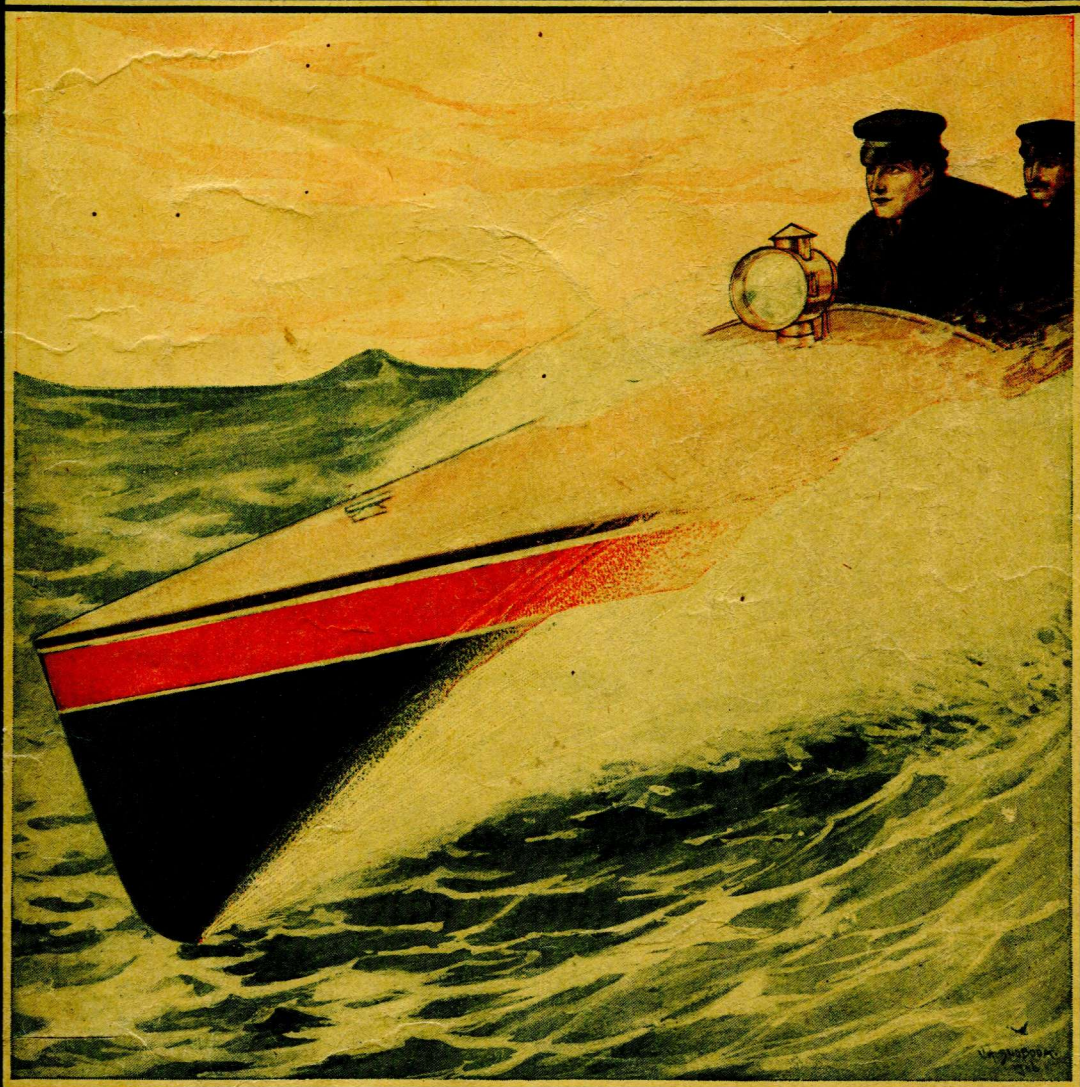
That Little Locked Case BEGINS IN THIS ISSUE

THE ARGOSY

FOR OCTOBER



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have you used Pears' Soap?

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Haben Sie
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benutzt?

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servi de
Savon
Pears?

Ohayo
"Pears"
no Shabon
wo otsu-
kaini nari
mashi-
taka?

おはよう
ペアースのしやぼん
をおつかいになり
ましたか

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¿Se ha lavado
Vd. con el
Jabón de Pears?

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OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

"All rights secured."

Makes not only the daintiest of breakfasts, but the most delicate and delicious desserts.

It is simple to cook, looks good, tastes good, **is** good. It appeals to the capricious or hearty appetite

The New Beauty-Culture

Means Beauty Protection All Fall and Winter Long

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THE time to prevent the harmful effects of the changing seasons upon the complexion is before the season's change.

Fall breezes and Winter blasts are pretty sure to prove unkind to tender skins.

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That is why careful women regard as vitally important the selection of a soap that will not permit extremes of wind or weather to roughen, redden, crack or chafe.

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Pond's Extract Soap

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The Argosy for October

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IN TWELVE CHAPTERS

ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT. An experience that brings shock after shock to the man who wants to lose his name..... CASPER CARSON 385

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THAT LITTLE LOCKED CASE. Part I. Certain extraordinary experiences that fell to the lot of a business man in connection with an article he had never seen, but which he was credited with possessing CROMWELL KNOX 430

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A striking fantastic story by WILLIAM WALLACE COOK, and

"KING OR COUNTERFEIT?" *A NOVEL MYSTERY TALE BY BERTRAM LEBHAR*

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ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

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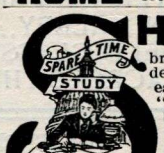

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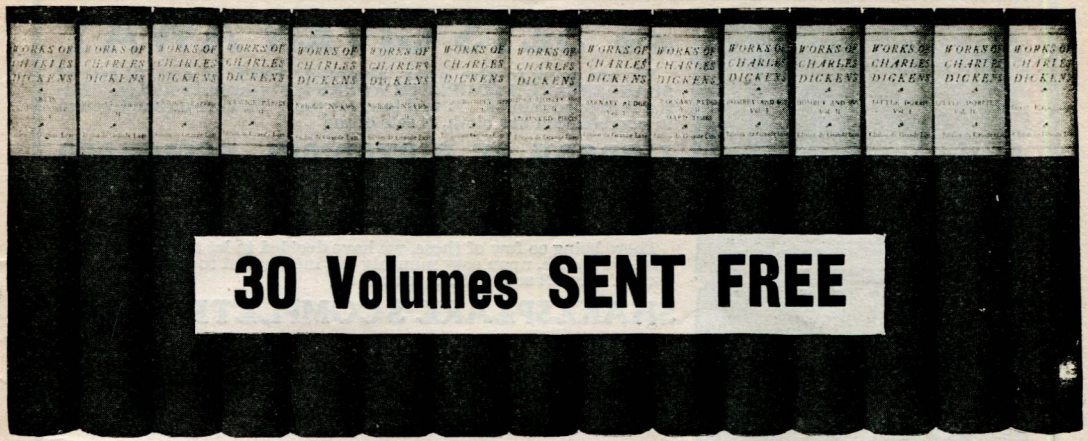

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New York

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Arg. Oct., '06

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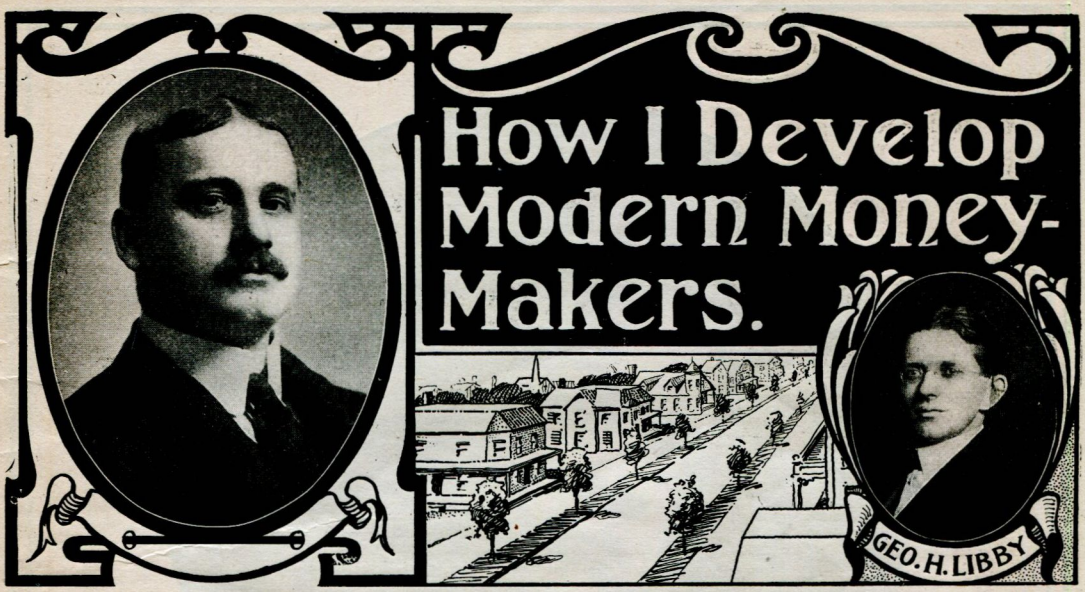

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The advertising business is to-day in its infancy, notwithstanding the marvelous growth of the past few years.

I have had three times the call for Powell graduates thus far in 1906 over any previous year. And this call comes from every section of America—from new advertisers who realize the importance of the trained ad writer as a factor in business conquest—from old advertisers who see husky new concerns getting big slices of their "established businesses"—and from the host of advertising agencies who are constantly expanding their copy departments.

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I have from the very start been the one advertising teacher who has received the almost unanimous endorsement of the advertising fraternity, and my worthy graduates have thus been in the best possible position to reap the quickest and biggest rewards.

An example: Prior to enrollment with me, Mr. F. W. Spollett, of the well known Carter Ink Co., sought the advice of the leading Boston advertising agencies, among them Wood, Putnam & Wood, who handle scores of high grade advertising appropriations, and the H. B. Humphrey Co., who place all the advertising of that noted reformer, Thomas W. Lawson, besides directing the destinies of many other notable advertisers.

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The great trouble of advertisers to-day is to find the right sort of trained advertising men and women—trained in that practical way only possible through the Powell System of Correspondence Instruction.

Mr. Libby, whose portrait appears herewith, became my student less than a year ago, while filling a humble position with a New Jersey rubber company. The selfish manager tried to discourage him, saying, "Powell won't help you," and, failing, he increased Mr. Libby's duties, hoping there would be no time for study. But selfishness availed nothing, and when through my course I placed him as advertising manager of the Frank D. Fuller Co., large real estate operators of Birmingham, Ala.

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It lathers freely, cleanses thoroughly, neutralizes the bad effects of cosmetics, and leaves the skin delightfully soft, smooth and elastic. A lather-luxury for shampooing. Invigorates the scalp, gives strength and lustre to the hair.

Our leaflet, "The Value of Systematic Shampooing," mailed free. Address

The Packer Mfg. Co., 81-83 Fulton Street, New York

THE ARGOSY

Vol. LII. OCTOBER, 1906. No. 3

ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT.

BY CASPER CARSON,

Author of "Playing Against the Colors."

An experience that brings shock after shock to the man who wants to lose his name.

(Complete in This Issue.)

CHAPTER I.

A FATEFUL MEETING.

ON the way back from a little town in Illinois, whither he had been called to attend the funeral of an old college chum, Harry Paine stopped off for a day or so in Cincinnati.

His train was a bit late, and as he had a business appointment immediately upon his arrival, he lost no time in getting up-town.

Catching a passing car, he proceeded direct to Fountain Square, where all the trolley lines of the city converge. From there it was but a step to the hotel at which he had decided to put up.

On the custom-house across the square is a clock, and noting by this that it was already past noon, Paine accelerated his gait. Grip in hand, he swung around the corner of Walnut Street at automobile speed, pushed through the heavy glass doors of the hostelry, and—cannoned full into a tall gentleman in gray who was coming down the steps from the lobby, apparently in an equal hurry.

Both drew back instantly, murmuring hasty apologies; but with the swift glance he directed toward the stranger, Paine stiffened into amazement.

"Guse!" he ejaculated incredulously.

His face swept the entire gamut of the emotions. His suit-case dropped unheeded from his hand to the ground.

The man with whom he had just collided was none other than the friend he had helped to bury only the preceding afternoon!

Their forcible encounter, moreover, proved conclusively that he was no airy fantom, but a creature of "too, too solid flesh."

While Paine stood there, mouth and eyes agape in hopeless bewilderment, the other man, quickly averting his face and muttering something about an "evident mistake," was now striving to push by.

His manifest confusion only served to confirm Harry's suspicions. Springing after the fellow, he laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"You cannot fool me, Sylvester!" he cried. "I know you, and I don't propose to let you go until you tell me the meaning of this masquerade. Surely," he pleaded, as the man still struggled to break loose, "you can trust me to stand by you, no matter what is up?"

His excited tone and the urgency of his gestures had begun to draw toward them the curious glances of two or three loungers about the doorway, and his companion, observing this, gave over the idea of escape.

"Sh!" he whispered sharply, turning about and catching Paine by the shoulder. "Not another word now. Come to my room in the course of an hour or so and I will give you a full explanation. I am in No. 326," he added, "and am registered under the name of Horace Clarkson, of Philadelphia."

"You will not fail me?" questioned Paine warily, still maintaining a clutch upon his friend's sleeve.

The other smiled slightly; then extended his hand, and caught the doubt-

er's in a peculiar clasp. It was the secret grip of the college fraternity to which both of them belonged.

More reassured, perhaps, by this token of their old schoolboy comradeship than by any other pledge which could have been given him, Paine interposed no further objections, but at once released his hold; and the two went their several ways.

The New Yorker—for Paine was a resident of the metropolis—duly kept his belated appointment, and succeeded, it may be added, in turning a very pretty stroke of business; though how he managed to do it will remain a mystery with him to his dying day.

While he sat there, shrewdly discussing commercial details and haggling over the terms of a contract, his mind was in a fog of bewilderment as a result of the strange experience which had befallen him. He was vainly striving to reconcile the evidence of his senses with facts which hitherto he had not brought even into question.

Sylvester Guse alive! And not only alive, but in the full possession of all his splendid physical vigor!

It seemed incredible when Paine recalled that only yesterday he himself had been one of the sorrowing group of mourners assembled to pay their last tribute of respect; had seen that form, wasted by disease, laid out amid all the somber pageantry of death; had heard the solemn words consigning the inanimate clay back to its Mother Earth; had with his own hands helped lower the casket into the tomb.

True, the face he had looked upon under the glass coffin-lid had been strange to him, wofully emaciated as it was, and half covered with a heavy growth of beard; but he had never for a moment doubted that it was Guse. No more than he could now doubt the face of the man he had just encountered in the hotel doorway, clean-shaven and rosy with health—a fact, by the way, which had perhaps rendered his recognition more prompt and certain than might have been that of one of its owner's daily associates.

Circumstances had kept Paine and his friend apart since their graduation, and consequently the image which had remained impressed upon Harry's mind was that of the beardless boy who had pitched to his catching on the 'varsity team in '96.

Could there be a possibility of mistake, he questioned? Might it be that his memory had played him false, and that he had been simply deceived by some chance resemblance?

But he was forced to dismiss any such supposition as absurd. The man himself had admitted his identity; appearance, voice, manner, the pledge which he had given, all proclaimed it. He was Sylvester Guse, and no one else.

The reported demise then, the panoply of mourning, the entire affair had been a trick, a daring imposture. Still, why had Guse done it? What purpose had led him thus voluntarily to take so desperate a step?

For, unless the undertaking were a gigantic hoax—and knowing his old old friend's matter-of-fact character, Paine was inclined to put small credence in any such hypothesis—it meant the inevitable sundering of all existing ties, a complete casting off of individuality. For all practical purposes, it was an act equivalent to suicide.

Men do not lightly indulge in such radical changes. What, then, had been the powerful motive impelling Guse?

Rapidly, Harry ran over in his mind the career of his friend as it had become known to him in the days of their intimacy, and added thereto the details of later years which he had gathered from friends and neighbors during his recent visit to the little town where Sylvester had made his home.

Not one word of discredit could he find in the entire record. Left an orphan at an early age, and without a relative in the world to whom he could turn for succor, the boy had pluckily made his way alone and single-handed.

While en route to make a new home for themselves in the West, his father and mother had been killed in a railroad accident, and as they were evidently of the emigrant class, it was supposed their child, who had been almost miraculously preserved, would have to depend upon charity.

But Sylvester had resources within himself. He had not been a day in the

town before his shrewd eye noted that old "Tony," the dago peanut-vendor on the court-house corner, was too far away from the big public-school building down the street to allow the boys and girls a chance to visit him during the brief period of recess.

Setting forth this fact in persuasive terms, the lad induced the old fellow to trust him with a basket of wares, and peddled them so successfully that thereafter "carrying the mountain to Mohammed" became a daily affair. He organized similar expeditions to other parts of the town, and thus soon had an established route and a regular list of patrons.

From this beginning it was but a step, of course, until he bought out old "Tony," and owned the stand himself.

People were instinctively attracted to the blithe, cheery lad, and encouraged him with their custom. The business prospered; "side lines" of candy, fruit and soda-water were added; and at last the concern outgrew its original quarters, and blossomed out into a full-fledged store.

Risen, then, to the dignity of a merchant, and obliged to mingle with men of affairs, Guse became sadly aware of his deficiencies. He took to studying in the evenings after his day's work behind the counter was over; and, as the door of learning painfully pushed open before him, grew conscious of fascinating vistas which lay beyond.

Determined to get an education, he toiled over his books alone for two years longer; then sold out his store and went to college.

Again his aptitude stood him in good stead; for he quickly perceived that there are other things to be acquired at a university besides a knowledge of Greek and mathematics. What he especially needed was polish and a knowledge of conventions.

Therefore, he did not make the mistake of transforming himself into a "grind"; but, merely studying enough to maintain a fair standing in his classes, devoted himself more particularly to the social and athletic sides of college life.

"I can dig all I need out of books for myself," he said; "what I want here is to get the worth of my money."

Accordingly, he divided his capital into equal parts for each year of his academic and law courses, and proceeded cheerfully to live up to it.

Not implying thereby, either, that he was in any way wasteful or dissipated; but simply that he rendered himself able to associate with the best set among his fellows upon something like equal terms, and without ostentation to "hold up his end."

When he returned to his home town with the title attorney-at-law tacked to his name, he did not have one hundred dollars in all the world wherewith to bless himself; but he was content.

"It was worth every cent of the investment," he declared stoutly. "I feel now that I need not be afraid to meet any man, under any conditions. And as for the financial stringency," he laughed, "why, that simply means that I must get to work and make some more."

That was a sample of the man's caliber. He always knew what he wanted out of life; and he took care to see that he always got it.

He had prospered in the practise of his profession, so Paine was told; had been universally respected by his townspeople; had succeeded as men reckon success; and then, at the very prime of his powers, had been stricken with humanity's deadliest foe, the insidious bacilli of consumption.

Then he had gone away, they said, had journeyed to Asheville and Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico, in the vain quest for health. But his malady was too far advanced; the milder air and the open life of the plains afforded him no relief.

The end came to him alone and amid strangers in a hospital at Denver; and it was only his lifeless body that returned to the community where he had grown up.

"It cost him a pretty penny, I guess," observed the old lawyer who was Guse's executor, in commenting upon these wanderings of his. "When 'Sylly'—that's what we always called him—went away, he was counted as being pretty well fixed; but he converted all his resources into cash, and drew heavily on them from time to time, so he leaves nothing except a small legacy for each of you six friends

that he wished to have act as his pall-bearers.

"Still," reflectively, "I suppose it is just as well, seeing that he was never married, and had no kin of any kind to leave his money to. On the whole, he probably was wise to use it all up on himself."

"But had he no debts?" Paine had questioned. "Surely, there must be some creditors who will have to be satisfied?"

"No," was the answer. "The last letter I ever got from him directed me to settle all outstanding accounts of every description, and after reserving enough for his funeral expenses to forward the balance of his estate to him. Seems like he calculated just how long he was going to live, almost to the very day. Kind of strange for a consumptive, too," he added thoughtfully; "they don't generally figure on not getting well."

Paine had thought little of this conversation at the time; but now it recurred to him with a new comprehension.

Guse's sham decease was evidently no sudden caprice, but a deep-laid scheme with every step carefully planned in advance.

But what could have been his purpose? Search as he would, Harry could conceive of no plausible explanation. None of the ordinary reasons seemed to apply in this instance.

Domestic difficulties? Guse had been utterly without kith or kin.

Business troubles? According to the lawyer, he owed no man a penny.

Fear of disgrace? His life had been an open book in the community where he had lived.

There was but one other possible solution, and as it flashed upon Paine he felt assured that he had fathomed the riddle.

Sylvester Guse was contemplating the commission of some monstrous crime. That was the only conclusion to be reached.

CHAPTER II.

"OFF WITH THE OLD LOVE."

CONVINCED that he had hit upon the true cause of his old schoolmate's peculiar behavior, Paine's face assumed a stern and magisterial expression.

"I may yet be in time to save him from his misguided course," he told himself. "I will handle the subject without gloves, and try to show him what a fool he'll be. Thank Heaven, I met him, if I may yet be only in time to save him from himself!"

Glancing at his watch he perceived that the hour for which Guse had stipulated was passed; and he therefore lost no time in breaking away from his present interview and returning to the hotel.

As he ascended in the elevator a new fear assailed him. Was it not more than likely that he would find the room untenanted, and his bird flown? He recalled the efforts Guse had made to evade him upon the doorstep, and that it was only when forced to it that he had consented to acknowledge his identity.

What more probable then than that this appointment was simply another ruse to give the man a chance to get away?

Consequently it was with a very strong idea that he would have only his trouble for his pains that Paine proceeded down the carpeted corridor and gave a rather tentative sort of rap at the door of No. 326.

But his doubts were speedily dispersed, for almost instantly the portal was flung open and there stood the smiling figure of Guse himself, waiting to receive him with outstretched hand.

"Come in, come in, Hal," he said heartily, drawing the other into the room, after which he pushed forward a chair and set out a box of cigars on the table. "Sit right down and help yourself to one of those weeds. You'll find them not at all bad; and, if there's anything else you want, you have only to press the button. Lord! I don't know when I've been so glad to see any one. Make yourself at home, man; and we'll have one of our old-time 'talk-fests.'"

In the presence of such unfeigned pleasure at meeting him once more, and under the spell of the fellow's frank, friendly manner, Harry could not help feeling ashamed of the suspicions which he had harbored.

And then the perplexing question rose again to his mind: What was Guse's purpose in this deception, unless it was intended as a swindle and a fraud? He nerved himself afresh to his duty.

"Wait a minute," he said coldly, still remaining standing. "You and I have been good friends, Syl Guse; but before I meet you on the old-time basis, I want to know a thing or two."

His voice broke suddenly under stress of his feelings, and abruptly he dropped the rôle of accusing judge.

"Oh, Syl! Syl!" he appealed. "I have always looked up to you as the one man of my acquaintance who was absolutely straight and square. You know that no matter what has happened or what may ever happen, I will always stand by you; but, for your own sake, don't make the hideous mistake of wrecking your entire future. Be advised while yet there is time. Don't——"

Guse, who had been listening to this impassioned exordium in thunderstruck amazement, suddenly interrupted with a wild howl of mirthful comprehension.

"By Jove, the fellow thinks I'm starting out on a career of crime," he ejaculated, holding his sides in an excess of laughter; "of deep, dark, dreadful villainy! What especial branch of evil-doing had you picked out for me, Hal?" he asked between his chuckles. "Murder, arson, or simple sneak-thievery?"

"Well, you must admit that I had at least some cause for suspicion," contended Paine stiffly, flushing with mortification at the other's hilarious reception of his well-meant advice.

"That's right; you had," granted Sylvester, striving to choke down his merriment. "And I don't forget either, Hal, that while thinking the worst you still offered to stick by me; but when you understand the real cause of this you'll see how supremely ridiculous were your long face and pious sentiments.

"Brace up, my boy," giving Paine a hearty slap on the shoulder. "It's a farce you've come to hear about and not a tragedy. Instead of graduating into the ranks of the crooks, it's a life of the most intense respectability I have in prospect. In short, Hal, I am going to follow the advice you have so often given me, and establish myself in New York. And, mark me," he added, not boastfully, but with a quiet self-confidence, "before I get through I'll make even that big town of yours know that I've been in it."

"But why all this hocus-pocus and double-dealing about it?" questioned Paine bewilderedly. "If you were coming on to New York, why didn't you simply up and do it? What was the necessity for this theatrical performance you have gone into?"

Instead of replying direct, Guse gave him a question in return.

"What is my name?" he asked bruskly.

"Why, Sylvester Guse of course; but I don't see——"

"And the nickname people have always given me?"

"'Sylly'—oh, I see," with sudden enlightenment, "you objected to that stupid old joke of 'Silly Goose.' Well, I don't know that I blame you much, old man; a title like that is something of an infliction, I'll agree."

"Paine," said the other man solemnly, "it has been the curse of my life. I didn't mind it so much when I was a kid, for it gave me a sort of distinctiveness in the town, and helped me along in my business; nor did I particularly object when you boys picked it up at college, for that was all in good-fellowship and fun. But when I returned to my home town and started to practise law, I speedily found what a detriment it was going to prove to me.

"I have a capacity for big things," he went on bitterly. "It is no self-flattery for me to say that; I know it is the truth. I could organize big corporations and run them, too, or I could rise to the top notch in politics. But, Lord, what show could a man have with an absurd title like that hanging to him?"

"Oh, I think you take a morbid view of it," put in Paine. "It is what a man is and does that counts, not what he is called," sententiously.

"Oh, is that so?" sneered his companion. "That is a lovely sentiment for the copy-books; but, let me tell you, in real life it don't go. If it hadn't been for that absurd nickname I'd have been nominated for district judge, and, what's more, nothing on earth could have prevented my election. Again, when the president of the bank died, there was no doubt that among all the directors I was the logical man to succeed him; but would they give it to me? Not in a

thousand years! Don't tell me," with a sudden outbreak of indignation, "that that fool name hasn't stood in my way!"

"But, if you felt so about it," interposed Paine, "why didn't you apply to the Legislature and have your name changed? That would certainly have obviated the difficulty."

"Pah!" scoffed the sufferer. "That would simply have shown that I cared and thus have made me more ridiculous than ever. No, Hal; 'Silly Goose' I was labeled, and 'Silly Goose' I was bound to remain to the end of the chapter. I could not escape it by moving away to another town, for it would inevitably have followed me. In short, so far as I could see, there was nothing for me to do but continue to writhe under my burden.

"And then, one night," he went on, dropping into narrative form, "I had a peculiar dream. I thought I was walking down Main Street, out there at home, when all at once I ran plump into Charlie Lehman, just as you ran into me down there at the door a while ago. Charlie was my bookkeeper when I was in the fruit business, I should explain, and had been dead and buried for nearly eight years.

"'Charlie Lehman!' I exclaimed on seeing him. 'Here and alive! What on earth does this mean?'

"Well, at first he tried to put me off; but finally he admitted my impeachment, and under promise of deep secrecy confided to me that he had never died at all, but had been buried in a trance, and on awaking managed to escape from the vault in which he had been laid.

"'Never give me away, Syl,' he adjured me, when we parted. 'You don't know what it means to a man to be able to take a fresh start.'

"I awoke with his final words ringing in my ears, and lay there pondering a little while over what could have given rise to such a strange and realistic dream. Then suddenly it flashed upon me that here was an avenue open to me to escape my troubles. 'Silly Goose' should be buried in the oblivion of the grave, and under another name, I, too, would take a fresh start in the world.

"I laid my plans carefully—how carefully you may judge when I tell you it has taken me two years to reach their consummation. But I was determined there should be no slip-ups or miscalculations.

"I arduously cultivated a cough, until by my persistence I succeeded in calling the attention of my friends to it, and was swamped with advice and patent medicines.

"Then, ostentatiously, I set forth to consult a Chicago specialist, and, having put in a day very comfortably playing billiards at the Auditorium, returned with the announcement that I had been ordered to a milder climate.

"I was very careful not to say who 'ordered' me; but, since it was an intention to deceive, I suppose it was a lie, anyway, eh? However, I got well enough punished for it," he sighed, his face growing suddenly sad and grave. "You have never visited the resorts patronized by the victims of tuberculosis; no? Well, the man who can observe the brave hopefulness of those patients, marking at the same time their slow, wasting decline, and not have his heart wrung again and again with pity, must be made of stone. That is all I can say.

"More than once, I was on the point of chucking up my enterprise, I can tell you. I began to harbor a superstitious fear that I was tempting Fate, and that in the end I should myself succumb to the malady I was simulating.

"But," with a firm set to his jaw, "I stuck it out. From place to place I wandered, searching for the man I wanted, and at last I found him on a ranch out in Arizona. Allowing for the ravages of disease, he was enough like me to be almost my twin brother; and a glance at him showed he had not six months to live. I scraped an acquaintance with him, and, when I got to know him sufficiently well, frankly stated my proposition.

"It was a brutal thing to do; but, for a wonder, he realized his condition and he snatched at it. He was hard-up, you see, and had been worrying himself sick over what was to become of his folks after he was gone, whereas the amount I offered him not only insured him ease and comfort in his own last days, but would provide a very tidy maintenance for them in the future.

"The bargain was made. We switched names, and then I had only to wait for the inevitable to start out in life afresh. Yet, strange as it may seem, I used every effort in my power to postpone the day of my emancipation. Thank heaven, I have nothing to blame myself with on that score.

"I took poor Clarkson down to Denver, and I got him all the relief that medical skill and tender nursing could provide. Believe me or not, Hal, if I could have saved that boy's life, I would have done it, and cheerfully remained 'Silly Goose' forever. But it was not to be."

The speaker paused a moment, and when he took up the tale again his voice was low and husky.

"He died with his hand in mine, and, when he could no longer speak, he smiled at me in a way that said as plain as words: 'God bless you.'

"The rest you know," Guse continued, resuming his normal tone. "I had the remains shipped back to my old home, and there interred with all the publicity which I could accomplish. The money which I have made is all in cash, and in a safe-deposit box, in New York, to which I hold the key. I have broken the last link which connects me with my past."

"And you were willing," interposed Paine a trifle bitterly, "to deceive me and your five other best friends, along with the rest of the world, and to drag us clear out West merely to add to the theatrical effect?"

"Yes," assented Guse; "it was necessary. Whatever expense or trouble you were put to would, I thought, be amply covered by the legacy I bequeathed each of you. Oh, I know," as the other strove to interrupt, "there was also the harrowing up of your feelings to be taken into consideration. But that was genuine. You were, to my mind, taking as final and irrevocable a farewell from him you had known as Sylvester Guse as though it had been my body you carried to the tomb."

"Yes, that is so, I suppose," agreed Paine; "but don't you think you were making a mistake, Syl? All six of us are well-established in New York. If you had confided in us, and told us of your plans, we could have arranged things so as to help you out materially when you came on there to settle down."

Guse threw back his shoulders with a gesture of impatient pride.

"I am not in the habit of seeking some one to boost me," he announced curtly. "I have always been able to make a way for myself. No, Hal, I don't dare have my secret known even among the old crowd. I am not sorry that you stumbled on it, for you were the one among all of them I hated most to lose. Still, even you, before you leave this room, must swear never to allude to the matter again, and never under any circumstances to address me or speak of me by the name I have discarded."

"Certainly, if those are your wishes. But look here," struck by a sudden thought, "do you imagine that the other fellows won't recognize you as readily as I did? You will undoubtedly run into them somewhere. Won't you have to explain to them, just as you have to me?"

"No," with a smile. "In fact, if we had not had this chance encounter, I would be willing to meet you face to face inside of six weeks and challenge you to detect my identity."

"Oh, you propose adopting a disguise, do you? Isn't that rather risky?"

"Not the kind that I shall have," explained Guse. "In short, Hal, the disguise that I take on is going to be permanent; and that is the reason I am in Cincinnati. There is a noted facial specialist here who assures me that he can so transform my countenance that my own mother—if I had one—wouldn't know me, and still leave no disfiguring scars to mar my beauty. I go into his hospital this afternoon, and when I come out I will be a changed man in every sense of the word."

"Six weeks?" broke in Paine disappointedly. "Pshaw! I had hoped you were going back with me. There is a splendid business opportunity open which is just in your line, and which I could put you on to at once. I signed up the agreements not an hour ago."

"What is it?" demanded Guse, and then listened eagerly while his friend unfolded the scheme, which was, as Paine had stated, distinctly in his line.

He put a few searching questions, examining the papers carefully. Then, with the quick decision which was a part of his nature, made up his mind.

"I'll tell you, Hal," he announced with some enthusiasm, "that is a good thing, and I don't propose to be left out of it. You take the key to my safe-deposit box, and from the funds there take out what is necessary to go into this——"

"Oh, I can advance you the money, I guess," hesitated Paine; but the other saw from his manner that this would work some inconvenience, and therefore insisted upon his original plan.

"No," he protested. "I would prefer it the other way. I guess I can trust you," with a light-hearted laugh, "not to take more than is coming to you. Though, even if you did," unconcernedly, "there are worse things than being broke.

"You keep the key, then," he went on, "and return it to me when I reach New York. I shall have no use for it in the meantime, and it might get lost if you sent it back by mail. And now draw up a contract and I will sign it with you."

A bell-boy was sent out for pens, ink, and paper, and in a few minutes the formal agreement was drafted and ready for the signatures.

Guse hesitated a moment, as he held his pen in air.

"How will you sign?" asked Paine with a covert smile. "Sylvester Guse?"

"No," jerked out the other, emphatically. "Thank heaven, I am done with that now and forever."

And, as he spoke, he dashed in bold chirography across the foot of the sheet the name "Horace M. Clarkson!"

CHAPTER III.

CATCHING THE LIMITED MAIL.

SOME five or six weeks later, a few moments prior to the departure of the Limited Mail for New York, a cab drove up to the Cincinnati Station and from it stepped a tall gentleman closely resembling in height and build the late Sylvester Guse.

It needed, however, but a single glance at the man's face to correct any such erroneous impression. Guse's eyes had been a bright, steel blue; this person's were a soft shade of brown. The shape of Guse's nose had been distinctly aquiline, while this man sported a proboscis of a pronounced Roman type.

There were also minor differences of lines and wrinkles which, while insignificant in themselves, taken together created a facial expression which could never under any circumstances have been mistaken for that of Guse.

The only test which could in any way have betrayed the homogeneity of the two was that of the Bertillon measurement; and inasmuch as the deceased lawyer had never run counter to the criminal code, there was no possibility of applying that.

In short, Mr. Horace M. Clarkson, of New York, as the neatly stenciled name upon his new suit-case proclaimed him to be, was in a position to brave the most searching and intimate inquiry into his identity.

His ticket and sleeping-car berth to the metropolis were already engaged, his baggage checked; and now he had nothing to occupy his attention, as he strolled idly up and down the platform waiting for the train to pull in, except to watch the string of arriving and departing passengers.

Strangely enough, for such a self-confident personage, this spectacle gave him an odd little feeling of loneliness. Every other traveler seemed to have some one either to welcome or bid him God-speed upon his journey. He alone had not a soul in the world, with the single exception of Harry Paine, with whom he could claim even acquaintanceship.

By his act of self-erasure he had destroyed at one fell swoop all those friendships which, to a man like himself, devoid of blood relations, mean so much.

Involuntarily he fell to commiserating himself upon his forlorn lot, harboring a sullen envy of those happier wayfarers who had people interested in their goings and comings; and then suddenly his depressed broodings were interrupted by the appearance upon the platform of another passenger, apparently as lonely and unfriended as himself.

A mere slip of a girl it was, young and pretty, and evidently unused to traveling

alone. Her wide gray eyes bore a shy, frightened look, and she was plainly in a state of nervous anxiety lest she might make a mistake and so lose her train.

Moreover, she was attired in deep black, betokening the existence of a recent grief. Clarkson, forgetting himself, became imbued with a chivalric pity and watched her interestedly, wishing vaguely that some chance might offer itself whereby he could render himself of assistance to her.

"A nice state of civilization we have reached," he fumed indignantly. "Here is that poor child, all at sea, and scared half to death by the strangeness of her situation; and yet a big lubber like me doesn't dare step forward and relieve her distress because, forsooth, she and everybody else would immediately think I was trying to flirt with her."

Just then, however, the arrival of the Limited Mail gave him something else to think of. As the long string of Pullmans backed up to the platform Clarkson hastily gathered together his luggage and joined the rush of embarking passengers.

Before he boarded the train, though, he cast a look back to see which of the sleepers his pretty little fellow traveler was going to take. It was of course no concern of his, yet somehow he felt as though he would like to know her destination.

But she still stood in the same spot where he had first observed her, evidently uncertain whether this was her train or not. In her trepidation, she appealed to a "baggage-smasher" who came hurrying by.

"Will you please tell me if this is the Limited Mail?" Horace heard her ask timidly.

But the man merely cast an unintelligible grunt over his shoulder and hastened on.

About two seconds later there was a very startled baggage-man on that platform. A stern hand suddenly descended on his shoulder, with a grip like that of a vise, and a wrathful voice in his ear demanded to know what he meant by such a show of incivility?

"I am well aware that you are not the 'information bureau,'" snapped out Clarkson, in reply to the fellow's protest; "but it's the money of the passengers on these trains that pays you men your wages, and we have a right to expect some little politeness and consideration in return. Since you don't seem to have grasped that fact for yourself, I propose to give you a course of practical instruction."

With that, he twisted the man abruptly about, and, despite his struggles, marched him briskly back to where the girl still stood, reduced by this time almost to the verge of tears.

"Now," ordered Horace grimly, "answer the lady's question. She asked you, I believe, whether or not this was the Limited Mail?"

The baggage-man, in rebellious humor, strove to break loose; but the clutch upon his collar was strong There were none of his comrades in sight upon whom he could call for assistance. In the end he was forced to surrender.

"Yes, it is," he growled. "Now le' me go. I'm in a hurry, blast ye!"

"Curb your impatience just a moment, dear boy," retorted Clarkson suavely. "It may be that the lady wants a little further information. If so, I feel sure you will be only too happy to oblige."

The girl, at first startled and alarmed by the approach of the tall stranger with his wriggling captive in tow, had by this time grasped the significance of the little interlude; and that she caught the humor of it was evident from the shy gleam of amusement which now sparkled in her eye.

Paying no heed to Clarkson beyond one fleeting glance, she nevertheless took a cue from him, and addressed another question to the baggage-man quite as though he had responded to her first with Chesterfieldian courtesy.

"Thank you so much," she said with gracious dignity. "Now, will you kindly point out the New York sleeper?"

Horace almost exploded. The sarcasm of it was so delicious.

"By George!" he exclaimed delightedly to himself, "she's a thoroughbred! Not one woman in a thousand would have played up to my lead like that."

The baggage-man, too, was so taken aback that for a moment he could only

goggle his eyes at her; but a sharp tug at his collar and a muttered command from behind brought him to his senses.

"Th' fourt' from th' end," he growled, with a jerk of his head toward the train. Then an unholy joy shot into his eye. "An', by crickey, you're goin' to miss her!" he exclaimed.

Clarkson turned quickly. So engrossed had he been in the task of teaching manners to his surly pupil, that he had failed to hear the conductor's warning cry of "All aboard!"

Already the porters had gathered up their little stools and were mounting the steps; the long string of brown coaches was starting to glide out of the station.

It was no time to stand upon ceremony. With a hurried cry, "Come on!" Horace snatched the girl's grip from the platform, and adding it to his own collection, extended his free hand to her.

She caught it, and together they raced down the line of moving cars. With a toss he sent the baggage up to a porter; then, without so much as "by your leave," threw an arm around the girl's waist and lifted her up into the air.

For one moment he felt her quick, panting breath against his cheek, and a waft of perfume from her hair swept across his nostrils; and for one moment she felt the quick, lithe pressure of his arm, and the uplift of those powerful shoulder muscles. Then she found herself safe and sound upon the platform of the car, stayed by the dusky hand of the negro porter.

A second later Clarkson had swung himself up beside her.

Her face was rosy-red as a June peony when she lifted it to his, and she was trembling like a leaf; but there was a certain stateliness in the little bow she made him. "I thank you very much, sir," she said with grave courtesy. "Had it not been for you I would have missed the train."

Then she turned and passed on into the car. Clarkson remained a while standing on the platform. Past rows of box-cars standing upon sidings rattled the train; under the dingy walls of factories and warehouses, streaked and grimy. Then suddenly it swept around a curve, and there lay the broad expanse of the rippling Ohio, with the green Kentucky hills upon the farther shore, the whole scene bathed in a flood of afternoon sunlight.

Clarkson's eyes, as he surveyed the peaceful vista, were reflective, but no longer moody nor bitter.

"Yes," he murmured, musingly; "as I said, she is a thoroughbred."

CHAPTER IV.

HOT FROM THE BAT.

CLARKSON was wise in his generation. He made no immediate effort to pursue an acquaintanceship with the young lady, whom fate—in a checked jumper and a dirty blue cap—had thrust into his arms on the Cincinnati platform.

She was young and self-conscious, and he realized that to push matters now would only alarm and embarrass her. He was confirmed in this view, moreover, by the quick manner in which she averted her eyes, and by the burning blush which spread up over her forehead when he finally entered the car.

"As I said, she's a thoroughbred," thought Horace; "and like all of them, sensitive and nervous. One has to handle them with a snaffle-bit; and there's no use trying to rush things. We'll be together on this train all day to-morrow, and I shall be very much surprised if something doesn't turn up to give me the opportunity I want."

Therefore, he subsided quietly into his seat a few feet down the aisle from hers, and apparently absorbed himself in a newspaper, although by the time that daylight faded, and the Pintsch gas flamed out in the globes overhead, he was probably much better versed in the details of her back hair than in anything which appeared on the printed page.

With the same careful diplomacy, he did not give way to his impulse, and, when dinner was announced, follow her directly to the dining-car in the hope that in the rush they might both be assigned to the same table. He waited until she should be thoroughly settled, and then, sauntering unconcernedly in, took a seat quite at the other end of the car.

As he passed her, he inclined his head in a brief salutation, and she responded

with a little fluttered bow; but Horace noted that, although the color rose again in a wave to her cheek, her eyes met his without apprehension.

"She's beginning to comprehend that I do not belong to the 'masher' breed," he told himself with satisfaction. "Now, if the gods are only good to me, it ought to be plain sailing."

He saw no more of her that night, for when he returned to the sleeper after a cigar and a short political discussion with some fellow travelers in the smoking-compartment, he found the curtains down before her berth.

Nor, on the following morning, did the opportunity he was awaiting present itself.

The train had been held up for several hours by a wash-out in the mountains, and the Pittsburgh section, which should have been attached at Grafton, had gone on ahead, bearing with it the diner. The passengers on the Limited Mail were consequently informed that they would have to endure the pangs of hunger until the eating-house at Cumberland was reached.

This ought to have provided an opening, for the common discomfort tended to sweep away barriers of reserve in a unanimity of rage against the railway management; but the girl took no part in the irate growlings of the mob.

After one or two inquiries of the porter, the young lady settled herself in the corner of her seat, and buried herself in a magazine, evidently prepared to submit to the inevitable.

This was undoubtedly Horace's chance. How many romances have been founded on the steaming cup of tea or the delicate chicken sandwich which the resourceful hero of fiction in similar circumstances always procures just at the right time!

But, alas, in the present case they were aboard the Limited Mail, booked to stop nowhere short of Cumberland, and not likely to interrupt its schedule merely to give a young man the chance of playing the gallant.

Moreover, the buffet was as empty as the proverbial condition of old Mother Hubbard's cupboard. Already, the porter had made himself hoarse, assuring avid passengers that "dey ain't nuffin' dah, suh; not so much as a bite ob ham, ner a bottle ob ketchup. You-all's jes' gotter wait till we gits to Cumb'lan'."

In his zeal, Clarkson even made a tour of the train with the hope of finding some fortunate possessor of a lunch-basket, who might be induced to divide; but the only person answering such a description was an emigrant in one of the day-coaches who stolidly munched at a repast of mussy bread and onions, and this was fare which he hardly believed would tempt the lady's palate.

Thus the precious moments slipped away, and "nothing doing," until at last, with a slackening of speed, and a grinding of the brakes, the Limited Mail rolled into Cumberland and stopped.

The depot restaurant at this mountain town is across a wide platform and up a flight of steps; yet so swift was the onrush of the passengers, under the stress of sharpened appetite, that the car-wheels had scarcely ceased to revolve before the long tables were surrounded and the knives and forks clinking in merry music.

Swept forward by the hungry horde, Clarkson tried to maneuver so as to hold two seats side by side; but when he stepped back to the door a minute to find her, one of the places was promptly preempted by a fat traveling-man. Another golden opportunity lost!

It was almost with a sensation of anger, indeed, that Horace saw her come out of the car at that moment, and make her way leisurely across the platform.

"If she had only shown a reasonable amount of haste," he muttered savagely, "everything would have turned out all right; but I suppose, like all women, she had to wait to see if her hat was on straight."

At any rate, he sensibly reflected, there was nothing he could do now but attend to the cravings of his own inner nature, and let her fence for herself.

A few moments later, by the removal of some dishes, he was able to catch an unobstructed view of her where she sat at the far-end of his table.

His own plate was piled high with roast beef, potatoes, and a varied assortment of vegetables; but to his surprise there was nothing before her save some pickles and a dish of ice-cream, and at

the latter she was toying daintily with her fork.

"Well, may I be eternally gee-whizzled!" ejaculated Clarkson under his breath. "And I thought she must be fairly famishing! It is doubtful if I would have won her unalloyed gratitude by getting her something to eat this morning after all."

Since there was this considerable difference in the size of their orders, the girl finished some little time before himself, and, having settled her check, stepped out upon the platform.

When Clarkson finally left the dining-room, he saw her standing there, and he paused a moment on the top of the steps to admire the pretty picture she made, as she gazed upon the somber, dark-green bulk of the mountain which rears itself just beyond the little town.

Behind her stood the long row of waiting cars, and mechanics were busily clanking at the boxes on the wheels to see that all was right for the next stage of the journey.

While Clarkson gazed, his eye suddenly caught the gleam of flying metal in the sunshine. The head torn loose from one of those clanking hammers was hurtling through the air directly toward her.

A dozen cries of warning were shouted simultaneously; but the girl, dazed, failing to comprehend her imminent peril, stood stock-still where she was.

While others were calling to her, however, Clarkson had acted. Like a flash, he comprehended the situation, and saw what he had to do.

With one flying leap he cleared the steps, tore across the intervening space, and reaching desperately out, caught the flying missile not six inches from her head.

A sharp pain ran up his arm, as his fingers closed upon the iron, and he dropped it as though it were red-hot; but his quick-witted action had saved the girl, and the spectators broke out into an involuntary round of applause.

She had turned in surprise at his cyclonic rush; but now realizing from what he had saved her stepped quickly forward.

"I have to thank you again, sir," she said, and there was a little tremble in her voice. "You have undoubtedly saved my life."

"Hardly that," returned Horace, trying to smile, but unable fully to repress a grimace of pain. "You might have received a pretty serious blow, but——"

"Oh," she interrupted with a quick indrawing of her breath, "you are hurt!" She glanced with solicitude at his hand from which the blood was now beginning to drip. "You must see a doctor at once."

But Clarkson endeavored to make light of his injury.

"It is nothing but a scratch," he protested; "and, besides, I cannot afford to wait over here to see a doctor. I must go on to New York by this train."

Further argument was cut short by a warning toot from the engine; and the man, still insisting that his injury amounted to practically nothing, hurried her aboard the train.

"You are the most obstinate person I ever saw," she scolded, as they entered the car together; "but you shall at least permit me to do what I can to relieve your pain. I have some arnica and things in my bag, and I have some skill in patching up wounds. My brother used to be a great baseball player, and my services were frequently called into requisition."

Horace, as may be imagined, was nothing loth to accept this offer; and the girl speedily proved that her vaunted surgery was no idle boast. She bathed and bandaged the cut on his hand (an ugly, jagged gash) with the deftness of a regular practitioner.

Over the finger itself, however—the middle one on the right hand, by the way—she shook her head with a dubious frown.

"I am afraid you are going to have trouble with that," she said regretfully. "See, it is swollen up to twice its normal size, and is rapidly beginning to discolor. If I am not much mistaken, it is broken. I wish you had taken my advice about a physician."

This was, of course, a cue for the young man to make a gallant answer; but before he could avail himself of it, he was interrupted by the negro porter, who stopped at the section to inquire if he was not Mr. Clarkson.

"Yere's a tellygraft fo' you, den," he went on, having received assent. "It done come back at Cumb'lan'; but I couldn't git you located no sooneh."

Horace took the yellow envelope; but was so awkward in attempting to open it with his bandaged fingers that the girl hastened to assist him.

The message was from Harry Paine, and stated that he had been unexpectedly called to Europe, sailing that morning; but that he had left the safe-deposit key at Clarkson's hotel, where the owner could get it on his arrival.

Horace was just about to fold the slip and place it in his pocket when he was startled by hearing an exclamation of surprise from his companion.

She had held the envelope in which the message came, and while he read the enclosure had been aimlessly creasing it between her fingers. Now, her glance was riveted upon the superscription with a kind of puzzled wonder.

"It is so strange," she explained in response to his look of inquiry. "I did not think it particularly odd when I heard the porter call you Mr. Clarkson; it is not an uncommon name. But that you should be 'Horace Maitland Clarkson,'" she drew her finger under the words of the address as she spoke, "is a rather surprising coincidence."

"Why so?" he asked, instantly on guard. "Have you ever known any one of the name?"

"Yes; my brother," she said, and her eyes filled with tears.

There was a little silence. Both of them were taken up with their own thoughts, although, as may be imagined, their reflections were along vastly different lines.

Then suddenly Horace became conscious of a conversation being carried on between two men in the seat behind them.

One was relating to the other, who had not seen it, the incident which had taken place on the Cumberland platform, and was expatiating admiringly upon the dexterity shown by Clarkson.

"Why, I haven't seen such a brilliant catch," he said, "since our old college pitcher, 'Silly Goose,' in the big game with Yale, when the score stood one to nothing in the ninth inning, ran out over the coaching-lines and pulled down a foul tip, which won us the victory."

Clarkson wheeled abruptly, and stared at the speaker. True enough, it was one of his old schoolmates. He had observed the fellow once or twice before, and had thought there was something familiar in his face; but had failed to recognize him under the changes which time had wrought.

"Silly Goose?" remarked the other man questioningly.

"Yes," with a laugh. "His name, as it happened, was Sylvester Guse; and of course a gang of college boys would never have overlooked such an obvious derivation."

Horace was recalled to his companion by hearing her give a little gasp.

"Sylvester Guse!" she whispered excitedly, leaning over toward him. "That was the name of the man my brother mentioned as his bosom friend in the last letter he ever wrote us. Oh, will you not get into conversation with that man behind us, and find out if he knows anything of Guse's movements in the last two years. Listen," she cried, suddenly lifting a silencing finger, for the man behind had once more started to speak.

"Yes, Sylvester Guse was a great ball-player," he said ruminatively. "Why, we used to think a game as good as won when he and Harry Paine were in the points for our side. Those two——"

"Harry Paine?" repeated the girl dramatically. "Was not that the name signed to the message you just received?"

Horace M. Clarkson began vaguely to wonder if this acquaintanceship he had been so keen for was going to be such a desirable thing after all.

CHAPTER V.

THE SISTER'S STORY.

THERE was a moment or two of rather awkward silence while Clarkson, as quickly as might be, strove to collect his thoughts.

"If one may draw an inference," he said finally, and there was less constraint in his tone than might have been expected, "you are seeking information concerning your brother. Now, pray do

not regard me as inquisitive when I say that perhaps if you told me the whole story I could better assist you in making such inquiries as you suggest concerning this man Guse, either from the fellow behind us, or from my friend Paine."

"Oh, I shall be only too glad to tell you," averred the girl. "It will be such a relief to have some one advise me, for I have been all the way out West, and have done everything I could think of, and I seem," there was a suspicious tremble in her voice, "to have accomplished just nothing at all."

She looked so helpless and appealing, so utterly unfitted to cope with the hard facts of existence, that it was all Horace could do to restrain himself from taking her in his arms and petting her as one might soothe a sorrowful child.

He repressed the inclination, however, and in order to restore her to her poise, adopted a lighter tone.

"Very well, then," he said with simulated sternness, "since I am to act as counselor, the first thing I shall suggest is that you adopt a more substantial diet than pickles and ice-cream. No wonder you haven't been able to accomplish anything," with disgusted emphasis, "when you fortify yourself for your task with such fare as that!"

She had the grace to blush and hang her head at his indictment; and when Clarkson followed it up with a demand that she take dinner with him in the dining-car that evening, and eat what he should order, she did not say him nay. Or, at least, the faint demur she essayed was quickly silenced by Horace's plea that he could not handle a knife and fork with his injured hand, and would need somebody to feed him.

Accordingly an *entente cordiale* being now firmly established between them, and her confidence thoroughly won, she proceeded freely and without reservation to tell him her story.

Her name was Daisy Clarkson, she said, and until two years before she and her brother Horace had lived happily with their widowed mother in an apartment in New York. Horace was devoted to his mother and sister, and as he was in receipt of a good salary had allowed them to want for nothing.

Like so many New Yorkers, however, they had lived without regard to the inevitable "rainy day," and when it finally came it found them ill-prepared to meet it.

Horace, verging into a decline, had been informed by his physicians that his sole chance for recovery lay in a trip to the West.

But the expense of this step, together with the cutting off of their source of supply, had proved a heavy drain upon the exchequer of the little family.

Anxious days succeeded. The word which came from the invalid was not of an encouraging character. The outlook for the future was dark.

Then came a letter from the brother, stating that he had struck up a friendship with a man named Sylvester Guse, and that the latter had offered to put him in on a business proposition which promised to pan out big things.

A month or so later came a remittance which relieved them from all necessity for further financial worry; but along with it arrived a message of such strange purport that it could not fail to give rise to grave misgivings.

In it the brother told them frankly that he had no hope or expectation of getting well, and that for reasons which he could not explain he desired to be buried out in the country to which he had gone.

"Let me urge it as a last request," he wrote, "that you make no effort to probe the circumstances of my death, or seek to discover my last resting-place. I will receive the tenderest care during my remaining days, and will be laid away by loving hands, and the exact time of my demise will be made known to you. You may rest assured on these points; all else must remain my secret."

Almost by the next mail this was followed by a letter from Sylvester Guse announcing that the end had come.

"A beautiful letter it was, too," commented Miss Clarkson with a shake of her head; "so sincere and manly, yet so delicate in tone, and speaking so tenderly of Horace as he had known him during their brief intimacy. It seems almost impossible to me, when I recall it, that the man who wrote those lines should be a villain."

"A villain?" exclaimed Clarkson amazedly. "Sylvester Guse?"

One would almost have thought from his expression of consternation that the girl's words had aroused some personal feeling.

Engrossed in her story, however, she gave no heed to his agitation.

"Yes," she said decidedly, "I am afraid there is no other construction to be put upon the facts which we have learned."

"Then you have disobeyed your brother's injunction, and are attempting to investigate the circumstances of his death?" questioned Horace quickly. His tone was almost one of reproof.

"I would not have done so," she explained in half-apology, "had it not been that certain intelligence reached us which caused us seriously to doubt if everything was as it appeared.

"A friend of mother's who lived in a little town out in Illinois happened to send us a paper containing an account of her daughter's marriage, and in glancing over it my eye chanced to be caught by an item detailing the death and burial of Sylvester Guse.

"The name is such an unusual one that I naturally became interested, and read the article, finding, before I had finished a half dozen lines, that it was undoubtedly the same man who had been Horace's friend.

"What particularly caught my attention, however, was the date given as his death, and I hurriedly got out the letter he had sent us in order to make comparison. There could be no question of mistake. The letter, as shown both by its contents and the postmark, was written the day after the man was supposed to have died."

"But I don't see that that proves anything," broke in Horace eagerly. "There must have been an error somewhere. Either the paper misstated the date or else the man himself got mixed up when he was writing to you."

"And the postmark?" she interjected.

"Oh—er—that must have been a mistake, too. Perhaps," lamely, "it was rubbed a little, and you read it wrong? Or, I'll tell you," with sudden inspiration, "Guse no doubt gave it to a friend to post for him, and this other fellow neglected to do so at once. That must be it," he repeated emphatically. "It would have been impossible, don't you know, for a dead man to write that letter to you."

"Yes," she admitted; "if it were true that Sylvester Guse is really dead."

Clarkson's jaw dropped, and he sat staring at her with wide, apprehensive eyes.

"If it were true that he is dead?" he repeated dazedly. "Do you mean to say you have any doubts on that score?"

She bowed her head in assent.

"We satisfied ourselves on the points that you have raised," she said, resuming her narrative, "and, after going over the matter thoroughly, decided that the manifest contradiction in facts warranted us in disregarding my brother's dying charge.

"We have lived a singularly isolated life since my father's death, and we had no friends to whom we could appeal in this emergency; so, as my mother is too old and infirm to undertake so long a journey, it was plain that, if any investigation was to be made, the task must devolve on me.

"I realized my ignorance and inexperience," she confessed, "and I dreaded to attempt it; yet I also felt that I would never be satisfied so long as this taint of mystery clung to my brother's end. At the last, I took my courage in both hands, and started."

"And you found?" burst out Horace, unable to restrain his impatience.

"I found that a man named Sylvester Guse had died at the hospital in Denver, as had been reported to us. From there I traced him back step by step to all the places where he and my brother had been in company, and I found that the circumstances he had written us of Horace's death and burial were a tissue of falsehoods.

"Then a new thought suggested itself to me. I went back to the Denver hospital, and showed the authorities there a photograph of my brother. They recognized it instantly as the portrait of the man known to them under the name of Sylvester Guse!"

She paused as though expecting him to be astonished at this revelation; but

Clarkson was so overwhelmed by this time that he was past simulating emotions he did not feel.

"Er—then, your brother was really dead, after all?" he stammered idiotically. "Probably the hospital got the names of the two men transposed," casting wildly about for a plausible explanation. "Awfully careless of them. But then I suppose these big institutions cannot help such mistakes at times."

"No," she denied; "it was not the fault of the hospital. I examined the entry-blank, and the name was given there as Sylvester Guse; written, moreover, by the same hand which had penned the letter acquainting us with Horace's death."

"And signed by whom?" faltered Clarkson, wincing almost as though from a physical blow.

"With the name of Horace M. Clarkson!"

It was a good thing she did not glance at her escort just then. His face was drawn and bloodless as that of a man on the way to execution. The big drops of sweat stood out upon his forehead. Unnoticing, however, her voice went on evenly:

"It was that fact which startled me so when I saw the address upon your telegram. I even fancied for a moment that you might be Guse still masquerading under my brother's name. Instantly, though, I recalled the photograph I have of Guse himself, and I saw that that could not possibly be."

"Ah, you have a photograph of Guse, then?" asked Horace with a great sigh of relief.

He felt as though he had been unexpectedly reprieved upon the scaffold.

"Yes; I made an especial trip to the town where he formerly lived in order to procure one. I want to be able to recognize him if I ever run across him."

There was a purposeful set to her lips, and a flash to her eye as she spoke, which betokened that, if the encounter ever did take place, Sylvester Guse would not escape without rendering her a full reckoning.

Clarkson, however, freed from immediate peril, and having had a chance to collect his wits, here broke in.

"But why should you want to find him?" he urged eagerly, almost pleadingly. "You have found out that, when he wrote you of your brother's death, even if he did not give the exact facts, he still told the truth in substance. Then, according to your own account, he was your brother's friend, let him in on a good business proposition, nursed him tenderly at the hospital——"

"I do not believe I said that," interrupted the girl; "although I am informed by the hospital authorities that such was the case."

"Er—perhaps not. At any rate I gathered as much from your story; and he certainly did carry out the requests which your brother announced beforehand he would make upon him.

"Now, it seems to me that you are making a great mistake in delving into this affair, especially in view of your brother's expressed desire that no inquiries should be made. As I look at it, there must have been an agreement between the two men to do these things for purposes of their own; and that it is an injustice to your dead brother to take the matter up now that he is no longer here to protect himself. It is good policy sometimes, Miss Clarkson, to let sleeping dogs lie."

"No, I do not agree with you at all," she protested stubbornly. "We have no fear of uncovering anything to Horace's detriment during his lifetime and we are distinctly unwilling to believe that he knew or was a party to the imposture practised at the hospital. You did not know my brother, and therefore I cannot blame you for your doubts; but it would take a good deal to convince me of the explanation you offer.

"My theory, on the other hand, is that Horace was so weak and ailing when he was taken to the institution that he was entirely ignorant of the fact that he was under a false name, and I believe that his previous actions and his strange letter to us were occasioned by a powerful and sinister influence which this man Guse had gained over him."

"But what purpose could Guse have had in any such deep-laid plot?" scoffed Clarkson. "What end had he possibly to gain?"

"Ah," she said. "Horace had made money in this business venture of his;

that we know. Whether he made more than he sent us, we cannot tell. It may be that he did, and that Guse employed this method of getting hold of it; or it may be that Guse took this plan of covering up some crime he had committed. Of one thing I am certain, though, and that is, he would not have adopted such questionable means unless his design had been an evil one.

"But all this is surmise and inference, Miss Clarkson," argued Horace impatiently; "and against it you have the plain command of your brother's letter. Again, I counsel you that you had better let sleeping dogs lie."

"And permit this man to flaunt my brother's name around the world, and trail it in the mire of disgrace, no doubt, while the man to whom it rightfully belongs rests under a graven lie?" she expostulated bitterly. "Never!"

Clarkson saw from her manner that nothing was to be gained by further deprecations, and so changed his tactics.

"Of course, I was merely trying to advise," he hastened to explain; "but since you are fully decided on your course, all I can do is to help you so far as lies in my power. I see little that I can do, though. You told me that your trip to the West had been fruitless; yet to me it seems that you have accomplished all that could have been expected."

"Ah, but I have failed to strike any clue leading to this man Guse," she broke in sharply. "That is the task before me, and it is because I believe that you can aid me, I have appealed to you. I want you to find out whatever you can from Harry Paine, and I also wish you would question this man who sat behind us. He may know something. Will you do this for me?"

"Certainly," rising with alacrity. "I'll go right back to the smoker and quiz the fellow right now. And—er—by the way, did the people at the town where Guse used to live seem much surprised at your story?"

"I did not tell any one there," she answered. "I was afraid he might have some friend in the community who would report the matter to him and put him on his guard."

"Thank heaven for small favors," muttered Clarkson on his way to the smoking-compartment. He mopped his forehead vigorously, and drew a long breath.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "Talk about your half hours in Purgatory!"

But, if he had only known it, there was worse still ahead!

CHAPTER VI.

GREETED BY A SURPRISE.

As might have been expected, Horace did not extract any very startling information from the man in the smoker. He actually did approach the chap and make some guarded inquiries, for he saw no use in reporting a downright falsehood to Miss Clarkson, and he had small fear that the fellow would recognize him under his disguise; but naturally he discovered nothing which would add to the sister's enlightenment.

He held out great hopes to her, however, of better success in an interrogation of Harry Paine; for he reasoned that in this way he could prevent her from essaying other channels of investigation, and since two or three weeks must elapse before his friend could possibly return from abroad, he would have an opportunity in the meantime to more fully establish himself in his new rôle.

"She really has no just complaint against me," he declared. "I have taken nothing from her brother except his name, and that I bought and paid for. I do not intend to pass myself off as he, nor to trade in any way upon his past. Why, then, am I not justified in protecting myself from an inquiry which her brother himself forbade them to set on foot?"

Nevertheless, since they had undertaken it, and since it was through his fault they were troubled with these harassing doubts and questions, he realized that in common fairness he owed these people some sort of an explanation which would allay their misgivings.

Of course, he might go to them and tell them the truth; but he shrank from imperiling his new career by extending any further confidences. Suppose Mrs. Clarkson should object to his using her son's name and should denounce him as an impostor?

The thought came to him that he might drop the patronymic he had taken and assume another; but he found that way of escape also barred. He had entered into the business arrangement which Paine had proposed to him under the name of Clarkson.

"In short," he reflected perplexedly, "I've got a pretty ticklish piece of work cut out for me; for I've not only got to keep 'Silly Goose' decently under the sod, and start out in my new sphere, but I've also got to relieve the minds of these ladies and make them understand that everything is on the square. And how I am going to do it all," he added with a frown, "is for the moment just a trifle beyond me."

Still, for all his quandary, no one would have imagined, when he rejoined Miss Clarkson, that he had a care in the world.

Horace was a firm believer in letting the morrow shoulder its own burdens; and he felt certain that Paine's absence would give him a long enough respite to hit upon some plan of solving his difficulties. For the present, through the intervention of fate, he had accomplished an acquaintanceship with a charming young woman, and he proposed to make the most of his opportunity.

He was a delightful companion when he chose to exert himself, and it is perhaps needless to state that he put his best foot forward in this instance. Tactfully he drew the girl away from the morbid thoughts and somber fancies upon which she had been dwelling too persistently of late, and found to his delight that she expanded under his buoyant optimism like a rose in the sunshine.

So congenial were their natures, and so pleasantly did the moments pass, that he could hardly believe it when he found that they were running into Philadelphia, and that only a short two-hours' stage of their journey remained to be covered.

A great part of the time lost the night before had been made up by the Limited Mail, and it was now apparent that they would arrive in New York only slightly behind schedule time.

Still, even so, it would be rather late for the dinner-hour, so the dining-car was attached at Philadelphia, and Horace was able to insist upon Miss Clarkson's redeeming her promise to eat with him that evening—a function which it may be stated was of considerably more solid character than the pickles and ice-cream which had served her for lunch.

The two progressed farther toward intimacy in that hour and a half between soup and coffee than they would have done in a month of ordinary meetings, and before it was over Horace had secured from her a timid permission that he might call upon her mother and herself at their New York apartment.

All too soon was the happy episode over. The speed of the train began to slacken, the lights multiplied outside the car-windows, blue-uniformed men with lanterns tucked in the crook of their elbows hurried through. They were in Jersey City.

Horace accompanied her across the ferry, and having placed her in a cab and started her off for home, turned his attention once more to his own affairs.

The first thing, of course, was to repair to the hotel at which he had arranged to stop, and see what message Paine had left for him along with the key to the safety deposit box. Accordingly he, too, took a cab and, giving the driver the direction, "The Hambletonian," was rapidly transported to his stopping-place.

He registered at the desk and, turning to the clerk, asked quickly for his letters.

A perfunctory glance at the key-rack and a languid shake of the head was his answer.

"Oh, but there must be," insisted Clarkson. "I received a telegram at Cumberland this morning stating that an enclosure had been left here for me. See, here it is," dragging Paine's message from his pocket.

"Nothing here for Horace M. Clarkson," repeated the clerk after another and more searching inspection.

"Well, I'll be eternally geewhizzled!" broke out Horace, dropping into his favorite expletive, "what could Paine have been thinking of? Are you sure there is nothing for me?" turning again to the clerk.

"Absolutely sure, sir, so far as to any-

thing being left at the desk. It may be, however, that the message was left for you personally with one of the day men. In that case I would know nothing about it, as I have been on trick only half an hour."

"Where can I get hold of the day men?" questioned Clarkson excitedly. "This is an important matter, and I want to have it straightened out right away."

"Oh, it would be practically impossible for you to locate them all to-night, sir," replied the clerk, with a pitying smile. "They will be scattered all over New York by this time. Your better plan would be to wait until morning, when you will find them on duty."

There seemed to be nothing else to do; so, as it was getting late, and he felt somewhat fatigued from his long journey, Horace ascended to his room and prepared to retire.

While emptying his pockets, however, as was his invariable custom before removing his clothes, a disturbing thought came to him.

Suppose that key failed to turn up on the morrow, and he was unable to gain access to his hoarded store?

He turned quickly to the dresser and hastily counted up the silver and bills which he had just laid there.

Twelve dollars and seventy-five cents! He knew he had been traveling pretty light, having no need for more than just enough to get him to New York; but he thought he ought to have a larger remainder than that.

Then he recalled with some bitterness of spirit the unnecessarily liberal tips he had given to the dining-car waiter and the porter on the train.

"I could have saved one dollar and ninety-five cents by coming up-town on the L, too," he told himself thoughtfully. "I may regret that cab before I get through with this scrape."

CHAPTER VII.

A FEW BOMBS EXPLODED.

BEFORE he reached the pajama stage of his undressing, however, Horace was able to laugh at the apprehension which had suddenly assailed him.

Of course there was a mistake somewhere, he assured himself. Paine would never have sent that telegram unless he had left the key and a letter of explanation as he had stated.

Moreover, the wire had distinctly said —he pulled it out of his pocket and read it afresh to make sure—that the articles were at the Hambletonian. Undoubtedly the explanation offered by the clerk at the desk was the correct one. In an excess of precaution, Harry had hesitated to leave the packet with the general "awaiting arrival" list, but had turned it over to one of the men for personal guardianship.

He could not of course have reckoned on the Limited Mail being late, and, knowing the clerk would still be on trick, had supposed that Horace would receive it immediately upon his appearance.

That was plainly the solution, Clarkson now saw; and there was consequently not the slightest necessity for him to feel any anxiety. His property would be duly turned over to him in the morning.

Indeed, just at the moment, he had a more immediate vexation to cope with, for by an incautious movement during the process of disrobing he had struck his injured finger, and it was now throbbing and aching most painfully.

Under Miss Clarkson's ministrations, the early hurt of the thing had been wonderfully soothed, and for the rest of the afternoon he had been so engrossed in other matters that, beyond an occasional twinge, he had been unconscious of his disability.

Now, however, the wounded member began to make up for lost time, and, when he unwrapped the bandage, he found that it presented a far from reassuring appearance. Swollen almost to the size of his wrist, it was tinged with the deep purple color of a damson plum, shading off at the points where his knuckles would normally have been located into high lights of an angry crimson.

It was hopeless to think of sleep with such an inflamed appendage as that, and fearful lest further delay might produce still more serious results, he decided to call a doctor at once.

The physician came, looked grave, announced that the bone was broken, and, after setting it, gave Clarkson a lecture on the danger of neglecting such things and admonished him not to use the hand, no matter what the temptation, under less than three weeks.

When he left he took with him the lion's share of Horace's available capital; but the sufferer was not disposed to put up a kick. The relief he had gained was cheap at almost any price, and the doctor left behind a sedative which assured him a composed and restful night.

Therefore, he sank shortly into a quiet slumber, and so reposed peacefully until well on into the following morning.

Having finally awakened, he summoned a bell-boy to assist him at his toilet, and then with his disabled hand carefully adjusted in a sling made his way to the dining-room. It is rather a difficult thing to feed oneself successfully with a single hand, and before Clarkson could satisfy his hunger he had to call the services of his waiter into requisition to prepare the different viands before him.

These are insignificant matters to mention, perhaps, but their importance will be recognized when one reflects that the waiter and bell-boy would naturally expect a considerably increased honorarium for the extra demands made upon their time.

As a matter of fact, after tipping them, settling for his breakfast, and purchasing a cigar, Horace had left in his pocket one lonely silver quarter.

So certain was he, however, that Paine's letter and the enclosed key would turn up all right, that he paid no heed to the narrow margin resulting from his disbursements. By daylight, the rational explanation advanced by the night-clerk appealed to him more strongly even than on the evening before, and he was troubled with no doubts but that he would receive his property all right as soon as he should call for it.

Accordingly, with a nonchalant air and perfect confidence of manner, he wended his way to the desk after breakfast and once more requested the packet left for him by Mr. Paine.

But again, with a haughty sweep of eye over the key-rack, the answer was returned that there was nothing for him.

"Oh, I know," explained Horace impatiently. "But I mean the letter which Mr. Paine left with one of you fellows personally to be handed to me."

"I do not recall any such circumstance," returned the clerk; "and certainly no parcel of the sort you describe was handed to me. However, I will ask Smathers and the cashier. It is just possible that one of them may have received it."

He was gone hardly a minute, not more than long enough for Horace to begin to realize that perhaps he had been overconfident in his belief that he had been merely the victim of a miscalculation.

Then he returned and the blow abruptly fell.

"No," he said, with a decided shake of his head; "I can state positively that no message or parcel was left here!"

For a moment Clarkson swayed giddily. The tiled floor of the hotel office seemed to be tilting up and down, and he had to clutch at the edge of the counter in front of him in order to retain his equilibrium. He felt exactly as though some one had dealt him a knock-out blow squarely between the eyes.

Then he saw the clerk gazing curiously at him, and he caught himself up with an effort. He muttered disjointedly something about "it not making any particular difference," and turning, strode hurriedly out of the hotel.

Halting at the street corner, he thrust his hands into his pockets and stood there a long while in a dazed contemplation of the strings of traffic making their way up and down the thoroughfare.

At first he was incapable of thought. This bolt from the blue—for despite his momentary uneasiness of the night before, he had never really dreamed but that Paine's letter would eventually be forthcoming—had literally paralyzed his wits.

But gradually his brain resumed its functions, and he began to comprehend the extent of the disaster which had overtaken him.

Here he was, a stranger in New York—for that matter, a stranger in the

world, since, no more than if he had hitherto been a denizen of Mars, was there a person on the globe to whom he could apply on the score of past acquaintanceship—stranded, penniless, and alone!

A righteous indignation surged up within him at the thought of Paine's carelessness. What had ever induced the fellow to send that message and then fail to carry out its provisions?

No doubt Harry had discovered by this time that the key was still in his possession, and would return it by the first steamer; but, even so, it would be two weeks before it could arrive.

"Of course, it would be possible for him to cable me funds inside of five or six days," ruminated Horace, "if there was any way for me to inform him of my necessities; but such an idea as that I was strapped would never enter his head of its own accord.

"Strapped!" he ejaculated, digging his solitary quarter out of his pocket and gazing at it disgustedly. "I am flat, stone broke, and how in the world I am going to get along for the next two weeks the Lord alone knows."

He had half a mind to chuck the coin to a newsboy who passed at that moment and eyed it greedily as it lay in Horace's outstretched palm; but on second thought he slid it back again into his pocket.

"It will at least pay car-fare," he muttered; and this chance remark evoked a new train of reflection.

Why not take a car and go down to Paine's office? There would be every likelihood that Harry had left word to extend him every courtesy, if he should call, and he could certainly learn there of his friend's projected plans and movements.

It might even be that he would find there the missing packet containing the key.

What a dolt he had been not to think of it before. Here he had been mooning about like an addle-pated fool, cursing his old chum and behaving himself like a candidate for a lunatic asylum, when all the time the proper course of procedure was obvious.

The explanation, as he saw it now, was simple. Paine, rushed with his preparations for departure, had naturally given the parcel to some clerk or office-boy with instructions to leave it at the hotel, and the latter had forgotten it. That was surely a reasonable solution.

His temper restored accordingly and confidence once more enthroned, Clarkson caught the next down-town car, and proceeded to the big office building on lower Broadway, from which Paine conducted his correspondence.

The directory on the marble wall of the entrance-way informed him that his friend's quarters were on the sixth floor. He recalled afterward that the elevator man grinned in a peculiar fashion when he asked for more specific directions; but he thought little of this at the time.

"'Nos. 611 to 617, eh; to my right down the corridor?'" he repeated as he passed along, glancing at the black painted numbers on the different doors to make sure he was headed aright. "Ah, here it is. Harry keeps a pretty extensive suite. Well, all the better for me, I suppose. In so large a place there ought surely to be some one at home."

He paused before No. 611 and read with interest the titles displayed on its ground-glass panel. There was "The Caucasus Oil and Pipe Line Co.," "The Pike's Peak Investment Co.," "The Wackermann Real Estate Co., capital $30,000,000," "Abner J. Wackermann, Stocks and Bonds," "Wackermann & Fassett, Investment Securities," and clear down at the bottom, in modest contrast to this grandiloquent list, "Henry S. Paine."

"That's Hal, all right," commented Clarkson; and satisfied that he had struck the right shop, a fact which the multiplicity of other concerns had caused him to doubt for a moment, he briskly turned the knob.

To his surprise the door did not open. He tried again, even pushed vigorously at it with his shoulders; but achieved no better results. Then he knocked; but, although he waited patiently, there came no answer, nor could he detect any sound of movement within the rooms.

Was it possible that not one of half a dozen different firms and corporations had even a stray typewriter around to meet callers at the very height of business hours?

He tried the other doors to the suite; but with no better success. "The Caucasus Oil and Pipe Line Co.," "The Pike's Peak Investment Co.," "Abner J. Wackermann, Stocks and Bonds," and all the rest of them seemed either to have gone to Europe, like Harry Paine, or to be taking a day off.

The idea struck him that this might be a holiday peculiar to New York, and of which he therefore had no cognizance; but the air of bustle and hurry throughout the rest of the big building, and the shirt-sleeved men and shirt-waisted stenographers whisking in and out at other doors, refuted such a theory.

In his perplexity he sought out the superintendent of the building and asked for an explanation.

"No. 611, eh?" repeated that functionary, with a burst of profanity that would have done credit to a river mate. "You ain't the first one that's asked that question this morning, and I wager you won't be the last. Well, I guess you can count yourself one of the suckers along with the rest of us. That old fox of a Wackermann has dished me out of three months' rent, and all he has left behind is some second-hand furniture that won't pay for its being carted off to the kindling factory. They say he sailed for Europe yesterday, just escaped the district-attorney's man, and is headed for Belgium, where an extradition treaty can't reach him. I'll bet he didn't take less than a million dollars with him that he'd grafted off the 'come-ons.'"

"But there are other concerns in the suite besides Wackermann's," broke in Horace eagerly. There is 'The Caucasus Oil and Pipe Line Co.,' and the——"

"Lord, but you are green," interrupted the superintendent, surveying him with compassionate derision. "Don't you know that all those things were Wackermann's under another name? It was all Abner J. Wackermann, and he has proved himself the greatest 'get-rich-quick' artist this country has ever known."

"And Henry S. Paine?" faltered Clarkson. "Was he connected with the swindle?"

"I don't know anything about him. He's only been here a month or so, and he sublet from Wackermann, not from us. I suppose he was in the game, too, however. At least somebody said he had skipped out to Europe with the rest of the gang."

There was nothing more to be learned, so with hopes dashed once more, and a new bitterness gnawing at his heart, Horace left the building and wandered aimlessly up Broadway.

As he strolled along he caught sight of the name of the safety deposit company where he had stored his money. Although he knew it was useless, he entered the tall structure with its granite pillars and made request that his box be opened.

A few searching inquiries developing the fact that he was not able to present an unimpeachable identification, and that the key had been neither broken nor destroyed, he was courteously but firmly refused.

On inquiry he learned, however, that Paine had presented himself with the key and a written order, and had visited the box on more than one occasion. The door-keeper could not be absolutely positive, but was under the impression that he had been in within the last four or five days.

In view of these facts, it seemed a little like locking the barn door after the horse was stolen; but on the bare chance that his old-time chum might be acting on the square with him, and that the key had fallen into the hands of unauthorized parties, Clarkson gave instructions that in the future no one save himself should be allowed access to the box, no matter what their credentials.

He had to admit that it was a pretty forlorn hope, though. Paine's shady associations, his sudden and unexplained trip abroad at the very time when the rest of the gang were fleeing to cover, the temptation offered an unscrupulous man in having such a large amount of money where he had only to help himself to get it, even his telegram calculated apparently to hoodwink Clarkson and keep him unsuspicious up to the very last minute—all taken together made out a case of circumstantial evidence which it was pretty hard to get away from.

Still, somehow, deep down in his

heart Horace could not believe that Harry Paine was a thief.

"I guess the old name sticks to me whether I want to shake it or not," ruminated the young man, with a rather rueful smile. "It's plain that I was a 'silly goose' to give Paine or any one else such a chance; and I suppose I'm a 'silly goose' now to think for a minute that he didn't take advantage of it. But Harry Paine—— Why, if he betrayed me like that, he is a worse traitor than Benedict Arnold!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT.

Up the deep, narrow cañon of lower Broadway trudged Horace as he pursued his meditations, on past those towering piles of marble and granite which spell "millions" in every stone of their sculptured façades.

A grim, ironic smile flitted across his lips as he recalled that this was the territory he had come to invade. He remembered his boastful remark to Harry Paine: "I'll make even that big town of yours know that I've been in it!"

It had not seemed so difficult then, when he was surveying the field in far-off perspective; but now that he was directly under the walls of these frowning fortresses, behind which wealth sat guarded and entrenched, he saw it as a very different, and indeed a well-nigh hopeless proposition.

As well expect a single Japanese infantryman to scale and take the heights of Port Arthur alone and unaided. All the daring and all the desperate endeavor in the world avails a man little unless he has the resources and supplies to back up his ambition.

No; it was no longer a question with him, Horace bitterly reflected, of challenging to combat the doughty leaders of capital. His task was the more exacting one of wringing from the grudging palm of this great city a stipend for the bare necessities of existence.

He must join the army of humble toilers who earn their bread in the sweat of their brows. More than that, he had to do so at once.

Even granting that Harry Paine had not dealt treacherously by him, and that he would eventually recover his money, a very considerable time must inevitably elapse before any such happy culmination to his difficulties; nor would it do to bank upon so extremely problematical a solution.

In the meantime, what was he to do? It is a question which has fretted many a capable man in the full possession of his powers, and bulwarked with influential friends and connections. How much more, then, might it strike terror to the soul of Horace Clarkson, crippled, forbidden to use his right hand for a period of three weeks, absolutely friendless as any being who ever stepped this planet, a stranger in a strange city, and with exactly twenty cents to his name?

"Rather a mess to get into, isn't it?" he commented whimsically after he had completed enumerating to himself the disabilities under which he was laboring. "Benjamin Franklin with his loaf of bread and Dick Whittington with his cat had what one might call a snap in comparison to it."

His manner, however, as he passed this observation was neither gloomy nor dejected; for it was characteristic of the man, now that he knew the worst which could befall him, and was brought face to face with an apparently hopeless proposition, that his optimism should rise in a corresponding degree.

He was like one of those prize-fighters who are said to be "greedy for punishment"; and the harder the blows Fate poured in upon him, the more stoutly did he hit back.

Nevertheless, he could not disguise from himself the precarious nature of his position; and his mind, as he walked along, was busily engaged in evolving some plan of escape from his dilemma.

He had by this time reached Union Square in his progress up New York's great artery of trade; and as he was footsore and weary from his unaccustomed tramp, he turned in to rest and to continue his meditations under the grateful shade of the trees.

Investing one of his scanty store of nickels in a bunch of the day's papers, he sought a seat on a bench near the fountain and eagerly turned to the columns headed "Male Help Wanted."

But, scan the items as he would, he could find in all the list no position suitable to a lawyer, or former business man and baseball player, unable to give references, and with one arm out of commission.

There were bookkeeper jobs a-plenty, and a demand for office assistants, places which he was easily competent to fill; but in every case previous city experience or unassailable credentials were insisted upon—requisites with which Horace was unable to comply, even though his writing hand had been in working condition.

The broken finger likewise barred him from seeking manual employment, for he was not too proud to swing a shovel, and he felt sure that under ordinary circumstances his great strength would easily have secured him work of some kind.

These avenues being closed to him, there was nothing left, as he could see, from his perusal of the help advertisements, but a position as agent or canvasser. Here again, however, his crippled hand was likely to interfere with success, especially if he had to carry a pack or kit of any kind, and, more than that, he would be heavily handicapped by his unfamiliarity with the city.

Besides, as he reflected, such jobs are usually paid by a commission or percentage on sales, and he required something which would bring him in immediate revenue. He comprehended very plainly that fifteen cents will not suffice long to cover one's expenses in New York.

And yet, unless he resorted to downright beggary, he could see no way in which he was to get any more.

On the bench occupied by Clarkson was also seated a ragged, disreputable individual, perhaps forty or forty-five years of age, but looking a good twenty years older—a typical derelict of the New York streets.

He was engaged now in keeping a weather-eye upon Horace, and as the young man laid, one by one, his papers aside, he pounced greedily upon the prize.

This was the fellow's existence—to dream his hours away upon a park-bench, seeking forgetfulness in the news of the day as he gathered it from the discarded papers of his more fortunate fellows. As lazy and lotos-eating a style of life as could well be imagined.

Yet the chap must have some method of subsistence, thought Horace; there must be a way for him to acquire the few pennies which sufficed to secure him a place to sleep and something to fill his stomach.

In his own condition of utter shipwreck, Clarkson now appealed to this vagabond.

"Say," he began, sliding along the bench toward the other, "tell me, how do you live?"

The man looked up with a quick suspicion.

"One of them reformers, eh?" he sneered. "Well, I'll tell you right now that you're only wastin' your time. I won't go to no settlement, and that's flat."

"You're away off, my friend," went on Horace. "I am no reformer and I haven't the slightest intention——"

"Then you're a story-writer lookin' fer 'local color,' or a newspaper reporter," announced the hobo with conviction; "and I ain't a goin' to do no talkin'. I'm gettin' tired spinnin' yarns fer youse fellers, an' gettin' nothin' fer it but a beer or two, while you knock down as much as fifty or a hundred dollars. So, if you want anything out of me, youse can understand, you gotter pay for it."

Horace smilingly pulled the three nickels from his pocket and held them out for the other's inspection.

"There's my pile," he said significantly. "You've diagnosed my case wrong, old man. I'm neither a reformer nor a novelist; I'm broke."

"Yes, you are," incredulously. "You look it, with them clo'es you got on, don't you?"

"Looks don't always prove everything," retorted Horace. "As a matter of fact, I have suddenly found myself stranded in this town, with fifteen cents to my name, not a friend to whom I can apply for assistance, and in addition a crippled hand, which will keep me from engaging in any kind of work for three weeks or a month. Now, I appeal to you, as one who knows the ropes, to tell

me what to do. I've got to eat and I've got to sleep, yet I have no desire either to seek charity nor to be run in as a vagrant."

The earnestness of his manner as he made this vigorous presentment of his case went a long way toward convincing the hobo of his sincerity.

"Say, but that is kind of tough lines," he remarked sympathetically. "Broke, an' with a lame wing into the bargain. An', to top it all, green to little old New York. No wonder you feel sort of down in the mouth, pardner. But, say, I'll put you wise to somep'n; youse ain't nearly so worse off as you thinks."

"I guess that's true under almost any circumstances," admitted Horace laughingly. "We are all of us apt to magnify our troubles while we are passing through them; but that does not make them any easier to bear while we are in their grip. It is only another way of saying, 'Things are never so bad that they couldn't be worse.'"

"No; that ain't what I mean," interrupted the other eagerly; "you don't catch on to my idee. What I was drivin' at was this: You says to yourself, 'I'm broke,' don't you? An' you b'lieves it, too. Yet, all the time you've got what would be a small fortune to a feller like me.

"Now, I'll bet you've got stowed away on your person at this very minute a watch, an' maybe a ring, or a gold pencil-case, or some trinket of the sort, that you ain't given a thought to yet; but which, if properly handled, could be turned into enough to buy you your chuck an' your sleepin' accommodations for many a long day. Ain't that so?"

"No; you are mistaken," returned Clarkson. "Outside of my sleeve-buttons and my studs, I haven't a thing which I could pawn. See?" And he turned his pockets inside out, one after another, to show that he was speaking the truth.

As a matter of fact, Horace had delayed purchasing a watch and the other little articles of value which go to make up a man's equipment until he should have arrived in New York; for of course all his former possessions of the kind had been turned over to the executor of the dead Sylvester Guse.

"Sho, that's too bad," commiserated the tramp, satisfied at last that the young man was as destitute as he claimed. "You're in a worse fix'n what I thought you were. Still," brightening up, "there is, as you say, the sleeve-buttons and studs; and you ought to be able to get somep'n on them duds. I know a place over on Bleecker Street where they'll trade 'em in with you fer others, an' give you pretty fair boot. If you'd take a suit like mine, they'd give you maybe as much as ten or twelve dollars."

Horace gave a glance of extreme disfavor at the other's tatterdemalion aspect.

"No, I thank you," he said decidedly. "These clothes are the only capital I have in the world; and, if I ever expect to get a job, I've got to be able to put up a front when I go around hunting for it. At least, I am going to hang on to them as long as I possibly can. I'll not let them go to-day, anyway," with defiant resolution. "I have enough to buy me my supper; and surely there is some place in this great city where a stranded man can get a bed."

"Certainly there is," responded the derelict promptly; "dozens of 'em. But if you ain't goin' to hock the clo'es," he cautioned, "I wouldn't advise you to try the Municipal Lodgin'-House. They'd spot you in a minute, an' begin to ask questions that maybe you wouldn't like to answer. Besides, you can't hit them for more'n three nights a month without gettin' sent up to the Island; an' it's well to hold them three nights in reserve in case you have to use 'em.

"What you'd better try to-night," he advised, "is one of them church grafts. They ain't so inquisitive there, and I will say for 'em that they give you a pretty fair hand-out in the way of a breakfast in the morning. I'll tell you," with friendly interest, "you be here about seven o'clock to-night and I'll take you with me down to the one I'm goin' to. It ain't no Waldorf-Astoria, but it's better'n snoozin' out of doors, an' I can steer you so that you can get in without very much trouble.

"I've got to leave you now," he continued, rising and stretching himself. "I've got a friend that runs a saloon over on the Bowery, an' he said maybe

he'd give me the job of sweepin' out there mornings. I want to go over and see him about it."

Clarkson watched him as he shuffled off between the trim lawns and glowing flower-beds, and wondered if he could ever degenerate to such a state as that. Verily, though, he was taking the first step. When a man comes to the point of accepting the charity of a free lodging-house, he has gone a long way toward the apathy of pauperism.

Horace may have been, and no doubt was, extreme in this view; but it must be remembered that from the time he was a little child he had paid as he went, and he had always entertained a profound contempt for the man who was unable to do so.

Still, in his present condition, it was a case of Hobson's choice. To pawn his clothes would merely give him a little temporary relief, and would definitely cut him off from the chance of raising his fortunes above their present low ebb.

To sleep on a park-bench would probably result in his ending up at the station-house under a charge of vagrancy, or if he escaped that, the exposure might produce serious complications from his injured finger.

And to think of securing quarters anywhere else upon his present capital would be as futile as to return to the Hambletonian——

With a sudden startled ejaculation, he sprang to his feet.

The Hambletonian! Good heavens, he owed them for the use of a bedroom and bath for an entire day, and he did not have a penny wherewith to pay them. More than that, his razors, his brushes and combs, his toilet articles, and his changes of linen were all in their keeping.

To attempt to get his satchel would inevitably draw suspicion toward him, resulting in his arrest as a common hotel beat.

CHAPTER IX.

A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY.

"It never rains but it pours, they say," muttered Horace; "and certainly things seem to be getting moist with me. Here, in addition to all my other troubles, I suddenly find that I am guilty of a crime. I don't know just what the penalty for beating a hotel-bill may be, but, whatever it is, I am unquestionably eligible to it."

And yet he was distinctly puzzled what to do to keep from getting worse into the mire. At present, he was only liable for one day's lodging; but, unless he notified them to the contrary, the hotel people would hold the room for him for a reasonable time, and the bill would be proportionately increased.

Yet, if he presented himself there to give up the room, what could he say? Merely that he was unable to pay; and, in default of a valid excuse, would be peremptorily marched off to jail.

Then suddenly the thought of the telephone occurred to him. Blessed invention! Without acquainting them with his reasons, he could relinquish his room over the wire, and instruct them to hold his grip as security until he should call around to settle.

Their natural inference would be that he had been unexpectedly called out of town for a day or so; and they would therefore interpose no objection to the arrangement, concluding, of course, that he had not been able to find time to come all the way up there and liquidate his bill.

This struck him as a brilliant inspiration, for by it he killed two birds with one stone. Not only did he prevent himself from running up an account without obtaining any advantages; but also, as his legal knowledge told him, the agreement on their part to submit to delay in payment would remove from him the onus of crime.

He therefore lost no time in putting his project into execution, and, as he had expected, found no difficulty in promptly closing the transaction with the Hambletonian. Coming back from the drug-store whence he sent the message, however, the rather poignant reflection struck him that he had talked away the big end of his supper.

The charge for his telephoning had been ten cents, and he consequently had but a single nickel left wherewith to provide his evening repast.

Clarkson had not felt particularly hungry before, although it had been early

morning when food had last passed his lips, and it was now getting well along toward evening; but when he realized that his opportunities for feasting were seriously curtailed, his appetite became positively ravenous.

What could one get the most of for five cents? He pondered, wavering uncertainly between the rival attractions of a fruit-store and a soda-water fountain. He knew, of course, that at almost any saloon the purchase of a glass of beer would entitle him to the privileges of the free-lunch counter; but, somehow, crackers and cheese and sliced onions did not appeal to him so strongly as did the bananas at the fruiterer's and the malted milk at the fizz-fountain.

He was about to cast his vote for the latter, when his eye was caught by the sight of a peanut-roaster on the corner.

Ah, that was the fare for him. Cheap, but toothsome, and at the same time filling! He hesitated no longer; but invested in a sack, and standing there beside the roaster, cracked the shells and stuffed the kernels into his mouth with a relish.

Insensibly he drifted into conversation with the vendor. The man chanced to mention that he was from Palermo, and Horace recalling some of the Sicilian *patois* which he had picked up from old Tony during his early apprenticeship, delighted the chap by addressing him in his own tongue.

After that, nothing was too good for Clarkson. The man insisted on his helping himself to all the nuts he could eat, and waxed effusive in confidences.

He told Horace how homesick he was for the vineyards and olive-groves of his native land, and that he and his wife were saving up every penny that they could lay by to go back.

Just then a dark-skinned, round-eyed Italian Juno came clumping heavily up the street toward them.

"Ah, there she comes now, signor. Rosina, my wife," with an ecstatic wave of his hand. "Is she not beautiful? The little one!"

She would only have made about six of her skinny, undersized husband.

But Rosina was not there merely to be admired. She wanted to purchase a gay, yellow kerchief for her head at the big department-store across the way, and as she did not speak English very well, she wanted her husband to go along and help her in the selection.

Antonio was immediately all desolation.

"But, *Carissima,*" he explained, "how can I? I am a business man, yes. How then can I leave the roaster to be depredated by thieves during my absence. Gladly would I lay down my life to go with you as you desire; but you see yourself it is impossible.

Clarkson, who had been a forced listener to the voluble, excited dialogue, here interposed. If they had no objection and were willing to trust him, he would look after the stand during their brief absence, and attend to any customers who might come along.

"You, signor?" exclaimed Antonio in thunderstruck amazement. "But no; you merely jest. You are a gentleman."

"Oh, it wouldn't be the first time I've done it," Horace assured; "and I guess my dignity can still stand the strain without breaking in two. Run along now, the pair of you, and get that yellow kerchief. I want to see if my eye is as good for a pint measure as it used to be."

He would listen to no protestations or denials, and, in the end, Antonio, deciding that he really meant it, acceded to his demand, and went off joyfully upon the arm of his buxom spouse.

"Well, this is rather getting back to first principles," commented Clarkson, turning up the wick in the lamp, and starting the cylinder revolving. "One never knows when old Dame Fortune's wheel will land you back at your starting-point. I wonder now if I am going to have any trade?'

As if in answer to his query, a messenger-boy came up just then and demanded a sack; then an oldish man with two little girls who called him "Uncle" stopped for ten cents' worth; and, to top off with, a "Seeing New York" automobile with a crowd on its roof was halted opposite him by a jam of traffic. Horace saw his opportunity, and, filling his arms with bags, wormed his way under the horses' noses out to the big, cumbersome vehicle.

"Fresh roasted! Hot peanuts! Five a bag!" he called lustily, clambering up

the side; and before he got through he had reaped a harvest of nickels from the sightseers.

In short, when Antonio and his "little one" returned, they found awaiting them a pile of silver which caused their eyes to bulge out, and evoked from them a perfect whirlwind of elated gesticulation.

"Ah, *Carissima,*" exclaimed Antonio, rapturously embracing his wife, "it will not be long now before you and I see Palermo once again. If I could but dispose of this pig of a roaster, we might even sail upon La Citta del Napoli, which takes its departure on Saturday next, with our Cousin Luigi Santo aboard."

A sudden idea flashed into Clarkson's mind, causing him to gasp and gurgle under the stress of its overwhelming magnitude.

"How much do you want for the roaster?" he asked, striving to speak unconcernedly, but unable to keep a slight tremble of anxiety out of his voice. "I might be able to get you a customer for it."

"Ah, signor," broke out the vendor eagerly, "I will sell it cheap. See, this magnificent roaster with the license paid for one year, and this splendid corner where the cops never bother—all will I let go for"—he reflected a moment—"for twenty dollars. It is a bargain, signor. Oh, yes. What you call a 'good thing'; is it not so?"

Horace looked grave, and meditatively glanced down at his clothes, recalling what the tramp had told him of their probable value.

"I will give you fifteen," he finally announced.

It was now Antonio's turn to deliberate. He looked at the roaster, then studied the sky as though about to forecast the weather, and then repeated the operation. More than once, Clarkson could see, he was about to shake his head; but always the thought of that return to his birthplace interposed to prevent ultimate decision.

It was Rosina who finally turned the scales. She had gathered enough of the conversation to comprehend what was up between the two men, and she also realized the opposing influences which swayed her husband.

Now she twitched at Antonio's sleeve, and drawing him aside, persuaded him in a flood of rapid, passionate utterance. She gave heed to none of the arguments he strove to enter; but overbore him with the torrent of her eloquence.

At length he yielded, and returned to Clarkson.

"Rosina, the impatient one, is unwilling to wait, signor," he explained, with a shrug of his shoulders. "It shall be as you say. We will sell the roaster for fifteen dollars."

Horace successfully concealed his exultation.

"Very well," he said quietly. "I will be around and close the deal with you to-morrow morning."

Observing by a neighboring clock that it was now verging on toward seven, he took leave of the Italians, and set out across Broadway to the Square to keep his appointment with the friendly hobo.

The latter was already awaiting him, and with the remark that it might be well for them if they "got a move on themselves," as the early comers obtained the pick of the accommodations, he led the way rapidly across Fourteenth Street and over to the East Side. It was a long tramp, and before they reached their destination Clarkson was beginning to think yearningly of the bed awaiting him. He was also very willing to be rid of his companion's society; for, as they trudged along, the tramp took it upon himself to cast some light upon the manner and method of existence of the "submerged tenth," and the revelations he made sickened Horace's soul.

He had been acquainted with poverty himself, God knows; but that was in a little country town where the ways of life, however humble, are clean, and the recital now given him of the straits and shifts to which these rats of the slums are put in the struggle for daily maintenance, opened up an undiscovered country to him.

Moreover, the very freedom with which the fellow described his life, and told of the petty grafts he employed, affected his listener unpleasantly.

Was it possible that men could grow so callous as actually to boast of the shame and degradation to which they had sunk? In his feeling of repulsion, Horace

shrank away from the wretched object beside him, as though he could gain contamination from his very physical touch.

The same sentiment of repugnance affected him, when he finally entered the bare, scrubbed reception-room of the refuge they had sought, and his nostrils were assailed by the unmistakable institutional smell of the place.

"Can a man ever cleanse himself from the taint of having spent even a single night here?" he asked himself fastidiously. "Will not the fact that he has accepted charity be like a corroding sore in his memory, ever eating deeper and deeper until it has poisoned his entire nature?"

Nevertheless, he was in for it now; so he shut his teeth, and resolved to see the experience through. Carefully coached by his mentor, he was able successfully to pass the rather searching examination, and then the man in charge informed him that he would have to take a bath and submit his clothes to a thorough fumigation.

Horace flushed a little at the curt tone of command; but quietly assented, and it was not until he saw the accommodations provided that he stubbornly balked.

There was a single, battered tin tub, half-full of soapy water left there by its latest occupant, and his guide remarked that this would have to serve him, as the pipes were out of order, and they could not be filling up the tub with buckets for every newcomer.

"You expect me to bathe in that?" questioned Horace incredulously, his disgust becoming all the stronger as the recollection flashed over him of the spotless white bath-room at the Hambletonian in which he had taken his "tub" that morning. "Thank you, I think I prefer to do without a bath to-night."

"Not much, you won't," retorted the other roughly. "It's one of the regulations here, and you'll keep it. Come, don't pretend any more of this squeamishness; but jerk off those duds of yours, and pile in. I'll bet, if the truth were told, you need it all right," the man added, with a grin.

Horace made a swift decision.

"Not for me," he announced, and before the surprised custodian could say a word or raise a hand to prevent him, he turned on his heel and quickly left the house.

The free air of heaven and the knowledge that he was once again his own master restored him wonderfully, and he no longer felt any lassitude or weariness as he turned his face northward.

Block after block he strode along briskly, and almost before he knew it he was once more standing outside the gorgeous portal of the Hambletonian. Nor was there any uncertainty or hesitation in his manner, for the purpose in his mind was well-defined and clearly settled upon.

Entering as though he owned the place he walked directly up to the desk and briskly inquired if he could have the same room he had occupied the night before.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Clarkson," responded the clerk deferentially. "In fact, I don't think your things have been even removed yet; you will find them there all ready for you. Returned sooner than you expected, eh?"

"Yes," confessed Horace, without, however, cracking a smile; "a good deal sooner."

He went at once to his quarters and drew the dainty porcelain tub full of water. Then, as he lay luxuriating in the warm, pellucid depths, he allowed himself to philosophize.

"I suppose it is bad ethics," he admitted; "yet, strangely enough, I feel vastly more self-respect now that I am traveling on false pretenses than when I honestly made known my true position and asked for the charity I so grievously needed.

"And I will pay this hotel," he asserted emphatically. "It is foolishly extravagant of course for me to stop here under my present circumstances; but I can carry away enough things out of my bag in the morning to raise the sum necessary to settle with them."

Still, even after he was tucked up in bed, he went on ruminating on the casuistry of the question involved, until at length a thought came which so tickled him that he had to sit up to get his laugh out.

"I'll wager," he chuckled mirthfully, "that I wouldn't stay here long if they knew my real business. This is proba-

bly the first time in its history that the Hambletonian has entertained a corner peanut-vendor."

CHAPTER X.

ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT.

ELEGANT in well-fitting attire and immaculate linen, Mr. Horace M. Clarkson descended from his room in the morning and made a leisurely transit through the lobby of the hotel.

In spite of the accusing pricks of conscience, he had passed a restful night, and there was nothing in either manner or appearance to indicate that he might not at that moment have a thousand dollars, or even more, upon his person.

As a matter of fact, he did have stowed away in various quarters of his apparel a number of articles which gentlemen do not usually carry about with them except in a grip or traveling-case. In his vest-pocket was thrust his razor; in each side-pocket of his coat were silver-backed brushes, combs and toilet articles; on one hip rested, in true Wild-West fashion, a big revolver, and the other bulged out suspiciously with his silver shaving-mug.

Fortunately, the weather happened to be drizzling and overcast that morning, and he was able to cover up his somewhat bulky appearance with a long, loose rain-coat; otherwise, he would hardly have had the face to run that gantlet of staring eyes in the lobby.

The coat was buttoned up to the chin, making its wearer uncomfortably warm, especially as he had on underneath it two or three extra shirts and a couple of suits of underwear; but he did not mind that, he told himself, so long as some of the things in his pockets did not chink together and give him away.

It was this fear, indeed, which caused his slow and stately progress toward the entrance. He scarcely dared to breathe until it was gained, lest an unguarded movement should produce a catastrophe.

As he passed the door of the dining-room there came to him an appetizing waft of steaming coffee and delicately broiled ham, and he was half-tempted to throw discretion to the winds and strain his credit at the hotel still further by signing a check for a meal. Indeed, he might have yielded, had not the presence of the heterogeneous cargo with which he was laden restrained him! Nevertheless, he took credit to himself for fighting down the dishonest impulse.

"No," he said sternly, "there will be no breakfast for me until I have completed my business and have really got hold of the roaster. And even then, the menu will consist of my own wares. I intend to practise economy in the future."

Once free of the hotel and able to step less cautiously, he broke into a brisk walk and consequently was very shortly at the pawnshop to which his friend, the derelict, had directed him on the previous day.

The hints given him by the hobo now stood Horace in good stead, for through them, aided by his own shrewd business sense, he was able to strike a deal with the pawnbroker which, after the bargain was concluded, caused that worthy to shake his head ruefully and insinuate that Clarkson was lying when he averred that he himself was not one of the chosen people.

As a net result of his dickering Horace obtained a fairly presentable suit of clothes and $27.90 in money.

"Thank heaven," he muttered to himself as he left the place, "that those toilet things of mine were practically new, and that when I bought them I bought them good."

With the roll of bills and the little sheaf of pawn-tickets safely tucked away in his new outfit he then hastened to Union Square, and finding Antonio anxiously awaiting his coming, at once closed up the deal whereby the roaster and a full stock of nuts became his sole and unquestioned property.

"*Bon voyage!*" he called gaily after the Italian, as the latter hurried off to display his gains to Rosina.

"Good-a-luck," shouted back Antonio with a flash of his white teeth. "I hope you make-a more'n a million dollar!"

"Small hope of that," murmured Horace with a derogatory glance at the grimy roaster, now covered with a tattered oil-cloth. "If the pesky thing will only grind out enough to provide me with a cheap little room somewhere, and something more to eat now and then than the

peanuts themselves, I shall be fully satisfied. That is," he added hastily, "until my hand gets well and I have a chance of boosting myself into something more lucrative."

But even these modest demands upon Destiny seemed in a fair way not to be realized. It was a muggy, cloudy morning, and the hurrying, bedraggled crowds along Fourteenth Street were not stopping to buy peanuts. The hours dragged slowly along toward noon with a total of only six bags disposed of, and one of those he had given away to a little street waif because he could not resist the appeal of her hungry eyes.

Then, to add to his discomfiture, it began to rain hard. All the other push-cart men headed for home; but Horace had no place to go. It would hardly do, he thought, to drag a peanut-roaster in through the front door of the Hambletonian; and as yet he had secured no other domicile.

Indeed, there was nothing to be done except to protect his wares as well as he was able with the ragged oilcloth, and take whatsoever heaven chose to send.

As for himself, he got out his rain-coat from under the little wagon, thankful that he had had sufficient sense not to let it go when he pawned his other things; and so escaped the drenching he must otherwise have received.

He did not realize himself what a figure he was cutting; but many a passer-by half stopped in amazement to glance at the tall gentleman in a stylish gray cravenette, who was so sedulously striving to preserve some hapless vendor's stock from a wetting. Had the downpour been less determined, Horace would probably have had as big a crowd around him in a few moments as though he had been a monkey or a trained bear.

Finally he overheard one of two men, sheltering themselves in an adjacent doorway, remark to his companion: "It's evidently some 'blood' doing it on a wager. There'll probably come along a crowd in an automobile presently and commence to guy him. Let's wait and see the fun."

Then Clarkson began to comprehend that he must present a rather unusual appearance.

His first impulse was to strip off the noticeable coat; but immediately a spirit of defiance rose within him.

"No," he declared; "instead, I will wear it all the time, rain or shine. It's a good ad, for it will draw attention to me and so help out my business. Why should I care, anyway? I don't know a single soul in all New York——"

How often Fate gives the lie to our careless statements. Hardly were the words out of Clarkson's mouth when an umbrella which had been bobbing along the sidewalk toward him was lifted so as to disclose its owner's face, and a sweet voice observed in a tone of relief:

"Ah, here is a peanut-cart after all, mother. We can gladden Bunny's heart in spite of the rain."

If Horace had been at that moment the possessor of the million dollars which the departing Antonio had wished him, he would have given every cent of it to be anywhere else than where he was. That face and voice were too deeply impressed upon his memory ever to be forgotten.

His new customer was Miss Daisy Clarkson.

Worse than that, the recognition was mutual. The gray eyes fixed upon him opened to their farthest width; an expression of absolutely blank bewilderment overspread her face; she gasped rather than uttered: "Why, Mr. Clarkson, what are you doing here?"

Now, Horace Clarkson had as little false pride, perhaps, as any man alive, and the business that he was engaged in was as honorable and legitimate as any that could be named; yet he would sooner have cut off his right hand than confess to this girl that it was his.

If he had not directly said so, he had posed before her on the train as a man of large affairs, and now to let her know that he was merely the keeper of a peanut-stand on the corner? He simply simply could not do it.

Nor could he well explain, either. To enter into a long-winded recital of his troubles here in the midst of a driving rain-storm to a girl, moreover, whom he had only met once in a casual fashion, and whom he had no reason to believe was more than ordinarily interested in him, would manifestly only serve to make a bad matter worse.

What, indeed, could he do? She had him caught "dead to rights," as the saying goes; she had asked him the point-blank question what he was doing there. What other answer was there to make her save the truth?

Scientists aver that the process of thought has a swiftness even exceeding that of light; but even so, Horace must have broken all previous records in that brief instant of time which succeeded Miss Clarkson's startled question.

As with a flash his mind took in all the considerations which have been here laboriously set forth, and a dozen others in addition; had weighed and rejected twenty different excuses which he might offer; and, all at the same time, had been busily debating whether Miss Clarkson looked lovelier in wet-weather rig, or as he had seen her on the train.

Oh, if she had only caught him at some other business! He would not have cared if it had been the most execrated concern in the world, if it had only borne some high-sounding name like that of a corporation or syndicate.

Syndicate! What a term that was to conjure with. Even a syndicate of peanut-stands would be respectable.

Ha! That was not a bad idea—a syndicate of peanut-stands covering the entire city. And, by George, it was feasible, too. He would look into the matter this very afternoon. And then, as by an inspiration, he saw the way to answer her question.

Scarcely an appreciable time had passed since the words had left her lips, and in that moment he had sounded the lowest depths of mortification, shame, confusion; yet now his voice was never more steady, his smile never more unconcerned.

"Oh, Miss Clarkson, how do you do?" he cried, doffing his dripping hat. "What am I at, you ask? Oh, I am *thinking* of getting up a big syndicate of all the peanut-stands in New York, you know; and just now I am familiarizing myself with some of the practical details. Rather a nasty day to try it; but I thought I would stick it out."

The surprise died out of her eyes, and in its place came a gleam of admiration.

"You big financiers are gobbling up everything," she said; "and I suppose you have to know every part of your various businesses from the ground up. I should think your heads would burst with the diversified lot of knowledge packed away in them. Mother," turning to the lady with her, "let me introduce Mr. Clarkson. The gentleman who was so kind to me on the train. Mother has a pet squirrel to which she is devoted," she added by way of explanation, "and we were on the lookout for nuts for him. I suppose, however, there is no opportunity to buy any here?"

"Oh, but indeed there is," retorted Clarkson with an airy laugh. "I am open for business quite in the regular way. How many shall I give you?" tentatively filling up the measure.

"Ten cents' worth will be quite sufficient, thank you." She laughed joyously as he handed her over the bag. "Really, I think you have very little to learn, Mr. Clarkson. You are already quite professional in your manner.

"And, by the way," she went on, "don't forget your promise to call on us. I have received some very startling information, and I want your advice in regard to it."

"I shall be only too delighted to aid you," returned Horace. "But what is the character of this information? Something in regard to your brother?"

"Oh, I can't tell it to you here; but please don't delay long in coming up to see us, for from what I have heard"—she lowered her voice—"I believe that Sylvester Guse is in New York right now!"

"No?" ejaculated Horace, every whit as astounded as he appeared.

"Yes," she nodded; "I have every reason to believe that he is in the city, and that with a little effort we can easily find him."

"Well, do nothing until I have had a chance to talk it over with you," urged Clarkson hurriedly. "If you were to act on your own accord you might—er—make a bad mistake. We must be wary in dealing with the fellow—very wary. And I will certainly be up, either to-night or to-morrow."

She duly accorded the promise, and it was therefore with a considerably relieved heart that he lifted his hat to her and her mother in good-by.

Then he glanced quizzically down at her dime in his hand.

"It isn't much to show for two hours of standing around in this rain," he soliloquized, "but, even so, it is not to be counted in the day's receipts. That will repose in a special pocket until I get enough money to have it set in gold, and then it will be hung on my watch-chain, as soon as I get one.

"But she gave me a good deal more than ten cents," he went on ruminatively. "She gave me the idea for a great big scheme which I'm free to say looks mighty good to me. I didn't tell her any lie, when I said I was thinking of organizing this syndicate, although I'll admit I hadn't been thinking of it very long. But I'll swear I am thinking harder of it every minute I live."

CHAPTER XI.

A RISE IN THE WORLD.

THE rain had about stopped by this time, and one of the men in the doorway stepped out and bought a sack of peanuts. Furthermore, he did not move on directly; but lingered uncertainly by the side of the cart, as though he had a purpose in view.

At last, with a little premonitory cough, and an air of indifference which did not, however, serve to disguise his real interest, he got it out.

"Pardon me, sir," he remarked with rather exaggerated deference, when one considers that he was addressing a peanut-vendor, "but did I understand you to say that you were organizing a syndicate to control the operations of this industry?" with a wave of his hand in the direction of the roaster.

Horace gave him a quick glance of scrutiny. He was a man of about forty, well-dressed, and with a certain air of importance and stability about him.

"Yes," he replied with assumed carelessness; "I have been working toward that end to some extent."

"Made any headway with it?"

"Enough to satisfy me that it is a good prospect. Why do you ask?"

"Well," returned the other cautiously, "it struck me, when I heard you speaking of it, that it ought to be an excellent proposition; and I thought, if there was any chance, and the scheme shows up as good as it sounds, I would like to be in on it. I am disengaged from active business just at present, and I have a large amount of money on hand which I desire to invest. There is my card."

The name, "Clarence J. Barron," Clarkson recognized as that of a man formerly prominent in the steel trade, but who had sold out his mill and retired at the time of the organization of the trust.

It is needless to say that as he read it Horace had hard work to conceal his exultation; nevertheless, he succeeded.

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Barron," he said slowly, as though taking time to consider, "I cannot say just at this minute whether it would be possible for you to get an interest or not. I will take the matter up, however, and will be pleased to communicate with you later in regard to it. You, of course, will want to do some investigating of the subject, and, if we see our way clear to having you join us, I would like to meet you somewhere and go into facts and figures with you."

"Why could we not meet at your office?" put in the gentleman eagerly. "I could time my visit so as to suit your convenience, Mr.——"

"Clarkson," supplied Horace; "Horace M. Clarkson. Sorry I do not happen to have a card with me. And," replying to the question, "I have not secured offices as yet. But," with just a second of hesitation, "I shall be happy to see you at my hotel. I am stopping at the Hambletonian."

He simply could not help it, he told himself. Circumstances seemed to conspire to hold him to that hotel as a goose is tied by the leg with a string attached to a peg driven in the ground.

He might wander off with apparent freedom; but always the restraining cord was there to jerk him back if he should stray too far.

"Yet there seems no way to escape it in this instance," he decided rapidly. "I can't ask this man to stand out on the corner to discuss a big business proposition with me; and so much depends on first impressions. The Hambletonian, with its atmosphere of opulence and so-

lidity, will give him a confidence in me that I could never gain at a lodging-house suited to my present estate. It is the principle of my cravenette coat over again."

And it was evident that Barron was impressed. The small fry of promoters did not frequent the Hambletonian as a rule; they were given pretty plainly to understand that their presence was not desired. His tone grew even more cordial than before.

"Very well, Mr. Clarkson," he said. "Very well; and I tell you frankly I hope we shall be able to do business. A man who will go to the trouble of verifying the practical details of a proposition for himself, heedless of what people may think of him, as you have done in this instance, is the kind of fellow I want to put my money in with."

Nor did the young man's blushes at this unmerited praise pass for anything more than modesty. With another gracious bow and the expression of a hope that they would see a great deal more of each other in the future, Mr. Barron proceeded on his way up-town.

"Well," considered Horace, "my capital will stand just one more day at the Hambletonian. I have got to swing Mr. Clarence J. Barron into line to-night, or not at all; and if I am going to do it, it behooves me to get a hustle on myself."

There was a newsboy who haunted that corner, and with whom Clarkson had struck up an acquaintance during the morning. Now, for a small stipend, he arranged with this youth to look after the roaster during the day and to take it home with him in the evening. As for himself, he had other fish to fry, and he put in a strenuous afternoon in the frying of them.

First he visited the City Hall, where from the license records he obtained a full list of the push-cart men of the town and the localities favored by them, and also learned incidentally that the bulk of the business was controlled by three wealthy Italians, who handled it on the padrone system.

With this pointer to guide him, he proceeded direct to this trio, and by dint of his convincing address and his ability to speak to them in the commercial argot of their own language, succeeded in framing up a conditional arrangement with them whereby they agreed to enter his combination.

From them he also obtained, while not seeming to invite it, valuable information concerning average profits, cost of maintenance, and the various details which a prospective investor would need to know.

A hint dropped by one of these men, too, sent him scurrying off in another direction, and despite denials and objections he forced his way into the presence of the big Tammany leader who is the power behind the official throne.

Furthermore—wonderful to relate—he secured the all-important sanction of this satrap to his scheme without *quid pro quo*, and solely by virtue of the favorable impression he made.

In all these cases he comprehended that the cravenette, which he kept tightly buttoned up over his shabby suit, was a mantle of protection to him. Its faultless cut, the glimpse of satin lining it afforded, the aroma of prosperity it gave him, was more influential in securing him his audiences than would have been a letter of introduction from one of the Vanderbilts.

Doorkeepers and intermediaries hesitated to question so important and distinguished looking a personage, and admitted him to the presence of their principals on his simple demand. Whereas, if he had once cast open those clasped flaps and shown the self-evident poverty beneath, he would have been sent packing in short order.

"Talk about an 'open sesame,'" whispered Horace to himself gleefully. "I am beginning to believe that on the strength of this coat I could walk right in and shake hands with the Czar of Russia."

Yes, it was a busy and a profitable afternoon that he put in; but he felt that he could not afford to rest yet. The crowning stroke, for which all his labors so far had been merely preparation, was still to be accomplished.

Repairing to a telephone, he called up Mr. Barron and informing him that the way was open to enter the syndicate, asked the ex-steel king to meet him at the Hambletonian at eight that evening.

Then he put in an energetic hour and

a half with the hotel stenographer, compiling and putting into shape the wealth of data he had gathered.

The last page of his presentment was just off the typewriter when his expected visitor was announced. Still in his raincoat, for he had not dared remove it in the lobby of the hotel, where he had been doing his dictating, Horace stepped quickly forward and, grasping the other's hand, led the way to his rooms.

"I think we have a big thing on hand, Mr. Barron," he said when their cigars were well aglow and they were finally ready to get down to business, "a good deal bigger thing, indeed, than I had in view when I spoke to you this morning. Just glance over these papers and tell me what you think of my deductions. You will see that I have widened the original scope, and now propose to take in not only the peanut-stands, but also the candy, ice-cream, lemonade, and knickknack vendors, and eventually perhaps the news-stands and bootblacks."

The magnate took the report he handed over and perused it attentively, pausing occasionally to ask some intelligent question, which in every case Horace was able to answer promptly and satisfactorily.

At last, having fully digested the matter, he laid it aside and sat for a moment smoking in silence.

Clarkson waited in an agony of suspense. Upon the millionaire's next words hung the issue as to whether he was to remain a penniless and homeless vagabond or to take the place to which he felt his talents entitled him.

But the decision was not long delayed.

"It's a great proposition," broke out Mr. Barron with sudden enthusiasm. "I am simply overwhelmed by the possibilities of which you show it is capable. Now, if you will let me know how much of an interest can be allotted to me and who will be the men associated with us, I think we can begin to talk terms."

"I have been awaiting that question," returned Horace, "and before we proceed any further I have a confession to make to you."

And with that he made a clean breast of his entire story. "I had sworn never to divulge to another living soul," he explained, "the name which I formerly bore; but I feel it is only due to you to know the real causes which have led up to our association—that is, if you still care to enter into partnership with one who is traveling under false colors."

"I don't see why not?" interjected Barron warmly. "I don't blame you a bit for dropping that ridiculous name, for I can readily see how it would prove a detriment to your career. As for myself, I consider your telling me very honorable.

"Now, let us get down to business again," he continued. "Do you really mean to tell me that you had no idea of this scheme at all until that girl spoke to you on the corner this morning, and that you have gathered all these statistics and formulated this entire proposition in one day's time?"

"Yes," assented Horace modestly; "it kept me hustling a bit; but I knew I had to be able to satisfy you to-night, or not at all."

"Well," commented Clarence J. Barron, "I have often heard the expression 'chain lightning,' but I never before had an adequate conception of what the word really means. You are the kind of a fellow I want to get hooked up with, Mr. Horace M. Clarkson; and if you say the word, we will close up the deal between us right here and now. The money you require will be forthcoming as soon as you want it."

"Then give me twenty dollars on account right now," Horace said. "I have been living on peanuts and water for two days and not much of that. Now, I am going to blow myself to the most expensive feed that this old tavern can furnish. It's time for me to jubilate."

And surely he had some cause for congratulation. He had arisen that morning a poverty-stricken peanut-vendor; to-night he was the prospective vice-president and general manager of "The New York Corner Refreshment Co.," with the millions of Clarence J. Barron back of him.

CHAPTER XII.

A BUNCH OF SURPRISES.

THERE was no lack of occupation for Horace in the next two days. With the tireless energy which characterized him,

he started right in to put his combination through and get it in running order.

"We must arrange for a general office at once," he had said to Barron that night before they parted; "and I know the place which will just suit us, and where we can move in without delay."

Accordingly, armed with full discretionary powers, he proceeded first thing the next morning to lease the commodious suite vacated by the fleeing Abner J. Wackermann, and before nightfall he had it completely furnished, fitted out, and ready for business.

Along the other lines of his task of organization and consolidation it was the same thing. Matters had to go on the double-quick whenever he put his shoulder to the wheel.

Still, despite the press and hurry of business, he did not forget his promise to call on Daisy Clarkson, and in default of having time to keep it, as he told himself, he made time.

"It is possible," he considered, "that Paine may have betrayed me again and blabbed my secret to some mutual friend, through whom it has filtered back to Miss Clarkson, and so given her this alleged clue she has that Sylvester Guse is in New York.

"In any event, it strikes me as an extremely prudent thing to find out just how much she knows and what she proposes doing. I can't afford to get tangled up with my old identity at this stage of the game."

Therefore, the second evening after closing up his deal with Barron he shook himself free of the cares of business for a season and betook himself to the pretty little apartment on Central Park West where Miss Daisy and her mother made their home.

Nor did he find anything to complain of in the character of his reception.

Mrs. Clarkson had evidently received a favorable report upon him and was prepared to extend a gracious welcome; and the daughter—— Well, if she had been charming on the train, he was convinced the English language did not contain a word fitly to describe her here at her own fireside.

"It is certain they don't as yet suspect me," reflected Clarkson with a sigh of relief; "and if I can help it, they're not going to, either—not, at least, until I get ready to tell my own story at my own time."

It may be inferred from this that Horace had a very well-defined intention of eventually revealing the true state of the case to Miss Clarkson; and the intelligent reader will perhaps grasp the occasion which he had in mind, and the manner in which he proposed to tell her.

The contemplation of that future exchange of confidences, however, and the present palpitation of the heart which affected Horace every time Miss Clarkson moved anywhere near him, did not prevent him from promptly asking her in regard to the intelligence she said she had learned.

Then, with some show of excitement, the girl produced a clipping cut from the "agony column" of a newspaper, requesting Sylvester Guse to communicate at once with the advertiser. The initial "H" was the only signature and the address given was that of the newspaper office.

"There," said Miss Clarkson emphatically, "doesn't that prove he is in New York?"

"Not at all," disclaimed Horace hastily. "It simply means that, like you, somebody else is trying to find him; or," catching at any straw in the effort to dissuade her from investigating, "perhaps it refers to some other Sylvester Guse. No, really, Miss Clarkson, it doesn't strike me that this promises much."

"You are always casting cold water on my plans," she pouted. "One would almost think you were trying to keep me from finding this man. I thought surely an answer to that advertisement would be a long step toward unmasking Guse."

While Horace stepped out to post this missive, Mrs. Clarkson took occasion to remark that their visitor seemed to be a very energetic young man.

"Oh, I think he is simply splendid," broke in Daisy enthusiastically, her cheeks flushed and her eyes shining. "I wish you could have seen the way he picked me up and put me aboard that train at Cincinnati. Why, he handled me just like I was—a sack of wheat!"

Mrs. Clarkson smiled reminiscently. Perhaps she knew herself the delirious pleasure of being handled as though one were—a sack of wheat.

Horace did not remain long after his return. It was growing late and he felt that he did not wish to wear out his welcome on a first visit; but he left no doubt in the minds of his hostess that in the future, like the election-day repeater, he would come "early and often." And, having received a pressing invitation to dine with them on the following Sunday, he walked back to his hotel as though upon air.

But there never came an answer in response to the letter they sent, and when Horace went to the newspaper office to make inquiries, he learned that their reply had failed of delivery, for the reason that the three days allowed for answers to the ad had expired, Miss Daisy having never thought of that fact when she held the clipping to consult with Clarkson over it. Nor did any further clues turn up to vex Horace's peaceful possession of his new name.

So the days passed away with Horace hustling for all he was worth, during business hours, to make "The New York Corner Refreshment Co." a glittering and triumphant success; and at other times to win the fortress of a woman's heart. And, truth to tell, it began to look very much as though he would score in both particulars.

One afternoon he was sitting alone in the private offices of the concern when he heard an excited voice outside demanding admission to some one in authority.

It struck him that there was something familiar in the tone, and, stepping quickly to the glass door, he peeped out to see—his false friend, Harry Paine!

The latter wore a cap and long ulster, and carried in his hand a traveling-bag covered with labels. It was evident that he had come thither directly from the steamer.

At the sight of this fellow, whom he had so freely trusted, and who had betrayed that trust in such dastardly manner, all the suppressed wrath in Horace's soul blazed up into a sudden white heat.

With a hasty stride forward he caught Paine roughly by the shoulder and twisted him about so as to bring him face to face with himself.

"You hound!" he ejaculated.

The startled expression in the other's face at this unexpected onset showed no trace of recognition, and swiftly recalling that Paine had never seen him since the alteration in his features, Horace leaned over and hissed in his ear: "You do not know me, eh? Well, I am Sylvester Guse!"

The apprehension and amazement which had been chasing each other in almost ludicrous sequence across the visitor's face now changed to a glad surprise, and he quickly put out his hand to grasp the other's.

But Clarkson drew stiffly back.

"Come into my office," he said in a tone like ice. "I have a few things to say to you."

"What's the matter with you, Sy—whatever your name is?" broke out Harry in bewildered fashion as they passed through the doorway. "One would think from your manner I had injured you in some way. I did all that was possible when I was called so suddenly away, even going to the trouble of wiring you that you would get your key and my message at the hotel."

"And have you the nerve to still stick to that yarn?" demanded Horace, turning upon him. "You know you never sent that key."

"I certainly did. Why?" breathlessly. "Do you mean to tell me you never received it? Oh, I see," a sudden light breaking in upon him. "And all this time you have been believing that I stole your money and ran off with it."

Clarkson bent a long, searching glance of scrutiny upon him.

"Hal," he said, "are you trying to tell me that my money is still in the safe-deposit box?"

"It undoubtedly is," averred the other, "unless you yourself have removed it. Why should I have taken it?" he went on. "I have plenty of my own. Indeed, instead of taking money from you I have been making it for you. The deal we went into together has succeeded beyond my expectations, and I have just completed arrangements in England which will treble our profits.

"But if you did not get your money,

how have you been able to pull along?" he went on, turning questioner in turn. "And what sort of a job have you with these people here?"

Then in a rapid interlocution of questions and answers the whole truth came out. Horace related his wonderful experiences, and Paine was alternately overcome with mirth and amazement as he heard the recital of his friend's various adventures.

At the conclusion he could only shake his head in wondering appreciation.

"You have dropped the old name, man," he said; "but you cannot drop your old abilities. You are certainly the goose that lays the golden eggs."

Harry's story was somewhat different, but excited no less interest on the part of his companion. He had never been a partner of Wackermann's, it seemed, in any of that wily rascal's various schemes; but had merely rented desk-room in the fellow's office.

Gaining some inkling of Wackermann's true character, however, he had moved his effects two or three days before the latter's flight, and his present visit was for the purpose of getting some papers which he had overlooked and left behind at the old place. The fact that he and the "get-rich-quick" crowd had sailed for Europe on the same day was simply an unfortunate coincidence.

They had gone by different steamers, it appeared, and Harry had known nothing of his name being connected with the scandal until after he had been several days in London. Then, happily, his business abroad was satisfactorily concluded and he had lost no time in returning to New York to clear himself.

"But what I cannot understand is this loss of the key and my message," he exclaimed as he finished. "It is a complete mystery to me; for I certainly took them up to the Hambletonian and left them there the afternoon I sailed."

"Well, there is only one explanation," replied Horace, "and that is that some clerk has mislaid the parcel, and that they didn't want to acknowledge it to me. I suppose I ought to bless them, for it has given me the chance of a lifetime; but as a matter of fact, I'd like to wring their necks. Come on; we'll go right up to the Hambletonian."

Accordingly they piled into a cab and drove furiously to the palatial hostelry.

"There," said Harry, pointing to the man behind the desk, "is the very fellow I gave the package to. Watch me call him down."

Haughtily he strode up to the clerk.

"Didn't I give you a package about three weeks ago to be held pending this gentleman's arrival?" he demanded sharply, indicating Horace by a jerk of his head.

The clerk scrutinized him a moment; then the light of recognition sprang to his eye.

"Yes, you left a package here," he responded, "and a nice lot of trouble we've had with it. You told us it was valuable, so we advertised for the owner, but he has never turned up. I wish——"

But Horace broke in here.

"You advertised?" he repeated with fine scorn. "Why, I was right here in the hotel and asking for it about a dozen times a day!"

"Oh, but the package wasn't for you, Mr. Clarkson," cried the clerk eagerly. "See, here it is," drawing out a sealed parcel and reading the superscription. "It is addressed to 'Mr. Sylvester Guse'!"

The two men turned away without a word. Out on the sidewalk Harry broke out with: "Old man, the cigars are on me."

"I think they are on both of us," rejoined Horace. "What an idiot I was never to think that in your hurry that was a mistake you were almost bound to make."

* * * * *

The cemetery out in a certain little Illinois town, of which previous mention has been made in these pages, is a quiet and unfrequented spot, and it is consequently not strange that the people of that community are entirely ignorant that one of the graves there has been disturbed and its contents removed.

The work was done by strange men and at night, and the coffined remains, thus disinterred, were so cautiously shipped East that no one could by any possibility trace them from their present resting-place to that country graveyard.

Where they now lie, under a beautiful

marble sarcophagus, a lady and gentleman—young, handsome, and distinguished—will frequently come to strew fresh flowers on the tomb.

"I can never forget, my husband," she will say, "that you were his friend, and that when he died your hand was clasped in his, and the words 'God bless you!' were on his lips."

Out in that Illinois village, however, they will tell you that that empty grave contains the body of a promising young lawyer who died alone in a hospital in Denver.

"Sylvester Guse" you will read the name upon the headstone.

"Yes," they say, "but folks about here always called him 'Silly Goose.' Kind o' onfort'nit, too. I 'low that fool nickname hurt him more'n a little. If it hadn't been for that, we'd a cert'nly 'lected him district judge."

THE END.

THE LEAK IN SECTION TWO.

BY GEORGE CARLING.

The theft of an invisible substance and the ingenious fashion in which it was located.

MR. DICK ENSSLER was not in a happy frame of mind. He sat in one chair with his feet flung across another—his pipe dangling from his mouth—and a book on "Line Voltage," which he had been trying to assimilate, pushed to one side.

In the first place, promotion did not keep pace with his ambition. He had been lineman for the great Suswego Falls Power Transmission Company for two years, although he had taken a course of electrical engineering with honor.

But he had found it necessary to begin at the bottom, and, as yet, his feet only rested on the first rung.

Then, there was a girl in the case. Miss Margaret Braintree had short-circuited Dick's heart-strings, and he felt that they were carrying more voltage than he could stand much longer.

Not that Miss Peggy—they all called her "Miss Peggy"—was throwing in any resistance! She believed firmly in a good conductor, and Dick felt that his contacts were all right regarding herself; but her father, the superintendent of the company, was packing in insulation as carefully as though he had forty thousand volts to care for—as Dick, indeed, felt that he had.

Only that morning Mr. Braintree had intimated to Dick, forcibly but not unkindly, that unless his visits to Peggy were scheduled for a considerable lower frequency, he should deem it expedient to transfer him to the Tadousac section—which was forty miles down the line.

Dick had pleaded his cause eloquently, but was met with a theory, by Mr. Braintree, that the man who got his daughter must first show what was in him; and, as yet, he said—still not unkindly—that he had not observed any brilliancy in Dick's handling of line-work.

He even took occasion to point out that a leak in the line, which had existed for months, had not yet been located. And, although it was by no means sure that the leak was on Dick's section, he was by no means sure that it was not.

Perhaps, after all, it was this leak which was giving Dick the blues.

This sixty-mile transmission line was divided into ten-mile sections, each section under the care of a lineman. Most imperative orders had been given to locate the leak, but without result.

There was a mystery about it, too, which kept Dick—and perhaps the other men—awake nights. As far as the most searching tests showed, it was not noticeable in the daytime, but at night it was very serious.

Of course, they had searched for tapped wires—for stolen "juice," as they put it—but found no illicit connection at any point.

The next morning Dick strolled into the great power-house. There was always a wonderful fascination to him in this wonderful plant.

Sixty feet above roared the furious rapids, over the brink of the falls. Here on the floor were the magical wheels, transforming that mighty rush of water into thirty thousand horse-power. An instant later that stupendous power was sixty miles away, running street-cars and a dozen big industries. It was grown-up fairyland to Dick, but a stern voice now came from the presiding genie:

"What's this, Enssler? Aren't you going out to-day?"

"I wanted to see you first, Mr. Braintree. I want to suggest that we linemen exchange sections for a week, so that we can check each other's work."

"It's a good idea, Enssler," said the superintendent. "It ought to lead to something. Every post and every conductor must be examined—look after the guy-lines, also. This must not go on any longer. The manager is getting sarcastic over it."

So Dick, who had always inspected Section One, which was next to the power-plant, went to Section Two, prepared for a week of very toilsome and very lonesome work.

This entire stretch ran through a sparsely inhabited country; rocky, marshy, and overgrown with thick underbrush and second-growth timber. The right of way, one hundred feet wide, immediately under the heavy line-wire, had been scrupulously cleared, but this narrow strip was almost the only open country in this section.

It was the third day when Dick got a little gleam of light, and incidentally excitement, in this monotonous job. He had descended from a pole, after a careful but futile examination of the heavy conductors, to which the line-wire was attached, and had really started for the next, when he took another glance over his shoulder, upward.

The glint of sunshine was upon the big copper wire, but close to the pole it struck him as being much brighter than elsewhere. He walked to the other side and concluded that he was mistaken. But another glance from his first point of view decided him.

He again sturdily drove his climbing-spikes into the heavy post, and in a few moments was up examining the wire. It *was* bright on one side, and on the top. Furthermore, he discovered little scratches on it.

Coming down, puzzled and thoughtful, he now observed that a slight foot-trail led from the post into the thick brush—not only to one side, but also to the other. This trail did not go straight across the open space, but formed a sharp angle at the post.

Following it to the north side of the clearing, he saw that it led away through the brush.

There was no doubt now, in Dick's mind, that he had located the leak; that some one was stealing the "juice" at night. But who? Two miles north of him was the Sweaburg highway. One mile south was the turbulent, tortuous Suswego River. Four miles down the river was the town of Sweaburg; and he knew of no one in this large section who used electricity—nearer than that town.

Of course he could go back to Suswego Falls and report what he had found, but it came to him now that this was his chance! If he could find out just where that "juice" was being taken, and how conducted, and locate the guilty parties, there would surely be good credit in it.

His handsome eyes flashed, and his heart beat rapidly, as he somehow got Miss Peggy mixed up in the problem. But he soon came to his senses and started on the job—the first really interesting one that had fallen to him.

He followed the faint trail through the brush, advancing cautiously and noiselessly. He had instantly grasped the importance of concealing his movements—even his presence—if he was to avoid giving alarm to his prospective prey.

After about two hundred yards of slow work, he caught the sound of an ax, and presently, peering from a heavy clump of cedar, he saw a small clearing and a rough, untidy-looking man splitting an old log. There was a rude, patched-up, one-roomed shack, and some rusty-looking hens, and the whole aspect of the place told of poverty and slackness.

There was no current used there!—that was sure. And yet, this was probably the man who knew about it.

As noiselessly as he came Dick retreated to the line, and, crossing the

cleared strip, he selected a hidden point of observation and prepared for a long, lonely watch.

At eight o'clock, when the September sun had set and deep shadows hung over the strip, Dick saw his man. He emerged from the trail, carrying a pole and a small coil of wire on his shoulders; and walking straight across the strip to the opposite brush, he disappeared.

In a few moments he again came out and, walking directly to the heavy post, which was the object of Dick's closest attention, he hooked the pole he had carried over the line. Then he went home.

So far it was all right. There was the leak and the connection, but Dick was well aware that now his work was only just begun. Where was this current going?

He had ample time to consider this question. All through the long hours of the night—in the wildness and loneliness of that heavy brush—with the added discomfort of a steady rain, he pondered over the matter.

With the aid of his pocket flashlight he examined the end of the line which entered the brush, and found it scientifically connected to a screw-post concealed in an old stump. The other cable he could not find.

There was a creek alongside and he felt confident that the cable was led into that and sunk along its bed.

Although a layman's presumption would have been that this current, being taken at night was used at night, Dick did not allow himself to be deceived by that. He well knew that it could be led to renew a storage battery, and used at any time.

Of course it would be an easy matter to get a gang of helpers and trace that cable to its outlet, but that would take the shine completely off his nugget of discovery. He wanted to complete the matter alone; and so thinking, and comforting himself with a pipe and a delicious dream of Peggy busying herself with a delicious little supper for two (Gee! how hungry he was!), he passed the hours until a lighter tinge in the tops of the trees warned him that dawn was at hand.

It was half past four when the man again appeared. Dick watched him unhook the pole and coil up the short cable, disconnecting the farther end, then he disappeared with it in the brush, toward his shack, and Dick started at once for Sweaburg.

He was wet, tired, and well-nigh starving when he arrived, but a wonderful breakfast put him all right. Then he did the town; noted the various places where electric current was used, and peered into the windows of the power-house of the big woolen-mill. He made out a one - hundred - and - twenty - horse-power Corliss engine, as he judged, with a little dynamo belted on—probably big enough, however, to give them all the light they needed.

It was not a satisfactory inspection, but he was refused admission without a pass—which he did not care to apply for.

At noon he looked for his old friend, Pat Burke, who worked in this mill, and took him to dinner.

"Pat," he said, as they lit their cigars, "what have you on for to-night?"

"I'm on fer anythin'!" replied Pat.

"Can you keep awake all night?" asked Dick.

"Sure I can, if I'm not at work!"

"It's this way," said Dick thoughtfully. "I'm down here on a special test. I ought to have a man to help me to-night, but I'd probably not get one now if I sent for him. There's five dollars in it, Pat, if you want to take hold."

"I'm yer boy, Dick! Sure an' I've thought some time, myself, I'd like to take up this profession of 'juice.' It's a nice, easy proposition—just saunterin' around wid a bit of an instrument, an' lookin' wise, d'ye mind!"

"You won't have to bother with even an instrument to-night, Pat. Now here's a card with the time marked on it. Eight-thirty—nine-thirty—and so on, every hour through the night. At exactly those times watch the electric lights in this town and note anything peculiar. See if they go out, and, if so, for how long. Understand?"

"Dead easy!"

"Make a note on the card, Pat, of just what happens. That's all there is to do. After three-thirty you can turn in. I'll see you at breakfast."

"You won't be wid me, then?" said Pat disconsolately.

"No, I've got to be at the other end," replied Dick hastily. "Don't fail me now, Pat—old man! It means a good deal to me to get this report right."

"I'll be as steadfast as the moon—if there ain't any girl comes along to bother me," replied the irrepressible Pat.

Enssler managed to get a couple of hours' sleep at the hotel; then he started again for the woods.

The proceedings of the night before were repeated. He watched the man make the connection, and at eight-thirty he himself lifted the pole for five seconds, then replaced it. So again at nine-thirty, and at each succeeding hour he broke that connection for a short period, noting the number of seconds—from five to ten—meanwhile praying most fervently that Pat had not succumbed to any temptation, but was faithfully watching the Sweaburg lights.

He had made the last test at three-thirty, and waited for the first gleam of daylight to make another examination of the cable—to discover, if possible, just where it entered the creek-bed.

It was while he was engaged on this that he heard a footstep behind him, and quickly turning—saw the man!

There are times that the brain works rapidly. Quick as the passage of the current over that sixty-mile wire came to Enssler the realization of all that this discovery of himself meant.

Within an hour or two this man would have informed his confederates—the farther end of the cable, wherever it was, would be disconnected and tossed aside. He had no doubt, all day, that the cable led down the bed of the river to Sweaburg.

One toss of the end there and all evidence of where it had been connected would be gone. His job would be but half done. The glory of it would be utterly destroyed by its disappointing and unprofitable ending.

"What're ye doin' there?" demanded the man furiously.

"I'm admiring this clever little contrivance of yours," said Dick coolly. "It really does you credit. But, all the same, I'll have to put you under arrest. You'll come to Suswego Falls with me."

The man laughed cynically.

"What's the arrest fer, my bucko?"

"Stealing 'juice,'" replied Dick laconically.

The man jumped for him, but Dick dodged and got in a wicked side clip. Then he sprang into the open, where there'd be some chance of a stand-up fight.

He felt that it was the only way he could do anything with this long, raw-boned, sinewy brute. The man rushed at him again, and again was stopped by a sturdy blow between the eyes.

But the long grass and low brush were sorely against any quick dodging, and at the next rush the man grappled and threw him heavily. The struggle was furious and merciless, and, as he caught the savage gleam of the man's eye, he saw that the fight was to the death.

There was no look of the hunted striving for escape in those bloodshot, furious eyes; instead, there was murder!—the destruction and annihilation of this witness against his wrong-doing—this meddler with his livelihood.

Twice his bony fingers closed on Dick's throat with a cruelly steel-like grasp, and twice Dick threw him off. The third time he jammed his knee into Enssler's stomach with a force which drove his breath from him, and as those brutal fingers closed again on his throat, and he saw the exultant gleam of triumph in the man's eyes, he felt that the end had come.

Strangling and hopeless, he flung an arm out, clutching, in his despairing agony, at the slime and muck in a little pool. Instantly and instinctively he brought his hand up, jamming the contents into the man's face—filling his open, gasping mouth, and his gleaming, murderous eyes.

With a smothered curse, the fellow slipped his hold and Dick, with a last, convulsive effort, struck one wicked blow and threw him off. Then he lost consciousness.

It could have been but a few minutes before he came to. The man was lying on his back, his face purple—and Dick saw that he was choking.

Struggling to his feet, Dick rolled him over, giving him a chance to clear out his mouth; and, as he lay there, face

downward, Dick bound his wrists behind him with his necktie.

Then he walked unsteadily back into the brush, where he had left his kit, returning with a small coil of wire and a drinking-cup. At the creek he quenched his own thirst, and then took a cupful to the man, who had now struggled to a sitting posture.

"Get up!" said Dick sternly, "and take a seat against that tree yonder."

The man's face was doggedly sulky. He made no attempt to move. Dick picked up the connecting-pole, and, walking over to the line-wire, hooked it on. The disconnected cable end lay within six feet of the man, and his eyes dilated with horror at the fearful, sputtering blue death which streamed from the bare wire into the wet grass.

"Get a move on!" ordered Dick fiercely, "or I'll start you with this."

The fellow scrambled to his feet and stumbled over to the tree. Here Dick bound his elbows to the trunk with the heavy copper wire.

He used his twisting-pliers and made a workmanlike lineman's job of it. The man was as secure as though chained and riveted.

"I'll be back as soon as I can find some rig to carry you out on," he said dryly.

Then sore and aching in every muscle, he struggled through the woods to Sweaburg.

"Fer heaven's sake!" exclaimed Pat, as he caught sight of his friend. "How many of 'em got at ye?"

"Only one!" replied Dick, with a grin.

"Thin he must hev bin an octopus. There's no wan pair o' hands cud ev had time to decorate ye that way!"

"Let me see your card, Pat, quick!" demanded Dick.

As he seized it and compared it with his own he almost shouted with delight. At every moment that he had broken that connection out in the woods the Sweaburg lights went out!

The evidence was complete. He knew all that it was requisite to know.

Then he told Pat about the fight.

"I've regained my respect fer ye, Dick!" commented that gentleman. "Ye've thrown and licked a man that's nivir bin thrown by any wan in this township—Luke Midger! It's myself that knows him—an' there's others—an' ye've got him under arrest, ye say?"

"He's wired up to a two-foot oak. He'll not get away unless some one helps him. Now, Pat, can you stay out today? I've got to have some one to help me."

"Sure I can! I'd risk the best job I ever had—which this wan isn't—to see yez through this. Come up to th' room an' git some clothes on. Ef the police see yer this way ye'll be arrested—an' I'll not say what for!"

A half-hour later Dick got Mr. Braintree on the 'phone and related all that had happened. That gentleman replied that he would come down to Sweaburg on the next train.

"I'm nervous about Midger," said Dick thoughtfully. "If any one gets through those woods he'll put up a yarn and they'll set him loose."

"I'll go right down there!" cried Pat eagerly. "I'll take my little power boat and go in an' keep frind Midger company till I hear from you."

"It'll be a good plan," said Dick, with animation. "I'll get along just as soon as I've seen Braintree."

When the superintendent arrived he was accompanied by Mr. Beatty, the general manager. Their congratulations on Dick's success were hearty.

"I ought to have suspected this before," said the superintendent, slapping his knee viciously. "The Sweaburg Light Company have, I know, been running with a small plant. Their custom has been increasing, right along—but I've never heard of their making any addition to their power. By heaven! they didn't need to when they could help themselves to ours as neatly as this."

"I thought it was the mill, at first," put in Enssler, "but I judged that their engine was big enough for their wants."

"You judged well, Enssler," said Beatty. "This man, Settle, the Sweaburg company's manager, is thoroughly unprincipled. I've known him long enough to be well aware that he'll stop at nothing to make dividends!"

"What am I to do with Midger?" inquired Dick.

The manager looked hard at his boots

for several minutes. Then a satisfied smile spread over his face.

"Enssler," he said, "you ought to have a rest and some sleep, at once, but I've got to ask you to stick it out for a few hours longer. Go up and take care of this man through the day, and at five o'clock be back here for instructions. In the meantime keep the matter strictly quiet."

"All right, sir!" replied Dick cheerfully, and once more he started up the road for Midger's clearing, getting a very welcome lift in a farm team, until he had to enter the woods.

He found Pat playing cards with the prisoner.

"He can play his hand all right," said the irrepressible Irishman, "but I hev ter deal fer him—an' in spite of that he's cleaned me out of six dollars—ev'ry cint I had. I was just goin' ter stake himself ferninst all he's got in his clothes. I'm thinkin' yer just in time to save yer prisoner, Dick!"

"I guess we'll get down to the boat, Pat. I've got to be in Sweaburg again at five o'clock for instructions."

"That'll suit me, an' I guess it'll suit Mr. Midger. He's feelin' pretty stiff. Come on, Midger! We'll go down an' inspict th' beauties of the Suswego."

Pat put his friend ashore about a mile above the town, in time for him to keep his appointment with the manager. At the hotel he found that both Beatty and Braintree had returned to the Falls, but the clerk handed him a letter.

As he read it his spirits fell, and he dropped into a chair, feeling that all the light had gone out of his life.

> Release Midger at once, and hand the enclosed check to Mr. Burke for his services, at the same time impressing upon him our desire for secrecy as to this day's work. Then return to the Falls without delay.

Dick glanced at the check—fifty dollars—and laughed ironically, as he thought that Pat had made much more out of the adventure than he would get.

Of course there was a blunder. Certainly there would have been no order for Midger's release unless things had somehow got balled up. The clean chain of evidence which he had been patting himself about was snarled somewhere. There was a short circuit—or blown-out fuse—which he had overlooked.

Heart-sick and wearied almost to fainting, he sought out Pat—and Midger was released and put ashore.

"I'll be up one of these days," said Pat cheerily, "and win back that six dollars, Luke!"

Then, as the man disappeared in the woods, Pat turned to his friend.

"What th' divil ails yer, Dick? If enythin's gone wrong an' ye git turned down, we'll divide this fifty, d'ye moind? Sure, I think I ought ter divide it enyhow!"

* * * * *

When the manager and the superintendent parted from Dick that morning, Mr. Braintree immediately returned to the Falls, while Mr. Beatty sauntered across the town, to the office of the Sweaburg Light and Power Company; and, sending in his card, requested to see the manager.

That gentleman received him with an assumption of hearty cordiality, and, after the usual greetings, Beatty said:

"I ran down to see if you feel like taking up that contract we offered a year ago, for power."

Mr. Settle clasped his hands behind his head and leaned back in his chair.

"No!" he replied indifferently. "We're doing very well. Our apparatus is giving us what we want, at present."

"Don't have any trouble with your lights at night, eh?"

Settle glanced up sharply.

"No! Of course the dynamo hasn't been built yet that doesn't make a little slip now and then, but we're doing pretty well."

"H-mp!" said Beatty meditatively. "I heard that there was some little trouble last night."

Then he leaned forward and looked keenly at Settle.

"Isn't it rather remarkable, Mr. Settle, that those lights went out at eight-thirty—and again at nine-thirty—and so on every hour through the night?"

Settle dropped his hands from behind his head and grasped the arms of his chair.

"What do you mean?" he stammered. "I've heard nothing of that!"

Then he added, as Beatty looked steadily at him. "Of course, there may have been some trouble—our—er—brushes, I believe, need truing up."

"It is not your dynamo which is wrong, Mr. Settle," said Beatty with a smile; "it's the switch! Do you know just where your switch was operated last night? Stay, I'll tell you! It was four miles down the other side of the river, in Luke Midger's clearing, Mr. Settle!"

Settle was now huddled down in his chair, pulpy and nerveless. His face was a sickly white—probably his teeth chattered.

Mr. Beatty continued: "One of my men was over there operating that switch, Settle, and another of my men was here in Sweaburg taking notes. I have in my possession their reports, tallying exactly. Also, we have in our possession the contact-pole and cable which your employee, Mr. Midger, has been using. Also again, we have in our possession Mr. Midger himself!"

Settle didn't reply. He made no attempt to. He was a wreck mentally—almost physically.

"Now I really think, Mr. Settle, that you'd better make this contract with us, at once. Don't you?"

Settle nodded dismally.

"In the meantime," continued Beatty, "we'll allow you to continue drawing that current. I know you need it. You can't run the town lights without it, and of course we don't want to embarrass the town. Our price will be, on short-time arrangement, one hundred dollars per night."

Settle was recovering slightly, as he began to see a prospect of settling this matter without exposure.

"That's a fearful figure, Mr. Beatty!" he muttered faintly.

"It's only until you sign a permanent contract, Settle," demurred the other, with a beaming smile, "or until you increase your own plant."

Settle groaned dismally—and Beatty went on:

"That seems to cover that point. Now, as to the current you've been using. I believe we offered you, a year ago, the power you needed for one thousand dollars a month. It's just about a year since we began to note a leak on our wire, Mr. Settle. Suppose we call the amount ten thousand dollars in round figures—how does that strike you?"

"Impossible! We can't pay any such sum, Mr. Beatty!" whined Settle.

"I'm sorry, Settle. Better talk to your directors and see what you can do. I shall return to the Falls on the four o'clock train. If I don't take that ten-thousand-dollar check with me, Mr. Settle, I shall hand Midger over to the police. Then the matter will be altogether out of our hands, you know.

"Of course, we can bring civil suit to recover, but the criminal proceedings will be a little awkward, don't you think? They will involve others besides Midger. You must know that. At four o'clock my train leaves, Settle. Good morning!"

* * * * *

When Enssler limped painfully from the train at Suswego Falls, that night, he felt that he was one of the most miserable men on earth. He was stiff and sore in every nerve, from his fearful struggle with Midger.

He was wearied to exhaustion from lack of sleep—and he was heart-sick with disappointment at what he feared was the abortive outcome of his efforts.

The jovial, beaming, sympathetic face of the superintendent, as he stood waiting on the platform, gave him a little ray of comfort and courage.

"Dick, my boy!" and a big hand was clapped affectionately on his shoulder. "You're pretty well done up! My car's here—I'll take you up home."

"Mr. Braintree!" stammered Dick, as the superintendent threw in the high-speed gear. "What's gone wrong? Didn't I hit the right company?"

"Guess you did, Dick! At any rate they're paying the bills. Beatty got a settlement from them before he left—got it just as he wanted it, too, Dick! He's got something to say to you as soon as he sees you. And I've got something to say to you now. It's settled that I'm to have an assistant. There's a lot of detail which needs a sharp eye and a clear head; and you're the man, Mr. Enssler!

"Here's your place, now. Get a bath and get to bed, and don't let me see you

until the day after to-morrow—d'ye hear? Stay!" he added, as a merry twinkle came into his eyes. "Come to think of it, if you wake up, you might get around about six o'clock to-morrow evening and go up to supper with me. Peggy will want to hear something about Section Two, I guess! Good night!"

THAT LITTLE LOCKED CASE.

BY CROMWELL KNOX.

Certain extraordinary experiences that fell to the lot of a business man in connection with an article he had never seen, but which he was credited with possessing.

CHAPTER I.

A JOKE, OR—WHAT?

FACING the sidewalk, between the street entrance and the half-curtained plate-glass windows, the big brass sign proclaimed that Carter & Joyce—specifically, as might be learned from the smaller type, Joseph F. Carter and Henry N. Joyce—manufactured and contracted for structural steel and iron.

Entering and looking upon Joseph F. Carter, one saw the typical modern man of business, practical and progressive, prosperous and unimaginative.

All sound hard sense and rock-ribbed conventionality was Carter; the fantastic and the unusual he avoided loftily, until—well, until a certain day when the unusual sought him out and marked him a fitting subject for sport.

Had you chanced in the office on that particular mid-afternoon, you would have seen Carter drop the last of some three dozen typewritten sheets and sigh contentedly.

The final specifications in connection with the vast Crane's Falls power-house were done; the last dimension had been filed at their big works; and one of the largest contracts for structural steel work was well under way.

It was a huge job, even for Carter & Joyce, and it was running very smoothly indeed. For that matter, most things seemed to run smoothly in their firm.

Carter rubbed his glasses and smiled placidly at the pile of papers, as he reflected upon the pleasant state of affairs. He glanced up when Joyce entered.

"Well, Henry, everything's in shape."

"Eh? Oh—Crane's Falls, you mean?"

"Of course."

"That's good." Joyce sat down and wagged his head approvingly. "That job's going to do wonders for us, Joe."

"Rather."

"Yes, sir, wonders," repeated Joyce. Then he laid the afternoon's paper across his knees and smiled. "Well, did he turn up?"

"He? Who?"

"The fellow you advertised for?"

"Oh, you mean the boy. Yes, I got a bright little chap this morning. At least, I believe he's bright. He——"

"No, no, no. I'm not talking about an office-boy. I knew you'd engaged that Irish kid. I meant the other."

"The other? What other?"

"Why, the other advertisement, of course," said Joyce, impatiently.

Carter frowned.

"I haven't been inserting ads for any more help."

"Well, I know you haven't been after any more help," said the junior partner, with visible exasperation. "What the dickens is the mystery?"

"The mystery?" Carter's smile was distinctly puzzled. "Henry, I know you're not addicted to strong drink, but your talk seems very incoherent this afternoon."

"Bosh! I mean that 'Lost and Found' advertisement, of course."

"Do you?" said Carter, tolerantly. "And which one?"

The other arose and slapped the paper upon the desk before him; one energetic forefinger was planted upon the column in question.

"As you know perfectly well, I mean that one! If there's anything in the matter that I shouldn't know, for

heaven s sake say so like a man! Don't dodge the issue in that fool fashion! I'm not anxious to pry into what doesn't concern me, but——"

Carter, readjusting the freshly polished glasses, had turned from him. The gold bow planted firmly upon his nose, he raised the newspaper, turned his chair so that the light came over his shoulder, and read carefully:

> FOUND.—This morning, near our office, a small locked black leather case, inscribed with gilt initials. Finder may recover same by calling and proving the property. Joseph F. Carter, Carter & Joyce, ground floor, Brindley Building, Front Street, New York.

Carter scowled and went through it again—and again. He dropped the paper and turned to Joyce.

"Well, Joe?" said that gentleman. "Something private?"

"Not to the best of my knowledge."

"What was it? Let's see the thing."

"I should be most happy to oblige," smiled Carter, "but it doesn't happen to be here just now."

"What! Did you get rid of it?"

"I never saw or heard of any little locked case, Henry!"

"You didn't find it?"

"Of course not."

"Then whatever possessed you to insert that advertisement?"

"Not being quite insane," said Carter, mildly, "I am forced to confess as well that I didn't insert the advertisement!"

"What!"

"Certainly not." Carter leaned back and almost grinned. "Come, come, Henry's it's silly. As a boy, I remember, you were fond of a joke, but at your time of life and such an absurd thing as this——"

"What's that? You mean that I——"

"Pshaw!" Carter looked straight at him. "Own up, now. It was some lingering spark of nonsensical boyishness that led you to insert that advertisement when you were up on Park Row this morning—wasn't it?"

The junior partner stared at him angrily.

"My dear man!" he said, with much force. "You haven't the assurance to accuse me of so unqualified a piece of asininity as the insertion of that notice, have you?"

"Well——" Carter, startled, was rather lame in his retort. "I—I—to tell the truth, I couldn't imagine that any one else would——"

"And how the deuce could you imagine that I would, then?"

The senior partner laughed.

"Don't work yourself up about it, Henry. It was the first thought that came to me as I read it—that you must have meant the thing as a practical joke. If you didn't—or, *as* you didn't, if that suits you better—well, I don't know just what to make of it!"

"No, nor I." Joyce crossed his legs and regarded the other. "Joe, you didn't find any case?"

"Of course I didn't."

"Or you didn't—well, say anything to anybody that might have suggested your finding a case, or something else?"

"What should lead me to say such a thing?"

"Why—I'm blessed if I know!"

Joyce stepped over and took up the paper once more. His brow contracted as he perused the mysterious little notice; and when he dropped the sheet, it was only to shake his head rather hopelessly.

"It's devilish peculiar!" he submitted, blankly.

"Well, I should say it was!" Carter was studying the advertisement again.

"It's a—mistake of some kind."

"Mistake?" The senior partner looked up, and quoted: "'Joseph F. Carter, Carter & Joyce, ground floor, Brindley Building, Front Street, New York.' That doesn't sound overmuch like a mistake, does it? It couldn't be much more specific without publishing my photograph, Henry."

"Then——"

"No." Carter, too, dropped the paper and stared at his desk. "It's a joke, or an attempt at a joke, on some one's part."

"And a confoundedly absurd one, at that!"

"Absurd isn't the name for it. It's too trivial for any one but a child to conceive—and yet, a child never wrote that notice."

"Then it must have been meant to annoy you personally, Joe."

"So it might appear, but——" Carter, too, wrinkled his forehead. "Where's the annoyance coming in? Not by people calling, certainly, for unless some one really had lost a leather case answering that description, with initials and all, he'd never dare show up here to claim it."

"That's true."

"No, it doesn't look much like a scheme to annoy me, and I don't know who would stoop to such a petty business, anyway."

"You discharged Berrian two or three weeks ago——" Joyce began slowly.

"Yes, and he went to Mexico three days afterward. And if he had stayed here, what earthly good could he have derived from such a prank?"

"None!" confessed the junior partner.

"Berrian wasn't that sort, any way. He was too stupid. No, the thing's been intended for a joke—and the Lord help the mind capable of such humor!"

"But some one did it," Joyce persisted. "The newspaper people didn't put in that ad for amusement. Could it have been any of the men at any of the clubs you belong to?"

"Um—no."

"Brixton?"

"Nonsense."

"Mayhew, then. He's a flippant sort."

"He's also in Europe—sailed last week."

"Then couldn't it have been Kiefer? He's a good fellow, and all that, but he's generally about——"

"Half drunk?" supplemented Carter cheerfully. "I know he is, but he couldn't have been responsible for this thing. He, too, is out of the city, and has been for several days."

"Then could it have been any one in our employ here?" persisted Joyce.

"Who?" Carter's smile was rather dry. "Do you imagine that, with the kind of discipline we maintain in this establishment, one or another of our assistants would be likely to undertake the job, and the risk of being detected, sooner or later?"

Joyce chuckled, somewhat grimly.

"It isn't exactly probable, but——"

"No, it's not!"

Joyce returned for the paper, with its strange problem. He folded the sheet so that the odd little statement of falsehood stood out before him; and for five minutes he pored over the lines.

The advertisement was a solid fact. What could have been its purpose? Who could have put it there?

Most natural of all suspicions, he found himself wondering very strongly whether Carter had not really found such a case, whether he had not inserted the queer notice, whether now, for some reason, he was not bent upon concealing all knowledge of the affair.

About the precision of that name and address lingered something altogether annihilative of doubt, of any suggestion of error on the writer's part. The thing was meant to apply to Carter, his partner, and to no one else.

Now, if Carter *had* found such a case——

He glanced covertly at the other, who had bent again over his specifications. And Joyce knew himself to be wrong.

In the fifteen years of their connection he could not recall one single instance, great or small, in which the senior partner had deviated from the rigid truth. His honesty was of the old-fashioned variety. He had just disclaimed any knowledge of the advertisement—therefore, he had none.

Joyce dropped the paper again.

"Joe!"

"Can there be anything behind this?"

"Behind it? How?"

"I mean, could any one with a grudge against us——"

Carter turned abruptly.

"Look here, Henry! If your mind is working along the lines of schemes and plots—drop it! That absurd thing may have been inserted by some one as a joke; personally, I have a strong suspicion that some newspaper reporter evolved it from his inner consciousness as the basis for a good story—nothing much has been happening on earth these last few days. However, be the originator who or what he may, he was a hare-brained idiot and nothing more serious. It is not a deep criminal conspiracy designed to ruin us!"

Joyce flushed a little at the rasping tone.

"Well, I was not meditating anything quite so spectacular——"

"Yes you were!" Carter corrected, more mildly. "I know you, Henry! Now, let's drop the subject for good."

"But some one is using your name—our firm name!"

"And if we find him, we'll prosecute him—that's all. Meanwhile, I decline to worry about the matter. We're not likely to be bothered by a clamoring throng, waiting to identify black leather cases with gilt initials."

The sarcastic smile silenced Joyce. He shook his head, but did not attempt further argument.

"Now," said Carter, "if you'll tell Miss Crawford to step in here, please, I want to hear her notes again, in regard to those roof girders in the western annex."

Joyce nodded and walked toward the door. On the threshold, however, he paused.

"Joe, the people down at the newspaper office might know who inserted that advertisement."

"Very true."

"Suppose I send the boy down there with a note?"

Carter shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Well—do so, if you'll feel easier, Henry. Let him go to Carrington's first, though."

He returned abruptly to his plans, and the door closed behind Joyce.

The stenographer entered, book in hand, and seated herself beside the desk; and for fifteen minutes or so they compared figures.

When at last Carter had finished and the stenographer prepared to depart once more, Joyce, who seemed to have been waiting, walked in.

"I say—Joe!"

"Eh?"

"About that advertisement."

"Bosh! Haven't you forgotten that yet?" laughed Carter shortly.

"No, I haven't. I called up the newspaper office."

"Well, and what did they say?"

"I asked if the copy had been handed in in person by any one, and if they happened to know the man. Some one up there investigated and informed me that the ad was mailed in—special delivery, too—and had been sent from the general post office just in time to get to press this morning."

"Yes?" Carter was not deeply impressed.

"And the copy and the envelope address were typewritten! There wasn't a scrap of writing anywhere about the thing. They had some difficulty deciding whether or not it should be inserted, being unsigned."

"Well, anything further?"

"Only that, while they were talking about it, some one called up on the telephone and stated that he had forgotten to sign his name. He gave it as Cornelius Orrington, three hundred and ninety something Fulton Street. And—there's nobody of that name in the directory and the street number would be somewhere out in the middle of the river!"

CHAPTER II.

AN EMOTIONAL VISITOR.

DESPITE himself, Carter's eyes opened a trifle more widely.

"Odd!" he commented.

"I'm glad you're admitting that," said Joyce, with some satisfaction.

"He went to the trouble of calling them up, for fear that the advertisement wouldn't appear—and then he gave a false name and address! Um! That *is* queer, Henry."

"It's decidedly peculiar! It shows beyond a doubt that somebody or other wanted that advertisement to appear. Why was it, and why the intense anxiety?"

"Perhaps——" Carter's eyes were roving. That was not a condition which Carter allowed his eyes to enjoy, and very abruptly they regained their wonted keen light. "Bah! I'll stick to my original theory, Henry. It's a bright young newspaper man somewhere up there on the Row."

"Do you really believe that?"

"I do indeed, and you'll see that I'm right. First thing you know, we shall receive a call from a sharp young person who wears glasses and has a note-book concealed in an inner pocket. He'll ask us about the advertisement and the case,

and when we disclaim any connection with the affair, he'll be hugely surprised and get a statement from me—or from both of us. Thereafter, he will adjourn to the newspaper office and interview the advertising department, and to-morrow morning there'll be a three-column mystery in one of the yellower journals. It's what they're paid for."

"But if——"

There was a gentle tap upon the ground-glass panel, and a clerk entered. He came forward and laid a card upon Carter's desk.

"Gentleman would like to see you personally, sir."

Carter, finding his glasses, picked up the card and smiled very significantly at his partner.

"Mr. Thomas Rathbone!" he said, softly. "The name of his paper doesn't appear on the card."

"Possibly it isn't a newspaper man," suggested Joyce.

"Do you happen to know any one by the name of—er—Thomas Rathbone, then?

"No? Nor do I. Well—we will not see him. That's all." He turned to the clerk. "What sort of looking man is this Mr. Rathbone—young, keen, pretty well dressed, and so on?"

"Well, no, sir. He must be nearly sixty, and he's rather shabby. His hair is gray and quite long."

"Um—old newspaper man in hard luck, then," concluded Carter. He handed back the card. "Tell Mr. Rathbone that I can't see him to-day, Jordan."

"Yes, sir."

"And—er—you might add that we have nothing to say for publication, as well."

"All right, sir."

The clerk departed, and Carter picked up his specifications for a last perusal.

"Why are you so certain that it is a newspaper man?" Joyce inquired.

"Because it couldn't logically be any one else, just at this time. I never heard of any Mr. Thomas Rathbone, and an elderly, long-haired, shabby person is hardly likely to be here after a lot of structural iron-work."

"But he might be some one——"

"Doubtless he is some one," smiled Carter. "But whether he is any one who could interest me just now, I very much doubt."

Joyce's lips were parted to speak when the door opened again. It was the same clerk and in his hand he held the same card. Carter regarded him coldly.

"Well?"

"This Mr. Rathbone will not go, sir."

"And don't you know how to get rid of people who will not go? If you could do no better there's a porter somewhere about, Jordan. I don't propose to be annoyed with Mr. Rathbone or any other newspaper man this afternoon."

"But I—I hardly think he's a newspaper man, sir."

"Why?"

"He doesn't look it, sir. They're pretty cool, as a general rule."

"And isn't this man?" asked Carter, with forced forbearance.

"He's about as excited as a man can be, Mr. Carter. He's pacing up and down the outside office now, and he seems half-distracted."

"What about?" snapped the senior partner.

"I don't know, sir, but when I told him that you were busy, he fairly yelled. He grabbed the card and scribbled a line on it—and here it is."

Carter's latent curiosity was aroused; with more eagerness than one might have expected, he stretched forth his hand for the card and took it from Jordan.

"Well—by Jove," he ejaculated, "Rathbone's a queer cuss, Henry!"

"Why?"

"Look at this!"

Joyce, leaning over his shoulder, saw:

SIR: *Look at the initials* and admit me quickly, please. T. R.

"The initials!" echoed Joyce.

"Yes, and he has underscored his confounded initials twice!" added Carter. "Who the dickens knows or cares about his initials? And yet—what the deuce is he driving at?"

"Have him in and see—I'm no good at riddles."

"I—I'll have to," sighed Carter. "Show the man in here, Jordan. And if I ring for you three times, go out quietly and bring in a policeman. He may be some sort of crank or lunatic."

"Very well, Mr. Carter."

The senior partner sat back, smiling quizzically. Joyce remained standing beside him, and stared toward the door with very animated curiosity.

Neither had spoken when quick steps approached along the little corridor from the general offices. The door was opened by Jordan, and Thomas Rathbone came in.

He was a tall, thin man, of sixty or so, as the clerk had said. His general bearing and appearance was that of the deep thinker; but his eyes gave another impression. They were much too close together, and they wandered in every direction.

It might have been caused by the excitement under which, very evidently, he was laboring, but the effect was not reassuring. His breath came hard and rapidly and his hands clutched the well-worn hat tightly.

This was the remarkable person, then, who had invaded the almost holy conventionality of the Carter & Joyce private office; and having brought with him an odd impression, he proceeded to make it more intense.

Glancing from one to the other for a moment, he burst out:

"Mr. Carter—which of you is Mr. Carter?"

"That is my name."

The visitor rushed across and seized the senior partner's hand—and wrung it violently.

"God bless you, Mr. Carter! God bless you, sir! You don't know what you've done for me to-day!"

Carter pushed him gently toward a chair.

"No—I don't," he said mildly. "Won't you be seated?"

"Heaven help me, sir! You've saved my life and everything that I hold most precious in it!"

"I am—very glad." Carter glanced from the visitor to the electric button and reflected that only three inconspicuous pushes would be necessary.

"If it hadn't been for you, sir—well, well, this is all taking time, is it not?" The visitor subsided almost limply into his chair. "If you could know the relief of it!"

The senior partner, for the moment, held wondering silence. Before he mustered words, Rathbone was speaking again:

"Were you astonished, sir, to see me?"

"Rather. Why——"

"But my initials told the story, eh? Well, sir, must I go farther with the identification?"

"Eh?"

Rathbone nodded.

"It's seal then, Mr. Carter. The hinges are of brass, nickel-plated. The cover——"

"Here!" Carter had half-risen. "The cover of *what?*"

"Why—of the case, of course!"

"The case! You mean——" the senior partner's voice rose suddenly.

"I mean the case which you found, Mr. Carter—the black seal-leather case, with my initials—T. R.—in gilt lettering on the top—the case you advertised in the 'Lost and Found' column this afternoon! I mean——"

Carter held up a hand, and the visitor ceased speaking.

"My dear Mr. Rathbone," he said, quietly, "you are speaking of the case which was advertised as having been found by me, I take it?"

"Of course. And please give it to me quickly, sir. At almost any minute——"

"Just a moment. The case isn't here."

"Not here! Where have you got it, then, Mr. Carter?" Rathbone cried, excitedly. "Where can I get it—and how soon?"

"That I do not know. I have never seen such a leather case, my dear sir. I am very sorry, if it means much to you, but I know nothing whatever about the thing."

Rathbone's eyes were staring, with a certain queer mixture of agony and amazement.

"You know nothing about it, Mr. Carter! But you inserted that advertisement in this afternoon's paper!"

"Pardon me, you are wrong. I did not. I know nothing about that either."

"You did not have it printed?" gasped the other. "Then, sir, who—who did?" He arose, and his hands clutched harder than ever at the worn hat. "Tell me, sir, who did it?"

"I don't know who did it, Mr. Rathbone," said Carter, gently. "I do not know any more than you about the affair—perhaps not nearly so much."

"And you haven't my little box?" wailed the other. "You mean to tell me that, after all, you *haven't it?*"

"I can tell you nothing else, for that is the truth."

Rathbone dropped weakly into his chair and sat huddled there. Carter watched him very narrowly.

In a vague way, he felt positive that there was some well-defined connection between the use of his name in the advertisement and the appearance of the odd personage before him. At least, he had felt positive until now; studying the figure in the chair, his belief weakened.

Allowing that some sort of queer scheme was being worked upon him, Carter could not but see that the old man's distress was very genuine indeed. Every line of the shabby figure bespoke the keenest disappointment; the eyes were half-closed; the unpleasant face was almost pinched.

Rathbone, Carter came to think after a minute, was—perhaps a victim, but hardly a party to the scheme.

But as he stared thoughtfully at the other and sought for some consolatory words, a change came over the visitor.

He straightened up rather suddenly, and his eyes opened. When they fell upon Carter they were angry; a moment later, they literally glittered with fury.

His lips were drawn in and a thin line of teeth was visible.

"Mr. Carter," he said, in a very low tone, "you don't know what you're playing with!"

"I know nothing about the matter—but I am certainly not playing with it," responded Carter sharply.

"You lie!"

"What's that, sir!" the senior partner cried angrily.

"You're trying to tell me—trying to make me believe—that you never found my case! You're trying to deny that, at first, you had that notice printed. And I say, you lie! You lie! You lie!"

"Here, here, Mr. Rathbone, be careful!"

"Careful! Careful of what?" cried the other, and his voice rose to a shout. "Careful not to make a disturbance and bring any one in here to find out that you, a rich man, would steal the one thing he treasured on earth from a poor devil like me!"

"But, my dear man!" Carter's bewilderment gained ascendency over his momentary anger. "I'm not trying to steal anything from you. I never saw your case. I haven't the faintest suspicion of an idea who may have inserted that advertisement. I tell you, for the hundredth time, that I know nothing whatever about it!"

"And I tell you that you lie, you cur!" screamed Rathbone wildly. "You *did* find my box! You *did* open it. You know what it contains *now!* But you didn't know it when you sent in that advertisement, did you? You didn't know then, or not a soul in all this world would ever have heard a word about it until—later! Would they, Carter? Would they?"

He advanced threateningly.

"And yet, you sit there and try to lie to me about it! You sit there and tell me——"

He was standing over the senior partner now, and his fists were clenched and all but ready to descend.

Carter rose swiftly. His strong hands caught the excited man's shoulders and forced him firmly back and into his chair.

"Mr. Rathbone," said Carter, coolly, "you're an old man and much worked up about something or other. We're making all allowances for that, you know, but please don't try striking me!"

Rathbone sank down, unresisting, in a heap as before. But his eyes were open now and staring vacantly before him.

Carter, despite what had passed, patted him upon the shoulder after a minute. The old man looked up at him piteously.

"Please, Mr. Carter!"

"What's that?"

"Please, sir, give it to me! For God's sake, give me back that case!"

"But I haven't your case, Rathbone. I never even saw a leather case of any color that had a lock, so far as I am able to remember."

The unkempt gray head shook weakly but persistently.

"It won't do you any good—it can't do you any good! You'd only spoil everything, and kill me! It isn't all you think!" he protested faintly.

"If I had your case," said Carter patiently, "I'd give it to you. If I knew the first thing about it, I'd tell you. But I don't, Mr. Rathbone—so what can I do for you?"

The man remained quite unconvinced, it appeared. Carter was lying, of course, but the power to fight him had left Rathbone. He could only plead now, and a cold hand grasped that of the senior partner.

"You know Benedict, sir—or maybe you don't know him, yet—he'll be after me! He may be after me now! He'll have seen the advertisement, and he'll get the case away from me, sir! I'm an old man—you see that. I can't beat him off if he attacks me on the street. He may be waiting outside now, sir! Please, please give me my case and let me go! Give it to me and let me go away with it before Benedict comes!"

There was something almost terrible in his earnestness. Carter's wondering face was a mass of lines. What under the sun was the trouble?

He turned back to Rathbone, and stared at him.

And then the door opened and Jordan hurried in.

"Another gentleman to see you, sir."

"Any one you know?" asked Carter quickly.

"No, sir, he has never been here before that I am aware."

"Did he mention his business?"

"It's something to do with a 'Lost and Found' advertisement, I believe he said."

With galvanic suddenness Rathbone was out of his chair. His eyes glared wildly about the inner office.

"It's Benedict! It's Benedict!" he cried in a choked, terrified voice. "Let me out of here, sir! Let me go!"

"But you are at perfect liberty to go, Mr. Rathbone," said Carter, as soothingly as possible. "There is the door."

"But he's out there! *He's* out there! Is there no other way of leaving the place?"

"Why—there's the side door, here," stammered Carter. "If you——"

"Where? Yes, yes, I see it!" The old man turned and seized Carter's hand again. "Don't give it to him, sir! Don't give it to him! Promise me you will not give it to him!"

"I promise you," said Carter quietly.

"Then—good-by!"

He darted across the office and jerked at the door. Jordan, open-mouthed, helped him with the spring-catch. The door opened—and the old man was gone!

CHAPTER III.

A BRINGER OF NEW CONFUSION.

CARTER stared at Joyce and Joyce stared at Carter—and Jordan, the clerk, stared at one of them and then at the other, and then at the open side-door.

The remarkable expression upon his young countenance brought Carter back to something approaching the normal.

"Well, close that door again, Jordan," he said. "This other man who is waiting—did he give his name? Was it —er—Benedict?"

"Here is his card, sir." The clerk produced a rumpled bit of stiff paper and extended it.

"Mr. Arthur Ormsby!" Carter read aloud. "Never heard of him before, either. Tell Mr. Ormsby that he—that he will have to wait for a minute or two. We'll see him then. That is all."

Jordan left. Carter dropped into his chair and fairly gasped at his partner.

"Henry—was he—was that man a maniac?"

"I—well, I'm blessed if I know," stammered Joyce. "He seemed——"

"Rational on some points? Yes. But he acted like a lunatic, if ever a man did on this earth."

"He knew about such a case—it must exist," submitted the junior partner.

"Exist! I should say that it did seem to exist! But——"

"And I wonder what in the name of all that's reasonable it contained!"

"So do I."

"You never thought to ask him!"

"Well—did you?" inquired Carter, smiling suddenly.

"The notion never entered my head," confessed Joyce. "At least, not until he was gone."

"It must have been—well, what on earth *could* it have been?"

"Something infernally valuable to the old chap, it would seem."

"But *what?* And why was he so excited? And who on earth is this Benedict? And why was the man so fearfully afraid of him?"

Joyce laughed shortly.

"If I could answer all that, Joe, I'd get out of this business and make a fortune at clairvoyancy. Perhaps Mr. Ormsby could tell."

Carter ran his fingers through his hair.

"We have no business to be wasting valuable time with this fool affair, but it has made me about as curious as a man could be and live. I——" he pressed the button. "Ah, Jordan! Ask Mr. Ormsby to step in here, please."

Both partners, it is likely, expected another maniac. In that they were completely disappointed.

Arthur Ormsby, it appeared, was a well-dressed little man—quite the ordinary, every-day person of the business world. His smile was suave and open, his step firm and resolute.

He entered and nodded politely to both men, placed his hat upon Carter's desk and, following the senior partner's invitation, drew up a chair and removed his gloves.

"Now—er—which of you is Mr. Carter?"

"I." Carter was regarding him curiously.

"Quite so, Mr. Carter. There was an advertisement in one of the evening papers, regarding a little black leather case."

"Yes." Carter's tone was even.

"The notice directed the owner to apply to you at this office, I believe, Mr. Carter."

"It did."

The other smiled contentedly.

"Well—I'm very glad to hear it, sir. I lost such a case this morning, and I believe that it is the one you mention."

Carter nodded expectantly.

"This case," pursued the visitor, "is a small affair of black seal leather with a small, somewhat peculiar nickel lock at the front. It bears the initials of my —er—brother-in-law, to whom it belonged originally."

"I see." Carter bowed. "And the initials—were——"

"T. R."

"Ah, yes. The case you lost was locked, you say?"

"Yes."

Carter managed a shrewd glance at Joyce, unseen by the visitor. They were on the track of some information which, from sheer curiosity, he desired very much. Now, with his customary diplomacy, Carter meant to obtain it.

"Mr. Ormsby, what did that case contain, may I ask?"

The man started.

"*Why* do you ask?"

"Merely to make the identification more complete."

"But you haven't opened it?"

"What did the case contain?"

"If you haven't broken the lock," said Mr. Ormsby, calmly, "you don't know what it contains."

"That isn't exactly answering my original question."

"I'm aware of that, Mr. Carter," smiled Ormsby, "but I fail to see its relevancy."

Carter, too, was forced to smile. In the business world he possessed something of a reputation for getting at what he wanted to know; here was a foeman worthy of his best effort.

"Isn't it conceivable, Mr. Ormsby, that the lock might have broken when the case was dropped?"

"It is not! You haven't examined that lock, or you would not suggest the possibility."

The senior partner was just a little abashed. The positive assertiveness in Ormsby's tone was not altogether expected. However, he tried another tack.

"So the case belongs to you, does it, Mr. Ormsby?"

"Certainly."

"And not to Mr. Thomas Rathbone?"

He shot the question out suddenly at the other, and watched for its effect.

Ormsby certainly started! Indeed, his face went just a shade paler—and then reddened slightly. The small man sat back, and a faint grimace appeared at the corner of his mouth.

"Pshaw!" he said. "I see that you are—er—wise!"

Carter's expression was inscrutable. The other hitched uncomfortably.

"See here, sir, has Rathbone been here?"

"It is not impossible."

"Then—say! Did you give him the case?"

"I did not."

"Honest?" cried Ormsby eagerly.

"I said that I did not."

Ormsby regarded him keenly for a moment. He slapped his thigh and burst into uproarious laughter.

"Well, by George! That's great! On my word, that's great! When did you tumble?"

"Tumble to what?"

"To the contents of the box, of course."

"What *were* the contents of the box?" asked Carter again, and suddenly.

"Oh, get out!" Ormsby chuckled good-naturedly. "You don't know—of course you don't know! That's why you stood off poor old Rathbone!"

The inscrutable expression was maintained only by a struggle; curiosity such as he had rarely known was burning within Carter.

"Look here, now," Ormsby began briskly. "You think you've got a line on the whole thing, don't you?"

"Um, um."

"Well, you haven't! You can take my word for it, you haven't. You don't know the inside of the thing as I do, and——"

"The inside of what?"

"Pish!" responded Mr. Ormsby tolerantly. "But you don't and you can take that as a cold fact! Oh, I know what you've got—or what you think you've got. Say, I suppose I know more about it than any man, barring Rathbone and Benedict—and, of course, the other parties."

Benedict! The other parties! Who were they? Who was Benedict?

Carter scowled; he was very near to being baffled—indeed, he *was* baffled, and he admitted it to himself. And having admitted it, he found himself very impatient at frittering away so many valuable business minutes over an affair in which he could have no concern.

He faced the amiable Ormsby suddenly.

"My dear sir, I suppose all this is rather foolish—I'm bound to admit that it is the result only of curiosity on my part. I may as well be frank with you."

"Eh?" Ormsby looked up in some astonishment.

"I haven't the case at all!"

"What!"

"More than that, I have never seen it!"

"Oh, come now——"

"And I don't know the first thing about the matter, save what I have gleaned from you and a very excitable person who left just before your arrival."

"You mean—Rathbone?"

"That was the name he gave."

Carter bent his gaze upon the specification papers, with the studied absorption which business associates understood as dismissal.

But Ormsby was not one of his business associates; he brought his chair nearer to the desk.

"But, my dear fellow, you inserted that advertisement! You described the case perfectly! You told people to apply to you—and here I am! Certainly, you never conjured up such a perfect description out of thin air!"

"I don't know who had that notice printed—I didn't!"

"You—bosh, Mr. Carter!"

The amazed expression gave way to one of incredulity—nay, more, of flat disbelief. Carter was a little astonished.

"Why—bosh?"

"Oh, we understand all that," laughed Ormsby. "I see precisely how the matter stands, man! Lord, can't I look through a stone when there's a nice, big hole bored in the center?"

"Which means that you don't believe me?"

"Oh, we wouldn't put it so harshly as all that," chuckled the other. "You are a bit absent-minded for the moment—that's all."

"I am not at all absent-minded, Mr. Ormsby. When I tell you that I know nothing whatever about the case and that I know nothing whatever about the advertisement, it is the simple fact. You are at liberty to credit it or not, as you may desire."

"Then, since it's all the same to you,

sir," laughed Ormsby, "I think I'll put it down to a slip of the tongue on your part!"

"You may put it down to——". Carter began angrily.

And there he stopped and returned to his papers. For Carter, Mr. Ormsby had ceased to exist.

Ormsby, however, was still upon the spot. Finding that time did not bring a change in Carter's attitude, at the end of five minutes, he laid a gentle hand on the other's knee.

"Come now, sir. Isn't it just a little foolish for you to act this way?"

"Foolish?"

"Of course. You've got the case—we understand that. You've opened it, too—that's pretty evident. Now you know what is inside, and you think you've managed to get hold of a big thing. But you're wrong, sir. I know more about it than you do—a good deal more, believe me—and yet even I should hesitate to tackle the job of carrying it through to the end."

"Really?" The curiosity was rising again in spite of Carter's efforts to keep it down.

"You can gamble on it. There are a whole lot of things that would make trouble before you were done with it. Now why not come right out, open and above board, and work with me?"

"In what way?"

"Well—in whatever way you like. If you want to go ahead and do—what you think you can do, why, I'll work with you, share half and half alike. It's a little foolish, but I'm willing."

"And if I don't choose?"

"Then we can hold on to it until Benedict's crowd is ready to put up a good sum."

"For the case?" asked Carter rather breathlessly.

"To be sure! Say, how much do you know about Benedict?"

"Nothing whatever!"

"Oh! Nothing whatever, eh?" Ormsby nodded wisely. "I see. You know nothing more about him than you do about the case—which you've never seen! Oh, you'll do, Mr. Carter! You're a deep one, fast enough!"

Carter flushed, but held his peace. Ormsby came even closer.

"Now, Benedict's crazy about this—you know that, for you've evidently managed to get the story from Rathbone, or some one else. Benedict's simply mad about the whole thing and the way he's been treated—or thinks he has. Just wait a few days. We'll hang on to the case, hard and fast, and let Benedict get a bit anxious. See? Then we'll let him approach us."

"Yes?"

"Oh, you don't know Benedict as well as I do, Mr. Carter—not by a very long shot. I'm acquainted with every point in the rascal's character! He, personally, will stop at nothing, and the fellows behind him have all kinds of money. He'll pay well for that little case, once we assure him that it's here and intact. We can fix the lock up again."

Carter smiled slyly.

"How much, do you think?"

"Whatever we ask, Carter. A hundred thousand—or five hundred thousand—or a million, for that matter! One is as easy to get as the other, and his people will hand it out all right. Yes, it's good for a million, if we work it properly!"

A—million—dollars. Carter's brain reeled. What under the sun could be contained in that little case *worth one million dollars?*

Not diamonds, certainly, nor other jewelry—nothing of that sort would fit in with this Ormsby's queer line of talk.

But—he had never seen it, he did not possess it, and there was no chance of his possessing it. So, as he had before concluded, the matter were best ended on the spot. Carter arose.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Ormsby. I haven't the thing, nor have I had it. Therefore I am regretfully forced to relinquish the prospect of that million. Before you go, would you mind telling me what *was* in the confounded thing?"

"Eh?" Ormsby's face, which had clouded at the first part of the speech, broke again into that maddening, tolerant grin.

"You haven't seen it—you haven't opened it—and yet you are most curious to know just what the contents were?"

"Yes."

"Well——" the grin broadened, "since you haven't seen it, the knowl-

edge would do you no good, Mr. Carter. And if you have, by any very odd chance, happened to open such a case—well, I'll furnish the information and all other necessary assistance when you're ready to make the deal."

He seemed rather pleased than otherwise; it was evident to him that Carter was more or less puzzled by the contents of the case he had found. His head bent a little to the side and he regarded Carter pleasantly.

"Come, sir! Why not give me your hand, let me see the little box, call it share and share—and have five hundred thousand apiece for nothing but a few days' waiting? It's easy money—you'll never see any easier—and I'll deal square with you! Eh?"

"But confound you! I tell you that I've never even——"

"Well, have it your own way, sir. If you change your mind, write me to the General Delivery. I'll be on hand within a few hours."

Reluctantly he took his hat and walked to the door. There he paused.

"Bah, Mr. Carter! Why be foolish? You can't swing it alone, no matter what you may think now. The only really sensible thing is to wait for some of Benedict's gang to turn up, and then hold them off until they're in the proper frame—and you can't do that alone successfully. Once more, sir, think it over! Eh?"

"My good man, I haven't got the damned thing!" Carter exploded, impatience, exasperation, and real disappointment mingling in his voice.

For a moment Ormsby stared at him in silence. After which he shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the private office without a word.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THIRD CLAIMANT.

CARTER, standing tiptoe a few feet back from the half-drawn shade, watched Ormsby leave the establishment and walk past down the street.

With a shrug, then, he returned to his desk once more and, quite ignoring Joyce's amazed countenance, made an effort to take up his specifications again.

It was quite useless. Great as was his ordinary power of concentration upon whatever work chanced to be in hand, his mind now refused to come down to business.

He turned after a minute and dropped the sheets with an impatient slap.

"Joyce," he said, "did you ever in your life see anything so downright insane?"

"Never!"

"What the devil is it all about?" cried the senior partner.

"Ask me something a little easier than that, please, Joe."

"This man Rathbone—evidently he's the original owner of the infernal case. It bears his initials, any way. Then Ormsby. Who on earth is Ormsby? What's inside the cursed box—why do they all want it so badly?"

Joyce shrugged his shoulders.

"And more than all that—did any one ever lose it, and if so, why are we supposed to have it here?"

"My dear fellow, you know just as much about it as I do."

"Well, it's a matter that a man might go mad speculating over!" snapped Carter impatiently. "I'm going to drop it now for good. By Jove, I am! It's next to impossible, and I'd give a hundred dollars on the spot to know the answer to the riddle—but it has taken up enough time now. Jordan!"

The clerk, passing the door, looked in.

"If any one else comes here to-day—or any other day—to see about a leather case which I am supposed to have found," said Carter, "tell him that the advertisement was a mistake—you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"And say that I know nothing whatever about the matter, and that I can't see any one in regard to it."

"Very well, Mr. Carter."

"All right—remember it, Jordan. I don't want any one else to get in here in connection with that beastly case!"

Jordan left; Carter grunted savagely.

"There! That ends our connection with the case and the mystery and Rathbone and Ormsby and all the rest of it! Now, Joyce! To get back to earth and sanity again, I want to have you look over these steel girders for the annex, up

there at the Falls. Duncan, when he figured out that part"——

Carter stopped short. The door had been burst open rather rudely. Jordan stood before him once more, a faint smile upon his lips.

"Well—what is it now?" rasped the senior partner.

"Another gentleman, sir—two of them, in fact. They came together."

"What's the name?"

"They declined to send in any name, sir. They said they wished to see you in regard to the advertisement."

"Well, tell them I can't see them!" said Carter impatiently. "No—that's all. I can't and I won't be bothered for another five minutes. Tell them that, Jordan, and tell them to get out as well!"

"But they seem——"

"I don't care what they seem! I will not see them!"

Jordan, who knew from experience that Carter's anger was not a thing to be treated lightly, backed out.

Just beyond the door, and only a yard or two down the corridor, he seemed to encounter the visitors.

"Mr. Carter cannot see you, sir," came from that direction.

"He can't? Why not?"

"He's very busy just now. He——"

"Nonsense!" said the voice.

Carter's scowl, as he arose, promised trouble for some one. He strode to the door—and walked fairly into the arms of a massive, black-bearded man.

He was followed by a smaller person of insignificant mien, and he literally shoved the senior partner back into the office.

Then, with Jordan's apologetic face in the background, the door closed suddenly. The big man laughed with much good-nature.

"Youngster said you were busy!" he remarked. "This Mr. Carter?"

"Yes." The senior partner, bewildered, dropped almost involuntarily into his chair again and stared at the intruders.

There seemed to be something compelling in the successive moves of these seekers of the little black case.

The big man, uninvited, found a place for himself.

"Well, sir, we saw your advertisement, and, I can tell you, we thanked the Lord when he saw it!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir! It's about the biggest relief I've known for a year! Where was the case found, Mr. Carter?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, don't you? I thought you'd found it yourself. Well—I suppose the thing is to identify it and not use up your valuable time, eh?" The visitor cleared his throat. "It's a little box of black seal leather, Mr. Carter, locked at the front. My initials are on top."

"And what are your initials?" inquired Carter. His curiosity was returning with irresistible force.

"T. R."

"And your name?"

"Thomas Rathbone!"

Carter laughed outright.

"So your name, too, is Thomas Rathbone?"

"Too? Why do you say that?"

"Oh, for no particular reason." Carter looked squarely at him. "See here, sir. As you say, I'm not anxious to waste any more valuable time. I haven't the case, I never found it, and I don't know the first thing about it or you or any one connected with the affair."

"But that advertisement——"

"It must have been inserted by mistake—or through design on somebody's part. At all events, I can learn nothing about it, and I've had the newspaper office on the wire. I haven't your case—or *the* case—and that is all that I can tell you. Good day, gentlemen!"

"Good day!" The stranger's face went purple suddenly. "To hell with your 'good day'!"

"What!" cried Carter in utter amazement.

"That's what I said, sir! You're a very clever person, I presume, but that little game doesn't work here!"

"Game! I——"

"Yes, game! When you want to deal with something soft and easy, Mr. Carter, don't pick out a man like me. I'm not that sort!"

The senior partner's rage was soaring.

"See here, do you know that you're sitting in my private office and talking to me!"

"I know just where I'm sitting, and I'm talking to a chap that thinks he's about as slick as they're made—and I'm not a little bit impressed!" sneered the big man. "You come up with that case!"

"You confounded ruffian!" thundered Carter, rising quickly. "I'll have the police in here and you'll be thrown out of the door—or through that front window—unless you get out!"

The other left his chair and faced him.

"You call in all the police you like, and I won't be thrown out until I've got that case tucked away in my inside pocket. D'ye understand that!"

His hand was raised, and Carter's own hands were not loath, it seemed, to accept the implied challenge.

But Joyce suddenly stepped in between the men, and the smaller companion of the visitor dragged him back to the chair.

"Now, now—gentlemen!" cried the junior partner. "This will not do at all, you know! You sit down there, Carter, and don't make an idiot of yourself. As for you, sir, I think that it would be better for you to leave."

"I'll leave when I take that little leather case with me."

"It isn't here—you'd better go now."

"It is here and I'm not going!" was the reply.

Joyce shrugged his shoulders and stepped back; Carter was quite himself again.

"My man," he said, to the belligerent intruder, "I presume that you are in your right mind and know what you're talking about."

"I believe so," retorted the other grimly.

"Therefore, I ask you to accept my renewed assurance that I haven't the vaguest notion as to the whereabouts of this confounded leather box—past, present, or future—and I would ask you to take that as my final word and go."

"And you honestly expect me to do it?"

"I hope that you will. I am very busy to-day."

"Oh, nonsense!" the big man cried, impatiently, as he settled back. "Lord, man! You seem to possess a reasonable amount of sense yourself—just ask yourself whether the yarn you're offering isn't a bit thin?"

Carter raised his eyebrows, but was silent.

"Here you go and find the case. You look at it, and it looks like some one's sample case, perhaps, or even a jewel case. You're a comparatively rich man, I should judge—you have no desire to retain it. Therefore you put the advertisement in the paper. Then you come back here and grow curious—and finally open the box. And when you've seen what it really does contain, you decide, very naturally, that you'll hang on to it. That's a pretty straight story, isn't it?"

"As a story, very straight. It happens to be a long way from the truth."

"Oh, not so far, I guess. Come, now. You can't use what you know and what you have—I'll block that for you if it takes every second of my time for the next ten years. You'll have no chance to do what you want to do with it. I'm telling you the straight truth—why not hand it over?"

"Because I don't happen to have it," repeated Carter wearily.

"And you know nothing about it?"

"No."

"Then maybe, even at that, you'll recognize my name. It's Benedict!"

So suddenly did the word come upon Carter that he started very markedly.

So this was the Benedict mentioned by Rathbone and Ormsby! He wondered less now that the old man had seemed so frightened at the approach of Benedict; but at least he had nothing to fear.

He was about to speak when it grew apparent that the start had not passed unnoticed. Benedict was grinning unpleasantly.

"Don't know anything about it, do you? And yet you jump like a scared rabbit when you hear my name!"

"It was not——"

"Of course not! Pshaw! What's the use of wasting words? You know where you stand and so do I. Hand over the box and let's call it settled."

"That is impossible." Carter sighed patiently.

Benedict glared at him for a minute or two. The glare softened, then, to a smile that was almost admiring.

"You're foxy!" submitted the visitor.

"Thank you."

"However," he crossed his legs, "there was a chance that you would be, and we came prepared. You see, we happened to learn that Rathbone had lost the box, and we were about to advertise for it ourselves. It was not very likely that two such cases would be found on this particular street and on this particular day, and—well, you know who—is willing to pay for the article."

Carter's eyes opened. One of Ormsby's prophetic utterances was coming true.

"Is he really?"

"Yes, sir, he's willing to pay all it's worth—and more than it's worth to you. What's the figure, Carter?"

"Not having the box, my dear man——"

"Drop it! Will ten thousand dollars take the thing—here and now—and no fuss afterward?"

"If I had it, ten thousand dollars would," smiled Carter.

"You refuse that?"

"I don't refuse it. I——"

"Twenty thousand, Carter—how's that?"

"A very pretty figure, and I hope, for his sake, that you find the present holder of the case."

"You're going to accept that, then?"

"If you want to give it to me for nothing."

Benedict flushed angrily, but kept his temper.

"Damn it, Carter! Have done with your fooling. Will you go to your safe and haul out the case for twenty thousand? The money's in my pocket."

"You might have had it for ten—I couldn't give it to you now for ten million. I haven't it."

"I say—" cried the other, suddenly. "Rathbone hasn't been here—you haven't given it to Rathbone!"

"I have not!"

"Nor to any one else?"

"Nor to any one else," repeated Carter.

"Give me your word!"

"I do," sneered Carter.

"Then, by thunder! Take thirty thousand dollars and hand over the box!"

Carter found something ludicrous in the other's excitement; he laughed, and in laughing he did the wrong thing again, for Benedict waxed more angry.

"You're slick—I'll admit it!" he snapped furiously. "You're considerably slicker than you look, Carter! Here! Take forty thousand dollars!"

"My good man, I'll take forty millions if you insist. I can give you nothing for it, unless you wish to buy out this business."

Benedict's hand went deep down into his trousers' pocket. For a moment he glowered at Carter. The hand reappeared and in it were massed a roll of thousand-dollar bills!

"Here, you obstinate hound!" he choked. "Here's every cent he gave me to use in getting back the case, and he'll raise the devil with me for not recovering it for less! There is fifty thousand dollars, Carter. Put that devilish case on your desk there—and it's yours!"

Much of the talk of the past few minutes Carter had taken with the proverbial grain of salt. Yet here was the most tangible kind of evidence of Benedict's keen desire to accomplish his mission.

Fifty bills—one thousand dollars each—and they were thrust forward now so that the edges brushed his hand!

He pushed them away angrily after a moment.

"I don't want your confounded money!" he said. "I haven't the case, as I have said about ten thousand times this afternoon, and if I had I wouldn't give it to you, for I'm morally certain that you've no right to it. However, right or no right, I can't deliver the thing to you. So kindly take that as final and leave!"

Slowly the bills returned to their hiding place.

"You're not going to do it?"

Carter was silent. Benedict arose, scowling.

"Then, by heaven! I'll have that case and you'll have no fifty thousand, you fool! D'ye hear? I'll make your life a hell on earth till I get it. I'll kill you, if I have to, but I'll have that little leather box out of you before I'm through!"

(To be continued.)

A GILT-EDGED INVESTMENT.

BY MELVILLE F. FERGUSON.

Working a game on an investor who insisted on a personal investigation.

"IT'S easier than an insurance game, and a heap more popular," said Sharkey, flicking the ashes from his cigar. "This worn-out mine, you understand, cost me five thousand dollars. We incorporate as the Aztec Gold Extraction Company of Mexico—Cowperthwaite St. Clair, president——"

"Huh! Say that again," interrupted Denton.

"Yes—Cowperthwaite St. Clair—that's yours truly. 'John Sharkey' would ruin it. 'Cowperthwaite St. Clair' is in itself a guarantee of integrity and respectability. We incorporate, I say, with a capital of one million dollars, represented by a million shares, par one dollar each. We issue one hundred thousand. Two shares to the bookkeeper, as secretary; two to the stenographer, as treasurer; two to the office-boy; 49,997 apiece for you and me. You put up two thousand five hundred dollars for your share of the cost of the property; we each chip in an equal amount for running expenses, and then——"

"And then," laughed Denton, "I go down to Guanajuato, hire twenty peons for a day, borrow some old rails and ties from the Mexican Central, and take a few photographs for the prospectus. We show the double-track connection direct from the mines to the main line, the construction of the new stamp mill, and the general activity on the company's property. And then we advertise the stock at thirty cents, and threaten to raise the price to forty in four days. It's a shame to take the money."

"My dear Delancey," said Sharkey, "your notions are very crude. Advertising the thing properly would prove very expensive. The old-fashioned way is simpler and cheaper. Besides, it is so long out of date that it has once more the charm of novelty.

'Now, this place lies about ten miles outside of Guanajuato, and the latest owner, who was fatuous enough to believe he had a good thing, built himself a habitation on the premises, which is still in tolerably good repair. That will be your headquarters. I will open offices here, get the investors interested, and send them out to examine the property. You will take them in tow on the spot; you will court investigation; you will show them over the mine and assist them in taking samples of the ore. When they have convinced themselves of the extraordinary richness of our claim, we sell out to them at a sacrifice. See?"

"Samples of the ore?" Denton repeated vaguely. "What are you talking about? The minute they get away with samples of the ore our philanthropic enterprise is doomed."

"Not so," said Sharkey, closing one eye solemnly. "I said you would assist them. Your assistance is indispensable. When those samples are assayed they will show something like eighty dollars to the ton. Without your benevolent intervention they would hardly run over six dollars."

"You mean I am to salt the mine?"

"Your perspicacity returns, my friend."

Denton puffed at his cigarette a few moments in silence.

"This is, on the surface, really immoral," he said finally. "The method I suggested is sanctioned by universal practise, and is unassailable from the legal as well as from the ethical standpoint. Your scheme looks almost—I qualify my criticism, mind you—almost like a swindle. Still, as it is proposed to separate only the incompetent and the unfit from their idle capital, the project is, in its ultimate analysis, a worthy one. That aspect of it particularly appeals to me. I'm with you."

In the genial shade of El Palicio, facing the Union Plaza, at Guanajuato, three months later, a dozen loafers lolled, taking in with languid interest

the usual incidents attendant upon the arrival of the little mule-drawn tram that connected with the railway at Marfil.

One by one there filtered through the crowd of eager cargadores who swarmed around the incoming passengers, struggling to take possession of their luggage, a drummer from the North; a promotor of one of the neighboring properties, with a party of prospective investors; a Mexican horse-dealer; a Western miner seeking employment in a new field, and a party of tourists. These the idlers passed in speculative review, bestowing upon each his due share of attention. But the last arrival to alight was somehow honored with an especially critical examination.

An Easterner, by the cut of his clothes; short, thick-set, well past middle age, and prosperous if the diamond stud sparkling in his broad expanse of shirt-bosom and the heavy gold chain spanning the extensive territory between his two lower vest-pockets afforded accurate indication.

Keen gray eyes peering beneath bushy brows returned the loafers' searching gaze with interest and singled out one among them as a likely substitute for a local bureau of information. The stranger approached, set down his heavy traveling-bag, mopped the perspiration from his forehead with a small sheet, and addressed himself to a tall, well-knit young man who stood a little apart from the rest of the group.

"Can you direct me, sir, to the property of the Aztec Company?"

Aztec! The idlers exchanged shrewd glances and contemplated the questioner with that same professional interest with which a company of butchers might be expected to survey a prize hog that one of their number was about to convert into pork. Eagerly they listened for the answer.

"With pleasure, sir. The fact is, I'm going there myself. I am the Aztec representative. My card," and the speaker fished a bit of pasteboard from the pocket of his negligé.

"Delancey Denton," read the elder man, holding a pair of black-rimmed glasses to his eyes. "Happily met, Mr. Denton. My name is Peabody—Bennett Peabody, of Providence, Rhode Island. No doubt you've heard of me from Mr. Cowperthwaite St. Clair? No? Well, I have here a letter which I should like you to read, if we could have a little conference somewhere without figuring as the principles in a joint debate."

He glared meaningly at the gaping audience, and Denton led the way through the bar of El Palicio to a small room in the rear. In the seclusion of this retreat Denton unfolded the missive presented by his companion and read:

> MY DEAR DELANCEY:
>
> This will make known to you Mr. Bennett Peabody, of whom I wrote to you under date of the 13th inst. Mr. Peabody is interested in the Aztec proposition, and desires to confirm what I have said of it by a personal inspection of the mine and an examination of its output. You will therefore afford him every facility for a searching investigation of our claims.
>
> Whatever you can do for him in this line will be greatly appreciated by
>
> Yours truly,
>
> COWPERTHWAITE ST. CLAIR,
> President.

Twice Denton scanned these lines with inward perturbation. The letter "under date of the 13th instant," to which Sharkey referred, had obviously miscarried. Equally patent was the fact that "whatever you can do for him," being interpreted, meant "whatever you can do to him."

It was up to the promotor to handle a promising investigator without an hour's warning, and consequently without the absolutely essential preparation of another "rich vein" in the mine. Delay was his leading card. If he could gain but a day to arrange matters he could assist Peabody in his investigations to some purpose.

"Now," said the prospective investor, while Denton was still turning these things over in his mind, "I want to be perfectly frank with you. If your mine is what it is represented to be, and the facilities for working it are favorable, I am prepared to take 50,000 shares at a reasonable figure. But I did not come all the way from Providence to buy a gold-brick."

"My dear sir," retorted Denton suavely, "we propose to let this enter-

prise speak for itself. There shall be no hugger-mugger. Everything shall be open and above board. You shall see every detail with your own eyes. To-morrow we will make a little trip over the property——".

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Peabody. "I think not. All I want is a square deal, but I want it quickly. To-morrow I must be on my way back to the States. This business must be finished this afternoon."

Denton felt the ground slipping from beneath his feet, but protest was in vain. Peabody was obdurate. Now or never was his motto, and he stuck to it pertinaciously.

The upshot was that immediately after the siesta the probing committee set forth—Peabody, Denton, a native miner, and a couple of peons armed with picks and shovels—for the ten-mile ride along the faintly marked trail through the cactus to the subterranean treasure-vaults of the Aztec Company.

Peabody alone, sustained by his feverish energy, ignored the discomforts of the journey and uncomplainingly endured the oppressive heat of the declining day. Arrived at Denton's adobe, almost at the mouth of the mine, he was with difficulty persuaded to indulge in a half-hour's rest preparatory to the descent in a capacious rawhide bucket to the bottom of the ninety-foot shaft.

Beneath the surface of the earth, as above, the visitor retained his mastery of the situation.

He listened attentively as Denton explained, in the minutest detail, the trend, dimensions, and value of the veins already opened, the certainty of the existence of others yet more profitable, and the cruel necessity which had compelled a suspension of active operations for lack of the requisite capital; but when the limited area worked by a former owner had been thoroughly explored, he himself broached the subject of sampling, and specified the points at which the blasting should be done. Four charges were set off in as many different places, and after each explosion Peabody, carefully gathering up and mixing the crumbled rock, deposited three or four pounds of it in one of the sampling-bags provided for the purpose.

Upon returning to the surface he called for wax and a candle, and solemnly sealed up the necks of his precious bags of ore in the most approved fashion. Marking the seals for the purpose of identification with an imprint from his cameo watch-charm, he deposited the ore in his traveling-bag, locked it, put the key in his pocket and heaved a sigh of intense satisfaction.

"There," he said, tapping the bag with his forefinger, "is the verdict. If you have a good thing the assay will show it, and we can doubtless do a little stroke of business."

"Just so," replied the promoter, with as much confidence as he could muster; "and the sooner your sealed verdict is opened in court the better for both sides. You will, of course, put up with me to-night. Why not let me send these samples to the assayer at Guanajuato now, and direct him to have a report ready when you go over in the morning?"

"A friend of yours, eh?" asked Peabody. "No, I think not. I'll take 'em with me and have 'em overhauled at El Paso by an assuredly disinterested party.

"Not that I haven't the utmost confidence in you, you understand," he added, with a peculiar smile; "but just for the sake of observing the usual precautions in such an important transaction."

Denton bit his lip, but swallowed the affront without turning an eyelash. The sampling farce was little to his liking; yet he resolved to bide his time, hoping, like Micawber, that something might turn up.

Meanwhile he produced a black bottle and a couple of glasses, and found his guest nothing loath to join him in a libation to a successful and mutually profitable outcome to the pending negotiations.

"No, no—well, just one finger," murmured Peabody, as Denton offered to replenish his glass; notwithstanding which protest he presently, in the most absent-minded manner, himself took the bottle and filled his diminutive tumbler to the brim.

A toast to that estimable financier, Mr. Cowperthwaite St. Clair, having been proposed by the visitor and duly disposed of, Denton went back at him with a bumper to his own prosperity,

and Peabody lost no time in returning the compliment.

By degrees, as the promoter plied his guest with drink, the man from Providence grew loquacious, then boisterous. Before nightfall he was decidedly woozy. By ten o'clock he was so far oblivious to his surroundings, with one exception, that it required the combined efforts of his host and two native servants to put him to bed.

The one exception was the black traveling-bag. With dogged pertinacity he clung to its handle throughout the evening and refused to be separated from it on any pretext.

Even while the trio undressed him he was with difficulty persuaded to change it from hand to hand.

The something Denton had been waiting for had turned up. Peabody, sober, had succeeded in obtaining genuine samples from the worthless mine, but the promoter could see no reason why he should jeopardize his financial prospects by permitting Peabody drunk to carry the unprepared rock away with him.

It was nearly three in the morning before Denton felt perfectly safe in undertaking to retrieve the disaster of the preceding afternoon.

The house was a squat, one-story affair built around a narrow courtyard, upon which its various apartments opened. The room assigned to Peabody lay directly opposite to that occupied by his host.

Creeping across the court in his stocking feet, the young man paused just outside of the visitor's door to listen. Reassured by a series of melodious snores, he softly entered.

The hand which had so tightly grasped the traveling-bag was extended above the pillow, and the bag itself was almost within reach from the door.

Cautiously Denton stole across the earthen floor, removed the key from his victim's trousers pocket, seized the bag, and departed as silently as he had come.

In the security of his own room he ripped the seals from the sample-sacks, emptied their contents into one end of a long wooden chest beneath his bed, and refilled them with some high-grade ore which constituted his stock in trade. This done, he was about to affix new seals when it dawned upon him that he had overlooked the cameo with which Peabody had impressed the wax.

Another stealthy expedition placed the watch-charm in his possession, whereupon he sealed the sacks with the owner's private insignia, returned them to the grip, and replaced all the articles in his guest's room precisely as he had found them.

In the morning Bennett Peabody was another man. Morose, snappish, self-centered, if he had any recollection of the convivial exercises of the night before he made no reference to it, and despatched his breakfast in gloomy silence. The ride to Guanajuato served by no means to improve his temper, and it was not until he was about to step aboard the tram for Marfil that he ventured beyond the curtest of monosyllabic remarks.

"I stowed away two or three bits of ore in my coat-pockets yesterday afternoon," he growled, "and now they're gone. Guess I left them on the table in my room. I wanted to give those specimens to some friends in the East. I wish you'd mail them to me—that would save me the bother of undoing one of these bags. Will you?"

Smiling inwardly, Denton promised, and shook hands with his dupe through the window as the bare-legged driver of the tram cracked his long whip about the ears of the leading mule and started off.

It was Pedro, the Aztec outfit's cook, who eventually recalled the matter of the forgotten specimens to Denton's mind. He found them in the guest-chamber, and carried them to the Americano to ask whether they should be thrown out.

Carelessly Denton took them in his hand to examine them. In an instant his indifference gave way to amazement.

"I'll take care of them," he answered, as nonchalantly as he could; but the second the servant retired he rushed to the chest into which he had cast the supposedly worthless samples secured by Peabody, dragged it into the middle of the room, threw back the lid, and raked over the ore with feverish energy.

One look was enough. Certainly this was not the trash he had imagined it to be. Within the hour he was galloping toward the town as fast as his little Mexican mare could carry him, with a double-ended sack full of Peabody's samples slung over his saddle.

It was the eighth of June when Denton received the report of the assay. It was the thirteenth of June when he pushed his way past the "buttons" in the New York office of the Aztec Gold Extraction Company of Mexico and breathlessly confronted John Sharkey.

"Great news, old chap!" cried Sharkey before his excited partner could utter a word. "He's landed! The deal is clinched, and the money's in the bank. Old Peabody has relieved us of 50,000 shares at thirty cents!"

"Relieved us!" shouted Denton, throwing his suit-case into a corner and advancing to the desk before which the exuberant financier was seated. "Relieved us! John Sharkey, you're a fool—a sucker and a fool! Our Aztec mine is worth half a million dollars if it's worth a cent."

Sharkey leaned back in his chair and grinned sympathetically.

"Tut, tut, my boy," he answered soothingly. "Better take a little something to quiet your nerves. I have a sovereign remedy in the closet here."

"Half a million dollars, I tell you!" roared Denton, thumping on the desk with his fist. "Look here, you blooming idiot—here's the assay of four samples actually taken out of the Aztec by Peabody. Look at them—they average seventy dollars. And you've gone and sold out half of it for thirty cents a share! Didn't you get my wire?"

"Certainly. You told me not to sell to Peabody at any price until you had seen me. I thought it was part of the game to draw him on. I showed it to him this morning, and it proved to be the finishing stroke. We closed the transaction at once. I didn't dream you meant it."

Sharkey looked the picture of dismay. When the whole story was unfolded to him he well-nigh collapsed; but he was the first to suggest the possibility of recovering something from the wreck.

"Peabody is probably still in town," he said. "He's been stopping at the St. Regis. Let's run over there and see what he'll take for that stock. Maybe he'll be glad to close out for a bonus of a thousand or two."

It seemed to be a forlorn hope, but it was worth trying. As it turned out, Peabody was there, and received the crestfallen promoters in his rooms.

Cautiously Sharkey, who did the talking, sounded him. He listened attentively, but when it came to the point he flatly refused to name a price at which he would sell. Sharkey thereupon offered him sixteen thousand dollars for the shares for which he had paid fifteen thousand dollars. At this Peabody decisively shook his head. By successive raises of $1,000 the bid was advanced to twenty thousand dollars, and still he remained unmoved.

"It looks as if you fellows had made a bad bargain," he replied. "No, I think I'll hold on. I went into this matter as an investment, not as a speculation. There's no use talking. The more anxious you are to buy back my interest the more confident I am that I have a good thing. I'm going back to Providence this afternoon, and I must ask you to excuse me, as I can hardly spare the time for all this chaffering. Make your final offer, and I'll give you the final answer."

With Peabody's permission, the Aztec Gold Extraction Company of Mexico retired to the adjoining room for consultation, and decided to put the figure at $25,000. If this failed, they would give him time to think it over at home, and approach him later.

They returned and stated the new proposition. Somewhat to their surprise, after long deliberation Peabody accepted, stipulating only that the price should be paid over in cash. Together the three went to the bank, where the money was drawn and the bargain concluded.

Peabody had cleaned up ten thousand dollars on the stock he had held for only a few hours, but the enterprising mining experts considered that they had after all paid but a comparatively small penalty for a colossal blunder.

Some three weeks later, when Denton was preparing to return to Mexico for the purpose of arranging for the devel-

opment of the mine and the marketing of its product, a letter bearing a French stamp and post-mark arrived at the offices of the Aztec Company. In Sharkey's absence his partner broke the seal and read as follows:

CANNES, JUNE 28.

MESSRS. COWPERTHWAITE ST. CLAIR, PRESIDENT, AND DELANCEY DENTON, GENERAL MANAGER, THE AZTEC GOLD EXTRACTION COMPANY OF MEXICO.

GENTLEMEN:

Many thanks for your kindness in financing my European trip. In return, it is a pleasure to me to set you right on some of the details of our recent deal. For instance, in the mattress on which I slept at Guanajuato you will find the stuff which I actually took from the Aztec mine. The excellent ore which Mr. Denton purloined while I feigned drunkenness came from Colorado.

Hereafter you would do better to confine your operations to genuine come-ons from Hoboken. I was a practised hand at the seamy side of the mining business before either of you were born. You will agree with me that the Aztec stock which I purchased of you was then what it never will be again—a gilt-edged investment.

Gratefully yours,

BENNETT PEABODY.

THE SCARLET SCARAB.*

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "In the Lion's Mouth," "The Fugitive," and "Blundell's Last Guest."

A story of Naples up to date in which an American gets on the track of romance by accident and is thereafter made to dance to a dangerous tune.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

PETER DOBBIN, at the age of thirty, retires from business with a comfortable fortune and journeys to Italy in search, as he tells an amusing traveling acquaintance, Billy Gregg, of romance.

Nothing materializes save Amos Todd, who, in Pierre D'Auban, does not recognize the nephew and namesake of his bitter commercial rival, Peter Dobbin; but Todd has a daughter.

It is on a shopping expedition with Doris Todd that Peter acquires, for a few lire, a scarlet scarab, set as a scarf-pin, which he immediately puts on. On the way home he suddenly realizes that all the Italian dignitaries whom they pass bow to him profoundly. At the hotel, Count Sebaste is effusively cordial, and, in a private interview, informs him that they are awaiting his orders. Peter awakes to the fact that he is involved in some international scheme, in which, strangely enough, Todd apparently figures.

A few days later he joins Doris Todd's party to Vesuvius. With Doris, he becomes separated from the rest, and they decide to explore a particular grotto, setting out with three guides. The grotto is full of complex turns and windings, and at the first pause, in an especially perilous portion, Peter discovers that Doris and two of the guides are nowhere in sight or hearing.

CHAPTER VII.

I REFUSE TO TALK BUSINESS.

IT is a cheerful, mirth-provoking sensation to perch helplessly at the bottom of a flight of steps, dabbling one's feet in an oozy, stagnant stream, a mile or so underground, with no possible mode of getting out; and with a grinning, torch-bearing bandit just out of reach, forming one's sole link with humanity and light!

Yet, oddly, it was not of myself nor my abominable plight that I was thinking at the moment. In fact I was so foolish as to remember nothing except that somewhere else in the bowels of the earth, unprotected, an American girl was in similar helpless case, a hundred times worse off than I could possibly be.

I remembered Doris Todd's sensitive, high-bred face—the face that always goes with a nervous, finely strung tempera-

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ment. I thought what this black, wet horror of captivity must mean to her. The dark, the water, the ruffianly faces of the two bearers.

My rage got the better of my good sense and I hurled a volley of hot Anglo-Saxon wrath at the torch-carrier, who waited mockingly across the low-vaulted pool.

Nor did I stop at that. Idiotically I leaped from the steps into the water—well above my knees—and with a clenched fist splashed my furious way toward him.

Quick as I was, he was far quicker. For, though it was evident he had contemplated no such act on my part (for the Sicilian peasant can never realize how any one will voluntarily and without pay bring himself into contact with water), there was a sudden move, a hissing sound, and I was in total darkness, knee-deep in water, with no general sense of direction and no knowledge of my enemy's whereabouts.

It was as though I had been suddenly stricken blind. The descent of darkness stopped my mad rush like a blow across the eyes, and I realized that at my leap from the ledge of steps the guide had simply thrust his torch into the water.

He might still be standing where I had left him; or he might have slipped into one of the by-passages. In any case he knew the surroundings and I did not.

The darkness seemed to crowd in on me from every side, pressing my eyeballs inward, suffocating my lungs like a thick pall of velvet.

I could not go forward. Once past the low arch, I should be irretrievably lost in the tortuous windings of the tunnel. What hope had I of catching the guide or of finding Doris Todd?

I understood at once how easy it had been to spirit her away from me. Several times in the course of our progress we had come to sharp turnings where, for a moment or two, those behind me were out of sight of the light my guide carried.

What easier, at such a time, than for Doris' bearers to slip to one side into a cross tunnel or alcove and let my guide carry me forward out of earshot? The acoustics of the place might readily, at a little distance and around one or two curves, shut off all sound.

Yet I resolved now to test those same acoustics. I gathered all my breath and energy, and shouted, calling on the name of the girl to whom my carelessness had brought all this mischance.

The room reechoed deafeningly to my shouts, and the sound returned to me, uncannily distorted, from along the watery passage. But no reply, no note of a woman's voice to tell me my call had been heard.

"The signore is exhausting himself needlessly," came the slurring Sicilian accents of the guide from somewhere in the dark—ahead of me, behind me, to right or to left—I could not tell which.

"The signore may shout till his lungs burst," went on the fellow, "but none will hear. Why not be wise? Three steps behind you, four at most, are the stairs you so foolishly quitted. Return to them, I beg, for it is not well for foreigners to stand in this water. The Naples fever is insidious. Return to the steps and I will light the torch again. There is much to be said, and time passes."

Instinctively I followed his direction.

It was hopeless to attempt to locate him in the darkness. Experience had just shown me I could not reach Doris by shouting. The fellow held all the cards. I must let him play a few, if I would ultimately escape, and if I hoped to save Doris.

I groped my way back through the chilly, dank wetness, and clambered on to the steps again, the water squashing in my shoes and running down from my dripping legs.

Oh, I was a pitiably foolish figure as I crawled up the stone stairs like a dejected dog after somebody has pushed him overboard.

A match burned blue and flared up, its reflection striking the pool and outlining the guide's unshaven face. The next moment he had his torch alight and was again facing me, the width of the low-roofed chamber still between us.

"Well," I said crossly, "I suppose this is a hold-up?"

"Does the signore take me for a common *tagliaborse* (petty thief)?" he retorted scornfully.

"It has that general appearance from where I sit!" I snapped. "But if it is only a practical joke, it's high time it ended. I——"

"Neither am I a *burlone* (humorist)."

"It matters nothing to me what you are. I demand that you restore the American lady at once to her friends, who must by now have arrived at their rendezvous outside the grotto. After that you can come back and settle *our* affair."

"The signore excites himself to no purpose over his companion. She is quite safe."

"Your men took her back?" I cried, in quick relief.

"Unfortunately, that was not possible. But she is safe and will be treated with respect. It is better that way and will make less trouble for us later on," he added, as if anxious to assure me that Doris's safety was due to no sentimental weakness on the part of himself or his accomplices.

"You say you are not a *tagliaborse?*" I said. "What then? I've heard stories of foolish tourists who were carried in here and who lost their nerve and let themselves be bullied by guides into parting with their valuables. But you have run up against the wrong man. Look here! My friends are outside. If you carry us both back safely, and at once, you get your fee—but not a penny of tipping. If not——"

"Your friends may or may not be outside," he returned, "but they were not there when you entered. Nor was any one else in sight. And I know enough of your barbarous English language to understand from your talk with the signorina that your friends were not aware you two were going to explore the grotto; or even that you had yet arrived there. Hence no one on earth but ourselves knows that you and the signorina are here. There will be no pursuit, no search. We are quite safe. Unless, of course, some of the regular guides chance to bring a party of tourists into the grotto. And we have left signs warning them not to bring any one thus far. They are good fellows, those guides. They will do as we ask."

"Then *you* are not regular guides?"

"At times, when money is scarce. Often enough to let us hold a guide's certificate."

"And at other times?" I asked, interested in spite of my fear for Doris.

"At other times—we find honest toil."

"As in this instance?"

"Quite so."

"And you expect me to turn over my watch and money? Well, you won't get them."

"The signore is pleased to insult me. I have no such vulgar desires. I fly for higher game."

His meaning flashed on me, and I stared at him, incredulous.

"You don't mean to say you are going to hold us for ransom?" I exclaimed. "This is the twentieth century, you fool! Such things can't be done in modern Italy."

"No? Perhaps the signore knows best. Perhaps not. But we shall try. There are many places under the mountain where our guests can be safely hidden while certain friends of ours tactfully arrange for the ransom. The signore has the air of a foreigner of wealth. Doubtless his relatives will pay a fitting sum to have him restored to their arms. The signorina called that fat old foreigner 'father' this morning. He looks to be a rich banker or perhaps a statesman. Surely he can pay well to save his beautiful daughter. To me it all seems quite feasible."

To me it seemed equally so. The cur's argument appeared flawless.

None knew where we were; none would search here for us. There were undoubtedly recesses where we could be guarded, forever if need be, from the outer world. The more especially since, as my guide hinted, the regular frequenters of the place stood in with the brigands.

Here was romance with a vengeance! I had found in one hour enough to last me a lifetime.

But again the thought rose before me of that poor, helpless girl, suffering the terrors of the lost, somewhere down here in the darkness, and the realization turned me cold.

"Listen, you dirty cur," I said at length; "I'll make you one proposition. And it's my first and last word. If you will at once have the signorina conveyed

to her friends, and give me sufficient proof that she is safe with them, I will pay you any ransom in my power. I am not a millionaire as you seem to think; but I can pay you enough to keep you and your fellow curs in black bread and onions for a lifetime. Is it a bargain?"

"The signore jokes! Surely, he jokes. The signorina's ransom is no affair of his. Why should we throw away one chance of ransom when we can win *both?* Why should we, even if you would double your own share, risk the signorina's telling her friends and yours—as she surely would—of your whereabouts; and putting the *polizia* on our track? Why should we?"

Why, indeed?

"Well, my friend," I answered, "you seem to have us about where you want us. But, since my actions cannot affect Miss Todd's welfare one way or the other, let me set your mind at rest by telling you I will stay here till doomsday before I pay you one *soldo* of ransom. And, if you choose, you can follow the time-honored, brigand custom of sending my ears one at a time as gentle reminders and souvenirs to my stricken relatives. Only, as I haven't a relative in the world, the packages may have to travel a long distance. In the meantime, you'll get no money or orders for ransom from me."

"The signore will change his mind, I think," he observed, "after a brief period of darkness and solitude and—hunger."

I made no answer; but, seating myself on the steps, lighted a cigarette.

The act was not one of cheap bravado. Indeed, I did it unconsciously. My nerves had been a bit upset and they clamored for the pleasant soothing that a smoke might bring.

Even as I sat there, puffing away with apparent stolidity, I was measuring the chances of a second leap toward the man. But I abandoned the idea as useless.

The whole width of the chamber intervened between us. Before I could traverse half of it, through the cumbering weight of water, he could again put out his torch, slip to one side and be as far out of my reach as if a hundred miles separated us.

No, I must await a better chance. So I continued to smoke and to blink mildly at the torch flare.

My calmness did not appear to please the fellow, for he spoke with less suavity than before.

"You have one hour in which to consent to my terms," he announced.

"*My* watch keeps different time," I replied, between puffs.

CHAPTER VIII.

I MAKE A DISCOVERY.

THE Sicilian looked at me, suspicious, uncertain; then, turning, he proceeded without another word to wade out of the apartment, carrying the torch with him.

I was left perched alone on the steps, cigarette in hand, staring after the departing light.

Then I jumped to my feet, with the idea of stealthily following him, in the hope of reaching Doris Todd.

But even as I formed the resolution, the light vanished. Whether he extinguished it or merely turned some corner that shut its rays from view, I did not know. But I saw at once the gross folly of trying to follow in the darkness. At the first steps outside that rock-hewn chamber I would be irretrievably lost.

No, irksome and unheroic as it seemed, my one hope of saving Doris was to maintain for the present a masterly inactivity and watch alertly for the first favorable opportunity to rescue or at least find her.

At the moment there was nothing to do but to sit still and—wait. I sometimes wonder if there is any other task in life so hard to perform.

And so I waited, smoking cigarette after cigarette, not from any especial enjoyment, but for the sake of something to do.

My red cigarette tip had a friendly, companionable look in that mass of impenetrable, choking darkness. There was no sound but my own breathing. I seemed to be in the center of primeval chaos, millions of miles away from sight or sound of human company.

I had nothing to do but torture myself with fears for that unfortunate, imprisoned girl; the girl whose big gray eyes had looked out on life so honestly, so fearlessly.

How were they looking now? With what unspeakable terror must they not be gazing into the hideous gloom or into the far more hideous faces of the three ruffians who had captured us?

And again I cursed myself for a fool for not refusing to enter the grotto until the rest of our party should have joined us. I could picture them now, waiting impatiently for us, up there in the sunlit, wind-kissed outer world; and I wondered, in maudlin fashion, if I should ever again see that same glorious world or my friend's faces.

Just then I would almost have welcomed the sight of Amos Todd himself.

To distract my mind from all this I rose and peered about me in the darkness. What was it the guide had said, before we entered, about the frescos of Marcus Agrippa on the walls alongside the water-steps? Here were the steps and here the walls. How about the frescos?

Not that I have the slightest interest in frescos, but anything is better than sitting in utter darkness.

I had my match-safe in a vest pocket. Luckily it was half-full; and still more fortunately it had been quite above the water's level.

I struck a match. It was the sort they sell in Italy—wax, with red heads; in little sliding paper boxes with a colored picture and a pointless joke on the top—matches that burn twice as long and smell four times as badly as our American variety.

The feeble glare cleared away a misty little radius of darkness, and fell on the damp, stained walls on either side of the steps.

By that tiny point of fire I could see again, as before, that the steps led up to a stone or concrete blank wall. If ever they had gone farther in the days of Marcus Agrippa—whoever he may have been—the passage had long since been walled up.

I thumped and rapped at the solid rock; but it nowhere gave back an echo to indicate a thinner section of partition.

Then, as my match burned down, I struck another and turned to the frescos.

There they were—such as they were—in the discolored plaster of the left-hand side-wall. Dingy, half-effaced tendrils and leaves of vine and clusters of stiffly hanging purplish grapes.

I was not vastly impressed. I was not in the mood to be impressed by anything except by wracking anxiety for Doris Todd's safety. I was about to turn away when my eye idly lighted on a lower design of frescoing, from which time and dampness had washed nearly all the pigment.

In the exact center of the group of grayish-green trefoil leaves, I discerned what looked like a small pomegranate or a big cherry. It, unlike the surrounding leaves, had lost none of its pristine color, but flamed forth blood-red—vivid, garish.

Now, I know next to nothing of frescos, but I do know that flamboyant, glaring scarlet was not a color in use among the ancients for mural decoration. The red, or Tyrian purple, which they used for such purposes was of a rich, dull hue, not in the least vivid or inharmonious.

Moreover, no color could have maintained its original brilliancy for twenty centuries here in this atmosphere of dark and damp.

So, as my second match burned out, I lighted a third, kneeling down on the moist stone of the stair to look closer at this oddity.

Then I saw what the thing was. It was no pomegranate or cherry frescoed there; nor, for that matter, was the object frescoed at all. It was crudely *painted,* in latter-day fashion and by a latter-day hand. Who had done such a senseless thing? And why?

For the pseudfresco, painted in the center of a wreath of genuine antiquity, represented no fruit, but a big, sprawling beetle!

An odd-looking beetle, at that. For he was a squat oval in outline, and the bars and markings on head, back, and wings were unusual.

Moreover, whoever heard of a *red* beetle? Yet, in some vague way, the creature seemed to me to have a familiar aspect.

The thought puzzled me. Then I remembered.

The markings and unnatural tint were, in a rougher, less artistic way, the same as those of my scarlet scarab scarf-pin.

Of course, it could only be a coincidence. Yet, in times of strongest mental stress and worry, the thoughts often have an insane habit of dwelling persistently on trifles. So it was with mine.

I struck a fourth match, using my scanty store of lights with asinine prodigality. Then I felt in my scarf for the pin. It was not there.

For an instant I feared I had lost it. Then I remembered the scene with Billy Gregg on the stairs that morning, and how I had dropped the bauble into my inner coat-pocket.

I fumbled for it, drew it out, and, holding it in one hand, held my match in the other and compared the scarab on the pin with the painted beetle on the wall.

Yes, they were the same in coloring, in general outline, and precisely identical as regarded their various peculiar markings.

A slight gasping noise behind me distracted my attention, and, springing to my feet, I whirled around, involuntarily raising in front of me, as a guard, my left hand—the hand that gripped the scarab pin.

On the instant, the match, burning low in my other hand, scorched my fingers and I dropped it.

It fell with a little smothered hiss in the water, and the waiting darkness once more rushed in upon me.

But not before, by the feeble glow of the falling match-end, I had seen, barely two feet away, a shadowy, whitish face out of which wonderingly incredulous black eyes stared wildly at me.

CHAPTER IX.

I PERFORM A MIRACLE.

For the space of perhaps five seconds after the falling match left us in darkness we two stood there without a word, without motion—I and the man whose face I had so dimly discerned by the last flicker of vesta-light.

While I had been studying over the comparison between my scarab pin and the painted beetle on the wall, he had crept up without sound, through the water, and had been at my side before I was aware of his approach.

Who he might be I could not guess; nor what his stealthy errand. I had barely discerned the outlines and eyes of a human face ere the light had died.

So, through the tiny space of time that seemed immeasurable, we stood. I, startled, yet alert for any move, and awaiting the decisive moment to come to grip with at least one of my foes.

He, breathless, motionless, seemingly frozen into inaction as though by some fright.

The silence ended. And in his first awed, frightened syllable, I recognized the slurring Sicilian patois of my guide. "*Eccelenza!*" he gasped. And again: "*Eccelenza!*"

Vastly different from his former sneering address; but I was too excited to note the change. For, as his words broke the spell, I had sprung forward in the dark, with outthrown arms, and grappled with him.

The impact knocked him off his feet, and together we crashed down on the steps, close to the water's edge.

A swift-planned idea had come to me—if I could overpower and disarm this ruffian, I might, by threats or even physical violence, make him take me to Doris Todd; or at least to the outer world, whence I could readily obtain rescue for her.

We fell, I uppermost, my knee on his chest, my fingers on his rough, unshaven throat; the rage of battle swelled up within me.

Then, collecting my wits, I slackened the pressure on my fallen opponent. For it suddenly occurred to me that this was no battle. Or, if it was, it was I who had done all the fighting.

For he had made no move to defend himself; had not struggled, nor sought to oppose my onset.

Was he paralyzed with fright? Or was this non-resistance some ruse whose climax would be a knife-thrust in my ribs? Suspicious though I was of the Sicilian character, yet I inclined to the former opinion.

I recalled his awe-struck exclamation of "*Eccelenza!*" (Your Excellency!) a term not lightly lavished in Italy on mere tourists or folk of small account.

I slackened again my grip on his throat and he spoke.

"My life is yours, *eccelenza*. It is forfeit. Yet how was I to know? There was no sign, no hint of who you were."

My head grew dizzy. Here, for the fifth time in twenty-four hours, a total stranger was addressing me as though I were a king.

What had come over my workaday self, that duke and bandit alike should do me reverence? And why, in the latter instance, had the reverence been deferred until now?

I still doubted.

"Your knife?" I demanded. "Where is it?"

"In my belt, *eccelenza*. To the right."

I found and drew out the ugly, curved little weapon.

"I am to die, then?" he asked quietly, misunderstanding my action.

"What other weapon do you carry?"

"None."

"Are you lying?"

"*Eccelenza* knows I cannot lie to him; but he may search."

Still holding the knife, I rose, keeping a tight hold of the fellow's arm.

"Get up," I said.

He obeyed submissively.

"Where is your torch?"

"Somewhere on the lowest step. Shall I search?"

"No. Have you no other means of light?"

"A candle, *eccelenza*, in my pocket."

"Light it."

He did so, showing me my guide's now familiar features, but paler than when I had last seen them, and stamped with a mute respect, in place of their former sly insolence.

"Set the candle there, on the coping. So. Now, take three steps backward. Farther back! Against the rear wall. Now, stand there while you answer my questions."

I was between him and the water. He had no room to dash past me. I had proven myself the stronger man, and I held, in addition, his knife.

So he could not escape, even if he chose to, which, from his slavish obedience to my every command, looked unlikely.

I saw that I apparently had some hold over him. What it was I did not know. But I had no notion of losing it by betraying my ignorance. Certainly not as long as the fact might aid me in rescuing Doris Todd.

"How are you called?" I began my catechism.

"Jacopo Murena, *eccelenza*, of Casada in the Sicilies."

"Why did you kidnap the lady and myself?"

"*Eccelenza*, because I and my brethren were fools and mistook you for rich Americans. The signorina, as any one can tell, is American; but *eccelenza's* Italian should have told us he was not a tourist. There is no excuse."

"Then," I risked the danger of the inquiry, "how did you discover who I really am?"

"I—I was creeping back, *eccelenza*, to see how the tourist was taking his lonely captivity. I saw you leaning over, studying the Sign——"

He waved one shaking hand toward the red beetle painted on the wall.

"By the way, who painted that?"

"I did, *eccelenza*," a touch of artistic pride flashing through his servility.

"But why?"

Before the query was fairly spoken I could have bitten out my tongue for my folly in asking it, for he stared at me in utter amazement.

"Why, surely," he muttered, "*eccelenza* knows this is one of the Places!"

"Yes, yes!" I broke in impatiently, although I knew nothing of the sort. "But why did *you* paint it instead of some more accomplished artist? Could no one be found to——"

A light of understanding and a look of chagrin broke simultaneously on his evil face.

"Is it so ill done?" he said. "I hoped I had made no error in the task. I am accounted skilful with the brush, and——"

"Oh, it will serve!" I interrupted, as if dismissing the trifle from my mind.

I was still shivering with alarm at the narrow escape I had had from betraying my utter lack of knowledge. But for the inspired turn I had given to the question I must surely have aroused his suspicions. Yet I ventured a step further.

"Any tourist," I said, "might have been examining the picture. How could that have proven my identity to you?"

"In your hand, *eccelenza*—can you have forgotten?—you held the Sign."

Now, I had held nothing at all in my hands except a match and—my scarab pin. I was as much in the dark as ever; except that I observed the reverent manner wherewith he referred to that same mysterious "Sign."

I had questioned him far enough to give me a more or less strong belief in his present sincerity. Who or what he supposed me to be, or why he supposed it, I had no idea.

But I thought I might trust him to lead me to Doris Todd. If I tried more questions I might ruin everything, and undeceive him.

I was about to order him to take me to where the frightened American girl waited with her two guards, when all at once he darted forward toward me.

Instantly I was on guard, the knife ready to stop his rush.

But there was no need. Three feet away from me he dropped on all fours, picked up something from the stones and, on one knee, offered it to me. It was my scarab pin that I had dropped when I attacked him in the darkness.

"The Sign," he said, "*eccelenza* let it fall."

I took it mechanically and put it in my inside coat-pocket. I scarcely heeded the action, for my mind was fairly whirling with the great solution that had burst in upon it.

The Sign—the scarab—the scarab—the Sign!

It was all clear as day; and any one but a thickhead would have understood long ago.

I had bought the scarab the previous afternoon. Up to that time I had been an unassuming, unnoticed globe-trotter. From the hour I put that pin in my scarf I had received respectful salutations from people who had never before seen me.

I had been received by Sebaste as his honored superior. And now this Sicilian cutthroat had become my abject slave.

The scarab was a sign or insignia or badge or token of some mysterious body of men and women; the mark of high, if not highest, rank in that society.

But what society could at once claim as members such widely divergent types as the Duke of Ferata and Jacopo Murena; as Count Sebaste and Amos Todd? From what I knew of all that quartet I feared the organization had no particularly exalted aim or purpose.

Nor was it evidently confined to Naples. For it contained Amos Todd, an American, and the mysterious "Man from Vienna." Also it had business of some sort—possibly had headquarters as well—in the Austrian capital.

Todd was a millionaire. Ferata was a duke. What scheme could be so stupendous as to tempt men of such vast financial and social power into joining it?

What organization could wield such authority as to bring this brigand, Murena, cringing to the feet of a complete stranger who chanced to wear the scarab pin? Why, too, was the scarab painted on the wall of this out-of-the-way hole in the ground?

That I had, by a queer freak of fate, become possessed of a pin which bore a close resemblance to one which served as a token of exalted position in some great secret society was evident. But would such pins be on sale, to any chance buyer, in an ordinary curio shop, like Dardo's, and at sixty cents apiece?

Again the odd problem as to how I had been able to purchase so undoubtedly valuable a bit of jewelry for so paltry a sum recurred perplexingly to me.

I was in a maze. I saw no way out.

One thing was certain. This queer combination of circumstances would enable me to release Doris Todd. That must be my first and chief duty. Later, I could decide on how to act in regard to this incomprehensible labyrinth into which I had wandered.

All these thoughts, conjectures and resolves, which, through my ignorance of fine writing, have taken so long to describe, flashed across my brain almost simultaneously. Indeed, hardly had the worthy Murena regained his feet, after kneeling to offer me the pin, when I had resolved on my course.

"Take me on your shoulders," I ordered, "and carry me at once to the signorina."

He picked up his torch, lighted it

from the candle, and stooped his broad back to receive my weight.

It may seem that I had taken my time about going to poor Miss Todd's rescue. But I had not. I had not dared trust Murena until my "knife-to-heart talk" with him; and now I was urging him down the water-filled passages at the top of his speed.

Around corners, through arches, and into transverse waterways he bore me. At length a sudden turn brought us into a little alcove with a sort of ledge at one side.

On this ledge a white figure stood, and on either hand sprawled and smoked a torch-bearing guide.

I caught a glimpse of Doris's face before she saw us coming. It was white as death and the mouth was tight set. Yet it bore no sign of terror, of flinching.

Those glorious great gray eyes of hers looked out on the black world before her with the same old honest fearlessness.

And at the sight of that splendid, brave little face, lit by the red flare of torches, against a background of dense blackness, something went wrong with my heart—something that could never again be righted.

Then our eyes met, hers and mine, and I saw the color surge back to her white face, the old laughing curves to her set lips. She took an instinctive step forward.

"Oh," she called, and even across the reach of water I distinguished and thrilled at the glad relief in her voice, "you're *safe!* I was afraid they had——"

Her breath caught and she could not go on. In all that horror it had been for *me* she had feared. The revelation sent the blood dancing idiotically through my veins.

But I saw it was my cue to end the strain of the situation. For, though I knew nothing of women, yet any ten-year-old boy could have realized there were tears in that silver voice, and I dreaded to see a woman cry.

I suppose unexpected sight of rescue unnerved her.

"Behold a knight of old dashing to the rescue of the damsel in the dungeon!" I declaimed, foolishly enough, in English. "I could wish for a showier, more mettlesome steed. But the general effect is just as good. D'Auban to the rescue!"

Inane and out of place as was my blatant shout it served its turn. The troubled look left her face, and her answering laugh held no trace of tears.

The two guides with Doris had sprung to their feet in amazement at sight of us and looked angry inquiry at their leader.

Murena raised his right hand before his breast and made a rapid movement of the three middle fingers. At sight of the signal the two slunk back and turned their wondering gaze on me.

"I can't explain," I said to Doris, in English, as they set me gently down on the ledge beside her, "but I must ask you—for the present—not to speak to our friends outside concerning this adventure. Can you trust me so far as to promise? I don't know any good reason why you *should* trust me, after the way I deserted you. But won't you?"

I feared she would refuse pointblank. Yet were she to tell of the matter, what good could be served? Her own father apparently was a member of the organization that harbored these three rascals.

If investigation were made, she might even come to learn her father's share in the society and what a cur he was.

And, much as I disliked Amos Todd, I did not relish the idea of his daughter's grief at such a discovery.

Besides, from a purely selfish standpoint, I did not wish my own innocent recreation checked quite yet. There might be further possibilities of interest and service in the scarlet scarab.

Already that same scarab had set my feet firmly in the long-sought highway to romance.

Had it not supplied me with mystery; with an adventure with brigands; with a chance of rescuing a beauteous damsel in distress? What more delightful series of episodes can one demand of romance in a single twenty-four hours?

And I was averse to ending the affair just at the point where I was at last beginning to enjoy it.

So it was with real relief that I listened to her somewhat wondering promise of silence.

"I don't quite yet understand what has happened," she said. "All of a sudden my guides turned in a different direction from yours. Then they lifted me to this ledge and sat down on the edge of it and began to smoke. I couldn't get a word out of them. So I stood there for about half an hour—till *you* came."

Half an hour! At the very least it had been half a century.

As the guides were carrying us toward the entrance of the grotto, she went on:

"But now that I've promised not to tell, don't you think you might let me know what it was about?"

"Just this," I explained with cheerful mendacity. "We lost track of each other and your two guides set you down in the most comfortable place they could find in all this expanse of dark wetness and waited till Murena and I could hunt around and find you. That's all."

"I don't see anything in that to warrant such a solemn pledge of secrecy," she retorted in disappointment.

"Perhaps," I answered, "you think I would enjoy being guyed by Billy Gregg and scolded by Mr. Todd, and sneered at by Sebaste and Mme. de Tournon for my abominable carelessness in losing track of you?"

"Oh!" she said, and I thought her voice betrayed a little note of displeasure.

Just before we emerged from the grotto to the clean, bright world above, I whispered to Murena:

"Until further orders, all despoiling of travelers, in any way whatsoever, at Solfatara, is forbidden. There are good reasons, which will appear later. Pass the word all along the line."

Murena mumbled respectful assent; but there could be no doubt whatever of the displeasure in *his* voice.

Decidedly this was not my day for saying acceptable things.

CHAPTER X.

I HAVE AN INSPIRATION.

"Margari! Eperzo à salvatore!
Margari! Ma L'ommo e'cacciatore!
Margari! Nun c'aie Corpa tu!
Chello che——"

"Now what in blitherin' blazes does that pie-eyed dago think he's singin'?" queried Billy Gregg, breaking in on the gay lilt of the street-singer. "Does he think there's words to it, I dunno, or does he make up them sounds as he goes along?"

"It's a street song—a '*bagatella*,'" explained Sebaste patronizingly. "The air is gay, but the song tells of a broken-hearted maid who——"

"The words sound more like a broken vichy bottle!" commented Billy. "What's the use of spielin' songs no one can understand? Now, down to Tony Pastor's——"

"Ah, you have such songs of the people in your own country?" asked Mme. de Tournon, on whom Billy's blatant crudities seemed to exert a sort of horrible fascination. "How interesting!"

"They're int'restin', all right, all right!" he admitted. "Some of 'em's corkers. Ever hear Maggie Cline sing?"

"I think Mlle. Cline has never sung on the continent," replied the countess regretfully; "and I've never had the happiness of visiting America. Is she a soprano or——"

"She's a fog-horn, and a jim-dandy one at that. And there's a bunch of other hot performers 'most as good as she is, too. Why——"

"And those folk-songs of yours? Are they like the *canzoni* we hear at night on the Naples streets? Cannot you hum a snatch of one of them?"

Before I could surreptitiously kick him, Gregg had thrown back his head and burst forth in the most splendidly tuneless, off-key voice it has ever been my luck to hear—a voice that contained but two notes, neither of which, by the faintest chance, ever was the note required at that particular point.

"Mother, mother, mother! pin a rose on me!
I can't get the girls to leave me be!
When I give 'em a kiss they ask for three!
Oh, mother, mother, mother! pin a rose on me!"

He paused to draw in a fresh breath, caught my vengeful eye, and sulkily subsided.

Sebaste had turned his back to us. His shoulders were shaking. Doris

Todd's eyes were on mine and I thought I read pity for me in them. I liked to think so. I needed it.

The countess had listened to the doggerel words of the song with a pained effort to catch their meaning. She had heard the music, as rendered by Billy, with the morbid curiosity that one might bestow on a three-headed cat.

"Ah, a little lyric of mother-love!" she hazarded vaguely, as he finished.

"A corker. A bunch was just beginnin' to carol it when I did my jump across the pond. It's one of the newest. Pretty smooth, eh?"

Doris mercifully called the attention of the others to the antics of a street acrobat who was throwing pin-wheels just below the Masaniello balcony where we were lounging after dinner.

"Say," growled Billy, under cover of the general talk, "what'd you want to give me the eye for? I wasn't makin' no breaks. That song's all right. You could feed it to a baby."

"She was making a fool of you," I answered.

"H'm! You're jealous 'cause she's took a shine to my gait. Oh, you needn't do the giant curve with your lips. I've got winnin' ways all right when I want to hand 'em out. As for this countess party, any one can see I'm catchin' her goin' and comin'. Oh, when it comes to eatin' up hearts, I'm a pitiless wolf!"

"You're a pitiful ass! Can't you see this French woman is only civil to you because she thinks you rich and because——"

I checked myself as I was on the point of adding that she also evidently thought him a member or perhaps a dignitary of the scarab organization.

"Well, maybe I *have* made a noise like a millionaire once or twice for her ben'fit," he admitted. "But what harm'll it do? I'm not on the marry. Why shouldn't she have a treat in gettin' the idea a millionaire's talking to her?"

He rambled on in like strain of self-justification; but I paid no further attention to him. My thoughts had wandered elsewhere. Not to Doris Todd, as they lately had an incorrigible way of doing; but to the fact that affairs must sooner or later come to a head, and that I might do worse than force Sebaste's hand.

Two weeks had slipped by since my adventure in the grotto of the Styx—lazy, delightful weeks; the happiest I had ever known. I had driven or walked daily with Doris Todd; brutally strangling my saner resolutions to be on my guard against becoming too deeply interested in a daughter of Amos Todd.

We had taken delightful little trips—all six of us—to Ischia, Pompeii, Capri, Vesuvius, and the half-hundred other wonder-spots that cluster about Naples. In the course of these I had managed to keep fairly close to Doris's side.

This served a double purpose; it enabled me to have more of her society and also prevented long converse of any private sort with Sebaste. The count, as the days wore on and I took no further steps in my rôle of the man from Vienna, was visibly impatient.

Once or twice he hinted to me that time was passing rapidly and nothing was being done. On each occasion I managed to put him off with some lofty remark about the necessity of awaiting the occurrence of some mysterious event.

At first the explanation had pacified him; but of late I could see that he was growing restless. A little more and he might even become suspicious. Or—worse still—the *real* man from Vienna might turn up.

Indeed, I often wondered what might have become of that important personage.

My true reason for doing nothing further toward ferreting out the mystery of the scarab during the past fortnight was that there seemed nothing I could do without betraying my position as an outsider. Also I had hoped, daily, that fate might again deal some big card into my hand.

But no such card had been dealt; and the freshness of the romance had begun to wear off.

On this evening, just as we went in to dinner, Sebaste had whispered to me:

"Your command could not be sooner obeyed; for he was away from Naples and none knew where. But he returned to-day, and all shall be arranged at once. Perhaps it is partly that which has caused you to delay?"

I had bowed in silent, uncomprehending acquiescence—and had spent all my

time since then wondering who "he" might be, and to what "command" Sebaste referred.

Whoever and whatever—*some* sort of action was apparently imminent. What was it, and how was I to meet it?

Verily, romance entails burdens!

Absorbed in a maze of futile conjectures and plans I sat in a far corner of the balcony, apart from the rest, staring unseeingly across the moonlit ripples of the bay to the cone-shaped fire-mountain beyond.

So forgetful was I of all except my own thoughts that the jolly conversation of the rest of the party faded into nothingness to my preoccupied mind.

I vaguely noted that Sebaste had left the group, had been absent for some moments, and had returned with another man whose features I did not, in the soft gloom of early evening, recognize.

Nor did I rouse from my reverie until the two, after greeting the others on the balcony, crossed to where I sat.

"Mr. D'Auban," said Sebaste, loudly, and in English, "permit me to present to you his serene highness the Duke of Ferata."

I rose, dumfounded, and mechanically bowed. Even in that moment of surprise it struck me as most unusual that a man of Sebaste's knowledge of the world and of courts should present the duke to *me* instead of presenting me to the duke.

But if Ferata noted anything odd about the ceremony of introduction he betrayed no sign of it. Then, all at once, it occurred to me that, as a supposed high dignitary of the scarab organization I probably outranked this penniless duke. And the thought was balm and pride to my free-born, democratic American soul.

After a civil word or two to me, still in English, Ferata rejoined the others; leaving me staring at him in bewilderment. For it is not customary for dukes—even bankrupt ones—to wander promiscuously around hotels and seek the acquaintance of foreign tourists. Nor did it seem natural that a man like Sebaste, if the duke chanced to visit him at the Masaniello, should drag his highness into such society.

Then fragmentarily I remembered: Sebaste's words before dinner—my random naming of Ferata, two weeks ago, as the man "chosen for Case No. 1."

Had all that anything to do with the duke's being here to-night? And, if so, to what had I "chosen" him? To assassinate some one, perhaps. Or, for all I knew——

Oh, this must stop; and stop at once! I had walked in the dark long enough. My idiotic prank might be the death of some one, if I left things go on.

I hastily reviewed a plan—desperate enough, but perhaps practicable—that I had some days before framed as a possible last resort.

The time had come to put it into operation.

CHAPTER XI.

I COMMAND THE SITUATION.

THE time for dreaming and planning had passed. The moment for action had come.

I left my seat in the far corner of the balcony and, passing behind the rest of the group, touched Billy Gregg lightly on the arm. He glanced up, and I made a slight beckoning gesture.

No one else noticed it; for he was nearest the long window leading into the hotel.

Billy, for all his East Side blatancy, was no fool. In fact, in matters that did not concern his vanity or alleged worldly wisdom, he carried the uncannily shrewd brain of the New York underworld denizen whose wits alone have to stand between him and starvation—and the police.

At a glance he saw something was up. Rising, he slipped into the hotel at my heels.

"What's doin'?" he asked in high curiosity.

"Come up to my rooms," I replied.

He followed without a word, and a minute later we were in the little sitting-room of my suite.

"I want you to help me out," I began, as he seated himself on a table corner.

"Sure thing!" he responded cordially. "How much?"

"I'm not broke!" I assured him, amused at his lightning conclusion as to the chief source of all troubles.

"Cops ain't trailin' you or anything?"

"Worse than that," I replied.

His face was a puzzle. To his checkered experience, police persecution and lack of money seemed the only two ills of any real importance that could befall a man.

Briefly, and as simply as I could, I rehearsed to him the whole story of the scarab affair, from my purchase of the wretched bauble up to Ferata's arrival on the scene.

He heard me through without a word of interruption—a rare event with Billy. His chief reason for silence apparently was that amazement had struck him speechless. Nor, for a full minute after I finished, did he find his voice.

"Pete!" he gasped at last (for to my unutterable disgust he had recently learned the Anglicization of my Christian name, Pierre, and used it on all occasions). "Pete, you ain't stringin' me?"

"It's all true. I couldn't invent such a story if I tried."

"That's right. You couldn't. Well, I'll be double-crossed!"

"That's what I don't want to be. And I want your help."

"Where do *I* come in? Want me to rough-house the dago?"

"No. If it comes to rough-housing, I can take care of myself. I want you to sit still and listen to something Sebaste will tell you. That's all."

Gregg grunted his complete disgust at the rôle.

"I'll look sweet, won't I, posin' as little Willie listenin' to a John D. Sunday-school spiel," he objected. "It's too easy, son."

"Not as easy as it looks. Besides——"

"Say," he broke in, with a fresh grievance, "what'd you keep all this dog-fight to yourself for these two weeks? Why was I left standin' around in pict'resque attitoods of ign'rance like a corn-fed dodo bird? Eh? Why couldn't you be a sport an' put me wise?"

"I'm sorry, old man," I rejoined. "I haven't treated you right and that's a fact. But——"

"Oh, that's all O.K.," he interrupted, mollified at once by my penitence. "Cut out the 'forgive-me-Harold' talk. Now that you *have* turned on the secret-tap, what'll I do to help you?"

"Just what I said. Sit still and listen to Sebaste. I'm going to send for him. He'll give you a line of talk. You are not to interrupt, to look glum or surprised, or make any comment. If any words are necessary, take your cue from me. And—one thing more—when he gets to a certain point I'll drop my cigarette-case. When I do, you're to say to him: 'What have Murena and his men to do with all this?' Can you remember?"

"I can remember the hang of it, anyhow. But it don't make sense to me. What's it mean?"

"If I explain everything in advance, you'd only get mixed. I'm going to ring for a bell-boy. Now, for heaven's sake, don't forget you're not to break in or change a muscle of your face no matter what he may say. Can I trust you? I warn you beforehand it may not be easy."

"Don't you worry about me, Pete. I'll hand him a look as solemn as a 'Here lies' tablet in Greenwood. An' I'll spring that Murena gag at the drop of the box."

A servant knocked. I scrawled on a card:

> May I trouble you to come to my rooms at once?

"Here," I said, giving the boy the card and a tip. "Take that message to Count Sebaste. You will find him on the east balcony."

Within two minutes the count was bowing on the threshold.

"I regret," I said, in Italian," to call you away from the duke, but——"

"No apology is needed," he smiled. "The duke seemed extremely well entertained. Already the——"

"I have sent for you," I went on, "to tell you our campaign is at last afoot."

His face lighted up. Then he glanced askance at Billy Gregg. But remembering that the latter's knowledge of Italian was limited to barely fifty words, his brow cleared.

Billy, meantime, was sitting up very straight, his eyes fixed on the opposite wall, his face set and expressionless. He looked like a Pompton farmer having his first photograph taken.

"You have perhaps wondered," I

continued, "as to the status of my friend Gregg in this affair of ours. Now that the duke has arrived, there is no longer reason for delay. Our next step can be taken. And, count, it is decreed that you are to take it."

He sprang up, all eagerness.

"You may be disappointed," I said, "in the apparent pettiness of your first mission. But, believe me, it is a most important one. Also, the order emanates from the highest quarters of all; and it is for neither of us to dispute such orders."

He nodded respectful assent. I was getting on swimmingly; for I had carefully composed and rehearsed each sentence.

"As I said, the order is imperative," I resumed. "While we may not understand its full purport, we can at least obey it. In fact, it was for that purpose that I was commanded to bring Mr. Gregg here."

"I do not quite follow you, sir."

"I was instructed" (I did not add that the instructions came from myself) "to bring Mr. Gregg to Naples for reasons that cannot be named here. He has been set aside for special work. I was to wait until an exigency arose, which now has risen, and then to request you to give him certain information."

"Certain information?" he echoed, puzzled.

"Yes. For some excellent reason *you* have been deputed to explain to him from first to last the nature of our league. —its plans, its work, its great object. Believe me, this task has been conferred on you as a token of honor."

He stared at me in open amazement.

"Very strange!" he muttered. "You are sure there is no mistake?"

"Count Sebaste," I replied, with a haughty sternness that did me vast credit "if I were the sort of man who made mistakes should I be wearing *this?*"

I drew my coat aside and revealed the scarlet scarab which I had stuck on the inner lapel of my evening waistcoat.

He was convinced; even deeply apologetic. Yet he made one further demur:

"Is—is he prepared?" he asked. "Is it safe?"

"If it were not," I retorted impatiently, "should your superiors have given the order and made it peremptory?"

His last objection vanished.

"It is part of our oath to obey blindly," he acquiesced. "He has been sworn, of course?"

"His discretion has been sealed," I answered in perfect truth. "He obeys blindly and only requires the details. You may speak freely. He is vouched for!"

"So be it!" assented Sebaste.

Turning to the statue-like Gregg he began to talk in English.

CHAPTER XII.

I LEARN MARVELOUS THINGS.

"MR. GREGG," said Sebaste, "I am deputed to explain to you the nature and great purpose of the order into which, as I understand, you have already been initiated. That you sought membership and fulfilled our severe requirements before fully learning the nature of your act, is to my mind most unusual. But it doubtless does credit to your faith in your sponsors; and now it only remains for me to fulfil my own share in the work by obeying the commands transmitted and indorsed by Mr. D'Auban, the order's legate to Italy."

The preamble was stiff and verbose, but the man's earnest dignity lent a solemn tinge to it.

It impressed Billy. Despite his motionless features I could see that.

It would have impressed me, too, were I not too excited to be impressed by any extraneous thing. I barely grasped the fact that I was Italian legate of this mystic order.

"The Brotherhood of Vienna," resumed Sebaste, "is an association with branches in every country in the world. Instituted forty years ago by three brilliant young Austrians, it now embraces a membership of more than one thousand, and with resources reaching far into the millions. We number Russian grand dukes and Sardinian peasants in our ranks. Our headquarters, as you know, are at Vienna, and each country has its own branch, ruled by a sub-president, or legate, who receives his orders direct

from the great Head Council and who is obeyed implicitly by all the Brethren in his own land.

"The Vicomte Barberi, who for twenty-five years was Italian legate, died last month. We were notified by messenger (for, to avert exposure, it is a rule that no papers of any sort shall be passed among us) that the successor had been appointed and that he would set out at once for Naples. The Italian Brotherhood were to convene here to receive him.

"For reasons, doubtless wise, Mr. D'Auban, the new legate, remained incognito for some time after his arrival, and has not yet decreed a formal meeting of the Italian branch."

He paused again; perhaps aware that his stifled resentment against my long inaction had led him from the main thread of his narrative.

"Such is the personnel and management of the Brotherhood of Vienna," he went on. "Its object may be summed up in one word—*Wealth!* Where does the world's greatest wealth—in the most portable form—lie? In America! There fortunes, so colossal as never to be attained in any other country, are made in a day. Men of no birth or breeding grow suddenly rich beyond all dreams of avarice. These men have children—sons who are sometimes weak and foolish—daughters who realize their low ancestry and yearn to gild it by a title. Their fathers second the wish. Our work is made easy."

He smiled knowingly at Billy, whose eyes had never strayed for an instant from the opposite wall.

"In brief," said Sebaste, "through the strength, means, and genius of our Brotherhood we marry the daughters of such men to poor and titled members of our order. American millions, nay, even billions, thus pass yearly into our coffers. We have lists of America's newly made millionaires and their families, and the exact amount of their wealth. The agent, not legate (for in America alone of all countries the Brotherhood has as yet no accredited legate), the agent who keeps us supplied with these frequently revised lists is Mr. Amos Todd."

I don't know why I was surprised. The old fox was quite equal to such work. And yet this oily hypocrite, who helped in the sale of innocent girls to bankrupt fortune-hunters, was himself a father! The father of Doris!

Her big honest eyes rose before my memory and I shuddered involuntarily. I was indeed learning—learning fast.

"These heiresses come to Europe or the nobleman selected by the Head Council go to America," went on Sebaste. "All our skill and our countless varied resources are exerted; and the matter is arranged. The fortune is acquired and, by his oath, the noble who marries it is obliged to pay seventy per cent to the treasury of the Brotherhood. Even with the remaining thirty per cent he is rich.

"As for the young American wife—well, the woman who is fool enough to marry out of her own country, her own surroundings and race—deserves the reward she gets. Without our help these nobles could scarcely hope to win such wives. Hence they gladly conform to our rules; and every one benefits—except the American girl."

Now I had, of course, known, as does many another American, that there is a regular gild, or society, in Europe, whose object is to win, by marriage, the fortunes of foolish American girls. Victims of the dirty deal are usually too proud to reveal the facts; but there is more than one authentic case on record.

And, as a good American, my blood had often boiled at the thought of this band of vampires who prey on women's lives.

But I had never dreamed that the traffic was carried to such wholesale proportions or that it had acquired a financial backing that would put to shame most of the state treasure-chests of Europe.

It is one thing to hear impersonally of the existence of such a thing; quite another matter to be brought face to face with it as I now was.

It needed all my nerve and self-control to play my part of cynical, careless listener. I do not know what close calls Sebaste had had earlier in his career; but I doubt if he had ever been nearer to death than at the moment when hot, blind rage took hold of me at his vile recital of that commerce in souls.

"One reason for our great success," continued Sebaste, "is the perfect secrecy with which every negotiation is conducted. The initiates know each other solely by password and countersign. There are no written rolls of membership. The Head Council lays out a campaign, allots to each his part in it, and places him under the orders of his country's legate. No written word is passed. All funds are paid direct to the Head Council, and by hand. The Council in return pays to each his share.

"We may not even know who is legate to any land but our own. The legates are appointed from Vienna and come to us bearing no testimonial, no credentials; in fact, no sign of authority whatsoever, except the high emblem of authority; an emblem that is known and revered by every member of the Brotherhood.

"Perhaps you have seen Mr. D'Auban wear a scarlet scarab scarf-pin? The scarab is our emblem. The beetle signifying secrecy, industry, and endless tenacity; the scarlet signifying gold and the royal hue of wealth. It is death for any save an accredited legate to wear it."

It may be imagined how delightfully comfortable this last bit of information made me. For weeks, it seemed, I had been unconsciously courting assassination. Had the "Man from Vienna" turned up in the interim I should doubtless at once have been made the mark for a score of stilettos.

"However," went on Sebaste, "there is no chance of such a thing. For there are only a few such scarabs made; only one for each legate. And whenever a legate dies his scarab is returned at once to headquarters and conferred on his successor.

"We may not meet publicly, we Brethren of the Vienna Order. Therefore, there are, in or near each large city, one or more secret meeting-places where, at a signal, we gather for important business. Each of these places bears the painted image of the scarlet scarab. I have the honor to be chief officer of the Brotherhood in Naples. And my second in command is the Duke of Ferata. Both of us are under the orders of Mr. D'Auban.

"I think, sir," he continued, turning to me, "that I have explained fully, yet as briefly as possible. Mr. Gregg, having previously taken the oath of implicit obedience under pain of death, now understands all that a private member of the Brotherhood may know."

Whether he did or not, I, at least, understood all except the bandit-guide Murena's share in the matter. Surely a low fellow of that type could scarcely be of use in this infamous marriage bureau.

I drew out my cigarette-case before answering, fumbled, and dropped it.

"Say!" growled Billy, breaking the silence for the first time, in obedience to the signal, "what's that dago geezer out there at Solfatara got to do with this shootin'-match of yours? That Murena guy. Where does *he* come in?"

"Oh, he is not one of us. But we find it mutually convenient to affiliate with certain of the more ambitious sort of banditti. Murena is leader of a band of men who eke out a living as guides, porters, and so forth, in order to hide their various real trades. He is bound by oath to obey our legate in certain matters, in return for legal protection and similar favors. He and others."

He rose to go.

"By the way, sir," he said, addressing me in Italian, "is it indiscreet to repeat a rumor which has gained credence in the Naples branch of the Brotherhood and to ask if it is true?"

Without awaiting a reply, he added: "I hear the Council have decided to send a legate to America—in fact, have already conferred the scarab on one—and that it is a woman who has been selected. Is——"

"I am not at liberty either to confirm or deny that report," I replied stiffly; just as I had been wont to address stray reporters who had wandered into my factory to inquire concerning the prospects of a strike, adding, in memory of what he had recently said: "The appointment of such a legate would of course be unknown except to the American branch."

Offended, he bowed curtly and left the room. And, ass that I was, it was only then I remembered that I had said not a word about Ferata nor sought to

learn what he might have been commanded to do in Case No. 1. Nor, indeed, what Case No. 1 might be.

Still, I had learned enough to set any normal brain awhirl.

"Pete!" observed Billy, breaking in on my thoughts, "I promised to set here and look like a boiled sheepshead and not move my face till you gave me the cue. Have I made good? And is the time up?"

"You have; and it is," I answered.

Before I could say more he was out of his chair and half-way across the room.

"What's the matter? Where are you going?" I called.

"I'm going to light on that Sebaste cuss like a Broadway cop on a stray nickel an' I'm goin' to encore the refined specialty by wipin' up Naples with Ferata. An' then every other man in that rotten Brotherhood I can get my hooks into. Lemme go! Quit grabbin' me!"

For I had seized him at the very threshold of the room and, despite his frantic struggles, succeeded in restraining him from his insane purpose.

"Come back, you idiot!" I ordered. "Do you want to wreck everything?"

"I sure do!" he panted. "An' what's more, I'm goin' to do it. Lemme go, can't you?"

Mild measures were absurd, in his present mood. I tripped him; and as he sprawled to the floor, I calmly sat on his chest.

"Now," I said, "you'll listen to reason."

"Oh, what a dirty game to put up on a white man!" he snarled, still struggling. "Pete, I didn't think it of you!"

"It's to keep you from running into a worse game," I retorted. "You want to rush out and rough-house two men because they happen to be scoundrels. What would you gain? You'd give away your own hand and get us both assassinated within twenty-four hours. And you'd do nothing toward breaking up the Vienna Brotherhood.

"Sebaste says it numbers over a thousand members. Suppose you licked two of them—suppose, even, that you killed them. There are others to take their places. You'd do no good and only get yourself imprisoned for life by the Italian law, and get *me* assassinated as an impostor."

"But—but American women—girls of our own country!"

"What can we do? Suppose we went to the authorities with our story? What then? Would the word of two obscure Americans be taken against the oath of native noblemen like Ferata and Sebaste? Even supposing the authorities we appealed to didn't chance to be members of the Brotherhood!

"We could blazon this story abroad. But, to outsiders, it would sound absurd, so impossible, that we'd simply be laughed at. Moreover, we'd expose ourselves to the revenge of this aggregation of precious blackguards, all to no purpose. Can't you see?"

"Yes," said Billy, reluctantly, "I see. But it's a blazin' shame! An' to think we've got to sit quiet an' let this go on! Ain't you goin' to do *anything?*"

I had risen. So had he. He evidently bore me no malice for my rough handling of him.

"There's nothing I *can* do," I answered. "At least not for the present. The only hope is to go on with this miserable masquerade and watch for some miraculous opportunity to put a spoke in the Brotherhood's wheel. This was a very pretty little romantic adventure at the outset, but it has turned into something that looks unpleasantly like ugly tragedy. It's death to draw back; and, perhaps, it's death to go on. What's *your* advice?"

"We'll go on!" decreed Billy Gregg.

CHAPTER XIII.

RAPTURE AND THEN DISMAY.

In melodramas or "action romances," adventure treads close on the heels of adventure, and episode on episode.

The hero is thus fortunate in being braced constantly against new mischances and has no time at all wherein to calm down, reflect, and grow afraid. Those fiction heroes are lucky chaps.

According to every fiction-formula, Sebaste's revelation and our joint resolve should have been followed at once by a series of lurid, crescendo mishaps

of the most amazing description. But, as a matter of fact, for two whole days thereafter absolutely nothing occurred.

On the third, however, enough happened to make up for that, and to make me sick at heart with a crass folly that had first set me to meddling with what was no concern of mine.

During those two uneventful days I spent less time in meditating on the revolting Brotherhood whereof Billy Gregg and I formed ourselves dishonorary members than on a certain mental phenomenon of which I suddenly became aware.

When Sebaste had told us of Amos Todd's position as American agent (in other words "spy") of the Brotherhood the knowledge ought, by every known law of ethics, to have increased to the highest degree my first distrust of Todd's daughter, and warned me to steer clear of her. Yet the news had an exactly opposite effect.

The thought of this innocent, child-faced girl loving and trusting her hypocritical cur of a father and believing him to be the soul of honor, was, to me, infinitely pathetic. I felt irresistibly, overwhelmingly drawn to her in her helplessness.

I did not try to analyze the feeling. It was like nothing I had ever known before in all my thirty years. Yet I vaguely felt it was the culmination of a something that had been growing stronger and more compelling within me ever since the first hour my eyes had met hers.

And then, all at once, I knew what it was.

I was in love!

Of course I was. Any fool could have seen that at a glance. And it had taken me weeks to discover it.

Well, if one has led a womanless existence for three decades, he cannot expect that when love *does* at last visit him, it will come properly labeled.

The very knowledge, while it took my breath away, filled me at the same time with a vague, glorious sort of happiness. The best proof of my silly ignorance of such matters rests in the fact that, for the moment, I never stopped to think nor to care whether or not she might return my love.

That might or might not come later. At present I had quite enough emotion thrust upon me to keep one man's mind busy.

By some perverse fate I saw little of Doris during those two days. Ferata had taken a fancy, apparently, to our party, for he spent nearly all his time with us.

To my disgust, Doris and he seemed to find much to say to each other. I was actually growing jealous. Then I scolded myself for the unworthy sentiment.

He was a brilliant talker; she a fascinating girl. Of course they got on well together. And, after all, he talked to her no more than to Mme. de Tournon.

"Say," observed Billy on the late afternoon of the third day, as he and I left the Todds' private sitting-room, where Doris had been hostess at a little informal tea, "I've got an idea."

We were on our way to dress for dinner. As we reached our rooms he went on:

"Don't get mad, but—well, I've got a hunch that Miss Todd is Case No. 1."

"What!"

"Don't do a scream! It jars me just as bad as it jars you. But dope up the game for yourself. Says Sebaste to you: 'Who's elected for Case No. 1?' says he, in words to that effect. 'Ferata,' says you, just like that; grinnin' to think what a hit you're makin' with yourself.

"A fortnight later Sebaste says: 'He's back in Naples. I'll put him onto the job,' says he. That evenin' Ferata trails into the limelight an' lays himself out to make a noise like a ardent sooter to Miss Doris. How about it? Yes? No?"

"Billy," I said impressively, "all you lack is intelligence. In the first place, Miss Todd is the daughter of an officer in their cursed Brotherhood. In the second, Miss Todd isn't the sort of girl who is dazzled by impecunious foreign noblemen or cares to marry such cattle. Old Todd is more kinds of a blackguard than I've got time to describe; but he is honestly fond of his daughter and he wouldn't consent to sell her to any man.

"No, no, Billy, you'll have to hit on some other rôle for Ferata. He's not courting Miss Todd, whatever he's do-

ing. Added to which, from a purely mercenary standpoint, the daughter of a man who can't be worth over a million at the outside is too small game for a real live duke."

"He ain't so terrible much alive at that," objected Billy, only half-convinced. "I've seen race-track men, back to Sheepshead Bay, that'd make him look like a dead 'un."

"*He* may think differently."

"Well, don't get woozy. I only gave you the tip to warn you."

"Warn *me?* Why?"

"'Cause you're nutty over her," replied Billy, in surprise that I should have asked.

"Drop it!" I adjured him hotly. "How often must I tell you it's bad form to drag women's names into jokes?"

"'T'ain't a joke!" he retorted. "If you ain't in love with her I never——"

"Nonsense!"

"Don't throw the bluff, Pete!" he begged. "What's the use of wastin' a good lie? You've got the worst case I ever saw. I've been onto it for two weeks."

"But I never knew it myself till three days ago," I cried, completely off my guard.

"The victim's gen'rly the last one to get wise," said Billy, with oracular gravity. "Well, good luck to you, old man! I don't set up to be a picker of winners in the maiden class, but unless I'm a farmer, she don't exactly hate *you,* either. You've made good runnin' so far, Pete. Keep it up! I'm rootin' for you."

Foolish as it may seem, his classical expressions of good-will cheered me amazingly. Besides, I felt better now that I shared my wonderful secret with some one.

Love is a queer thing. For years I had been a secretive, hard-headed business man; and now I was actually deriving pleasure from sharing life's golden secret with an East Side ex-prize-fighter.

Verily, the human heart is fearfully and wonderfully made.

So is the under jaw of the domestic cow.

I sat through dinner trying to keep up my end of the talk, but finding myself constantly staring at Doris in an inane fashion. Once or twice she caught me at it; and—perhaps through embarrassment or annoyance at being stared at—her cheeks went red and her eyes fell.

"Oh, you've got her goin'!" chuckled Billy as we left the table.

"Shut up!" I retorted.

I strayed out on the balcony above the street. I wanted to be alone. I did not know why. Below, along the sea-wall, some one was singing "Addio, Mia Bella Napoli!" to a plaintive mandolin accompaniment. The moolight lay in a broad track of silver athwart the bay. The soft airs of early April breathed across my face and I could hear the lapping of ripples along the shore.

"Moonlight—and Youth—and Love—and *Italy!*"

I had read the line years before and now it came back to me in all its full and sweet meaning. And with it—parting with little white hands the portières of the long windows—came Doris.

I had not heard her. But I turned to meet her, even before she appeared from behind the heavy curtains. Something told me she was near.

The beauty of the night was in my brain. She alone had been needed to complete it all.

There she stood, her shimmering white dress and big luminous eyes against the velvet background of the hangings, the glory of the moonlight forming an aureole about her.

And then—neither of us had spoken—I don't know how it happened; but I had sprung forward and caught her in my arms.

Her willowy, slender figure lay quiet against my breast for the remotest fraction of a minute. Then, with a little gasp, she made as though she would free herself.

I, in my stark ignorance of women, released her. She took a step backward, though, as it seemed to me, not in anger or disgust.

And as she did so, a bar of light from the corridor pierced the aperture between the curtains and fell full upon her.

My eyes dwelt on her beauty in utter rapture, taking in every detail of the dainty, disheveled hair, the flushed

cheeks, the wide, glorious eyes, the filmy white dress, whose lace jabot had become disarranged by pressure against my chest.

Then—then all the rapture and moonlight and beauty went out of life, leaving me desolate.

My changed face must have told her something, for she shrank back in amaze before my look.

(To be continued.)

When a Princess Falls in Love.

BY ELIZABETH YORK MILLER.

A story with an up-to-date fairyland setting and a rude riding over the conventions.

THE real name of the Princess was—but why spoil the story at the start? You'll find out soon enough.

It is sufficient, isn't it, that she lived in a truly real castle on the banks of the Rhine—I mean the American Rhine—and all princesses live in castles on the banks of Rhines. At least, so said the story-books.

The castle was built of gray stone and had a dozen towers and a thousand windows. So many towers that hide-and-seek became burdensome, and so many windows that the maids despised cleaning them, which even the maids of a princess may do.

The Princess was seven when she first discovered her royal origin and it tickled her fancy so mightily that she stuck to it from then on.

It happened very simply. The French governess reading her a French fairy-tale, translated from the German—for, of course, the best of them are certainly not French but German, and Danish, and American—as I was saying, the French governess, by the lurid descriptions of high life which poured from her lips, was the means of convincing the princess that she *was* a princess.

The governess didn't know what a revelation she had made, but she was a stupid sort, anyhow, and was never known to see through a pane of glass when it was held up before her.

Most little girls had to pretend, but everything about the Princess was real. The castle was real, the walled-in estate was real, and the Queen was—well, she was *depressingly* real.

One hesitated about the King, but only for a moment. As soon as you saw him sign a check, and he was constantly signing them, you knew that he was real, too.

There was something that you liked about the King. In spite of his power and his money he was human.

He was jolly, too, and he dearly loved a practical joke, but the best thing of all about him was the fact that he had originated in the peasantry—they call it the "common people" over here. The Princess fully sympathized with him, and there were times when she wished that she had been born a peasant, too.

She always looked on approvingly when the King sneaked into his big, velvet-floored library, picked his way through the quantities of mahogany furniture and hooked his old pipe from behind the picture-frame where he kept it hidden.

She would run and bring the vulgar little bag of long-cut from the farthest recess of the table drawer, and then sit on the arm of his chair while he smoked and told her stories of his first girl—the girl who had given him that very pipe—and how she had been married these many years to the same farmer that he used to play with when they were both farmer boys together.

The Princess loved these stories. She wove a beautiful romance around the King and his having to renounce the lovely peasant girl because of his exalted rank.

She told some of the romance to the King himself, and he roared mightily with laughter, but she never told the Queen.

Now, this little story opens on a most auspicious day. It was the eighteenth birthday of the Princess herself, who now quite firmly believed that she

had turned an important corner on life's highway, and was something more of a woman than a child.

When she came down to breakfast the King pulled the Princess's ear and called her "Pussy." Then he asked what he could do for her by way of a birthday present.

"I am going into town on the 10.10," put in the Queen, "and perhaps you would like to go with me, Evelyn. You may have a holiday from lessons, as it is your birthday, and we will have lunch at Sherry's and go to a matinée, if you wish."

She said it with true queenly elegance, and looked extremely regal in her morning gown of pink silk and lace, a hothouse grape poised in her dainty white fingers.

But the Princess, like the naughty child she had ever been, refused to be impressed. She didn't want to go into town with her mother, and flatly told her so.

"What *do* you want?" asked her father, anxious to please.

"I don't want to be bothered, papa, that's what! Leave me alone for one day and let me do anything that comes into my head. That would be charity. I'm tired of being a Princess. I want to put on a disguise and forget myself."

"Such nonsense!" remarked the Queen, rising and shaking down her laces ponderously. "You'll spoil that child, Eben, if you will persist."

"Persist in what?" asked the King innocently, swallowing his cup of coffee at a gulp.

But the Queen had swept loftily out of the room, and the King and the Princess were left to themselves.

"You see, papa, for once in my life I want to feel free—to follow my own will, I——"

"As far as I can judge, you always do follow your own will, but suit yourself," said the King easily. "You'll have to count me out, though. Langford is coming up this morning and we have some railroad reports to go over. Perhaps this afternoon I——"

"Oh, never mind *you!*" said the Princess quickly, flushing up to the roots of her curly brown hair. "Tell me about this Mr. Langford. He's your new secretary, isn't he? He's the one whose picture you showed to Cousin Clara, and she said he was the perfect Christy man."

"Yes, same one. He's got brains, too, if he is pretty. Whatever became of that picture, anyway? Come to think of it, I've never seen it since. I'll bet a cookie Clara helped herself to it."

"No, she didn't," said the Princess candidly. "I took it and it's up-stairs now in my top bureau drawer. Do you want it, particularly?"

The King looked at the Princess and the Princess looked at the King, and then he said: "Evelyn, I think you had better go to New York with your mother this morning. I'll give you a blank check and you can buy anything you blame please."

"All right, papa, thank you ever so much. The check will come in handy, but I won't go to New York. I couldn't bear to be so far away from you on my birthday, and, besides, don't forget, you promised——"

The King tried to look severe, but the effort was a failure, for a pair of soft little arms went around his neck, and a coaxing voice said, "I'm your onliest daughter, dads dear, and don't be cross with me. I'm going for a ride, a nice, long ride, and what time did you say Mr. Langford was coming?"

"I didn't say, Pussy, but since you are so interested, why, he'll be here 'most any time. He's going to bring up that new Panhard I bought Saturday."

"Then he'll come by the State Road, won't he dads?"

"There's no other way he could come."

"All right," answered the Princess enigmatically, "perhaps I'll see him."

She flew up the wide marble stairs to her own particular corner of the castle and demanded instant assistance of her maid.

Into her most becoming riding-habit she got as fast as possible, telephoned to the stables for her horse, and was downstairs again, before one would have deemed it possible, with her three-cornered hat set severely on her bright curls and a huge bunch of violets tucked in the bosom of her coat.

It was her ill-luck to meet the Queen

at the front door. The depot wagon was waiting and the Queen paused, one foot on the step, to regard her daughter.

"Where are you going, Evelyn?" she asked disapprovingly.

"Just riding, mama," said the Princess with a lightness she did not feel.

Somehow, the Queen always affected everybody in the same way. You felt guilty in her august presence whether you were really guilty or not.

"Very well, my child, since you seem to prefer it, but bear in mind that there are seven miles of roads within our place. It will be hardly necessary for you to ride outside. In fact, I don't consider it safe for you on the high-road with only Thomas for escort."

"Yes, mama," said the Princess meekly, at the same moment favoring her groom with a brief wink which was meant to assure him that they would do just as they chose.

Thomas, being what they call a fairly well-trained servant, did not return the wink. In fact, he gave the impression of resenting it, for he turned immediately and gave close attention to his mistress's horse, whose saddle-girth apparently needed adjusting.

In another moment they were off, cantering briskly along the hard, shady road, bordered on either side by what the poet calls "bossy dells," with just a glimpse of the sheep feeding on the meadow-slope and the great, gray castle rising sharply behind them.

It was very beautiful, and an ordinary person would have counted her cup of joy full, but not so the Princess.

Dissatisfaction gnawed at her breast.

"What's the use of being a Princess," she argued to herself, as they drew nearer and nearer to the forbidden gateway, beyond which she might not go.

"There's no sense in being alive if one can't do as she pleases on her eighteenth birthday! Besides, my father said so, and isn't he quite as important as the Queen?"

The Princess knew very well that he wasn't, but she touched up her horse, all the same, and cantered disobediently through the gateway into the hard, white State road. Thomas followed, for there was nothing else for him to do, and it was useless to expostulate.

Once on the high-road, however, the Princess suddenly altered her tactics. It was difficult for a mere groom to follow her royal vagaries.

From a brisk canter she brought her horse suddenly to a slow walk. Once she pulled out her little watch and examined it critically. It was almost as though she had planned a rendezvous.

Several cars whizzed by them, but none was the Panhard, when suddenly, in the distance, the Princess heard the long, musical wail of a Gabriel horn, and soon descried a huge red car ascending the difficult Arch Hill.

She knew it instantly, for only a few days before she had helped to select that very car.

She waited at the top of the hill, knowing that the sharp turn at the summit would bring her well into view of the occupant of the car, when he would be going slow, of necessity.

One quick glance told her that it was the one she was expecting, and then the Princess must have had a sudden inspiration, for she did a most extraordinary thing. I am almost ashamed to tell of it.

She dug her heel sharply into the side of her unsuspecting little horse, gave a quick tug at the bridle which made him rear unexpectedly, and promptly slipping her foot out of the stirrup, she slid to the ground with a wild, melodramatic shriek, subsiding into a meek, motionless heap.

It was all accomplished so quickly that the astonished Thomas had barely time to dismount and run to her before the great car came to a full stop at her side, and a very anxious young man jumped out to investigate the extent of damage he had caused.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" murmured the Princess, as though in great pain. "Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear!"

Then she fainted and the young man lifted her head upon his shoulder and supported her in his arms. Alarm was written all over his face.

"My dear young lady," he pleaded fearfully. "Please tell me where you are hurt, and can't I do something?"

The Princess came to conveniently, and answered him.

"I don't know, it's my ankle—no, no,

never mind, I guess it's my arm; it might be my shoulder."

Thomas suddenly smiled behind his hand in spite of himself.

"It's hurt all over she is, I guess," he remarked, as he went to capture his mistress's restive mount, which was placidly chewing grass by the roadside in the very face of the chugging red monster which had so frightened him.

The young man did not see Thomas smile. He was more intimately concerned in stroking the slim, pretty hand which had slipped its glove. He was busy thinking what a nice hand it was, when the Princess spoke languidly.

"Perhaps, sir, you could take me home. Were you going far?"

"Not very far," answered the young man. "And I will be glad to take you home. If possible I would like to stop first and let my employer know the cause of my delay. That is, of course, if you feel able."

"Oh, yes, indeed," said the Princess cheerfully, despite her painful accident. "I'm really all right. Just shaken up a bit, you know. But may I ask who your employer is? Perhaps I know him."

"Sure. His name is Mr. Eben Standard. You've heard of him, at any rate. Pretty nearly as rich as they make 'em, but a mighty good sort for all that."

"Thomas," said the Princess, turning to her groom, "this gentleman is Mr. Standard's secretary; he will take me home in his motor-car. You may go on with the horses. Oh, thank you!"

This last remark was occasioned by Mr. Langford lifting her gently in his arms and placing her on the red leather seat next to the driver's. She was glad he hadn't expected her to sit in the tonneau.

"How did you know I was Mr. Standard's secretary?" he asked as soon as they were fairly started. "I might be the chauffeur."

"No, you're not the chauffeur. I've seen him lots of times. He's a little, greasy Frenchman and he wears a mustache which they would make him shave off only he's uglier without it."

Langford threw back his head and laughed gleefully.

"You're a funny little girl," he said, "and how comes it you are so familiar with the Standard family?"

"Oh, we live about here, and gossip will get over the hedges, you know. Here's the gate," she continued, "and I'll show you the way through the grounds, if you don't know it. I've driven through many times, and strangers are apt to get mixed."

"All right, I'll be obliged to you. But it looks as though this road to the left leads straight to the house."

"Oh, no, no, it doesn't," she cried hastily. "Turn quick, to your right! There! Why, you'd have got into a perfect maze if you took that other road."

She leaned back contentedly as they bowled swiftly into the drive that was to take them remorselessly over those seven long miles before bringing up at Mr. Standard's front door.

Did I say seven *long* miles?

It seemed just seven minutes, but they had chatted of a hundred different things and he told her his name and she told him a name that was not hers, and all the time a wicked plan was evolving itself in the brain of the Princess.

"Mr. Langford," she said impulsively, "I want you to do something for me!"

"Anything in the world," he assured her recklessly.

"All right, now that's a promise. I've got such a jolly plan. You'll laugh when you hear it. Just take me in with you when you go, and introduce me to Mr. Standard as your cousin. I want to see the inside of their house. I'm just dying to! And then when you are through with your work we can roam around and enjoy ourselves a bit before you take me home."

A troubled line spread itself over the forehead of the young man and he fidgeted uneasily.

"I'd be glad to," he stammered, "but there are lots of reasons why I couldn't do that, you know. First, it wouldn't be fair to Mr. Standard, would it? And, then, your people would certainly worry about you."

The Princess put on her prettiest pout, which the King never could resist, and this new man found it very hard to.

"Now that's all nonsense," she argued. "Mr. Standard is all right. He isn't a bit grouchy like his brother. He's full of fun—everybody knows that. And my mother is in town to-day and won't be home till dinner-time, so I'm safe enough."

"But how about your riding-habit?"

"Don't let a little thing like that worry you. Aren't you even a little bit clever? You met me as I was going to ride in the park; it was such a nice morning that I couldn't resist taking a run into the country with you. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I think I see," said Mr. Langford, a slow smile spreading itself over his face.

As he spoke they drew up under the big porte-cochère, and Langford jumped out and held out his hand to his fair "cousin."

The door opened at that moment and Mr. Standard himself came out, democratically, to meet his secretary. At sight of his daughter he pursed up his lips and was about to emit a whistle of surprise when he happened to catch the Princess's eye.

She was favoring him with a wink similar to the one she had bestowed upon Thomas. Mr. Standard was reasonably quick and he forgot to whistle, and Langford stepped gaily in where the angels fear to tread.

"Good morning," he began blithely. "Mr. Standard, I took the liberty of bringing my—my cousin out with me this morning, for—for a little run—into the country, you know. She was going riding, but—but I insisted."

The Princess nearly burst with laughter, and the King just put out his hand and said: "Your cousin's a bird, Langford! What's her name?"

Langford was stung into silence by the unexpected levity of his employer, but the Princess filled the gap by saying prettily, "My name is Mary Murray, sir."

And the King said: "Very glad to know you."

He ushered them into the library and when Mary Murray offered modestly to withdraw while they transacted their business, Mr. Standard would have none of it, but insisted that she must sit where he could keep his eyes on her, and that they must both stay to lunch, all of which was very gratifying to the Princess, and very puzzling to the secretary.

Mr. Langford went through his labors that morning as one in a dream. All the while there whirled through his brain the image of a wilful young creature in a riding-habit, who used slang, and was almost too familiar with a man who demanded all kinds of respect from the average person.

Uppermost in his mind, however, was the knowledge that he was deceiving Mr. Standard. A hundred times it was on the tip of his tongue to tell the truth, but the blue eyes were constantly warning him, and man has ever been a slave to such eyes as those.

At lunch they sat opposite to each other, with the King between them, and the Princess sighed and couldn't eat because she was in love, and so did the secretary. But the King's appetite was unimpaired and fortunately, while he was clever in most things, he didn't see what was going on under his very nose.

The Princess fitted into her surroundings beautifully, and while the handsome young secretary dared to dream, he began to wish that he, too, was rich and could provide such an exquisite setting for—well, somebody who would have golden-brown hair and blue eyes, and look so well in a riding-coat.

Luncheon over, Mr. Standard dismissed his secretary with the invitation to stay about as long as he pleased and enjoy himself showing his "cousin" the place.

So they strolled out on the terraces and fed the peacocks, and she told him all about her childhood's play of being a princess and living in a castle just like this.

"Only," she said, "a truly princess is so lonely, isn't she? And don't you think that even a princess who lived in such a place as this might be lonely, too?"

"I think she might," he answered gravely. "I've heard that Mr. Standard has a daughter. They say the mother is very strict with her; they are afraid of fortune-hunters or something like that. But any dear little princess, like yourself, for instance,

whom I chanced to discover in even so beautiful a palace as this, I would try very hard to take away with me. You see, I couldn't forget that she would have to marry a prince if she stayed, and I, being only an ordinary mortal, would be jealous of that confounded prince."

"But you're the Prince, himself! The very Prince I've——"

Then she stopped and blushed furiously. It sounded somehow immodest, for all it ran so trippingly off her tongue.

"You don't really mean," he began excitedly, "You don't mean that you—that I——"

"Of course not," said the Princess coldly, withdrawing her hand. "I don't mean anything of the kind. It was only a fairy-story and I was just *talking*."

"Talk some more, Mary Murray," he said softly.

"My name is Evelyn," she snapped.

"Is it? That's a beautiful name and just the kind that a Princess ought to wear. May I call you the 'Princess Evelyn'?"

A sparkle of fun came into the Princess's eyes and she looked up at him demurely.

"If you will tell me what to call you?"

"My name doesn't fit in with royal surroundings a bit. For instance, 'Prince Bill,' now, that's a hot old name, isn't it?"

She laughed with him, and then said, "But King William is all right!"

"I'd be satisfied to have you call me 'Billy'—that is, if you thought you could like me well enough."

The Princess pulled a red rose to pieces and blew the petals over him mischievously.

"Be careful, sir," she admonished him. "First thing you know, I'll be saying, 'Oh, this is so sudden!'"

"I wish you would—I just wish you would!" said Billy earnestly. "Ever since I first saw you——"

"So long, long ago."

"Well, it seems as though I had known you forever."

"Yes? Well, please go on. Ever since you first saw me——"

"Ever since that moment I've been dying to——" he hesitated.

"Well, why don't you?"

"Why don't I what?" Billy was holding himself steady with difficulty, his voice shook and he leaned perilously near the lips that tempted him.

"You know, in the fairy-story," began the Princess musingly, "when a prince loves the princess he——"

"Yes! He does what?"

"Oh, he just tells her so—stupid!"

The Princess was getting pettish.

"Goodness gracious, Billy," she said crossly, "have I got to do it all?"

In an instant Billy's arms were around her and he had kissed her full on her sweet, red mouth.

"Oh, dear!" she panted. "Let me go, let me go, I say! How dare you?"

"Oh, I dare, all right, and I won't let you go until you promise—Evelyn."

"Promise what?"

"To marry me."

The Princess laughed provokingly. And then she said in a soft, little voice: "Indeed, I'll promise. I've been in love with you ever since I first saw your picture, and I meant to marry you, then."

He held her off at arm's length.

"What do you mean, darling? My picture?"

"Nothing," said the Princess. "Some day I'll tell you, but you must let me go. The servants will see you. And besides, haven't you been a little hasty? How do you know who I am? I might be almost anybody, or nobody."

"I don't care who you are! You're the sweetest, dearest little girl in the whole world. Why, if you were Mr. Standard's daughter herself, I'd ask you to marry me just the same."

"Would you really? Now, that's what I call real noble of you." The Princess fairly shook with laughter.

"I don't know why you're laughing."

"No, but you will. If you want to marry me, you must ask my father—that's proper, isn't it?"

He nodded.

"Well, come along. Let's say good-by to your—employer—and borrow his car to take me home in."

The sun was going down behind the mountains across the river as they slow-

ly made their way toward the house, his arm about her slender waist. The sky was dyed a beautiful yellow and crimson and the river shone brilliantly to match.

"Isn't it lovely?" sighed the Princess, "and just like my fairy-story come true. There he is!"

She pointed her finger to where Mr. Standard sat on the stone terrace facing the west, taking a solitary cup of tea, his weather-beaten old pipe in his hand.

"Hello," he said good-naturedly. "You here yet, Langford?"

He took out his watch and looked at the Princess.

"Just five minutes more and your mother will be home. I heard the train whistle. Better scoot and change your dress if you don't want to get into trouble. And I guess I'd better hide this."

He grinned and knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the wicker tea-table.

The Princess exchanged a knowing wink with the King.

"All right, papa," she said. "I've had a beautiful birthday, and Mr. Langford is going to stay for dinner. And, oh, yes, he wants to ask you something important—it's about me. And, papa—you might as well say 'yes' now as later on. It will be ever so much nicer!"

A CUE FROM CHANCE.*

BY JAMES F. DEMERIT,

Author of "The Puzzle at the Alberon," "A Turn of the Wheel," "All in a Name," etc.

A glimpse behind the scenes at the making of a musical comedy, together with an account of some exciting incidents in the careers of the men who hatched it out.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THROUGH a series of misfortunes, Clay Hopworthy is unable to obtain a position, the promise of which has brought him to New York.

Reduced to his last dollar he runs across Brent, a good-hearted, Bohemian sort, engaged in demonstrating the possibilities in a hand-to-mouth existence. Later he has occasion to assist a lady, who gives him her address, saying she has some work for him.

On the way thither he is mistaken for a thief, and in escaping from the pursuing mob, finds himself at her very door.

She proves to be Miss Kendrickson, a sculptor, in need of a model.

On their next meeting Brent tells him that he has written the music to a musical comedy, but can find no one to write the libretto. Clay proves to be possessed of a facile pen, and they form a partnership, also interesting Miss Craymore, a light-opera star, in the scheme.

On his next visit Clay finds that Miss Kendrickson has persuaded her wealthy and somewhat invalid uncle to take Clay as a companion. In the midst of their interview, Borrow, the old man's nephew, who kept Hopworthy out of his previous position, interferes, insulting Clay in such a manner that he gently but firmly puts him out.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN UNENVIABLE POSITION.

THE outer door of Miss Kendrickson's studio shut with a snap of the spring-lock, and Clay left Borrow to kick in futile rage against the panels while he hurried back to the workshop and to the sculptor and her uncle.

There was a broad couch at one side and Clay was amazed to see the old man stretched upon it, with Miss Kendrickson slapping his hand. He had heard no fall, or cry, but the old gentleman was unconscious, with set eyes and breath that came stertorously.

The young man sprang forward, asking no question at the moment, but

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loosened the patient's tie and collar, opened his shirt, and gave his windpipe full play. He seemed easier at once; his eyeballs rolled down and the lids closed over them.

"And you call that apoplexy?" Clay asked the niece in wonder. "It's more like epilepsy."

"Sh!" she said. "He's had these fits for years. He had them when he was a boy, I understand. They have grown on him of late."

"That scoundrel should not have worried him, then."

"Cousin George Borrow has his reasons for worrying him, perhaps," she returned bitterly. "Now you know why I am so anxious to have you take charge of Uncle Dan. Somebody must watch him and defend him from Borrow—and others."

"But doesn't he know his own danger?" demanded Clay, looking down at the now quietly sleeping patient.

"He has no memory of these paroxysms when he recovers," the sculptor replied quietly. "And it only makes him angry to hint at them. Some time he'll go off in one."

Clay shuddered. "And you mean to say that Borrow knows it?"

"I do. And others of the family who are always disturbing the old man, too. Oh, I told you that you would be mixed up in a nice family scandal!"

"I don't want to be!" groaned Clay. "This is no job for a man outside the family."

"That's exactly why it *is* your job," she declared. "You are an outsider. You have no reason for wanting him to die——"

"My God!" gasped the young man, falling back.

"I mean what I say," she returned bitterly. "It is for your benefit to keep him alive. The longer he lives—if you suit him—the longer you'll keep your situation. Defend him from excitement. Defend him from his own family."

"This—this is awful, Miss Kendrickson."

"Oh, the Borrows aren't the only family that are waiting for dead men's shoes. That wretch who was just kicking my door would shut Uncle Dan up in the insane asylum if he dared. He is helpless, you see, when he is this way. It always ends in a short sleep. There! he is waking."

Her voice dropped to a thrilling whisper. Her face expressed real feeling as she added:

"Do you see how much he needs somebody disinterested? You will stay with him, won't you, Mr. Hopworthy?"

"I—I'll try it," groaned Clay.

Old Mr. Borrow sat up suddenly, blinking his eyes; then he stared at the two looking at him.

"Why—why!" he gasped. "Did I fall asleep?"

"It looks like it, Uncle Dan," Miss Kendrickson said carelessly. "Do you feel rested?"

"Do you know—I don't remember—— Oh! is that *you*, young man?" he finished, eying Clay with better understanding. "Well, what do you say? Will you accept my terms?"

Not a word about George Borrow; nor a remembrance of the shock, or fit, or whatever it had been. Clay recovered his own composure.

"I accept, sir," he said.

"Good! Ah! my tie and collar. What's this?"

"I loosened them for you, sir," said Clay respectfully. "I thought you would—er—nap better."

"Yes, yes! Thanks!"

Clay rebuttoned the collar and tied the silk string deftly. The old gentleman seemed to approve.

"Ve-ry good," he said, rising when Clay had finished. "Now, Niece Sadie, are you going to dinner with me?"

"I am ready, Uncle Dan."

Mr. Borrow passed Clay a card.

"Call at that address as early as eight to-morrow morning," he said. "Good night!" and so let his new employee go.

Clay was not sorry to get away by himself. He wanted time to think the matter over and get his mind adjusted to the strange situation.

Besides, he wished to go out ahead of the old gentleman and his niece to see if the younger Borrow was about. That individual, he made up his mind, was an out-and-out villain; and there was some satisfaction in thwarting him in his attempts upon his uncle's peace of mind, considering Clay's personal grievance

against the manager of the Slocum Manufacturing Company.

But Borrow had disappeared. Clay nevertheless waited in the shadow of a neighboring doorway until he saw Miss Kendrickson and the old man come out of the studio building, hail a cab, and drive away.

Then he went home, and as he hurried northward along Seventh Avenue he began to realize that at last he was really decently fixed in the city. A week before he had been wandering along Broadway, with a single dollar in his pocket, afraid to break it, and wondering where he should sleep.

Now he had obtained what promised to be a financially good situation, even if the work and associations were unpleasant, and had made several good friends, as well. He hurried on to Mrs. Lemmon's, in haste to meet the chief of those good friends, John Vivian Brent.

Clay was not the man to take any outside party into the unpleasant matter which had opened his eyes this evening. The Borrows' private affairs were not a subject for discussion between Brent and himself.

He only told Brent that he had succeeded in securing the hoped-for position, and the composer congratulated him extravagantly. Clay had some doubt as to whether such congratulation was due, however.

He went in the morning to the Amboyne Apartment Hotel, where his new employer lived. Miss Kendrickson had left Clay to find out for himself the real state of Mr. Borrow's mind. Her hints had only prepared him for the realities of the case.

The old gentleman believed that he was quite able to take care of himself, both physically and mentally. But Clay soon saw that, although it would be absolute cruelty to shut him up, Daniel Borrow was as crazy as half the inmates of the insane asylums of the State.

One thing Clay discovered at once: the inferior employees of the hotel, where the old man occupied the finest suite, were taking advantage of his weaknesses.

What with unnecessary tips, and "hard-luck" stories told the old man by everybody from the scrub-woman to the head-waiter in the dining-room, Clay was staggered the first day by the unnecessary expenditure of small sums.

Daniel Borrow was naturally kind-hearted and easily accessible—to everybody but those who really might have some claim upon his generosity. He suspected and feared all his relatives, and began by looking on Clay himself with plain doubt.

The young fellow, however, who posed as Mr. Borrow's "private secretary," soon decided what attitude he should take. He might have doubled his salary the first week by what many would have called "legitimate graft."

Instead, he went to the manager of the hotel and, usurping an authority that he did not possess, made that gentleman believe that he was really engaged by Mr. Borrow's friends to look out for him.

"Your employees here are robbing Mr. Borrow," he said severely. "They are jogging his elbow for tips, or working on his sympathies for presents, all day long. Unless it is stopped, we shall go to some other hotel."

Now, at this time, Clay had about as much influence with his employer as a fly; but Brent would have said he "bluffed well." Besides, the manager was an honest man.

"It shall be stopped if I have to discharge every person in my employ. We want Mr. Borrow here."

"Unnecessary to discharge anybody. Merely warn them that I am watching, and the first one who tries to 'make a touch,' as they call it, I'll report to you and he or she will be sent away."

"But I can't stop his tipping them," the manager said.

"You must. Tell them they must refuse any tip that Mr. Borrow offers. He'll tip his waiter, and the chambermaid, and elevator-boy at the end of each week—as your other patrons do."

And this was done. The old gentleman was saved from two to ten dollars a day, for his memory was so short that sometimes the same story of a "touching" nature would be worked twice on him in the same twenty-four hours, before Clay took the matter in hand.

This is getting a little ahead of the story, however. To go back to the first day Clay spent as Mr. Borrow's factotum.

It humbled his pride a bit to be at the beck and call of so exacting a master. But, then, there was the ten dollars a week and his living expenses. A man can bury pride, providing his duties are respectable.

At least, Clay determined to bury his. And it was not so hard to please Mr. Borrow in most matters.

He helped him first with his correspondence. Then he read the newspaper to him, put his library in order while the old gentleman wrote some personal letters, went to luncheon with him, and finally saw him off to make calls for the afternoon.

Having now two or three hours to himself, Clay hurried down to Brent's lodgings, and there he arrived just in time to view an upheaval in Mrs. Cushing's household, the storm-center of which was his friend Brent.

A girl with a dirty apron—the signal-flag of the ordinary lodging-house slavey—opened the door for Clay; but it was unnecessary for him to ask for Brent. His voice resounded from above:

"Now, my *dear* Mrs. Cushing——"

"Don't ye do it, Mr. Brent!" exclaimed the high-pitched voice of the landlady. "I'm obderate—obderate, I say. It's got ter come to an end right here."

There was a dignified pathos in Brent's tone that, had Clay not known the fellow so well, would have impressed him.

"You grieve me, Mrs. Cushing—you really do," the young man said. "To think that I should have paid you two weeks' rent so recently——"

"I know it! I know it!" broke in the landlady, all in a flutter. "But as my husband says: 'No knowing when he'll come so near not owin' you anything again.' an' it's so, Mr. Brent. You know it."

"My dear Mrs. Cush——"

"Now don't ye!" exclaimed the good woman, almost in tears. "You ain't got no baggage. You can go right out now. And you ain't stone-broke—that I'll be bound."

"Such ingratitude!" said Brent, with a sigh, coming down into the second-floor hall.

"Oh, come on, old man!" Clay called up from below. "You can go home with me."

"There!" cried Mrs. Cushing, with plain relief. "You've got a home offered ye, Mr. Brent. 'Tain't as though you was bein' put out on the sidewalk."

"But to think that after my having advertised your lodgings for all these months—for you to ask me to go! It is too, too much!"

He came down the remaining flight, shaking his head sadly, carrying his only luggage, a plethoric music-roll, in one hand, while the landlady watched from over the banisters.

"Susan," he said to the giggling maid, still with great solemnity, "you are not a pretty girl, but you have a good heart."

"I hope so, Mr. Brent," she returned. "I—I'm sorry you're going," she added in a whisper.

Brent's hand touched hers before he followed Clay out of the house. The latter looked back and saw the girl looking at what Brent had left in her palm—a silver dollar!

"Oh, you utterly preposterous and impracticable ass!" groaned Hopworthy. "Being sent away from your lodgings because you cannot pay for them, yet tipping the slavey a dollar."

"Well, really," Brent returned, unabashed, "the creature had been very accommodating to me. I couldn't do less, could I?"

Clay insisted on Brent's going to Mrs. Lemmon's with him.

"I sha'n't be able to sleep there, like enough, for Mr. Borrow will want me near him. But you can take my place and Mrs. L. won't care, of course, who pays for the room."

"Ye-es. But something's got to turn up for me pretty soon, old man, or *I* won't be able to pay her for it," observed Brent.

"I'm glad to hear you say that. It shows sense. That brings me to the point where I can talk straight to you."

"I know it's going to be something unpleasant," Brent groaned.

"No. It's about money matters."

"Good Lord! what's more unpleasant?"

"Don't be ridiculous. Are you satisfied that I should financier this firm?"

"More than satisfied. I can't."

"Then you are to stick to your music and let me worry about Mrs. Lemmon. I am going over to the restaurant to collect the money due me there, and I can pay my room-rent for this past week, then.

"Next week we'll be all right, of course."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Brent, putting out his hand. "Are you figuring on supporting me?"

"Not a bit. I want at present an interest in 'Little Lillie Lee.' The woman who wrote the verses is glad to take ten dollars cash for the song rights—so she says."

"And what then?"

"We'll publish it ourselves. We'll become the firm of Brent & Worth, music publishers. 'Great oaks from little acorns,' you know. Now, do I get a half interest in 'Little Lillie Lee'?"

"Gee! old man, you'll never be able to get it printed and circulated."

"That's my part of the business. Are you willing to let me go ahead with it—to see what can be done?"

"Oh, go ahead," Brent grunted. "But you don't know what you are up against. Publishing a song—and selling it afterward—is as bad as writing a musical comedy. With two such jobs on our hands, we'll certainly have them full!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST STROKE OF BUSINESS.

CLAY had made some inquiries already regarding the mechanical work of getting a song printed, and he would not allow Brent's disbelief in the practicability of the thing to disturb him.

He left Brent at Mrs. Lemmon's, established in his own room, rode to the West Side restaurant, collected the money due him, and then rode across town and down to a certain music-engraver near Cooper Union.

This address he had obtained from the directory; but certain information he had gathered by going into a music publisher's near Broadway and talking with a good-natured clerk.

For instance, he learned that the ordinary song, published at fifty cents, is sold to the retail trade for about twelve and a half cents. The cut-price stores have a uniform retail price on such music of from sixteen to nineteen cents.

On a royalty basis the song-writer gets one, two, three, or more cents a sheet. The actual cost of printing the song, after the plates are engraved, is very small.

Brent, who was no bad draftsman, had made a poster cover for "Little Lillie Lee" that was as attractive as the ordinary song displayed in the shops. Clay found that he could have this cover printed in three colors, and the music in black ink—five hundred copies for forty odd dollars.

After that the printing for future editions would be less costly. The printer wanted nothing down; but he demanded cash in full for the five hundred copies when they were delivered. This delivery could not take place under three weeks, at the earliest.

"I'll do it!" exclaimed Clay, destroying his bridges behind him, and he left the copy and hastened up-town to the Amboyne to attend upon Mr. Borrow before dinner.

He was in season, fortunately, and had some moments to wait before the old gentleman returned from his round of calls. But Clay was somewhat disturbed to find that he must hang around in the public office of the hotel until Mr. Borrow came to let him in.

He suggested to his employer that it would save time and trouble if he was allowed a latch-key for the suite.

"What!" snarled the old fellow. "How do I know that you're honest?"

But Clay had made up his mind not to be disturbed by unpleasant observations.

"How will you ever find out whether I am honest or not, unless you give me a chance to rob you?" he asked bruskly.

"Ha!"

"Besides, I don't intend to be turned out of your rooms and wait like a dog in the halls whenever you go out—make up your mind to that, sir."

"You're impudent!"

"Don't you believe it, sir," replied Clay. "Don't you ever mistake truth for impudence."

"Humph! well, I'll give you a key," grunted the old man.

But he locked up his silver desk-furni-

ture and a gold-lined tray from the sideboard before he dressed for dinner. Clay judged it better to ignore childish acts like these, and Mr. Daniel Borrow was certainly in his second childhood, if nothing worse.

Clay found, likewise, that the old gentleman had no intention of lodging his new employee in the hotel. Mr. Borrow had an extra bedroom in his suite; but he would not trust Clay to sleep there.

He had made arrangements for the young man to occupy a room in a house on the next street, and Clay would enter into this possession on the next morning. When he did not dine or lunch with Mr. Borrow, his meals would be paid for at this boarding-house.

The arrangement was a foolish and expensive one, for the room and board would cost Mr. Borrow twenty-five dollars a week (the room was a big front parlor; there had been nothing mean about the old gentleman's selection), and if left to his own devices Clay would have found something at half that price.

"Think of it!" he said to Brent that night when they retired together at Mrs. Lemmon's. A man drawing ten dollars a week salary paying twenty-five for his room and board. It's ridiculous!"

"He must have nothing but money," grunted Brent. "Don't you suppose you could get him interested in 'The Arrow of Fortune'?"

"Not on your life! He'd queer the thing."

"He'd be a good angel all right."

"No, sir. Angels fly away too easy. What we want is a *bona fide* manager who has brains as well as money."

"Now, what's the use of talking nonsense!" grunted Brent. "That's an impossibility. The two don't go together—not in the tribe of managers."

But despite this caustic observation, born of some small experience on his part, Brent was giving much of his time to hunting for that rare fowl, a manager. A manager who would appreciate the value of the musical play, and either possess the money to put it on, or be able to find the cash for the purpose.

"Why, if he hasn't money himself, it will be a long and tedious business to convince a lot of other people that the piece is good, so that they will put *their* money into it," objected Clay. "We might as well try to find those people ourselves, and do away with the manager."

"You're talking like a stuffed monkey," said Brent inelegantly. "What *is* a manager?"

"A man in a silk hat and diamond shirt-stud—usually with an Hebraic nose. At least, all you've pointed out to me have been that."

"You are growing humorous. How do you suppose they got the diamond studs, et cetera?"

"According to Loraine, by owing their choruses money when their productions bust up."

"Let me tell you something," said Brent, now the serious one. "Managers have their uses. They have learned their trade. They may not always know what will hit the public taste; but they know how to whip a thing into shape for stage production, and other men who have money to invest in such a production are willing to trust to the managers' opinions. D' you see?"

"Clear as mud."

"How do you suppose that 'Will-o'-the-Wisp' thing was put on? Do you know it cost thirty-five thousand dollars before the dress rehearsal?"

"Goodness!"

"That's what it did. Do you suppose the manager had that? Why, he went flat-broke on 'The Golden Galley'—the thing he put on last season.

"Just the same, he has the confidence of one or two of these ticket-speculators, and of a music-publishing firm. The latter are making a mint of money out of the music of 'Will-o'-the-Wisp,' and they put up a good share of that thirty-five thousand to back the production. The theater ticket-speculators did the rest."

"What, those fellows who are such nuisances in front of the theaters when you go to buy a seat at the box-office?"

"No, no! The public kicks over that imposition as the public always kicks—over the smaller indignities and cheats foisted upon them. I mean men bigger than they. Do you know that you can never buy the best seats in the theater at the box-office?"

Another New Magazine from the Munsey House.

WE are bringing out another new magazine, which will occupy a field hitherto unfilled. It is to be called

THE RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE

While this magazine is designed especially for railroad people, it is nevertheless a pretty good general magazine. A railroad story, whether true or the creation of fancy, naturally has a direct interest for the railroad worker, but it is none the less interesting to the general reader than if the theme were located in some other phase of life.

THE railroad, second only to religion, has been the greatest civilizing and enlightening force in the world. It has eliminated space and brought backwoods sections in touch with the polish and alertness of the cities. In conjunction with the telegraph, it has daily placed the news of the world before the farmer and mechanic in the once remote places of the country. It has built up the great West—a region which was a limitless waste when this country was born, and which would still be a vast, uninhabited tract of barren prairie but for the railroad. It has stretched out from the little hamlets along the seaboard and created an empire the like of which does not exist in the Old World.

With a population to-day of well-nigh ninety millions, the United States owes

perhaps fifty millions to the railroad, without which our development would have been confined to the Atlantic coast. We should have had no way of bringing grain and cattle from the West, no way of transporting coal from the mines and iron ore to the furnaces, or of carrying the finished product to the centers of trade. Gold and silver and copper would still largely be locked up in the recesses of the mountains.

But the material development brought about by the railroad is not the sum of its achievements. It has made us a big people, a broad people, a great people. The very vastness of things brought within the compass of man by the railroad has stamped itself upon us and made us bigger in conception and execution. And this growth having taken on a momentum, the process of expansion, with our people, has kept pace with the marvelous development of the railroads and all other phases of industry. We think in a big way, see things in a big way, and are reaching up higher and higher all the while to measure up to our ever-expanding conceptions. And in this magic transformation which in a day, as it were, has developed a little nation into the most powerful in all the world, the railroad has played the great and all-important part.

To-day, with its various ramifications and allied interests, the railroad business is the biggest industry in America with the one exception of agriculture. And yet there is no magazine of general interest, so far as I know, which contains special features of direct interest to the railroad workers and their families.

It is singular that this is the fact when there are perhaps as many as five hundred publications of one grade and another that are published for the farmer and his family—publications that contain a considerable percentage of reading of a technical farming nature, together with fiction, general information, biography, poetry, and such other items and articles as make good, wholesome, and interesting reading for the home and fireside. The fact that there is a demand on the part of farmers for all these agricultural journals makes me marvel that no publisher hitherto has thought to issue a publication for the railroad man, who represents the second largest industry in our Western World.

Well, at last you have one—you, the railroad workers of America, and I hope you will find in it a good many facts and articles and bits of news that should naturally interest you and all those directly or indirectly connected with railroading. But in addition to these specific features that ring of the rail I am sure you will find in it an immense amount of good general reading, some instructive, some amusing, and much that is entertaining. And after all it is the entertaining things—the good, warm-blooded human stories of deep vital interest—that take hold of us and make us a nation of magazine readers.

My experience in the publishing business justifies me in saying that, if all fiction were to be eliminated from the magazines of America, their combined circulation would speedily dwindle to not over twenty per cent of the present total. If this deduction is correct, and it is not a careless bit of analysis, it is clear that the

story with love and adventure—the good old-fashioned kind that never grows old and never will lose its charm so long as human nature remains human—cuts a very big figure in the periodical publishing world and fills a very big place in our lives as a people—including all the people who can read at all.

It is this fact that leads me to issue a magazine for the railroad world which shall be something more than a mere technical thing—a magazine that shall be filled with human interest stories in fact and human interest stories in fiction. And fortunately for this publication, the railroad in its very nature is so dramatic that it furnishes thousands of themes in real life which are as thrilling and daring and brave as the fancy of the most active story-writer can invent and vitalize into probability.

Before the days of the railroad and ocean-going steamers, writers found that the ocean furnished the most dramatic possibilities. But with the disappearance of the sailing ship and with the subjugation of cannibals and savages, the ocean no longer compares with the railroad in the variety and multiplicity of dramatic and thrilling possibilities.

The weather bureau, the lighthouse, the life-saving station, the telegraph and telephone, the wireless telegram, a better knowledge of the ocean and its habits and a more complete record of its most dangerous places—all these, together with the big stanch ships of to-day, have robbed the sea of much of its dangers. It is still far from a placid thing, and it can be very ugly, very treacherous, very wicked, but to a large extent man is getting the mastery of it. Our big modern steamers can run away from a storm, fight a storm, defy a storm. All this about the sea to show that its old-time dangers and terrors are disappearing, while railroading has come into the foreground and is the most thrilling and dramatic phase of human endeavor. Every minute that a great train is thundering along at sixty or eighty or a hundred miles an hour it is not only subject to many perils, but is actually skirting the very edge of disaster. And because of this danger—this tensity of life on the rail, there is an excitement and fascination to it that cannot be found and does not exist in the more placid and more secure occupations.

Railroading on its present gigantic scale in America is a world in itself—a great nation in wealth and activity and enterprise and population. It is something apart from agriculture and the building trades and manufacturing and merchandising. It has its own language to a considerable extent—its slang and shadings that smack of the speed of the locomotive, and it might almost be said that it has its own literature. The railroad stories that have already been created and the railroad stories that have been enacted in real life are in aggregate much more than the entire literature of some old and important countries. And railroading with us is only a little more than half a century old. Indeed, it is within the last twenty-five years that the great expansion has come about.

It is for this world, this great railroad world, that we are issuing THE RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE. It is largely a new creation in magazine-making. There is nothing else in America or in any other country just like it. We have had

no examples to follow. Consequently we may have fallen short of the mark at which we have aimed. But perfection is usually a thing of growth. The important thing is to begin, to make a start. There can be no evolution without something to improve. In a word, THE RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE is now something more than a fancy. It has crystallized into a fact, taken on an entity, and now it is up to the magazine itself to fill a place hitherto unfilled in the homes of the railroad workers of America—to bring into these homes each month many hours of entertainment, and to bring also a wider and fuller knowledge of railroad men and methods, as well as an abundance of good, wholesome, helpful, and instructive reading on matters of general interest and of timely importance. If it does this in a way acceptable to you it will measure up to the standard set for it by its publisher.

I have said all this about the railroad world to show you what a big world it really is, and what are its possibilities of dramatic interest for making a red-hot magazine for any reader, whether he be railroad man or otherwise.

The first number of THE RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE will be issued about the 15th of September. I should like you to get a copy of the first issue and see for yourself what you think of it—see if it has anything in it that you would not like to miss.

At this writing the first number is not yet made up, and as I am just back from Europe, I have not read much of the material that goes into it—not even seen all of it. But judging from what I have seen, and from my general knowledge of the plans and scope of the magazine, I am convinced that it will have some rattling good stuff in it. And I don't mind venturing the prediction here and now that THE RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE will prove a good running mate for THE ARGOSY and THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE.

We are starting off with two serial stories and what amounts to another in the shape of a series of "THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERIES OF AMERICA"—real life, actual occurrences.

Don't forget the date of issue—somewhere from September 12th to 15th—and don't fail to ask your newsdealer for a copy.

FRANK A. MUNSEY.

"How's that?"

"Because there are certain speculators who have a standing order for so many of the best seats in each theater of prominence, and these seats they sell at an advance of from fifty to two hundred per cent in the hotels about town.

"Two men have made great fortunes out of the business—such great fortunes that hardly a show goes on the boards along Broadway that one or the other of them has not an interest in it.

"And the public never makes a 'holler' about them. They only see the little fellows with their bunches of tickets standing in the lobbies, or on the sidewalks. So you see, the manager with money isn't necessary. But the manager who has the confidence of a ticket-speculator, and perhaps of a music-publishing house, is the man we want," concluded Brent.

"I hope not the last," cried Clay. "We want to publish the score of 'The Arrow of Fortune' ourselves."

"That's right. Get crazy," grunted Brent, and rolled over decisively and refused to talk any further.

But Clay's belief in their success as music publishers could not be shaken. As he found time from his duties with Mr. Borrow, he visited every large shop he could find where music was sold, paying particular attention to the department stores.

In these shops he made the acquaintance of the "heads of stock" at the music counters and, where possible, of the young women who "tried out" the music for the customers on the piano. At one place he even got an engagement for Brent to accompany at a so-called concert one day, in the intermissions of which he played his own music.

At that store they ordered fifty copies of "Little Lillie Lee" without having seen the music, and Clay hurried the printer. Besides that, at the end of the week, the firm sent Brent their check for five dollars.

On the other hand Clay inspired his partner to call on certain vaudeville singers in their dressing-rooms and try to introduce his forthcoming song to them. One young woman agreed to sing it if her picture was printed on one edition of the song.

They held this offer in abeyance for the present, and finally got the proof read and made the printer promise to have the first five hundred copies of the song ready for delivery in a week.

Then Brent backed Clay up against the wall of the room at Mrs. Lemmon's, holding him by both shoulders, and demanded:

"How the devil are you going to pay for them?"

To which Clay replied: "I've got eighteen dollars left from my two weeks' salary with Mr. Borrow. Miss Kendrickson owes me three dollars for posing——"

"Long life to your lily-white hand!" interposed Brent.

"I'll have another week's pay before the songs are ready."

"But you are doing it all."

"I am financiering this firm. Leave it to me."

"You are doing too much."

"I am doing my share. Aren't you doing yours? Isn't the music of the 'Arrow' almost completed, and on paper?"

"Yes. But it's up to me to do something else," declared Brent, shaking his head.

"What's that?"

"I must find the manager," declared the composer; "and I must find him at once."

CHAPTER XV.

A SHOCKING DISCOVERY.

MEANWHILE Clay Hopworthy had quite broken into harness at Mr. Borrow's. The old fellow was a puzzling proposition; yet his very variety kept Clay interested.

He would lock up articles of virtu and of value, fearing that Clay would rob him; and then send the young man down to the bank to draw a couple of hundred dollars, or to pay a bill, and never ask to see the receipt for the money.

He willingly paid twenty-five per week for Clay's board and lodging, and kicked viciously every time he came to pay the young man the ten dollars salary he had promised. His eccentricities would have obtained him a through ticket to Bloomingdale; and yet he was as shrewd and

long-headed in business matters as one could wish.

Clay began to see that the old fellow had cultivated these eccentricities more to puzzle and trouble his relatives, who watched him like a circle of terriers about a caged rodent, than aught else.

Yet, following out the sustained truth that the man who plays at insanity will in time become unbalanced in mind, Mr. Daniel Borrow's eccentricities were growing on him. But, withal, he was sharp enough to dodge real excitement—excitement that might throw him into that state in which Clay had once seen him.

With his friends—and it was a pity that none of his relatives seemed to be in this category—the old gentleman was jolly and indeed gay; but when a Borrow called he became instantly sarcastic and grumpy.

For instance, one day, after having been out on an errand, Clay opened the outer door of the suite and entered to find Mr. Borrow entertaining an angular lady of uncertain age, who raised a gilt lorgnette to eye the young man with a dissatisfied frown.

"And you mean to tell me this—this fellow has a key to your apartments, Mr. Borrow, comes and goes as he pleases, and may do as he likes here, while your own loving nephew is denied half that privilege?"

"My own loving nephew would like to see me in my coffin—I know him!" snarled Mr. Borrow.

"You malign George, Daniel," declared the lady.

"Bah!"

"This fellow is unknown to you. And I understand he was discharged by George's employer——"

Clay had passed through the room then, and, closing the door, heard nothing more from the ill-natured and ill-mannered woman. When she was gone the old man came to him chuckling.

"So they say you're a thief, or something," he cackled. "Well, I'm glad to know it. You don't pretend to be anything else, so I know where *you* stand. These others—ah! they'd rob me of my life as well as of my money. Now, sir, you hear me!"

He began to grow excited, and his eyes flashed. Clay was afraid he would bring on one of his fits, but he did not know how to stop him.

"You hear me!" repeated old Mr. Borrow. "If that scoundrel George Borrow comes here, you put him out—put him out, I say! I won't see him, nor correspond with him, nor have aught to do with him."

And he trotted up and down his rooms half an hour after this outbreak before he recovered his composure. Clay had considerable doubt, however, as to whether he had any right to deny a relative of Mr. Borrow entrance to his suite.

He asked Miss Kendrickson for advice. She never called on her uncle, but he frequently went to the studio, and Clay acted as her model two or three times before the sculptor was satisfied with the hand of her statue.

Regarding the requested advice: "I never give advice," she declared, in her dry way. "It is your business, not mine."

"But you are his relative!"

"And you have your living to make. If you let George Borrow gain any influence over him, you'll lose your job; don't forget that."

This put the difficulty on a basis that was revolting to Clay Hopworthy. Miss Kendrickson suggested that he keep uncle and nephew apart from motives of selfishness, and those motives, to Clay's mind, were disreputable.

So he was not happy. After he had left Mr. Borrow for the night, and could hurry to spend a couple of hours with Brent over the musical play, he managed to forget his troubles for a time.

One set of troubles, rather. In the business of the firm of Brent & Worth, new troubles faced him.

Brent naturally could not live without eating, and the treasury of the firm had to be tapped for his necessities. It galled Clay terribly to think of the money wasted by Mr. Borrow in paying for his board as well as lodging near the Amboyne, for more than half the time he ate with his employer at the hotel.

So the day for the song-sheets to be delivered came near and the most Clay could find to meet the bill was something like thirty dollars. He added to that the order for fifty copies of the song,

for which the Mastodon Department Store would pay $6.25.

But the printer's bill would be $44.50, including a hundred extra covers which were to be used for posters advertising the song in the shop windows. Now, $36.25 would not pay $44.50!

"You see how it is," Brent told him, laughing. "You can't get along without your uncle's help——"

"I wouldn't ask Mr. Borrow for a cent above my wages——"

"Ho, ho!" roared Brent. "That's not the uncle I mean. You'll pawn your watch and some of your clothes. I'll take you around to a man I know. He's got *mine.*"

But Clay did not wish to patronize the pawn-shop. He had figured out that when a man begins to depend on such means for financial help, it becomes a habit not easily broken.

And thirty-six per cent per year is a preposterous rate of interest. He might get down to one suit and one hat, like Brent; then neither member of the firm could go out of the house in the morning.

"We are launching into business in a small way," he said thoughtfully. "Most firms begin small. And let us begin honestly. I'll go to the printer and put the facts before him——"

"Never!" gasped Brent. "He'll shut down on you instantly. You've got to bluff, or you'll be thought a fool. And a fool can't get trusted for a square meal, even."

"Then I'll steer a course betwixt and between. I'll neither be entirely frank nor will I try to overreach the printer."

And with this determination he walked into the office of the man on the day agreed and planked down thirty dollars.

"I can't pay the entire bill to-day," he said, looking the printer straight in the eye. "But I only want fifty copies now. Can I have them?"

The man hesitated less than half a minute. He would still hold four hundred and fifty copies, and the electrotypes, so he was due to lose nothing.

"I usually demand cash when the customer has no bank reference," he said. "But—this time——"

Clay got the fifty copies and hurried off to the Mastodon. Before he left that store he saw "Little Lilly Lee" displayed to excellent advantage over the music counter, and heard the girl playing it to the crowd which always hovered about this part of the store.

Besides, the head of the department gave him an order on the cashier for the price of the fifty copies. Small accounts were always settled immediately, it seemed.

But Clay did not go at once to the cashier's desk, much as he wanted the money. He placed the order in his wallet and went up-town to fulfil his duties as Mr. Borrow's "man of all work."

He carried with him an extra copy of the song he had obtained from the printer, however, with which to rejoice Brent's soul, and that night he swore to himself that the most important thing the firm of Brent & Worth had before them was the replevining of some of Brent's clothing.

"If you could go out with these songs to-morrow, you might sell a couple of hundred—or, at least, place them where they might be sold. But you can't go in a dress-suit and top-hat," he groaned.

"I'll take 'em around in the evening," suggested Brent.

"Look nice, wouldn't you, lugging a bundle of song-sheets under your arm. No, no! I'll have to sell this first edition during such hours as I can escape from my Old Man of the Sea."

He said nothing about it to Brent, but Clay had intended flashing the order on the Mastodon Store before the music printer and let *him* collect it on account the next day. But before morning he had thought out another scheme.

That *bona fide* order for payment for fifty copies of "Little Lillie Lee" might help him to get orders at other stores. But he must take the printer further into his confidence, however.

Fortunately, Mr. Borrow went to ride with a friend the next morning and Clay found himself free until luncheon. Down to the Bible House he hurried to put his new idea into execution.

He told the printer how he stood, displayed the cashier's order, and told the man why he wished to keep it for a few days. Then he asked plump for two hundred copies of the song—making altogether half of the first edition.

"Go ahead!" said the printer. "You'll make your word good, young man—I can see that. Take two hundred copies, and these posters if you want them; but pay me the $14.50 due before you take away the other two hundred and fifty copies, or the plates."

On these easy terms Clay carried away his bundle of songs and spent the remainder of the forenoon in seeing the trades-people whom he had already prepared for the reception of "Little Lillie Lee."

He sold outright but ten copies, however. Few stores did business on a cash basis like the Mastodon; but that order helped him dispose of nearly a hundred copies of the song on commission. He saw, however, that this was bound to be a slow way of getting the music introduced.

"The only way to make money in music publishing is to get out an enormous edition and have a dozen people singing it around the country, and advertise. Now, if we sell every copy of this five hundred, we'll only have made eighteen dollars," and he shook his head thoughtfully.

But in a minute he plucked up courage.

"That doesn't matter. We didn't expect to make on this edition. I forgot that. We have the plates. Hereafter the songs won't cost us more than half as much apiece. But—by Jove!—we sorely need capital."

And that lack set his active mind to greater exertions. He had two problems on his hands—the matter of the song, and that of the musical comedy.

"Lord!" he thought. "If we once got the show on the stage we could interpolate the song in it—'twould go great as a sextette, or something. The words lend themselves to something in the 'Florodora' style. By Jove! I have it!" And he had. But after a bit of indecision he decided to keep it to himself—not even to tell Brent yet; and I shall follow suit.

While Clay was busily engaged in spare hours pushing the song business, most of his time was taken up with his duties as secretary. And they were not light.

Old Mr. Borrow could be a very exacting taskmaster if he wished. Clay's work seemed never done. He was never sure of his freedom in the evening.

Besides, he knew that his employer's relatives (all but Miss Kendrickson, at least) were not pleased that he should be with the old man. They evidently suspected undue influence and believed that Clay would manage to wheedle the old gentleman out of some of his money.

Clay learned a deal more about this unhappy family as the days passed. Old Borrow spit out about them with fury now and then. Indeed, sometimes his tirades would have been good testimony on behalf of the insanity plea, had the Borrows, small and great, heard them.

Twice Clay refused George Borrow entrance to the suite in the Amboyne Hotel. Once on the street the nephew accosted Uncle Daniel.

"Call a policeman! call a policeman!" cried the old gentleman, shaking his stick and beginning to turn purple with wrath.

"I swear I will do so—and go to the station to press the case—if you don't let him alone!" Clay told the younger Borrow, and the latter sheered off.

Clay had to take the old gentleman into a drug-store in the neighborhood, and it was an hour before he had recovered his composure. Warned by Miss Kendrickson, Clay feared to have young Borrow see his uncle in one of these fits.

"As sure as he does he will apply for a guardian, or try to shut the old man up. That will kill him," declared the sculptor solemnly.

It was known to Clay, too, that the family had endeavored to have the old gentleman examined, quietly, by several expert alienists; but Mr. Borrow had dodged all such traps. He had a faithful old physician in whom he had confidence and could not be weaned from him sufficiently to consult any other practitioner.

Then letters began to come to the old gentleman. George Borrow probably did not know that Clay acted altogether as amanuensis. The letters asked for money.

It must be confessed that, after the mean trick which young Borrow had played Hopworthy in regard to the situation promised him by Mr. Slocum, the

private secretary had at first some little enjoyment in thwarting the nephew.

But these letters told more than Clay had suspected. George Borrow was in serious financial difficulties. He said he had bought stocks and must cover his margins or he would lose all his investment. Would Uncle Daniel help him?

"And Uncle Daniel won't help the little whelp—not a cent's worth!" snarled the old man. "If he dares come here, Hopworthy, show him the door."

"That isn't right," Clay declared firmly. "He certainly has some claim on you."

"On my estate—yes; but not on me," declared the old man, who took a deal of plain talk from his man, first and last.

"'Blood is thicker than water.'"

"Don't you believe it. I'd rather leave my money to found an asylum for stray cats than give it to George Borrow."

But Clay knew he did not mean this. The old man was impulsively generous. Clay read over again the last letter from young Borrow, and there was a desperation in it that killed the dislike he had for the fellow. The writer of that letter was in serious difficulties.

If George Borrow could appear before his uncle at the proper moment, and approach him in the right way, Clay was sure he could obtain the help he needed. He thought over the matter for twenty-four hours.

Then he usurped an authority he did not possess and wrote to George Borrow. The old gentleman had that very day drawn two thousand dollars from the bank. He paid many of his smaller debts in cash, and it was near the first of the month.

"Your uncle has the fifteen hundred dollars you have requested by him, at this moment. If you address him in the right way I believe he will let you have it. He has forbidden me to let you in; but if you call to-morrow I will disobey him," he wrote.

He sent the note down to the Slocum Manufacturing Company by special messenger that very afternoon, and then, when excused by the old gentleman, took his way to Mrs. Lemmon's with a lighter heart than usual.

"I've done the decent thing, anyway," he told himself.

That evening Brent finished the last of the music for the play. They had found somebody to typewrite the libretto and wait for the pay, and the first act was in book form. Clay was nearly suited with the second act.

"Only the lyrics," he groaned. "They're rotten, Brent! I'm no poet."

"Pooh! You don't need to be to write songs," grunted the composer.

Clay had nothing to call him to the Amboyne that evening. It was eight o'clock, his usual hour, when he unlocked Mr. Borrow's door the next morning.

The instant he stepped inside he saw, by the fact that the shades were drawn at the sitting-room windows, that the old gentleman was not astir.

Then he observed that the electric lights were turned on over the reading-table. This startled him. He hurried to the door of the old man's bedroom.

His employer was stretched upon the floor, under an open window, dead!

CHAPTER XVI.

A TANGLE OF THREADS.

The dividing walls and doors of the Amboyne were sound-proof. The windows of the suite looked out upon an inner court, so it was very quiet at all hours.

Now, as Clay Hopworthy stood transfixed in the doorway of the bedchamber, the silence of the rooms, as well as that awful object on the floor, chilled him with fear. The place was like a tomb.

The horror of his discovery kept Clay standing there, speechless and motionless, for some moments. There was nothing to do for the old man; he knew he was dead.

He lay upon his back, his face discolored, his lips apart, his eyes wide open and glaring. He had died by strangulation, and he had been dead some hours, without doubt.

Clay could not touch the body. He only gazed upon it, shaking, gasping, the tears running down his cheeks.

That old man, inoffensive, with only a short time to live at the best, to be murdered in this horrible manner! For

cold-blooded, heartless murder he believed it to be. The face showed that.

And why? The object? Not hard to find. Indeed, it was only too plain.

Mr. Borrow's desk stood in this bedroom, and Clay had seen him lock his money into a certain drawer of that desk a hundred times.

That particular drawer was smashed and lying empty upon the carpet. Robbery had been the object; murder the unexpected incident.

The young man was confused and frightened. What would happen to *him* when the authorities discovered the matter?

He had been Mr. Borrow's only companion. He had known of the money; indeed, he went to the bank for the two thousand dollars the previous forenoon. He had not left the suite until after they both came up from dinner in the evening.

It was a situation to set any thoughtful man's nerves aquiver. Clay was tempted to steal out of the rooms, depart from the hotel, and run away entirely without even giving the alarm.

How many times the innocent are considered guilty—at first, at least! Suppose he should be arrested and thrown into a cell to await the result of the police investigation.

Indeed, this thought gaining such power over him, he crept away from the bedroom-door and approached the outer one. His hand was already on the knob when the bell beside him rang with startling suddenness.

He fell back from the door, shaking in terror. It was as though the hand of the law had been dropped upon his shoulder.

But after a moment he gathered some courage, straightened his face, and prepared to face the matter out. The bell rang again sharply.

Clay opened the door. There stood George Borrow—alone.

The shock that had smitten Clay when he looked into the bedroom at the dead man was as nothing to *this*. Uncle Daniel Borrow lay on the floor of the next room; here stood George Borrow, called to the house by Clay's note to see the old man!

Young Borrow's face was at best not handsome. Now its expression did not add to its beauty. It seemed as though several emotions were struggling for control of his countenance.

"I—I must see Mr. Borrow," he burst out, advancing one foot into the room.

Clay had a mad desire to slam the door in his face and shut him out. Yet he had advised Borrow to come here this very day for the purpose of moving his uncle's hard heart.

He had intended to let him in and allow him to see the old man suddenly, after begging George to say or do nothing to excite him.

"I wish to see my uncle," repeated Borrow, with more emphasis.

He could not fail to see that Clay was greatly disturbed. He eyed him coldly and suspiciously.

Clay stood aside and the door swung to.

"Come!" exclaimed the visitor. "Where is he?"

Clay, still wordless, nodded toward the bedchamber. Borrow looked about the sitting-room with quick suspicion.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Isn't he up? Am I too early? Didn't you write me to call?"

"Yes," whispered Clay huskily.

"Then what's the matter?"

"I—I have just come in," stammered Clay. "I have just got here."

"Don't you sleep here?"

"No. I live on the next street."

"Ah!" muttered Borrow.

He crossed in front of Clay and went toward the doorway of the bedroom. The other wished to scream, but could not. He only gasped and a lump rose in his throat.

Suddenly Borrow uttered a shout. He dashed into the bedroom and Clay heard him fall on his knees beside the body.

"Uncle! uncle! My God, he's hurt!" he cried. Then, in a tone of horror: *"He's dead."*

Clay staggered after him. He saw Borrow pounce down upon the still body again, rip off the tie and tear away the collar, throwing both away from him.

"It's no use! it's no use!" he found himself saying to the nephew. "He's been dead a long while."

"How do you know that?" snapped George Borrow, turning swiftly on him.

Clay winked hard and opened his mouth twice without speaking. Then his wandering eye caught at a straw.

"The bed!" he whispered. "Don't you see it hasn't been slept in?"

"It's so!" admitted Borrow, still looking at him.

"My God!" gasped Clay. "You don't think——"

"I don't know what to think. Have you called anybody?"

"I just found it out. It made me sick. I don't know what to do."

"Send for a doctor—first."

"Oh! Dr. Simonsby."

Clay ran to the telephone. He knew where to find the family physician in whom old Mr. Borrow had put such trust.

He rang up the medical man and asked him to come to the Amboyne as quickly as possible.

"Some—something terrible has happened to Mr. Borrow!" he said.

Then he came back to the bedroom. Young Borrow was sitting in a chair and looking thoughtfully upon the corpse. It was evident that he had already examined the rifled desk.

"Robbery," he said, without looking at Clay. "Are you the person who wrote me yesterday?"

"I am."

"My uncle had money here, then?"

"Nearly two thousand dollars."

"You knew all about it, did you?" and the query was accompanied this time by a sudden sharp look.

"I did. Otherwise I should not have written you what I did."

"Humph!" grunted the nephew. Then he added, in a different tone: "Do you see that line about his neck? He was strangled with a cord."

"Do you believe it? It doesn't seem anybody would be so cruel."

"Bah! if the robber was discovered at his work of course he'd do for the old man."

"Horrible!" murmured Clay. "When do you suppose it was done? I did not leave here until near eight o'clock."

"I suppose you can prove that?" suggested Borrow sharply.

Clay flushed and then paled.

"I can," he said coldly. "I spoke to the clerk as I went out, giving him an order for Mr. Borrow. He will remember."

"Lucky your skirts seem clear, then," muttered Borrow. Then he added: "And he was alive at nine o'clock, I know."

"How do you know?"

"Because I called here," admitted the fellow coolly.

It was Clay's turn to look strangely at *him*. He could not speak for a minute. Then Borrow added:

"I called to try to see him. They telephoned up-stairs here for me. He refused to see me. That was at nine o'clock."

"Then—then we are both cleared of any suspicion," stammered Clay.

"It seems so," returned the other, and at the moment the bell at the door rang again.

Dr. Simonsby lived only a few steps from the Amboyne. He had come right up in the elevator without having his name telephoned from the office.

A single glance he gave Clay as he entered; by it he seemed to read what had happened and turned quickly to shut out the curious people in the hall before saying a word. The boy at the switchboard down-stairs had undoubtedly circulated the report that Mr. Borrow was ill.

The doctor went into the bedroom and without uttering a word examined the body as it lay on the floor. Clay followed him on tiptoe. Young Borrow still sat there as though entranced.

"He's dead. He's been dead for a long time. Who discovered this?" asked the doctor, in a shaking voice.

"This fellow," Borrow said, indicating Clay.

But the doctor did not notice the nephew. His question had been addressed to Clay.

"I came in just before eight o'clock. Mr. Borrow called a few moments later."

"Whom have you told? Do the police know?"

"No, sir," said Clay, in answer to the last question.

"They should be told! they should be told!" exclaimed George Borrow, jumping up. "I'll telephone."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," commanded Dr. Simonsby shortly. Then to

Clay: "What's the meaning of that broken desk?"

"He had a lot of money in it," gasped Clay.

"Robbed?"

"Yes, sir. It was that way when I came in."

"How much money?"

"I don't know just how much. I drew two thousand from the bank for him yesterday."

"Ach! the old fool!" muttered the doctor tenderly. "I told him to pay by check. Ah, ah!" and he sighed.

Suddenly he looked up at Clay again and said: "Telephone to Miss Kendrickson."

Clay hurried away to do his bidding; but Borrow leaped up again, this time in wrath.

"Let me tell you, doctor, you are using a very authoritative manner here. *I* shall take charge of my uncle——"

"You will do nothing of the kind, sir. How came you here this morning, anyway? You are a human buzzard," declared the doctor harshly. "You and all your crew will settle about the old man now, and pick his estate to pieces. But not just yet. I am in command."

"The police will be in command in a very short time, sir!" cried Borrow, shaking his fist at the medical man.

"Indeed! And what for, sir?"

"Because my uncle has been murdered. It is a case for the police."

"If he has been murdered, it is a case for the coroner," returned Simonsby.

Clay heard no more, for he closed the door so that he might telephone. But it seemed awful that those two men should quarrel there in the presence of death.

He 'phoned Miss Kendrickson, told her the truth plump (he knew she was the kind of a woman who could better stand this than suspense), and then went back to the bedroom.

Young Borrow was in the sulks. The doctor was writing a letter.

"Take this to the address at once, Mr. Hopworthy," said the latter to Clay, folding his note and sealing the envelope.

Clay knew enough to obey without question. He was only too glad that the doctor had taken the control of affairs.

When he stepped out of the elevator in the office the clerk was waiting for him.

"Is it true, Mr. Hopworthy? Is the old gentleman really dead?"

Clay nodded. He was ready for tears and could scarcely speak without breaking down.

"And all alone there! The poor old man. When do you suppose it happened?"

"After nine o'clock last night, at any rate," Clay said, at last.

"How do you know?"

"His nephew was here and called him up."

"I remember—I remember!" exclaimed the clerk. "The old gentleman refused to see him. They weren't friendly?"

"I couldn't say," returned Clay stiffly.

"The young chap was mighty cut up. He went up, anyway."

"What?" gasped Clay.

"So Johnny, the porter, says. Saw him ringing at Mr. Borrow's door a little later. He went up the stairs, I suppose. They must have had some quarrel, and that's why the old gentleman wouldn't let him in."

"Oh, hush!" exclaimed Clay, and hurried out.

But he was so weak he could scarcely stand. George Borrow had not taken "No" for an answer and had tried to see his uncle even after being refused an audience over the telephone.

But he had said nothing about it when he told Clay he had called at nine o'clock in the evening.

"Did he get in? Mr. Borrow might have thought his ring at the door was that of one of the hotel people. Did he get in?" repeated Clay, over and over.

"This is a terrible thing. The old man killed, his desk rifled—and Borrow needed the money! God! what am I saying?

"And on top of it all *I* was the one who advised him to come. Could they have quarreled and the old man have died in one of those fits?

"No, no! He was strangled—by a cord, Borrow says. Ah! why should he have said that? Does he know more than he should?"

He staggered into the nearest drug-store, told the druggist he must have some stimulant, and downed a glassful of drug-store brandy.

It made him deathly ill and it was an hour before he could go on to do Dr. Simonsby's errand. This delay was most unfortunate—for him.

Several most important matters happened in that hour.

(To be continued.)

SHANGHAIED.

BY FREDERIC REDDALE.

What fell out to a sailorman minus a job, and the surprising turn given to the uprising of a mutinous crew.

IN the autumn of 1885 I was counting the paving-stones of South Street, New York, being that useless shore encumbrance, a sailorman out of a job.

I had served as second and first mate in deep-water ships for a matter of six years, and had besides a master's certificate in my chest. On my last voyage, while running up the coast in a dense fog, my ship, the Flying Chief, took the ground off Barnegat during my watch.

We hauled off with no more damage than the loss of our false keel, but the owners promptly discharged me, and I found the office-door of every ship-owner in New York shut in my face.

For six weeks I tramped the docks, until my ready money was about gone. Fortunately, I was single, with no one dependent on me but my old mother over in Brooklyn, and there was enough in savings-bank to keep her from want.

I had about concluded to begin all over again, and ship before the mast once more, when the adventure befell which produced such startling results.

It was a cold, rainy, and foggy night in October, and I had been over to Greenville to see my former captain. He, too, was on the waiting list. Coming back I took a boat from Communipaw, intending to walk around the lower part of the city to Wall Street Ferry.

It was after midnight, and on arriving at the ferry-house I found the boats there had ceased running. There was nothing for it but to walk a few blocks farther and try Fulton Ferry.

Now, I protest I was sober—not being a friend of the drink at any time. South Street at midnight is about deserted, and, as I have said, the night was thick with fog and wet; out of the haze overhead I could dimly see the flying jibbooms of the liners at their wharves forking out across the dirty thoroughfare like fingers of fate.

I had covered half the distance, and already the lights of Fulton Ferry were looming through the mist, when I heard a queer pitapat of rubber-shod feet behind me. Half turning my head to see, I caught the hissing whisper:

"Soak him, Barney!"

It was a word and a blow—a crashing though noiseless stroke across my temples, and I dropped like a log. When I came to my senses, with an aching head, I found myself on the floor of a high and roomy deck-house, and the first sight that greeted my dazed eyes was a red-headed giant standing over me, his foot raised to repeat the kick which he had just landed in my side.

I rolled over to escape the blow, scrambled to my feet, and made a break for the sliding door. I stumbled into the open air of a glorious autumn day, the muck all gone, and found myself on the main deck of a tall ship, deeply laden, from over whose high bows and headgear there came blowing the steam and smoke of a tug.

In an instant the truth flashed upon me. I had been shanghaied—struck down by "crimps," carried aboard while insensible, and shipped before the mast; bundled to sea with not a rag save the thinnish suit of blue serge in which I stood.

Mechanically I felt in my pockets. They were empty; even my handkerchief

was gone, along with pipe, watch, money, and a plain gold ring which had been my father's.

The red-headed man stood in the doorway of the deck-house, looking at me with a sardonic grin on his ugly phiz.

"Guess you'll turn to now!" he snarled, with as much feeling as though speaking to a dog. "Get that main-hatch tarpaulin stretched along, and step lively!"

There was appended a choice string of profanity, in which my eyes, my limbs, and my sacred ego were all consigned to everlasting torment.

In a glance I knew him. He was Si Hogan, and I had been first mate over him voyage before last. In those few seconds I also had arrived at a clear understanding of my position.

I was once more a foremast hand, tumbled on board by some boarding-house shark the night before; penniless, shipped for a long voyage with nothing between me and nakedness but the ship's slop-chest!

I knew enough of salt-water discipline to realize that it would be useless to "kick." I must e'en make the best of a bad job.

Hogan I knew for a brute and a bully—one of those down-east ruffians, found only in American ships, more's the pity, whose code in dealing with a crew consists of hard words and harder knocks. The ship in which he sailed was more than likely to be a floating Hades, unless the skipper kept him in check.

All this, I say, flashed through my still aching head while I stood recovering my breath after my unceremonious exit on deck. But in that brief interval I got my bearings.

"Ay, ay, sir!" I answered nimbly enough, and then:

"What ship might this be, Mr. Hogan?" I inquired.

He started, and stepped half-threateningly, half-uncertainly toward me.

"Who—what the——" he was beginning, when I determined to assist his wits.

"You've a short memory, Mr. Hogan," I said. "Don't you remember Miles Bantock, first mate of the old Iroquois?"

"By the holy jumping Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed, "what you doin' here?"

"Shanghaied, I suppose," I returned, "but as I was upon the point of signing on A. B. once more, it doesn't matter much, except that I should rather have come aboard in shipshape fashion," indicating my wholly unsuitable shore toggery.

"May I be everlastingly transported to the hottest Tophet that ever sizzled!" was the sense of his next exclamation, though the terms were more forcibly direct and primitive. "This'll be nuts for the old man!" and he slapped his thigh in huge and brutal delight.

"Does your 'old man' happen to want a mate this morning?" I inquired with a grin.

"Not by a blame sight he don't!" was the reply.

My cool and jaunty acceptance of the situation rather staggered him.

All this time I was sweating at the heavy tarpaulin, getting it unrolled ready for battening down. Apparently forgetful of discipline, Hogan continued:

"What you goin' to do about it?"

"Stick it out, I reckon," I replied. Then straightening up and looking him squarely in the eye, I added:

"I know my work, Mr. Hogan, and I don't need any of your peculiar persuading!"

He laughed a short laugh, mirthless as the bark of a dog.

"Well, I dare say you do," he said, "an' I don't see as you can help yourself, but you'll find there's a sweet lot o' swabs aboard," and with these words he strode aft, knocking down a man in the road, by way of keeping his hand in.

By this time we were running smartly on the heels of the tug down the Swash, and soon she would be casting off.

"All hands make sail!" shouted Hogan from the break of the poop.

The wind was about sou'west, and hence the old familiar cry, "Hoist stays'ls and inner jib!" found me ready at the halyards. The fore-and-aft canvas sheeted home, there came the order:

"Set tops'ls and t'gall'ns'ls," and soon the black yards were alive with a crowd of picturesque figures clad in clothes of every imaginable cut and color. I deliberately chose the upper maintopsail

yard, and gave the cry "Sheet home!" before the fellows had cast off the gaskets of the other square sails.

Then came Hogan's hail from the deck.

"You, Bantock, loose the maint'gallant an' royal!" This was boys' work, but as no watches had been set, it was anybody's job. As I shinned down a backstay and gained the deck, eight bells were struck, and "all hands" were summoned.

We were a motley crew—twenty-six of us all told—for the ship was a lumping big boat, carrying three royal yards. There were four Irishmen, a Finn, a Lascar, a couple of Ratcliffe Highway lads, and several Germans, or "Dutchmen."

Being divided into watches, I found myself in the port division, which was the first mate's, and then we were told to get breakfast.

The deck-house was a fairly comfortable affair, as such sea-parlors go—clean, light, and airy. A long table ran on stanchions fore and aft, and there were benches at each side lengthy enough to accommodate each watch.

Back of the benches were the bunks, double-deckers, six on a side, for which we proceeded to draw lots, and I was lucky enough to get a lower bunk amidships. But that was all—for I had neither mattress nor blanket.

This was my first chance really to get acquainted with my mates, and I soon found that I was the only American in the crew. Among other things I learned that the ship was the Shanadoah, bound round the Horn to San Francisco; that the first mate was a "putty man"; that the second mate was a "holy terror"; that the "old man," meaning the captain, was a drunken hypocrite, and so forth.

From all of which it seemed as though we should be anything but a happy ship.

Grumbling began at our first meal, for the grub was execrable—the hard-tack moldy and weevilly; the tea simply something dark and evil-smelling, sweetened with coarse molasses; this was our breakfast.

One or two old shellbacks munched and drank the stuff stolidly enough, but most of the watch turned away in disgust, as I did myself, and the ship, her owners, and her officers were cursed in half a dozen different dialects.

In their rough way the fellows commiserated my personal plight, and first a pillow, then a blanket, were tossed into my empty bunk. But I lacked everything else—boots, jacket, coarse shirts, a knife, and oilskins, to say nothing of pipe and tobacco.

I foresaw that an early visit to the slop-chest was an absolute necessity.

As soon as the port watch had breakfast, we went on deck, and the starboard watch went below. We were speedily hustled to work about the decks, the other watch having made all plain sail. It was my trick at the wheel, and I took an early opportunity of stating my wants to the chief mate.

I noticed that he gave me a queer cock of his eye when I mentioned the slop-chest.

He was a little man, named Coker, and a good seaman, far and away the best man aft. He had heard my story from Hogan, and in a few words he let me know that he sympathized with my unique position. Discipline forbade him to say more.

"When Captain Milligan appears, he'll introduce you to the lady who runs the slop-chest on this hooker." And without giving time to ask questions, he waved me forward, my two hours' trick being over.

A lady! Who could it be? Not the stewardess, for I had seen no signs of a petticoat about the decks. Perhaps some relation of the skipper's. However, at seven bells there was a halloo sent forward for "Tom Smith."

"Tom Smith's wanted aft!" "Tom Smith!" "Here, Smith!" "Hey, Smith!" went echoing and booming aloft into the swelling canvas.

I was yelling for Tom Smith as lustily as the others, when I felt a friendly push from the bos'n.

"It's you they want, ye blazing fool!" he exclaimed. "Get away aft wi' ye!"

Then the truth flashed upon me. I appeared on the ship's articles as "Tom Smith," the crimps having robbed me of name as well as liberty.

I trotted nimbly aft, and through one of the sliding doors that opened into the

cuddy off the main deck. There I confronted the skipper and—a lady, as I suppose she'd desire to be called.

Captain Milligan was a pocket edition of his second mate, Silas Hogan—short and thick, with a mat of red beard under his chin, and a long, cleanly shaven upper lip. His eyes were small and cunning like a pig's, and about as expressionless; his ears were immense, and flared away from the side of his head like a pair of stuns'ls; his voice reminded you of nothing so much as a rusty key grating in a lock; an inflamed and bulbous nose told of deep and constant potations.

His companion was built on a more generous model physically, being a good head taller than the skipper; for a walk she had a waddle, with that solid set of the heels which some women acquire on the shady side of forty-five; she was very primly dressed in some shiny black stuff, with a huge dinner-plate of a brooch at her collar. Her grayish black hair was plastered smoothly on either temple; she had a double chin, bold, cruel black eyes, and an aggressive "no-nonsense-with-me-my-man" sort of manner. In a word, she was, as I divined, a vixen and the real boss of the ship.

"Why didn't you answer to your name?" inquired Captain Milligan fiercely.

"Because I didn't hear it, sir," I replied quietly. "Tom Smith is not my name. I was sand-bagged and shanghaied last night, and that's a crimp's title. I never signed articles for this voyage."

"Your mark's there, anyhow," said the skipper.

"Very likely," I rejoined nonchalantly. "We know how those things are done, sir. My real name is Miles Bantock, formerly mate of the ships Iroquois and Flying Chief, and I hold a master's certificate. Your second mate, Mr. Hogan, can corroborate this."

"That's as may be," sneered the captain, with a disagreeable leer which made my fingers itch to knock him down, while Mrs. Milligan sniffed insultingly. "The ship's got all the mates she wants this voyage, an' Tom Smith you'll remain. There's too many ignorant mates knockin' about. Lost your last ship, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't," I answered shortly. Another sniff.

"Mr. Coker tells me you want some slops," he went on. "Let's have the list, then. Mrs. Milligan takes charge of the slop-chest on this ship."

"I want some half-boots, a flannel shirt, oilskins, trousers, some socks, a knife, a belt, a pipe and tobacco," was my answer.

The lady of the slop-chest made a list of the things as I called them off.

"That all?" he inquired.

"That's all," was my laconic answer.

"Come back at eight bells and they'll be ready for you," and with that he waved me away.

Promptly at eight bells I presented myself in the cuddy again, and found my purchases in a pile on the floor. This time I had to deal with Mrs. Milligan alone.

"There you are, young man," she said, proceeding to check off each item from her list. "Boots, five dollars; shirt, two an' a half; trousers, three an' a half; oilers, seven dollars; two pair of socks, one dollar; belt, dollar an' a half; knife, one dollar; pipe, fifty cents; tobacco, fifty cents; total, twenty-two dollars an' a half, and I hope this will be a warning to you to let strong drink alone in future!"

As the old "she-devil" announced the prices, and I handled each article, I could not suppress a whistle of amazement.

It was robbery on the high-seas! The things were of the cheapest and commonest, at top prices. I had spent nearly two months' wages in less than half an hour, and what I had to show for the money I could have bought on West Street or the Highway for less than half, and got better goods.

But 'twas useless to haggle—the things I must have. The pipe was a cheap wooden affair with a rubber mouthpiece, and on shore would have been dear at a quarter; the tobacco was common plug, and she had charged me half a dollar for two squares—worth fifteen cents at any shop.

Despite my burning indignation at being fleeced, it was laughably tragic to see this prim and pious old lady selling

her trash at a thousand per cent profit, and trafficking on the necessities of the poor devils who manned her husband's shipmen who need a friend more than any other class in the world, and upon whom, in an emergency, the safety of that ship depended.

She looked me up and down with her brazen black eyes as I fingered the goods, and inquired with some asperity if the articles were not good enough for me? I could not resist giving her a shot, as I rolled my purchases into a bundle and stuffed the pipe and tobacco into my pocket, at the risk of her reporting me to the skipper for insolence.

"Have you any cigars?" I inquired. "I rather think I sha'n't be able to afford much of your tobacco. Or perhaps you have some champagne that isn't too dear?"

"This is a temperance ship, young man," she snapped back, "and I wish it was an anti-tobacco ship likewise!"

"The devil it is!" I thought, as I went on deck; "then the temperance is all forward, as I'm a sinner!" For neither grog nor rum was served out on board.

My watch were at dinner as I entered the deck-house and pitched the goods into my bunk.

"Smith's been shopping!" "How much did she soak you?" "Expect to have any pay to take up when we git to Frisco?" were some of the gibes with which I was greeted.

"I've been robbed!" said I shortly.

"In course you has!" retorted a black-haired young Englishman named Jack Harris. "W'y, I 'eard the ole girl tell Coker that she made six hundred dollars out of 'er bloomin' slop-chest last voyage! 'Ow's that, matey?"

"I shouldn't have been surprised if it had been six thousand," I returned, while fishing about in the mess-kid for a bit of beef that was not all hide and gristle. "She charged me Fifth Avenue prices for Bowery goods—and mighty poor Bowery at that. What do you say to paying fifty cents for this pipe, and a quarter for this little cake of plug?"

"The bloomin' old she-pirate!" exclaimed Harris, and every man in the watch growled as though he had been personally swindled.

"Tell 'ee wot, mates," exclaimed a short and fat seaman who answered to the contradictory nickname of "Bones," "the grub on this cursed hooker ain't fit for swine. *I* ain't had no dinner!"

"Same here!" growled the others.

"Somethin's goin' to happen if we ain't fed better, that's wot!" continued Bones, as he flung himself into his bunk, smoking furiously.

II.

WELL, it is not my purpose to give you a daily diary of this eventful voyage. The food got worse, if possible, as the days rolled by, and the men, sulky and half-starved, were driven to their tasks by Hogan with blows and brutal language, in which he was abetted by the skipper.

The note of a chantey was never heard; the crew refused to sing. There was scarcely a man who did not have a broken nose, a gashed lip, or a lump on his head, to say nothing of body bruises. Me, the mate let alone; of abuse I got my share, but of blows none. The ship was literally hell with the lid off.

Appeal to Captain Milligan was useless; he was seldom sober, but drunk or sober he always backed up Hogan. I pitied First Mate Coker from the bottom of my heart; he would take no part in hazing the men, and consequently the captain and Hogan hazed him as far as they dared.

However, long before we were up with the line, Coker fell ill and kept his cabin. For a week he did not appear on deck. Then, one day, we ran in under the lee of Barbadoes; a colored pilot put off, Coker was helped over the side, and we saw him no more.

This did not help matters aboard the Shanadoah. Coker had been the only gentleman aft, and with him out of the ship the two blackguards had things their own way.

The men never ceased grumbling, night or day, and threats of violence were made every hour of the twenty-four. The skipper took the first mate's watch, otherwise the cruel routine was unchanged, except that Coker's absence seemed to remove the last restraints of decency from Milligan and Hogan.

The former was never sober; the lat-

ter fairly reveled in profanity and brutality; he could not give the simplest order without tailing on a torrent of abuse, which was more often than not driven home by a blow from his huge, hairy fist, a belaying-pin, or the butt-end of a revolver.

We were nearly dismasted in a white squall in about ten degrees south, being caught all aback, the ship forced on her beam-ends, solid seas curling over the lee bulwarks, and the water waist-high on the main deck.

It was "cut away" and "let go," and we only saved the ship and her spars by working like madmen for our lives. The skipper was scared out of his drunken wits, but Hogan stormed and threatened and bullied it through as usual, and when we were out of the mess he knocked a man down because he stopped to finish coiling a halyard before obeying some small order.

The crisis would have come then, for we were all tired out and mad clean through, but Captain Milligan ordered a pig to be killed and served out to the crew, and for the first time since leaving port we had a square meal. But the false calm did not last long.

We took the trade-wind in about twenty degrees south, and started on our long reach down the Atlantic parallels for the Horn.

Never was the old adage about how great a matter a small fire kindleth better exemplified. It was Mrs. Milligan's slop-chest that started the trouble.

As the Horn drew near, the men began to overhaul their scanty wardrobes, getting out woolen shirts, heavy socks, and furbishing up oilskins and sou'-westers—those who had them, that is. And a pitiful array of crazy duds they were.

The old hands aboard knew what the passage of the Horn meant, even in summer; warm clothing was an imperative necessity, and so, one by one, they made requisitions upon the supplies kept by Mrs. Milligan in the lazaret, only to come back swearing till they were black in the face at the outrageous prices charged, and vowing all sorts of vengeance.

It was maddening to think of that old harridan sitting there at the receipt of custom, exacting double and treble prices for her shoddy goods, meeting the clumsy objections of the men with pious ejaculations and Scripture texts, and all the while knowing that she was imperiling the safety of the ship by her unholy greed for gain. So the farce had its tragic side as well.

As for me, I "blew in" another month's wages before I felt fairly well equipped for the passage of the bleak and biting waters off Cape Horn.

We were in latitude forty-eight degrees south and longitude fifty-five degrees west, with the Falklands somewhere in the black haze to starboard, looking up for the Cape close-hauled, the wind southwest, with a dark and greasy swell out of the south'ard.

It was bitterly cold for the time of year, and already our running-gear was stiff with frost and the canvas like sheets of iron in our numbed fingers. We had been half-starved and wholly maltreated for weeks, and the hardest part of the voyage was at hand.

We were a sullen and an ugly crew, and yet a smarter set of hands never tallied on to halyards or swung out on the foot-ropes. I verily believe at that time there was murder in every man's heart, put there by cruelty and suffering.

At this juncture our tobacco gave out; the supply in both watches seemed to come to an end as if by magic. No one had any to lend, and it was comical to see the poor fellows going through the corners of their pockets, trying to scrape together half a pipeful of the precious black fragments.

But there was plenty on board—in the hated slop-chest—and no doubt we could have all we wanted if we chose to pay the Milligans' price. But such was their hatred of the skipper and his wife that many of the men preferred to suffer rather than meet her extortionate rates.

At last, four of the most insistent went aft, among them Jack Harris and the Lascar. They came back with blacker scowls than ever.

"Ho! mates, d'yer 'ear the noos?" sang out Harris. "The price o' 'baccy's gone up—I'm charged two bloomin' bob an' a arf for this," holding out a small square of plug half the usual size.

It was even so. Mrs. Milligan, perhaps finding her own stock getting low, or

more likely thinking it good business policy to make an additional profit out of the men's necessities, had doubled her prices!

That alone would have settled the fate of the Shanadoah so far as the crew was concerned. But a deeper tragedy was at hand.

We had in my watch a little fellow named Miggs—a Cockney—who was subject to epileptic fits. By common consent we always took especial care of him aloft; even Hogan respected his infirmity, and never ordered him into the rigging alone unless he was securely lashed.

Upon the afternoon following the episode of the tobacco the skipper was on deck, the mate being below. Miggs was at work in the mizzen rigging, secured by a life-line around his middle.

Suddenly the captain ordered him aloft to stow the mizzen-royal gasket which had worked adrift. Miggs sent a protesting glance at the deck, old Milligan storming away at him for his slowness, and then he started aloft.

Both watches were on deck, it being the second dog-watch, some stumping about to keep warm, others at work on various trifling jobs. We all heard the captain's order, and there were not a few growls of disgust at his drunken cruelty.

Miggs reached the mizzen-royal yard safely, and was in the act of passing the lee gasket, when he was seen to twist and quiver, his body bent and tautened in an arc, and losing his hold he fell backward and shot from that dizzy height into the sea!

There was an instant cry of "Man overboard!" from a dozen throats, and ere he touched the water twenty pairs of arms seized the braces, expecting an order to heave-to, while as many more attacked the gripes and lashings of the quarter-boat, when there came the arresting order from the skipper:

"Keep all fast with that boat, I tell ye!"

The ship was doing about five or six knots, plunging sullenly through a head sea. No order came to check our headway, and our cold-blooded commander stood calmly looking aft into the dusk, where poor Miggs had gone to his death.

Hogan, doubtless hearing our cries, rushed on deck; to him the captain said something in a low tone, and then went below as unconcernedly as though the ship's cat had gone overboard.

There was a chorus of hoarse and angry yells from the crew when it became clear that no effort was to be made to save our shipmate.

"They're a pair o' bloody murderers, that's wot!" shouted Harris, louder than the rest.

"What's that mutinous hound sayin'?" yelled Hogan, coming to the break of the poop, where he could look down on the main deck. "If any of you condemned and decayed scowbankers has anything to say about who's running this ship, let him come up here an' I'll give him his answer!"

So saying, he drew his revolver, and we heard it click as the hammer flew to full cock.

We were a cowardly lot, you'll say, yet such is the sense and the weight of authority at sea that very few crews, taken thus by surprise, would have done any more than we did—disperse growling about the darkening deck.

What actually took place between eight o'clock and midnight I knew only from hearsay, for I was confined to my bunk with a severe neuralgia. One side of my face was swollen to the size of a Dutch cheese, and, when I went aft to ask for some liniment, Hogan was considerate enough to growl out that I'd better turn in until morning, which you may be sure I was very glad to do.

As a matter of fact, my position on board had become a peculiar one. The crew had long since found out my rating and my history, and noticed that although I was one of them, so far as sharing their tasks and their wretched food went, I was about the only man aboard, saving the carpenter and the bos'n, who had not been manhandled by Hogan.

The men knew that I was a navigator, but, because I had resolutely refused to join in their mutinous talk, they had come to leave me out of their counsels.

Well, the port watch went on deck at eight o'clock that night, and glad enough I was to crouch down in my damp and scanty blankets and endeavor to seek oblivion from pain in sleep. I was roused at midnight by the calling of the star-

board watch and the tramping of heavy boots as my own watch came below.

I noticed that the men from the deck did not, as usual, immediately turn in, but sat around smoking and with an air of expectancy. Then I must have dozed off again.

I was awakened by a heavy hand on my shoulder, and opened my eyes to find a knot of men elbowing each other in the space between the berth and the table.

"Up you get, Bantock," said Jack Harris. "You're wanted in the cabin!"

"What's that?" I mumbled through my swollen jaw, rising to a sitting posture and throwing one leg over the side.

"Come along aft, an' ye'll see!" was the reply, and half-rushed, half-carried, I was borne along the deck—noticing, by the way, that the ship was hove-to—and into the cuddy.

There a strange sight met my eyes.

In the big swinging chair at the head of the table, securely lashed, sat Captain Milligan, his countenance doubly inflamed by rage and drink. A gag effectually stopped his speech.

In one corner, neatly trussed and likewise bound, his wrists tied together under his knees, lay Hogan. He, too, was gagged, while a great gashed bruise over his right eye showed that he had not yielded to numbers without putting up a stubborn fight.

"There they be, the bloody murderers!" shouted Harris, striding to the side of the deposed captain and shaking a dirty fist under his nose.

An ominous growl ran through the crowd of rough seamen, which boded ill for the captives. Every man was present save one solitary hand at the wheel.

"What have you done with Mrs. Milligan?" I asked.

For answer there came a furious fusillade of thumps and kicks on the inner side of the door of our former first mate's cabin, and the shrill though muffled cries of a scolding woman.

"She's in there, right enough!" said Bones. "She's wuss'n them, bein' a woman, but we ain't hurted her, an' she'll screech 'erself 'oarse 'fore long!" and he spat on the carpeted floor with infinite contempt and disgust.

I looked around on the strange scene—at the infuriated faces of the speechless captain and mate, and the no less angry crew.

"Well, mates," I said, as coolly as possible, "what's the meaning of all this?"

"It means the ship's ours!" retorted Harris; "it means that we're tired o' seein' murder done and bein' treated wuss'n gutter dogs; it means that you're goin' to take charge, seein' as you're the only navigator among us, an' that we're goin' to cut the bloomin' v'yage short right 'ere!"

"And suppose I decline?" I asked.

"Now see 'ere, matey, we don't want no trouble alonger you," said Bones truculently. "We've done all the dirty work, an' we're ready to take the blame if so be there's any blame comin'; but we means wot we says. If yer don't we'll make yer!" and he jerked his thumb significantly in the direction of the two prisoners.

"Tut, tut, man!" I rejoined quietly; "you can't scare me. I shall do what I think best for all hands, myself included!"

I took in the situation at a glance. The alternatives were awkward enough in either case.

My notions of discipline were too strict to permit me to look with favor upon mutiny or piracy, no matter how black the provocation. The two brutes had brought it upon themselves, and yet, as the only educated man forward, it lay in my power to mitigate the disaster, and perhaps save the ship and cargo.

I had no intention of being classed as a common mutineer, and thus ruin my future professional chances, to say nothing of spending a term in jail. So I sparred for time.

"What are your plans?" I asked, turning to Harris, who seemed to be ringleader and spokesman. "I suppose you know the penalty for this job when we get ashore?"

"Drat der penalty!" growled a big German, Hans Schmidt—nicknamed "Smiddy"; "vat's der penalty for lettin' a mans drown pefore our eyes—answer me dot!" he demanded fiercely, striking his fist in his palm.

Harris waved his hand for silence.

"'Ere's wot we've settled so far. We

want to head norrards where it's warm; we want some o' the cabin grub; an' we want them two murderers kep' in chokee until we gets into some civilized port, an' then we'll 'and 'em over to justice, as the story-books say. Ain't that it, mates?"

A chorus of assenting "Ays" was the quick rejoinder, and I listened in astonishment.

"Is that all?" I questioned. "There's to be no bloodshed—no fighting?"

"That's all!" assented Harris, "an' there'll be a blame sight less bloodshed on this hooker now them two devils is triced up!"

The men's plan was almost childlike in its simplicity, although full of endless difficulties, and proved that they were harmless enough at bottom. I began to see how to steer a fair course out of the mess, but I had to feel my way carefully.

"Men and mates," I began, "I'm free to say that the treatment in this ship has been shamefully and needlessly cruel," and here I faced Milligan and Hogan; "but I'll not disguise from you that I don't believe in this way of righting wrongs at sea; no good ever came of it, nor ever will. You know how I became one of you, and I've done my bit like a man, watch and watch. Yet I was the mate of a bigger ship than this last voyage, and I hope to be again. Consequently, I don't propose to let this mucking job ruin my chances of getting a vessel. I'll do as you wish, provided you'll sign a statement in the log to the effect that I had no hand in the mutiny, and that I was forced to take charge. Do you all agree?"

I looked around and into the weather-beaten faces of the crew, their motley clad figures swaying to the heave of the ship in the dim light of the cabin lamp.

Although Milligan and Hogan gave no sign, I had no doubt they heard every word I said. Even the old beldame in the cabin was quiet, probably with her ear to the keyhole trying to make out what was passing in the cuddy.

"That'll be all right, Mr. Bantock," said Harris quickly, giving me the quarter-deck handle to my name. "Any writin' you draw up we'll sign—eh, mates? An' now give us the course for the hequator, will 'ee? We're all tired o' bein' frozen as well as starved."

"The course will be nor'-by-east," I answered after a moment's reflection. "Get her head round, bos'n, and make all plain sail! You can go forward, men."

Thus quickly I assumed my newly bestowed authority.

I motioned Harris and the seaman called Bones to stay behind, and as soon as the decks resounded with the cheery songs of the men making sail, I said:

"What about the captain and mate? You can't keep them this way, you know."

"I've thought o' that," Harris responded, seating himself with cool assurance on a corner of the cabin-table. "We'll leg-iron 'em an' 'and-cuff 'em, an' keep 'em in their cabins!"

"You hear that, gentlemen?" I said, turning to the helpless skipper and the prostrate Hogan. "I shall want you both to witness that I had no hand in this matter, and I assure you that in acting as I am doing I believe I am saving you both from a worse fate. Better get it seen to at once," I continued, turning to Harris.

I went on deck, took a hasty look around, and then returned to the cuddy to see that there was no unnecessary brutality in dealing with the captives.

I found the carpenter and the bos'n already at work, and it was a comparatively easy matter to get the bilboes on both, bound as they were. Then the lashings were cut, the gags removed, and they hobbled to their respective cabins, speechless with rage and mortification, and Harris turned the keys.

Of Mrs. Milligan we heard no more that night. On deck the watches went on as before, while I caught brief naps on the cabin locker.

III.

NEXT morning found the ship under all plain sail, and doing a good twelve under a strong southerly breeze. Acting under the orders of the sailor Harris, the steward had broken out a plentiful supply of the cabin stores for the cook, and the appetizing smell wafted aft from the galley of rashers of ham, preserved potatoes, newly baked loaves of bread, and the steaming aroma of coffee that

was really coffee, told me that we were about to taste the first decent meal that had passed our lips in many weeks.

After breakfasting myself, while the carpenter kept the deck, and seeing that the prisoners' wants were attended to, I spruced up a bit, as became one in charge of so fine a ship as the Shanadoah, and then, in pursuance of a plan I had matured overnight, proceeded to interview Captain Milligan.

Before turning the key I knocked on his door and was bidden to enter.

I found him lying in his bunk in the only comfortable posture permitted by irons on ankles and wrists—namely, on his back with his hands clasped in front.

"Good morning, Captain Milligan," I began.

"Don't good morning me, you infernal two-faced mutinous hound!" was his furious rejoinder.

"So, my fine cock!" I said to myself, "that's your temper, is it?" and without another word I turned on my heel, and shut and locked the door, resolved to leave him to his thoughts for another twenty-four hours.

I did not go near Hogan, intending to deal with his master—and mine—first. Mrs. Milligan gave us no trouble, for when she learned that her husband and the mate were in irons, she became docile as a kitten, and hardly spoke above a whisper to the steward, who waited upon her.

The second morning found the skipper not quite so defiant when I entered his cabin, and he even grunted a response to my salutation. I went at once to the point.

"The situation on your ship, Captain Milligan," said I, "is none of my seeking or making. As you heard me tell the men, I don't believe in violence at sea on the part of either officers or crew. For what has happened you have wholly Mr. Hogan and yourself to blame. The men have been treated with needless brutality, and I regard the loss of poor Miggs as little short of deliberate murder."

If he could have killed me with a look, I had been a dead man then and there, but he simply gritted his teeth and held his tongue.

"You heard what the men are resolved on doing. I can't hinder them, and if I tried they'd probably send me to join you and your mate. When I consented to take charge it was solely with the idea of protecting the lives of yourself, your wife, and Mr. Hogan, and of saving the ship. But I've no notion of running my neck in a noose, and, if I consent to stand between you and the crew, I insist on your signing a statement which will acquit me of all blame. Will you sign such a paper?"

"I'll see you hanged first!" he shouted, jerking himself into a sitting posture. "Don't you come to me with any of your blasted palaver, you slumgullion! I know you and all your tribe, and I've seen your little game ever since you came aboard!" and he ran on in a burst of profanity which I escaped by making my exit and locking the door on him as before.

I found Hogan just as intractable, but twice as profane and foul-mouthed in his abuse of myself and the crew. He vowed he would "do for us," and land us all in jail when he got us ashore.

For his vile talk and impotent threats I cared little, but the mulish obstinacy of the precious pair bade fair to render futile all my well-meaning plans. I should say that the men kept a perpetual guard of two of their number on watch in the cuddy, and consequently every word of my interviews with the skipper and the mate was carried forward.

As I paced the deck that afternoon on the dog-watch, Harris came aft and said:

"They're a sweet lot, them two, burn me if they ain't!" jerking his thumb downward over the cuddy skylight.

"That's right!" was my emphatic rejoinder, "but let me tell you, my friend, that we've caught a pair of Tartars!" and leaving him to digest the remark I went below.

However, the events of the next week gave us little leisure to consider our deposed officers, we being more concerned with our own safety. On December fifteenth, being then in latitude forty-four degrees south and longitude thirty-eight west, we picked up a gale from the southwest, which by midnight had hardened into hurricane force.

We got the Shanadoah hove-to on the port tack under a number two storm try-

sail and a square of tarpaulin in the mizzen rigging, and there we lay for six days, making pretty good weather of it, the ship as tight as a new drum, but driving steadily to leeward and northeast toward the heart of the South Atlantic.

It was an anxious time for me, but through it all the crew behaved splendidly. True, there was little to be done, save relieve the wheel, although to ease our spars I had all three to'gallant masts housed and their yards and gear sent down.

For the first two days of the storm I made regular visits to Captain Milligan and Mate Hogan, only to be assailed with insulting queries as to how soon I intended to wreck the ship. These reflections upon my professional capacity merely served to confirm me in my resolve to stand by the men.

But the situation was a puzzler. I doubted if the men could carry out their plan to hand over the skipper and the mate to justice in any commercial port. A ship's captain is endowed with the most absolute authority anywhere on earth.

Naturally, the men's stories of cruelty and hunger would be denied; the death of Miggs could be explained by swearing that the ship's safety would have been jeopardized by attempting his rescue. If we went into port the American consul would take charge of the matter, and we stood to be sent home for trial on board the first United States war-ship that came along, after spending weeks in a malodorous prison.

In that event I saw but one conclusion —a certain term in jail for all hands, with a double dose for me as chief conspirator. From time to time I let the ringleaders among the men know my opinions on the matter, and what I thought of the final outcome of their escapade. Whereat they were certainly troubled.

The hurricane blew itself out in the evening of the twenty-first, and by midnight the stars were shining overhead and the sea was going down rapidly. We made sail once more, but at sunrise there was hardly enough wind to fill our topsails or to steady the ship in the heavy sea still running.

But it was a glorious morning, warm and genial, and after breakfast I put both watches to work stepping our to'gallant masts, and by noon we were creeping along under royals, the canvas and our wet clothes drying rapidly in the sun.

At noon I took the first observation possible in nearly a week, and being anxious to learn our drift and the ship's position, I went straight to the cabin to work out my sights. I found our situation to be latitude thirty-seven degrees eight minutes south and longitude twelve degrees three minutes west.

My entry in the log-book was hardly dry when I heard a cry on deck, a scuffling of running feet, and immediately one of the hands put his head in the open skylight and called out:

"There's land right ahead, Mr. Bantock!"

I sprang on deck, and there, sure enough, right over our starboard bow was a great hump, of a pearly tint, in shape not unlike that of the Peak of Teneriffe. Although I had never sighted it before, I knew at once that it must be the island of Tristan d'Acunha, a mass of cold lava and cinders which rises nearly nine thousand feet above the sea.

Harris and Bones and two or three others came crowding aft to where I stood.

"Wot is it? Wot land's that, Mr. Bantock?" they panted. "'Tain't the coast o' South Ameriky, is it?"

"No," I answered, and gave them the name of the island, adding: "There will be two smaller islets in sight before long, Nightingale Island and Inaccessible Island."

"Be they inhabited?" queried one.

I told them that Tristan was certainly peopled, having been a British colony since the Napoleonic wars. So far as my recollection went, the population numbered not over a hundred souls, mostly of English and Dutch descent, the islanders supporting themselves by breeding a few cattle, sheep and goats, and growing vegetables, which they traded to whaling ships.

After absorbing this little budget the men went forward, and stood in groups gazing at the solitary peak planted midway in the vast expanse of ocean between Cape Horn and Agulhas, and talking earnestly together in twos and threes.

Well, all that afternoon we crept ahead, until by sunset we were not more than five miles distant from the largest island. Then the breeze completely left us, the sea flattened out like a sheet of satin, and all night we lay softly heaving to the unbroken swell without so much as steerage way.

The men in both watches were up and down continually, and the gleams of the rising sun had scarcely dispelled the wreaths of mist curling around the crest of the gigantic peak than I saw that something new was afoot among them.

A light air came breathing out of the west, and at six bells we were creeping ahead under plain sail, slowly opening out the westward angle of the island. The charts told me that the only landing-place was on the northerly side, and I was ogling the forbidding surge-beaten coast through the ship's glass when Harris came aft and said:

"Mr. Bantock, the men'd like to speak to you, if it's convenient."

I looked around and found all hands gathered on the main deck in evident expectancy, and all looking my way.

"What's up now, Harris?" I asked.

"If you'll step forrard, sir, you'll 'ear wot's in our minds."

In answer to my glance of inquiry little Harris began:

"We've bin turnin' over wot yer said about them two devils bestin' us arter all w'en we gits ashore! D'yer still think, Mr. Bantock, 't we carn't jail 'em for wot they've done?"

"I think the odds are they'll jail us, and that's my honest opinion," I replied as impressively as possible. "You may take your individual oaths that, if tall swearing will do it, Milligan and Hogan will prove that we're a parcel of skulking scowbankers; their cruelty will be glossed over as necessary to the ship's discipline; the remainder of the junk they call provisions will be tossed overboard, and they'll make us out a lot of vicious mutineers. They'll swear that they did not overstep the law of the sea—and neither you nor I can prove that they did."

This was the simple truth. The many cruel incidents of the voyage—the execrable food, the brutal assaults on the crew, the extortions of the captain's wife, even the callous indifference to the fate of poor Miggs, bitter and vivid memories though they were to the crew, would sound quite tame and trivial when told before a magistrate.

My opinion did not seem to disconcert the men. With a quiet grin Harris rejoined:

"Well, sir, we've got a card up our sleeve as'll trump all that!"

"Indeed!" said I; "then for heaven's sake play it!"

"You say that there island's inhabited, and that ships does often touch there?"

I nodded.

"Then 'ere's wot we mean to do—put 'em ashore there an' leave 'em!"

The proposition took my breath away.

At first blush all my professional instincts revolted at the idea, for to every well-trained seaman the person of his captain is sacred. But a glance at the faces of the crew showed me that they had determined upon this course and would carry it out despite anything I might do or say, and the plan certainly solved our present difficulty.

However, there was another side to be considered.

"Let me tell you," I went on, "that you are simply accumulating trouble for yourselves when you do reach port. I don't know what the punishment is for marooning one's captain and mate, but I should say it must be pretty stiff. Have you men thought of that?"

Harris, the little daredevil, chuckled: "Yes, we've figgered that out, an' once the old man's over the side we'll tell 'ee 'ow we're goin' to manage!"

I shrugged my shoulders, saying: "You'll do as you like, anyway, so what's the use of jawing. But you'll never get them to enter a boat willingly; you can't send them adrift without the use of their arms and legs, and if you take off the irons, why stand by!"

Here the seaman Bones broke in with a disgusted air:

"Oh, you be blowed! We'll hist 'em over the side, tow 'em ashore, an' let the natives turn 'em loose!"

Evidently the crew's ingenuity was not at fault, I thought, as the conference broke up. But I determined to have no hand in the marooning.

Immediately after breakfast the men

began operations. We had opened the north side of the island, and the wind having canted to the south'ard we made a short board on the starboard tack, the main yard was backed, and the ship brought to a stand about a mile off shore.

The little sandy cove of the landing-place could be made out with the unaided eye, as also the white cottages of the islanders in a sort of cleft, green with grass or some sort of herbage.

Next, the two quarter-boats were lowered, and both brought to the gangway. A couple of seamen got in each and passed a length of topsail chain-sheet from the bow of one to the stern of the other for a towing line, which could not be cut.

From my place on the poop I witnessed these preparations in silence, the men evidently foreseeing that I would hold aloof.

The boats being ready, they got the gangway ladder over the side, and then four of the biggest fellows went into the cuddy, from whence there immediately ascended a storm of objurgations in Captain Milligan's rasping voice. He might as well have talked to the ship's capstan. They lifted him out of his bunk and carried him on deck, two men at his feet and two at his shoulders, and in this fashion handed him down the ladder and deposited him in the waiting boat.

The mate they served in the same way, to a similar accompaniment of "language," to which the men, with admirable self-restraint, made no reply, although I could see their tanned faces flush and their muscles twitch at some of the vile epithets bestowed on them.

It was Mrs. Milligan's turn next, and I stood ready to check any violence or the slightest indignity. But her spirit seemed completely cowed, and when the carpenter said, "This way, mum!" she walked out on deck and allowed herself to be handed down the ladder without a whimper or a single wag of her tongue.

Now came a temporary halt, and sounds of argument welled up through the skylight. Suddenly Harris poked his head through the companion.

"Sorry to trouble yer," he said, "but wot about their traps—shall we send 'em along?"

"I should certainly collect their personal property," I answered, "but don't touch the ship's instruments; we'll want them ourselves."

With a wave of the hand he vanished, and in a few minutes the five of them appeared, each laden with an armful of dresses, trousers, coats, boots and hats. They even tossed into the boat a box of cigars belonging to the captain, Hogan's pipe and tobacco, and lastly they handed down very carefully the cage containing Mrs. Milligan's canary-bird.

"All ready, boys?" sang out Harris.

"Right O!" came the reply.

The two sailors got out of the captives' boat and allowed it to drop aft; then the forward boat was brought to the gangway and a crew of four took their places on the thwarts, Harris steering.

They shoved off, tossed their oars over the side, and rowed away for the island at a pace which kept the towing chain taut.

In twenty minutes they had covered the distance, and vanished behind a rocky spur or cape which defended the tiny harbor. In fifteen minutes more they reappeared—one boat only—and, having nothing in tow, came along at a smart pace.

They hooked on to the falls, and Harris came straight to where I stood, grinning with satisfaction. I could not forbear questioning him.

"How did you manage it?" I asked. "Are they safe?"

"Right as a trivet," he chuckled. "We towed 'em into shallow water a few fathom from the sandy beach. There was a little mob o' natives waitin' for us to land. So we jest slips the towin' chain an' sings out to them 't we'd brought some wisitors. Then we hauls off a bit, an' waited to see wot they'd do.

"Jest as I figgered, three or four of 'em wades into the water an' drags the boat ashore. Then they hands out old she Hundred-per-cent, an' then they stands an' jaws an' 'olds up their 'ands at th' sight o' the captain an' Hogan all tied up; an' then they lifts 'em out bodily an' sets 'em on their feet. All this time they was both of 'em jawin' away that we was bloody mutineers, an' shakin' their fists at us, an' makin' signs for the islanders to chase us. But I fancy them beach-combers wanted to get at the

rights o' the matter fust, an' while they was 'splainin' and arguin' we gives way. An' a bloomin' good riddance o' bad rubbish, says I!"

I shook my head soberly, for the grave import of what the men had done came to me with tenfold force now that the skipper and mate were really out of the ship.

I stepped to the rail, and swept the island with the glass. There was no sign of excitement, and none of pursuit—which would indeed have been useless. I shut the tube and turned to Harris.

"Well, and what's next in your program, Mr. Harris?" I asked.

"The crew's decided on perceedin' to the Cape o' Good Hope, sir, an' we arsk yer to lay our course straight there."

"And why the Cape, in the name of all that's holy?" I inquired hotly.

"I'll tell yer all about it as we goes along, Mr. Bantock," he said suavely and soothingly. "Jest git 'er 'ead pointed that way, will 'ee? It'll be all right," he assured me with a confident nod of his head and a twinkle of his impudent black eyes.

I descended to the cabin to consult the chart, and quickly made our true course for the Cape to be due east. The wind was still from the south, so only a few pulls on the braces were necessary to trim our canvas, and, almost as quickly as I can tell it, we were leaving the cindery rocks of Tristan astern, and heading for Agulhas under every stitch that would draw.

By this time it was eight bells, and the men were at dinner. There was no need of any observation with the island abeam, so I logged our position, with a brief statement of the day's doings, snatched a hurried bite, and regained the deck, waiting for Harris to reappear, determined to have an understanding with him at once.

Almost immediately he came aft, puffing clouds from his black cutty pipe, from which I made no doubt that the slop-chest had been looted, and that for the rest of this strange voyage every man would have all the tobacco he wanted.

I waited for him to begin, which he did after leisurely taking a seat on the edge of the skylight.

"D'ye know Table Bay, Mr. Bantock?"

"Very well," I replied.

"That's good," he said. "The men's plan is this: you navigates us straight to Table Bay, an' you brings up in Simon's Bay."

I nodded.

"Werry good. That night we takes the long-boat, an' we gives you the slip—desarts—vamooses, as the Yankees say. Savvy? Once we strikes the beach we disappears; some on us tramps to the di'mond fields, some on us ships agen right off, an' some on us goes to frien's in Cape Town. Wot next? W'y, you're left all by yer lonesome, an' can tell any old muckin' yarn yer like. Tell 'em the truth if yer think best. They'll never ketch us, an' if yer work it right, yer'll have all the credit o' savin' ship an' cargo from a band o' bloodthirsty pirates! Yer'll be a reg'lar 'ero. Yer telegraphs th' owners, they gives yer command, yer ships a noo crew, completes the voyage, an' yer fortune's made!"

The cool audacity and perfect feasibility of the plan compelled my admiration, and clapping him on the shoulder I said:

"Why, man alive, I believe you're the cleverest fellow aboard this old hooker after all! Your place is aft—why have you never risen above the rank of common sailor?"

"Never had no eddication, an' never stayed in one place long enough to git it. Now th't I'm old enough to know better, I'm too old to larn," and with a devil-may-care swing of his shoulders he swaggered forward.

Not to weary you with the tamer details of the run to Agulhas—which we made in about three weeks, no further adventures befalling us—it fell out nearly as Harris foretold.

We brought up in Simon's Bay on the late afternoon of January fourteenth, about two miles off the beach. That night, according to promise, the crew deserted to a man! I signaled to a harbor tug the next morning, and sent word to a firm of shipping agents in Cape Town, to a member of which I told the story in all its details.

Through this gentleman I communicated by cable with the owners of the

Shanadoah in New York, and in thirty-six hours I was empowered to command the ship and carry her to her destination. I shipped a new crew and fresh provisions, bought me some decent clothes, and knew myself once more.

There were certain formalities to be gone through, before the American consul and the port authorities; my sworn declaration was taken by a magistrate, with a view to the apprehension of Jack Harris and his mates, but they were never heard of. A copy of the aforesaid statement was also mailed to the owners.

Three months later, after a rather slow passage, I took a pilot off the Heads, and on calling at the ship's agents in San Francisco found letters awaiting me, confirming me in my command if I brought the old hooker in safely. I have never wanted a ship since.

Captain and Mrs. Milligan and Mate Hogan had to stay on Tristan nearly a year before they were taken off by a whaler. We have never chanced to meet since—but the world is a little place after all, and who knows when I may run across them?

AN AGE OF MADNESS.*

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "The Hoodoo Ranch," "A Perilous Trail," "The Mysteries of the Flying Fudge," "The Man From Martinique," etc.

The strange and thrilling experiences that sprang from a quiet plan to build air-ships on an island.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

JOHN DECKESSON and Laphystium Poggitt are in terested in inventing an air-ship on Frenchman's Island, in Oneida Lake. M. de Watines and his daughter Josephine, the owners of the island, arrive from Paris in search of a buried treasure, which they finally unearth.

The following morning M. de Watines is found murdered. There are no traces of the criminal except the imprint of a strange boat on the beach, a couple of footprints, and a Malay dagger, which is dredged from the lake. M. de Watines had no enemies, although Josephine remembers that her father has not been on especially good terms with M. Kaufmann, his brother-in-law.

Through the stupidity of rustic officials, Deckesson is arrested, but after numerous trials and accidents he escapes to Paris and falls in with George Pallser, also escaping from justice on account of a boyish escapade. Deckesson, under the name of Arthur Larkin, cultivates Kaufmann, whom he does not like, and learns from his banker, M. Martin, that, to pay Kaufmann's debts, M. de Watines had mortgaged the family estate which is about to be sold. Deckesson buys the place. He also finds that Kaufmann has had in his employ a Malay servant who disappeared about two months previously.

Forgiven by his father, Pallser returns to America, and by him Deckesson sends back reassuring messages to Frenchman's Island.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SOME LETTERS TO BE READ BETWEEN THE LINES.

IT was a time for messages. The first to arrive was a cable from Mr. Poggitt, in care of M. Martin, sending me seven hundred and fifty thousand francs. This I deposited, turning the amount due on Watines and the Paris house over to Alexander, and leaving the rest with the bank, subject to my draft.

"I can now communicate with Mlle. Josephine," said M. Alexander.

"Yes," I told him. "I will give you her address."

"How is Madame La Tour now?" asked M. Martin.

**This story began in the May issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The five back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 50 cents.*

"She is better," I said. "She has gone to America to see her parents."

"Ah? Rather a sudden start, was it not?"

"My wife is American," I explained. "They do things on the jump."

"Yes, yes," he assented, laughing. "That is true."

I gave Alexander the address by which a letter would reach Josephine. I remained, after he had gone, for a chat with the banker.

M. Martin was cordiality itself. He had accomplished the sale of the estate of De Watines without annoying Josephine, he had received the full amount of his loan, and a goodly residue had been left for the young lady.

I had no idea whether I had paid too much or too little. I did not really care. I must show some interest, and two days were spent with Alexander previous to the arrival of the money in looking over my new estate.

As a matter of fact I fell in love with it. The château was large and well built. There was a very old portion, full of historic interest, as a few holes made by cannon-balls could testify.

The new part was modern and comfortable. The château stood in a pretty park, and behind the stables stretched farmland, gardens, hothouses — everything that goes to make a complete gentleman's estate.

"Now that I have become the successor of M. de Watines in the ownership of Watines and the Paris house," I remarked to M. Martin, "I feel what I may call, or at least think, a warrantable curiosity in what appealed to me before only as a matter of public interest. Who and what is M. Kaufmann, the brother-in-law of the man who was murdered in America?"

M. Martin crossed one leg over the other and leaned back in his chair.

"You have asked something. I would answer you if I could. None of us know very much about M. Kaufmann except that he is the brother-in-law of De Watines. On the strength of this we took him up.

"He owed De Watines a large sum of money—in fact the money I loaned on the mortgages to De Watines went to Kaufmann as a loan without security.

"Kaufmann never had any business, but lived apparently by his wits. Upon the urgent pleading of De Watines, who was one of my best friends, I sent Kaufmann to Saigon, in Cambodia, to open a bank there. He got into all sorts of trouble, and finally had to return, leaving some debts for me to pay, and bringing with him a rascally native whom nobody liked.

"This Bai Rak is called by Alexander and others a Malay, because the name is more familiar, although Cambodia is a French possession and the Malay Peninsula is not. But the various peoples of the Asiatic coast are sufficiently akin so that one name is as good as another."

"This Bai Rak is missing," I remarked. "He disappeared about the same time De Watines was killed."

"I have often thought of it. I have wondered if Bai Rak knew anything about the murder. If Bai Rak does, then so does Kaufmann."

"Possibly not. Bai Rak might have gone on his own hook."

"Scarcely. You see nobody knew he was gone until months had elapsed."

"How do you account for that?"

"I do not attempt the impossible. It might be that Kaufmann kept quiet until he thought there was reason for making a stir."

"And did he make a stir?"

"He certainly tried to find some trace of his servant."

"Then, in your opinion, Kaufmann's anxiety might have begun only when he had reason to believe Bai Rak was not going to return with the treasure he had stolen?"

"Something like that," said M. Martin.

I next visited the secret police with an introduction to the commissaire.

"I am desirous of keeping this very quiet," I told him. "I wish to learn something of one Bai Rak, a native of Saigon, Cambodia, who disappeared last October."

"You are rather late with your inquiries," was the response. "M. Kaufmann had us upset looking for him some time ago. Shall we go over it again?"

"What can you let me know?"

"Wait."

He rang a bell. An assistant entered.

"Bring me the record of the search made, on behalf of M. Kaufmann, for Bai Rak."

A book was brought.

"Now, you see," said the commissaire, "Bai Rak lived with M. Kaufmann as his servant. On the third of October M. Kaufmann claims that he gave Bai Rak two thousand francs to deposit in the bank of M. Martin. Instead of obeying orders Bai Rak ran away and has not been found.

"We made a complete search. A man answering his description left Havre on the fifth for New York, and was seen in New York. He seemed to be well supplied with money. The man had none of the oriental look. He was dark, but dressed in European fashion and was not bad appearing.

"The man supposed to be Bai Rak, seen in New York, went by the name of 'Honore de Bergelot.' He attracted no attention, traveled some, and ultimately disappeared."

"Would it cause you much inconvenience to ascertain if he ever returned to Saigon?"

"The trouble is nothing."

"I will pay expenses."

"Call to see me in one week."

Other messages began to come. Here is one from Pallser:

MY DEAR ONE-TIME HUSBAND:

I am home again, thank heaven, and all is forgiven. My father was delighted to see me alive and my mother wept over me as though I was some good. What a fool a man is to do wrong when he has a good father and mother.

I went to see your Mr. Poggitt. He is certainly a queer card. I found him bossing one of the most mysterious jobs I ever saw. What is he building—a huge bat or what?

He is very funny. He was not going to admit me at first, but I sent word that I had been a passenger on that French ship and that was the open sesame. He received me at a forge and asked me if I had seen any one he knew. I whispered that I must see him alone.

We went into a house he has built and sat down. When I told him you were alive and well in Paris I thought the old fellow would eat me up. He fussed and fumbled, and wiped his eyes, and then I gave him your note. He said he would send the money at once.

He took me over the lake on the ice, for it is very cold here, and the ice is still thick enough to bear. We saw Mlle. de Watines. She received your note with tears and a red face.

Say, old man, I'm jealous. I fancy there will be a wife there soon without any masquerade. I see now why you wanted me to keep up the farce of acting as your wife. You now have a medium through whom you can communicate with Mr. Poggitt and Josephine.

Send anything you want done. I am at your service. People are crazy here to know how I escaped from drowning. I have told more lies than I did in Paris. Let me hear from you.

PALLSER.

Here is Mr. Poggitt's communication:

TO MY FRIEND M. LA TOUR:

My very dear friend, your welcome letter in reference to a small matter of financial business and other matters came to my subservient hand in due time by channels of which you doubtless are aware. Permit me to state that the contents of your letter filled me with joy. As I have before had occasion to remark, the ways of Providence are past finding out.

I have cabled seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, which sounds tremendously large as compared with a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. I sincerely trust that you have not paid too much for the property you speak of purchasing.

Here, I am exceedingly busy. I have now in all, workmen and helpers, about fifty on the island, and my plans are being carried out with a rapidity that is astonishing. I expect to make an experimental trip in a short time. My present plans are for a small air-ship, but these can be enlarged upon as we make improvements. It will assuredly be a success.

LAPHYSTIUM POGGITT.

I received a letter from Josephine, but as was the case with the one I wrote to her, it was not necessary to repeat that here.

In a week I went back to the commissaire. I expected some news, of course.

"I have been in communication with the authorities in Cambodia," he said. "A complete search fails to reveal anything concerning Bai Rak. He certainly has not returned to Cambodia."

"Nor to Paris?"

"Nor to Paris. Of that I am certain."

"Then he is probably still in America."

"If he went there at all."

"Then as soon as I can make arrangements I shall go to America and hunt for him."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Look out, you, in that America. They have killed one of our best citizens, M. de Watines. You look out for yourself."

I promised him to be careful, and then went to Alexander to make arrangements for the care of my estate while I was gone.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ANOTHER DISGUISE.

It was spring again. The air was balmy, the snows were melting fast, and again I stood upon the shores of Oneida Lake, whither news of my coming had preceded me.

I had written to Josephine that I would appear as her cousin from Paris, come to take her home. I wrote the same to Mr. Poggitt.

I was a typical Parisian. My disguise was so perfect that I felt absolutely no fear that I would be recognized. I stood on the boat-landing at Constantia and gazed in amazement at Frenchman's Island.

A high, tight fence surrounded it. Smoke-stacks and roofs could be seen, and at the western end a great dome upreared itself. The dome seemed to be made of glass, so I supposed Mr. Poggitt was putting on some of the last fine touches to his machine.

The ice had gone from the lake, and boats were running. I hired a boy to take me over to the island.

"He won't let you in," remarked my youthful boatman.

"Who will not?"

"The loon—old Poggitt. He's what they call dippy. I don't know what he's doing. There was a man killed there last October."

"Indeed," I said as we set out. "Did Poggitt kill him?"

"Naw, a young feller. He's dead, too. Got drownded out to sea."

I stepped ashore on what was left to step on, a foot or two running outside Mr. Poggitt's fence, and knocked on the gate. A workman opened it.

"Take my card to the inventor, Mr. Poggitt," I requested.

Mr. Poggitt's face was somewhat flushed as he received me, but he bore himself well.

"M. La Tour, I am pleased to see you," he said. "I understand you are interested in aerial navigation."

"To a considerable extent," I replied. "I have heard of your new system and permitted myself to believe you would show me what you intend to do."

"Certainly. Come with me."

We went into the glass-roofed room, the workmen gazing in astonishment at the only outsider who had been admitted.

Here was indeed an air-ship. Whether it would fly or not, I could not tell. It was made to be raised and held in the air by a cigar-shaped contrivance of very thin aluminum.

"There is a specimen of the material," said Mr. Poggitt, handing me a piece about a foot square.

It was thin and seemed to have absolutely no weight in my hand.

Besides the balloon part there were wings and a steering apparatus, and nearby stood the car itself, in which three or four persons could ride with comfort.

"There is," said Mr. Poggitt, "nothing mysterious or secret in the merely mechanical contrivance. I have discovered, however, a gas that can be manufactured very cheaply, of such wonderful lifting power that this machine is but a plaything to it. The secret which I have maintained is the manufacture of this gas. I shall try the balloon soon. I invite you to enjoy a trip with me."

"I accept with pleasure," I said.

In that way we kept up the semblance of being strangers, but there was a tremor in Mr. Poggitt's voice. From the glass room we went to the house, where we had a regular old-time talk. To repeat it would be to repeat what I have written here.

The same boy rowed me back to Constantia, and I hired a rig and had the boy drive me to see Josephine. It goes without saying that she was glad to see me. We talked long and earnestly about the plans I had laid, and the estate, and I promised to come and take her for a sail on the lake the following day.

I had the boy drive me to Sylvan Beach, where they were just getting ready for the summer business, and I secured a room at the Algonquin. I slept there that night and early the next morning drove over and got Josephine.

We made very good cousins, and went back to the hotel to wait for the boat. There was a small steamer called the Lake Bird that ran daily from Brewerton, on the Oneida River, to North Bay, and returned. The boat reached North Bay about noon, and we were on hand to take it.

The captain's name, I had ascertained, was Clark.

There were few passengers, and, having introduced Josephine and myself to the captain, we fell into easy conversation.

"This is a very pretty little lake, captain," I remarked. "I come from Paris. We have few such lakes in France."

"New York State is well supplied with lakes," he answered.

From one subject to another we drifted until I felt that I might venture on the real object of my sail.

"One of my purposes, captain," I said, "in visiting America this time, is to trace a fellow countryman who disappeared last October, leaving his affairs in very bad shape. His name was De Bergelot. I have traced him through New York, Albany, Utica, and there the trail seems to end. He was a great fellow for lonely trips. It is just possible you saw him."

"Possibly," answered the captain. "We carry a great many strangers. There was one who seemed to like us pretty well. He sailed with us every day for a week. He asked a good many questions. But he couldn't have been a Frenchman. He was too dark."

"My friend was dark. He had lived some time in Cambodia and was well burned."

"Cambodia? That's so. That is the French possession in Asia."

"Exactly."

"Yes, he spoke of it. Well, well. He was a queer fellow. He had a pair of marine-glasses and he was studying the lake shores all the time. I remember him well enough."

"Probably my friend," I said with my heart thumping. "When did he leave you?"

"Oh, I missed him one day, but we had a tragedy here about that time—a young fellow from New York killed another Frenchman, and that kept all our attention. It was a very strange case. I doubt if it will ever be settled. The young fellow got away and was drowned, so they say, at sea. He was rich, though, and I always had my doubts. Even a deputy sheriff likes to feather his own nest."

As we came near the island the captain pointed to it.

"That fellow from Cambodia seemed to be interested in that island," he said. "That is where the murder took place. There's a crank on there making balloons or something. His name is Poggitt."

I began to think.

There was no doubt in my mind that the man with the marine-glasses was Bai Rak. He had been traveling up and down the lake in the steamer, studying our doings with a glass.

"Where did he get on?" I asked.

"Oh, he slept aboard sometimes. I think he made his headquarters at Brewerton."

"Is there a hotel there?"

"Oh, yes. A good one."

Having arrived at Brewerton, we went to the hotel. I introduced myself to the proprietor.

I made known my errand. He laughed.

"I remember your countryman very well," he said. "He remained here about a week. He then disappeared as suddenly as he came, and left his bill unpaid. He never came after his trunk. He did not seem to be that kind of man, but he never returned."

"That is strange," I said, "and he left his own affairs in a muddled state."

"If you are a Parisian," he said, as if glad to get rid of M. de Bergelot as a subject, "perhaps you can tell me what this is. There is a settlement of nondescripts—half-breeds, gipsies, thieves, and a mixture of everything bad—back here in the swamp, and a few days ago one of them came in and got a few drinks and gave me this in payment."

He handed me a gold coin. It was French, of the reign of Louis XVI.

"Where did he ever get such a thing?" I asked, after I had explained what it was.

"He said the French gentleman gave it to him for taking him out in a boat."

Truly, after much tribulation, I was getting on the right track.

I took Josephine home and went on to the Algonquin.

Now I was so sure of what I was doing I wasted no time. The next day I went to Syracuse. I had little difficulty in finding a second-hand clothier's. Here I purchased a rusty old black suit, a mile or two out of build, with a long frock coat; then I bought at a costumer's a heavy black beard to represent a Jew. I invested next in a lot of trinkets—needles, thread, pins, ribbons, fish-hooks, all kinds of odds and ends, and a pedler's pack.

These I took to the Algonquin, and in an hour I was as completely transformed from La Tour as I had previously been from Deckesson.

I started off on foot, and stopped at the home. Josephine did not know me, but I told her what I intended to do.

I then went on to the island. Mr. Poggitt was very much disgusted when he saw who his visitor was.

"I want nothing," he said.

"Yes, you do," I replied in a whining tone. "Please buy. I sell ferry scheap."

"My good sir, I want nothing."

"I sell you an air-ship, mit gas."

Mr. Poggitt stared.

"I sell you French shoe-string like is used py mine frent M. La Dour."

"Where did you meet him?" asked Mr. Poggitt wonderingly.

"I meet heem in Paree."

Then I laughed.

"You are as many-sided as an octagon," said Mr. Poggitt. "What are you going to do now?"

"Mr. Poggitt," I declared, "I am going to land the murderer of De Watines. I have seen a piece of his money. I have traced that Bai Rak to a swamp back of Brewerton. Did you ever hear of the place?"

"Brewerton? Yes."

"But the swamp?"

"I understand that about two miles back of Brewerton there is a settlement of gipsies, or something like that, and I have heard that no one goes near them. They are on a creek that runs into the lake, and are much feared for their thieving propensities. I advise you to take an officer with you."

"Yes, and get myself arrested again and lose all I have gained. No, I shall do this thing myself. If I am missing long you can send an officer after me."

I slept at the island that night, intending the next morning to go on to Brewerton.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

I SELL OUT AT A PROFIT.

THE clanging of machinery awakened me the following morning and I rose, feeling anything but confident.

It frequently happens to me, and I presume to almost everybody else, that a plan suddenly conceived and acted upon on the spur of the moment promises better than one upon which hours of deliberation have been spent. All the little uncertainties that may stand in the way of success are brought out clearly in the light of deep study.

I looked with considerable disgust at the frowsy beard and well-worn clothes I had chosen as my disguise. I did not hurry to put on the full rig, but, hearing Mr. Poggitt in the kitchen talking to the cook, I went down to breakfast.

"Good morning," said Mr. Poggitt. "You slept a little late. I thought perhaps you would have a hard day ahead and I therefore forebore to wake you."

"I am in no hurry to start," I answered, "but I am hungry."

"It is well," said Mr. Poggitt, as he watched the cook broiling some chops, "to eat when you are hungry. Eat plenty. As I have before had occasion to remark, the ways of Providence are past finding out. He works His ends as becomes Himself. Now, are you sure you are on the right track?"

"There can be nothing sure."

"You put my mind in such a whirl last night that I could not exactly encompass what you intended to do. Is it your idea that this murderer is hiding in the woods back of Brewerton?"

"No, scarcely that. A man like this Bai Rak seems to be—ready of wit, liking the ease and luxury that wealth brings—would hardly remain with a gang of ignorant gipsies, half-breeds, and the like."

"Well, then," said Mr. Poggitt, drawing his chair to the table opposite me, "what do you expect to accomplish, and what do you already know?"

"Why," I replied, "I have told you about all I have discovered, in one way or another. I fancy you know as much as I do about it."

"No," said Mr. Poggitt, shaking his head. "You are mistaken. One of the beauties of your plan, when you gave me the money to continue with the air-ship, while you devoted your time to the pursuit of the murderer of De Watines, was that your mind was free to absorb all there was to know regarding the murder, while mine remained so filled with air-ship that it had no room for anything else. I have, it is true, learned what you told me, but not in a connected chain."

"Very well, then, let us take up the threads and see if you do not agree with me that this is worth at least a trial. To begin, the brother-in-law of De Watines owed him a large amount of money."

"Yes."

"To lend which De Watines mortgaged his property."

"Yes."

"Kaufmann, the brother-in-law, is a scamp."

"Yes."

"He had a servant he had brought from Cambodia, full of oriental wickedness, but suave and polished and dressing in Parisian clothes."

"Yes."

"This man, whose name is Bai Rak, was traced as far as New York, where he went under the name of M. de Bergelot."

"Yes."

"A man answering to his description sailed up and down the lake on the Lake Bird every day during the week we were digging in the old cellar."

"Yes."

"He disappeared, on or about the same time we found De Watines dead."

"Yes."

"He left his trunk at the hotel in Brewerton and did not pay his bill."

"I see—go on."

"A short time ago one of the men from this settlement of riffraff comes to the hotel, buys some drinks, and pays for them with a gold-piece of the time of Louis XVI."

"Ah! Well?"

"He says that a Frenchman gave it to him for taking him out fishing in a boat last fall."

"Good. Now that, I should think, is as far as you have gone."

"Yes. The next chapter will come to-day."

"You have made a clear case thus far," commented Mr. Poggitt, who was now dreadfully in earnest. "But is there no other page? Is there not at least one chapter on the reverse of the picture?"

"Yes. And that is what bothers me. To start with, it is not likely that Bai Rak would know anything about the treasure unless he was told by Kaufmann."

"Of course not."

"If Kaufmann had learned of the existence of the treasure it would seem that, if he wished to kill De Watines, rid himself of a creditor, and at the same time win great treasure, he would do it himself and not trust a man who would, as is now certain, keep the treasure himself."

"Very good reasoning. Proceed."

"There is no certainty that the man who rode up and down the lake was Bai Rak."

"Certainly not."

"And the worst problem of all is, that, as the treasure was in a large trunk, upon which my name is prominently displayed, how could Bai Rak escape with it, when the police at every outlet from this region were notified?"

Mr. Poggitt bowed his head in deep thought.

"It is a most puzzling case. You are armed, of course?"

"I am armed, but would use my weapon only in a most desperate situation. I have no desire to get tangled up in the meshes of the law again. With two escapes marked up against me, even

though I proved myself innocent of the murder of De Watines, I should receive scant courtesy from the officials from whom I once escaped, and whom I shall have proven fools at their own profession."

"You are quite correct. You have a most difficult problem to solve. It behooves you to move with every caution. What are your plans?"

"I have no really definite plans except to penetrate to this region where nobody goes. I understand that these people are absolute pariahs. They are shunned to such an extent that even a physician will not go near them. If one of the men is seen loitering in a village he is locked up by the constable on suspicion. The idea is to make things so infernally unpleasant that they will move away. But they own the land and the only thing to do is to drive them out by harsh measures."

"Then, alone, you propose to go among them?"

"Yes, and use eyes and ears to the best advantage."

"Is there nothing I can do to assist you? Would it be wise to have a reserve force?"

"No. The reserve force must necessarily consist of officers, and the first thing they would do would be to arrest me. I will make this arrangement with you. This is Wednesday. I can reach Brewerton in your boat. I shall probably be at this settlement—I never even asked what it was called—some time this afternoon. Give me till Friday noon. If I am not here then, organize a search for me unless you hear from me direct."

"That is a good plan. Then probably between now and Friday noon I shall not see you."

"It is not likely."

Having made a good meal, not knowing but what I might see the time I would feel the need of one, I returned to my room and completed my toilet.

As I came down with my pack, my back bent as from years and incessant labor of carrying my wares, Mr. Poggitt smiled grimly.

"Your make-up is superb," he said. "Unless you discover yourself to them by some careless act they will not suspect you."

He left the island in charge of his foreman and took me to Brewerton in the launch. We arrived there at about eleven o'clock.

Mr. Poggitt at once turned the boat back, giving me a hearty handshake and wishing me all sorts of good luck.

I tried my disguise on the hotel man. He did not suspect, and purchased a few trinkets, some shoe-laces, and a comb.

"Which way are you going?" he asked.

"Oh, I go any vay. I shust go vich vay I like. I find a leedle grik here. I go along it."

"Well, you'd better not. The Dalers will steal everything you've got."

"The Dalers, you say, mine frent?"

"Yes, they are a bad lot. They would knock you down for a shoe-string."

"Vell, I must do something. I am not avraid."

I plodded on, followed by his kind and well-meant remonstrances. I struck the creek, which was about ten feet wide and navigable for a good-sized row-boat, and followed a path along the right bank.

I passed one farmhouse, but as it appeared to be the home of people of a good class I did not inflict myself upon them. I found that the creek had several turns to it, and the two miles in a straight line meant about three by this path.

It was a lonesome walk. I passed forsaken hay-sheds and broken fences.

The country was good and had been well tilled. But it was evident that the presence of the undesirable people I was going to see had killed the locality, temporarily at least.

At last I saw my goal ahead. And a collection of crazy huts it was.

Surrounding woods had been robbed of their saplings. Huts had been thrown together regardless of location. The ground was swampy, and wherever there was a hummock that was dry, a house perched on it.

Back of the settlement was a stretch of swamp-land with here and there an island, with a few trees, but for the most part a waste that could be utilized if the miserable wretches who now inhabited it were driven out.

I learned their history later. Some

were half-breed Oneidas, bringing their negro or squalid white wives there to found a village.

Some were stragglers from a band of gipsies that had passed through a few years before. The land was cheap and they bought it through George Dale, a half-breed, who was their ruler.

As I entered the village dirty women and idle men eyed me curiously and laughed. They were the most brutalized people I had ever seen.

A huge, dark-featured man, with straight black hair, came toward me. I decided at once that he must be Dale.

"Well, Jew, what do you want?" he asked roughly.

"I vant to sell goots," I answered. "I haf here many t'ings for ladies. Ah! Let dem gadder rount me. So I show you."

Curiosity was getting the better of them. Dale stood back and folded his arms while the women gazed at my stock.

"Rippons," I said, taking up a lot of bright-colored streamers and displaying them. "All kints. Ah!"

I placed a gaily colored ribbon alongside of the greasy hair of one of the women. She bought it.

"What is this all about?" came a voice.

I opened my eyes in amazement and my heart leaped.

A handsome woman, evidently ignorant and gross, but striking in appearance nevertheless, came from the most pretentious house, and walked toward me. She was dressed as no woman of New York had ever dressed.

Her waist was of the finest satin, embroidered with gold thread. The gown was of the same material, and over her shoulders she wore a satin cloak, something after the fashion of a dolman.

She wore a collar of white ermine, now sadly soiled from its filthy and unwonted surroundings.

Had I not seen the contents of the second chest dug up in the old De Watines cellar I would have been stricken dumb with amazement.

This undoubtedly was Dale's wife, the queen of this disreputable rabble.

"He thinks he has things to sell," said Dale with a loud laugh.

"Well, perhaps the old fool has some things I need. A fine dress won't hold your shoes together, and a fur collar won't take the place of stockings or garters. Come, old man, let's see what you've got."

The others, with the same awe and respect that commoners give to royalty, stepped back while she looked over my stock.

"I'll take that," she said, snatching up a paper of pins.

She picked up a hand-mirror and surveyed herself.

"Oh, you are pretty enough and vain enough without that," laughed Dale.

"Go to the dev—no, I mean go to the bank and get me some money. I'll buy all he's got."

"All he's got!"

"Yes, all he's got. I can't go to the villages in this, and I haven't got anything else."

"Well—money is scarce."

"The deuce it is. Are you going to keep it and leave it when you die? What are you afraid of now? This man is a wandering Jew. What does he care?"

"Where did you come from?" asked the big man.

"Me? I gome vrom der goal mines off Bennzylfania. I zell much goots dere."

"Where's that?" asked the woman. "Near here?"

"Oh, no. Many hundred miles avay."

"Where are you going?"

"I go on mit Chicago."

"See?" said the woman. "He's safe."

With a doubtful look Dale turned away and went into the house.

He returned in about ten minutes with some money in his hand which he held out toward the woman.

She took the money and I saw the sheen of gold.

"Here," she said, handing a gold-piece to me, "I'll give you this for the lot."

I took it. It had been scrubbed and rubbed to make it bright. My heart thumped and pounded as I examined it.

It was a Louis d'or of the seventeenth century. How had this squalid crew come by it?

"It is not enough," I said, as I fondled the piece. "Diss iss not goot money."

"It looks good, but I don't know how much it is," said the woman.

"Vere you get him?" I asked.

"Oh, we go to Canada some summers and get such money there."

I shook my head.

"You musd haf more," I said.

"Here, take this," replied the woman, who was absolutely ignorant of the fortune she possessed. She handed me a gold crown.

I sold her the entire outfit, and, with the two gold-pieces in my pocket, started to go.

Dale watched me with eyes I did not like. I saw him whisper to one of the other men.

"I zell you dis?" I asked, as I turned around. "I zell you dis sheap."

I held out my revolver.

Dale started toward me, his hand in his pocket for money.

"No," I said as if on second thought. "I haf gold. I geep it. I might ged robbed."

They stood and watched me as I walked away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I OBSERVE STRANGE THINGS.

I WALKED till I was out of their sight and then went into a thick woods. What I had seen and heard proved to me that I was on the right track. But what track?

I knew the gold-threaded gown, the ermine collar, the gold itself, had come from the cellar of the old De Watines house on Frenchman's Island. But who had taken it from the porch of our house, and who had killed De Watines?

No one had visited the island while we were digging, and it was impossible that any of these squalid, ignorant, brutish people could have known of our quest, and our success. The man who had used the marine-glass every day for a week was the man who had made the discovery. He was also probably the man who committed the robbery.

But how was it that so much of the treasure had stuck in the possession of Dale?

The question now with me was, had I learned enough to warrant me in disclosing myself to the police, or was it too soon? I knew that some of the treasure of De Watines was in the hands of these people and that they were just beginning to dare show it.

But what proof had I that they were in any way concerned in the murder?

Supposing, as a base of argument, that the man with the marine-glass had been Bai Rak, and that it had been Bai Rak who had committed the murder, the hypothesis was that he had paid Dale for taking him to the island in a boat the night after he had seen us take the treasure from the broken chest and place it in my trunk. Dale, holding the boat, naturally knew that the murderer had done his foul work when he returned with the trunk.

Now, having returned with Dale to the squalid settlement where alone he could find a ready accomplice, I permitted myself to suppose Bai Rak, or whoever the murderer was, had left the tell-tale trunk with Dale, as well as the costly fabrics which would only be in his way, and, making a selection of the most valuable pieces of money, had gone on, leaving enough to pay Dale well, not only for the service rendered, but for keeping his mouth closed afterward.

Still supposing that Bai Rak was the murderer, I followed with my mind his movements.

It was an easy matter for him to escape from the region of the lake, as the police were looking for a man with my trunk, up to the time of my arrest, when they ceased to look for any man at all.

Where had he gone? He had not returned to Paris. It was not probable that he would go to London, for the exchange of money of that description could be made only in a few places, and conservative and cautious London would soon want to know more about it.

He certainly had not tried to dispose of it in New York, for every paper in the State had been filled with descriptions of the treasure that had lain undiscovered for a century.

Manifestly it was dangerous to proceed now through the medium of the police. I knew I had a desperate character to deal with in George Dale. He

might possess more knowledge under his rough exterior than he wished to show.

I figured the matter out in my mind to this conclusion:

I might, with such knowledge as I now possessed, go to the police and ask their cooperation. Admitting that they would be willing to grant it, which I doubted, I had no proof that Dale committed a murder, and did not believe he had.

I had no proof that Bai Rak had committed the murder, and no proof as yet that I had not. Dale could turn on me and denounce me as the man who had employed him to come to the island and take me away with the trunk after I had killed De Watines. The police could make a better story out of it than they had before.

If Dale had any reason to protect himself, and of course he had, he could state that I had explained the situation to him, and told him what time to be at the island with a boat. I could be represented as planning to prove an alibi by taking Josephine to the theater, reaching home, chatting with Poggitt and De Watines, going to bed and returning to commit the crime when the others were asleep.

It might even be stated that in all probability I had not contemplated murder at all. But, expecting De Watines to go to bed, my sole purpose was to carry off the trunk of treasure.

But, finding De Watines awake and ready to defend his possessions, I killed him because there was nothing else to do.

I was in a horrible mess of perplexity. After thinking the matter over I resolved to hang around in the woods till night, and go back to the village and see if I could discover something more.

I spent the rest of the afternoon trying to figure this out to my satisfaction, and when night came went by a roundabout way to the nearest point to the village where I could still be covered by woods.

The village was lighted by lanterns hung on poles, and I could see there were more men there than I had seen in the daytime. They were evidently holding some kind of council.

I could see the powerful frame of Dale as he stood in the center of the group. He seemed to be listening to the talk of the men around him, as though taking advice, or sifting the opinions of each.

I saw him nod his head several times, and shake it negatively as many more.

This lasted about a half-hour. Then I saw two of them enter Dale's house and emerge therefrom with my trunk between them.

Two others brought spades, and they carried the trunk away from the village and directly toward my hiding-place.

I shrank farther back and got into a veritable thicket of dogwood, and I had no sooner settled myself than they entered the wood.

"I tell ye," one was saying, "I heard it twice. He's a Frenchman, and is looking for the fellow who came here last October. He is staying at the Algonquin. Bapp saw him. He is a tall fellow and well dressed. He sailed on the Lake Bird. Who knows but the Jew was a detective?"

"Or this new Frenchman himself?" added another.

"It's best to be safe," said a third. "We were too sure of being safe because nobody comes here. That's why I fear that Jew. We never had a Jew pedler come here before. And Sade, the fool, must come out and show that blamed gown. Couldn't you keep her in, Dale?"

"Keep Sade in with a dress like that?" Dale laughed. "You ought to know Sade better than that, by this time. It was the first opportunity she had to show herself in it. I don't blame her; she did look fine."

"She won't look so fine if that fellow was a detective and comes back with more."

Dale uttered an oath.

"There are twenty of us, not counting the women. We can take care of all they bring. Scatter in the woods and pick 'em off. We all have guns."

"You ought to have knocked the Jew down and taken his pistol away," growled one of the men.

"Well, I didn't. I am sorry now, but if I get him again he will know it."

While they were talking they were digging. They made a hole big enough to swallow the trunk, and then lowered it. I judged from the way they car-

ried it that it was empty and that the money had been taken out.

"Now for the other," said a voice. "It has been in the swamp long enough. I know it's in a sealed box, but if a force comes here to look they will open it."

I wondered what the "other" could be, but resolved to know before the night was over.

They went to a portion of the swamp where there were no houses, and after some work among the long cat-tails and flag dug up a long, narro.. box. This they carried to a cattle wallow in the woods, where, in the heated summer days, the cows that came there stood with their feet in ooze for coolness.

Here the men dug a grave and buried the box.

"They'll never find either one now," said Dale as they marched away.

"We'll see about that," I muttered, with an inward chuckle.

I waited with a feverish impatience till I judged it was midnight. I dared not light a match lest the flash discover me to the gang.

I crept from my hiding-place to where they had buried the long box. I had little doubt what was in it.

I saw it all now. If Bai Rak had been the murderer of De Watines, he had not lived long to enjoy his ill-gotten gains. He had been killed himself by these people.

I was trembling with excitement. How was I to get the grave open? I wanted to be sure that there was a body in that box before I disclosed anything to the police.

I groped around till I found a stout stick, and with this tried to pry away the mud. It was slow work.

"I'll have to give it up and come with a spade to-morrow night," I told myself.

I heard an instantaneous rush. I had no time to turn. Something struck me on the head and I fell unconscious in the mud.

(To be continued.)

COUSIN ALMIRA'S BABY.

BY C. LANGTON CLARKE,

Author of "A Bargain in Weeds" and "An Umbrella Embarrassment."

Being the account of the horrible evening put in by a hater of infants.

MRS. GEORGE SCALES laid the letter she had been reading beside her plate, and glanced across the breakfast table at her husband, who was dividing his time between mouthfuls of toast and paragraphs in the morning paper.

Her brows were slightly puckered, and her face wore an expression of mingled pleasure, perplexity, and amusement.

"Cousin Almira will be here to-night," she said.

Mr. Scales grunted.

"And she's bringing her baby," continued Mrs. Scales, watching anxiously for the effect of this announcement.

"What!" cried Mr. Scales, sitting bolt upright. "A baby? To this house? She sha'n't do it. I won't have it. Telegraph at once and tell her we haven't got room for it. Tell her there is diphtheria on the street. Tell her anything you like. She can't bring it here."

"It's no use your going on in that way, George," said Mrs. Scales calmly. "Not a bit. And I wish you wouldn't snort like that when you are eating. It's not her fault. She can't help it. She intended to leave the child with a friend until she got settled again, but they have measles in the house. She either had to bring it here, or leave it in the street. I suppose you think she ought to have done that?"

Mr. Scales's face conveyed the impression that the latter alternative would have been much the more satisfactory.

"Why can't she send it to an orphanage, or a home, or some place like that?" he demanded.

Mrs. Scales waved the suggestion scornfully aside.

"I didn't think you were so abominably selfish, George," she said. "The child won't hurt you. One would think it was some beast of prey to hear you talk. You will hardly see it at all, unless"—and she smiled with a tinge of malice—"unless you like to have it up in your study sometimes. You haven't finished?"

Mr. Scales, who had pushed his plate away with some violence, and risen hurriedly, stood glooming darkly on his wife, as he crushed the paper which he had been reading into a hard ball.

"All right," he said. "Have it your own way. You always do. But I give you solemn warning——"

The awful possibilities of the coming fortnight, and the hopelessness of adequate retribution for his sufferings, were too much for him, and he left the room abruptly.

"Poor George!" said Mrs. Scales, as the banging of the front door notified her of her husband's departure for his office. "What a pity it is that he never had any brothers or sisters—or children of his own!" she added with a sigh.

She smiled as a vision of Mr. Scales wheeling a baby carriage rose before her.

"Now I wonder what Jane will say?"

To her great relief, Jane, a domestic of some six months' service, received the news with an enthusiasm which Mr. Scales would have regarded as warranting a committal for insanity.

"It will be nice to have a little baby in the house, ma'am," she said.

"It will mean a little more work for you, Jane," hinted Mrs. Scales, thinking it advisable to have an understanding from the first.

"I don't mind, ma'am," replied the servant cheerfully. "And besides it won't be so much among four of us."

"Four?" queried Mrs. Scales.

"You, and me, and the mother, and Mr. Scales," was the confident reply.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Scales. "I don't think we can count on Mr. Scales. He doesn't like babies."

Jane tossed her head.

"You mark my words, ma'am," she said with the air of a phophetess. "He mayn't think so now, but he'll be doing his share before the visit's over."

The mistress smiled incredulously, and the two fell to discussing ways and means, with occasional digressions by Jane into the histories and peculiarities of babies she had known.

Mr. Scales, striding gloomily downtown, found it impossible to rid himself of the depression caused by his wife's announcement.

An extraordinarily large number of babies seemed to be taking a morning constitutional, and every baby carriage he passed gave him a fresh shock. He scanned the occupants with a critical eye, and was surprised to find that they did not all look alike. Several, whose noses had been imperfectly attended to, made him shudder, and one lusty-lunged infant brought him to a halt.

"Do they all cry like that?" he asked anxiously of the good-looking nursemaid.

The girl, who evidently regarded the question as a transparent pretext for addressing her, replied with a glance so chilling that Mr. Scales retired abashed, and with his curiosity unsatisfied.

"Know anything about babies, Butterworth?" he inquired, with a fine assumption of carelessness, of a bachelor friend, who dropped into his office during the morning.

Mr. Butterworth, who was investigating Mr. Scales's box of cigars, laid it down and stared.

"Can't say I do," he replied. "Why?"

His raised eyebrows voiced an unspoken question.

"No, no," said Mr. Scales hurriedly. "Nothing of that sort, thank—ahem. My Cousin Almira Trenter is coming to visit us. She arrives to-night, and she's bringing a baby along. I want to know what I've got to expect."

"How old is it?" Mr. Butterworth demanded, with a judicial air.

"About six months, I should say," replied the other, who had been notified of the birth by his wife, and had a good memory for dates of even the most uninteresting occurrences.

"Boy or girl?" continued his friend.

"Blessed if I know," replied Mr. Scales. "I forgot to ask."

Mr. Butterworth shook his head.

"A good deal depends on that," he said sagaciously. "Girl babies are not so

bad, but boys yell all the time, like the very devil."

"You seem to know a good deal more about them than I do," Mr. Scales said, with some irritation, "and what you do know isn't very encouraging. I'll bet it's a boy. They always are when you want them to be something else. However, I suppose I can keep out of its way."

"Don't you delude yourself with that idea," rejoined Mr. Butterworth, grinning. "You'll be expected to do your share—nurse it now and then, and give it your 'tick-tick' to play with. I shouldn't wonder but what you'll be asked to give it a bath sometimes. I'll drop in some evening and get some pointers."

Mr. Scales's expression of disgust was too much for his gravity, and he was obliged to leave the room hurriedly to avert a serious breach of friendship.

When Mr. Scales returned home that evening, he found the baby enshrined in the drawing-room, and being ministered to by three slavish idolators.

It was not an attractive child, being undersized, with a small, brown, wizened face, and a pair of glassy eyes, which stared at its host in an oddly disconcerting fashion.

"Oh, George!" cried Mrs. Scales, who, kneeling beside the baby, was making strange noises with her lips, "did you ever see such a little darling?"

Mr. Scales's reply was a discreet and non-commital cough.

"What is it?" he inquired, turning to the mother.

"It's a human being," replied Mrs. Trenter sharply. "What did you think it was—a monkey?"

Mr. Scales thought it looked uncommonly like a monkey, but out of deference to a mother's feelings forebore to say so.

"I didn't mean that," he said, flushing. "I mean is it a boy or a girl?"

"H-he," said Mrs. Trenter, strongly aspirating the pronoun by way of emphasis—"h-he is a boy."

"Oh, indeed!" replied Mr. Scales gloomily, remembering Mr. Butterworth's generalization.

He was about to add that it couldn't be helped, but checked himself in time.

"Quite a nice baby," he remarked.

His tone was noticeably devoid of enthusiasm, but Cousin Almira accepted the amende.

"Will oo give Cousin George a nice kiss?" she said, addressing the infant.

"I don't think I'd better," Mr. Scales interrupted hurriedly. "Fact is I've been smoking some pretty strong cigars, and it might make it—I mean him—sick."

He pulled out his watch, and muttering something about dressing for dinner, made his escape.

To his consternation the baby appeared at the dinner-table, seated in its mother's lap.

He tried not to look at it, but it held an extraordinary fascination for him. He could not keep his eyes off it, and its performances with a piece of crumby bread, and subsequently with a soft biscuit, seriously impaired his appetite.

"I won't have it," he declared explosively, when he was alone with his wife, after a most trying evening. "You've got to keep that baby out of my way, or I'll leave town or take rooms at a hotel. And don't you have it at dinner again. It makes me sick."

"But it's such a lovely little thing, George," urged Mrs. Scales, with a covert smile into the mirror.

"It isn't!" cried Mr. Scales, wrenching off his collar, as if he were strangling the object of his wrath. "I saw a lot of babies this morning—took particular notice of them—and this one's the ugliest of the bunch. It's done everything but yell, and I suppose—— There, what did I tell you?"

A shrill cry arose from an adjoining room.

"Really, George," said Mrs. Scales sharply, "you are insufferable. Please don't swear like that. You needn't distress yourself. After to-night you won't know that there is a baby in the house."

"Won't I?" replied the husband grimly, with a gesture of the hand in the direction of the disturbing sound. "Do you propose to buy a gag?"

An abrupt cessation of the cry brought a look of relief and pleasure to his face.

"By ginger," he said, "I believe that's what they've done."

Mrs. Scales, who divined more accurately the method adopted, forbore to

dispel the illusion, and Mr. Scales fell asleep undisturbed by any further outburst on the part of his infant guest.

Mrs. Scales kept her word, and the next three days passed without any noticeable annoyance to the sensitive husband. Mr. Scales advanced his breakfast hour, under the plea of extra work, and, after dinner, during which meal the baby remained in custody of the faithful Jane, entrenched himself securely in his study.

Only twice did he encounter the infant, and the interviews were of such brief duration as hardly to be worth mention. The promptness with which the child's cries were stilled excited his curiosity, and Mrs. Scales, in reply to his inquiries, explained that it was effected by administering a draft of milk in a feeding-bottle.

"So that's the tip, eh?" said Mr. Scales, charmed with the simplicity of the method. "Live and learn. I thought they swaddled its head up in the bed-clothes. That's what I should do."

"I pity any baby that falls into your hands, George," remarked his wife, and Mr. Scales, with a comfortable sense of security, replied that that day was far distant.

They were at dinner on the evening of the fourth day, when Mrs. Scales made a disconcerting announcement.

"Cousin Almira and I are going to the theater to-night, George," she said. "You'll have to get along without us for a few hours."

"Eh?" said Mr. Scales blankly, laying down his knife and fork. "To the theater?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Scales sharply, "to the theater, and for goodness' sake don't bulge your eyes like that George. The Foresters have a box at the Majestic, and they have invited us."

"And what about the baby?" demanded Mr. Scales.

"Oh, that's all right," replied his wife comfortably. "Jane will look after him. She's a capital nurse."

"But supposing it gets sick?" urged the husband anxiously.

"Rubbish!" interposed Mrs. Trenter. "He's never sick. He's as healthy as a young colt."

"We're not going to Kamchatka, George," added Mrs. Scales. "Now, please don't make a fuss. We're going to the theater, and then to supper with the Foresters, and that settles it."

"I might drop round and see Butterworth," Mr. Scales suggested tentatively.

"Well, you can't," replied his wife. "Jane will be nervous if she is left alone. Surely you can stay at home one night, and let us have a little enjoyment."

Mr. Scales, with a resigned shrug of the shoulders, accepted the situation.

"All right," he said. "Have it your own way. But don't blame me if anything goes wrong. I'll call up Butterworth, and get him to come round for a game of chess," he added in a more cheerful tone.

Mrs. Scales, having carried her point, raised no objection, and, half an hour after the ladies had left for the theater, Mr. Scales and Mr. Butterworth were setting out the chess-board.

Mr. Scales was slightly the better player, and he was deeply chagrined by the result of the first game, which was won by Mr. Butterworth after a piece of strategy which the loser declared to be underhand. He concentrated all his energies on retrieving his defeat, and so absorbed was he that he failed to hear a ring at the door-bell.

It was not until Jane, after several unheeded taps, entered the room and stood before him, that he looked up from the board.

"Well?" he said, with a slight frown of annoyance. "What's the matter?"

"It's my father, sir," whimpered the girl. "He's fell down into the cellar. My little brother's just brought me the news."

"Too bad," said Mr. Scales, his eyes wandering over the board. "Not hurt much, I hope."

"His leg's broke," replied Jane, punctuating her catalogue with sobs. "And two ribs—and his shoulder's out—and he's cut his eye—and the doctor thinks there's something gone inside him."

"Dear me! Dear me!" said Mr. Scales with perfunctory sympathy.

"And he keeps calling out for me," continued Jane. "I was always his fa-

vorite. I just came up to tell you, sir, that I'll have to go to him."

"Certainly, certainly," assented Mr. Scales absently. "Hold on, Butterworth, I haven't moved yet. You'd better run along as fast as you can."

"Oh, thank you, sir," said the girl. "I'm sure baby'll be all right till the ladies gets back."

"Eh?" cried Mr. Scales, suddenly alive to the gravity of the situation, and with consternation writ large on every feature. "The baby? I'd forgotten all about that con—that blessed infant. You can't go, Jane. It's out of the question."

"I must go, sir," replied Jane firmly. "It's my dooty as a daughter."

"But I say you mustn't!" cried Mr. Scales violently. "It's impossible. Out of this house you don't go to-night."

Fire flashed from Jane's eye, and her lip ceased to tremble.

"I'll wish you good night, sir," she said, "and a kinder heart. I don't envy your wife, I'm sure. The child's in Mrs. Trenter's room," she added as she went out. "You'll be able to hear him if he wakes."

With these ominous words she departed, closing the door with unnecessary violence.

With a pallid countenace, Mr. Scales heard her go to her own room and then her heavy footfall descending the stairs.

"What are we to do?" he said, turning to Mr. Butterworth, who had been a silent but interested spectator of the domestic drama.

"*We?*" replied the other expressively. He took out his watch. "I don't know what you are going to do, but I think I'll have to be getting home."

"You won't!" Mr. Scales cried, with sudden ferocity. "Jane may go, but I'll be darned if you shall. If you leave this house before my wife and cousin come back, our friendship ceases. Good heavens, Butterworth," he continued, in tragic tones, "surely you wouldn't desert me at such a time!"

The other was not proof against the pathos of this appeal.

"All right," he said resignedly. "I'll stick by you, but I don't see what use I should be. Shall we go on with the game?"

Mr. Scales shook his head.

"I couldn't give proper attention to it," he said.

Mr. Butterworth pushed his chair back noisily.

"What are we to do then?" he demanded.

"We can make less noise at any rate," replied his friend sharply. "For heaven's sake don't wake it up."

Mr. Butterworth, crossing the room on tiptoe, took a cigar from a box and lit it.

"I suppose we may smoke," he said in an exaggerated whisper.

Mr. Scales, ignoring his friend's buffoonery, followed his example, and for half an hour the two sat puffing in silence, Mr. Scales starting at every sound.

"This is a little monotonous for a man of my laughter-loving disposition," observed Mr. Butterworth at last. "I'm going to play a game by myself."

He moved over to the chess-board, and began to set the pieces.

"Better come and tackle it," he urged. "The time will pass quicker."

"Nothing would make the time pass more quickly for me," responded the other lugubriously.

Mr. Butterworth smiled. It was an unfortunate smile. The relaxation of his jaw allowed his cigar to fall to the floor. He made a wild clutch to retrieve it, and upset the little table bearing the chess-board.

In a desperate effort to save that he struck his elbow against a vase, and the ruin fell with a crash which might have been heard half a block away.

"Confound you, Butterworth!" cried Mr. Scales, starting up furiously. "You did it on purpose."

Mr. Butterworth's indignant disclaimer died on his lips, and the two men stood gazing on each other, panic-stricken.

Overhead — underfoot — all around, the air was filled with a thin, ventriloquial wail, which seemed to come from all the points of the compass at once.

Mr. Butterworth was the first to speak.

"It's awake!" he said in awed tones.

Mr. Scales threw himself back into his chair.

"And all because of your bungling carelessness," he muttered.

"Why didn't you let me go home when I wanted to?" demanded the other, not unreasonably. "Then it wouldn't have happened."

Mr. Scales, having no argument handy, kept silent.

"We can't stay here and let it yell itself to death," said Mr. Butterworth at last, as the sound increased in shrillness and intensity. "We've got to do something. Brace up, and let's go and have a look at it."

He led the way, and the two stood and gazed down at the baby, who by this time had reached the limit of his powers, and was maintaining a steady howl, broken by extraordinarily brief pauses for respiration.

"Why don't you pick it up?" said Mr. Scales impatiently when the noise became unbearable.

"Pick it up yourself," replied the other. "It's not my baby."

"It isn't mine, if you come to that," argued Mr. Scales hotly. "It was your stupidity which awakened it."

"Try putting the clothes over its head," suggested Mr. Butterworth.

A light flashed on Mr. Scales.

"Where's its bottle?" he said feverishly.

He made a hurried search, and finding the implement on the bureau, held it up in triumph.

"Here it is!" he cried. "My wife gave me a tip. You fill this up with milk, and stick this rubber end in its mouth, and it'll quit yelling at once. I know it's right because I've heard it. Never made a sound afterward."

"Good!" said Mr. Butterworth. "Where's the milk?"

"In the refrigerator," replied the other. "Go down and get it, and don't linger."

Mr. Butterworth hurried away, and returned at full speed, bearing a jug.

"It seems pretty cold for a young one," he said doubtfully, testing the temperature of the jug with the palm of his hand.

"Not a bit," replied Mr. Scales with all the confidence of an expert. "The colder the better. Pour away."

"Say when," said Mr. Butterworth. "It's a pretty big bottle."

"I don't know when," the other replied impatiently. "Fill the bottle full and let the child judge for itself. It knows how much it can hold better than we do."

The baby, who was both hungry and thirsty, accepted the proffered refreshment with avidity, and having got over the shock occasioned by its first taste of the ice-cold draft, settled steadily to work.

"Seems to be going pretty fast," said Mr. Butterworth, as the milk sank in the bottle with alarming rapidity.

"I never saw anything like it," assented Mr. Scales. "The child must be hollow. We've got to put the brakes on somehow, or it'll choke itself."

"Pinch the tube," suggested the other.

Mr. Scales tried, but was unable to hit the happy medium between a complete stoppage of the flow, which elicited cries of protest, and a degree of constriction which had no appreciable effect.

"It's no use," he said despairingly. "You have a try."

Mr. Butterworth declined.

"We'll have to let it go its own gait," he said. "I suppose when it gets filled up it will go to sleep."

The baby, with its eyes fixed intently on Mr. Scales's perturbed countenance, continued to absorb the milk until only a few spoonfuls remained, when it suddenly released the tube, and set up a dolorous wail.

"Not much of a tip," said Mr. Butterworth scornfully. "I thought you said this would stop it."

"So it does. So it should," replied the other, actually wringing his hands; "but there must be something else which my wife forgot to mention. Shall we fill the bottle again?"

Mr. Butterworth dissented.

"It evidently hasn't got room for any more," he said. "There's only one thing to do. Pick it up and nurse it. Now it's no use talking like that. If you don't, I go home. I'm not going to be a party to infanticide. Bring it into the other room."

Thus commanded, Mr. Scales, after sundry anathemas, gathered the baby and the bed-clothes in a clumsy bundle, and followed his friend back to the study.

"It won't stop," he said piteously, as he sat, the picture of misery, on the edge

of the sofa, holding the baby like an unwieldy parcel.

"Rock yourself back and forward," directed Mr. Butterworth, who was seated at his ease, a cigar in his mouth.

He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and was beginning to derive a certain amount of enjoyment from the situation.

"And for heaven's sake don't let it see your face," he added.

Mr. Scales, with a mutinous scowl, imparted an oscillatory movement to his body.

"Now sing," commanded the other.

"I won't," Mr. Scales replied savagely. "Do you think I'm going to do all the work. Sing yourself."

Mr. Butterworth obligingly trolled a bacchanalian stave in a voice of great richness and power, which so surprised the baby that it ceased its wails. The relief, however, was only temporary. The child, not being accustomed to take its food at a temperature of thirty-eight degrees Fahrenheit, was feeling decidedly uncomfortable, and continued to advertise the fact.

"This is awful," groaned Mr. Scales, after half an hour spent in devising soothing expedients, and putting them into practise without result. "It's wound up for the night. I wish you would take it for a while; my arms are nearly broken."

Mr. Butterworth shook his head.

"Too risky," he said. "I wouldn't advise moving it."

He glanced at the clock.

"The show ought to be about out now," he added consolingly.

"What's the good of that," the other replied irritably. "They're going to supper at the Foresters. If you would call up the house, and leave word for them to come straight home as soon as they arrive, you would be of some use, instead of sitting there grinning."

Mr. Butterworth, composing his features, went over to the desk-telephone, and Mr. Scales sat watching him with the expression of a prisoner when the jury files back into the court-room. An animated conversation followed, the disjointed sentences at Mr. Butterworth's end of the line driving the other almost frantic.

"Not till one o'clock?" Mr. Butterworth concluded in a surprised tone.

Evidently the reply was confirmatory, for he hung up the receiver with a weary air.

"What's that?" demanded Mr. Scales anxiously. "What's that about one o'clock?"

"They're not expected home till then," replied Mr. Butterworth. "They are having supper at one of the down-town restaurants. The servant doesn't know which."

Mr. Scales, making a despairing clutch at his hair, nearly let the baby fall, and retrieved it with some difficulty.

"I can't stand another three hours of this and I won't!" he shouted. "It's getting worse and worse. I can hardly hear myself speak. Do something, Butterworth, or there'll be murder. I'll go right out and leave it on a door-step."

"I'll tell you what we might do," said the other, after a few moments' deep thought. "Three doors from my diggings is a sort of trained nurses' boarding-house. How would it do to get one of them to come over?"

"Thank the Lord you have a glimmering of common sense occasionally," cried Mr. Scales. "Call them up, and offer them anything—any price."

He arose, and pacing feverishly up and down the room, resolutely closed his ears to the conversation which ensued.

"It's all right," Mr. Butterworth said at last. "One of them will be here inside a quarter of an hour. I told them it was an emergency case. Brace up, it won't be long. Shall I put a cigar in your mouth and light it for you?"

Mr. Scales's relief was too great to leave any room for resentment at frivolity, and no condemned prisoner ever listened more eagerly for the first indications of an expected reprieve than did he for the coming of his rescuer.

The nurse, a beetle-browed young woman, with an incisive manner, received Mr. Scales's thankfully yielded burden with professional interest, but when she learned, after a few curt questions, that she was simply expected to act the part of nursemaid for a few hours, she at first flatly declined.

It is probable that she would have adhered to this decision, had not Mr. Scales,

in recounting his experiences, mentioned the incident of the feeding-bottle. A brief but trying cross-examination followed, the nurse, whose temper was somewhat ruffled, commenting unsparingly on what she called Mr. Scales's criminal recklessness.

"It's a wonder you didn't kill the child," she said sternly.

"He wanted to at one time," interposed Mr. Butterworth. "He was going to leave it on a door-step."

A frosty glance effectually checked any further untimely levity, and the nurse disappeared into the bedroom with her charge, which, to the intense surprise of the two men, had become almost instantaneously quiescent.

Under the soothing influence of tobacco, Mr. Scales regained something of his former spirits, and was even able to smile a little at the recollection of his troubles.

"The joke is certainly on me," he said. "My wife and cousin will have a good laugh."

"And some other people," murmured the other half inaudibly.

A faint, unconscious grin hovered about his lips, and in his eyes was the abstracted look of one engaged in composition.

Mr. Scales looked at him angrily.

"I suppose you think you are going to make a funny story out of this," he said.

"As funny as I can," assented Mr. Butterworth. "It doesn't need much invention though—that's one thing. It's pretty good as it stands."

Then Mr. Scales broke out, but it was not until he had exhausted all his powers of persuasion, invective, and menace, that he succeeded in extorting a reluctant promise of silence.

Mr. Butterworth, disappointed of the pleasure which he had promised himself, and annoyed at his friend's unreasonable sensitiveness, waxed monosyllabic, and conversation languished, until a sharp ring at the door-bell announced the return of the ladies.

"Well, George," said Mrs. Scales briskly, as her husband admitted them. "We've had a lovely time. Everything all—— *Who's that?*"

She pointed to the head of the stairs, where stood the nurse, conspicuous in her uniform.

"That?" replied Mr. Scales, with a sickly smile. "Oh, that's a trained nurse. The baby——"

He got no further. With a wild scream Mrs. Trenter thrust him violently aside and rushed madly up the stairs.

The nurse, startled by this sudden manifestation, fled precipitately, and Mr. Butterworth, hurrying out of the study, met the agonized mother on the landing.

"Tell me the worst," she cried, seizing the astonished man by the arm with both hands and shaking him in her agitation. "Tell me the worst. I can bear it."

"The worst?" echoed Mr. Butterworth, startled out of his usual aplomb. "The worst about what? I don't know what you are talking about?"

"My child!" wailed Mrs. Trenter. "Oh, doctor! If you have a heart do not keep a mother in suspense. Tell me he's not dying."

"He's all right as far as I know," Mr. Butterworth replied bruskly. "He's asleep, I should imagine, because he's not crying. And I'm not a doctor. I'm——"

Mrs. Trenter did not wait for him to complete the sentence, but dashed into her bedroom, where Mr. Butterworth heard her in excited colloquy with the nurse.

"And now will you please tell me what it all means?" demanded Mrs. Scales magisterially, glancing from her husband to his friend, both of whom stood before her with the abashed mien of a couple of truant schoolboys. "Come, George, I'm waiting."

Mr. Scales hurriedly reeled off the events of the evening, while Mr. Butterworth occasionally tried to lighten the recital by laboriously playful interruptions. His efforts, however, met with indifferent success, and warned by the expression of the listener that the domestic barometer was falling fast, he took advantage of the striking of the clock to express surprise at the lateness of the hour, and effect a hasty retreat.

"And I told you what would happen if you had that baby here," Mr. Scales concluded, with an attempt to assert himself. "It's your fault. I never put in

such a time in my life—never. I warned——"

But Mrs. Scales cut his reproaches short.

"Of — all — the — men — I — ever —saw," she said with an impressive pause between every word, "I think, George, that you are the stupidest and most helpless. It's no use your saying any more. You'll only make it worse. You had better go to bed."

Mr. Scales opened his mouth to reply, but the hopelessness of it all overwhelmed him, and the words died on his lips.

Then, throwing out his stiffened arms, with a gesture of resigned obedience, he went.

IN THE WAKE OF THE SIMITAR.*

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK,

Author of "An Innocent Outlaw," "The Gold Gleaners," "The Spur of Necessity," etc.

An unexpected inheritance which landed its recipient in a not particularly pretty kettle of very lively fish.

CHAPTER XIII *(Continued).*

A STARTLING SITUATION.

THE doctor was startled. His keen eyes traveled back and forth between the girl and Max for a moment, and then he demanded:

"What's back of this? Tell me what you're trying to get at, can't you?"

Max went over his theory step by step. Leaning back in his chair, the doctor fixed his gaze on the ceiling and listened intently.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, when Max was done, and stared hard at the young man.

"Isn't there any way you can get at that bullet?" asked Max helplessly. "It may mean everything to Lee Marvin."

"It will be months, perhaps years, before the ball can be removed—maybe not at all. Cully's life hangs in the balance."

The doctor passed over to the girl and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Rose," said he in a kindly tone, "you must let this matter rest. You have an able counselor in young Broderick. Unless I am greatly mistaken, you have kept quiet about this matter of the marked bullets?"

"Yes," said Max.

"Then say nothing to any one. I have never believed that Lee Marvin shot that man—I know the boy too well. Circumstantial evidence, however, is a dangerous thing, and has sent many an innocent man to the gallows. If we want to cut this circumstantial web that has entangled Lee, it must be done indirectly.

"I see a way, but it will take time. The question is, has each of you sufficient confidence in me to give everything into my hands, and do exactly as I tell you to do without question?"

"I have, Dr. Jenkins," answered Rose bravely, lifting her eyes to his.

"If Miss Marvin is satisfied," said Max, "I must be."

"Very good. You have abundant cause for hope, Rose, and no matter what happens, don't let your spirits flag for an instant. I never saw a man pulled down over an affair as your father is over this. He needs your support, and there is no one else who can do for him what you can.

"And another thing I must impress on you, keep quiet about every detail of Broderick's theory. Phillips must be kept in entire ignorance. Let him go ahead, in his feeble way, and try to make a defense. It will be a long time before Lee's case comes to trial; and it may never get that far, if my plan works out. You can both set your minds at rest about that bullet. Unless Cully dies, it cannot figure in Lee's defense."

What the doctor's plan was, neither

* *This story began in the August issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The two back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 20 cents.*

Rose nor Max had the remotest idea. It was evident that it had occurred to him suddenly, taking shape, no doubt, as the young man propounded his theory.

It was asking a good deal to bid the girl pluck hope from the very depths of discouragement. Apparently, however, she had unlimited faith in Dr. Jenkins; and since she had agreed to be governed by him, Max could do no less.

"Keep the pouch of bullets and the bullet-mold," counseled the doctor, when his callers were about to leave, "for they are of prime importance. At the proper moment we can get an affidavit from Larrimore to the effect that Pasco was at his place on Tuesday evening, June 10th.

"As for the rest," he added, addressing Rose, "trust me and be patient. If we accomplish anything, Broderick will be the man to thank for it. He has done some clever work, and I am sure I can count on him to do some more."

That ended the interview.

"Have you any idea what the doctor will try to do, Mr. Broderick?" inquired Rose, when they had regained the street.

"Not the slightest," said Max, "but, somehow, he inspires confidence."

"He does, indeed. The future looks brighter to me than it has at any time since Lee was taken to Carrington."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERRUPTED BURGLARY.

A MONTH—two months—passed. So far as Lee Marvin was concerned the situation remained unchanged.

Not a week went by that Rose did not make a pilgrimage to the Carrington jail. Sometimes her father accompanied her, and sometimes Phillips; once, by special request of the prisoner, Max himself went.

Lee met him with a hearty hand-clasp.

"God bless you, old chap!" said he. "I know what you have done for the folks and I wanted you to come over here so I could thank you."

Away from the sun, the prisoner's face was whitening; other than that there was no mark of the jail upon him. He was straight as an arrow, broad-shouldered, and every move of his body attested his rugged strength.

Max had been impressed with him at their first meeting. He liked him now, and mentally vowed to leave no stone unturned to help him gain his freedom.

"I am glad to see you keeping up courage," said Max.

Lee laughed softly.

"When a man's innocent, all this claptrap"—he waved a hand at the stone and iron-work—"fades out of his mind. A clear conscience is everything, Broderick. Having one yourself, I am pretty sure you understand what I mean."

They chatted for some time and then Max left Rose alone with her brother. When she came out, and they were about to start away, Lee called Max back.

"I have told sis how I dislike Phillips," he whispered through the grating, "and I want to tell you. I am not having him for my lawyer because I want him, but because Rose wants him.

"My suspicions are not founded on anything very tangible, but if Phillips doesn't prove to be a snake in the grass I'll miss my guess. Should you happen to have any business dealings with him, Broderick, look out for yourself."

The advice was hardly necessary, for Max had already taken the lawyer's measure. They were not on cordial terms; on the contrary, whenever they met they afforded each other but the merest recognition.

Rumor had it that Max was "tryin' to cut Nate out," and that he wanted Rose for a "life as well as a business partner." These remarks reached Max, in a roundabout way, and, while they made him indignant, they set him to thinking.

Thereafter it was noticeable that he was more friendly toward Phillips. The young man was so constituted that the thought that he was prejudiced against Phillips on Rose's account sent him to the other extreme.

The lawyer rebuffed his advances—which was the very best thing that could have happened to Max.

During these two months the *Simitar* thrived. New settlers came in, several new stores and dwellings were begun, the old Townsite Company was bought

out by more progressive people, and the exploitation of Sharon and Wells County started in earnest.

A bountiful harvest seconded the efforts of the "boomers." Trains arrived daily over the branch now, and Sharon stirred, yawned, and quickened into vigorous life.

All this was good for everybody, and it was especially good for the *Simitar*. The subscription list grew by leaps and bounds. When it reached the thousand mark, paid up and exclusive of exchanges, Rose gave a dinner to celebrate the event.

Nathan Phillips was a guest at the dinner, and there was a vacant chair for Lee.

During this period of waiting, Cully lay in his bed at the Larkin home. His long fight was not over, he suffered much pain, and the doctor talked vaguely of complications.

As yet there had come no hint to Rose or Max of the doctor's plan. It was on Friday, ten weeks from the day Max had arrived in Sharon, that the doctor saw fit to begin operations in Lee's behalf.

The beginning was peculiar, so peculiar that Max was tempted to question the doctor's judgment. Laboring up the stairs, Jenkins pushed into the sanctum and flung some closely written sheets down on the desk in front of Max.

"That stuff has got to go in to-morrow's paper," said he.

Max looked at the copy with consternation.

"Why, doctor, we haven't any room for it!" he exclaimed.

"Then make room for it. Take out my ad, take out everybody's ad, but get that in to-morrow's *Simitar*. It's my first gun, young man. Something is going to happen next week, and you've got to fix things so you can be absent from this print-shop for a few days, if necessary. You are my main dependence; Colwell comes next."

"Why," muttered Max, scanning the copy, "do you think it advisable——"

"You promised not to question anything I saw fit to do," glowered the doctor.

"Anything you saw fit to do in connection with proving Lee Marvin's innocence," qualified Max.

"Well, that stuff has everything to do with it."

"I don't see how this——"

"Of course you don't. Are you going to publish that, or not?"

"I am," said Max. And the doctor puffed his way out again.

Max called his partner in from the workroom.

"I want you to listen to this, Miss Marvin," said he. "Dr. Jenkins has just left some copy."

She sat down, and he proceeded to read:

"It is not generally known that developments of very great importance have taken place in the Cully shooting affair, but such is the fact. These developments tend strongly in the direction of Lee Marvin's complete innocence.

"A certain notorious character, who makes Sharon his base of operations, was seen in the vicinity of Lee Marvin's claim on the night of Tuesday, June 10th. It is known that this man uses an old-fashioned muzzle-loading rifle, that he casts his own bullets, and that his bullets *are plainly marked by a defective mold.*

"If such a bullet could be found to have caused Abijah Cully's injury, responsibility for the shooting would rest upon other shoulders than Lee Marvin's. No probing for the bullet can be done, however, without grave danger to Cully's life. His death, therefore, so far from clouding Lee Marvin's fortunes might prove his salvation."

Max threw two of the written sheets on his desk and stared at Rose. She gave an amazed gasp.

"Why," she cried, "the doctor is doing just what he told us not to do! We were not to breathe even a whisper concerning your theory to any one, and here he intends publishing it and scattering it broadcast."

"That's the way it struck me, Miss Marvin. I tried to remonstrate with him, but it was no use.

"We gave him our promise, you remember, to follow his lead without question."

The girl sat in astounded silence for a space; then she observed:

"Jed Pasco will certainly see that article when it is published, and he will be put on his guard."

"Certainly he will," said Max, "Here's some more copy the doctor turned in:

> "It is stated on good authority that during the last few hours Abijah Cully's condition has taken a turn for the worse. It is not thought possible that he can survive more than twenty-four hours."

Rose was vexed almost to the point of tears.

"One of the articles declares that if Cully dies the mark of the bullet may be found and Lee's innocence proved," said she, "and the other states that Cully's condition has taken a change for the worse. It is an invitation for Pasco to get out of the country."

"Which he will do forthwith, unless I am very much mistaken," added Max.

Without stopping to put on her hat, Rose ran over to Dr. Jenkins's office. In a few minutes she was back.

"The doctor is not in an explanatory mood," she reported. "All he would say is that what he was doing was for Lee's benefit, and that if we didn't want to help him that was our lookout."

"We'll have to run the stuff in this week's paper," said Max helplessly; "there's no getting around it."

"That's the way it looks to me," returned Rose, taking the copy and going back to the workroom.

As Max lay on his cot that night, revolving in his mind the events of the day, his inability to make anything of the doctor's plan worried and oppressed him. How benefit was to come to Lee Marvin by placing Max's theory in the hands of Pasco was a mystery that baffled solution.

As the sleepless hours wore on, Max's brain reeled with it. In order to divert his thoughts to more profitable channels, he was on the point of getting up and doing some writing.

Just as he was about to carry out this intention an unwonted noise from the office was borne to his ears. The sound resembled the stealthy raising of a window-sash.

Rising at once, he crept to the copy-hole in the partition and peered through it into the other room.

As near as Max could judge, it was midnight. There was no moon, but against the lighter background framed in the office-window the dark figure of a man could be seen, climbing into the sanctum.

Max made no outcry. Scarcely breathing, he continued to watch.

On gaining entrance to the room the intruder straightened erect and listened intently. Apparently satisfied, he struck a match.

The man was no one Max had ever seen before. He had a low forehead, a retreating chin, and other marks that stamped him as a degenerate.

His attention was centered upon the floor. His eyes were engaged with its dimensions, and presently he kicked aside an old rug that lay in front of the desk and went down on his knees.

With the aid of a second match he made a closer examination of the floor. A moment later he had lifted a section of one of the boards, plunged his hand into the opening and drawn out a paper.

The moment had come for Max to act. He had no firearm of any description. In lieu of such a weapon he caught up a shooting-stick, stepped to the door and softly opened it.

The burglar, a flickering match in his hand, was intent upon an examination of the document just secured.

"Make a move," called Max sternly, bringing the shooting-stick on a line with his eyes, "and I'll put a bullet into you!"

The man flung himself back with a gasp. The match dropped, but before the flame died out in darkness he caught a gleam of the steel in Max's hand.

"Don't shoot!" he begged. "I ain't takin' anythin' that's valuable to you."

CHAPTER XV.

A CALL TO ACTION.

Max and the intruder moved about like shadows in the gloom of the office. In his own mind the intruder was sure that if he tried to escape his body would make a large target in the window; he was equally sure that, since the editor had the "drop," any attempt to draw a weapon of his own would be followed with regrets.

"Strike another match," said Max,

"and let me see you place that paper on the top of the desk."

The fellow hastened to obey.

"Now take a chair," snapped the young man. "I'd like to talk with you before handing you over to the sheriff."

"What you goin' to hand me over to the sheriff for?" was the response. "I ain't done nothin' to hurt you."

He fell into a chair, cringing before the leveled shooting-stick.

"If your motives are honest, why didn't you call here in the daytime and try to secure that paper in an honest way?"

"I was only follerin' instructions."

"Whose instructions?"

"Your uncle's."

A quiver raced through the young man's nerves.

"Were you doing this for my uncle or for Nathan Phillips?"

"I don't know nothin' about Phillips."

"Where is my uncle?"

"Don't know. I was to mail that paper to him at Mandan."

"I'll look the paper over and, if I think he ought to have it, I'll send it to him myself. Who are you?"

"Oll Meigs," was the sullen response.

"You're the fellow that jumped Pasco's claim, eh?"

The man swore under his breath.

"Jasper Broderick hired you to do that just as he hired you to do this, I suppose?" pursued Max.

"Well, I ain't workin' for nothin'."

Max sat for a while reflective, no sound but the ticking of the office clock breaking the silence. He finally decided that nothing was to be gained by bothering further with Meigs.

"Get out of that window again," said the young man, "and take yourself off as quickly as you can."

"And I can't take the paper?" queried the man.

"Certainly not. Give the desk a wide berth when you pass it on the way to the window."

Without a word Meigs got up, made his way to the window, and disappeared. Max stepped forward and watched him descend, carry the ladder back to the place where he had found it, and then lose himself in the hovering shadows.

Closing the window, the young man laid aside the shooting-stick, lighted a lamp, and examined the paper. What he learned from the document was sufficiently startling.

It was a memorandum of agreement between Nathan Phillips and Jasper Broderick. By its terms the two entered into a conspiracy to jump certain claims, Phillips furnishing the money to pay the claim-jumpers, Broderick acting as a go-between, and profits to be equally divided.

It was expressly stipulated that Phillips was to be a "silent partner" and referred to, when necessary, as "M. Paramore."

Max extinguished the light, replaced the section of board and the rug, and went back to his cot. The important document was under his pillow.

Next morning he wrote to his uncle at Mandan. The letter was couched in plain language, well calculated to sting the conscience of an ordinary man—perhaps Uncle Jasper's.

The facts connected with Max's securing the Phillips-Broderick agreement were stated. Max added, furthermore, that the agreement might prove valuable to him and that he should retain it and, if he thought necessary, use it.

The young man indulged in no expressions of gratitude for the gift of the *Simitar*. Instead, he enclosed his note for $600, payable in twelve months with interest at six per cent.

This letter was duly posted in time to leave by the Saturday's mail. The moment it was out of his hands Max heaved a sigh of relief.

He was positive that the agreement was what Phillips was looking for when surprised going through the papers of the desk.

The doctor's articles, appearing in that week's issue of the paper, sent a thrill of excitement throughout the length and breadth of Sharon. People discussed the new evidence in groups on the streets, in the stores, in their homes; and Cy Larkin reported that Pasco had shown his defiance by grinding the paper under his heel in Bulger's sample-room.

Furthermore, Pasco, in the presence of witnesses, had registered a vow to "get" Max Broderick, who, it was sup-

posed, had written the articles. He would "get" him, and he would "get him for keeps."

Pasco paraded the town defiantly, his long-barreled rifle in the hollow of his arm. No one molested him.

Sunday passed, and with Monday the news traveled along the main street like wild-fire—"Bije Cully is dead!" There was no sympathy expressed for the claim-jumper. The trend of public anxiety was expressed in the two questions, "Will Lee Marvin be cleared?" and "Where's Jed Pasco?"

For Pasco, erstwhile insolently defiant, had vanished as though the ground had opened under his feet.

At eleven o'clock of that fateful Monday morning, two men bore a stretcher to Dr. Jenkins's office. A blanket covered the stretcher, and under the blanket could be traced the gruesome outlines of a still form.

A crowd gathered at the foot of the stairs leading to the doctor's office—an expectant crowd, talking in whispers, watching like weasels for a sign, and speculating wildly.

At one o'clock the telegraph operator emerged hastily from the railroad station with a yellow envelope in his hand. He was deaf to the inquiries of the crowd and raced up the stairs to Jenkins's office.

Presently he reappeared, followed by the doctor himself. The doctor's face was bland and inscrutable as he locked his door behind him, shook his head negatively when questions were asked, and made hastily for the office of the *Simitar*.

Rose and Max were in consultation in the sanctum.

"Read this, Broderick," said the doctor, flinging the message to him, "and then act accordingly. The hour is ripe for accomplishing—the unexpected."

> Have Max Broderick join me in Carrington at once. Am on Pasco's trail. If I'm not at the Gibson House will leave word for Broderick there.
>
> COLWELL.

Thus ran the message, which Max read aloud. A pallor flew into Rose Marvin's face and she fixed her blue eyes strangely on Max.

"I'll go, of course," said Max, "but it's too late for the train."

"You'll have to ride horseback," said the doctor, "and start without delay. I told the telegraph operator, who brought the message, to ask them at the livery stable to put their best horse under saddle for you. It will be ready by the time you are."

Max started for his coat and hat. While in the workroom he heard Rose ask:

"Why is it necessary for Max to go? Pasco is especially bitter against him, and suppose——"

"Is Max a toddling infant?" broke in the doctor gruffly. "Hasn't he shown his ability to take care of himself? Anyhow"—and there was a quizzical note in the doctor's voice—"what do you care what happens to Max, if it comes to that?"

"If you hadn't published those articles," said Rose reproachfully, "Pasco wouldn't have fled, and this pursuit wouldn't have been necessary."

"Of course it wouldn't."

"Why did you do it, doctor?"

"Because I'm trying to save Lee. Now, don't bother that pretty head of yours any more. Say good-by to Max and keep up your courage."

The doctor was gone when Max reentered the office, and Rose stood leaning by the window, pale and distressed. Max stepped to her side.

"You can get along all right, Rose," said he. "The chances are that I'll be back by the time the type from our last issue is in the cases. But I sha'n't come back, little girl, until I bring Pasco. It means so much to Lee, you know."

Her head fell and a sigh fluttered from her lips.

"Here is something I found last night," Max went on hurriedly, handing her the Phillips-Broderick agreement. "I feel that you must know what this paper contains, although I wish from my heart that you received it from any one but me."

She took the paper mechanically.

"Good-by," he said.

"Oh, Max, Max!" she sobbed, and flung her arms impulsively about his neck.

He had loved her from the moment she had come between him and her father, there at the doorway in front of

Minnick's. But he had striven to lock the passion in his own heart, for he had not dreamed that she cared for him.

His heart was in his throat. He hesitated a moment, then strained her to his breast and kissed her lips.

"Be brave, dear," he whispered, and was gone.

Dr. Jenkins was waiting for him at the foot of the stairs. Max's face was flushed and happy.

"I wouldn't give a picayune for his chances," chuckled the doctor.

"Whose?" demanded Max sharply. "Lee's?"

"No, Phillips's. Take this. I hope you won't need it, but still it is best to be prepared. I couldn't give it to you upstairs—Rose would have seen me."

The doctor pressed a small revolver into Max's hand.

"And mind," cautioned the doctor, "if you and Colwell come back without Pasco, I won't answer for Lee."

"We'll get him," answered Max, and flung away in the direction of the livery stable.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE TRAIL.

In somewhat less than two hours after leaving Sharon Max was inquiring for Colwell at the Gibson House in Carrington.

"Is your name Broderick?" inquired the clerk.

"Yes."

"Colwell left for Jimtown on the two o'clock train, but here's a message for you."

Max tore open the envelope with feverish hands.

> Have just learned a man answering Pasco's description started for Jimtown in a buckboard with a couple of cowboys, early this morning. You might follow on a good horse and make inquiries as you come along. Possibly Pasco's start for Jimtown is only a blind, but I have decided to go on by train and see what I can discover. If you learn anything of importance, communicate with me at the Gladstone; otherwise, look for me there. If I don't meet you, will leave word.

It was nearly forty-four miles to Jamestown and the untried Max was already saddle-weary. But Max was not thinking of himself; he was thinking of Pasco and, primarily, of Lee.

In the foreground of his thoughts, too, hovered a tear-stained, anxious face, whose wide blue eyes looked their love and appeal into his. Surely no man had ever a stronger inspiration to do his best.

It was necessary for him to cross the railroad-tracks in the vicinity of the station in order to reach the livery barn. A velocipede-car, such as is used by track inspectors, was on the station platform and caught his attention as he rode past. That car was a suggestion.

After commending his tired horse to the liveryman's care, he asked about the road to Jamestown. It was a good road, he was informed, barring an occasional slough here and there, and it followed the railroad track every foot of the way.

The last item was enough for Max. He returned to the railroad station and leaned through the window for a few words with the agent.

The agent, who was also the telegraph operator, was at that moment taking a message. When he had finished, he turned to Max.

"Would it be possible for me to borrow, or hire, that velocipede-car for a ride to Jamestown?" Max asked.

"I don't know about that," was the reply, as the agent got up from his desk with the message he had just taken in his hand. "This road isn't in the habit of lending its rolling stock."

The agent started to leave.

"Wait a minute," went on Max. "Couldn't you telegraph headquarters and see if the car couldn't be secured?"

"I could, of course. I'm in a hurry now, though. This message is important and I must deliver it."

"My business is important, too," returned Max. "Just send that message in, won't you? Tell the superintendent that Max Broderick, editor of the Sharon *Simitar,* wants to use the car, and——"

"Well!" exclaimed the agent. "If you're Broderick, you're just the man I was going over to the Gibson House to find. While you're reading the message, I'll wire your request to Jimtown."

Max's telegram was sent from Minnewaukon to Sharon and Rose had had it rushed on to Carrington.

"If you are looking for Pasco," it ran, "he is here in Minnewaukon." It was signed "O. M."

For a moment the initials comprising the signature puzzled Max. Then the name of "Oliver Meigs" occurred to him.

Meigs bore Pasco a grudge, so it was very natural that he should forward such a message. Any doubts Max had, clustered about the fact that Meigs should know Pasco was wanted.

On the whole, the message seemed reliable and Max made up his mind to a change of plan.

"Tell the superintendent," said he to the operator, "that I want to use the car for a trip to Minnewaukon—not Jamestown."

Minnewaukon was north, in the vicinity of Devil's Lake. The message was altered accordingly.

The magic of that one word, "editor," brought a favorable response. Before leaving Carrington, Max wrote out a telegram to be sent to Colwell, explaining what he was going to do.

The velocipede-car contained seats for two persons. Stirrups for the feet and levers for the hands furnished motive power, and Max sped merrily along on his northward journey.

It was tiresome work, and the miles dragged after the first half-hour, but better that than a wait until next day for the regular train, or a rough and even slower journey in the saddle.

Barlow, New Rockford, Divide, Sheyenne—he flitted through the little towns, an object of wonder to station loungers, and of an occasional demand for his authority from station agents. The agents he referred to the superintendent at headquarters, and pushed and pulled his way onward.

Eleven o'clock that night found him in Minnewaukon, his strength almost at the bounds of endurance. The ragged prairie town was dark and silent, and a search for Pasco, at that hour, seemed to offer small chance of success.

Fatigued as he was, and a total stranger, to whom was he to turn for assistance? Although not exactly a fatalist, Max believed that if the stars were propitious, untoward circumstances would count for little providing he did his best.

Dragging the velocipede-car from the rails, he left it beside a tool-house and started into the town. His footsteps awoke resounding echoes on the board walk and stirred a dog into noisy clamor. The dog was answered by another on the farther side of the town; and then another and another, from various points in the darkness, helped to swell the defiant chorus of barks. Max, worn out and sleepy, thought irritably that he had never been in a town where the canine element predominated as it did there.

As he continued on, wondering which house would best reward an attempt at securing information, a man turned a corner directly in front of him and flashed a dark-lantern suspiciously into his face.

"Hello!" exclaimed Max, blinking in the penciled gleam.

"Hello, yourself," returned the other. "Lookin' for some one?"

"Yes," answered the young man. "I was beginning to think the whole town was asleep."

"All the law-abidin' citizens took to their beds long ago," was the pointed response.

"Which leaves you and me to be accounted for," said Max humorously."

"I'm the night-watch," said the man quickly.

"I just got in on a velocipede-car from Carrington. Sharon is my home town, and my name is Broderick. I run the paper there. I am looking for a fellow named Jed Pasco, who is wanted in a shooting scrape, and information I have received leads me to believe he is in Minnewaukon. Have you noticed a suspicious character in the place lately?"

"By Christopher, that's what I have!" replied the night-watch. "He's putting up at Matt Gidley's. But say," the man added, a commendable eye to the main chance, "is there any reward for this fellow Pasco?"

"None has been offered; but I have five dollars for you if the man you have in mind is the one I want."

Matt Gidley was the proprietor of a cheap lodging-house, and Max and the night-watch immediately started for the place to investigate. The night-watch did not pound on the door of the lodging-house, since such an alarm might

cause the suspicious character to scent danger and take to flight.

On the contrary, he tapped at the window of Matt Gidley's room, which happened to be on the first floor, and subsequently held a conversation with him under the raised sash.

"Gosh!" said Gidley, peering toward Max, "I thought there was somethin' wrong with that new lodger. I'll open the door and take you up to the place he's sleepin'."

Gidley got hurriedly into his clothes and admitted Max and the night-watch.

"Think he'll be hard to handle?" asked the latter nervously.

"If he hadn't been given to indiscriminate shooting," replied Max, "I shouldn't be after him now."

"You better go ahead," said the night-watch; "you know him better'n I do."

Max dropped his hand in his pocket and clasped the handle of the doctor's revolver. Then he followed Gidley upstairs.

"There's the room," said the proprietor of the lodging-house, indicating the door with a nod and backing away, holding the lamp high above his head.

Max stepped to the door and drummed on it with his knuckles. A husky voice from within asked his business.

"I want to see you a minute," answered Max.

Sounds of some one moving about in the room were heard, and then the door was unlocked and pulled open.

"Oh!" came an astonished voice, "is that you, Broderick? I was wonderin' whether you'd take my word for it an' come on here."

Max laughed and let go his tense grip of the revolver.

"I had an idea you might be Pasco," said he. "Is the fellow still in town, Meigs?"

"He left for Fort Totten last night. If you want to get him you'll have to go on there."

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EXCITING SCENE ON THE LAKE.

Somehow Oliver Meigs had slipped out of Max's calculations. He was surprised and disappointed to find Meigs instead of Pasco.

The night-watch was also disappointed. A five-dollar bonus did not often come his way.

"When did you get here, Meigs?" Max asked.

"Sunday," was the answer.

"How do you know Pasco came here?"

"I saw him get off the train yesterday."

"And how did you know I wanted him?"

"Got hold of a copy of your last week's paper and read about them new developments in the Cully shootin' scrape. I know what kind of a gun Pasco uses, 'cause I've been close up to the muzzle of it.

"Then, too, I was in his shack for a day or so—long enough to get acquainted with that cracked bullet mold o' his, an' some other things. I wasn't long in figgerin' out who used the marked bullets.

"When I seen Pasco, I was dead sure you had him on the run, so I didn't lose no time in sendin' you that telegraft. He's a bad 'un, an' if I can help get him behind the bars I'll be glad to do it."

"Now, one thing more," said Max. "How do you know Pasco has gone to Fort Totten?"

"The feller that carries the mail drove him over. I saw 'em leavin' town an' talked with the mail-carrier when he got back."

"Can I get the mail-carrier to drive me over? I should like to leave here by daylight in the morning."

"I'll see him, and if he'll take you I'll have him drive around."

It was after midnight and Max had to have rest. After requesting Gidley to arouse him at five o'clock and have an early breakfast ready, the young man turned in for a few hours of sleep.

Both Meigs and Gidley were true to their engagements, and by six the next morning Max was riding across the Indian reservation with the mail-carrier. The military post, which was their destination, lay on the shore of Devil's Lake.

At the beginning of the journey the day was bright. Gradually, however, the sky became overcast, and there was a promise of storm in the air.

The mail-carrier was a loquacious young fellow and kept up a running fire of talk. He had a grievance, it appeared, and his grievance was against the government, particularly that branch of it presided over by the postmaster-general.

For a long time the mail for the fort had arrived at Minnewaukon and had been carted across the reservation. Now another man, living in Devil's Lake City, had secured the contract. Henceforth mail matter to and from the post was to be carried across the lake in a small launch to Devil's Lake City.

Max was not much interested in the mail-carrier's grievance. What concerned him more was the mail-carrier's trip, on the preceding day, with Pasco.

As a test of the information vouchsafed by Meigs, Max asked the mail-carrier for a description of his other passenger. The description tallied exactly with Pasco's appearance, down even to the long-barreled, muzzle-loading rifle and the powder-horn.

Pasco, the mail-carrier averred, seemed nervous and excited, and was continually looking behind him as though he feared pursuit. For the rest of it, he was taciturn and preoccupied and said nothing whatever about himself.

The mail-carrier had let him down at the post trader's store, near the fort, and had seen nothing more of him. He might be at Totten, or he might have crossed over to Devil's Lake City—Max himself knew as much about that as the mail-carrier.

From his companion Max learned that there were several small launches and sailboats on the lake, some belonging to officers at the fort and some to nautically inclined persons in the town on the opposite shore. The lake was very large and, owing to the great sweep of the wind across the neighboring plains, could roll up breakers that would compare not unfavorably with those of Lake Michigan.

"It's a treacherous body of water," said the mail-carrier, "and chuck full of rocks and shoals. I guess by the time the gov'ment loses a few mail-sacks in the lake, the red-tape fellers at Washin'ton 'll be ready to give me back my job."

The wind freshened, black clouds became thicker overhead, and the mail-carrier took critical note of the signs and whipped his horse into a brisker gait. Now and then a teepee or a rude shanty showed itself in the scant timber, and a squaw, or a red man, popped into sight and watched the travelers stoically.

"I guess we'll about hit Totten in time to keep out o' the wet," observed the mail-carrier. "There's the fort, off to the right there, on that 'rise.' If your eyes are good you can see the flag."

Max saw it; and at about the same time he heard the angry rumble of the lake lashed by the wind. The mail-carrier was as good as his word, and drew up in front of the post trader's store before the first rain-drops had begun to fall.

Max settled for his ride. While he was doing this, a man in an oilskin coat, with a mail-bag over his shoulder, passed by on his way to the lake shore.

"You got a fine spell o' weather for your first trip," called the young fellow who had driven Max from Minnewaukon.

There was a taunt in his voice, for the loss of a fat government contract had left malice in its wake.

"Don't you worry none about me, Hamp Stoddard," grinned the other.

"I ain't worryin' about you," said Stoddard; "I'm worryin' about the mail."

Max passed into the store to make a few inquiries of the post trader. Two or three Indians were in evidence, lounging about the counters.

Max heard a rear door slam.

"Where's the man in charge?" he asked of one of the Indians.

The red men stared and shook their heads mutely. Max's eyes were ranging up and down the interior of the store and happened to rest on a side window just as a form hastened past it on the outside.

The next moment the young man whirled and dashed back out of the front door. Unless his eyes were at fault the form that had passed the window was that of Jed Pasco.

Stoddard was just driving away and the man with the mail-bag was out of sight. The roadway was clear, and Max

darted round the side of the store building.

Pasco had vanished. For the fraction of a moment Max stood perplexed..

A footpath stretched away toward the shore of the lake, almost at his feet. At a loss for anything else to do, he followed it.

Presently he reached a point from which he caught an uninterrupted view of the tumbling waters. The path led to a small pier beside which a launch was making a landing.

A man and two ladies were in the boat, the man wearing the uniform of an officer. Max's gaze wandered across the pier to a point from which came the pounding of a gasoline motor, reaching his ears faintly above the noise of the waves.

There was Pasco, fifty feet off shore, in a boat that was laboring into the very teeth of the gale. It was the mail-boat, and the man Max had seen with the bag was at the helm.

Rushing for the pier, Max halted at the outermost end of it and made a trumpet with his hands.

"Hello, there!" he shouted, at the top of his lungs.

He had to repeat the hail again and again, for the fierce wind beat the words back and scattered the sound impotently. At last, however, he secured the mail-carrier's attention.

"What do you want?" came the answer.

"Come back!" shouted Max. "That man in the boat with you is a criminal! He is wanted in Sharon for murder! Bring him back!"

Pasco was watching and listening grimly. Suddenly he threw his rifle to his shoulder and leveled it at the man at the helm.

What Pasco said it was impossible for Max to hear. The mail-boat did not attempt to turn, but kept steadily fighting her way onward across the lake.

Meanwhile, the officer had assisted the ladies to the pier and they had left hastily to find refuge from the storm. The officer had remained and was taking a deep interest in Max's attempt to halt the other boat.

As Max turned away helplessly, the officer touched him on the shoulder.

"My launch is at your service," said he, "and she can overhaul anything on the lake, in fair weather or foul."

"Thank you," said Max. "The rascal in that mail-boat is a——"

"I have heard and seen enough to convince me of what *he* is," broke in the officer. "That mail-boat connects with the east-bound train at Devil's Lake City, and if we don't overhaul it before it gets across, your man may give you the slip. Jump in."

Max caught the officer's hand impulsively, then sprang into the little craft as it lay plunging and grinding alongside the pier. The officer followed, started the engine, and the last stage of the pursuit was begun.

By that time the rain was driving across the lake in sheets, the roar of thunder was deafening, and the play of lightning almost continuous. The officer had Max hold the wheel while he opened a locker and brought out a couple of oilskin coats.

"My name is Rankin," said the officer, bracing himself while he got into one of the oilskins and flung the other to Max, "Lieutenant Rankin. It's a bad squall we're having, but the Oriole will ride it out like a duck.

"The mail-boat is the Mollie O," he added, taking the helm from Max. "She has been on the lake a long while and I don't think she's overly stanch. You're from Sharon, are you?"

Conversation was difficult and the two had to talk at the top of their voices.

Max nodded in answer to the officer's query.

"My name is Broderick," said he; "I'm the editor of the paper at Sharon. A young man's whole future may depend upon my success or failure in capturing the scoundrel in that mail-boat."

"We'll do our best," said Lieutenant Rankin, "but this head-wind is playing the deuce with our speed. The Mollie O, however, is as badly handicapped as we are."

Max crept closer to the bow of the Oriole and clung there under a deluge from the churning waves. The Mollie O was laboring hard, and, while her skipper attended to the steering, Pasco faced him grimly, the long rifle ready for instant use.

The Oriole was gaining steadily. Max made his way cautiously back to the side of the lieutenant.

"It's a wonder the rascal doesn't send a shot in this direction," commented Rankin.

"While he finds it necessary to hold the whip-hand over that other chap," answered Max, "he won't do any shooting this way. His gun is a muzzle-loader, and while he was ramming home a fresh charge the mail-carrier could make things interesting for him."

"By Jove!" shouted Rankin, rising abruptly and peering toward the other launch, "the Mollie O is driving toward the rocks—the wind is too much for her. If that fellow with the gun doesn't let Lovejoy turn, there'll be a wreck."

"If Lovejoy turns back to Fort Totten," cried Max excitedly, "Pasco knows we'll get him!"

"Is the villain crazy? It's either put about or wreck the boat. Lovejoy understands that. Look! He's getting ready to do something."

The other boat and its passengers could be seen but indistinctly. The rain mist spread like a curtain between the two launches, and the sharp flashes of lightning were needed to bring out the Mollie O at all clearly.

What happened was seen by those on the Oriole in irregular but swiftly recurring periods, like a moving picture running slowly through a stereopticon—now a burst of light and now an interval of opaque darkness.

Lovejoy was observed to rise from his seat, then to hurl himself forward, while the loose tiller suffered the Mollie O to broach-to at imminent peril of swamping; then, from the gloom, came a hoarse cry and the crack of a rifle.

"He has killed him!" shouted Max. "Pasco has killed him!"

"No," corrected Rankin as a sullen streak zigzagged across the whitecaps, "they're at it, hammer and tongs. There! This Pasco of yours is over the rail!"

The Mollie O, lying broadside to the wind, had heeled over and was dipping her port rail. Evidently Pasco had fired at Lovejoy, and missed; thereupon the men grappled, and by a chance Pasco went overboard.

Lovejoy, blotted from sight for a space, was next seen back at the wheel, bringing the launch around. The boat had his attention just in the nick of time; a fraction of a minute longer and she would have been on the rocks.

During the clash on the Mollie O the Oriole had been plunging onward and was close by at the time of the mishap to Pasco. Max, without loss of a moment, began divesting himself of the oilskin, and of his coat, hat, and shoes.

"What are you about?" roared Rankin.

"Stand by as near as you can," Max answered. "I'm going in after Pasco."

"You're mad! Let the scoundrel shift for himself!"

Even while he remonstrated the lieutenant was pulling a coil of rope from under the seat.

"We want the fellow in Sharon—I must get him!" Max flung back.

"Tie that rope around you, then!" and, with one hand, Rankin tossed the end of the rope to Max.

The young man worked with marvelous quickness. The struggling form of Pasco could be easily seen, not more than twenty feet from the Oriole.

The instant the rope was in place Max went over the side and swam manfully in Pasco's direction. It was dangerous work, but if ever Max's heart was in a task it was in that one.

For all he knew, Lee Marvin's fate hung on the issue of that critical moment. And the memory of that tear-stained face in the dusty little office of the *Simitar* would have nerved him for any peril.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PASCO'S CONFESSION.

MAX had only a vague recollection of what happened after he flung himself into the raging waters of the lake. Although a good swimmer, his powers had never been taxed as they were then.

Fortune favored him, for wind and waves conspired to throw Pasco within arm's reach. Half-strangled and panic-stricken, Pasco caught Max about the waist, thus hampering him in his efforts to keep both of them afloat.

Then, but for the rope provided by Rankin's foresight, the two would surely have been overwhelmed. As it was, Max's senses left him and he gave himself up for lost.

When he recovered, he lay dripping upon the pier, Rankin and Lovejoy bending over him, the latter with a flask at his lips.

"He'll do, lieutenant," said Lovejoy, "but he'll never have a closer call in this life."

"You shipped a little more water than was good for you, Broderick," remarked Rankin. "How do you feel?"

"Fagged out," answered Max. "Where's Pasco?"

Lovejoy stepped to one side and afforded Max a glimpse of Pasco, sitting upon the wet planks, his hands bound at his back. Pasco returned Max's look with a black scowl.

"You got me," he growled with an oath. "If I could a-done it, I'd have dragged you under."

"The cur came within one of doing it, too," said Rankin. "If you're well enough to walk, Broderick, let's get out of this beastly rain. I'll manage the prisoner."

Lovejoy handed Max the clothing he had stripped off and left in the boat. When he had got into it, Max and the lieutenant started for the town with Pasco between them.

"It was a hard job getting you and Pasco into the Oriole," said Rankin.

"I don't hardly see how you did it," answered Max, "with such a sea running and the boat to take care of."

"The rope turned the trick. I lashed the wheel and hauled in on the cable. Pasco was hanging on to you all the time, either so badly frightened he didn't know what he was doing or else so vengeful he wanted to pull you down with him.

"I succeeded in getting you both into the boat somehow, and bound Pasco's hands while he was spent and unable to resist. Lovejoy and I reached the pier about the same time, and made fast. He lent a hand and we managed to get the two of you ashore."

"I shall never forget how deeply I am indebted to you," said Max with feeling.

"Don't mention it," returned the lieutenant. "That's one of the things I'm here for."

"I suppose there is a hotel in town?" asked Max, looking over the huddle of buildings that comprised the civilian part of the settlement.

"There is," replied Rankin, "but you're not going to have anything to do with it. You're for Officers' Row with me, and Pasco's for the guard-house."

Max was grateful to the officer for his show of hospitality, but was firm in declining the invitation. Colwell would surely be along in the afternoon and the first point he would aim for in search of Max would be to the hotel.

The guard-house, of course, was the only place for Pasco, and Rankin passed on with the prisoner.

After giving his clothes to an attendant to be dried at the kitchen fire, Max ordered his dinner sent up to his room and went to bed. Following the meal he slept soundly for several hours, and was finally awakened by Colwell, who had just arrived from Minnewaukon.

The sheriff was a very much surprised man. He was positive Pasco had left Carrington to drive to Jamestown, and how he ever got to Minnewaukon and Devil's Lake was beyond his comprehension.

On arriving at Minnewaukon Colwell had experienced no difficulty in learning where Max had gone. Without delay he engaged a man at a livery barn to take him to the post.

While Max was getting into his dry garments he informed the sheriff of all that had taken place in Carrington, Minnewaukon, and Fort Totten. That Colwell was delighted with the result goes without sayig.

As soon as Max was ready, he and Colwell paid a visit to Officers' Row and asked for Lieutenant Rankin. Rankin was found, in due course, and all three repaired to the guard-house.

Pasco was in a gloating mood and swaggeringly defiant. He admitted the shooting of Cully, and in his hardened heart exulted because he had "played even" with an enemy. His sole regret appeared to be that he had not also "squared accounts" with the two Brodericks, Jasper and Max.

The colonel in command at the post placed an ambulance at Colwell's disposal for the purpose of conveying the prisoner to Minnewaukon; and late that afternoon the sheriff, Max, and Pasco began their return journey.

Telegrams were despatched from Minnewaukon to Rose, Dr. Jenkins, and Lee Marvin, announcing the capture of Pasco and his acknowledgment of guilt. That night was passed at Matt Gidley's, and next day the south-bound train carried the prisoner and his captors to Carrington.

Rose and her father, Dr. Jenkins and Campbell, the sheriff of Foster County, were at the station to meet the arriving party. Rose was radiantly happy and her father seemed like a different man.

The doctor, as usual, was gruff and matter of fact, but he found occasion to grasp Max's hand and whisper in his ear:

"We're not done with this thing yet. Next in order is a seance at the jail."

Max wondered why there was to be a "seance" at the jail, but passively accompanied Jenkins, Marvin, and Rose, who were trooping along at the heels of the two sheriffs and Pasco.

Notoriety was dear to Pasco's soul, and it is to be presumed that he had earned enough to satisfy him. Later, he was to count the cost—but that fact seemed farthest from his mind at the moment.

The "seance" was held in the sheriff's office in the jail. On either side of the manacled prisoner sat Colwell and Campbell; near-by was the doctor, smoking reflectively, and on the other side of the room was Rose, with her father and Max.

A deputy sheriff was pulled up in front of a desk, a pad of paper in front of him and a pen in his hand.

"Pasco," said the doctor, deliberately, "everybody in Sharon knows what sort of a rifle you carried, that you cast your own bullets and that you used this mold."

The doctor took Max's "Exhibit A" from his pocket and held it up for Pasco's inspection.

A puzzled look crossed Pasco's evil face. "Where'd you git that?" he demanded harshly.

"I called at your shack one night when you were away," spoke up Max.

"Oh, you!" snarled Pasco. "The more I hear, the more I wisht I'd throttled you when we was in the lake together."

Just then a door leading into a corridor was thrown open and the turnkey came into the office with Lee. The young man walked directly to Max and wrung his hand.

No words were spoken. Lee Marvin's gratitude was beyond the power of mere words.

In passing to a chair, Lee halted in front of Pasco for a moment and gave him a long look. Pasco sneered and shrugged his shoulders.

"That's right," said he. "You owe Broderick a heap. If it wasn't for him I reckon I'd still be at large and you'd be as good as sent up."

Lee passed on to the chair and sat down.

"There is something else we know, Pasco," continued the doctor, "and that is that every bullet you cast bore the mark of that defective bullet mold. These marked bullets have enabled us to connect you with that attempt on Jasper Broderick's life——"

"I wisht I'd got him!" breathed Pasco through his teeth.

"And with the shooting of Abijah Cully," pursued the doctor.

"If Cully hadn't died you'd never knowed," chuckled Pasco.

"We had something of a case against you," said the doctor. "You were at Larrimore's at eight o'clock on the night of Tuesday, June 10th. Furthermore, you were known to bear Cully a grudge."

"I'd have given you the slip, slick an' clean, if it hadn't been for them marked bullets. You couldn't have made out no case ag'inst me.

"I had been layin' for Cully for quite a spell, but I didn't go out that night intendin' to shoot him. I had made up my mind that I'd buy some bullets at Minnick's, when I did *that*. I was huntin' for Phillips's steer that Tuesday, and I only chanced to be near Marvin's claim.

"As I passed the shack, after leavin' Larrimore's, I seen Cully through the window. And he was sech a good tar-

get I blazed away, never thinkin' a thing about them marked bullets.

"The thing was handy, an' I done it. If it hadn't been so handy, Lee Marvin would have stood the brunt of it, and not me. I could have fooled everybody, jest as I fooled Colwell by leavin' Carrin'ton in a wagon with some cowboys, gettin' out at Bordulac, the first station south, an' then takin' the train for Minnewaukon.

"I'd have been over the line into the British possessions by now if Broderick there hadn't pushed into the game." Pasco fell back in his chair in complacent silence.

"Did you get all that?" asked Jenkins of the deputy at the desk.

"Yes," replied the deputy, his pen scratching on the paper in front of him.

Pasco was surprised for a moment, and then smiled grimly.

"I'll sign it," said he, "if you think it'll help me any when my case comes to trial."

"We're not making any promises to you, Pasco," spoke up Colwell.

"I'll sign it anyhow. You got a cinch on me an' I might as well."

Colwell led him to the desk and he affixed his signature. Campbell, Jenkins, and Max witnessed it.

"As I said afore," went on Pasco, "if Cully hadn't cashed in, I'd have hung out till the last, and you couldn't have made no case ag'inst me.

"I was keepin' watch o' Cully, and I knowed that if he got up he'd have carried the bullet around with him as long as he lived. The fear of his quittin' was all that kept me on the anxious seat."

"Very true, Pasco," said the doctor gravely, passing to the door leading to the corridor. He opened the door.

"Come in," he called to some one outside.

A man entered, leaning heavily on a cane. The man was wasted almost to a skeleton; his face had a grayish cast and his eyes were hollow and bloodshot. Jenkins supported him to a chair.

Lee Marvin, his face pallid as that of the newcomer's, sprang to his feet and stood staring as one in a dream.

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, "this is Mr. Cully. Contrary to the general supposition he did not die—nor will he, from the effects of the wound received at the hands of Jed Pasco.

"What Pasco just said is true. His guilt could not have been proved if Cully had lived. Therefore, with Cully's assent, I endeavored to entrap Pasco by means of a ruse.

"Lee Marvin's fate hung in the balance. I think you will all agree with me that the end justified the means."

The two sheriffs, apparently, were in the secret. Astonishment was written in the faces of the others, and in none more strongly than in Pasco's.

His jaw fell, his limbs relaxed, and his head dropped forward on his breast. He had been beaten, and at his own game.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARD.

IT is some years now since Max Broderick left the *Plaindealer* and went to Sharon to assume charge of the *Simitar*. The stirring events that followed in the wake of his new duties form an exciting page in the early history of Wells County, and can never be forgotten.

Lee Marvin, breaking from the thrall of circumstantial evidence that hemmed him in, returned to Sharon and was largely identified with the prosperity of the growing town. And while Pasco was serving his long term in the penitentiary, the *Simitar* was growing in power and its owners in fortune.

Nathan Phillips ceased to be a factor in the development of the new country. Just what use Rose made of the Phillips-Broderick claim-jumping agreement, Max never knew.

The document was returned to him with the request that he make no mention of its contents. Shortly afterward Phillips sold out his interests in Sharon and departed for parts unknown.

Max received another letter from his uncle. This one came from San Francisco and, contrary to the nephew's expectation, was conciliatory in tone.

It contained the twelve-months' note Max had sent to Mandan and a request that he forward the six hundred dollars, as the writer was on the point of trying his fortunes in the Sandwich Islands.

Max sent the money, and Uncle Jas-

per lost himself on the highways of the Pacific. He was never heard from again—a fact which occasioned his relatives no regret.

Long after the *Simitar* had become an established success, Robinson of the *Plaindealer* dropped in on Max, told him how Judge Kelly had described the situation in Sharon on the eve of Max's departure from Fargo, and how he, Robinson, had had it in mind to head the young man off with a telegram.

"I'm glad you didn't," said Max.

"So am I," answered Robinson. "I knew you had the right stuff in you and that you could make a 'go' of the *Simitar* if you went about it in the proper way. The result, I think, amply justifies the opinion I had formed."

"Thank you," smiled Max. "I doubt, though, if your telegram would have stopped me."

Robinson's mission to Sharon was not entirely one of congratulation. He wanted to sound Max on a political matter. The party needed a good man to run for State representative, with a view to higher honors in the future. Would Max run if nominated?

Max took the matter under advisement and counseled with Rose. She was enthusiastically in favor of his making the attempt.

He did; and not only was he nominated, but elected. The victory was celebrated by a bonfire, a torchlight procession—and a wedding.

Lieutenant Rankin was "best man." When it was all over, Cy Larkin—now regularly employed on the staff of the *Simitar*—took the lieutenant aside.

"Blamed queer how things turn out, sometimes," observed Cy.

"Yes?" returned Rankin smilingly.

"That's the way it strikes me, leftenant. When Max first come to Sharon we was all dead set on runnin' him out. He had the nerve to sick, and soon he begun makin' friends. Now look at him! Goin' to Bismarck, Max is, and the finest girl in the county is goin' with him. A whole lot of happenin's have trailed along in the wake of the *Simitar*."

"So it appears," smiled Rankin. "Max made a hit with me the first time we met—on the pier at Fort Totten. He deserves all the good luck that has come to him."

"Course he does!" declared Cy, emphatically. "But they's a lot of things in this world we don't know till we find 'em out, ain't they?"

THE END.

A Plot From Plaster of Paris.

BY JOHN QUINCY MAWHINNEY.

The astounding thing that happened to a writer of fiction in connection with his scheme for a new story.

THE friends of Waldo Emerson Carr, the author, often referred to that young man (mostly behind his back) as the Melancholy Scribe of Manhattan—for, said one, "Like Hamlet, it is hard guessing whether he is dippy or not."

Be this as it may, the fact remains that Carr did, once in a great while, actually get a story published, but most of his efforts were returned with the significant notation: "It's all right, but——"

He had no need to read further. He knew by heart the phraseology of the completed expression.

It was partly on account of the receipt of just such a communication, neatly pinned to a familiar-looking manuscript, that he was at present submerged in a brown study.

He certainly must write something that would "make 'em sit up and take notice."

Lounging in a large arm-chair in his room, he set his thoughts on a still-hunt for a suitable theme or plot around which to weave a story which he could exchange with some appreciative editor for lucre. But inspiration seemed to be off on a vacation and his intellectual faculty a vacuum.

His mind was a blank; he began to fear he had lost it. Even the awkward-looking maid straightening up his room (he hadn't left it all morning) failed to disturb him. At any other time his excitable nerves would have caused him to spring up and chase her from the premises.

He was hoping, aye, praying for an inspiration. And in the next minute he had one.

There was suddenly a crash, and the young author felt his head come in contact with some object; the ceiling took on the appearance of the sky on a summer's night; twinkling stars and dancing balls of fire were chasing each other in zigzag courses to and fro; and the milky way was shining yellow in the glare of so much illumination.

That is, this is the way it all appeared to Carr just then.

After he had recovered his equanimity, and felt the rising mound on the top of his head with trembling fingers, he sprang from his chair in a frenzy.

Upon the floor lay his beloved statue of Venus of Milo. It had been quite a large figure when a unit, but at present it was impossible to count its various sections. Some were small, some were medium-sized, but none were large.

The maid, trembling, gasping, and quaking with fear, one hand over her heaving bosom and the other clutching a bedraggled feather-duster, told the story. She had simply been overzealous.

"Wench!" he screamed and then stopped. On the point of discoloring the atmosphere with eccentricities of speech, he paused.

His face resumed an expression of satisfaction. For, out of the dust from the Goddess of Love's disastrous spill, there arose an idea!

In rapid sequence there flitted through the brain of the bruised young author the words "statue-sculpture-sculptor!" An inspiration! A theme! A plot!

An idea had struck him—though in an unexpected quarter.

Turning to the maid, he remarked:

"Girl, reswallow your throbbing and palpitating heart. 'Tis not to eat, and will feel better in the diaphragm than among the teeth. Arm yourself with a dust-pan and remove these fragments of my once adored Goddess of Love. I forgive you your zealousness."

The maid fled and Carr proceeded to jot down the salient points of his story.

Inserting a sheet of paper into his typewriter, he began:

A young sculptor—Jean Van Asdel.
Sees and talks with a beautiful girl in a dream.
Decides to search for her in the life.
Does so. Search is rewarded by discovering a maiden whose likeness to his apparition is unmistakable.
(I will think up their meeting later on.)
Van Asdel falls in love with her, etc.
Goes to her guardian for consent to woo her. Is repulsed.
Guardian turns out to be a sculptor also—a famous one.
Will have nothing such as Van Asdel in his family.
Concedes the young sculptor a chance, however, if he becomes famous in a year.
This Van Asdel does, for he wins a first medal, with a side purse of $5,000, in a competitive display of marbles at the Academy of Sculpture, ten months later. It turns out that his sweetheart's guardian, who had also entered several works, is bested and has to take second honors.
Climax.
Finale.

To this plot Carr appended the notation that the finished story would tell how Van Asdel's sweetheart had posed every day for the statue which had carried off first honors.

As he read over the outline and reinserted the sheet of paper into his machine, the maid came back. She announced that some one wished to speak to the author on the telephone down-stairs.

It proved to be an editor (an angel in Carr's mind), who had really accepted one of his stories and who wished the author to make a change in it.

"All right. I'll come down to your office right away," replied Carr.

Hanging up the receiver, he rushed upstairs, secured his hat and stick, adjusted his tie before the glass, and was off.

He spent most of the afternoon with the editor (for the story had to be practically rewritten) and returned to his rooms at five-thirty.

His plot was still in the machine and, sitting down, he added a couple of notes and then carefully stowed the precious paper away. Like the written combina-

tion of a safe, the plot might prove valuable to the right person should he read it over.

Carr intended to round the thing into a story the next day. But that next day was filled with incidents of which he little recked.

At two o'clock he was in the reference-room of a public library searching for a volume on sculpture.

While thus engaged he did not notice another man enter the room. After glancing around, this individual walked toward the spot where Carr was reading titles. The stranger also was evidently in search of a book among the "S's."

Finally Carr was successful and took down a volume to glance through it. As he did so, the newcomer uttered an involuntary exclamation.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he apologized, apparently embarrassed. "But I came here expressly to consult the same book you have in your hand. Are you a sculptor also?"

Carr looked at the stranger and was struck with his appearance. Of slender figure and handsome face, the author immediately pictured him as the hero of some stirring love romance. His light-brown hair hung in ringlets on his forehead.

"No, I am a writer," answered Carr. Then, remembering the other's "also," asked: "Are you?"

"Yes," replied the stranger modestly. "That is why I wish to consult the book you have there."

But Carr hardly heard the words. Instantly his mind reverted to the plot he had framed up the day before. It was about a sculptor. Here was a coincidence of note. Then an idea came to him.

"You are welcome to the volume," he said. "But it has just occurred to me that, inasmuch as you are a sculptor, you may be able to tell me what I have been hunting for."

He really wished to become acquainted with this young fellow.

"If I can I shall be delighted to assist you," was the latter's response.

"Let us sit at this little table in the far corner, in order not to disturb the others. I notice loud conversation is not permitted."

"Better still," suggested the sculptor, "let us repair to the restaurant around the corner. I feel the need of a little lunch, anyway, and we can converse undisturbed. I'll consult that to-morrow," he continued, replacing the volume.

Accordingly they walked to the restaurant together. The sculptor selected a place in the rear of the room at a table for two.

"You doubtless have the history of sculpture at your finger-ends," laughed Carr, after they had given their order.

He was after a few "pointers" and wanted to draw the other out.

"Well," smiled his companion, "I have read considerably in that direction, naturally. My work demands it. But before telling you what you may wish to know, I must unburden myself to you of a little secret."

"A secret?" repeated Carr, more interested than ever.

"Yes. It's about a dream I once had——"

"A dream?" interrupted Carr. "Did you say a dream?"

Again the outline he had written flashed across his mind. Did his memory serve him true? Did not the sculptor in his story have a dream, also?

What if it should turn out to be the same as the man's across the table? But he scoffed at the idea and broke into a laugh.

The other joined him.

"Yes, I suppose it does strike you as funny, but"—soberly—"to me it is most serious. I don't mind admitting that I am slightly superstitious and that I believe in dreams."

"I have heard they usually pan out just the opposite," returned Carr, taking a swallow of water and eying his companion curiously.

"Well, I hope mine doesn't," answered the other thoughtfully. "You see, it was about a girl."

"A girl!" Carr felt some misgivings as to the soundness of his hearing faculties.

"Yes. And *such* a girl! Although an artist, I am not, like you, a writer, and so will not attempt her description. Suffice to say that she was beautiful; very beautiful. But the strange part of it was that she spoke to me——"

"Spoke to you!" interjected Carr, excitedly. His hands were gripping the table-cloth and his face was changing color. "What—what did she say?"

"She told me that if I——"

But the sculptor suddenly broke off abruptly, his eyes opened wide in astonishment, his lips parted, and the glass he had been holding in his hand came down on the table with a crash.

Carr's interest in his companion's story now gave way to amazement at his actions. He saw the sculptor slowly rise from his chair, his frame trembling, and his glance riveted.

"What's the matter?" whispered Carr, so as not to attract attention.

The other didn't seem to hear him and he repeated his query.

It was effective. The sculptor allowed his glance to rest on Carr's face. With a queer expression he reached for his hat.

Following his gaze, Carr saw, at the far end of the room, a young lady rise from her seat and start for the door. As she did so the sculptor reached into his pocket.

Fearing something was about to happen, Carr leaned over the table and clutched the other's wrist. But his companion merely drew forth a card and dropped it on the table. His eyes were still at the far end of the room.

"'Tis she," he whispered, bending over the author. "The vision I saw in my dream! I must know her. Will see you to-morrow afternoon here at this place."

With these words he hurried out of the restaurant, leaving Carr in a stupor of amazement. His brain was whirling round like a buzz-saw.

How like his story! It was wonderful. Aye, unnatural and uncanny.

Then a frightful thought assailed him. The perspiration started in beads on his forehead.

"Perhaps—perhaps it's all an hallucination. I've been working too hard lately. Perhaps the boys are right, and I am a little overbalanced. Maybe I am losing my mind; or I am dreaming now. Did I write a plot after all? I'm not quite sure. My memory is growing worse each day. I'll have to stop smoking. If I *did* write that plot, the strangest coincidence ever recorded is passing before my eyes. I'll——"

But he left off soliloquizing to utter an exclamation loud enough to attract the attention of every guest in the place.

Carr dashed his hand across his eyes and looked a second time at the card the stranger had left. He felt himself growing weak.

Everybody in the room was staring at him, but he noticed none. His nerves were becoming a bunch of springs.

He looked at the card again and was unable to believe his senses. He called the waiter and asked for his check.

"Did another man lunch with me?" he whispered as he took the slip and noticed the charge.

"Why, yes, sir. The man who went out just now."

"Then a man did go out. You are sure a man went out? Then it's no hallucination after all. I did have a companion. I thought I couldn't have been so far gone as all that. But this card!"

He glanced at it again and immediately became visibly nervous. Giving the waiter a two-dollar bill he snatched his hat and stick and rushed from the place.

As he did so, he overheard a remark to the effect that some one was "dippy."

He applied it to himself and hurried on. The thumping on the inside of his head alarmed him. He wondered if it were caused by the "rats" several of his friends had often informed him nested in his "garret." It certainly began to look like it.

He strode down Broadway, taking notice of nothing nor of where he was going. He had proceeded several blocks in the blistering sun and the perspiration was teeming from every pore when he was suddenly gripped by the arm.

"Where to, old man? Why such a hurry?"

With haggard face and listless eye Carr stared at the speaker. He recognized his friend Conrad Tompkins, a young doctor.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Conny?" he gurgled.

"Certainly it's I," replied the other, looking at the author in surprise. "Where are you hurrying to in this hot weather man? If you're not careful, you'll get a stroke."

Carr didn't seem to hear his friend's question.

"Can you read?" he asked abruptly.

"Can I—— Say, Carr, old man, what's wrong with you? Have you the 'jimjams?'"

"I don't know whether I have or not," replied the author, mopping his brow.

In his left hand he still clutched the card of the sculptor.

"What does it say on that, Con?" he added.

The physician burst out laughing.

"Say, you have 'em bad. Better go home and go to bed. Take a sleep."

"Sleep be hanged!" exclaimed the author. "Tell me what's on that card."

The physician took the bit of pasteboard and glanced at it.

"Why, the name Van Asdel. That's all."

"Van Asdel! That's it! I thought I was mistaken, but I see I'm not. I can't understand it at all. I guess I'm bughouse all right. My head's lopsided. So it's Van Asdel? Jean Van Asdel, eh?"

"Yes," answered Tompkins, a look of concern spreading over his features. "But what's wrong, Carr?"

"Wrong!" exclaimed the author. "Why, I'm wrong. I'm crazy. I've got a cog loose or broken somewhere in my intellectual machinery. I'm 'dippy.' That's what they said, 'dippy.' I've been dreaming for the last two days that I had written a plot for a story. See?"

"Yes."

"Well, I haven't after all. I find the things I thought I had put on paper were events actually taking place. My hero was a sculptor. His name was Van Asdel—Jean Van Asdel. See that card? Well, I just left a fellow who gave it to me, and, look you, he is a sculptor, to boot!"

And the author broke off into a fit of wild laughter. His friend looked anxious.

"Come, old man, let's go back to your room. You need to get out of the sun. I'll mix you up a cooling drink and you'll be all right in a short while."

He believed that his friend, with his excitable nature and unstrung nerves, was out of his head. Calling a cab, he helped Carr in and followed him.

During the ride the author stared blankly at the card which had caused so much excitement, never removing his eyes from it until Tompkins announced they had reached their destination.

They entered his rooms together and Carr sank into a chair.

"I thought I wrote that plot, Con," he said, forcing a laugh. "Thought I wrote it and put it in that drawer. Yes, that drawer, but I guess I've been dreaming. I sometimes dream in the daytime. It's a good way to——"

He suddenly stopped and stared at Tompkins. The physician had opened the drawer indicated and took from it a typewritten sheet of paper.

"Why, I guess you wrote the plot after all, old man. Here it is."

"Well, I'll be jiggered! It *is* the plot, isn't it? Then how do you make it all out?"

"Sure you didn't dream you met this sculptor?"

"Dream it? Why, there's his card. How do you account for that?"

"Probably you've been carrying it around in your pocket for quite a while and it was that suggested the name of your hero to you. It seems plain."

"Rats," snapped Carr. "I tell you a fellow gave it to me just before I met you. He was a sculptor, too."

"Well, I give it up," rejoined Tompkins. "It's too hot for conundrums. But, by Jove! I've forgotten an appointment. See you to-morrow afternoon. Maybe you can have an explanation with your fantom in the meantime," he laughingly added as he left the room.

"I intend to," yelled Carr. "I am to see him to-morrow afternoon at the same place."

The young author spent the greater part of that night trying to figure between the real and the imaginative incidents of the day, but with no success.

The next afternoon saw him making for the restaurant where he was to meet the sculptor. That individual was waiting for him and greeted him smilingly as he entered.

"I hope you will pardon the abrupt manner in which I took my leave of you yesterday," he began.

"Don't mention it," replied Carr, taking a seat. "You had plenty of reason. The girl was well worth the chase. She was very beautiful."

"Beyond compare," supplemented the other, rapturously. "And her conversation and manners are as charming as her face is pleasing to the eye——"

"Then you contrived to meet her?" interrupted Carr eagerly.

"Yes," said the sculptor, half closing his eyes behind his cigarette smoke. "It was fate. I followed her down street for several blocks, my nerves tingling with emotion. I was racking my brain for some method of accomplishing the wild desire which possessed me—that of becoming acquainted with her. Luck favored me.

"She entered an art store where I have several marbles on exhibition. I could at least follow her inside, for I am well known to the dealer. What was my surprise to find her examining none other than one of my own works—a fisher-maiden. As I passed through the door she had just asked the storekeeper whether he thought the creation perfectly natural. Catching sight of me at this instant, he smilingly answered:

"'Here is a gentleman who can reply to your question better than I.'

"It seems the girl was a regular customer of his and he knew her quite well. He had the sense to introduce us on the spot."

If such a thing were possible, Carr's ears were spreading themselves to catch every word which dropped from the other's lips. Of an impressionable nature, the speaker's story affected him like strong wine. The other continued:

"'Mr. Van Asdel is the artist who conceived this piece of work,' the dealer explained, and I felt myself growing red. She lifted her brows in pleasant surprise. We began talking, the sale being forgotten, much to the dealer's annoyance. But lo and behold, after conversing for a while, it turned out that the girl's uncle or some relation was a great sculptor himself."

"What?" shrieked Carr, springing from his seat. "You say she has an uncle who is a sculptor?"

He was panting hard.

"Why, yes," answered the other calmly. "He is a famous molder of the strong emotions. His 'Hatred,' 'Vengeance,' and 'Jealousy' are widely known masterpieces."

But something was again thumping inside Carr's cranium; he began to feel dizzy and started to fan himself with the bill of fare. His companion was leaning back in his chair, lighting another cigarette.

"Do you know," he continued, "I have an idea about this thing."

But Carr, for the moment, didn't hear what the other was saying. He remembered, or thought he did, that he had written in his plot a line to the effect that "Guardian turns out to be a sculptor—a famous one."

The other continued:

"I think I'll try and have this young lady pose for me. I wasn't received very cordially by her relation and think my chances are rather slim in case I should wish to marry her. And, confidentially, that is what I hope to do some day."

Carr's eyes were staring wide.

"There is to be a contest several months from now and I really believe, if I could get this girl to pose for me, the inspiration her presence would create would crown my labors with success and I could sweep all honors before me. Also——"

But Carr, his eyes bulging and his mouth agape, jumped from his seat and, forgetting hat, stick, or settlement for the luncheon, rushed from the restaurant as though pursued by a hundred demons.

He was unable to listen further. There must be something wrong with him and he must find out what it is. The strain on his impressionable nature was too much.

Heading up Broadway on the run, he dodged some people and bumped into others. A policeman, seeing the hatless and wild-eyed man rushing toward him and thinking he had committed a crime, endeavored to stop him, but without success. Carr ducked under his arms and ran on.

Although apparently out of his mind, he seemed to know where he was going, for, finally reaching his home, he unlocked the door and stumbled up the stairs and into his room. Here he sank, exhausted, on the floor.

When he came to he found himself on his bed and the face of his friend, Conrad Tompkins, bending over him. He felt very weak and feverish.

"Why, Carr, old man, what's the cause of this. You're all played out."

The author looked at his friend with a vacant stare.

"Did you see your fantom again today?"

"No fantom, Conny. No fantom. He's real or I'm bughouse. I think it must be the latter."

"Talk with him?"

"Yes. That is, for a while. But, man, you will probably not believe it, but it seems I have written the plot for a story which is happening right now in real life. Whether it is a gift from above with which I am suddenly endowed or not, I cannot tell. But certan it is, this man's conversation so wrought on my nerves that I couldn't sit still to hear him finish. I just had to get out into the air——"

"And the sun," supplemented Tompkins. "I was sitting here waiting for you when suddenly you bolted in and flopped full length on the carpet. Took me about three-quarters of an hour to bring you to.

"But you shouldn't let this thing affect you in this way. It's merely a remarkable coincidence. If you are not careful you will actually be out of your head if you keep brooding on it."

"How can I do otherwise than brood over it?" answered Carr impatiently. "Here is an occurrence which undoubtedly has no precedent. An author actually meeting the creation of his imagination in the flesh! And the remarkable part of it all is that the man, besides being a sculptor, bears the same name as that of my hero. It's more than I can figure out. Get me pencil and paper, Conny, and I'll make a story out of it."

"No you won't, old man. You must remain perfectly quiet. Your brain as well as your body needs rest. If you begin mapping out another yarn, you are liable to work yourself into a more feverish state than you are at present."

Carr had started to a sitting posture, but now sank back on his pillow, where he lay, gazing at his friend with vacant eyes.

After mixing and persuading the sick man to swallow a narcotic, Tompkins took his leave. On his way out of the house he instructed the landlady to call him by 'phone instantly should Carr show signs of becoming worse.

Had he not had a couple of engagements to attend to he would have remained with his friend all night; he was apprehensive lest the author might have another spell before morning.

His fears were well grounded. It was about eleven o'clock that night that the physician was called to the telephone to listen to the frantic talk of the author's landlady. She said the sick man was trying to make thread of the bed-clothes and kindling-wood of the bedstead.

Tompkins hurried to the side of his friend only to find that the landlady had but slightly magnified the true state of affairs.

The writer was clearly out of his mind.

Thinking over the remarkable coincidence of the sculptor in his story and in reality, his overworked imagination had stretched until it had cracked. His eyes were rolling in their sockets and his fingers were alternatingly clutching his hair and the sheets; now he would laugh and cry out some incoherent exclamation; then his brow would wrinkle and he would beat the sides of his head with his open palms, muttering to himself.

The physician's face wore a troubled look as he directed the landlady to hold the author down while he tried to administer a sleeping potion. The affair was as baffling to him as to the author.

As he approached the bed the sick man glared at him like a caged animal, enraged through captivity.

Tompkins saw immediately that it would require more physical exertion than he was able to bestow to force the patient to drink the mixture he held in his hand. Turning to the landlady, he told her to hasten for assistance.

Thinking, perhaps, that the affair might prove distasteful to her other roomers, she decided not to call any of them, but went to the front door to ask aid of some passer-by.

And it is well that she did so.

On the opposite curb she noticed a young man standing near an electric light, apparently waiting for some one. She beckoned him and, after a slight hesitation, the stranger approached and raised his hat.

The landlady hurriedly told what was

required and he, consenting, followed her to the room of the author.

Here they found the physician vainly trying to soothe Carr, who was muttering inarticulately and steadily working himself into a frenzy.

As the stranger stepped into the room and caught sight of the man on the bed, he started back in alarm. His hand reached to a chair-back for support and his face turned a deathly pale.

"Why—why—is he out of his mind?" he asked in an awe-stricken whisper.

"Very much so," replied Tompkins. "But please remain as quiet as possible, as our conversation might make him worse. I wish to give him this medicine, so if you will kindly hold his wrists, I shall be greatly obliged."

He spoke in a low voice, but the author seemed to know there was another person in the room. He turned his eyes on the newcomer, who endeavored to draw back out of range.

The action was not quick enough. Carr caught sight of his face. Before the physician and landlady could prevent, Carr rose to his knees and, extending his right arm, pointed accusingly at the shrinking stranger.

With eyes bulging and voice rising to a shrill treble, he cried: "There he is! That's he! The demon that has been tormenting me—Van Asdel, the sculptor!"

Then he fainted as the physician pressed him back on to his pillow.

For several seconds no one spoke. The author's words had struck his hearers with amazement, even though they were uttered in delirium. The physician was the first to break the silence.

"Best thing he could have done," referring to the fainting spell. "After this he will be quieter. Funny, though, that he should accuse you of being the sculptor," he added, turning to the stranger.

The other's reply was as startling as the wild outburst of the delirious writer. He stepped forward and gazed with pitying eyes upon the white and drawn face on the bed.

"Not at all," he said slowly, "seeing that I *am* the person in question."

Tompkins nearly drowned the patient with the bowl of water he held.

"What!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to tell us *you* are the *sculptor!*"

"I must ask that you allow me to defer an explanation until I can bring another person here," answered the stranger quietly. "From the condition of the young man on the bed, I feel that this other person's presence is required immediately. Have you a telephone, madam?"

The landlady led the way down-stairs.

"Well, of all the jumbled, tangled, and confusing affairs which it has been my misfortune to experience, this case takes the cake," muttered Tompkins as, left alone, he renewed his efforts to bring the author back to consciousness.

It was probably fifteen or twenty minutes before the landlady and the stranger reentered. They were accompanied by a third person, wearing eye-glasses.

This man was probably of the same age as Carr. His expression was troubled and he appeared very nervous as he stepped quickly to the author's side.

"Has Waldo come to yet?" he asked anxiously.

"Not yet," answered Tompkins, surprised that the newcomer spoke so familiarly of the writer.

The physician was under the impression that he himself was the author's only close friend in New York.

"I have an explanation to make," continued the man with the eye-glasses; "also, I fear, a great reparation. My name is Armstrong. Mr. Carr and myself were great friends at college a couple of years ago. But after graduation I left for my home in Texas and only returned to New York three days ago. I immediately called on Carr and found him out.

"Now, I must explain that while at college I was the victim of a practical joke in which Carr figured as ringleader. I didn't become angry with him, but made up my mind that if ever I got the chance, I would pay him back.

"Upon entering his room here when I called before, expecting him to return shortly, I sat down in front of his typewriter. In it was a sheet of paper on which he had been writing. Thinking it was one of his stories, or a part thereof, I turned up the carriage and read the screed. It proved to be, as I assumed,

the plot for a story which he evidently intended to write later on.

"Instantly an idea struck me! Here was the chance to 'get even' with Carr for the joke he had played on me at college. I immediately formulated a plan of action, as it were.

"My friend here, Mr. Eugene Rawlson, is an actor of considerable talent, and to him I outlined *my* 'plot.' He was to impersonate the 'hero' of Carr's narrative. He agreed to help me.

"To become acquainted with Carr was the next thing. This required some thought and reconnoitering. Eugene watched the house here until Carr started down street the day after my visit; followed him to the library and——"

"I know the rest," interrupted the physician. "I see it all now clearly—except the card on which the name 'Jean Van Asdel' was printed. How did you arrange that in so short a time?"

"It wasn't printed," answered Armstrong, with a smile; "merely written."

"And I suppose you were watching the house to-night to carry the joke further when the landlady called you in?" queried Tompkins.

"Yes," replied Rawlins. "I wished to see the finish and report to Armstrong. He was waiting at his apartments for me and that is the reason I was able to get him here so promptly."

"His report was rather startling, as well as disconcerting," said Armstrong, ruefully glancing at the bed.

Just then Carr opened his eyes and feebly raised his hand to his forehead. Then he caught sight of Armstrong; recognized him and, in surprise, extended his hand.

The medicine he had taken served to kill the delirium and he was now himself again, though quite weak.

Armstrong grasped his hand affectionately and tenderly and, heaping imprecations upon himself, explained matters to the author.

"And as full reparation for the evil I have wrought, I'll take you on a six months' cruise on my new yacht 'The Girl,'" concluded Armstrong, "where you will be able to gather enough atmosphere, ideas, and plots to last you a lifetime.

"Further," with a mischievous twinkle and winking at Tompkins, "we'll spend a month or so on the 'Isle of Charm,' where, two summers ago, you were so smitten with that little Mam'zelle de Somebody or——"

"I'm on," interrupted Carr, smiling faintly.

CAUGHT.*

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "No Way Out" and "Who and Why?"

The romance of a postal clerk, showing how it came to enmesh him in the coils of circumstantial evidence.

CHAPTER XIII.

MESSENGER-BOY KELLY.

"I SUPPOSE you've seen the good news in the paper, Jeremiah," said Postmaster Gray, bursting excitedly into the lawyer's office. "They've got the girl locked up safe and sound."

"Yes, I know," replied Packard calmly.

"Why, what's the matter, Jeremiah? I thought you'd be overjoyed at the news, and it don't seem to give you any satisfaction at all. Think what it means to Tom! He ought to be free pretty soon, now that they've caught the real murderer. I must say, though, that I'm real sorry for the poor creature. Such a nice, dainty little girl, too. Do you think they'll send her to the chair, Jeremiah?"

"I don't," answered Packard shortly.

"What! You think they'll commute her sentence because of her sex, eh? I

* *This story began in the July issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The three back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 30 *cents.*

hope they do; but it's horrible to think of that pretty, delicate young woman being sent to prison for life."

"I don't think they'll send her to prison," said Packard.

"You don't, eh? Then what will they do with her? Pardon her?"

"Nope."

"For heaven's sake, Jeremiah, stop answering in riddles and tell me what you're getting at," cried the postmaster impatiently.

"I don't think they'll indict the girl at all," said the lawyer.

"What!" cried Postmaster Gray in alarm. "You don't mean to say that Tom will have to suffer for that girl's crime, do you?"

Suddenly a horrible thought seized him.

"You don't mean to tell me that Tom has carried out that fool threat of his and confessed, do you?"

"No; Tom hasn't confessed," said Packard. "He's not going to, either, if I can help it."

"Then what makes you say that the girl won't be indicted?"

"Because, in my opinion, she isn't guilty," said the lawyer.

"Then who is, for heaven's sake? Not Tom Sutton?" cried the dazed postmaster.

"I hope not," replied Packard, smiling. "But I'll not keep you in suspense any longer, postmaster. I don't mind telling you that I've interviewed Tom and the girl in their respective cells today, and as a result of those interviews I am fully convinced that neither of them murdered Paul Dupree."

"Then who is the murderer?"

"I don't know yet. That's what we've got to find out."

"And what has occurred to change your opinion about the girl so suddenly?"

"I'll explain that to you later. I haven't any time now. I want you to go on an expedition with me."

"What kind of an expedition?"

"I want to find a messenger-boy."

"The messenger-boy whom Miss Morgan hired to take that wallet to Tom Sutton," said the postmaster eagerly.

"No, not *that* messenger-boy. I don't think there is any such boy in existence. I want to find the boy who *said* that Miss Morgan hired him."

"What do you mean, Jeremiah? I don't understand you at all."

"You will later," said the lawyer. "Come on now. Get your hat. We may have a lot of walking to do before we land our man, or rather, our boy."

"Where are you going to look for him?"

"Well, I'm going to start at the Brixton Building and go to every Western Union office within a radius of five miles. I've learned that it was a boy in Western Union uniform who delivered that package. I'm going to get that boy by the process of elimination."

"And do you now think that the messenger-boy killed Dupree?" asked the postmaster, thoroughly dazed.

"Maybe," said Packard, chuckling.

They went to the Brixton Building and asked the superintendent there to direct them to the nearest Western Union office.

"There's one a block farther up," said the man, and Packard hurried the bewildered postmaster there so quickly as to take the old man's breath away.

"Do you keep a record of the errands your district messengers are sent out on?" asked Packard on their arrival.

"Yes, sir; we do."

"Have you a record of last Monday's messenger business?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Then will you kindly look it up and tell me if one of your boys wasn't sent to Post-Office X. Y. to deliver a package, somewhere around half past twelve in the daytime?"

The manager looked over his records.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Messenger 642 was sent to Post-Office X. Y. with a package about noon last Monday."

Neither Packard nor the postmaster could repress an exclamation of joy at this intelligence.

"I would like to talk to this boy—number 642. Is he in?" asked Packard eagerly.

"No, sir," replied the manager. "He quit the job last Tuesday. You're not the first that has been here looking for him. There was a long-haired, foreign-looking gentleman in here the other day inquiring for him."

"Ah!" exclaimed Packard quickly. "And did he find him?"

"No. He seemed pretty much upset, too, to learn that he had left our employ. His face went as white as chalk when I told him the news and his ugly jaws worked convulsively. He asked me for the boy's address."

"And did you give it to him?" asked Packard eagerly.

"No, I couldn't. I haven't got it. You see, the boy's folks moved to Brooklyn last Tuesday. That's why he quit the job here. All I can tell you is that his name is Mike Kelly."

Packard turned to Postmaster Gray in dismay.

"That's hard luck," he exclaimed. "After this promising start we're just about as badly off as we were before. Just think of trying to locate a Mike Kelly in all of Brooklyn!"

"Perhaps Mike has a chum among the messenger-boys here who would know where he's moved," suggested the postmaster.

"That's a good idea," said the manager of the telegraph office. "He *has* got a chum—little Pat Ryan. I'll call him. Perhaps he'd know. I didn't think of it before."

In answer to his summons a mite of a boy, who was sitting on a bench at the back of the office deeply absorbed in a dime novel, came forward.

"Hey, Pat," said the manager, "do you happen to know where Mike Kelly's living now?"

"Sure. In Brooklyn," answered the urchin.

"What part of Brooklyn, my boy?" asked Packard, holding a bran-new quarter in front of the boy's fascinated gaze.

"I think he said 2000 Washington Street," said the boy readily. "His father keeps a plumber's shop."

"Good boy!" said Packard, handing over the silver piece. "Come on, postmaster; we'll go over to Brooklyn immediately," and he burst out of the office with the still bewildered postmaster at his heels.

"Jeremiah Packard," said the old man when they were seated on a trolley-car bound for Brooklyn, "I declare I'll not go a step farther with you unless you explain to me immediately what all this means."

"All right, postmaster, I'll explain," said the lawyer. "I've talked with the girl and she swears that she didn't hire that messenger-boy who took the wallet to Sutton. Now, if she didn't hire him, somebody else did, and I am going to find out the person."

"But what makes you believe that the girl's telling the truth?"

"Well, in the first place, I'm a pretty good judge of character, and that girl's got honesty stamped all over her. In the second place, I've had a little talk with the coroner's physician, Winston, this morning."

"What does he say?"

"He performed the autopsy on Dupree and he says he's made up his mind that it wasn't a hat-pin that killed the Frenchman."

"What was it, then?"

"Well, the doctors have reached the positive conclusion that a solution of cyanide of potassium was the poison used. Now, they say that you couldn't get enough of the poison on the surface of a hat-pin to do the trick. Dr. Winston, therefore, believes now that the instrument used was some sort of syringe, and that the deadly poison was injected into the Frenchman's blood hypodermatically, killing him instantly."

"Well, how does that prove that the girl didn't kill Dupree?" said the postmaster stubbornly.

"It doesn't *prove* that she didn't kill him; but it certainly makes the chances that she did very remote. The doctor tells me that the employment of a solution of cyanide of potassium is a very rare thing in murder cases. Now, how did this girl know enough about chemistry to employ such an unusual method?"

"Well, if she's mixed up with a secret society, somebody may have supplied her with the stuff," said the postmaster. "You know you yourself advanced that theory yesterday. Remember, the girl left town with that mysterious one-armed foreigner. Perhaps he supplied her with the poison."

"Well, that's another matter I want to tell you about. She says she never met that fellow before. That he came to her pretending he had a message beg-

ging her to leave town at once, so as not to be called upon to testify against him at the trial. Tom denies that he sent anybody with such a message and swears he's never seen this one-armed foreigner."

"Well, that's a strange story," said Postmaster Gray, shaking his head dubiously. "What could have been the fellow's object in getting the girl out of town? I think she's been lying to you, Jeremiah."

"Maybe," said Packard. "Personally I don't think she has. I think she's telling the truth and nothing but the truth. Perhaps you're right, however. That's why I am so anxious to find that messenger-boy. He'll be able to tell me whether or not she did hire him to take that package to Sutton."

It was nightfall when they reached 2000 Washington Street, Brooklyn, which turned out to be a plumber's shop sure enough.

Packard breathed a sigh of relief as he glanced at the sign-board. It was a new sign-board, evidently only up for a day or so, and it read: "James Kelly —Plumber."

They entered the diminutive store and a dirty-faced small boy greeted them.

"Whatcher want?" he asked. "Pipes busted? Pop ain't in now."

"We're looking for a boy named Mike Kelly who used to be messenger 642," said Packard.

"That's me, all right. Whatcher want?"

"I want to have a talk with you, my boy."

"What about? Yer ain't from the school, are yer?" asked the boy suspiciously, with alarming thoughts of truant officers in his mind.

"No, we're not from the school, Mike. We want to know if you'd like a dollar to spend."

"It's a cinch I would," said the boy eagerly. "Aw, go on; quit your kidding."

"I'm not kidding, Mike. Do you remember taking a package to a post-office over in New York last Monday?"

"A package to the money-order clerk, do yer mean?" asked the boy readily.

"Yes," cried Packard eagerly. "You're an intelligent boy, Mike, a very intelligent boy. Tell us who gave you that package to send and this dollar is yours."

"On the level?"

"Yes, on the level."

"Gee, that's a cinch," said the urchin. "It was a gent as gives me that package."

"A gent!" cried Packard and Postmaster Gray in one breath.

"Yes, sir, and he was a generous gent, too. He hands me a dollar and he says, 'Here, boy, take this package to the money-order clerk at the post-office and tell him that a lady named Miss Morgan gave it to you to bring to him. He was very particular that I should say as how a lady sent me with the package."

"There!" cried Packard, turning excitedly to Gray. "What do you think now, postmaster?"

"I think that the girl told the truth, of course," said the old man. "But I don't understand it, Jeremiah. How could anybody else have hired that messenger-boy? How could anybody else have known about Tom's visit to Dupree's office to get that money? How could anybody else have known that the girl had promised to get Tom the money, when Dupree threw him down?"

"There's just one man who knew all these things," said Packard slowly, "and that's Saunders, the bookkeeper. By his own statement he heard the girl whisper to Sutton that she'd send the money to him if she could raise it. He was the only person in the office during that interview besides Sutton, the girl, and Dupree.

"By the way, my boy, tell us where was this man when he gave you the package? Did he come into your office to hire you?"

"No, sir. He had a messenger call in his own office, and when he rang it the manager sent me around there."

"Ah! And do you remember where his office was?"

"Sure. In the Brixton Building, on the tenth floor."

"In the Brixton Building—on the tenth floor!" gasped Packard. "In Dupree's own office! Then it was Saunders without a doubt. Postmaster, this is a splendid day's work. We'll rush back to Inspector O'Connor's office and

have that bookkeeper arrested at once. We'll bring this crime home to him. Even his faked alibi sha'n't save him."

CHAPTER XIV.

SURPRISED.

JOHN SAUNDERS, bookkeeper for the late Mr. Paul Dupree, read of the arrest of Marjorie Morgan with a great deal of satisfaction.

"This will break her proud spirit," he said to himself. "She'll lose that haughty manner of hers now, I guess. She will be mighty glad to be the wife of John Saunders or any other man who'll have her before many days have passed. Well, I'll teach her a lesson. I've been down on my knees to her and she wouldn't listen to me. Now the situation is reversed. Now it's my turn.

"I don't think they'll send her to the chair. I don't think they'll convict her. It's mighty hard to get a jury to convict a woman on circumstantial evidence in this town. With a good lawyer she ought to get off.

"But she'll have to go through the disgrace and humiliation of a public trial, and that'll tame her down some, I guess. That will make her hang her pretty head in shame for the rest of her days. Even though the jury acquits her, the stigma of the accusation will always stick. She'll never be able to free herself of it. No matter what a jury's verdict is, there's always half the world ready to believe the worst of anybody. Her name will be published broadcast throughout the country. It will be on everybody's lips, and wherever she goes all eyes will be upon her and all tongues will be talking about her.

"Under these circumstances I'll bet she'll be mighty glad to lose her own name and take the name of John Saunders."

He chuckled as he contemplated this pleasing prospect.

He felt so sure that he made up his mind to pay Miss Morgan an immediate visit in her cell at police headquarters.

"I shouldn't be surprised if she's toned down sufficiently already," he reflected. "A night in jail has broken many a haughty spirit. Now that she's had time to think things over, I shouldn't be surprised if she'd be willing to marry me right away. I guess I'll go to see her anyhow."

He went to police headquarters and sought out Inspector O'Connor.

"If you've no objections, sir," he said, "I'd like to pay the prisoner, Miss Morgan, a short visit.

"What for?" demanded the chief of the detective bureau gruffly. "What do *you* want to see her for, anyway?"

"Well, you see, inspector, we worked in the same office together and naturally I feel interested in her case. I feel friendly disposed toward her and I'd like to help her if I can."

"You feel friendly disposed toward her, eh? Well, you took a mighty poor way of showing it. If you're a friend of hers, why did you come to me and squeal on her the other day? What's your game, anyway, Saunders?"

"I came to you the other day to tell what I knew about her connection with the case because I thought it was my duty as a citizen, inspector."

"Humph! Your duty as a citizen, eh? Well, I want to tell you that I've always got my suspicions of men who come to the police because they're prompted by their sense of civic duty. They're generally fellows with a personal ax to grind, I find."

"Well, I had no ax to grind, inspector. I am Miss Morgan's friend and would do anything to serve her. I came to you the other day to tell what I knew against the girl purely in the interest of justice."

"Humph! That was very creditable, Mr. Saunders. I always like to meet men who wish to aid justice," remarked the inspector dryly. "Well, I'm very glad that you've called to-day. I was expecting you," he continued.

"Expecting me!" cried the bookkeeper, in great surprise.

"Yes. I don't mind telling you that I had sent out Detective-Sergeant Hawkins to find you and bring you down here."

"What for?" asked Saunders, a look of alarm stealing across his features.

"Oh, I want to introduce you to some friends of mine. I know you'll be

mighty glad to meet them. But first of all, John Saunders, I want to ask you a question."

"What is it?"

"Why did you kill your employer, Paul Dupree?"

"You're joking, inspector," gasped the bookkeeper, his face as white as chalk. "You asked me the same ridiculous question the other day."

"Yes, I only *suspected* that you killed Dupree then; now I *know* that you killed him. Come, Saunders, it won't do you any good to beat about the bush. Better be sensible and make a clean breast of it."

"Make a clean breast of what!" cried the terrified man. "I've nothing to make a clean breast of, inspector."

The chief of the detective bureau frowned impatiently.

"Oh, I've got some friends waiting outside who've told me a few things," he said. "We've got you dead to rights now, Saunders. The game is up. It was very clever of you to try to throw suspicion on that poor girl, so as to save your own wretched hide; but you see it don't work."

"Inspector, you have got me wrong. I swear it," cried the bookkeeper hoarsely. "Haven't I proved to you conclusively that I was at Bradstreet's commercial agency, looking up some credits, at the time Mr. Dupree was being murdered? Isn't my alibi good?"

"Oh, I've seen better alibis than that broken down before now," said the inspector. "You're a clever fellow, Saunders. I'll give you credit for being that; but, as I said before, the jig's up. We've got proof positive now that you killed Dupree. We know that it was you who hired that messenger-boy to take the wallet to Sutton."

"Proof that I hired that messenger-boy!" cried the man, aghast. "You're joking with me, inspector. You know very well that it was the girl who sent that wallet. Didn't the clergyman overhear the messenger-boy say so; and didn't he come here and tell you about it. I read so in the newspapers."

"Oh, yes. The clergyman heard the boy tell Sutton that the wallet came from Miss Morgan. I'm not disputing that point at all," said the inspector.

"Very well, then. Why do you say that I hired that mesenger-boy?"

"Because it's the truth. Because I happen to know that you did hire that boy. Because I happen to know that the boy was not telling the truth when he said that he came from Miss Morgan. Because I happen to know that you paid that boy well to say that it was the girl who sent him. Oh, we've got a strong case against you now, John Saunders! There's scarcely a detail missing. You might as well give up and save yourself and us a whole lot of trouble. We know now just what occurred in Dupree's office on the day of the murder.

"You were in the outer office at your bookkeeper's desk when young Sutton came in, and you of course heard all the conversation between Sutton and Dupree about those money-orders. Then you saw Dupree go into his private office, banging the door angrily after him, after declining to give back the money to the post-office clerk. Then you heard the girl whisper to Sutton that she would try to get him the money to save him from getting into serious trouble and that put the idea into your black heart.

"You waited until you saw your chance, killed Dupree with a poisoned instrument, and then stole his wallet and sent it with two hundred and twenty-five dollars, per messenger-boy, to Sutton at Station X. Y., artfully telling the boy to say that the package came from Miss Morgan. Oh, it was a clever scheme!"

"Who says these things!" cried the bookkeeper hoarsely. "Whoever told you that story is lying, inspector."

For answer the chief of the detective bureau touched the bell on his desk.

"Bring in those people," he commanded of the patrolman who answered the summons.

The bookkeeper turned anxiously toward the door and gasped with surprise as the policeman returned, accompanied by Packard, Postmaster Gray, and a small boy.

"Ever see this boy before?" the inspector asked of Saunders.

"Never," cried the bookkeeper emphatically.

"Humph. A uniform makes a lot of difference, doesn't it? If he had his uniform on you'd recognize him probably. I guess the boy's memory is better than yours.

"Come here, my boy. Did you ever see this man before?"

Packard and Postmaster Gray awaited the answer breathlessly. There was a half-minute of silence so intense that the postmaster fancied he could hear the beating of his own heart.

The boy was regarding the bookkeeper searchingly.

"No, sir," he said with a shake of his head, "I don't remember ever having seen this guy before."

"What!" cried the inspector, Packard, and the postmaster in chorus. "Never saw him before?"

"No," said the boy, "not as I can remember."

"Take another look, my boy. Look at him carefully and think hard. Isn't this the man who gave you the package to take to the post-office?"

"Nope. That ain't the guy at all," said the boy. "If that's what yer trying to get at, mister, yer talking hot air. That ain't the guy what gave me the package. He didn't look anything like this fellow. His face was altogether different, and so was his hair."

Postmaster Gray looked at Packard with an expression of blank dismay. The inspector frowned in vexation.

"The boy must be mistaken, inspector," cried Packard. "This must be the man. I'll stake my professional reputation upon it. Who else could have sent that wallet? Who else knew of Sutton's visit to Dupree's office to get that money?

"Who else was in a position to contrive that clever scheme of telling the boy to say that the wallet came from Miss Morgan? Hasn't this man admitted to you that he overheard the girl whisper to Sutton, in Dupree's office, that she'd try to get the money and send it to him? His own admission brands him as the man who sent that wallet to Sutton. It must have been he, inspector. I'm sure of it. The boy is mistaken."

"Take another good look at him, my boy," said the inspector. "Are you absolutely sure that this wasn't the man?"

"Positive. He don't look anything like the other guy."

"What did this other chap look like?"

"He was tall and had long, black hair. Looked as if he didn't have the price of a hair-cut. His face was altogether different. He had a funny way of talking. Spoke like a dago. He wasn't anything like this man."

CHAPTER XV.

MCKNIGHT'S SECOND ADVENTURE.

"WELL, Jeremiah, what do you think of the case now?" asked Postmaster Gray anxiously, after the pair had left police headquarters.

"I don't know what to think, postmaster. The latest developments have knocked all the wind out of me. I felt sure that the boy would identify Saunders at the first glance, and his failure to do so was a painful shock. Why, I felt so positive that Saunders was the man that I never even thought of asking the boy for a description of the fellow before we reached the inspector's office.

"Well, the inspector says that Saunders may have been the man, after all, and that he may have been disguised with a wig and assumed a foreign accent in order to avoid identification by the boy afterward. What do you think of that theory, Jeremiah?"

"Well, it's possible, but not probable, postmaster. Of course, a wig would make a lot of difference in a man's appearance; but that boy is a remarkably intelligent kid and I think he'd have recognized some familiar features about the face, notwithstanding. The boy seems absolutely positive that he's never seen Saunders before. I'm inclined to believe him. My opinion is that the fellow who hired the boy really was a foreigner.

"Don't you remember, postmaster, that the manager of the telegraph office, where the kid worked, told us about a long-haired foreigner calling there the other day, looking for that boy. That probably is the same man who hired Mike."

"This certainly is a most remarkable

case," sighed Postmaster Gray. "It doesn't look as if we shall ever get to the bottom of it. Just as we think we have a substantial clue, it melts away like vapor.

"It's the most mysterious case I've ever heard of, Jeremiah. Who are all these foreigners, anyway, and what connection have they with this murder? Who is the tall foreigner, with the close-cropped hair, whom that newspaper photographer told us about? Why did Dupree want his picture so badly? Who is the one-armed foreigner who induced the girl to run away from the city? What could have been his object? And now, lastly, who is this long-haired foreigner who hired the messenger-boy and who went around to the telegraph office the other day to find the boy again?"

The lawyer smiled at the old man's vehemence.

"I wish I could answer all those questions, postmaster," he said. "I feel sure that if I could I could also tell you who killed Paul Dupree and why. We've got to run that gang of foreigners down without delay. We must find every one of them, and we've got to solve the problem of that mysterious snap-shot.

"It looks to me as if the whole murder case may hang on that picture, or rather those pictures, for there were two poses. It's a funny thing, when you come to think of it, what became of those photographs. They weren't found on Dupree's body or anywhere in the office. It's more than likely the photographs were in the wallet and that the man who murdered Dupree stole the wallet, not for the money that was in it, but for the pictures."

"That sounds like a good theory, Jeremiah," said the postmaster. "It looks as if all these foreigners may be in league together, and that, by procuring the photograph of one of them, Dupree incurred the deadly enmity of the bunch. Probably a secret society or something, eh?"

"That's just my idea, postmaster. You've hit the right nail on the head. You can bet your boots that that picture incident is at the bottom of this whole mystery. Just as soon as we can find out why it was that Dupree wanted that man's picture badly enough to be willing to pay one hundred dollars for it, we'll be on the track of the murderer. For I'm just about convinced that it was an associate of that man with the close-cropped hair who killed Dupree."

"Well, there's only one thing against the theory," rejoined the postmaster. "How could any of those foreigners have worked that wallet trick? How could any of them have known about that money-order mistake?

"How could any of them have known enough to send that wallet to Sutton with just the right amount inside? How could any of them have known that Sutton knew Dupree's typewriter girl?

"No, Jeremiah, when you come to look at the matter in a rational way you must admit that it looks as if somebody inside that office committed the murder. It must have been either the bookkeeper or the girl. There wasn't anybody else in the office, according to their own statements."

"Well, I've got a theory, postmaster, which may explain that baffling problem," said the lawyer quietly. "I won't say anything about it, even to you, until I have investigated further. You can rest assured, however, that it is quite possible that somebody may have worked that wallet trick without having been in the office at all during Sutton's interview with Dupree. The more I think of it, the more I think that I have hit the right trail at last. Yes, postmaster, I feel almost positive now that Dupree was murdered by that long-haired foreigner."

"What is this new theory, Jeremiah?" asked the old man eagerly.

"Don't ask me now. In a few hours I hope to be able to tell you all about it and solve the mystery of Paul Dupree's murder."

'You don't tell me!" gasped the old man in surprise. "Well, if you do solve it in a few hours, you'll be a wonder, Jeremiah Packard, for, as it appears to me, the case is more puzzling now than it ever was. Where are we going now?"

"To the office of the *Daily Mirror*."

"What for?"

"To see that newspaper photogra-

pher—McKnight, I think he said his name was."

"What do you want to see him for?"

"To do something which I ought to have done long ago—get him to make us prints of this fellow with the close-cropped hair. He's preserved the negative probably. The pictures may help us a whole lot in our efforts to round up this bunch of mysterious foreigners."

They went up to the fourteenth floor of the Mirror Building, where the art and photoengraving departments were situated.

By rare good fortune McKnight happened to be in.

"If you'd arrived five minutes later you'd have missed me," he said. "I was just about to go up-town to get a picture of an old woman who is celebrating her hundred and second birthday. What can I do for you, gentlemen?"

"You were telling us the other day about the snap-shot you took for Dupree," replied the lawyer. "I suppose you haven't destroyed the films, Mr. McKnight?"

"Yes, I have. Unfortunately I spilt some chemicals on them when I made those prints for Dupree, and ruined both of them. It's too bad, isn't it? By the way, I can tell you something interesting about that picture. I had another exciting adventure concerning it only an hour ago."

"You did, eh?" said the lawyer eagerly. "Tell us all about it please, Mr. McKnight."

"Well, I've heard from the man with the close-cropped hair."

"You have. In what way?"

"I had a visitor up here an hour ago. He was a tall, bearded, foreign chap, spoke with a slight accent and had long, black hair reaching almost to his shoulders."

Packard and the postmaster uttered an exclamation of startled surprise.

"What did he want of you, McKnight—tell me quick?" gasped the lawyer.

"He asked me the same question you just put—wanted to know if I had destroyed those films. Now, I was kind of suspicious of the chap, so, although those films were destroyed, I replied: 'What's that got to do with you?'

"'I'll give you a hundred dollars for the original films,' was his answer.

"You can bet I was sorry then that I'd spoiled them, but thinking to have some fun with the fellow, I said, 'I wouldn't part with those films for a million dollars, my friend.'"

"What did he say to that?" asked Packard eagerly.

"He got very excited," replied the photographer. "A look of fear came over his face, a look of fear mixed with fury.

"'I've got to have them,' he said excitedly. 'I give you two hundred dollars for them.'

"'What do you want them for?' I asked him.

"'Never you mind what for I want them,' he answered sharply. 'I must have them. Do you understand me?' He spoke threateningly and there was a commanding look in his eye which raised my dander.

"'You must have them, eh?' said I. 'Well, let me tell you, my dago, you won't get them.'

"There were some films lying on that table over there and I happened to glance toward them as I spoke. The fool dago followed my glance and evidently thought they were the ones he was after. Before I could guess what he was going to do, he had sprung forward with a cry of triumph and seized them frenziedly. In his mad rush he kicked over a thousand-dollar enlarging camera and smashed it to pieces.

"That was his finish. Five strong photoengravers rushed at him and grabbed him angrily. Well, he struggled furiously and it was all they could do to hold him. 'Get a cop, somebody,' yelled the boss. 'We'll send the crazy dago to prison for this.'

"When he heard that he was going to be arrested he struggled more desperately than ever. He rolled all over the floor with the entire photoengraving force on top of him. Another apparatus was smashed and furniture kicked all over the place. It was a hot fight. But what do you think happened in the struggle?"

"What?" cried Packard and the postmaster eagerly.

"The foreigner was badly mussed up.

His hair and his beard were torn off, revealing to my astonished gaze the man with the close-cropped hair, the man whose picture poor Dupree wanted so badly——"

"And the man who murdered Paul Dupree," broke in Packard excitedly. "Postmaster, it looks as if we've really struck oil at last. Don't you understand? That long-haired fellow who hired the messenger-boy is no other than the man with the close-cropped gray hair. They're one and the same. It looks as if we're almost at the end of the chase now. Where is this fellow now, Mr. McKnight? Did he get away?" he asked anxiously.

"Get away? No, I should say not. He's in the police station, locked up on a charge of disorderly conduct."

"We'll have the charge changed to homicide by to-morrow morning," exclaimed Packard triumphantly.

CHAPTER XVI.

PACKARD WINS OUT.

"AND so you think you're right this time, eh, Mr. Packard?" remarked the inspector sarcastically. "You're sure now that it was the man with the close-cropped gray hair and the foreign accent who killed Dupree? Well, I'm not forgetting that you were equally sure only a few hours ago that the bookkeeper did it. And yet your star witness, that messenger-boy, threw you down completely."

"I don't think that the boy will throw us down this time, inspector," replied Packard confidently. "I'm absolutely confident that I've hit the right trail at last. That foreigner with the close-cropped gray hair is the man who killed Dupree and gave that wallet to the boy to deliver to Tom Sutton."

"And have you any theory as to motive?" asked the inspector with a trace of sarcasm in his tone.

"Yes, sir, I have. I think the man killed Dupree to get possession of those snap-shots."

"Humph! And what, in your opinion, is the significance of that photograph incident?"

"Well, I've only got a theory to advance, inspector, but I think before we get through you'll find that it will be borne out by the facts. I think that this foreigner had some very good cause for not wishing his identity known. For this reason he wore a wig of long, black hair all the time. He imagined that with this disguise he was safe—that nobody in the city recognized him or knew his secret.

"Somehow or other, on the day preceding the murder, the fellow happened to be on Broadway without his wig. According to the photographer, the fellow had no hat, either, at the time, so it is reasonable to suppose that the wind had lifted his hat and that the wig, being insecurely fastened, had gone with the hat.

"The man was hurrying along Broadway in fear and trembling, apprehensive lest he should be recognized before he could procure another wig. Dupree happened to be on Broadway at the time and saw what had happened.

"Perhaps he knew the other's secret and recognized him immediately without his disguise.

"The newspaper photographer happened to pass at that moment with his camera. Dupree, seeing the camera, was seized with a sudden idea. If he could secure a picture of that fellow as he really looked, it might come in useful. For this reason he excitedly offered the photographer fifty dollars to take the picture.

"The photographer has told us of the man's terrified efforts to avoid being snapped. He has told us, too, of his visit to the *Mirror* office yesterday to try to secure the orignal films at any cost.

"The fellow realized at once why Dupree wanted that picture. He knew that he had been recognized—that his identity had been discovered. He knew that his secret was no longer his own. Probably Dupree was the only man in the United States who shared it with him.

"He must get these dangerous snap-shots and he must silence Dupree. With this object in view he went to Dupree's office, killed the Frenchman, and stole his wallet, which contained the tell-tale photographs.

"Then he rang for the messenger-boy and told him to take the wallet and the two hundred and twenty-five dollars to Tom Sutton at the post-office and say that he came from the girl."

"Not so fast," interposed the inspector. "So far, your theory has sounded pretty good, Mr. Packard; but now you're getting a little wild in your guessing. Assuming that this foreigner *did* kill Dupree, why hire that boy to take that wallet to Sutton? How did he happen to know anything about Sutton or the girl or the money-order incident?"

"Yes," broke in Postmaster Gray, who had been listening thus far in breathless silence, "that's the very question *I* put to him. You remember, Jeremiah, that I asked you the same thing yesterday."

"Yes," admitted the young lawyer, smiling, "and I told you that I hoped to prove that it was possible for a stranger to pull off that wallet trick without having been in the room at all during the interview between Sutton and Dupree."

"Well, how are you going to prove it?" snapped the inspector impatiently.

"By that messenger-boy. First, let us see if that boy doesn't identify this foreigner. If he does, I think I'll be able to explain everything."

The inspector touched the bell on his desk.

"Bring up that foreign prisoner, first, and then bring in that messenger-boy," he said quietly to the policeman who appeared in answer to the summons.

Five minutes afterward two brawny policemen entered, dragging between them a struggling prisoner.

He was a tall man. His hair was gray and cropped close to his head, which was bald on top. There was a livid scar upon his forehead. His face was distinctly foreign—either French or Italian—and his features were of villainous mold.

His jaws now worked convulsively, and his eyes gleamed with fear and rage as he tugged frantically at the handcuffs.

Postmaster Gray could not repress a shudder as he saw him. He certainly looked like a man capable of any sort of crime.

"Better take it easy, my friend," said the inspector calmly. "It's no use getting excited. Bring him over here, men."

The prisoner let loose a torrent of language. He spoke in a foreign tongue, but it was evident that he was uttering imprecations, deep and direful.

The door of Inspector O'Connor's office opened again and Detective-Sergeant Hawkins appeared with Mike Kelly, the messenger-boy.

"Come here, my lad," said the inspector in a kindly tone. "Have you ever seen this man before? Take a good look at him."

The boy gazed at the prisoner searchingly. He appeared to be in doubt.

"I think I've seen him before; but I'm not sure," he answered slowly. "It looks like somebody I know; but I can't think who it is."

The inspector rose from his chair suddenly, seized a wig of long black hair from his desk, and clapped it upon the prisoner's head, holding it there despite the man's frantic struggles to dislodge it.

The result was striking. The boy's eyes opened wide with surprise. He pointed a finger at the cursing prisoner and cried excitedly:

"Why, now I know him. It's the man who sent me on that message to the post-office. That's the fellow. I didn't quite recognize him without the long hair."

Postmaster Gray uttered a shout of joy and triumph.

"At last, at last!" he cried. "Now Tom Sutton will go free."

"May I ask the boy a question, inspector?" said Packard eagerly.

"Certainly."

"My boy," went on the lawyer, "where was it that you first saw this man?"

"I've told you," was the reply. "In the Brixton Building, on the tenth floor. I went there to answer his call."

"That settles it," said the inspector. "I congratulate you, Mr. Packard. I guess you're right this time."

"One minute, inspector. I don't think the boy has told us all yet," said Packard.

He turned to the youngster again.

"You say that you met him on the tenth floor of the Brixton Building. Do you remember whose office it was?"

"No, I don't remember the name," said the boy.

"Wasn't there a name on the door?" continued Packard.

"I don't know. The door was open and this man was standing in the doorway. When I stepped off the elevator he met me in the corridor and gave me that package."

"Then the office this man came out of was right opposite the elevator, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good!" cried Packard triumphantly. "That confirms my theory, inspector. The office this man came out of was not Dupree's."

"Not Dupree's!" cried the inspector and the postmaster in a breath.

"No, sir. The office this man came out of was directly opposite the elevator, as the boy says. Dupree's office is situated on the other side of the building, at the end of the turn in the corridor."

"And what does that discovery mean?" asked the inspector, plainly puzzled.

"It means just this: You were asking me a few minutes ago how this fellow could have known about Sutton, the girl, and the money-orders—how he could have worked that wallet trick? Well, I've solved the problem. I only had a theory before; but now I've confirmed it.

"The office this fellow came out of when the boy saw him is on the tenth floor of the Brixton Building; so is Dupree's. The windows of the two offices face each other. There is only a narrow air-shaft between. You noticed that air-shaft, postmaster, when we were in Dupree's office. It being summertime, both those windows were wide open and the man in the other office could hear anything that went on in Dupree's place.

"This man was in that other office on the day of the murder. He saw Sutton enter the wine-agent's rooms and heard him tell Dupree about the mistake with the money-orders. He heard the Frenchman reply, in a loud, angry voice that he wouldn't help Sutton rectify the error. He heard Sutton plead with the old man, and heard the old man repulse him. Then he saw the girl and the post-office clerk exchange whispers, after the wine-agent had retreated into his private office, angrily banging the door after him.

"Perhaps he couldn't hear what those whispers were about; but from the facial expressions he could guess that the girl was sympathizing with Sutton. He knew that the girl's name was Miss Morgan, for he may have heard the wine-agent call her by it.

"He waited at the window until he saw the bookkeeper and the girl leave the office and then he knew that Dupree was alone. He stepped out of his room and around the bend in the corridor, came upon Dupree suddenly, killed him with the syringe containing the deadly poison, and lifted his wallet.

"Then he hit upon the plan of turning what he had heard to good account. He took the pictures out of the wallet, rang for a messenger-boy, and sent the wallet to the post-office money-order clerk, telling the boy to say that it had come from Miss Morgan. By this means he hoped to throw suspicion on the girl, thinking that Sutton would squeal on her to save himself. That's my theory, inspector."

"And a darned good one," exclaimed the chief of the detective bureau enthusiastically. "I think you've just about hit it right, this time, Packard. We'll make out a good case against this fellow. We've still several matters to clear up yet, however. The principal thing we've got to find out is the secret which has caused this fellow to go around in disguise."

A policeman here entered the office with a cablegram.

The inspector tore open the envelope and glanced over the contents. Then he uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Here's a rare piece of luck, gentlemen. Listen to this," he said. "This cablegram is from the chief of police of Paris. It is addressed to me and it runs:

> "Arrest on sight Pierre Gaston, fifty-eight years old, six feet tall, heavy build, weighs about two hundred pounds, scar on forehead, gray

hair, straight and close-cropped. Bald on top of head. Gaston escaped from Devil's Island a month ago. Was serving life term there for murdering a Paris citizen five years ago, by injecting cyanide of potassium. Have just learned he has sailed for New York. Is a desperate character.

"That settles it," went on the inspector triumphantly. "Now, we know this fellow's secret and why he killed Dupree. You'll notice that Dupree was killed in the same way as this French citizen the cablegram speaks of—by an injection of cyanide of potassium. So you escaped from Devil's Island, did you, my hearty? Well, you won't escape from where we're going to send you, for you'll go to the electric chair now, as sure as shooting."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONFESSION.

In the death-cell at Sing Sing a man sat awaiting the summons to the Great Beyond. In another room other men silently went about the grim task of preparing and testing the electrical apparatus which was to send a soul into eternity.

Every inmate of the quiet prison felt a sense of heavy oppression and gloom, for all knew that an execution was to take place that day within those grim walls.

The doomed man did not weep nor indulge in loud exclamations of fear. He sat crouched in a corner of his cell, his head bowed in his hands, a look of dumb despair on his evil countenance.

A French priest entered the cell, treading almost noiselessly.

"My son," he said gently, "the time is growing very short now. Will you not confess?"

The man slowly raised his head and replied: "Yes, father, I will confess. I killed Paul Dupree. Now that death stares me in the face I am prepared to tell the truth. I am not afraid to die. I would rather die in the electric chair of these accursed Yankees than go back to Devil's Island—better a speedy death than a living tomb." He shuddered as he spoke the last words.

"Five years ago I killed a man in Paris," he went on. "It isn't necessary to tell why I killed him; it is enough to say that it was deliberate murder. It was easy to kill him. I just took a hypodermic syringe, filled with a deadly poison, and gave him an injection while he slept. The police thought that the poison I used was a solution of cyanide of potassium, but they were wrong; it was a subtle Indian poison which kills instantly.

"Well, I was caught and the crime brought home to me. My lawyers managed to get my sentence commuted to imprisonment for life on Devil's Island. They thought thereby that they were rendering me a great service. I thought so, too, at the time. I soon realized my mistake.

"It is not an easy thing to escape from Devil's Island; but I contrived to accomplish it. In the dead of night, just one month ago, I got away from that hell upon earth and managed to get passage to America.

"I had a friend in New York named Henri Picaut. 'One-Arm Henri,' they called him in Paris. Picaut had the reputation of being the most daring crook in France. They made it so hot for him, though, that he had to come over here.

"As soon as I landed in New York, I hunted up Picaut and found him. I asked him what he was doing for a living and he whispered to me that he had a big scheme on hand—a scheme to bunco several hundred Frenchmen living in America.

"It was an ambitious plot, involving large sums. To work it Henri had to pose as a person of great respectability. He hired an office in the Brixton Building on the tenth floor. It was at his suggestion that I went to work for him. I was out of funds and Henri promised me a rich haul, so I consented. That was an unlucky step for me.

"I had disguised myself with a wig of long, black hair, and I thought that my secret was safe. As luck would have it, however, Picaut's office was just opposite to the office of Paul Dupree.

"I didn't know Dupree and I didn't think he knew me. Several times I noticed him regarding me from the window of his office as I sat in Picaut's place engaged in writing fake circulars.

"I didn't pay any attention to him. I thought he was merely looking out of curiosity. I didn't think that he recognized me. As a matter of fact, I don't think that he did know who I was—then. He simply fancied that there was something familiar about my face, but he couldn't just place me. I have since learned that Dupree was an intimate friend of the governor of Devil's Island, and probably during his visits to the prison he had noticed me there.

"That was enough to make him suspicious, but he wasn't sure. When he had seen me at the prison my hair was gray and close-cropped. Now I wore a heavy mass of long, flowing black hair.

"One unlucky day, when I happened to be walking briskly along Broadway, a gust of wind lifted my hat from my head. I tried to catch it, but I was too late. When I put my hand to my head I was horrified to find that my wig had disappeared along with the hat.

"I was hurrying away, trying to get to cover before the change was noticed, when I turned and saw that I was being pursued by a young photographer. I tried to get away from him, but the fellow followed me persistently and finally managed to get a snap-shot of me.

"If I had had that deadly syringe with me then, that photographer never would have developed those negatives; but luckily for him I had left it in my room.

"I knew then that somebody knew my secret; but I didn't at the time suspect Dupree. Still, I was very careful, and when I went back to Picaut's office I took care to let down the shades.

"I didn't know that Dupree had anything to do with that photographer until the next morning, when I heard voices in Dupree's office, and, looking through a hole in the shade, I saw to my horror that Dupree had a visitor, and that that visitor was the photographer.

"I saw the photographer hand over the pictures to Dupree and I saw Dupree give him some money. And then I knew the truth. Dupree had seen me on Broadway without my wig and had recognized me positively. He had hired this photographer to get a picture of me and was going to send it over to his friend, the governor of Devil's Island.

"Instantly my mind was made up. Dupree must be done away with before he could notify the authorities. Those pictures must be taken from him and destroyed. So I awaited my chance.

"Later that day I heard angry voices in Dupree's office, and looking through the hole in the shade again I saw Sutton, the postal-clerk, having an angry argument with Dupree, and I listened to every word. I thought then how easy it would be to murder Dupree and throw suspicion on this young postal-clerk.

"You shudder, father! It is a revolting story, I know; but I am determined to tell you the whole truth. I saw the postal-clerk whisper to the young woman. I had heard Dupree call her Miss Morgan. I could see by the look in her eyes that she was sympathizing with him. The court between the windows wasn't a very wide one.

"I waited until Dupree was alone in his office, then I crept out of ours, around the corridor, opened Dupree's door as noiselessly as possible and, before the wine-agent could utter a sound, I had plunged the dagger-like end of the syringe into his back. He died instantly.

"Then I took the wallet from his pocket and hurried back to Picaut's room. There I abstracted the photographs from the wallet and sent the leather case, with two hundred and twenty-five dollars, to Sutton at the post-office.

"I didn't know Sutton's name, but I told the messenger-boy to give the package to the money-order clerk and to say that it came from Miss Morgan.

"I did not think that Sutton would hold his tongue about that wallet. I thought he would try to save himself by informing on the girl.

"When I read in the newspaper that Sutton was arrested I congratulated myself that I was safe. At first I was surprised to see nothing in the papers about the messenger-boy incident; but I soon guessed the truth. Sutton was keeping silent out of loyalty to the girl. He believed the girl guilty, and therefore he would not say how he had obtained possession of that wallet.

"My plans were working even better than I expected. My only fear then was

that the girl would have a talk with Sutton and protest her innocence; that she would deny that she sent that wallet and that he would believe her and break his silence about how he got the thing. Then the police would find the messenger-boy and learn from him that it was I who hired him and I would be in great danger.

"I went to see the messenger-boy, determined to scare him into keeping his mouth shut. To my horror, I found that the youngster had left the service and I could get no trace of him.

"To avert the danger that threatened me, I determined to get the girl out of town before she could have a talk with Tom Sutton. I dare not go to her myself; but I sent Picaut, bidding him tell her that he was a friend of Sutton's and that to save the postal-clerk she must run away.

"That plan worked. Then I remembered with horror that that newspaper photographer might still have the negatives of those pictures in his possession, and while they existed my secret was not safe.

"I would have sent Picaut to the *Mirror* office to get the films and all would have been well, but Picaut had left town suddenly. The police were on his track and he was forced to run away. I therefore had to go to the *Mirror* place myself, and that proved to be my undoing, as you know.

"That lawyer fellow Packard was already on my track. What he didn't find out he guessed. It is marvelous how he did it. Thus I was caught."

"My unfortunate son," said the priest brokenly, "my unfortunate son! The burden of your sins is heavy upon you."

"I am repentant now, father," rejoined the man. "I am not sorry to die, though. It seems that even without Dupree's help the French authorities have discovered that I was in New York. Probably I should have been caught and sent back to Devil's Island, even if I had not murdered Dupree. I would rather die than go back."

* * * * *

While the wretched man was making this confession at Sing Sing another scene was being enacted at the home of Marjorie Morgan in New York.

Marjorie had a visitor, Mr. John Saunders, erstwhile bookkeeper of the late Mr. Paul Dupree.

"Miss Morgan," the bookkeeper was saying, "I have come to try my luck once more. I know that you are too generous to bear ill will for the trouble I have caused you. You have obtained much unenviable notoriety in connection with that horrible affair. Your name is on every tongue. Why not change that name and take mine?"

For reply the girl raised her left hand, on the third finger of which a ring flashed merrily.

"I *am* going to change my name," she said softly, "but I am not going to take the name of Saunders."

THE END.

A VISITOR.

I SOMETIMES smoke a pipe with him
When twilight shades begin;
If I had done the opposite,
The Man I Might Have Been.

He never with misfortune met;
Men hail him with acclaim;
He shows me all the gold he makes,
The glory and the fame.

But is he any happier
When all is counted in?
Just one man knows, and he won't tell—
The Man I Might Have Been.

McLandburgh Wilson.

BY WAY OF THE BLIND ALLEY.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

The surprising step Detective Bridger took in connection with the Rockhaven robberies.

THE man who runs a detective agency is in the same boat with the man who conducts a grocery store—when demand lifts up her voice he must respond with alacrity or lose business.

Wherefore Bridger, whose up-town detective bureau was fast building for itself a more or less extended reputation, did not feel entirely pleased when, at the end of a hard day, this telegram arrived:

> Kindly come at once, or send thoroughly competent man.
> FRANK R. MARSLAND, Rockhaven.

Marsland's identity, of course, was hardly shrouded in mystery; he owns nearly half of Rockhaven, that long-established suburb of New York. He is a wealthy and conservative person, is Marsland—but why on earth, at six o'clock in the evening, did he want a detective, and on a hurry call at that?

Bridger pondered over it until the striking of the clock aroused him. He stood upon his feet with a scowl.

Palpably, he could not neglect the call; but he wished that his fame as an astute detective had not traveled to Rockhaven—or at least not until he had recuperated from the long work in connection with the Beavers case.

But Marsland had sent for him and he must go. He left word with the office-boy to take the reports of such outside men as were yet on post, and made for the train.

And at half past seven he was pressing the button beside Marsland's door.

Marsland is a person who has ever shunned the vices of hemming and hawing and cultivated the virtue of direct and vigorous attack, which is probably the reason that he collects rent in so many sections of Rockhaven. Within two minutes he was seated beside Bridger, and he had hardly dropped the detective's hand when his even voice began to tell the tale.

"You were probably a bit astonished at so hurried a summons, Mr. Bridger?"

"A trifle."

"I believed, however, that it was unwise to let another night pass without putting the matter into competent hands. You have read nothing of our trouble up here? No, I thought not. We've been trying to keep it out of the papers. The matter which is worrying us is simply—a second-story burglar!"

"The ordinary article?"

"Very likely, but a little more daring than the ordinary, I believe. However, we've had enough of it. Several of the gentlemen who have suffered met in my office late this afternoon, and we agreed that it would be better to call in you—or some one like you—and see if the nuisance can't be stopped. The matter was given into my hands, to be managed as quietly as possible—and here you are."

"You've been robbed yourself?"

"Not as yet. No, the first sufferer, I believe, was Cushman, whose house is at the far end of Vine Street here. That was about three weeks ago. The burglar entered while the family was downstairs at dinner, removed about seven hundred dollars' worth of small jewelry and vanished. The theft was not discovered until about half past eight."

"And the burglar?"

"There was no sign of him. We notified our apology for a police force, but they were utterly unable to obtain the slightest trace. After two or three days we were forced to believe that the man had contrived a clean escape and most of us, barring Cushman, were preparing to forget the robbery altogether.

"Then, Mr. Bridger, a house five doors this way, was entered in the same manner and at the same hour, and a quantity of small stuff removed!"

"And they found no trace this time?"

"Only the footprints, where the burglar had jumped from the porch-roof. After two days, Brindley's place was

robbed—after another three, Macintosh's home was fairly rifled. On Saturday of last week the Episcopal parsonage was entered during the early evening, and Mrs. Bradshaw's diamonds removed; on Monday of the present week the upper part of Wilson's home was entered a little after seven, and a new assortment of jewelry stolen. That is all, up to date, and we feel that the time has come to put a stop to it!"

"Well, I should think so," Bridger observed dryly. "All this daring work has been done without an effort on the part of your police to offer an obstacle?"

"Not quite that, perhaps, but our force here is neither large nor particularly brilliant."

The private detective grunted softly and thoughtfully.

"Let's see, now. The robberies were all committed early in the evening?"

"Practically all between seven and eight—just about this time of night."

"And the man is supposed to have entered and left by the second story windows?"

"At the rear of the houses. Yes, that part is undoubted."

"Undoubted? Why?"

"Because in—yes, in every case his footprints have been found on the grass at the back of the house."

"And traced——"

"Only to the sidewalk on the side street, or to the rear fence of the grounds as the case happened."

"So that is as far as your police force saw fit to investigate?" smiled Bridger.

"To all intents and purposes. Danvers, the head, asked innumerable questions and made a great time searching for clues. Up to the present, he has accomplished absolutely nothing."

"Well — that frequently happens," mused Bridger. Then he looked up abruptly. "But surely, Mr. Marsland, some one somewhere has seen some trace of the robber, beyond those footmarks?"

"That is precisely what we do not know. On the evening of the second burglary, a coachman caught sight of a man with a bundle, on Bell Street, the one behind this. He looked at the fellow rather curiously, with the result that he hastened away. The coachman followed, and the man took to his heels.

"In a minute or two, I understand, it was a pell-mell race down Bell Street. After a block or two, the man with the bundle dived into the blind alley beside Seely's old house, and slammed the gate after him. When the coachman was able to open it, the alley was empty."

"Blind alley? What sort of blind alley?"

"Why, it is merely a passage beside the empty Seely house. The dwelling has never been completed, owing to Seely's death, but when they were building it, the intention was to have an alley running through to the yard, for tradesmen and so on. Since Seely's death the back part of the lot has been sold, and the other end of the alley simply boarded up."

"To the top of the alley?" asked Bridger incredulously. "How high is it, and how is the man supposed to have vanished?"

"The alley is but one story high—the house runs out over it on the second floor. As for the boarding at the rear, there's merely a high fence, perhaps six or seven feet."

"So that the man, of course, climbed over and pursued his way?"

"Probably."

"And nothing more has been seen of suspicious-looking people?"

"Only Danvers' own clue," said Marsland tartly.

"What was that?"

Marsland sighed with even more impatience.

"Well, on—let me see. Yes, the night Macintosh's place was robbed, Danvers set out to scour the town. An hour after the robbery, he succeeded in locating a man, also with a small bundle, who was hurrying along Chandler Street. He followed him for a time, missed him and picked him up again, three or four blocks from here. He was about to accost the man, when he walked into the side gate of Professor Gorman's grounds and disappeared. Danvers went in as quickly as possible, but there was no sign of him."

"Whereupon the clue was dropped?"

"You don't know Danvers," snapped Marsland. "He made his way to the house and demanded that he be allowed to search the premises. He had some

words with the professor himself as to the propriety of the act, but in the end Gorman allowed him to proceed. And, sir, Danvers went through the place from end to end, from the top of the house to the bottom, out through the hothouses and the aquarium to the stables, and even finished up in the loft of the carriage-house!"

"Which was quite proper," commented Bridger.

"Which was a piece of unqualified asininity!" retorted Marsland. "Few people beside Danvers would have had the assurance even to imply in the vaguest way that Professor Gorman could be harboring a criminal."

"But why is this Gorman so immaculate?"

Marsland snorted frankly.

"You are evidently unacquainted with Rockhaven's people, Mr. Bridger. For one thing, the professor is seventy-six years of age! For another, he is the wealthiest man in town, or very nearly so. For a third, his reputation as a man and a naturalist extends all over the country. He lives in his flowers and his animals! His house is almost the handsomest in the town!"

Bridger leaned back and laughed.

"Well, it's a little far-fetched, I'll admit, to try to rake in a septuagenarian scientist, where second-story burglaries are concerned—but I think your Danvers was justified in a way, nevertheless. Of course he found nothing in his search?"

"He found nothing."

"Um. And has anything *else* been seen of gentlemen with bundles?"

"No."

"And Danvers has been unable to learn anything from his various investigations?"

"According to his own story. He seems to consider the matter dropped." Marsland's voice was distinctly angry. "Well—there you are, Mr. Bridger. There's your case. We are willing to pay whatever is reasonable—or even more—to have this confounded pest apprehended. It's injuring the town as it is. Numerous people are on edge, and one or two of my tenants actually talk of leaving Rockhaven unless it can be stopped. Why, some of our citizens are positively having dinner served up-stairs in the bedrooms for the sake of having a constant eye on the second floor."

Bridger, having nothing at stake, found some difficulty in subduing the amused chuckle which rose to his lips.

"Just what do you expect me to do, Mr. Marsland, at this time?" he asked thoughtfully.

"Capture the man, if it's a physical possibility!"

"He may be in Mexico by this time. The last robbery occurred on Monday, you say, and this is Saturday."

"He didn't leave for Mexico after the first—or the fifth—attempt, Mr. Bridger!"

"True." Bridger's smile was not quite free from sheepishness, in face of the pointed comment. "Well—I'll see what can be done, sir. I will call tomorrow on the people who have been visited, or this evening, if you prefer it. I'll look over the ground and hear what Danvers and the coachman have to say—and do what I can. It's impossible to promise much more than that, you know. I wasn't on the spot when the trouble occurred."

"I understand, Mr. Bridger. Well—go ahead, then, in your own way, and be assured that we'll make it well worth your while, more particularly if you succeed in catching the rascal."

"Very well. But——" Bridger was standing now, and his face wore a frown. "But I wish that it might have been possible for me to be at a little closer range with one of the robberies. I——"

A faint crash of glass interrupted him. Marsland sat up suddenly, and Bridger looked questioningly at him.

The sound had seemed to come from above, but the direction was most indefinite. The detective smiled.

"Is he visiting you now, Mr. Marsland—and taking the windows with him?"

Marsland was out of his chair.

"It's more or less absurd, I presume," he said, walking to the door. "But I'm going up to investigate that racket. One of the servants has broken something, I suppose, or——"

He was out of the room and ascending the stairs. Bridger, smiling slightly, sat down and waited.

He was not long in suspense. Some three or four minutes later Marsland's voice came excitedly from the head of the stairs.

"Mr. Bridger! Mr. Bridger! Come up here, please!"

The detective left his chair with a bound and made for the stairway. Three steps at a time, he rushed for the second floor—and on the landing stumbled into Marsland's arms.

"He's been here!"

"What!"

"Yes, sir, while we were talking about him!" Marsland caught his breath. "Somehow, he must have become frightened and tried to leave in a hurry. He brought down the curtain-pole in the rear bedroom and it smashed straight through the sash!"

"It could not have been one of the servants?"

"There is no one on this floor. No, Mr. Bridger, I've been visited, too."

"But what has he taken?"

"That I don't know as yet." Marsland turned back quickly. "Come along, Mr. Bridger. We shall doubtless learn within a minute or two."

He led the way into the large rear bedroom, Bridger close at his heels, and turned on the lights.

The place was in confusion, as regarded bureau drawers and closets. On the floor lay an expensive set of furs—by the window a beautiful mink coat. Marsland darted for a half-opened drawer, and triumphantly fished out a red leather case.

"Mrs. Marsland's jewels!" he cried. "He missed them!"

"You're sure?"

"Yes." Marsland, having opened the case, closed it again with a snap. "They are all here, but——" He turned to the dressing-table. "By Jove! Her watch and a brooch are gone!"

"Anything else?"

Marsland looked around quickly.

"Not that I can see at the moment. But, Bridger——"

"Then we'll get after him!"

The detective was already half out of the window. Before Marsland's voice had died away, he stood on the roof of the rear porch, and there the owner of the house joined him hurriedly.

Bridger was looking about.

"If he left by that window—as he must have done—the chances are that he walked straight to the edge of the roof here, for he couldn't have taken a corner of the house." He suited the action to the word. "From here he must have—dropped. Are you coming, Mr. Marsland?"

Before the other could quite comprehend his design, the detective had swung himself easily over the edge of the porch-roof. For an instant he hung by his hands; then dropped lightly to the ground below.

It was rather an effort for Marsland, but he followed without hesitation; and having recovered from the shock of the drop, he stood beside Bridger.

The detective was bending low, in the faint light from the street lamp at the corner, shining between two of the detached houses, and examining the ground.

"He landed here, too, as sure as you're born!" he announced. "And from here he went——"

Crouching still, Bridger made his way straight across the lawn to one of the cinder paths. A satisfied exclamation escaped him.

"I wasn't wrong, Mr. Marsland! Here's where he struck the path. Can you see?"

"Hardly."

"And from this point, he made for the rear of the grounds."

Marsland followed again, as the other hurried down the path. At the hedge he paused.

"Well, this is the direction our man took, fast enough, Mr. Marsland. I presume he crossed that open lot and made for—whatever street it is over there."

"Bell Street."

"Where the first man was seen with the bundle?"

"Yes."

"Then, by Jove, we'll follow him! In which direction is the blind alley?"

"Up there, two or three blocks."

Bridger scratched his head.

"It's poor assumption, I suppose, and he may have taken exactly the opposite direction. But, it being the only hint we have to work upon, we're bound to use it!"

He pushed through the hedge and held the bushes apart for Marsland. Side by side they ran across the vacant building plot, and reached the Bell Street sidewalk.

"Down there, is it?" said Bridger. "We'll just stroll along hurriedly, as it were, so as not to attract the attention of the gentleman, should he happen to be about."

Marsland, forgetful of his velvet smoking-jacket and hatless condition in the mild air, gave excited assent, and they steered a course down Bell Street.

The thoroughfare was not closely built up, and the few residents were mostly at the evening meal. For a block, then, they encountered no one, and Bridger, at the crossing, growled under his breath.

"It's as deserted as the Sahara Desert!" he said. "If the fellow went the other way——"

"Who's that ahead?"

Bridger strained his eyes. With some difficulty, he described a hurriedly moving form on the next block, going in their direction.

"Give it up!" he said. "However, we'll overhaul him. If his conscience is clear, he'll permit it. If it isn't, he'll run!"

Their pace was quickened, and the sound of their steps rang out sharply on the still evening air.

And that sound had its own result, for under a gas lamp the man ahead turned for a minute, seemed to survey them—and broke into a full run!

"Spotted, by thunder!" cried Bridger and gathered himself for the chase.

In a moment both men were flying madly along Bell Street—and the other more madly, a block ahead. For some three hundred feet, the distance between them neither lessened nor increased. Bridger was pushing his strong muscles to greater effort, when—the man disappeared.

One instant he had been there, clearly discernible in the street light; the next he was gone!

"What the——"

"The blind alley beside Seely's house!" panted Marsland. "He's gone in there!"

At the same instant the noise of a slamming gate reached them. They bent low and raced ahead, and after a few seconds they stood before a solid wooden gate.

"This it?" Bridger turned for the moment.

"Yes."

Crash! The detective's broad shoulders came against the thick boards. Another mighty crash—and the old bolt gave way before him!

Into the black alley Bridger rushed headlong. Marsland came close behind.

Now, it would have been impossible for a child to slip past them in the narrow passage; yet they reached the far end and found themselves before the wooden fence—and the light from Bridger's match revealed nothing at all.

"He went over with a rush, all right!" The detective was pulling himself to the top, and with a terrible effort Marsland followed suit.

Together they squeezed through the narrow space and dropped to the other side.

Here they found another vacant plot, partly dug for new building operations. Bridger took a quick survey and hurried on—and at the sidewalk of the next street he stopped.

"You see that gate?" he demanded breathlessly, pointing across the street, and some few hundred feet farther on.

"Yes, of course. It is——"

"Well, a man in rather light clothes went in there just now, and he was going like a streak of greased lightning!"

"But——"

Bridger was off again. Across the street he dashed, and straight through the gate. Head down, he made up a dark path, pausing for an instant here and there to light a match, examine the sand and grunt his satisfaction.

Marsland, expostulating faintly, was still well behind when the detective brought up sharply. His head had almost collided with the substantial side wall of the house within the grounds.

"Mr. Marsland," said Bridger, in a whisper, "where are we now?"

"In Dr. Gorman's grounds! That's what I have been trying to tell you."

"The professor's, eh? That's a funny coincidence, isn't it? Then I'll tell you something. The man we chased—and I

verily believe it was the man who broke into your house—came through that alley, crossed the lot, came in here and up the path—and went straight through that door into Professor Gorman's house!"

"Nonsense, sir!"

"There is no nonsense about it. He's in there now!"

"But, my dear fellow!" cried Marsland. "Professor Gorman——"

"I don't care if he's an angel with wings!" said Bridger energetically. "That crook is under his roof, and I'm going to get him!"

"But I can't permit it. The professor has been greatly annoyed by Danvers. What will he say to me——"

"Nothing at all," replied the detective, "if you remain here and out of sight."

He turned and made for the front of the house, and Marsland followed closely. He rang the bell and a maid opened the door.

"Is the professor at home?" queried Bridger.

At the sound of his voice a very old, very benevolent, white-haired man appeared from the study in the rear.

"I am Professor Gorman."

"I am a private detective—my name is Bridger. May I search your house?"

A momentary gasp of sheer amazement, and much of the benevolence disappeared.

"Hang you, sir! Is my house supposed to be a harbor for criminals? You, Mr. Marsland——"

"Mr. — er — Bridger believes, you know——"

"I don't believe anything. I know. The burglar who has been operating recently in Rockhaven is just now under your roof, professor. How long he'll remain there, if we spend the evening arguing the question, I cannot say. He's here, however, at this moment, and I should very much appreciate your kind and immediate permission to search for him."

"My good man! My dear Mr. Marsland!" stammered the professor. "I—why, I hardly know——"

"If he's not an utter born fool, he'll be gone again in two or three minutes," Bridger suggested.

The professor shook his head angrily.

"Then go on with your search, sir, and I shall accompany you."

Without hesitation, Bridger walked straight to the rear of the house. Uncomplimentary as it may have been, he ran quickly through the library. Nothing was revealed.

He tried the door at the rear; it opened under his hands and showed a long alleyway of green foliage and flowering plants. This, then, was the hothouse.

Bridger stepped down and walked the length of the place, glancing keenly under the benches.

He found nothing whatever—the view across the floor was unobstructed, and no place existed for the hiding of a man.

At the end another door met him. He opened it without pause and strode into the professor's aquarium. It was an odd apartment to be found in a dwelling.

About the sides were glass tanks, filled with fish of many kinds. A deep pool at the far end held a pair of seals, and beside it a shallow, muddy enclosure showed some half dozen alligators of different sizes, big and little, motionless and sleepy.

For the moment Bridger stared around curiously, and the professor, noting his interest, smiled benevolently again.

"You are astonished at my collection, sir? Those seals were brought down from Bering; I have wonderful success with them. The 'gators, too—what do you think of them?"

"They're beauties, I suppose," said Bridger. "All alive?"

"Oh, no. The two larger ones are merely skins upon frames. That one died before I had had him a week, I'm sorry to say. The big fellow over there was brought north in 1889. He died about seven years ago. The small one to the right——"

But Bridger had returned to his muttons. He cut off the professor's amiable discourse with a nod, and looked about. Across the aquarium, a man was working at one of the tanks, and the detective called out:

"Has any one been in here within the last five or ten minutes?"

"Eh? No, sir." The man looked up in astonishment.

"Sure about that, are you?"

"Why, yes, sir."

"It's curious, then," muttered Bridger, turning back. "From the general appearances of things in here and what I saw outside, I'd have been willing to swear that that fellow came in by the side door of this very room."

The professor interjected a smiling, incredulous "Tut, tut"; Marsland wagged his head deprecatingly.

Bridger, however, was still unconvinced of his error. Scowling thoughtfully, he stared about the place; there were no nooks or crannies which might have held the fugutive, but——

"Professor!" he said suddenly. "Just when did that big alligator die?"

"It was—er—seven years ago last April, I think."

"Then—here, you come back!" He extended a finger toward the servant, who had edged toward the door. "Just keep him here, Mr. Marsland!"

Wondering, Marsland moved toward the man and blocked his exit. Bridger took to doing surprising things.

Very rapidly, he threw one leg over the railing of the alligator enclosure and stepped in; he jumped to the side of the great 'gator and seized him bodily! He rolled the empty skin over without ceremony—and a little man in groom's livery rolled out!

He was furiously red and streaming with perspiration; his breath came in gasps and his eyes were wide and frightened. One hand instinctively went to his side pocket.

And Bridger's hand reached the pocket first. With a quick twist he produced a small gold watch and a brooch.

"There, Mr. Marsland! Are those your wife's?"

"Well — upon — my—soul!" gasped Marsland. "Yes!"

"God bless me!" cried the professor, readjusting his glasses. "James!"

"James is the man!" said Bridger grimly as he led the little fellow across to the others.

A dramatic pause ensued. The groom made no attempt at escape; the other man stood sullen and silent in the corner. After a minute Bridger spoke again.

"One of your employees, professor?"

"My groom, yes."

"He bears a very striking resemblance to a person whose picture I have seen in the Rogues' Gallery," commented the detective.

"Well——" he turned to the captive. "You're the individual who has been causing the trouble, eh? And, working in conjunction with your friend over there, you had about the neatest hiding-place in town, didn't you?"

He laughed shortly.

"Nobody under the sun would have looked for you in this house—except, perhaps, the scorned Mr. Danvers."

"But, my dear Mr. Bridger," put in the professor, "whatever led you to suspect that——"

Bridger laughed again as he tightened his grip and walked toward the door.

"Professor, I see that you're near-sighted, and I perceive also that Mr. Marsland wears pretty thick glasses. If your eyes had been as good as mine, and you'd been used to looking for things in unlikely places—well, it would have impressed you as just a little odd, I believe, to find an alligator who died seven years ago breathing as if he had finished a mile sprint at the very top of his speed! Wouldn't it?"

AN INSTRUMENT.

A HUMAN heart, this was the instrument
That many, dowered with cunning skill, essayed;
Joy fingered it, and Fear above it bent,
And Sorrow her pale hands upon it laid.

Then Anger smote it, and Despondency,
And Passion swept it with his touch of flame;
But it gave forth no wondrous melody
Till Love, the masterful musician, came.

Clinton Scollard.

SEEN THROUGH A FIELD-GLASS.

BY LEANDER S. KEYSER.

A long-distance view which seemed to prove that, after all, seeing is not believing.

HAVE you ever felt the cold chills run up and down your spinal cord? True, it is difficult to comprehend how chills could be anything but "cold"; yet something must be conceded to a popular mode of expression.

Well, that was Robert Mandell's experience as he stood on the high hilltop at the border of the woods, looking through his powerful field-glass.

It might be explained here, by way of parenthesis, that Robert Mandell was an inveterate rambler, and had gone out to the aforesaid hilltop on that fair April day in the interest of certain investigations in natural history that he was carrying on.

Little did he think that his scientific researches were to be rudely and mysteriously interrupted.

In a sequestered hollow that thrust itself like a wedge into the range of hills on the opposite side of the wide valley stood a small farmhouse, surrounded with the usual complement of outbuildings. It was perhaps nearly two miles from Mandell's post of observation to the premises in question.

For some cause, which he has never been able to explain, he was focusing his binocular upon the little homestead. He himself was hidden among the trees and saplings of the woodland border in which he stood.

His glass, which had a magnifying power of about five diameters, revealed the whole scene as vividly as if it were only a few rods away.

Then it was that he witnessed a tragedy which made him catch his breath in spasmodic gasps, and sent the shivers up and down his spine. This is the scene that met his horrified but fascinated gaze:

A man and a woman were standing face to face in the yard at one side of the little farmhouse. They seemed to be engaged in a somewhat heated dialogue, for the woman made a number of emphatic gestures with her hand.

The man held a long-handled shovel on his shoulder, the broad, rounded blade of which could be distinctly seen by the observer on the hilltop. He was rather young looking, with no beard save a dark mustache. The woman's face was young and fair, though at the distance Mandell was not able to identify her features.

Suddenly, to Robert Mandell's dismay, the man lifted his shovel and brought it down with all his force upon the woman's head, crushing her to the ground. Then he brutally struck her again, as if to make sure his victim was dead.

Mandell gasped and muttered incoherently in his excitement, and his frame trembled so that for a few moments he lost his focus on the terrible tragedy.

When he again succeeded in getting the scene in the field of his glass, the murderer was carrying the woman's limp form on his shoulder up through the yard in the rear of the house, while he held his shovel in his right hand.

Rapidly he ran up through an orchard, then turned to the left, and followed a rail-fence that ran diagonally up the slope and partially screened him. All the while he was stooping low to hide himself from possible prying eyes.

At length he slipped stealthily into a clump of bushes at the border of a sparse woodland. Through the network of the twigs of the thicket, which was not yet covered with foliage, Mandell could see what the man was doing—digging a grave in which to bury his victim and hide the evidences of his crime.

As he worked he glanced around at intervals in a nervous way, as if he feared detection.

Mandell was so overwrought with excitement that he could hold the glass to his eyes only by a supreme effort of his

will. However, he resolutely continued his espionage till the man dropped his victim into the cavity he had dug and began to shovel in the earth.

Then Mandell looked around carefully, both with and without his binocular, to make sure he would be able to identify the spot where the tragedy had occurred and the body buried.

Yes, it was the homestead in the little hollow almost directly south of him, and on the opposite side of the valley. He felt certain he could not be mistaken as to the locality. The summit on which he stood was familiar to him, too, for he had made more than one excursion to it in days gone by, on account of its commanding position.

Then he drew out his watch, and noted that it was within a few minutes of ten o'clock.

Flinging the strap of his field-glass about his shoulders, he ran as fast as he could down the steep hillside to the nearest farmhouse. He soon found the owner, whom, fortunately, he knew.

"Mr. Wasner," he said breathlessly, "I'll give you five dollars if you will take me to town as quickly as you can. Something terrible has happened, and I must see the sheriff at once. I can't tell you now what it is. All I want is to be driven to Banford post-haste."

"All right, Mr. Mandell," the farmer agreed, repressing his curiosity. "I'll have the boy take you. Here, Mike," he called to his half-grown son, "hitch up Fanny in the light buggy, and drive Mr. Mandell to town. And be quick about it!"

It was only three miles, and in a little more than half an hour Robert Mandell reached the sheriff's office, and was telling his story to that astounded functionary. A little later Mandell, the sheriff, and three other officers were driving rapidly along the country road toward the scene of the tragedy.

Their way first led over a high divide, then down into the broad valley across which Mandell was gazing when he witnesssed the slaying of the woman.

"Yonder is the hilltop, Mr. Tompkins, on which I was standing when I saw the woman murdered," said Mandell.

"Ah! I see," the sheriff answered.

A drive of a couple of miles up the valley brought them to the lane leading up to the premises they were intent on visiting. A previous inquiry from a neighbor elicited the information that the name of the farmer on whom they were to call was George Harding.

It was an anxious moment for Robert Mandell and the officers as they drove up to the little frame house, for they did not know what kind of a reception might be accorded them.

"Be ready for any emergency, men," the sheriff commanded. "No telling what will happen when Harding learns what we are about."

The men set their teeth, put their hands on their revolvers, and, led by the sheriff, walked quietly up the path to the house.

As they came near a man stepped out of the side door and stood looking at his visitors with mute inquiry on his face. No fear was depicted there. He simply gazed quizzically at the men, none of whom were dressed like officers of the law.

"I think that's your man, Mr. Tompkins," Mandell whispered to the sheriff. "His general appearance agrees with that of the man who committed the crime. Act quickly, officer."

"Hold up your hands, Mr. Harding," the sheriff commanded, covering the fellow with his revolver, while the other officers did the same.

The man's hands were promptly lifted above his head, while his face grew ashen, and he cried, "Are you a band of robbers?"

Just then a woman came running to the doorway, uttering a little cry of consternation.

The officer spoke out sternly: "Hands up, madam!" an injunction that she did not hesitate to obey when she saw the revolvers pointed at her.

"What does this hold-up mean?" Mr. Harding quavered, seeming to think that his visitors were a gang of brigands.

"I'm sorry to be compelled to place you under arrest, Mr. Harding," answered the sheriff, stepping forward and slipping a pair of handcuffs on the man's wrists. "I think, too, to make safe, I'd better take this lady in custody as well. Is she your wife, Mr. Harding?"

"She is," the man replied, his face going white and red with apparent amazement. "What in the world am I arrested for, Mr. Tompkins? I—I'm a law-abiding citizen."

As he spoke, the look on his face was certainly one of pure astonishment, not of guilt. Mandell could not help wondering at the innocent expression. He surely did not look like a man who would commit even a trifling wrong, to say nothing of a capital crime.

However, the officer was accustomed to the simulation of innocence, and would not allow himself to be diverted from the performance of his duty.

"You shall know in good time, Mr. Harding," he said, somewhat gruffly. "When we've made an examination of the premises we shall doubtless have abundant evidence of your crime.

"George," turning to one of the officers, "you may remain in charge of the prisoners while the rest of us look about and make an investigation. Now, Mr. Mandell, tell us just where the—the—event took place."

"It must have been right here," Mandell replied, looking about in a slightly puzzled way; "right at the side of the house, only a few feet from the path; at about this point, I should say. I remember the path distinctly."

The officer proceeded to examine the lawn and path, even going down on his knees in his search for blood spots. Beginning at the point indicated, he moved around in widening circles till he had covered nearly the whole area of the side yard.

All the while Mr. and Mrs. Harding were watching the performance with wide-eyed wonder. If they were guilty of a capital crime, the penalty of which they must have known to be death, they certainly were adepts at disguising their feelings.

Presently the sheriff rose, and came back to Mandell, saying:

"I find nothing incriminating here."

"It's very strange," rejoined Mandell. "But the proofs may have been removed between the time of committing the deed and that of our arrival."

"But there's no sign of any conflict having taken place on the lawn."

"Yes, that is odd," Mandell admitted. "But come, Mr. Tompkins; I'll lead the way up to the copse yonder."

"In the name of God, what are you looking for, men?" Mr. Harding broke in at this point. "Surely you don't mean to accuse us of a foul crime!"

"You shall know about that in good time, Mr. Harding," parried the sheriff. "Where can we find a couple of shovels?"

"Yonder in the wood-house," Mr. Harding replied, without a sign of reluctance.

Followed by the sheriff and two of the other officers, Mandell led the way up the hillside in the rear of the farm buildings. When they came to the corner of the orchard he was puzzled for a few moments by a peculiar circumstance; the rail-fence ran longitudinally across the slope instead of diagonally, as he had supposed. But perhaps viewing it at a distance made it appear so, he reflected.

They followed the fence till they came to a thicket at the border of a small tract of timber. This must be the copse in which the woman's body was surreptitiously buried. Mandell's pulses throbbed hotly as he approached the place, which now seemed to him to have an uncanny atmosphere about it.

The sheriff and his men pushed into the copse and began to examine the ground at the spot pointed out to them by their guide. To their surprise, they found the earth everywhere covered with dead leaves and grass and small bushes and briers. No fresh dirt was to be seen; no signs of any excavating having been done; not a leaf, not a grass spear, not a bush or brier in the whole thicket, which was only a few rods square, had been disturbed.

All the bushes were firmly rooted, and bore no evidence of ever having been dug up. The searchers went carefully over every foot of soil.

At length the sheriff pulled himself out of the copse, and looked at Mandell as if he doubted the latter's sanity.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Mandell?" the sheriff inquired.

"I'm teetotally beaten!" Mandell admitted, mopping his forehead with his handkerchief. "I was sure I could lead you right to the spot. Yonder is the hilltop across the valley where I stood

and saw the whole tragedy. How could I have been mistaken!"

"And you plainly saw the deed?"

"I would take an oath that I saw it as clearly as I see you now."

"There's no other thicket on this hillside, is there?"

"None whatever," looking around. "This simply must be the thicket in question. You can see for yourself that this is the little hollow directly south of the hill on which I was standing."

"Your glass is a good one?"

"First-class. None better made. I would vouch that it wouldn't play me a trick. Even a poor glass could not make a man see what I saw. It's utterly inexplicable."

"Well, we'll go over the whole ground again."

They did, but it was of no avail; there was not a scintilla of evidence that even a blade of grass had been unnaturally displaced in the entire copse.

It was mystifying beyond measure. Mandell simply went hot and cold when he reflected on it.

Could he have been the victim of an optical illusion? Or was it mental hallucination? He could accept neither alternative.

It was impossible that his optic nerve could have conjured such a scene as the one he had witnessed through his glass. Nor was he subject to mental vagaries.

But what was the meaning of the mystery? It was humiliating, too, to have his good judgment and even his sanity suspected by the officers, who, he fancied, looked at him curiously.

They went back to the house and questioned and cross-questioned Mr. Harding and his wife.

"What were you doing between nine and ten o'clock, Mr. Harding?" the sheriff asked.

"I was plowing in the field just over the shoulder of the hill," the man responded promptly.

"How long were you there?"

"All forenoon—from breakfast till dinner."

"Were you at the house at all during the forenoon?" Mandell put in.

"No, sir; I stayed in the field from about half past six this morning till my wife rang the dinner-bell at twelve o'clock."

"Have you had your dinner yet?"

"Yes, sir; just finished eating as you drove up to the house."

"Could you have seen the house from any point where you were plowing?"

"No, sir; the field is on the other side of the little ridge yonder."

Then the sheriff turned his battery of questions upon Mrs. Harding.

"Were you here at the house all the forenoon, madam?" he asked.

"I was," she replied promptly, looking him firmly in the eyes.

"Did anything unusual occur during the forenoon?"

"Nothing at all—at least, nothing that I saw. Why do you ask?"

"Never mind that, Mrs. Harding. If I didn't have good reasons, I wouldn't be troubling you with these questions."

"Did you have any visitors during the forenoon?" Mandell inquired.

"None whatever."

"Are you sure?"

"As sure as I am of my own existence."

"Mrs. Harding, look me directly in the eyes, and answer me this question," Mandell said, eying her keenly: "Didn't you see a man and woman standing here in your yard a little before ten o'clock this forenoon?"

"I did not, sir," the woman replied in most positive tones, looking her questioner unflinchingly in the eyes.

"Do you think a man and woman could have been standing here without your seeing them?"

"I think not, sir. I was working in my dining-room and kitchen all forenoon, and, as you see, the doors and windows open toward this side of the house."

"What were you doing between nine and ten o'clock?"

"I was baking, sir. It's my baking day. At that time I must have been making my pies, for I had them in the oven a few minutes after ten o'clock. You see, I always look at the clock when I put my pies in the oven, so as to know——"

"Yes, of course, Mrs. Harding. While you were making your pies, in what direction were you facing?"

"This way, sir. You can see for yourself. My kitchen table, on which I always knead and roll my dough, stands right before this window. So I must have been facing toward the window, and no person could have been out here in this part of the yard without my seeing him."

No amount of cross-questioning could shake the couple's testimony. Moreover, there was an air of verisimilitude about all their statements that carried conviction.

"I have one more request to make to you, sheriff," said Mandell. "Leave your officers here in charge of the prisoners, and go with me to the summit of the hill yonder where I was standing when I saw the tragedy."

"Very well, sir," replied the officer. "Suppose we go at once."

On the distant hilltop Robert Mandell soon focused his binocular on the little farmhouse on the opposite slope.

As he looked through the eye-pieces he gave a start. Then he held up the glass, turned the knob to adjust the focus, and looked again.

A mutter of surprise broke from his lips. Was he bewitched or crazy?

He wiped the outer prisms of the field-glass. He also rubbed his eyes. Then he looked again.

"What's the matter, Mr. Mandell?" the sheriff asked gravely.

"It seems to be the place, and yet it doesn't look quite natural," the rambler admitted reluctantly. "There are the hollow, the winding lane, the little frame house, the orchard above the farm buildings, the copse at the edge of the woods—but—but, hold! the fence runs straight across instead of diagonally, and the slope is steeper than it appeared to be this forenoon, and the whole scene is laid out on a much smaller scale; and, well! I can scarcely believe my eyes, for I remember now that the whole hilltop as I saw it this morning was covered with forest, whereas the summit I'm now looking at is entirely denuded of trees. Well, Mr. Tompkins, I confess that I'm baffled, dumfounded. I don't know what to say. I can't be sure of the identity of the place where the fearful crime was committed."

"Look up and down the valley and see if there's no other place that corresponds," the sheriff requested.

"There's none," Mandell declared, after a careful reconnaissance. "You might as well go back and release your prisoners, so that innocent parties will not need to suffer under an unjust charge. Let us keep the matter quiet, too, until the mystery is cleared up."

This was the course pursued. The next forenoon Mandell was busy, but in the afternoon he made his way to the hilltop that now held so much weird fascination for him, and found the Harding place looking precisely as it had on the previous afternoon.

He went home baffled and perturbed beyond measure. For the first time in his life he found himself in the presence of a real mystery—one to whose solution he could find no clue.

A few days later the daily papers of the city rang with the news of the disappearance of a woman, for whom search had been made in vain. The last time she had been seen in her home she had declared in a fit of anger that she was going away, and would not return till evening; but she had given no hint as to where she intended to go.

Comparing dates, Mandell found that the day of her disappearance was the very day on which he had witnessed the terrible tragedy on the hillside. She had left home at about eight o'clock in the morning, which would have given her time to go into the country some miles before ten.

Mandell wondered whether there might be any connection between the two events.

The atmosphere of mystery surrounding the tragedy he had seen through his field-glass hung like a pall over him. He was haunted by it day and night. It destroyed all his enjoyment in his scientific excursions into the country.

Some days later he found time for a ramble, and was drawn almost irresistibly toward that fateful hilltop.

It was a little before ten o'clock when he reached the elevation, the hour at which, a few days prior, he had been an involuntary spectator of a capital crime.

Leveling his glass toward the south, and looking sharply into the eye-pieces, he uttered a cry of consternation, and

the binocular almost fell from his nerveless hand. Then he looked again.

This time his glass revealed the exact locality in which he had witnessed the tragedy! For ten minutes his glass was glued upon the landscape, which he in spected in every detail, knowing that he could not be mistaken as to its identity.

Presently his eyes grew weary with the strain, and he dropped his glass to his side, and took several turns about the woods for relaxation, and to work off something of his overwrought emotions.

When he again lifted his glass and looked through it, what was his amazement to find that the scene had changed back to the prosaic little farm of the Hardings! He glanced at his watch and found the time a few minutes after ten.

For several days he repeated the experiment on the hilltop, and made the following strange discovery: From about half past nine to ten o'clock in the forenoon his glass revealed the scene of the crime; at all other times the little Harding farm.

What did it mean? Here was mystery on mystery. What was it? Optical illusion or mental hallucination? Was the strange phenomenon in the glass, or in his eyes, or in his brain, or in the landscape?

While he ruminated, a thought flashed into his mind. He hurried home and laid plans for carrying his investigations into a new field.

Before sunrise the next morning he had left the city behind him and was clambering up the steep ridge to the south of the one he had been infesting for so many days of late. Mile after mile he trudged along the top of the range, stopping every few minutes to scan the landscape on both sides.

It need not be said that he was violently tossed about between hope and fear. He had a theory; would it be proven true or false?

A few hours of toilsome jogging along brought him to the top of the ridge directly above the Harding place. First he leveled his glass northward upon the hilltop that had introduced him to the mystery he was now trying to clear up. The towering summit had the familiar air of a well-known friend. Then he turned southward, and sent his gaze across the valley toward the tall range of hills on the opposite side.

An exclamation burst from his dry lips, and a shiver went through his whole frame, causing him to tremble like a leaf. Do you ask why?

Yonder, on the other side of the valley, lay the scene of the tragedy he had witnessed. Even with the naked eye he recognized it, and when he fixed his glass upon it every feature of the landscape was brought out with the utmost distinctness—the hollow, the house, and other farm buildings, a little yard, the orchard, the rail-fence running diagonally up the slope, the hilltop crowned with tall forest trees, and the fateful copse where the body had been surreptitiously buried.

He was looking directly southward. Several miles to the northeast lay a broad, beautiful lake that sparkled in the sunshine like a sapphire gem.

"I've solved my problem," he muttered, trembling with excitement; "solved it, too, on scientific principles."

But he meant to make sure, for he wanted facts, not theories.

A few hours later he had crossed the second valley, clambered stealthily up to the opposite heights, and crept almost on hands and knees through the woods down to the thicket, which he had reason to believe contained an assassin's awful secret.

His blood ran hot and cold by turns as he examined the spot. It required only a few minutes' inspection to furnish indubitable proof that his judgment was correct—an excavation had been made not many days before in the thicket.

His next step was to hurry to town and request the sheriff and his helpers to examine the thicket. This was done at once, with the result that the body of the missing woman was exhumed, and the real murderer brought to the bar of justice.

It was another case of a crime committed through jealousy and anger. At the trial, in which Robert Mandell was one of the principal witnesses, the lawyer for the defense put this question to him.

"How do you account for your seeing this tragedy through your field-glass,

Mr. Mandell, when you were standing on a hilltop so far to the north?"

"In this way," Robert Mandell replied, with a good deal of assurance: "The silvery lake, the position of the sun, the state of the atmosphere, the peculiar topography of the landscapes, all combined at that particular spot and hour of the day to produce a mirage of special distinctness."

The New Neighbor Across the Hall.

BY MARTIN M. FOSS.

The astounding tale told by the stranger, with its sequel that fell on the mystified one like a bolt from the blue.

I WAS deep in a reverie by the grate fire in my bachelor apartments when there came a soft knock on the door.

Perhaps I had been dozing, for I did not hear the footsteps on the stair; but I had no sooner roused myself with a cheery "Come in" than I realized that my new neighbor from across the hall was calling on me.

I rose, with a definitely fixed picture of him in my mind, for though I had never seen the man, to my knowledge, yet I had seen his name that day on the packing-cases at the door, and there was a quality in it—Montague Grant—which made me sure of him.

Surely I had heard it somewhere—perhaps at the club, or as the author of some book or play. At least, I felt confident that he would be tall and dark, with thin, aristocratic features, and a great dignity of presence. So much did I believe in my picture that when the door opened softly I knew him at once; for by some strange psychological process I had painted his portrait on my mind exactly.

I bowed gravely, as he spoke:

"You will pardon my intrusion upon you——"

He had seemed nervous and embarrassed as he entered, but he became more calm, and smiled as he came forward in answer to my invitation.

"This is," I said, "Mr. Montague Grant."

He stopped suddenly, in great surprise, and looked at me in a queer, nervous way, hesitating a moment before he answered. But as I drew a chair to the fire, he replied:

"Yes; but how did you know?"

I explained my simple deductions with a little pleasure; for I have a certain pride in my ability to diagnose incidents which often perplex other people—no step on the stairs, therefore he must be from the top floor, and he alone, besides myself, lived on the top floor.

He laid his hat and coat aside and sat down in front of the fire, and for the first time I saw deep lines in his face, the footprints of worry, and the nervous twitching of his long fingers told me that he was even now under some great strain.

"Have you had difficulty in preparing your rooms for the night?" I asked.

I was on the point of offering him my couch when it occurred to me that this neighbor, with whom I hoped to be friends, might resent the advance.

"Yes," he said.

"It is trying, but I am sure you will find it very comfortable here when you are settled."

The conversation lagged whenever I ceased speaking, and I noticed that he gazed blankly into the fire.

Why had he come?

Obviously he had planned to go out of doors, from his dress and overcoat, and his manner did not show the vivacity which I should have expected from a friendly caller on his first visit.

His face grew more troubled, and his eyes, deep-set as they were, filled with apparent pain. I sympathized with his care, which I could see lay beyond the mere detail of settling a pair of rooms.

I spoke to him, after a long pause, of his apparent trouble, framing my sentence as carefully as possible. He answered me quickly:

"Yes, there is something very

wrong. That is why I came to you. I could not stay alone—did not dare—another moment. You may well think it strange that a total stranger should encroach upon you in this manner."

"Not at all," I said hastily; "though we have never met, we have, and shall have, much in common here."

"I feel that I must tell you something. I must appeal to you to listen patiently, and help me a little if you can. I am in great perplexity — great trouble, I may well say—which my mind cannot grasp. There is a mystery, something supernatural—I don't know just what."

The prospect of such a tale pleased me, I must confess, though I felt keen pity for the evident distress of my caller.

"You have guessed who I am and evidently have never heard of me before, which is natural enough; for I am nobody in particular.

"Three weeks ago my wife died very suddenly. I can't tell you quite what it meant to me."

The look of utter hopelessness and pain in the man's face cut me like a knife. I spoke as kindly as I could of my keen regret.

"Yes," he continued, "she died with scarcely a night's warning. I stood the strain until they carried her away, and then every fiber in my body seemed to snap. The doctor sent me to Bermuda, but when I reached there a cablegram summoned me back to attend to important business.

"I could not bear the thought of going to Montclair, for the house had been closed; so I have lived for several days at a hotel. Then I learned of a vacant apartment here, for I have heard of the house often, and I sent to Montclair for some of my furniture, books, and pictures. I could not go to our—our——"

He paused, his mind seeming to stray among the images in the firelight—images, probably, of the woman who had shared his life, and who seemed to have taken with her, in death, all its joy—aye, almost all of the life itself.

I had found, in these same lights and shadows, so much of peace and happiness. A strange thing, this firelight, which shows so many phases of life, all the scales of joy and pain, in the same evening. I hastily jotted down in my memory that this would make a capital essay.

"To-day," my neighbor continued, rousing himself suddenly, "I found that I must go home—to the house, I mean. I planned to go in the afternoon, but I was delayed, and it was five o'clock before I reached the station. I found myself on my regular train, with the customary faces about me. The familiarity of it all tortured me beyond words.

"I could not shake off the idea that I was going home; that my wife would meet me at the door, as she always did. I tried to think clearly; yet I was haunted with the joy which one feels in awaking from a bad dream. 'It was not true,' my mind said; 'Margaret will be there!' The trial of that ride was worse than anything I can describe."

The wind howled roughly outside, rattling the windows while he talked. The fire settled a little and burst with a new brightness.

"From the station I walked rapidly to the house, trying to gain control of myself," he went on. "But as I turned into the path I could not give up the hope that there would be a light in the window, and that my wife would be in her usual chair.

"As I rounded the last bend, and the house came into view, you can imagine my bewilderment, and the sudden rush of joy, as I saw a light shining from the front window. I almost ran forward, for an instant, until I realized that whatever caused the light, the house was, for me, barren and dark. I stopped to control myself, and then I saw a woman sitting by the window. I stared. There could be no doubt—it was my wife."

"Your wife!" I cried.

"Yes. Listen! My wife!" he said. "Just as she always sat. I was cooler then, for I felt that I must think clearly or die. I heard a step behind me, and, not knowing what to do, I sprang behind a clump of evergreen trees which grew beside the house.

"From where I stood I could see my wife plainly. She had been reading a book, but as the step came nearer, she stopped, listened an instant, and then went to the door. I knew every line of

her face and figure—every detail of her dress; it was surely my wife."

"Heavens, man!" I broke in. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know—let me tell you all." He spoke in a voice so tense that I sank back obediently.

"My temptation was to run to her; but the man whose step I had heard was on the porch now, and in an instant passed inside. I rushed to the window, half-crazed. Suddenly he came into the light, his arm about my wife's shoulders——"

My visitor stopped, his body shaking and his face buried in his hands. For a moment he did not speak, and I could frame no sentence which did not seem crude and rough.

He roused himself shortly, and with his teeth set and hands clenched, spoke three words:

"It was myself.

I jumped from my chair.

"My God, man! What do you mean?"

It came to me in an instant that he was insane, yet there was no evidence of an unbalanced mind in either his face or manner of speech.

"As I live and am before you," he said, "I saw myself there, my arm about my wife's shoulder. It was no delusion, no trick of the mind—nothing but a bare fact.

"There I was. We—or they—went up-stairs together. I remember the cool glass against my face; for I had come close to the window. I shook from head to foot, and then, coward that I am, I ran back to the station, caught a train for the city, and here I am. At least, I think so—am I?"

As he ceased speaking, great waves of chill swept through my body. The man's mind must have left him. His great grief, and the strain of the familiar trip to Montclair, had tricked his brain. Psychologically, it was very simple; yet his tone, though intense, was very low, and there was no evidence of raving in his words or manner. For a long time, so it seemed to me, he did not speak. Then, rising suddenly, he said:

"Don't mention this, sir. I am sure you will understand why I could not stay alone. I feel stronger now. To-morrow you may be able to help me, but to-night we can do nothing. Good night."

He held out his hand, and before I could frame one of the thousand questions which whirled through my mind he gathered up his coat and hat and passed out of the room.

I stood, fairly stunned, wanting to run after him; to force him back into his chair until I could learn the truth, and help him out of his—his what should I call it?

I heard my door shut, and then I sank back into my seat, and for a long time sat staring into the dying fire. Gradually my mind cleared, as I rooted out one fallacy after another until I formed a working basis.

Obviously, I reasoned, the case was one of a psychological nature. The picture which had tortured him for nearly an hour so mastered his mind as to completely blank all else. Yet he had been conscious of material objects about him which I judged to be real. All in all, this did not satisfy me.

The strength of character and mental force which the man had shown, his ability to brace himself under what was to him a strain of awful reality made it untenable. I discarded insanity as an impossible theory, and tried to abandon the psychological idea.

When I did this, however, it left my mind but one solution—the man was right. Yet, how could that be? It was absurd. And then I would mutter to the coals:

"Perhaps, after all, such things do happen. I don't believe in them, but it may be. I can't say that they do occur, but I can't say that they don't."

Suddenly, as I sat gazing at the whitening reds of the fire, a thought struck me which made me sit up very quickly.

The man was in evening dress!

For a moment I was staggered. Obviously my new neighbor was a practical joker; perhaps a man who knew my weakness for such cases as he had presented, through some common friend at the club.

Evidently there would be a sequel to this joke, running through many months, perhaps years, which would find expres-

sion in meaning glances and smiles as I entered a room, or in rough thrusts at my credulity.

I went over the man's talk, every word of it, and tried to recall his expressions. He was plainly agitated when he entered, and, though I had watched him closely, he had never, as I recalled him, abandoned the nervous, worried look. If I had been tricked, it was by an actor of rare ability.

"Montague Grant," I muttered. I could think of no professional actor by that name.

Again I settled down for calm reflection, trying to shake off this last train of thought, but every proposition was qualified with the words, "If his story is true."

Granting that it was, what a night of suffering he had before him. There would be no comfort in the wind and storm which are so dear to me. I felt that the disorder of his rooms would fairly reflect his mind.

If it were not true—my heart sank within me, for I have a little pride in my dignity of manner and position—what a warmth of laughter he must be holding back, or else he was even now in a corner at the club, where he was going over the story for perhaps the twentieth time.

That part I could settle. I rose quickly and started for the door; but, half-way there, I paused with a new idea.

I had not heard him enter his room nor his step on the stair. Could my mind have been too confused to receive messages from my ears?

Nervously I paced back and forth, until I heard a step coming up the stairs. It paused at the opposite door an instant, there was the click of the latch, and the door closed. I know not whether pity or wrath was uppermost in my soul.

To soothe my mind before retiring—for I was now determined to await developments—I picked up a book. Scarcely had my mind settled, however, to the level of another world, as the volume led me away from the thoughts of the evening, when I heard my neighbor's door open suddenly, and a sharp rap on mine followed.

I rose, startled. A thick-set, florid man of about fifty years of age bustled in, his face very red, and his manner indicating great excitement.

"My name is Grant. Just moved in to-day——"

"Pardon me," I broke in decidedly, "but I have met Mr. Grant."

The man recoiled a little.

"I don't understand. I am Grant. Never saw you before, but I have been robbed."

I felt a sudden giddiness, and was obliged to catch hold on the table for support.

"You—Grant—robbed!" I gasped.

"Yes. Everything of value that could go in a man's pocket—money, jewelry, curios, and the Lord knows what else. Haven't you heard a sound in my room? I fear I left my door unlocked when I went out to dinner."

Gradually my senses came back to me. I recalled the rap I had heard, early in the evening, as I read, supposing it to be a servant or an expressman; I recalled, too, the absence of footfalls before my first caller came, the evening dress, the silence after the door had closed.

My new caller was talking excitedly.

"You didn't hear a sound?"

"No," I answered, truthfully enough.

"Nor see anybody?"

"Yes, I saw a man, tall and dark, with deep lines in his face. I took him to be you."

"Thunderation!" cried the other. "Why didn't you ask him who he was?"

"Why should I have? He was in evening clothes."

"Would you know him if you saw him?"

"I think so," I said.

"All right. I'll notify the police. Perhaps we can get him yet."

I sank into my chair, my strength utterly gone. I knew my clues would be useless after the hour that had passed, and then, too, I dared not tell my story. There are tales enough about me at the club already.

Anyhow, I am glad that I happened to be in my room when my first caller came, for I have a few books and trinkets which I love and which it would pain me much to lose.

MEN WHO WANTED MORE—AND GOT IT.

BY VICTOR FORTUNE.

The story of workers who grew tired of grinding away at nine and ten dollars a week and wanted more, and with the help of the International Correspondence Schools were enabled to earn that number of dollars a day.

DO you want a larger salary?

You reply, "Of course, would a hungry man eat? What a foolish question!"

Yes, but *do you really want more,* or are you just wishing?

Do you know there are plenty of men who earn nine or ten dollars a week who might be getting that number of dollars a day—if they *really wanted it?*

Are you one of them?

W. W. Scott was, for at 26 years of age he was earning exactly $9 per week. One day came the realization of how foolish it was for an able-bodied man to be grinding away at that price. Then he *wanted more,* and to get it, enrolled with the International Correspondence Schools for the Electrical Course.

That gave him money-earning knowledge, and almost immediately he obtained a position as an electrician's helper. He says: "From that time I was steadily advanced until, three years ago, I established a business for myself. My present earnings are about $4,000 a year. I attribute my success to the International Correspondence Schools."

Mr. Scott's address is 56 Boylston Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Another man who *wanted more* and got it is Oswald C. Drechsler. At the time Mr. Drechsler enrolled for the I. C. S. Textile Designing Course, he was a pattern weaver, drawing about $9.00 a week. This is his story:

"I am now a designer in the employ of the American Woolen Company, Assabet Mills, Maynard, Mass., and have increased my earnings to nearly three times what they were. In my opinion the I. C. S. method is the best in the world for any young man who is trying to get ahead."

Mr. Drechsler's address is Box 851, Maynard, Mass.

MONEY-EARNING POWER

Of course it is just as foolish to expect more without earning it, as it is to be satisfied with little when one may get much. And that is the value of the I. C. S. Courses: they impart money-earning power—and with that backing no man need draw a lean pay envelope.

Read what another Massachusetts man has to say, Edward T. Luce, Winthrop Building, 7 Water Street, Boston, Mass.: "The fact that I could advance through the I. C. S. was brought to my attention when I was employed as a machine hand at $1.25 a day, and seeing a life of servitude ahead of me, I enrolled with the Schools."

Now, if anyone had told Mr. Luce, when he was getting the munificent salary of $7.50 per week, what would be the result of his enrolment, he would scarcely have believed it. That in a few months he would become a draftsman at 100 per cent. increase; that he would be employed by the United States Geological Survey at

a further advance; that advance would follow advance as a result of the I. C. S. teaching, until he became a partner in the Lombard Company of Boston, and had charge of a large number of draftsmen and machine designers, would be too great a stretch of imagination. Yet that is precisely what did happen. In commenting on his success, Mr. Luce says:

"I can only say that there is no necessity for ambitious men to remain at the bottom. There is a way to start right, and my rise started upon my enrolment with the I. C. S. and to them the credit is given."

FOLLY TO BE SATISFIED

Mr. Luce puts the truth in a nutshell when he says there is no necessity for an ambitious man to remain at the bottom. Not only is there no necessity, but to use a homely expression, "there is no sense in it."

What folly it would have been for Harvey Brakeman, New Kensington, Pa., to have remained satisfied with his work as carpenter at $2.50. He wasn't satisfied, and enrolled for the Architectural Course. After a few months' study he was advanced. In telling of his success Mr. Brakeman says: "Following my course in the I. C. S., I continued to advance, until now I am in business for myself and net about $5,000 a year in earnings. I think there *is no better system of training in existence than that of the I. C. S.*"

Lest you should think Mr. Brakeman an exception, here is the name and address of another carpenter who grew tired of $2.50 per day and decided to better himself by enrolling with the I. C. S., Alexander McLean, 833 East 35th Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Mr. McLean reports:

"When I enrolled with the I. C. S., I could hardly draw a straight line, but I now draw plans satisfactory enough to pass the inspection of the Tenement House Commission. I have been enabled, *through the help of the I. C. S.*, to establish a business of my own, and many times my earnings reach $100 per week. Some of the buildings I have erected cost more than $100,000."

PROMOTION THE RULE

These men are examples selected at random from the thousands who have succeeded through the I. C. S. During the months of April and May, 1906, reports were received of 712 I. C. S. men who had received advancement or increase of salary. Promotion for I. C. S. men is not the exception; *it is the rule.*

The I. C. S. prints a book, "1001 Stories of Success," telling of a thousand men and women who have realized their ambitions through the I. C. S. system; in every case giving names and addresses. This book has helped thousands to obtain what they wanted and will help you. It will be sent for the asking.

Here is the case of a young man in Santa Fé, New Mexico, G. A. Collins, 112 San Francisco Street. While a chainman, Mr. Collins enrolled for the Railroad Engineering Course. He is now a Civil Engineer with an office of his own. He writes:

"My earnings have increased nearly 1,000 per cent. I can recommend your Schools to any ambitious and earnest man. The I. C. S. is certainly a wonderful institution."

A Colorado man, M. J. Slate, of Fort Lupton, Colorado, was a farm-hand at the time of enrolling with the I. C. S. His present salary as mine engineer is about $200 a month.

James Thompson, 18th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa., is another example of what the I. C. S. can do. While an apprentice earning $6 per week Mr. Thompson enrolled with the I. C. S. He writes: "I am now sole owner and proprietor of the Philadelphia Iron Works, and the volume of my business is $250,000 a year. In my opinion, the I. C. S. forms the best institution of its kind in the country."

What Mr. Thompson did in Pennsylvania, M. S. Hasie, Jr., did in a different way in Texas. After Mr. Hasie had clerked for five years, he realized that he might clerk for fifty more as far as prospects were concerned. In telling his experience he writes:

"Accordingly, I enrolled in the Bridge Engineering Course. The instruction enabled me to advance until now I am in business for myself, doing last year something over $200,000 of work. To those whose ambition promotes a desire for greater earnings, I could recommend nothing better than a course in the I. C. S."

Where you live makes no difference to the I. C. S. Every state and territory, every county and nearly every town in the United States has successful men who have doubled, tripled, quadrupled and quintupled their earning through the I. C. S. Apprentices have become Master Mechanics; Carpenters and Bricklayers, Architects and Contractors; farmers' sons, surveyors and electrical and mechanical engineers; bookkeepers, draftsmen; seamstresses and domestics, teachers and designers; oilers, firemen and helpers—foremen chief engineers and superintendents.

They had just one thing in common—*they wanted more, and got it through the I. C. S.*

WHAT THE I. C. S. DOES

How the I. C. S. helps these men never ceases to be interesting. It takes a young man like H. H. Baughan, Carrollton, Ga., who left his father's farm at the age of 21 to work as car cleaner for a street railway company, and enables him in a short time to become Superintendent of Construction at $100 per month. Mr. Baughan writes: "My advancement would not have been possible without the instruction afforded by my I. C. S. Course."

The I. C. S. enrolls an apprentice like C. V. Boykin, care of Valk & Murdock, Charleston, S. C., for the Mechanical Course, and helps him to become foreman of the Valk & Murdock Iron Works at seven times his former salary. Mr. Boykin says: "For any young man who is willing to do his part, the International Correspondence Schools can do no end of good."

The question for you is, *"Are you willing?"*

The I. C. S. will take a boy like Walter D. Ticknell, 306 Speed Street, Vicksburg, Miss., who enrolled for the Mechanical Drawing Course before leaving public school, and enabled him to become a draftsman and designer at $100 per month.

The I. C. S. will take a helper in an electrical shop like Junior Parish, Box 8, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and assist him to become manager of the Municipal Electric Lighting Plant, Coffeyville, Kansas, at an increase of 350 per cent. salary. Mr. Parish says, "for this success I am indebted to the training and constant encouragement, courtesy and assistance rendered by the I. C. S."

ARE YOU WILLING?

Are you willing to use that training and assistance to get what you want?

The I. C. S. will help a man to change his occupation. It takes a man like Walter H. Crawford, 218 Union Street, Nashville, Tenn., who was a real estate agent, and makes him a mining engineer, earning $250 per month and upwards.

The I. C. S. takes a man like W. J. Bedard, 256 Linden Street, Rochester, N. Y., able only to read and write, and assists him to hold responsible positions. Mr. Bedard writes: "I am now employed as Draftsman and Estimator and Superintendent of Machinery for the largest engineering concern in this city. When I enrolled I was janitor and engineer in a small establishment, and my salary was only one-fourth of what it is to-day."

The I. C. S. enables a man to set up in business for himself. George C. Leek, 21 Center Street, New Haven, Conn., on fin-

ishing school enrolled for the Lettering and Sign Painting Course. He writes:

"Through this instruction I was enabled to establish a business of my own, which has gradually grown until now we occupy a two-story building, and have ten men in our employ. Last year's volume of business was $15,000. The I. C. S. is certainly a great help to young men who desire to get ahead in the world."

The I. C. S. takes a machinist like John Parkin, 258 Catharine Street, Hamilton, Ont., Can., who found it almost impossible to advance before enrolling in the I. C. S., and shows him how to do it. He writes:

"I am now doing a business of about $9,000 a month, have a factory of my own, and all prospects are for a bright future. I recommend the I. C. S. to any one wishing to advance himself."

It is because the I. C. S. has helped so many thousands of people in all conditions and circumstances of life, that it states positively that it can help any man to better his position and earn more money.

The I. C. S. can do this because its home-study text books and correspondence courses offer the exact training required. They are *easy to study, easy to remember, easy to apply.*

It can do it because it has had a wide and successful experience in placing thousands of men and women in better positions at increased salaries. It can do it because of its Students' Aid Department, organized for the sole purpose of helping I. C. S. men to obtain better positions. It can do it because it is in communication with many of the principal employers of the country who are constantly applying for skilled men.

Thomas A. Edison, the great inventor, says in a recent interview: "The world is searching for men of intelligence. It is searching for them everywhere. The door of opportunity is open, as it has never been open before, for men who have minds even a fraction above what is necessary for a routine muscular task. It doesn't matter whether a man be poor or rich, or what his color, creed or origin, he has a better chance now than if he lived a generation ago; that is, if he can bring intelligence to his work."

The I. C. S. helps you to get the "intelligence"—the training that you need. Training means money, often much money. The question is—Do you want it? Do you want more? Are you willing to make the effort to start? Or would you rather work for small wages when you might be getting $40 or $50 a week?

"I WILLS AND I CAN'TS"

Henry Ward Beecher said that there are just two kinds of people—the "I Wills" and the "I Can'ts." The "I Wills" go ahead and do things, and the "I Can'ts" sit around and criticise them.

Which are you? If you belong to the "I Will" family, mark the coupon opposite the occupation that you would like to advance in, and mail it to-day. Remember that it costs you nothing except the price of the stamp, and *puts you under no obligation whatever.* Mark it at once. This simple act has been the means of leading many situated as you are into the Land of MORE. *It will lead you.*

International Correspondence Schools,
Box 806 W, SCRANTON, PA.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for a larger salary in the position before which I have marked X

Bookkeeper	Mechanical Draftsman
Stenographer	Telephone Engineer
Advertisement Writer	Elec. Lighting Supt.
Show Card Writer	Mechan. Engineer
Window Trimmer	Surveyor
Commercial Law for Justices of the Peace	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Civil Service	Building Contractor
Chemist	Architect'l Draftsman
Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Structural Engineer
Elec. Engineer	Bridge Engineer
	Mining Engineer

Name_____

Street and No._____

City_____ State_____

A BLANK COUPON FOR YOU.

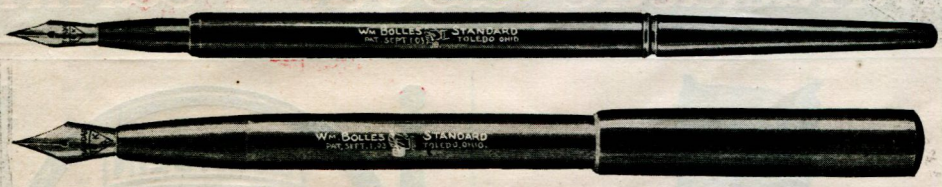
The Wm. Bolles "Standard"

Self Filling Self Cleaning Fountain Pen

Fills Itself This Way

The "Standard" Self-Filling Pen can be **filled** at any ink-well, **anywhere, anytime.** To fill the Standard Pen, open the barrel and after dipping the pen in the ink, squeeze the automatic filler. When you let go the pen is filled and the barrel is closed.

No buttons, humps, caps or extra parts—no valves, pistons or twisted rubber to vex or wear.



No Ink dropper Means

NO BLOTS IN FILLING

NO BLOTS IN WRITING

NO BLOTS IN CLEANING

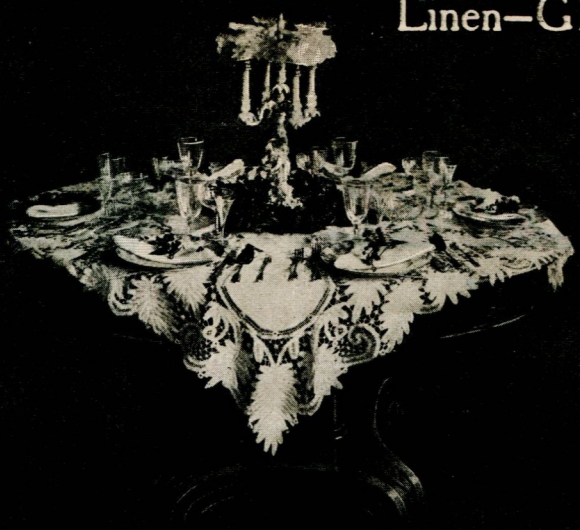
The "Standard" Self-Filling Pen *costs no more* than the common kind but gives you every advantage of the best fountain pens that have gone before. Its *extreme simplicity* is the reason. There are as few parts in the Standard as in any fountain pen ever made, old-style or new. Every Standard Pen and all its parts are *guaranteed for two years* by us and by your dealer.

THEN WHY FOOL with an ink dropper? Why not write today for booklet and name of our nearest dealer?

Wm. Bolles Pen Co., 1063 Jefferson Ave., Toledo, O.

SUCCESSOR TO STANDARD SELF-FILLING PEN CO.

Linen—Glass—China—Silver



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Pearline

The Choicer the article the Greater the need of PEARLINE'S Gentle, Harmless, yet Effective way of washing.
Intelligent and Thrifty women are those most

Enthusiastic about Pearline

Men Swear BY Them—Not AT Them

THE FASTENER WITH A BULL-DOG GRIP

Washburne Pat. Imp. Fasteners

There is comfort and utility in their use.
Look for name on fastener.

Key Chain and Ring 25c. | Scarf Holders - - 10c.
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Little, but Never Let Go

Sent postpaid. Catalogue Free.
Sold everywhere.

AMERICAN RING CO., Dept. 89, WATERBURY, CONN.

"LITHOLIN" COLLARS AND CUFFS

are waterproofed linen.
Wrinkles and frayed edges impossible.
Always fresh—always stiff.
When soiled you can clean them in a moment with a damp cloth.
All shapes and sizes.

At collar shops or of us.
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THE DOOR

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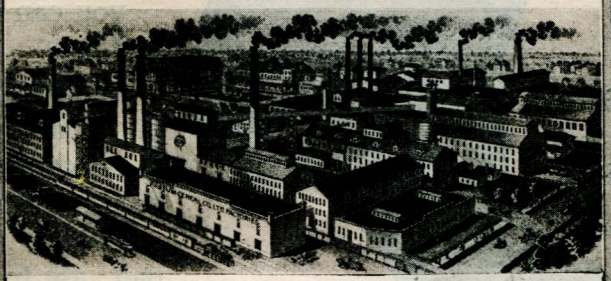

WELCOME

Thousands pass through the door every year, and **learn for themselves** just how POSTUM and GRAPE-NUTS are made, and what they are made of.

Then they know why Postum and Grape-Nuts contain the Brain and Body-building materials that make them famous.

They see pure, wholesome food.

They see immaculately clean processes.

YOU are also invited, but if you can't come in person, send your name and address for the booklet, **"The Door Unbolted."** It's beautifully illustrated, showing all the steps in the manufacture of Postum and Grape-Nuts as clearly as good photographs can make it, and is next best to a personal call.

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POSTUM CEREAL CO., LTD.,
Battle Creek, Mich.

POSTUM

$5.00
to
$8.00

Quality in a Stetson Shoe stands out all over it—you can see it—you can feel it.

Many men tolerate shoes of indifferent quality and fit because they think all makes are alike.

Before buying another pair, ask to see

THE STETSON SHOE

The Footwear of a Gentleman

Look at it—feel the leather—examine the fine stitching. You know you are looking at a ***better*** shoe. The materials are selected for quality—the shoe is made for quality—and the shoe shows value that you can see at a glance.

In shapes, leathers and quality The Stetson Shoe is the footwear of a gentleman.

If not at your dealers, write us. Style Book Free.

THE STETSON SHOE CO., South Weymouth, Mass.

To the Dealer: We will send a sample line to any reliable dealer wishing to take advantage of this advertising and to attract to his store men's fine trade.

Let Us Send You this Two-Horn DUPLEX Phonograph on Trial

Direct from our Factory to your own Home.

Each horn is 30 inches long with a 17 inch bell.

Size of cabinet, 18 inches by 14 by 10 inches high.

An Entirely New Principle in Phonographs

—**Two** vibrating diaphragms to reproduce the sound.

—**Two** horns to amplify and multiply all the sound from **both** sides of **both** diaphragms.

—No tension spring and no swing arm to cause harsh, discordant, mechanical sounds.

Consequently, the Duplex produces a sweeter tone and greater volume of music than any other phonograph and is absolutely free from all metallic sounds.

Double Volume of Sound.

HERE is the explanation of the Duplex principle: When you hit a tin pan with a stick, which **side** of the tin pan gives forth the noise? Why, both sides, of course.

If you collect the waves from **one** side of the vibrating pan, you get only **half** the noise. That's plain, isn't it?

Well, the same thing holds true of the diaphragm of a phonograph.

In every talking machine made heretofore, one-half of the sound waves were **wasted.** You got just one-half the sound that the diaphragm made—the rest was lost.

The **Duplex** is the first and the only phonograph to collect the vibrations and get **all** the sound from **both** sides of the diaphragm.

Because the reproducer or sound box of the Duplex has **two** vibrating diaphragms and **two** horns (as you see) to amplify the sound from **both** sides of **both** diaphragms.

The **Duplex,** therefore, gives you **all** the music produced—with any other you lose one-half.

Compare the volume of sound produced by it with the volume of **any** other—no matter what its price—and hear for yourself.

Purer, Sweeter Tone.

BUT that is not all, by any means.

For the Duplex Phonograph not only produces **more music**—a greater volume—but the tone is clearer, sweeter, purer and more nearly like the original than is produced by any other mechanical means.

By using **two** diaphragms in the Duplex we are able to dispense **entirely** with **all** springs in the reproducer.

The tension spring used in the old style reproducers to jerk the diaphragm back into position each time it vibrates, by its jerking pull **roughens** the fine wave groove in the record, and that causes the **squeaking,** squawking, harsh, metallic sound that sets your teeth on edge when you hear the old style phonograph.

In the Duplex the wave grooves of the record remain perfectly smooth—there is nothing to roughen them—and the result is an **exact reproduction** of the original sound.

As a special guarantee against the presence of harshness resulting from vibration, the points of contact between the horns and reproducer are protected by rubber,—an exclusive feature of the Duplex Phonograph.

Direct From the Factory.

WE ask the privilege of **proving** to you that the Duplex gives a double volume of music, of purer, sweeter tone than any other phonograph made.

We want to prove it at our expense. We ask you to let us send you one **at our expense**—under an arrangement mutually satisfactory—for use in your home one week.

Invite your neighbors and musical friends to hear it, and if they do not pronounce it better—in volume and in tone—than the **best** old style phonograph, return it at once at our expense. That's a fair offer, but it isn't all.

We save you in the price exactly $70.15—because we save you all the jobbers', middlemen's and dealers' profits. We sell it to you at actual factory price.

Sold through dealers the Duplex would cost you at least $100—and it would be a bargain at that. Bought direct from our factory it costs you (one profit added) only **$29.85**

And you get a seven days' trial in your own home—and are under no obligation to keep it if you are not satisfied. You run no risk, for this advertisement could not appear in this magazine if we did not carry out our promises.

Music In Your Home.

THINK what a Duplex Phonograph will mean to you! The variety of entertainment you can command at trifling expense is practically unlimited.

You can enjoy a delightful selection of songs, poems, piano, banjo, guitar, or violin music, short stories, anecdotes or dialect pieces, all reproduced by the marvelous two-horned Duplex with the faultless fidelity of an instantaneous photograph.

You can bring to your family and friends, in all their original beauty, the priceless gems of musical art, the classic performances of famous Artists like Paderewski, D'Albert, Raoul Pugno, and Jan Kubelik.

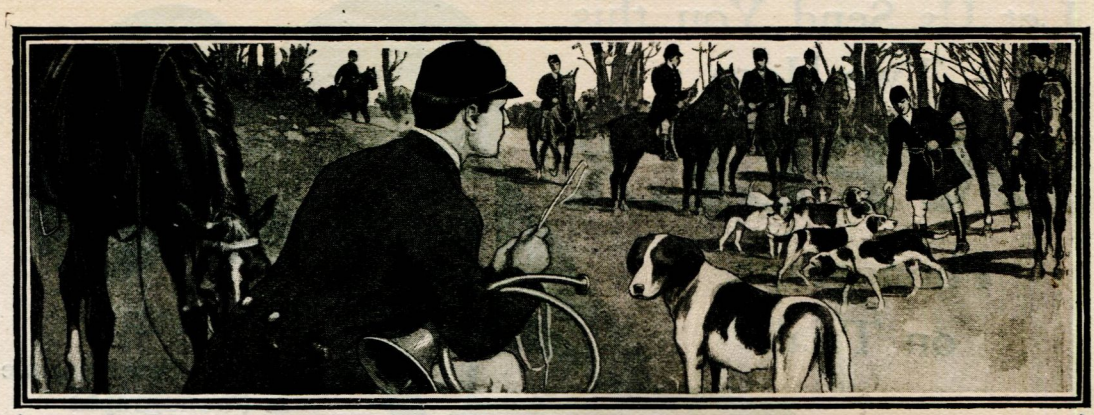
Or, you can listen, entranced, to the magic notes of melody fresh from the throat of a Patti, Melba, or Calve, and the great dramatic tenors, Caruso and Tamagno.

And, best of all, you can hear once more the voice of dear old Joe Jefferson as, with matchless pathos, he delivers the lines of Rip Van Winkle so familiar to a former generation.

With each Duplex we send free 6 seven-inch or 3 ten-inch records.

Write today for catalog and full particulars of our FREE trial offer. You will never regret it. Please address

The Duplex Phonograph Co., 144 Patterson St., KALAMAZOO, MICH.



Correct Costume is a Part of the Game

—Not only after the hounds but in the office, on the street, at the club and in the drawing room.

And wherever it may be, it's the *shoe*-part of your costume that most unmistakably completes or mars it.

Every Regal on the list is built on that idea—*correctness* of style *first of all*. That's why we don't *invent* shoe-styles but *reproduce* direct from the faultless, costly, custom designs that *set* the shoe styles. We fit you with exactly the same models that the best custom makers in the country would charge you twice as much for, made to order;—the same *shoes*, except the labels, all through—selected oak-bark-tanned soles; fine, firm but flexible uppers; Scotch linen sole-sewing; Japanese silk stitching; careful hand forming and lasting; and a true fit for *your* foot, insured by *quarter sizes*.

By mail everywhere and sure fit guaranteed. The New Fall Style-Book is out! Send for it to 509 Summer Street, Boston, Mass.

LANGDON, $4.00

Wide-tread double sole with custom extension. Sloping, medium-narrow toe, inside and outside back-stays.

Style 4RD3—(As illustrated). Made of Regal Black King Calf.

Style 4RD1—Same, except low shoe. Made of Black Wax Calf.

Quarter Sizes!

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The samples include the good old-fashioned A.C.A. Ticking in wide and narrow stripe; dust-proof Satin Finish Ticking in linen effects; and our exclusive Mercerized Art Twills in fancy stripe with floral effects, in blue, pink, yellow, green or lavender. See the coupon below.

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MATTRESS

$15.

From us EXPRESS PREPAID or of an OSTERMOOR Dealer

THE PERFECT MATTRESS

is the one you never feel, the one that never forces itself upon your mind, the one that *lets* you sleep if sleepy, and *lulls* you to dreamland when restless.

With a *hair* mattress beneath you, you are constantly squirming around to avoid lumps and hollows. Hair mattresses are bound to be lumpy and uneven because the hair is stuffed into the tick in handfuls.

The Ostermoor is made of Ostermoor sheets of uniform thickness, *laid* in the tick by hand—*built*, not stuffed. Dust and vermin-proof.

The Ostermoor is aseptically clean, non-absorbent, does not mat, pack or lump, keeps its original resiliency, and never needs remaking. Better than hair—much cheaper.

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We Sell by Mail or Through 2,500 Ostermoor Dealers

Regular Sizes and Prices	
2 feet 6 inches wide, 25 lbs.	$8.35
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All 6 feet 3 inches long.
Express Charges Prepaid.
In two parts, 50 cents extra.

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Samples of Ticking

and your 144-page book, so that I may learn about the Ostermoor, and the name of my Ostermoor dealer.

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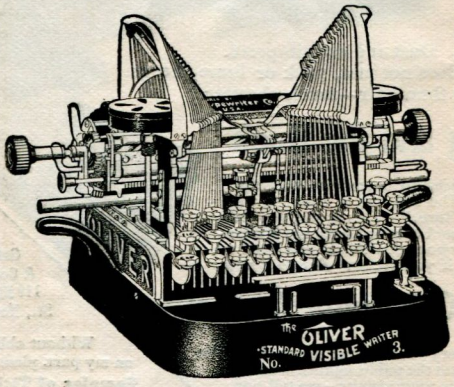

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Address at once,

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER CO., 157 Wabash Ave., Chicago

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Pompeian Massage Cream

This will smooth out "the furrows of care," take away the tense, drawn set of the muscles that makes the furrows, soften the skin, cleanse the pores, flex the muscles, and make the flesh firm and plastic, the skin smooth, ruddy and athletic-looking. Thousands of men use Pompeian Massage Cream simply as a matter of cleanliness—to get rid of the pore-dirt that washing cannot remove. Others use it to take away after-shaving soreness.

SEND FOR FREE SAMPLE

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Pompeian Massage Soap is a delight to any one who appreciates a soap of the very highest quality.

This is the jar the barber buys

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50¢ 50¢

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BULL DOG SUSPENDERS

Their judgement is worth something to you if you're tired of those stiff unyielding suspenders whose only reason for existence is their fad construction; that's both unnatural and unserviceable. For every reason given in favor of other make suspenders at least two logical arguments can be advanced why **YOU** should wear **BULL DOG SUSPENDERS,** and the strongest one is

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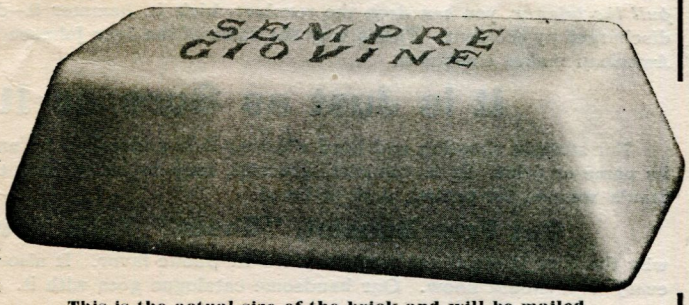
"Sempre Giovine" is put up in bricks, in beautiful cartons, carefully packed, convenient for traveling. It will keep fresh and moist in any climate.



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3-inch barrel, nickel-plated finish, 22 rim fire cartridge, 32-38 center fire cartridge - - **$5.00**

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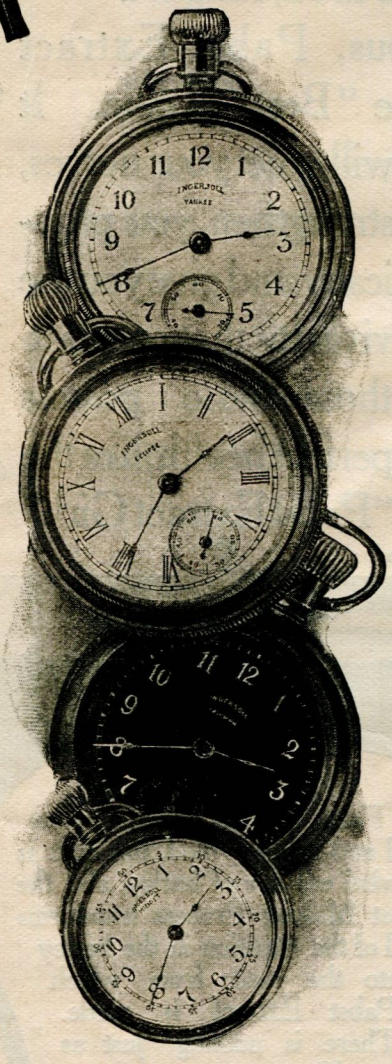
Ingersoll

WATCHES



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The Ingersoll is a true-timing, long-enduring, handsome, dependable watch. Sold to you by any one of 50,000 reputable dealers at less than the factory cost of regulating an ordinary watch—at less than the repair-cost of a broken mainspring in other watches.

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The Only "Dollar Watch"

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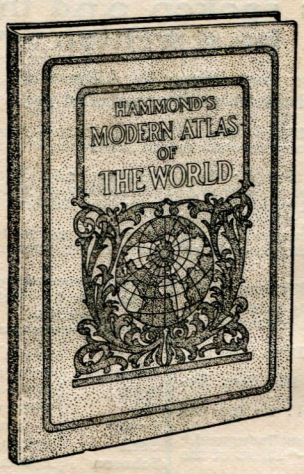

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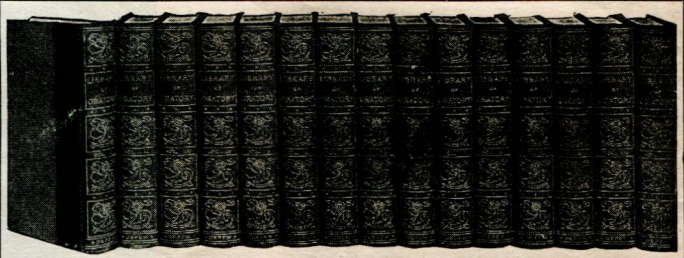

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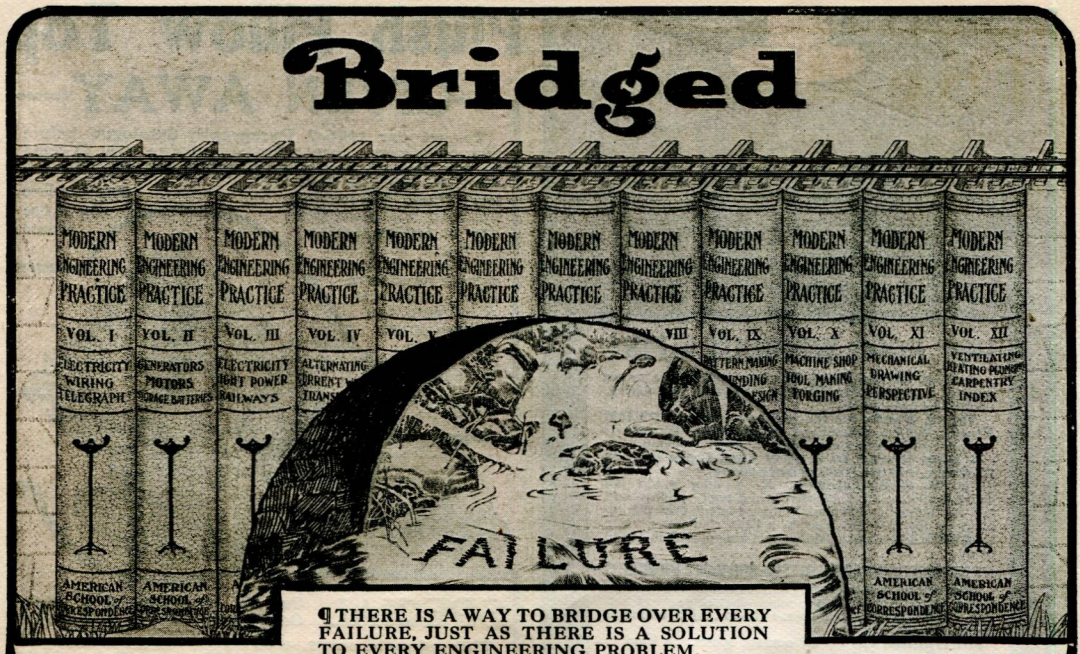

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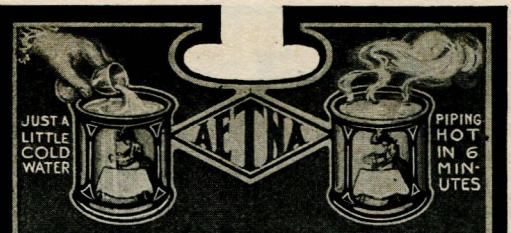

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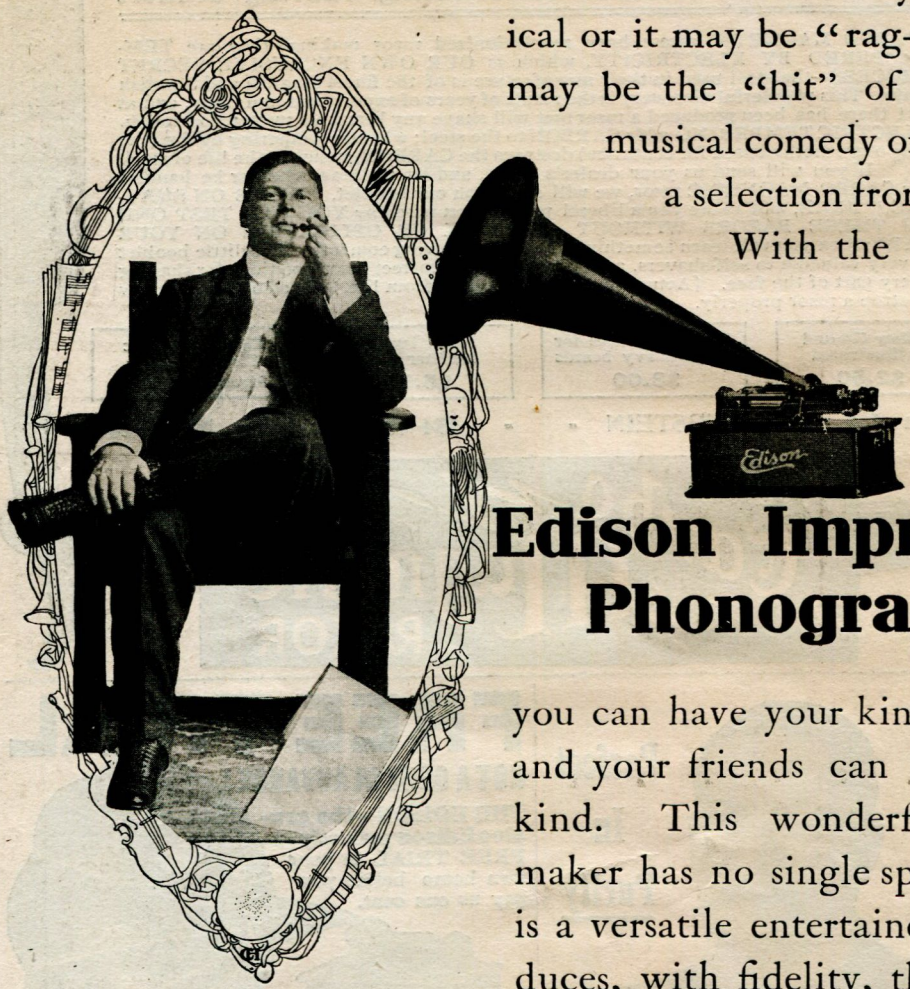

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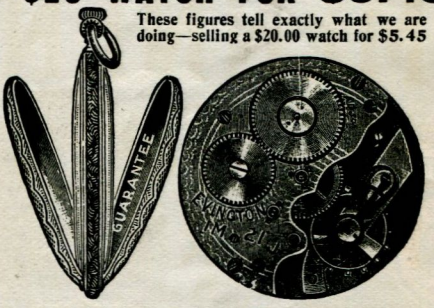

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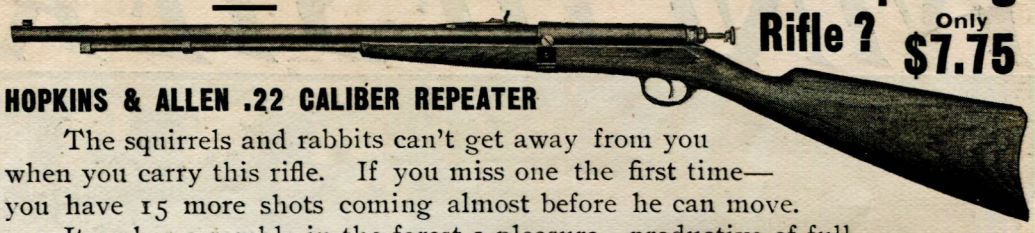

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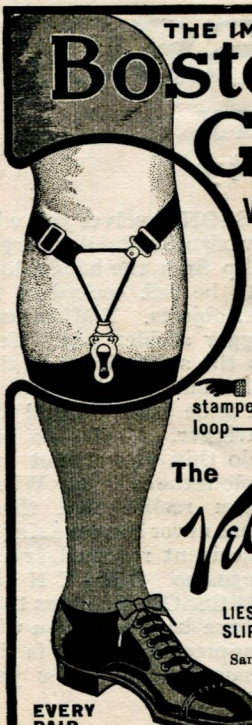

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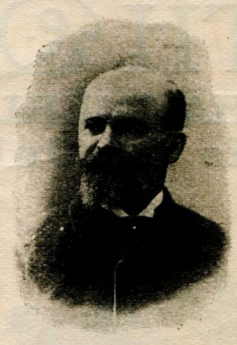

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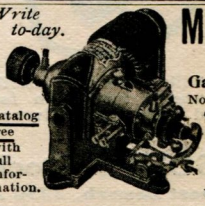

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starts and runs Gas Engines without Batteries.

No other machine can do it successfully for lack of original patents owned by us. No twist motion in our drive. No belt or switch necessary. No batteries whatever, for make and break or jump spark. Water and dust proof. Fully guaranteed.

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. . . SHOES FOR MEN . . .

They Fit the Foot That's Inside

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NOT ordinary shoes, not usual shoes, not shoes that *merely* look good but hurt your feet; not shoes that are merely comfortable either, although KING QUALITY SHOES are certainly that, but shoes that unite comfort *and* style.

King Quality Shoes are comfort giving shoes, foot beautifying shoes, instep supporting shoes, ease conferring shoes and rest bestowing shoes. The best dressed man can find no more elegant and correctly shaped shoe; the pedestrian can find none more easy to wear. Shoes that add distinction to every man who dons them.

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Fair Handy Hat Fasteners

The only Practical and Reliable Hat Fasteners for Women. Instantly pinned or sewed inside of any hat, and invisible when in use.

Hold better than four hat pins and do not make holes in hat.

Always ready—no hunting for hat pins. No fussing to see if hat is on straight.

Used and recommended by best dressers everywhere.

Fancy hat pins can be left in the hat, if desired, for ornament only.

Made of best spring brass, rust-proof and non-breakable.

Once you use the Fair Handy Hat Fasteners you will never be without a pair for each hat.

Send 25 cents today for a pair postpaid

If not satisfactory your money back. Every lady should have one or more pairs of Fair Handy Hat Fasteners.

Special Offer to Agents Write for it. You can make big money selling Fair Handy Hat Fasteners. Unlimited demand. A woman agent made $184 50 last month selling them. Don't wait—begin now and increase your income. Patented and manufactured solely by

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365 SHAVES

WITHOUT STROPPING

A shave every day in the year for less than two cents a week, with the wonderful double-edged wafer blades of the Gillette Safety Razor.

Actual Size
Ready for Use

One million satisfied users prove the supremacy of the Gillette, a supremacy due to the double-edged wafer blades which require No Stropping and are Always Sharp—**facts true only of the Gillette Blade.** If there is a single user who is not getting the utmost satisfaction, **we want to know it.**

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Any man can shave himself smoothly and easily with the Gillette. It is the simplest as well as the best and most durable razor made. Every double-edged wafer blade is as perfect as science and skill can make it. The steel used in the manufacture of Gillette Blades is made specially for this purpose. By a unique process which required years to perfect, this steel is converted into Gillette double-edged wafer blades, uniform in temper, and with **the most perfect shaving edge in the world.**

NO STROPPING NO HONING ALWAYS SHARP

50,000 double-edged blades a day are turned out at our factory—100,000 shaving edges—the strongest kind of evidence that Gillette Razors are widely used and appreciated.

Every man should secure a Gillette Razor. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded on our 30 Days' Free Trial Offer. Most dealers make this offer; if yours won't, we will.

Gillette Playing Cards

For 25c. Silver or Stamps

and the name of a friend who does not use the Gillette Razor, we send postpaid, to every address a full deck of playing cards, regular 50c. quality, celluloid finish, with round corners and gold edges, in handsome heavy gold-embossed leatherette telescope case.

12 BLADES—24 SHARP EDGES

The Gillette Razor is packed in a handsome leather case with 12 double-edged blades (24 perfect edges) each blade good for an average of more than 20 smooth, delightful shaves without stropping. When dulled throw away as you do a used pen. A new blade inserted in a second.

PRICES: Triple Silver-plated Set with 12 Blades, **$5;** Standard Combination Set with Shaving Brush and Soap in Triple Silver-plated Holders, **$7.50;** Extra Blades, 10 for **50c.**

Sold by all Drug, Cutlery and Hardware dealers everywhere. Send to-day for our handsome illustrated booklet.

Gillette Sales Company, 254 Times Building, New York

Gillette Safety Razor

NO STROPPING, NO HONING.

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LEARN TO MAKE FROM $3,000 TO $10,000 YEARLY

In the **REAL ESTATE BUSINESS.**

We will teach you thoroughly, by mail, the **REAL ESTATE BUSINESS**, and the course will also include instruction in **GENERAL BROKERAGE, INSURANCE, ADVERTISING, SALESMANSHIP, CONVEYANCING and a GENERAL BUSINESS COURSE.** This is your opportunity to succeed without capital. By our system you can learn the business and make money in a few weeks without interfering with your present occupation. All graduates appointed representatives of leading international brokerage companies who will furnish choice salable real estate and investments, co-operate with and help you to make a large steady income. Our co-operative methods insure larger and steadier profits than ever before. Full course in Commercial Law given free to every real estate student. Every business man should have this course. Our **Free Book** is valuable and interesting and tells how **You can succeed.**

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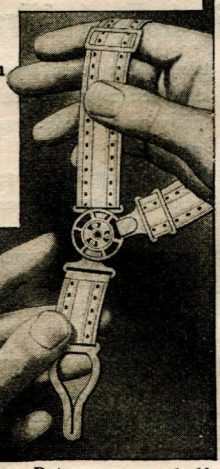
Ball Bearing Garters

If you need Garters now, try the new Ball Bearing kind. The separated sockhold keeps the socks securely and smoothly in place. These garters cannot bind, slip or loosen. No strain anywhere — that's why they wear so long.

25c. a pair.

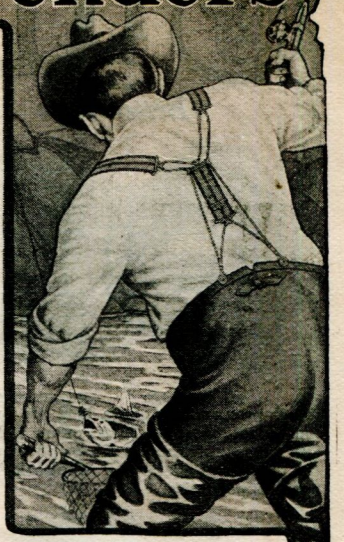
If your dealer has none, buy of us.

The C. A. Edgarton Mfg. Co.
561 Main Street, Shirley, Mass.



President Suspenders

THEY MOVE NONE SO EASY



Binding of shoulders and pulling of trousers are discomforts of ordinary suspenders.

Presidents rest lightly on the shoulders. The back slides quickly and gracefully with every move. The braided cords pass smoothly through little nickeled tubes, lessening the tension at every point. They're so easy you can't feel them, and your trousers **always** hang evenly and stay smooth.

Any dealer will let you put on a pair before you buy them. Put them on and learn how good they are. If your dealer has none, we will send you a pair for **50c.** Wear them 3 days. If you don't like them, return them, and we will refund your money. You can get light, medium or heavy weight. Every pair is guaranteed to give absolute satisfaction.

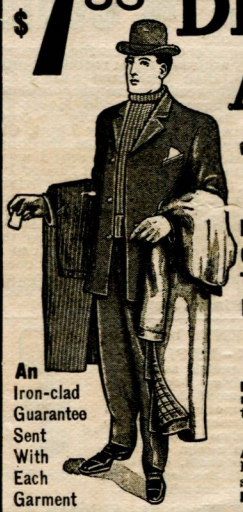
CHRISTMAS — For 75c. you can get a pretty Picture Combination Box containing a pair each of President Suspenders and Ball Bearing Garters. Makes a nice present.

Your dealer will order them for you. If not, then buy of us. Sent postpaid for 75c.

The C. A. Edgarton Mfg. Co. 561 Main St., Shirley, Mass.

Return reverse half of Guarantee Ticket with 10c. for pack of President Playing Cards.

$7.85 DRESSES Any Man



With an All-Wool Made-to-Measure Suit or Overcoat of Nobby Material

Fall and Winter Storm Coat, Extra Pair of Trousers. High Grade Sweater FREE

An Iron-clad Guarantee Sent With Each Garment

Suits **made to measure** by **experienced tailors, durably trimmed, for $7.85,** equal to any tailor's $15.00 suit.

A Fall or Winter **Storm Coat** or **A PAIR OF EXTRA TROUSERS** like suit, a fancy pattern if desired, **besides a high-grade Sweater Free**

You take no chance dealing with us, as **you do business with a house that bears reputation. Perfect fit guaranteed, or you don't take the goods.**

Just send us your name and address and we will send you **free samples** of our Fall and Winter cloth, measurement blank and tape line. **SEND NO MONEY, BUT WRITE TO-DAY.**

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Hair Goods postpaid on approval. Pay when satisfied.

Extra short stem switches, well made of good quality hair and to match any ordinary shades, at the following special prices:

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Send sample of your hair with your order. We will send prepaid on approval. If you find it perfectly satisfactory and a bargain, remit the amount. If not, return to us. Rare, peculiar and gray shades are a little more expensive; write for estimate. Our Free Book is full of valuable suggestions on how to become beautiful. Write for it today.

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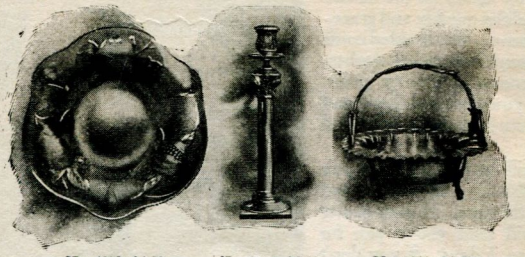
Largest Mail Order Hair Merchants in the World

Tufts

"Better than Sterling"



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Write for this book and learn for yourself the new styles, the really artistic designs, that will be popular this Fall and Winter

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Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen

The pen with the Clip-Cap

is the Tool of Trade

to which buyer and salesman, clerk and employee point with pride as a faithful business assistant.

It is easy to fill, easy to clean, requires no repairing; can always be depended on to write, write, write, so long as there is a drop of ink left. Never floods, never fails.

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For sale by best dealers everywhere.

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HOW TO GET THEM

THE sixth edition of the book, "200 Eggs a Year Per Hen," is now ready. Revised, enlarged, and in part rewritten; 96 pages. Contains among other things the method of feeding by which Mr. S. D. Fox, of Wolfboro, N. H., won the prize of $100 in gold offered by the manufacturers of a well-known condition powder for the best egg record during the winter months. Simple as a, b, c,—and yet we guarantee it to start hens to laying earlier and to induce them to lay more eggs than any other method under the sun. The book also contains a recipe for egg food and tonic used by Mr. Fox, which brought him in one winter day 68 eggs from 72 hens; and for five days in succession from the same flock 64 eggs a day. Mr. E. F. Chamberlain, of Wolfboro, N. H., says: "By following the methods outlined in your book I obtained 1,496 eggs from 91 R. I. Reds in the month of January, 1902." From 14 pullets picked at random out of a farmer's flock the author got 2,999 eggs in one year—an average of over 214 eggs apiece. It has been my ambition in writing "200 Eggs a Year Per Hen" to make it the standard book on egg production and profits in poultry. Tells all there is to know, and tells it in a plain, common-sense way. Price, 50 cents, or **with a year's subscription to the American Poultry Advocate, both for 65c.**, or given as a premium for **four yearly subscriptions at 25c. each.**

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Gents' 12 or 16 size or Ladies' 6 size plain or engraved open face 20-year gold-filled case, with Elgin or Waltham movement,
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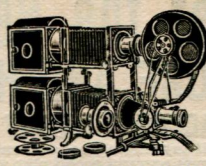
IT PAYS BIG To Amuse The Public With Motion Pictures



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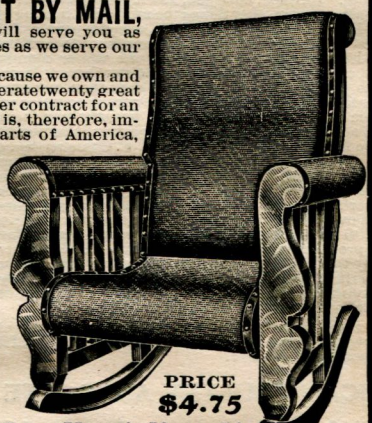

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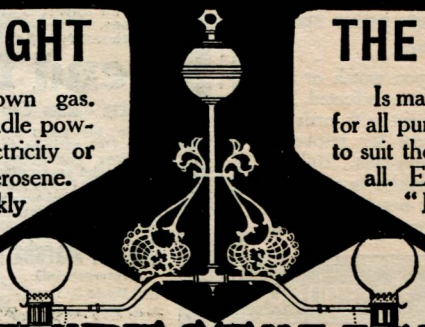
Makes and burns its own gas. Produces 100 to 2,000 candle power light. Brighter than electricity or acetylene and cheaper than kerosene. Saving effected by its use quickly pays for it. Absolutely Safe. No Dirt, Smoke or Odor. Agencies all over the world.



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Is made in over 100 different styles for all purposes, for in and outdoor use, to suit the fancies and pocketbooks of all. Every lamp warranted. More "Best" lamps in use than all other makes combined.
Agents wanted everywhere.
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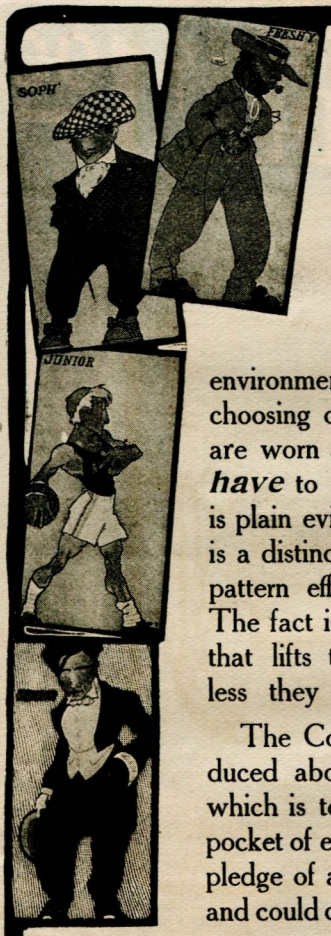
THE "BEST" LIGHT



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The College Brand trademark reproduced above is imprinted on a label which is to be found on the inside coat pocket of every suit. This trademark is a pledge of all that we have claimed here, and could claim for perfectly-built clothes.

Four Large College Posters for 30 cents

The four miniature reproductions in the upper corner of this ad are taken from a complete set of the cleverest posters that ever "posterized" college life. They are reproduced in many brilliant colors in large size (11 x 22 inches) ready for framing, without any advertising printing whatsoever. They represent the "Freshy," "Sophomore," "Junior" and "Senior," in characteristic caricature of clothes and dress. For 30 cents to cover mailing, etc., we will favor Argosy readers with the complete set of four.

For souvenir post card "fiends" we have reproduced the four posters in exact coloring in mailing size, which can be had by sending us two 2 c. stamps.

COLLEGE BRAND CLOTHES are for sale at the smartest shops over all the land. Ask your dealer for "College Brand Clothes," and if he can't or won't supply you, write direct to the makers,

E. L. BLIMLINE & CO.
5 East 17th Street, New York

Just a Whisper off Fifth Avenue.

EVER-READY RAZOR & 12 BLADES WORTH $5.00 $1.00

When the "Ever Ready" Safety Razor was $5.00 it didn't shave one whit better. In fact with the new one-piece silvered frame, it's better to-day at $1.00. Shaves any beard with "velvet" ease—no knack or skill required—every man his own expert barber. Each Ever-Ready Set at $1.00 is complete with the new Ever-Ready frame—twelve (12) critically perfect Ever-Ready blades and stropping holder—all compactly cased.

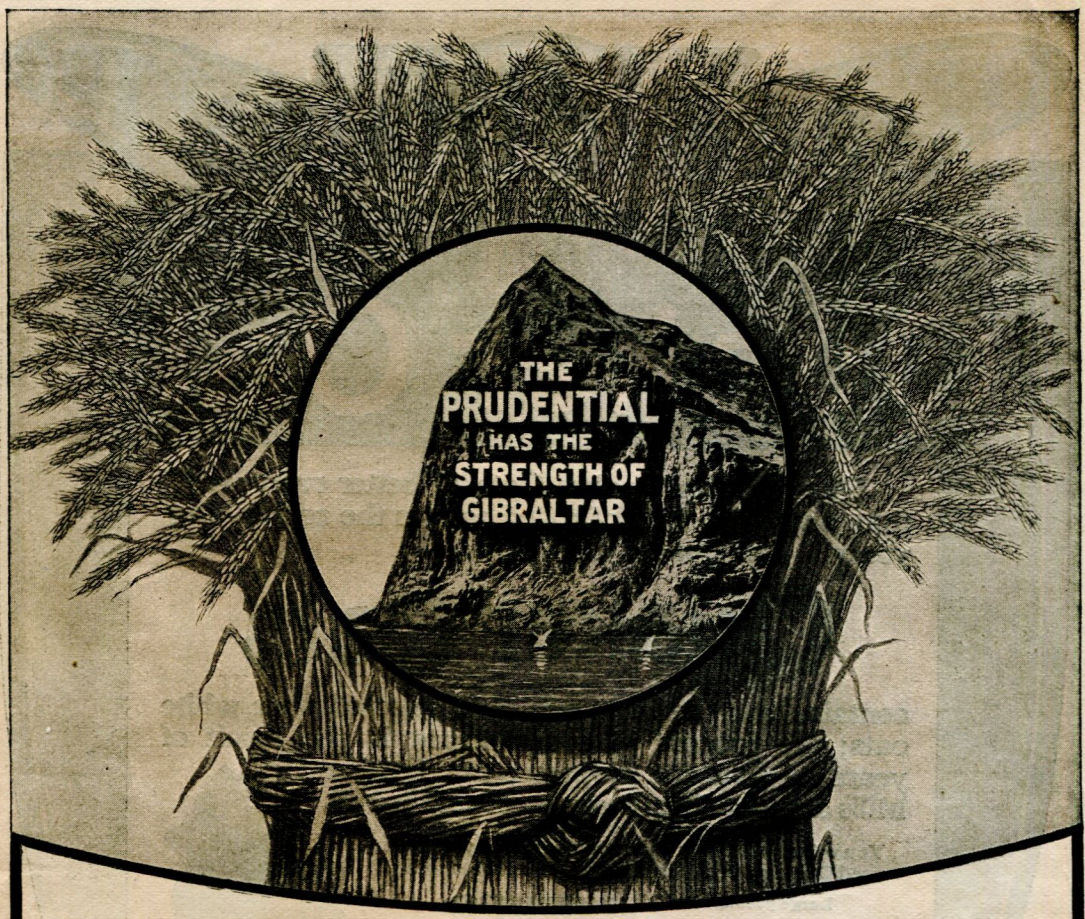
Remember there are **12** separate Ever-Ready blades to each set—the finest specimens of blade making ever put into a razor. Each blade can be resharpened and stropped to give years of service.

We exchange **6 new blades** any time for **6 dull ones and 25c.**

Men already owning "Gem," "Star" or "Yankee" Safety Razors can buy **6** special Ever-Ready Blades for **50 cents or 12 for 75 cents.**

"Ever-Ready" Dollar sets are sold by **Hardware, Cutlery, Jewelry and Department stores** throughout America and the world. Beware of the profit-greedy dealers who might try to "palm off" more profitable substitutes. All blades stamped "Ever-Ready" and frame "A. S. R." Every Ever-Ready Razor is absolutely guaranteed to shave any beard or money cheerfully refunded. Mail orders prepaid upon receipt of dollar. *Canadian price, $1.25.*

AMERICAN SAFETY RAZOR CO., 299 Broadway, NEW YORK



The Harvest Will Be Certain

If you take out an Endowment or Life Policy in The Prudential. You can thus save small sums, and assure yourself, or family, a substantial income at a later date, when most needed.

Every year The Prudential is paying out Millions of Dollars of Life Insurance to policyholders who are reaping the Harvest of their forethought. This money is being used to support families, educate children, furnish business capital and provide incomes.

You wish to reap the BEST harvest for yourself? Write The Prudential to-day. It has something interesting to tell you. Address Dept. 98.

THE PRUDENTIAL

INSURANCE COMPANY OF AMERICA

Incorporated as a Stock Company by the State of New Jersey

JOHN F. DRYDEN, President

Home Office, NEWARK, N. J.

Quaker Oats

The fact that Quaker Oats is "better every way" than any other kind of rolled oats, is the reason why you will like Quaker Oats best.

Quaker Oats

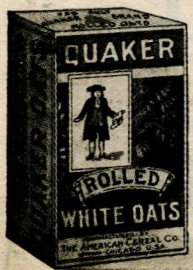
contains only the finest quality of selected, pure, white oats; the process of manufacture is the result of years of constant progress; the Quaker Mills are models of cleanliness and purity.

You will never order common oats once you have used Quaker Oats. Better try Quaker Oats today.

Large package 10c. At grocers everywhere.

Made by the Quaker Oats Company, Chicago, U. S. A.

Have Breakfast with me



PARKER

FOUNTAIN PEN

"MR. PARKER
Certainly makes a good fountain pen"
is the verdict of thousands.
Because he makes an honest pen and makes it the best he knows how.

The Parker carries with it a **WRITTEN WARRANT** signed by both the dealer and the manufacturer Has points of superiority which other pens do not have, such as the **LUCKY CURVE.** This **PREVENTS** your finding ink on the nozzle every time the cap is removed. The Spear Head Ink **CONTROLLER PREVENTS** overflow or dropping. These are only two reasons (there are others) why the Parker gives the best service and satisfaction. Costs more than shoddy goods, but worth double the difference. Made either in Standard or Self Filling.

More than **10,000** dealers sell the Parker, because they believe in it and recommend it. Please ask **your** dealer. If he does not sell them, we will fill your order by mail. Beautiful Art Catalog mailed on request. Please write us today.

PARKER PEN CO., 82 Mill St., Janesville, Wis.

P. S.—A very useful little present mailed to any one sending for Catalog, who is interested in the purchase of a Fountain Pen.

Williams' Shaving Stick

Those wiry beards that resist the razor's edge quickly yield to the softening influence of the pure, antiseptic lather produced by Williams' Shaving Soap. Feels fine on the face.

THE MUNSEY PRESS, NEW YORK