a volunteer?"

"Oh, no," said the civilian quietly. And the officer drew a great sigh of relief.

The crowd below them, that had begun to disperse, suddenly swayed forward and began to cheer. Almost on the heels of the regiment they had been watching came a detachment of cavalry.

"It isn't often even in Washington one sees two shows in a day," remarked the West Pointer, leaning forward. Then he drew back. "It's some more volunteers," he said in a slightly bored tone.

The flag of the troop swung into sight. The breeze caught the banner and flung it wide. The mounted men rounded the corner, handling their horses with an assurance that told of an intimate acquaintance with hardship and long marches. Some of the men's feet dangled painfully free of the stirrups; others wore sleeveless coats. The flag of the Union hung limp and frayed and bullet riddled on its staff.

"It's part of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry!" cried out the civilian. "It's part of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry! Hur——"

The cheer died suddenly in his throat and the young West Pointer turned. His eyes, in which had dawned a newer and a greater patriotism, rested inquiringly on the young civilian.

"You knew some one in it?" he asked.

The other met his look.

"My brother," he answered.

"He—he is not here today?" The West Pointer felt a strange contraction, as if his collar hurt.

The young civilian turned his eyes

towards the portion of that mounted cavalcade that was triumphantly riding homeward, its riddled flag, its broken ranks, a token of its service to its country. He held his hat in his hand as the banner passed.

"No; he fell at San Juan," he said simply.

FOR THE HONOR OF HIS HOUSE.

BY JOHN P. RITTER.

A story of the St. Bartholomew massacre. The deadly peril of two men, one the object of Guise's hatred, the other a martyr to what he adjudges to be the honor of his name.

CHAPTER I.

A WARNING.

THE third week in August, in the year 1572, was an eventful one in Paris.

The flower of the French nobility had congregated in the capital to witness the nuptials of Henry of Navarre to Marguerite of Valois, the king's sister, and the wedding had been followed by a series of entertainments more magnificent than any that had hitherto been given in the Louvre.

The festivities began on Sunday, the seventeenth of the month, with the formal betrothal of the contracting parties, and the marriage had been celebrated on Monday, with a splendor extraordinary even for that age of reckless extravagance.

A succession of pageants and mock combats had pursued their uninterrupted course through Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; and, as Catholic and Huguenot had participated in the merrymaking with every evidence of mutual good will, it seemed as if the union of the Catholic princess to the Huguenot prince had been the means of effecting a happy reconciliation between the two factions that had so long disturbed the peace of France.

The Huguenots especially had excellent reasons for rejoicing; for Charles IX seemed disposed to add many privileges to the edict of pacification he had recently accorded them; their great leader, the Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, stood high in the monarch's favor; while the Duke of Guise, their arch enemy, was supposed to have lost much of his former influence at court.

Little did they know that the real sovereign of France was not the king, but the cruel and treacherous queen mother, Catharine de Medici, who swayed their sovereign's weak and passionate nature with diabolical art.

Their hearts, therefore, were filled with confidence, but, on Friday, an event had occurred which rudely dispelled their hopes.

That morning Coligny was returning home on foot from the Louvre, when a shot, fired from the window of a house in the cloister of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, smashed two fingers of his right hand and shattered his left arm. He raised his eyes, pointed out with his injured hand the house whence the shot had come, and hastened to his quarters.

The news of the attempted assassination spread with marvelous rapidity. At first, the Huguenots were greatly alarmed; but on learning, later in the day, that Charles IX had called upon their wounded chief, expressed the most genuine sorrow at his misfortune, and swore, with his accustomed profanity, to visit upon those implicated in the crime a swift and signal punishment, their confidence was in a measure restored.

Nevertheless, there were some among them who saw in the event of that day the first act of a tragedy whose catastrophe could not be long deferred.

In a conference of the great nobles of the reformed faith held in the admiral's house that evening, the Vidame de Chartres urgently advocated the instant departure of the Protestants from Paris. Eight hundred Huguenot gentlemen had accompanied Henry of Navarre to the city, and a still greater number had arrived before him to be present at his

marriage. Paris was crowded with Huguenots, attracted hither by the promise of a love feast with their former enemies.

The Vidame represented to them that they had thrust their heads into the very jaws of the lion. He pictured their defenseless situation; the temptation that it offered their enemies to plot their ruin, and implored them to leave the capital while there was yet time.

But his arguments were overruled.

Teligny, in particular, the gallant and accomplished son in law of Coligny, opposed a course which not only might endanger the admiral's life, but would certainly displease the king, by betraying distrust of his ability or inclination to defend his Protestant subjects.

And so they remained in Paris, unaware that Catharine de Medici and her friends had already planned their destruction.

* * * *

It was St. Bartholomew's eve.

The bell of the Louvre chapel was ringing for vespers as Count Raimond d'Evreux—a gallant and accomplished young noble of the Catholic party—rode into the courtyard of the palace of Duke Henry of Guise, and dismounted at the grand entrance.

Giving his horse into the charge of a groom in waiting, he ran nimbly up the steps and, finding the door open, passed through into the hall. A number of gorgeously attired lackeys were standing about, one of whom approached him with a respectful bow, saying:

"Your pardon, count! Mlle. d'Yverny bade me tell you that she will receive you in the card room."

The count inclined his head condescendingly to the menial, continued on to the great staircase, ascended to the spacious gallery on the second floor, and proceeded to the apartment where the young lady was awaiting him. As he crossed the threshold, she arose from a seat near a window and advanced to greet him with the words:

"So you received my message and have come. Thank God!"

He kissed her fondly.

"Yes, Gabrielle, I have come," he said. "But what ails you, sweetheart? Why do you tremble so?"

"Oh, Raimond, I have been so alarmed on your account," she murmured, winding her arms lovingly around his neck. "If you had not come to me I would have died."

Laughing lightly at her fears, he gently disengaged himself from her embrace, and led her to a cushioned seat in the embrasure of a window, where he sat down beside her, saying:

"You are nervous, Gabrielle. Something has happened to upset you. Come, tell me what it is!"

These words were uttered in a gentle, reassuring tone, such as he might have employed in consoling a child. And, in truth, so far as ignorance of the world and purity of heart were concerned, the beautiful young girl beside him was a child, indeed; yet one endowed with all the ripe perfections of a woman.

Gabrielle d'Yverny was in her twentieth year; and although she had been a maid of honor in attendance on the Duchess of Guise for a twelvemonth, she had not as yet been brought within the contaminating influence of the French court, as the Guises were out of favor with the king.

Innocence showed in the serene expression of her large brown eyes, and sensibility in the exquisite curves of her perfect mouth. Her delicately formed nose indicated refinement, and there was a softness in the contour of her rounded chin that betrayed an inborn gentleness.

"Ah, I know you will think me foolish," she said; "but wait until you have heard me through. Perhaps then you you will think, dear Raimond, that I had good reason to be anxious about you."

"Then, you are not anxious now?" he asked playfully.

"No; you are safe in my keeping now, and I intend to make you promise to remain in this house overnight."

"And leave M. Saint André alone?" he said. "No, no, little one; I must return home to look after my guest."

At this her face clouded again.

"What! You must return home?" she asked anxiously. "Home to look after that Huguenot? Oh, Raimond, it is because of him that I fear for you."

"Now, what a foolish child you are!" he said with an amused laugh. "What

possible harm could befall me through Gaspard Saint André?"

"He is a Huguenot."

"Well, what of it?"

"Can it be possible you have forgotten that Coligny, the Huguenot chief, was fired upon yesterday by an assassin?"

"No," he answered coolly, "I remember the circumstance well." And he added with a flash of indignation, "It was a most cowardly and treacherous assault."

"Hush!" she whispered, casting frightened glances round and beginning again to tremble. "You must not speak that way here."

He took her in his arms and caressed her tenderly.

"My poor, timid little Gabrielle!" he said. "Come, tell me all your troubles like a dear, good child."

She looked up from her resting-place on his bosom, and answered in a voice barely above a whisper:

"Oh, Raimond, Duke Henry has been acting strangely during the past two days. He has been so violent and morose, and I have heard such dreadful threats, that I scarce know what to think. And I have observed that messengers have been coming and going between the Louvre and this palace all the week. The king's mother has been in constant communication with Duke Henry, and so has her brother, the Duke of Anjou. And I have seen men arming in the palace, as if for some bloody deed. Look!" she cried, turning in his arms and pointing out of the window, "you can see them standing in the rear courtyard below us now."

Thinking it best to humor her, Count Raimond glanced out of the window, expecting to note no more than the usual number of armed retainers that the duke always kept about his person.

He was greatly astonished, therefore, when he observed that the courtyard was crowded with armed men—some wearing the black, green, and white striped trunk hose of the Guise livery, it is true, but the majority having the unmistakable appearance of hired ruffians.

They stood in groups, conversing in eager whispers, sat on benches, grim and expectant, or swaggered to and fro impatiently, like bloodhounds chafing to be unleashed. There was an air of mystery about them that boded no good.

Count Raimond turned anxiously to the girl.

"Where did these fellows come from?" he asked.

"That I cannot answer," she replied. "All I know is that they have been arriving by twos and threes all day. Weapons have been given to them, and they have been sent to this courtyard to await orders."

"Do you know what the orders are to be?" he inquired gravely.

"Only that the men are to be employed against the Huguenots," she answered. "I learned that much from the Duchess of Nemours, the duke's mother. And then I remembered that my Raimond was entertaining a Huguenot in his house, and sent for him to come to me at once. And now," she pleaded coaxingly, "you must promise to remain here overnight."

Although it grieved him deeply to deny her, the count realized that as the Huguenots were mysteriously threatened, he must return home to protect his guest. The laws of hospitality demanded it.

"Come, Gabrielle," he said, "I must be going."

And gently but firmly releasing her from his arms, he rose to take his departure.

"No, no!" she cried, clinging to him desperately. "You must not go, Raimond. I will not let you. You are safe here, and here you must remain. Saint André is a man; let him shift for himself! Oh, I implore you not to leave me!"

And then she brought to her aid an argument against which even the greatest heroes are not proof—a woman's tears.

At this Count Raimond's resolution began to waver, and there is no knowing what he might have done had not a third person appeared upon the scene to decide him.

Footsteps sounded in the gallery, and a moment afterwards a tall, powerfully built young man of superb presence entered the apartment.

He was, perhaps, twenty or twenty

one years of age, but looked much older. Over a gray satin doublet he wore a corselet of woven mail, a red silk riding cloak hung from his broad shoulders, and a richly jeweled bonnet rested jauntily on his head.

He was booted and spurred, as if for a journey, and was armed with a rapier and a brace of pistols.

"What, in tears?" he cried, looking inquiringly at Mlle. d'Yverny and then at Count Raimond. "I trust, my dears, you have not been quarreling?" Then, dismissing the matter as of no importance, he turned to the count with the words:

"You are the very man I have been looking for, D'Evreux. Come with me into this chamber, where we can talk undisturbed."

Saying which, he crossed the card room towards the door of an adjoining apartment.

Mlle. d'Yverny looked pleadingly into the face of her lover.

"Duke Henry wants you, and you must go," she whispered. "But you will return to me, dearest, before leaving the palace, will you not?"

"Yes, I will return," he answered.

And, kissing the tears from her eyes, he hurried off to confer with the duke.

CHAPTER II.

AN ALARMING REVELATION.

When Count Raimond had entered the chamber, the Duke of Guise closed and fastened the door. Then he strode over to a window that commanded a view of the courtyard, and stood, silent and motionless, for several moments, gazing down upon the armed men below him.

Suddenly he wheeled towards the count, and it could be seen that his eyes glittered wildly and that his face was clouded with gloom.

"Have you heard any rumors, D'Evreux?" he inquired.

"Rumors of what, your grace?" asked the count.

"Of the great enterprise that's on for tomorrow?"

"No."

The duke heaved a sigh of relief.

"Then, our secret has been kept better than I thought," he said.

A period of silence followed, during which Guise studied his friend's face with a puzzled, doubtful look, debating with himself whether it were safe to trust him. Having made up his mind that it was, he spoke again:

"I referred just now to a great enterprise, thinking you might have heard of it; but I see you have not. It is a close secret; but I would have let you into it before if I could have found you. In fact, I called at your house twice during the day, but both times you were away from home."

"I am sorry to have inconvenienced your grace," said Raimond.

"You need not apologize," protested the duke; "I have no cause of complaint against you. You had no means of knowing that I was looking for you, and had a perfect right to go where you chose. Nevertheless, it is fortunate that I found you here; otherwise you might not have learned of the enterprise, and I might have been disappointed in obtaining a favor that I am about to ask of you. But first let me explain."

He clasped his hands behind his back, and paced the chamber nervously as he proceeded:

"You have doubtless heard," he began, "that Coligny is on the road to recovery. The varlet intrusted with his removal made a sad botch of it"—here the duke uttered a frightful oath—"and merely wounded him when he should have killed him.

"Now, if the admiral had been removed, as was intended, we might possibly have spared his followers; for, with their chief out of the way, they would not have been very formidable as enemies. But with Coligny alive, and in the highest favor with the king, they have enormous power to do evil; therefore, it is necessary that every Huguenot leader in France should die."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the count in alarm. "Are you mad?"

"Aye, mad, if you will!" cried the duke. "Mad to wreak vengeance on Coligny for planning the murder of my father! Mad to destroy all the Huguenots for the evils they have brought upon France! Mad to see justice done; to

release the king from evil advisers; to restore peace, prosperity, and happiness to my beloved country! If these desires constitute madness, then mad indeed I am!"

While giving utterance to these violent expressions, the duke increased the rapidity of his stride; his face grew scarlet, and his massive chest rose and fell convulsively. When he had finished, he paused a moment to recover his breath; then, turning to the count with a crafty smile:

"Do you recognize the expediency of the alternative?" he asked calmly.

Although horrified at what he had already heard, the count determined to lead the duke on to a full revelation of the frightful plot at which he had hinted. So, controlling his emotions, he answered with assumed indifference:

"I don't quite understand you."

"Then you are duller of comprehension than I thought," returned the duke. "I was referring to the expediency of getting rid of the Huguenot leaders."

"True; but how can that be done?"

"Oh, ho!" laughed Guise; "the means have been arranged already. But I forget that I have not yet let you into our secret. Listen, Catharine de Medici, the Duke of Anjou, myself, and a few other true lovers of France have decided that it is time the king was released from the baleful influence of Coligny. This can be accomplished only by putting the admiral out of the way.

"An attempt was made at his removal yesterday. It failed. Tomorrow morning before daybreak another attempt will be made, only this time it will not be Coligny alone, but all the Huguenot leaders, who will be removed. For it is expedient that none should be left to avenge the death of their chieftain."

"What! Dare you conspire against friends of the king?" cried Count Raimond.

"It will be by the king's orders," was the reply.

"Impossible! He would not be guilty of such treachery."

Guise responded to this outbreak with a low, cynical laugh.

"It is apparent that you do not know King Charles," he said. "Let him once suspect that these friends, as you call them, are conspiring against him, and there will be no bounds to his fury and resentment."

"But what proof have you that such a conspiracy exists?" asked the count.

"The king's mother will attend to that," replied the duke; and he added, with a smile full of meaning, "She is an Italian, you know, and, therefore, apt at unraveling conspiracies."

"Do you mean that she has discovered a plot of the Huguenots against her son?"

Guise laughed outright at his simplicity.

"Oh, yes," he replied ironically, "she has discovered a most diabolical plot, you may be sure—a plot that will arouse fear, rage, revenge, and every other evil passion in the king. It is probable," he continued, "that she has already revealed it to him. So we may expect the king's permission to carry out our designs at any moment."

"But supposing he refuses to grant it?"

"He will not refuse," was the emphatic answer.

That Guise thoroughly understood the character of his royal master, and could, therefore, prophesy with certainty on how he would act, is borne out by the facts of history.

Even before the king had been approached on the subject of the massacre of the Huguenot leaders, the projectors of the outrage had carefully prepared for its execution. They had armed all their retainers, apportioned out among themselves and agents the different quarters of the city, and artfully aroused the evil passions of the rabble.

They had even agreed upon a signal for the commencement of the bloody work—the ringing of the tocsin by the bell of the Palace of Justice an hour before daybreak.

The mine was in readiness; it needed but the king's consent to fire it.

How his permission was finally obtained by the entreaties and cunning misrepresentations of his mother, Catharine de Medici, constitutes one of the most shameful episodes in French annals.

For hour after hour the king withstood her arguments; but at last her evil

counsels prevailed. Towards midnight, on St. Bartholomew's eve, after a violent mental struggle, he gave in to her will, crying:

"'Sdeath! Since you think proper to kill the admiral, I consent; but all the Huguenots in Paris as well, in order that there remain not one to reproach me afterwards. Give the orders at once."

And so the design to kill a few nobles became a general massacre.

Having revealed the "great enterprise" to his friend, Guise now proceeded to ask the favor he wished to obtain of him.

"My dear D'Evreux," he began in mild, insinuating tones, "you have a guest sojourning with you, have you not?"

"Yes," replied Raimond.

"One M. Saint André, I am told?"

"The same."

"A friend of Coligny, and quite an important personage among Huguenots, I understand."

"True."

On a sudden the duke's tone and manner changed.

"Are you aware that this M. Saint André is my mortal enemy?" he cried fiercely.

With a premonition of what was coming, the count looked him straight in the eyes and answered coolly:

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Because I want you to deliver him over to my vengeance," cried the duke. "I want you to see that no harm befalls him until the appointed hour. If you have any enemies among the Huguenots yourself, upon whom you would be revenged, seek them out when the proper time arrives and kill them; but reserve M. Saint André for me. Make sure that he does not escape. For, when I have finished with Coligny, I shall call at your house to settle accounts with him—do you understand? That is the favor I had to ask of you. Will you grant it?"

"No."

"But, consider, my dear D'Evreux, this man has done me a terrible injury. He was equally guilty with Coligny in planning the murder of my father. Knowing this, will you still refuse my request?"

"Ask justice of the king," said Raimond, turning to leave the room.

The duke's face paled with chagrin.

"Where are you going?" he asked angrily.

"Home," said the count.

"To keep Saint André for my vengeance?"

"No, to save him," was the calm reply.

CHAPTER III.

BY ORDER OF THE KING.

As Count Raimond passed out into the card room, Mlle. d'Yverny ran up to him, crying:

"Why, Raimond, how pale and agitated you look! What has happened?"

"Nothing, dear, nothing," he answered huskily. "His grace and I have had a little disagreement—that is all."

"What! You have quarreled with Duke Henry?"

"You could hardly call it a quarrel. It was rather a misunderstanding. I will explain at some other time."

"But why not explain now?"

"Because"—and his voice trembled as he spoke—"because I have only a few moments at my disposal, and I want to give them to you, Gabrielle."

And clasping her in his arms, he kissed her again and again.

"Oh, my love! My Raimond!" she cried in tones of dread. "Why do you kiss me so? Tell me, can it be that you never expect to see me again after you leave me?"

He did not answer.

"Yes, I know it is that," she continued. "You are going away from me to risk your life for a stranger. Ah, how can you be so cruel to your poor Gabrielle?"

She threw her arms around his neck, and clung to him, weeping.

"My darling! My life!" he said hoarsely. "I implore you to be calm! Do you wish to unman me? Consider, Saint André is my guest. He has placed himself in my keeping, at my invitation. Shall I betray his trust in me with treachery? No, a thousand times no! Hospitality is a thing to be held sacred and inviolate among men. Is it not so?"

"Yes," she murmured faintly.

"Then, which shall it be—shall I desert my guest, or defend him? Shall I be cowardly, or brave?"

She buried her face in his bosom, and whispered:

"Be brave."

Then, with an effort, she checked her sobs, and looked up into his face, smiling. And there shone a light, half fear, half joy, through her tears; for she now realized more than ever before that the man she loved was true and honorable.

"Kiss me, Raimond!" she said very gently. "There, once again!—and again! Now go, dear, while I still have courage to part from you!"

She smiled sweetly as she uttered the words, and the same smile followed him as he passed out into the gallery. He gave one backward glance on reaching the door, waved a last adieu, and then hurried off to the courtyard, where he had left his horse.

On leaving the duke's palace, he rode straight to the house of Admiral Coligny, on the Rue St. Bethisy, to inform him of the murderous plot that had just been revealed to him, so that he might take precautions to protect himself and the Huguenot nobles.

He found the dwelling strongly garrisoned by a company of Swiss arquebusiers, fifty in number, under the command of M. Cosseins, a trusted captain in the royal service. This officer informed Raimond that the king had sent him to look after the safety of the admiral and his friends. So, satisfied that Coligny was secure under the monarch's protection, Raimond went his way without delivering his warning.

When he arrived home, he hastened to the chamber of his guest, and found him in the act of dressing for the street.

"Where are you going, Saint André?" he asked abruptly.

"To the admiral's, to inquire about his wound," was the reply.

"Pardon me for contradicting you," said the count; "but you are not. You are going with me."

"Indeed?" said Saint André, elevating his eyebrows and regarding his host with an amused smile. "Why, how peremptory you are, my dear count!"

"When the occasion demands it, yes."

"And is the present such an occasion?"

"It is."

"Then," said Saint André, "as your guest, I must place myself at your service, and postpone the visit to my friend Coligny until tomorrow."

"By that time," returned the count gravely, "I trust you will be many miles from Paris."

"What do you mean?"

"That you and I must leave the city this evening."

"Impossible!"

"Very well, then, remain where you are and perish."

Saint André looked at him in alarm.

"Perish?" he echoed.

"Yes, before daybreak tomorrow. Assassins are seeking your life."

The Huguenot's face paled perceptibly; he knew that Count Raimond was not the man to deceive him.

"When shall we start?" he asked after a pause.

The count turned to leave the room.

"Immediately," he answered. "I will have horses made ready at once."

It was after ten o'clock when they set out on their journey.

The town was quiet and very dark, save where, at intervals, smoky oil lamps swung from pulleys over the middle of the street.

On account of the gloom and the uneven character of the way—for this was before the period of paving stones—they were obliged to keep their horses at a walk. They rode side by side, in silence, and unattended.

Passing between rows of tall houses with high pitched roofs, quaint turrets, and toppling chimneys, they emerged presently into a broader thoroughfare that led to one of the great gates of the city. Here they turned to the right and somewhat quickened their pace.

It was evident that in this busier part of Paris the citizens had not yet retired to rest. For, more than once, they encountered bands of men hurrying along with links and arms.

Lights gleamed in the windows of the houses; the glare of torches and the murmur of voices could be seen and heard in the fore courts of the larger dwellings, while shadowy groups could

be descried standing motionless in the dark mouths of narrow alleys.

There was an air of mystery abroad, a sense of fear, expectancy, and preparation, and the night was full of phantoms.

The fugitives had proceeded along this wider street for about half a mile, when the count suddenly reined in his horse, and pointed into the darkness ahead. Looking in the direction indicated, Saint André beheld an arched gateway flanked by huge round towers, from which a massive wall extended to the right and left.

"'Tis the city gate," he muttered with a sigh of relief, "and beyond it lies freedom and safety." And, turning to his companion, he added aloud, "Come, let us hasten thither!"

But the count still halted in the road.

"Why do you stop?" asked Saint André.

"Can you not see?"

"What?"

"The gate."

"Well?"

"It is closed."

For several moments neither spoke; but remained stock still in the middle of the street, regarding each other through the darkness with frightened, questioning looks. Then the count broke the silence with the words:

"This gate is never shut until midnight, and it is not yet half past ten. I fear something unusual has happened; I may be wrong. At least we can ride forward and ascertain."

A few steps of their horses brought them to the gate, which they found closely guarded by a troop of halberdiers. The captain of the band stepped forth from the shadows of the archway and challenged them.

"Gentlemen, what errand brings ye here?"

"We wish to leave the city," said Count Raimond. "Pray open, and let us through!"

"I am sorry to refuse you," returned the officer politely; "but I am under special instructions to permit no one to pass this gateway tonight."

The count could hardly disguise his annoyance.

"Who gave you such an extraordinary command?" he inquired.

Doffing his bonnet, and bowing almost to the ground, the other answered:

"It is by order of the king."

The count uttered an exclamation of dismay. The officer's answer bore a striking resemblance to certain words spoken by the Duke of Guise while informing him of the plot against the Huguenots.

"It will be by the king's orders," he had said, referring to the execution of the design; and the shutting up of the Huguenots in Paris, by the monarch's express command, seemed to confirm this statement.

As all the other gates of the city were invariably closed at ten, the count realized that it would be useless to apply at them. Still, as it might be possible to escape by crossing to the other side of the Seine, he turned in the direction of the river, and motioned Saint André to follow.

"Where are you going?" asked the latter, when they were beyond hearing of the soldiers.

"To the ferry."

"For what purpose?"

"To cross over to the Faubourg St. Germain, where there are no gates to hinder our flight."

"Good."

Accordingly, they walked their horses in silence back over the way they had come, and then through a narrow street that led to the river. They reached it without adventure, and made their way to a boat landing a few yards to their right. But, as they were about to descend to the platform where the boats were moored, a dozen soldiers left the shadows of the houses on the river bank and surrounded them.

"Not so fast, gentlemen!" cried their officer, stepping forward and seizing Count Raimond's horse rudely by the bridle. "What brings ye here at this hour?"

"We have business across the river, and have come to be ferried over."

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"Your business will have to wait," he said; "no boats cross the Seine this night."

"By whose order?" demanded the count.

"The king's," was the curt reply.

Thus, for the second time, was their flight frustrated by the royal mandate.

Could it be possible that the king was acting in concert with the enemies of the Huguenots?

It is recorded in history that Charles IX ordered the gates of Paris closed and the ferries stopped on that memorable night, in order to prevent the escape of the assassins who had wounded Coligny; but certainly Count Raimond was justified in suspecting him of treachery, in view of what he had heard.

It was with a feeling of utter hopelessness, therefore, that he turned to Saint André and whispered:

"'Tis useless to try further; it appears that even the king is against us. Let us return to my house, where I can at least protect you with all the resources at my command."

So leaving the ferry, they rode back to the count's dwelling in silence.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE WAY OF SERVING A FRIEND.

BEFORE proceeding with the narrative it will here be necessary to briefly review the antecedents of the two men whom destiny had thrown together in such a strange relationship.

Count Raimond d'Evreux was descended from one of the oldest and most honorable families in France. It was a matter of no little pride to him that he came of a house without a blemish on its escutcheon.

His ancestors had all been patterns of chivalrous Christian knighthood, and from his earliest days, he had been trained to emulate their example. Hence his exalted idea of knightly honor.

When he was in his seventeenth year he had succeeded to the title of Count d'Evreux, and the estates that went with it, through the untimely death of his elder brother, who had been killed in a duel with an unknown Huguenot. It was hinted that his brother had been treacherously dealt with by his adversary, and this had aroused in the young count's heart a passionate desire for vengeance—the one fierce instinct in his otherwise gentle nature.

It has been said that his brother's slayer was unknown. Yet he bore upon his person an indelible, telltale mark by which the count hoped some day to identify him.

One of the dead man's seconds had informed him that when the stranger stripped for the duel it could be seen that a device of a peculiar character was tattooed upon his right forearm. It was the representation of a heart, a stirrup, and a cup executed in a bright red color.

At the period of this narrative, the count had been searching for his enemy for five years, so that he was in the twenty third year of his age.

M. Gaspard Saint André, the man whom he was called upon to defend, was fully ten years older. Grave, taciturn, and mysterious, he laid no claims to an honorable ancestry. Indeed, even his closest friends knew nothing of his antecedents. It was sufficient for them that his education and manners proclaimed him to be a gentleman.

Possessed of undoubted talents, he had recently attracted the attention of Coligny by his display of religious zeal; he was now deep in the confidence of the admiral, and it was prophesied that he was destined to attain a high position among the Huguenots.

The two men had been strangers until the occasion of the royal marriage, when, at the urgent request of Teligny, the admiral's son in law, the count had invited Saint André to be his guest.

While the two were endeavoring to escape from Paris, there came to Count Raimond's house an emissary of the Duke of Guise. He was no less a personage than the duke's secretary, an unscrupulous Italian, who had been chosen for the mission on account of his intimacy with certain of the count's servants.

On reaching the dwelling, and finding the master and his guest gone, he called two of these intimates aside into a chamber, where they could confer unheard, and broached the purpose of his visit with rare cunning.

"Truchon—Valette," said he, "do you wish to serve your master?"

"I would lose an eye for him," answered Truchon.

"And I an arm," replied Valette.

"Good!" exclaimed the secretary, with an approving nod. "I like your moderation. Now, if you had said that you stood ready to sacrifice your lives for your master, there would have been an end to all negotiations between us, and I would have been obliged to seek assistance elsewhere. But, as your fidelity is tempered with reason, I feel confident that we can come to terms, especially as the reward I am authorized to offer for your services is very large."

"Have you come here to corrupt us?" cried Truchon.

"Do you think we can be bought?" exclaimed Valette.

The thin lips of the Italian parted in an ironical smile.

"Oh, no, my friends," he said; "I know you too well to imagine that you could be either corrupted or bought. But," he continued suavely, "if I can show you how you can enrich yourselves in an honest, honorable way, I am sure that neither of you will let the opportunity go by."

"Oh, well, if the affair is honorable," said Truchon with assumed virtue.

"Aye, if it is honest," added Valette hypocritically.

"It is more," said the Italian. "It is highly meritorious, as you will see when I explain it."

He motioned his companions to chairs, and, taking a seat opposite them, continued:

"Your master, the Count d'Evreux, is extending his hospitality to a very wicked and designing Huguenot, Saint André by name. This man is a mortal enemy of the Duke of Guise, who has sworn to have his life. The count knows this, and in his heart approves the duke's purpose; but, because M. Saint André is his guest, he is determined to protect him with his life. On the other hand, the duke is equally bent on killing him. Do you understand?"

Truchon and Valette nodded a dubious yes.

The Italian resumed:

"Now, the duke loves Count Raimond as a brother, and does not wish to sacrifice him to his vengeance—that is, if he can possibly avoid it. And so he has sent me here to conspire with you to save him."

"What would he have us do?" said Truchon.

The Italian bent towards him, and whispered fiercely:

"Kill the Huguenot!"

"'Sdeath!" exclaimed Truchon in alarm, "do you take us for rogues?"

"Or assassins?" chimed in Valette.

"On the contrary," returned the secretary, "I take you for true, brave men, devoted to the service of your master. Surely," he added, with an unctuous smile, "you could not find better employment than in saving the good count from harm."

"But why should the duke harm him?" inquired Truchon. "Why does he not delay his vengeance until the Huguenot has departed from his house?"

"Aye, the count would not stand in his way then," said Valette.

The secretary smote his knee with his clenched fist and answered with emphasis:

"The duke is resolved to have Saint André's life *now*—do you understand?—*now!* At present he has him completely in his power and on no account will he give him a chance to escape. Whatever is done must be done quickly. Come, do you wish to save your master, and earn the duke's reward?"

Truchon knit his brows, scratched his head, and pondered. Valette did likewise. It was apparent that they were sorely perplexed how to decide.

Noticing their hesitancy, the wily Italian remarked in a casual manner:

"I forgot to mention that you will receive a thousand crowns each for the job."

Truchon looked inquiringly at Valette.

"What say you, comrade?" he asked.

"That I like the reward, but not the risk," was the answer. "I hardly think we could come through the affair with our lives."

"The duke will protect you," said the Italian reassuringly. "You can find an asylum in his palace when the deed is done."

"In that case," returned Valette, "if Truchon agrees to the undertaking, so will I."

"I agree to it," said Truchon; then,

turning to the secretary, "Monsieur," said he, "how long a time will you give us to accomplish our task?"

"It must be finished before daybreak tomorrow," replied the Italian. "If the Huguenot is alive when the tocsin sounds from the belfry of the Palace of Justice, the duke will come here to kill him with his own hand, and you will lose your reward. Moreover, your master, the count, will be placed in grave peril of his life; for he will undoubtedly attempt to defend his guest to the last."

"Rest assured, we will save him from such a folly," said Truchon.

"Aye, we will choose a time to kill the Huguenot when he is alone," added Valette.

The Italian rubbed his palms together and chuckled with satisfaction.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I see that we understand one another perfectly. I wish you all possible good luck."

Saying which, he arose from his chair, waved an adieu to the two faithless servants, and started to leave the house. But ere he reached the door leading into the street, an evil smile flitted across his sallow face, and he stopped in his tracks to ponder.

"Yes," he muttered, after several minutes of silent reflection, "it is possible that Truchon and Valette may fail in their attempt after all. In that case, Count Raimond is likely to thwart the duke in his revenge, for he has an army of retainers to help him. It is expedient, therefore, for me to go among these people, and see what a little Italian policy can accomplish."

And with that he turned quickly about, and made his way to the hall of the servants.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARING FOR DEFENSE.

WHEN Raimond and his guest reached home, they retired into the library to consult upon a course of future action.

Having closed and locked the doors, the count placed two chairs at opposite sides of a table, and they both sat down.

For several moments they remained silent and motionless, their hands supporting their chins and their elbows resting upon the table, staring at one another in blank despair. Finally, the count broke the silence with the words:

"Well, what's to be done now?"

"Before discussing that question," said Saint André, "I would like to know the nature of the peril that threatens me."

"I have already told you that assassins seek your life," returned Raimond.

"Aye; but you have not told me why. If assassins are lying in wait for me, it must be that some enemy has employed them. Who is this enemy?"

"The Duke of Guise."

Saint André turned pale, and trembled.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, "it is as I feared. Guise believes that the admiral and I were concerned in the murder of his father; but I swear that it is not so. The admiral is too high minded to consent to an assassination, and as for myself, I can prove that I am not——" He checked himself suddenly, and reddened to the roots of his hair. Then he cried out vehemently, "Oh, say that you do not believe it of me!"

"I am loath to think evil of any man," answered the count, beginning to distrust the other; "but even if I knew that you were guilty of the crime you deny, I would still remember that you are my guest and would protect you. Especially," he added, "as it is not the Duke of Guise alone whom we have to deal with now, but a host of other enemies."

"You speak in enigmas!" cried Saint André, with increased alarm. "Pray explain your meaning."

At this the count told him of the plot against the Huguenots that Guise had revealed to him, and of his fears that the king had been prevailed on to countenance the intended massacre. And he added:

"But, whatever happens, the king will protect the admiral; for he has sent a company of arquebusiers to guard his house."

A moment afterwards he struck the table with his fist, and cried joyously:

"I have it! Coligny is your friend, and he is under the king's protection. You will be safe with him. Come, let us hasten to his dwelling while there is time!"

Saint André reddened, turned pale, reddened again, and answered faintly:

"No."

The count regarded him with amazement.

"What!" he exclaimed. "You refuse to go to a place where you will be safe from your enemies?"

But Saint André only repeated:

"No."

It was in vain that Count Raimond pressed him to heed his advice. He was obdurate, exhibiting such an embarrassment in his refusal that his host grew more distrustful of him than before. At last, having exhausted every argument, the count said with a shrug of his shoulders:

"Well, since you will not go to Coligny's, I must provide for your safety here. Come, let us place the house in a condition of defense."

With that he rose from the table, and going over to the door, opened it and led the way out into the hall.

The two men then proceeded to make a critical examination of the premises, going from room to room, and noting the positions most suitable for fortification. When they had finished their rounds, they returned to the library, where they compared their observations and discussed various plans of defense.

It was finally decided to establish a series of barricades, one within the other, after the manner of a military camp. The courtyard gate was to be the first, or outer, of these defenses, as an attacking party would be obliged to pass through it in order to gain access to the house.

It was a massive affair of oak and iron, and when closed was held in place by heavy crossbars which rendered it well nigh impregnable.

The second barricade was to be erected inside and across the great door of the dwelling, with a similar fortification across the servants' door in the rear. At the head of the main stairway, on the second floor, the third barricade was to be established.

A fourth was to be constructed at the head of the flight leading up to the third story, and a fifth at the top of the ladder communicating with the attic.

Thus the defenders would be enabled to oppose their assailants step by step to the roof, where, if the worst should happen, they could resort to flight over the neighboring housetops.

The count supervised the work, while his servants performed it. Saint André stood by, grave and thoughtful, watching its progress and offering an occasional suggestion.

The material used in the construction of the barricades was the costly furniture of the establishment—chairs, sofas, bedsteads, tables, cabinets. In obedience to their master's instructions, the servants ransacked every chamber; the beautiful house was completely despoiled in the process of converting it into a fortress.

The most assiduous of the workers were Truchon and Valette. They vied with each other in activity and zeal, lifting, carrying, pushing, hauling, as if their lives depended upon their exertions.

And, moreover, it was edifying to behold the alacrity with which they responded to the suggestions of Saint André. They ran hither and thither to do his least bidding, devoting themselves especially to his service.

Their fellow servants, on the contrary, put but little heart into their labor. They did what they were told to do, no more.

They went about their work with sour, lowering faces, and more than once the count was obliged to reprimand them. A critical observer might have read mutiny in their looks, but he saw nothing more serious than sullenness.

When the barricades were completed, the count drew Saint André aside into the alcove of a window, to confer with him concerning the disposition of the garrison.

"I have six arquebusiers in my employ," he said, "to protect me when traveling on the road. They are brave, resolute fellows, accustomed to danger, and, therefore, I will station them in the courtyard to guard the gate. Does that meet with your approval?"

"Yes," answered the Huguenot. "Six trained men at arms should be able to hold that position against thrice their number."

"I have, besides," continued the

count, "twenty servants in my establishment. That is a sufficient number to render the house impregnable, provided I had arms to distribute among them. But, unfortunately, I have not. I have five or six rapiers, and perhaps half a dozen pistols—that is all."

"Arm them with bricks from the chimneys," suggested Saint André, "and station them at the windows and behind the barricades. A brick is a dangerous missle when thrown with swiftness and precision."

The count grasped at the idea with enthusiasm.

"Good! It shall be done," he exclaimed. "I will call the men together now and give them their instructions. Bide here until I rejoin you."

Saying which, he hurried away to call a meeting of his retainers in the hall of servants, leaving alone the man in whose defense he was staking so much.

CHAPTER VI.

A QUESTION OF DUTY.

THE servants' hall was situated in the basement of the great house, and had a door opening into the courtyard.

It was across this entrance that one of the barricades had been erected.

The apartment was spacious, in keeping with the dignity of the establishment, and served two purposes: the retainers of the household ate their meals there, and there they met to gossip and amuse themselves when off duty.

As the count entered this room, he observed that many of his servants had already gathered there, and were standing about in little groups, whispering and gesticulating excitedly. But on seeing him they instantly relapsed into silence. He noticed that there was an expression of discontent on their faces, and that they regarded him uneasily; but he was too much occupied with other things to give heed to this at the time.

Having summoned the absentees to his presence, he took a position opposite the barricaded door, and began to speak as follows:

"My men, you have doubtless wondered why I have called upon you to place this house in a condition of defense. I will tell you the reason now. The life of M. Saint André is threatened, not by an ordinary enemy, but by one who can command the services of a hundred devoted followers to help him carry out his designs. I am informed that this enemy will attempt M. Saint André's life before daybreak; that he will come here, to my house, to kill him. But I have resolved not to allow my home to be so dishonored.

"M. Saint André is my guest, and the laws of hospitality require that I permit no harm to befall him so long as he remains under the shelter of my roof. If it is necessary that I should die in his defense, so be it. The sacredness of my home shall be preserved at all hazards. You now know the reason for these warlike preparations. All that remains, therefore, is for me to provide you with weapons, and instruct you in the duties that you will be expected to perform."

He paused and cast a look around, as if awaiting some expressions of approval from his servants; but not a single man responded. The drop of a pin might have been heard in the profound silence that reigned.

With a vague feeling of alarm, Raimond turned to the captain of his arquebusiers.

"M. Gaillard," he cried, "stand forth and receive your orders!"

The man addressed stepped forward, saluted respectfully, and stood before his master with eyes cast upon the floor.

"Captain," began the count, "are all your men at hand?"

"Yes, master."

"Are their weapons in good order?"

"So far as I know, your excellency."

"Are you well provided with slugs and powder?"

"My lord, we have sufficient for a siege."

"Very well, then, place your men under arms at once, and take your stand within the courtyard gate."

But Gaillard never stirred from his tracks. Instead, he raised his eyes to his master's face, and inquired with the utmost presumption:

"Are we ordered there to defend your guest, my lord?"

The count stared at him in amazement.

"Is it the part of a soldier to question his superiors?" he cried. "Yes, you are ordered there to protect M. Saint André."

Gaillard smiled disdainfully.

"My lord," said he, "however willingly we would die in your service, we must, nevertheless, decline to fight the battles of this Huguenot."

And, before Count Raimond could recover from his surprise, the captain turned towards the barricade, clambered over it, and passed out by the door into the courtyard, his five comrades following at his heels.

Truchon and Valette—who were standing among the servants—took advantage of this diversion to glide quickly and stealthily from the room.

"Cowards!" cried the count fiercely, shaking his fist at the departing arquebusiers. "Scoundrels, to draw my pay only to abandon me at the first menace of danger!"

Then, turning to the steward of his establishment, he said in calmer tones:

"It is apparent, Mandelot, that we must depend upon our grooms and lackeys in this affair. What say you?"

There was no reply.

The count continued:

"I have twenty true men in my household—a sufficient number to man all the defenses, with some to spare. I have rapiers and pistols for half a dozen, and for the rest we can find other weapons. Come, my good Mandelot, call forth six of my lustiest varlets to man the courtyard gate!"

The steward remained motionless.

"Why are you silent?" demanded the count. "Did you not hear my command?"

At that Mandelot stepped forward, and replied very gravely:

"Yes, my lord, I heard it."

"Then, why do you not respect it?"

"Because it would be useless for me to do so, my lord."

Count Raimond looked from the steward to his servants, and read in their faces a sullen defiance of his authority. Then, with a foreknowledge of what was coming:

"Do you mean that you would not be obeyed?" he inquired.

"I do, my lord," replied Mandelot.

The count was dumfounded.

Could it be possible that his retainers were about to desert him in a body?

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, with a terrible sinking of the heart, "have the rascals forgotten whose livery they wear? Are they lost to all sense of duty?"

"No, my lord," replied Mandelot firmly, "we are well aware of our duty. We wear your livery, it is true, and, therefore, owe you service; but in this case our duty binds us to one far higher than our master."

"To whom do you refer?"

"To the king of France, who has commanded his subjects to extend no protection to the Huguenots."

"Who told you such a falsehood?" cried the count.

"The secretary of my Lord of Guise," replied Mandelot.

Count Raimond's eyes flashed fire; for he now knew that, to serve his own base ends, Guise had been tampering with his retainers. Already they were deserting him—creeping quietly and stealthily across the barricade and out through the door into the courtyard. There was but one chance left to recall them to their allegiance, and he grasped at it like a drowning man at a straw.

"Hold!" he cried imperiously. "You claim that duty binds you to one far higher than your master—the king. True; but I say that your first obedience is due to One compared with Whom the king, with all his majesty, is as nothing—the great King of Kings, who commands you to love your enemies."

"Aye; but not to die for them," said Mandelot, adding, "Since your excellency expects us to risk our lives for a Huguenot, we must beg to retire from your service."

With these words he made a low obeisance to his master, and, calling upon the servants to follow him, passed out through the courtyard door.

Scarcely had the last varlet disappeared, when the noise of a scuffle was heard overhead, and a voice cried out in tones that echoed through the silent house:

"Help, D'Evreux! Help!"

(To be continued.)

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SAILS.

BY HATTIE LUMMIS.

An episode on a yachting party, which proves that while it always takes two to make a quarrel, cleverness on the part of one is quite sufficient to make it up again.

THAT Miss Delamore's yachting party would prove a success was a foregone conclusion. Miss Delamore was herself a success, and all her undertakings bore the imprint of her conquering personality. Those honored by her invitations were in the habit of accepting promptly, while those not so fortunate were properly envious and cast down.

Accordingly, when for this particular occasion she received regrets, and those, too, from Kitty Crawford, on whom she had principally relied for the entertainment of her guests, Miss Delamore simply set her lips together with Napoleonic firmness and drove at once to Kitty's home to inquire into the matter.

She found the young lady in the garden, languidly occupying a hammock, and attired in a negligee gown which the male observer would have thought enchanting, but which Miss Delamore was too absorbed to notice.

"As for your not going, my dear," she said, plunging into the conversation with her usual impetuosity, "that's all nonsense, you know. It's got to be arranged somehow. I've depended on having you sing, and, besides, the yacht is a perfect dream now that it has been refitted. What's the matter, any way, Kitty?"

As she hurled this question at her friend she bent upon her a controlling gaze such as the hypnotist fixes on his prospective victim.

But the other girl was as shrewd as she and as self possessed.

"Oh, I don't know, Lou," she answered, with a carelessness that was almost too elaborate. "I'm rather used up, and, besides, the sea breeze burns one to a crisp, especially the nose. And considering the tilt of mine, you know, I can't be too careful about giving it undue prominence."

"What absurdity—from Kitty Crawford!" thought Miss Delamore; but she only said: "Nonsense! Wear a veil. I'm going to have the jolliest sort of a crowd, Kitty. I want you to meet Miss Huntington, of Baltimore; she's really distractingly pretty. And Mr. Jack Walford—let's see. Do you know him?"

Miss Crawford, lowering her inscrutable lids, admitted having met the gentleman in question at her uncle's seaside residence. She neglected to add, however, that they had immediately and mutually fallen in love, a state of affairs culminating in an engagement after six weeks' acquaintance, and that just a month before this very morning they had quarreled irretrievably and parted forever.

Nor did she mention that in breaking this brief engagement she had come as near to breaking her heart as a well conducted nineteenth century girl ever comes to so ill advised a proceeding.

Not being given to indiscriminate confidences, Kitty referred to none of these things, but their recollection may account for her saying, in a very languid voice, just as her friend rose to go, "Don't expect me tomorrow, Lou; but if the day is lovely, and I happen to feel just like it, I may come."

Whereupon Miss Delamore, interpreting the remark as an unconditional surrender, kissed her enthusiastically, and went away in triumph.

But when Kitty came on board the yacht next morning there was not in her manner the faintest trace of listlessness or languor. In her blue yachting suit, with a jaunty sailor hat perched carefully on one side, she was the very embodiment of girlish animation.

Her advent was hailed with an enthusiasm universal, except in the case of one young man, who exclaimed under his

breath, "The devil! She here?" and walked to the other side of the yacht to recover his composure.

For Jack Walford was still young enough to believe that love is eternal, and though he had no intention of making any unmanly fuss over the matter, he knew very well that his heart had been irremediably broken by the cruelty of this coquette in blue, now lavishing her dangerous smiles on all comers.

Jack looked out over the calm water and thought of the evening just a month before when he and she had walked together under the sighing branches of the pines, and the sea breeze had ruffled the bewitching little curls around her forehead.

The poor boy choked to remember the trifle "light as air" which had been the cause of their quarrel, and vainly tried to console himself with the reflection that if Kitty had ever really loved him she could not have made those savage speeches which had cut him to the heart.

One recollection, however, gave Jack a melancholy comfort. When Miss Crawford had drawn from her finger the ring which he had placed there with so much love and pride a few short weeks before, Jack had received the little token without a word, and turning on his heel, had hurled it into the dancing waves. Then, without a single backward glance, he had walked away, and by this course of conduct, Jack thought, perhaps not unreasonably, that he had properly sustained the dignity of a much injured man.

And now, though he had been taken by surprise and compelled to beat a temporary retreat, Jack, who was grit to his finger ends, had no intention of surrendering without a blow. After fifteen minutes of reflection, he found himself able to approach Kitty and greet her with a careless cordiality; and then immediately devoted himself to making the acquaintance of Miss Huntington, who was almost as pretty as her enthusiastic hostess had declared.

And so the morning passed uneventfully, and the afternoon was well advanced, when Miss Delamore called upon Kitty to sing.

Kitty responded with the readiness which was one of her charms. She brought her guitar from the cabin, took her seat conveniently near the spot where Jack was carrying on a very fair imitation of a flirtation with Miss Huntington, and without preface or apology began one of the favorite ballads of the day.

Kitty's voice was like herself, piquant and sweet and full of charming surprises. She sang snatches of operas, rollicking college songs, and now and then one of those tender, plaintive little airs that compel neither smiles nor tears, but in some unaccountable way reach the heart.

And her audience applauded hungrily, and would not be satisfied, till at last she said, with a pretty air of determination, "This is positively the last." As she spoke, she looked full at Jack, and for the first time that day their eyes met.

She turned away her head, and a beautiful color burned in her cheeks as she struck a vibrating chord on the guitar. There was in her voice, too, a tremulousness which caught the attention of the listeners almost from the first word.

We wandered in the shadow of the pines, my love and I.

In spite of himself, Jack writhed on his chair. The memories of one eventful night grew vivid at those words.

Again he seemed to hear the weird music of the rustling pines, and the face of the singer grew misty before his blurring eyes. It would have been more delicate in Kitty, the poor fellow reflected savagely, to select a song without such allusions. But like all else in this day of torture, it must be endured, and Jack braced himself to listen.

We wandered in the shadow of the pines, my love and I,
As the wind was blowing freshly from the sea;
But a sudden, fitful darkness stole across the summer sky,
And a shadow came between my love and me.
Some hasty words were spoken, and then almost unawares
Hasty answers to unthinking anger led,
And our heartsick, bitter longing and our weeping and our prayers
Ne'er can make those false and cruel words unsaid.

The young man wiped the drops of perspiration from his forehead. He was pale to the lips, and the girl from Balti-

more noticed it and asked him confidentially if he were seasick.

Jack did not answer. In fact, he did not even hear. For now into Kitty's voice there had come a poignant note of longing and entreaty, and her guitar, as if responsive to her mood, sobbed out its rippling accompaniment:

He took the ring I gave him, nor cast a glance at me,
As he held the jeweled trinket in his hand,
And then he turned and tossed it in the waters of the sea,
Where the waves were splashing idly on the sand;
He went his way unheeding the hot tears I could not hide,
He went his way and not a word was said,
But my stubborn heart was breaking underneath its mask of pride,
And the pine trees sobbed in pity overhead.

The words were crude, the melody simple; yet, as the girl sang from her heart, she somehow touched those divinest of life's harmonies, which are the inspiration of all the arts.

And more than one of the listeners found their eyes suspiciously moist, though perhaps they themselves would have been puzzled to tell why.

I wake from bitter dreaming but to call aloud your name;
I sleep again to dream of you once more;
And my stubborn pride has left me—I admit I was to blame;
Forgive me, dear, and love me as before.
For the future is o'ershadowed with the darkness of despair,
In the sky of life love's sun no longer shines,
And I'd give the whole world gladly, once again to meet you there,
Reunited in the shadow of the pines.

The song closed abruptly, and Kitty, leaving her seat somewhat hurriedly, turned her back upon her still clamorous audience.

Jack followed, and as they stood in a sheltered nook together, his shoulder close pressed to hers, he saw that her delicate lips were quivering.

"Kitty," said the young man, his voice thick with love's sublime intoxication, "can you ever forgive me?"

She turned her brimming eyes upon him. "If I hadn't wanted forgiveness myself," she said, "I should never have written that song."

Then, with that indifference for appearances characteristic of great souls in moments of exaltation, Jack kissed her in the shadow of the sails, and as the relenting angel sheathed his flaming sword, the lovers, hand in hand, reentered paradise.

THE ADIRONDACKS AND LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

Crimson and green and golden
Against a sky of blue,
Mellowed by autumn sunlight,
God's glory shining through,
Dainty as cheek of woman,
Grand as the boundless main,
The beautiful Adirondacks
Stoop down to kiss Champlain.

Burnished like precious silver,
Restful as love divine,
Fresh as the breath of morning,
Peaceful as day's decline,
Bathing the rugged ledges
With gentle, sweet refrain,
The beautiful Adirondacks
Are kissed by Lake Champlain.

Sarah Knowles Bolton.

THE AMAZONIAN CONSPIRACY.*

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

A wonder of the deep and the plot and counterplot that carried her into alien ownership. The strange combination of circumstances which put a newspaper man into position to dictate terms to a nation.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

GARRETT VOSE, deprived at one blow of fortune and the opportunity of marrying the girl he loves, takes up newspaper work as reporter on the *Leader*. He is sent to interview Mathias Burbank, the father of his sweetheart, in regard to a submarine craft Burbank has invented. In a restaurant he overhears a conversation that leads him to suppose there is some crooked work going on between one Rivas and Carlos de Casa regarding the payment of his price for the boat to Burbank, who is negotiating for her sale to a South American junta. He tries to warn Burbank, but the inventor thinks him jealous of De la Casa, who is paying attention to Helen, and will not listen. Vose writes a letter to Helen, briefly informing her of the facts, and then departs by the steamer Good Fortune, on an assignment for his paper. The Good Fortune is ostensibly bound for the Klondike, but the *Leader* has reason to suppose she is to carry stores and arms for a revolution in Amazonia. One reporter has already had his ticket canceled, and Vose takes passage as a private individual.

Sure enough, the steamer lays to off Montauk and proceeds to take on another cargo from lighters under cover of darkness. A fisherman from Block Island hails the steamer, and to keep him from blabbing news before the vessel is beyond reach, he is detained on board until she is ready to continue her voyage. Vose conceives the scheme of sending a despatch for the *Leader* ashore by this fisherman, who unfortunately gives the matter away just as he is about to sail off on his smack. Thereupon Señor Rivas, who has come aboard during the night, draws a revolver and commands that the fisherman be brought back and Vose seized.

CHAPTER IX.

AN IMPROMPTU COURT MARTIAL.

IT was still too dark to see clearly, but the double ender had scarcely sheered off from the Good Fortune's side. The squat figure of its skipper loomed plainly against the background of gray sail and was an excellent mark for the Amazonian leader.

"Stop that, Rivas!" shouted Captain Randall from the bridge. "Put up that gun."

But the fisherman saw the shining barrel of the weapon, too.

"Tarnation!" he yelled. "What be yeou adoin'—yeou long legged dago? Ef yeou fire that thing at me I'll see th' hull b'ilin' of ye shut up in Newport jail. I'll spile yer piratin' v'y'age, naow, I tell ye!"

"Don't fire that thing here," commanded Purcell, reaching Rivas' side.

"Den, let him bring back de telegram," cried the Spaniard. "We mus' have eet."

But Purcell calmly disarmed the excited man and put the weapon in his own pocket. "You're not in Amazonia yet," he said, in reply to Rivas' sputterings. "Let the boat go. Those fellows can do us no harm with a hundred telegrams. We shall get out of here in an hour."

"But ze man who haf' sent eet—where is he?" cried Rivas.

Nobody had laid hands upon Vose, but the Spaniards had surrounded him so that he could not easily have escaped.

He stood with impassive face, but cursing himself mentally for a fool in trusting the drunken boatman. He might have known a man so well plied with liquor would have no discretion. It would be lucky if the double ender got into port in safety, let alone his telegram be attended to.

Rivas approached the reporter with wrathful face, his hands trembling from excitement.

"You, señor, are a spy!" he cried. "You shall go ashore wit' the tug. You cannot go wit' the steamer."

"Aren't you taking too much for

* *This story began in the July issue of* THE ARGOSY, *which will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 10 *cents.*

granted, Mr. Rivas?" responded Vose calmly. "Why do you call me a spy? And *what* is there to be spied upon?"

"*Caramba!*" ejaculated the Spaniard. "You t'ink to pull the wool over my eyes, as you dam' Yankees say, eh? But you s'all not—no, señor! You go back on de tug."

"Not for *your* say so," declared Vose. "I paid my passage to Alaska, and if I like I shall go there. Where you fellows go is your own business. I don't ask questions, nor shall I answer them."

There was much chattering among the Amazonians, but Rivas' was the master mind.

"Whoever you are, you s'all go ashore," he reiterated. "I will pay back your passage money myself."

"Thanks—but I beg to be excused."

"Do not tempt me too far!" cried Rivas, striding towards him with hands clenched.

"And don't you double your fists at *me*, or I'll fling you over the rail, old as you are!"

"*Caramba!*" snarled the revolutionist. "You threaten *me?*"

"That's it exactly," replied Vose. "I'm tired of all this, and I'm going below. I've nothing more to say."

"You will not go below, young señor," declared Rivas, controlling himself with difficulty.

"I wouldn't try to stop me if I were you," said Vose.

"You s'all go aboard that tug."

"You are mistaken."

"I command you, señor!"

"Happily you are not skipper here. I refuse, sir."

"Then, I will call upon Captain Randall to send you."

"And if he tries it I'll appeal to the other passengers."

Rivas turned and said something in a low voice to his henchmen.

"Do you understand Spanish, Mr. Purcell?" asked Vose quickly.

"Mighty little," replied the mate.

"Well, these gentlemen are going to try to 'rush' me. Shall I appeal to you for protection, or shall I protect myself?" and he suddenly drew a shining object from his pocket.

The crowd got away from him in the liveliest manner imaginable.

"Hold on! None o' that!" cried the mate. "Put up your gun, sir. I'll see fair play." Then to Rivas: "Don't lay your hand on him, señor. You'd better all go forward to the old man and let him decide the matter. It's out of my province."

They moved on the bridge, the crowd of Amazonians still keeping Vose well surrounded; but it was noticeable that they refrained from hustling the reporter.

Randall came down upon the deck at once. He was chewing on an unlighted cigar and looked anything but pleased at the situation.

"Now, see here, Rivas," he demanded, "what is this all about? Don't you know I've got enough to do without being bothered by every mare's nest you've a mind to stir up?"

"The man is a spy," cried Rivas. "He has sent a telegram ashore by those drunken sailors."

"Humph!" growled the captain. He looked Vose over carefully. "What do *you* say to that?"

"Nothing."

"Eh? You admit it?"

"I say nothing, sir. I believe Señor Rivas has to prove his assertion, as he makes the accusation."

Vose made a mistake there, however. Like most seafaring men, Randall had a hearty contempt for courts and lawyers.

"Don't you play none o' your dam' sea lawyer tricks aboard my ship!" he exclaimed. "Who are you?"

"You'll find my name on your purser's list—and I've paid my passage to the Klondike," Vose responded shortly.

"See here, my hearty, you were evidently never aboard ship before," said Randall, stifling his wrath. "I'm master here."

"And I am a passenger. There are also other passengers on board. I don't propose to submit to imposition—not even from the captain of the ship—nor will the other passengers, I feel sure."

Randall looked for a moment as though he was about to give way to his temper; but he was really a gentleman, and after a moment's thought said more calmly:

"You're right. I beg your pardon. But what is this row about?"

"Señor Rivas accuses me of being a spy (whatever I am spying about, I don't know) and of sending a telegram ashore by that fishing smack."

"Well, did you?"

"Did I what?"

"Send a telegram?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Aha!" gasped Rivas, starting forward. "He admits eet!"

"And I had a perfect right to do so," pursued Vose. "Why should I not telegraph my friends when I see an opportunity of doing so?"

Randall gazed at him sullenly.

"You talk mighty smooth," he said; "but I don't like your looks. What did you have to telegraph about?"

"That's entirely a private matter," replied the reporter.

"Why didn't you speak to Purcell or me about it?"

"Because I did not see the necessity of doing so. I considered that I was a free moral agent even though I might be at sea."

"Oh, you did, eh?" snarled Randall.

He was a choleric man, and Vose's replies were not calculated to appease his wrath.

"The success of our expedition demands that the fellow be put ashore, *capitan*," interposed Rivas, insinuatingly. "We cannot afford to have a spy go wit' us now."

"You're talking too much, Rivas," returned Randall bluntly. "You keep on and you'll tell all you know. I don't see any proof yet that the man isn't what he pretends."

"But you would take no risks, *capitan!*" cried the Spaniard. "The cause demands——"

Randall damned the cause heartily.

"What have I got to do with your private rows?" he demanded. "I'm not running this steamer for you. I've got my employers to consider. We've already turned down one man for you—that newspaper fellow. We can't throw all our passengers overboard to please you."

"*Caramba!* ees eet de money dat makes you hesitate, *senor capitan?*" demanded Rivas. "Then I, myself, will reimburse you for the man's fare if he be put aboard that tug yonder."

"Well, now you're talking sense," exclaimed Randall, apparently vastly relieved. "If you're ready to pony up the price, why it's another matter. I'll give you an order on the steamship company, young man," he said to Vose. "Mr. Purcell, tell the steward to bundle the fellow's dunnage on deck."

This cool proposition well nigh took away the reporter's breath. But he did not propose to stand meekly by and submit to any such high handed proceeding.

"One moment, Captain Randall," he said. "What has Señor Rivas proven against me that I should be so summarily put off your steamer?"

"'Tain't a matter of proof," replied Randall shortly. "But he's willing to go bail for your passage money, so you can get ashore."

"And you really suppose I'll let you do it?" Vose cried, with sudden heat. "Do you think I am a fool? You cannot legally put me off your steamer—for *any* cause—until we reach some port where the matter can have the attention of a consul. And as for your using force in putting me over the side, I don't advise you to try it!"

"Don't crow too loud, my bantam," said Randall good humoredly. "I've half a hundred men to do my bidding."

"And every man of them will stand in a prisoners' dock so sure as they reach New York again if they touch me," declared Vose. "You're going a good deal too far, Captain Randall, and you know it. Before we left port you might have refused me passage had you so desired; but you can't put me ashore now on any such flimsy pretext as this."

"And how will you help yourself?" demanded the captain, lighting his cigar.

"I shall call on my fellow passengers for help first, and request them to demand the return of the Good Fortune to port till the matter can be settled. We are less than six hours from our dock. It will not delay the voyage for long."

"Great Peter!" exclaimed Randall. "Do you hear that, Rivas?"

The Spaniard showed his teeth. "Will you allow the man to insult you?" he demanded.

But Randall looked serious. "I don't want him stirring up the other passen-

gers, Rivas. That will be bad for you and bad for me."

"Put him aboard de tug *now*," said the other. "Then he cannot get at de others to disturb them, eh?"

"If you try that," declared Vose sternly, "there'll sure be trouble."

He stepped quickly aside and placed his back against the deck house. His hand was thrust into his coat pocket.

"I propose to stay aboard the Good Fortune—either dead or alive—and if you try to put me off, I'll not be the only one hurt. There have already been threats of shooting here tonight. I'm not threatening you, but I warn all concerned that I am armed."

CHAPTER X.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS.

At this instant of strained attention one of the mates came running aft.

"Last package aboard, sir!" he reported.

Randall wheeled about instantly.

"No time for fooling now, boys," he said. "Look lively there! Cast off those hawsers and clap on the hatches. Mr. Stevens, your watch to the anchor. Mr. Despenard, how's her steam?"

"We can start the moment the anchor is tripped, sir," replied the engineer.

"Good! We'll get out of this at once."

"But, *senor capitan!*" exclaimed Rivas, trotting along by the doughty little commander's side as he strode the deck. "This man—this spy——"

"Don't bother me now, Rivas. Can't you see I am busy?" cried Randall. "Besides, you're too late. The tug's cast off a'ready."

The crowd of insurgents had followed their leader. Purcell touched Vose lightly on the arm.

"Just you get below, sir," he advised. "It'll blow over now."

"Think so?" queried the reporter, with some anxiety.

"Yes. Couldn't you see the old man was just killing time for you? He's got to keep these fellows satisfied, you know, that's all. But, by Jove, you came near getting him mad."

"I didn't like the joke," remarked Vose ruefully.

"Humph! I s'pose not. But what the devil did you want to send a telegraph despatch ashore for, I'd like to ask?"

"Yes? Well, there's several questions I'd like to ask you; but I know you wouldn't answer them."

Purcell laughed. "All right," he said. "Just you keep out of the way of these dagoes for a day or two till it blows over. They'll watch you like cats at a mouse hole, I expect."

At that Vose went below and turned in. Before he lay down, the Good Fortune was in motion, and, leaving the tug and her tow behind, steamed rapidly away into the south.

The reporter did not rise until noon, and by that hour every vestige of land had disappeared, and the steamship was cutting through the gray Atlantic rollers without let or hindrance, the only live object, save the gulls, on the bosom of the sea.

None of the other passengers had been apprised of the trouble he had had with the foreigners; and as the latter ate at a table by themselves and bunked in the second cabin, Vose was not disturbed by their proximity below.

He found much entertainment during the first few days in getting acquainted with his fellow passengers.

They were not altogether an ordinary group for an ocean steamship. There were few "tourists," so called; all were bound to Alaska for business of some kind—even Mrs. General Serviss and her daughter. They were going to relieve the tedium of the general's exile, and the young lady, at least, was eager to spend a winter as well as the summer months on the verge of the arctic circle.

Captain Randall, who was evidently no society man, delegated his first mate to do the honors of the table, and Purcell made himself particularly agreeable to the ladies. There were three besides the Servisses—miners' wives on their way to join their prosperous husbands at Cape Nome. To them all Purcell was most obliging.

But Vose noticed with amusement that the good looking first officer was always at Agnes Serviss' beck and call.

On deck he arranged her steamer chair, brought rugs and wraps, walked the deck with her for "exercise" (after having paced his own watch of four long hours, perhaps), and otherwise played the gallant; while below he lent her books, sang in a good baritone all sorts of sea ditties to her accompaniment on the little chapel organ, and made himself indispensable to her comfort and amusement.

A blind man would soon have realized that Mr. Purcell was "hard hit"; and Vose, to help the fellow along, devoted himself to the general's wife, and kept her so fully occupied that she hadn't half a chance to see the growing intimacy between her daughter and the mate of the Good Fortune.

Vose saw little of Señor Rivas, but he had good reason to know that the Spaniard had not forgotten him. Wherever he went about the ship, and whomsoever he talked with, there was some black browed fellow sure to be near at hand, listening and watching. This espionage was aggravating, but the reporter bore it good naturedly.

But finally it ceased to be amusing. One night, upon going to his stateroom, he found that the door had been forced, and his trunk and bags thoroughly overhauled.

He was angry at the outrage; but it worried him, too, for memoranda containing his instructions from Mr. Brunelle (fortunately, mostly in shorthand) and some *Leader* letter heads were missing.

At first he intended complaining to Captain Randall. Afterwards, however, he thought better of that, for if he did so he would open the fight and unmask his own batteries. He decided it would be safest to let the enemy show his hand first. Then he would better know how to meet the attack.

Besides, he believed Rivas and his friends could scarcely make much of a case out of the material of which they had gained possession. It would be quite impossible for them to translate his stenographic notes, for, as is the case with most reporters, long practice had given him a distinctive stenographic system of his own, which nobody else could understand.

So he kept his own counsel and waited for Rivas to make the first move. However, forewarned by this happening, he deposited his wallet with the purser and took a receipt for it. The day following this disturbing incident passed without anything happening out of the usual routine of affairs; but the second day, just after luncheon, word came to Vose that the captain wished to see him in the chart room.

The reporter found Señor Rivas there before him, as he expected. The little captain, puffing furiously at a very black cigar, sat at the chart table and looked —as he felt—ill at ease.

Vose bowed to both as he entered, which salutation Rivas returned reluctantly, but Randall did not notice it.

"See here, mister," began the steamship captain, in his snappiest tone, "Señor Rivas tells me you are not what you pretend to be—er—he seems to think, in fact, that you are aboard the Good Fortune to spy on us. Now, if it hadn't been for what occurred the other night off Montauk, I wouldn't listen to him for a minute. But you have made no satisfactory explanation of that telegram—and—and—well, we're all into this business up to our necks, owners and all, and we can't afford to be meddled with."

"I beg your pardon, captain," interposed Vose, with a smile; "but did it ever occur to you that you might be talking in riddles to me? I purchased my ticket for Alaska. My reason for doing so is my own personal business and nobody else's. I ask no questions about any side issues you—or your friend, Señor Rivas—may have."

"That's just it, Rivas," cried the captain, petulantly. "As I said before, he's shown no curiosity, and minds his own business. I can't haul my passengers in here and examine them all to please you. I'll get myself into no end of trouble, with passengers and owners alike."

"Let him tell who he is and what his business aboard the Good Fortune is, then," demanded Rivas, with vexation.

"I utterly refuse to make any statement," said Vose quickly. "I am not even beholden to Captain Randall for my presence here. I purchased my

ticket of his employers. As long as I break none of the recognized rules of the steamship, even he has no jurisdiction over me."

"Hold on, hold on!" exclaimed Randall. "That's all very well ashore; but you must understand, young man, that at sea it's a coat of another color. Might is right sometimes."

Vose laughed good naturedly.

"Well, captain," he said, "I'm willing to admit that you can hang me to the yard arm, if you wish. Only you know, and I know, that somebody will have to suffer for it when you put in at any civilized port. I don't know what you expect to make out of this voyage aside from your regular pay; but if my liberty is curtailed, or I am otherwise treated unlawfully, it may cost you in the end far more than you will care to lose for the sake of obliging your good friend, Señor Rivas."

"You're a bold talking lad," growled Randall, and he drummed on the table. Then, after a moment, he added, "But what's this you say about having found out something more regarding the gentleman?"

Rivas looked doubtful, and Vose turned to the Spaniard also.

"Yes, Señor Rivas, trot out your proof of my infamy, if there is any. I shall make no explanation, or admit anything, until your evidence is in. I'm on the defensive; you're the prosecutor; you must state your evidence to back up your accusation first. That's good law the world over."

"Damn your law!" growled Randall again. "I'd like you a deal better, young fellow, if you weren't so sharp on your law twaddle."

The reporter laughed once more. "All right, sir. But come, señor, trot out your evidence. I challenge you to produce any to prove—by the way, what are you trying to prove? That isn't quite clear in my mind yet."

"That you are a spy, or——"

"A spy?" cried Vose. "What are you and your friends doing that you should fear spies?" Then he turned swiftly to the little captain and said gravely: "I hope, sir, you are not taking any chances in this voyage that might jeopardize the safety of your passengers? There are ladies aboard, and certainly they, if not we men, deserve some consideration."

Randall looked uneasy and shuffled his feet.

"I believe you to be one dam' newspaper reporter!" exclaimed Rivas sharply. "You are here for no good."

"And is it a crime to be a newspaper man?" queried Vose easily.

"Well," said the captain, "we don't want no reporters on this ship. If I'm convinced you're one, I've told Señor Rivas I shall ship you back by the first inward bound steamer we hail, law or no law. We ain't goin' to have the v'y'ge sp'iled by no quill driver."

"You're willing to take great chances for Mr. Rivas," sighed Vose. "Well, señor, bring on your evidence. This is growing interesting."

The Amazonian leader shot him a malevolent glance and went out.

"This is a bad business, sir," Randall remarked, half apologetically. "If you'd only be reasonable and give some account of yourself——"

"Why should I?" cried Vose. "You don't ask your other passengers to come into this inquisition and be catechized, do you?"

"But no suspicion has fallen on them."

"Suspicion of what?"

The captain turned aside and made no reply.

"Besides," the reporter continued, "I might tell you anything I pleased. You could not disprove it, nor could I prove my story. And you and I both know that Rivas would not accept any statement I might make."

"Damn Rivas!" ejaculated Randall.

"With all my heart," responded Vose, grinning.

"If you tell me a satisfactory story, I don't give a hang whether he is pleased or not. But I must assure myself. There is too much depending on this v'y'ge for us to make a mistake."

Just here Señor Rivas returned, with one of his swarthy faced followers in tow.

Vose's eyes twinkled at sight of this individual. He was a man whom he had noticed frequently spying upon him. Rivas carried several letters and papers,

and these he placed on the table in front of Captain Randall.

Before he could speak, Vose started forward in apparent excitement, exclaiming: "Those are mine, captain! My personal papers."

Rivas showed his teeth in a grim smile.

"So, so, señor!" he cried. "You admit they are yours, do you?" Then, turning to the Good Fortune's commander, he added: "See, my *capitan*, it iss as I haf tol' you. The man iss a spy, or reporter, or somet'ing——"

"I'm glad I'm something," murmured Vose, wondrously calm again.

Rivas paid no attention to him, but continued eagerly: "See you, here is stationery from the office of a New York paper. And look at these—these papers are written in cipher. Nobody can read them."

Vose laughed aloud at this, and even Randall looked puzzled.

"That's shorthand, isn't it?" he asked.

"It's the devil's own language," returned Rivas testily, having evidently puzzled over Vose's pothooks to little purpose.

"By the way," remarked the reporter, "where did you get these papers, any way?"

"Aha, señor!" cried the revolutionary leader, shaking his long finger at the American. "You are int'rested, eh? I will tell eet you. Had you not already admitted them to be yours, I was prepared to prove eet. This señor," he intimated the man by his side, "took them from your stateroom. He found them in your personal effects. Is more proof needed to show the man a spy, my *capitan?*"

Vose stepped quietly to the table and gathered up his property. Then he said:

"Further proof is scarcely necessary to show that your friend here is a common sneak thief, Señor Rivas. I have been waiting two days to discover who burglarized my room. I thank you for telling me."

Then, turning swiftly to Captain Randall, he continued, with some heat: "Sir, I demand that this fellow be apprehended for robbing my cabin. I shall prosecute him in the courts of the first port at which we touch."

Rivas began to laugh; but his levity was stifled when he saw Captain Randall's face. It was black with anger. The little commander pounded the bell on the table and a steward presented himself at the door.

"Send Mr. Purcell here," he ordered.

Almost immediately his first officer appeared.

"Mr. Purcell," said Randall, still strongly agitated, "take this fellow," pointing to the astounded Amazonian, "clap him into a stateroom, and set an armed guard at the door. I'll have no thieves at large on my ship. And as for you, Señor Rivas, I have half a mind to serve you the same shift. I believe you egged the fellow on to do his work. No, sir, not a word. I won't listen to you. I'll prosecute the man myself, so sure as we reach a United States court."

Purcell gravely laid his hand on the prisoner's arm and wheeled him towards the door, and Rivas, sputtering oaths in Spanish and broken English, followed. Swiftly, then, Randall turned upon Vose.

"See here, you!" he said. "I guess I know you at last. And, by God! I know what to do with you, too. You're a correspondent for the *Leader*. We got rid of one of 'em at New York, but I might ha' known another would come sneaking aboard. Now, sir, the first inward bound ship we hail you'll go aboard her—bag and baggage!" and the wrathful commander brought his clenched fist down with emphasis on the table.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH THE GLASS AT 28.60.

Vose, feeling much more troubled than he looked, drew out his cigar case and carefully selected a weed before speaking. He was about to offer one to the little captain, but there was a glare in Randall's eye which seemed to forbid any such familiarity.

"Don't you think," he said finally, "that you are taking a good many chances, captain?"

"That's what I'm here for," snapped Randall. "The company wouldn't have

sent Adoniram Randall to sea on this v'y'ge if there hadn't been chances in it—I can tell you that."

"Well, sir, supposing I *am* a newspaper correspondent (which, by the way, I fail to see that Señor Rivas has proved), what possible harm could I do either you or these dagoes if I am allowed to continue the voyage? In fact, what will you gain by putting me ashore?"

"I'll be dam' well rid of ye!" declared the captain. "I don't like bein' played upon; you ain't no better'n a stowaway, for ye come aboard under false pretenses."

"I beg to differ, captain," returned Vose quickly. "I made no pretenses whatsoever when I came aboard—nor do I make any now. I do not even plead guilty to the heinous crime of being a journalist," and he smiled.

Randall only grunted and scowled more darkly.

"But suppose I am one," pursued Vose, "what harm will I do you, any way?"

"Young man, you know well enough that this isn't a business which we care to have talked about in the newspapers. I don't know how much you know, an' I ain't fool enough to tell you what *I* know; but there's a deuced lot depending on the despatch of this cruise.

"We've got certain stuff to deliver, at a certain place, by a certain time. If you go along you'll be snoopin' around and writing to the papers all about it—give the snap dead away. We may want to repeat the voyage, and if the newspapers get hold of all the particulars, it'll put a bad spoke in our wheel. I'll send you back to get rid o' your blamed prying. You fellows pretty nigh drove me crazy all through the Cuban war."

"And you'll send me to New York, where I can write and publish at once an account of the Good Fortune's movements since leaving her dock?"

"That won't bother me much. You don't know where we're bound; and if you do, it's no killing matter. But if you learned just the spot where we land our goods, that would injure us."

"Well, captain, I think you are making a mistake—even from your point of view. And as for Rivas and his men, whatever their business may be, they'd better try to make the newspapers their friends instead of warring with them too."

"I guess you're a newspaper man all right," said Randall. "You talk like one. I ain't got no love for the whole kit an' b'lin' of 'em! They sp'iled a good business for me. 'Twas the newspapers brought on the war with Spain, an' that killed filibustering."

"By Jove," exclaimed Vose, "you'd have been a blockade runner in the Civil War, I s'pose!"

"And so I was, young man," snapped Randall; "and if I'd been master instead of quartermaster's mate, I'd not be running up and down the earth now. There was heaps of money made in blockade running."

The reporter could not help feeling a little contempt for this fellow who, though Yankee born and bred, seemed "a man without a country," and whose patriotism was to be weighed but lightly against gold.

"Now," said the commander, in conclusion, "you can go. But you'd better pack your dunnage. We'll likely speak some vessel inward bound before the day's over, and aboard of her you shall be put—you take my word for it!"

But no vessel, inward bound or otherwise, was passed that day. Thus far the weather had been extremely pleasant; the barometer began to fall towards night, and when darkness came, a brisk gale was whining through the Good Fortune's steel cables, and she was beginning to plunge a bit, like a restive horse.

The women passengers grew pale and sought their berths soon after dinner, and the single stewardess had her hands full with her patients before midnight.

Vose found a strange delight in pacing the deck with Purcell, for the pitching of the steamer made no difference to him. He was a good sailor, and the gathering storm exhilarated rather than depressed him.

"I shall be sorry to have you go, sir," said the mate, who had already received instructions regarding the hailing of the first inward bound ship sighted and the disposition to be made of the *Leader* correspondent. "I shall be sorry to have you go; but you'd never ought to

have tried coming aboard a craft commanded by Adoniram Randall. He hates newspaper men like poison."

"He doesn't like publicity," replied Vose, laughing. "But there's little danger of my being sent back in the present state of the weather, eh?"

"Well, we could scarcely get a craft to lay to for us just now—nor could we very easily get a boat out," replied Purcell, with a companionable grin. "So you're safe for the night. But don't build any hopes because of that. As soon as we get out into the Gulf Stream we'll find plenty of incoming craft."

"By the look of things now it will be several days. This is no squall."

"The glass *is* dancing some, I admit. But we don't often have very long gales this month in this latitude."

However, by daybreak there was no let up in sight. The Good Fortune was fairly in the grip of the elements and her iron beams and great steel girders groaned beneath the strain. The waves had grown to fearsome proportions and pounded the hull viciously. At the impact of some of the huge billows she shook from end to end like the trembling of a frightened creature.

The passengers for the most part kept below decks, and the ladies to their rooms. Meals became a farce, and the sight of a colored steward shooting across the saloon floor, with the contents of a soup tureen or of a coffee pot trailing behind him like the tail of a comet, became too frequent to be even amusing.

The gale, however, was only such as is commonly met in the North Atlantic; yet the officers of the Good Fortune were worried, and their faces began to show it.

Purcell took Vose into his confidence when he found the reporter standing before the storm glass at the foot of the cabin stairs.

"What does that look like to you?" he asked grimly.

"What—the glass?"

"Yes."

"Well, isn't it pretty low?" queried the passenger doubtfully. "Though I'm not much used to the instrument."

"Either that glass has gone crazy," responded Purcell solemnly, "or it's the lowest glass *I* ever saw—and the other mates say the same. Why, do you know, sir, the proper mark for the mercury to touch in an orthodox North Atlantic storm is around 30 or 31. I never saw it lower than 29 before."

"And this says 28.60!" exclaimed Vose, peering at the instrument.

"That's what it does—and it's stood there for an hour."

"What do you think it portends?"

"Almost anything, from a hurricane to a cloudburst and waterspouts," returned the mate with a grim laugh. "Even the old man's worried."

"Well, if the gale continues, I reckon I shall be retained as a passenger for some time to come."

"Humph! We might all leave together—stranger things have happened," responded Purcell. "We're likely to get all that's coming to us."

Short but fierce hurricanes developed during the day. The wind blew terrifically from one quarter for two or three hours, and then suddenly died out; to be followed shortly by quite as heavy a blow from an entirely different point of the compass.

These alternate gales and calms whipped the swell of the ocean down to a series of short, choppy waves and wreaths of surf, like nothing so much as a kettle's boiling. In this seething, foam streaked flood the Good Fortune staggered on her course, and the gravity of the officers' faces grew.

The ship was sailing in a veritable storm center, and the barometer seemed stuck at its low mark.

In the cabins there was much wailing and woe. The ladies soon recovered from their illness; but it was dangerous for them to try to leave their berths. The men themselves sported as many black eyes and bruises as though they had all been in the prize ring. The smell of arnica overpowered that of soup, even at meal time.

There was no regular motion to the boat; in fact, it was particularly irregular. A man might balance himself with the greatest care in crossing the saloon, and, before he knew what had happened, would find himself doubled up under one of the wall settees.

The Amazonians in the second cabin seemed to get on worse than the other

passengers. Most of them were poor sailors, and added to their other discomforts was incessant seasickness. It took the pluck out of all of them—all except Rivas—and had a gunboat of the Amazonian republic been able to lay the Good Fortune to, the capture of the whole crowd of insurgents would have been the simplest thing in the world.

Rivas, however, had grit, and was vicious enough as well to keep a lookout for Vose now and then. He seemed to suspect all kinds of trouble from the reporter, and hated him to be out of his sight, alow and aloft.

For four days this state of affairs continued. The Good Fortune seemed to have this stretch of storm cursed ocean to herself. Despite her heavy engines, she had been driven off her course and was far to the east of the Gulf Stream now.

It was just at dark on this fourth evening. Purcell had the deck, Captain Randall having turned in for his first bit of sleep for forty eight hours.

Vose had crept out and had lashed himself to a pin rack just under the break of the quarter, or bridge. Occasionally the mate shouted a remark to him and he replied; but the wind almost smothered them whenever they opened their mouths.

Vose had come up for a breath of fresh air, and had about made up his mind that he had got enough to last him for the rest of the voyage, when suddenly there was a shout from the men on lookout forward.

What had happened Vose could not see; he only knew that the mate started for the pilot house on the instant. But the warning came too late. The steamship rose to the top of a wave of more than ordinary height, and slid into the trough rapidly. There was an awful shock to her keel somewhere near the stern.

She had struck!

It was no collision. There was no other craft in sight. And a reef in that part of the ocean was an impossibility. The vessel had slid down upon the obstruction from the high wave, and following the first shock was another.

Then the Good Fortune bounded over the object and lay shivering in the trough of the sea, while a deafening sound of escaping steam came from the engine room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOOD FORTUNE BECOMES THE PLAYTHING OF FATE.

BEFORE the second shock, Captain Randall bounded out of the companionway. He grabbed his trumpet and bawled to Purcell, who was hanging far over the lee rail.

"What's she hit?"

"A derelict, sir," replied the mate.

"Is she clear?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"What's the matter in the engine room?"

Before Purcell could make reply, Despenard, the chief engineer, ran aft, his face white with terror.

"The dam' screw won't work, cap'n!" he gasped. "The shaft's broke!"

"Here," cried Randall, "you get a brace on you, my man! I don't want the passengers to see a face like yours. We'd have a panic on our hands."

Then he turned to Stevens, the third officer, who had come from the wheel house.

"Go below, sir, and keep the passengers down—every man of 'em. Tell 'em there's no danger—that the ship's scratched the paint off her bottom, that's all. Git!"

Stevens hurried away, and Purcell came up the tottering deck.

"That propeller shaft has torn dozens of plates off her," he reported. "Why didn't you stop her before, Despenard?"

"I couldn't. I was asleep before the flywheel. First I knew, the engine was racing like mad, with the steam spurting out of every valve. I didn't hear the first shock at all."

"You *must* ha' been asleep," growled Randall. "Well, Purcell, close the compartment doors. We'll try to keep the bilge out of the fire room."

"Gurney's gone down to 'tend to it."

"That's right. Couple on your pumps, then. Is the damage all in the stern?"

"Seems to be, sir."

"Well, we know what we're up against, that's one comfort," said Randall, and Vose smiled at the old seaman's remark.

"Comfort!" he muttered. "This bally old ship is going to the bottom. There's lots of comfort in *that*."

But if his opinion was shared by the officers, none of them (saving Despenard) showed it. All were cool, and spoke more quietly than on ordinary occasions, it seemed.

"Go back and 'tend to your engines, Mr. Despenard," commanded the captain. "And straighten your face out, man! You're not killed yet. Don't let Jimmy see you looking like a white livered herring."

Jimmy was the assistant engineer, and subsequent proceedings proved him to be better than his chief in an emergency.

"That man ought to be running a donkey engine in a coal shaft," growled Purcell under his breath, as the engineer disappeared.

"Now I'm going below to have a look at the trouble," Randall declared. "What the devil's that riot?"

Shouts and curses arose from the forward cabin, and a moment later Stevens' whistle rang out sharply.

"It's those damned dagoes!" cried Purcell. "Like enough they'll act worse than the Italians in the stoke hole."

"Who's with *them?*" demanded Randall.

"Jimmy was holding them down with a gun when I looked into the engine room," responded the mate carelessly. "Jimmy's all right."

"You bet he is!" returned the captain, preparing to go below.

The uproar continued in the second cabin, however, and the third mate's whistle sounded again. Stevens' watch came forward on the trot—for the most part brawny and bare armed Irishmen.

They disappeared into the second cabin and for several moments the uproar of voices increased. But the sailors cowed the excited Spaniards, who had been clamoring for the boats to be lowered, and Rivas and Stevens obtained the whip hand of them again.

In the first cabin everybody was quiet, the men whispering together in low tones; the women, including the stewardess, sitting in one group. Perhaps a few tears were shed, but in the main they all behaved admirably. Stevens' quiet voice had stilled their excitement at once.

"But I do wish Mr. Purcell would come down, mamma," whispered Agnes Serviss. "He could tell us so much more about it. I wonder what has happened? I shouldn't be so frightened if I only really knew what it was."

"But Mr. Purcell wouldn't tell us any more than Mr. Stevens," said her mother.

"He'd tell *me*," declared Agnes, with conviction, and her mother glanced at her with sudden, sharp surprise.

Agnes was such a little, fair girl that she seemed childish, and even to her mother she was hardly "grown up." Vose's kind offices had so blinded the eyes of the general's wife that the wooing of the handsome mate and her little daughter had gone on unnoticed. She suddenly became very grave—graver than the collision had made her.

Meanwhile, on deck, Purcell had set his watch to coupling the pumps, and soon two streams of water were spurting across the deck. Everybody seemed busy, so he made Vose an officer for the nonce, and left him in charge of the pump crew while he went below himself.

The first mate's appearance was hailed with thankfulness by Agnes and the other ladies (saving, perhaps, Mrs. Serviss, who was scarcely in a state of mind to welcome him in *any* way just then), and they plied him with questions.

Purcell admitted the seriousness of the affair, but assured them that the pumps could take care of all the water that could possibly enter the stern compartment for a long time to come. The panic in the second cabin had subsided, and, after a glance in upon the Amazonians, the officer returned to the deck.

Captain Randall and Gurney, the second officer, were just coming up from below.

"How bad is it, cap?" queried Purcell.

In this hour of difficulty something of

ordinary quarter deck etiquette was dispensed with.

"She struck a derelict all right," growled the commander of the Good Fortune, "and between you an' me an' the bowsprit, she's got her never get over."

"Oh, not so bad as that!" cried Purcell, aghast.

"Yes, sir, quite as bad as that," said Gurney. "The water's flooding in enormously. We can't keep it out of the fire room for long. Jimmy has had to let the Italians up and called for volunteers from my watch to keep the boilers hot."

Randall cursed all "dagoes," as he called the Latin races, with fluency.

"And the old ship's got to go?"

"She has, unless the sea calms down and we get a swift tow—and a dam' swift one, too!" added the captain gloomily. "That first collision tore a great hole in her bottom directly underneath the propeller shaft. Damn these submerged derelicts, any way!" he added fiercely. "The second crack smashed shaft and propeller both, and while the engines ran wild there for some seconds, the broken shaft hammered the cheese out of her bottom plates. Oh, it's a nice mess!"

"And a brand new craft!" groaned Purcell.

"An' look at the cargo we got," added Gurney.

"No insurance on *that*," said Randall. "But that's on the dagoes—don't touch neither us nor the company."

"But away goes our extra pay," observed Purcell. "Well, what can't be cured must be put up with. How are you getting on with the pumps?" he asked Vose, as the latter approached.

"All right," said the reporter. "The pipes are full and the water's clear. I guess we are just pumping the ocean through her."

"So you've set him to work, have you?" remarked Randall with rather a friendly grin. "Well, it's the first time I ever see a newspaper feller doing anything worth while."

"What are you going to do, captain?" queried Purcell thoughtfully. "Shall we stick it out or prepare the boats?"

"Stick it out, by thunder!" cried Randall sharply. "Let them that's afraid get out of the way of them that ain't, that's all. But no boat shall be lowered till I give the word. We'll keep her afloat as long as the Almighty'll let us; *then* it will be time enough to think of going on a boating excursion.

"You see that the boats are all properly provisioned, Mr. Gurney. I'll leave that business entirely in your charge. And you'll be sure that none of them dagoes gets to monkeying with the boats, either. You can place armed guards at each boat you prepare."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"This is no sort of weather to lower boats in, any way," added the little commander, chewing on an unlighted cigar, as he often did when excited. "We can keep the Good Fortune afloat for hours yet. We'd be foolish to leave her."

"I think the wind has moderated," ventured Vose.

"You're right it has. And there's a break in the clouds yonder. It may clear before midnight."

"I hope it does," said Purcell. "There should be a good moon about now. I'd like to see something of our surroundings."

"Well, we know they're wet," observed Randall with a grim smile.

"She's sinking a good deal by the stern," said Vose suddenly.

"Don't you fret, young man," returned the captain; "she won't go down yet a while. Her compartment partitions will keep a deal of the water from flooding the rest of the ship. If the sea gets calm we might float this way for days and days."

"Excuse me!" returned the reporter.

"It's likely we'll all be excused," returned the captain. "We shan't take any foolish risks. If the sea goes down and I can find out just where we are, and how far off the track of steamers and sailing craft we be, it may be best for us to get the boats out by morning. But stick to her as long as the gale's blowing, say I!"

Vose went back to the pumps, which vomited the water across the decks amidships.

"She's gaining a bit on us, sir," said one of the seamen respectfully.

He had been examining the measuring rod.

The truth was the water in that stern compartment was gaining very rapidly. It was like trying to pump the Atlantic through the pipes, as Vose had said. The rent in the steamship's hull was a fearful menace to the life of the Good Fortune and her company.

The dragging hours of the night passed in dreary procession. A settled apathy held in its grip all those below deck.

The first cabin passengers clustered about the cabin table and listened to a young man who was going out to the Moravian mission station beyond Cape Fairweather. He led them in a service which was appreciated by the women perhaps more than by the men.

Vose was the only passenger allowed upon deck, and he worked as hard as any officer or man, and had no time to be fearful.

In the other cabin the Amazonians were crouched, listening in horror to the clank of the pumps sounding the death knell of the ship. Forward a guard was set on the stokers' quarters.

The miserable Italians had become panic stricken, and seamen had taken their places at the furnaces. The water was making into the other compartments now, and it was only a question of time before the fire boxes would be flooded.

"But we'll keep 'er goin', sir," declared Jimmy, when Randall looked in at the engine room door. "I've 'ad some o' the boys bring hup some lard firkins an' 'ams from the 'old, an' we'll knock to bits some o' the wooden bulk-'eads han' keep the coppers 'ot with that, if the grates get flooded."

Despenard had quite given up, and his young assistant had taken full charge of the machines. The elder engineer had lost his nerve and was only anxious to obey the directions of his former assistant. He at least had sense enough to realize his own unfitness for responsibility, and did all he could to help Jimmy.

The captain went from one part of the ship to another. With the men he was jocular; with the passengers hopeful; but on the bridge, with nobody but Purcell and Vose to hear, he was profane and despondent.

"It's a dam' shame!" he declared. "Look at th' filibust'ring trips I've run in my time, an' never a mishap to speak of until now. An' this would ha' made us all wealthy—demmet!"

"No use crying over spilled milk," said the mate sententiously.

"Ah, you go to blazes—you an' your spilled milk!" snarled Randall. "I guess I'd never oughter started out on this v'y'ge. I might ha' knowed somethin' would ha' happened at last. An' I told my wife two years ago that I'd never make another trip of this kind. Serves ye darned well right, 'Doniram Randall!" And then he cursed himself for several kinds of a fool in a most emphatic voice.

"This'll kinder make them fellers below crow small when they get home, eh?" suggested Purcell, nodding towards the second cabin.

"I don't give a hooter for *them*—Rivas nor none of them," growled Randall. "What th' blazes d'ye s'pose *I* care who bosses Amazonia? They won't get much good out o' all this truck we got aboard, that's all."

"Guess the revolution'll be a fizzle," suggested the mate.

"No; they mean business all right," said his superior. "Rivas says they'll open hostilities whether we land there or not. But they placed a deal of dependence on this cargo of ourn—an' on another scheme they're working."

"What was that?" asked Purcell curiously.

Those two talked as calmly as though the sidling deck beneath their feet was not sure to go to the bottom of the sea within a very few hours.

"Why, I heard that the junta'd got its eye on that submarine death trap of old Burbank's. Remember it?"

"I've heard of it," returned the mate. "Reckon it'll work?"

"Dunno. They say it will, an' that the junta's bought it at a fancy price. If it does go to St. Luke it'll make old Marnelli's fleet of war tubs and iron pots look like thirty cents in little less than the shake of a sheep's tail, eh?"

Vose, who listened silently, could have told them something about that

submarine boat; but he kept his own counsel.

However, he would have been greatly astonished himself had he known the whereabouts of the Neptune at that identical moment and the strange net of circumstances which enmeshed the inventor, his daughter, and several other characters vitally connected with the working out of this narrative.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MIND FEMININE.

It is an almost unpardonable act of idiocy for a merely masculine plummet to seek to fathom the mind feminine. I wish to say right here that, as the author, I do not know exactly in what regard Helen Burbank held Vose, and I have some doubt if the young lady knew herself!

Helen had not fallen in love with the same impetuosity which characterized Vose's devotion. His importunity had perhaps urged her into an engagement before she was quite sure of the depth of her own feeling.

But, having taken this step, womanlike, she burned her bridges behind her and gave her heart and happiness into his keeping without reservation.

There was one other passion in Helen Burbank's life, however, and while the sky was cloudless these two passions did not conflict. She loved her father deeply—with an affection amounting almost to veneration. His will was law to her, his deeds and words always right, and his ability of mind she never doubted.

She believed him the greatest genius in the world, and possessed the same absolute faith in his invention that Burbank had himself.

When the fortune of Harold Vose was swept away, Burbank began, by every means, to undermine the hold the unfortunate banker's son had upon his daughter. Upon the receipt of Garrett's letter releasing the girl from her engagement, Mathias had put the matter so cunningly before Helen that she really thought she was doing the kindest thing possible in taking her lover at his word. She went away at her father's request, leaving Vose to work out his hazard of new fortunes untrammeled by anything she might do.

When she had returned from her long trip West, however, she expected to hear from or to see Vose. But the months passed in silence, and when they had come so suddenly face to face in the hall the night of Vose's visit to Beach Haven for the *Leader*, it was the first sight of him she had had in all the three years and more of their separation.

Whether she would or not the joy at seeing him once again overpowered every other thought and emotion, and on the impulse she showed him her heart. And Vose, poor fool, had been too blind to grasp his opportunity!

The next day it was too late. She knew he was to be one of the party on the Neptune during its trial trip, and she steeled herself for the occasion. Besides, De la Casa was present, and she found the Spaniard vastly amusing.

De la Casa was of noble birth, coming of a good Castilian family, which had migrated to South America only one generation back. The captain was an important man in his own country—or would be if the Amazonian revolution proved victorious—and, to tell the truth, Helen's head was just a bit turned by his gallant speeches.

Besides, she wished to punish Vose for his blunder of the previous evening—and she punished him sorely. When the reporter had called again to warn Burbank of the treachery which he believed De la Casa to be plotting, Helen had refused to meet her old lover. Nevertheless, she watched him slyly through the window of her own boudoir during his interview with her father.

When Vose had gone away, in much apparent indignation, Helen appeared once more and found her father tramping up and down the front walk, flushed and angry.

"The puppy, the insufferable puppy!" sputtered Burbank.

"What is the matter, father?"

"That fellow Vose—if I'd been a younger man, I'd have caned him!" and the inventor swung his stick viciously. "By gad, sir, that I would!"

"What has Mr. Vose done?"

"Why, the rascal came here and had the impudence to try to poison my mind

against Captain de la Casa—a most presumptuous and unwarranted proceeding, and I told him so."

"Against Captain de la Casa?"

"Yes. By gad, sir!" continued the inventor, quite beside himself with excitement. Usually calm and impassive, he became really riotous. "I'll teach him to defame the character of my friends."

"But, father, what did he say about the captain?" and Helen flushed a little.

"Said he was untrustworthy—dishonest; intimated that he would bear watching, in fact. And all because of some vaporings he heard—or imagined he heard—in a down town café. It's abominable!"

"Tell me what he said, father," commanded Helen.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," returned Burbank, a little troubled. "There's no need of your mind being poisoned by doubt, too."

"I wish to know what he said," she declared. Then she added: "Remember, nothing Mr. Vose could say would influence my opinion of Captain de la Casa."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, my dear," cried Burbank, and he repeated Vose's story. "Now, whether the fellow was lying or not, I don't know. But I wonder what could make him come here with such a tale——"

"It was jealousy," declared Helen, flushing more deeply.

"Do you think so?" said her father. "Jealous of my success, is he? The impudent puppy!"

Helen bit her lips, but did not explain.

"You don't suppose there *is* anything in it, do you?" asked the inventor, after a moment. "It was just that Vose's vaporing, hey?" The old man was naturally suspicious.

"Captain de la Casa is a gentleman, father," declared Helen quickly.

"I know—I know. But——"

"He comes of a great family. And why should he wish to deprive you of your just earnings?" she demanded. "He admits the Neptune is worth the price, does he not?"

"Indeed he does!" cried Burbank eagerly. "Why, my daughter, he is enthusiastic—enthusiastic! All day yesterday and part of today he has been aboard of her with Morse, learning every part of the machine. He has a great head for mechanics, has De la Casa—a great head. He'll know the Neptune from A to Izzard before he's done with her. And he begs me to hurry the guns aboard. He says he is confident his report will be accepted by the junta, and instead of intimating any delay regarding the money, told me in confidence only this morning he might bring me a certified check for my two hundred thousand on any day now.

"Think of it!" murmured the inventor, rubbing his hands together while his eyes sparkled. "*Two hundred thousand dollars!* Ah, it is riches."

"And you will go on, dear father, and invent even more wonderful things!" cried Helen, quite as enthusiastic.

"Indeed, yes! But my Neptune—ah, my child, it will make your father's name famous. And it will blow the Amazonian fleet out of the sea!" and he chuckled. "De la Casa says so himself."

"But why is Captain de la Casa so anxious to learn all about the boat?" asked Helen doubtfully.

"Ah, I'll tell you," replied the inventor, lowering his voice as though he feared to be overheard. "He will take the boat south himself when the junta buys it. Of course, Morse will go, too; but there must be another man to spell Morse—you see that the responsibility would be too much for one."

"I—I—why don't you be sure of your money first, before you let him learn about the mechanism?" queried Helen.

"Oh, I'm sure of the money all right," declared Burbank. Then he stopped, scowling darkly. "You've let what that fool Vose said poison your mind already."

"No, no!" cried Helen eagerly. "I haven't given it a thought. I tell you nothing Garrett Vose could say would change my opinion regarding the captain."

"I hope not," growled Burbank.

Yet disquieting thoughts possessed Helen for the rest of the day. She was unable to drive the story Vose had told her father out of her thoughts. Do

what she would, her mind was ever reverting to the warning.

Why had Vose come to him with the story? What object could he have in view?

Bitterly as she felt towards the reporter, she could not really make herself believe him the ignoble scoundrel her father painted him. Nay, she had reason to believe him different from that. Jealousy (which she had certainly intentionally fed in his breast) would not cause a man like Vose to stoop to petty meanness. She felt it—she knew it!

She lay awake hour after hour that night worrying over the matter. Almost was she tempted to seek Vose out and demand a repetition of the tale from his own lips.

And then, the next forenoon, came the reporter's letter to her. There was the ring of truth and honesty in it, despite the coldness which she thought it betrayed.

He was going away—perhaps never to return. Where was he going? And what was his mission? Helen had heard that sometimes journalists are assigned to work to face which might make the bravest shrink. The thought shook her.

She feared for the safety of the man whom she told herself and her father she did not love.

The words Vose had written regarding De la Casa shook her confidence in that smooth tongued individual, though she had declared nothing the reporter could say would influence her upon that point. She felt as though a danger menaced them—a subtle danger which she knew not how to combat.

And thus, in such state of indecision, passed many anxious hours.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN DE LA CASA IS DISPLEASED WITH AN IMPORTANT AMERICAN INSTITUTION.

THERE was a show of languid interest about the office staff of the *Leader* that morning, and while waiting for their daily assignments the young men who were the bone and sinew of the great daily commented freely on the column article which, double leaded, was made the feature of the first page of the morning edition.

The story had come in on Sunday from the East over the wires, and Murchison had pounced upon it eagerly. The "flimsy" man had privately pronounced it a fake; but Murchison's evident belief in the genuineness of the story rather shook the sub editor's belief in his own judgment. Murchison's "nose for news" was phenomenal. As the humorous man of the *Leader* said:

"Murchison's olfactory nerves are so acute that he can detect the odor of real tobacco in a Pittsburg stogy"—and then he at once put the joke in the Sunday supplement for a "filler" and collected a dollar on it at the cashier's desk.

But whether they believed it or not, everybody about the office read Vose's narrative of the movements of the Klondike bound steamship Good Fortune on her first night out from New York. Of course his name was not signed to the article as it came off the wire, but Murchison was in no doubt.

He took advice with Mr. Brunelle, and that gentleman, seeing that the story did not tell too much, but just enough to whet the public appetite, "O. K.d" it. Thus it was that the room was in quite a buzz of comment when the door opened and a young lady timidly approached the single headed Cerberus who guarded the gateway to the editorial desks.

"I wish to see Mr. Vose," she said.

The man—or boy—glanced up. It was really hard to classify the guardian. He was a boy's size and received a boy's pay all right; but his face betrayed antiquity and was wrinkled like a mummy's.

Perhaps this appearance of extreme age was due to the fact that the sins of the entire office rested on the guardian's shoulders—these sins including even the knowledge of the long list of creditors who hounded the steps of the festive young men of the *Leader's* staff.

"I wish to see Mr. Vose," repeated Helen.

"No dun," thought the guardian; and then, when he heard the name he

was sure of it, for Vose was one of the few who never asked him to "stave off" the ubiquitous collector. So he lifted up his voice and shouted:

"Vose!"

There was no answer, and again the boy shouted.

"Yell a little louder, Jimmy," growled somebody near him. "Maybe he'll hear you. But he isn't in sight, and blessed if I've seen him for three or four days."

Vose had actually got away without a single member of the reportorial staff being the wiser. There was no "leak" in the *Leader* office. Its manager did not live in Europe and try to govern his paper by cable.

"Where's Vose?" asked the boy of another reporter.

"Dunno. Got fired, maybe." Then they suddenly became aware that Jimmy was inquiring in behalf of a very pretty girl, who still stood timidly at the gate.

At once two or three rushed forward to offer her a chair inside the rail, and Jimmy was (figuratively speaking) trod underfoot.

Helen recovered her self possession at once; no number of young men could trouble her—when they tried to make themselves agreeable, at least. Jimmy went off to Murchison and inquired for Vose.

By and by he came back and asked Helen to go into the city editor's office. Little Murchison looked up absently from his assignment book and motioned his visitor to a seat.

"Mr. Vose is—er—is not here to-day," he said.

"Will he return—that is—when may I find him here?" queried Helen, with some little confusion.

"Well, that I can't exactly say. Was it very important?"

"Was what important, sir?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

"Your business."

"Ye-es." She was hardly sure herself what she wished to see Vose for. The Sunday had been a day of anxiety for her, and she had been fairly impelled against her will to make this visit to the newspaper office.

"You see," Murchison went on, "Mr. Vose has gone—er—out of town. Yes, out of town. We could scarcely say just where he is at the present moment, I'm afraid."

"Will a letter reach him?"

"I really couldn't say," the city editor declared. "I don't know his address myself," and he said it with perfect gravity.

Then Helen remembered what she had heard in the outer room. "He is still working for the *Leader?*" she queried.

"Oh, yes! He has been assigned to —er—to special duty."

"How long do you think he will be out of town?"

"That I couldn't tell you."

"But doesn't anybody know where he is and when he will be back?" she cried desperately.

"Is your business very pressing?" asked Murchison, with some show of interest.

By this time Helen had concluded it was, and she said so.

"Then, you had best see Mr. Brunelle."

"Mr. Brunelle?"

"The managing editor. Wait! I will take you to his office," and the reporters were astounded to see the little city editor escorting the young lady down the long corridor towards the managing editor's door.

Mr. Brunelle listened to her request patiently.

"It would be utterly impossible for me to give you Garrett Vose's address," he said. "He is at sea."

"At sea!" exclaimed Helen.

"Yes. He is bound on a long voyage for the paper."

"And a dangerous voyage!" murmured Helen.

"Humph! What do you know about it?" demanded Brunelle, looking over his glasses at her shrewdly.

"Oh, nothing—nothing, sir!"

"Are you — ahem! — a relative?" queried the managing editor. "I understood him to say there would be nobody to inquire for him while he was away."

"He—he did not expect me to inquire for him," she said, hanging her head. "He wrote me a letter before he left and

I wished to ask him a question regarding—regarding a private matter."

"Humph!" grunted Brunelle. "I really don't see how I can help you. I really don't. It will be impossible for anybody to communicate with Vose for several months."

So Helen went away, at first much cast down at her fruitless search. Then she grew angry with herself for ever going to the *Leader* office.

What would those men think of her? What was Garrett Vose to her? Nothing, and she wouldn't have him for anything in the world—so there! And then she hurried home and cried a little in her own room, and was angry and miserable by turns for the rest of the day.

In the evening Señor de la Casa presented himself at the inventor's house, as was his frequent custom. He was in a great rage over an article in the morning paper—an article purporting to be written by a passenger aboard the steamship Good Fortune relating how she had been laden off Montauk with a contraband cargo for some mysterious port.

"*Caramba!*" ejaculated the Amazonian leader. "These papers — these cursed papers! Ze American press is a disgrace—a disgrace! Why do they spy an' spy upon everyt'ing? It is abominable!"

The inventor and his daughter, who had heard privately of the great filibustering expedition, and knew a great deal about the plans of the revolutionary party of Amazonia, were quite as indignant as the captain could have wished.

"Well, the expedition is off, of course; that ees one satisfaction," said the captain. "We shall hear from it before many weeks."

"But will you remain in New York long, captain?" asked Helen.

"Perhaps—perhaps not," responded De la Casa, smiling at her enigmatically. "I may leave this week if," and here he turned to Burbank himself, "if the matter of the Neptune is settled as it looks to be settled now."

The inventor flushed eagerly.

"What is the outlook, captain?" he demanded.

"My dear friend," cried the captain, with his hand upon his heart, "I can almost promise that you shall see that certified check in a day or two at the farthest."

"No!"

"Indeed, yes. It is so, I assure you. May I congratulate you in advance, sir? The money has already been deposited, and the committee only ask one thing further."

"And what is that?" asked Helen eagerly, for her father for the moment was unable to speak.

"Are the guns aboard?" inquired De la Casa, without replying directly.

"Yes, yes! Everything is all ready," declared Burbank.

"Then, the committee instruct me to descend in the Neptune once more; to govern the boat myself that I may feel confidence when we set out upon our long voyage; and to try the guns. The boat must be all prepared. I may start south with her the very hour the committee settles with you, Señor Burbank. Time is precious, now that the Good Fortune has gone."

"And war will be declared when?" asked Helen, who had gained a rather enlarged idea of the forthcoming rebellion.

"Ah, that I cannot tell. Those who have the fate of the party in their care are better able to decide than I. Perhaps fighting will begin as soon as the Good Fortune arrives; or perhaps they will wait until the Neptune is on the ground."

"There'll be need of little fighting when the Neptune gets there," declared Burbank with confidence. "If you manage the boat right, Captain de la Casa, the government of Amazonia must sue for peace in short order."

Captain de la Casa smiled quietly. "We shall see," was his comment.

"And when shall you wish to make your final test of the boat, sir?" asked the inventor.

"Tomorrow, if I may."

"Tomorrow it shall be. I'll have Morse get everything ready by noon."

"You are kind, señor. The time suits me well."

"And you really think your friends will agree to my terms?"

"Surely—surely! Have no fear re-

garding that, my friend," said Captain de la Casa.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEPTUNE PUTS TO SEA.

THE covered dock in which lay the submarine boat was a scene of great activity on Tuesday forenoon. The Neptune had her heavy guns and all her other paraphernalia aboard, and the workmen were now polishing and varnishing every piece of "shiny" metal in her interior. Morse about worshiped the craft and tended and watched over her as though she were a baby.

When the deal was finally made with the Amazonian junta, Morse expected to go south with her. That had been the understanding, and he had even gone so far as to bring his trunk aboard. The Neptune might start for the South American republic any day.

Burbank, with Helen, came down to the yard about noon; but De la Casa did not arrive until some time later. The submarine boat had her steam up and the workmen were waiting to open the great doors and give her passage into the bay.

"Ah, my friend!" exclaimed the Spaniard effusively. "Is it I who have kept you waiting?"

"Not for long, captain."

"It is well. I was delayed, Señor Burbank, but I bring you the best of news."

The inventor's eyes sparkled. "And it is——"

"That my confrères have agreed to your terms—indeed, yes!"

The inventor was in ecstasies at this statement.

"At once?" he cried.

"This very day. Before the banks close. If you will meet the committee the papers will be passed. Yes, señor, they await your coming now."

"But you—how about your trip today?"

"Oh, I shall make eet—one little short trip. But it will be all right. They have accepted my report as final. You will let your assistant go out with me this afternoon, will you not?"

"Yes, yes."

"*Bueno!* We will start at once, while you, señor, shall go to this address"—he handed the inventor a card—"and meet my friends. I wish to run the Neptune myself about the bay; I expect to leave for the south with her tomorrow or the day to follow."

Burbank hesitated just a moment. "Would it not be possible for me to meet the gentlemen a little later—after your return with the boat?" he asked. "Then I could go with you and see that all was right about the Neptune."

"Now, do not trouble yourself, señor," De la Casa exclaimed. "Señor Morse will do very well. Besides, my friends await you. You will be able to deposit your check today."

That overcame Burbank's hesitancy. The thought of the two hundred thousand dollars—a fortune!—awaiting him in the city convinced him that he need not remain to watch his precious invention. But Helen now added to his indecision.

"Why not wait until tomorrow, father?" she asked him. "If you will, we can go with Captain de la Casa now."

"I—I——" The inventor was troubled again.

"I beg of you not to do that, sir," said De la Casa hastily. "Some of the gentlemen have come to New York at great personal inconvenience and will return to their homes as soon as the business is transacted. Besides, they await you even now, señor. If Mees Burbank is so desirous of a last voyage in the Neptune," and the Spaniard bowed to her with a smile, "I will postpone my trip till your return. Or, better still," he added, as an afterthought, "if Mees Burbank will trust herself to Meester Morse and myself, she shall go now."

"That's it, Helen, *you* go with them," cried her father hastily. "Morse has steam up already," and he bustled away.

Now, Helen did not wish to go in the submarine boat without Mathias Burbank; yet she could not refuse. If for no other reason, the doubt instilled into her mind by Vose's letter forced her to go.

Surely, if Captain de la Casa proposed treachery he could not steal the boat while she and Morse and the other men

were aboard. So she accepted the Spaniard's hand and was helped below.

A little later the turret hatch was screwed down and the water roared into the ballast tanks of the Neptune until she had sunk to her normal level. Then she shot out of the dock with Captain de la Casa at her lever.

The Amazonian headed the craft directly out of the bay, and those in the bowels of the ship scarcely knew where they were being carried. Helen felt nervous, and, for the sake of company, remained in the engine room, where Morse and his assistant watched the powerful gasoline engine. Besides the three and De la Casa, there were only two others aboard this trip.

The other two men had been trained to handle the guns, and had come for the purpose of assisting De la Casa in his experiments.

The Spaniard did not submerge the Neptune, but kept her at a high rate of speed even after leaving the bay.

"She's just traveling, miss," said Morse proudly, as he noted the speed clock. "Twelve and a half knots! It's great."

"But where is he going?"

"I don't know, miss. Straight out to sea a way where the guns can't do any harm, I reckon. He's got the chart before him, and he's a good pilot."

But Helen could not stifle her anxiety. By and by she left the engine room and sought the cabin which had been hers whenever she descended in the boat. She lay down in the berth to try to compose herself. Almost instantly her ear caught the sound of a stealthy rattling at the latch of the door.

She sprang up in a sudden fright. The sound was not repeated, nor did she hear anything from without. With beating heart she crept to the door and softly turned the steel knob. The door had been fastened from without. She was a prisoner!

In an ecstasy of terror she tried to shake the door, and cried out at the top of her voice. But she soon stopped. There was a peculiarity about the Neptune's staterooms which she had often noticed. They were sealed from every sound in the ship—almost like water and air tight compartments.

When the door was closed it was well nigh impossible to hear voices even in the cabin. Now she was sealed in one of these tomb-like iron boxes, and she knew not how to summon help.

Meanwhile, the man who had so cunningly fastened Helen's door, and who was one of the gunners, went to the door of the tower in which the governor of the submarine craft stood, and rapped sharply. The panel slid back instantly, and De la Casa peered out.

"Well?"

"The girl is locked into her room."

"*Bueno!* I wondered what to do with her."

"She is safe! But she may pound on the door and summon help."

"We won't give her time. Tell Morse I want him. Quick!" commanded the captain.

"Is it now?" asked the man meaningly.

"Yes, yes! I haf just sighted the sail. We might as well settle it at once. Leave your mate to guard the other engineer."

"Sure," returned the other, and hastened away.

In a few moments Morse appeared.

"Why, I thought Miss Helen was with you," he said. "Have you seen her?"

"The señora is in her stateroom," responded De la Casa. "Come up here, Señor Morse. I would speak with you."

Morse stepped unsuspectingly into the turret. The Neptune was still skimming the surface of the sea swiftly; there was scarcely any swell.

"Do you see yonder, Señor Morse?" asked the Spaniard, pointing out to sea.

"Do I see what?"

"The sail?"

"The schooner? Yes, I see her. What of it?"

"On board of that vessel, señor," said the captain eagerly, "there are certain friends of mine. They are waiting for us."

"'They are waiting for us?'" repeated Morse, looking blankly upon the smiling Amazonian.

"That is it, señor."

"But—but——"

"Some of them will come aboard here, señor," said De la Casa easily.

"They also have stores for the Neptune—sufficient to supply a crew for a long voyage. *We shall not return to Senor Burbank's shipyard.*"

"My God!" gasped Morse, turning white.

"You are astonished, señor?" suggested De la Casa. "Be not so—eet ees a very simple matter. Two hundred thousand American dollars is much too large a sum to pay for an invention that is not yet proven a success. After the Neptune has shown what she can do in battering President Marnelli's navy to pieces, then the republic of Amazonia may think about paying for her, eh?"

"You fool!" cried Morse, "do you think you can steal a thing like this and get out of the country with it?"

"Why, señor, I already have got away with her," and De la Casa laughed immoderately.

Morse, who was coming to his senses, reached out suddenly and touched a button on the wall. It was the signal to the engineer to stop. The captain laughed coolly.

"Your assistant," he said quietly, "is under the eye of one of the gunners. They are both my men. You see, Señor Morse, it was easier to buy men than to buy the ship, eh?"

"You confounded rascal!" growled the engineer.

"Ver' likely, señor. If hard names relieve your feelings, why——" and he shrugged his shoulders. "Now," he added, "I called you here that you might be informed of the situation. You will please be prepared to go aboard yonder vessel."

"What!"

"*Si*, señor! I could not think of keeping you here. You would not be trustworthy, I fear. You will be landed on the Irish coast from the schooner."

"But why—why——"

"Because I do not propose letting this get into those dam' papers too quick," interrupted De la Casa.

"But Mr. Burbank will be crazed," cried the engineer.

"He is not far from that now, eh?" and the Spaniard laughed cheerfully.

"For God's sake show some feeling!"

"He will be heart break over the loss of his loved boat, think you?"

"His boat!" cried Morse. "Man alive, what is his boat to his daughter? It is of Burbank as a father I am thinking. And it will be a terrible experience for Miss Helen," and the good fellow's eyes filled with tears. "Think of the long voyage across the ocean in a sailing vessel, and the unpleasant situation in which we may be placed even after being landed in Ireland."

At that De la Casa threw back his head and laughed long and loudly.

"Ho, ho! You take too much for granted, Señor Morse," he said.

The engineer looked questioningly upon him, puzzled by his speech.

"I haf not said I should cause Mees Burbank the discomfort of a voyage to Ireland."

"What will you do with her?"

"I am sorry that she felt it necessary to come wit' us," De la Casa said slowly; "but now that she is here——"

"Well, sir?"

"I think I can make her comfortable aboard the Neptune," and he smiled.

"Damn you!"

The words rasped out of the engineer's throat like the roar of a wild beast. He flung himself at the Spaniard, and the attack was so sudden that the latter was borne to the floor of the turret. De la Casa, cursing and gasping, tried to wrench his hand free to draw his knife; but Morse was the heavier and he fought with desperation.

Meanwhile, the Neptune was rushing out to sea with no hand to guide her and no eye on the lookout for danger.

(To be continued.)

MUSIC.

LONG eons ere the earth began,
A child more radiant than the morn
In far celestial realms was born,
And lives as Music now in man.

Helen W. Grove.

REVENGE IS SWEET.

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

The tale of a fellow summer boarder which shapes itself into an account of how certain long suffering listeners finally evened things up with the literary "feller."

I ALWAYS looked forward to my summers at Great Beach Bay with the keenest delight. My office in town is an inner one on the sixth floor of a musty old building, with windows opening on the air shaft, so that my vista consists of Muggins Minks' bookkeeper, in his duster, pegging away on the other side of the shaft, with occasional glimpses of Johnson & Hurley's typewriter, who wears short hair and spectacles.

Thus, when I get out to Great Beach Bay, with its generous expanse of sea and sky and sand, I feel just like the mule when it is released from harness—inclined to lie down and roll. But I only do this when I am in the water, and then, more frequently than not, it is done for me.

Great Beach is very close to town, so I can go and come every day, and Mrs. Cederby, where I have put up for the past six seasons, keeps a most desirable house. She never takes children, prefers bachelors, and always has her after dinner coffee iced, so that I feel quite as much at home there as I do in my winter quarters at Mrs. Bateman's, in town.

But this summer a fearful visitation was made upon us dwellers at Cederby Cottage. This blight made its appearance in most innocent form, in the shape of a young man with a pink in his buttonhole, a curl on either end of his small blond mustache, a fresh appearing dress suit case in his hand, and a letter of introduction to Mrs. Cederby in his pocket that at once procured him admission to the household. He was assigned a small room adjoining mine, and none of us thought he was any worse than a harmless dude. Little recked we then of the fearful truth.

It came out two nights after his arrival, when, the evening being rainy, I had taken my room, a novel, and pipe in preference to the piazza. There was a knock at the door, and then, without waiting for my response, Mr. Percival Prince—the newcomer—walked in with an illustrated paper in his hand.

"I thought you might like to see an advance copy of *Funlet*," he said, seating himself on the bed. "I'm on the staff, you know, so get early pickings. Rather a good center cartoon this week, I think."

I took the paper he handed me, which I had frequently seen on the news stands, and agreed with him that the double page cartoon was rather neat.

Prince meantime had lighted a cigarette, and as I turned over the pages of the paper, sat there smoking and nursing his knee, narrowly watching me.

While I was looking at the pictures at the bottom of one of the pages, this observation of his became so intense that he lost his balance on the bed and would have fallen off had I not caught him.

"Beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, "but I thought I noticed a misspelled word in that skit of mine on yachting. Those proof readers are so careless."

I glanced at the article and saw the words "Percival Prince" at the bottom of it. I made some remark expressing my surprise to learn that we had an author in the house, and then turned the leaf to look at the pictures on the other side of it.

Prince wriggled about uneasily for a minute or two, and then as I started to hand the paper back, came out with: "Oh, by the way, I wish you'd read that little thing of mine and let me know what you think of a description of a girl I've got there."

Ah! If I had not been weak then, I might have spared myself the evil hours the future held in store for me. But I ran the article through hastily, allowed my smile to broaden more than the humor of the thing justified, and when I

had finished, handed the paper back with the comment: "Quite dainty. It must be a great pleasure to you to be able to write so fluently, Mr. Prince."

This opened the flood gates, and for the next half hour I was forced to listen to a faithful account of the manner in which the muse had first wooed this particular Prince. He went back into his own room to get another of his productions to show me, when I at once seized the opportunity to hurry off down stairs and out on the piazza, where I stayed until I thought my literary friend must have got tired waiting for me. Then I sneaked up to my room like a burglar, and slipped into bed.

I hoped that my failure to reappear would be taken as a slight, and that Mr. Prince would treat me thereafter with studied coldness, but no such good luck awaited me.

At dinner the next night the fellow was extra cordial, and when we strolled out on the piazza afterwards he slipped a bundle of cuttings into my hand, saying that as I had enjoyed his yachting skit so much he thought I would like to read some of his other sketches.

This, I say, was but the beginning. Before the week was out he had bored everybody in the house with his "shop" talk, and a copy of *Funlet* was to be seen in every room.

We were all afraid to start any subject at table, for it was sure to remind Prince either of something he had once written about or would suggest a theme for him to treat at once.

And this was not the worst. We all stood in dire terror of being introduced bodily into Mr. Prince's tales, and each made a desperate effort to have his personality as colorless as possible.

As may be imagined, all this was not conducive to the serene enjoyment of the delights of Great Beach Bay. We all went about with a hunted look in our eyes, and dreaded what the morrow might bring forth.

But Prince himself thrived and flourished like the traditional green bay tree. The wretch positively grew fat, and had evidently never had such a good time in his life before.

Finally I could stand it no longer.

"It takes two to play any decent game," I said to myself. "This Prince has had his own way in solitaire long enough."

Then I devoted all the time I could snatch from business, sleep, and the Prince persecutions to thinking, and at last I hit upon a plan I thought would work.

To carry it out properly I was obliged to take all my fellow boarders into my confidence and request their aid. But this, when they learned the end I had in view, they were more than ready to give, and we determined to carry the scheme into effect the very next night at dinner.

"Oh, Mr. Prince," I began on that occasion, even before I sat down, so that he should not get ahead of me, "you must come in some day with me and go through the works. You know the cloth is first taken——" And I went on to give a detailed account of the process employed in getting our print goods ready for market.

When I felt myself nearing the limit of my powers, I glanced meaningly across the table at Dodkins, who is in the hardware trade, and as soon as I paused he broke in with: "Don't you need a new razor, Mr. Prince? I wish you would step in our store and let me show you a new line we have just received from Sweden. Many people prefer Sheffield steel, but the Swedish article——" And then he took his turn at giving an exhaustive account of new fads in the cutlery business.

As soon as he showed signs of weakening, Mr. Tripper was ready to step in with reminiscences of the building trade, dating back to the fifties, and after him came Mr. Severance, the brewer, with an account of his experience with Canadian versus American hops.

Each and all of these directed his conversation pointedly to Mr. Prince, mentioning his name at frequent intervals, so as not to permit his attention to wander.

This carried us to the end of dessert, and then, as soon as we adjourned to the piazza, old Dr. Cuttle was ready to thrust his arm through Prince's and walk him off to listen to a description of the most interesting post mortem he ever conducted.

I noticed that the "literary feller's" legs tottered under him as he moved away, and when the two came back an hour later he looked positively ghastly in the moonlight.

My plan was succeeding beyond my hopes. He went straight to bed, dodging past the rest of us as though we had some contagious disease. He did not appear the next morning at breakfast, and that night at dinner he scarcely raised his eyes from his plate.

Nor have we had any cause to complain of him since. One dose of his own medicine had been sufficient to rid us of the annoyance.

DEATH OR DISHONOR.*

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

A business trip that involved not only deadly peril, but torture as well. The harrowing experiences of two men from New York who were considered inimical to the welfare of Brazilian laborers.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Bob Evens and Walter Howard are sent by the North and South American Trading Company to buy rubber lands in the forests of Brazil. The natives, fearing the introduction of labor saving devices, imported from the United States, will deprive them of the means of livelihood, organize themselves into resistance. At their head is one Silva, who, journeying to Para on the same steamer with Evens and Howard, at first pretends to be their friend, but after they have entered the forest on their quest, causes them to be set upon by his men and brought to his plantation. Here he holds them in captivity until they shall consent to write him an order on the Bank of Para for two million milreis—about one million dollars. This they refuse to do, whereupon Silva begins the attempt to starve them into submission. But, anticipating some such move on his part, they have concealed portions of the food passed in to them from time to time, and meanwhile having worked away at removing the adobes forming one of the walls of their prison house, finally make their escape into the forest, where they nearly starve to death.

They are found by Silva's head overseer, who returns them to his master, and they are imprisoned again. This time they are put in a room whose only window overlooks the river hundreds of feet below. They bribe a servant to bring them a little water, and Silva—discovering this—comes the next day and shoots the man at their very feet.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH HOPE AT ITS LAST GASP.

ON an evening made dark by clouds, two haggard men stood leaning out of that open window above the water. Their best and most familiar friend would have difficulty in recognizing them as the two well dressed, prosperous looking Americans who had, but a short time before, set gaily out upon a matter of business for a wealthy firm.

The gaunt and hungry faces were lighted by no ray of hope. The malevolence of Silva had now reached its highest point. They were being starved to death.

All efforts to break the proud spirits had failed. All torture of mind and body that the wicked mind could suggest to weaken those determined wills, yet to save enough life to enable the hands to sign a draft on the Para Bank, had not accomplished its object.

Weak and miserable as they were, these two men had resisted every temptation for the few days that had followed the murder of Pedro Lobano. When thirst and hunger seemed about to end their agony in madness, a seeming kindness produced sufficient food and water to stay the ravages. But with the reviving energy the strong wills became more determined not to yield to the unjust demand of Silva.

Even were they sure of saving their lives by signing away the money of the company, they would not do it. They were convinced that to yield would simply be to hasten the cruel end.

* *This story began in the June issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The two back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 20 cents.*

Finding himself beaten by the determination of the Americans, Silva had forbidden his men to offer them any more food. He would, he thought, make one more effort just as starvation had brought them almost to the point of death. Then, with the draft, bearing their united signatures, he could send Alvelos to Para to draw the money, and could easily end their lives and dispose of their bodies so that no trace of his crime would ever be discovered.

Silva reckoned with men. He knew he had two brave Americans as captives. He knew he had a strong, if slow, enemy in Governor Fonseca. He knew he had a constantly increasing army. These were the only elements with which he reckoned. He forgot, if indeed he had ever thought, that a just God was over all, and His watchful eye saw the island of San Antonio as well as the prosperous churches and cities of the world.

The ways of Providence are sometimes mysterious. They are always sublime.

The two famishing men, with staring eyes, looked down upon the dark stream that swirled around the base of the rock.

Often during that hour had Evens thought that Howard's plan to leap to the river below and end it all, or fight the waters to the shore, was best.

But each moment, as he almost reached the determination to yield to Howard's beseeching, some subtle influence held him back. Some spark of something almost like hope would spring to life within him.

"Wait," he whispered. "Wait a little while. We can stand it for a few hours, I guess."

Far up the river a great black object was meanwhile swinging with the current, traveling constantly in the direction of the island. It was not a boat, for it seemed to have arms that reached from the water up towards the clouded sky. It was not a man, for it was far too large for human shape.

It was not a thing of life, for no motion was perceptible, save a slight swaying as the current caught it first on one side and then another.

It was a tree.

There is in South America a species of palm called by the natives, "Barrigona," or "big belly." It has a scientific name much longer and less easy of comprehension. It grows to a considerable height, its tall trunk surmounted by spreading branches.

The peculiarity of this tree is that it reaches its greatest girth, not at the base of the trunk, but up near the lowest branches. It swells here to the circumference of fifteen or twenty feet, according to the age of the tree and the conditions under which it has grown.

These trees are used by the Indians to form canoes. When the tree is old, the interior of the distended trunk is soft and pithy. It can easily be dug out, the limbs trimmed, and a serviceable boat formed by nature ready to the hand of man is there.

This great barrigona tree had been cut by some Indians, and had been allowed to escape in the tide, or had been blown down by some heavy storm, or had been in some other manner torn loose from its native spot. It was now gliding towards the Para River, where it would eventually meet with a current that would bear it to the ocean and be lost in the vast waste of water, where no man could ever utilize it for any purpose.

But now a current was bearing it steadily towards the island of San Antonio. The sentries on the southern shore saw its dark, shadowy outline as it swept down upon them, but having once ascertained its nature, gave it no further heed.

It seemed at one time as if the great barrigona was going to cling to the southern shore of the island. But the current was running strong, and it swung out again and rounded the eastern end.

The two men looking down upon the swirling waters saw the thing, and their hearts for a moment almost stopped beating. They thought it was a boat. If so, did it contain enemies or friends?

But they soon made out from the uncertain motions that it was not a boat. One of its longest branches caught on the southern edge of the rocky promontory and swung its great trunk in towards the wall of rock. An eddy held it fast, and it lay there, a great black object, squarely under the prison window.

"What is that thing?" whispered

Howard. "Can it be that Fonseca has sent a gunboat to blow up the island?"

"No, it is not a boat," said Evens. "It may be a mine they have let float down. If it is, it will blow this rock to pieces—and us with it."

"Just as well," muttered Howard.

At that moment a rift in the clouds—appearing only for a moment—enabled the keen eyes of Evens to see the object clearly.

"It is a barrigona!" he cried. "Don't you remember the Indians of the Orinoco that used to ride over the rapids on the trunks of those trees?"

Howard's breath came fast. He seemed to divine some of the inspiration that had seized upon Evens.

"If we could only reach it!" he whispered.

The sky clouded again. The dark object lay almost motionless under the window—two hundred feet below. Evens was trying to recall the shape of the rocks that seemed so steep.

It did not take much effort. He had studied that rocky wall for hours at a time. He knew every inch of it that could be seen from the window.

He knew that for twenty feet down, the side was almost as smooth as the wall of the room he was in. Then the surface became jagged and broken. He remembered crevices and jutting points, to look at which, as the water swirled beneath them, had made him dizzy.

"If we only had a rope!" whispered Howard.

For another moment Evens stood motionless, with his gaze riveted in a fascinated way upon that silent tree.

"Listen!" he said, turning abruptly to Howard. "Are you convinced that it is Silva's purpose to kill us?"

"Great God! Is there any doubt?"

"Since we have been in this prison you have frequently wanted to leap from the window to the river."

"Yes! Yes!" said Howard feverishly. "I want to now!"

"I am ready."

In the darkness Howard's eyes seemed like some weird, unearthly lights as he looked at his stronger and calmer companion.

"What do you mean?"

"Listen. Calm yourself. You will have need of all the nerve Silva's cruelty has left us. Below there lies a craft that will bear us away from this terrible place. It is safer even than a boat, for if it is seen by Silva's men no notice will be taken of it. The thing is to reach it."

"It is a long leap from here. To strike on the jutting rocks would be to drop stunned into the water and drown. It is even possible that the fall itself would be too much for us."

"Bah! Suppose it is! Is it not better to die making an attempt for liberty than to go mad here and afford sport for that monster?"

"But wait. Below us the rock is not so smooth. I believe if we could get down about thirty or forty feet we would find footholds and crevices to which our fingers could cling. If we can get down a hundred feet the jump to the river will be less hazardous."

Howard was panting. Suppose, after all, this last attempt should end in failure. His already overtried nerves could never stand it. He would go raving mad.

"Take off your clothes."

They sat down, two feverish, trembling men, and took off their shoes and stockings. Their coats, vests, and trousers soon lay in a heap on the floor. Evens took up his own coat.

"What are you going to do?" asked Howard.

"Make a rope."

He picked at the seams with his teeth. With a strength imparted by hope and excitement, he tore the coat into its original pieces.

Howard's followed. Then the trousers. Howard's shirt was next. Evens had no linen shirt, his having gone to make a light in Silva's subterranean dungeon.

With nervous fingers Evens now tore each piece into strips.

He tied these together, testing the strength of every knot. With them all he had a strong rope about twenty feet in length.

The next question was how to fasten one end in the window.

The long, hollow club which had saved them once from maddening thirst, and had brought a cruel and sudden death upon Pedro Lobano, was still in the

room, perhaps as a mocking reminder of their near approach to having some one to assist them.

Evens picked it up. It was longer by a foot than the window was wide.

He tied one end of the long rope to this in the middle, and let the other end down along the rocky wall.

"Wait," he said. "If we have a minute of light we will go."

The minute of light did not come for an hour. But it came at last. There was no fear of their being observed. No eye could see them from the other portions of the island.

"Who first?" asked Evens.

"You," said Howard.

"I'll try it. When you see me on the tree come. If you fall I will get you."

With a prayer the desperate man climbed out of the window. He seized the rope. For a moment he swung perilously over the water. Then hand over hand he began to go down.

Howard watched him. He reached the end of the smooth portion of wall, twenty feet below. He hung there for a while, groping for a foothold in the rocks. To his relief they were not as hopeless as they looked from above. They were rough, jagged, and creviced in a thousand places. Evens managed to get a good hold and released the rope.

With bated breath Howard now saw him continue his downward course. Evens breathed scarcely at all. Inch by inch, carefully, slowly, clinging like a salamander to the rocks, he kept on, never looking up.

It seemed an age—almost the whole night—to Howard. Suddenly Evens was lost to sight. Howard believed he had fallen. But no, he came into view again much farther down.

He had found an incut on the wall that took him out of view from above, and where the descent was easier.

At about fifteen feet above the river he could climb down no more. The rock was again smooth, affording no hold. His hands were bleeding. The flesh of his fingers was cut almost to the bone.

His feet were in worse condition from scraping on the rocks to find a place to rest his toes.

But his heart was strong. He looked down, measured the distance, and sprang into the branches of the great barrigona tree.

The impact gave an impulse to the tree and it slowly left the rock. Evens looked up. He already saw Howard hanging in midair on the rope. If the tree swept out into the strong current it would be some distance off when Howard reached the water. But Evens was powerless to stay its progress.

Howard, weaker than Evens, was slower in his descent. He reached the end of the rope. His heart misgave him. He had scarcely strength to hold with one hand while he felt for a crevice with the other. He made the mistake of looking down. He grew dizzy, relaxed his hold, and fell.

"My God!" breathed Evens, as he saw the form of his comrade come plunging down.

Howard struck the water not far from the tree. For two or three minutes after the splash there was no sign of him. But then he rose face upward, and Evens saw that he was unconscious.

It did not take a moment for the brave fellow to decide what to do. He plunged in, grasped the unconscious form with his bleeding hands, and swam back with his burden to the tree.

It was only by an almost superhuman effort that he drew the senseless form up into the branches. But, once there, there was a secure resting place.

The tree was now fifty feet from the island and was in the current. Evens found that Howard still breathed, and felt sure that he would recover.

He crouched in the branches and remained motionless, lest some keen and prying eye on the island detect the moving form on the tree.

It was a terribly perilous ride. But they were free! Free!

After an hour, the shape of the island was but dimly made out in the darkness. Evens knew that the tree could not be seen by Silva. Thank Heaven, the army of the insurgents had not yet acquired possession of a searchlight.

Evens could see lights on the western portion of the island moving among the trees. Fires burned in the forests. As was usual among these people, they were holding their revelries at night.

Evens, watching Howard, saw him move. A slight moan came from him. Evens reached out, touched his face, and spoke.

"Do you know me, Walt?"

"Yes," came a whisper. "I—can't—get hold of—anything."

"You're all right," said Evens soothingly. "You are on the barrigona."

But Howard made no response. His feeble system could not do more than catch at consciousness, and he relapsed.

But to have heard his voice was encouraging to Evens, and a prayer of thanks again ascended to that Omnipotent Power to Whom he felt they owed so much.

CHAPTER XII.

A RESPITE.

SOME mention has been made in these pages of Don Rafo Barboso, a wealthy planter of the Tocantins valley. His hacienda was one of the finest private residences in Brazil.

The plantation extended some ten miles along the Tocantins, and twice as far back to the great pampas beyond.

The natural products of this great estate were of the most diversified nature. Thousands of acres of the caoutchouc forests stretched along the southern boundary of the estate. Tropical fruits in abundance grew in several places.

But these were not what had made Don Rafo famous. In fact, he was desirous of disposing of these forests to the American Company in order to rid himself of hundreds of negro laborers who were completely under the influence of the *avaidores,* and a menace to Barbosa's peace.

The real business of Don Rafo was modern farming. He had conceived the idea that the rich lands of the Tocantins valley could be made to yield the various cereals that were now brought from a distance, and also that the raising of sheep, domestic fowl, and cattle could be managed successfully and made remunerative.

Great stables, barns, sheep sheds, all the necessary farm buildings, stood in convenient spots. Vast herds of horses and cattle roamed on the pampas. Great quantities of products not native to Brazil were beginning to find their way from Barbosa's well tilled farm to Brazilian ports.

The most remarkable thing about Barbosa's place was his house. What he loved best were his wife, Donna Terese, and his daughter, Señorita Mencia.

The donna was superb, Mencia beautiful; the mansion grand. In fact, the common name for the house in Para was the "Casa Grande."

It was about three hundred feet in width, and as deep from front to rear. It inclosed a magnificent patio.

The front portion of the Casa Grande was two stories in height. Its great stretch of frontage was relieved by many architectural tricks, such as hanging balconies, projecting windows, and carved stone set in relief.

The rest of the house was one story, and contained bedrooms, baths, servants' quarters, and kitchens. Water was supplied by windmills and a private system on the estate.

It was a peculiarity of Don Rafo that he never trusted a negro or half breed near his family. His servants and guards were the few original Tocantins Indians now remaining.

These copper hued thoroughbreds were brave, cleanly, easily taught, and faithful. All the servants of the household were male. A dozen had been trained as soldiers, and these were ever on guard, armed with modern rifles.

Don Rafo felt perfectly safe in making journeys to distant cities, knowing that his wife and daughter were under the protection of men who would die in their service.

As the Casa Grande was the most remarkable thing about this great plantation, so the tower was the most striking thing about the Casa Grande.

This tower, which the far seeing Barbosa had erected even before his great house was completed, stood a short distance from the southern corner of the front portion of the mansion. It was higher even than the second story, and was connected with the building only by a bridge to the roof.

And on that bridge there stood day

and night two of the faithful Tocantins, armed with rifles.

The lower part of this tower was merely solid masonry. Above this there was a room containing a bed and a store of such necessities as a besieged family might want. Above this again, reached by a winding staircase, was a room in which rifles, ammunition, and the other munitions of war were kept.

From this room small loopholes commanded the roof of the house and the surrounding land. Then, above all, was the parapet of the roof.

The bridge was controlled by a lever in the gun room, and could be raised from the roof or lowered at will.

The Casa Grande was splendidly furnished, Barbosa's wealth being at the disposal of two ladies of taste, his wife and daughter. In their magnificent home they found much comfort, but often longed for the society of others of their own rank in life.

It was to return to this home, in which he invariably found sweet welcome, that Don Rafo Barbosa set his face and turned the prow of his new steamer when it had come from the shipyard at Para, and had been laden with the new agricultural implements Barbosa had imported.

The steamer looked smart in her fresh coat of paint. She had been rechristened the Mencia, after the planter's daughter. As a matter of fact, the boiler and other machinery of the steamer were about as old as they could be and still perform service.

The craft carried but five men as crew, was a side wheeler, and was purchased for the purpose of rendering Barbosa independent of the unreliable river service, so that he might get his produce to Para at any time he wished.

From that city it could be shipped to distant ports.

The captain and pilot of the steamer was a swarthy half breed named Francisco Disterro. The engineer was José Goyaz. Besides these there were two deck hands and a cook.

Barbosa regretted the necessity for placing his steamer in the hands of men he knew nothing of, but there was no help for it. Among the twelve hundred workmen on his plantation, there were no engineers and pilots, and had there been, Barbosa would have liked them no better, unless they were Tocantins. And these were scarce and were all needed at the Casa Grande.

The Mencia, on her first trip to the plantation, was plowing along up the river, having been out from Para since long before daylight. In the far distance the gleam of a white building on the island of San Antonio could be seen.

Señor Barbosa was sitting in the cabin of his new possession, placidly smoking a black cigar, and planning further improvements in methods that would insure increased returns.

His repose was rudely broken by a deck hand who burst into the cabin without ceremony.

"Señor," he exclaimed, "there are two men in a tree!"

Barbosa looked at him very much as if he had announced the important fact that there was a man in the moon. He knew the steamer was a mile from shore. What had he to do with men in trees?

"One is dead, señor, and the other is waving his hand. I think they are Americanos."

Barbosa went out of the cabin as though propelled by electricity.

"Where?" he demanded.

Right in the path of the steamer was a great barrigona tree, with one half naked man lying as if dead in the spreading branches, and another, with even less clothing, astride the swollen trunk.

The ghastly and emaciated appearance of the man on the trunk filled Barbosa with a feeling of horror.

"Help!" cried the suffering man. "We are Americans."

Barbosa gave orders like a whirlwind. A boat was lowered and two men got into it. It sped to the tree. Right in among the branches the powerful rowers sent its prow, and poor Howard was taken from his perch.

He still breathed, but whether he could be revived or not was a question.

The boat now went to the aid of Evens, who sank shivering in the bottom.

Howard was first handed up to Barbosa, who placed him upon a sofa in the cabin, and went back to help Evens.

The latter, brave, strong, resourceful as he had been, had reached his limit of endurance, as Howard had reached his the night before.

His bruised feet stepped on the hot deck, his eyes swept round him, and a look of hope seemed to be striving with despair for the mastery in his face.

"Who are you?" he asked, as he saw the kind face of the rich planter.

"I," said Barbosa, as his eye took in the bleeding fingers, the hungry face, the torn feet, "am Don Rafo Barbosa. You are the friends of the United States consul. Whatever has befallen you, I know not. But you are now in the hands of a friend."

Evens put one hand to his head, drew the worn fingers across his brow, and sank down at Barbosa's feet unconscious.

He was placed by the side of Howard, and some liquor, which Barbosa had also imported along with plows and harrows, was opened. A quantity was forced down the throat of each of the men. The steamer went on. The barrigona, having performed its duty, swept on with the current to the sea.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

It must not be understood that the gathering of Silva's army had altered, to any great extent, the usual placid course of events on most of the plantations in the Tocantins valley.

In Brazil, as in several other countries of South America, men sleep right alongside a rebellion, and do not show the least interest until the ultimate success of one side or the other seems assured. Then these faltering ones rush to form an alliance with the stronger.

It was so, to a great extent, with this revolution of Silva's. The man had, undoubtedly, the sympathy of the majority of those in the valley who worked for hire.

Their indolent masters had allowed the business of their estates to fall so completely into the hands of their overseers, and these overseers had grown so insolent in their advantages, that many of the plantations, like that of Señor Hernandez, were under the control of an overseer and *avaidore* in one and the same man.

But though Silva had his sympathizers, it was no easy task to get them to take up arms.

Governor Fonseca was known as a hard fighter. He had put down more than one uprising within the province over which he was the executive.

Further, he had the strong backing of the federal government. Thus, men waited to see how the thing was going to look after a battle or two had taken place before they forfeited what they now certainly possessed for the chance of gaining more, with the prospect of failure.

Alvelos, as we have already seen, was the overseer of one of the two largest plantations in the valley. By virtue of his additional business as an *avaidore* he controlled the majority of the men on Don Rafo's magnificent estate.

Up and down the valley rode Alvelos, fomenting with all his arts the bitter feeling that was becoming so prevalent against foreigners, and the administration that favored them.

But even this exacting duty did not wholly absorb the mind of the overseer. He had a good many fish to fry, one way and another, two certain purposes being, however, always most prominent in his thoughts.

One was the acquisition of a vast fortune through the methods he had employed so long, and the other was the acquisition of Señorita Mencia Barbosa for a wife.

This project carried with it a portion of the other, for Mencia would undoubtedly inherit the great fields and fortune of her father.

So, among all his manifold duties as overseer, *avaidore*, chief of staff to Silva, and what not, he still found time to visit the hacienda often enough to keep himself prominently before the young lady whose fortune was his idol.

We find him one day riding slowly along a road that extended southerly along the west bank of the lagoon, smoking placidly, and thinking, perhaps, of the time when Silva would take Fonseca's place, and he, Alvelos, was the admired commander of the army of Para.

Not that Alvelos knew anything

about soldiering. But to wear a fine uniform, live in great style, and have a pretty wife—not a bad ambition for an overseer.

As he drew near the great house of Señor Barbosa, his eyes lighted up as he swept them over the broad, well tilled, and fertile acres. Some day they would be his.

At the present time it was largely to his advantage—it was absolutely essential to the growth of his fortune—for him to sympathize with the negroes and rail against the importation of machinery that enabled two men to do the work of ten. But, after all, he had a sneaking admiration for Barbosa's methods. And when he was rich, the husband of Mencia, and the owner of the Casa Grande, he could drop the mask and continue in the successful steps of Barbosa.

Alvelos, as an *avaidore*, was getting rich. When he was rich enough, he could throw off the assumed love he had for the blacks.

He rode straight to the broad piazza of the Casa Grande, where Señora Barbosa and Mencia were sitting in their accustomed shady nook. Two or three of the faithful Tocantins were to be seen near, and the two on the bridge stood like statues.

"*Buenas dias*, Donna Terese," said Alvelos, dismounting and letting his horse browse. "Señorita Mencia, I greet you. Is Don Rafo not at home?"

"No," said Mencia's mother, speaking in a friendly way. "He has not yet returned from Para. We cannot imagine what detains him for so long a time. I sincerely trust no harm has befallen him."

"Oh, no harm, surely," rejoined Alvelos. Then, at an invitation from Donna Terese, he took a seat on the piazza.

It must be remembered that the ladies and the Tocantins in Barbosa's household had as yet learned nothing of the insurrection.

Alvelos lighted a cigarette and smoked as he chatted. He strove to bring smiles to the lips of Mencia with jokes—and Alvelos had a ready wit.

"I am greatly disappointed in not meeting Don Rafo," he said. "Yes, greatly disappointed."

"Had you important business with Don Rafo?" asked the señora.

Alvelos cast a meaning look at Mencia, causing that girl's heart to beat with painful swiftness.

"Important! The most important business that a man ever had," he replied. "I wish to ask of him the privilege of——"

A shrill whistle sounded from the lagoon. Both ladies rose hastily to their feet. Alvelos, too, wondering what steamer this could be, stood craning his neck towards the farthest point at which a boat ascending the *igaripe* could come into view.

"A new steamer!" he exclaimed, as the white bow of Barbosa's boat shot before the clearing.

Barbosa, standing in the bow, waved his hand. Overjoyed at the safe return of the husband and father, the ladies walked towards the wharf, at which Barbosa's flatboats, his former means of transporting goods, had always been loaded.

Alvelos walked with them, getting his false lips in shape to give the returning planter a greeting.

The dark eyes of Barbosa rested upon him for a moment, and Alvelos was conscious of an uneasy feeling.

"Good day, Don Rafo," he said. "This is quite a surprise you have prepared for your friends. A fine steamer, and the name is Mencia. Did you notice that, señorita?"

Barbosa, without answering, attended to the work of bringing the boat to the wharf. Then he kissed his wife and daughter, and refused the hand Alvelos held out to him.

Both ladies turned pale, for this was a shooting matter with men of the Alvelos stamp.

"You insult me, Alvelos, by your presence here," said Barbosa. "I wish to tell you that I am fully aware of your evil work."

Alvelos' face twitched spasmodically.

"Don Rafo, you have met with crooked tongues," he said. "What evil tale have you heard? Who has dared calumniate me?"

Barbosa uttered a short, harsh laugh, and then gave a low whistle. The door of the cabin opened and a man came out.

Alvelos' countenance now became a study in chagrin, astonishment, and baffled rage. Evens stood before him—Evens, thin, but calm, with his fingers bandaged, a suit of neat white linen from Barbosa's stock he was bringing home for his own use, and a mocking smile on his hungry face.

"You see, Alvelos, it is of no use to deny anything," said Barbosa. "Let me tell you that the story of your work shall be given to Governor Fonseca at once. The imprisonment of these two Americans, and the assembling of the insurgent army, will be punished severely."

At the mention of an insurgent army, the señora and Mencia gasped and looked terrified.

"You need not fear," went on Barbosa, turning to them. "No sooner had I heard the story of these unfortunate young men than my mind was made up at once. As soon as I can get the steamer unloaded, she shall return to Para, carrying you, my wife, and you, my daughter, and these young Americans. They came to see me on business, but have fallen into the hands of a band of cutthroats and robbers. They will return to Para with you, and after Fonseca has put down this uprising against his authority, they will come hither and make us a visit."

As Barbosa finished speaking they heard the hoof beats of a horse. Alvelos, for the moment neglected, had seized the opportunity to get away.

"I'll settle with him some other time," said Evens.

Don Rafo now proceeded to give the ladies a brief sketch of what had befallen the two Americans, and Mencia, in particular, seemed much interested in the handsome fellow whose rugged strength and wonderful nerve had brought him and his companion to safety.

But it was really Howard, white and weak, to whom her generous sympathies went out. He looked so ill, lying there on the cabin sofa, and so feeble compared with Evens, that a wave of feeling rushed over both ladies as they greeted him.

He was not yet able to walk, but was fully conscious, having had the best of care since Barbosa had found them on the barrigona. He, like Evens, was dressed in a white suit.

With the assistance of two Tocantins they got Howard to the house, where he was placed in a comfortable bed in a luxurious room, and one of the Indians detailed to wait on him.

"Bob," he said, looking up with a smile, as the Tocantin began waving a fan to cool the air in the room, "the change from the direst distress to the lap of luxury in the twinkling of an eye is too great. I think I am delirious."

"Oh, señor, you are beginning to improve already," observed Mencia with a smile.

"Do you really think it is necessary for us to go to Para?" asked the señora when she had Barbosa alone for a moment.

"Indeed, yes. I feel it very urgent. On no other account would I be separated from you."

"But we have the Indians, and the tower."

"Truly, as you say, we have. But this valley—this very spot—may be the theater of a bloody war. That rascal Silva and Alvelos are gathering men on the island of San Antonio. And as we came up through the lagoon I saw signs that were unmistakable. I believe camps are forming in other places."

Donna Barbosa sighed. She did not wish to go to Para. She did not wish to leave her beautiful home. But she had always obeyed Don Rafo, and had never had reason to find fault with his judgment.

She had two of her servants begin preparations to depart.

Leaving the señora thus employed, and Howard in the care of Mencia and the Indian, Don Rafo at once began the unloading of his cargo. Evens walked to the wharf to watch the operation.

In some mysterious manner the news of the steamer, her cargo, and her American passengers, had spread all over the estate. Negroes and half breeds came from every industry on the place, and looked with frowns and forbidding faces at the new farming implements that were being placed on the wharf.

Overseers came, too, inspected, flattered Don Rafo, and then had horses

drag the machines to the places where they belonged.

One huge negro, who seemed to be a person of some influence among his fellows, stood sullenly watching the men take the things out of the steamer. His small black eyes would furtively search Evens' face.

Having become weary of watching, he walked to Evens, giving Barbosa a wide berth.

"Is it true, señor," he asked, "that these are machines made in your country?"

"Yes," said Evens.

"And is it true that with these machines a few men can do the work of many?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"And you have come to work the machines for Don Rafo?"

"I? Oh, no! I came on other business."

"To buy the rubber forests?"

"Yes."

A peculiar look passed over the face of the big negro and he strode away.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STORM BREAKS.

UNDER the care of such hospitable nurses as the señora and Mencia, even Howard's weakness gave way and he gained rapidly. Evens, of course, was still suffering the effects of his imprisonment and long abstinence from food. But he could now eat a good meal, and his bruised fingers bothered him more than anything else.

That evening they sat on the piazza talking seriously of past events. Evens had informed Barbosa of the conversation which had taken place between the negro and himself on the wharf.

Barbosa was decidedly uneasy. It was clear to him that mischief was brewing on his own estate. The hatred that his men had towards improved machinery was no secret.

He had not expected any outbreak. But now the atmosphere seemed charged with some ominous warning. Men could be seen in the moonlight talking in groups.

Frequently Barbosa would glance up at his tower as if contemplating the possibility of taking up quarters there for the night.

Suddenly a form was seen skulking along in the shadows of a row of low bushes left to form a hedge. Barbosa instinctively put his hand on his revolver. He withdrew it, however, when he saw that the man was one of his most trusted overseers.

"Señor," said this man, coming by shadowy ways to the piazza, "I have come here at the risk of my life to warn you."

"To warn me? Is there anything wrong, Rocco?"

"Yes. Everything is wrong. Alvelos has been among the men and turned them all against you."

"What seems to be the trouble?" asked Barbosa calmly. "Is it the new lot of machines?"

Rocco waved his hand as if in despair.

"The machines, yes, señor. The men do not like them. But that is not all. There is a revolution."

"Do you mean that started by Silva and Alvelos?"

"Yes, señor."

"But that is a very small one, as yet. I do not think we need greatly fear having Silva and Alvelos for our masters, Rocco."

"We are very near it now. It seems that you told Alvelos that the señora and the señorita were to go to Para tomorrow, and the two Americanos."

"Yes," said Barbosa, fidgeting. "I said it in his hearing."

"Alvelos is determined that neither the ladies nor the two Americanos shall go. He has been among the men and told them that the Americanos have come with the machines, and more would follow. That they were to take the places of your field hands. He also told them the Americanos were going to buy all the rubber forests, and so no native Brazilian would have any more work."

"Well?" questioned Barbosa, as Rocco stopped.

"The men are inflamed. They are mad. They swear that the two Americanos shall be killed. They will smash the machines. The new steamboat also is not liked. It took many flatboats and

men, señor, to get the stuff to Para. Now one steamer will do it, and the men are not of our place."

"But we have no pilots or engineers here."

"The men do not reason that way. They declare they will not submit to any change that robs them of work. They demand that the old way of working be restored and that the machinery be sent away."

"Then, they are undoubtedly contemplating an attack."

"Yes. I came to tell you that it would be best for you and the ladies and the two Americanos to go on board the boat now and get away as soon as you can. If you wait longer, it may be too late."

"Did Alvelos say any more?"

"Your daughter is not to be allowed to go to Para. When the men have had their way and the attack is made, and the Americanos killed, he will come and end it—making it conditional that he receives your promise that the señorita shall be his wife."

Barbosa shuddered, but set his teeth hard.

"Come!" he said to his wife and daughter, who had not heard the conversation. "You must go at once. Things are very black. Alvelos has been making mischief among the men. Rocco says an attack is likely to be made on the casa tonight. We must get you and the Americans away before this happens."

They all stood for a few minutes, scarcely knowing what to do first. That there was some cause for anxiety, all admitted. But it seemed absurd to think that that great establishment was to be disrupted, and men were to be killed, merely because a few American machines had been imported to improve the work.

But Evens, who had had considerable experience among the ignorant laborers of Brazil and other countries, knew that this bitter feeling against improvements that worked against the useless and indolent among them was universal.

Even while they pondered, a hoarse roar was heard from some farm buildings in the rear. They ran beyond the corner of the casa to look.

A great red tongue of flame was shooting upward. The glare showed hundreds of men, an armed mob, dragging from the burning building the new agricultural implements, and destroying them.

Barbosa and his family looked for a moment with sinking hearts at this real evidence that the men had revolted.

"My heavens!" cried Barbosa suddenly. "We are too late! To the tower, friends! To the tower! The mob is coming!"

And, between them and the burning building, there was a hustling mob of a hundred blacks surging like a troubled sea, making for the Casa Grande, filling the air with mad cries of:

"Kill the Americanos! Kill them! We will have no foreigners to take our places! Kill the two that are here, so no more will come!"

With pale face Barbosa gave his orders. The Tocantins assembled. Taking Howard, and leading the way for the others, they rushed to the roof and across the bridge.

The rumble of the lifting machinery had not died away before the forms of a dozen mad blacks were seen on the roof.

"The steamboat! The steamboat!" came a cry from below, and another portion of the crazed mob made for the wharf.

In another instant there came the sound of rifles, and the steamer glided out on the calm lagoon.

And then from the roof of the Casa Grande came a voice, recognized as that of the big negro who had accosted Evens.

"Señor Don Rafo Barbosa!" he shouted, "we give you one chance. Turn over the Americanos to us, or we will destroy your house, all that is in it, and your family. What answer do you give, señor?"

The great form stood out in bold relief in the moonlight. A rifle gleamed in the tower. The quick eye of the planter glanced along its barrel. There came a sharp report, then a wild scream.

The big negro fell from the roof to the ground with Don Rafo's answer in his heart.

(To be continued.)

A STUMBLE INTO LUCK.

BY HORACE G. SMITH.

A tale of ranchmen and the victim of their spite, being a case of circumstantial evidence that came within one of sending the wrong man into another world with a noose about his neck.

JACK BRAYTON told me this story when he came East last winter to visit his old friends, see something of New York, and ultimately to carry off the prettiest girl in our set to grace his "Wild Western" home.

When Jack first went West "to look about him," and before he had fully decided to make that wild and woolly country his future home, he went to work on Fred Everleigh's ranch (Fred was an old friend of his father's) with the purpose of learning the business of stock raising.

After a couple of years spent with Everleigh, he bought the Silver Bullet Ranch; but that has nothing whatever to do with this story, for the occurrences he related to me, and which I now here repeat, took place some time before that, during his cow punching experience at Everleigh's.

The boys who worked for Everleigh were about the average sort of chaps that one meets on a stock ranch—some well educated Eastern fellows, who had come West like Jack "to look about them"; a few who had been born and brought up in the country, or emigrated there early, and a few more who were doubtless renegades from other States—for one mustn't be too particular whom he hires for herders in the West.

But altogether, Everleigh's crowd were rather above the average in point of respectability.

Besides these several classes of individuals, whom Jack laughingly referred to as "the happy family," there was a young Mexican—hardly more than a boy, in fact—called Miguel.

Being the only "greaser" on the ranch, Miguel naturally had rather a hard time of it; but he was devoted to Everleigh (or seemed to be), and the treatment of the other herders could not drive him away.

Miguel was a dark skinned youth, with jet black eyes, straight hair like an Indian (in fact, there may have been some Indian blood in him; many of those Mexicans are mixed up in like manner), who, when he mounted a horse, seemed part of the animal itself, so naturally and easily did he ride.

He took care of the horses which Everleigh himself rode, did the errands of the ranch, and otherwise made himself useful.

To the average ranchman's mind, "greaser" is a term synonymous with "thief," for the American of the West has had such ample experience in the matter of Mexican honesty that all are looked upon alike.

Everleigh, however, regarded Miguel as a faithful assistant, and would listen to nothing against the boy, although some of the herders seemed very desirous of getting the youngster into trouble.

If a pipe was lost or a jack knife mislaid, some one would be sure to suggest Miguel as the cause of the disappearance of the article; and if any of the rougher fellows on the ranch became angry with him, the boy would have to listen to the vilest kind of abuse.

Everleigh wouldn't allow it if he was about, but the boy wouldn't play the sneak and tell him when he wasn't there to hear, and so suffered these indignities in silence.

A time came, however, when there was a case brought against the young Mexican which Everleigh had to listen to, and it came about in this way:

The overseer, Bill Smollet, went down to Tombstone one day and drew three hundred dollars from the bank for

Everleigh. Coming home about supper time, he forgot all about the money for the moment, and tossing his coat (in the pocket of which he had placed the money in an old wallet) on a bench in the wash room, he went in to supper.

A few minutes later Miguel came in and, after remaining some time in the wash room (presumably to wash up), sat down to supper. Later, when Bill went into the office to give Everleigh the money, greatly to his surprise, the wallet had disappeared.

At first Bill was scared over the loss of the money, and then he gave way to a choice string of profanity, which, upon investigation by Everleigh and Jack, who happened to be present, was caused by the certainty in Bill's mind that Miguel was the thief.

Smollet, although filling the position of overseer of the ranch, had always been one of the boy's fiercest enemies, and at first Everleigh thought the accusation the result of mere spite.

Bill's story was so circumstantial, however, and the evidence pointed so strongly to Miguel, that Everleigh called him in and examined him.

The Mexican denied all knowledge of the money, and despite Smollet's loud accusations, both Everleigh and Jack were strongly inclined to believe the boy. But nobody else had been in the wash room after Bill came in except Miguel, and there the case stood.

"We'll wait to see what turns up," Everleigh said at last. "I'm not going to accuse the boy on such flimsy evidence as this."

"Flimsy evidence!" cried Smollet angrily; "I call it a clear case. If I had command here I'd string the little rascal up until he squealed and told us where he'd hid it."

"That will do," said Everleigh sharply, and Bill slammed out of the office just about bursting with rage.

He was an ugly fellow when he was roused, especially when in liquor, and it was quite evident to both Jack and the ranch owner that he had been drinking while in town.

Everleigh did nothing about the loss of the money that night, and very early the next morning, as previously arranged, Jack and Miguel started for the range, Smollet accompanying them to take orders to the herders already there.

Bill treated Miguel as meanly as he dared all the way, but the boy bore his taunts in silence, although it made Jack's blood boil to hear the fellow. Finally he told Bill to drop the subject, as he had heard the boy badgered all he proposed to, and the overseer, who rather feared young Brayton, both because of his physical proportions and his influence with the owner, sullenly obeyed.

The route to that part of the range on which the cattle were grazing took the trio along the Tombstone road for four or five miles, and then the trail branched off into the low hills on the south.

Near this spot Bill Smollet rode into a thicket at one side and at once reappeared bearing a jug of liquor. Evidently he had hidden it there the day before, and that was his reason for being so anxious to go out to the range upon this occasion.

Fred Everleigh was very strict about the use of liquor by the men, and had he known of this flagrant disobedience on Smollet's part, would have discharged the overseer at once.

Jack knew what would be the immediate result of the introduction of this liquor supply among the rough fellows on the range. He had been present at several such orgies already, and was more than half convinced that it was his duty to inform Everleigh of the matter.

Miguel always had a harder time when the men were drunk, and upon this occasion, at sight of the jug, the boy actually paled with fear. He knew the lawless natures of the fellows far better than did Jack.

Three miles or so from the Tombstone trail they found the herders' camp; and to increase Jack's uneasiness, the men gathered there proved to be the roughest and hardest of the crowd. They came eagerly to meet the overseer, and it was quite evident that the jug had been expected.

Jack tried to persuade two or three of the best natured fellows to let the stuff alone and go back to the herd, but he might just as well have sought to turn a pack of coyotes from their feast.

They were fairly crazy for the liquor, and it looked like a race to see who could get drunk the quickest.

Miguel, of course, came in for his share of abuse, and when the crowd was in that delightful state known as "about half shot," Smollet bethought himself of the trouble over the money on the evening before, and loudly declared his suspicions of the poor little Mexican.

"Burn me ef that hain't jest what I been 'spectin'," cried Tom Murray, the biggest and one of the ugliest in the crowd. "That comes o' havin' a dirty greaser erbout hyar with respectable men."

"'D oughter string 'em up—ev'ry last one of 'em," another added.

Miguel looked at Jack in sudden fear. The men were drinking heavily, and all of them had their eyes bent upon him most ferociously.

Jack Brayton was his only friend, and he did not realize the gravity of the situation.

"String him up—that's what!" yelled Bill, staggering towards where the Mexican boy was at work among the pots and kettles.

"No, no," cried a young fellow who up to this time had been undemonstrative. "Le's give him a fair trial 'n' then string him up."

"Bully for you," said 'Najah, falling in with the plan. "I'll be sheriff," he added, making a grab for the boy and catching him by the shoulder. "I'll be sheriff, an' you fellers kin bring on yer court."

Jack here began to interfere.

"Let the boy alone, Tom," he said sharply. "You fellows have got altogether too much drink down to know what you're about. Come, drop him, I say."

"I'll drop you!" Murray exclaimed, with a fierce oath.

"We won't have no interference with such a white livered chap as you," added the fellow called 'Najah, threateningly. "A man 'at feels himself too good ter drink with us had better clear out."

"You scamp, you!" exclaimed Jack, who has a temper of his own and could never be accused of a lack of bravery; "get out of my way or I'll give you something that will lay you by longer than this spree's liable to."

He tried to force his way into the circle to rescue the boy, but two or three of the half tipsy fellows pulled him back. Quick as lightning Jack wound the lash of his "bull whip" around his waist and struck out with the short, thick handle of the weapon.

'Najah went down before the first blow like a log, and another fell back howling and rubbing his arm, but they were too many for him, and tearing himself away, he ran over to the horses, and, leaping upon his own, sped away down the trail.

A volley of curses and even a pistol shot or two followed him, but they only served to urge him on faster.

He was thoroughly alive to Miguel's danger now. The anger of the drunken crowd would be vented upon the defenseless boy, and what might they not do ere he could reach the ranch and arouse Everleigh and the other men?

He spurred his horse more and more swiftly until, just as he rounded the clump of bushes at the junction of the trail where Smollet had hidden the jug of whisky, the animal stumbled, plunged forward, and threw Jack clear over her head.

"Kate! I declare I wouldn't have thought that of you!" Jack exclaimed, leaping up little the worse for his tumble, and gazing seriously at the mare, who had recovered herself and now stood quietly by. "You never—by all that's lucky, what's this?"

He fairly shouted out in delight, and, dropping upon his knees, seized an object which lay half hidden beneath a stone. It was a brown leather wallet, filled to bursting with bank notes. The wallet Bill Smollet had lost!

He was in the saddle again in an instant and tore back over the trail towards the herders' camp.

He was not a moment too soon, for the whisky crazed crowd, having finished their mockery of a trial, had already placed Miguel, crying and praying for mercy, beneath a tree with a lariat around his neck.

"Here's Brayton! What does he want now?" shouted somebody.

"Would you murder the boy?" Jack

cried, waving the wallet over his head. "The money's found. I found it just where Bill dropped it in the trail when he hid that jug yesterday. He never took it to the ranch at all!"

"It's found? That settles it, I reckon," 'Najah declared. "That clears the greaser, boys."

"But it don't clear Bill," growled Tom Murray. "What'd he wanter say he kerried the money up ter the ranch for, ef he didn't?"

"Guess we'd better have a lynchin' arter all," some one suggested pleasantly.

In spite of the whisky he had imbibed, Smollet's face fairly turned pale.

"We'll have nothing of the kind," said Jack sharply, leaping from his horse, "but we will have some fun of another kind. Bill Smollet," he added, stepping towards the overseer, and rolling back his cuffs, "you did your prettiest to get Miguel into trouble. Now I'm going to give you a little the worst thrashing you ever had."

And knowing Jack's temper and Jack's muscle, I think, very likely, that he was as good as his word.

But he did not allow the matter to drop there. He went to Everleigh at once and related the whole story, and the overseer, Tom Murray, 'Najah, and two others were told to get out of the State at once.

They went.

A BOAT SONG.

Row! row! with a steady stroke,
That's sending my bark to sea;
The air is soft, the ocean calm
And my love is along with me.

Pull! pull! we go with the tide
On the dimpling water's breast;
We rise and sink, but steadily on
To the radiant, amber west.

Down, down, goes the sinking sun
Through clouds of flaming yellow,
The waters change, with changing lights,
To tints that are warm and mellow.

So, so, does my love's sweet face
Change with her feelings ever.
She tries to hide what I know well,
But ah! with a vain endeavor.

Red, red, she has caught the glow
Of the red sun on her lips,
A golden light is in her hair
As the sun in the water dips.

White, white, oh! the snowy clouds
Are touched with brightest pink;
But pink and white, her velvet cheeks
More beautiful are, I think.

Blue, blue is the sky between
Where floating clouds they sever,
And deepest blue, her eyes that speak
Of faith that is true forever.

Swing, swing, now around, my boat,
For the evening star is bright,
Drift with the tide that bears us home
By the waning moon's soft light.

F. L. Ward.

The Fault in the Lone Hand Mine.*

BY JOHN E. BENNETT.

A story of peculiar conditions in Montana. The sturdy perseverance of the one man who pinned faith to the Jackpot claim, the one friend he made in an important crisis, and the many enemies he had to fight.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MIKE CASEY, from Ireland, maintains faith in the Jackpot claim after all his associates at the camp, giving up hope of ever reaching pay dirt, have moved on and out. Barney Drake, deputy sheriff, is finally sent to take possession in the name of the law on account of certain unpaid bills in Helena, but Casey prevails on Barney to help him work the claim overnight before Sheriff Plummer himself arrives in the morning, and the result of their combined toil is a big find. But the sheriff pounces on them, arrests Casey, and discharges Drake. The latter reaches town ahead of Plummer, and as the sheriff appears to have no notion of paying him the four hundred and sixty dollars owing him, Drake utilizes the discovery of Plummer's lost memorandum book containing the safe combination, to go to the office and help himself to the sum. On reaching his office, Sheriff Plummer discovers the receipt Drake has left him for the money appropriated, and issues a warrant for his arrest. Meanwhile the sheriff and his pals plan to run Casey for governor in order that they may have the reservation opened and so secure first option on the good mines there, and because they think Casey will be a pliable tool in their unscrupulous hands. Casey is elected, and one of his first acts is to pardon Drake, who had been sent to the penitentiary. As the two friends are returning to Helena the train is held up by masked men, one of whom Drake recognizes as Plummer. Casey threatens to expose them all and is fired upon as the men get away. The bullet passes through his arm and severely wounds a young woman sitting behind him, but both recover and Casey is able to return to his office in a week.

He hears from several sources that Plummer and his men are working mines on the reservation, which is not yet open, and there has been trouble there. While the governor is still considering the signing of the reservation bill, Plummer and his associates call and make Casey a large offer to sign the bill at once; Casey reserves his decision, which infuriates the men, though they leave the office without demonstration.

CHAPTER XIII.

LASSOING A VICTIM.

WHATEVER burnings for vengeance Sheriff Plummer may have felt against the governor, they must have ceased to distract him shortly after the above interview already recorded. About an hour following his exit from the executive chamber he was seen walking down Broadway in a laughing and rollicking conversation with Lord Humphry Rochester.

Lord Rochester must have enjoyed implicitly the confidence of his London associates, for there was upon record a power of attorney duly executed by the Transatlantic and Western Development Company authorizing him to take entire charge of the Lone Hand property, to employ and discharge all persons in its service, to sell ore, to receive and pay all moneys, to sell even the mine itself.

Indeed, his lordship was said to have been nearly or quite the largest stockholder in the enterprise, and the holders of the remainder of the stock were unquestionably his friends.

Lord Humphry was for the most part a quiet, comfortable man, and soon grew to be well liked by a large body of acquaintances. He attended closely to his business, and was much at the mine. He seldom ventured into society, of which Helena boasted that it possessed the richest, most *distingué* in the Rocky Mountain region; but he had a few male friends, and with these he occasionally held forth with closed doors in his suite at the Royal Gorge. Here he shuffled cards and fired off champagne corks in

* *This story began in the May issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The three back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 30 *cents.*

a mist of cigar smoke until very late in the mornings.

"Intermittent eruptions through the old craters of his youth's dissipations," was the opinion which the sober folk of the town held of these periodical and closely guarded excesses. It was true, perhaps, that the wild streams did not burst forth with the violence which had characterized their pristine flow, and some of the vents had become choked up with old scoria and were extinct; but the activities were sufficient to indicate what must have been the impulsive wellings of those founts in those old—or young—days.

A relic of these past indulgences was Lord Humphry himself. Following each of these sprees, as he tersely characterized them, his lordship would succumb to a deep and heavy languor, a sort of nervous exhaustion, in which he would remain for two days.

His recovery would be hastened by numerous counter potations of the various forms of bromide and soda. Having safely evolved from his chrysalis state, his lordship would issue forth looking relaxed and *passé*, his facial tints mellowed to a pale pink, but smelling fresh and redolent of steam baths and barbers' ointments. Then he would proceed to attend to his affairs, and for weeks, or possibly months, the midnight welkin of his apartments would be unstirred by the resonance of his guffaws, or by the explosion of corks from the bottles of his effervescing wine.

On the day in question Lord Rochester was feeling particularly happy. Though he had not been at the mine for two weeks, yet he had meanwhile been busy, nevertheless, and on that day he had received the most recent clean up at the mill, amounting to over two hundred thousand dollars.

This sum completed the amount of one million of dollars deposited in bank to the credit of himself and the company. In the period of five months his lordship had taken out of this phenomenal mine a net sum of one million dollars, the full amount that had been paid for the property.

This sum he turned over to an express company in the purchase of exchange upon London. With the original bill and its duplicate in his pocket, he now proposed to write letters, the bills to be inclosed in separate missives and forwarded to London by different mails.

He was on his way towards his hotel when he met Sheriff Henry Plummer. Plummer was aware of his lordship's periodical "sprees," and had been for some time by devious ways seeking to become one of the chosen company which, upon such occasions, assembled as his lordship's guests.

The sheriff was an insinuating, insidious man in social intercourse, of strong personality, and he readily impressed himself upon strangers. Now, by his vivacious spirit and apt talk he soon had his lordship in such a pleasant humor that he yielded to an invitation to supper, and the two passed into Main Street and entered the restaurant called the Bon Ton, where they occupied a closed box.

Sheriff Plummer early assumed the jaunty air of a plunger at this repast, and insisted upon calling for the most expensive dishes which the menu listed, listening to no expostulations of his guest when it came to the ordering of wine. For though his lordship indulged too freely on these unpardonable occasions to which I have referred, yet at other times he refused to touch intoxicants and stoutly resisted all overtures to force them upon him.

But the manner of Sheriff Plummer had in it so much of dash, so much of joviality, that Lord Humphry was carried irresistibly back to his college days. Thus he drank, and as he drank, the moon in his face arose, and it came up red, the light Burnside whiskers setting against it like patches of fog.

He grew garrulous, then lofty and swollen with pride. Artfully, with the most polished words, did Plummer feed his vanity, while he filled his stomach with that fluid which men "put into their mouths to steal away their brains."

For as Lord Humphry extolled his performances, he revealed the inner business of the mine. He told the size of the vein, how much ore they were taking out, how much it milled to the ton, the large amounts which the owners were realizing from it; all this he told, and how, too, he had just expressed a

"round million to London" and had "bills of exchange in his pocket right now for that amount."

Lastly he boasted of the power he had over the mine, and how "right now there's a document on record in your blawsted court house here, giving me authority to sell the mine whenever I see fit."

Sheriff Plummer did not leave his lordship at the conclusion of the supper, though it was after nine o'clock when they arose from the table at the Bon Ton. Half an hour later, his lordship, accompanied by the official, came swaying, partially staggering, into the Monte Carlo, his big face livid, looking inflamed, like a huge blister.

The Monte Carlo was a big one story frame shed which breasted the street for about fifty feet and ran back a hundred or more in depth. You ascended three steps to reach its double half glass front doors, an entrance which was mounted on both sides by pyramidal ornaments of beer kegs.

Within, a long, polished light wood bar extended half the length of the building. Half a dozen waiters, jacketed and aproned in starched white, completed the attractions on the right of the hall.

At the farther end, a stage about four feet from the floor shelved back to include the balance of the right side, and this was flanked upon the left by a doorway in the rear wall, through which the scents of cookery and the sizzle of frying meats told of the cheap restaurant which was conducted there. In front of the stage was a dingy square piano with a nasal twang, operated by a pale, bony faced man in his shirt sleeves, who beat rhythmical time to his pawings by the swaying of his greased and glossy black head. Beside him a fiddler pushed and pulled, and to this music a pair of cork blacked "artists" rattled their feet upon the stage and gyrated in ungraceful antics.

Stationed up and down along all wall spaces everywhere else in the room, save in the left hand corner, were tables, counters, stands, at and upon which were the operators and devices of the "sure thing" games. Some of these appliances were mechanical, consisting of boxes, wheels, balls, and cards, and depended for the certainty of their effects upon hidden and secretly moved cogs, straps, and levers.

Others were mere packs of cards, and the results were attained through the digital dexterity of their manipulators. All of the schemes were under perfect control of their conductors, and the element of chance in any of the so called games was wholly obliterated and out of the question.

In brief, it was an elaborate and impudently planned system to rob, and the brazen manner in which it was maintained must forever be a blight upon the reputation of Montana. Such a citadel of fraud, as every early resident of the mountainous region of Western America will recognize, could not have continued in the most primitive mining camp.

No sooner would its arrangement have become understood by the more intelligent members of the community, than it would have received a notice to quit, signed by the authority of the Vigilance Committee; a notice which no recipient in the entire history of such judicature has ever been known to disregard.

But in this modern day, when the functions of Judge Lynch had given way to legally constituted authority, the Monte Carlo was not only permitted to flourish, but its existence was licensed by law. It had received from the legislature a sort of letters of marque and reprisal, under which it was empowered to sail forth and pillage the community; the only reservation being that the methods by which its fraud was perpetrated should remain concealed from the eyes of its victims. To every wail of one of these, comatose and indifferent society returned but one reply: "Well, you knew it was that kind of a place, what did you go in there for? Didn't know it! Well, then, you were a fool if you didn't."

It was not until 1889 or '90 that these institutions were closed by a law defining the character of gambling games which should be licensed, and which excluded all games other than round table poker and faro; though, as is well known, even this latter game is sus-

ceptible of manipulation to the certain defeat of the player.

It was upon this scene that Lord Humphry Rochester, rubicund and blear eyed, plunged and floundered. His lordship evidently felt himself a Gulliver among the Lilliputs, for he ordered every one to the bar, and, when he moved across the hall, quarreled with a Mexican range rider for not deferring to him in the matter of passage.

He began to play at every game in the place, Plummer becoming at once his guide and booster. He was robbed with a facility and precision which satisfactorily displayed to the attending partner in the enterprise the adeptness of his imps at their several instruments, while that gentleman himself as readily and repeatedly won.

His lordship's pocket coin faded away as a breath; Plummer, noting this, offered him a loan. He refused it, however, with lofty scorn, and, in a frowzy, muzzy way, turned to exploring the interior reservoirs of his coat for his check book.

Some one suggested that perhaps he had left the thing at his office, whereat his lordship blinked at the floor with unsteady head, as though the floor was oscillating and he was following its motions. Then he drawled, "Blawst me heyes, I believe that is so," and with his left hand filled with letters and papers, he fished out an envelope containing the two foreign bills of exchange. These he turned over to Plummer, with the words:

"I refuse to accept any of your blawsted money, saw, as a gratuitous loan, but if you wish to make an advawnce upon this collateral, saw, I will take that."

Plummer moved to the bar, his check book in hand, drew a check for ten thousand dollars, had it cashed there, and turned the notes over to Lord Humphry.

"If you want any more, sir," he said, "I can let you have all you want. I have plenty in bank. So don't hesitate about asking for it."

"By Geawge!" exclaimed the noble person, as he took the proffered handful of bills, most of them of denominations of one thousand dollars; "you fellows are blooded in here, upon me sowl."

The truth was that what had been given his lordship was not money, though the things resembled ordinary bank notes. They were dummies, and such was specifically stated in fine letters printed on the back of each, in which it was made plain that they were issued for use in playing at the games, where they would be received as money, and that they would be redeemed in gold coin upon presentation at the bar.

The inscription also stated that the holder agreed that the bill was not to be taken from the house. This precautionary proviso was designed to shield the issuers from conflict with the United States counterfeit laws.

His lordship took the bills without the least thought as to their genuineness as money, and straightway invested them in chips at a faro table.

This table was not in the open, but was a private affair within a stall or inclosure arranged in the rear of the hall and on the side opposite the stage. His lordship, having an aristocratic penchant for reserved places and private apartments, was readily enticed into this Dantean cave.

Four other players—who were in fact four boosters—were selected from the crowd by Plummer to lend "*esprit*" to the game, as he said, but in reality to keep up his lordship's spirits during the rack proceeding to which it was proposed to subject him. Thus, with a man stationed outside the door to deny access to others, it was essentially a select party. As such there was no limit at the top of the game, and counters for the sum of the lowest limit, usually fifty cents or "four bits" each, were rated at five dollars apiece.

This standard did not continue long before there was a complete readjustment of the values represented by the variously colored disks, raising them all to a still higher rating.

As his lordship played he was attentively plied with wine, and, egged on in the headlong recklessness which he rapidly developed, and in which he was fairly paced by Plummer, he was soon heard to complain of the size of the stacks of chips made necessary to repre-

sent his bets upon the board. Thereat it was assumed that the signal had been given for a raise of chip values, so that there was chalked upon the blackboard behind the dealer the following:

White chips, each	$1,000
Red chips, each	$5,000
Blue chips, each	$25,000
Yellow chips, each	$50,000
Gray chips, each	$100,000

The above schedule was made in order to avoid possible dispute in the sale of chips, or in their cashing in at the close of the game.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PLUCKING OF THE GAME.

LORD HUMPHRY'S big, blousy face glowed like a red hot cannon ball, from which the two wisps of beard might have been sizzles of smoke or steam. His eyes were swollen and watery, and, as he repeatedly called upon Plummer for more money, his articulation was clogged and scarcely intelligible.

Quite evidently, this noble person was in a sadly befuddled state; palpably, too, he had fallen mercilessly among thieves, and they were fleecing him with an audacity and vigor which grew more relaxed, though not less rapacious, as their subject became more and more advanced in the stage of helplessness.

Quite in contrast with the maudlin and brawling figure of his lordship were the flushed face and gleaming black eyes of Plummer, watching like a serpent the moves of Lord Humphry upon the board, his ears alert to sense through the modulations of his victim's voice the progress of his intellectual murk. The rough copper spots on Plummer's face had burned to a redder hue, but his visage was full of action and interest—full, too, of daring deviltry and endless greed.

"Your collateral is exhausted," he finally said in response to Lord Humphry's oft repeated call for more funds. "I have loaned you up to the full limit of your stake."

"W-h-a-t! A million dollars gone!" gasped his lordship, raising his head and rolling his eyes upward to the ceiling, while his face lost color.

"No, not gone," responded Plummer cheerily, alert that reason should not be shocked back into its wine usurped throne—for the present at least. "No," he said, "I've got plenty of money yet; all I want is more collateral, that's all. Go on with the game, boys; I'll lend his lordship all the money he wants. Here, take some of my chips; you'd won that time if you'd had the ace coppered, as you had it before, see?"

Lord Humphry took the chips and placed them on the ace, whereupon Plummer leaned over to him and whispered: "I'll tell you what I'll do. You put up a deed to that mine, and I'll loan you another million. The chips are rated high, and you may win that all back on a few turns of the deck. You've won a good deal here to-night; but you've lost more than you've won. Two or three times you've been ahead of the game, but luck fluctuates; now, the next time you get ahead, quit. Then we'll go out here and get lunch; I've got a fine spread out there ready for us when we get up. Here, boy, bring us another small bottle and some more good strong cigars."

Lord Humphry's will seemed by this time to be as effectually beneath Plummer's control as though the sheriff had employed hypnotic suggestion. The chill which had palsied him at the thought of his lost million had given way to a fever of anxiety, and a desire to recoup his losses by future winnings.

If reason had stirred him he might have turned to Plummer with the stern inquiry: "Where did you get so much money, sir, that you are able in this off hand manner to loan me two millions?"

Such a demand would probably have precipitated a row—the method of a thief in evading a question which he cannot answer—and it would have ended by ejecting his lordship from the premises and saving him from the act which he was about to commit.

Plummer had evidently, earlier during the evening, conceived the idea of this possible property transfer, for when Lord Humphry consented to make the deed, it was discovered that there was a notary in the body of the hall and that he had a deed blank in his breast, an ink

bottle in his coat, a pen in his vest, and the official seal of his office in his hand. He was brought into the alcove; the instrument was drawn by a few strokes of the pen, Plummer and wife being made the grantees.

A description of the property conveyed, which would have required considerable writing, was obviated by reference to the preceding deed upon record; the date, parties, book or folio of enrollment not being remembered by his lordship, were left blank to be carefully supplied by reference to the records on the following day, this detail being attended to by Plummer himself.

And so the deed was signed and acknowledged; the notary supplied his subscription and affixed his seal. One hundred thousand dummy dollars were paid at once, the entire million not being handed over at that time, for, as Plummer sagely remarked, "We may possibly have to tear this thing up in a few minutes."

It may be imagined that this act was absurd throughout, so far as it might be expected to furnish tenable ground upon which to base a claim of title to the property in question, and that the deed would not withstand an action to set it aside in a court of law.

But Plummer, previous to the transaction, had carefully canvassed this very idea. The consideration named in the deed was one hundred thousand dollars, and though the property was reputed as being worth a million, yet he knew courts would not higgle upon the matter of consideration.

Plummer had about sixty thousand dollars in money, and was reputed to possess much more. He had frequently deposited large sums in the courts as bail or bond money in affairs of himself or his friends. It was his purpose to conceal the million dollar phase of the transaction, and to represent that he had bought the property for one hundred thousand dollars, and that the money was paid in bills; so that when he should testify in a legal contest arising over the title that he had bought the property and had paid one hundred thousand dollars for it, he was well equipped to answer the question of "Where did you get that money?" Plummer was surrounded by seven witnesses who would swear upon the stand to the bona fide nature of the transaction. These were the dealer, the watcher at the game, the four booster players, and the notary, the latter being one of his protégés. Lastly, he expected to be able to get a jury that would be favorable to his side of the case, for the contest would have to be waged in Helena; it could not be carried abroad.

Nor did Plummer contemplate that the service of the gaming table as the desk upon which the deed was signed would operate to establish a presumption against the value of the consideration of the instrument. In a center of Europe or the East a title so strongly savoring of the gambling hell would find slight favor in the eyes of a jury; but in Montana the savor of gambling was not a taint to the tastes of juries, and Plummer sincerely believed that he could establish an apparently good case and swear his adversaries out of court.

He believed he could thus hold his booty, for it was notorious that great properties had passed title in Montana through no more colorable transactions than this, and never had there been an instance known in Montana of such poltroonery as one seeking restoration at the bar of law of what he had lost at the tables of the gambling house. Popular sentiment did not look upon such transfers with disfavor, and the gainer was commonly regarded as profiting by his luck after having taken a risk adequate to his reward. And in all countries the security of property rests as much upon the acquiescence and regard of society as upon the strict letter of law.

As to the foreign bills of exchange, Plummer had no doubt about his ability to maintain his appropriation of them and to profit by them, for he had only to negotiate them to an innocent holder without notice to make them unassailable at law. He could easily do this by going down into southern California somewhere, buying real estate with them, then mortgaging his purchase, and so realizing on them; or he could readily

find some dishonest bond broker whom he could satisfy of their genuineness and who would collude with him in securing the money which they represented.

The robbers did not tarry long at the table with his lordship after the passing of the deed. His chips were "won" nearly as rapidly as they were put down, and as fast as one batch of money was exhausted, Plummer was ready with another, which his lordship passed over to the dealer for further supplies of chips.

At last, surfeited with liquor and physically exhausted, his lordship fell asleep. The game was thereupon closed, and he was left to sit upon his chair, his head resting on his arms upon the table, while all other persons left the room. It was then two o'clock, and he was permitted to sleep there until four, when he was roused by some big, rough stranger who demanded that he get up and go home, as they were about to close the place for the night.

His lordship, partially awake, staggered to his feet, rubbed his eyes, and looked around him.

The small room was deserted. He passed into the hall; that also was in a state of quietus. All the games were closed, the game keepers had vanished, and wooden chairs were piled upon the tops of their respective tables.

The floor was wet in splotches, and had the smooth, dustless appearance of having been lately swept. The place was abandoned by the swarm of its visitors, and only a single fat, milk faced barkeeper stood behind the counter, polishing glasses with a towel.

Down near the front door, with their sides at respective poker tables and their heads on their breasts, sat two sottish persons, sour in somnolence, from which a second big, rough man was vainly trying to awake them.

His lordship observed this in his stupor and heaviness, drew on his ulster, which fortunately had escaped a thief, and made his way in muddled cautiousness down the icy steps to the pavement below.

The snow was packed solidly everywhere, and the cold was keen. The sky was moonless and clear, set with its many stars. His lordship slipped and halted as he moved, but nevertheless progressed, and safely reached the Royal Gorge, where he repaired to his rooms and to bed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TURNING OF THE WORM.

WET and weary, nursing their rifles in their arms, three men scrambled down the side of a mountain and made their way to Hope Station, on the Northern Pacific Railroad. One of the men led a pony by the bridle, lashed, Mazeppa-like, upon the back of which was the stark body of a young man, a hole in his right breast, from which the blood oozed, revealing the manner in which his life had gone out.

There was no coat upon it, and the shirt sleeve of the left arm had been torn away, baring the flesh. Along the entire under side of the forearm were exposed the numerous fresh, healed, or suppurating incisions of those poor wretches so common among the gambling element of Montana, the victims of the morphine habit.

As an onlooker scrutinized the remains, the right leg, shown by a lifting of the bottom of the trousers, displayed a repetition of the condition of the arms. The spots were punctures of the epidermis into which had been inserted the long, needle-like tube of the injecting syringe charged with its solution of the sulphate of morphia, that terrible drug which such irritated and profoundly disordered systems so painfully crave.

About this object with its pitted cuticle and its blanched and hollow cheeks there gathered a curious and excited crowd, which increased in numbers as the body was untied from the pony and laid upon the platform.

"A dead dope fiend!" exclaimed some one of the onlookers; "where did you git him?"

"It's one of the Mullen hold ups," explained the close cropped leader of the trio, through whose bristly black beard one might have discerned the features of Barney Blake. "These gents here," he said, "is two of the miners from the Ivanpah, over by the Pipestone Pass; the mine what the gold belonged to what

was stoled. The mining company give us the outfit, an' we've been trailin' the rascals fer two weeks. We caught up with 'em last night an' give 'em a brush; resultin', we got this feller an' the rest got away.

"There was four of 'em in the gang, and we know who the other three air. This feller is named C. P. Vickery, 'Hit the Pipe Pete,' they call him about town; he's been a tin horn gambler about Helena for two year now, an' never struck an honest lick in his life, I suppose. The governor's offered a thousand dollars apiece for 'em, so we brought this feller down with us an' we're going to take him to town on the train."

"Where did you meet up with the gang?" asked an inquisitive bystander.

"Up here on the slope of the range," was the reply. "They were makin' along the divide, and were fer gettin' across the line over into British Columbia. There was only three in the party we overhauled; the other one had left before we tuck up with the trail."

"That feller's purty well used up with dope," remarked another bystander. "I wouldn't a thot he'd had sand enough in him to help hold up a train. How did you come up with him?"

"Well, we come onto 'em just about dusk," answered Drake. "They had gone into camp. We called to 'em to throw up their hands, but they dropped behind rocks an' opened fire on us, an' two of our ponies was killed. We returned the fire and got this man; we think we winged another; but he got away in the dark with his pard. We couldn't foller, 'cause we had no animals, so we loaded the body onto the only pony we had left an' packed it along.

"No, he didn't die right off. He lived about half an hour, an' we didn't move him till next mornin'; we camped there all night. He told us 'fore he died who the other man was what was not with the party, give us some evidence agin him, give us the address of his mother—she lives back in Injianny—told us to write to her an' say he was dead, but not tell her how he come to cash in his chips.

"Shore! We know'd they was the robbers, 'cause we never missed the trail after we tuck it up; why, every now an' then we'd pick up a piece o' paper or sunthin' what the rascals had dropped—most likely lost—an' what we could see had come out o' the robbery. No, we didn't git no money; there warn't no money got, 'cept what was taken from the passengers.

"There was a hundred thousand dollars in gold bars in the safe, an' the safe was thrown off of the car; after Fletcher, the superintendent, was shot, the train people asked the robbers fer a truce in order to git the man aboard the car an' see whether he was dead or no; they give it to 'em, an' the brakeman an' the expressman went out an' got the body an' put it in the express car. While they war doin' that, I was goin' through the cars, gittin' all the pistols I could find, gittin' ready to sneak off an' give 'em a tussle. Ther war two other fellers on the train what wanted to go with me, so I let 'em come.

"After the train pulled out an' while it war movin' very slow up the hill, me'n these two gents sneaks off an' takes to the timber. We goes back down the slope, an' when we gits down a bit we sees these ducks with a light, monkeyin', we figgers, about the safe. We could've picked off no less'n three of 'em if we'd gone about it right, but these two shorthorns as I had with me, when they sees the robbers down ahead, they loses ther nut an' sets up a yell; consequence was, the robbers, what we'd got O. K. if it hadn't been fer this, makes a stampede an' gits off. That was how them robbers got away; but we stayed by the safe, separatin' an' layin' low, so not one uv them fellers dared to come up. By an' by down comes a reinforcement from the station, an', if the robbers war around there anywhere then, they tuck off.

"We put the safe on the next train, an' them gents as war with me, they said they thot they'd p'fer to go back to town, but I went over to the mine after some men, an' got these two gents here; then we went back an' picked up the trail."

Just as this interesting narrative was closed the east bound train was heard to whistle, which cut off further discus-

sion. The body, now incased in a box which had been furnished by the town, was put in the baggage car; the man hunters got aboard, and were soon whirling away from the curious, gaping company which had clustered around them.

Helena was tremulous with excitement when the party arrived there. People were scurrying in various directions upon the streets as though under the stimulus of some extraordinary impulse; and as Drake and his friends moved from the station up towards the town, one man called out to another from across the way:

"They've got him!"

"They have?" returned the other. "Where did they find him?"

"At his house, down in a vault in his cellar where he kept his money," was the reply.

"And where is he now?" asked the other.

"Well, they've got him down as far as the gambling house, an' the crowd's holding him there."

"Who ye talkin' about?" asked Drake of the informant who stood nearest him.

"Plummer, the sheriff," was the reply. "Haven't you heard about it?"

"No," rejoined the astonished Barney. "What about him?"

"Oh, he robbed this English lord out here at the Lone Hand out of his mine and a million dollars."

"Whew!" whistled Drake, while the two miners gazed in mute surprise. "How did he come to do that?" he asked.

"Oh, he got him up in the Monte Carlo, made him drunk, and then went through him," was the reply.

"Is that so?" exclaimed Drake. "When was it?"

"It happened night before last. The Englishman was in bed all day yesterday, didn't get out at all. Today he's been flying around town like he was crazy, wringing his hands and pulling his hair in the street, asking everybody to help him, and the whole town's worked up over it. You'd better get up there; they're raising Cain yet."

Drake left the man and hurried on. But suddenly a thought seized him, and, turning to one of his companions, he said:

"Bill, you go git a wagon an' git the body in it an' bring it up town. Meet me on the corner of Bridge an' Main Streets. I'll be there. Come on, Jack."

Bill turned back, and Jack and Drake quickened their paces and moved on together. When they reached First Street a crowd was observed upon the corner; in the middle of it, white plug hat on the back of his head, bony hands flinging in the air to give largeness to the emphasis of his speech, was Banker Klein.

"It's a rascally outrage!" he declared. "It's a vile shame that such a place as that Monte Carlo should be allowed to run. And this man Plummer, it's notorious that he's at the head of it. He ought to be in the penitentiary this very minute." (A voice: "He'll go there, too.")

"Of course he'll go there," asserted the excited Klein. "I'll see that he goes there. He robbed that poor man cold blooded as ever a hold up robbed a train. That Monte Carlo place ought to be torn down! That kind of a gambling house must be shut up. I'm not saying anything against a regular gambling house; but that's not a regular gambling house; that's simply a den of thieves, and everybody gets robbed who goes in there. Ain't I right?"

"Course you're right," yelled the crowd. "Go on! Go on!"

"Git up on the steps!" hallooed another voice.

There was a movement of the press towards the speaker, who was thereby pushed backward towards the brownstone steps of the bank building. There, in full view of the increasing gathering, he continued:

"That place is a standing outrage in any community. It's injuring the reputation of our city abroad. People outside and in the East hear reports about this place, and think we're all a pack of robbers and ruffians out here. We've got to choke it off, for the sakes of our families and our business." (Cries of "Course we have!" "You bet we have!")

"I'll start a petition today to the legislature to pass a law forthwith to close

that Monte Carlo up. And I know the governor will stand by me." (Cries of "Of course he will!" "What's the matter with Casey?" "Keep your eye on Casey!" followed by a general outburst of laughter and yells.)

Drake paused but for a moment here. He moved on, leaving the irate banker still expostulating, vehemently declaiming on the brownstone step, and addressing this most spontaneous of indignation meetings, expressive of an explosion of pent up public feeling, smoldering long in silence, now volcanically gushing forth.

But farther along, the fever of the populace was at a yet higher pitch. A great crowd had assembled on Bridge Street, and had stopped the cross town movement of another crowd en route to the jail from Plummer's house, where they had effected the arrest of that worthy.

Plummer's arms were pinioned, and he was guarded by men with revolvers in hand, who demanded of the others that their passage be not impeded.

A demonstration had been made by the assemblage upon Monte Carlo, the attacking party breaking down the front doors and forcing its way into the building, demolishing glasses on the bar counter, smashing game devices and tables.

The few police were powerless to resist the onslaught, and a contingent from the sheriff's office, which appeared during the mêlée to aid in the defense of the premises, was threatened with suspension to the cross bar of a telegraph pole should it interfere. The assault, however, was repulsed by the attachés of the house, who drove the assailants forth into the street.

While Drake looked on, a detachment was seen to be rushing a reel of hose across the street from the direction of the engine house. When it reached the street corner, the hose was quickly rolled off and coupled to a fire plug, the nozzle attached, and almost instantly a terrific head of water was squirting and spluttering into the Monte Carlo through the barred doorway, crashing the window panes and mirrors, cracking into broken sticks what furniture it did not split, and tearing away and drenching the inmates, who, shivering, and wounded by the force of the water, fled to the rear of the building, seeking refuge where they might.

This Augean stable action of the hose party was attended with yells, jeers, and groans from the crowd in vent of its fury. The captain of the police force hurried to the governor with a request that he call out the militia to quell the mob.

"Let thim foight it out," replied Casey grimly; and the crushed official took himself away.

CHAPTER XVI.

VENGEANCE OVERTAKES THE SHERIFF.

Down among the crowd the rumor was spreading that the bills of exchange and the deed taken from Lord Humphry were in the possession of Plummer upon an agreement between him and his two partners at the Monte Carlo. It was also said that Plummer had brought sixty thousand dollars in coin from his house and had given it to his associates at the gambling place in exchange for their respective interests in the spoils.

The report further ran that one of these men was seen to move away from the wrecked and wet interior of the building, himself wet yet smiling; that he was then heard to observe that "the old Monte Carlo was busted up, but he didn't care, any way; he had cleaned up thirty thousand dollars out of that Englishman business, and he was ready to quit.

By this time the wagon containing Bill, the miner, sitting beside the driver, moved up to the curb at the junction of the two streets and stopped. Drake mounted it and addressed the multitude.

"Gents," he said, "hold onto that man Plummer there, for what I've got to say is fer his ears as well as fer the rest of ye. Jack, jump up here. You an' Bill lift up the box so the people kin see the body."

They did so, and there was exposed the face and full form of the dead robber. A murmur of astonishment swept over the great throng as this shocking spectacle was thus suddenly presented.

"Drive the wagon up here so we can

see!" demanded voices from the direction of the cross street.

The vehicle was moved to the middle of Bridge Street, where it again halted. The street inclines steeply against a hill and reaches a level at its meeting with Main—the place where the wagon stood.

Packing close about the conveyance, and rising head above head up this hill, was the great concourse of people, every one withdrawn from the vicinity of the Monte Carlo, all now directing their attention to Drake and his ghastly exhibit.

"Gents," said the stubble haired man, his face black from his short beard, "gents, me an' these two gents here, what's miners from the Ivanpah, we's been out in the Cœur d'Alene country huntin' train robbers. We met purty good success, fer we bagged one, an' we brot him along. This is, as you kin see, 'Hit the Pipe Pete.' His right name is C. P. Vickery, an' he's one of the best known gamblers an' all around dope users in town, an' you'll be quick to recognize him.

"Well, gents, this man was one of the gang what robbed the overland on the night of the twelfth of January. There was four in that gang, as you may remember hearin' talk of at the time. We tuck up the trail of three of 'em, an' we got this one; the other two got away, an' I expect by this time they're across the line. This man lived half an hour after he was shot, an' durin' that time we got a deal of valuable information out'n him.

"We found out the names of the other three men who was into the robbery. You'll 'scuse me from givin' 'way ther names at this time, as I got designs on 'em yit an' hope to capture them, but the other robber, gents, was Sheriff Plummer, an' he stands right there agin the side of that house."

"You lie, you scoundrel!" shrieked Plummer. "You're a discharged employee from my office and an escaped convict from the penitentiary; I'm after you now to take you back."

"That's jest about as true as anything else he's capable of sayin', gents," declared the imperturbed Drake. "I was convicted on a technicality of takin' out'n his safe money what belonged to me an' what I couldn't 've got no other way. He was never known to pay a debt that he could git out of; an' one of the first official acts of the governor, as soon as he heard the facts, was to pardon me out. Everybody knows that; it's been in the newspapers; an' you kin see how quick he's givin' to lyin' when he flings out a statement like that.

"An' now, gents, I will p'ceed to the business of this Plummer. But before I do, I give notice that I claim his arrest on a charge of murder an' train robbery, an' all the rewards offered fer his arrest. An' I don't make this charge without'n proof enough to make it stick.

"In the fust place, we've got the dyin' statement out of this man Vickery, made to myself in the presence of these two gents here. It was tuck down in writin' an' is in my p'session an' will be produced at the proper time in court. It says that Plummer was one of the robbers, an' gives the names of the other two. Then I happen to have Plummer's pocket knife—with his name on it—taken off the body of Vickery, showin' he was in close communication with Plummer."

"That knife I lost—it was stolen from me," cried Plummer; "you got it from the thief."

"An' as if ther was somethin' needed to locate him on th' ground," continued Drake, "here's Plummer's gold ring with his name on the inside of it; that was picked up on the site of the robbery. I suppose some of youse gents may have seen it on his finger; I know I have, many a time. See if he's got a ring like that on his finger now. Hasn't got any; well, there it is. I suppose he lost it, dropped out'n his pocket maybe, fer he must've tuck it off'n his finger so's it wouldn't give him away."

"'T's a lie!" snarled Plummer; "the thing is not mine."

"His initials, 'H. P.,' is on the inside of it, gents," continued Drake, still holding the gold band with its dark stone setting up to his audience.

Plummer attempted to reply to this, but his speech was shut off by a hand pressed over his mouth. He tried to bite the hand which thus suppressed him, but was so roughly used in return that he desisted.

"An' here is a piece of sack," went on Drake, "found on the trail of the robber who set out fer town after he left the other two. You see it's partly burnt; an attempt was made to burn it, but it happened to be wet, an' it burnt only in places. We found that hid away among the rocks.

"You can see there's been two holes cut out'n it, an' it was probably one of the sacks used by the robber to cover his head with while he was robbin' the train. You kin see on the back of it there's the word 'Sheriff' in dim letterin', an' the rest is worn out. Somethin' has likely been sent in it to the sheriff's office, an' it's likely the robber got it there.

"But what I consider the best proof of all," he continued, "is yet to be tested. Will some o' youse gents over there please pull off the boots of that man Plummer an' pass'm up here?"

This was speedily done, notwithstanding the resistance of Plummer. Drake meanwhile continued his speech, his memory refreshed by a note book which he had taken from his pocket.

"Now," he said, "the tracks of that robber was boot or shoe tracks—it was not moccasin tracks. The print was eleven an' a half inches long, three an' three quarters inches across the ball of the sole, two an' a half inches across the heel, an' the heel was three an' a third inches long. There was little plates on the lower outside edge of the heels. Now, this man might not now be shod with the same set o' gearin' that he wore then, but we'll see how what he has on stands with these dimensions, any way."

Thereupon Drake drew forth a small pocket rule, and, taking up one of the boots which had been passed to him, called the attention of his audience to the fact that there was a plate upon the lower surface of its heel. Then he measured the parts of the boot he had named and called out the figures as they were taken.

A man in the crowd to whom he had passed the book followed him by reading off the writing thereon. The dimensions of the bottom of the boot were found to compare throughout with the enumerations of the book.

"There you are, gents," declared Drake; "there's yer proof, an' I denounce that man Plummer as bein' one of them highwaymen what robbed the overland on the night of the twelfth of January last an' killed Superintendent Fletcher."

This arraignment closed Drake's speech, and the assemblage, which had been hushed into silence by the scene of death and the startling intelligence which the speaker was enunciating, now began to manifest its reaction.

The first motions of this change came as a slight stirring following a long, deep pause at the close of this remarkable address. Then it seemed that this strained and exasperated camel of Public Tolerance of Plummer's conduct and presence had received the straw which had snapped its back.

A wave of uneasiness, of restlessness as of desperation held in check and under pressure, passed over the crush. Suddenly some strong, firm voice cried, "Hang the villain!"

"String him up!" yelled another.

Then the cry "Hang him! Hang him!" seemed to ascend simultaneously from all quarters of the vast mass of the mountaineers.

It came as though from the ground, rising and swelling and rolling on. The human unit may be individual when alone; but when thus compacted with his fellows he is but a fiber of the whole, like a floret in a thistle; together they comprise the complexion of the flower; and a thought possessing a gathering of men pervades it like a body of color; the whole bunch or aggregate stands for an expression of that hue. And so as an afflatus or efflorescence did this color thought broaden and obtain, the great assemblage demanding as one man that Plummer be hanged.

With the energy of demons, a dozen hands seized the crouching, palsied coward and thrust him into the wagon. Some one had already brought a rope from a neighboring grocery; the crowd broke out with a cry: "To the big cottonwood! To the big cottonwood!"

His hands were lashed to his sides, and a handkerchief drawn through his mouth and tied behind his head to stifle his cries. The horses were whipped up, and the wagon dashed on across Dry

Gulch towards the west side of town, the great throng rushing after like an army on a charge.

Presently the team halted under the outstretched limb of a gnarled old cottonwood which lifted its leafy head high in air. Here a noose was quickly made of an end of the rope; the other end was flung over the branch, caught on the other side, and spread to a hundred hands.

The handkerchief was removed, the limbs securely tied.

Plummer protested that he was innocent, that the act of the mob would be murder, and that they would later repent of it. He denounced Drake as a scoundrel who would be a murderer, and declared he had never wilfully done a wrong action in his life.

Finding that resistance was of no avail, he broke down, cried, and asked that his wife be sent for. A messenger hurried off to summon her, and shortly returned with the statement that he had told his business to the person who had come to the door, who had conveyed the request to the woman, but that she had refused to respond or to come to the scene.

This intelligence seemed to melt the last vestige of stiffness which yet remained in Plummer's conduct.

"Yes," he blurted, "she forsakes me now she's got all out of me she wants. She's got that Englishman's papers, and she has profited by everything else I ever did. She put me up to all my bad jobs, for she wanted money—money to hoard up, for what purpose I could never understand.

"She put me up to getting into the Monte Carlo to get money, more money; she put me up to doing that job on the railroad, all to get money. When that Englishman came here she went crazy. She put me up to trying to get him into trouble. She wanted his mine, wanted everything he had. I did it, did it all for her, for I loved that woman, loved her like a fool;" and he dissolved again in blubber.

"Gentlemen," he went on, "I was born in Tarrytown, Virginia, in 1842; educated at the old Alexandria military school, and emigrated with my parents to Missouri in 1860. I came to Montana in the following year, and since then I have been hoeing my own row as best I could. I declare before God, I was honest before I met that woman, and she has brought me where I am today."

This concluded the valedictory of the doomed man, whereupon some one called out, "Men, do your duty!" The driver sounded "k-k" at his horses, gave them a cut with his whip, and the wagon moved off.

Simultaneously those on the rope ran down the hill with it, and the human form at the other end rose swiftly in the air.

As it was drawn up there was a great yelling and cheering from the canaille, with cries of "Hang him!" "That's right!" "Serves him right!" but though pistols were present in plenty, no one attempted to fire a shot at the suspended creature, and the mass was singularly orderly and of one accord.

If Plummer had any friends in the assemblage they fringed but an edge of it, and they did not declare themselves nor attempt to interfere. The dying man hung there in grim silence and horror, the red blotches on his face growing black, his frame contracting with its muscular spasms.

(To be continued.)

THE TRUEST CONQUEROR.

WHO quells a nation's wayward will
  May lord it on a throne;
But he's a mightier monarch still
  Who vanquishes his own.
No power of fortune lays him low;
  No treacherous smile allures;
King of himself, through weal or woe—
  He conquers who endures.

A RUN WITH THE PAY CAR.

BY WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON.

The ruse of the express company and its checkmating by the train robbers, with an account of the outcome that waited on a particularly bold attempt at a "hold up."

"GENTLEMEN, I sent for you tonight for a special purpose. We have in the office a chest of money consigned to Gunnison. It is to pay off men at several of the mines, I believe, and instead of sending it with the regular express messenger, I propose to put it on board the freight which leaves here at midnight.

"I have special reasons for doing this—in fact, I am afraid to trust it on the regular train—and I wish you to take charge of the money. You will say nothing about the matter, of course, but quietly report for duty at eleven o'clock tonight."

In these words the superintendent of the express company at Montrose, Colorado, assigned to Fred Harlan and myself a run that was destined to be one of the most memorable events of our lives.

We did not think so at the time. Indeed, there was nothing very remarkable about the circumstance, for there was always a risk in sending large sums of money over that road, and it was very natural for the superintendent to attempt a little ruse of this kind to thwart any possible scheme of robbery that might be under way.

The midnight freight was made up at Montrose, and when Fred and I reached the yards the money chest was already stowed away in an empty car, which, for obvious reasons, was securely fastened up and marked "perishable."

I shudder now to think how near that car and all its contents came to perishing, too.

At the last moment Fred discovered that his dog Ponto had followed him from home unperceived. It would be dangerous to abandon the animal there, with all the shifting that was constantly going on; and as there was no time to take him back, Fred hastily thrust him into the car, and, slipping in after him, we closed the door and fastened it on the inside.

None of the employees had seen us enter, and I don't suppose any of them knew what valuable freight that car held—with the exception of the engineer and conductor.

In a few minutes the train started. Fred rigged up a couch against the end of the car, with a plank that was lying on the floor, and I sat on the chest beside him.

Then we lit our pipes and smoked and chatted for an hour or more, while the train rushed on and on through the night, whistling shrilly at intervals.

Fred had dropped off into a sort of a doze and I was just wondering whether it was my duty to wake him or not, when Ponto lifted his head and uttered a short, peculiar bark.

A moment later the cars began to rattle and bump violently, and soon the train came to an abrupt halt. We were both on our feet instantly. I seized my rifle, which was standing close by. There was no reason that we could think of for the stoppage, but before we could make up our minds what to do, the train had started again.

It went only a few yards, however, and then moved slowly back towards Montrose, going faster and faster each moment.

"Great heavens," cried Fred suddenly, "our car is detached!"

My companion was right. The car with the money had been near the center of the train when we started, now it was speeding away by itself—where, we had not the slightest idea.

Our sense of hearing, sharpened by long service at railroading, told us all this.

Our first impulse was to make certain that the fastenings of the door were se-

cure, and by that time our speed had perceptibly diminished. A moment later we came to a full stop.

"We've been run off on a siding," exclaimed Fred in an excited whisper, but before I could reply Ponto barked gruffly, and we heard voices just outside the car.

Then a heavy blow was dealt against one of the doors—with an axe, probably.

All doubt was gone now. We were in the hands of some desperate band of robbers, and the chance of saving either our lives or the money was slim.

We resolved to make a fight for it, though, and carefully inspected our weapons. Mine was the only rifle, but Fred had a revolver that he knew well how to use.

Half a dozen more blows followed in quick succession, and then Fred placed his mouth to a crack in the door, and shouted:

"The first one that breaks into this car is a dead man."

The blows ceased for a moment or two. The desperadoes were evidently surprised to learn that any person was in the car. Then a gruff voice called loudly:

"Open that door, young feller, an' you shan't be harmed."

We made no reply to this modest request, and after a few low muttered imprecations, the blows were repeated faster and harder than ever.

"We *must* hold out, Ned," said Fred sturdily. "The trainmen will come to our assistance before long. The robbers expected to get the car open in a hurry and make off with the chest. Any delay will be fatal to their plans."

Fred was plainly right on this point, for an attack was begun almost immediately on the opposite door, and the blows were so loud and numerous that we could not hear ourselves speak.

Ponto meanwhile kept up an incessant and furious barking. At last one of the heavy oaken beams went to splinters, and through the crevice we caught a glimpse of torches burning outside.

Another blow made a hole as large as a dinner plate, and, quick as a flash, Fred blazed away with his revolver, four times in succession.

The discharge was greeted with hoarse yells of rage, and more than one cry of pain, for the robbers had been grouped thickly around the door.

"Down, Ned, quick!" shouted Fred, and as we both dropped into a corner of the car, a perfect fusillade of rifle and revolver shots was fired.

The bullets sputtered thickly over our heads, but neither of us sustained the slightest injury.

Then we crept past the broken door to the farther end of the car. The light outside showed, of course, where the hole had been broken in, and we trained our weapons on the spot, ready for the first man that would make his appearance.

Meanwhile the other door was being slowly battered in, and soon a gaping hole was chopped through. We instantly fired at the spot, and not without effect, to judge by the fierce yells that responded.

The situation was becoming more critical, for two or three rifle barrels were thrust in from both sides of the car, and the bullets whistled uncomfortably close to our heads. The rascals dared not expose themselves sufficiently to take aim, and our return fire did them no damage.

Then a long arm reached in and attempted to snatch the big bar which offered the main obstacle to the breaking down of the door. Before either Fred or I could fire, Ponto sprang forward and seized the ruffian's hand in his sharp white teeth.

We heard a quick report, a yelp of pain, and then poor Ponto dropped back on the floor, to all appearances lifeless.

Enraged at the death of the dog, Fred emptied his revolver at the hole, to what purpose we could not tell.

After that, hostilities ceased for a little while, though the axes still tore away at the door and the gaping holes grew larger and larger.

"I smell smoke," said Fred suddenly. "Do you?"

"Yes," I replied, "I detect it plainly;" and as we looked at each other in sudden alarm, we heard a sharp crackling underfoot, and red flashes of light were visible through the flooring.

The miscreants had set fire to the end of the car, with the intention of driving

us forward within range of their murderous weapons.

We lost hope then and there. We could take our choice—death by fire or by bullet. There was no other alternative.

The flames enveloped the end of the car with amazing rapidity, until their red tongues were licking the inside timbers and the boards were hot to the touch.

Our skin seemed to be blistering, and the smoke poured round us in suffocating whirls, but we still held our ground, knowing that to advance meant certain and speedy death.

Outside, the axes were still going rapidly, and through the smoke we saw one of the doors tumble with a crash into the car. A moment later the second one dropped.

The robbers could almost place their hands upon the chest now, but still they hesitated to enter.

Then a burst of flame came hissing from the bottom of the car, and with a loud cry Fred fell over.

Hardly conscious of what I was doing, I grasped him by the shoulders and dragged him foot by foot towards the open door, expecting every moment to be riddled with bullets.

I heard a wild yell from outside, and then a rattling fusillade of rifle shots. I thought I was shot, and wondered vaguely why I did not fall, and the next thing I saw was a familiar face surmounted by a blue railroad cap peering into the open doors.

"The money is safe," said the man to some one behind him, "but I don't see either of the poor fellows. I'm afraid they're done for."

I tried to cry out, but the sound choked in my throat, and then I must have fainted dead away.

* * * *

I came back to life in the caboose of the freight train. Fred was a few feet away, and we were both soon able to listen to the strange story of the stolen car.

The train had been stopped at both ends by a gang of masked desperadoes, three of whom took possession of the engine and gave orders to suit themselves.

The train was broken in two, and the forward part, with our car attached, was run a few yards beyond the switch that operated a two mile siding which ran back into a lonely spot among the mountains.

Then the train was backed with sufficient speed to send our car—which had meanwhile been uncoupled—far out on the siding. The train was then joined together and the engineer ordered to go ahead at full speed.

This command he obeyed to the letter until he reached a small wayside station, where plenty of volunteers were found to come back to the rescue—and their arrival was well timed indeed.

Two of the robbers were dead, and from one who was wounded information was received that led to the capture of many of the gang.

How they ever discovered that the money was in the freight car was never ascertained, though it was probably through the treachery of some railroad employees, for the robbers did not hesitate in picking out the car that contained the booty.

Fred and I were all right in a day or two, and a week later we received a substantial recognition of our bravery, as the superintendent was pleased to call it, that went far to make amends for our terrible experience.

Ponto, I almost forgot to say, was rescued from the burning car. The bullet had glanced from his skull, only stunning him, and he was as lively as ever the next day.

SPECULATIONS.

LOVE is a god of fancies; a glance, a whisper low
May wake to life that idol which we hold.
And I have thought sometimes, in certain hearts I know,
That Love was wakened by the chink of gold.

Flavel Scott Mines.

THE GRAY FOX OF GIBRALTAR.*

BY E. W. MAYO.

A story of plot and counterplot in the days when Spanish dominion over the gateway to the Mediterranean was tottering to its fall; also involving an incursion into the domains of Cupid and Mars.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MERTREZ ANSWERS THE CRY.

THE shouts of the frightened servants, echoing along the darkened street, reached the ears of the single pedestrian who was at that moment within its confines. With the instinct of his kind, Mertrez, for it was he, grasped the hilt of his blade and ran quickly forward towards the scene of the disturbance.

It was not altogether by accident that the Spanish lieutenant had come to be on the lonely street at this hour of the night. For many days and nights he had wandered back and forth along these thoroughfares near the harbor front, gazing eagerly at the dimly lighted windows of the houses, and peering at the passers by in anxious search for a face which he had thus far failed to see.

The injuries he had sustained in the course of the battle upon the heights, while they had left him unconscious for the time being, had not been of a serious nature. The careful dressing which the British surgeon had given his slight wounds, and a few days of rough nursing within the fortress, had set him on his feet again.

He had a dim recollection of having seen Anita bending above him as he lay upon the ledge directly after the battle, and of having heard her voice.

He waited anxiously for her coming, believing that she would seek him out among the Spanish prisoners who shared the fortress hospital with their late opponents. But she had not appeared, and he had believed that perhaps his earlier impression was only the passing fancy of his disordered brain.

Then had come the signing of peace and his liberation. After that he had been free to leave the Rock whenever he chose to do so, but he preferred to remain, in the hope of seeing Anita, for whose disappearance and complete silence he was at a loss to account.

He had waited upon the Rock, in the little arbor of locust trees, where he had used to come to meet her in the old happy days before the recent troubles. He had wandered up and down the streets of the town, hoping for a chance encounter with her, but his vigils had all remained unrewarded.

He did not know the exact situation of Courtney's residence, beyond the fact that it was near the water front. Latterly he had taken to haunting these streets, believing that if the girl were here he should certainly see her or learn some news of her in the course of time.

It was thus that he had been near at hand when the outcry arose. He had no idea that the call for assistance came from the house of Courtney himself, but he obeyed the summons promptly as he would that of any person in distress.

Reaching the house, within the open doorway of which stood the shouting and terror stricken women, he paused only to learn the direction of the difficulty, and then dashed through the hall towards the inner room, drawing his sword from its sheath as he ran.

So quickly had all this occurred that the outlaw was still bending above the old man with his hand upon the latter's throat when Mertrez entered the room.

The lieutenant took in the situation at a glance and darted towards the assailant, but the outlaw had heard his heavy steps approaching along the hall, and, divining that the sounds indicated

the approach of a fresh antagonist, he sprang to his feet and faced about.

Mertrez recognized the man before him in an instant. A fierce light leaped to his eyes and a feeling of savage joy filled his heart. Before him was the opportunity for which he had often wished. Now he would settle the unfinished score, which had stood against the bandit since the day of their encounter in the forest. Perhaps, too, he would settle a deeper score.

Like Courtney himself, he had heard the vague rumor that Anita had departed from the Rock in company with the old witch woman. If so, Brulo had doubtless had a hand in the matter. Mertrez had guessed upon the instant of seeing him that he was now within the walls of Anita's home.

The two men faced each other in silence for a moment. Brulo was like an animal at bay, savage, defiant, and desperate. The officer, on the other hand, was cool and self possessed. There was almost a glad ring in his voice as he said:

"So, sirrah; at last we meet again! On guard, and let us see if Fortune will favor you as well as she has done in the past!"

Without reply the bandit drew his short sword and fell into position. At once Mertrez began the attack, making his sword play with lightning rapidity before his antagonist's face, and giving the latter no opportunity for the tactics which he had employed in their previous meeting.

The conditions of this struggle were very different from that former one. Instead of the cool shade of forest trees above them, there was the lofty ceiling of the room. Instead of the soft mold beneath their feet there was the polished surface of the floor, on which they were compelled to move cautiously lest a false step might send them sprawling.

The clash of their weapons echoed through the long hall and mingled with the startled exclamations of the women, who watched the conflict from the doorway.

From the first Mertrez felt confident of the victory. He pressed his attack vigorously, giving not a moment's pause between the rapid movements of his weapon.

The steel gleamed in the light of the many lamps that hung about the room. It flashed back and forth like a beam of silvery light, and in spite of Brulo's efforts, it approached nearer and nearer to his own body.

Slowly the outlaw began to give back, yielding the way inch by inch, and feeling each step with cautious feet lest some unforeseen obstruction should catch his heels and send him suddenly backward.

There was no disadvantage in this movement. In fact, could he but reach the wall of the room and place his back against it, his position would be more secure than that of his adversary.

So he kept on, fighting stubbornly, but gradually moving further and further backward, and waiting for the slightest relaxation in the play of the flashing blade before his eyes.

Suddenly, as he pressed forward more vigorously than before, the lieutenant seemed to slip upon the polished floor. He went down upon his right knee and the movement withdrew his weapon a little from its close proximity to his adversary's breast.

A savage light flashed into the gitano's eyes. Here was the opportunity for which he had been waiting.

He straightened up, raising his short weapon in a stroke that was intended to cleave his opponent's skull.

But the lieutenant's movement had been a carefully planned feint. As the outlaw's blade descended, it met a quick upward guard, and the unexpected encounter with the opposing weapon, backed by the iron wrist of the lieutenant, sent Brulo's weapon whirling from his hand.

There was a sharp, sudden movement of Mertrez' arm. His blade descended swiftly, its point against the bandit's breast.

Then he rose quickly to his feet, and at the movement a crimson stream spurted from the gitano's side where the officer's sword had gone home, piercing him entirely through the body between the lower ribs.

The outlaw stood for a moment with arms upraised, tottering like the trunk of a tree that is severed from its stock, but yet pauses an instant before its fall.

His eyes rolled upward until only the whites were visible; a fleck of blood appeared upon his lips. Then, with a horrible, gurgling cry, he toppled backward, striking against one of the great mirrors of the room in his fall and shivering it to fragments.

Mertrez gave no further heed to his vanquished antagonist. He knew that stroke too well to fear that it had failed. His chief concern now was for the man from whom he had diverted Brulo's attention, and whom he believed to be Courtney, Anita's foster father.

The man had lain upon the floor, where the gitano's first attack had sent him, throughout the progress of the duel. He still lay there unmoving, his face of a purplish hue, and his breath coming and going in long, heavy gasps.

Summoning the servants, who were still too frightened by what they had seen to volunteer their assistance, Mertrez directed the removal of the stricken man to one of the couches in the adjoining room. Then he sent one of them post haste for a surgeon, while he himself loosened Courtney's clothing and applied such simple restoratives as he thought might prove of benefit.

As he worked over the inert figure he learned by questioning the servants who hovered about to execute his orders that Courtney had been alone in the house at the time of Brulo's attack, and that they did not know the whereabouts of their young mistress, who had been absent for many days.

The surgeon's examination developed the fact that Andrew Courtney had been stricken with apoplexy in the excitement of his interview with Brulo, and that its effect had been aggravated by his subsequent rough treatment at the outlaw's hands. The surgeon shook his head as he concluded the examination, noting the symptoms of the case and the old man's feeble and labored breathing.

"He may recover," he said, "but it seems more than doubtful. He will require constant attendance and careful nursing. You, I presume, will remain in charge?"

"I will," answered the lieutenant unhesitatingly.

During the days that followed, Courtney lingered on uncertainly. He had regained consciousness, but it was impossible for him to speak, and he could only indicate his wishes by the movements of his eyes.

However, he made it clear in this manner that he desired Mertrez to remain continually with him, and showed such evident signs of distress whenever the lieutenant moved away from his couch that Mertrez seldom left the room, but remained on guard beside the sick man, snatching a few moments of rest now and then as he sat in his chair while his patient slumbered upon the couch.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COURTNEY BESTOWS A BLESSING.

It was late in the afternoon of the fourth day of Courtney's illness that the equipage of Don Emilio Cassava toiled along the road that led from the northern side of Gibraltar to the town itself. From either side of the coach two anxious young faces peered out as the carriage moved slowly forward.

Like many another who had passed along that way of late, Paula and Anita were seeking for familiar forms and faces, and like those others, they had sought thus far in vain.

The consuming anxiety of each of the young women was to gain some information regarding her lover. Don Emilio himself was chiefly concerned with the prospect of finding a good inn and comfortable lodging at the end of his journey.

However, in obedience to the urging of the young women, he halted his cavalcade before the main gate of the fortress, and sent his equerry to inquire after the two men anxiety for whom had brought his party hither.

No satisfaction was afforded by the result of these inquiries. At the headquarters nothing was known of Captain Silvela. All the Spanish prisoners had departed, being liberated at the conclusion of the peace, but he had not been among them.

Lieutenant Mertrez had been there immediately after the repulse of the Spanish attack upon the heights. He was among the wounded, but had de-

parted with the others, so that his injuries, apparently, had not been serious.

With this report they were forced to satisfy themselves for the time being. As to their next movement, there was some discussion.

Don Emilio and his daughter wished to proceed to some place of public entertainment, but Anita insisted that unless they accompanied her to her own home, she herself would not go thither.

Therefore, the extensive cavalcade wound its way through the narrow streets of the town, some of which were scarcely wide enough to permit the passage of the great coach. The unusual nature of its appearance, for there were none but the most primitive carriages in Gibraltar, aroused much curiosity among the loiterers along the streets and led to the opinion that some high and mighty personage, such as the governor of a province at the very least, was the occupant of the coach.

After much jolting over the uneven roadways, and frequent haltings in the more restricted passages, the party at length drew up before Courtney's residence.

Anita descended from the carriage, and with mingled feelings in which hope and fear were both conjoined, rapped upon the panel as she had done so many times before. The door was quickly opened by the old servant woman, who uttered a cry of joy at seeing her young mistress before her.

The girl paused a moment and then inquired with awkward constraint:

"Is my father within?"

Tears rose to the faithful woman's eyes as she replied:

"Aye. He is within, and very, very ill. Methinks he will be glad to see you, although he cannot tell you so."

Without further delay Anita summoned her companions and conducted them within the house.

As the trio entered the great room, they caught sight of Courtney and his faithful attendant at its further side. The patient had been restless throughout the day and the preceding night, now and then mumbling incoherent words and showing a desire to impart something to Mertrez, which the latter had done his best to comprehend.

At length he had dropped off into sleep, and the lieutenant, worn out with his long vigil, slumbered also.

At first Anita had supposed the figure sitting beside the old man's couch to be one of the ordinary attendants, but as she came nearer and observed his face, she sprang forward with a glad cry that brought him, startled, to his feet.

The two gazed into each other's eyes for a brief instant. Then the words, "Carlo," "Anita," sprang at the same moment to their lips, and they were clasped in each other's arms.

The unusual commotion aroused Courtney from his slumber. He opened his eyes and gazed about vacantly for a moment. Then, as his gaze lighted upon the girl's figure, he recognized her, and with a supreme effort, uttered a low call.

She turned quickly towards him, and, kneeling by his side, smoothed back the thin gray hair from his brow and kissed him upon the forehead.

The sick man smiled contentedly, with a look that showed his happiness in spite of the pain it cost him. It was the first kiss he had ever had from the girl.

The group remained thus for a few moments, Anita kneeling beside Courtney's couch, Mertrez standing by her.

Not a word was spoken, but the eyes of all were moist, and Anita's tears rained fast upon the coverlet.

At length the old man roused himself once more. A change came across his face. The tense, drawn look disappeared. His lips moved, dumbly at first, and then more easily.

Finally he spoke in the broad northern dialect which he had not used for many a year:

"Where hast been, lass?" he asked, turning his eyes towards the girl who knelt beside him.

Anita was weeping, so that she could not reply, but Paula came quickly forward, and, bending above him, said:

"She has been with me, sir. I have taken good care of her."

Courtney smiled again. A little later he indicated to Mertrez that he wished him to kneel beside Anita.

The lieutenant sank upon his knees. Tears were rolling down his own cheeks

now. It was evident to all that Courtney's end was approaching rapidly. The momentary recovery of his speech was but the last effort of his flagging faculties to assert themselves.

Now his eyes began to assume a glazed look. The tense muscles which had held his body rigid since the moment when he was stricken relaxed more and more. His breath came more and more slowly.

With a last effort he half raised himself upon the pillow. Paula, understanding his desire, moved quickly to his side and tenderly supported him.

Slowly the dying man lifted his wasted hands until they rested upon the head of the weeping pair kneeling by his couch. Then, with a labored utterance that became each moment fainter, he bestowed his blessing upon the twain.

At the last he was the father.

As his voice, almost inaudible now, reached the last word of the simple form, his frame suddenly relaxed. He sank back upon the pillow.

It was the end.

* * * *

It is easy to guess the remainder of the story, so far as Carlo and Anita are concerned. Not many weeks after the death of Courtney they were married quietly in the little chapel at Gibraltar. After the many troubles and difficulties of their courtship they at length found perfect peace and happiness.

They lived to a good old age and throughout their lives both held in loving memory the man who had once been known as the Gray Fox of Gibraltar, but who to them was always "father."

Those who are versed in Spanish history may be interested in knowing that this same Carlo was the famous General Mertrez who afterwards distinguished himself so greatly in the African wars. It was mainly through his efforts that Spain won from the Sultan of Morocco the strip of land along the African shore which she still holds.

Of this territory Mertrez was for many years the governor, and so it came about that Anita at length came to rule over at least a part of the Moors, as her birth entitled her to do. She was a famous woman in her later year, and many of the shrewd observers of the time declared that no small part of her husband's remarkable success in life was due to her efforts.

Paula's life was not so happy. It was found that Captain Silvela had been killed in the attack upon the cliff. True to her promise, Señorita Cassava entered the convent, and there at length she found peace for her unhappy heart in a life filled with good deeds.

If you go to Cordova today you may see the weather beaten but still handsome building erected as a hospital for the sick poor by the good Sister Paula. And if you talk with some gray haired old pensioner of the great wars, he will tell you of the beautiful, sad faced woman who moved about on all their bloody battle fields, attending the wounded, consoling the dying, and appearing like a very vision from heaven to the eyes of many a poor, fever stricken soldier in the hospitals. "Saint Paula, she was in truth," the pensioner says, and calls a blessing upon her name.

THE END.

FANCIES.

FANCIES are but streams
Of vain pleasure.
They who by their dreams
True joys measure,
Feasting, starve; laughing, weep;
Playing, smart; whilst in sleep
Fools, with shadows smiling,
Wake and find
Hopes like wind,
Idle hopes, beguiling.
Thoughts fly away; Time hath passed them.
Wake now, awake! see and taste them! *John Ford.*

THE MATE'S BLUNDER.

BY MARCUS D. RICHTER.

A whaling adventure with far reaching consequences. Smashed by a whale's tail, adrift in the fog, swept by a tempest, and tantalized by more than one glimpse of safety.

SPEAKING of occurrences, seemingly of a trivial nature, but that afterwards lead to many of more importance, until at times the chain seems endless, reminds me of an experience, or rather a series of experiences of my own, which occurred quite thirty years ago.

The blunder of one man, and that a bull headed Frenchman, affected me for two years afterwards, or, at least, that is the way I look at it.

I'll spin the yarn, and you tell me if I am not about right in my belief.

It was when I was on my second whaling voyage in the ship Emma Duncan. I was not more than twenty five, but I came of a seafaring race, knew how to steer and make sail an' splice before I was out of dresses a'most, and was rated as an able seaman on the Emma's books.

Old Cap'n Joshway Joy was our skipper—a better man never lived—and the mate was this same thick headed little Frenchman, Louie by name—a good seaman, and not hard on the men, but with as dull a wit in a time of emergency as any man I ever saw.

A man ought to be pretty sharp witted, not dull as an old case knife, to be mate of a whaler, for he has to take the lead in a chase, and there is always the danger of running against an old bull with fight in him from the word go. Then, look out for a gale, say I.

I steered Louie in the first boat, and I don't know how many times I saved him from smashing the craft by running in too close to a "struck" whale. He'd get excited and lose every bit of judgment he ever possessed.

The time he made the biggest fool of himself was when we'd been out a little over two years and were working down the coast of South America on our way round the Cape and home.

We'd done well, remarkably well, in fact, and when we ran into a little school of sperms off the Chilian coast, Cap'n Joy said one of 'em would fill all the remaining casks we had aboard. I tell you, with that declaration ringing in our ears we put off from the old Emma's side with a will.

Our boat was ahead, and we overhauled the first whale, as vicious a little bull as I'd ever seen. I stood up in the bow with the iron, and when we were almost atop of him I sank it deep into his back.

I never made a prettier cast in my life, and by the way the bull sounded I knew that we had no weakling to deal with.

While the line was still whistling over the bows, I changed to the stern and Louie took my place with the lance.

We didn't have bomb lances in those days, nor bomb guns, such as they use now in whaling. We were content to pull up on the whale and prod him with the lance until he spouted blood, and then back water and wait till the death flurry.

Well, this bull went down as deep as ever I saw a whale go, and as soon as he came up he started off, towing the boat with the speed of a railroad train. But we'd gathered in some slack, and knowing that he'd soon tire of playing horse, and the sea being calm, we just laid back and let him run.

By and by he stopped, and we crept up to him. He let us get right onto him, and soon Louie was churning him with a lance.

"Blood!" I yelled, after a minute; "back water!"

A great spout of blood rose from his blow holes and dyed the sea all around, while we backed out of harm's way. The mate was nervous and excited, I could see, afeared that the whale would get away from us.

He *did* die hard, that's a fact, but I'd seen 'em die harder an' knew that when the "flurry" *did* come it would come sudden.

Louie chewed his mustache and stamped his feet on the bottom boards of the boat till I thought sure he'd pound a hole in her. And still that bull lay as quiet as a lamb, without a sign of "flurry."

"Pull, men, pull!" he finally shouted. "Let me geef him another von!"

Before I could open my mouth, the fools had done it—pulled right onto the dying whale. Louie began to prod him again, and just then the whale "up flukes" and slammed the whole after part of his body down upon the stern of the boat.

Just by reason of good luck, rather than by good management, I sprang forward over the stroke oar and so saved myself, but the whole stern was carried away.

The whale started off with a rush, and somebody knew enough to cut the line, but I'll be bound it wasn't that Frenchman.

Of course, it wasn't exactly a new experience for us to be smashed, and the third mate's boat was near by, but it was such an utterly useless accident that it made me mad.

Any one with a grain of common sense would have known that the whale couldn't last long after spouting so much blood, and have been content to wait.

We hailed the third mate's boat, and he came over to us. Of course our smashed craft couldn't sink, although she was full of water, and we were all sitting in it up to our waists, so Louie decided to go in the third officer's boat after the wounded whale.

"You stay here with the men, Potter," he says to me, "an' I geet that whale yet."

So they put after the old fellow and left us in the smashed boat, feeling anything but pleasant. It was the spring of the year, and the water was cold.

They hadn't been gone ten minutes before I saw that we were going to have trouble. One of the sudden fogs peculiar to that latitude was coming up and had already hidden the ship from us.

It might last only a few moments, going as quickly as it came, or it might remain for hours.

If the other boat kept on after the whale, they'd be sure to lose us; but I don't think they noticed the fog bank. Any way, they kept right on.

"We're in for it," said old Bill Rogers, and I tell you we were.

The fog came down so thick that you could almost cut it with a knife, and although there was no danger of our sinking, still the prospect of sitting there in the boat, with the water lapping around our waists, was not an enviable one.

Then, along with the fog we began to see the sharks cuttin' through the waves all about us—great ugly fellows, twelve or fourteen feet long. There's nothing that swims in the sea that's worse to look at, or worse to fall in with, than those "sea lawyers."

They'd swim right up to the side of the smashed boat and roll over on their sides and look at us out of their wicked eyes—Bill Rogers declared they winked at *him*—and tell us as plainly as dumb looks could that they were only waiting for us to thrust an arm or a leg over the side so that they could snap it up. They couldn't turn the boat over, or they'd have had us all at once.

Well, we lay there in that fog five hours, once being so near the Emma Duncan that we could see her upper rigging, and finally the fog began to lift. But with the lifting of the fog a nasty wind sprang up that quickly rose to a gale.

I tell you, we wished then the fog had stayed by us a bit longer.

Night was upon us now, and there was little hope of our being taken off until morning; but the sharks had left the surface. Fish, mostly, are not fond of storms, and go below when the gales begin to whistle.

That was a dreadful night. Nothing but a buoyant quality of the material of which the boat was made kept her afloat, and with every wave beating directly upon us, I doubted very much if any of us could retain our hold until morning.

And my fears came very near being realized. At daylight, when the blow

cased up, only three of us were left. All the others had been washed away during the night.

There wasn't a sail in sight when the sun came up—just a bare, heaving waste of sea; all of us lost heart, for what with the hunger and thirst, and the bruises we had received from the pounding of the waves, our situation was enough to discourage any one.

The sun beat down on us all day, and as the only protection from its heat we had was obtained by wetting our heads with the sea water, it is a wonder we didn't all get flighty.

Bill Rogers did go completely crazy before night, and declared that the sharks (who had gathered about us again) were painted red, white, and blue, and were winking at him, and beckoning him with their fins to jump overboard.

The other man, a Kanaka, and myself dared not try to hold him, for the least roll of the boat might pitch us all out. So we had to sit there and see poor Bill leap to his death and watch those terrible tigers of the sea fight each other for his dismembered body.

After Bill went, the Kanaka began to droop a good deal, I noticed, and I couldn't get a word out of him.

Finally I fell into a doze myself which lasted pretty much all night, and when morning came I wasn't greatly surprised to find the poor black boy gone.

We must have drifted a great way from where we had struck the sperm whale, or the Emma Duncan would have found us before; but I certainly hoped to see her that day.

About noon I did sight a ship, but 'twas the dismantled hull of a smaller vessel than the Emma.

I tore out a seat and paddled with all my strength for the wreck. Anything was better than that smashed whale boat.

In my weakened condition I was until nearly dark getting near enough to the ship to swim for it. Fortunately, there was a rope hanging over the side, and I pulled myself aboard.

I could tell by the roll of the vessel that she was pretty well waterlogged, and the best thing I could do would be to put off again as soon as possible.

Lashed to the deck, I saw a hatch that had been made into a raft, with a mast stepped and a sail already bent to a spar. It was pretty evident that the crew had started to escape in this way, and had either all been washed overboard or rescued by some passing ship.

I went into the cabin, which was under two feet of water, and after lighting the lamp, I found the mate's private log book open on the table.

The last entry was dated that very morning, and stated—would you believe it?—that after being wrecked by a great wave the night before, which wave had smashed and carried away all the boats, she had been sighted and her crew rescued by the Emma Duncan.

But before this, you can easily believe that I had been to the water butt, and even as I read the entry in the log book I was munching some food.

Knowing pretty well that the old hulk would not hold together much longer, I provisioned the raft as best I could, and by the aid of a block and tackle and a lot of rollers, I got the unwieldy thing over the side.

I lost a good deal of my provisions in the plunge overboard, but there was no time to return for more, so I set sail at once for the Easter Islands, which I figured were the nearest to me.

I had fortunately obtained a boat compass from the wreck, so I was not entirely helpless.

It was gray morning when I left the wreck, and with a fresh and favorable breeze, I bore away to the westward. Not a sail did I spy all day long until just as the sun, a great, round, red orb, was sinking below the sea line. Then, right across the glowing disk, there appeared a ship under full sail.

It was a long way off, but I knew those spars and the rigging. It was the Emma Duncan!

But she was too far away for them to see me, and she appeared to my vision only while passing the sun. Then she disappeared, and hers was the last sail I saw for six months.

Not that I remained on the raft all that time. I reached an island less than two weeks later, more than half dead from lack of food and drink, and on that island I stayed for over seven months.

When six months of the time had passed, a native craft came to the island; but I hid myself, for they had every appearance of being pirates of the worst kind. Some of those Malay proas get even as far east as that longitude at certain seasons.

Shipwreck stories are too common for me to tell you how I lived on that island. It sounds well to read about, but I never like to think of it, so, with the reader's permission, I'll skip it.

Sometimes, even now, I awake in the night trembling and crying because of my dreams of that lonely isle. I never liked solitude, and I certainly did not care for it then.

The San Francisco whaler Aden took me off the island at length, and I was landed in that city, without a cent, about a month later. Of course I had to ship as best I could; so, instead of going towards home, I went to China, and from there to India and back again. *Then*, however, I made for home on the bark Josephus, landing in New York just about two years after leaving the Emma Duncan.

I was in Jerry Smith's, who used to keep a respectable sailors' boarding house in North Street in those days, talking with some men I knew (they had given me up for dead long before), when who should walk in but Louie, the old mate of the Emma Duncan?

He'd been on a short trip on a Mediterranean fruiter since leaving the old whaler at New Bedford, and had just got back.

I walked right up to him, and says I, "Louie, do you know me?"

Quarter deck etiquette is kind of dropped ashore, you know. He stopped and gasped as though he'd seen a ghost.

"Potter," says he, "I t'ought you vas dead."

"Not yet, Louie, as you'll soon find out," says I. "Through your bull head blunder, I've lost my lay in as good a whaling voyage as ever was seen; I've been knocked about in a Chinese packet for nigh a year, been alone on an island for six months an' more, and besides that, have lost six mates, all good an' true men, which you ain't," says I, "being as you're nothing but a Frenchman."

Well, you'll excuse me for talking kind of rough like that when I get excited, won't you? The men made a ring for us, and then and there I gave Louie a little the biggest licking one man ever gave another; at least so the men called it, and they talked about it at Jerry's long after I'd become captain and part owner of a good ship myself.

Louie never laid it up against me, however, for he sailed under me as second mate more than one voyage years afterwards, and a better officer I wouldn't want, barring his natural dullness.

But I could never really forgive him for that blunder.

RIPPLES.

BESIDE a shady pool she stood,
Just where the meadow meets the wood;
I know the place full well.
And lightly on the surface clear
She cast a pebble lying near,
And round it, as it fell,
The little ripples, every one,
All laughed and sparkled in the sun.

Once on a sleeping heart, by chance,
There fell a careless word, a glance,
Upon a summer's day.
The word, the look, the summer, too,
Have fled, as all sweet things must do,
But, though they've passed away,
In one heart, that will not forget,
The happy ripples sparkle yet.

A BATTLE WITH MISFORTUNE.*

BY UPTON B. SINCLAIR, JR.

A tale of trials in the great metropolis, wherein is shown that the fight with poverty and illness may have all the exciting features of a contest with life threatening conditions in the wilder regions of the earth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HANGING IN THE BALANCE.

THE pace, however, was more than flesh and blood could stand. Bronson and the Texan soon realized that they could never keep it up until they reached the office of Henderson & Murray. The former caught sight of a passing cab, and he called to the driver; the cowboy echoed the cry with a whoop which caused the man to turn around on his seat in alarm.

In a few seconds the two were in the cab and flying up the street.

"Fifty cents extra if you bring me there in ten minutes!" shouted Bronson.

"I'll make it all right, if I don't get arrested," was the cabby's reply, and he fell to lashing his horse.

The two young men sank back and gasped for breath, and presently Bronson told his companion what he had learned over the telephone about the change back in the route of the parade.

"There is no doubt about it now," he cried, "and our fortune is made if we can only succeed in the stroke. The thing is, will we get there before Thompson notifies his agents, or before the agents find it out themselves? There is a paper up town which will probably issue an extra a short while after the information is out, so you see it all hangs by a thread."

"Doggone yo' boots! Git up thar!" the Texan began to call out, leaning from the window. "Do you call thet goin'? You ought to git out on the ranch once 'n' see some drivin'!"

It was a thrilling race, for the Texan's protests were not without their effect, and several times the driver came within an ace of upsetting the cab as he veered to one side to pass another vehicle. More than once policemen rushed out and yelled at him, but he paid not the least attention.

"There's the building now, right ahead—that tall one," Bronson cried suddenly.

It was a matter of seconds now; in order that none of these might be lost, Bronson had taken out his money, and the cowboy likewise produced his; they counted out the one hundred and fifty dollars, and Bronson shoved the amount into his pocket.

"If I don't make that real estate agent sign the lease in a hurry it won't be because I don't try!" he exclaimed.

"Don't let him git suspicious, fo' Heaven's sake!" was Saunders' warning. "He may hev heerd somethin' about the change."

"I'll do my best," Bronson replied. "I'll manage it if it can possibly be done. Just think what a reward it will mean," he added excitedly, "if we succeed in renting that store for three or four hundred dollars! And even that may not be all, for we may be able to lease it permanently soon afterwards."

At that instant the cab stopped because of a momentary blockade; without a moment's hesitation Bronson made a flying leap out of the door.

"You stay and pay the driver," he called back to the Texan.

With that he dashed off up the street, and a minute later was in front of the office of Henderson & Murray.

A more sudden change in demeanor could not have been imagined. Bronson stopped, wiped off his collar, mopped the perspiration from his brow, and then strolled leisurely into the office.

**This story began in the February issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The six back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 60 *cents.*

A young clerk came forward, of whom Bronson immediately inquired for Mr. Henderson.

"I am not sure if he is in," the clerk replied.

Bronson choked as he thought of that appalling possibility of his not being there, a contingency on which he had not counted. But to his relief he saw the senior partner just entering.

"So you are back," was the other's greeting.

"Yes, and I have news which will interest you," rejoined Bronson, making the effort of his life to appear perfectly calm and collected.

"Ah!" said the other, rubbing his hands. "What is it?"

"I have talked the matter over with the parties interested," Bronson went on, "and we have decided that the office will suit our purposes; I have come to arrange the matter."

"I shall be pleased to arrange it as quickly as you like," said Mr. Henderson.

"Well, you cannot arrange it any too quickly to suit me, as I have not a little to attend to this afternoon," and Bronson hoped he was not appearing too precipitate.

"We think we do business pretty fast in this office," was Mr. Henderson's smiling rejoinder, and he turned towards a desk at one side. "Just step over here, please."

He produced a paper with a big red seal at the bottom, and in large, engraved letters at the top the word "Lease."

"It will not take me very long to write out this," he said, "though we don't often have occasion to settle a matter so quickly."

Then for a minute or two there was silence in the room, except for the scratching of Mr. Henderson's pen as he filled out the terms of the agreement. Bronson meanwhile gave no outward sign of his anxiety, but the fingers behind his back were twitching at a furious rate.

Mr. Henderson looked up suddenly as the door opened, and Bronson whirled about, his heart in his throat; but it was only Saunders who strolled in unconcernedly.

"Good afternoon," he said, and then added, "Don't mind me, for my friend is in a hurry."

After which the scratching continued again. The two gazed at each other, and Bronson took out his handkerchief to wipe away the perspiration, which stood in beads on his forehead. Yet every second which passed brought them nearer to victory.

It seemed impossible that anything could block them; but there was no being certain. They found that out to their alarm a few seconds later.

Mr. Henderson had filled out one after another of the blanks in the lease; then he blotted it, and at last looked up.

"I think you will find this all right," he said, as he held it towards Bronson.

The latter glanced through the agreement quickly.

"It is the usual form," he said. "One hundred and fifty dollars per month—payments strictly in advance."

Mr. Henderson had already signed his name as "Agent for Henry G. Thompson, owner."

"And now there is little more to be done," said Mr. Henderson. "I suppose your friend will be your witness?"

"Glad to oblige," was the Texan's response.

"Then there is nothing else but for us to sign this lease?" inquired Bronson.

"Oh, you forget," interposed Mr. Henderson; "there is the matter of references——"

"Oh, I guess there isn't very much to be looked up in that line," was Bronson's reply, as he drew from his pocket the one hundred and fifty dollars, and counted the sum out on the desk in front of them; "I don't suppose you will need any other references than this?"

Mr. Henderson counted the money over, laughing.

"No," he said; "I guess that will be sufficient, under the circumstances. But of course you know that I shall have to make out a second copy of the lease."

Poor Bronson's heart sank, and his dismay showed itself in his face.

"It won't take very long," said Mr. Henderson, as he seized his pen and began writing again.

But the time, short as it was, proved to be a period of agonized suspense for the anxious pair. They stood gazing around them nervously, straining their ears for the fanciful sounds of danger, while Mr. Henderson's pen fairly flew over the paper. They were just beginning to be convinced that all danger was over, when suddenly Bronson gave a start of dismay.

Through the open window of the office had come a sound—a sound which he had been dreading most of all:

"Extra, extra!"

The cry was already close, and coming rapidly nearer. Trembling with anxiety, Bronson silently moved over to where his friend was standing, and whispered breathlessly to him.

A look of determination crossed the other's face; he started for the door.

"I'm afraid I can't wait," he said. "I've really got to go!"

"It won't be but just a moment," cried Mr. Henderson, looking up from his writing.

"Cain't stop," called back the Texan, as he vanished, "but I'll step in ag'in; I've got somethin' to 'tend to up the street."

Again came the dreadful cry, "Extra, extra!" now louder than ever. There were evidently two or three voices shouting at once, and Bronson began drumming loudly on the desk to keep the sounds away from the other man's ears.

Meanwhile the Texan, as soon as he was fairly clear of the building, had turned and dashed up the street like a madman. A few seconds later he reached the foremost of the four men, who were running down the street, each with a big bundle of papers in his arms.

"Extra, extra!" was the cry. "Change of the route of the great parade! Fifth Avenue counted in! Extra, extra!"

It was fortunate that the cowboy was by this time somewhat accustomed to city ways, so he did not draw his gun. He grasped the first of the men by the arm.

"Look a' hyar!" he cried, "do you want to make some money?"

"Makin' it just as fast as I can!" was the reply.

"I've got a friend down the street who is very sick an' nervous," said the Texan (not without some truth), "an' it makes him worse to hear this hollerin'."

"The deuce with him!" growled the man, as he started on again.

But the Texan took a fresh grip on his arm.

"Here's fifty cents," said he, "if you'll go over on Broadway an' not come back till you git three blocks down the street."

The man hesitated but an instant; he then took the money.

"A bargain," he said, and off he rushed down the side street.

Wild with delight, Saunders dashed on to the next man. This time he caught two together, and met with equal success. It cost him a dollar, but he had achieved his purpose.

There was only one more man left.

"I reckon he won't be no harder'n the rest," chuckled Saunders as he reached him.

He repeated the same formula as before, and as he did so he plunged his hand into his pocket.

"Half a dollar," he said.

"I'm willin'," answered the man. "Only shell out quick!"

And then began the trouble, for instead of "shelling out," the Texan stood still for an instant, a blank expression on his face.

"What's de matter wit' you?" the man demanded. "Ain't it a go?"

"My—my money's all gone!" gasped the other in horror.

With an expression of disgust, the man sprang forward again, and started off down Fifth Avenue. Once more he raised that cry of "Extra, extra!"

Poor Saunders was about as desperate as a man could be, searching wildly about in one pocket after another of his clothing, but not a cent could he find. He had paid the cabby's charges, and the other dollar and a half had taken the last cent which he owned on earth, besides the hundred dollars which Bronson was paying over to Mr. Henderson.

And in the mean time, that fellow was hurrying on down the street, with his dreadful cry. With a wild "Durnation!" the Texan leaped forward.

"Thet air hez got to be stopped!" he gasped.

And there was only one way which

occurred to him of accomplishing this purpose; he seized the paper man by the shoulder and dragged him roughly back.

"Look a' hyar," he shouted, "I tell you——"

He did not get time to tell any more, however; the man saluted him with a furious oath.

"What do you want?" he yelled. "Let go of me, I say!"

And as the cowboy still continued to haul away, an instant later the man raised his arm and knocked his hand free. Just how things went after that, it would not be possible to tell, but suffice it to say that a few seconds later the man had dropped his papers, and the two were at it, hammer and tongs.

CHAPTER XXX.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Of course a fight on Fifth Avenue in broad daylight could not get very far without drawing a crowd. The two struggling contestants were in a few seconds completely surrounded by a yelling group of errand boys, to say nothing of dignified business men, who ought to have known better.

The fight itself would be beyond description, for the blows exchanged were wild and promiscuous, the two swinging their arms like windmills, and the affair was ended with the suddenness with which it had begun.

There was a roar from some one on the edge of the rapidly thickening crowd of "Cheese it, the cop!" However ignorant the cowboy may have been of the meaning of those words, his opponent was not slow to comprehend them.

He turned and plunged into the crowd at the top of his speed, apparently having no further thought of revenge upon his assailant or of his newspapers, which he left scattered about on the sidewalk.

And Saunders, who had at first turned to chase him, suddenly caught sight of the policeman. He darted back into the crowd, where a little gamin, who had been eagerly watching the affray, whispered to him, "Stop runnin' an' he won't know yer!"

And, taking the hint, the Texan adjusted his collar and strolled calmly off.

The spectators were all so bent on getting away themselves that no one noticed him, and when the puffing officer finally succeeded in pushing his way through the crowd he had not the slightest clue to guide him to the combatants.

Meanwhile the Texan, as he hurried off, could not help chuckling to himself that his purpose was accomplished. There were no more cries of "Extra!" on Fifth Avenue.

"An' I reckon Bronson's gone an' done it by this time!" he told himself.

He lost no time in returning to the office of Henderson & Murray. As he opened the door he saw his friend in the very act of bending over the table to sign the leases, while Mr. Henderson was again counting over the money, preparatory to putting it in the safe.

"Oh, here you are," he said, as he caught sight of Saunders. "We were just waiting for you."

The Texan stepped over to the desk; Bronson had signed both documents, and they only awaited his witnessing of them.

Probably never in his life had the Texan felt his lack of education more than he did at that moment; instead of being able to rattle off his name in a few seconds as Bronson did, he had laboriously to spell out letter after letter.

And indeed he had reason to believe that his slowness very nearly cost them the success of their plan. He had just made the last little curlicue with which he finished his crude signature; then, half dazed with the magnitude of the triumph, he turned towards his friend, and at that very instant the climax came.

The door of the office opened, and a man rushed in. As Bronson caught sight of him, he instinctively made a grab for one of the copies of the lease.

For the man was Thompson, the editor of the *Globe*.

He was evidently in a hurry. He stopped abruptly as he saw who was in the office, for there was probably no one in the whole city whom he had less expectation of seeing, or whom he was less pleased to meet.

But his business was so urgent that he hesitated only for an instant.

"I just stopped in to tell you the

news," he said, as he hurried up to Mr. Henderson. "I suppose you have heard it?"

"What's that?" replied the agent.

"Why, about the change."

"What change do you mean?" asked the other.

"The change in the route of the parade."

Henderson gave a start.

"What in the world are you talking about?" he gasped.

"What I stopped in for," continued Thompson calmly, "was to tell you that in case you should have an application you will, of course, not think of renting the store."

The whole truth flashed over the real estate agent in an instant. Apparently too much astounded to utter a word, he stared with open mouth, first at Thompson and then at Bronson and his friend.

It was all the latter could do to keep from giving audible vent to their delight, for it was truly comical to see the behavior of Thompson.

At first he gazed at Bronson with a puzzled expression. Then as the facts of the case dawned on him it gave place to a look of wild alarm. He whirled about to Mr. Henderson.

"You don't mean," he panted—"you can't possibly mean——"

He stopped, as if unable to utter the terrible words.

"I do mean just that!" groaned the agent.

"You have rented it?" Thompson almost screamed.

"Yes," was the breathless response, "I have rented it to this gentleman."

Thompson was fairly foaming at the mouth by now; he clenched his fists and leaped towards Bronson as if to attack him. But fortunately for himself he restrained that impulse in time. The mere motion almost got him into trouble, for the cowboy, who had been crouching and glaring at the man as savagely as a panther, was just about to spring at him when Bronson seized him and dragged him back.

Thompson, meanwhile, in his helpless wrath, had turned upon his agent.

"Do you mean," he cried, "that it is done—that the papers are signed?"

"They are," said Mr. Henderson.

"But, you fool, you," Thompson panted, "these boys have no money—they are beggars!"

The agent shrugged his shoulders.

"They paid me one hundred and fifty dollars," he said, "and it is good money; that is all I know about it."

As the enraged man realized definitely how he had been baffled, and by whom, he lost all control of himself, and stormed up and down the room, swearing alternately at Bronson and at Mr. Henderson. The former closed the incident, however, as far as he was concerned, by putting the lease in his pocket and walking out of the store.

In fact, he dared not remain, for he knew not how long he might be able to restrain his excitable friend, who was struggling and protesting vehemently, wild for a chance to "git at him," as he phrased it.

But when he was once more out in the open air the Texan's wrath soon evaporated, giving place to the wildest joy; indeed, it was almost impossible for the two to realize that they were actually in possession of that store.

"Doggone yo' boots, old man!" Saunders exclaimed, "we'll make about a hundred dollars apiece!"

"By Jove, though, it was a narrow escape," laughed Bronson; "just to think, if we had been but a few seconds later, we would have lost the chance."

But ways and means of utilizing the advantage they had gained must now be discussed.

"Of course we'll hev to advertise her," chuckled the Texan, "an p'r'aps we'll put up a big stand inside."

"But where are we to get the money to do this?" Bronson wanted to know.

The thought seemed to strike the Texan for the first time. He put his hand to his pocket, while a blank expression crossed his face.

"Durnation!" he cried. "Thet's so; do you know I hain't got a cent left?"

Then it was Bronson's turn to look astonished.

"Not a cent?" he cried in alarm.

"Not a picayune!" was the reply; "I paid it all to them newspaper fellers an' that air cab driver."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Bronson. "How much did you pay that man?"

"A steep price," answered Saunders; "but I reckoned them things wuz expensive."

"But how much?" Bronson persisted.

"He said fo' dollars, an' then thar wuz the extry fifty cents——"

Bronson staggered back to lean against a lamp post for support.

"Four dollars and a half!" he groaned.

"Warn't thet right?" persisted the other in alarm. "Why, how wuz I goin' to know? I couldn't tell——"

It was some time before Bronson recovered from the shock.

"I know it," he said at last; "I should have told you; as a matter of fact, a dollar and a half would have been liberal pay. Four dollars and a half!"

Bronson looked so disheartened that Saunders felt for his gun and whirled about as if to start on a hunt for that cabby; but the other at last succeeded in persuading him of the futility of that course of action, and they set out for home once more.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOOKING AHEAD.

Bronson in the mean time was examining his own financial condition.

"Marner gave me two dollars," he said, "but I have spent some of that already; we won't even have enough to pay for our room; what in the world are we going to do?"

"Doggoned ef I know!" was the cowboy's glum response. "Why in durnation didn't we think of these hyar things afo'?"

After their triumph it was naturally to be expected, however, that the two would not remain cast down for a very long time.

"When we rent that store we can hire all the cabs in the city," Bronson laughed suddenly.

And then the Texan related his experiences with the newspaper venders, which had the effect of restoring them both to good humor very speedily. Nor was it very long before there were other prospects disclosed to them.

"We were doing all that worrying about paying for our room," Bronson suggested suddenly, "and we entirely forgot that we needn't pay for it."

"Not pay for it?" the Texan asked. "What do you mean?"

"Why, we can doubtless settle with the landlady by paying her for the time we have been there," was Bronson's reply.

"But what good'll thet do?" protested the Texan. "We cain't sleep on the street, kin we? Ef it war down on the ranch, now, it'd be all right, but up hyar——"

"Where in the world is your memory?" put in Bronson with a merry laugh. "Sleep on the street! What in the world are you talking about? Haven't we got a palatial residence for which we are paying five dollars a day?"

It was some time before the Texan was able to comprehend the fact that Bronson was proposing to occupy the loft as their dwelling place.

"There is no reason why we shouldn't," he said—"until we succeed in renting it, at any rate. Of course we won't have beds there, but I fancy I can get along without that. Can't you?"

"I kin try," replied the Texan with a grin; "I never slept in a bed till I come to this hyar town."

The two were very speedily convinced of the practicability of that new scheme, and lost no time in carrying it out.

"It may be that Thompson would make a kick if he knew anything about it," said Bronson; "because, you see, he might claim that he simply rented it to us for business purposes. But we can lock ourselves in, and then no one can find out what we are doing—that is, unless they break down the door."

Arrived at the lodging house, Bronson found no difficulty in making peace with the landlady. Bronson had no belongings, and Saunders only a small bundle, so it did not take them very long to clear out of the place and hurry back to their new possession.

It must be remembered that so far they had not even entered the place; and they were not a little anxious to find out what it looked like.

"We will have to get the key over at the real estate agent's," said Bronson.

So the two once more entered the familiar office.

Mr. Henderson came forward to meet them, looking, of course, exceedingly glum and surly. However, he gave up the key, and the two were soon in their new home.

The size of it made them start in surprise, for though it was a very small office, it was enormous compared to the tiny hall room to which they had been accustomed.

"Durnation! How'll we ever git used to it?" gasped the Texan.

But Bronson's chief thought was of the windows. He found to his delight that there were two of them, both unusually broad.

"We can get a dozen people in here to see the parade," he laughed, as he turned and clapped his companion on the back. "Saunders, our fortune is made!"

The two delighted young fellows could not but smile as they realized the strange contrast which was presented between their aristocratic dwelling place and their financial condition. Bronson had but one dollar and twenty five cents in his pocket, and this was the sum total of their possessions.

"But you say we kin live fer a few cents a day," remarked Saunders, "so I guess we kin git along."

"We can live cheaper than ever now," Bronson declared. "Yesterday, as I was passing a bakeshop, I happened to notice a sign in the window which announced that they sold 'yesterday's bread for half price.' If I had known that a few weeks ago, I would have been wealthy by this tim !"

"Every little helps," said the other. "We'll tackle thet air place."

Bronson was reminded of old times as he made his way around to the nearest grocery store. He returned with a familiar loaf of bread and a can of milk, which offered quite a contrast to the meals he had lately been enjoying.

"But it won't take us two hours to eat it, doggone its boots!" observed the Texan, as he quaffed his share of the liquid at a single gulp.

"We have no occasion to hurry," laughed Bronson. "We have nothing to do, you know."

In spite of the size of their bedchamber, the two were not very comfortable that night, for they had nothing to do but to stretch themselves out on the floor; however, except for a slight stiffness, they were none the worse next morning, and both of them woke up with ravenous appetites, to satisfy which another raid was made on the grocery store.

"I don't think this way of livin'll be any cheaper'n the other," said the Texan, as he again devoured his share. "I kin eat about twenty meals a day of this hyar kind."

"You won't get them," chuckled Bronson, "for I have got hold of the cash, and you must economize whether you like it or not."

"I'll git a squar meal fo' lunch, any way," declared the other.

They had been invited by Judge Fuller to repeat their yesterday's visit, for the latter understood, of course, how anxious the two young men were to keep informed as to Owen's progress.

In the mean time they sought out a public library, where they could consult the morning papers, and from these they took down a list of several persons who were advertising for places from which to view the parade.

"We don't want to lose any time about it," Bronson announced. "It would be a fearful calamity if we were stuck with the loft on our hands."

The very thought made them shudder. They resolved to start out the very first thing in the afternoon and hunt up the advertisers.

They arrived at the judge's in due course, and were again invited up stairs, where they were greeted by Miss Fuller. It was only a few minutes afterwards that Judge Fuller also put in an appearance. He gazed at the two young men with not a little curiosity as he entered.

"I know what you are going to ask," said Bronson, laughing. "You are wondering about that telephone incident."

"To be sure I am," said the judge. "What in the world——"

"Oh, it is a long story," replied the other. "Are you equal to it?"

"Go ahead," said the judge.

"Well, in the first place," Bronson began, "I want to ask you if you know of anybody who wants to rent a place to see the parade?"

"What sort of a place?" asked the judge.

Bronson answered the question, and the other eyed him in some surprise.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I am looking for such a place myself."

The two young men gazed at each other in amazement.

"You see," continued the judge, "my family and myself will have to see the parade, and I don't know how many friends who are coming on. I haven't made any arrangements yet, but I was thinking of putting up a stand of my own."

"But have you got a place?" asked Bronson.

"No," was the response; "I should have to hire it, and that would be very expensive. Besides, I should rather be indoors, as it may be cold, or a storm may come up in the course of the day. Who is this person who has the place to rent of which you speak?"

And then the two proceeded to tell the story between them, both out of breath with excitement, and interrupting each other promiscuously. The rest listened with evident delight, and as for Judge Fuller, he was completely aghast.

"I never heard of a greater piece of enterprise in my life," he exclaimed. "You young men certainly deserve your success. I congratulate you."

"It is a little premature," said Bronson. "We haven't sublet our place yet."

"I don't think there will be much difficulty about that," was the answer. "How much do you want for the loft?"

The two looked at each other in uncertainty.

"I am sure I don't know," said Bronson, acting as spokesman. "I don't know how much it is worth; we wouldn't want to overcharge you."

"Nonsense," said the judge. "If I should take it, it would be purely a matter of business. But lunch is ready. We will continue the subject down stairs."

The two did not like to discuss prices with their friend, but Judge Fuller speedily settled that matter.

"I have been negotiating for a place up on Riverside Drive on which to put a few seats," he said. "I was to pay three hundred dollars for it. The trouble and so on would probably cost me another hundred dollars, so I will agree to pay you four hundred dollars for the loft. Does that seem fair?"

As it chanced, four hundred dollars was the maximum sum which the two had hoped to get for the rent of the place. They were perfectly satisfied, and announced the fact eagerly.

"Perhaps it will be just as well to settle this matter now, and get it off my mind," said the judge when the party adjourned up stairs again. "Generally, I don't transact business at home, but you will excuse me this time."

He went to a desk and put his hand on a small tin box. From this he took out a number of bills.

"There you are," he said, passing them over. "My mind is easy now."

"And our fortune is made," gasped Bronson, almost speechless with delight.

It was a long time before the two were able to realize their good luck, to comprehend that their trials were over at last.

"I don't know how we can ever thank you," said Bronson to the judge.

"I don't want you to try," was the other's response. "But what are you going to do with your property after the parade is over?"

Neither Bronson nor the Texan had gone so far as this in their planning, and said so frankly.

"Why don't you start a literary agency?" suggested the judge, turning to Bronson. "You will have headquarters centrally located; our friend Saunders here will see to it that you are not imposed upon by any frauds, and keep office, while you and Owen can pass upon and place the various manuscripts submitted. You have already some literary and artistic acquaintances; I can put you in the way of making several more. There are surely enough aspiring geniuses in the country to pay you a living commission for what you do for them, and you have a small capital to pay for your preliminary advertising."

The idea dazzled Bronson and dazed Saunders, but after the latter had been made to understand that he would not be required to do anything more distinctively literary than to receive callers and investigate doubtful customers, he be-

came enthusiastic over the scheme, which was duly carried out after Dewey Day had gone into history. And as the young firm prospered, we need no longer concern ourselves with their adventures, the latter being no longer admissible under the title "A Battle with Misfortune."

THE END.

IN CUPID'S SERVICE.

BY WALTER BEVERLY CRANE.

A romance of Little Italy, setting forth the faithfulness of poor Gigi, true to his master's behests, whether these took him on missions of love or hate.

DOWN in "the Bend," in Little Italy, she was called "La Picciola" by the swarthy denizens of the *quartier;* the *flaneurs* of Broadway knew her as Thérèse, the little flower girl; but to young Antonio Cappiani, the organ grinder, she was "*cara mia Teresina.*"

Next to his monkey, Gigi, the dearest and sweetest thing in the world to Antonio, was his Teresina.

Basta! Giovanni Tassilo, the girl's father, was a Sicilian, with blood like lava and a temper—*inferno!* He was a harsh, capricious, insanely jealous padrone of a parent.

In the daytime he presided over a push cart laden with the fruits of the season; at night he followed and watched his little daughter as she sold her boutonnières in the uptown cafés and outside of the theaters in the Tenderloin.

Left motherless at the tender age of five, Teresina had grown up under blows and endearments, oaths and caresses, a struggling little sunbeam in a shady spot.

As it was, she lightened the hearts of her countrymen with a laugh that was a tune; she cheered the old and sick of the *quartier* with a voice as sweet and welcome as vesper bells; and her eyes held for Antonio Cappiani, the maestro of modern organ grinders, an inspiration heavenly—so gladsome, in fact, that he had already worn out two cylinders of "Sweet Marie" playing her praises about town.

She was only fifteen, yet a woman. Her cheek had the blush of the ripening grape, her eye was brown as the hazel nut, her hair black as midnight, and her figure—*corpo di Bacco!*—divine!—her bosom "half globed, like folded lilies in the stream."

Many were the boutonnières she sold along Broadway, and when, after an unusually good night's work, she returned to the Bend with Giovanni, her pockets jingling with coin, the old man would forget his jealous fears and murmur admiringly in patois:

"*Non pezzo piccolo, Teresa, non pezzo piccolo carissima!*" as he gloated over the shining silver.

It would never do to lose Teresa, his precious little mint, his pure white dove.

Diavolo! But he must guard her carefully, for had she not many suitors, young and old, rich and poor? Had he not seen the fine American signors in the up town cafés try to kiss her when flushed with wine?

Inferno! He would run his stiletto through them, one and all, should they attempt to steal his daughter from him.

Of but one man was he really fearful—young Antonio, the organ grinder, who lived in the rear tenement of the court, the window of whose room looked into the abode of his little one, and to the sill of whose window was attached the end of the Tassilo clothes line.

Of all Teresa's admirers, none so strong and handsome as Antonio Cappiani; none so well known and influential socially.

He was the leader of all functions, and both the president and treasurer of the organ grinders' association. It was common report that Antonio and his monkey were great money makers, and that he had money in more than one savings bank.

In the daytime Teresa had to work under Maria Santuzzi, the old woman who lived on the top floor of the Mulberry street "double decker" and made wax flowers for a French firm in South Fifth Avenue.

It was a distasteful task to the child of nature, molding flowers of wax and forming the fantastic creations the old woman designed.

At night she really lived—forgot for the time her dreary existence—for it was then that Giovanni brought her the flowers she loved, flowers that she kissed and caressed with delight as she sallied forth to breathe for a few short hours in the artificial glare of Broadway.

Antonio was truly a man about town,

"East side, west side, all around the town,"

as his organ played and Gigi climbed.

Only on Sundays and late at night was he permitted to see his beloved Teresina, and then their meetings were stolen.

He used to stand in the doorway of the tenement and watch for her return, to be greeted with a smile from the girl and a fierce scowl from the father, who always tagged at her heels.

That she loved him he knew by the smile and the many tender missives that found their way across the clothes line running from the windows of their respective rooms, messages carried by Gigi in the dead of night.

Poor little Gigi! How often Antonio aroused him out of his hard earned rest, and compelled him to stretch his tired little limbs traveling across the swaying line between the sighing lovers!

Thus did Antonio foil the dragons of his heart's Hesperides.

Gigi, stripped of his red zouave suit and cap, those gorgeous regimentals of his workaday life, would carry their miserably spelled notes and Antonio's gifts of sweets—sweets carefully wrapped in paper and tied with string, for Gigi was not an infallible "monk."

And how Teresina would welcome the little fellow with a kiss, and how Antonio would take that kiss from his furry cheek when he had safely made his return trip in the ghostly moonlight only the laughing stars can tell—and they never tell tales.

Gigi was the connecting "link" between the two, never missing, but always ready to prove the Darwinian theory that the man and woman owed their existence to him—as indeed the lovers did.

Gigi was a macaque, and a perfect gentleman in all his actions.

Unlike most of his kind, his deportment was excellent, and his gestures never inappropriate to the occasion.

He was neither mischievous nor thievish, and was always mild and tractable, taking life seriously—not the joke his audiences seemed to consider it.

His education had not been neglected: there was not a cleverer performer in the profession.

Antonio had even taught him to test bad money with his teeth, a proceeding which so shamed the guilty giver that a good dime was generally thrown after him.

Whatever meetings the young lovers planned had to be held when Giovanni was in a neighboring wine shop, their trysting place a corner of the dark and grimy court below.

One night Giovanni Tassilo came home shrieking curses loud and deep; he was frantic with rage, grief, and despair—he had lost Teresa!

She had disappeared around a Broadway corner in company with a tall, well dressed man, an American, he thought.

A policeman had seen them enter a cab and drive hastily away. Giovanni had been unable to trace or follow them.

Maledizione! Curses on the day he let her speak to the fine gentlemen of the cafés.

The wise ones of the colony winked the eye and said the police would never find her.

"Poppotetta!" La Picciola had her price, like the rest of the girls; she wanted a higher bidder than Cappiani; she had run off with some rich American signor who would buy her fine gowns and put diamonds in her ears.

Giovanni swore that she had been kidnaped, that she never would have left him willingly—at which Piero Santuzzi and the rest of the cabaret's habitués roared with laughter.

The hot blood of Giovanni could not brook the insinuation; Piero Santuzzi

was carried home with a bad knife thrust between the shoulders.

Antonio said nothing after his first furious outburst of grief and rage; he did nothing but preserved an ominous silence that boded ill to any jester that dared speak her name in his presence; he was as quick and ready with the knife as Giovanni.

He kept silent and drank more vermuth and absinthe than was good for him. The "Sweet Marie" cylinder was taken out of the organ and ground under foot; he would never play the melody again.

To console himself he replaced the rejected cylinder with the intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana," and the music of Mascagni soothed him at times.

Gigi and he had long talks regarding the missing girl, at which conversazioni Gigi, in answer to Antonio's many frantic inquiries as to her whereabouts, would take off his little red cap and scratch his head in utter bewilderment.

Corpo di Christi! He would search for her and her lover if he had to travel the world over.

With this determination he and Gigi left the colony one day and became wanderers on the face of the earth. It was summer now, and the Mecca of his profession the seaside resorts.

First they visited Coney Island. There on the Bowery, along Surf Avenue, was a field of gold. Gigi's new drill and pole climbing proved a great card, and Antonio rolled in wealth.

But he was far from happy; there was a malignant devil in his heart, the lust to kill in his fierce nature, that could not be stifled. He had sworn a solemn vow to find the faithless one and the miscreant that had stolen her from him; he must kill them both!

Patience, though—the Order of the Mafia had taught him to be cautious and deliberate in his movements when seeking revenge.

The summer was waning; it was the tag end of the season when he and Gigi found themselves at Atlantic City. There Lorenzo Riccadonna, with his wife and piano organ, were the first they met with.

The information he thirsted for was his at last.

Lorenzo had seen Teresa in Philadelphia. She was living there, he said, but the man she was with was not *Americano;* he was *Italiano,* a rich restaurant keeper who kept a *pensione* in New York as well as Philadelphia. He did not know the number of the house, but he gave Antonio the name of the street.

Trovato!

Despatch, lest they escape him!

In three hours' time he and Gigi were in Philadelphia. At last they found the street. The music of his organ would bring her to the window, he hoped.

He rattled off his repertoire block after block, but the faces he and Gigi saw were all strange and unfamiliar. He had pulled his hat well down over his eyes to avoid recognition; and as for Gigi, he was disguised in an entirely new uniform.

He was in the midst of the intermezzo from the "Cavalleria" when a familiar form appeared at the second story window of a small red brick house.

Presto! The face was turned towards him. In the gathering twilight the features were indistinct; he strained his eyes; his hat brim bothered him, but—yes, it was she! *Trovato!* It was Teresa!

Ah, but what a change from the girl of the Bend! She was no longer the simple, laughing little flower girl, but a heavy, dull eyed, painted creature, adorned with cheap and flashy jewelry, and clad in a silk gown of startling red.

She leaned indolently out of the window and whistled to the monkey.

Antonio was now playing in galop time, his excitement was so intense. Gigi had begun to climb the water spout of the quaint little house, and was nearing the woman at the window. Would she recognize the monkey, and thus warned, escape him?

Gigi had reached the window sill and was gravely saluting his former mistress. Antonio did not dare look up at the two, but ground away with his eyes fixed on the cobble stones, mechanically jerking at Gigi's rope.

Diavolo! He glanced up in surprise; the cord had suddenly grown very slack.

Both the woman and the monkey were gone from the window.

He pulled hard on the rope; it came

tumbling to the ground with no monkey attached to it. What had become of the two?

Was she going to steal his "monk," his beloved Gigi?

Had she recognized? *Inferno!* Perhaps she had recognized him; she was going to escape with him and cheat his master of his revenge.

The "monk" was off the string! *Dio mio!* But he must recover Gigi at any cost.

He propped his organ against the area railing and rushed madly through the open basement door.

A huge negress tried to bar his way, but he cast her aside with an oath, and plunged on through the dark hallway in search of the stairs.

He reached the first landing. There was a door, wide open, leading into a court in the rear; from the court ran a narrow alley connecting with the adjoining avenue. The house had both an entrance and exit leading into different streets.

Santa Maria, she has escaped him!

Antonio dashed on up stairs and threw his weight against the door of the front room. It swung open to the vigorous push of his shoulder, and he went sprawling on the floor.

The room was deserted!

Slowly the door swung back.

Ah! What was that—*there?* See, transfixed to the inside panel of the door a long, keen, shining stiletto driven through it, its little arms and legs extended in a last agonized convulsion—what was it?

Look again, Antonio, at the thing nailed to the door as if crucified, with the life blood slowly ebbing from it and forming a dark pool on the carpet below.

"Mother of Mercy!" he shrieked in Italian, staggering towards it.

Pinned to the breast by the blade was a scrap of paper on which had been hastily scrawled in Italian: "If you dare to follow me I will treat you as I have treated your monkey."

When the policeman who had been summoned to arrest the crazy organ grinder opened the door of the little second story front room, he found a dead man and a dead monkey. But the stiletto was no longer in the monkey's body, it was up to the hilt in the man's heart, and the writing on the paper was quite illegible.

THAT TRUE TO LIFE STORY.

BY JAMES BURTON REYNOLDS.

How a certain young man conceived the idea of writing a piece of fiction that should be altogether different from the usual brand of the article, and the fantastic plan he made use of in carrying out his scheme—with the sequel thereto.

IT was an unusual gala night at the Cosmos Club, a club, too, that was noted for its gala occasions; and in the lexicon of the Cosmos, "gala" was synonymous with "noise"—so much so, in fact, that people who were not members of the club took pains to call this institution the Chaos Club; but, then, that may have been because they were jealous of the good times that went on inside the big stone building looking out on the well groomed park which was the Sunday parade ground of the city.

The Cosmos, however, had one thing, at least, in its favor: it was no hypocrite. It sailed under no false colors. It made no pretensions to athletics, to literature, or to science. It spent none of its time in keeping up a display art gallery, nor its energy in furnishing constituents for a swimming bath or athletic apparatus.

Its library had long since been turned into a grill room, where each member kept in a rack his own long pipe and big carved mug, and card tables occupied the space that on the plans of the architect bore the title of "Reading Room."

The club boasted but one object, one ambition: that of enjoyment. It was distinctly a young men's club, popular on account of the spirit, life, and good natured unconventionality that reigned all over the building from the billiard

tables down in the basement to the sleeping apartments up under the roof.

So there was really some basis for the nickname of the Chaos which it had received, and tonight was one of the occasions that furnished it.

There had been a chafing dish contest in the big grill room, and a culinary battle royal it had been. A score and more of contestants had sat each at a little table in front of his own chafing dish and manufactured a Welsh rabbit, while a scoffingly appreciative audience sat around and made suggestions and trouble.

The committee had made their rounds some little time before, had given their decision, and the prizes had just been awarded.

There was a silver chafing dish for the best tasting concoction, a traveling clock for the rabbit that had been made in the quickest time, and a dainty dressing mirror for the best looking one. There was also a booby prize for the worst one of all, a huge volume entitled "Hints to Young Housekeepers," all aglow with pictures of vegetables and roasts, and filled with rudimentary instructions in cooking.

The contest over, there was a grand reunion of victors, vanquished, and spectators. The parlors were filled, and the constant pressing of the bells kept the blue coated waiters on the jump, for every one was thirsty and impatient.

Over in a corner by the window lounged a little group of four, among them Lawrence Dana, who had distinguished himself by winning the first prize.

He was a young fellow, only a couple of years out of college, who had studied the mysteries of the chafing dish much more zealously than the mysteries of mathematics, while at Harvard; happy go lucky, popular, handsome, and lazy; whose present occupation consisted in waiting to be admitted into his father's money making firm and in taking frequent pleasure trips to Europe in order to increase his patience.

One of his companions was of the same sort. J. Arlington Henderson, as his card read, or "Jack," as everybody but his mother called him, was older, but not more mature.

He was a broker; that is, he called himself one in conversation and at a dollar a line in the advertising columns of the newspapers, and sat in his uncle's office and whittled away pencils and used up huge blocks of paper in figuring out a short cut to fortune.

The others were older. George Gray was an artist, full of talent and Bohemianism, but not a painter for revenue only.

His allowance from his mother's estate was more than sufficient to keep the wolf some blocks away from the door of his studio, and he used his brush simply for pastime, in the same way that his companions used a golf stick or a billiard cue.

Fred Carroll, the fourth one of the group, was a mystery that the club was trying to solve. No one understood him, no one knew anything about him.

He had not been in the city long, but the most of the time that he had been there he had spent inside the club. In fact, as a general thing he and the lights went out together at about the same time every night.

He was cynical always, and was considered artificial. He was young, undoubtedly, but looked old, and he varied between two moods: he was either exuberantly gay and careless, or gloomy and uncommunicative; there was no middle ground. Tonight it was the former mood that was in evidence.

The conversation over in this corner drifted promiscuously along. They had settled the important fact of whether the new dancer at the Gaiety Theater could really dance, and how she compared with Mlle. Guyere, whom all four had seen in Paris the previous winter; they had discussed the chances in the club yacht race that was to be held in a few days; they had speculated as to what the sudden rise in Western Union meant; they had touched on the elopement of the week before, and finally they drifted around to recent attempts at homely literature in handsome bindings.

Gray dilated enthusiastically upon the absurdity of the fiction of the day. He declared that authors did not believe what they wrote, could not possibly believe it if they tried, and that

they pictured impossible events knowingly and with deliberate intent to deceive.

Carroll smiled quietly and shook his head.

"I cannot agree with you there, Gray," he said. "I think that writers really believe in their situations when they think them out and write about them. The authors may be mistaken—of course, many times are; but they err through ignorance."

He hesitated a moment, then went on: "A friend of mine was telling me about a case of this kind the other day, a case that came under his own observation. An interesting story it was, too, and I will tell it to you if you will promise that it goes no further, for true stories ought never to be repeated."

The promise was quickly nodded, and Carroll continued:

"The story was about a young fellow named—well, Russell will do as well as anything. He was a clever sort of a chap, good natured and good company. He was a good student, and left college with the pockets of his commencement gown full of honors.

"He had one great aspiration—that for literature. Even in college he used to have the pictures of authors on the walls of his room instead of those of actresses. He was an omnivorous reader. He haunted libraries and was a financial godsend to booksellers. He read everything that came in his way, without regard to age, color, or previous condition of servitude.

"He dabbled in writing himself, and, on the whole, successfully. It is true that the shelves of his desk contained a large number of notices such as: 'We regret to inform you that the inclosed manuscript, which you kindly submitted, has to be returned. We thank you for your courtesy in submitting it, and remain,' etc.

"But occasionally he had a story or a sketch accepted and printed to the pleasing accompaniment of his full name, and this was enough to arouse the enthusiasm of his circle of friends and inspire him with new ambition.

"These friends, in their lavish appreciation, predicted that some day he would write a great novel. The idea thus planted grew with tremendous rapidity in Russell's mind.

"He determined that he would not only write a novel, a real flesh and blood story, but he would do it at once. What was more, the novel that he would write should be something out of the ordinary, something that would compel the world to pause for a moment in its mad rush and talk about it and him.

"When he thought of the multitude of sickly, weak, trifling novels that not only filled up the book stands, but were actually sold by the thousands, he felt certain of his ability to become a novelist. If such mosquitoes of literature could sell, certainly he could bring forth a story that would win quantities of fame.

"He knew better, so he told himself, than to follow out the stereotyped lines of thought. He would avoid the pitfalls and the ruts into which the novelist was almost certain to fall. He knew them and could avoid them. His would not be the conventional love tale that he had read and yawned over so often.

"He would have nothing to do with that old, old story, that tale in which the course of true love never ran smooth until the last chapter, and perhaps not then if the author was of a melancholy disposition or happened at the time to be troubled with indigestion; and the course of false love flowed placid as the surface of a hermit mill pond.

"His should be a novel from which the end could not be seen from the beginning. Furthermore, it should be modern. He was tired of the idea of going back to the middle ages, simply because when the tale was placed amid such surroundings no one dared to dispute inconsistencies of costume, geography, actions, or morals.

"In his story he would get along without monks and castles and troops of mounted horsemen, and cities with gates that closed at sundown, and languishing ladies in upper chamber windows, and knots of velvet lying about the streets, and penniless gentlemen of France going about on meddlesome and impossible errands and marrying heiresses to millions and thrones. In his novel there should be the union of the true and the strange.

"His novel became his one thought. During his business hours he was planning it out, at his leisure he was inventing situations. As he swung along the street or was jostled in the crowded car, he studied the faces of the people about him for characters.

"At last he decided upon his two leading personages. They should be a man, young and handsome, and a woman, old and unattractive. The lover he would make a person whom all society welcomed and for whom haughty dowagers angled; rich, accomplished, aristocratic.

"The lady in the case should be one well along in years, with a disposition soured by a loveless life, petulant, morbid, ignored and ignoring. Yet he would have this petted young man become fascinated by this woman and leave his own circle to seek her company.

"He would have him fall in love with her and finally marry her. And then the woman whom all had ignored, except this young hero, should recover her spirits and her grace and make him so good a wife that he could truthfully conclude in the language of the old fairy tale, 'And they lived happily together ever afterwards until they died.'

"This was the story he mapped out. No one, he told himself with satisfaction, had ever written a novel like it. The characters were certainly new in their arrangement.

"The public might say that his tale was improbable, but what of that? He believed in his own mind that such a thing could happen. What if people did call his story overdrawn and ridiculously impossible?

"It would make talk, and every conversation upon the subject would add fame to his book. The possibilities would be discussed by the critics in the papers, and by the people over the dinner table and under the evening lamps.

"It would be a new puzzle for the world to solve, a world so fond of puzzles. He would bring together society's idol and society's butt; *Othello* and *Desdemona* would be reversed and outdone; he would out Shakspere Shakspere.

"The more his mind dwelt upon this idea the more impressed with it he became. He enlarged upon it to himself, he gave it color, he reveled in picturing the sensation the novel would make when it came out.

"In a short time he had the story all drawn out on mental diagrams and the first few chapters down on paper. Then came his departure from the city to escape the summer's heat.

"He was to spend his vacation season at Lake George. In fact, the summer would not have seemed complete for him had he gone elsewhere.

"For years he had been an annual visitor to the big, blue, treacherous lake, from the time of his college days when he had camped there with classmates and made their island ring with college songs and shouts. He knew every part of the lake and nearly everybody along its shores, and when he stepped off the steamer at his hotel down along the island studded narrows he was greeted with shouts of welcome that assured a month of enjoyment before him.

"There was a wealth of young ladies, comely and fair to look upon, most of them old friends, and the usual dearth of young men; there was his fishing pole hanging high up on the piazza where he had left it a year ago; his canoe floated in the little sheltered bay, and his sailboat stood ready for flight, only waiting for a breeze and his hand upon the tiller.

"A few days after his arrival he chanced to be introduced to a woman whom before that time he had not noticed. In some way she at once singularly reminded him of the heroine of his unwritten tale.

"She was well along in years, she was unattractive certainly as compared with the ones about her, and in her face were the indications that she was equally without a past or a future.

"He inquired about her, and secretly he was delighted with the information that he received. She was a disagreeable person, so the young ladies told him, peevish, sarcastic, and distinctly inclined to be meddlesome.

"She was unpopular with everybody, young and old. She took no part in any of the hotel gaiety, but sat like a silent Cassandra, looking the things she did not say.

"The more they talked in this strain the more interested Russell became. He was convinced that here he had found the very person who was to figure in his great novel.

"He had imagined the character, and now found to his great delight that there was really such a person. Before him was an opportunity for character study such as few novelists had ever had.

"His coming to Lake George at just this time, he told himself in his enthusiasm, was a direct act of Providence, and clearly signified that he was to write the great novel—well, of the day.

"Everything was now plain. All that he had to do was to become thoroughly acquainted with Miss Easton, we will call her; study her as he would a book of philosophy at college, and then write down the result of his discoveries.

"And study her he did. He spent most of his time in her company. He talked to her, he read to her, he rowed her about the lake in the morning, at noontime, and by moonlight.

"Together they climbed frowning Black Mountain, getting lost in the narrow bridle path that leads to the top; they investigated dried up rivers where snakes with mighty rattles were supposed to dwell; when launch parties were formed to go up or down the lake, he saw to it she received an invitation among the first.

"People began to laugh, then to whisper, then to talk, and then to shake their heads knowingly. Days and weeks went by, and still Russell kept up the intimacy.

"His friends could not understand it. He deserted them basely and clung to the side of the lady of years.

"They rallied him about it, but he only smiled and gave no explanation. As a matter of fact, he did not realize the amount of attention that he was paying Miss Easton.

"He looked at it from a different standpoint. With him she was a problem, upon the successful solving of which depended the success of his book. He was interested as he had never been before in the study of a question.

"When with her he was not himself, he was the hero of his novel. In his own mind he laid aside his own personality entirely.

"He forgot himself and his friends alike. He saw only the opportunity of perfecting his novel and the fame beyond that.

"He put himself in his imaginative hero's place. He said to her the things that his hero was hereafter to say. He studied out these sentiments at night and spoke them to her the next day.

"He noted her surprise at hearing them and remembered her replies. Then he would write down the sentiments and the answers she made to them, and the little touches of nature she had shown.

"His book was apparently making itself, the dialogue was being manufactured as he went along, the lights and shades were being adjusted with perfect nicety. It seemed to him like a play in which he stood behind the scenes with the prompter's book in hand and watched the characters moving and talking.

"He had long before determined that one of the great scenes of his novel should be that of the proposal. With such an unusual blending of characters as the ones who were to take part in it the scene itself must be unusual.

"Nothing commonplace would do. It should be a masterpiece, natural, effective, convincing, dramatic. He would make it realistic. Miss Easton should tell him how to write it.

"By this time he was well enough acquainted with her, he thought, to ask her to do this favor for him. He would explain to her about the book, not too much, however, and she should compose the lady's reply to the young man.

"It was getting near the time of his departure from Lake George when he explained this to her and asked her assistance.

"He must have blundered, he must have forgotten to say anything about the book in his eagerness to gather material for it. At any rate, he found himself one afternoon accepted by Miss Easton as her future husband.

"So suddenly did this new position come upon him that for a time he was dazed. Gradually the light came, but it brought with it no relief.

"His blindness disappeared, he came

out of the character of the imaginary hero and became himself. Now that the scales of overenthusiasm had dropped from his eyes, he wondered how he could possibly have blundered so.

"To him the whole affair had been idealistic, savoring of the stage, of the mimic world, not of the every day one. To his mind it was the hero of his work of fiction proposing to the heroine of the same address.

"In his delight over the success that was crowning his fantastic plan he had forgotten entirely to think that there was any other interpretation to be put upon the matter.

"It was a ridiculous position for him to be placed in, so he told himself after the first shock had passed.

"It was a very interesting story that he would have to tell, how he, Charles Russell, who prided himself upon being a man of the world, who had mocked at love and scoffed at sentiment, had actually proposed to an old maid whom he had known but a few weeks.

"How his friends would laugh over it when he told them, what sport they would make of him! What a charming story it would make to tell to his coterie at the club in some cozy, confidential midnight symposium, and how the glasses would tinkle over it and him!

"He could hear their chaff already and see them shake their heads and hold their sides.

"Of course, there was only one thing to do. He must go to Miss Easton and make a confession. It might be hard for him, but as a man of honor it was necessary.

"It would be rather embarrassing, perhaps, to tell the story so that she would understand it properly and see that he was at heart blameless. Yes, it might require a great deal of diplomacy and ingenuity to weave the facts together so as to make a satisfactory appearance.

"But he would tell the whole truth, how an author's enthusiasm in his subject had carried him too far, how ambition was the real culprit, how it was all a joke on his part, a literary blunder.

"But when he pictured himself telling these things to the calm faced lady, somehow he did not seem to make a very splendid appearance. His story did not seem so humorous after all, and he began to doubt whether he would tell it at the club.

"There was, it is true, the course left to him of running away and allowing time to settle the whole thing in its own fashion; but that was unmanly, and Russell hated cowardice in any form. His sense of honor was highly developed, too highly, his friends often thought, when it seemed to slip across the boundary line into the land of the whimsical.

"As he thought the matter over, there came to him suddenly the fact that she had a position, too.

"Thus far he had considered the matter only in the light in which it affected him. It was embarrassing, ridiculous, and awkward. But what of her?

"She had taken it all in earnest. In her eyes all his devotion had been sincere; she had no suspicion of anything unreal behind it.

"It had been a new experience for her. She had read of such things in books, her friends had sometimes confidingly whispered of similar incidents, but she had given up hope that the story of her life was ever to contain such a chapter.

"His memory persisted in thrusting torturing thoughts before him. He remembered that his manner had been that of the lover, not of the acquaintance and friend. It is true that he was only impersonating another character, but she knew nothing of that.

"He remembered how she had changed in the time he had known her —at least to him. There had been a different look in her eyes, a different manner. His devotion to her was so unexpected, so surprising, and, above all, so grateful, that its effectiveness was trebled.

"It had melted the ice that had formed about her heart, and she found herself human after all, yearning for sympathy and for that something more than friendship.

"She had confided in him without reserve. She had told him about herself, of a life that had been sad after once promising so much of happiness, of family money swallowed up in hun-

gry Wall Street, of an unanticipated struggle for existence, of weary days and weeks and years of the drudgery of the schoolroom, that treadmill life where it is ever the same threadbare story, and where one sits by and watches the human tide sweep along.

"In his company she threw off her gloom and lost her petulance. He found that she was well educated, interesting, and animated.

"She had wandered about in foreign lands, and had used her eyes instead of her guide book, and had seen things that were not put down between the red covers. Her sarcasm changed to sparkling conversation.

"As Russell thought of her position, his own gradually disappeared. She became the central figure, the one to be regarded; he was only the side light.

"His sense of honor began to assert itself in a most startling way. It boldly declared that his path of duty was plain, that he should marry her. He had won her affection; it would be cowardly as well as cruel to hand it back to her with the announcement that it had only been taken as a joke and was not wanted.

"If it were only one of the young ladies, the case would be altogether different. She would forget it in her next burst of romance.

"But with Miss Easton this could not be. To tell her the truth now would be to send her back to her old sadness and morbid state, all the darker for the ray of false sunshine that had been hers.

"His sense of honor, oversensitive as it was, demanded that he marry Miss Easton, telling him plainly that he was pledged to her, bound by his own words, his own acts.

"Then the practical side of his nature would take him to task for the idea, and tell him that he had no right to marry her, tell him that he did not love her, and that marriage under such circumstances would be torture and too great a punishment for a fault that was merely that of carelessness.

"Then his conscience would take up the fight again, saying that his plan had all been quixotic, that he had no right to place her in such a position, that even in the best light he had acted like a bully rather than as a gentleman, that he had been worse than foolish, but for that reason should not shrink from paying the price of his folly.

"There was, too, another phase of the matter.

"He had contended in his unwritten novel that such a marriage as that which now confronted him would end happily. His whole idea had been that the lady whom all seemed to ignore was in reality the one to be chosen above all others, that the people in general had misjudged her. This had been the foundation of his story.

"He had been certain that such a union would result splendidly; he had thought it all over and had the arguments all nicely stored away in his mind ready to put on paper.

"Yet here he was shrinking from the very experience for which he predicted such glorious things. Somehow, when brought face to face with facts and conditions, his confidence in his enthusiastic predictions was considerably shaken.

"The medicine that he had so cordially prescribed for others did not seem to taste the same when prescribed by his conscience for himself.

"Still, everything had gone along as he had argued that it would. The lady had shown to him a side of her disposition and character which the others had not seen.

"She had become fond of him, there was no doubt of that, and under that spell had been a splendid friend and confidential companion.

"There was no mistaking the light that shone in her eyes on that unfortunate afternoon when he made his awkward and misunderstood proposal. Neither was there any mistaking the expression upon her face at that time.

"It persisted in coming up before him now, every time that he thought of telling her what a horrible mistake it all was, and warned him of the expression that would take its place if such an explanation was attempted.

"Well, I am stringing this story out longer than I intended, but to me it is a very interesting one. The upshot of it all was that his sense of honor got the better of his common sense, and he married her.

"He carried out his mistaken proposal manfully. Not by word or sign did he let her know that there was any error, that his devotion had been anything of the sham.

"You will say, of course, that he was foolish, that he did wrong. Perhaps he did; but he was young at the time, with boyish notions about the beauty of self sacrifice, and the dreams about his novel had taken him out of himself.

"As I have told you, his sense of honor was overcultivated, and the word 'duty' seemed very strong to him," and there was a tremendous earnestness in the speaker's tones.

"Come here, Carroll," came a voice from across the room just then. "You are wanted to decide a bet."

"All right," he rejoined, and started to leave, saying to his group of auditors: "I'll be back in a moment. It cannot be anything very important or they would have settled it themselves. It is only the minor matters that those fellows leave to others for decision."

"But you did not finish your story," insisted Henderson. "How did the marriage that you told us about really result? Was it a happy one?"

"Well," said Carroll, as he moved away, and there was a curious smile upon his lips, "that novel was never finished."

For a few moments there was silence. Then Gray leaned forward and said in a low tone:

"Boys, that was a remarkable experience. Now that I think of it, I have heard that Carroll has a wife much older than himself. I know that he never invites anybody to his house and is seldom there himself. He certainly looks like a man whose home life is not happy, and in Philadelphia, where he used to live before he came here, there were rumors of a separation soon to take place.

"No wonder he was in earnest while telling that tale. It was his own story."

There was another silence.

"That's so," finally came from Henderson; "and what is more, remember that we promised him that the story should go no further."

RUN TO EARTH.

BY JARED L. FULLER.

The mystery at the Howards' and the manner in which the new reporter set about converting it into professional capital—and incidentally into a stroke of luck for its victim.

I.

"I'M glad to see you, my boy," said Mr. Oscar Coppleton, editor of the Camden *Daily News*, whirling about in his chair and offering young Travers his hand. "Your father is my oldest friend, and although I haven't seen him for fifteen years, I am only too delighted to welcome his son. You are much like him personally, Eugene."

"Thank you, sir," responded the young man, taking the chair to which Mr. Coppleton motioned him.

"Ha!" exclaimed the newspaper man. "So you are proud of your father's good looks, eh? He *is* a handsome man, 'Gene, and in this case, at least, 'handsome is that handsome does,' for I know no truer friend than Bob Travers. Now, by this note Bob writes me, I understand that you wish to go into newspaper work—'enter upon a journalistic career,' as they usually call it."

The other laughed as he replied:

"I've already made my début in the newspaper world, Mr. Coppleton. I've had a year's experience on the Charlotteville *Advance*. That's a weekly, you know, and there's not much opportunity for a man to get ahead on a country paper. I thought that if I could get on the *News* it might be a stepping stone to a city daily some time."

"That's a very laudable ambition, but let me tell you, your experience on a country paper is not to be laughed at. It brightens up a young fellow's wits amazingly. I'm glad you have some knowledge of all round work, for in that case I think I can find something for you to do on the *News*.

Mr. Coppleton was silent a few moments, and his caller waited expectantly.

"Now, see here, 'Gene," he continued, tapping the desk thoughtfully with his pencil. "There is something which I was about to put into the hands of Mr. Murphy, my oldest man, but if you will undertake it, you can accomplish the object a great deal better, because you are a stranger here. It is a bit of newspaper detective work—something which the *News* seldom has—and may prove a very interesting assignment indeed. If you make anything out of it, it will be a fine feather in your cap, too, let me tell you, and I will see that you get all the credit that is due you."

"That *sounds* promising, but what is it?" Travers asked with a smile.

"I'll tell you what it is and then you may take it or not, just as you wish," said the editor, becoming grave. "A farmer just out of town has been charged with something, which, if it is true, is a disgrace to our civilization and ought to gain the fellow a term in the penitentiary. It was brought to my attention by old Judge Burgess—he is part owner of the *News*—and he begged me to investigate the matter.

"It seems that this man (his name is Howard—Dan Howard—by the way) has a bound boy out on his farm whom they say he treats with terrible cruelty. Now, how much we are to believe of what 'they' say I leave you to judge.

"Judge Burgess has taken more than ordinary interest in the boy—John Andrews is his name—and although I never saw him but once I thought him a very nice, well behaved little fellow. But old Howard would never let him off the farm if he could help it, and as the boy was a slight, delicate lad, I judge that he must have had a hard time of it with Howard and his son. They are both bullies and as cruel as an Apache Indian.

"Howard has never been able to keep decent men working for him, because of his temper, and has to depend for extra help upon the three or four Indians who live over in the Hollow, about two miles beyond the Howard farm. They are pretty poor workmen, as I know to my cost, but they are the best Howard can do, I reckon.

"The judge tells me that young Andrews was afraid of his life among them all, and especially was he fearful of the old man and his son, Hank. The boy will land in the penitentiary, if his father doesn't; you see what I tell you.

"The judge rather blames himself for not investigating the matter before, for about a month ago he saw the Andrews boy and knew by what he said that the Howards were treating him worse than ever. The next thing that we heard—and by 'we' I mean the outside public—was from the Howards themselves.

"Old Dan appeared in town one morning and declared that John Andrews had run away in the night, after half killing his boy Hank, and he hurried the doctor right out to patch him up.

"The doctor told me that Hank wasn't hurt very seriously, despite the great noise old Dan made about it. He had a scalp wound and was bruised a little about the shoulders and head, as though beaten with a club.

"The doctor had no particular love for Hank, and thought that he had probably got no more than he deserved, but he expressed to me his doubts that such a slight fellow as Johnnie Andrews was able to deal such blows.

"There was no sign of the boy, however, nor has he been seen by any of the neighbors since; but the judge believes that the boy is confined in the Howard house and is still more cruelly treated than before.

"His reason for this is that his gardener's boy refused to go by the Howard house on an errand after dark the other evening, because, as he declared, the place is haunted by Johnnie Andrews' ghost.

"Upon inquiry the judge learned that three or four nights after the bound boy was supposed to have disappeared, the gardener's son was near the Howard house and heard (as he avers) John begging and pleading for mercy with old man Howard, just as he used to do when the farmer was beating him.

"Now, if that poor boy is confined over there and is being treated inhumanly, as these accounts would suggest, the people want to know and stop it, and the *News* wants to know it first. Several of the neighbors have made in-

quiries of old Howard about it, but he has such a temper that none of them has tackled him but once.

"Now, if I should send any of my men up there, the Howards would be 'onto them' at once; but you're a stranger, 'Gene, and will not be suspected. What do you say to playing the detective in a good cause?"

"I'll do it gladly," replied young Travers at once. "The story interests me, and if those Howards are maltreating that boy, I'd like to be the one to run them down."

"All right. I'm glad you are interested in the case; you'll do better work. Take your time about it, *and be sure you are right.* Don't go into anything impetuously and make the *News* a laughing stock."

"Never fear, sir. I'll use discretion. Now, I've got to find a boarding place, and I might as well get one out near the Howard farm as elsewhere. In which direction is it?"

Mr. Coppleton gave him the necessary directions, and Travers started off at once with his valise.

II.

CAMDEN was not a large town, although it supported a daily paper, but being the center of a large farming country, it was the place of shipment to the more distant cities, and its tradesmen thrived prosperously upon the inhabitants of the outlying districts as well as upon those in the town proper. The *News* had the field to itself, and although strictly partisan in politics, the paper had few enemies throughout the region.

By the aid of Mr. Coppleton's directions young Travers easily discovered the road leading past the Howard farm, and it being a cool day, he briskly traversed the two miles lying between the outskirts of the town and the farm house.

There was enough romance about his first assignment on the *News* to make him thoroughly in sympathy with his task, and as he strode along he rapidly sketched a plan of action.

When he reached the Howard place he saw, by a swift glance up and down the road, that there were only two houses in sight—one a large, handsome mansion, surrounded by well kept grounds, and the other a tiny brown cottage in the opposite direction and on the other side of the road from the farm house.

With but little hesitation he opened the gate and walked quickly up to the side door of the house.

His rap brought a woman to answer it almost instantly.

She was a tall, muscular, and hard featured woman, dressed in a scant, figured dress. She glanced at the caller in anything but a friendly manner.

"We don't want to buy nothin' today, young man, so you kin go right along," she said, in a high, sharp voice.

"Excuse me, madam," returned young Travers. "I have nothing to sell. I stopped to inquire if you could refer me to any house near here where summer boarders are taken? Or perhaps you could take me yourself? This is a pleasant country and I expect to spend my vacation here."

The woman opened the door a little wider, and before she spoke the newspaper man knew by the expression of her face that avariciousness was her ruling characteristic.

Her eyes took in in one comprehensive glance Travers' handsome outfit, as though she was deciding in her own mind how much the young man would be willing or able to pay.

"I dunno," she said slowly. "Boarders don't pay very well, an' so I haven't taken any this summer, though I've had 'em every season for eight years before. But—well, you step in an' I'll see what my husband says."

Travers endeavored to be outwardly unconscious of her sharp scrutiny, and followed her into the house.

Instead of leading him into the sitting room, Mrs. Howard gave him a seat in the kitchen, and threw on her sunbonnet, preparatory to running out to find her husband.

Before she left the room, however, she hesitated before a door which 'Gene was certain led to the cellar, and after darting a penetrating glance at her visitor, she locked the door and, removing the key, left the kitchen by the back way.

Her actions, coupled with what Mr. Coppleton had told him, were significant; but remembering that he might be even then watched by some member of the family, Travers did not seek to discover what was beyond that door.

From the window he could see into the back yard, and a few moments after Mrs. Howard crossed it on her way to the barn, he saw her returning in company with the farmer himself.

Howard was a tall, heavily built, smooth faced man, with a brutal expression of countenance. Travers could hear the man's rough words before he got to the house.

"I sh'd have thought you'd known better, Mirandy," he was saying. "You know very well that there can't be no boarders in this house *now*, any way. Like's not he has been sent here by some of those blasted busybodies to find out what he could about us. I know their ways, dern 'em! An' you've gone an' left him alone in there."

The kitchen window was open, but it was evident that neither Howard nor his wife knew it, for they took no pains to lower their tones.

"I locked the door, so ye needn't be none scared," the woman said sharply. "But if anybody's a fool it's you, Dan Howard. Acuttin' of your own nose off out of spite—that's what you're doin', you an' Hank. That young fellow could stand eight dollars a week jest as well's not."

"I can't help it; he can't come and that's all there is to it."

"You certainly be a fool, Dan Howard!" his better half exclaimed wrathfully.

"Mebbe I be, but it can't be helped now. *I* didn't know you wanted to take boarders this summer. Now, you go erlong in an' send that chap off 'fore he gets to snoopin' around that cellar door."

Howard turned back to the barn and the woman came into the house, her hard face flushed and angry.

"I can't take ye, mister, an' that's all there is to it," she said, throwing off her sunbonnet. "I'd like to well enough, but my husban' don't—don't think it best."

"I'm very sorry, madam," Travers replied, rising and picking up his valise. "You seem to have so much room here that I thought surely I could get board."

"I'd like to hev ye the best kind," the woman declared, "but I just can't, and that's all there is to it, I s'pose."

"Do you know any one about here who would be likely to take me in?" her caller inquired, as he stepped through the doorway.

"I s'pose Widder Jones would be only too glad ter git ye," Mrs. Howard returned, in anything but a neighborly spirit. "But I can't say much for her table an' beds."

"Well, I suppose I must try her, although I'd much rather stay with you, of course. Where does she live?"

"In that brown cottage down the road. Good day," and the door was hastily slammed.

"There's a pair of 'em," Travers soliloquized, as he left the place and retraced his steps towards the brown cottage. "If the son combines all the characteristics of his parents he must have a sweet disposition! Both the old man and his wife are capable of worse things than ill treating a bound boy, and I wouldn't trust myself in their clutches overnight."

III.

YOUNG Travers found "Widder Jones" a quiet, pleasant voiced old lady, evidently in the poorest circumstances, but her house was as neat and orderly as possible. He liked her at once, and she, on her part, was glad to have him as a boarder for five dollars a week.

"Usually what few people come here go to Howard's house up the road," said the widow, as she bustled about the wide, cool kitchen, getting dinner.

"Yes, I was—er—directed there," 'Gene returned; "but they're not taking boarders this summer."

"Not taking boarders!" cried the old lady, in evident surprise. "I never knew Miranda Howard to refuse to make a dollar before. Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, Mrs. Jones. I did my best to get her to take me, but her husband objects to her taking boarders this year, I believe."

Mrs. Jones looked at her guest thoughtfully a moment, and then shook her head slowly.

"I don't understand it at all," she said.

"What is there about it you don't understand?" Travers asked with a smile.

"Why, not more than a month ago she was getting ready for boarders, *I* know, for she told me so," responded the good lady. "But then," she added, "it's none of *my* business, and I shouldn't be wondering about what doesn't concern me."

"Perhaps it *does* concern you—at least, to a certain extent," her new boarder remarked quietly.

"How do you mean, young man?"

"I can guess what is in your mind, Mrs. Jones. You are thinking of what the neighbors are saying about the way the Howards have treated a boy in their employ, and, as some suggest, *are still treating him.*"

Mrs. Jones forgot her dinner and sat down.

"Seems to me, young man," she said rather severely, "that you know more about what is going on about here than a total stranger. Are you one of these detective fellows?"

"Not a bit of it," returned the young man, laughing. "I am a stranger, as I told you, but I have heard what people are saying about the Howards and that poor boy. I am very much interested in the case, and if, as some suspect, the boy is still in the Howards' custody, there must be some reason for their not wanting the fact known."

"I think you have been listening to gossip, Mr. Travers," said the old lady, evidently relieved to find that her visitor was not a police officer. "Johnnie Andrews is not in Dan Howard's power any longer, I am sure. You may well call him a 'poor boy,' for if any one needed sympathy and love that boy did.

"The Howards treated him cruel enough, it's true, ever since he came here last spring, but many's the time he's told me he'd run away, and at last he's done it. I don't stand up for Dan or Miranda Howard, but I *do* think that folks is wronging 'em by supposin' such dreadful things about 'em. Why, old Mr. Donnelly, as is gardener up to Judge Burgess', told me he believed they had poor Johnnie locked up in their cellar because his boy—a half witted little lad—heard voices there one night."

"Then, if all these stories which are being circulated about the Howards are wrong, we should do all in our power to right them," Travers suggested, when his hostess had finished.

"That is true, sir; but Dan and his wife act so when they are spoken to on the subject that people think they are guilty of some awful crime."

"I hear that the Howards claim that their son was attacked by Andrews the night he ran away and handled pretty roughly," said young Travers. "Was John the sort of a fellow to do such a thing?"

This evidently staggered the good lady.

"I don't know what to think of that," she admitted slowly. "I think that *that* is a lie, but why the Howards tell it I don't know."

"Why do you think it is a falsehood?"

"Because," Mrs. Jones replied, sinking her voice to a whisper, "Johnnie was so ill treated and poorly fed that I don't believe he would have had strength to beat Hank the way they claim he did. That's why. Johnnie used to run in here just on the edge of the evening sometimes—Dan would swear at him and beat him cruelly if he knew he talked to the neighbors—and I used to feed the poor lad, for I pitied him so. He was a dreadful delicate boy, and looked like my poor Jamie before he died."

The old lady's voice broke a little and she wiped her kind old eyes on her apron before continuing.

"I know Johnnie wanted to run away, an' though I knew he was legally bound to the Howards, I couldn't blame him none. If he had come here, as I told him to, the night he ran away, I should have given him a little money I had saved for him, and food enough to have lasted him a day or two."

"Did you expect him, then, on that night?" Travers asked quickly.

The old lady blushed as rosy as a girl.

"I didn't mean to tell you that," she said, half laughing through her tears, "but I *did* expect the poor boy to come

here, and I was dreadfully worried when he didn't come."

"And yet you don't believe he is being kept a captive in the Howard house?"

"Not a bit of it," she declared decisively. "They have advertised for the runaway, and Mirandy Howard would never have agreed to *that* expense had poor Johnnie been in their possession."

"Not even to disarm suspicion?" 'Gene inquired.

"I see you are determined to believe the boy is there," said the widow, with a smile.

"I intend to find out whether he is or not," young Travers returned firmly.

IV.

TRAVERS left the little brown cottage directly after dinner, and with the apparent intention of exploring the neighborhood, wandered up the road past the Howard house, and entered the farmer's fields opposite Judge Burgess' handsome mansion.

Evidently the Howard farm was a large one, for as far as he could see down the valley the white painted boundary fence ran, inclosing at least two hundred acres.

Far down in the swale, where a narrow ribbon of brook ran through the farm, several of the hands were at work raking up the long windrows of hay, and towards this spot Travers directed his steps.

As he drew near the field, he discovered that there were but two men at work raking the coarse interval hay into great heaps, while a third individual was lazily reclining between two heaps, watching the others rake.

This was a young fellow of eighteen or twenty, awkwardly built, and with features drawn so nearly on the coarse and brutal lines of old Dan Howard that 'Gene had no trouble in recognizing the son, and as a further identification, if he needed any, his head was bound up with a white cloth.

The two men who were working were half breed Indians, of whom a few families dwelt in the neighborhood, and whom Mr. Coppleton intimated were the only help the Howards could hire.

They were dull looking, heavy featured men, their black, coarse hair sweeping their shoulders as they worked with the slow precision of convicts.

Travers, to all appearances, carelessly approached the workman furthest from where Hank lay, and spoke to him.

"Where does this brook lead, my man?" he inquired in a tone quite loud enough for Hank to hear; then, before the man could reply, he added in a lower voice: "Where is the boy who used to work here—Johnnie Andrews?"

The man worked stolidly on without replying for a moment, and if 'Gene's question or manner had startled him he gave no sign.

"Dat brook lead to Con'way Ribber," he said, at length.

"Coneway River is the stream that passes through the town, isn't it?" 'Gene went on, and then *sotto voce:* "But what about the boy?"

"He run away," declared the man, casting a glance from his beady eyes at his questioner's face. "Johnnie kind to me, I help him."

"You helped him run away, eh?" repeated 'Gene eagerly, though striving to hide his anxiety. "You know where he is, then?"

"No," the Indian shook his head decidedly. "I no see him. Molly, she my wife, *she* no see him. I fasten rope to de shed window so he got out, but no see him again."

"Then, you expected to see him again, eh?" said 'Gene, shrewdly. "There is an old lady—Widow Jones—who lives just down the road a piece, and she expected to see him, too, but he didn't go there. Where do you suppose he is?"

The Indian shook his head and went to raking harder than ever; but Travers did not intend to give up so quickly. He had evidently stumbled upon a clue and he proposed by no means to relinquish it.

"They say that he beat Howard's son and that his head is all cut open," said young Travers. "Do you believe that?"

A shadowy grin for an instant crossed the Indian's face.

"He's no strong enough to beat a rat," he said. "He very sick—most dead."

"But where is he now?"

The man shrugged his shoulders, but

did not reply. At that moment Travers heard the rough voice of the senior Howard across the meadow.

"Do you suppose *he* knows?" he asked, indicating the approaching farmer with his thumb.

But the Indian refused to be pumped any further.

"You ask him," he said, looking at Travers suspiciously.

The old farmer came nearer and saw his son reclining on the haycocks.

"You Hank! how do you expect we're goin' ter git this fodder in if you laze round that way?" he bawled, freely interspersing his remarks with oaths. "You git ter work or I'll tan your hide for ye."

"You'll have a nice job trying it," was Hank's filial reply, but he slowly arose, nevertheless, and grasped his rake. "I ain't agoin' ter slave for ye the way Jack does."

"You git ter work as I tell yer, or I'll bat ye over the head," declared the old man, who seemed particularly savage over something.

"No, ye won't—you've batted me over the head enough——"

He stopped suddenly and looked at Travers, who had halted near by to listen to the quarrel. The old man's attention was thus drawn to the stranger also.

"Can't you ever l'arn to keep a close tongue, Hank?" he demanded in a lower tone; then to Travers: "Well, what do *you* want, mister?"

"I was inquiring if this stream would lead me back to town."

"Wal, I kin tell you that it *would*, but it ain't goin' ter," returned the farmer rudely. "I don't want no city fellers sneakin' round my farm abothering of my men, an' cuttin' up didos ginerally. So you'd better git back to the road."

"All right," returned Travers with a smile, and he turned about at once and went back to the fence.

He could afford to smile, for unwittingly Hank Howard had settled one point in the mystery of John Andrews' disappearance. It was not the bound boy who had inflicted the injuries on the junior Howard. It was the work of the old man himself, whether intentional or not Travers neither knew nor cared.

As soon as it was dark enough for his purpose that night, Travers excused himself to his kind though voluble hostess, and leaving the cottage, bent his steps towards the Howard place. He leaped the fence some distance from the farm house and approached under cover of the grove just east of the building.

During the afternoon he had taken a careful though unobtrusive survey of the premises and had the situation of every shed and stump about the house mapped out in his mind. He was sure that the bound boy had not run away, and if he was still at the Howard house, then the cellar was the place of his captivity.

Silently he crept nearer to the building, but it was not until he had circled nearly around it that he discovered anything out of the ordinary about the cellar. Then a beam of light flashed out of an opening just before him, and crawling swiftly forward, Travers peered into the cellar.

The small, square window was open, but a heavy screen was screwed to the frame. The room itself, into which Travers looked, was a small, square apartment, evidently a potato cellar, with one narrow door leading out of it.

At one side was a heap of old sacks and rags, and upon this was stretched the figure of a youth, with wrists and ankles tied, and face turned to the wall.

A cry of pity rose to Travers' lips at the white, drawn face of the boy, but he stifled it, and turned his attention to the other figures in the cellar. They were the Howards, father and son, and they stood directly beneath the window conversing.

"What under the sun shall we do with him, dad?" Hank demanded, almost whimpering. "He looks awful."

"I dunno, son," responded the senior Howard, who was quite as frightened as his son, for his hand, which held the smoky oil lamp, trembled visibly. "I wisht we'd let him run away ef he wanted to 'nstead o' pitchin' on him."

"So do I, dad," responded Hank. "Then you wouldn't hev batted me over the head athinkin' 'twas Jack."

"You oughter hev stayed 'round behin' the wood shed," snarled his father; "then I wouldn't hev hit ye. But the

mis'rable little wretch does look mighty sick. He'd oughter hev a doctor, but I don't see how he kin."

Young Travers waited to hear no more, but stole quickly away from the window.

"That boy *must* have a doctor, that is a fact," he muttered, as he hurried along, "and I know just who will get him one."

* * * *

The next afternoon's *Daily News* was read with avidity. Conflicting reports of affairs at the Howard farm had been circulated all day, and only one thing was absolutely known until the paper came out, and that was that the Howards, both father and son, were lodged in jail.

The *News* had obtained a statement of the affair from the bound boy, John Andrews, himself, who had found a comfortable refuge in the Widow Jones' little cottage, with the good woman as nurse.

The Howards, seeing the rope dangling from the window of the old shed where John slept, and suspecting the bound boy's intention of running away, lay in wait for him, the old farmer himself armed with a wagon stake, a weapon of sufficient weight to fell an ox, let alone a poor, half starved boy.

In the darkness, however, the old man ran against Hank and attacked him, thinking it was John, inflicting a beating which made the younger Howard roar again.

Discovering his mistake, and seeing the bound boy escaping in the darkness, the irate farmer pursued him and brutally knocked him down with the stake, using more force than was necessary.

In the examination of the prisoners some days later, Hank admitted that the bound boy had been picked up for dead by his father, and in great fear they had hidden him in the cellar. Then the old man had ridden off for a doctor to attend to his son's wounds, and reported that John Andrews had caused them before running away.

Before his return from town with the doctor, Hank and his mother had discovered that John was still alive; but the mischief was already done and they dared not reveal the truth.

The brutal nature of the act and the subsequent cruelty of concealing the injured boy in the cellar assured the elder Howard a long term in the penitentiary; but the grand jury did not hold Hank, and after selling the farm, he and his mother left that part of the country.

John Andrews, whom the courts at once released, found plenty of friends among those in Camden who knew of his sad case, and he made his home with good Mrs. Jones. As for Travers, his share in the work of investigating the mystery brought him into prominence at once, and he received, as Mr. Coppleton had promised, all the credit which was his due from the *Daily News*. To that first assignment the young man points as one of the stepping stones which gained him his present editorial position in the metropolis.

LIEUTENANT PLINLIMMON'S STICK.

BY E. MONTROSE.

The story of a son's sweetheart, who hears about herself what the proverb promises shall meet the ears of listeners. But she, being an unwilling one, contrives to turn the circumstance to good account.

MRS. PLINLIMMON'S front door stood wide open, and a young lady on the doorstep was peering doubtfully into the hall, with her hand on the bell handle, and with an expression of perplexity on her pretty face.

It was a bright morning in early June, and the street was a quiet one; but it was an unusual thing for Mrs. Plinlimmon's front door to stand open to any chance wayfarer, and still more unusual for no trim maid servant to answer the bell.

Nevertheless, this young lady had rung twice without eliciting any response, and she now glanced up and

down the street before giving another pull to the bell.

The only persons in sight were two women standing at the end of the block, looking down the cross street as if watching for some one.

Before she could make up her mind whether it was worth while to walk towards them and make inquiries about the inmates of this apparently deserted house, a boy appeared wheeling a trunk on a handbarrow; and as soon as he joined the women the whole party walked quickly down the cross street and was soon out of sight.

The young lady pulled the bell again impatiently, and this time the welcome sound of footsteps and a closing door caused her face to resume its serenity.

She waited hopefully, but only a murmur of voices came through an open window near by, and at last in desperation she made a step forward and again peered into the hall.

A card tray stood on the hall table, and beside it reposed a stick with a curiously shaped silver handle, that attracted the young lady's notice.

She was advancing to see it more clearly, when the murmur of conversation rose higher, and a plaintively querulous voice said:

"I have heard that she is a dreadful college girl. I don't know her; but I have been told she has no money, and I suppose she counts upon his fortune; but the poor fellow will just ruin his prospects by such a step."

A low reply interrupted the speaker, but the plaintive voice resumed impatiently:

"Oh, of course she wears bloomers and rides a bicycle, and no doubt knows all the 'ologies,' but that will not make the poor boy a comfortable home or cook his dinner; and that is what she will have to do, for I am sure Aunt Hetty will alter her will as soon as she hears of this. She is coming here the day after tomorrow, and how I am to bear up before her I can't think. She is so sharp, she is sure to pry things out."

A mixture of expressions that was almost ludicrous had chased over the countenance of the listener in the hall; but she now drew back, whispering to herself:

"The wrong house, of course."

She stepped softly outside the door, intending to beat a noiseless retreat, but the stick, apparently resenting the intrusion, slipped from the table and fell heavily to the floor.

An exclamation from the room and the sound of rapid footsteps convinced the young lady that her chance of escaping unseen was gone. With a slight shrug of annoyance she turned, and had just time to smooth her countenance, when a middle aged lady, wearing a bonnet, entered the hall, and approached the open door with an expression of surprise in her keen brown eyes.

"I am afraid that I have mistaken the house," said the young visitor, with a smile that lighted up her pretty face bewitchingly. "Will you kindly tell me whether Mrs. Brown lives here?"

"No, she does not," replied the older lady courteously, "but I think that she lives on the opposite side of the street. I will ask Mrs. Plinlimmon;" and she quickly returned to the room from which she had come.

The young lady bit her lips, and muttered impatiently:

"Why didn't I say Mrs. Zerubbabel? Of course there would be a Mrs. Brown somewhere in the block."

The voices in the next room were now clearly audible, and the plaintive tones of the first speaker exclaimed:

"The front door wide open! Why, where can Jane be? Yes, there is a Mrs. Brown; but I am not quite sure which is her house. I will call Jane; she knows all the neighbors," and at the same moment a gentle, flurried little lady with soft gray curls and a white cap fluttered into the hall.

"I am so sorry that you were kept waiting at the door. My maid knows the house that you are looking for, I am sure. Oh, no trouble at all," she said, with nervous politeness, hurrying away in the midst of the assurances of the young lady that she would on no account give her the trouble.

She paused a moment to pick up the fallen stick, which she replaced with an almost caressing touch on the table.

She was gone long enough for the young visitor to have grown impatient and left, but there was something in

the gentle face of the little lady that made the young girl linger for another glimpse of it.

At last Mrs. Plinlimmon returned more flurried than before, and she paused at the parlor door to exclaim:

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Opdyke, I can't find either Jane or Susan, and their clothes seem to be gone, too."

"What! You don't mean to say that they have taken French leave!" said her companion, coming into the hall all alert and interested.

"Oh, no; they never could have done such a thing with Aunt Hetty coming the day after tomorrow," cried poor Mrs. Plinlimmon. "Jane wanted to be married this week, but she promised that she would put it off till after Aunt Hetty's visit."

"My dear Mrs. Plinlimmon, could you expect that any girl would postpone her marriage to accommodate her mistress?" said Mrs. Opdyke. "Depend upon it, she has gone off quietly to avoid any explanations or expostulations."

Mrs. Plinlimmon's gentle face wore such an expression of despairing dismay that the young onlooker at the front door was touched, and she longed to say a word of encouragement; but at this moment the little lady recalled the stranger and turned with native courtesy, that even her distress could not make her forget, saying:

"I am sorry that I cannot direct you exactly to the house; but I am sure that Mrs. Brown lives in the next block above, and I think that it is on this side of the street."

"I am very much obliged to you," replied the young lady, with a bright smile. "No doubt I can find the house. I am sorry to give you so much trouble," and she ran quickly down the steps.

"She seems such a sweet little lady," she soliloquized as she walked rapidly up the street. "But it must have been she who made that ugly speech."

A look of resentment flashed across her pretty face; but it softened as she suddenly exclaimed half aloud:

"I verily believe that those women with the trunk were her servants slipping off. What a shabby trick to play her! Oh, well, it would do no good to tell her about them. Poor little soul, I wonder what she will do with that terrible Aunt Hetty, and her equally terrible will!"

Then she smiled to herself and looked grave, and finally, with a little shake of her shoulders, recalled the fact that she was in the public street, and ought to regulate her countenance accordingly, instead of smiling and frowning over the troubles of people whom she had never seen before.

Meanwhile, distress and confusion reigned in Mrs. Plinlimmon's neat dwelling. Jane had beyond a doubt taken matters into her own hands, and had stolen off to be married; and Susan, who was the cook and Jane's aunt, had probably gone with her rather than stay and have to explain or apologize for her niece's flight.

"Everything comes upon me at once," said Mrs. Plinlimmon, with a weak attempt at a smile, which ended in tears. "I was so upset at Tom being ordered to sea again so much sooner than we expected; and then comes this letter telling me of his engagement to this dreadful Helen Rivers, and asking me to call on her while she is in town; then Aunt Hetty's letter saying that she is coming this week; and now both servants are gone, and where on earth I am to look for others I don't know."

"You can't look for them at all today, for you have a wretched headache," said Mrs. Opdyke briskly. "Go up stairs and lie down, and I will stop at the intelligence office where I got my cook, and see if I can find somebody for you."

After a feeble protest Mrs. Plinlimmon was glad to accept her friend's suggestion, and Mrs. Opdyke, whose brisk energy seemed to carry with it an assurance of success, took her departure.

Mrs. Plinlimmon was a widow, and she had only taken the house in which she was now living a year before, when her son Tom came home from his last cruise.

She wanted to make a home for him where she could have him all to herself; but when he unexpectedly received his sailing orders, she looked forward with dread to the long loneliness of his absence. Then came his letter announcing

his engagement, and begging his mother to call upon the young lady, who was going to visit friends in her neighborhood.

In great distress of mind Mrs. Plinlimmon had just decided that she might as well give up her house, as Tom would now be lost to her, when she received a letter from Miss Hetty Plinlimmon, her deceased husband's only sister, informing her of that lady's intention to make her a visit. Miss Hetty had inherited the bulk of the Plinlimmon property, and on this account was a person of no small importance among her relations, although she was dreaded for her quick tongue.

She had also shown a liking for Tom, even going so far as plainly to declare to a less favored nephew her intention of making Tom her heir. But she was so peculiar and touchy that Mrs. Plinlimmon felt that it would be very detrimental to the interests of her dear Tom if she were to give the slightest hint that the proffered visit was not perfectly convenient and delightful to her.

"But this dreadful girl," she sighed. "I have heard of her from Laura Clashwood, and I know very well the kind of girl that Laura admires. If Aunt Hetty sees her, she will be wild. I must call at once and get the visits over before Aunt Hetty arrives. Tom's letter says that she will be in town only a few days, so I may hope that she will be gone before Aunt Hetty comes; and, after all, who knows what may happen before Tom returns from this cruise?"

Nursing this secret hope, Mrs. Plinlimmon nerved herself for the ordeal and made her call, only to learn that Miss Rivers had not yet arrived. The respite that this gave her was marred by the uncomfortable conviction that Miss Helen's visit would now probably exactly coincide with Miss Hetty's, and thus a meeting between the two would be unavoidable.

This seemed bad enough; but now the sudden departure of her neat and competent servants, who had been with her ever since she took the house, proved the last straw on her load, and she felt utterly miserable and broken down.

Mrs. Opdyke's friendly efforts only succeeded in procuring a string of utterly impossible looking girls, who kept Mrs. Plinlimmon running to the door, and crushed her with their airs and their ignorance. She hastily swallowed a cold lunch, and in the evening took a cup of tea and a biscuit, and crept to bed disheartened and weary. Of course she passed a bad night, waking at frequent intervals from uneasy dozes, to think pathetically of the possibility that the police might have to break their way into the house in the morning only to find her dead in her bed.

At an early hour she rose, and, opening the shutters, began to prepare for breakfast.

In former years Mrs. Plinlimmon had done this and had enjoyed doing it, for she was neat and a good cook; but now it seemed a heavy tax on her strength. A ring at the bell called her to the door before she had finished getting the fire ready.

"Surely they won't begin to send me more girls at this hour!" she ejaculated as she glanced at the clock, which marked five minutes to six. She opened the door and there stood a woman, who greeted her with the well known formula:

"I heard that you were looking for a girl, ma'am."

The speaker was neatly dressed in a calico gown; she wore bluish spectacles, and her hair, which was a light sandy color, was brushed smoothly back from her face under a very plain bonnet.

"Do you come from the intelligence office?" asked Mrs. Plinlimmon.

"No, ma'am; I came to town only the day before yesterday, and I don't know the intelligence offices. But I saw a lot of girls coming to your door yesterday, and I thought I might as well try." The woman spoke in a slightly hesitating voice.

Mrs. Plinlimmon looked at her suspiciously for a moment, but noticing the color beginning to rise in the other's face, she said kindly:

"Come in, and tell me what you can do."

As they passed the hall table the silver headed stick again fell to the floor, and the woman stooped and replaced it with a quickness and care that pleased Mrs. Plinlimmon.

In answer to Mrs Plinlimmon's questions she said that she could cook and keep a house tidy, but she could not wash or iron. Her name was Helen Dunn, and she had never lived out before.

Mrs. Plinlimmon liked her manner, but she thought of Mrs. Opdyke's horror if she should learn that she had taken a servant unknown and unrecommended.

"How soon could you come, if I should decide to try you?" she asked.

"I could stay now, if you wish," replied the woman, glancing at a brown paper parcel that lay in her lap. "I have clothes here that will serve me till you see if I suit."

"Where did you say that you came from?"

"My home was in Brentford, but I have been away a good deal lately."

"Oh, Brentford!" said Mrs. Plinlimmon. Then after a slight hesitation she asked: "Do you know the Rivers family there?"

"There is no Rivers family there now, ma'am. There is a Mr. and Mrs. Martin, and they have a niece, a Miss Rivers; but she has been off at college for several years, I believe."

The woman's words agreed exactly with what Mrs. Plinlimmon had already learned, and there would be a chance to ask Miss Rivers about her. Catching at this faint substitute for a recommendation, she said quickly:

"Very well, you can stay, and I will now show you the kitchen and your room."

She was feeling so weak and tired that any help was a welcome boon, and this woman pleased her. After she had shown where things were to be found in the kitchen, she was going to lead the Mrs. Plinlimmon, and she said:

"Hadn't I better get your breakfast first? You look tired."

The little mark of sympathy touched Mrs Plinlimmon, and she said:

"I do feel rather faint, and breakfast will do me good. Perhaps you, too, have not had yours?"

"I came out too early for the folks I was staying with," replied the woman. "I was afraid I might miss the place if I waited."

As she spoke she opened her parcel and took out a gingham apron and a plain cap, which she donned as soon as she had taken off her bonnet. Then she set to work in a businesslike way that carried comfort to poor Mrs. Plinlimmon's weary soul and body.

The breakfast was simple, and it was soon served; but it was perfect—nothing burned, nothing slopped about, and Mrs. Plinlimmon felt fifty per cent better after it.

"I will take you up stairs now, Jane," she said, after the breakfast things were cleared away. "Oh, but your name is Helen. That is awkward; for it is my name, and I expect a visitor tomorrow who always calls me by my name."

"You might call me Nelly," suggested the woman with a slight hesitation; but Mrs. Plinlimmon shook her head abruptly.

It had been the pet name of her only little girl, who had died when three years old, and she could not use it. She looked puzzled, and the woman herself came to the rescue.

"Why not go on calling me Jane?" she said quietly. "You have already called me that several times, and you are used to it. I don't mind, and I shall soon get accustomed to it."

"Have I really?" exclaimed Mrs. Plinlimmon, surprised. "I did not know it. But it is true, I am used to the name; and if you can get used to it, I think it would be the best way."

About an hour later Mrs. Opdyke stopped in on her way to market.

"I thought you might like me to leave some marketing orders for you," she explained. "I am glad to see that you have a girl. She looks neat and respectable. Have you engaged another one?"

"No," replied Mrs. Plinlimmon; "and the fact is that Jane was just saying that she could manage very well if I would put out the wash and engage a woman for half a day to do scrubbing. Indeed, she said that she would rather take lower wages and be alone."

"I don't wonder at that," said Mrs. Opdyke. "That is what always seemed to me the worst part of domestic service. A girl may get a very nice mistress, and there may be a dreadfully irri-

tating temper in another servant, which spoils it all. If she is competent, I would let it go that way, at all events until your visitor is gone."

Mrs. Plinlimmon cheerfully accepted advice that coincided so well with her own wishes, and after thankfully availing herself of Mrs. Opdyke's offer to convey her orders to the market, she said good by to her, well pleased that there had been no inconvenient inquiries into Jane's recommendations.

The correct answers about the Rivers family, which had satisfied Mrs. Plinlimmon, might not have seemed so satisfactory to Mrs. Opdyke.

The preparations for Aunt Hetty's arrival now went on briskly, and Jane helped so quietly and so effectually, that by evening all was in order, and Mrs. Plinlimmon herself felt far less tired than on the previous day, when she had done nothing but interview applicants.

A good night's rest restored her to her usual placid and kindly frame of mind, and she was prepared to greet Aunt Hetty cheerfully; but, alas! after all her preparations a disaster occurred which she could not possibly have foreseen or prevented.

The hack containing Aunt Hetty drove up to the door. Mrs. Plinlimmon was on the steps to receive her, and at a word from her Jane ran quickly to the curb to assist her to alight.

But the independent lady, hurrying to forestall any assistance, twisted her foot as she sprang from the hack, and but for Jane's strong arms she would have fallen flat on the pavement.

Mrs. Plinlimmon, seeing what had happened, quickly fetched out a chair, and after she had placed Aunt Hetty in it, Jane and the hackman carried her, chair and all, into the house; but the sprained foot was swelling painfully, and Aunt Hetty groaned and moaned for her own trusted doctor.

"Dr. Owen, my doctor, is so good and kind!" exclaimed Mrs. Plinlimmon. "Oh, if I only had some one to send for him!"

"Just give me the address, and I will go," replied Jane, in a brisk, cheery voice, hardly like her own usual hesitating tones.

"It is at the corner of Spring Street and Maplewood Avenue," replied Mrs. Plinlimmon. "It is not hard to find, for Spring Street is the third street below here, and then it is a straight road north to Maplewood Avenue, and the name is on the door. You could not miss it; but it is a long way, and no cars run near there. It is growing late now, and I believe it is beginning to rain. Oh, how unlucky!"

"Never mind. Perhaps I can get somebody to go for me," said Jane. "The house where I stayed is not very far from here. I'll run across there and try, if you don't mind."

Mrs. Plinlimmon was only too thankful, for although she could bathe and bandage a sprained ankle, she was not equal to managing Aunt Hetty in a nervous fit; and that was what the pain and the shock would evidently culminate in.

She bade Jane wrap herself in a big waterproof and take an umbrella, and she was watching her hurrying down the street before it ever occurred to her that it was a little risky thus to trust a total stranger after barely thirty six hours' service.

"What a lecture Tom would give me!" she murmured. "But I am sure that she is trustworthy and honest; even he could hardly distrust her if he saw her."

Aunt Hetty, who was beginning to work herself into a fever under the conviction that the ankle was broken, was a good deal soothed by the assurance that the doctor had been sent for, and the time passed better than Mrs. Plinlimmon had dared to hope, until Jane returned warm and breathless.

"You got somebody to go for you!" exclaimed Mrs. Plinlimmon; "for you never could have gone all that way so soon. But I am afraid it will be hard to keep Miss Hetty quiet till the doctor comes, the messenger has such a long walk."

"The messenger did not walk," replied Jane.

"How did he go?" inquired Mrs. Plinlimmon, surprised.

"On a bicycle," replied Jane briefly.

"Oh," said Mrs. Plinlimmon, with a sigh of relief. "I have heard that they go very quickly."

Jane coughed, and then asked if she had not better get some tea ready for Miss Hetty.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Plinlimmon, and a few hasty directions followed, the result of which was soon visible when Jane returned with a dainty tray that tempted even Aunt Hetty's fastidious taste and caused Mrs. Plinlimmon inwardly to call down blessings on Jane's big sandy head. The arrival of the doctor soon after, with his kindly manner and cheery words, completely reassured the whole party, and Aunt Hetty was composed for a night's rest.

Days of tedious nursing followed this catastrophe, but Jane proved to be an excellent nurse, and with the assistance of a woman who had before done days' work for Mrs. Plinlimmon, all went as smoothly as possible.

Aunt Hetty was confined to her room, and was not the most patient of mortals under this restraint, but Mrs. Plinlimmon was conscious of a guilty feeling of relief, as she remembered that now there would be no need for any meeting between Aunt Hetty and Miss Rivers whenever that young lady should return her call. Tom was to sail in a few days, and even her grief over this was a little assuaged by the thought that absence had been known to work wonders.

One day as Jane was dusting she removed the silver headed stick from its rather awkward position on the hall table; but Mrs. Plinlimmon, coming down stairs just afterwards, noticed the change and replaced it.

"It is my son's stick," she said to Jane. "He forgot it, and left it there after he said good by to me, and I like to see it there."

Jane glanced at her with an expression that Mrs. Plinlimmon almost thought was sympathetic, but the glasses were a decided bar to much expression on Jane's face.

However, the stick was always carefully replaced after dusting, and was picked up without a sign of impatience, no matter how many times it rolled off the slippery surface or was dislodged by an unwary elbow.

A week passed, and Aunt Hetty was improving steadily. She had taken a fancy to Jane, and one day she even vouchsafed the remark:

"That maid of yours, Helen, is an instance of the small difference that there is between beauty and ugliness. You know if Cleopatra's nose had been another shape the fate of Rome would have been different; and if your maid's hair was a different color and her eyes were visible, I have no doubt but that she would be a pretty woman."

"I don't think Jane ugly," remarked Mrs. Plinlimmon mildly.

"She is no beauty, at all events," replied Aunt Hetty decidedly; "but she is the most useful and sensible creature that I ever came across."

"Indeed she is," replied Mrs. Plinlimmon warmly; "and really, she has quite a nice complexion—very unusual in a woman of her age, for I am sure she is not young."

"If some of the young society ladies had the training that these country women get," began Aunt Hetty, who was now started on a hobby, "they would be good for something. When Jane raises me I never feel the least anxiety; but as for my nieces, Clara and Gertrude, I should not think my life worth a moment's purchase if they tried to lift me."

The entrance of Jane with the two o'clock mail put a stop to the conversation.

"If you don't need me for a little while, I'll go up stairs and tidy myself for the afternoon," she said.

"Just listen for the door bell," said Mrs. Plinlimmon, who was in constant, nervous expectation of Miss Rivers' appearance. "But I don't think any one will call at this hour."

Jane went up stairs, and Mrs. Plinlimmon saying, in a disappointed tone, "No letter from Tom! I thought that he would write before he sailed," began to open her mail, when the bell suddenly echoed to a sturdy pull.

"Miss Rivers" rose to her mind so quickly that she almost said the words aloud; but she jumped up nervously to call Jane. As she reached the door she met Jane running down the stairs, hurriedly adjusting her cap on her head as she went.

Mrs. Plinlimmon slipped back into the room, wondering how she should meet the young lady, and feeling a distinctly cowardly desire to say, "Not at home."

Meanwhile, Jane had reached the front door and opened it, but instead of a young lady a tall gentleman stood before her.

He gave her a surprised glance, and then asked:

"Is Mrs. Plinlimmon at home?"

"Yes, sir," came almost inaudibly from Jane's lips.

The young man stepped inside smiling and with a sudden twinkle in his eyes, as he said:

"Just tell her that a gentleman would like to see her." He passed on to the parlor door, but turned quickly to say: "Stop a moment; she is quite well, isn't she?"

Jane had by this time closed the front door, and in the shaded light of the hall was relieved from the embarrassment into which his surprised scrutiny had thrown her. She therefore answered with a steadier tone:

"Oh, yes, sir; perfectly well."

"By George!" muttered the young man suddenly, flinging open the parlor door to let the light from within fall more strongly on her face.

But Jane had noticed a card that had fallen from the hall table, and she stooped for it as she said:

"Please walk in, sir."

"Well, of all fools I am the biggest!" muttered the young man, as he gave his broad shoulders a shake and stepped forward across the threshold of the room; but his eyes were still turned upon Jane, and as she rose, meaning to hasten up stairs to call Mrs. Plinlimmon, and to escape the prying gaze that so much disconcerted her, an extraordinary phenomenon presented itself.

The curiously twisted silver handle of the stick projected beyond the edge of the table on which it lay, and as she raised her head it fastened in the neat cap, which she had pinned on too hastily to be very secure, and slid in a style made perfect by practice down on the floor.

But this time it fell not alone. If it could not take the world with it, it at least took all that it could catch, and that included a neat cap, a sandy wig, and a pair of blue spectacles!

Mrs. Plinlimmon, alarmed by the clatter, reached the head of the stairs just in time to see a manly figure snatch her discreet Jane into its arms, and to hear a well known voice exclaim:

"Helen, what on earth is the meaning of this masquerading?"

"Tom, my dear Tom!" she cried in utter amazement, running down so hastily that she tripped over the fallen stick, and would have fallen herself had not Tom, with truly nautical presence of mind and quickness, flung out his right arm and gathered her into it, while he held fast his other prize with the left.

"Now, this is what I call a jolly homecoming, but I want a little explanation," he exclaimed, as he hurried them both into the parlor, and placed them on the sofa, with himself comfortably installed between them.

Mrs. Plinlimmon gazed in great bewilderment from her son to the figure beside him, of which nothing but the dress reminded her of Jane.

Instead of the large, ill shaped head and plain face that she knew, she saw a small, symmetrical head, with coils of dark hair wound tightly around it, rosy cheeks, and bright eyes brimful of devotion as they gazed eagerly into Tom's handsome face.

Even the mouth, which in Jane was always primly compressed, had now suddenly become transformed, perhaps from the kisses which the audacious Tom had pressed upon it, into a veritable Cupid's bow.

Mrs. Plinlimmon's lips quivered, and a mist of tears dimmed her sight as it flashed upon her that she was thus brought face to face with the woman who had stolen her son from her.

But the dark eyes were not so absorbed in Tom that they could not see Tom's mother, and in a moment this strangely transformed creature was kneeling beside her, and a sweet voice cried:

"Oh, forgive me. I did not mean it as playing a trick, but you were in such trouble, and I thought perhaps you would like me more if you knew me better."

It was now Tom's turn to stare, and something like a frown hovered over his brow at these last words; but Mrs. Plinlimmon, for all her nervousness, was not lacking in womanly wit or womanly kindness, and she interrupted her, saying, as she stooped and kissed the girlish face upraised to hers:

"My dear, you certainly have helped me out of very great trouble, and the last week has proved to me that my son has won a treasure. Aunt Hetty will think the same as I do."

Tom, whose face had beamed at his mother's speech, now drew in his lips in a silent whistle.

"Aunt Hetty! Is she here, and has she had a finger in this wonderful jumble?" he asked.

"No, indeed; she knows nothing about it," and Mrs. Plinlimmon lowered her voice cautiously; "she is laid up with a sprained ankle, and I am afraid she will feel cross at being left alone so long."

But Tom declared that he would not undertake to face Aunt Hetty until he knew the whole business, and a hasty explanation followed.

"Can't we hide all this affair from her?" he asked, after he had gathered the outline of the story. "You are so good at acting, Helen, you can get into your own proper rig and make believe that you have just arrived."

"She will ask for Jane," said Helen, smiling roguishly. "You do not realize Jane's good qualities."

"Tell her that Jane has left without warning," replied Tom, catching his sweetheart's hand in a close grasp as his only reply to her last saucy words. "Aunt Hetty can't bear to be humbugged—she never could; and she will be wild if she gets to know of this."

"No, no, my boy; we can't have any more acting," said his mother, shaking her head decidedly while she softly patted Helen's hand. "Aunt Hetty is probably very much irritated already, as she must have overheard our voices in the hall."

"Then," said Tom, with sailor-like frankness, "I say, let us go up and face the music at once together. She can't devour us all at one mouthful, and perhaps numbers will dissipate her wrath."

He rose at once, and the ladies followed meekly as he strode up stairs to Aunt Hetty's room.

That lady, instead of displaying the least irritation, held out her hand to him with perfect composure as he entered, and said coolly:

"How do you do, Nephew Tom?" Then, turning her sharp eyes on Mrs. Plinlimmon, she inquired: "Now, Helen, pray tell me, was I right or wrong in what I said to you less than a half hour ago?" and she glanced meaningly at the pretty face of the young girl.

"Aunt Hetty," interrupted Tom, taking Helen Rivers' hand, and speaking with quiet dignity, "this young lady has done me the honor to promise to become my wife. Let me present to you Miss Helen Dunn Rivers."

At this point a gleam of surprise did flit across Aunt Hetty's face; but she revenged herself upon Tom by answering sharply:

"I only hope, young man, that you will *now* begin to try to deserve your good luck." Then, satisfied with having crushed the offender, who had been guilty of the crime of telling her something that she had not already found out for herself, she turned to Helen Rivers, and holding out her hand, said kindly: "You look much nicer, my dear, without that ugly wig. Now tell me what induced you to put it on, for you see that you cannot hoodwink me."

The delay down stairs, which Mrs. Plinlimmon had feared would exasperate Aunt Hetty, had had just the contrary effect, for she had seen enough with her observant eyes to have her curiosity excited about her sister in law's new maid, and she had gathered enough from the exclamations that floated up to her to piece out for herself a tolerably connected idea of what had occurred.

If she had failed to divine the engagement of her nephew, she had guessed enough to justify her in assuming the rôle of one who had known everything all the time, and was only graciously letting others explain to her what she had already found out.

Helen Rivers was quick to perceive this, and as she related how she had inadvertently discovered Mrs. Plinlim-

mon's domestic troubles, the old lady nodded and laughed shrewdly.

"I am a college girl," said Helen in conclusion; "but I know how to cook, and I like to do it, and I think that I can keep a house tidy, too."

A faint flush tinged Mrs. Plinlimmon's faded cheek as she recalled her words to Mrs. Opdyke on that woful morning; but Helen never betrayed that her quick ears had caught what was not intended for them. Her revenge had been taken, and it was complete.

"It was all the fault of your stick," she afterwards averred to Tom, "for if I had not recognized the stick I should have gone away. Then it fell down, and I was discovered. You know, too, it was that veritable stick that betrayed me to you."

But here Tom stopped her, and stoutly asserted that he had felt that she was near him before ever the twisted head of the stick had dragged off the sandy wig and the spectacles; and on that point they are still of different opinions.

After Aunt Hetty had been satisfied by Helen's account, she turned to Tom to explain his unexpected appearance, and great were the rejoicings on learning that his orders had been changed, and he was to have another year of shore duty.

Of course Tom was eager to be married, and equally, of course, Mrs. Plinlimmon had again to look out for servants.

Mrs. Opdyke asked about "that nice Jane," and on learning that she had left at the end of her week, she read Mrs. Plinlimmon a friendly lecture on the danger of taking a servant without good recommendation, and congratulated her that she had not lost her silver spoons. Only the four assembled that day in Aunt Hetty's room ever knew that Tom Plinlimmon married his mother's cook.

A dark question remained for some time unsettled in Mrs. Plinlimmon's mind; but one day she summoned up courage to say to her son's wife:

"Have you ever ridden a bicycle, my dear?"

"Yes, frequently in the country," replied Mrs. Tom frankly, "but only once in town, and that was the evening that I went in such haste to fetch Dr. Owen for Aunt Hetty."

Mrs. Plinlimmon gasped, but she made no further remark, and there was no apparent diminution in her affection for her daughter in law.

The stick can no longer be considered Tom's stick, for he has never been allowed to carry it again.

It hangs in Helen's room, decorated with a huge bow of ribbon, and nobody but herself and the stick know of the wrathful feelings with which she was leaving Mrs. Plinlimmon's door had not its timely fall brought her face to face with the offender, and softened her heart to the distressed little lady whose unlucky words she had overheard.

A SUMMER PICTURE.

THE fields are turned to tawny green,
And down the lane on either hand
The tall mock orange thickets stand,
And blooming elder bushes screen
Shy brooding wood doves, and between
Low lacing boughs the sheep are seen
Across the pasture land.

Within the garden poppies spring,
And tangled sweet pea vines have spun
A rosy tissued web, and run
Along the orchard fence, to cling
Beneath the trees where robins sing,
While to and fro the mowers swing
Their scythes athwart the sun.

Evaleen Stein.

TWO QUEER ADVENTURES.

BY CAPTAIN HENRY F. HARRISON.

The saving of a floating menagerie by two castaways sends them inland on a hunt for their salvage money, where they become entangled in another animal adventure.

IT was during my first voyage under the English flag that Luttrel sailed with me from London to Calcutta.

His father was a wealthy London merchant and owned nearly half of the very ship on whose decks we met, but Luttrel seemed to take a great liking to me, despite the difference in our positions, and we were together a great deal.

Between the Maldives and Laccadives, about two hundred miles west of the island of Ceylon, we caught the bad weather attendant upon the change of monsoons. And one night, in the midwatch, while the ship was lying to under a "goose wing," a sea boarded her, sweeping everything movable from deck.

Among the movables were the ship's goat, Luttrel, and myself. The goat was never heard from. Luttrel and I were lucky enough to grasp a spare topgallant yard washed from the top of the house.

And the next morning, with the abatement of the gale, found us drifting down towards a small schooner rigged vessel of foreign build, while the Akbar was nowhere in sight.

The vessel was what is known as a *lorcha* of the largest size—say a hundred tons burden. Sharp at both ends, with a broad beam and two stump bamboo masts with lateen sails which were furled, while between the two a rude staysail was set, which kept the clumsy looking craft up to the wind.

As the sea gradually subsided, being now almost within hail, we let go the yard by mutual consent, and struck out for the *lorcha*, over whose low rail no sign of a face could be seen.

"She — must — be — abandoned," gasped Luttrel, as, breathless with our long buffeting by the seas and the exertion of swimming, we reached the side together.

The coir cable, curving from the hawse pipe upward to the anchor on the bow, gave us something to clutch. Then by convulsive effort we succeeded in crawling up and over the bows.

"Good gracious!" Luttrel exclaimed —and no wonder! In my varied experiences I never saw such an unusual—and ridiculous—sight in all my born days.

Squatted along on the dry part of the deck in the beams of the sun, now about two hours high, were fully twoscore monkeys, of every conceivable color, shape, and size, from a tiny spider monkey up to a really malevolent looking old chimpanzee with two prominent fangs, which he displayed most threateningly.

But as I was about to give vent to my own astonishment, a roar of the most terrific volume suddenly sounded from below. Then followed a scrabbling sound, and in another instant the head and shoulders of a full grown tiger were thrust up through the small companionway, which, as we afterwards knew, led to the vessel's forecastle.

Luckily the back of the animal's head was towards Luttrel and myself, and the way we slipped down on that loop of coir cable was worth seeing.

With a simultaneous shriek the monkeys fled up the stays and shrouds—scrambling over each other's heads in their frantic hurry.

As though satisfied with his exhibition of authority, the tiger, uttering a sort of subdued growl, retired into the forecastle, where he had evidently found something to eat. As we cautiously regained our position we could hear him crunching bones of some kind, and snarling as though for his own special benefit.

We had kicked off our shoes while swimming. Before I knew what Lut-

trel intended doing he slipped inboard in his stocking feet and drew over the companionway slide, which was made of heavy teakwood.

Again that terrible roar, and with it an upward rush. We heard the tiger's head strike underneath the slide, but it was evident enough that he was trapped.

Then each of us drew a long breath and looked around in wild eyed amazement.

Well, there was no particular mystery about it. A large cage, lashed to ringbolts in the deck, had one end completely smashed out—probably by shipping a heavy sea. The tiger, thus released, had then, without doubt, taken charge of the deck. The boat was missing from the rude davits, the falls of which had been out.

Wherefore, we argued that all hands had preferred braving the dangers of the deep to facing a lively and presumably hungry tiger, weighing in the neighborhood of three hundred pounds.

Along the bulwarks half a dozen cages were lashed, which had contained the different varieties of monkeys that over our heads were chattering furiously and making the most outrageous grimaces. The bar of each cage had been twisted to one side, from which Luttrel and I naturally inferred that the tiger was in search of one or more victims.

But we were chilly and hungry, so, as the *lorcha* was making good weather of it, we cautiously ventured down the after companionway into the small, dimly lighted, and not overclean cabin.

It was completely deserted. On a table lashed to the wall was a well thumbed map of the Indian Ocean, and from the course marked out in pencil we saw at once that the *lorcha* was from Point de Galle, on the southwest coast of Ceylon.

There was dry clothing in a berth—woolen shirts and two trousers, with coarse shoes and a couple of straw hats, such as are worn by all the Malay sailors of those parts. Having dressed ourselves in these, we found some tins of food in one of the lockers, to which we did ample justice. Then we went on deck.

The northeast monsoon had begun to blow with the subsidence of the gale. Hoisting the lateen foresail without overmuch difficulty, we put the little vessel before it for Point de Galle. Later in the day we managed to get the reefed mainsail up.

We took turns at the tiller all that day and the following night, which was bright and clear. The tiger roared furiously at intervals, but we had got quite well accustomed to that.

In the hold was a store of partly green bananas and plantains, intended for the monkeys. These we brought on deck, but it was only when we were both aft that their fear of man permitted them to come down, hungry as they were.

Late that afternoon we sailed into Point de Galle harbor, where we came to anchor within a stone's throw of the quay—a score or so of monkeys being perched along on either of the two tapering lateen yards.

The American consul, who came on board with a throng of curious visitors, listened to our story with great interest.

It seems that the *lorcha* had been chartered by an agent of Wombwell's menagerie, who was buying animals for shipment to England.

"You have an undoubted claim for salvage," he said, "but you would save trouble and expense by seeing Mr. Dewey, the agent, and accepting any reasonable amount he might offer." Which finally we resolved to do.

But Mr. Dewey had started the day before for Pamar, a district about fifty miles inland, in search of a couple of small elephants which he purposed forwarding to Europe.

As luck would have it, however, a single bullock cart with native driver was to be despatched to the same settlement with some arms and ammunition that had just arrived by steamer for Mr. Dewey, who was planning a hunting excursion still further into the interior after securing his elephants. And through the good offices of the consul we secured passage in the bullock cart.

The so called "highroad" leading from Point de Galle to Pamar was simply a sandy track distinguished by deep ruts, and, owing to the ignorance or stupidity of our Singalese driver, we lost even this on the forenoon of the third day's journey.

To add to the vexation of the affair, he could not understand a word of English, nor we a word of his own dialect. And after wildly bemoaning his fate—as we presumed from his gestures and groans—the wretch produced a bottle of arrack from under the seat, from which he drank not wisely, but too often, and, despite our threats, stretched himself out under the tilt and fell fast asleep.

"Well, this is a pretty go!" exclaimed Luttrel wrathfully.

"Rise up here, you copper skinned rascal!" But shaking failed to awaken him. So Luttrel started in one direction and I in another, hoping to discover the lost track, or at least find some one who might put us in the way of finding it.

Ever since morning we had heard from time to time distant reports of musketry, which, had not Ceylon been a perfectly peaceful island, would have suggested some sort of warlike skirmishing.

Luttrel thought it might be in celebration of some native holiday; hence, sooner or later, we felt sure of encountering a party or parties of natives.

Carrying a Martini rifle belonging to Mr. Dewey, I had hardly gone twenty paces from the bullock cart before I came upon a neatly constructed habitation. In another moment the entire family came out to meet me.

In expressive pantomime I tried to make known the fact that we were lost in the jungle and wished to be directed to the highroad. And to this day I don't know whether the native had any idea of what I was driving at.

But on his own part he also went in for pantomime, which was quite as blind to myself. And after an extravagant display of gestures he pointed from the bullock cart to an open space in the jungle.

Then he shook his head gravely, and after a low salaam, turned and entered the hut, followed by his wife and interesting progeny.

"Well, we might as well try that track as any," said Luttrel, when I reported to him a little later. So we started up the bullock in the direction indicated.

That afternoon we came very suddenly upon decided evidences of at least semi civilization, if nothing more. On either side, as far as we could see, was a high, circular stockade, built in the strongest possible manner, inclosing several acres.

But what this vast inclosure could be intended for passed both Luttrel's and my own comprehension. Facing us was the opening, and as a huge wild fig offered shade and a resting place, we drove the bullock cart inside.

"Hark," suddenly exclaimed Luttrel, holding up his hand.

Breaking the strange silence peculiar to tropic interiors, came a continuous popping of muskets—now on the right hand, now on the left, very much nearer than we had yet heard them. And between the explosions horns were blown and drums beaten.

Luttrel seized the drunken Singalese by the shoulder and pulled him out of the wagon. The sudden shock seemed to bring him to his senses somewhat.

Rubbing his eyes vigorously, he looked about him at the stockade inclosure. Then, as the advancing sounds smote upon his ear, he uttered one comprehensive yell and bolted for the open.

As Luttrel stared at me in bewilderment, a distant crashing of bushes began to be heard. And all at once, from a belt line of woods facing the entrance to the stockade, appeared a big elephant.

Trumpeting with fear or rage, we did not know which, he headed straight for us. Following came not one more, but twenty. And following the twenty were at least threescore more big and little elephants.

At the same moment a tremendous fusillade burst from the cover. Yells and screams followed, and a hundred native beaters rushed into sight.

I remember that Luttrel threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired at the charging elephant. Involuntarily I did the same, and the great mountain of flesh tottered and fell within ten feet of where we stood.

The remainder of the herd, with wild trumpeting, broke right and left in the very entrance of the stockade, and, dashing through the fleeing lines of beaters, were lost to sight in the jungle.

For a moment it seemed as though we

had escaped death in one form to meet it in another. For, maddened by the escape of the mighty prey upon which for four days they had been gradually closing in, full fifty natives made a mad rush towards Luttrel and myself.

Fortunately, at that moment Mr. Dewey, a sunbrowned Englishman, came up at full gallop, and shouted something in the native dialect. The half naked mob stopped on the instant as Dewey rode forward.

He listened rather impatiently to Luttrel's hurried explanation.

"It's a pretty expensive job for me—now I shall have to wait a couple of weeks for another herd to be driven in, but I suppose it can't be helped," he said dryly.

And I don't think he was any better pleased when he learned our errand, particularly as after considerable haggling we settled upon three hundred guineas as the sum we would claim for the salvage on his "live stock."

But an amicable adjustment was finally reached, and we returned to Point de Galle fully satisfied—speaking for myself—with our experience in zoological pursuits.

THERE IS BEAUTY.

THERE is beauty without stature
In the perfect Grecian mold;
There is beauty without feature
In the classic dies of old;
There is beauty without fashion,
There is beauty without art,
In the pure and simple passion
Of a tender, loving heart.

Be the passion love or pity—
Crowned with honor or with shame—
For a dreamland or a city—
Still the lesson is the same;
For the spirit is immortal,
And it shineth through the clay
Like the sunlight through the portal
Of a dark and somber day.

Clarence Hawkes.

THE PASSER.

SWEET Spring trips by my door,
I see her go;
The blossoms in her hands
Are white, like snow.

Her smile hath that warm gold
The great sun hath;
It sheds a wonder light
Along her path.

And, oh, her peerless eyes,
How blue they be!
As fathomlessly deep
As the deep sea.

"Stay!" unto her I cry;
In vain! In vain!
I keep my heart until
She comes again.

Clinton Scollard.

The Puritan

"GRANDMOTHER'S APRON."

EXPERIENCE is a great teacher. If it were not so, THE PURITAN would be just where it was two years ago. The fact is, we know better today than ever before what PURITAN readers want, and we shall know better still tomorrow. There will be many to-morrows during the coming fall and winter, and each one will have its careful, earnest thought, and its bright, successful results. The results are assured, for some of the best brains of the day will have the molding of them.

Contents for August.

A CRANFORD EVENING. An entertainment based on the famous story.

THE NOMADIC HOUSEKEEPER AND THE SERVANT QUESTION. Some of the trials of American housekeeping abroad.

THE STEADY LIGHT. A Short Story.

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THE UNFAIRNESS OF IT. A Sketch.

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