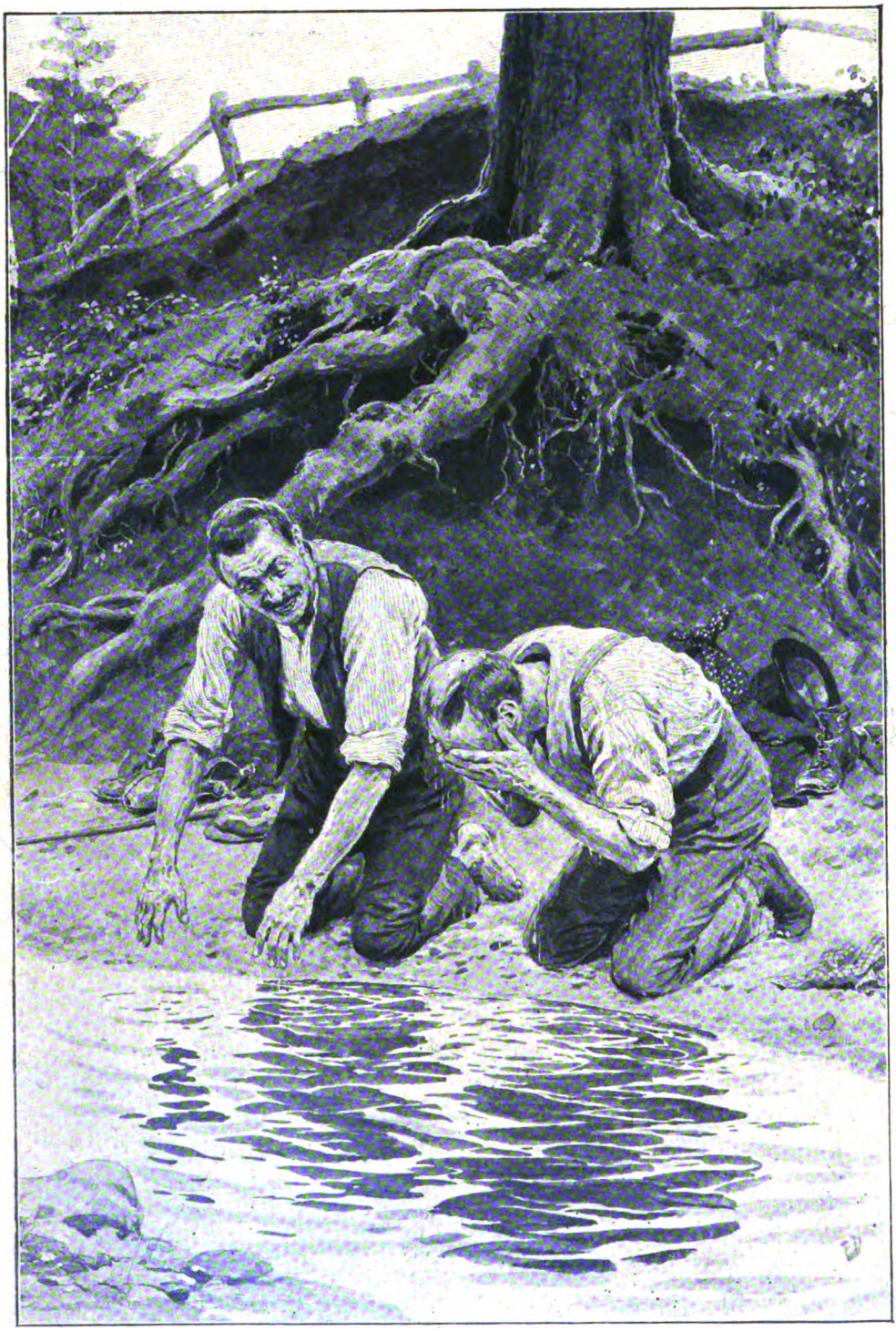
Sept 1907

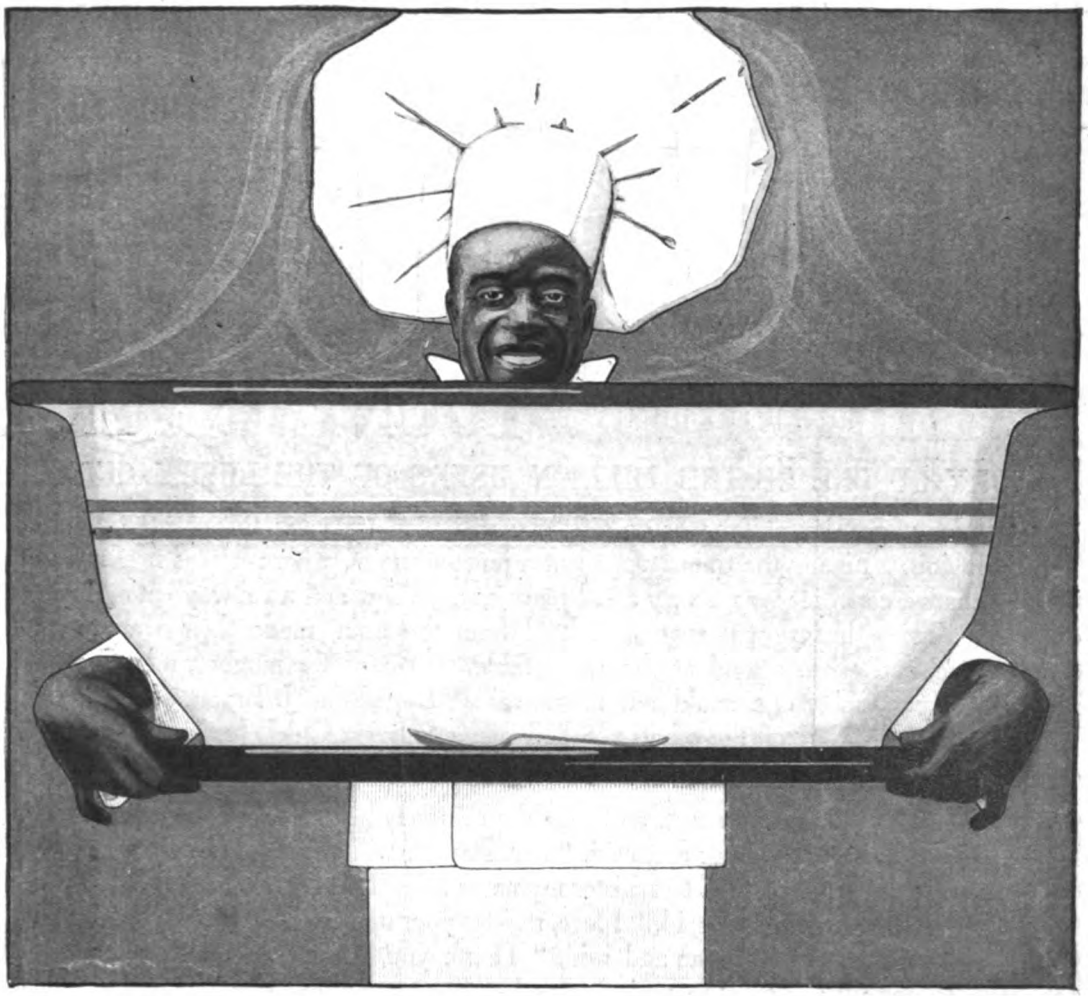
THE ISLE OF MYSTERIES BEGINS IN THIS ISSUE

THE ARGOSY

FOR SEPTEMBER 1907



Oh for a cake of "Pears" now!



BIGGES' I COULD GET, SAH!
MO' WHEH DIS COMED FUM,
YAS SAH,

CREAM of WHEAT

GEO. S. PARKER LUCKY CURVE FOUNTAIN PEN

A STORY OF ONE OF THE MILLION USERS OF THE LUCKY CURVE.

NOT long ago, the writer was on a train which was traveling through the State of Illinois. Finally the train stopped at a junction point, where it was necessary to change cars. It was a very small place, but it contained a railway eating house, or hotel. Three hungry passengers alighted from the train, made their way to the dining room, and were seated at the same table. One of the number, a large genial man, with a personality one could not forget, said, "I am Wm. J. Bryan, of Nebraska. Who are you?" One of the others pleaded guilty to being Chief Justice of the State of Iowa, and the other, the writer, was the "Lucky Curve" man.

¶ A pleasant half hour was spent, and then the company adjourned to the office. Mr. Bryan stepped up to the register and said, "Mr. Parker, will you loan me a Parker Pen (he owns one now) with which to register my name?" This was done, and Mr. Bryan turned to the Chief Justice and said, "Here, register your name with a Parker Pen." The Chief Justice turned to Mr. Bryan and said, "Thank you, Mr. Bryan. Unlike you, I do not have to borrow a Parker to register, for I own one, and the opinions of the Chief Justice of the State of Iowa for the past five years have been written with a "Lucky Curve."

¶ Mr. Bryan laughed heartily and acknowledged that the joke was on him, but promised that he, too, at first opportunity, would purchase a Parker Pen. But do you know that there are a lot of other people who would be users of the Parker Pen if they knew of its real excellence? But listen, please.

Did you ever see some friend take the cap off the pen point end of a fountain pen and then look disgusted, and finally take a piece of paper and wipe off the nozzle? If you have, you may be sure it was not a Parker Lucky Curve Fountain Pen.

"What! Do you mean to say that this common and disagreeable feature is eliminated in the Parker?"

Most certainly we do, for to prevent that trouble the famous Lucky Curve was invented.

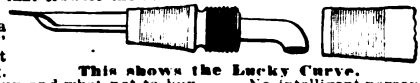
"Then why is it every one who uses a fountain pen does not buy a Parker?"

Simply because some people do not take time, the same as you are doing, and inform themselves as to what to buy and what not to buy.

"But will you please tell me how it is the Lucky Curve makes the Parker cleanly while the others soil the fingers?"

Very gladly.

In the common kind of fountain pen, you will find, if you unscrew the nozzle from the barrel, that the feeder is cut off almost even with the thread end. As soon as the pen is returned to the pocket, the heat from the body causes the air inside the barrel to expand. The only way the pressure can be relieved is to force upward the ink column in the capillary channel, where it spills over the edge of the nozzle, under the cap. Proof. Examine any pen not having the Lucky Curve. Unscrew the Parker, and you will find the end of the feeder in the form of a curve—just enough of a curve so that the mouth touches the side of the barrel. By this wonderful little bridging device, gravity and capillary attraction are brought into play, and the feed channel is quickly emptied of ink back inside the barrel, thus eliminating the possibility of ink being forced outside the nozzle.



This shows the Lucky Curve.

No intelligent person would knowingly run into trouble if he could avoid it; and a safe rule in purchasing a fountain pen and not invite trouble and inky fingers is to unscrew the nozzle and examine the thread end. **See that it has the Lucky Curve.**

If before buying you don't talk to a Parker Pen dealer (of whom there are more than 12,000), or write for instructive and beautifully illustrated catalog, I will think it is because you don't care to have the best. Made either Standard or Self-Filling in many styles.

PARKER PEN CO., 82 Mill St., Janesville, Wis.; European branch—Stuttgart, Germany.

Foreign Agencies: Buntin, Gillies & Co., Hamilton and Montreal, Canada. Gerber-Carlisle Co., Mexico City, Mexico; E. Lufft & Co., Sydney, Australia.

The Argosy for September

One Complete Novel

Six Serial Stories

Sixteen Short Stories

A railroad serial of odd incidents, under the title

"NOBODY'S FOOL,"

will start its fascinating course in the October ARGOSY.

ISSUED MONTHLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E.C., London

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President. RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary. CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

ENTERED AT THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE AS SECOND-CLASS MAIL MATTER.

"I made $450.00 the first week."

—Louis A. Hebert.

"HE'S a bright fellow, strange he doesn't get along any better." How often you have heard that said about a man, and perhaps wondered why it was so. Observe closely and you will find he doesn't KNOW THINGS OF COMMERCIAL VALUE, things that bring a big price in the business market, as it were. The REALLY "BRIGHT FELLOW" is the one who studies advertising, and is thus in command of knowledge that brings from $25.00 to $100.00 A WEEK. The REALLY "SMART MAN" is the one who sees the necessity of first acquiring this business knowledge and then applying it in such a way as to ADVANCE HIS BUSINESS or INCREASE HIS VALUE to his employer. There is no reason why a man of ambition —"a man of steel"—should remain in a cramped position.

There is not as much competition in the little places in the advertising field as there is in the big places in every other line. PREPARE THOROUGHLY WITH US, BY MAIL, FOR ADVERTISING, and you will find yourself stepping out of a crowded field where salaries are boiled down and getting into an OPEN ONE WHERE $25.00 TO $100.00 A WEEK IS PAID.

The excuses men make for themselves constitute their greatest obstacles to success. If you could be in my office for one week and read the ENTHUSIASTIC LETTERS FROM SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS, you would not let another day pass without enrolling. You would read letters from clerks, stenographers, bookkeepers, and men in every known vocation who are stepping OUT OF THEIR NARROW CONFINES INTO $25.00 TO $100.00 A WEEK POSITIONS AFTER HAVING LEARNED ADVERTISING, not in one case alone, not in a hundred cases, but in thousands of instances. You would also realize the need for men and women trained to write advertisements, because there is a continual and ever-growing demand for efficient advertisement-writers. ADVERTISEMENT-WRITING IS THE MOST FASCINATING BUSINESS IN THE WORLD. Send in your name and we shall be glad to demonstrate to you how thousands of men and women have increased their incomes from 25% to 100%, and we will also tell you what we can do for you. It is a straightforward business proposition where there is nothing to lose and everything to gain. Fill in the coupon, and mail to-day. You will receive by return post, our large beautiful prospectus, which lays the whole field before you, so plainly and practically that you can see opportunities for yourself.

FILL IN NAME AND ADDRESS AND SEND THIS COUPON

Page-Davis School,—Send me, without cost, your beautiful prospectus and all other information.

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

State .....

941

Page-Davis School,

Address 90 Wabash Ave., CHICAGO
Either Office 150 Nassau St., NEW YORK

THE ARGOSY

Vol. LV SEPTEMBER, 1907. No. 2

A CRACKERJACK CRACKSMAN.

By E. V. PRESTON.

The series of robberies at the safe company's works, with the deductions of a corpulent detective based on an experience that seemed to belie itself.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

BURGLARY UP TO DATE.

AT two o'clock in the morning the streets of Rivington are dead and deserted, the windows of its houses are dark, and even the great plant of the Sterling Safe Company (the town's chief industry) shows no other signs of life than the occasional flash of a lantern and the thump-thump of a stout stick as the superannuated old night-watchman makes his rounds.

It is therefore in no way remarkable that an automobile passing through the place at that hour should fail to attract attention, especially since it was an electric machine absolutely noiseless in its operation save for the soft purr of its rubber tires biting into the roadway.

And, for that matter, even had the sleepy night-clerk at the hotel, or one of the local doctors out on a midnight call, chanced to notice the thing, he would have paid but scant heed to it, for Rivington, lying midway between Chicago and Milwaukee, is an easy motor run from either city, and consequently, the appearance of a car, no matter at what hour, is not a circumstance calling for particular comment.

The chauffeur who was the sole occupant of the vehicle seemed well aware of these conditions, for although his coat-collar was turned up, his cap pulled down over his eyes, and his face obscured by his goggles, he did not seek back alleys or unfrequented ways, but drove straight down the main street of the town.

Through the business section he flitted like a swift shadow, past the homes of the wealthier residents—ornate dwellings set back from the street and surrounded by wide stretches of lawn—then on to where the houses were of smaller proportions and huddled close together, the cottages of the workmen at the safe-factory.

Finally he came to the factory itself—its collection of buildings a mere indeterminate blur of deeper blackness against the gloom of the moonless night—and here he halted.

A twist to a button and all the lights on his machine went out; the darkness seemed to leap suddenly forth like a beast of prey and swallow him up.

"Good thing I know my way so well," he muttered reflectively. "Otherwise, I almost doubt if I could pull off the job."

Very cautiously he steered down to the edge of the road, well out of the beaten track, and stopped again.

For at least five minutes he sat listening, all his faculties strained to the most rigid attention; then, apparently satisfied that his advent had been unobserved and that no one was in the vicinity, he dismounted and began fumbling with his hands at the internal mechanism of the car.

"Resistance coils are O. K.," he commented in a satisfied whisper, "and all connections tight as a drum. Now all we need is to switch the current, and then we are ready for work."

He tightened up a couple of screws, and catching hold of the speed-lever, forced it up to its farthest notch.

"I'm going to scorch you a bit to-night, old girl," he grinned at the motionless automobile. "I shall need every ounce of power that you can give me."

These preparations concluded, he stepped away from the machine, and, with a long loop of insulated wire hanging over his shoulders, climbed the bank and warily scaled the high board fence which enclosed the premises of the safe company.

Just as he alighted on the inner side, however, he heard footsteps approaching, and crouched back hastily into the shadow until the old watchman, with his flashing lantern and thumping stick, had passed.

"Jove, but that was a tight squeak," muttered the intruder. "The old fool is off his schedule to-night; he should have passed by here ten minutes ago. Still, so long as I didn't get caught, it's all the better for me. It will be a good half-hour now before he comes this way again."

Accordingly, having waited a minute or so longer to assure himself there was no danger of the watchman's return, he stepped boldly forward and approached the little one-story building about fifteen feet from the fence which served the concern as its office.

It was no trick at all for him to effect an entrance, since the Sterling Safe Company, relying upon the guaranteed impregnability of its own wares, scorned as superfluous any protection in the way of burglar-alarms or elaborate fastenings to doors and windows.

Indeed, so secure was this feeling of confidence that, as the visitor soon discovered, the lower sash at one of the rear windows had been carelessly left up when the office force departed for the night.

Naturally, he did not fail to avail himself of this advantage, and a moment later, still dragging his coil of insulated wire behind him, he had clambered through the opening.

Directly across the room stood the big double safe, the latest model and most finished product of its makers, its lacquered surface gleaming in the light of the gas-jet which hung over it, its ponderous dimensions seeming to offer defiant challenge to anything short of an overwhelming charge of dynamite.

"Ah, you think yourself a regular Gibraltar, don't you?" mocked the chauffeur, wagging his head at it. "Well, I am going to show you a thing or two you don't know!"

He drew from the inside pocket of his coat a small bottle containing a colorless fluid and held it up to the light.

"Every drop of it worth its weight in gold," he mused; "and this scant three ounces is all there is of it in the world. It certainly behooves me to accomplish my purpose before it is all used up."

A moment longer he stood there, silently contemplating the little vial he esteemed so precious; then, with a quick shrug of the shoulders, he restored it to his pocket, and rousing himself from his reverie, stepped across the room toward the safe.

Nor, once started upon his task, were there any further periods of inattention; realizing the shortness of the time allowed him, he worked breathlessly ahead, with an almost feverish intensity of energy.

Quickly the loop of wire was uncoiled from his shoulder, and with a pair of nippers he deftly attached one strand of it to the gas-pipe overhead, in order to insure himself a ground connection.

The other strand, which, it now appeared, ended in a point or pencil of some dull metallic substance, he treated with more circumspection, donning a pair of rubber gloves before he permitted himself to handle it.

When it was finally adjusted to his satisfaction he drew forth once more from his pocket the little bottle, and with the utmost care, so as not to spill any of its priceless contents, dipped a camel's-hair brush into it, and traced with the fluid a slender streak upon the surface of the safe-door around the combination.

Then, before the liquid had a chance to dry, he snatched up the singular tool attached to his wire, and touching a button in its handle, pressed the point home at the commencement of the thin, wet line.

There was a momentary flash of brilliant bluish-green light, like the pyrotechnic display sometimes furnished by

a short-circuited trolley-car, a crackling, sputtering sound, and then the point of the instrument sank noiselessly into the forged and tested steel.

The man drew a sigh of relief.

"Like soft butter!" he ejaculated in a jubilant whisper. "Well, I never doubted it would do the work provided I could get sufficient power, and the old automobile seems to be furnishing that, all right. However," interrupting himself as he glanced at the clock on the wall, "I can't waste any time now in self-congratulation. I've got to hustle if I want to get through."

Suiting his action to his words, he turned the direction of the tool he was guiding, and with all possible speed began forcing it through the thick door, along the line he had previously drawn with his mysterious fluid.

Once or twice, when the contact became bad, as shown by a recurrence of the flash and the crackling noise, he had to stop and touch the steel in advance of his progress with a drop of his liquid; but even with these delays, the result he achieved was something marvelous.

When he entered the office of the safe company the hands of the clock had pointed to a quarter after two; at half past he had cut out a clean circle from that six inches thick, stubborn steel door, and the way to the interior of the safe lay open before him.

Disconnecting his appliance, accordingly, and laying it on one side ready for his departure, he thrust his hand into the orifice he had made and shot back the bolts.

The heavy door swung open to his touch, and dropping down upon his knees, he began rapidly searching through the receptacle's various compartments.

Strangely enough, to those containing money or securities he gave but a cursory inspection, devoting his attention entirely to certain files of documents and papers.

These he examined carefully, and once in a while a gleam of excitement would light up his eye as he sorted one thing or another out of the collection; but after a moment's survey he would always lay back the memorandum, or whatever it might be, and with a little sigh of disappointment proceed with his search.

And in the end he had to rise to his feet baffled and disconcerted, for every corner of the safe had been ransacked, and the thing he sought was not there.

His eyes filled with bitter gloom; he stood for a space gazing cynically at the safe which he had risked so much and gone to such pains to open; then, aroused to the precariousness of his situation by the approaching tap-tap of the watchman returning on his rounds, he hastily closed the wrecked door, and gathering up his apparatus, vanished as he had come.

Five minutes later his automobile, swift and silent, slipped back, unobserved, through the still sleeping town.

Nor did the Sterling Safe Company raise any hue and cry when discovery was made of the casualty which had befallen them. It is hardly good advertising matter for a manufacturer of burglar-proof safes to admit that a choice sample of his wares, stationed in his own office, could be ripped open in a single brief half-hour. This, by the automatic register, was shown to have been the interval between the recurring visits of the night-watchman.

There was a quiet investigation, of course; but when it was discovered that there had been no loss, and that the shrewdest experts were unable to explain how the steel had been perforated, the Sterling people deemed it wise policy to let the matter drop and say nothing more about it.

But a week later the electric automobile went out on another expedition, and this time the result could not be covered up. A Sterling safe had just been installed at the Rivington Business Men's Club, and was considered a model of construction, since the president of the club was also superintendent of the factory, and with a natural pride had given the organization the best he had in stock. This was found with a neat puncture in its solid door and the combination completely cut out.

As before, there was nothing missing from the contents, and no one was able to tell how the job had been done; but these facts, if anything, only increased public curiosity and made the case more widely talked about.

And then, before the excitement had a chance to die down, a small safe in the office of Judge Hazelrigg, the company's attorney, met a similar fate.

Again the contents were left intact, and again the experts had to shake their heads and admit themselves at sea over the methods invoked.

Owners of Sterling safes began to look at one another and wonder who would be the next victim, and the whole town discussed the mystery with eager and unabated interest.

Since robbery was evidently not the motive of the unknown cracksman, what on earth did he want? Was he some inventor who was trying in this way to demonstrate his discovery of an efficacious method for cutting through case-hardened steel?

Some people thought so; but others, looking askance, put it down to an effort on the part of unscrupulous rivals to injure the Sterling Safe Company. It was pointed out that some skilful rascal introduced into the concern's employ might have incorporated such defects in these safes as to make them easy of perforation, and this theory received added strength from the fact that all the specimens broken into had been of very recent manufacture.

The company, naturally, grasped at such a solution, and at once inaugurated a searching inquiry into the characters and past affiliations of all its men, but before the investigation was fairly started the new hypothesis received its death-blow from a fresh exploit on the part of the mysterious motorist.

And, unlike lightning, he demonstrated that he could strike twice in the same place, for again he chose the premises of the safe company as the theater for his activities. But this time he passed the office, and visiting the factory proper, cracked a little old-fashioned safe which was used for the storage of pattern designs, and which had been turned out so long ago that there could be no question of honest workmanship in its construction.

The characteristics of this last job were the same as all the others. Nothing was missing, and the motive for the crime was still a riddle. The only evidence to prove an intruder's presence was the smooth circle cut out of the steel door and left lying on the floor.

Who had done it, and why, and how, were questions the Sterling Safe Company found itself unable to answer, but they felt that it was "up to them" to find out. Their sales were being injured through countermanded orders; their business reputation was at stake.

In solemn conclave the officers met, and decided to spare neither time, money, nor effort in the promot and effective solution of the enigma.

CHAPTER II.

HOW TO SEE THROUGH A MILLSTONE.

"IT is not as much a question of finding the man," explained President Ward, of the safe company, to his visitor, "although we would, of course, be quite willing to see him well punished for the annoyance and trouble he has caused us. But our chief interest is to learn the process, he uses in order that we may take steps to fortify ourselves. So, in your investigations I would urge you to hold that point in mind."

"Easy Money" Jones listened to these instructions imperturbably and without interruption, but when they were finished he squared his bulky frame back in his chair and folded his pudgy hands across his fat stomach.

The great detective was no featherweight, and his general attitude indicated that he was sitting down on the president's suggestion, and sitting down on it hard.

"When I take a case, Mr. Ward," he announced firmly, "I take it to handle according to my own best judgment. I am always willing to give due consideration to the wishes of my clients, but I insist on having a free hand. So, unless you are ready to accord me that privilege I may as well retire from the case."

President Ward gave a slight start; he was not used to being so coolly set aside. An impatient retort trembled on his lips, but before he could utter it he recollected how signally all the efforts of himself and his associates had failed in clearing up the mystery. This "Easy Money" Jones, he had been told, was the one man in the country who might succeed.

Therefore, he choked back the answer on his tongue, and instead assured the other with the best grace at his command that there was no desire on the part of

the safe company to restrict or hamper him in any way.

"Ah, that is better," commented the detective affably. "And now that we understand each other, I will tell you why I don't think that suggestion of yours worth while. If you were talking to a chemist it might do to say, 'Tell me the method; I don't care anything about the man,' but I am a detective, and the only way I can learn the method is by finding the man, studying his motive, watching him at work, if possible, or if not, by extracting from him, either through fear or favor, the information I desire."

The president was forced to nod assent to the undoubted logic of the argument.

"Yes," he agreed, "I see that you are right. But," anxiously, "how long do you suppose it will take to run the chap to earth? None of us here have even a suspicion as to his identity."

"How long?" repeated Jones, ruminatively cocking one eye. "Well, to tell you the truth, I've got him located right now."

"What?" The dignified head of the safe company almost bounced out of his chair, so great was his amazement at this calm assertion.

"Why, Mr. Jones," he exclaimed incredulously, "you've not been in town more than half an hour, and practically every minute of that time has been spent here in the office with me. Do you mean to tell me that in so short a space you could have plumbed a mystery which has been baffling us all for weeks?"

The detective nodded.

"I have found," he observed oracularly, "that most so-called mysteries are due to the fact that people seek strange and unusual explanations for them instead of paying attention to the plain and simple clues directly at hand.

"Now, what are the facts here?" he questioned, sliding forward in his seat until his short legs could touch the floor, and leaning argumentatively across the table. "Perhaps if I trace out the mental steps I took in considering them it will help you to understand how I have been able to reach so prompt and positive a conclusion.

"In the first place, then, I received a telegram from you yesterday afternoon asking me if I could come to Rivington at once and take charge of an important investigation for your concern. Fortunately, I happened to be at liberty, so, having wired back my acceptance, I took down my scrap-books to learn, if possible, why I was needed, for you will remember your message gave no inkling of the service you might require of me.

"I keep, I should explain, a very carefully indexed record of all newspaper clippings relating to crimes and mysterious happenings, no matter in what part of the country they may occur, and, searching under the heads of 'Rivington' and 'Sterling Safe Company,' it did not take me long to discover that your little town had been all stirred up, of late, by a series of inexplicable burglaries.

"For the past month, I learned, on an average of one a week, safes of your manufacture, warranted strictly burglar-proof and flawless in every detail, had been rifled with no more apparent difficulty than if they had been ordinary soap-boxes, and in no case did any clue exist either as to the identity of the cracksman or as to the manner in which he performed his work.

"It was evidently a new process of safe-breaking that he had discovered, for mechanics and officers of the law alike had to admit that the fellow's craftsmanship was beyond them. There were no traces of drilling or of the use of explosives; no rough or broken edges; but in each instance the laminated steel door was cut out around the combination as cleanly and smoothly as a sharp knife would slice through cheese.

"Finally," concluded Jones, "my clippings informed me that in no case had anything been taken—that the contents of the safes were always found intact.

"Now, what," he asked, "should you think would be the points to strike me in this very fair presentation of the case?"

"Well," hesitated Mr. Ward, "the absence of robbery as a motive, I suppose?"

"Yes, that of course."

"And the fact that all the pillaged safes were of our make."

"Good. Go on. What else?"

"Why, the method employed."

"Exactly," assented the detective enthusiastically. "Those are the three salient and outstanding features of the affair from which no one can get away; the three pillars upon which rest the entire case.

"With them before my eyes, I had pretty accurately deduced the identity of the guilty man before I ever set foot in Rivington. They acted like beacon-lights to clear up the entire situation for me."

"I'm glad you found it so," commented the other, not without a touch of sarcasm. "To me, they seemed to render the mystery only more obscure and impenetrable."

"How can you say that?" demanded Jones eagerly. "Is it not plain that the man was no ordinary thief seeking for loot, but a skilled workman, probably an expert on safe-construction, and actuated by some motive which led him to attack only Sterling safes?"

"Oh," said President Ward, thinking he began to comprehend, "the old theory of a rival manufacturer, eh?"

"Not at all," quickly. "I very soon discarded that hypothesis, for the reason that there are no grounds to believe that any other make would prove more invulnerable to this peculiar process. No, Mr. Ward, it was no opposition house that prompted this assault upon your wares, but a man who, having discovered a valuable trade secret, took this means of bringing it to your attention.

"He demonstrated his powers solely on Sterling safes, partly because he was more familiar with this construction, as shown by the certainty he exhibited in knowing just where to perforate so as to sever the main bolt, but chiefly because he expected to make you his purchaser."

"But if the fellow had made such a discovery, and wanted to sell it to us," frowned Ward, "why didn't he come to us like a man and offer the thing in the regular way of business?"

"Perhaps," said "Easy Money" Jones significantly, "he knew his price was so high you would never pay it unless he forced you to it.

"Before I came here, Mr. Ward," the detective went on, "I made up my mind that I should have to look for a man of intelligence, thoroughly acquainted with all the details of safe-manufacture, and who, moreover, wanted something from the Sterling Company or one of its officers which they were unwilling to grant.

"When I entered your office this morning I found you alone with your daughter—a charming young girl, if you will permit me to say so—and almost immediately your superintendent, a good-looking young fellow, found business requiring his presence here also. Yet, when you signified your desire to be alone with me he seemed to forget all about this important business he had, and at once volunteered to entertain Miss Ward while we were holding our conference by conducting her through the factory."

"And what does that prove?" the president inquired haughtily.

Jones answered him with another question.

"Mr. Ward," he said earnestly, "are you willing to have this superintendent marry your daughter?"

"I certainly am not," snapped the other decisively; "but—"

"Ah, I thought so," nodded the detective. "Well, that is the price you would have been asked to pay for this new secret method of cutting through steel!"

CHAPTER III.

"A WOMAN'S AT THE BOTTOM OF IT ALL."

"HEATH?" gasped the manufacturer, goggling his eyes at the detective. "You think that Heath, our own superintendent, is responsible for these outrages? Why, that is absurd!"

"Ah, but is it?" eagerly demanded Jones. "Suppose, just for the sake of argument, that Heath had hit upon this new device capable of disintegrating your most tenacious steel—and you will admit that with a man of his intelligence and experience such an accomplishment would be nothing remarkable—what do you think he would have done with it?

"Would he have come to you like a man, as you say, and have offered to sell it to you in the regular way of business? Not much, for he would know too well what would happen.

"You would pooh-pooh his discovery, and demand a demonstration of its efficacy before you would consent to treat with him; and then, when you had seen it tested, and perhaps had wormed the formula out of him, you would secretly call in chemists and have the process analyzed and investigated until you knew as much about it as he did.

"Finally, you would go to him, and after depreciating the thing to the best of your ability would tell him that you liked, nevertheless, to reward industry and application on the part of your employees, and would offer him one thousand dollars, or maybe five thousand dollars, for all his rights.

"If he declined, and sought another market for his wares, you would be merely so much money in, for you would be already, through your chemists, in full possession of the secret, and would long since have taken steps to protect yourself."

The magnate shifted uneasily in his chair, and flushed under the detective's rather blunt statements; but he did not attempt to deny that such would have been his course of action.

"No," went on Jones, "Heath, if he is as smart as he looks to be, would take means to assert himself in a very different way. He would evolve just some such scheme as this safe-cracking campaign in order to show you where you were at; and then, when he had you all wrought up, and frightened to death, as you are now, he would report that he had solved the mysterious method employed and could tell you how to guard against its recurrence.

"In your relief and gratitude you would regard him as a wonderful man, with a brilliant future ahead of him, and when, before acquainting you with the details of his discovery, he ventured to apply for your daughter's hand you would see no objection to such an arrangement.

"Instead of getting a paltry thousand or five thousand dollars, therefore, the far-sighted Heath would become your son-in-law, and in the nature of things the future head of the Sterling Safe Company."

President Ward considered a moment, thoughtfully stroking his chin; then his lip curled slightly and he gave a shrug to his shoulders.

"Very pretty, Mr. Jones," he said, "but hypothesis—pure hypothesis. You haven't got one fact to bear you out."

"One fact!" ejaculated the detective, throwing out his hands. "Good Heavens, I have a bushel of them. A blind man could see that the fellow is in love with your daughter. It requires but one look at him to tell that he is capable, shrewd, clever, and ambitious. As you yourself admit, this work was done by some expert safe-maker, probably a man in your own factory, and not for immediate gain, but with some deep-seated motive aimed unquestionably at the Sterling Safe Company—to all of which qualifications he conforms. And yet you say I have not a single fact to bear me out.

"But there is still more confirmation," he went on eagerly. "Look at the places where these different jobs of safe-cracking took place. Two at this factory," enumerating them upon his fingers, "where, knowing the rounds of the night-watchman and all the ins and outs of the establishment, he could work without the slightest fear of detection. Another at the office of the company's attorney, where almost similar conditions prevailed. And, lastly," with an air of triumph, "one at the Business Men's Club, where he is the guiding spirit, and maintains, moreover, his own private apartments.

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Ward, that in the light of the other points I have mentioned these circumstances fail to strike you as peculiarly relevant?"

The president made no answer, but the ominous tightening of his lips and the quick flash of his eye betokened that the other's arguments were beginning to carry weight.

"I am not a betting man," declared the detective, pushing home his advantage, "but so certain am I of my interpretation of the facts in this case that I would be willing to wager every cent I possess in the world that this Heath will approach you before the end of the present week with a proposition substantially the same as the one I have outlined.

"There is no need for him to delay any longer," he explained. "He has worked you up to the flutter of trepida-

tion and uneasiness that he planned; the time is ripe for him to make his next move on the checker-board."

"Well, if he does he'll soon wish he hadn't," broke out the old man angrily. "Just let the rascally hound try any blackmailing trick on me, and I'll soon show him his place. I'll clap him behind the bars so quick that—"

"No—no," interrupted Jones, rising to his feet and laying a dissuasive hand upon the excited magnate's shoulder, "that would never do. Remember, we have nothing but suspicion as yet, and before we can clap him behind the bars we must have proof. To turn on him with an accusation as soon as he begins to negotiate would be simply to seal his lips and forever destroy any chance of learning the nature of his secret process. You must, instead, encourage him, pretend to treat with him, and so, by giving him rope, lead him on to hang himself.

"Now, listen to me and I'll show you just how you must act," and thereupon the detective rehearsed with elaborate pains the rôle of dissimulation which he was determined the other should play.

Meanwhile, Lloyd Heath, superintendent of the factory, entirely unconscious that he was being so invidiously discussed behind the closed doors of the president's office, was proudly conducting Miss Ward through the plant, and whether or not there was any ground for the other inferences drawn by "Easy Money" Jones concerning the young man, no one who saw the pair together could doubt for a moment that he was head over ears in love.

"Th' super cert'nly has got it bad," was the comment of more than one of the workmen as the couple passed by. "Wonder if old man Ward'll stand for it?"

There were various opinions on this point, but none as to the suitability of the match; for, as one old fellow watching them with admiring eyes expressed it, they made a "spanking team," and the romance of the situation appealed to these rough and hardy natures.

Heath was hardly a popular "boss" among his men. He was too aloof and reserved of manner, too stern and severe a disciplinarian, to engage their liking; but "all the world loves a lover," and his marked devotion to the president's daughter—who was universally idolized among the hands—won him more friendly comments that day than he had received before during the whole tenure of his position.

He had come to Rivington some five years previous, from no one knew where, to accept a subordinate position at the Sterling factory, but had speedily proved his capability, and through a combination of opportunity and merit had within one year worked his way up to the superintendency.

A quiet chap, almost suspiciously reticent concerning his past, he nevertheless held the respect and esteem of his employers, and of the entire community. The factory flourished under his management, and the town looked to him for leadership and advice in every worthy movement.

He was chairman of the school board, a director in the Public Library Association, and, as already stated, president of the Business Men's Club.

Only recently had he gone into society to any extent. For the first four years of his stay in the town he evinced no ambitions in that direction whatever; but when Harriet Ward returned home from Europe, where she had been finishing her education, a change seemed to come over the spirit of his dreams.

He bought a dress suit, and indulged in a round of social calls, and presently there was no festivity in Rivington, especially if Miss Ward were likely to be present, at which he did not also appear.

Naturally, gossip connected their names more or less together—"Easy Money" Jones's shrewd guess was by no means the first that President Ward had heard of the affair—but although everybody was well convinced that Heath was in love with the girl, nobody could quite make out whether she cared for him or not.

She encouraged him to a certain extent—if walking, driving, dancing, and bicycling with him in a perfectly frank and friendly fashion could be called encouragement—and there was certainly no other man to whom she accorded so much of her companionship; still, there were those who professed to see in this no more than coquetry, and who insisted

that she was merely amusing herself with Heath because there was no other equally personable and congenial suitor in sight.

And perhaps the most uncertain person of all in regard to it was the superintendent himself. He had refrained from making a direct avowal of his feelings to her, partly through fear of a negative answer and partly because he had once heard her say she would never marry without her father's consent; but, by no means despairing of ultimately obtaining the proud magnate's sanction, he had sought in all sorts of roundabout ways to discover the true nature of her sentiment toward him.

He was engaged in an effort of the sort this morning as he conducted her through the works, for he knew that he appeared to his best advantage here where his word was paramount and his single hand directed all the titanic forces and diverse energies of this big plant.

And to his delight, he thought he could detect signs of yielding in her. She was not gay, brilliant, elusive, as usual, but seemed in a more tender and conciliatory mood.

Her favor mounted to his brain like wine. He threw back his head and his eyes shone as he led her from one floor to another, explaining and commenting upon the things they saw.

Finally they came to the molding department, but just as they were about to enter Heath caught the girl by the arm and drew her quickly back. A workman was coming directly toward them, carrying outstretched before him a huge ladle full of molten steel.

So close were they that the hot breath of the thing scorched their faces, and Harriet gave a little involuntary cry.

The man with the ladle had been hurrying along, his eyes bent straight ahead upon his task, but at the sound of the girl's voice he glanced up, then stopped dead still and staggered back a step, the heavy vessel he bore wavering loosely in his grasp.

For just a breathing-space it was nip and tuck whether the white-hot glowing contents would not be tossed over Miss Ward; but the man himself saw the danger, steadied the tilting ladle by a quick twist of his arms, and regaining his running step, pushed the thing ahead to where the mold was waiting to receive it.

She did not realize it, but Heath comprehended that to save her the man had deliberately risked throwing back the whole seething mass upon himself. It was pure luck that the stratagem had succeeded without himself becoming the victim.

Nevertheless, his heroism availed him little with the irate superintendent. With a quick motion of his arm Heath summoned the foreman of the shop before him.

"Discharge that awkward oaf," he directed sharply, pointing to the man who had just set down his ladle. "This is no place for people who can't keep their eyes where they belong."

Then he turned to Harriet and offered his arm to conduct her on through the shop; but she was nervously upset by the incident, and after a moment's hesitation decided to postpone any further sightseeing.

"I guess, instead, Mr. Heath," she said, "I will ask you to take me over to my phaeton. I had intended stopping for a little chat with father, but I see he is still busy wtih that big fat man over in the office, so I will put it off until dinner-time and go home now.

"And by the way," she added coaxingly, "don't you think you were a bit hard on that poor man with the ladle?"

"No," Heath replied. "I wasn't hard enough. Why, it was only by a miracle that the blundering fool escaped throwing the seething mass on you."

"But he was not to blame," she pleaded. "It was really my fault. I disconcerted him by my foolish scream. Won't you revoke the discharge, Mr. Heath, and let him stay?"

A little frown creased the superintendent's brow.

"I have made it a rule," he said slowly, "for the sake of discipline and in order to save myself endless trouble, never to take back a man I have once dismissed."

"But you are going to do it this time?" she wheedled, and then, as she saw he was still undecided, added softly: "For my sake?"

She had climbed into the phaeton by this time, and, with the reins gathered

in her hand was only waiting for his answer before she started.

"For my sake?" she repeated, leaning appealingly over the side of the vehicle toward him.

"Yes," he burst out passionately. "Yes, I will take him back. I would do anything for your sake."

He would perhaps have added more, but ere he could frame his lips to the words the girl had murmured some graceful expression of her appreciation, and touching her horse with the whip, moved away.

Heath stood with his hat off gazing after her until she had disappeared around the bend in the road; then he turned, and with a look of decision on his face strode straight across the yard to the office of the president.

That functionary and "Easy Money" Jones had just about concluded their conference when his knock sounded.

"The superintendent!" muttered the detective as Heath's figure was disclosed in the doorway in response to Mr. Ward's crisp "Come in." "Is it possible that developments are about to start so soon?"

He tried to render his broad, vacuous face still more expressionless as he turned and stared ostentatiously out of the window.

But he need not have gone to such pains, for it is doubtful if the newcomer more than noticed his presence. All Heath's attention was concentrated on the president.

"Pardon me for intruding upon you, Mr. Ward," he said in a voice husky with eagerness, "but there is a very important matter I must discuss with you some time to-day, and I wanted to know when you would be at liberty to grant me a private interview."

Old Ward hummed and hawed, and was a bit uncertain.

"My time is pretty well crowded, Mr. Heath," he said. "Couldn't you give me some kind of an intimation of what it is you wish to speak with me about? You need not mind Mr. Jones," with a wave of his hand toward the detective. "He is—er—an old acquaintance of mine."

Heath hesitated a moment; then he brought it out doggedly and with a rush, and "Easy Money" Jones, for all his efforts, could not keep a gleam of triumph from showing in his eye.

"It is—it is in regard to these mysterious burglaries," said the superintendent. "I think I have discovered the method which the fellow employs."

"Ah!" cried President Ward, and there was no pretense in the excitement he displayed, either. "That is indeed important. I'll tell you, Heath," as though struck by a sudden suggestion, "I haven't a minute that I can give you to-day, but suppose you come up to my house to-night, and then we can go into the thing at our leisure. Let us say eight o'clock, eh? You will find me in my library."

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXPECTED HAPPENS.

At eight o'clock that evening President Ward, duly coached and primed for the impending interview, sat in his handsome library, pretending to turn over the pages of a magazine, but so excited that he really didn't know whether the sentences which danced before his eyes were English words or ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The president, in short, was in that state popularly known as being on tenter-hooks, for he had been exhorted so strenuously on the necessity of being diplomatic in his dealings with the wily superintendent that he was grievously afraid he might not come up to the standard required, but by some ebullition of his naturally irascible temper would "queer the whole show."

But if he was uncomfortable, far more so was poor "Easy Money" Jones, for that martyr to the cause had crowded into the small space behind the bookcase in the corner several more cubic feet of his "too, too solid flesh" than there was room to accommodate, and the sharp edges of the woodwork were cutting ridges into his suffering anatomy.

Every moment in those restricted quarters seemed a century of torture to the obese detective; but he endured it in stoical silence, consoling himself with the thought of the triumph which was soon to be his.

Presently the bell rang, and Mr. Ward

began fluttering over the pages of his magazine as though it were a telephone directory in which he was searching for a number he wanted on a hurry call.

"Steady," came a sepulchral whisper from behind the bookcase. "You mustn't let him see that you are excited."

But the warning proved in vain, for the arrival did not turn out to be their expected visitor, after all. Instead, there was borne in to them from the hall the sound of a strange man's voice, and then a glad cry of "Ned! Ned!" from Harriet as she flew down the stairway, while a moment later both voices were shut off by the closing of the drawing-room door.

"H'm," commented "Easy Money" Jones. "Of course, it may be only her cousin or some such person—you never can tell about girls—but on the whole I'm glad Heath didn't hear her say 'Ned! Ned!' just now. It might have made some difference with him."

Very shortly afterward, however, the superintendent put in his appearance, but he stopped in the hall a moment for a word with Harriet before he came on to the library.

She heard him at the door, it seemed, and came out to ask him if he had reinstated the man for whom she had interposed at the works.

"Why, no, I haven't," Heath was obliged to confess. "By the time I got back to the molding-shop I found that the fellow had received his time and had left the premises. However, I sent word to his boarding-house that I wanted to see him, and if he is still in town no doubt he will turn up to-morrow. The foreman of the shop looked at me as though he thought I was crazy when I told him I wanted the fellow taken back; but," he finished thrillingly, "I'd do anything for you!

"And by the way," he added in a lower key, "who is calling on you to-night?"

"Oh, an old friend from the East," she answered carelessly. "He dropped in unexpectedly this evening, and quite took me by surprise."

"Can't you get rid of him?" urged Heath significantly. "I shall be engaged with your father only a half-hour or so, and after I am through with him there is something I very much wish to say to you."

"Oh, I'm afraid I can't hear it to-night," she replied. "This man from the East is sure to stay late, and I can't be rude to him, you know. You will simply have to wait and tell it to me another time, Mr. Heath. Is it very, very important?"

"Very, very important," assented Heath, and although his lips smiled his face was strangely pale. "Still," he added, "I guess it won't spoil for having to keep a few hours longer. Perhaps you'll give me an opportunity of telling you some time to-morrow?"

"Perhaps," assented Harriet, and with that he had to be content, for she turned quickly back toward the drawing-room, leaving him to go on to his interview in the library.

Mr. Ward received him cordially, perhaps a shade too cordially; but in the general perturbation of his own spirits Heath failed to notice the rather artificial character of the magnate's *bonhomie*.

Thus, a few moments were passed in mutual compliments and an interchange of remarks on indifferent topics, until finally the manufacturer began to wax impatient. How impatient was "Easy Money" Jones at this fruitless extension of his torment may be imagined.

"But let's get down to business, Heath," was the way in which the manufacturer at last took the bull by the horns. "You said you thought you had dropped on to the scheme this clever cracksman has been using against us. How about it?"

Heath cleared his throat a bit nervously.

"First, if you please, Mr. Ward," he said, "there is another matter which I would like to take up with you. It is not my way to beat around the bush, so I'll come plump out and tell you it is in regard to your daughter. I love her, and I want your consent to my seeking her hand in marriage. I know that you are to a certain extent prejudiced against me, but—"

The president interrupted him with a quickly deprecating hand.

"Prejudiced against you?" he cried. "My dear Heath, how did you ever get such an idea as that into your head? Why, if I had the selection of a son-in-law to order I should have to pick one who in all essential qualifications con-

formed very closely to yourself. Prejudiced against you, dear boy! Why, you were never more seriously mistaken in your life."

"You are willing, then?" exclaimed the young man joyously. "You give your consent?"

"Not so fast—not so fast," protested the father laughingly. "I know it is the prerogative of a lover to be ardent, but you must have a little patience with me, until I can ask you a few questions.

"Now, in the first place how does Harriet feel about all this?"

"She doesn't know anything about it," confessed Heath, a trifle shamefacedly. "I thought I would first speak to you."

The old man pretended to look deeply surprised.

"And you haven't spoken to Harriet yet?" he demanded. "Why, it's she you want to marry, and not me, isn't it? You are putting the cart before the horse, Heath. You should get her consent first and then come to see me about mine."

"But will you give yours if I can win a favorable answer from her?" queried the suitor anxiously. "She says she will never marry any man, you know, unless he has your full sanction and approval."

Ward laughed out in light-hearted merriment.

"Tush!" he cried, digging the other playfully in the ribs. "That is merely another way of saying that she will marry whom she chooses. We modern fathers know better, my boy, than to oppose any man our girls pick out, and the only way we can save our dignity is by graciously 'consenting' to whichever Tom, Dick, or Harry is thrust upon us. So, you see, you have applied at the wrong shop, Heath; you want to petition headquarters direct.

"And now that more important affairs are out of the way," he urged, still smiling, "let us get down to the safe business. What is it you have found out about this secret process?"

"Well, sir," said Heath, drawing a bulky packet of papers from his pocket and throwing it down upon the table, "the whole thing is here."

President Ward, with a little exclamation, pounced upon the packet and began turning over the leaves with rapid fingers.

Then he glanced up in quiek chagrin.

"Why, there is no sense to this," he cried angrily. "It's simply a lot of gibberish."

Heath smiled.

"It is a cipher," he explained, "which came into my possession some years ago, and, as I was then told, contained a receipt for a reagent that would, under a strong electric current, dissolve forged steel, while with it is also set forth the antidote for the poison, so to speak, or, rather, the method by which this reagent may be guarded against and set at naught.

"I paid little heed to the old paper when I got it," he went on, "but recently, when these unexplained burglaries occurred, it struck me that our mysterious cracksman must have struck the same process or something like it, so I hunted the old cipher and began working over it.

"I have already translated all the formulas in it relating to the destructive reagent, and by making the stuff have fully confirmed my suspicions that it is the same process that has been used here in such sensational fashion."

"But how about the antidote?" eagerly interrupted Ward. "The manner of rendering steel impervious to such attack?"

"That I have not yet fully worked out, but I expect to have it complete in a few days. Then I will be glad to give you a demonstration of the whole proposition, Mr. Ward, and to make arrangements with you for incorporating the protective part of it in the future output of the factory.

"In the meantime, though," he added a shade anxiously, "I am going to ask you if I can leave the old cipher here with you for safe-keeping. It is too valuable a document to be left lying carelessly around, and besides," dropping his voice a trifle, "I have had an uneasy feeling for several days that I am being watched and followed. It may be that some one has learned that I have the thing in my possession and is trying to get hold of it before I have extracted all its secrets. This wonderful cracksman," with a smile, "is such a dickens of a fellow it's hard to tell what he may not be up to.

"Therefore," he concluded, "I have decided to put the thing well out of my hands, and as I can think of no safer

place for it, I want to put it in your charge."

"Certainly—certainly, my boy," responded Mr. Ward with alacrity. "I shall put it away in my safe, here, and shall see that no one, not even myself, gets a peep at it until you call for it to be returned to you."

"Old liar," thought the detective, overhearing all this instructive conversation from his post behind the bookcase. "I'll bet he has the whole thing copied off before breakfast to-morrow morning, and that he hires all the experts and chemists he can get hold of to tackle it."

And so worked up did "Easy Money" become over his unworthy client's duplicity that before he thought he gave vent to a slight cough of reprobation.

"What's that?" cried Heath, starting up. "I didn't know you had any one here in the room with you."

"No more I have," declared Ward unflinchingly. "That was a sound from out on the street. Your nerves must be in bad shape, Lloyd!"

But after the superintendent had departed, a few minutes later, and the detective had come out from his retreat, the remarks which were addressed to poor Jones might well have made his ears burn.

"You a detective!" sneered Ward. "Why, you big, fat porpoise, you came pretty near spoiling everything with that wheeze of yours."

"Well, so would you have wheezed," muttered the other, "if you had had to play pussy-in-the-corner there for two hours and a half, with all kinds of sharp points gouging into your ribs. But," his ill temper beginning to evaporate as his crushed avoirdupois expanded to its normal rotundity, "didn't it work out splendidly? Hasn't everything about this case turned out just as I told you it would?"

"But what good does it do us?" mocked Ward, whose temper seemed to grow more sardonic as the detective's improved. "All we've got out of it is a paper which nobody can make out. The real secret which I was after is as far away as ever."

"Oh, no, it isn't," dissented Jones. "I don't care anything about that cipher, but I am almost ready to guarantee you that I will know all about that secret before nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"How?" demanded his client. "Who will tell you?"

"Lloyd Heath himself! Ah!" he broke off suddenly, lifting his hand, "there is something that I have been expecting."

It was the sharp, imperative peal of the telephone-bell.

CHAPTER V.

TRAPPED IN THE DARK.

"Easy Money" Jones made it his proud boast that he never did anything by halves.

He had confidently expected to learn Lloyd Heath's secret, as has been seen, by eavesdropping on the conversation between him and Mr. Ward from behind the bookcase, but that did not prevent him from laying other lines to the same end.

As a matter of fact, he had ordered the superintendent shadowed from the moment his suspicions had first turned in that direction, and all day he had been receiving reports from his men detailing Heath's every movement.

What he could not understand, however, was how the suspect could in so short a time have become cognizant of the espionage placed upon him.

It had not been in force more than ten hours at the outside, and Jones's sleuths were supposed to be experts at the business of trailing a man without his knowledge; yet Heath had certainly declared himself under an uneasy impression of being watched and followed.

Could it be, thought Jones, that his men had become careless in their work and had permitted their quarry to perceive he was being stalked? If so, the detective resolved there would be some speedy changes in his force, for, to his mind, the whole success of this most important case depended on the free and unsuspecting movements of the superintendent after he should leave Mr. Ward's house.

Consequently, it may be imagined with what anxiety he awaited a report from the three men he had detailed to trail Heath from the moment he came out, and when he caught up the telephone-receiver and heard the elated announcement that the

"game" was "treed" he breathed a deep and heartfelt sigh of relief.

Nor did it appear, from the story related by his men, that the superintendent had shown himself particularly watchful. He had left the Ward place by a somewhat unfrequented route, it is true, and he had pulled his coat-collar up and his hat down over his eyes as though to avoid recognition, but outside of these simple precautions there had been nothing to suggest any nervousness on his part.

He certainly had not attempted to double on his track, or to adopt any other stratagem to throw a possible pursuer off the scent.

Leaving the house, they said, he had taken a short cut through the place by a back way which led him through a poorer section of the town and so on out across the river to an old abandoned stone-quarry.

Here they had lost him for a few minutes, but while searching around to find where he had disappeared had suddenly been attracted by a glimmer of light far up in the quarry-wall.

Only a moment it flashed, and then went out; but one of the watchers, clambering to where it had appeared, found that although now screened from below it was still visible at that height, and came, in fact, from a narrow opening leading into the cliff.

Following this back for twenty or thirty feet, he discovered that it widened abruptly into a cave about the size of a good-sized room, which, to his surprise, was elaborately fitted up as an experimental laboratory and workshop, with an electric furnace, a miniature forge, and all sort of apparatus of which he did not know even the name.

But the most startling sight of all, to him, was the man who sat there, so absorbed in some work upon which he was engaged that he entirely failed to note this intrusion upon his privacy. It was the superintendent, whom they had lost a few minutes before at the foot of the cliff.

How he had arrived hither the spy could not tell, for to climb up the face of the cliff to the opening where the light had appeared would have been impossible without being seen by the three watchers below.

It must be that there was an interior passage leading up to the cave from the foot of the quarry, and this theory the man confirmed a few minutes later by perceiving that the iron door closing off the avenue which he himself had followed had been opened from the inside, and not from without.

The dust which lay thick on the floor of the passageway bore, as he saw by means of his pocket-flash-light, no prints of other footsteps than his own on the outside of the iron door.

Hence, he argued that it had merely been set ajar in order to admit air into the cave, and that through the opening of it the glimmer of light had escaped which had attracted the attention of himself and his companions.

These observations made, he hastily withdrew, thanking his lucky stars that Heath had been too deeply engrossed to notice his rather incautious entrance, and having regained his comrades, hurried to the nearest 'phone to acquaint Jones with his discoveries.

The great detective, as may be surmised, lost no time in acting on the information and proceeding to the scene to witness this remarkable retreat for himself. Arriving at the quarry, accordingly, he found two of his men on guard below, while the third had returned to his post of vantage in the mouth of the upper passage.

It was a rather formidable climb for a man of the detective's girth and weight, but "Easy Money" never faltered for a moment.

Upward he dragged himself with laborious pains, sometimes slipping halfway down again as some bush or vine on the face of the cliff to which he trusted too much gave way in his grasp, but he always returned undaunted to the charge, and finally, breathless but triumphant, he reached his goal.

"Is he still here?" were his first panting words as his assistant at the top pulled him over the final ledge of his journey, and when assured that Heath was yet in the cave he gave a quick grunt of satisfaction.

"All right, then," he said. "You fellows have had a hard day's work, and you had better go home now and get some rest. Unless I am away off in my

guess, he will stay right here until morning, and therefore I can easily look after him by myself."

But for once the astute sleuth was off in his calculations, for his men were hardly out of sight and he himself squeezed through the narrow passage to a point where he could hold the superintendent under observation than the latter raised his head from the work upon which he was engaged, and glancing at his watch, sprang to his feet.

More than that, he turned and came directly across the cave to the shadowy corner where Jones was ensconced. There was no chance for a retreat; the slightest movement must inevitably have betrayed the intruder's presence. All that "Easy Money" could do was to flatten himself back against the wall and hold his breath, in the hope of avoiding detection.

Fortunately for him, there was a slight elbow in the rocky side of the cavern, which threw the niche where he stood into comparative gloom; and fortunately, too, the other man was in a deeply abstracted and meditative mood.

At any rate, Heath passed within a foot of him without noting his presence, and having closed and barred the iron door across the passage, returned the same way, equally oblivious to the man whom he could have touched by simply stretching forth a hand.

"Closing up the shop, eh?" commented Jones, noting that the other was putting things away and preparing to leave. "Evidently going to call it a day's work and go home, isn't he? And he's inhospitably cut off my retreat, too," with a glance at the securely locked iron door.

"Well," shrugging his shoulders, "I don't know as I care very much about that. If there's another way out, I guess I can take it as well as he. And in the meantime I will have a chance to look around this snuggery of his and see just exactly what he's—

"Hello!" He was almost startled into an exclamation aloud, for the superintendent, catching up his hat, touched a button on the wall, and instantly all the electric lights which so brilliantly illuminated the place went out. The cave was shrouded in a blackness so intense that it could almost be tasted.

Quickly Jones threw his head forward and bent a straining ear to catch from the other's footsteps the direction in which he moved; but he was obliged to confess himself puzzled. He could hear the man hustling about for a minute or two, after which there came a soft, swishing sound of brief duration; then all was silence.

The listener waited quiescent for one minute, for five, counting off the slow seconds by the pulse-beat in his own wrist, until satisfied, at last, that the other was really gone and that he was alone.

Then he stepped quickly from his niche and started across the floor toward the button on the wall by which Heath had turned off the lights.

Another moment and he would have the place flooded with illumination, and the chance before him to rummage among the superintendent's secrets to his heart's content.

But as he reached out for the button he suddenly stumbled, plunged forward, and with an exclamation of horror and a fruitless grasp at the empty air, felt himself falling into an unsuspected abyss!

CHAPTER VI.

A CLOSE SHAVE AND A BIG SHOCK.

"EASY MONEY" does not recall how hard he lighted when he landed at the bottom of the hole into which he so unwittingly tumbled, but he argues, from the bruises which manifested themselves upon his person, that it must have been a pretty comfortable jolt.

When he slowly recovered consciousness his first impression was of one personified and gigantic ache, but presently he became able to differentiate this sum total into a vast number of separate and distinct little aches, and having made an exhaustive inventory of these, he finally reached the conclusion that perhaps he was not the candidate for the morgue he had at first supposed.

"Legs all right," he told himself cheerfully, despite an involuntary groan or two, as he extended first one and then the other of those members in tentative fashion. "Arms ditto," also trying them. "Now let's see about the general condition."

It was a hard struggle to turn over—something like that of a fat beetle which has inadvertently fallen on its back—but

eventually, albeit not without a vivid accompaniment of profanity, the feat was accomplished, and the detective was able to lift himself to his hands and knees, and ultimately to assume a sitting posture.

"Pretty sore," he commented, gingerly rubbing various portions of his anatomy, "and evidently had the senses jolly well knocked out of me, but, so far as I can tell, there are no bones broken, and no injuries that the arnica-bottle won't make as good as new. In short, 'Easy Money' may be slightly disfigured, but he is still emphatically in the ring.

"And now," he muttered, "let us take a look around and see just what kind of place it is I have got into."

He had his match-box in his pocket.

"Fool that I was," he thought, "not to have used it in the cave instead of recklessly charging around in a strange place in the dark."

Thus, he was soon able to make out that he sat at the bottom of a smooth, circular shaft extending up into the rock. Just how far this might ascend he was unable to tell by the tiny flare of his matches, but since it was evidently the hole down which he had fallen, he estimated it, by his injuries, at about twenty or twenty-five feet.

Nor was there any way definitely to ascertain, for the utter absence of any foothold on the sheer rock-walls must have baffled even a more expert climber than himself. True, there was a wooden box or sluice at one side of the shaft down which one could plainly hear the sound of falling water, but after vainly essaying once or twice to shin up this the detective had to admit that in his present bruised and shaken condition the task was beyond him.

"I guess I don't get back into that cave up-stairs — at least, not this way," he finally admitted, after seeing that the only result he was likely to attain was to still further tear his already damaged apparel. "And," he added, "since there doesn't seem anything here of especial interest, I suppose I might as well be leaving."

He had already noticed a crevice in the rock on one side of the shaft wide enough to admit the body of a man, and he naturally reasoned that this, if followed, would lead to the outer air, terminating, no doubt, in the entrance at the foot of the quarry which Heath had taken when followed by his men.

It was, of course, up and down this shaft, so Jones figured it, that the superintendent made his way to and from the cave.

"Though, how he does it, not having wings, certainly beats me," said the detective, glancing again at the smooth black hole yawning above him.

"And what's 'more," he exclaimed, his thoughts reverting back to the scene in the cave, where he had stood watching the other at his work, "it's funny I didn't notice the aperture in the floor. By George," with conviction, "there wasn't any. He walked all over that side of the room, and it was solid everywhere he moved. It must be that he covers it with a trap when he is up there, in order to keep the light from penetrating down here and so showing the way to anybody who might follow him this far on the road to his retreat."

But while the detective stood cogitating on this point he was suddenly startled by hearing a soft, swishing noise above him in the shaft. Nearer and nearer it came, and hastily lighting one of his few remaining matches, he held it at arm's length and stared up into the darkness.

At first he could see nothing at all, but just as the feeble flame of his taper was about to die out he descried the shape of a wide platform bearing down upon him.

In an instant an explanation for the whole set of phenomena which had so puzzled him flashed upon his mind.

It must be that among the other conveniences which Heath had installed in this retreat of his was an elevator. He remembered now that he had seen a stout cable on the opposite side of the upper cave, but having so much else to occupy his attention at the time, had paid little heed to it.

In this way, too, he had remained ignorant of the shaft which had so nearly ended his career, for the elevator-platform being flush with the floor completely concealed it.

Then, when Heath had turned out the lights and left it must have been to step on the car and ascend to some exit at the top of the cliff, or else to some other cavern on a higher level—probably the

latter, Jones thought, since the return of the car denoted that the superintendent was about to go out the same way that he had come in.

It did not take the detective long to comprehend these points. A heavy elevator-platform swooping downward and threatening to change one's proportions into those of a griddle-cake is apt to quicken the perceptive faculties.

In fact, "Easy Money's" opinion was formed in the brief space intervening between the "Oh!" of astonishment he uttered when he first saw the thing bearing down upon him and his "Ah!" of relief as he slipped hastily aside into the crevice and heard it grind down with a dull thud upon the spot where he had just been standing.

"Lucky thing for me," he muttered, "that it didn't happen to be let down while I was lying there knocked out and taking the count. Otherwise my friends, when they stepped up to take a last look at the remains, might have thought a porous plaster had been rung in on them."

However, he did not linger long to pass comments on the situation. Lloyd Heath was unquestionably on that descending car, and would almost immediately be coming along the passage; so, as the detective had no hopes of the superintendent's overlooking him on a second encounter, he lost no time, as he put it, in "pulling stakes for daylight."

And perhaps it was well for him that he had such a powerful incentive to urge him on, for the passage was frightfully narrow—not much larger than a good-sized rabbit-burrow, in fact—and if it had been anything less than a case of "must" it is highly doubtful whether poor "Easy Money" would ever have succeeded in wriggling through.

Pell-mell he plunged ahead, forcing himself along almost by sheer force of momentum, and leaving frequent mementoes behind in the shape of shreds of skin and clothing; but he made it.

Heath stopped to lock an iron door half-way down the passage similar to the one in the upper cavern, and by grace of this the detective gained ten or a dozen yards on the winding path.

This brought him to a point where the roof suddenly dipped and rendered further walking upright an impossibility; but he never faltered for a second. Down on his fat stomach he went, and into the hole he dived without thought of consequences.

And his daring brought a just reward, for he had only to writhe and wriggle along so for a moment before the way took a sharp upward turn, and a second later he felt a fresher breath in his nostrils as he poked his head out through the tangle of vines and bushes which Heath had cunningly arranged to screen the entrance to his retreat.

Hurriedly "Easy Money" drew himself out of the hole, and stepping quickly to one side, threw himself down, blowing and almost spent, in the concealing shadow of a huge boulder, while a minute or two later Heath emerged in more leisurely fashion, and having glanced around to see that no one was in sight, rearranged the disturbed vines and creepers over the mouth of his cave and started off toward town.

Despite Jones's precipitate flight through the passageway ahead of him, it was evident that the superintendent had seen or heard nothing to arouse his suspicions, for the precautions he took were perfunctory upon their face, and the man's manner as he walked away was that of one entirely at his ease.

The detective waited until the other was well out of sight, then, hunting out his shoes where he had left them when he essayed to climb the cliff the night before and rendering his appearance as presentable as possible, he, too, headed for the other side of the river.

The gray dawn, vague and misty, had been breaking when Heath and he emerged from the hole in the rocks, so that by the time Jones had attended to these various matters and was crossing the bridge it was broad daylight, and when he reached the center of town the east was all aflame with the gold and purple heralds of the rising sun.

"Easy Money," however, had little time to devote to the glories of a sunrise. Turning in sharply at the Ward place, he hurried up to the front door and began a vigorous yanking at the bell.

"Pretty early for a morning call," he grinned maliciously to himself, "but I've had to lose all my night's sleep, and it

won't hurt the old codger to dispense with an hour or two of his to keep me company."

So, he mercilessly kept the tocsin going until at last an upper window was thrown up and old man Ward angrily thrust out his tousled head to demand what was wanted.

"It's I, Mr. Ward," explained Jones, standing out from under the shadow of the portico. "Come down at once. I have developments of the greatest importance to tell you."

Struck by the excitement in his tone, the manufacturer leaned farther out to bend a searching look upon his visitor.

"Have you learned the secret process?" he inquired eagerly.

"No, but I'm so close to it that it can't possibly get away from me. I've found the place where Heath conducts all his secret experiments."

"Good! Good! Hold on a minute and I'll be down. I want to hear all about it."

Accordingly, his head disappeared, and a few moments later Jones heard him tugging impatiently at the fastenings of the front door.

"Come in. Come in, Jones," he urged, throwing wide the portal and disclosing himself in the somewhat airy costume of a flowered dressing-gown and a pair of carpet slippers. "Just step into the library, here. The maids will be around to clean up before long, but we can have a chance to talk there for a while without danger of being overheard."

As he spoke he ushered the other into the spacious room, and stepping over to the eastern window, threw back the blinds and admitted the morning light, fresh and exultant.

Moving on, he was about to repeat the experiment at the southern window, when he was halted by a quick, startled exclamation from the detective, and turning, followed the latter's bewildered glance.

For a moment they two stared at what they saw, then gazed at each other with mutually incredulous amazement, and then back again at the spectacle which was disclosed by the light from the window.

Out of the front of a handsome Sterling safe which stood on one side of the room, and directly around the combination, there had been cut a smooth, regular circle of steel, which now lay on the floor in front of the strong box.

The mysterious chauffeur had made another trip!

CHAPTER VII.

EXPLODING THE CHARGE.

For a moment longer the dumfounded pair, their mouths agape, their eyes goggling, stood in a sort of speechless daze; then old man Ward, somewhat recovering his faculties, sprang forward and threw open the safe's ravaged doors.

With shaking fingers he ran through the contents of the thing, hastily counting up the bills and silver in the money-compartment and checking off from memory the tally of securities and documents.

At last he had finished, and rose slowly to his feet.

"Same old story, I suppose?" said Jones, with a glance of inquiry. "Nothing missing, eh?"

"No, you are wrong," with a shake of the head. "The cipher formula which Heath gave me last night has been taken."

"The cipher formula?" incredulously. "Why should he take that, when he gave it to you himself?"

"How should I know?" a shade tartly. "You are the one who is supposed to furnish explanations for these things. All I can tell you is that it is gone."

"But it seems incredible," muttered the detective helplessly. "Why on earth should a man go to the trouble of cracking a safe merely to steal something that he might just as well have kept in his own hands? Besides," he added, "I would almost have been willing to take oath that he spent the entire night in that cave."

"Perhaps," suggested Ward, not without a touch of sarcasm, "those wonderful deductions you have been airing are not so well founded as you think and Heath is in reality innocent."

"No—no," protested the detective hastily; "that could not be. It has all dovetailed and fitted in together too neatly for me to be mistaken. And I cannot swear that he was in the cave,

you know. In fact, come to think of it, he almost positively was not. He must have left by an upper entrance when I fell down the shaft, come over here and done this job, and then returned when I saw him leave the place in the morning.

"Why, of course," he exclaimed. "He went to the cave for his tools and apparatus, and took them back there again when he had finished with them. In fact, this work only makes the case against him stronger than ever."

"But why should he steal his own paper?" queried the other skeptically. "You haven't as yet given any explanation for that."

"Oh, can't you see through that game?" asked Jones, all his assurance returned. "Why, that was merely for a blind. Our young friend had begun to get frightened and to think he was suspected—no accuser like a guilty conscience, you know—so he says to himself: 'I'll throw a strong bluff. I'll make a plausible excuse and get Mr. Ward to keep this paper for me in his safe; then I'll crack the safe and steal my own paper, which will convince everybody that it is not I who have been doing these various jobs.' See?"

"Yes, I do see," cried Ward, with an ominous flash to his eye. "The impudent scoundrel! How long will it be, Jones," turning sharply to the detective, "before you will be ready to order the fellow's arrest? I warn you that I am so wrought up over this last occurrence that I may not be able to keep from blazing out at him if I come in contact with him to-day!"

The sleuth pondered for a moment before replying.

"Well," he said at last, "if you feel that way about it I don't know that there is any use in waiting. We can rest pretty well assured that we'll get all the corroborative evidence we need, as well as the formulas for his secret preparations, in that cave of his. Perhaps, on the whole, it will be better to come crashing down on him with an arrest now when he is not expecting it than it would be later. He will be liable to say something in his excitement that can be used against him."

"You would sanction an immediate arrest, then?" demanded the manufacturer eagerly.

"Yes," assented "Easy Money." "So far as I am concerned, I can see no valid objection."

"Come on, then," urged Ward, seizing him by the arm. "Let us go down to the factory and have it out with him."

"But," protested the detective, "let me go to the hotel first and change my clothes and get a bite to eat. Look what a sight I am," glancing down at his torn and disheveled raiment.

"No," insisted Ward; "you look well enough for the work we have in hand, and as for breakfast, we can have that while my buggy is being brought around. I cannot feel an easy moment while that rascal remains at liberty. I want to see him denounced and clapped behind the bars as speedily as it can be done."

Accordingly, it was not more than fifteen minutes later that the old man, scrunched up on the seat of his buggy, between Jones on the one side and an almost equally fat policeman on the other, was urging his blooded mare down the main street at a 2.40 clip.

"I ought, by rights, to be arristin' you yersilf, Misther Ward, f'r such scandalous dhrivin'," jolted out the policeman as they whirled along, "but, begorra, so long as ye don't run down any poor hilpless autymobile I'll let ye go this time, pr'vided ye promise niver to do it again."

The only answer the manufacturer vouchsafed was to give the mare another lick with the whip and to push her along faster than ever.

So they finally dashed up to the factory, and Jones and his client having taken seats in the office, with the policeman ensconced in a closet ready to appear when he should be needed, word was sent out to the superintendent that the president desired to speak with him.

In five minutes or so Heath entered, cool, self-possessed, thoroughly master of himself.

"By Jove," thought "Easy Money" Jones enviously, "the fellow must have nerves of steel. Here he has been skylarking around all night, cracking safes and what not, yet he looks as though he had gone to bed with the chickens and knocked off his regular eight hours on a spring-mattress."

The superintendent glanced with a slightly supercilious smile at Jones's rather tatterdemalion appearance—the detective thought there was a quick, significant comprehension in the look—then he turned to his employer with respectful inquiry.

"You sent for me, sir?" he said.

"Sent for you? Yes, indeed, I did send for you, you sneaking, treacherous—"

Jones quickly interposed.

"You must not mind what Mr. Ward says this morning, Mr. Heath," he cried eagerly, striving to ameliorate the effects of his companion's vehemence. "He is overwrought and excited. And no wonder, either," he added, "for another of the Sterling safes has been cracked—the one, in fact, that is in Mr. Ward's own library."

"What?" exclaimed Heath, falling back a step, while his face went deathly pale. "But of course," he questioned sharply, "there was, as usual, nothing missing?"

"No; in this case the cracksman made an exception to his usual rule. There was something missing—a paper, in short, which I believe you yourself gave to Mr. Ward last night for safe-keeping."

The detective had expected some kind of demonstration from the young man before the interview was concluded, but it can hardly be said that he was prepared for one at this point, or at any time looked for the kind of one that was forthcoming.

For a moment Heath shrank back, seemingly completely overcome at the news; then he caught himself together as though a sudden suggestion had come to him and sprang across the room to tower menacingly over old Ward, his eyes flashing, his face working convulsively in the intensity of his passion.

"You old cheating fraud!" he roared at the startled and terrified president, "don't you come down here trying to work off any such slick game as that on me, because I won't stand for it! My cipher stolen, eh?" laughing mockingly. "Yes, I know just how much it is stolen. It has been cribbed by you, so that you can work over it and get the secret out of it without having to settle with me!

"And you thought that I would swallow any such cock-and-bull story as that it had been taken?" he questioned sneeringly. "Jove, you must have thought me green. Come, now, Mr. Ward," sternly, "give it up and I'll say no more about it, but call the thing a good joke."

The magnate was so flabbergasted by this unexpected turning of the tables that he was beyond making an answer, and Jones, who had rushed over to his side, took it upon himself to reply.

"Do you mean to charge Mr. Ward with stealing this paper of yours?" he demanded.

As a matter of fact, the idea had come to "Easy Money" that the charge might not be far from the truth. How easy it would have been for the old manufacturer to claim that the cracksman had taken the paper, which he probably had in his own pocket all the time!

"I certainly do so charge him," responded Heath belligerently; "and unless he gives it up jolly quick I can tell him there are going to be some lively doings around here."

"Then," probed Jones quickly, "you are willing to swear that the paper was in the safe when you finished cracking it last night and took your departure?"

"When I did—what? Look here," turning sharply on the detective, "you may be only crazy, but, by George, I'm going to have an explanation of what you mean by that before either of us is ten minutes older."

"And, by George, you can have it without waiting two minutes," retorted the other with spirit. "It's no use for you to bluff any longer, Lloyd Heath. You have played a deep and a clever game, but you have come to a show-down now, and you might as well knuckle under and admit that you are beat."

Heath stared bewildered at him a moment from under frowning brows; then his face relaxed, and he began to laugh.

"I actually believe," he said, "that this fat slob does me the honor to think that I am the mysterious cracksman."

"Not '*think*,' Mr. Heath," corrected "Easy Money" with exaggerated courtesy. "He *knows* it!

"This fat slob, as you so gracefully term me," he went on, "spotted you as

soon as he came here as the one man who had the motive and the ability to accomplish these unexplained burglaries. I pointed out to Mr. Ward that with the stakes for which you were playing you would not have hesitated to take the risk of cracking a few safes in places which were entirely familiar to you, and where you could do the work with practically no fear of detection.

"I told him, too, that no one in Rivington, or anywhere else, for that matter, was so likely as yourself to have discovered this reagent which apparently could dissolve the most tenacious steel as easily as a lump of sugar is dissolved in water. Finally, I predicted to him, the effect having been produced upon his mind for which you were aiming, that within a very short time you would appear before him claiming, as you yourself put it, to know both the poison and the antidote, and would demand as the price of your information the promise of his daughter's hand in marriage. True to my prediction, you came to his house last night and made him that identical offer."

Heath had ceased laughing by this time, and was listening with grave attention. As the detective paused, however, he once more curled his lip in a sneer.

"Very good prophecy on your part, no doubt," he commented, with a shrug of the shoulders, "but I still fail to see where it proves my guilt. I have discovered a reagent to dissolve steel, and I want to marry Miss Ward; therefore, I must be the cracksman. Is that your argument, Mr. Detective? '

"Not entirely," returned Jones; "for, added to it, I will tell the story of how you were followed to your secret lair in the old stone-quarry last night, how you were seen to prepare there the apparatus and appliances which you needed for your nefarious task, how you were trailed thence back to town and directly to the premises of Mr. Ward"—this was not strictly true, but it might have been, and in aiming for dramatic effect "Easy Money" never allowed himself to be hampered by too literal an adherence to the truth—"how you entered the house," he went on, "and how you cut a disk from the door of the safe; finally, how the task completed, you gathered up your tools and returned to your retreat across the river, emerging thence by a different way, and coming back to town just as the dawn was breaking.

"Every foot of that journey was marked," he declared, raising his voice and leveling an accusing finger at the superintendent; "every move you made under cover of the night was noted by competent witnesses; there is a coil of evidence about you which you cannot break, and from which you cannot escape. What have you to say to that, Mr. Lloyd Heath?'

"Say?" replied Heath, standing straight up and looking him coolly in the eye. "Why, that you have either been hitting the pipe or else are the reincarnation of Baron Munchausen, for such a farrago of nonsense I never before heard in all my life!"

CHAPTER VIII.

SURPRISES IN COURT.

SUCH stupendous audacity as this fairly staggered the detective. That Heath should continue to protest his innocence even in the face of such an overwhelming array of proof to the contrary was in no way surprising; many an obstinate criminal will cling desperately to the last shred of defense in the hope that by some hook or crook he may manage to wriggle out of the toils. But here was a fellow who boldly challenged the truth of the charge brought against him and insolently defied his accuser.

Perhaps, thought Jones, the young fellow did not understand how serious was the situation; a touch of greater severity might lead him to change his tune.

Therefore he stepped to the door of the closet, and flinging it open with a melodramatic flourish, led forth the policeman.

"Mr. Heath," he said, bending a stern and forbidding glance upon the accused, "before I instruct this officer to serve the warrant which he holds for your arrest I am willing to give you one more chance. If you admit your responsibility for these burglaries, make a clean breast of the whole affair, and—er—display a more contrite spirit in regard to your misdeeds I am willing to intercede in your behalf with Mr. Ward, and I think

with some possibility of obtaining leniency for you. Otherwise," inexorably, "the law will have to take its course."

The superintendent did not seem greatly impressed by this exordium; as a matter of fact, he threw back his head and yawned.

"Oh, what's the use of wasting all this time in rag-chewing?" he broke out impatiently. "I can understand that a windy old donkey like you enjoys nothing better than to hear the sound of his own braying, but I've got work to do, and can't waste the entire day fooling around over this absurd farce you have cooked up."

He turned sharply to the policeman.

"Have you got a warrant for me?" he asked.

"Yis, sor," glancing hesitatingly at Jones; "that is, I've got a slip iv pa-aper requistin' yer prisince down at th' justice's office."

"And the charge is burglary?"

"Yis, sor; or, at least, a shtatement that yez called on Misther Ward, here, widout his permission an' thrifled a bit wid th' safe in his libr'y, belike."

"In other words, you have a warrant charging me with unlawfully breaking and entering into Ezra Ward's dwelling last night, and while there burglarizing the safe in his library?"

"Well, sor," admitted the policeman unwillingly, "I don't want to hurt yer feelin's none, but since you yersilf put it that way, far be it from me to deny that sich is th' purport of the pa-aper which I have in me pocket."

"Why don't you serve it, then?" demanded Heath coolly. "Come, my man," with a touch of irritation as the officer continued to stare uncertainly first at him and then at Jones, "as I said before, I am a busy man, and I can't afford to waste my valuable time with such tommy-rot any longer than is absolutely necessary. Therefore, as you know your duty, perform it. It is not you," with ominous significance, "who will have to suffer if a mistake is being made."

So, thus prompted, the policeman finally shuffled forward, and with anything but a good grace went through the formality of taking his prisoner into custody.

"An' I warn ye," he concluded, "that anything ye may have to say is liable to be used aginst yez."

Heath shot an ironical glance at Jones. "It's well that I was admonished on that point," he murmured mockingly. "There is no telling how much I might have given away under the excitement of the moment."

But "Easy Money" only regarded the pleasantry with a stony stare.

"You may find, young man," he adjured him severely, "before you are through with this affair, that it is not quite so much of a joke as you seem to think it is.

"Let us proceed now to the justice's office," he directed the policeman, "so that the prisoner may be arraigned and have his bond fixed, in case he still persists in pleading not guilty."

"Oh, but I shall stand upon my rights," spoke up Heath quickly, "and shall demand an immediate hearing."

It would not be fair to say that the detective received this rather disconcerting proposal with absolute equanimity; but he very speedily rallied, and bowed in grave assent. It would never do, he reflected, to let the prisoner think that they were afraid; and although his chain of evidence was not as strong in every link as he would have liked to have it, he still believed it sufficient for the purposes of a mere preliminary examination.

Therefore, he interposed no objection to the arrangement, but hurriedly called up his assistants by telephone and rehearsed in his own mind the points which he considered would be most telling for the prosecution.

The news of the superintendent's arrest rapidly spread throughout the town, and by the time the proceedings were ready to start the justice's office was packed with an eager and gaping crowd, for everybody was desirous of hearing the sensational climax to the mystery which had kept the town agog for over a month.

Jones himself first took the stand, and detailed in a most convincing manner the deductions he had drawn from the nature of the burglaries themselves, and then the investigations he had conducted, and which had resulted in the complete confirmation of his beliefs.

"I did not myself see Lloyd Heath

leave that cave and go to Mr. Ward's house to crack the safe in the library," he concluded, "but from what I did see, and from all the other circumstances in this case, I cannot believe that any thinking man will doubt he was so engaged while I lay unconscious at the foot of that elevator-shaft."

Heath's lawyer, strangely enough, made no effort to attack the main trend of this story, but contented himself, on cross-examination, with a few indifferent questions relative to time.

"At what hour was it that Heath called at Mr. Ward's house last night?" he asked.

"Exactly fifteen minutes after eight."

"And when did he leave?"

"Ten minutes after nine."

"What time was it, then, when you first saw him in the cave?"

"Probably an hour later. Say fifteen minutes after ten."

"You are sure you are correct in these answers, Mr. Jones?"

"As to the time of his arrival and departure from Mr. Ward's house, absolutely so. The other answer is, of course, only an estimate, but I think may be regarded as reasonably accurate."

"Thank you," said the attorney blandly. "That will be all."

"Easy Money" could scarcely believe his ears. He enjoyed a good duel of wits upon the witness-stand, and when the cross-examination had begun he had settled back in his chair with the anticipation of a scorching ordeal ahead of him. Yet this lawyer for the defense had asked him only three questions, and those of the most aimless and perfunctory character.

Was it possible that the defense was going to collapse without even a show of resistance?

It must be, he decided, that his story, so concise and convincing, had been more than the other side had bargained for, and that in the face of it the prisoner had realized, at last, the futility of further denials.

Yes, that must be it, he grew more and more certain when Mr. Ward and the three assistants, having been put upon the stand to corroborate the detective's recital, were each let go with only the same trivial questions as to the time that Heath had arrived and left Mr. Ward's the evening before.

There was a slight discrepancy in the testimony of the three assistants on the latter point from that given by Jones and Ward, they maintaining that the superintendent had come out of the door at exactly nine o'clock, while the other two put the time of his departure at ten minutes after nine, but the attorney for the defense made nothing of it, and the difference was really so immaterial that no one in the court-room paid any heed to it.

Indeed, the lawyer for the prosecution was on a broad grin, as he closed his case, over the utter failure of the defense to make any kind of showing.

"They evidently found they were up against a stone wall," he whispered exultingly to Jones. "Now they will probably introduce no witnesses, but will simply waive further examination and let the prisoner be bound over to the grand jury. That is really about all they can do to save their face."

But he speedily found that he was mistaken, for the lawyer on the other side suddenly roused from his air of lethargy, and turning to the bailiff, directed that the Rev. Charles Goss be called.

"Oh," commented the prosecuting attorney, smiling contemptuously as he leaned across the table to his opponent, "going to prove previous good character, are you? Well, you needn't go to the trouble. We are willing to admit anything that your witnesses may come forward and swear to. Previous good character isn't going to help your client any in this box."

But the lawyer for Heath made no answer to the rather taunting offer. Instead, he quietly went ahead having the Rev. Mr. Goss, an elderly clergyman with a benign face, duly sworn and put on the stand.

"Mr. Goss," he said when the formalities were at last concluded, "you are, and have been for the past twenty years, as I understand, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in this town, and reside next door to the church, at number two hundred and thirty-one South Main Street."

The minister bowed assent.

"Where is your residence in relation to that occupied by Mr. Ezra Ward?"

"About three blocks farther down, on the same side of the street."

"About a fair ten minutes' walk, then?"

"Just about that."

"Are you acquainted with Lloyd Heath, Mr. Goss?"

"Very well. He is an attendant at my church, and I also meet him frequently at meetings of the Public Library board, to which we both belong."

"Did you meet or see him at any time after dark last evening?"

"I did. I met him coming out of Mr. Ward's gate as I passed that way on my road to the post-office."

"What time was that, Mr. Goss?"

"Shortly after nine o'clock. I can fix the time very definitely, since I glanced at the clock when I left the house in order to see if I could catch the nine-thirty mail with the letter I was taking to post, and I noted that it was then just on the stroke of the hour."

"Did Mr. Heath speak to you when he met you?"

"Certainly. He bade me good evening, and asked me where I was going in such a hurry. When I told him, he informed me that there was no need of haste, as he had learned that the nine-thirty train was an hour late. Thereupon I slowed down my pace, and we strolled up street together, conversing on indifferent topics, until we reached Dr. Raynor's office, where he bade me good night and left me."

"You are sure that this was Lloyd Heath, the prisoner at the bar?"

"Absolutely so. It could not possibly have been any one else."

"And did you notice anything peculiar about his appearance? Coat-collar turned up and hat pulled down, as though he were trying to avoid observation?"

"Nothing of the kind at all. He looked then just as he looks now; and so far from seeking to avoid observation, it was he who hailed me when I passed him."

At the conclusion of the minister's testimony the prosecutor looked down his nose for a minute, but eventually he decided not to cross-question a witness of such unimpeachable veracity as the reverend Mr. Goss.

"After all," he whispered to Jones, "what can they make out of it? Of course, those assistants of yours are flatly contradicted—how on earth do you suppose they ever got so balled up?—but the main body of our case still stands unimpugned, for after leaving the dominie Heath still had plenty of time to get across the river and to his cave."

The lawyer for the defense, however, was not through yet, and there came a sensation in the court-room when he stood up and called, in a clear voice, "Dr. Raynor!"

CHAPTER IX.

TABLES TURNED WITH A VENGEANCE.

DR. RAYNOR, who proved to be a stout, bustling little physician, with a brown beard and gold-rimmed glasses, gave such answers to the questions asked him as to age, residence, and associations as indicated that his standing in the community was as high, and his veracity as unquestionable, as that of the previous witness.

In fact, the prosecutor glumly informed Jones when the latter leaned over to suggest a question that it would be practically useless to attempt throwing any doubts upon this class of testimony.

"If Raynor bears out Goss and continues the alibi beyond the time when you say you saw Heath in the cave," he observed sharply, "why, the jig's up. We may as well stick our little papers in our pockets and go home."

"But how can Raynor swear to any such thing unless he lies?" protested "Easy Money" earnestly. "I tell you, I saw the man there with my own eyes."

The attorney shrugged his shoulders.

"You may have seen him there a thousand times," he answered bluntly, "but if Goss and Raynor say differently you'll have a hard time making any judge or jury in Rivington put any faith in it."

And to the detective's wide-eyed amazement, that is just what Dr. Raynor did. In a brusk, positive manner, which gave conviction to every word that he uttered, the physician told how Heath had come to his office the night before

shortly after nine o'clock and had remained there chatting with him until about half an hour later, when the two of them had walked together over to the Business Men's Club, and had there engaged in a game of whist.

"With whom did you play, doctor?"

"Mr. Heath was my partner. The opposing hands were Mr. Darby, the cashier at the Citizens' Bank, and Judge Tuttle, of the Superior Court."

"And how late did you play?"

"Until just exactly midnight. Then the game broke up, and Mr. Heath and I went to bed in his apartments at the club. A water-pipe had broken in my office, I should explain, and had rendered everything so damp that it was impossible for me to sleep there. Consequently, Mr. Heath offered to share his bed with me, and I very gratefully accepted."

"What would you say, then, doctor, of a man who claimed that from shortly after nine o'clock last night Mr. Heath was either in a cave on the other side of the river or else skulking about over the country as a burglar?"

"Say?" ejaculated the physician contemptuously. "Why, there are only two things to say. The man is either a liar or should consult an alienist."

"Easy Money" Jones gave a gasp which sounded like the explosion of an automobile-tire. To think that he, the great Western detective, who had solved more mysteries than you could count on fingers and toes, should thus be coolly brushed aside with an epigram! It was beyond the bounds of endurance.

Spluttering and stammering in his indignation, he grabbed at the sleeve of his attorney, and began demanding that the latter should call the witness to account. But the lawyer merely drew away from him in cold disdain.

"Oh, what's the use?" he replied wearily. "It's as he says—you're either a liar or a lunatic; and perhaps you don't know yourself just which it is. I only hope, though," he added fervently, "that I may never run into your like again."

The lawyer for the defense leaned across the table toward them with a seraphic smile.

"I have two witnesses yet to call," he announced, "Mr. Darby, the cashier at the Citizens' Bank, and Judge Tuttle, of the Superior Court."

But the prosecutor flung up his hands in a gesture of complete surrender, and grabbing up his books and papers, fled from the court-room.

"The case is dismissed," said the magistrate, "and the prisoner discharged. Mr. Heath," turning to the superintendent, "permit me to congratulate you on the fortunate ending of the case."

"Ah, your honor," spoke up Heath quickly, "but the case is very far from ended. I want warrants drawn as fast as you can make them out for the arrest of Ezra Ward on a charge of stealing a valuable paper of mine left in his charge, and also for joining in a conspiracy with this so-called detective"—casting a contemptuous look at Jones—"to prove me guilty of a crime which they knew I did not commit.

"Furthermore," he announced, advancing threateningly toward old man Ward, who sat cowering in his chair, scarcely able yet to comprehend how completely his accusation had been discredited—"furthermore, I intend to bring civil actions against you to the amount of one hundred thousand dollars for false arrest and for defamation of character!"

The manufacturer weakened like a cur before the menace in the other's tone and manner.

"Oh, Lloyd," he begged, "don't be so hard on me. It was all a mistake into which I was coaxed against my will by that fool yonder," with a malevolent glare at the unhappy Jones. "Don't have me arrested, Lloyd, and don't sue me. You and I can get together and agree upon things without going to any such lengths as that. You've always found me fair in my dealings with you, haven't you? Well, I promise to be more than fair now."

A gleam of triumph shot into Heath's eyes. The detective noted this, and at once put his own construction on it, for even in an hour of such crushing defeat "Easy Money" could no more help drawing inferences than he could help drawing his breath.

"Aha," he murmured, "the rascal sees that he had the whip-hand now, and he is going to force his advantage to the

furthest limit. Old Ward will have to give his daughter to him whether he wishes or not, and also whether she wishes or not. Otherwise, he may expect no mercy."

Meanwhile, the old manufacturer was quavering on through appeals and protestations, while the superintendent stood at one side with frowning brow, pretending to consider.

"One thing must be understood, though," said the young man firmly—"that before anything else is done, and before I make any promises of leniency, that paper which I gave you last night must be restored to me."

"But how can I restore it?" cried Ward, throwing out his arms. "I haven't got it, Lloyd. On my honor I never took it."

His denial was so patently sincere that even Heath, with all his suspicions, could no longer doubt.

A sudden look of desperate terror darkened the superintendent's eyes, and all at once his face grew haggard and lined.

"Who has it, then?" he demanded fiercely. "It certainly didn't vanish of its own accord. Who has it, I say?" seizing the other by the shoulder and shaking him to and fro.

"How do I know?" wailed Ward, wincing and trying to break loose. "All I can tell you is that the mysterious cracksman broke the safe open and the paper is gone."

"Ha!" cried Heath, with an oath. "The mysterious cracksman, eh? I never could understand the fellow's motive before, but I begin to see it now. It is this paper he has been after all the time, for he cracked only those safes to which I had access and where I might have put it—the two at the factory, the one at Judge Hazelrigg's office, and the one at the Business Men's Club. He evidently knew that I had it, and also knew its value. But who," rumpling up his brows and thrusting his fingers wildly through his hair—"who can he be?"

"Easy Money" Jones, who had been an interested listener to the colloquy, roused himself with a sudden start and very stealthily slid off his chair and started for the door.

Once outside, he removed his hat and let the brand-new conception which had taken root in his brain grow and expand.

"Who is he?" he whispered to himself. "I don't know, either, just now, but, by Jove, I am going to find out!"

CHAPTER X.

SWAPPING INFORMATION.

"So, it was this precious paper of Heath's that the cracksman was after," ruminated Jones, his brows drawn deep in thought, "and not, as I conjectured, a demonstration of the efficacy of a new resolvent for steel. Well, that puts an entirely different face upon the matter. We must rub out all the old calculations and start with a clean slate.

"And now let's see what we have to go on?" he pondered. "First, that he wanted the paper; and second, that he got it. But how did he know or suspect that it was in Ward's safe? That he should have gone after it the very first night that it was placed there looks too pat to be entirely a coincidence.

"Who knew that it was there, then? Heath? Yes, but he didn't take it. He is too worked up over its loss. Nor would he be likely to have told any one of its being there.

"Ward? Yes, but neither did he take it nor tell any one of its presence in the safe. Had he done so, he would certainly have weakened and confessed in his fear when Heath started after him.

"That leaves me, and I am very sure that I, likewise, neither took the paper nor told any one about it.

"And there was nobody else. Heigho!" broke off "Easy Money" mournfully, "I don't seem to be getting any place very fast with my present reasoning.

"Could any of the servants have overheard and given it away, I wonder?" he went on, still hammering away at his idea. "No, I remember that Ward mentioned that none of them were at home except old Martha, and she is too deaf to hear thunder.

"And Miss Harriet," reflectively, "is, of course, out of the question.

"Miss Harriet!" drawing himself up short and dragging excitedly at the single thin lock which streaked across his

bald forehead. "I had forgotten all about that; but, by Jove, she had a caller last night—this 'Ned! Ned!' whom she seemed so glad to see. More than that, they sat just next to the thin partition between the parlor and the library. I could hear their voices when I was scrooged behind that miserable bookcase, and they were talking low, too. No doubt they heard on their side every word that was spoken in the library.

"By Jove," and he smashed one pudgy fist down into the other. "I believe I've got it this time, and got it right."

With "Easy Money," to strike a theory was to follow it hard and fast wherever it might lead, and consequently, he started off without delay upon his new tack.

He had lost his entire night's sleep, unless the period of unconsciousness when he lay stunned and insensible at the foot of the elevator-shaft be counted; he was sore and bruised in body from the vicissitudes through which he had passed, and still more sore and bruised in mind from the drubbing which had been administered to him in the court-room, yet it was characteristic of his elastic nature that with a new goal in sight, and a new problem on which to whet his peculiar talents, he was as full of go and ginger as if he had just "come out of the barn."

Nevertheless, eager as he was to start on his fresh quest, he realized that his appearance was not all that might be desired for the company he was planning to seek, for he was still arrayed in the frayed and tattered garments which had passed with him through the adventures of the previous night.

Therefore, before starting out he proceeded to his hotel and indulged in a warm bath with a complete change of clothing from top to toe.

"H'm," he commented significantly as he surveyed his chubby person in the bathtub and noted the numerous black and blue spots, "I was either a liar or a lunatic, was I, when I told about that cave over at the quarry? Well, all the bad luck I wish Dr. Raynor is that he may have the same sort of a pipe-dream every night of his life."

By the time he had finished his bath and shave, however, and was decked out in new garments, there was little to show, on the exterior, at least, of his former sorry plight, and it was with quite his usual air of jaunty sprightliness that he strolled down Main Street and turned in at the Ward place.

Mr. Ward, the maid informed him, was not at home; but that intelligence should not have surprised him, since as a matter of fact he had telephoned out to the factory and discovered that the manufacturer was there before he ever stirred from the hotel.

Nevertheless, he now betrayed considerable vexation over the news, and was apparently about to turn away, when, as with a sudden thought, he faced around again and asked if it would not be possible for him to see Miss Harriet.

The maid, upon the interchange of a small piece of silver between them, decided that it would, and accordingly, some fifteen minutes later, Harriet fluttered down to where he was waiting for her on the veranda and greeted him with a plain look of inquiry in her eyes.

"Miss Ward," said "Easy Money," dropping his voice to a confidential murmur, "I am going to be perfectly frank with you, and tell you at the outset that I am here to get some information out of you which I want very much, but which I do not think you will care to give."

"Then, I will be equally frank," she responded, laughing. "If I do not care to give it you certainly will not get it."

"Ah," said the detective; "but I do not come empty-handed, for I have some information which you would give your eye-teeth to know, but which I am under no obligation to tell you. What I propose, therefore, is a trade. You tell me what I want to know in exchange for what I can tell you."

"That ought surely to fetch her," he thought shrewdly, "for there are just two things which no properly constituted woman can resist—a secret and a bargain."

And the result showed that he was not in error, for a gleam of interest shot into Harriet's blue eyes and she dropped something of the slightly supercilious attitude she had hitherto maintained toward him.

"But how can I be sure that I really care for this information you say you are

able to give me?" she questioned cautiously.

"Well," he smiled, "we might do like the boys when they swap jack-knives. Each holds his property hidden in his hand and shows it bit by bit to the other until the trade is complete."

"All right," she agreed merrily. "This promises to be a very diverting pastime. Go ahead, but you must 'show' first."

"Well," he said, "I know that Lloyd Heath has a nefarious scheme in view whereby he hopes to force you into marrying him."

She shrank back with a little startled exclamation, and her face took on an expression of hauteur. The game was evidently touching on more intimate matters than she had reckoned upon. Nevertheless, she was "square," and after a moment she had controlled her agitation and was able to smile again.

"So far, so good," she said quietly. "What is it that you wish to know?"

"First, who is 'Ned,' who called on you last night?"

She gave another involuntary start, and for a moment appeared as though about to refuse an answer; but after a little consideration responded somewhat hesitatingly:

"Ned Braley."

"And where is he from?" asked Jones quickly.

Harriet held up an interdicting finger.

"You must first 'show' again," she reminded him.

"Pshaw!" he said pettishly. "We'll be a year getting anywhere at this rate. Come," impulsively, "I'll 'show' you my whole 'knife' and have done with it. Then, if you think it is worth a swap, you can tell me all I want to know about Ned Braley. I am willing to trust to your honor."

"Very well," she assented; and so, as briefly as might be, he told her all about the suspicions he had harbored concerning Heath, and of the efforts which he had made to show up the superintendent as the mysterious cracksman.

"I was mistaken about that," he conceded. "He had nothing to do with this strange series of burglaries. But I was not mistaken in my estimate of him as a bad man," he added; "nor was I mistaken in believing that he is determined to win you by fair means or foul.

"He has your father in his power now, Miss Ward, and his evident purpose is to force the old gentleman into persuading you to consent. There is only one way in which to overmatch him, and that is to produce the cipher paper which was stolen from him last night and disclose the identity of the mysterious cracksman."

"No," she said quietly, "there is another way."

"And that is?"

"To tell Ned Braley!"

CHAPTER XI.

WHO IS WHO?

"AND who is this Ned Braley?" questioned the detective eagerly.

"Well," she said, and a light smile played over her lips, "it is not publicly announced yet, but I don't mind telling you in confidence that he is my fiancé.

"I met him some years ago, while I was going to school over East," she explained, "and we then became engaged; but very shortly afterward," and she hesitated a moment, "something happened that made him think that a marriage between us was impossible and he wrote me that I would never see him again.

"The other day, however, after seeing or hearing nothing from him in all that time, I encountered him unexpectedly in our own factory while Mr. Heath was conducting me through it on a tour of inspection.

"He had changed greatly, of course—wore a beard, and was in workman's clothes, the few he wore," with a slight blush, "for it was in the molding-room I saw him—but I knew him the instant I saw him, and it was plain that he also recognized me. In fact, he became so agitated at the sight of me that he almost signalized our meeting by throwing a ladleful of hot metal on me, and Mr. Heath punished him for it by discharging him on the spot.

"Thus it happened that I very shortly saw him again, for as I was driving away from the factory I met him trudging down the road. I stopped him, made him tell me his story, coaxed him to cut

off his disfiguring beard, and persuaded him to call on me that evening. He did so, and we renewed our engagement. That is all," she concluded rather abruptly, "that I think I have a right to tell you."

"Just one more question," pleaded Jones. "While you were renewing the engagement in the parlor did either of you overhear from the library a conversation in the course of which Lloyd Heath entrusted a certain valuable cipher to your father for safe-keeping?"

"No," and the girl firmly shook her head; "that is a question I decline to answer."

"Perhaps," suggested Jones eagerly, "Mr. Braley might be willing to answer if I put the query to him?"

"Easy Money" had been stirring around in the storehouse of his memory, for some moments past, after a certain vague, elusive recollection which was pigeonholed there, and this last remark was prompted largely by the fact that he had just laid hands upon it and brought it to the light.

"Perhaps," he added significantly, "I could also arrange a trade of jack-knives with him. I could show him, for a starter, something about Phalanxville, New Hampshire."

The girl gave a decided start.

"What do you know of Phalanxville?" she cried breathlessly.

"Ah," said the detective, "I once knew of an old inventor there who died just after completing the discovery of a wonderful secret. What it was I never learned, but have always surmised that it had something to do with the iron and steel industry, as his investigations had run chiefly along those lines. At any rate, he considered it so valuable that he would not commit his formulas to paper directly, but transcribed them in the form of a cunning cipher, so that if anybody should come across it by chance he could not make head or tail out of the thing.

"When he was dying he told the family, assembled around his bedside, of this cipher, and promised them that it would make them all independently rich; but after he was dead, and a search was made for the cipher in the place where he said he had put it, nothing could be found.

"Nor was it believed that the disappearance was due to accident, for a brother-in-law was known to be cognizant of the cipher's existence, and it was strongly suspected that during the excitement attendant upon the funeral he had coolly appropriated it.

"I was called in, and spent some time on the case, but was unable to unearth any facts tending to support the family suspicions, and had to give it up.

"After my retirement, however, a young son of the house, convinced despite the lack of evidence that the paper was really in his uncle's possession, adopted more impulsive measures, and went on a visit of inspection to the house of his respected relative.

"Unfortunately for him, though, he was caught, and the uncle being incensed at the lack of trust thus shown, pushed the case so vigorously against the boy that he was convicted, and sentenced to two years in a State reformatory.

"And strangely enough," concluded the detective dryly, "the name of that young man was the same as that of your fiancé.

"Now," he asked, "do you think that your Mr. Ned Braley might be willing to trade jack-knives?"

She considered thoughtfully for a moment.

"Yes," she said, at length, "I think he might."

"And where can I find him?" cried "Easy Money," rising alertly to his feet.

She laughed.

"You might have some difficulty about that, for I do not believe he has any place of fixed abode just at present. When he was working at the factory, where he passed under the name of Dick Henson, he lived at a boarding-house, but since he lost his job he tells me that his home is wherever his hat is.

"However," she added, "I have an engagement to meet him at my father's office at four o'clock this afternoon, so if you will get in my phaeton and drive down there with me I shall be very happy to introduce him to you."

On their arrival at the factory, though, there was no sign of Braley anywhere in sight, and Jones found the reception accorded him, despite the fact that he was accompanied by Harriet, anything but genial.

Old man Ward merely glanced up at him and then turned his eyes away, while Heath, who was lounging around as though he owned the place, was so offensively hostile in manner that the detective soon beat a retreat and went out to sit in the phaeton.

From his brief inspection of the place, however, Jones distinctly perceived that the superintendent was the man in the saddle, and had exacted heavy terms from Ward as the price of his leniency.

The manufacturer seemed completely cowed before the domineering spirit of the other, and cringed and trembled did Heath so much as look in his direction.

"He didn't dare meet his daughter's eye, either, I noticed," commented Jones as he sat communing with himself in lonely state out in the phaeton. "I'll bet anything I've got that they've already patched up a deal whereby the girl is to be forced into marrying Heath whether she wants to or not. I think, though—"

But whatever it was that Mr. Jones thought, he never said it, for he was interrupted at that moment by the shrill sound of a woman's scream from the office.

Hurriedly he tumbled out of the phaeton, and gallantly he started to the rescue; but before he could reach the door a bearded man of slighter, more agile build had pushed past him and flung himself into the building.

Jones heard a heavy crash as he lumbered after, and another little excited cry from Harriet, but when he reached the scene all that greeted his amazed vision was the sight of Miss Ward clasped in the superintendent's arms and clinging to him for all she was worth.

"Oh, Mr. Jones," she cried, perceiving the gaping detective in the doorway and disengaging herself with a charming blush from the embrace in which she was held, "I promised to introduce you to my fiancé. Well, here he is."

"Heath?" gasped the dumfounded sleuth.

"Oh, no," answered the man, as he picked up from the floor his beard, which had come off in the scuffle, and readjusted it about his face. "Heath," pointing to a huddled mass in one corner of the office which was just beginning to stir—"Heath is there; he tried to kiss Miss Ward without her permission. I am Ned Braley, at your service."

"Yes," exclaimed the detective, his eyes distending with a sudden comprehension, "and you are also the man whom I saw in the cave over at the old quarry and mistook for Heath!"

CRAPTER XII.

MAKING MATTERS CLEAR.

THE man made no attempt to deny the assertion.

"Yes," he said carelessly; "we are cousins, you know, and there is an unmistakable resemblance — not strong enough to puzzle anybody who might see us together, but sufficient to cause strangers often to take one of us for the other."

"Then," spoke up "Easy Money" quickly, "Heath, or, rather, Alvord, for that must be his true name, is the son of your uncle who stole the cipher from your family?"

"Yes," Braley once more assented, "he is the son, and the heir to that wicked old man's dishonor. At his father's death he took up the task of deciphering the secret which the other had sought to work out for so long but had never been able to accomplish.

"They had the cipher, but I had the key to it," he explained; "for my father had entrusted the latter to me just prior to his death, together with a small vial of his resolvent, all that he had ever made, with instructions how to use it.

"Now, however," he exclaimed, "I have the whole thing—cipher, key, resolvent, and method of guarding against it!"

Old man Ward, who had been sitting at one side wrapped in a sort of lethargy, started up in trembling excitement at these words.

"What?" he demanded, with more of a return to his normal manner than Jones had seen him wear since he entered the court-room that morning. "You are really in possession of the wonderful secret? I must have it from you. I must have it, no matter what it costs."

"Oh, we'll talk that over later, Mr. Ward," said Braley, with a smile. "I

don't fancy but what we can hit off a deal that will be satisfactory to both of us."

But the manufacturer didn't want to wait.

"The sooner we can announce that Sterling safes are fitted with the safeguard the better for our business," he objected. "In the meantime, the cracksman is abroad, and every time he breaks into a safe sales go down ten per cent."

"But the cracksman will maraud no more, Mr. Ward," smiled Braley. "His expeditions and night-sallies are over."

"I only wish I could be so sure."

"Why, Mr. Ward," broke in "Easy Money" Jones, unable to resist the opportunity to appear important, and acting as though he had known it from the start, "don't you understand? Braley, here, *is* the cracksman. He has been doing all these jobs on your safes with the very excusable motive of getting hold of that cipher which Heath gave you last night, and which was in reality stolen property, having been unlawfully sequestered by Heath's father years ago."

"Yes," said Braley; then, seeing that they were all anxious for the story, he rehearsed to them briefly the details which the detective had outlined to Harriet.

"After I had been released from the reformatory," he went on, "I thought there was nothing left for me but vengeance. My uncle was dead, but I was satisfied that my cousin had the cipher, and I determined to camp on his trail until I had got it away from him and had punished him for the sins of both himself and his father.

"It took me a long while to locate him; but finally I learned that he was here, acting as superintendent of the factory under an assumed name. I secured a job here so as to keep an eye on him; but I also had to have a place for research and study where I could be free from espionage, and in prospecting around, one day, I came upon the cave over in the old quarry.

"It made an ideal spot, for there was a subterranean spring in it which gave me ample water-power for all my electrical apparatus; and from this fact that I had electricity 'to burn,' so to speak, came the idea of turning myself into the mysterious cracksman.

"I had long harbored the purpose of searching for my cipher in that way, but had been deterred by the fact that I could scheme out no way to get electric power sufficient to operate my resolvent. With it always on tap in my cave, though, it was a very easy matter to put it on wheels in the shape of an automobile and carry it around with me wherever I wanted to work. My auto I used to store in an upper gallery of the cave, raising it by my elevator to an opening which, though larger, was as carefully concealed as the one at the bottom of the quarry."

"Then it was to get your auto that you left the main cave last night and allowed me to fall down the elevator-shaft?" asked Jones.

"Yes, I was starting out then on the expedition to Mr. Ward's house which resulted in the recovery of my long-lost cipher."

"But how did you get into the house?" probed the manufacturer. "I have excellent locks on all the doors and windows."

"Why, I don't recall any difficulty about getting into the house," said Braley, with a significant glance in the direction of Harriet. "In fact, if my memory does not fail me I walked right in the front door, and unless I am vastly mistaken somebody opened it for me to walk in."

At this point, however, Heath, who had been lying over in one corner comfortably dead to the world ever since he had run the point of his jaw against his cousin's good right fist, began to manifest signs of returning consciousness, and presently he was sitting up and taking notice.

"Here, you, Henson," he spat out viciously, pointing his finger at Braley, whose false beard metamorphosed him once more into the iron-molder, "what do you want sticking your nose in around here? You clear out, now, and stay off these premises, or I'll have you arrested."

"Oh, no, you won't," came the answer, as unexpected to him as a thunderclap in January. "It is you yourself who will clear out and stay off these premises or get arrested. I have the cipher which you kept from me so long, and the key to it as well, and by virtue of those facts

I am master, not only here, but at every other safe-factory in the country."

And as he spoke he jerked off the false beard and disclosed himself in his own proper person.

"You?" exclaimed the thunderstruck schemer; then, without another word, but white to the lips, for he saw his game was up, he slunk from the place.

"Well," said old man Ward, "that leaves us looking for a superintendent here. I never thought I'd offer it to a cracksman, but you can have it, and welcome."

"And there's another position in which you'll have to accept him, father," spoke up Harriet shyly. "He cracked his way into my heart long, long ago!"

THE END.

THE CAPTAIN'S STRATEGY.

By C. C. HOTCHKISS.

A sea tale of the Revolution, involving surprises all around.

LATE on a beautiful evening in the month of May, 1777, the thirty-six-foot sloop Gloosecap stole out of the harbor of New London on her way to Greenport, Long Island. That great caution was necessary is plain from the above date, for at that period the Sound was infested by British cruisers, and nothing obstructed their range from New York to Newport, both those important ports having been recently lost to the Colonies.

On the sloop were three people: Samuel Darrell, its owner, a young man of twenty-five, and his sister Hetty, six years younger, a lovely type of the fearless Colonial maiden. The third party and the moving spirit of the trip was a little, dried-up, one-eyed man of fifty, who looked to be sixty odd, so shriveled was his face, so thin his loose gray hair.

But Mr. Isaac Quest was far from being decrepit, either in mind or body.

He had been caught in the fall of Fort Washington and sent to the prison ship Jersey; was taken out to act as a pilot for a British patrol boat, escaped by jumping into the sea and swimming to the Long Island coast, and finally had become one of Washington's unobtrusive but most trusted agents in the loosely organized secret service of that day.

His present mission was to learn the strength of the enemy at Sag Harbor, with a view to the breaking up of that depot of supplies.

That the errand might appear to be one of peace, should the sloop be molested during the trip, there were no arms aboard save the single pistol belonging to the spy, the girl being taken along that color might be lent to the harmless nature of the trip. Moreover, she could help work the little vessel after the spy had been placed ashore in the woods.

At ten o'clock that night the Gloosecap ran into Greenport after an eventless trip, and there learned that Washington had been forestalled. For the night before, Colonel Meigs, of Guilford, commanding a whale-boat expedition, had rowed across the Sound and descended on Sag Harbor, burning a gunboat, a transport, and the storehouses of the British, and capturing about a hundred redcoats. With his prisoners and his plunder he had returned to Guilford without the loss of a man.

This was great news, but it made the errand of Quest fruitless and rendered his stay in the neighborhood dangerous; for the British force at Canoe Place was already overrunning the country, and not only would the spy be liable to capture, but the sloop was in danger of being seized. The trio on board quickly decided it to be imperative that they return at once to New London.

At midnight the tide was running ebb, and by the time the little vessel was off Orient Point, the wind, which had been decreasing, failed altogether, leaving the

Gloosecap at the mercy of the waters of the mill-race that pour from Peconic Bay, and the rush to the ocean of the flood that churns through Plum Gut, while, to make matters worse, the air turned cool and a thick night fog arose from the whirling water.

Wrapped in the dense mist, the sloop drifted wildly, and in a few moments those aboard had lost their sense of direction; they only knew they were rapidly getting out to sea. By three in the morning it was plain that they were well on the bosom of the ocean, for a long, low ground-swell now swung them with a motion as regular as the beat of a pendulum.

The wind was dead, the sea was dead, and everything buried in a dense fog.

The hours wore on. The spy fell asleep, curled up in the little galley forward, and as it grew light the girl went to rest in the cabin, leaving her brother alone in the cockpit.

As the sun rose he felt its heat through the fog blanket and knew it would soon clear, but not a breath of wind came with the sun, and the boat lay in the trough of the long swells that lifted her lightly, passed under her, and went on to die in thunderous surf somewhere on the coast to the north.

It was seven o'clock when the fog dissolved. In ten minutes the horizon was clear. The ocean lay like a polished sheet of steel, waving lazily under a cloudless and windless sky. To the south loomed Montauk Point; to the west lay Gardiner's Island, a blue sheen, while Gull Island was but a faint blurr on the horizon.

But the eye of young Darrell scarcely noticed these points. His attention was fixed upon a topsail schooner lying becalmed some mile or more to the south. He leaned forward and, taking the glass from its slings in the companionway, gazed long at the stranger.

There was no flag at her peak, but all her plain canvas was set, and he knew that the yellow spot in front of her foremast was a brass swivel gun, and that the vessel was no trader. The burning question remained: Was the schooner a British patrol or a Yankee privateer?

Darrell was inclined to think the latter; the sheer of her deck, the rake of her masts, and her rig were all unlike the cumbersome English pattern. He waked the spy, who took a long look at the vessel from the cabin window. When he finally closed the glass there was something like trouble in his single eye.

"My lad, that yonder is the British patrol boat Devil Fish. She was captured on the Hudson after we lost New York, and refitted. And a devil she is. How do I know it? Because, my son, 'tis the very craft I piloted for three months and escaped from. I know her as I know my hand."

He lifted his hand and looked at it.

"Suppose they take a notion to board us!" said Darrell, with consternation on his face. "Look at that! There goes a gun!" Quest clapped his glass to his eye again.

"Aye and there goes her bunting. 'Tis the English ensign, lad. She wants to know your colors."

"And there's not an ensign aboard, Isaac!"

"Then 'tis likely she'll visit ye shortly —with a boat, if the calm holds, and with a ball if the wind rises and ye attempt to run."

"And if they board us?"

"See now," said Quest, forcing a laugh, "ye are no zany. Well, if they board us 'twill be the yard-arm for me, a prison ship for thee, and God knows what for the lass. Wake her, but let her not go on deck. A petticoat in sight is an invitation to those fellows. Were it any boat in the world but the Devil Fish I might hope we could cozen her."

The girl was aroused and the situation explained. The conditions were menacing, but beyond a knitting of her dark eyebrows she appeared untroubled.

This was that she might hearten her brother; for herself she felt like crying, but she knew that a breakdown on her part meant no less than panic for him.

The young man had never faced such a position. He did not lack courage; he lacked means to show courage; to him tame submission seemed horrible, and the means of resistance was not at hand.

"What would you advise, Isaac? Something must be done."

"We lack weapons and must use wit

instead," put in Hetty. "They must be deceived and they mustn't board us. Samuel, you must go to them before they come to us. Tell them some story; say that we are from Sag—driven out—or something. We must not surrender and we cannot fight."

"Aye, the lass is right," said the spy. "Ye must go to them, though I'm loath to have ye risk yerself for my sake."

"Risk!" exclaimed Darrell as he felt the force and hope in his sister's words. "Isn't the risk greater if they come aboard of us? They may come, anyway, to see if my yarn is true. I shall not report you as being here, and yet there's no room to hide a dog on the Gloosecap."

"There is, indeed," said Quest. "If ye leave this craft ye would drop yer jib —and by accident I'll be under it when it comes down. Do ye see? I know we be chancing things, and I wish to say now that I'm determined not to be taken. I have one shot for the man that sights me—and then there's plenty o' room over the side if worse comes to worse. If ye are going, lad, ye had best hurry."

"Right," said the young man, as though waking from a dream. "Get into the lee of the jib and I will drop it. God knows what is before us."

He kissed Hetty, straining her to him, but the girl did not whimper. The old man held out his hand.

"What a coil I have brought ye to, lad. I ask forgiveness of ye both. I could not know."

"It is all in the line of duty, Isaac—and we may pull through. Good-by, and God bless you."

He spoke cheerfully, running up the little companionway to the deck. He dropped the dingey from its davits, then went forward and loosened the jib halyards. The little old man had snaked himself from the galley hatch and lay along the heel of the bowsprit, his cocked pistol in his hand.

II.

To those who looked from the schooner all appeared natural. It was fairly evident that the single man aboard the sloop was about to put off, and Captain Dacre, who had just arranged for a boat to board the stranger, countermanded the order and waited.

When, some time later, young Darrell pulled under the stern of the schooner and saw the name Devil Fish in large letters, his heart went down. In a few minutes he climbed over the side and was at once taken before Captain Dacre, who stood on the quarter-deck. During the passage the young man's brain had worked hard and to purpose.

"What sloop is that?" asked Dacre, sternly eying Darrell and noting both his bearing and the superior style of his clothing; that is, he was not dressed in either leather or coarse woolen, and bore none of the air of a rustic.

"That is the Gloosecap, out of Newport to Canoe Place and back, sir," said Darrell, saluting easily, though his heart was going like a drum.

"You are not a fisherman?"

"I am not."

"What are you doing in these waters, sir?"

"Returning from Canoe Place after bearing a message from General Pigot."

"Have you no papers?"

"No, sir."

There was an assertiveness and self-confidence about the young fellow, who looked to be less a sailor than a gentleman. Captain Dacre did not like it. He wished his prisoner to cringe before him—as most of them did; at the same time he wished to be sure of his ground.

"This is a likely story to tell me, young man. If you had a mission, you had papers! Explain yourself, sir. I believe you are a cursed Yankee!"

"I beg your pardon," said Darrell, keeping his eye fixed on his questioner and throwing his head up. "I presume you are at liberty to insult me on your own deck. When I report to General Pigot I will tell him what you say. I am not in the regular service, sir, but I have proved valuable, to General Pigot, nevertheless, and I have done a favor or two with my boat for Sir Peter Parker. You have not heard the news, evidently!"

"What news?" asked Dacre, somewhat taken aback at the spirited return made by the young man, and also influenced by the free use of titles which, as a provincial himself, he worshiped.

"This," answered Darrell, with the desperate feeling of a gambler staking

his all on a single card. "I was sent to Canoe Place to order the troops stationed there to proceed at once to Sag Harbor. I delivered the order, hence have no papers. General Pigot got wind of a contemplated raid on the storehouses at Sag, and I was sent with the news. I was too late. The Yankees got there night before last, burned everything, and carried off more than one hundred men. I learned this last night and put back only to be caught in this calm. There is my story, sir."

Dacre swung around to his officers.

"This is news indeed, gentlemen!" he exclaimed. "We will proceed to Sag Harbor at once and test the truth of the story. If it is as stated, our duty lies there, at present. If it is not the truth, sir," he added, turning to Darrell, "I shall hang you like a dog. What is your name?"

"Darrell. Samuel Darrell."

"Ah! Any relation to the late Samuel Darrell, of Westchester?"

The young man's face flushed. That his namesake had been a Royalist was the skeleton in the closet. For years politics had divided the family, and to Darrell it now looked as though his dead, and to him, dishonored relative would be the means of present salvation.

He answered at once: "He was my uncle, sir."

"That alters your case somewhat," rejoined Dacre. "I knew your uncle long before his house was sacked and he himself killed in a Skinner raid. However, when the wind rises we will go to Sag."

"And what of me, sir, and my boat yonder?" inquired Darrell, assuming more confidence than he felt.

"Aye, and what of me, Captain Dacre?" put in a tall, black-eyed officer clad in military undress, pushing his fine person in front of Darrell. "You know that, weather permitting, I was to be in Newport to-night. It will hardly do for my own mission that I dance about Sag Harbor for an indefinite time."

"True, Bellmore," said Dacre, turning to the last speaker. "I had forgotten your mission; but, by Heaven, you'll never let one forget you! What's to be done? My duty in Sag Harbor seems clear—even imperative—"

"So is the solution clear," returned the black-eyed man. "I will simply and by your leave take this young man prisoner and go to Newport in his boat. I will hand him over to General Pigot in person, and you won't deny that as a fair test for his yarn."

He laughed easily, shaking his broad shoulders.

"Have ye a seaworthy craft and a hand to work her, sir?" he added, turning to young Darrell with the air of having had his proposition already accepted.

"I have one hand aboard," replied Darrell.

"Are you willing to take the risk, captain?" asked Dacre. "If so, I place the entire outfit in your charge."

"It is small risk, I assure ye, sir. I have no doubt of the word of this young dog. Faith, to be true, sir, unless I am far amiss I know his sister. Hetty, by name. Ha?"

He turned to the young man again. Darrell simply bowed and bit his lip. This was probably one of the audacious moral outlaws who had met his sister when she was caught in New York on its fall the year before.

"By my faith, gentlemen," continued the debonair officer, "it behooves me to be careful of my prisoner's feelings, for if he be as furious as his sister is fair I am in great danger. I knew her in New York—a coy damsel. It was I who procured her a pass through the lines to save her from—no matter whom. She went East, ha?"

He turned again to the young man.

"My sister is at home," answered Darrell, flushing darkly.

"Aye? Then to her house will I go and claim my reward," he rejoined lightly and with the impudence of his class. "I well remember the charming witch. Perhaps she will be kind, now that I have her brother a prisoner. A fair exchange is no robbery."

The group of officers laughed aloud. Young Darrell controlled himself, but his heart burned and his fist closed as though it would like to make acquaintance with the handsome, sneering face before him.

"Are you ready to go aboard now, Bellmore?" asked Dacre. "I think we

will have wind ere long—within two hours."

He cast his glance along the horizon.

"Not I—with him," was the laughing response. "That cockle-shell will not carry the two of us with my traps, nor am I ready. I will have to ask for a boat later, captain."

"Take one and welcome, but 'twill be a long pull. Now Mr. Darrell, return to your sloop," said Dacre. "You were fortunate in finding one to identify your family, else it might have gone hard with you. As it is, you can serve me as well as Captain Bellmore and yourself. When the wind rises work this way. You understand the futility of attempting to escape."

"I have no desire to escape, sir," returned Darrell. "I am obliged to you for your consideration."

He saluted the group of officers, and in a few minutes was on his way back to the sloop, rowing easily, though it was all he could do to prevent showing a wild hurry.

For a daring scheme had boiled into his brain and was stirring his blood to a fever. He would capture his passenger —a British captain. Providence had placed the insolent officer in his power; his visit to the schooner had accomplished all he had hoped for—and more. The whole would be a fitting climax to Meigs's victory.

III.

"Did you ever know a Captain Bellmore while you were in New York?" Darrell asked his sister as he went down into the cabin of the sloop.

"Never," she replied.

"The liar! He's an impudent scoundrel and claims he knew you well, having even gone so far as to obtain a pass for you."

Darrell was looking out of the port and could not see the sudden rush of color that swept to his sister's cheeks. Her face paled again as suddenly as it had flushed.

"I know of no Captain Bellmore or any such British officer," she said.

Darrell went forward and hoisted the jib. The spy, screened by the rising sail, slipped back into the galley. A few moments later the trio met in the cabin, where the young man detailed all that had happened.

He then proceeded to explain how easily the capture could be accomplished despite the evident power and weight of the intended victim.

"Hetty can be at the wheel. I will go into the cabin and drink with him. At the proper time I will give the signal and throw myself on him, at which you, Isaac, will appear from the galley and cover him with your pistol."

"He may surrender," said Hetty, "unless he suspects his danger the instant he sees me. I did not bridle my tongue in New York. If Captain Bellmore knows me he knows I am a Whig —harmless enough as a woman—but a Whig. The instant he sees me he will suspect you. The boat that brings him may take you back a prisoner."

"What's to be done, then?" inquired Darrell, turning to Quest in consternation. "He's liable to put off any moment. By Heaven! I think they are working at the davits now!"

"Then the lass mustn't be seen—as a lass—and yet she must be used at the helm. Now, would ye—"

"I know," broke in the girl. "If you two will give me the cabin for a few moments, I'll turn myself into a man until the boat gets away again. There are plenty of oilskins about."

The wind came as the girl was dressing. Darrell was at the wheel, the spy out of sight in the galley. Even as the young man eased the sheets and directed the sloop's course toward the schooner, he saw a boat leave the latter's side, and his heart began to beat rapidly in anticipation of the coming struggle.

Considering the time spent on her disguise, the girl's transformation was wonderful. She was clad in old canvas breeches and her small feet wallowed in sea-boots so large and heavy that she could scarcely pull them along.

Her hair was tied back, queue-like, with a piece of common marline and its luxuriant length hidden down the back of a shabby oil-skin jacket. Her face was smutted with charcoal from the galley stove and her fine head lost in the depths of the immense sou'-wester. If she sat still and remained unobtrusive she would undoubtedly pass muster.

Darrell placed her at the wheel and went forward. His heart was now thumping as wildly as it had done on the schooner, for he had made up his mind that if discovered he would not go back as a prisoner. Like the spy, he would do what damage he could, but if beaten, he, too, would go over the side.

The laboring rowboat pushed against the freshening breeze, and ere long the tall figure of the black-eyed British officer stood upon the deck of the Gloosecap. His commanding presence showed to a great advantage on the small vessel, and Darrell realized, with a sinking heart, what it would mean to throw himself on that formidable looking officer.

Even backed by the pistol of the spy, it appeared certain that the younger man was bound to suffer, as his opponent was his superior in age, inches, and weight.

The single portmanteau was thrown from the rowboat, which at once sheered off and returned to the schooner.

The easy, debonair expression of the officer was unchanged as he glanced about him, taking in the figure but not the face of the supposed lad at the wheel, the empty cabin, into which he looked by bending, and his host who now came aft. The girl did not lift her eyes.

"You have a tidy little craft here," remarked the captain.

"Aye, and a seaworthy one, sir," said Darrell, with a growing desire to do at once that which must be done. "It may come with bad grace from a prisoner, but, prisoner or host, I have little to offer you in the way of refreshment. Neither coffee nor tea would I carry for fear of being damned were I crossed by a Yankee privateer, but I have a fair quality of rum below. Will you taste it?"

The officer laughed.

"Faith! that will I. Now, what a chance you would have at me were you a Yankee in disguise. Did I not know you for a Darrell, sir, I would never have risked myself in such contracted quarters."

The words brought the blood bounding to the young man's face, but to his great relief the officer laid his sword, with the belt wrapped around it, on the seat of the cockpit, thus disarming himself. Darrell motioned his intended victim below and followed him. Going to a locker, he brought out a bottle of rum and some glasses, which he placed on the table.

Everything seemed ready. He knew that the spy, pistol in hand, was crouched behind the galley bulkhead. He knew that his sister was ready and waiting for the signal, which was to be the word "king," in some reference to the British sovereign. She was to throw the sloop broadside to the wind and sea that the officer might be obliged to fight from the disadvantage of a leeward position.

Despite the tremendous nature of his undertaking, the young man was anxious to begin and end it, and yet so sensitive and far from brutal was his nature that he hated to take by surprise the man who now sat opposite him.

There was such a careless, trusting, good-natured air about him that the Yankee's contemplated act seemed the acme of treachery. The impudent and supercilious manner that had marked the officer while on board the schooner was no longer prominent, but Darrell was now in for it. He shut his heart against his victim.

It had been in the plan to get the officer behind the table, where he would be in close quarters, but without any outward protest the victim refused to place himself at such a disadvantage, being content to be seated on the cushioned transom near the companionway, where he looked about as though enjoying the comfort and coziness of the quarters; and this, too, without the common courtesy of removing his heavy cocked hat, though he threw his cloak from his powerful shoulders.

Darrell motioned him toward the liquor. The officer reached forward and poured himself a fair dram, then pushed the bottle to his host. The youth filled with a trembling hand and got to his feet.

"We have no ladies to toast," he began, his tongue seeming to clack from sudden dryness.

"I suggest that we drink to your fair sister, sir," said the captain soberly.

"Being my sister, sir, I cannot permit it here or now. I will, however, give

you a pledge that you have never heard, or if you have, you never drank to it."

He lifted the glass high above his head, and as though suspicious of an indefinable something, the officer followed the motion exactly, his dark eyes fixed on the speaker.

"Here, then," said Darrell, his face growing deadly pale, "is to the flag of the Colonies and *defiance to the king!*"

He shouted the last words, tossed off the liquor, flung down the tumbler, and braced himself for the shock.

But no shock of a physical nature came—not even a reproach. Instead, the tall, black-eyed officer sat and stared at him, still holding his own untasted liquor, then lifting his glass, he said quietly: "Here's to my prisoner! I thought as much!" and drank the contents.

Darrell was amazed. He felt that he had blundered somehow, but as at that moment, and in response to the signal, the sloop's helm went up and placed the vessel broadside to the increasing blast, there was nothing for him to do but to take advantage of his favorable position, and with the cry of "Isaac! Isaac!" he threw himself on the British officer.

But that individual seemed to possess an intuitive knowledge of coming events, for instead of succumbing to the projected weight of his assailant, he half rose to meet the assault and, catching Darrell by the arms just below the shoulders, held him with a grip that made the other powerless to do more than kick with his feet.

Had the event been of less significance the position would have been ludicrous.

"Hello, lad! Now isn't this a deuced fine way to treat a guest!" exclaimed the officer, holding the young man away from him at arm's length.

"Guest be cursed!" sputtered Darrell. "Look over your shoulder, sir, and know yourself to be a prisoner."

He struggled violently to rid himself from the grip of his powerful adversary. The officer turned his head and saw the spy now half through the door, his pistol-hand resting on the table, the cocked weapon leveled full at him.

For an instant he looked bewildered, and then began to laugh.

"Now, by the gods!" he shouted without relaxing his hold on Darrell. "I knew I had caught a hot-headed Yankee, but damme if I dreamed I would get so close to the commander in chief! What, Quest! Play that cursed thing in some other direction! Don't ye know me, man? Hold hard, Darrell! Easy now, till I doff hat and wig! There!"

He pushed the young man down on the locker with one hand and tore off his head-gear with the other.

The act disclosed a mat of curly brown hair, which was in strong contrast to the full-bottomed and powdered wig he had worn. At the sight Quest dropped his pistol with a cry, ran round the table and clasped the big man in his arms, and he, loosening his grasp on Darrell, lifted the spy to his broad chest and hugged him.

"Donald Thorndyke! What on earth are ye doing here?" exclaimed Quest.

"Doing here? Why, being taken a prisoner to Colonel Ledyard, unless I miss guessing my young friend's mind," returned the big man, laughing heartily.

"I think we each owe something to the other," he continued, "for though I saved you from a scrape on the schooner," he added, addressing Darrell, "you pulled me from the worst hole I was ever in, but it is too long a story to tell."

"What's the meaning of this, Isaac?" demanded Darrell, springing to his feet, his eyes not yet opened to the change of circumstances and his pride still rankling under his summary treatment.

"Easy, son," said the old man. "Get ahead, Donald. Lay a clear course."

"'Tis a small event with great consequences!" exclaimed the officer. "Probably it was Meigs that saved us both. You see, sir, the moment you confessed to the name of Samuel Darrell I knew who you were and realized the pickle you were in, and, being in one myself, resolved to save us both. I used your sister's name and treated it lightly that I might carry out the character I had assumed.

"I did get the lady a pass from New York—did she never tell you? No? Well, it was through forgery and was traced to me. Being known on land, I fled by sea, forging an order of requisition for carriage to Newport on an im-

portant mission. Were I discovered I would hang, for I, like Isaac here, belong to Washington, though my instructions are broader than Isaac's.

"Do you yet see light? I knew well enough what must be in your mind when you consented to take a British officer to Newport, but I hardly looked for you to act so promptly. I had no objections to drinking your toast or to going to New London. It is my chosen destination, for, and let me ask you to understand me, your fair sister has my profoundest regard, respect, and—and devotion, and I was on my way to her in her father's house. You cannot fail to understand me."

His tone was serious, and his words and manner too pointed to be misinterpreted. Darrell, who had listened in a wonder bordering on consternation, seemed finally to grasp the meaning of it all.

"Does my sister know you as Captain Bellmore?" he asked.

"Indeed, sir, she knows me better than that, as I can prove when you see us face to face."

"You have a strong sponsor in Isaac here," said Darrell, holding out his hand; "and your own easy treatment of me, though somewhat galling to pride, is something I should thank you for. I am your debtor, but there is a final court to which you must answer. Will you excuse me, sir?"

He left the cabin and went on deck, taking the wheel from the girl. Her eyes questioned his, for she had seen nothing and had heard hardly more.

"It is all right," said Darrell in a low tone. "He yields himself a prisoner. Go you forward to the galley, and to the cabin when I call them up. Then dress, and when ready knock on the door."

The girl, trammeled as she was, could but crawl along the deck. As she reached the hatch her brother called to those below.

"Gentlemen, do you think it safe to shift helm for New London?"

"In faith, I'm for New London, now that the schooner is out of sight," replied Thorndyke. "But should she see you again she will not wait to board you, I fancy."

"And why not?" asked Darrell.

"I'll tell you later; but alter your course now," was the answer.

The wheel was put over. The three men sat in the cockpit and talked. There was much to explain, much to wonder over, and the time sped rapidly.

"When you left the cabin, you spoke of a final court in my case," said Thorndyke, after a time. "And you meant?"

"I meant the lad at the helm," answered Darrell.

"Whom you must have pitched into the sea, for i' faith! I did mark one here when I came aboard. And what has a foremast hand to do with the matter?"

"I have known a cook to be potent over a whole ship's company—let alone a craft like this."

"Was it the cook—or can it be possible I—"

"Aye, cook and court of last resort. Isaac, will you give a pull to the jib halyard? Now, captain, look to the cabin door, please; I thought I heard a knock."

Quest jumped to his feet and went forward with a shrewd knowledge of why his absence was desired. The stranger leaned over and threw open the cabin-door, his eye encountering Hetty Darrell, who, becomingly attired in her usual dress, stood at the bottom of the steps.

The surprise was mutually overwhelming, but the reconstructed Royalist was the first to recover himself. With a shout and a laugh full of the exuberance of youth, and rare at his age, he leaped the ladder's length at a bound, and the astonished Darrell, bending low to look after him, beheld his sister clasped in the arms of the tall stranger, where she lay without a struggle.

IV.

It was somewhat later. They were all on deck and the Gloosecap was now running through the passage north of Fisher's Island, safe from all possible pursuit. Reaction had followed excitement and the story had been told.

"You see, my respected and prospective brother," said Thorndyke, "the thing hinged on my getting certain papers transmitted from Lord Howe to Sir Peter Parker; and Captain Dacre

had them—until I stole them. That is the reason I lingered aboard after you left. I had to unearth them, for I had them well hidden. The possession of these papers has been greatly desired by his excellency, and to me they are worth a commission in the army. Without that commission I was too poor to think of more than loving, but now we have nothing to conceal.

"As for the rest—your sister may tell it—only, we were pledged a year ago when I was, to put it plainly, a spy in New York. I have seen some service—had some reward, but nothing equal to this. I think that is all until I meet your father."

"Well," said Quest, pouring out and lifting a tiny drink of rum, "this should be celebrated properly. Here's to the victor of this day's work, whoever it may be, but it gets me to determine who the prisoner is. We've all had a hand in it, but which wins?"

Darrell laughed good-naturedly and pinched his sister's arm.

"Well, Isaac, if you look sharp I fancy you'll find the little blind god in command of this craft. You are safe in toasting him; so here goes."

THE ISLE OF MYSTERIES.

By BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "When a Man's Hungry," "King or Counterfeit?" "No Way Out," etc.

The outcome of a shipwreck, with comedy trimmings.

CHAPTER I.

I MEET BOFFINS.

I NOTICED her as soon as I got aboard at Naples.

She was leaning over the rail on the promenade deck, gracefully waving her handkerchief to some friends ashore. At her side stood a middle-aged woman of severe aspect, who frowned disapprovingly at the exuberance of the young girl.

"Gee whiz!" I exclaimed to myself. "What a peach! I wonder who she is! I must get an introduction before I am a day older."

I was referring, of course, to the girl and not to the middle-aged woman of severe aspect.

Indeed, if it had not been for the forbidding presence of the latter, I think I should have gone up to the girl there and then, and taken advantage of the unconventionalities of ocean travel to "get acquainted" without the formality of an introduction, for she was very beautiful.

During my tour of Italy (at the expense of my firm, be it explained) I had met many handsome women. Italian women, when they are beautiful, are very beautiful; but, in looks, this girl excelled them all, and I felt proud of my country and my flag when I saw, at a glance, that she was unmistakably American, from the tips of her shoes to her wealth of auburn hair.

I stood at a respectful distance (there was something about the middle-aged woman which made one keep his distance), watching her admiringly. She continued to wave her handkerchief animatedly until we had steamed so far out that the people on the shore were lost to view.

Then she turned to the middle-aged woman with a merry laugh. "Good-by, Italy," she said, adding: "Now for dear old America and the Stars and Stripes."

"Maude," rejoined the other woman chillingly, "I wish you would not be so enthusiastic. It's so vulgar. What would Reginald say if he had seen you?"

"Oh, bother Reginald!" cried the girl. "Really, mother, you make me weary."

"Amen," quoth I to myself. "'Bother Reginald,' say I also. I haven't the slightest idea who Reginald may be; but I imagine that he is a most unpleasant person. So her name is

Maude and that is her mother, eh? What a very disagreeable woman! What a fine mother-in-law she'd make for a fellow!"

This last reflection was quite impersonal. It must not be imagined that at that early date I even dreamed of winning the hand of the beautiful Miss Maude.

At the girl's retort the mother gave a gasp of horror.

"Slang!" she exclaimed with a shudder. "Maude! Maude! How often have I warned you not to indulge in slang! Never let me hear you use that awful phrase again. It isn't bad enough that your father made his fortune in trade, but you must further disgrace the family by indulging in the habits of the *bourgeosie*. Really, Maude, I'm surprised at you."

At that I gave up all hope of becoming acquainted with the girl; for if the mother felt aggrieved at her husband because he had made his fortune in trade, doubtless she would shrink with horror from the thought of her daughter knowing any such person as myself.

It was true that nobody could justly accuse me of having made *my* fortune in trade. I was in trade though—minus the fortune.

I was a penniless salesman for a shoe-house. True, my firm valued my services so highly that, when my health failed, they sent me to Italy to recuperate and generously paid all my expenses. Nevertheless, the fact remained that I was nothing but a common salesman, and I trembled to think of the scorn that this haughty woman doubtless would display if ever she discovered that such a vulgar creature trod the same deck as herself.

The thought was so discomfiting that I went below without waiting to hear the girl's reply to the last reproof.

Whether it was because I was thinking of the beauty of the girl or because I had not yet acquired my sea legs, I do not know, but as I started down the stairway leading to the smoking-room, I tripped, lost my balance, and plunged, head first, down the short flight of steps.

I might have hurt myself severely, if the force of my fall had not been broken by somebody getting in the way.

My head butted violently into his stomach. He was a fat man, and as I struck him amidships (to use a nautical expression) he emitted a deep grunt.

It was no make-believe grunt, but one so profound and sincere that it seemed to come from the bottom of his heart.

Of course I was profusely apologetic. Like most fat people, he was good-natured, for as soon as he had recovered his breath and his ruffled dignity, he assured me that he was willing to forget and forgive.

"In fact," said he genially, "to show that I bear no ill will, let's come and have a smoke."

Over the cigars, he grew talkative.

"What's your name, young man?" he inquired. "James Armstrong, eh? Glad to know you. My name is Boffins—John Boffins."

We shook hands as though we had just that second met each other.

A little later he looked at me wistfully.

"Young man," he said, "I want to ask you a question. Don't take any offense, please. If I've got you wrong, I'll apologize beforehand."

"Go ahead, Mr. Boffins," I said. "Ask any question you've a mind to."

"Well, it's just this," he said eagerly. "You look like a sensible young man. Do you work for a living?"

"Certainly," I replied.

"May I ask what line?"

"I'm a drummer for a shoe-house."

He bent across the table and gripped my hand cordially.

"I thought I wasn't mistaken, by Jiminy!" he cried joyously. "Young man, I'm glad to meet you. I'm glad to meet a young fellow who works for a living. I'm so sick and tired of parley-vooing with a bunch of harebrained young fools who never did a day's work in their useless lives, that this meeting brings joy to my heart. Shake hands again. Thanks. So you're a drummer for a shoe-house, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Selling shoes to Italy, I suppose, eh? Talking the Italians into buying American boots, I'll wager."

"Not exactly," I replied. "I'm traveling for my health just now."

And lest he should fall into the mistake of thinking that I had money, I

hastened to acquaint him with my firm's generosity.

"So they're paying all your expenses and letting you travel first cabin, eh?" he said. "That's what I call handsome. Well, young man, I'm mighty glad to have met you. I'm glad now that your head butted into my stomach, I am indeed. I've been pining for months past for a talk with a man who works for a living. I've seen so many of the other kind, confound 'em."

"Perhaps you're in business yourself, sir," I ventured to remark.

He looked like a retired business man. He was short and fat and very red-faced, but he had a shrewd expression.

He shook his head sadly.

"Not now," he replied, with a sigh. "I've made my pile, I regret to say, and my wife's worried me into retiring. She's got social aspirations, you see. Social aspirations and the biscuit business don't go well together."

"Biscuit busines, Mr. Boffins!" I exclaimed excitedly. "Can it be possible that you are the Boffins—"

"Of Boffins's Bitable Biscuits—certainly. That's me," he said proudly. "My picture used to be on every box (none genuine without it), but my wife objected to that when she got into society; so I had to cut out the photograph of myself and use an angel's face instead. Yes, sir. I'm the Boffins of Boffins's Bitable Biscuits, as sure as you're born."

I gazed at him in awe and admiration. Of course everybody had heard of Boffins's Bitable Biscuits. They were advertised all over the world.

Everybody knew how John Boffins had started in life as a baker's boy and had become a multimillionaire. I was proud to number him among the men I had met.

"Let's come on deck," suggested Mr. Boffins a little later. "I'd like to introduce you to my wife and daughter. You'll find the old woman a trifle chilly, I'm afraid; but my gal will more than make up for that."

I arose to accompany him, little dreaming whom I was to meet.

"By the way," he whispered, as we climbed the stairway, "you needn't mention anything about Boffins's Biscuits, you know. Don't let on that you've ever heard of them. My old woman's a little touchy on that point."

I hastened to promise him that I should forget for the time being that there were any such biscuits in the world.

"Good," said he. "Then come along. There they are, sitting over there."

He pointed, with small consideration for polite usage, and as my gaze followed the direction of his finger, I gasped with surprise. It was the beautiful girl and her haughty mother.

"My dear!" said Boffins, to the haughty mother, as we drew up before their steamer-chairs, "let me introduce you to Mr. James Armstrong, of New York. Mr. Armstrong, my daughter Maude."

The mother surveyed me critically through her *pince-nez*. The daughter acknowledged the introduction with a gracious smile.

"Any relation to the Armstrongs of Boston?" inquired the mother languidly.

"First cousin," I replied unblushingly.

The Armstrongs of Boston were howling swells, I knew. They were no kin of mine, but as they were not on board to deny the relationship, I could afford to take the liberty of attaching myself to their family for the time being.

This seemed to clear the ice a great deal. The haughty mother melted considerably on receipt of the information.

"We spent two weeks with them last summer," she volunteered. "They are most charming people."

"Thank you," I replied with becoming modesty.

"It's strange that we did not meet in Italy, Mr. Armstrong," said the beautiful daughter.

"It's more than strange; it's pitiful," I replied.

Just then a young man joined the party. He was a tall young man, very thin, and very pale-faced. He wore a monocle and a bored air.

"Reginald," said Mrs. Boffins, "allow me to introduce Mr. Armstrong—a cousin of the Armstrongs of Boston, you know. Mr. Armstrong—Mr. Reginald Van Wade, my daughter's fiancé."

So this was Reginald.

Of course I had heard of Reginald Van Wade, the most blue-blooded multi-millionaire in America.

He bowed stiffly. There was something about his manner which aroused in my breast a desire to strangle him.

Perhaps this feeling was in large part due to the fact that I had just heard that he was engaged to be married to the beauteous Maude. I don't mind admitting that I envied him.

I lingered near their steamer-chairs a few minutes, and then the mother, in her polite way, made it so unmistakably plain that I was *de trop* that I excused myself and departed.

Old Boffins and I had many chats in the smoking-room after that; but I did not have much to say to the rest of the family.

Despite my supposed relationship to the Armstrongs of Boston, the haughty Mrs. Boffins was inclined to regard me very coldly after our first meeting. I have an idea that she had been looking me up in the New York "Social Register," and, not finding my name there, had her suspicions aroused.

Reginald, too, was exceedingly haughty toward me. I met him once in the smoking-room and invited him to have a drink. He curtly refused.

The only member of the family, besides the father, who greeted me pleasantly was the beautiful Maude. She smiled sweetly whenever I encountered her on deck or in the saloon.

However, she was always accompanied by her mother or the dignified Reginald, so I did not venture to get into conversation with her.

It was not until after we had passed the Azores that I espied her sitting all alone on deck, reading a novel. It was 10 P.M., and most of the passengers had already gone to their staterooms to "turn in" for the night.

This was my chance. I hastily walked over to her.

"Good evening, Miss Boffins," I said. "I am glad to see that you are such a good sailor. You don't mind the sea at all, I suppose?"

"Oh, no," she answered. "I just love it. I have traveled so much, you know. Isn't this a glorious night?"

"Magnificent!" I assented.

There was a vacant steamer-chair beside hers. I asked if I might sit there, and she graciously assented.

I was preparing to enjoy myself immensely, and was hoping that Reginald and the haughty mother would keep away. But just as I was opening my mouth to say something, there came an awful crash and the vessel shook from stem to stern.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Miss Boffins, turning pale. "What on earth has happened?"

"I'll find out," I said. "Don't be alarmed. It's probably nothing serious."

But despite my reassuring words, my heart was beating wildly as I went in search of information.

CHAPTER II.

A DESPERATE SITUATION.

WITH the intention of going below, to inquire of somebody in authority, I rushed to the stairway.

They call a stairway a "companion-way" in nautical circles, I believe; but I am no sailor—being, as I have said, merely a humble shoe salesman—and if the reader expects to find an abundance of nautical terms throughout this narrative, he is doomed to disappointment.

However, ignorant though I was of all matters pertaining to ships and the sea, I was able to realize at once that something serious had occurred.

After the first crash, and the shuddering of the steamship as though she had been some living creature trembling with fright, there came an awful stillness, broken only by the cries of alarm from the terrified passengers, and the hoarse shouts of the crew.

This stillness I rightly attributed to the sudden stopping of the engines, and considering that we were far out at sea, with no land in sight, the realization of this fact was disquieting enough.

After one has been at sea, aboard an ocean liner for several days, one becomes so accustomed to hearing the throbbing engines that one scarcely notices it.

But let that "boom! boom!" sound come to a sudden halt and the effect is startling.

I did not get below. I was nearly

swept off my feet by the rush of panic-stricken passengers, making for the deck. Everybody, white-faced and wild-eyed, was rushing up that stairway.

Men, women, and children, beside themselves with fear, many of them only partially clothed, were struggling wildly in their efforts to reach the open air.

So great was the press that it seemed to me that several must be crushed to death.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" I cried; but nobody paid any attention to me.

Among the crowd I saw Mr. Boffins, helping Mrs. Boffins up the stairs.

"What has happened, Mr. Boffins?" I yelled; but he did not seem to hear me.

Down below, officers were shouting orders to the crew and sailors were swearing.

Then I heard somebody cry, "The pumps! the pumps!" and I knew that the situation was desperate.

A second afterward the pumps began to throb. It was a terrible sound, seeming to tell of impending death. It was like the gasping of a human being who has been mortally wounded.

Just then I remembered that I had left Maude Boffins on the promenade deck, and without waiting to find out more definitely what had occurred, I ran back to her.

I found her surrounded by a throng of fear-maddened passengers, who were wringing their hands and shrieking in their terror. Several of the women and some of the men were on their knees praying.

It was an awful sight.

"Oh, Mr. Armstrong!" cried Miss Boffins, as I reached her side, "for Heaven's sake what has happened? Is the ship sinking?"

"I hope not," I replied. "I believe there has been an accident to the machinery. Let us hope it is nothing serious."

"And my mother and father and—and Reginald—where are they? Are they injured?"

"No. Your mother and father are somewhere on deck. I saw them coming up the stairway."

"And Reginald—Mr. Van Wade—where is he?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him. I reckon he is all right. Have no fear."

"Oh, I am sure the ship is sinking. Something tells me that we shall all be drowned. And the water looks so terribly cold."

She gazed through the darkness out over the sea and shuddered.

"Calm yourself, Miss Boffins," I entreated. "There is no reason, as yet, to think that things are as bad as that. These people are crazy with fear. Let us keep our wits about us."

Just then the captain appeared on deck.

"Calm yourselves, ladies and gentlemen," he cried. "There is no danger! There has been a slight accident in the engine-room. We shall have everything repaired in half an hour. Will everybody please be quiet? There is really no danger."

But I thought I could see from his face that he was not telling the truth. Besides, I had heard the order to man the pumps.

I tried to buttonhole him, with the idea of getting full particulars as to the nature of the accident, but he broke away and plunged hastily down the stairway.

A few minutes after that the vessel gave a terrible lurch, throwing everybody to the deck, and a wail of terror, such as I hope never to hear again, went up.

Then I heard the cry: "The ship is sinking! To the boats! To the boats! Quick! To the boats!"

I did not wait to ascertain whether that cry came from those in authority or from the terrified passengers.

Mr. and Mrs. Boffins reached us just then, with Reginald Van Wade in their wake.

Without waiting for any of the crew to come to our assistance, I ran to the nearest life-boat and unfastened the ropes which held her in place.

"Quick!" I cried to the Boffins party. "Get aboard. There is no time to lose. Let us save ourselves!"

I helped Maude into the life-boat. Boffins helped his wife and the pale-faced Reginald Van Wade helped himself.

Then Van Wade and I let out the tackle and the boat, with its human load, descended to the water.

The waves, with a politeness which

could have been dispensed with, rose to welcome us. Our little craft bobbed up and down like a cork. One second we were on top of a foam-covered mountain and the next we were down in the valley, menaced on every side by towering heights which threatened to topple over and crush us.

To add to the terror of the situation the moon had disappeared behind a cloud and an inky darkness prevailed.

Mrs. Boffins screamed—not a loud vulgar scream—she was a woman who could remember her dignity even in the face of death; Reginald Van Wade began to whimper, Mr. Boffins groaned, but Maude uttered no sound. That girl had grit.

Our position was by no means enviable; but for the time being we were safe—safer, at least, than if we had been aboard that doomed ship.

And that is how I and the Boffins family and Reginald Van Wade came to be at sea in the dead of night in an open boat.

CHAPTER III.

ALL AT SEA.

For a time, we bobbed up and down on the waves. Nobody spoke; but each of us was thinking hard and our reflections were by no means of the most pleasant character.

If only the moon had shown some consideration and had come out of its retirement behind the clouds, the situation would not have been quite so bad; although it was desperate enough at the best, Heaven knows.

But the moon acted disgracefully. It resolutely kept behind the very darkest cloud it could find, and as a result we were tossed about in inky darkness.

And only a few minutes before I had praised the weather to Maude Boffins.

She had said that it was a glorious night and I had replied that it was magnificent.

And it *had* been a fine night then. The sky had appeared to be absolutely cloudless; the stars had twinkled merrily, and the moon had shone brightly. That was only a few minutes ago; but now—ugh!

Mrs. Boffins was the first to break the gloomy silence.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she moaned. "What will become of us? I know we shall all catch our death of cold. We shall all perish."

"If we perish," said old Boffins grimly, "it won't be by catching cold."

"This thing can never keep afloat in this sea," muttered Reginald Van Wade, almost in a whisper.

Just then a wave, more pitiless than the others, swept over the boat and drenched us all.

Mrs. Boffins and her daughter screamed aloud. They were sitting side by side in the stern. Reginald Van Wade groaned, old Boffins grunted.

"Don't be alarmed, ladies," I said as cheerfully as I could. "If we all keep perfectly still and don't move around we'll pull through all right. Perhaps, in the morning, when this darkness lifts, we shall run across a vessel which will pick us up."

They all seemed greatly comforted by my words. They appeared to believe what I said.

As for myself, I must confess that I was prepared for the worst. I did not have much hope of being picked up by any rescuing party. I quite expected to have the boat overturn any second.

The thing was pitching horribly. We all held on to the sides to avoid being thrown out.

"Don't you think," remarked Boffins, "that if somebody was to take the oars, we might steady the boat a little?"

"A good idea," said I. "Can anybody row?"

Nobody answered.

"How about you, Mr. Van Wade?" I suggested. "Surely you know how to handle a pair of oars."

"No! No!" cried the young multimillionaire hastily. "Really, I don't know anything about rowing."

"How about you, Mr. Boffins?" I next inquired.

"Never touched an oar in my life," he answered. "When it comes to the water, I'm all at sea. Ask me anything about the manufacture of Bitable Biscuits—"

"John Boffins!" screamed Mrs. Boffins, from the stern.

"What's the matter, my dear?" asked the old man fearfully. "Did a shark bite you?"

"No, no!" cried his indignant spouse. "But haven't I told you, time and time again, not to refer to that horrid biscuit business. Suppose somebody should overhear you?"

"Gad! I wish they would," said the self-made millionaire. "I'd be willing to carry a biscuit sign for the rest of my days, if only somebody would come along and rescue us from this plight. Jumping Jupiter! How this boat is pitching. Won't somebody take the oars and steady her? Surely, you know how to row, Armstrong?"

"I only held a pair of oars once in my life," I groaned. "That was on Central Park like. A brave park policeman plunged into the lake without stopping to take off his uniform and rescued me as I was disappearing for the third time."

"Then I protest against his taking the oars, Mr. Boffins," put in Reginald Van Wade hastily.

Then Maude Boffins spoke.

"When I was at Vassar I used to be pretty good at rowing," she said. "Perhaps I could try now."

"There's a brave girl," spoke up Boffins admiringly.

Mrs. Boffins screamed.

"Maude Boffins," she cried, "I am surprised at you. I won't permit it. How a refined and educated young lady could propose to make such a tomboy of herself, I cannot conceive—"

"But it would steady the boat, mother," protested the girl. "See how we're being pitched high and low!"

"I don't care," said Mrs. Boffins firmly. "I'd sooner perish this instant than see you act in such an unmaidenly manner. What would Reginald's dear mama say—"

"Bother Reginald's dear mama!" cried Maude impatiently. "Hand me a pair of oars, Mr. Armstrong."

"Maude," cried her mother, "I forbid you to do it, do you hear? John Boffins, if you do not forbid her I will never speak to you again."

"If somebody doesn't take those oars pretty darn quick," growled Boffins, "you'll never get a chance to speak to me again. We shall all be pitched overboard in a minute."

Just then I made an alarming discovery.

"Don't pursue this little discussion any further," I said grimly. "It's quite useless. We haven't any oars."

"What!" cried Boffins, incredulously.

"It's the truth," said I. "I forgot to look to see if there were any in the boat when we lowered her. We haven't got a single pair."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" muttered Boffins. "Confound that steamship line, anyway! This is a piece of gross carelessness on the part of the company. If ever I get back to New York, I shall write to the papers about it. The discipline on board that ship was disgraceful. There ought to have been a sailor to take charge of each life-boat. If we had an experienced navigator with us now, who knows but what we might reach land without difficulty."

"Perhaps if Mr. Armstrong had not been in such a deuce of a hurry," interposed Reginald Van Wade spitefully, "we might have fared differently. Probably while we're drifting about here all the other passengers are being rowed to land by skilful sailors. We were foolish to seize this boat and sneak away, without waiting for some of the crew to help us."

This remark roused my ire, the more so because I knew there was some truth in it.

"Nobody asked you to come along. You could have stayed behind and welcome," I said, wrathfully.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" broke in Maude Boffins gently. "Let us not have any quarreling, please. Our plight is desperate enough without that. Let's not fall out with each other."

"We'll be falling out quick enough, I'm thinking," growled old Boffins, between his teeth. "Drat these waves. How the boat does rock."

"Miss Maude is right," I said. "I apologize for my display of temper; but really it is not fair to blame me. I did what I thought was best. Who knows whether anybody else besides us escaped from that doomed ship? At any rate we are still alive. For all we know every other soul aboard may have perished."

"Armstrong is right," announced Boffins. "Let us be thankful for our luck so far. Perhaps we shall come out of this terrible experience all right after all."

Here Mrs. Boffins offered a diversion.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "it is after supper-time, and I am terribly hungry."

Here was a calamity I had entirely overlooked. Unless we were rescued pretty soon we should die of hunger and thirst, even though we escaped drowning.

Supposing we lost our reason from starvation and were seized with cannibalistic desires?

Involuntarily, I thought of old Boffins. He was the fleshiest of the crowd. Supposing we became so hungry that we lost all human instincts and became wild beasts—I shuddered for the biscuit manufacturer.

As the hours passed, Mrs. Boffins became more and more hungry, and began to whimper.

Reginald complained that he felt thirsty. Boffins remarked that he would give all his millions for a bottle of beer. Maude said nothing, but gave a sigh that spoke volumes.

To describe all the harrowing details of that terrible night would be too painful a proceeding. Even now I shudder to think of them.

After what seemed an interminable time, morning dawned.

It was a beautiful morning, too. The sun shone brightly. The clouds disappeared. The sea was calm.

But not a sail appeared in sight—not a sign of a ship. As morning passed into afternoon we became hungrier and thirstier, and all the while we were drifting—drifting—we knew not whither.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN ALL SEEMED LOST.

THE daylight comforted all of us in a certain degree. Our plight was still bad enough, but the light of the sun at least enabled us to see each other's faces, and, besides, while there was light there was hope.

At night we stood no chance of being picked up by a passing vessel, while by day there was always that possibility.

We all gazed anxiously in every direction in search of a sail; but we gazed in vain.

By the time day turned into night again we were all so weak that we could scarcely talk.

Old man Boffins groaned piteously in his anguish. Like most fat men he was a heavy eater and he must have suffered the tortures of the Inquisition.

The second night of our terrible experience the moon acted more considerately. She shone gloriously and we could see almost as well as in the daytime.

We should have been thankful for this if we had not been so weak from hunger and thirst that we could not feel thankful for anything.

The moonlight shone upon Maude Boffin's pale face, and the suffering I saw written there alarmed me. I realized that the poor girl could not keep up much longer without food. Mrs. Boffins, too, was in a pitiable condition, and Reginald Van Wade was on the verge of collapse.

Of course I could not see my own face; but if I looked as I felt, my appearance must have been startling.

"And to think," I groaned, "my kind employers sent me on this trip for the benefit of my health! This is certainly an excellent tonic for a sick man. The sea air is so delightfully bracing. Gives one such a fine appetite."

The first night we had spent worrying as to the possibilities of the boat turning over. The second night we would not have cared very much if the boat *had* upset.

"Oh, if only we had stayed on the ship!" groaned Mr. Boffins. "We would at least have drowned there with a square meal in our stomachs."

As poor Boffins spoke, those stories I had read about shipwrecked wretches turning cannibals again came into my mind, and I am ashamed to say that this time they did not appear to me to be quite so horrible.

I found myself examining Mr. Boffins's ample outlines, almost with the critical eye of an epicure.

"If only we had some water," groaned Reginald Van Wade, "I think I could stand the hunger."

"Oh, dear, I shall die of starvation," groaned Mrs. Boffins.

But not a word of complaint was uttered by Maude Boffins. As hour after hour passed, she grew perceptibly weaker, but not a murmur escaped her lips.

Thus the second night of misery passed. When morning dawned Reginald Van Wade was light-headed. He seemed to be laboring under a hallucination that he was dining at his club, and he kept giving orders to an invisible waiter to bring on the most tempting viands.

Old man Boffins listened to him in anguish, and finally threatened to jump overboard if Van Wade did not stop.

"It's bad enough to be starving without having it rubbed in," he growled.

I think he was desperate enough to carry out his threat if at that moment I had not made a wonderful discovery.

I happened to glance under the second seat from the stern of the boat, and to my surprise saw something there which caused me to shout with joy.

That is to say, I would have shouted with joy if I had possessed sufficient physical strength, but in my weak condition the best I could do was to give vent to a gasping sound such as is made by a baby who has swallowed a penny.

"What's the matter?" asked Boffins, his face lighting up with renewed hope.

For reply I summoned all my remaining strength, and leaning forward I dragged from under the seat a large tin box.

It looked like a cracker-box, and with trembling fingers I opened the lid, hoping against hope.

It was filled to the top with hardtack. Hardtack is not the most dainty fare, but it looked like roast turkey to us then.

"Food! Food!" gasped Boffins gleefully.

The delirious Reginald Van Wade caught sight of the hardtack and plunged forward toward it so eagerly that he almost upset the boat.

"Ladies first!" I said sternly, for I had begun to hate this fellow, and I grabbed two big handfuls of the biscuits and passed them to Maude Boffins and her mother. Then I handed Boffins his share, and finally tossed some to Van Wade.

We ate ravenously, despite the fact that our mouths were so parched with thirst that we could scarcely chew.

Of course the hardtack made us all the thirstier, and after eating it we suffered terribly.

However, I bethought me that perhaps a further search of the interior of the boat might reveal something to drink, and sure enough, on looking beneath the other seats, we found a breaker of fresh water, a tin, a box of cheese, another tin box of hardtack, and a large tin box of embalmed beef.

By eating sparingly, there were enough provisions in that boat to last us for a couple of days.

They had evidently been placed there by the steamship people for just such an emergency.

We drank and ate our fill, and after that we were almost merry.

"And to think that we went starving for two days," grunted old Boffins between big mouthfuls, "with this stuff in the boat all the time! Armstrong, my boy, we're a parcel of fools!"

"But when these provisions are consumed we shall be just as hungry and thirsty again," groaned Van Wade, who had recovered his reason.

"Let's hope we'll be rescued before then," said Maude Boffins fervently.

"Amen," added I.

And after drifting for another night and day, we saw something which made us all cry out with joy.

It was Maude Boffins who espied it first.

"Look! Look over there," she cried excitedly. "Isn't that a ship?"

We all gazed eagerly in the direction in which she pointed.

"By gad! that's what it is!" cried Boffins excitedly, and he started to yell "Help! Help! Help!" at the top of his voice.

"It doesn't look to me like a ship," said I.

"Not a ship? What is it, then?" asked Reginald Van Wade, keen disappointment in his voice.

"It's better than a ship. It's land," I cried excitedly. "Don't you see those trees? Can't you see those hills? Hurrah! Land at last, and we're heading straight for it."

"Thank Heaven!" said old Boffins fervently. "Our troubles are all over now."

"Maude," said Mrs. Boffins quietly, "arrange your hair this minute. See how it is all tumbling down behind. Why haven't you more pride and dignity? Who knows whom we may meet on land?"

CHAPTER V.

TERRA FIRMA.

THE waves tossed our boat upon a shelving, sandy shore. Boffins and Van Wade were not slow in getting out, and I assisted Maude and Mrs. Boffins.

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Boffins, "doesn't it feel good to have solid earth beneath one's feet? I'll never go to sea again if I can help it. When I die I'm going to leave half my fortune to establish a home for the relief of the wives of shipwrecked sailors."

Just then a big wave, as though angry at being cheated of its prey, swept up on the shore, and almost knocked us off our feet.

"See that now!" exclaimed Boffins indignantly. "That confounded sea isn't satisfied with what it's done to us already. It's after us even now. Did you ever see the like?"

"Let's not be angry at the sea, father," said Maude Boffins. "It has acted splendidly throughout. Just think how fortunate we have been. It's a wonder we were not upset ten minutes after we left the ship."

"Well, I've felt pretty much upset myself," commented Boffins. "What's the matter, Armstrong?"

For I had uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"Matter enough," said I gloomily. "See what's happened. We forgot to fasten the boat. That confounded wave has carried it off. Now we're in a pretty fix."

"Not a bit of it," rejoined Boffins. "If the sea wants that old tub of a boat, let her have it and welcome. I've had enough of it. I never want to look upon a rowboat again. What on earth do you want to keep the boat for, Armstrong? For a souvenir, eh?"

"Souvenirs be hanged!" said I savagely. "That boat has got all our remaining store of food aboard. Now we're up against it pretty hard."

"Not at all," retorted Boffins. "We'll find plenty to eat ashore."

"I hope so," I murmured desperately.

We clambered up the sloping beach high enough to be out of reach of the advancing waves.

Then we all sat down on the dry sand and watched our boat being carried out to sea.

"Thank Heaven we are not aboard of her," said old Boffins fervently.

"I'm soaked to the skin," announced Reginald Van Wade.

We were all of us pretty wet. I noticed that Maude Boffins was quietly wringing the water out of her skirt. She did not complain. I looked at her admiringly.

That girl had more grit than any woman I had ever met. I don't mind confessing that by this time I was head over heels in love with her.

"A little water won't hurt us," she remarked.

"I'd sooner have the sea on me than me be on the sea," remarked old Boffins, who never missed an opportunity for a pun.

"The question is what shall we do now?" said I. "What shall be our first move?"

"I would suggest that we go to a hotel and get dry clothing," said Mrs. Boffins languidly. "We shall all catch our death of cold if we sit here in our wet things."

"A good idea!" exclaimed Boffins. "I wonder what country this is, anyway? Coast of Europe, I guess."

"I haven't the slightest idea," said I. "Geography was always my weak point at school."

"We'll ask the first policeman we meet," observed Mrs. Boffins calmly.

"If there's any policeman around here, he seems to be off post," said Boffins, looking anxiously in all directions. "I never saw such a deserted-looking place in my life."

"Oh, we'll meet lots of people farther inland, I suppose," spoke up Maude Boffins. "Don't you think so, Mr. Armstrong?"

"I hope so," I answered.

"Personally," said Boffins, "I don't

care whether this is Europe, Asia, or America. It's all the same to me. On one point I'm resolved, however. Whatever continent we're on, we're going to stay on it unless we can get off it by railroad. I've had enough of sea traveling. I'll never board another ship as long as I live."

"Oh, but we must get back to New York," cried Mrs. Boffins hastily. "I promised the Nostrands that we would attend the coming-out ball of their daughter Marjorie. We simply must be there. I wouldn't offend Mrs. Nostrand on any account."

"We'll be there if we can ride or walk to New York," said old Boffins firmly. "If it's a question of taking a ship, we'll stay on this continent for the rest of our lives. No more ocean-going for mine."

"Don't be ridiculous, John," cried Mrs. Boffins indignantly. "I'm surprised at you. I insist on going back to New York at once. Let us go to a hotel immediately. We can stay here overnight, but to-morrow we must seek the nearest steamship-office and proceed to America. My mind is made up on that point."

"Well, you'll travel alone, my dear," said Boffins stubbornly.

"Very well," rejoined the strong-minded spouse. "If you're going to be so obstinate, John, Maude and Reginald and I will go to New York and leave you here. I simply must keep my word and attend the Nostrand ball."

"Well, let's find out where we are before we argue about it," said Boffins pacifically. "For all we know, we may be on the American coast already."

Reginald Van Wade laughed derisively.

"We had only just passed the Azores when the ship went down. We've been on the water three days since then. We couldn't have reached America in that time."

Old Boffins scowled darkly.

"If you know it all, young man," he growled, "perhaps you can inform me where we are."

"I don't know," said Van Wade. "I can't tell in what direction we drifted. We may be on one of the Azores."

"On an island where savages are!" cried Mrs. Boffins in alarm. "Good Heaven, I hope not!"

"Or we may have reached the coast of Portugal," said Van Wade authoritatively.

"Ah," said Mrs. Boffins, with a sigh of relief, "that sounds much better. I understand there are quite a few good families in Portugal."

"Don't you think it's just barely possible that we may have struck a desert island?" suggested Maude.

"Good Heaven!" cried old Boffins in alarm, "I hope not. What's put such a horrible idea in your head, Maude?"

"Oh, it has just occurred to me that it's just as likely as not," replied the girl calmly. "Either we've drifted back to the Azores, as Reginald says, or we've floated farther southward, and in that case must have struck some island."

"What do *you* think, Armstrong?" asked Boffins, turning to me anxiously.

I shook my head helplessly.

"It's beyond me," I answered. "I haven't the least idea where we are. I regret to say that I haven't had much schooling."

"Never went to college, eh?" sneered Van Wade.

"No," said I, completely losing my temper at his manner, "I never went to college. I didn't even graduate from the public schools."

"You don't mean to say that you went to the public schools in New York?" said Van Wade, with a sneer.

Mrs. Boffins gasped with horror at the idea.

"Yes, I did," said I, "and I'm proud of it. The boys I went to school with, Mr. Reginald Van Wade, didn't have any blue blood in their veins, but they were manly boys—not milksops."

"How interesting!" drawled Van Wade. "And will you tell us, Mr. Armstrong, how it happened that you did not graduate from the public school?"

"Yes," I said hotly, "I will, with pleasure. I left school because I had to make my way in the world. My father was too poor to allow me to finish my education. I left school to make a living."

"And at what, pray?" asked Van Wade scornfully.

"At selling shoes," I said, with equal scorn.

"Shoes!" screamed Mrs. Boffins in horror. "Selling shoes! A vulgar trades-

man! Boffins, this is all your fault. You introduced him to us. Maude, we have been deceived."

"For Heaven's sake, mother, be quiet!" snapped the girl, and from the sympathetic expression of her face I saw with joy that she did not regard me less favorably because of my confession.

As for old Boffins, he swore a good round oath.

"Mrs. Boffins," he growled, "I'm getting sick and tired of all this infernal nonsense. Armstrong is as good a fellow as I've met in many a day. You sha'n't insult him in my presence, do you hear?"

Mrs. Boffins turned for sympathy to Reginald.

"That's the disadvantage of ocean traveling," she remarked to him in an aside that was perfectly audible to all of us. "One is forced to rub shoulders with such undesirable people. We will drop this person as soon as we reach a hotel. What would your dear mother say if she knew of this?"

"You seem to forget that if it hadn't been for Mr. Armstrong none of us would be here," said Maude indignantly. "Mother, I'm surprised at you."

"Your father shall pay him for the services he has rendered us," replied Mrs. Boffins haughtily.

The hot blood rushed to my face at her words. I felt a fervent desire to strangle somebody, and Reginald Van Wade appeared to be the most available victim.

But with a great effort I controlled myself.

"Thank you, madam," I said witheringly, "I am sufficiently repaid for any services I may have rendered by having been afforded the privilege of mingling with such exalted society during the past few days. Don't worry about having to drop me as soon as you reach a hotel.

"I don't know what place this is—whether it's a civilized country or a desert island—but whichever it is, I promise you that our ways shall lie in different directions from now on."

I was walking off in high dudgeon, when suddenly something occurred which caused me to stand stock-still in terror while the blood froze in my veins.

From behind a clump of trees, a short distance inland, came a loud and terrible roar—the most awful sound I had ever heard.

There was no mistaking that sound. Oftentimes, when in New York, I had visited the Central Park zoo and watched its inmates with bated breath.

I had heard that sound too often not to be able to recognize it now. It was the roar of an enraged lion!

CHAPTER VI.

TREED.

In the terror of that moment all our differences were forgotten. We all stood rooted to the spot. Mrs. Boffins appeared to be on the verge of swooning; Maude's face went ghastly white; old Boffins was trembling violently, while Reginald Van Wade looked as if he already felt himself in the grasp of the ferocious beast.

As for me, I don't mind confessing I was so scared that my heart thumped wildly against my ribs and my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. There was not a moment to lose. Any second that hideous monster might pounce upon us.

"Quick! Quick!" I cried. "To the trees! To the trees!"

And I pointed as I spoke to some tall timber situated, I need scarcely state, in an entirely different direction from the clump from behind which we had heard that terrible roar.

I seized Maude's arm, and Boffins seized the arm of his wife, and we all ran as hard as we could.

Fortunately, the limb of one of the trees was within our reach.

I offered to assist Maude Boffins, for Reginald Van Wade was so terror-stricken that to look after himself was all he could manage. But the brave girl declined my help.

"I can climb," she gasped. "I used to be the champion tree-climber at Vassar. Look after my mother, please, Mr. Armstrong."

I was astonished at the ease with which the girl found her way from branch to branch. It isn't a nice comparison, but she displayed the agility of a monkey. College athletics are a great help to a woman.

I turned to Mrs. Boffins.

I bore that lady no good-will, but as I have said, it was no time to remember personal differences.

The poor woman was so scared that she forgot to censure her daughter for being unladylike enough to climb a tree, even despite the fact that Miss Maude tore her skirt in the process and also displayed perhaps more of a well-formed ankle than would have been deemed proper in polite society.

"Let me assist you, madam," I said.

"No! No!" she gasped. "I could never do it—not even with your assistance."

"But there is no time to lose," I cried impatiently. "If you don't hurry it will be too late. That lion will be upon us."

She screamed her terror.

"No! No!" she repeated faintly. "I could never climb it—never! The rest of you save yourselves and leave me to my fate."

By now she was weeping.

"Come! Come, Maria!" gasped old Boffins impatiently. "This is no time for foolishness. Don't you see that you are imperiling all of us by this delay? Come, get up into the tree at once."

Again that awful roar smote our startled ears, and seeing that the emergency required desperate measures I wasted no more time in parleying, but suddenly seized Mrs. Boffins around the waist, and with the assistance of her husband lifted her bodily to the first branch of the tree.

Maude, from the second limb, grabbed her mother's hand, and thus we helped her a step higher up.

Luckily, the branches were particularly close together, so that it was easy climbing.

Next I turned my attention to Boffins, who, on account of his excessive avoirdupois, did not find climbing easy.

Terror, however, can cause a man to accomplish what under ordinary circumstances would appear physically impossible, and, with my assistance, Boffins managed to make the ascent almost gracefully.

After seeing Boffins safely up, I was about to follow him, not caring (to tell the truth) what became of Van Wade; but with a howl of terror the latter rushed at the overhanging branch with such impetuosity that he almost knocked me off my feet, and before I could recover myself he had preceded me up the tree.

Therefore, I was the last to ascend, and I did so breathlessly, expecting any second to feel a relentless paw upon my shoulder and to be dragged back to earth by the ferocious lion.

Fearing that the savage brute might be able to reach us, we managed to help each other a considerable distance up the trunk, although Mrs. Boffins by her fears, and old Boffins by his unwieldy girth, made the task rather difficult.

"Thank Heaven!" gasped Boffins, with a sigh of relief. "We are out of danger. Jumping Jupiter! What a horrible adventure! I guess we'll go to no hotel this night. We'll stay up in this tree until that lion or tiger, or whatever it is, dies of old age."

This time Mrs. Boffins did not dispute the point. The poor woman could brave the dangers of the sea and retain her self-possession, but she was not proof against the wild beasts.

She had no desire to leave the comparative safety of that tree; not even to attend Marjorie Nostrand's coming-out ball in New York. Even the displeasure of the socially mighty Mrs. Nostrand was not to be compared to the fury of that ferocious brute, skulking somewhere near by.

"But we can't stay up here forever," said Maude, from a branch higher up. "What are we going to do?"

Nobody answered her. We were not particularly concerned about problems of the future. The near present was alive with such dreadful possibilities as to occupy all our attention.

"How do we know but when that brute scents us he won't climb up after us?" asked Van Wade morosely. "It ought to be easy climbing for him."

"Pshaw! Lions don't climb trees," I retorted contemptuously.

I was by no means sure on this point, but I made the assertion with the idea of calming the fears of the women.

"How do we know that it was a lion?" asked Van Wade.

"Anybody could tell that by its roar," I replied, with a sneer.

"It sounded just as much like the

roar of a tiger or a leopard," observed Van Wade.

"Well, whatever animal it is, I don't want to meet it," said Boffins. "I don't hear it roaring any more. I wonder if it could have gone away. Do you think so, Mr. Armstrong?"

There was intense eagerness in his voice.

"I hope so," I answered. "He may have gone farther into the interior. Let's hope that he has."

"In which case, what shall we do?" asked Maude. "Unless we know for certain, I shall be afraid to leave this tree."

"There may be more of them around, too," said Mrs. Boffins in a weak voice.

She was sitting, none too comfortably, I suppose, on a stout branch by the side of her husband.

Night was approaching. It was already getting dark.

"I propose that we stay in this tree until daybreak," I said. "It wouldn't be safe to go down in the dark."

The suggestion met with general assent.

"I wonder what country this can be, anyway," said Boffins. "Must be a pretty wild sort of place if they let wild beasts roam around at will."

"If it's a lion, we must be on the African coast," answered Van Wade authoritatively. "I don't see how we could have reached Africa in three days."

"Well, it's a condition, and not a theory, which confronts us," said I. "I don't know where we are, but I do know where the lion is. I wish we'd never landed in this infernal place."

"Even the sea would have been better than this," groaned Boffins. "I'd rather be drowned that eaten by a lion."

"I, too," added Mrs. Boffins, with a shudder.

"And we owe it to Mr. Armstrong that we are here," said Van Wade bitterly. "If we hadn't listened to him in the first place and helped him seize that boat we might have left the ship with the others and got ashore safely."

That was too much for me.

"If you don't shut your mouth," I hissed, "I'll shake you off this tree to the ground. I don't intend to stand much more from you."

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" protested Maude.

I was about to apologize to her for my display of temper when a terrific roar froze the words on my lips.

The roar was no longer in the distance. It came from directly underneath us.

Our eyes dilated with terror as we glanced downward.

Even through the gathering darkness we could distinguish the form of a gigantic lion—the biggest lion I had ever seen.

He was standing at the foot of the tree, tail erect and jaws distended.

Mrs. Boffins and Maude united in a screech of terror. Old Boffins trembled so that the branch of the tree on which he was perched vibrated beneath him. Reginald Van Wade groaned in apprehension. My hair stood on end with horror.

As though in answer to the screams of the women, the lion roared the louder. It curdled our blood to hear him.

"It *is* a lion," whispered Boffins, his teeth chattering. "I was hoping it wasn't. What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do?"

"I think he's going to climb the tree," shrieked Van Wade.

"Let's all shout together," said I. "It's our only chance to scare him off."

And in chorus we shouted.

But the lion put his great fore paws against the trunk of our tree and began tearing off big pieces of the bark with his sharp claws, as though to demonstrate to us what he would do when he had us within reach.

We did not need any demonstration. To look at those horrible, distended jaws was enough. Our imaginations could supply all the details.

"What's he stripping off that bark for?" whispered Boffins hoarsely. "D'ye think he's going to chop down this tree, bit by bit, Armstrong?"

"I don't know," I groaned. "Let's all yell together once more. Our only hope is to scare him off."

We all shouted at the top of our lungs. Even Mrs. Boffins managed to forget her dignity for the time being and joined in the chorus.

It was a horrible medley of sound,

but it had no disheartening effect on that lion. In fact, he appeared rather to enjoy it.

He began to dance around the tree on his hind legs as if he had been listening to waltz music.

"No good," I sighed. "We must try something else. Won't somebody make a suggestion?"

I was so humbled by terror that I would gladly have welcomed an idea even from Reginald Van Wade.

But Reginald did better than suggest.

He left the tree suddenly and went down to face the lion single-handed. I don't mean to say that he left the tree voluntarily. But he was sitting, all alone, on a rather thin branch, and just at this precise psychological moment it happened to give way beneath his weight.

There was a snapping sound, a yell of terror from the unfortunate Reginald, a shriek of horror from Maude and Mrs. Boffins, and it was all over.

With blanched cheeks we gazed down at the spot where Reginald Van Wade had fallen.

The fall had not hurt him much, apparently, for he was sitting up on the ground gazing dazedly about him.

And a few feet away stood the lion, looking at him in majestic amazement, as though he misunderstood Reginald's reasons for coming down and was astonished at the temerity of the man.

Van Wade was looking at the lion as a mouse looks at a cat when cornered.

And to us in the tree it seemed that Reginald stood about as much chance as that same mouse.

"If only we had a gun!" I groaned.

"He'll be killed!" moaned Maude. "Oh, poor Reginald!"

"His poor mother!" sighed Mrs. Boffins. "She will never forgive me."

"Can't we do something to help him?" gasped Boffins. "This is awful. See how they're staring at each other! Why doesn't he get up and run, darn it, That lion won't wait much longer."

"Perhaps Van Wade's got him fixed with his eye," I said hopefully. "I've read of savage beasts being subdued that way."

And just then something happened which made us gasp with surprise.

The lion stood on his hind legs, his paws extended in front of him, and began to beg like a well-trained dog.

The amazed Reginald evidently thought that this was the lion's before-dinner custom, for he uttered a loud cry and put his hands before his face. But the lion, having stood on his hind legs for a full minute, suddenly reversed the order and did a hand-stand with his front paws, balancing himself with perfect ease.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated old Boffins. "What an extraordinary animal! I never saw a lion act that way before, outside of a circus. This is the most astonishing country I've ever heard of. The lions here must be natural-born acrobats."

Still standing on his fore paws, the lion advanced in an upright position toward Reginald, his hind legs pointing heavenward.

It was such a ludicrous sight that only the fact that Van Wade appeared to be in great danger kept me from laughing aloud.

"Quick! Quick!" I yelled to Van Wade. "See if you can't climb up this tree while he's in that position. Hurry! Hurry! He can't attack you while he's balancing himself on his front paws. Hurry! Now's your only chance."

Reginald heard, and scrambled to his feet.

He was about to follow my advice and make a dash for the lowest branch of the tree, when the lion suddenly brought his hind legs to earth again and stood on all fours, looking at Reginald reproachfully, as though saying: "Ah, would you, now? Not much, my boy!"

Reginald uttered a scream of terror, and evidently thought his last seconds on earth had arrived.

There was no time for him to climb the tree now. If he tried to do so there was no doubt whatever that the powerful brute would bring him to earth again with his sharp claws.

There was not even time for him to turn in the other direction and run. The lion was too close to him.

Poor Van Wade seemed doomed. The lion had apparently got tired of his vaudeville exhibition and intended to take his meal without further ceremony.

Our hearts stopped beating as we watched. We gave Van Wade up for lost.

But with a courage born of desperation, Reginald seized the big branch of the tree, which had fallen to the ground with him, and waved it frantically in the face of his foe.

Then I thought that all was over, for I did not believe that the king of beasts would ever stand for that insult.

But to the surprise of all of us, we saw the lion cower and recede as though he were afraid.

This fact seemed to give Van Wade courage, for he even dared to take a step forward, still waving the branch of the tree in the lion's face.

The lion took another step backward, and the more the beast receded, the closer Reginald pressed him, always shaking that tree-branch in the brute's face.

Suddenly the beast opened his awful jaws and gave vent to a terrific roar.

I closed my eyes then, not wishing to see what would follow, for I felt that the lion had become tired of this trifling and was about to spring upon his unhappy victim.

But a second later I heard a triumphant shout from Van Wade. I opened my eyes quickly and could scarcely believe what I saw.

For the lion was disappearing in the distance, in full flight, and Reginald Van Wade stood under the tree, with chest expanded and the tree-branch still in his hand, apparently master of the situation.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" I exclaimed disgustedly. "And they call that animal the king of beasts!"

"Come down," shouted Van Wade triumphantly. "Come down, all of you. Don't be afraid. There's no danger. I hit him in the face and scared him away. The lion's afraid of me. Come down, all of you. Come down, Maude and Mrs. Boffins. Don't be scared. I'll protect you."

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER SURPRISE.

IT was a great disappointment to me. Not that I had hoped to see the lion turn on Van Wade and rend him in twain. I had no liking for the supercilious Reginald, but I wished him no such terrible fate as that.

But since the days of my early boyhood I had looked up to the lion as an animal that knew no fear. I had reverenced him as the king of beasts.

When a mere child I had gazed in rapture upon gaudily colored pictures of the magnificent brute. When I grew old enough to read, I had eagerly devoured stories of thrilling adventures with lions in lonely forests.

Often, as I have said, I had gazed in awe upon the lions in captivity in the New York Zoological Gardens. I loved to look at the powerful, beautiful creatures (from in front of the bars), and picture to myself, with a shudder, how they would tear a man to pieces if they had the chance.

The lion had always been my ideal of the animal kingdom. And now that ideal was ruthlessly shattered.

I had made a painful discovery. The lion was *not* the king of beasts. The lion was a four-flusher. The lion was a coward. The lion would turn tail and run at the rustling of a tree-branch.

Pshaw! A mongrel-bred dog would have shown more courage. Even a cat would have snarled and tried to scratch the hand of the person waving the tree-branch.

This lion had been seized with panic and retreated to the woods. I could have shed tears of disappointment.

But I was aroused to myself by the voice of Boffins.

"What do you say, Mr. Armstrong? Do you think it safe for us to go down? This tree is none too comfortable, but I don't want to run any risk of being devoured by wild beasts."

"If all wild beasts are like that lion we won't stand much chance of being devoured," I said resentfully. "The lion has always had the reputation of being the most fearless of animals. Seeing how that one turned and ran, I guess we're not in any danger."

"But he may come back again," protested Mrs. Boffins.

"If he does," said I, "we can chase him away again. I don't think we've anything to fear from him."

"But there may be others," suggested Maude. "How do we know that the others may prove as cowardly? I presume that anima's differ in courage, the same as men."

"And talking about the courage of men," said Mrs. Boffins, "hasn't our dear Reginald proved himself a real hero? The way he confronted that savage lion was truly sublime. I must write to his mother about it by the next mail."

"He certainly is brave!" murmured Maude softly. "I admire him more now than I ever did before."

"Pshaw!" I put in savagely. "It wasn't courage on his part. It was desperation. Besides, it was a piece of luck, anyway. If that lion had been as savage as he looked Reginald would have been mince-meat by this time."

It was an ungenerous remark, and Miss Maude turned upon me angrily.

"For shame, Mr. Armstrong!" she cried. "It was a brave act, and you know it. Why do you try to minimize Reginald's courage? It was superb!"

Even Boffins was indignant at my remark.

"Van Wade certainly did show spunk," he said. "I didn't think he had it in him. I'm afraid I've done him an injustice all along."

"I've always told you so," observed Mrs. Boffins reproachfully. "There's a great deal more to Reginald than shows on the surface. He doesn't go around bragging and blustering, but when it comes to critical moments one does not find him wanting. We are fortunate to have such a sterling young man for a prospective son-in-law. Maude is a very lucky girl."

I relieved my savage feelings by kicking the trunk of the tree.

Just then Reginald Van Wade, who had been strutting to and fro underneath the tree, with his chest thrown out in the most disgusting manner, called up to us:

"Say! Why don't you folks come down? It's all right, I tell you. There's no danger. I won't let the lion hurt you."

It made my blood boil to hear the protecting air he assumed toward us.

Prudence suggested that our safest course was to stay up in the tree. Where there was one wild beast there might be others, and as Maude had truly said, the others might not manifest the timidity that this particular lion had displayed.

But in the face of Reginald's self-assurance I could not advise such a course without seeming very much of a coward in comparison.

So, as the little party appeared to look to me for guidance, I threw discretion to the winds.

"Let us go down," I said. "The danger is over."

It is a much easier matter to climb down a tree than it is to climb up. Even Mr. and Mrs. Boffins, with the help of Maude, Van Wade, and myself, were able to accomplish the descent without mishap.

When we reached the ground Maude Boffins rushed over to Van Wade and effusively hugged him.

"Good for you, Reggie!" she cried. "I didn't think you had the nerve. I'm proud of you. I am, really."

"Not so boisterous, Maude, not quite so boisterous, please," Mrs. Boffins admonished, and for once I heartily agreed with that lady.

"I don't blame you for expressing admiration for dear Reginald's exhibition of heroism, however," she continued. "We are all very proud of you, Reginald, my dear boy. Your dear mother will be delighted to hear of your bravery."

"Pooh!" said Reginald, with ostentatious modesty. "It was nothing. I beg you not to mention it. I've done more daring things than that at college. After all, it was only one lion, you know. If there had been three or four it might be something to speak of, you know."

"What admirable modesty!" whispered Mrs. Boffins to her daughter.

I was glad it was so dark that the expression of my face could not be seen. I am afraid I almost regretted at that minute that the lion had not killed Van Wade.

Old Boffins advanced and held out his hand cordially.

"Reginald, my boy," he said, "I'm proud of you. Shake!"

"Don't mention it, please," rejoined Van Wade.

"You must have been awfully scared when you fell from the tree, Reggy," observed Maude Boffins, with a shudder.

"Fell!" exclaimed Van Wade in evident surprise. "I didn't fall from the tree, Maude."

"Didn't fall from the tree?" exclaimed Mrs. Boffins, Maude, and old Boffins in an astonished chorus.

"No," said Van Wade easily. "By Jove! What could have put such an idea into your head? I saw that the lion was about to climb the tree with the evident intention of devouring us, so I—" And he paused impressively.

"Yes?" exclaimed Mrs. Boffins eagerly. "So you did what, my dear Reginald?"

"So I jumped to the ground with the intention of meeting the brute face to face and scaring him off."

This was too much for me. I burst into a loud guffaw of laughter, in which old Boffins joined.

Mrs. Boffins was indignant, and plainly showed it.

"Mr. Boffins," she said, "I see no reason why you should forget your good breeding because certain other persons apparently do not possess any. Will you please explain to me the reason of your unseemly laughter?"

"Well, really, my dear, that's too much for me to swallow," replied Boffins, trying hard to be serious. "The idea of Reginald jumping down from that tree of his own volition, with the express purpose of meeting that lion face to face. Ho!—Ho!—Ho!"

"Reginald," said Mrs. Boffins, "I hope that you will not be offended by Mr. Boffins's unseemly conduct. I am afraid that he has fallen in with bad companions and is not quite responsible for what he says or does. When we reach a hotel we will make some changes in the personnel of this party which will be eminently desirable."

This was gross ingratitude, for Mrs. Boffins never would have been able to climb that tree without my assistance. But I said nothing. I merely scowled savagely and made up my mind to take the hint and rid the Boffins party of my company without delay. For the present, however, I had to make the best of circumstances until I found out on what kind of an island we had been cast.

It was with a pang that I thought of parting with the beautiful Maude, but it could not be helped. After all, there was no chance for me. She was already betrothed to Van Wade, and although she had not seemed to me to be particularly attached to him, she was now filled with admiration for his exploit in connection with the lion, and apparently regarded him in an altogether new light.

I turned to go, but Boffins laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Don't mind what the old woman says, my boy," he whispered. "Do me a favor and stick to us until we're out of danger. We haven't the least idea where we are now, and we don't know what perils may confront us. For the sake of me and my daughter, stick to us."

I was about to tell him that it was no use; that I could not put up with his wife's snubs any longer, and that I would not be a member of the party under sufferance, when just then we heard another terrible noise which caused our hearts to beat fast with fear.

It was a trumpet sound, and I recognized it at once, as I had recognized the roar of the lion.

For this sound, also, I had heard many times in the zoological gardens.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Boffins fearfully. "What's that?"

"An elephant," I answered.

"Elephant?" exclaimed Van Wade quakingly. "Quick, then. Let's get up into the tree again. Hurry—there's no time to lose."

"What's the use of climbing the tree?" I said, with withering sarcasm. "It will only put you to the trouble of jumping down again to meet the elephant face to face as you did the lion. Why not wait here and confront him, Mr. Van Wade?"

But Reginald was already running to the tree as fast as his legs would carry him, leaving the rest of us to follow if we felt so disposed.

For the second time I seized Maude's arm, and old Boffins dragged his wife toward the tree.

But we were too late. We heard the crackling of bushes being shoved aside, and by the light of the moon made out the ponderous form of an elephant rushing toward us.

(To be continued.)

BECAUSE PACKARD FAILED.

By CHARLES B. FREMONT.

When the reporter's sweetheart came to the rescue and why she retreated in the hour of triumph.

THE city room of the *Mercury* was almost deserted.

The day city editor sat at his desk, his coat off, his shirt-sleeves rolled up to his elbows, his chair tilted backward at a dangerous angle and his feet resting comfortably on the desk's blue blotting-pad.

He was puffing contentedly on a dirty-looking clay pipe. It was an ill-smelling pipe, but the editor loved it as a mother loves her first-born, and to him its odor was as the perfume of summer blossoms.

At the other end of the room, at the desk nearest the window, sat a pale-faced young man, busily engaged in scribbling numerals on a sheet of copy-paper.

These two were the only occupants of the big room. There were many other desks there, but they were unoccupied. Their owners had already visited the office, received their afternoon assignments, and gone out to "cover" them.

In a few hours they would return, an energetic hustling brood of young men. They would seat themselves at the desks, tear the metal covers from the typewriters, and clatter away at the keys for dear life.

Then the half-dozen telegraph operators would arrive, and the clicking of their instruments would mingle with the tick-tack of the typewriters, the combined result being more suggestive of a boiler-shop than of the office of a conservative daily newspaper.

A boy entered the room and handed a note to the city editor. Without withdrawing his feet from the desk, he took the note, tore open the envelope, and glanced carelessly at the contents.

Then he frowned and read the note over again more carefully. After that he glanced hesitatingly at the young man sitting at the desk nearest the window.

This young man was sitting there because there had been no assignment for him that afternoon. It was summer, a season when news is scarce.

There being no immediate work for this young man to do, he was "hanging around" the office waiting for something to turn up, meantime engaged in trying to solve a purely personal problem by means of a pencil with a chewed end, and a sheet of paper covered with numerals.

The problem the young man was trying to solve was this: Could a weekly salary of twenty dollars be made to support two persons when one of the persons was a young woman with an avowed willingness to make sacrifices?

After much calculating, he finally managed to do the sum to his satisfaction.

"It can be done!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "It will be a case of practising economy in a whole lot of ways, but it can be done."

"How's that?" exclaimed a voice in his ear, and he turned to confront the day city editor.

"I say it can be done—" the reporter repeated and then stopped in confusion.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Hargrave," he stammered. "I guess I was talking to myself."

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," drawled the city editor solemnly. "You might as well find somebody worth while talking to while you are about it. For instance, if you are quite through jotting down figures on that sheet of paper, you might put on your hat and go out to have a talk with Mr. Simon Lackeye."

"Mr. Lackeye, the great millionaire, do you mean, sir?"

"I believe Mr. Lackeye's worldly possessions *are* reckoned in millions," observed the editor dryly.

"But he never talks to newspaper men—at least he's got that reputation," exclaimed the other.

"That may make your task a trifle difficult, but not impossible. You must make it your business to see that he talks to you, my son."

"What about?" asked the young man, with a sigh.

"About the marriage of his only daughter, Clara. I've got a little note here, sent in by some anonymous tipster, saying that Miss Lackeye was secretly married yesterday. The name of the bridegroom is not given, neither is the place where the ceremony was performed, so you see the story lacks some essential particulars. Of course, it may be a fake tip; but then, on the other hand, it may be true. At any rate, it is too important a tip to throw down without investigation.

"Go out and see what you can get on it, Packard. See the old man and make him talk. Learn what you can from the servants. Try to find out particularly the name of the bridegroom and whether or not it was an elopement. If there's anything in it, it's a big story—the biggest you've ever handled, I guess. See that you don't fall down on it!"

With that the city editor turned and walked back to his desk, leaving the odor of his villainous clay pipe behind him.

The young man scowled—not because of the smell of the editor's pipe; but because he was not at all elated at being honored with this particular assignment.

In fiction, the young reporter, in the face of almost hopeless odds, always lands the story he goes after and comes back in triumph to the office to have the city editor fall on his neck and weep tears of joy and gratitude.

But in the cold world of fact this does not always happen. Often the young reporter will labor hard all day and at the end have nothing to show for his work. Then he must go back to his office and report failure, and in such case the city editor will not fall on his neck. Instead, he is more apt to jump on that same neck, figuratively speaking; for in these days of enterprising journalism, effort counts for naught unless crowned with success.

Therefore Packard scowled. He realized the magnitude of the task before him and the slim chance of his being able to make good.

He knew that it was common talk on Newspaper Row that no reporter ever had succeeded in obtaining an interview with old Simon Lackeye, who detested newspapers and newspaper men.

He had heard other reporters declare from experience that the servants of the famous millionaire were the most haughty and unapproachable set of lackeys in town.

He saw failure staring him in the face before he started out, and if he did fail the chances were that he would lose his job, for he had a sneaking idea that the city editor did not especially like him. Probably that was why this impossible assignment had been given to him.

With a sigh he seized his hat and walked toward the door.

"If you run across any of the men on the other papers, don't forget to keep your mouth shut," the city editor called after him. "We may have that tip exclusively, you know."

"All right, sir," Packard answered without turning his head, and he walked on toward the elevator with the air of one who goes to his execution.

He did not have to consult the directory to find the home address of Simon Lackeye. The famous pile on upper Fifth Avenue is one of the sights of New York.

It is a colossal red-brick edifice surrounded by spacious grounds. The front entrance is approached by way of a broad, sweeping carriage-drive.

Packard knew that the old millionaire, a widower, lived there with his nineteen-year-old daughter and the servants.

He had often gazed at the building in passing and thought how gloomy and unhomelike it must be for two persons to pass their lives practically alone in such a big place.

"If the daughter really has eloped," he mused, "the old man will be more lonely than ever. I'll bet he's wild with rage. What a story it would make! If only I could land it!"

He climbed the white marble steps and pressed the button.

The heavy bronze outer door immediately swung open and a tall, severe-looking footman confronted him.

"Is Mr. Lackeye at home?" the reporter inquired.

"What nime, please?" asked the footman.

"Mr. Packard."

"Will you let me 'ave your card, sir?" said the flunky, his manner a shade less officious.

Packard produced one of his private cards and hoped against hope.

The footman, with much dignity, handed the card to a second lackey who stood a few paces in the rear, and who immediately strode majestically up the red-carpeted stairs, bearing the card on a silver salver which he held at arm's length, as though he feared it might bite him.

He returned in less than two minutes with his nose pointing toward the ceiling and scorn written all over his haughty features.

"Mr. Lackeye knows no such pusson," he reported to the first footman.

"Mr. Lackeye knows no such pusson," repeated the latter solemnly. "In that case, young feller," he added, turning to Packard, "'e is not at 'ome."

Evasive tactics having thus failed, Packard had no recourse but to make a clean breast of it.

"Oh! Of course Mr. Lackeye would not know me by name," he said, smiling as though this melancholy fact had only just occurred to him. "How very stupid of me, to be sure! Would you kindly go and tell him that a representative of the *Mercury* would like to see him on a very important matter."

As he completed this sentence the features of the footman froze outright, while the countenance of the second lackey became a picture of disdain.

"Oh," said the footman, "so you *are* a reporter. I thought you was from the first. Well, young man, you'd better go right away from 'ere. Mr. Lackeye has nothing to sye."

"Won't you please ask him?" pleaded Packard. "I believe he will see me."

"Mr. Lackeye never sees reporters," replied the man.

"But he may make an exception in my case. It's about something very important!"

The footman sighed with ostentatious weariness.

"Really," he said, "it's not a bit of good for you to stand 'ere arguin', young feller. You're only wasting your time and mine. Will you please go away from 'ere?"

"Perhaps if I wrote Mr. Lackeye a short note you wouldn't mind delivering it," persisted Packard desperately.

"Mr. Lackeye never receives communications from the newspapers," said the man.

"Then perhaps *you* can tell me what I want to know," pursued the reporter. "It is concerning Miss Clara's wedding. Is it true that she has—"

He did not finish the sentence, for the door was suddenly flung shut in his face.

Boiling with rage at this indignity, he stood for a few seconds glaring at the handsomely molded bronze panels.

"Insolent hound!" he muttered, and then his sense of humor came to the rescue and he smiled grimly.

"Well, at any rate, my visit here has not been entirely fruitless," he reflected as he turned on his heel and descended the marble steps. "At least, I've discovered one fact; that the old man is at home. How to get to him is the question. If only I could meet him face to face, I feel confident that I could persuade him to talk."

He was not quite at the end of his resources. He bethought him that the millionaire had a telephone in his house, and he now tried to get into communication with him by that means.

This plan, however, proved a sad failure. The 'phone was answered by the same flunky who had slammed the door in Packard's face, and the fellow, evidently recognizing the voice of the reporter, declared bruskly that Mr. Lackeye was "Not at 'ome," and cut off the connection before Packard could say another word.

Then Packard tried a really ingenious scheme. He went to a Western Union Telegraph office and hired a uniformed messenger-boy to deliver a note to the millionaire. It was a cleverly worded note. It stated that the *Mercury's* office was in receipt of a report that Miss Clara Lackeye had eloped with her father's coachman and asked for either confirmation or denial of the rumor.

Packard hoped by this daring fabrication to stir the old man into making a statement as to the real facts of the case.

By availing himself of the services of the uniformed messenger, Packard managed to score a victory over his enemy the flunky; for that worthy, not suspecting the source from which the note came, innocently carried the missive to his master.

However, that was all the satisfaction the reporter got, for the millionaire read the note carefully, scowled, and then sent back word by the messenger-boy that there was no answer.

This time Packard was at the very end of his rope. He could think of no other means of landing the story. He might as well, without further waste of time and effort, go back to the office and report failure.

However, he did not pursue this course. In his wretchedness he yearned for sympathy, and he realized that this was not to be obtained at the office of the *Mercury*.

So instead he paid a visit to Miss Ada Wilson, the girl of whom he had been thinking when figuring out the problem of how to make his meager salary support two persons.

A mere glimpse at Miss Ada Wilson's face was enough to chase the gloom from any man's brow. Her complexion suggested Dresden china, her eyes were wondrously blue, her hair was gloriously golden, and when she smiled she was all dimples.

She greeted Packard with great cordiality.

"But goodness gracious, Tom!" she exclaimed, "how moody you look to-day! What on earth is the matter?"

"Business troubles," sighed Packard.

"Business troubles?" she repeated anxiously. "Has anything happened at the office, Tom?"

"Something *will* happen at the office when I arrive there," answered Packard dismally. "I've fallen down on a big story. I suppose I might as well hand in my resignation before I'm told that my services are no longer required."

"Is it really as bad as that?" asked the girl fearfully. "Tell me all about it, Tom."

Packard explained to her the nature of his assignment and how all his efforts to land the story had resulted in failure.

"And you can't think of any other way of getting at the facts?" inquired the girl, when he had finished his tale of wo.

"No," sighed Packard. "I'm completely at the end of my resources. You see, I've got such scanty information to work on. If only I knew the name of the minister who married them, I might be able to land the story. But I don't know anything. I don't even know the name of the bridegroom! I don't know where they were married! I don't know positively that the girl is married at all. The tip may be a pure fabrication, you see.

"I don't know of anybody to go to for information except the girl's father and the servants. The servants won't talk and the father won't even be seen, so you see I'm thoroughly up against it."

"Poor boy!" she sighed with much sympathy in her tone. "I wish I could help you, Tom."

"I know you do, little girl," replied Packard gratefully. "At all events, it is consoling to have your precious sympathy."

"But I would like to offer you more than sympathy, Tom. I would like to give you practical assistance."

Packard shrugged his shoulders.

"Unfortunately, you can't. It isn't in your power," he said with a sad smile.

"But why couldn't I—" The girl stopped short ond looked at Packard, her color suddenly heightened, her eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Tom, I've got a great idea!" she cried. "Why couldn't *I* try to interview this horrid millionaire?"

This suggestion was so startling to Packard that for a few seconds he sat surveying her in speechless surprise.

"You!" he at length managed to gasp. "You interview old Simon Lackeye! What a preposterous idea!"

"But why is it preposterous?" she demanded earnestly. "Why shouldn't I go to the old man and ask him to tell me all about his daughter's marriage?"

"Because you're not a newspaper man," said Packard, smiling indulgently. "You haven't any newspaper training, you see. You wouldn't know how to go about it."

"I'd know how to ask questions—all women know that," declared the girl

confidently. "Doubtless I wouldn't know how to write the story in the shape your paper would want it; but I could get the facts and hand them to you to work up."

Packard looked at her admiringly. She certainly was not lacking in grit.

"But you'd never get past the servants! They wouldn't allow you to see the old man," he protested.

"I can at least try. I hardly think they'd slam the door in *my* face. They wouldn't be so rude to a woman."

"I'd like to see them try it," growled Packard, clenching his fists at the thought.

"Very well! You see, there's no reason why I shouldn't make the attempt. Shall I start at once?"

Packard hesitated. He had heard of cases where women reporters had managed to get interviews where mere men had tried and failed.

In his opinion Ada Wilson was irresistible. It was hard to imagine even old Simon Lackeye or his flunkys refusing her aught. It was just possible that she might succeed. And yet somehow or other it went against the grain to think of her doing this thing.

But before he could reply the girl had left the room, and when she reappeared, a few minutes afterward, she wore her hat and gloves.

"Come on," she cried briskly, "I'm ready. I've just thought out a splendid plan of campaign. I'm positive it will succeed."

"What is it?" asked Packard, with genuine curiosity.

"Never mind, sir. I prefer to keep it a close secret. It's a daring scheme. I'm a genius to have conceived it. You needn't laugh. You'll say so, too, when I tell you about it after—after I bring you the story of Miss Lackeye's marriage."

Packard laughed.

"You certainly have got an abundance of self-confidence, girlie," he said admiringly.

He escorted her to the mansion of the millionaire, and after seeing her walk boldly up the marble steps, he hid around the corner to await developments.

With a steady hand the girl pressed the bell-button. The big door was immediately opened and she found herself confronting a haughty flunky—the same fellow who had slammed the door in Packard's face.

"I wish to see Mr. Lackeye," she said with dignity.

The fellow looked at her intently.

"What nime, please?" he inquired coldly.

"I prefer not to tell my name," she answered. "Just say to Mr. Lackeye that a lady desires to see him immediately on a matter of the greatest importance."

The footman shook his head.

"Himpossible, miss. The master never sees hany person without they sends their cards in first, miss."

The girl opened the little hand-bag she carried and took therefrom a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. On the paper she wrote the following extraordinary message:

"Must see you at once. I am the wife of the scoundrel who has run off with your daughter."

Then she carefully folded the paper and handed it to the flunky.

"Please give him that. It will explain everything," she said.

The fellow regarded the folded paper suspiciously.

"Are you from a newspaper, miss?" he inquired.

"No," cried the girl haughtily. "Now don't ask any more questions, but take that note to Mr. Lackeye at once."

She looked him straight in the eye as she spoke, and there was something in her glance which caused the fellow to obey without further questioning.

He turned on his heel and disappeared, leaving her standing in the hallway.

A few minutes afterward he was back, and by the curious look he cast upon her, the girl guessed that he had taken the liberty to read the note while conveying it to his master.

"Mr. Lackeye will see you in the library, madam," he said graciously.

A second flunky led her up the red-carpeted staircase and ushered her into a magnificently furnished room, the walls of which were lined with bookcases.

A handsome gray-haired old man was the sole occupant of this room. He sat in a big easy chair, and as she entered

the girl's first glance told her that he held her note in his hand.

Even without this means of identification she would have recognized him as old Simon Lackeye from the many published portraits she had seen.

There was a frown upon his face as he motioned her to a chair; but when he spoke to her his tone was gentle and courteous.

"Please be seated, madam," he said. "You wrote this note, I believe?"

As he spoke he fixed his keen eyes upon her, and the girl felt herself trembling beneath the directness of his gaze.

"Yes, sir," she answered, summoning all her courage.

"And you claim to be the wife of my secretary, Herbert Dare?"

"Yes, sir," responded the girl in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper.

Her ingenious plan was succeeding admirably. Already she had learned the identity of the bridegroom. Even if she failed to obtain further information she could now go back to Tom and tell him that the report of Miss Lackeye's marriage was true, and that the bridegroom was the old man's secretary, Herbert Dare.

That was a great deal accomplished, anyway, and yet she experienced no thrill of elation at her success.

Instead, she felt very uncomfortable. The old man's penetrating gaze was still fixed upon her face. Try as she would she could not look into those keen gray eyes.

A sudden desire to flee from that awful presence seized her, but a greater fear of the consequences of such an act compelled her to stay where she was.

"How long have you been married?" inquired the old millionaire quietly.

She felt that she could not go on with this wretched deception. She hated herself for having conceived such a dishonorable plan. But just then she thought of Tom Packard and how it would go with him at the office if he did not land this story. That gave her courage and she answered, almost with boldness:

"I married that rascal in London, England, two years ago. He deserted me a few weeks after our marriage."

She heard the old man sigh, and summoning enough courage to look into his face, she saw that his stern features were convulsed with grief.

"My poor little daughter!" he muttered brokenly. "My poor little Clara! I would have given all my millions to have saved you from this disgrace."

Then for the first time Ada Wilson realized fully the enormity of her offense. In her eagerness to help Tom she had not given a thought to the temporary suffering her daring deception might cause.

She put her hands before her face and burst out sobbing. Evidently her grief was misinterpreted, for the old man rose from his chair and walked over to her and placed a hand gently upon her head.

"Don't cry, my child," he said soothingly. "Believe me, you shall be fully avenged for the wrongs you have suffered at the hands of that scoundrel. He and my poor deceived daughter are now at Taunton, Massachusetts. My unfortunate girl was married to him there last night. You and I will go there at once and confront him with his villainy.

"I am an old man; but, thank God, there is still enough strength left me to thrash him within an inch of his life when I lay hands on him. And—after I get through with him, we will let the law take its course. You shall have ample satisfaction, never fear!

"And to think that I was about to send a telegram to my poor girl telling her that I forgave her, and asking them to return home! Oh, the contemptible wretch! The contemptible wretch!"

Every word he uttered was like the lash of a whip to the sobbing girl.

"No—no," she cried passionately. "It is I that am the contemptible wretch—not he. Oh, Mr. Lackeye, forgive me. I have deceived you! There is not a word of truth in what I have told you! I am not that man's wife! I have never seen him! That note was all a wretched lie. I invented this horrible story in order to learn from your lips the facts about your daughter's marriage. Oh, I must have been mad to do it. Forgive me! Forgive me!"

Into the old man's face came an expression of mingled astonishment and scorn.

"Young woman," he said sternly, "do you mean to tell me that you, who look so young and fair and innocent, could stoop to such a base deception?"

For reply the girl only sobbed wildly. There was a full minute's pause, then the millionaire continued, with a world of bitterness in his harsh voice:

"You did it for a newspaper, I presume. For the sake of a few lines of space, you were willing to sacrifice truth and honor."

"Oh, forgive me!" cried the girl. "Let me explain."

"Pardon me," broke in the old man coldly. "Explanations are quite unnecessary. I fully understand the whole situation. You have accomplished your mission. You have fooled me into giving you the details of my daughter's marriage. I congratulate you upon your success. Doubtless the reputation you will achieve in your office will more than compensate you for the lack of a conscience. I must beg you to leave this house immediately."

He had pressed a button on the library-table and, as he finished speaking, a liveried servant appeared.

"John," he said, "show this young woman out, and if ever she calls here again remember that she is not to be admitted, no matter what mendacious story she may tell."

"Oh, sir, please let me explain," cried the weeping girl. "I know that I have been thoroughly wicked, but I don't think that I am quite as bad as you think. I didn't do this sinful thing for myself. I did it for Tom—for Tom Packard of the *Mercury*. He had to get this story or lose his position and I couldn't bear—"

"I really don't care to hear your explanations, young woman," broke in the millionaire icily. "Nothing you can say will excuse the fact that you have acted a shameful lie and worked a disgraceful imposition upon me. This interview is absolutely at an end. I congratulate you upon having so successfully obtained it. John, show this young woman to the door."

"This way, miss," said the flunky in a tone of firmness; and trembling with shame and humiliation, the girl rose from her chair and followed him.

As she left the house, Packard, who was patiently waiting for her around the corner, hurried to join her.

"Well, girlie, what luck?" he cried eagerly. "Why, bless me! You've been crying. What on earth has happened?"

"Oh, Tom," she sobbed, "take me home as quickly as you can. I am so miserable."

"But what's the matter, dear?" cried Packard anxiously. "What is the meaning of these tears? Is it because you failed to get the story? If so, cheer up. I don't care—"

"No, Tom," she cried hysterically, "it isn't because I failed to get the story that I'm so upset. It's because I succeeded in getting it. I know all about the marriage of Miss Lackeye. I've interviewed the old millionaire and obtained the story from his own lips."

"Bully for you!" cried Packard excitedly. "You're a wonder, girlie. You're the cleverest little woman I've ever seen or heard of. So you've landed the story, eh, and these are tears of joy? Good! What a hit I'll make at the office—thanks to you, little treasure!"

The girl shook her head mournfully.

"No, Tom," she sighed, "I'm awfully sorry, but I can't tell you anything I have learned about Miss Lackeye's marriage. These are not tears of joy, Tom, they are tears of shame and grief. I am the most hateful girl in the world, Tom, and I am thoroughly ashamed of myself.

"You must promise me not to ask me a single question, for I cannot tell you anything. And I don't care if you do lose your job on that horrid newspaper! I detest newspapers, and I'll never try to cover another story. Please take me home at once."

And although Packard made several artful and delicate attempts to inveigle her into communicating to him what had happened in the millionaire's house, he was wholly unsuccessful.

The girl had made up her mind that the only way by which she could atone for the deceit she had practised was by not availing herself of the information she had thereby obtained. And so she withheld from Packard the story which meant so much to him and which it was in her power to place in his possession.

Finally Packard was forced to go to

the office, empty-handed, and "face the music."

"Verily the ways of women are hard to understand," he told himself with a sigh on the way. "To think that she actually managed to land that cracker-jack story and then, for some idiotic reason or other, won't give it up! Oh, well, I suppose there's nothing for me to do but confess failure to that beast Hargrave, and take my medicine."

"That beast" Hargrave looked up with an expectant expression on his face as Packard approached his desk.

"Well," he said eagerly, "did you land that wedding-story, Packard? I suppose you did."

"No," stammered the reporter, flushing to the roots of his hair. "I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Hargrave. I did the best I could. I tried to get an interview with old Lackeye, but he wouldn't see me."

"Wouldn't see you!" cried the city editor in amazement. "What do you mean, young man? Why! Old Lackeye just called me up on the telephone and asked me to tell you to call him up as soon as you came in. He said that he wanted to talk to you about 'that interview.' Those are his very words, my boy."

"Wanted to talk to me about that interview?" gasped Packard in amazement. "Did he ask for me by name, sir?"

"He most assuredly did. He asked for Mr. Tom Packard. There's only one Tom Packard on this sheet, to the best of my knowledge. But don't stand there gaping, you young idiot. Get to the telephone at once."

Thoroughly dazed, Packard walked across the room to the telephone-booth and called up old Lackeye's home.

To his surprise, when he announced to the servant that it was Mr. Packard of the *Mercury* who desired to talk with Mr. Lackeye, instead of suddenly finding the connection cut off, he was told to "Kindly hold the wire."

"Hello!" said a harsh voice at the other end a few seconds later. "Is this Mr. Packard?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom eagerly.

"This is Mr. Lackeye. I want to ask you a question, young man. That young woman who called at my house a while ago? What relation is she to you?"

"She will be my wife some day, sir, I hope," answered Packard proudly.

"Ha!" exclaimed the voice at the other end. "Well, young man, I want to congratulate you. She's a clever girl, sir—a mighty clever girl. And I want you to convey to the young lady my sincere apologies, sir. I am afraid I spoke to her more harshly than I intended. Now that I've had time to think it over I fear that I may have been more severe than she deserved—so I called you up to ask you to apologize to her on my behalf; for I am afraid I may have made her unhappy by the way I treated her."

"You did, sir," cried Tom indignantly. "You made her very unhappy. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for being harsh to a dear little girl like that."

"Well, I'm willing to do what I can to make amends," said old Lackeye, quite humbly. "Come up to the house, young man, and bring the young lady with you. I'll—I'll give you a signed statement about my daughter's marriage, if you like. It will be the first signed statement that Simon Lackeye has made to a newspaper in years, so it ought to make amends. I hate newspapers and reporters, but if your paper ever again sends you to get an interview with me, young man, send the young lady in your stead, and you will get the interview every time."

TO LADY MINE.

DAINTY maiden, oft thy lustrous eyes
Make sacrifice with love-fires to the gods;
Ah! canst, then, marvel that the evening skies,
Close-drawing cross their azure-gray cloud dyes,
Refuse to flame their stars against such odds?

Clay Arthur Pierce.

ON GLORY'S TRAIL.*

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "Their Last Hope," "The Scarlet Scarab," "The Fugitive," etc.

A story of America in the time of the Colonies, involving a desperate journey whose path lay across that of Washington himself.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

DOWN the Boston Road, in tan and buckskins, strides Craig Drysdale, son of Hiram Drysdale, president of the council of the town of New York. Around the bend he comes upon Karl Krauss, a young man of fashion, who is threatening a girl. Him Craig packs off in short order, and later learns that the girl is Mlle. Désirée du Fresne, cousin of the fop, Karl Krauss. He escorts her to town, where he is later associated with Krauss in filing papers for the council. Krauss one day receives a letter from Molly Gaines, who until recently has been the object of Craig's adoration. The next day a set of plans is missing; the council meets in haste; Krauss is accused, and flees the town. Three days later, while roaming in the forest, Craig hear voices in Dead Man's Hut, a fearsome place reputed to be haunted. Approaching softly, though in fear and trembling, he sees—nothing could have been so unexpected as what he actually *did* see.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MIDNIGHT MEETING.

THERE I knelt, among the dew-soaked weeds, my eye to the chink in the log wall.

Within the room a single lantern, in the center of the rough-hewn block that had served the Dane and his wife for a table, shed a fitful light through the bare room, leaving its corners in gloom, but throwing into plain view a group of four persons.

Two of them had their backs to me. The other two were bending forward as though studying some object on the table, over which all four were poring. At first I could not distinguish the faces of any of them.

Wordless, motionless, wrapped in shapeless cloaks, they might well have been witches or any other breed of uncanny folk. Yet, at actual sight of them much of my fear had died.

There was something very real, if equally unexpected, about those silent forms staring down at the table.

As my eyes grew used to the light I could see that all four were not really motionless. One of the two fronting me was moving a hand here and there on the table, as though indicating some course or direction.

The gesture was not unfamiliar to me. Often had I seen some council-member, a chart of the scene of war spread before him, indicate with his finger certain routes, while his fellow-councilors gathered about and followed the trend of the lines he indicated.

Perhaps it was because of this recollection and the associations it brought up that my surprise, great as it was, did not cause me to betray my whereabouts when the figure with the moving hand rose from its stooping posture and the lantern-light fell full on its face.

The cloaked man was Captain Johann Krauss, commandant of the New York fort.

"So, it is *here* that Karl is in hiding!" I muttered to myself; "and he is receiving a private paternal visit by night! But it might have been safer if the captain had not trusted the secret to these two others, whoever they may be. Probably a couple of his negroes bringing provisions to the poor boy."

**This story began in the August issue of* THE ARGOSY, *which will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 10 *cents.*

Ashamed at myself for my previous fear, and not a little chagrined that I should have worked up my faltering courage to so high a point all to no purpose, I was about to turn away and resume my homeward journey, when the cloaked man at Captain Krauss's right lifted his head.

It was not Karl, as I had fancied. Instead—and here my amaze turned me fairly stupid—it proved to be Lieutenant Carney, the man who had broken in on my talk with Karl that day in the council-rooms just as we had completed work on those miserable plans—the man who had been the bearer of Molly Gaines's unlucky letter.

What was he doing here? He and Karl, though pleasant enough acquaintances, had not been sufficiently intimate to warrant Carney's coming far out of town at dead of night simply for a social call on the refugee.

Moreover, Carney bore a name for gossiping, and for being a light-headed ne'er-do-well. The last man on earth, apparently, to be told such a secret as this.

Why, Karl's whereabouts would be known all over town before another nightfall!

I was interested—so much so that I clean forgot my earlier impulse to move away. Moreover, since the identity of two of Karl's visitors had so astonished me, might not that of the third prove an equal surprise?

For, of the two who stood with their backs to me, one was tall and apparently broad of shoulder, while the other was slighter and many inches shorter. This much I could see despite their muffling cloaks, and I had readily guessed the former of the two to be young Krauss. It was concerning his boyish companion that my curiosity was aroused.

The man I had decided must be Karl was still following the course of Captain Krauss's finger across the table. In a few moments—probably to see better—he rounded the corner of the board and stood beside Krauss.

His action disclosed to me a momentary glimpse of the table's surface. It was littered with papers, one of them stretched out flat and held open by bits of stone on each corner. Before I could take a second glance at the documents, the man who had passed to the farther side of the table came into the area of light.

It was a bronzed, high-cheek-boned face, lean as a wolf's, and thatched with straight black hair. Not the features of Karl Krauss, but palpably those of a half-breed Indian. And on more careful inspection I recognized the fellow.

He was Simon Rigault, the famous Canadian forest-runner, a man who in the north was as well known as Frontenac himself. Marvelous tales were told of his prowess and his adventures, for he had a speed and endurance and a knowledge of trails equaled by no white man and by few Indians.

The son of an Ottawa squaw and a French under-officer, he had been raised in the French camps, and was chief scout in Dieskau's army. He had been pointed out to me two years before, when I visited Quebec in behalf of the Ohio Company.

There was no mistaking that pock-marked aquiline face and the narrow black eyes. The man at Krauss's side was unquestionably Simon Rigault.

But what, in the name of all that was wonderful, was he doing in the suburbs of the English stronghold of New York, a full hundred miles distant from the nearest French lines?

Had he deserted the Gallic cause, or had he sneaked through a hundred miles of hostile country to sell to Captain Krauss tidings of the expected invasion? This latter supposition seemed highly probable.

Those papers that strewed the table might well be documents bearing on the French military operations. Some of the most valuable of our own plans had lately been stolen. Now, by way of reprisal, were we buying some of France's secrets?

I smiled to myself at thought of the barter's grim irony, and I looked again at the papers, straining my keen forest-bred eyes to decipher them. At first their contents were a mere blur. Then, as they grew clearer, I gasped aloud.

For the large sheet of parchment spread out there under the lantern's rays was a plan. And that plan, as—even at that distance—a hundred famil-

iar marks indicated, was none other than the map I had redrawn of the three harbor channels leading to New York.

Here was a discovery indeed! Our carefully executed plans, charts, specifications, etc., which had so mysteriously vanished from the council-chamber, were here in Dead Man's Hut, neatly set forth for the perusal of this half-breed French scout!

And helping him decipher them were Captain Johann Krauss, New York's trusted military commander, and one of his lieutenants!

Treason of the most barefaced type, if ever I saw it! Small wonder that this unholy trinity had chosen a haunted house and the hours of darkness for their meeting! This would be news to set all New York a buzzing when I should return with it.

And now to identify the fourth conspirator—that short, boyish fellow in the shapeless cloak—and thus make my report complete!

He certainly was not Karl Krauss. And, by the way, where *was* Karl? Not here, as I had at first fancied. I was glad that he, at least, had no share in the abominable transaction.

I had been at the chink in the wall less than a minute. In that time no one had spoken. All had been noting in silence the course of Captain Krauss's stubby forefinger along the various channels indicated on my map.

But at last the silence was broken—broken by the fourth and only unrecognized member of the party, the slight figure with its back to me.

"Now I think I understand," the Unknown said. "I will translate it to Simon while you get the next paper ready."

The words were commonplace. But the voice went through me like a knife.

For it was the voice of Désirée du Fresne.

CHAPTER IX.

I START ON A MAD RACE.

DÉSIRÉE DU FRESNE, in that coterie of spies and traitors! The forest-elf whom I, in duty's name, had transformed into a stiffly uncomfortable little city maiden!

I could have sworn she was as honest as day. Yet now she was intriguing to give the city that sheltered her into the hands of the French foe and their merciless Indian allies. To turn over other women to the tomahawks of Delaware devils, to yield her neighbors' lives and goods to the horde of mixed races that would pour in upon us once the betrayed outer defenses of harbor and forts were passed.

And it was *she*—this child-faced traitress—to whom my mind had so often turned of late, whose lot I had so pitied, whose every grace of look and gesture I had unconsciously treasured in memory! Until now I had not realized how much a part of my life this demure little ex-dryad had become, nor how disillusionment can hurt a strong man.

Concerning Molly Gaines I had never had illusions. I had known her for what she was—a pretty feather-headed flirt, with whom I had become infatuated, and whose light gaiety I had hoped one day to deepen into love for myself.

She had played me fast and loose, and no hearts had been broken. But with this blue-eyed French girl it had been different. Under all her gay, wayward childishness I had thought I read an honesty and depth of character I had never before dreamed of finding in any woman. Truly, the dream had been pleasant. But now I was awake.

Meanwhile, Désirée, in musical French, was explaining to Rigault the simple key to the cipher we had used in marking the divers points on the chart, and was showing him the course of the several channels.

"This is not needed!" he interrupted her, after listening impatiently for a moment. "As I have told you, I am a forest-runner, not a tactician. I am under orders to bear these papers to our lines, not to explain their meaning."

"We squabbled over that long enough a few minutes ago," she retorted. "Captain Krauss wished you to understand these plans and maps, so you could describe them in case you should lose—"

"I lose nothing I once get. All you have explained means nothing to me. I shall carry the package to my general, or to the man he sends to meet me at Lacolle. There my duty ends."

Désirée turned in despair to her uncle and translated Rigault's words.

"The pighead!" snorted Krauss. "That is what comes of petting and making a hero of a half-breed. He forgets his place."

"But he has the whip-hand of us, it seems," lisped Carney, in his insufferable British accent. "And it is the only way we can get the papers across. I—"

"Yes, curse the luck!" broke in Krauss. "If only it had been safe for Karl to wait and carry them! But I knew what a hue and cry there would be at his vanishing, and, for fear some woodsman might catch him, I dared not let the lad take with him so much as a scrap of paper. If I had known the council would send only soldiers—"

"That was by *my* advice," observed Carney with complacence. "And faith, 'twas the least I could do after palming the documents under his very eyes."

"Then it was *you* who took them?" broke in Désirée.

"To be sure it was. He knew, of course, that they were to be abstracted at the first favorable chance, but at his own request he was not told who was to do it, nor how, nor when."

"But why? And why did he not take them himself?"

"Same reply for both questions, *mademoiselle*. He was certain—as one of the clerks responsible for the papers' safety—to be interrogated on oath by the council as soon as the loss should be discovered. And the man, oddly enough, sticks at perjury. A queer defect in one otherwise so clever, but—"

"Oh! He wished to be able to swear truthfully that he had no knowledge of the missing packet? Truly a brilliant appeasement of conscience!"

"Yes, was it not?" agreed Carney, on whom her sarcasm was quite lost. "You see, he—"

"But why did he flee when there was no proof against him?"

"We had heard nothing from the French in a month. Rigault was to have been here a full week ago. When he did not come, we feared our last message had miscarried. It was necessary to send some one to the French lines to reestablish communication, and to order Rigault or some other runner sent on at once for the papers. Karl was the only man we dared despatch on such a mission. You see, he knows the country, and— But surely, *mademoiselle*, since you are one of us, you must already have known all this?"

"I knew nothing. To-night my uncle told me that he needed an interpreter for an interview with a Frenchman. Since Karl was gone, there was no one but myself he could trust in New York who speaks French. He told me then that I would be rendering a service to France, and explained how. So, I came."

Verily, our honorable fort commander was wise in his generation and chose his tools wisely. Relying upon this poor child's devotion to the country of her birth, he had played on that false patriotism to drag her into this infamy. Yet that knowledge did little to soften my heart toward his dupe.

Krauss, during the foregoing brief colloquy, had been busily sorting the papers, folding up the charts, and bundling all back into the official leather case.

Rigault interrupted this latter operation with a grunt of contempt.

"Ask him," he commanded Désirée, "if he thinks I am going to lug that great wallet through the wilderness so that any chance passer-by can see I am carrying messages? Here, let him give them to me."

Snatching the case from Krauss's hand, the half-breed unceremoniously tumbled the papers out on the table. Then, sitting down on the earthen floor, he unwound the long deerskin leggings he wore, and spreading them before him, proceeded to lay the flattened documents one by one among the folds of hide.

This accomplished to his taste, he proceeded to wind the leggings once more about his lean nether limbs from ankle to thigh. So cunningly was the operation accomplished that the casual observer would never have guessed that aught besides a fairly well developed pair of legs was hidden beneath the swathed deerskin.

"So much for that!" he remarked, getting to his feet and kicking the despised document-case across the room. "When next these leggings of mine

come off it will be at Lacolle, in the presence of my general or his representative."

"But if you are stopped?" queried Désirée.

"If I am stopped it will be by a bullet. No man living will look there for my papers. So, they will be safe if I live or die. But I shall live. It is a way I have."

"Have you any more to say to him?" Désirée asked her uncle, who stood glowering and muttering at the messenger who had so lightly treated his authority and his august self.

"Yes!" growled Krauss. "Tell him he is insolent and insubordinate, and that if he wore a sword—"

"My uncle," translated Désirée sweetly, "bids me thank you and to wish you *bon voyage*. Pray present his respects to *M. le Général.*"

I waited to hear no more, but slipped back among the bushes, and thence noiselessly wriggled my way out of ear-shot.

I had heard quite enough for one night.

And now where lay my duty? My first impulse was to rush back to the city as fast as my moccasined feet could carry me, to tell my father the whole story, to have him call an instant session of the council and bag the conspirators on their return.

But Désirée?

I remembered the fate of a French spy at Albany at the hands of the furious townsfolk, and the thought turned me sick. Even could the military—such of them as were not already in this treason scheme—be relied upon to protect the prisoners from the people, what fate save the gallows awaited Désirée du Fresne?

Oh, she was such a *child*—so little, so pretty—and she loved life so—the wild, glorious life of the forests! To condemn her to a horrible death, or at the very least to a lifelong imprisonment, was more than I could endure.

What mattered the exact measure of her guilt? She was a woman—scarcely more than a schoolgirl. But the council, in their access of terror and indignation, would never take that into account.

If I withheld my news the treason must spread, and the fall of the city—perhaps of all King George's American possessions—would lie at my door. No, I must carry the warning, be the consequences what they might.

An inspiration came to me. Why mention Désirée's name at all? I could readily describe the rest of the affair and yet leave her out of my tale. Neither Krauss nor Carney was likely to implicate the girl. And without them she would scarcely trouble further the peace of the community.

Yes, that was clearly my course. And the knowledge lifted a load from my heart.

The light was extinguished in the hut. My eyes, now used to the darkness, could distinguish the four shadowy figures that emerged. By short cuts and by my greater speed I could readily reach the city a full half-hour ahead of Krauss.

But a new thought rooted me to the ground even as I had bent forward for my run. Simon Rigault!

While I was alarming New York and breaking up the nest of traitors there he would be safe on his way to the French lines, carrying with him full plans of our forts and our harbor, and details of our military force and provisions.

Must he be allowed to escape and to give France this key to our strength? In a second my mind was made up. The conspiracy at home could wait. The present absolute need was to get those papers away from Rigault. And this I vowed to do.

It was a mad resolve. He was armed. I was not. At his belt I had seen a hunting-knife. His rifle had stood against the table in the hut. I had no weapon, and no means of securing one. Moreover, he was the fleetest, most enduring, forest-runner in all Canada.

Already he had left the trio he had come to Dead Man's Hut to meet, and had melted away in the darkness. How could I hope to come up with him, or, having come up, to force the papers from him?

But before I had clearly formulated the question I had darted off in pursuit—unarmed, ignorant of his exact direction, and with no settled plan of attack. Yet, equal to my ignorance and other

drawbacks was my ever-mounting resolve to win back those papers and to save New York.

CHAPTER X.

A DUEL WITH TIME.

WERE I to describe the next week's happenings in detail I should fill a vaster volume than that which comprises the writings of holy Master Bunyan, the Cripplegate tinker.

Yes, and some of my mishaps and adventures during that time would well-nigh rival those of the folk in his "Holy War" or "Pilgrim's Progress." But I must pass lightly as may be over that great race across the wilderness. For the happenings that followed are of far stranger, more exciting, sort, and I doubt not will furnish keener interest.

When I plunged through copse and forest that midnight in the early summer of 1755 in hot pursuit of Simon Rigault to prevent his bearing our plans of defense to the French lines my quest was little more practical than is that of the urchin who seeks the gold-pot at the rainbow's foot.

For Rigault was a fighter of renown, and was well armed. I carried no weapon. He was the peer of all forest-runners. I was soft from a month of sedentary town life. He had a fair start on me, and he knew the exact direction he must follow. I, in the darkness, must take my chance of picking up his trail.

There was but one thing that redeemed my chase from stark madness: twice had he spoken of Lacolle as his destination. Now, Lacolle, as we traders knew, was the little fur station on the Conemaugh River, in the far west, where the Delawares and others of the western and Pennsylvania tribes were wont to store their pelts until enough were collected to make up their annual quota for the Ohio Company's traders.

There were several such stations within a hundred miles of the Conemaugh, and for greater convenience the company's agents had established a post and built a fort—which they christened Fort Pitt—a bare fifty miles west from Lacolle, at the junction of the two great rivers, the Monongahela and the Alleghany.

But while the fort was in building a band of French raiders had come down, driven away our men, seized the fort, and completed it, giving it the name of Du Quesne. Since when the Gallic power had extended eastward beyond Lacolle. The woods were full of savage allies, and no Englishman, be he trader or settler, dare risk his scalp in the vicinity.

Thither, it seemed, Rigault was bound. We had had reports of a gathering of the French and their tribal friends near Du Quesne and to the northward, where, it was said, they were massing to resist the projected British and Virginian expedition against the river fortress.

While I had visited that district but once, three years earlier, I had a fair memory of its whereabouts and of its geography. So, I knew what Rigault's general direction must be. That was my one excuse for following him.

Though he must be conversant with fifty short cuts unknown to me, yet I had some hope of picking up his trail if I followed the nearest route toward Lacolle, and of running him down ere he could reach the French lines.

Should he once gain the shelter of those lines, my journey would probably be worse than useless. Nor would my own life be of any especial value in such surroundings.

Another hope spurred me on. For though he would travel at good speed, he could have no idea he was pursued. This—though he was journeying through hostile country—would doubtless render him less vigilant in guarding against rear attack.

He had moved westward. He of course had a boat moored somewhere along shore. He would choose some wooded spot, to avoid observation.

Now, the shores of York Island were open, or, at the most, thinly wooded, up to a point nearly a mile north of Yorkville. On this fact I counted in making for the boat which I had so recently left on the beach just above that same patch of forest.

Winded from my running, I came upon the boat, at the same time wonder-

ing what the boy I had hired to return it to its owner would say on finding it gone. I rowed, with the swift, silent stroke I had learned from the Canadian foresters, to the distant Jersey shore, scanning the dull surface of the Hudson, as I went, for signs of Rigault's craft.

But there was no moon, and the sky was close-clouded. The water, while giving back a faint shimmer that left both banks visible, hid any smaller and nearer object. If Rigault was invisible to me, so, also, must I be to him.

Yet I rowed lightly, having also torn my neck-scarf in two and bound it about the oar-locks. For I was not minded that so much as the distant click of wood against iron should set my man on his guard.

I pulled southward as well as west, making for a point just off the Dutch village of Pavonia, on the Jersey shore. It was the shortest crossing, and I judged that thither Rigault would turn his boat's head.

Nor was I wrong. For as I ran my prow up on a strip of gravel I saw, not fifty feet away, a little wherry already beached.

I crossed over to it and ran my hand along the oars. The handles were almost dry, despite the heavy dew, whereas the blades still dripped water. The oars, I judged, had not been laid down more than five minutes at most.

Good! I had lost less time than I had supposed. So far, my luck surpassed all expectation.

I might have had to cast about for a mile, up and down shore, before finding Rigault's place of landing. Now I could pick up the trail fresh, and barely five minutes behind him. Before morning, if my good fortune held, I might readily hope to overtake the fellow.

I scrambled up the steep bank, where a path ran back toward the hill. I had not traversed a hundred yards before I almost collided with a man descending the slope toward the beach.

He was a squat, heavy-built fellow, in the baggy trousers and wide hat of a Dutch farmer.

"Have you met any one on your way down?" I asked in my best Dutch.

"No," he grunted, sidling away as though fearing I was a highwayman.

This was a staggerer. For unless Rigault had taken at once to the woods —an unlikely chance so long as a path would serve his turn—this farmer must have met him.

"How far back do you come from?" I asked next.

"Hundred yards, maybe. Maybe two hundred."

"I know this locality well enough to remember there is no house within a quarter of a mile from here. You are lying."

"Who said anything about a house?" he growled.

"If you don't come from a house, where do you come from this time of night?"

"I come from my boat first. Then just now I found I'd forgot to take my oars with me, so I turned back for them."

"Your boat? Then, it was *your*—"

"My wherry down there? Yes. I crossed from York Island ten minutes ago. What are you asking all these questions for? What business of yours—"

He grumbled on, but I did not listen. My spirits had fallen to zero. So, it was this bumpkin's wherry I had mistaken for Rigault's! All my work to do over again!

I swung on my heel and walked back to the beach. I must now follow the shore up or down till I should find the forest-runner's boat. It meant a dreary search.

The Dutchman, plainly puzzled at my demeanor, clumped along in my wake.

"Foresters must be holding a meeting somewhere to-night," he muttered as, coming out into the open, near the shore, he noted my deerskins.

I made no instant reply. In fact, his words, at first, scarcely pierced my mind. Then, as he reached his wherry, a thought came to me and I sprang after him.

"What do you mean about a meeting of foresters?" I queried. "Have you seen any others to-night?"

"Only the one I just rowed over."

"Just rowed over?"

"Yes. From York Island. I rowed him across there after dark. He told me to wait and row him back. And I did. Gave me twelve shillings, and—"

But I was gone, up the path, at top speed, cursing my own stupidity as I ran. I had thrown away precious minutes while all the time Rigault was on his way inland.

Had I kept to my course at first I might well have caught up with him before the path reached the forest. Now the best chance of all my journey was gone.

It is one thing to overhaul a man on a clear path, and quite another to study out, by night, the direction he may or may not have taken through the thick woods. Still, I was not discouraged.

I knew, of course, that if Rigault had suspected he was followed no Indian could have found his trail. But he did not know I was behind him, and would therefore, probably, take no pains to efface his tracks.

At the path's abrupt end I cast about like a hunting-dog, and after a minute, dark as it was, I felt a spot where the mold had been pressed. Three feet in each direction and then—another footmark. I was on the half-breed's trail.

Knowing, thus, the line of start he had made, it was a matter of a minute to figure out the various stars by whose compass-line Rigault was shaping his southward course. It was all a mere question of simple mathematics known to every trained woodsman.

I could not, in this way, miss his trail by any distance so great as to render it difficult to pick up when dawn's light should come to my aid. For already, because of my delay, I had given up the hope of overhauling my quarry that night.

Off I set at the steady, mile-eating Indian trot so familiar to me. And on through what remained of the short summer night I kept the pace with scarce a break.

At first my muscles, softened by city life, rebelled, but before I had covered five miles they had fallen back into their old pliability.

At sunrise I had found Rigault's trail. It was scarcely fifty yards to the left of my own. But it was colder than I could have wished.

By breaks in bush-stems and pressure of moccasin-marks in the springy turf I calculated that the half-breed must be a full hour ahead of me. He was in better condition than I, and—though it irks me to confess it—a faster traveler.

Still, he must rest, soon or late; and though weary, I kept on at what speed I could, in the hope of coming upon him during some brief hour of repose.

So certain was I that he could not suspect pursuit that I took no great pains to skirt the wooded borders of field and farm-land, but pursued the elusive trail straight as a foxhound. Noon found me exhausted from my hot pace.

I had kept to his track unerringly, and during the past two hours I had found it easier to follow than in early morning. The half-breed had evidently felt so secure as to neglect even the most common precautions. Even the cleverest forest-runner is prone to underestimate possible peril. And he had not maintained his first rapid pace.

For now, according to all signs, I could not be a half-hour in his wake. And so the race went on, I summoning all my flagging speed to wipe out the brief interval of time that separated me from my antagonist.

It was about one o'clock that I came upon a little natural glade in the thick Jersey woods. In the center of the clearing stood a moldering stump. Thither, easy to follow as the plainest print, ran Rigault's trail. And there, at the stump, that same trail abruptly ended.

Yes, *ended*. There was no more trace of it, beyond or to either side, than if the man had taken wing.

I stood, foolish, baffled, at my wits' end, staring hither and thither as might a dog when the partridge he has chased along the ground suddenly flies upward.

Then, in stupid speculation, I fell to studying the hollow stump which had marked the end of my race. It stood a foot or so in height. Amid the dry-rot and decaying moss of its interior lay a scrap of birch-bark, the only object there which showed no sign of time and weather.

So odd an incongruity at once caught my eye. I picked up the fragment.

Across its lower side, scrawled with a bit of sand-slate, were these words, in very ill-spelled French: *Tu es un bon courreur du bois. Mais pas assez bon.*

Adieu.—RIGAULT. (You are a good forest-runner. But not good enough. Good-by).

I sat down as though knocked in the head. Mortification stung me like a whip.

Oh, what a triple fool I had been! Secure in the belief that my opponent would not trouble himself to observe whether or not he was pursued, I had blundered on after him, across open country, and with little more effort at concealment than a charging bull.

He, on the contrary, had taken the usual precaution of a forest fugitive and had evidently "cast back," with a view to discovering if by any chance he *was* followed. He had, of course, seen me, and had amused himself for a time in leaving a plain trail.

Then, tiring of the sport, he had left me this birch-bark farewell, and effacing his track as he well knew how to do, had calmly vanished.

Even now, from somewhere in the forest shadows beyond, he was probably observing my chagrin with keen amusement.

This thought put me on my mettle. If he would thus befool me perhaps I, too, might do a little deluding on my own account.

I arose, in a fury that was only partly simulated, ground the birch-bark under my heel, shook my fist at the woods ahead of me, and turning about, slouched despondently back in the direction I had come. And as I went I did some rapid thinking.

The trail had grown suspiciously plain about two hours back. Therefore, it must have been about that time that Rigault had first learned of my pursuit. He could not, therefore, know I had followed him all the way from York Island. He doubtless thought me some South Jersey trapper who, accidentally catching a glimpse of a half-breed sneaking through the woods, had suspected him of being a French spy and given chase.

My manner on reading the birch-bark missive would probably lead him to think I had abandoned the chase. But he would certainly take care to leave no visible trail for some time to come.

Therefore, it was out of the question to think of following my original plan of dogging his steps. I should have my labor for my pains, and probably fall into an ambush before I had traveled another day.

My one hope had been Rigault's ignorance that he was pursued. Now that hope was dead.

But my rage gave birth to an idea—an idea so glaringly audacious that it fitted in well with my desperate mood. I was in fine humor to risk my life. And if ever a plan involved crazy risk, it was the scheme which I had just then evolved.

Without waiting for second thought, I proceeded to put it into execution.

CHAPTER XI.

INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH.

HERE, then, was my plan:

Though I could no longer directly follow Rigault, I knew his destination—Lacolle, the former fur post—full two hundred miles distant as the hawk flies. I resolved, in the mad folly of youth, to make the journey, running on lines parallel to Rigault's, keeping out of his way until he should have entered French territory. By that time he certainly would fear no pursuit, and might even abate his pace.

True, the last half of the way would lie in French possessions, through forests and rivers alive with natives who asked no better sport than the annexing of an English scalp and receiving for it the bounty so lavishly paid by their Gallic masters.

But I was past weighing chances. Moreover, apart from my selfish wrath at being bamboozled by a mere half-breed, how could I turn back now, with the knowledge that I alone could save our plans from falling into the hands of our country's enemies?

Insane as the notion was, it was our one hope. I would follow Simon Rigault to Lacolle itself, if need be. Yes—in my boyish bravado I vowed it—if worst came to worst I would even snatch the precious papers from the hand of the French general himself in the midst of his army. So began my two-hundred-mile journey.

It was a passing desperate feat, even for a hot-headed boy. Yet I will pass over it as briefly as I may.

For the first days I made good progress. It was fairly open country, and the course was known to me. Food of a rough sort was to be had for the asking from the scattered cottages and log huts I passed. I had some silver coin and one or two gold guineas with me, and these far more than sufficed for my needs.

But it was after I had left the Jersey provinces and passed the settled regions of eastern Pennsylvania that my real hardships began. Here I could no longer travel at full speed, but for miles at a time must creep warily, like a hunted wolf, through districts that I knew to be hunting-grounds of hostile Indians.

I lost much more time in this way than I could afford. Moreover, my progress was still further retarded by the swollen, unfordable rivers that ran like a veritable network through those western forests.

These I must swim at night, lest my bobbing head be noted by some passing savage. When I reached such a stream it was necessary to wait until dark before crossing.

In all these ways I felt I was losing ground on Rigault. He could proceed without caution, and probably had a chain of canoes awaiting him at various river-banks.

To atone for my daytime slowness, I took to stretching each day's march far into the night. At such times I could move more boldly and with greater rapidity.

Besides, Rigault was not likely to make such forced marches. This extra effort on my part might, I hoped, partly offset my other delays and keep me abreast of him.

The food problem, too, now became one to reckon with. I could no longer openly buy provisions. I had no arms wherewith to shoot game. Once I knocked over a porcupine with a club, and once a baby black bear, and on their flesh, cooked over just-deserted Indian camp-fires, I lived for days.

At another time, hunger-mad, I wriggled one night to the outskirts of an Indian village and filched a newly roasted haunch of deer that had been hung up for salting.

By the wood knowledge that was in me I managed for the most part to avoid observation. Once, as at twilight I swam a river, an arrow whizzed passed me and splashed into the water not six inches in front. I dived and swam under water to the shadow of the bank, a few yards distant. But I was not pursued.

Some native, seeing by the half-light a dark object moving through the water, had doubtless loosed a shaft on the chance of the swimmer being a doe or a bear.

At another time, by night, I ran into a belated party of Delaware hunters. By running silently, doubling on my tracks, and swimming a half-mile I shook them off.

These are but a few of my divers adventures. But they and others threw me repeatedly off the straight track, delayed my journey, and lengthened its distance.

My deerskins were in shreds, my face bristled with unshaven stubble; the flesh I had accumulated during my sedentary month in New York gave place to a gaunt, hollow-eyed leanness. My moccasins were worn through, and my feet sore and swollen.

Bramble and brier had scratched my face into a pattern of half-healed welts and scars. He must indeed have been a shrewd observer who could recognize the trim, well-fed Craig Drysdale of other days in the hairy, thin, ragged woodsman who now prowled the Pennsylvania wilderness.

Worst of all, I had no means of determining whether or not I was in Rigault's vicinity. He might, it is true, have been delayed, but daily the chances of his having far outstripped me grew greater.

I was more than half minded, again and again, to abandon my wild quest and return to civilization. But the bulldog obstinacy that has ever carried Englishmen through hopeless odds to victory stood me in good stead.

I had set myself a task. Vain as that task seemed, I would pursue it until I had absolute proof of its futility.

I remembered from former years the district through which I was traveling. And at last I knew when Lacolle was but a day's journey off.

Then I veered slightly to the left, and traveled thus obliquely for a couple of hours, ever on the lookout for Rigault's trail, yet ever more and more certain that I should find it, if I found it at all, several days old.

At last I came upon it. The man was no longer traveling with secrecy, but openly, as in a safe country. Yet not with the purposeful openness that had so deceived me at the beginning of the chase. And his trail was barely one hour old.

This latter bit of unexpected luck puzzled as well as delighted me until, on closely examining his moccasin-tracks across a strip of soft mold, I discovered that he had gone lame. A twist of the ankle, I decided, from the shape of his footprints. And I also noted that he used his rifle as a crutch to help him along.

I followed with all speed, yet with redoubled caution. How long he had been lame I could not know. But he had evidently been forced to travel slowly for some distance.

Hurry as I might, I could not come up with him, for the day was far spent.

Dusk was falling as I came to the edge of the forest and reached the five-acre clearing that surrounded Lacolle. The settlement holds a bare half-dozen houses, all of them of rough-hewn logs. The largest and the central structure—post store and inn—was the only one from which lamps or candles twinkled.

Even as I gazed I saw its one door open and let out a blaze of light. On the threshold, just entering, a man's figure was silhouetted. In another moment he had passed in and the door had closed behind him.

But not before I saw that he limped and supported himself, crutchwise, on a long rifle. It was Rigault.

I had lost the race by a scant hundred yards!

All my weeks of danger and fatigue had gone for nothing. By now he was safe among his own people. The papers were irretrievably lost to me.

I could have wept for sheer anger at my narrow margin in losing what I had risked so much to gain. It would have been easier to bear had I missed him by a hundred miles. But by a hundred yards!

In morbid self-torture I reviewed my childish boast to snatch those plans from the very midst of the French army. And the recollection steeled my quivering nerves.

Well, there were the papers, in the inn, right before me. And here was I, loitering like a beaten camp-dog on the edge of the clearing. As I had gone so far, I must go farther. I would not throw down my hand until the last card should be played.

Abandoning the furtive, slinking air that had of late become second nature to me, I threw out my chest and strode manfully out from the forest's shelter across the clearing to the inn.

Without pausing on the creaky, narrow porch, I found the latch, swung open the door, and entered.

The light of a dozen lamps and a great hearth-fire set me a blinking, and I held my hand across my upper face as though to shut out the glare. Thus shielded, I took in at one glance the interior of the big ground-floor room that served doubly as store and lounging-place for guests.

There must have been from thirty to forty men gathered about the fire or scattered in groups here and there throughout the bare apartment. Some were Indians, some wore uniforms, but for the most part the loungers were white men in more or less dilapidated deerskins, and were apparently hunters, forest-runners, and other rustic folk.

A dozen or so of these were sitting idly on benches, smoking long pipes, while others sprawled at full length on the board floor.

My entrance attracted scarcely a glance. I differed little in aspect from many of the foresters who had gathered here on the outskirts of the French army for trade, curiosity, or as recruits for Beaujeu's rapidly augmenting forces at Fort Duquesne.

I slouched to one side of the room and dropped, with a grunt of fatigue, on the floor, resting my head against the lowest of the wall-logs. My coonskin cap was

drawn down above my eyes, and from its shadow I began to search the company for Rigault.

I soon singled him out. He was at the opposite end of the long room, seated at an angle of the fireplace before a little table, at which a tapster was engaged in serving him with wine from a keg.

Opposite to Rigault at the table sat another man, whose face was momentarily turned from me as he called some order to the host. I noticed that his clothes, though travel-stained, were of fine cut and texture.

I had leisure to plan out my next move. Should my identity or nationality be discovered I would at once be butchered with as little compunction as if I were a mad dog. Spies are not popular in their opponents' war centers—

My thoughts received a swift shock. The man seated opposite Rigault had turned back to the table. He was Karl Krauss.

CHAPTER XII.

CHECK AND COUNTERCHECK.

I WONDER I did not betray myself in my surprise at sight of Karl in such a place. For I shoved back my cap from my brows and gaped open-mouthed at the strangely assorted pair.

"You have a good eye, comrade," chuckled one of the French woodsmen sprawling near me. "You can single out an Englishman first glance. But don't look as if you were going to cut his throat. He's quite harmless."

I dropped back on my elbow, glad my astonishment had led me into no worse prominence. For the man beside me had spoken in French, and had evidently attributed my amazed stare to one of perplexity or anger at seeing an Englishman so far within the French lines.

"He is French enough at heart, *ce brave M. Karlkraus,*" resumed my new acquaintance, with the pleasant garrulity born of warmth and physical rest. "He is a good Frenchman at heart in spite of the cursed English cut of his clothes. Otherwise, would he be at Fort Duquesne, as I saw him not a week agone, the guest of no less a man than our commander, Captain Contrecœur himself? Eh? Tell me that, *mon vieux.* The guest of Contrecœur!"

My blood boiled, as must every English colonist's, at the name of that French demon who had so often stirred up his dusky allies to butcher defenseless British settlers; the man who had headed the attack which wrested the half-built Fort Pitt from us and changed it to Duquesne. So it was he, commander of the great French fort, to whom Karl had fled for refuge!

"He came, not a month ago," resumed the other, doubtless mistaking my flush of wrath for one of keen interest, "bearing a word-of-mouth message to General Dieskau from New York. He—or his father, I forget which—and the general are old and dear friends. When Dieskau was hurried north to take command against Johnson he deputed the estimable Karlkraus to come here to receive from Rigault certain papers of import and bear them to Contrecœur. Beaujeu was sent to relieve Contrecœur, who is to bear the papers north. But where have you been, that all this makes you so excited? It is week-old news for a hundred miles around."

"I have been in the hills to the east on scout service," I replied, intentionally stammering so that the seeming impediment in my speech rendered my words almost incomprehensible.

For though, like most of those whose business carried them far north or south, I had early mastered French, I feared lest my foreign accent might betray me. But let a man stammer badly enough and I defy any one to detect his accent. Therefore, I stuttered most egregiously.

"To the east?" he exclaimed. "On the lookout for Braddock and his army? The rumor of his approach has put them in a fine panic at Duquesne. A bare three hundred of us French—regulars and militia—and scarce a thousand Algonquins, Ottawas, and Sacs. And they say Braddock carries full ten thousand men."

"Somewhat more, I should say," I responded after a moment's profound calculation, even though I knew that the new-arrived British generalissimo could not muster more than a fifth of that number at most.

If the French were scared into ex-

aggerating our numbers, so much the better. It was not for me to correct their error.

"More?" snorted my friend. "That will be sad news for Contrecœur and Beaujeu. You go on to-night with it?"

"No. I am worn out. I rest here until morning."

"Ten thousand—or more!" muttered the woodsman. "And reenforcements from the north cannot reach Duquesne for another two weeks. The call for recruits is out, and every loyal Frenchman for a hundred miles is hurrying thither. That is why you see so many of us here to-night. But we are all too few, I fear."

"I fear so," I answered lugubriously. "This Braddock is a man to strike terror. He—"

"I saw one of his chief officers once," broke in the woodsman. "A great rawboned boy he was, but clever enough to force his way from the Virginias, four hundred miles northwest, to Le Bœuf, through ice-choked rivers and deep snow and woods that swarmed with hostiles. Let me see—that was two—yes—two years ago next winter. St. Pierre commanded then at Le Bœuf. And this lad bore him letters from Virginia's Governor. Insolent letters, so camp gossip says. Yet the messenger walked into the lion's den as though he were ambassador from fat old King George himself. A brave lad! A shrewd lad, too! I wish I could recall his barbarous name. Ouas—Ouasun—"

"Washington," I supplied, imprudently enough, for no Frenchman could have pronounced "W" so glibly.

"Faith!" laughed the woodsman, "with all your wretched stutter you speak these English names plainer than I. Yes, that was the man. The story of his journey has traveled far. Though, Heaven knows, his mission accomplished little enough in checking our fort-building."

But my mind had strayed from the talkative fellow, and was centered on Simon Rigault and Karl. The former, secure in the belief that he was among friends, was unwinding those long leggings of his and drawing from their folds the papers he had received in Dead Man's Hut. These he handed over to Karl, who carefully received them, bound them together with cord into two thick packets, and buttoned into the inner pockets on either side of his peach-blow waistcoat.

If only he would start forward at once for Duquesne with them!

But he very evidently had no such intent. He settled himself back comfortably in his chair and continued his chat with Rigault.

The half-breed and he had the corner to themselves. They were folk of consequence in that gathering, it seemed, and as such were entitled to sit aloof.

There was a stir in the room. The host reentered, followed by lads bearing spoons, metal platters, and a great caldron of steaming venison-stew. The landlord made the round of the room, collecting from each of the loungers a coin, while in his wake the serving-boys filled platters with food for those who had paid.

For such was the custom on the frontier. A livre or a shilling entitles wayfarers to a rough supper and a night's sleep on the floor before the hearth. A higher price commands a better meal and a real bed in the loft above the living-room.

To the latter class of guests Karl and Rigault evidently belonged, for a tapster was setting a fowl, browned bread, with honey, and a fresh bottle on their table.

I had no French money, but in those parts, where half the coins in circulation had been filched from murdered Englishmen, this discrepancy of currency mattered little. When my turn came I handed mine host a silver shilling. He spat contemptuously on King George's face, depicted thereon, slipped the money in his pocket, and passed along. In another minute I was easing my long hunger with chunks of hot venison and hard, waxy potatoes.

Soon after the meal was ended the hum of talk died down. Men rolled themselves in cloak or deerskin and stretched out before the fire. For though the season was early July, yet the night, as is often so in the wilderness, had an edge to its breath.

Karl, from whom I had never taken my eyes for more than a minute at a time, yawned, rose, and prepared to

ascend the ladder to the rude loft. Rigault, who had been swathing his injured ankle in cold-water bandages, grunted a good night to him and curled up before the blaze.

Within a half-hour I was seemingly the only person awake in the whole place.

The air was rasped by snores in a dozen keys. Tobacco-smoke still spread a blue haze over all, and though the lamps were out, the dying fire made the room fairly light.

I was glad of this illumination. For though I dared not stir for the present, I was using that same light to make myself familiar with the position of each recumbent body, the distance between each two, and the safest path among and over them to the ladder-foot.

This was no easy mental task even to a trained woodsman. It entailed a brain-portrait of the whole room whereby I must guide myself as well by night as by day.

Yet before the last log broke in half and fell into the ashes amid a little golden shower of sparks I felt I had learned my lesson.

Another hour I lay there, tense, alert, until the red embers grew gray and darkness crept ghostlike out through the long apartment. This was my time.

Then I arose. In two hours more the summer dawn must break. By that time my work must be done and I dead or on my homeward way.

It is a light matter for a woodsman to walk so softly that no ordinary man can hear him. But it is more of a feat to step in so gentle a fashion as not to awaken fellow woodsmen. And this now was my task.

From memory I located each sleeper, and glided between the resting bodies with no more sound or stir than a prowling cat.

One thing was in my favor: all these men felt secure. They were in their own country. No thought of peril kept their minds wakeful.

Braddock, it is true, was approaching, but he was still many miles away. Even had they awoke and heard me tiptoeing among them, the odds are they would have suspected nothing.

Yet, I took no chances. Onward I stole until my foot was on the ladder's lowest rung. A stealthy climb and I was in the slope-roofed loft.

Though I had no light, I was not at any special loss. For I had been in dozens of similiar inns. Nearly all were built on the same plan—a partition down the center, on one side of which the host and his family were wont to sleep; the other side—usually that facing the road—roughly divided off, by quilt or bare boards, into several sleeping-apartments for guests.

Deerskin curtains instead of doors protected the privacy of such rooms.

I crept along the guest side of the main partition, pausing outside each curtain. From the first two came echoing snores. From the third merely the heavy, regular breath of a sleeper.

I chanced it and stole into this cubby-hole room, passing my hands softly to right and left. At the first step my fingers touched the skirt of a coat thrown over a chair, and I knew I had entered the right chamber. For the coat was of English cloth, as could be told by its feel.

I had noted the freedom with which Karl had ordered bottle after bottle of heady French wine earlier in the evening. And now I was grateful for this. For, while he had been far from tipsy, his potations had lent an unwonted soundness to his slumbers.

Still, I took no chances, but with infinite care passed the lightest of fingers over each article of clothing I could find. The peach-blow waistcoat was not among the garments I encountered scattered carelessly about. So, at last I was fain to approach the bed.

This was more ticklish work. But in a minute of deft search I had located the waistcoat. It was doubled, and lay beneath the corn-husk pillow whereon the sleeper's head rested.

Fifteen minutes of delicate manipulation of pillow, waistcoat, and head and the garment was in my hand. How I blssed the vintner of that strong wine!

The packets, both of them, were readily found. I slipped them inside my own shirt, crawled down the ladder, and made my way over the snoring woodsmen out into the night.

I was still more than an hour ahead of dawn, and by the time Karl should awake and discover his despoiled waist-

coat lying on the floor beside his bed I would be miles on my homeward way.

I swung out at a noiseless run. But on the first minute I halted, annoyed by a doubt.

True, I had seen Karl divide the papers and put them into his waistcoat, but the light had been bad, people had been passing between us, and it might be barely possible that the packets I had seen him deposit were merely two of several. I could not afford to rescue part of the papers and not all.

He might have placed some of our plans in pockets of other of his garments. I must make sure.

I have said there were several log huts in Lacolle. But since the checking of the fur trade the inn was the only inhabited building. I found my way to one of these deserted huts—as far as possible from the inn—crept in through the unlatched door, which I closed behind me, and, first making sure that the windows were boarded, produced part of a tallow dip I had stolen from the inn after supper-time.

I had thought, when I took it, that it might come in handy during my homeward journey.

I cautiously lighted the candle from my flint and steel, and placing it on the floor, proceeded to draw out and examine the packets.

Yes, there they were, all our plans, just as I had put them in the leather case in the New York council offices weeks before. I picked them up, and was about to refold them, when from the creases of one of the lists of supplies a letter fluttered earthward.

I started to restore it to one of the two bundles, supposing it to be some invoice or similar paper I had overlooked, when I noticed that it was written in French. Moreover, it was not in either my handwriting or Karl's.

Curiously I glanced at the signature. The name at the bottom of the sheet was "Pol Contrecœur!"

All scruples thrown aside, I crouched down near the light and read it. Then slowly reread it. It ran:

> As soon as the excellent Rigault shall bring you the documents from New York hurry him back to watch and report on Braddock's advance. Then, with all speed, join me here. I shall postpone for a few days my journey north. For Beaujeu has a plan that appeals to me. My spies tell me Braddock marches as though through a friendly country, throwing out no pickets, deploying no skirmishers. Though I can scarce credit such madness, I am assured it is true.
>
> He will be upon us before our reinforcements can arrive. Beaujeu suggests that we send out what men we can spare and ambush him. While I have no hope that this can stop his advance, yet it may cut down his force and hamper his movements.
>
> All of which will give us time. And time is what we most need. There is a bare chance the ambush may cause him to move so cautiously thereafter that our reenforcements can reach Duquesne ahead of him.
>
> The spot Beaujeu has chosen for the ambush is a most happy one, less than a full day's march from here. The exact location I can better describe—since you are not sufficiently familiar with the country—when I see you. But whatever the result of the ambush, I think I can promise you even better sport than your beloved foxhounds of England afford. So, come at once.

Here was a muddle with a vengeance! My course was plain. I must make my best speed to Braddock, and if, as I could not believe, he was really taking no precautions, put him on his guard. A wily general could doubtless turn such news to advantage and prepare a fine death-trap for the ambushers.

But the plans!

If I carried them and Contrecœur's letter away with me Karl must at once discover the theft, know of the robbery, and warn Contrecœur that the ambush plot was discovered. Then, no doubt, a second plan would be formulated against the advancing British—a plan that might well succeed if Braddock kept no closer guard than Contrecœur's spies reported.

But if the papers were returned to Karl those cherished plans of our city would soon be in Dieskau's hands. On the contrary, if I did not return them, then so much the worse for Braddock's forces! What was I to do?

I am a dull fellow at times, yet now and then in moments of sore stress ideas inspire me. Such an idea now came.

It will be remembered that when I left New York for a brief outing, three days after the theft of the plans, I was still busy on council office work. To atone in part for my holiday, I had intended to stop at the offices on my return home that night and do an hour's writing. Therefore, I had carried at my side my little wooden "clerk's satchel," containing inkhorn, quills, and steel eraser.

These I now drew forth, and, throwing myself on the ground among the plans and other papers, I set to work with a will.

And without false vanity I may say I worked to some account. A chart-line cunningly erased and redrawn at a slightly different angle; a map with dimensions twisted from their original lay; a figure obliterated and another substituted, in a list or specification.

That was all. Yet, when I was done, any ship following the harbor channels charted on those plans would infallibly find herself on the rocks. An attempt to surprise a "position" from the rear would bring the assailants up against a stone wall.

The interiors of forts wore a wholly different aspect from those formerly depicted. Roads on the maps would lead travelers into water or wilderness instead of inside our lines of defense.

Altogether, I had marred each important document in such a way as to make it wholly useless for war purposes, yet of plausible enough aspect to pass muster anywhere.

I was quite content.

And now to restore those two packets and Contrecœur's letter to the waistcoat-pocket of Karl Krauss and put back the waistcoat itself under his head! A trifling matter of detail, of course, but one on whose success hung my plot and my life itself.

Dawn was perilously near. Already the faint gray in the east was tinged with pink as I crept back into the inn, over the sleepers, and up the ladder.

The snores were fewer. Here and there a man stirred uneasily. The dawn that was lightening the east had not yet illumined the dark living-room of the inn, but these forest dwellers felt its approach even in their dreams.

Karl, too, was breathing less heavily. The wine-fumes were wearing off.

I restored the packets and the letter to his waistcoat, but dared not try my former method of manipulation. He was too nearly awake for that. Instead, I thrust one corner of the waistcoat beneath his pillow, leaving the rest hanging loose, so that it would seem that his head had deranged the garment's position while he slept.

This accomplished, I crawled down the ladder. My work was done. I could depart now, unsuspected, at any time, and make my way in safety to Braddock.

With a sigh of relief I stepped down off the lower rung and—planted my foot with all the weight of my hundred and eighty pounds full into the center of Simon Rigault's upturned face!

(To be continued.)

THE BANDAGED HAND.

By WELTON YOWELL.

A caller with an object in view and a "backer" that was not so plainly visible.

BROKER HALL sat in his office enjoying a huge Havana, when the door was opened by Jimmie, his messenger, who stated that a gentleman wished to see him.

"Didn't he give any name?" asked the broker.

"No, but he said that he wanted to see you in regard to some stocks."

"Oh, very well; show him in."

Jimmie left, to return a few minutes later followed by a thick-necked individual whose loud clothes and fake jewelry did not favorably impress the broker.

Hall noticed that a bandage covered the man's right hand and wrist.

"H'm," he muttered; "looks like a bunco-steerer. I'll keep my eyes peeled."

The messenger's opinion did not vary much from the broker's.

"Men of his sort," soliloquized Jimmie as he left the office, "don't deal in stocks. They would take chances on hooking a fat pocketbook from a fellow."

When alone with the broker the visitor, who gave his name as Collins, took a chair and plunged into the object of his call.

"Mr. Hall," he began, in an oily tone, "to state my business explicitly, I came here to get ten thousand dollars from you."

Then he added, as the broker gave a gasp of astonishment:

"I think you will hand me your check for that amount, as I have you covered with a revolver. It is concealed under this bandage."

The broker turned deathly white.

"You see," continued Collins, "I've worked this racket before without being nabbed by the police, and I don't see why it shouldn't work again. You know, when a man is down and out in a financial way, and cannot get hold of the long green except by hard labor—which, by the way, is not one of my habits—he grows desperate. That is my present condition. I'm desperate. Now, it's up to you to sign that check and—"

"Great Heavens, man," cried the frightened broker, "to give you ten thousand dollars means financial ruin to me. I have but very little over that amount. Can't you be satisfied with five thousand dollars?"

"It's of no use for you to beat about the bush, Hall," answered Collins. "I'm getting impatient. If you don't give me that check in short order"—he shoved the revolver in close proximity to Hall's face—"I'll blow your head off."

A revolver, no matter how small, can accomplish wonders. Seeing no way out of it, the broker, with trembling fingers, signed his check for the required amount.

"Now send that red-headed messenger of yours to the bank for the money," ordered Collins. "You see, the cashier, Mr. Happ, is acquainted with me, and instead of turning this check into money, he would turn *me* over to the police."

The broker pressed a button, which summoned Jimmie to the room.

"Get this check cashed," said Hall in trembling tones. He wanted to add, "Don't cash it; get the police," but he knew that such action might affect the trigger of that revolver.

Jimmie noticed his employer's pale face and agitated manner, and on the way to the bank he pondered deeply.

"Something wrong there," he ruminated. "I'm almost certain I saw the impression of a revolver under that bandage, and yet I'm not absolutely positive. If I were, it would be up to me to get the police. I've never seen the boss look so agitated before. Rather queer that he should sign a check for so large an amount. But supposing my suspicions were all wrong, and I should get the police to go to the office and investigate, wouldn't I be in a nice pickle?"

After five minutes' thought Jimmie's face brightened suddenly, and he muttered to himself, "Yes, I'll try it."

Ten minutes later, with an envelope in his right hand, Jimmie entered the broker's office hurriedly and said: "Mr. Hall, there's three policemen outside who want to see you. Shall I show them in?"

Jimmie's words produced a magical effect on Mr. Collins. With an oath he sprang up, snatched the envelope from Jimmie's hand, gave one hurried glance at the contents, and started on a dead run for the rear door.

Mr. Hall, no longer under the influence of a revolver, found his voice.

"Stop thief!" he yelled at the top of his voice as he started in mad pursuit.

"I'll wait until he returns," said Jimmie to himself as he dropped into a chair.

Twenty minutes later a mob, headed by the perspiring broker, rushed into the office. In their center was Mr. Collins.

"What means this, Jimmie?" exclaimed the broker, opening the envelope which the thief had snatched from Jimmie's hand and displaying a bunch of green and yellow tobacco coupons.

"It means that I fooled Mr. Collins and saved you ten thousand dollars, Mr. Hall. You see, I was suspicious of this man the moment I laid my eyes on him. When I entered the office the second time my suspicions increased, for I noticed how deathly pale you looked and how agitated you seemed to be. Thinking that I had enough cause for my suspicions, I thought of some plan to fool him. So, after getting the check cashed I got hold of those tobacco coupons, which I slipped into the envelope. Of course, you know how the plan worked. It saved you ten thousand dollars, and here it is."

Jimmie reached in his pocket and pulled out a roll of bills that made the spectators gasp.

The broker peeled off a crisp one-hundred-dollar note and handed it to the boy.

"That is yours, young man," he said, "and you can consider your salary raised an extra five dollars a week."

And Jimmie murmured, "This is so sudden!"

"Oh, by the way," added Mr. Hall, "what became of those three policemen?"

"They were only a bluff," laughed Jimmie.

A LEGACY OF TERROR.*

By T. ALBERT MACE,

Author of "At Fate's Hand," etc.

The nerve-racking outcome of a call at a cottage that housed a mystery.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

WHILE the up train of the B., R. and K. is going through a tunnel Lester Chamberlain, real-estate broker, of Mastersville, throws from the window a telescope-bag which he has acquired under peculiar circumstances. The up train immediately behind is reported wrecked in the tunnel, the wreck catching fire. Chamberlain is convinced that the wreck is due to the heavy bag rebounding on to the track. Horror-stricken, he reads in the papers about old Bill Jones, who has mysteriously died at Listome. Jones has been known to him by the name of Abel Perry, and has lent him large sums of money for the benefit of his twin half-brothers, Trainor and Perry Chamberlain. Under the door of the house at Listome is found a letter from "the gang" accusing old Bill of not being on the square. Chamberlain's nervousness is increased because the brakeman of the train will recognize him, and because he is being dogged by a stranger. Thrust under the door of his home he finds a letter in a straggling handwriting, which he proceeds to read laboriously.

CHAPTER VII.

TRAITOR NUMBER TWO.

YOU dont kno me but i kno you and i seen you in old bills hous in Listome when he croked—an lucky for him he did dam him.

He done the gang dirt and hogged the swag an his crokin aint the last of it—no fear. the stiffs what you call cops aint found no dow in that hous an you an me knos why. your a swell an dont want to be rung in on this i guess but you will be if you dont come to time.

i kno old Bill told you where he planted the dust an you cant fool me ime a wise gy all right all right. You dont want no body to kno you knod bill an ile split if you dont make it right with me. if I tell the gang what i kno they wold tare the gizzard out of you an thats strate to.

Fair is fair—you hafe an me hafe. then the gang neden kno nor folks. ile telegraft you where to see me when youv thort it over. youl hear from me soon. But dont you go blowin the cops off to this youl be sorry if you do an thats no ly.

i dont sign no name but youl know me when I telegraft.

**This story began in the August issue of* THE ARGOSY, *which will be mailed to any address on receipt of* 10 *cents.*

This was the complete contents of the badly scrawled letter which Chamberlain found upon the threshold of his office. And its meaning, despite the bad spelling and lack of punctuation, was as plain as a pikestaff.

The man who had hounded old Abel Perry to his hiding-place in Listome too late to force him to make division of his ill-gotten spoils, and who had chanced to see and follow Chamberlain himself that adventurous night, had not been frightened away from his quest by the attention the police were giving to the affair.

He proposed to handle some of that money—the forty thousand which the dying man had assured the real-estate agent was put safely away. And it seemed that if the old man had played the traitor to "the gang," this Unknown was quite anxious to be traitor number two!

He was offering to divide the loot as the price of his silence. If Chamberlain would meet his terms he would neither relate the affair to his evil associates nor allow the story of the dead man's real identity to become public.

How much or how little this cheerful scoundrel might know about Abel Perry's affairs, it would be enough to start the tongue of scandal to wagging if he related how Chamberlain had been connected with the Listome recluse.

There was a ring of sincerity in the threatening letter that the recipient could not doubt. The man meant business.

As Chamberlain remembered the fellow's expression of countenance he was quite sure that he was not one to be lightly swerved from a determination. His ugly jaw, firmly set lips, and narrow, penetrating eyes went to make up a visage particularly grim and determined.

And then suddenly it flashed into his mind that in one way the appearance of the stranger and the illiteracy shown in this letter did not well jibe! His Nemesis was fairly well dressed, and had the air of a man of at least ordinarily good education.

Had he deliberately disguised himself by means of this letter? Nobody would really associate the screed with the brisk, businesslike man whom Chamberlain believed had written it.

The main thing to consider, however, was what course he should pursue regarding the letter itself and the threat it contained. Could he afford to ignore it, refuse to meet the writer, and tacitly agree to allow him to proceed as he pleased in the matter?

The fellow might still have a very hazy idea concerning his former associate's real connection with Chamberlain. He might not, even now, know that "Bill Jones" was Abel Perry.

Yet the real-estate man saw clearly enough that an anonymous letter to the police stating that Chamberlain had visited the Listome cottage on the evening of the mysterious old man's death would occasion inquiries sure to bring the truth to light.

Scandal was imminent—scandal which would besmirch the reputation of the Perry family, and which might cast a cloud upon his twin brothers for their entire lives. Such black sheep as Abel Perry usually injure the reputation of their kin, and the fact that their criminal great-uncle had made the boys his heir would always be remembered against them.

However, his correspondent would gain absolutely nothing by this course. It did not take a very keen eye to see that.

If the police took the matter up none of old Abel's money would ever reach the palm which evidently so itched for it. If, as the writer elegantly termed it, he "split" he would secure nothing for himself but revenge.

There was another threat in the letter that troubled Chamberlain more deeply. He might really be in danger of physical injury at the hands of this man and his friends.

How desperate "the gang" might be he could not know. But the brief tale the dying Perry had related to him pointed to the fact that his associates had been men who hesitated at no crime to gain their ends.

Abel had been a rough and tough one himself; he did not fear his blackleg associates, but Chamberlain might well dread them. If the writer of the letter, who seemed to have been the only one successful in searching out the supposed "Bill Jones," told his pals of the secret

the dying man had entrusted to Chamberlain the latter might indeed stand in danger of bodily harm.

Yet he dared not go to the police with the letter. He could not expect the authorities to help him hide the family disgrace. The very scandal he desired to smother would be published abroad if he asked for protection against this blackmailer and his friends.

It looked to Chamberlain as though he was sure to get into difficulties whichever way he turned. Why had not something warned him against replying at all to that note from Abel Perry?

And yet, it would have been cruel to refuse a dying man's request. The old fellow had certainly felt a great fondness for his niece's children; he desired the twins to have his money.

The writer of the letter demanded half of old Abel's hoard. He probably had no very clear idea as to how much it amounted to. Judging from the letter, twenty thousand dollars would seem a vast fortune to such a man.

"I'll wait—that's my only game," Chamberlain muttered, at last putting the letter away in a carefully locked drawer of his safe. "He evidently intends me to think the matter over before communicating with me again. When he telegraphs me, as he intimates he will, I may be better able to decide what to do."

Troubles seemed to thicken about Chamberlain from day to day. As near as he could learn, the advance information which Beardsley had given him concerning the buying in of the newly floated stock of the B., R. and K. company by the steam-railroad directors was correct in every particular.

A part of the road was built and in running order, it was true, and it would be necessary, to save its charter and franchises, some time to build the remainder; but the new owners of the electric road were moving heaven and earth to extend the line in a direction which would not so thoroughly tap the territory along the route of the steam road.

The part of the new road built would not help Chamberlain to sell an inch of his real-estate holdings. And until the matter was permanently decided he dared not make possible purchasers of building-lots any promises regarding transportation facilities.

Seeing that he was doomed possibly to a long holding of the lots, he approached the bank regarding the borrowing of a sufficient sum to make his settlement with the several owners of the West Mastersville land.

Heretofore, the president of the bank had frequently offered him assistance—had urged it upon him, in fact— and for small sums, and on short time, Chamberlain had availed himself of the convenience. His credit, he knew, was good with the institution.

Yet, at the start he struck a snag. He frankly stated what he expected to do with the money, and it was evident that President Commich had heard of the hold-up in the building of the B., R. and K.

"I will place the matter before the directors next board day," he said cautiously. "I cannot give you an answer until they decide."

Now, this, before, had always been a mere formality. But Commich gave him no assurance that the loan would pass the board. Indeed, Chamberlain went away feeling more than a little worried.

If the bank refused the loan he would be actually obliged, after all, to tap Uncle Abel's hidden fortune. If he must use the rest of the ill-gotten money to save the twins' and his own property from going to eternal smash, how could he buy off the villain (or villains) who was planning to share it with him?

About this time, too, another nerve-shaking item appeared in the paper from the lively Listome correspondent:

> Chief of Police Dick MacCurdy confided to your representative last evening that a black telescope-bag had been found among the unidentified baggage recovered from the tunnel wreck, which bag Mr. MacCurdy believes is in some way connected with the mystery which has so puzzled Listome of late. He admitted that he is satisfied that the old recluse who died alone in his house on Railroad Street was a well-known burglar, for whom the authorities of half a dozen cities were in search.
>
> He was a master tool-maker and an expert safe-breaker, and this mysterious bag was filled with the finest kind of

burglars' tools. It is supposed that the man seen running from the Jones house on the night of the old man's demise was a pal who came there to steal the dying burglar's valuable kit. This man may have left town on the train which was wrecked in the tunnel, and his may have been one of the several unidentified bodies recovered from the ruins of the burned smoking-car.

Chief MacCurdy will not give the name which he believes Jones bore in the underworld, but he declares his career was a long and noted one, and that he served sentences in several penitentiaries. It is believed, too, that he broke, of late years, with his pals, and that the man who stole the kit of tools may have been after Jones's hoarded wealth as well. Chief MacCurdy intimates that the public has not yet heard the last of the case.

The prospect suggested in the last sentence so startled Chamberlain that he did not observe the significant fact that the black telescope-bag must have come into the possession of the police officer quite intact.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNEXPECTED.

LIVING from day to day in expectation of hearing by "telegraft" from the individual who had tucked the note under his office door, Chamberlain felt a good deal as a convicted man must who is awaiting an uncertain sentence.

He wasn't at all sure what he should do when the lightning struck—whether to answer the fellow in person or by letter, or to ignore his wire altogether. It looked a harder question to decide every time it rose, like a fantom, to confront him.

Yet the days passed without a sign from his Nemesis, nor did Chamberlain see him again. He dared not hope that the man had given up his intention of hounding him for a share of old Abel's money; it is, however, a fact that trouble deferred makes one's mind callous to its coming.

It was from quite an unexpected direction that Chamberlain received the next javelin of ill fortune. A letter from Perry Chamberlain, who usually did the writing for the two boys, had in it a paragraph that puzzled and disturbed the recipient's mind:

> We had an adventure last week Saturday that we're afraid will get to old Hopper's ears—then we'll get a wigging. Train and I went fishing in Bounder's brook, and there's a part of it preserved, it seems, but we didn't know it. A long-legged farmer with whiskers on his chin like you see on the stage chased us clear across a big pasture, and he'd have caught us, too (he had an ox-goad, and snapped it mighty viciously), if it hadn't been for a man who came along and jumped the fence and held him while we got into the road.
>
> That is a funny man. We got quite well acquainted with him, Train and I. He might have been a tramp, from his talk, only he was dressed pretty well. And he was dreadful curious about us, and called Trainor "Sandy," because he's got that straw-colored hair and no eyebrows to speak of, and he called me "Mick."
>
> Oh, the funniest part of it was, he said he knows Uncle Abel Perry that we saw once at your office, and he seemed to want to know all that we knew about him. That ain't much, you know, so if he didn't know Uncle Abel well he didn't get much from Train and I. We've seen this man twice since, and he's a real good-natured man. He's promised to show us a little lake up in the mountains that was once stocked with trout by some rich men and everybody's forgotten about it. If it's as he says we'll express you down a box of the biggest we can catch.

Now, there might not be anything to fear from this, yet Chamberlain was tempted to board the first train and go to the school town to gather further particulars of this stranger who seemed so much interested in old Abel Perry. It worried him to think of the twins making friends with the man.

Yet there was not much chance for boys to get into mischief while under the eye of the principal, to whom Perry had referred so feelingly as "old Hopper." He was a very strict and careful pedagogue.

Chamberlain, however, had not been out of school so long himself but that he remembered how sometimes the keenest guardians might be hoodwinked, and the twins were, as he expressed it,

"cleaners." He went so far as to pack his valise and take it to the office with him one morning, intending to take a train for the school town in the afternoon and spend the night with his half-brothers.

And at this point a totally unexpected incident intervened. The very man about whom he had been worrying so much walked into his office at an hour when Chamberlain was quite alone and expected no other callers for the day.

He came in briskly, closed the door, and approached the real-estate man's desk before the latter looked up from his writing. And once having looked at him, Chamberlain sat aghast, his jaw dropped, staring in utter silence at the fellow.

It was the man who had excited his fears the evening of and the day following old Abel Perry's death—the person who, he was more than half convinced, had sent him the badly spelled letter demanding a share of the dead man's fortune.

"Your name's Chamberlain, I believe?" began the man curtly. "Lester Chamberlain?"

The other nodded, swallowed hard, and managed to drag his eyes away from the fellow's face. He was afraid his own countenance displayed his inner feelings too plainly, and he needed a moment to control the expression of his features.

His ruler had dropped to the floor, and he stooped to fumble for it. From this position he mumbled, "Take a chair," and came up after a bit, and after the man had seated himself, with a very red face but with his nerves under better control.

"I see you know me, Mr. Chamberlain," said the visitor shrewdly.

"I have seen you before—yes," admitted the real-estate man; but he had command over both his face and his voice now. "What can I do for you?"

The man had slipped his finger and thumb into an upper vest-pocket, where a business man usually carries his cards; but at Chamberlain's admission he grunted and brought the fingers out empty.

The motion was not lost on Chamberlain, however, and among his other puzzled mental queries was this: Who ever heard of a man in the burglarizing line carrying professional cards with him?

"I tell you frankly, sir, I'm some puzzled about you," said the man bluntly. "I've been letting you run with a loose rope, and watched you like a hawk, and you haven't panned out satisfactory.

"But that you know something that *I'm* anxious to know is as sure as taxes. Now, I've come to you for a square understanding—"

"Suppose I refuse to recognize you or to have any conversation whatever with you?" interposed Chamberlain courageously.

"Oh, I can't make you talk, perhaps—not just yet. But I'll make it blamed unpleasant for you if you won't!" returned the man in some heat. "It's a blind lead, I know; nobody would ever suspect a respectable chap like you, and them I've told it to scout the idea."

"Then you have already told it?" demanded Chamberlain, feeling that the blood was leaving his face.

"To the right parties. Of course."

"Then," thought Chamberlain, "he has decided not to play traitor to the gang. He has taken them into the secret. I am in greater danger than I thought. One—this fellow—I might deal with; but the whole gang of bloodthirsty—"

"But I'm convinced," the man's voice interrupted Chamberlain's train of anxious thought, "that no man would act the way you did and not be wise to the thing. I'm here, Mr. Chamberlain, to ask you to tell me what you know. And, by Jove! if you won't loosen up I'll find a way to make you."

Pale as he had grown, Chamberlain's voice was unshaken and his eye steady. "You'd better drop that tone, my man," he said. "I allow nobody to bulldoze me. If I decide to answer you at all it will not be because you threaten me."

"Hanged if I care how you do it—only answer," growled the other.

"Do you realize that I have only to telephone to the police and hold you here till they come—no, don't do that!" exclaimed Chamberlain, with a warning gesture. "If you happen to be armed I'd never let you get at your gun. I'm considerably bigger than you are, you know. Be quiet."

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped the stranger.

"You think so? I wish you to understand that I am not afraid of you," Chamberlain went on, eying him steadily. "And I don't like your tone. I'm not sure that I sha'n't send for the police, anyway."

At that the other laughed—laughed long and loudly.

"Say, this is the best ever!" he exclaimed. "Who do you take me for?"

"Just the dirty blackmailing scoundrel you are," Chamberlain replied testily.

"Say!" cried the man, growing sober instantly and looking much displeased, "I don't fancy being called those names. You'd better hold your jaw."

"If you don't like it you can get out. I haven't invited you here."

"That's true, mister. I invited myself. And while I'm here we both might as well keep cool and talk the matter over. I'm not at all sure, after all, that you know who I am."

Chamberlain began to flush again. He wondered if he had made a mistake. He said nothing, but continued to eye his visitor curiously.

"I'm a railroad detective, with a special officer's license. I could arrest you right now, Mr. Chamberlain, and when you talk about sending for the police you make me smile. I'm called Sampson, and I'm at work for the railroad company on a very particular case—I guess I haven't got to explain any further."

For Chamberlain's face had changed in spite of the watch he had set upon himself. He had fallen back in his chair, his mouth agape.

"Railroad detective!" he at last mustered voice to repeat.

"That's me. Now are you ready to talk? I don't know what you mean by calling me a blackmailer. I'm not on the graft. You couldn't buy me off if you wanted to, and if you've paid any good money to keep out of this mess you've been stung, that's all."

"Look here!" cried Chamberlain desperately, "will you tell me what you mean? What have you come here for? What do you want of me?"

"Ah! now we're getting down to business," declared the other with satisfaction. "I'll show you pretty quick what I'm after, if you don't already know," and his sharp eyes bored Chamberlain through and through.

"I'm from Missouri," the real-estate man declared. "If you're not—that is, if you *are* who you say you are, what do you want of me?"

He tried to throw as much wonderment as possible into his voice and manner of asking the question, but it was woful hard work to appear unconcerned. At once his guilty conscience assured him that his connection with the train-wreck in the tunnel, weeks before, had been discovered.

The sweat started out upon his brow; but it was growing dusky in the office, and as he sat with his back to the light, the visitor could not see his face very clearly.

Meanwhile, Sampson, the railroad detective, pulled out a wallet, from which he selected several bits of paper which appeared to contain memoranda. With scarcely a glance at Chamberlain, he began to read from these notes:

"Mr. Lester Chamberlain, partner firm of L. Chamberlain & Co., real estate, and lives at 17 Lagrange Street, Mastersville, single.

"On 20th day of October (date in question) he suddenly broke several business engagements, stating that he was called to Harriman to see about purchase of farm in that locality. Careful inquiry fails to find any person who saw him in Harriman or vicinity; farm in question is not for sale; third count, train on which Mr. C. returned to Mastersville did not stop at Harriman that evening.

"Mr. C. noticed in last car of train No. 42 (train preceding train 56, which was wrecked) by rear brakeman, Frank McMaugh, just previous to the passage of the tunnel. Mr. C. sat alone in rear of last car; gas was turned off owing to lack of pressure (see train report of Conductor Fortesque of that date), and McMaugh was in forward end of car when train passed through tunnel. Not impossible for Mr. C. to open rear door and return to his seat without discovery by others in car. McMaugh noticed Mr. C. was very nervous and acted strangely. When questioned, told McMaugh he was ill.

"First seen by deponent in Mastersville station as he left train. Station-

master Crimmons read aloud telegram announcing wreck in tunnel within hearing of Mr. C. Latter overpowered by emotion—screamed aloud and rushed from station. Walked through the streets in evident aberration of mind; deponent kept near enough to hear him groan and mutter to himself. Evidently Mr. C.'s mind was greatly harassed by news of wreck of No. 56.

"Called at office of L. Chamberlain & Co. next day. He observed Mr. C. go into the office during the forenoon; he did not come out. He refused to answer knock, but after dark he crept out back window, so that neighbors should not know he was there. Still haggard-looking and distraught.

"Later learned that Mr. C. was very ill at home of Dr. Reginald Beardsley. Doctor reported patient threatened with brain-fever. While Mr. C. was ill, deponent ordered to do special work at other end of division, and lost sight of Mr. C. Owing to failure of certain other clues suggested by board of directors, deponent brings this line of investigation to notice. Wreck not satisfactorily explained. Locomotive No. 56 might have been flung from track by explosion of bomb, and said bomb might have been dropped from tail end of train 42, which passed through the tunnel twenty-four minutes in advance of No. 56."

The detective, who had been obliged to follow his text closely because of the fading light, here stopped and looked up at Chamberlain. The latter had started forward and uttered a half-suppressed shout at the last words.

"My God! what do you mean to intimate?" he gasped. "Do you say I deliberately wrecked that train? Did you tell your employers you believed I dropped a bomb on the track?"

"That was the report I read to them," Sampson said, eying him grimly.

"But for what reason—how dared you—it is preposterous!" cried Chamberlain, wringing his hands.

"A good many things look preposterous until you get at the inner workings of a man's mind," declared the detective sententiously.

"But, man!" cried the troubled and excited Chamberlain, "what earthly reason could I have for committing such a crime?"

"Ah! that brings me to a further item in these memoranda," Sampson replied coolly. "Just listen to this:

"Said L. Chamberlain & Co. heavy investors along proposed route of B., R. & K. electric road—loaded down with building-lots said to be worthless now that new road has changed hands and in case tracks are not laid as first planned. Mr. C. believed by friends, including Dr. Beardsley, to be on the verge of bankruptcy. Has tried to borrow money of local bank and been refused. Motive for causing wreck—revenge."

After reading the above he put his notes calmly away and looked again at the shaking Chamberlain with a maddening air of satisfaction.

CHAPTER IX.

FACING IT.

THERE was a man once who dropped a five-dollar bill on the street and spent a couple of hours in useless search and worriment of mind over it, finally to arrive at home and find that his house and all that he possessed had been consumed by fire while he was hunting for a measly five-dollar note.

Somewhat as that man must have felt was Chamberlain's condition of mind. He had borne the weight of self-accusation for the tunnel wreck for weeks, believing that inadvertently he had caused the catastrophe, and here came a man who accused him plump of intentionally wrecking train No. 56 with a bomb!

The punishment of his own conscience had been almost greater than he could bear at first, but he had early in the affair seen that his throwing of the telescope-bag from the train could not be considered a deliberate attempt to cause an accident.

Here was this beefy-faced railroad detective, however, with a penchant for theorizing and an idea that he was a second Sherlock Holmes or Monsieur Lecoq, who had figured out a more or less plausible reason for his having committed the atrocity, and had found circumstantial evidence to connect him with the fact!

To feel that he might have been the unintentional wrecker of that train was bad enough, but for it to be said that he

did it deliberately, and from such despicable motives, was more than Chamberlain could patiently bear.

In a moment after the detective had ceased speaking he jumped up and had him by the collar. He grabbed Sampson's right wrist, too, when he saw his hand dart behind him, and for a minute the two struggled all over the office.

Chamberlain was rather a husky fellow, and, as he had intimated, the detective was no match for him. He shook the man until his teeth rattled in his head.

"You yellow cur!" he cried, dropping him finally in a heap (he had already wrenched the pistol from the man's pocket and tossed it aside) and spurning him with his foot, "I'll choke you some more if ever you repeat this story. Why, it's the most barefaced attempt to ruin a man's character of which I ever heard. Do you mean to tell me that you repeated this dastardly yarn to the directors of the Bridgton and Western Railroad?" and he started for the fellow again.

The latter, who had risen gingerly, still feeling of his throat and gasping, dodged around the office table and called out:

"Now, I warn you, Mr. Chamberlain, if you lay a hand on me again I'll have you in court for it. I can't stand everything."

"Nor can I. Answer me. Did you tell them this?"

"Yes."

"And what did they say?"

"They told me to 'forget it!'" admitted the detective sullenly. "But, by gad! I'll stake my life on your knowing more than you should about that wreck. I've serious doubts about the train being derailed by the spike they found."

"Then, they *did* find some plausible reason for the accident?" Chamberlain asked, more eagerly than he should, perhaps.

"Oh, you're interested, all right—I can see that," said the fellow nastily. "Yes, there was a broken cold-chisel, about two feet long, found in the wreck. It had nothing to do with the engine, nor had it ever been seen by any of the railroad men before.

"But I don't believe it was that which derailed fifty-six. Nor do *you*, Mr. Lester Chamberlain. Let me tell you that you haven't seen the last of me. I'll have you in the noose yet—and I'll pay you for *this!*"

The detective had got his hat, smoothed his ruffled plumage, and reached the door ere this. Still uttering threatenings and scowling at the real-estate man most ferociously, he faded away, and Chamberlain did nothing to detain him.

He wanted to think, and to be alone. The accusation had made him terribly angry, yet behind it was a feeling of sudden relief. There was a doubt cast upon the supposed cause of the train-wreck.

He knew Dr. Beardsley could easily obtain information — "inside information"—about the doings of the railroad people. He went to him that very evening, giving up his intention of making the twins a surprise visit.

Indeed, having found out that the man he had suspected of being Abel Perry's one-time pal was an entirely different person, he ceased, for the time being, to worry about that mysterious writer of notes. The accusation the railroad detective had brought against him was too much to be quietly borne.

Beardsley took him across town, at his urgent request, to call upon the cousin who was a member of the railroad board, and to this gentleman Chamberlain put the matter bluntly. Had the board, or the superintendent, or anybody else except Sampson considered for an instant that he might be a person who would seek to blow up a train for any cause whatsoever?

Oh, Chamberlain continued quite hot, but between them the doctor and his cousin soothed him. Sampson had put forward his preposterous notion, and the board—especially those members who knew of Chamberlain—and the general manager himself, had pooh-poohed the idea.

"But the fellow's an obstinate chap, and he evidently was determined to satisfy himself," said the director. "He's not a bad fellow, by any means, but he was overofficious in going to you in that manner—"

"It's more than that, sir!" declared Chamberlain. "If he repeats his story, and I hear of it, somebody will suffer for it. He's your employee, and you must stop him. I'll sue the company for libel —damme if I don't!"

Beardsley finally quieted him down, and the cousin went on to say that the officers of the road had about decided that the broken chisel had done the fatal business for train No. 56. The ties were so splintered at the point of the accident that the spot could not be found where the chisel had been hammered into the wood, but it was without doubt that tool which had derailed the train.

Hope of finding the person or persons who had so deliberately planned to wreck train No. 56 had been quite abandoned by the officials. They were settling the damage cases as best they could, and trusted the matter would blow over.

Chamberlain had scarcely cooled down when he left the house and separated from his friend the doctor. Then, as he thought the matter over, he set suddenly upon a certain fact and worried it doggedly.

Nobody had made mention of finding other tools scattered about the tracks where the wreck had occurred, and MacCurdy, the police chief of Listome, had carried away a bagful of burglar tools from the remains of the wreck.

Now, if the train had collided with old Abel's telescope-bag, which Chamberlain had thrown overboard in the tunnel, why had not that case been torn to pieces and the various tools scattered about?

Perhaps, after all, he had carried a burden of anxiety and sorrow all these weeks that he need not have shouldered. Could it be possible that ill-disposed persons had really planned and carried out the train-wreck, and that the bag he abandoned had nothing to do with it?

It was a thought that gave him vast relief—or would have done so could he have brought himself to believe it was actually true. But after so long considering himself in the light of an unintentional murderer it was hard to see the matter in any other way.

Sampson, the railroad detective, evidently believed him worse than that. He was determined to connect the real-estate man with a deliberate attempt to wreck the train.

And in sneaking about, and watching him, and asking questions, was the man not likely to unearth something that would cause Chamberlain almost as much worriment of mind as an actual public accusation in connection with the tunnel horror?

He had surely made an enemy of the detective, and an obstinate man such as he was not a person to ignore. Sampson would hold to his opinion, and try to prove himself right, as tenaciously as any bulldog.

And the rascal seemed to have found out the most intimate matters of Chamberlain's business! It made the latter doubly wrathful to remember some of the items of Sampson's memoranda.

He even knew that the real-estate man had asked the local bank for funds to cover payment on his West Mastersville holdings, soon coming due. What was that he had said about it?

"Has tried to borrow money of local bank and been refused."

Was that true? Had Sampson some way of finding out secrets which Chamberlain did not know himself? He had not been to the president of the bank again, nor had he heard from him.

The very next morning he satisfied himself by seeing Mr. Commich and asking if the board had decided about the loan he had mentioned.

"Why, we're more than sorry, Mr. Chamberlain. We don't wish you to consider it any reflection upon you, but the security you offer—that other land toward Llewellan — the board doesn't consider good."

"Why not?" demanded Chamberlain shortly.

"Why, they scarcely think that under present circumstances it would bring the face of the mortgage you suggest—thirty-odd thousand dollars—if put in the market. There is much doubt, you know, as to the extension of the B., R. and K. road through that land."

"It's got to go there some time," said Chamberlain doggedly.

"Well, that's a question—and not one for us to decide. Evidently, it will not go there at present, and the bank does not wish to tie up its funds in any more

long-time mortgages. Of course, you understand," pursued Mr. Commich, trying to be pleasant, "that we'd like to accommodate you at another time, or on other security."

"Oh, very well," the young man grunted, and went out.

He was facing it now for fair! No backing down or turning the corner. Shortly he must find between thirty and forty thousand dollars or lose all the West Mastersville land, the only part of his holdings which really would be worth a picayune if the electric road were held up for long.

Even what he had paid to the owners to close the bargain would be lost—and that was no inconsiderable sum in the bulk. The firm of L. Chamberlain & Co. faced a crisis.

It had come to this: Should he sacrifice his own and the twins' fortune, or handle more of Uncle Abel Perry's accursed money?

And there was the "ready letter-writer"—the man who had not signed his name to his threatening note—and perhaps other members of the gang, to settle with. It was a ticklish matter to decide.

Yet the time for settlement was now drawing so near that he could not postpone action much longer. Uncle Abel's hoard could not be come at in a minute.

Chamberlain actually wished his unknown correspondent would write or "telegraft." Anything would be better than silence. He had written Perry and Trainor to eschew the company of strange men.

It would have been some comfort to Chamberlain really to know how much of the hidden money the writer of that note would demand. Abel had mentioned something like forty thousand as being in his cache; Chamberlain would need the bulk of that sum to pay his firm's indebtedness.

And when he set out on his quest for the money how did he know that the unknown pal of Abel Perry, or the detective, Sampson, would not watch and follow him? The latter seemed to be familiar with many things Chamberlain thought he had done in secret.

So, forewarned, he made his plans accordingly. He was determined to get away from town in such a manner that if either or both of the men he feared were watching him their suspicions would not be aroused.

Several of his friends were going fishing through the ice at a lake some miles out along the railroad track, and he agreed to accompany them. It was such an ordinary excursion that Chamberlain believed it would attract no attention, and he left town with the crowd early in the morning of the day appointed, quite confident that he had thrown any inquisitive party off the scent, and totally unsuspicious of what fate held in store for him against his return to Mastersville.

CHAPTER X.

WITH INFINITE CAUTION.

No word old Abel Perry had spoken on his dying bed had escaped Chamberlain's memory.

With infinite caution had Perry gone about the hiding of his ill-gotten fortune; and his one virtue seemed to be his desire to arrange things so that his identity as a marked criminal might never be associated with his real name and family.

Under one name he had committed his crimes and served his various seasons of punishment; the underworld did not know his antecedents, as it so seldom knows the antecedents of its votaries.

Nor had the police ever been able to trace the cunning and bold old burglar back to his young manhood, when he had laid the foundation for his wonderful success in his chosen calling by learning the blacksmith and tool-making trade in his native town. Abel Perry never talked about himself, even to his most intimate associates.

When he had finally separated himself from the gang of which he had been the leading light he had retired secretly to the Listome cottage under the name of Jones. His money was in a safety-deposit vault in a somewhat distant town, and in quite another alias.

The old man, knowing that his end might come rather suddenly, for the doctors had warned him, had arranged carefully for the safety of his fortune, and had made quite sure that it would

reach Chamberlain's hands, and through his the twins', without any publicity.

He told Chamberlain that he had hired the safety-deposit box under peculiar conditions. He had explained to the vault people that he might be stricken suddenly, and they had agreed to allow any person to remove the contents of the box on presentation of the key and a written order from himself.

That order he placed in Chamberlain's hands, with the key, the number of the box, and full directions. Nothing had escaped the young man's attention, troubled and frightened as he had been on that dreadful evening.

He now joined the fishing-party with delight, for the very clothing he was able to wear on the jaunt would help to disguise him. It was up to him now to obtain the funds in old Abel's safety-deposit box without being recognized in his proper character.

It was a jolly crowd with which he left Mastersville, and he was expected to keep up his end, for heretofore Chamberlain had been the life of any party of which he was a member. He was continually hearing his acquaintances passing the remark that "Lester's changed a lot since he was sick." It seemed to him as though even such a thoughtless observation might attract undue attention to his state of mind.

So, he made an effort to keep in the tone of the party on this morning. They caught an early freight out of the Mastersville yard, and were set down at a water-tank not far from the string of lakes to which they were bound.

It was a snapping cold morning, and the air gave them a ravenous appetite. While the others cut holes through the ice, set "jiggers," and otherwise prepared for the day's sport, Chamberlain agreed to get breakfast ready.

There was a wood-chopper's hut on the border of the first pond. One of the boys had packed a coffee-pot and a frying-pan. Chamberlain made the coffee and fried bacon over the rude stove, finding plenty of other cooked eatables in the various packs.

When the meal was ready he waited to gulp down a big pannikin of coffee himself, and then blew the whistle for his friends. They were scattered over the pond, and would be some minutes in gathering.

He snatched a hot bacon sandwich, set the coffee-pot on the board, and leaving a penciled note beside it stating that he had "forgotten an engagement and must return home at once," plunged into the woods at the rear of the cabin and made his way at his best speed back to the railroad.

"If any of 'em follow me they may go half-way to Mastersville before they find that I did not go in that direction," Chamberlain told himself. "It will cost me something to square myself with them for this trick, but I can't run the risk of one of the boys saying he'll go back with me. I've got to run this thing alone."

He reached the railroad without being followed. He walked two miles to a lonely station, from which he took the first train toward Eastman Junction. There he changed cars, and by a branch line reached, about noon, the city where old Abel had deposited his funds.

He knew little of the town, but he found the safety-deposit place without asking a question. And the way in which he doubled back upon his tracks, and watched from around corners, and stopped apparently to stare into shop-windows while really he was "sizing up" the people who passed or stopped to look with him finally convinced his uncertain mind that his footsteps were not being dogged.

In his rough costume, a casual glance, even of a friend, would scarcely recognize Lester Chamberlain. He was quite effectually disguised.

There was some delay at the safe-deposit institution, but no more than he had expected. There was something a bit unusual about the affair; still, Chamberlain kept his head and answered all questions with perfect coolness.

Whatever the officers of the institution might think, they could not refuse to keep the agreement well understood between themselves and the person who had engaged the box. Here came a man with the key, and with an order signed by the same name and in the same hand as that affixed to their books.

So, in the end Chamberlain was passed into an inner compartment, and the

locked box was brought to him. When he was alone he opened the receptacle gingerly.

There was something in it—parcels wrapped in brown paper, their contents hidden. And on the top lay a folded bit of stiff paper.

He opened this first and read, in the crabbed hand of old Abel, a terse document willing the money to his twin nephews and appointing Chamberlain trustee. The paper was neither legally drawn, signed, nor witnessed, but Chamberlain understood.

He first of all destroyed the paper, tearing it into small bits and scattering some in the waste-basket, while the rest he put in his pocket. He proposed to make it impossible for any person to obtain the pieces and fit them together again. His own name was mentioned in the document.

Then he examined the several packages. On the outside of each was a certain sum written in Abel's characteristic hand, and on counting the bank-notes within the young man found them to tally perfectly with the sums thus called for.

As the pile of bank-notes grew under his hand the real-estate man became almost feverishly excited. He forgot that this money was the fruit of crimes innumerable; he lost his former horror of the taint which clung to Abel Perry's fortune.

The old man's tale had not been visionary. Indeed, there was more here than he had given Chamberlain reason to suppose; it ran considerably over forty thousand—all in bills of large denomination.

When the various packets were emptied the money altogether did not make a very bulky parcel. He could easily distribute it all about his person without exciting comment.

And he was very desirous of doing this. The officials of the institution did not know what was in the box; it might contain money, bonds, or jewelry, or merely papers, so far as their knowledge went.

Chamberlain desired to walk out of the place with the fortune stowed away in his clothes in such a manner that he would not attract a second glance. For the fear that he might be robbed of this money before he could bank it, or before he could get it locked up in his safe at home, now disturbed him seriously.

He remained fully an hour in the little room alone. When he called the attendant and gave up the box the keenest eye would not have discovered any change or disturbance in his dress, but encircling his waist, and tied tightly to his body with a piece of tape, between his two shirts, lay hidden the several packages of bank-notes.

He left the place hurriedly, and without looking to either right or left. His mind was so enthralled now with the thoughts which centered in the fortune he carried that he had forgotten the possibility of his having been followed by either Sampson, the railway detective, or the unknown writer of the threatening letter.

He knew the hour at which he could get transportation back to the junction, and it was close on that time now, so he turned through a narrow and rather ill-favored street which he believed would prove a short cut to the station.

Almost instantly he was aware of a hurried step on the walk behind him. The street was almost deserted, and this tread rang out clearly. Reminded at once of his former fear, he turned his head to observe who might be trailing him.

It was a stocky, low-browed man, with a fierce, bristling mustache and hands like hams. Instantly Chamberlain conceived a terror of the fellow. He was tempted to take to his heels, yet in broad daylight surely no one would dare to molest him.

While he hesitated the man's long strides brought him abreast. He cast a watchful and sinister glance at Chamberlain, and his lips moved in a significant way.

"Don't you make any mistake, young feller," were the words the real-estate man heard. "I want ye, an' I ain't been hangin' erbout that bank all this time to let ye git away now. Don't cut up rusty, me laddy-buck, for if you do—" and a threatening gesture completed his sentence.

(To be continued.)

COSGROVE'S COMEDY.

By EPES WINTHROP SARGENT.

The ready-made romance a business man fitted to a woman across the aisle of the car, and the rôle of fairy godfather he assumed to help things along.

CLINTON COSGROVE mentally gave thanks that the girl across the aisle was so absorbed in her newspaper. Cosgrove could not do much reading on the train; the shifting lights made his head ache.

A crowd of noisy drummers, jubilant over their nearness to New York, were filling the café-car with the smoke from their cheap cigars, and had rendered the place unbearable. It was pleasant to sit back in his chair and study the girl opposite.

Cosgrove enjoyed mysteries, and here was one ready to hand to beguile the tedium of the trip to town.

To begin with, she was rather more than pretty, and, moreover, possessed an air of distinction that added to her purely physical charm. She wore her fashionably tailored gown with the air of one used to good dressing, yet the handbag that rested at her feet was worn and shabby—a relic of the days when paper imitations of alligator-hide were "quick sellers" in the shoddy-shops.

She occupied her seat in the chair-car as though she were used to such conveniences, yet the woman who had escorted her on board and took an affectionate farewell, with the wish that the "job" would come quickly, suggested the day-coach rather than the Pullman.

Almost before the train had pulled out she was engrossed in a New York paper, turning, after a brief glance at the headlines, to the "want" advertisements. She was so interested in these that she was not conscious of Cosgrove's steady, if polite, scrutiny.

For a man who spent the major portion of his waking hours in an endeavor to get the best of the Wall Street gamble, Cosgrove possessed an imagination of singular fertility and delicacy, and from the meager facts apparent he wove a romance about the girl.

From between his half-closed eyelids he observed the masses of golden hair that crowned the shapely head and shaded the high, white brow; he rejoiced in the purity of her profile and the soft coloring of her skin, and noted with an artist's appreciation the lithe lines of her slender figure and the perfection of detail in her dress. From every point of view she was admirable.

Then his thoughts reverted to the mother, with her coarse, red hands, her florid coloring, the rusty hat, and the plaid shawl surmounting the skirt of some rough dark stuff that long since had faded from any definable tint. From the comparison the inference was obvious.

The girl must have inherited her refinement from her father. He could picture the very type of broken-down fellow of good family—glad to wed a woman of coarser fiber who would put him on a pedestal of adoring love, content to slave over the tubs and scrubbing-bucket that he might enjoy the leisure that was so clearly his due.

Those fellows seldom lived long. Usually, they drank themselves to death. Then the love that had worked uncomplainingly for him had worked for the baby.

She should be a lady, as her father had been a gentleman. He could imagine the sacrifices and privations that had been endured that this tender girl might be reared to a life of gentility.

Now her education was complete, and she was faring forth to New York in search of a "job." Perhaps a few months in an office and then the stage would claim her for its own.

"Show-girls" of her rare distinction were eagerly sought. Somehow, he did not like to think of this flower girl engulfed in the vortex of Broadway.

And so, as the train sped through the Pennsylvania valleys, Cosgrove specu-

lated on the outcome of the quest. He started guiltily as the porter gave the first call for lunch and the girl rose quietly to go forward to the diner. The meal meant the price of a day's work for the toil-worn hands of the mother, yet it seemed perfectly right that she should go.

She had carelessly thrown the paper on the seat, and with an assumption of indifference Cosgrove reached for it. With a confident smile he turned to the "want" pages.

It was just as he had supposed. The advertisements she had been clipping were from the "wants" for typewriters and stenographers. She was looking for a place in an office.

She had clipped more than a dozen of the tiny slips, and in his imagination he could see her, that evening, laboriously answering the advertisers. Probably she had already arranged to go to some working girls' home, and she would enter on her task with the confidence of the novice.

He could trace the gradual growth of disappointment at her lack of success, the dwindling of the scanty funds, and finally the abandonment to despair. And then! Would she go back to the squalid home—or would she stay?

It all seemed so real to him that she returned before he remembered to put back the paper. She gracefully accepted his apology, and tendered its longer use in well-chosen words, but he blunderingly thanked her and retired in confusion to the diner for a lunch he did not care for.

He braved the smoke from the drummers' cigars until the train had passed Newark. Then he went back to his seat with his mind made up.

But it was not until the train had crept into the shed at Jersey City and they were hurrying down the platform between the tracks that he at last found courage to speak.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, as he raised his hat. "I suppose you will think me meddlesome, but I could not help seeing that you were interested in the 'want' advertisements."

They had passed the gate, and she turned and faced him, polite inquiry in her expression.

"You see," he hurried on, "I don't suppose that you—that is, your friend realizes that most of the places advertised are already filled. Now, if—er—your friend is looking for a stenographic position, there is a vacancy in my office. If you will call—that is, if your friend will call to-morrow, after three, perhaps it might be arranged."

"I thank you," she said gratefully as she took his card. "At three, you said?"

"At three. The exchange does not close until then."

He raised his hat and turned away. He congratulated himself on that fiction of a friend. It had made it very easy for him to speak, and he saw that she understood.

They needed another typist in the office. Within twenty-four hours she would be installed in his employ. What might not the future bring forth?

Cosgrove had never known time to drag so slowly. The hands of the big clock behind the chairman's little balcony seemed to stand still as he moved impatiently about the floor of the exchange. Once when Sugden met him and had begun to complain of his typewriter Cosgrove had mentioned the paragon he was to have in his employ.

He was ashamed of himself a minute later, but the damage had been done, and when the hands at last reached three and the gavel fell Sugden headed a delegation that would not be shook off.

They burst into the outer office of Carman & Cosgrove and came to a dead halt. Cosgrove gasped, but went forward to greet a replica of the old woman of the station.

She was younger, and the plaid shawl was replaced by a badly cut jacket, but she was her mother's daughter. Cosgrove would have known her in a thousand.

He hustled her into his private office and turned over the card she handed him. It was his own card, and on the reverse was written: "Introducing Mrs. Behrman, in whose behalf you were kind enough to speak last night."

It was some satisfaction to find that she was a capable worker, with orthodox ideas of spelling, instead of her own system of simplification, and with a brief arrangement as to terms Cosgrove rose to indicate that the interview was over.

Mrs. Behrman looked up.

"'And it is really that I am engaged?" she asked.

"Of course," was the impatient response.

The flood-gates of her tears were open, and she raised her voice in homely expressions of gratitude to him and to Helen Westervelt.

Cosgrove gasped as he heard the name. It was at least a mercy that he had employed his "fiction" of a friend. She had supposed that he understood, for she was the prime leader of all movements for working girls, and it was only natural that she should suppose that he knew her by sight.

The woman sobbed out her story. She had run away from home to marry Behrman, who had deserted her as soon as he had obtained possession of her slender savings. Her mother would not forgive, and Miss Westervelt, interested in the case, had acted as ambassador.

It was Mrs. Behrman's satchel she was carrying, and which had been largely accountable for the mistake he had made, and it was with Mrs. Behrman's forgiveness and promise to join her daughter that Helen was returning to town.

Cosgrove rang for one of the other stenographers to look after the weeping woman, and went out into the office to face his tormentors. His appearance was greeted with a shout.

"Is it that you are no judge of beauty, or is it some new exhibition of your perverted ideas of humor?" demanded Sugden.

"I don't think the laugh—or the dinner—is on me," suggested Cosgrove. "It seems to be up to you, Jimmie."

"I guess I'm it," agreed Sugden, not realizing that he himself had suggested to Cosgrove a way out. "I coaxed the boys over to investigate a romance, and we find it is a farce."

"Wait until I get my coat," commanded Cosgrove as he disappeared.

He struggled into that garment as he muttered to himself: "It's a farce so far, but it's just the comedy relief to the romance if I can make it so. For it will be a romance, and only the first act has yet been played."

A YANKEE MAID.

THERE lurks a witchery about
  This dainty Yankee maiden;
She wins me with a smile or pout
Through varying moods, and is no doubt
  With wiles and wisdom laden.

Her face is dreamy as the purr
  Of noontide brooks through flowers;
In dimples deep the sunbeams stir,
Her smiles are gay as ever were
  The fauns in lazy hours.

Her lustrous eyes in merry wise
  Low laugh from under lashes
That in a lazy languor rise;
And bluer than the bluebell lies
  The deep hue in their flashes.

And then to crown a rare delight
  She studies Worth and Virot:
A great hat from our wondering sight
Hides softest curls engoldened bright—
And he who saves his heart is quite
  A wondrous kind of hero.

Archibald Douglas.

TRACKING IT DOWN.*

By GARRETT SWIFT,

Author of "Guarding the Treasure," "Mrs. Curtis's First Husband," etc.

A doctor's mystifying experiences in the rôle of first aid to a detective.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

JOHN CLAVE, doctor, is suddenly called from home on a stormy night to attend a sick boy, whom he discovers to have been poisoned. He accuses the man who calls himself the boy's father, and is entrapped by the latter in a courtyard, where he spends the night in hunger and discomfort. In the morning a beautiful girl looks out of one of the windows. Clave attracts her attention, and later meets her and her father, Malden Burt. The latter is certain that the boy, who has disappeared, is his own son, Denman, and that his disappearance has been caused by his uncle, Matthias Burt, who has been occupying the house. Gelter, of the Amory Detective Agency, and Clave are commissioned to track the boy. One Simms, a cab-driver, is arrested on suspicion, but can tell them nothing beyond the fact that a yacht had waited at Inwood on the river. Clave and Gelter receive an invitation to dine with their employer, who wishes them to meet his brother, Matthias.

Matthias tells Burt that he has been searching for the boy and will continue to do so. When he leaves the hotel Clave and Gelter follow him to a house which, they learn, is occupied by one Jacob Coleman, a gentleman of the flashy order. From Atlantic City Gelter sends a telegram to Coleman in the name of Granville Burt, and receives a reply telling him to adopt a new name. Clave writes to Denman's mother in his name, and gets an answer from Helen. Meanwhile, Malden Burt receives an anonymous communication commanding him, if he wishes to save Denman, to force down the price of stocks which he controls, in order that the writer may make a fortune on the rise. Gelter follows Matthias, alias Coleman, to a roof-garden, where, after the latter has spoken with a young man who proves to be Granville Burt, he arrests him. In the elevator Matthias puts his hand under his coat, there is a muffled report, and he falls to the floor.

CHAPTER XIII *(continued).*

A BEWILDERING DECISION.

THE sudden death of a man in an elevator was an event, I found, calculated to make all sorts of commotion. When one reads of such a thing in a conservative paper—unless the man himself be a person of renown, celebrated for his wealth, art, or the woman he married—one passes it by, if suicide is suspected, with merely a comment such as "Another fool gone home."

If one read it in a sensational paper, with all the glamour that a skilled and ungrammatical writer can throw around the affair in the ten minutes he has allotted him in which to make copy, one says it is exaggerated.

In the first case we are wrong because every suicide teaches a lesson of one kind or another, and in the second case we are wrong because the real thing cannot be exaggerated.

I was filled with horror when I heard that pistol-shot and saw Matthias Burt fall to the floor of the car. I heard Gelter let out an oath. The elevator-man gave a yell and stopped the car between floors.

I at once sprang into my professional rôle and knelt at the man's side.

"How?" asked Gelter tersely.

"He is dead," I answered.

Gelter turned to the elevator-man angrily.

"Go on, you fool," he said.

"I don't want you people to get away."

"Oh, you don't? Going to turn us over to the police? Good. I admire your public-spirited action. But how are you going to do it by holding us suspended here?"

**This story began in the July issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The two back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 20 cents.*

"I'll holler."

Which he certainly did. An answering call came from below, and the car shot downward.

Two policemen stood there. They looked at us as we landed.

"What's the matter?" asked one.

"Shooting," answered the elevator-man. "I don't know which one did it."

The officers looked puzzled. The crowd grew greater, and mutterings were heard, though against whom could not be told.

"Perhaps I can explain," said Gelter, "but not here."

"You'll have chance enough, young fellow," spoke up an officer. "Come with us."

A mob of reporters rushed through the crowd. Where they came from so soon I could not imagine.

"What is it?" they asked breathlessly.

"Man shot," said a policeman.

I had determined to say nothing. It would be better for me to let Gelter do the talking.

"What are the particulars?"

"Haven't got any yet. Have to go to the house for that."

We were marched away, a call having been sent for an ambulance. We were soon in the private room of the captain of the precinct.

The officers who conducted us there told their story.

"Were you two together?" asked the captain.

"Yes," said Gelter. "We were together, and with the promise that you will not disclose our names I will give you the whole story. Most of it is familiar to you."

As Gelter spoke he shoved aside his coat.

"That's all," said the captain to the officers.

With looks of disgust on their faces, they marched out.

Gelter told the whole story.

"It is the most unfortunate thing that could have happened at this time," he said in conclusion. "We were right on the trail as hot as they come. Now there will be confusion, and what we have done must be done all over again."

The captain rubbed his chin.

"I suppose it will get into the papers," he said. "It is impossible to keep anything secret now. The question is, was this death of Burt accidental or, as it has been called, really a suicide. The man was under arrest for a crime in which he certainly had a hand and a working knowledge. He was desperate. His hand and revolver were concealed. Did you stand at his left?"

"Yes," said Gelter.

"He may have fired at you. In his desperation he might have thought that if he could shoot you and the doctor he could escape. He would have fired at you first because, as an officer, he would be sure you were armed."

"That is true," assented Gelter. "He may not have intended suicide."

"We will never know now," said the captain. "It must remain one of the unsolved mysteries. But his death certainly interferes with your plans."

"Decidedly. I had hoped to learn much from Burt."

We notified Malden Burt and Mrs. Coleman. There was a coroner's inquest. Here two surprises came out.

Malden Burt learned that his brother, as Jacob Coleman, was for the second or third time raising money on memoranda signed "M. Burt" and using Malden's credit.

No good reason could be given for the change of name from Burt to Coleman except that Matthias wished to operate secretly in New York while those who knew him believed he was out of town.

The other surprise was that Mrs. Coleman seemed utterly indifferent to the fate of Matthias.

This, however, did not interest Gelter or me.

The case was at last given to the jury. The verdict was suicide. Almost everybody doubted it. We had lost all we had gained.

There was nothing to do but begin all over again.

We roamed New York. We haunted Dog Fish Landing. We tried to find the girl I had seen at Brighton.

It seemed useless. Granville Burt, his fiancée, and the man of the stormy night had vanished as if from the face of the earth.

We visited the widow. She said their acquaintances were people who spent a great deal of money on pleasure and were

not overscrupulous as to how they got it. She had been deceived, wofully deceived, and there was a party of friends going to the races at Saratoga and she could not go.

She knew nothing of Granville. She did not like him, and he never came to the house. This accounted for the meeting in the roof-garden.

"Another fizzle," commented Gelter.

"Let us hope."

I was continuing my correspondence with Mrs. Burt. The answers I received were sometimes from her and sometimes from Miss Burt. Miss Burt simply wrote to please her mother, and her mother would read the letters. They were sent to Atlantic City, and then forwarded to me at the Astor House.

At noon of the day we had visited Mrs. Coleman I found a letter addressed to me. I felt a thrill when I saw that it was in the handwriting of Helen Burt. It read:

DR. CLAVE:

I found this in a smoking-jacket of my brother's. It may or may not have any bearing on his fate. I send it to you so that if you and the detective feel it is good for something you may use it.

HELEN BURT.

I handed the note to Gelter.

The enclosure read as follows:

DEAR DENMAN:

I have heard that you wanted a yacht. I think I have one that would just suit you, and wish you would come and look at it. We are cruising off Rockaway, and can meet you any time you say. Don't say anything about it until you buy. You know how fidgety aunt is when you are on the water. This is a little steam-yacht, about a hundred over all, fully found, nice deck-house, good cabins, everything fine. Organ in main saloon, which would suit you. If possible, be at Dent's Landing, Edgemere, Rockaway Beach, to-morrow. Your affectionate cousin,

GRANVILLE.

Gelter read the letter over twice. He carefully folded it and put it in his own pocket.

"Now I want Granville Burt more than ever," he said.

"Do you see anything in that?"

"Do I? It holds the key to the whole situation."

"How?"

"It is as clear as anything could be. Things are simmering down to something like clarity now."

"Well?"

"Denman Burt was lured to his death."

"He didn't die."

"He was to have died. Some person interfered. Now, either Granville Burt wrote this to lure Denman where he could murder him and was defeated in his purpose, or some one else did and changed his mind. The thing is still pretty thick, but we'll get at it. Denman Burt accepted this invitation. So will we."

"What are you going to do?"

"Charter the swiftest yacht in commission at Erie Basin. We can cruise as well as Granville Burt."

His decisions were so quick that they were bewildering.

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM OUT OF THE NIGHT.

I HAD never seen so many yachts together before. There were ocean-going schooners and ocean-going steam-yachts.

Some had not been out for years, and were battered-looking from weather and neglect. Some were just in after the summer's sport, and looked tired of it all. Others were as bright and new-looking as when put in commission in the spring.

There were single-stickers, with sharp straight bows, and some with overhang almost half as long as the hull. There were cruisers and racers. There were boats of all kinds, sizes, and shapes. Boats for all purposes. It was a yachtsman's clearing-house.

Gelter knew just what to do, how to do it, and where to go to do it. I knew nothing of our requirements, and spent my time looking at boats.

"There is a fine yacht," I heard a man say.

I looked at it. It *was* a fine yacht. I supposed Gelter would hire it at once. It seemed to me he would.

But some new idea had taken him. He wanted a yacht that had just come in, and he wanted to inspect the cabin of each one.

This was permissible. We saw yachts with big saloon and no stateroom. We

saw cruisers all staterooms and small saloon. Here, again, everything was shaded to the needs.

I was interested, and studied them all. Some had been brought in shipshape and clean. Others looked as though the crew had deserted as soon as they struck the basin.

Many of them had a sailor on board. In one such there was an absence of neatness, but there was no disorder. It was as if everybody had quit in a hurry. Books had been left behind. Pictures still hung in the cabins.

I went through them, trying to imagine what sort of summer a crowd of pleasure-seekers would have on such a craft.

Suddenly I stood still, my heart pounding like a trip-hammer. I let out a yell that brought Gelter and the yacht-agent to me. I stood transfixed, my eyes on a photograph that was stuck behind a little bulkhead desk in the saloon.

It was the picture of two men in sailor garb. One was the unmistakable face of the man I had seen at the house at Inwood, and the other was Granville Burt.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Gelter.

"Look!"

I pointed to the picture.

"Granville, yes. Well?"

"The other. The man—the man—"

"Of Inwood?"

"Yes."

"Sure?"

"I could not mistake that face."

Gelter put the picture in his pocket.

"Who owns this yacht?" he asked.

"It is owned by a man in Brooklyn. It was chartered this year."

"Do you know the name of the person who had her?"

"Know the name? No. All the business was done through the owner."

The sailor on board was questioned. He did not know.

"I was not on the cruise," he said. "I was sent aboard here."

"Give me the name of the owner."

"James Saul."

Gelter wrote that down.

"Any of the party come ashore here?"

"No. The crew only, but I don't know where they went."

"Looks like something doing," I remarked.

"Wait and see."

We hurried to Brooklyn. The name of James Saul was well known, and we had no trouble in finding his residence.

We learned there that Mr. Saul had been in Europe all summer. Nobody knew when he would be back. No one knew anything about his yachting affairs. He was a bachelor, and spent little time at home.

Next was the yachting register. It gave a list of owners. Saul was down as one. His yacht, the Wild Bird, had been chartered to Granville Burt.

Gelter felt elated. We rushed to the office. We found there a letter from Mr. Burt enclosing another.

Mr. Burt's letter was short, and asked that we make such use of the enclosure as we could. The enclosure ran as follows:

MALDEN BURT:

The death of your brother will make no change in our plans. He had nothing to do with our part of this plan. You will proceed as laid down in our former letter or we will send your boy's body home for burial—in pieces. We are so desperate that we will not hesitate to take another member of your family if needful to our purpose. It would do us no good to kill you. We want you alive, to act.

A cold shiver ran down my back. Would we never land this gang of cutthroats?

Gelter spent much time studying the picture.

"Clave, I am going to smoke—smoke—smoke. I almost have the thing written in my mind, but there is still a missing letter. Get that and we will have the secret."

"But we are off again," I said. "Granville Burt must be in with this crowd."

"He was—there may have been a quarrel. It will come. But I want to be alone."

"All right. But say, I think I'll go back to my own clothes. These are uncomfortable."

"Well, you can get them on again. Think I've had enough of this rig for a time."

We went to François and were rehabilitated in our own clothing. But they were

not our own, either. They had been purchased at Atlantic City. I had good clothing home, and I wanted to see Rex.

I went to Inwood. I went first to Gibbs's, and found Rex in great condition. I petted him, and he jumped on me and fawned at my feet.

"Good Rex; good dog!"

His answer was a bark.

I went to my own house, and opened the windows to air the place. I examined my wardrobe, and laid out the clothing I would put on after I had had a bath.

I went to the store, and bought chops and vegetables, and a pie and some milk. Rex and I were going to eat together once more.

It was like old times. I reveled in the cooking. I had had a room at college, and had done my own cooking on a little oil-stove to save expenses. But of all the meals I ever cooked, I don't think I ever enjoyed one more than that in which Rex and I celebrated our reunion.

"Fine, eh, Rex?" I said as he wagged his tail and ate the chop I broiled for him.

After we had eaten our fill I lighted a pipe and sat down in my library to read a little. The air was cooler and purer than down in the city. It stirred the blood. It made one feel like an athlete.

Rex lay at my feet.

I read a while and fell to dreaming. I thought of that awful night, not so long ago, when the storm was beating upon the earth with the rage of an angry Heaven and I had gone out to that terrible ordeal and the excitement that had followed it. I wondered if any further disturbance of my life would come.

In the silence I grew drowsy. I fell asleep.

I was suddenly thrown into something like a terror of paralysis by a bag that was thrust over my head. I heard Rex cry as only a wounded dog can cry. He was not then near me.

I struggled. I fought with the desperate determination of a man who loves life and will not have that life taken from him.

"Be still," hissed a voice in my ear. "A sound or another move and you are a dead man."

Something was put around my mouth, almost suffocating me. Then my arms and legs were tied, and I was laid on the floor.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE RIDE IN AN AUTO.

I CAN scarcely give an adequate idea of my emotions as I found myself bound and gagged on the floor. I knew that my assailants were in some manner, and in close relationship, connected with the Burt case, but how I could not at the moment figure out.

A glimmer of reasoning power was coming to me, however.

"Hurry up," I heard a voice say impatiently.

The voice came thick and heavy, but the tones reached me clearly enough for me to know that I did not recognize it as the voice of any person I had ever met.

"There is no hurry," retorted another voice that filled me with intense rage.

Though muffled to my ears by the bag that had been thrown over my head, I recognized the voice as the one I had heard in Matthias Burt's house that stormy night when I had been left in the closed court to starve.

"No hurry?" exclaimed the other voice. "How do we know who will come here?"

"Nobody, unless, perhaps, a patient, and he had few. You don't suppose that after going thus far I am going to make a mistake now, do you? The dog is wounded, and there is blood on the piazza. You must be a fool to think I am going to leave that there. We would start the hunt all over again. The piazza must be cleaned up, and the dog must be taken along."

"I don't see—"

"Hang you and your 'don't see'! Well, then, don't see, but do. If we go and leave the place like this we give the thing away to the first-comer. If we leave the dog everybody will know a tragedy has taken place."

"Yes, and if we take the dog—"

An oath broke from my original enemy.

"You are remarkably brilliant to-night. If we leave the place in proper order, what would be the natural theory? That

he has gone away of his own will and taken the dog. No one will try to follow, because he has been away and everybody knows he is looking for Denman Burt."

Both men laughed.

"All right," said the voice I did not know. "I see your point. I'll get some water."

I made several efforts to wriggle myself free from the thongs with which they had bound me, but it was a useless waste of energy.

I heard the splashing of the water, and heard Rex cry. I supposed they were stopping the flow of blood from his wound to avoid the slightest telltale.

Next I heard them shutting and locking windows. They took the key of the front door from my pocket, and then I felt myself lifted.

I was carried out through the door, as I could feel the cooler air on my hands. I could hear the chug-chug of an automobile ready to start.

"Put him in the back and close the hood. It is such a cool night for ladies."

"Even if they are protected by automobile screens," said the other with a laugh.

I was placed in a corner of the wide seat, and fastened there with something that went around my waist.

"I'll lock the door, and we'll get the dog," I heard the voice of my enemy say.

It was not more than half a minute when I felt the heavy head of Rex as he was placed at my feet. He gave a sort of moan as they hustled him in without regard, apparently, to his injuries.

There was a louder noise from the motor, and the huge machine began to move.

If there was ever a man consumed with rage, I was at that moment. I knew that my anger was impotent. But that did not cool it any. I wanted the life of the man who was taking me away probably to rid me of mine.

I had not been injured, and no attempt had been made to deprive me of my senses. But the possession of these did me no good, for I could not tell where I was or whither I was going.

I did know that the man who had called me to attend Denman Burt was the man who had captured me. He was evidently the master in the expedition.

In this I found, upon reflection, a sort of forlorn hope. He had been eager to save the life of Denman. Murder was not his forte. Yet, he had tried to murder me by showing me into the closed court instead of out on the street.

I tried to tell by the difference in sound and feeling what sort of road we were on. Sometimes the heavy body bounced up and down on its springs. At other times it was still, and the machine rolled as smoothly as though over a polished floor.

I realized that we were going at a rapid pace, but whether too fast for the speed limit or not I could not tell. It was my first ride in an automobile.

I hoped the fellows would exceed the law allowance and get themselves arrested. I would then be discovered and set free. But no such luck. They were far too careful.

It seemed as though we had ridden about an hour, when there was a quick turn and the forward end of the machine seemed to rise slightly, as though ascending a hill. I tried to measure the distance and compare it with the time. The smoothness of the running told me that it was no country hill up which we were speeding.

Gradually there came to me a difference in atmosphere. The air struck chill and moist on my hands. There was a peculiar freshness to it even as I breathed it through the bag.

I immediately came to the conclusion that I was going over the Brooklyn Bridge.

Presently I felt the downward tendency.

Soon came the clanging of trolley warnings and the noise of vehicles on rough pavement.

After that it was impossible to tell anything about direction. The noises ceased. Except for the noise made by the motor, there was not a sound.

If my two captors spoke at all their voices did not reach me.

How many hours we rode in that way I could not even guess. My hands and feet were numb, and my arms and legs were sore with the cords that were biting into them.

Rex was quiet. I could not reach him, and it would have availed me nothing

if I could. I spoke to him, and he whined in response.

There was an irony in the seeming mercy of the men. They must ere this have passed spots where the dog could have been thrown. But on we went.

At last, after a ride that seemed almost interminable, the machine slowed down. The hood was lowered. To my surprise, through the bag the light of dawn shone in my eyes. We had ridden nearly all night. At least, so it seemed to me. Of course, I could not calculate well, because I did not know how long I had been asleep when my captors came.

"Look off," said the voice of the man I had met. "Is all clear?"

"Yes. Nothing in sight."

"Get the launch."

The launch again.

I heard a noise similar to that made by the motor-car, and soon I was lifted and placed in the bottom of a boat. I knew from the rocking that it was not a large boat, so it scarcely could have been the one I had seen at Dog Fish Landing.

Again the mysterious mercifulness showed itself. Here, at least, with no one in sight, they could drown the dog and rid themselves of him forever. But this did not seem to be their purpose.

I felt the weight of Rex as he was deposited in the boat, part of his body resting across my legs.

"How do you lock this?" asked the voice I did not know.

"Don't lock it there. I will attend to it."

The noise started up and lasted only a few minutes.

"You can't tell," said my old foe's voice. "Some snipe-shooter or duck-hunter may prowl down here, and the sight of an automobile this time in the morning might lead to other discoveries."

The launch put off, and I judged the time to be about forty minutes before it stopped.

It bumped up against something, and one man jumped out, as I could tell by the jar of the launch.

Once again I was lifted and carried upon something that seemed afloat, yet was firmer than the launch. Here I was permitted to stand erect.

"Better leave him tied?" asked the strange voice.

"What's the use? We are not afraid of him now, and he certainly cannot escape."

"He might commit suicide."

My enemy laughed.

"Dr. John Clave, at your service, is not that kind. Give him the use of his hands and feet."

There was a quick action of a knife and my arms and legs were unshackled. Then there was the shutting of a door apparently over my head, and a bolt. I heard Rex whine.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FLOATING PRISON.

SINCE my captors had seen fit to release my arms and legs, leaving me at liberty to do as I pleased with my face, I untied, after considerable difficulty, the bandage they had fastened around my mouth, and then drew off the bag with which my head had been covered.

I was certainly in a strange place.

It was no ogre's cave, to terrify one with moans and mysterious happenings, nor yet a fairy-grotto. It was a room.

I judged the room was about ten feet long, by perhaps six wide at one end, narrowing slightly toward the other. At the wide end was a swinging bed built against the partition separating that room from anything that might be beyond.

There was another little room, opening at the other end, with a wonderful amount of small conveniences crowded into small compass.

On one side there was a rack which I judged to be for guns, but there were no guns there.

Seats ran along the sides, and there was a sort of folding table. There were a few books neatly arranged on a shelf.

There were neither doors nor windows to this strange prison, if prison it was, but a narrow set of about four stairs led to a trap-door above. This I found securely fastened.

The floor was covered with linoleum.

On the floor lay poor Rex, with a bandage around his middle. He was panting. His great eyes looked up at me with a piteous expression of appeal.

The only light came from a heavy glass skylight, in the roof.

The air was not bad, considering that the only ventilation was from a small pipe above. Looking up through this, it seemed about three feet long, and pointed to a small spot in the sky.

I knelt down by Rex.

"Poor fellow, you got it worse than I did, didn't you?" I murmured, and he seemed to understand my words of sympathy. "But," I continued, "there is no telling what is before us. We may be killed, or some other evil thing may happen to us. We can't tell. But, anyway, we are together, Rex."

I unbound him. His side was cut as though one of my captors had come upon him unawares and ran a knife into him. The hair was matted with congealed blood, and I wondered if I could find water.

I went to the smaller apartment, and there found a tank of good drinking-water. I got some in a tin basin I found hanging up, and after bathing the faithful hound's side I examined his hurt more carefully.

It was a serious, but not necessarily dangerous, wound. I tore a strip from my shirt and bound it up as well as I could. I also gave him some clear water to drink.

I had time then to think. A dozen things seemed to crowd into my mind at once.

So far as my impending fate was concerned, speculation upon that was useless. Had the intention been to kill me, there was opportunity enough without going to the trouble of bringing me to a place that was comfortable even if, for the time, a prison.

Had the motive been one of enmity, surely Rex would not have been brought along to keep me company.

Yet, on the other hand, the chief of my captors was the man who knew I could identify him as the abductor of Denman Burt. He had tried to kill me by starvation. That might be a favorite method of his for getting rid of enemies.

I gave up trying to think what I might expect, but there were other things I could think of.

Naturally, the first in my mind was my mother; then my father. They had but just received a letter giving an account of the Burt mystery, and now, if I were gone from their knowledge any length of time they would naturally fear that I had met death at the hands of the scoundrels I had described to them.

Then I thought of the Burts. Their natural supposition would be, after the discovery that I was missing, that I had taken Rex, and perhaps some money, and fled. The account at the bank would be examined.

I was perfectly safe on that score. I had never drawn any money from the fund. I left all that to Gelter.

I wondered how they would manage with the letters supposed to be written by Denman Burt to his mother. Perhaps Helen would continue to find a way. Certainly, understanding the case, the postal authorities would help her out on that.

She could write the letters and send them to the post-office in a second cover addressed to the postmaster, who could have the one addressed to Mrs. Burt mailed at any office he wished. Helen could arrange to have the point of mailing agree with the contents of her letter. That matter could be got over.

Now, what would Gelter think? Gelter was a man who usually thought straight at a mark and generally hit it.

His acumen was so great that I hoped he would strike the right cue.

His first act, naturally, would be to go to the bank. Then he would go to Gibbs's, and learn that I had been there. His next step—I followed him step by step—would be to go to my house, which he would find locked up, as it had been when we were there before.

Finding everything just as I would leave it, what would he do next?

We had no definite plan except that he had declared he intended to charter a yacht. If I was hidden in some inland spot, a yacht would not find me. But I fancied there was motion to the thing I was in, and the light and air coming from above confirmed it.

Was I on the ocean? If so, how far from land? Was I anchored?

If I was, was I in the line of ships that could cut me down? Was that, after all, the purpose? Were Rex and I to be drowned together, and sink into the secret-bearing ocean, leaving no trace behind?

The more I studied the thing out the more perplexed I became.

Was my fate anything like that of Denman Burt? What was this partly submerged thing in which I was imprisoned? Who were my captors, that they could do as they pleased under the very noses of the police?

I began to grow hungry. My watch had not been wound up, but when I took it from my pocket it was going. I did not know whether it was right, for I knew some watches stopped before the spring was entirely exhausted and would run on a few minutes after being jostled.

But by my watch it was nine o'clock. I knew this must be 9 A.M., because I had seen the dawn through the bag, and I knew that a heavy skylight would not give light at 9 P.M.

I searched for food in the little cupboard in the "kitchen," as I called it. My nautical experience had been limited to rowboats on river or lake. I suppose had I been used to yachts I would have called my kitchen a galley.

I found a little coffee that had evidently been there some time and was devoid of aroma. There was nothing else.

I thought it better to wait. It was possible that whatever my captors had in view for me depended on my being kept alive for a time, at least.

Rex was still my anchor of hope. If they intended to kill me, why had they taken the trouble to save Rex?

I sat down on one of the broad, comfortable seats, and picked up a book. It was a story of a cruise in a yacht, full of incidents that would be interesting to a yachtsman, but which I did not understand.

I did get interested in a story, when there came a bump and the sound of a heavy body scraping along the side.

I heard some one land on the deck. Then there was the noise of bolts being withdrawn.

"Clave?" came the well-known voice of my captor.

"Well?" I growled.

"I am coming down. I know you are not armed. We examined you at your house. Don't try any tricks."

I looked toward the trap-door. I saw a face I did not know. It was peering down, and alongside the face there ran an arm. At the end of the arm was a hand grasping a revolver aimed at me.

Rex made an attempt to rise, but could not. He growled faintly.

I saw two well-shod feet, two well-clad legs, and the rest of a man fully dressed in a stylish yachting-suit, topped off with a cap, descending.

He smiled benignly. It was my man of the Inwood house.

How I hated him! How I longed to leap upon and throttle him! But a gleaming revolver in his hand deterred me.

Glancing toward the companionway, he said: "Sam, bring down the breakfast. The doctor must be hungry. And don't forget the dog, poor devil! It was a shame to knife him. Come, Sam! Don't be all day."

I stared at the man in absolute amazement. He was not the man of the stormy night, then, after all. Yet he was.

The faces were the same, but this man was smiling and happy. That man had been demoniac in his rage. This man was jauntily attired in a yachting-suit.

He wore white shoes, white trousers, a dark-blue jacket, and a white bulging cap with dark-blue band. The man of the storm wore a rain-coat, with which he covered his face.

Yet they were the same—I felt sure.

(To be continued.)

KIND FATE.

LOVE duped us, sweet! Last year you wed
Another man, and I, instead
  Of muttering oaths in bitter bass,
Sent silver spoons, and as I read
Your bridal cards, devoutly said
  How kind Fate was!

Eva Wilder McGlasson.

THE PLAYTHING OF POWER.

By HERBERT FLOWERDEW.

The desperate straits that drove a man to place his future in pawn with a modern Shylock.

I.

THE LAST RESORT OF DESPERATION.

IN the cheaply furnished room of a seaside lodging, Francis Colvin sat with his pen in his hand and called himself the meanest creature on God's earth. He was going to ask the girl who loved him to lend him some money—for more money, since the month he had already passed by the sea had been spent there at Gertrude Ogilvie's expense.

And he was going to advise her to remain in a situation she found odious because he was afraid that her slender savings would be exhausted too quickly if she had to draw upon them for her own needs as well as his while she was seeking a fresh engagement.

He felt himself to be despicable, and yet what was a man to do who had not a penny in the world, and neither the strength nor the courage needed to face life thus handicapped.

He was a painter, and in spite of a distinct touch of genius had managed to support himself with his brush from the age of nineteen, when his father's financial collapse and death left him dependent on his own exertions. Now, at twenty-four, he had achieved the slippery reputation of the man "from whom something is to be expected," and he had relied on the promise of that reputation to ask Gertrude Ogilvie to be his wife.

His declaration had been hastened by the fact that Gertrude, like himself, was alone in the world, a detached cipher, and needed all the glamour of hope to brighten a struggling present. She was a governess whose lot seemed to throw her always into uncongenial households.

They had been meditating life together in a garret—a garret with a north light—when even that modest ambition was quenched by the very last factor Colvin had thought of in his calculations for the future. He was taken ill.

An attack of influenza of the virulent 1905 brand had laid him by the heels long enough to exhaust his cash in hand, which was never more than a trifle, and the actual need of money had driven him to work too soon and too eagerly.

A relapse completed his bankruptcy and left him without even the energy to paint. He had lost all hope, all spirit, and, he told himself, all manliness and pride, when his sweetheart availed herself of a rare holiday to travel down and see him, and like the brave, loving little woman that she was, took his cure in hand.

He must go down to the sea, and in a month he was sure to be quite well again. It was preposterous for him to plead that he could not afford it while she had the money.

Colvin knew how small was the little sum she had managed to save as a defense against the evil days she dreaded, the periods when she was seeking a situation, but he had accepted the greater part of it, and was writing now to ask for more.

For the month had made little difference to him. Physically he was stronger, he looked less like the mere wreck of a man, but he still had the hopeless feeling that he would never be able to paint or support himself.

Only the thought of Gertrude's trust goaded him to take up his brush, and it was only to spoil canvas consciously. He could do nothing that he dared offer to the least critical of dealers.

He must make fresh inroads on his sweetheart's little store or starve, and the alternative was made all the more painful by the knowledge that Gertrude was very unhappy in her present situation. Colvin unfolded her last letter to read again.

She was very brave, very uncomplaining, but it was easy to read between the lines that she was being persecuted by the master of the house with odious at-

tentions. For the first time Colvin allowed himself to realize what it must mean to her.

"Of course she would have thrown up her post instantly if she had only herself to think about," he told himself, and impulsively tore up the letter he had written in reply. He wrote instead:

> My Own Dear, Brave, Little Woman:
> I am getting on famously. Have put on three pounds this week, and am painting for all I am worth. I have not sold anything yet, but have not the least doubt that I shall when I run up to the dealers.
> Not that there is any hurry. The money lasts longer than we expected.
> Touching the blackguard, of course there is only one thing to be done, dear. Tell his wife, and if, as you expect, it puts an end to your stay in the house, well! that is nothing to be afraid of, now that I am recovering so fast, and shall be able so soon to pay you back what you lent me. I am just off for a swim now and shall have another good spell at work when I return refreshed.

He finished the letter off hastily, with tears in his eyes as he added the loving good-byes—into which he dared not put his whole heart, lest she should realize their finality.

The idea of going for a swim and never coming back had haunted his thoughts ever since his arrival at the seaside. It offered such a satisfactory way of avoiding the ugly word, "suicide."

"A man went out beyond the breakers and overestimated his strength. When he tried to return, he found the current too strong to battle against."

It had happened once or twice during Colvin's stay, and although in each case a rescue had been effected, it was only because the swimmer had managed to raise an outcry which called the boats to his assistance. In his case there would be no outcry and no rescue.

It was the only thing to be done, since he could not support himself, and would not hang a dead weight round the neck of the woman he loved.

He used his last postage stamp to send off the letter and walked deliberately on to the bathing-machines.

He had almost reached them before an obstacle to his purpose suggested itself, all the more irritating because of its pettiness. He had not even the money needed to pay for the hire of a machine.

It was possible for him, of course, by walking further along the shore, to reach an isolated spot where he could undress and enter the sea without fee or formality, but it was essential to the success of his undertaking that he should do nothing out of the ordinary, nothing that might not be done by one of the crowd of well-to-do pleasure-seekers, sauntering along the sunlit parade as he stood thinking.

His thin lips twisted into the grimace of a smile at the grim irony of the thing. He had cast aside all the tremendous scruples which keep men from contemplating self-slaughter to be balked by the want of a sixpence.

He took a mental inventory of his possessions. His jewelry he had long since parted with, but on his finger he still wore a ring which had escaped the pawn-shop, not through any association, but because its exchangeable value was so trifling.

It was made of copper and he had picked it up in a curio shop in his palmy days for some eight shillings because its quaint design had taken his fancy. According to the dealer it was profoundly ancient, and had talismanic virtues which rendered it a tremendous bargain at the price.

Colvin did not believe him, but the thing was surely worth sixpence if he could find a purchaser. With an abrupt impulse he stopped a fat little Jewish gentleman who was strolling by.

"Would you care to buy this for sixpence," Colvin asked, drawing off the ring.

Half an hour before the action and the speech would have been impossible for him. He would as soon have thought of vending his canvases in the street.

But now he was conscious of a strange detachment from his fellow men which left his sensitive pride indifferent to any care for what they might think of him. He had almost the feeling of a disembodied spirit permitted to look on at the absurd pageant of human life without taking a share in its petty emotions.

He bore the Jew's keen, questioning scrutiny with a profound indifference, which had in it nothing of effort, nothing

of affectation. He was absolutely without any earthly interest or emotion in the business beyond his one concern as to whether he would get the sixpence or be kept longer seeking it.

The little fat, overdressed man looked from him to the ring and did justice to a unique position by saying something that he had never said in his life before to any one who offered him a bargain.

"It is worth more than sixpence."

"I know," responded Colvin curtly, "but that happens to be all I want."

The Jew felt in his pocket and bringing out a handful of silver handed over the coin.

"Thanks," he observed. "I never say 'no' to a bargain. It is an interesting curio, and pretty ancient, I should imagine."

"The man who sold it to me swore that it was Egyptian, and dated from the third dynasty," said Colvin, as he pocketed the sixpence and turned away in the direction of the bathing-machine office.

Jacob Hebron, the financier, stood still and watched him with undisguised interest, but Colvin had already forgotten the man's existence.

So long as a material difficulty opposed itself to his plan, he had thought of nothing but its removal. But now that the way lay clear before him, he felt the first vague stirrings of compunction.

The very act of undressing in the old-fashioned wooden hut on wheels brought back involuntarily a hundred memories of the happier times when a visit to the seaside had been wholly a thing of pleasure.

The zest that he had felt then for life! It was dangerous for him even to remember it, now that life had become impossible. He undressed and got into his suit hastily.

The remembrance became more vivid as he plunged into the water and struck out with an easy breast-stroke. He had always taken a delight in swimming, and although he had been too spiritless to think of bathing since his illness, the first touch of the sea-water brought back much of his old enthusiasm. And the exertion gave him no sense of fatigue as the slightest effort still did on land. Undesirable as the emotion was, he realized that he was *enjoying* his swim.

Glancing back at the shore he became aware that somebody was energetically calling and signaling—to him apparently. It was the fat little man to whom he had sold his ring.

He was standing at the very edge of the water, evidently anxious not to wet his immaculate patent-leather shoes, but just as evidently eager to attract the swimmer's attention.

For just one moment Colvin hesitated. Then he turned his glance resolutely out to sea again, and resumed his stroke.

What could the man want with him? Nothing that could possibly be of importance enough to delay him in his task. He had turned his back on life. It would be undignified and irresolute if he went back even for a moment to satisfy a paltry human curiosity.

It would be bathos to find that he was only wanted to give some further details about a trumpery curio.

But though he turned a deaf ear to the man calling him, Colvin found it impossible to conquer the curiosity the other's action had aroused.

The Jew could not have had the effrontery to call him back from a swim just to discuss the ring. He must have had something more important than that to talk about. What could it possibly be?

As he swam mechanically onward with the outgoing tide, Colvin's mind exerted itself on the problem, a problem all the more tormenting because he would never return to hear its solution. It obsessed him in spite of his will, claiming the thought that he would have given to his plan, to the last silent spiritual intercourse with the woman he loved.

He swam onward without decision until a sense of physical fatigue made his strokes no longer mechanical, and he glanced back again at the shore.

He was surprised to find that he had already passed far out of range of the other bathers and was farther from the beach than any of the adventurous swimmers had gone whom he had seen rescued by the boats.

A sudden chill of dismay struck him inconsistently as he realized this, and he turned at once, putting all his strength into his stroke against the tide.

He had not admitted to himself that

he had any uncertainty as to what he should do. He had decided without hesitation or wavering that to die was the only course open to him. It had all been settled when he wrote Gertrude's letter and posted it.

Yet now, when he saw the great stretch of water that separated him from the shore, and felt the strength of the tide which had carried him out so easily, making every stroke back an effort, he felt as though he had been hurried abruptly into an irrevocable position before he had finally decided whether he wanted it or not. The strength of the opposing current roused in him a spirit of fierce opposition and he strained every muscle to fight against it.

He had not admitted to himself that he was struggling to save his life. He was struggling only for the right to keep the choice in his own hands.

Pride would have forbidden him to admit the other if it was true, and if he struggled he still had the resolution to raise no cry, to make no sign that might be taken by any one watching him as an appeal for assistance.

To the people on shore, if they noticed him, he was simply a strong swimmer who had gone out as far as he wished and was now returning. Before they discovered their mistake, his strength, already waning fast, would be exhausted, and any attempt at rescue would be too late.

He wondered if he was making any headway at all. The beach, with its row of bathing-machines, its crowd of gaily dressed holiday-makers, seemed an indefinate distance away. He was quite sure that he could never reach it.

Gertrude would never see him again. For the first time he realized vividly what his death would mean to her. He had thought only of the burden taken from her shoulders, the benefit she would derive from the few pounds that she would have left to spend on herself instead of on him.

Now, for the first time, he pictured the alternative, and admitted to himself that the benefits would seem very paltry to her in comparison with their cost. A hundred times sooner than hear of his death she would see her last penny spent on him while she continued to endure martyrdom in her uncongenial position.

He had been selfish in deciding to die. But he had his own honor to think of, and it was surely better to die than drag the woman he loved down to destitution.

A boat was putting out from shore, and he tried to stifle the thrilling hope that his difficulties had been observed and that he was to be rescued whether he wished it or not.

But his heart sank as he realized that the solitary boatman in it was stopping to light his pipe before settling to the oars. Yet it seemed coming directly toward him, and the chaos of conflicting hopes and fears in his heart crystallized into a definite decision.

He would do his best to reach the boat that was making its leisurely way toward him. If he succeeded—well, he would take it as the decision of Fate that he was not to die. If he failed—and his sense of utter exhaustion told him that he would fail—it would only mean that he had carried out his purpose.

The decision gave him new incentive to effort, but he had no strength to support it now, and after another dozen strokes the water closed over his head as his jaded limbs refused to work. The promise of death put an end definitely to all the self-deception with which he had allowed his pride to cloak his actual feeling. He knew that he wanted to live. At any cost to have life and its possibilities! As he rose, he struck out afresh and shouted to the boatman so languidly approaching. He had sunk again before the boat, no longer drifting on the current, reached him, and he managed, with the rower's help, to climb aboard before sinking down exhausted.

"I did not know you were in difficulties, sir, or I would have got out quicker," the boatman said, as Colvin opened his eyes again.

"But you were coming out to me," said Colvin, remembering the certainty he had felt that the boat was heading always toward him.

The old man nodded.

"Yes, sir, but only with a message. A gentleman on the sands sent me out to you. He said he might lose sight of you if he waited for you to come in. And I was to say that Mr. Hebron, the gentleman who bought your ring, would be

glad if you could take lunch with him at the Grand Hotel as soon as you have had your swim."

II.

THE SEQUEL TO THE SWIM.

"OH, here you are," said Mr. Hebron, advancing to meet his visitor in the magnificent entrance-hall of the hotel. "I am glad you got my message. You were rather in difficulties, weren't you, when the boat reached you?"

Colvin's pale, tired face was perfectly impassive.

"Yes, the current was stronger than I thought," he replied easily. "So the arrival of your messenger was very opportune. But I am still wondering to what I owe your invitation. If you are hoping for more information about the ring—"

The fat little millionaire interrupted him.

"That bargain is over and done with. I am perfectly satisfied with it, if you are. But it is one of my rules never to let a good bargain stand alone. When I find a man who sells one thing cheap, I do not leave him until I know whether he has anything else to sell."

"Then I am afraid you will be disappointed," said Colvin. "I have nothing to dispose of that is worth even a sixpence."

"So you think," responded Hebron. "I, on the contrary, imagine that you have about the most precious commodity in the market to sell, and are inclined to let it go cheap. But I never like to approach a deal on an empty stomach. I don't know about you, but this place gives me an appetite. I have ordered lunch in the public room, but they have given me a corner where we shall be as free from interruption as if we were alone, and it is not half so dull. We get a very fine view of the sea, too."

He chatted pleasantly in the manner of the genial host as he led the way into the huge dining-room.

Colvin followed him, feeling that everything was strangely unreal. The mental and physical strain through which he had so lately passed had left him dazed and incapable of emotion. He was little more than an automaton, following without question the direction of the moment.

It was a pleasant direction. His swim, besides tiring him out, had given him an appetite, as he found when he began to eat.

It was very grateful to sit at ease surrounded by the atmosphere of luxurious refinement which he had not known since his father's death, satisfying to the full the first keen appetite he had known since his illness, with no disturbing concern for the cost of what he ate and drank.

It was a dream, of course—a waking dream. This little urbane, bright-eyed man, who was refilling his glass with expensive Burgundy would discover that he was making some ridiculous mistake, and he (Colvin) would awake to find himself back in the land of reality with the question whether he should live or die all to be threshed out again.

He shrank from the idea of facing it. He wanted to dream as long as possible, and he almost consciously avoided over the meal any word or sign of impatience that might precipitate explanations.

Hebron, who chatted all the time, chiefly about himself and his success in life, with a question thrown in now and again to draw out something of his visitor's history, seemed no more impatient for them. It was not until they had reached the coffee and liqueur stage that he changed abruptly from the genial host to the man of business.

"And now to discuss our deal, Mr. Colvin," he said, and as he spoke his little dark eyes, fixed on the artist's face, seemed suddenly to become more keen, more searching and alert.

"To begin with," he continued, as Colvin remained expectantly silent, "what is your precise reason for wishing to commit suicide?"

Colvin started and stared at him with something that was almost fear in his eyes.

"What do you mean?" he demanded with forced indignation.

Hebron laughed good-naturedly.

"Come, my dear fellow, it is necessary for us to understand each other if we are to do business. A man may, perhaps, spend his last sixpence on a bathing-suit, but he does not take one sixpence where he could have taken two, unless he knows that the swim will be the last thing in this world that he'll have to

pay for. I knew the moment you went to the bathing-office what your intentions were, and that is why I made such a to-do to try to stop you, and sent the boat after you."

Colvin sipped his coffee very deliberately.

"It was very good of you," he said, with a suggestion of irony in his voice, "but supposing I had decided to take my life, don't you think that it was purely my own affair?"

Hebron nodded.

"Certainly. For Heaven's sake don't think I am a philanthropist. I have not the least objection to your taking your life if you wish. I only interrupted you to ask whether you really wish to throw it away for nothing, when, as I said before lunch, a human life is about the most valuable commodity one can possibly have to dispose of. By jingo, if I could put my life into the scale, if I could even afford to make it an even chance whether I lived or died, I could make ten millian dollars in one *coup.*"

He spoke with emotion, and Colvin's voice sounded strangely lifeless by contrast.

"And a great deal of good your ten millions would be to you, if you were dead."

The financier did not smile. He was profoundly serious.

"Yes, that is the difficulty, of course. In my case it is insurmountable, and as a consequence I have not the least intention of giving up my life until I am forced to do so. But you? If you have nobody that you would care to benefit by your death, at least there are pleasures that you would like to enjoy before you die. You have enjoyed your lunch. Would not a year of such lunches, of the life you are living at this moment, be worth bargaining for?"

"Certainly, if I had anything to offer in return."

Hebron threw out his fat hands impatiently.

"My dear fellow, have I not kept telling you that you have the most priceless commodity in the market—a life, if you are only willing to sell it, instead of throwing it away like a fool?"

"And what is my life worth to anybody?" Colvin demanded with much bitterness. "Alive, I can't even support myself—"

Hebron interrupted him.

"Your life is worth practically anything you like to ask. If you have decided to lose it, it could make very little difference to you if you took another life first. There are half a dozen men I could tell you of whose sudden death would upset the stock exchanges of the world, and enable anybody who knew beforehand what was coming to clear a dozen fortunes. And you can always make sure of killing a man if you don't mind whether you are caught."

Colvin laughed mirthlessly.

"Thanks. I am not a murderer. A man does not part with his conscience just because he finds it impossible to live. If that is the sort of bargain—"

Hebron interrupted him eagerly.

"It is not. I was only suggesting at random one of the ways in which the man who does not value his life finds himself on a different footing from other men. It is a thing I am always thinking about. There is not a day that passes, I suppose, without my saying to myself: If only one need not bother about one's life. It makes me positively ill to hear of men throwing away their lives for nothing, men, too, who leave wives and children behind them whom they would like to benefit, and when I saw you marching off to follow their example, I could not stand it, I really could not. Why do you want to die?"

"Because I cannot afford to live."

Hebron nodded cheerfully, rubbing his little fat hands together.

"That is good. If it were love, religion, or jaundice, I should find it hard to offer you terms. As it is—well, wouldn't you like a fling before you finish, a thousand pounds to spend first, say?"

Colvin shrugged his shoulders.

"If I had a thousand pounds to spend, you would not find me wanting to take my life at all."

The financier nodded solemnly.

"That of course is a difficulty, but it can be overcome. Isn't there anybody in the world that you would like to benefit by your death? Have you no relatives, no sweetheart who would be better for your thousand pounds?"

The artist's face flushed a little. It was the first sign of emotion or even of interest he had allowed himself to display in the strange discussion.

He had refused to admit that it concerned him. How could it when this little human vulture who talked of his life as if it were a pawn in a game of finance was talking only on the assumption that he was determined on suicide?

He was not determined on it. At the worst it was something that might enter into his calculations when he considered his position afresh, but so far, as he had shown by calling to the boat for assistance, he had decided against it, and the fact gave him a pleasant sense of superiority as he listened to Hebron's talk.

He told himself that he was taking a pose, passing as a would-be suicide, when he was nothing of the sort.

But now abruptly the barrier of indifference behind which his pride shielded itself was pierced by a suggestion. If in some way he could lift Gertrude from poverty by dying?

The idea gripped him irresistibly. His last thought when he imagined that he was drowning had been that he would never be able to repay her the money she had already spent on him. His vivid picture of her misery on hearing of his death had owed half its piteousness to the setting of friendless poverty in which he had to think of her always remaining.

If by his death he could set her free from her slavery, surely that would be atonement for the cowardice of his desertion. He found himself suddenly eager to know whether there was any substance behind the Jew's promises, whether the man could actually offer him a price for his life, or was only proposing the commission of some crime possible only to the utterly reckless, and impossible under any circumstances to a man of Colvin's upbringing and instincts.

And Jacob Hebron's eyes became even more keen and eager, his voice more persuasive, as he recognized his advantage and made use of it with all the intuitive knowledge of men, and skill in influencing them, which had enabled him to raise himself from the gutter to his present position.

He had already recognized Colvin's conscientiousness and on account of it had dismissed reluctantly but resolutely some pet schemes which had lain ready in his mind for some occasion like this. They were gigantic schemes, but they needed coarser material, and Hebron never wasted time.

A deal with the insurance companies was the most that he could hope to carry through with this young man, and he had to proceed delicately even with that proposal to make it agreeable to his hearer's sense of honesty.

"There is no such thing as cheating an insurance company," he explained, when in spite of his care, Colvin had raised the scruple. "They safeguard themselves too carefully. If you choose to give up your life to realize your money, that is your affair. Some companies protect themselves against it. Those that don't—and I should confine my operations to them—leave the choice open to you.

"And you do not intend to take your life. I sincerely hope it will not be necessary. I never stickle at a hundred per cent interest, and if at the end of twelve months you pay me two thousand pounds for the one thousand I am going to spend on you, I shall not grumble at the bargain and the insurance companies will be the gainers. The insurance is only to protect me against loss if you fail."

"And supposing that I fail and refuse to kill myself?" Colvin asked with a wan smile.

Hebron smiled also.

"Well, considering that I shall have your bill for the two thousand, backed by your friend, Miss Ogilvie, and can ruin you both, I think I am safe in imagining that you will prefer leaving your friend with two thousand pounds derived from your life insurance to seeing her ruined by your bill. Oh, this thing works out excellently."

"For you," retorted Colvin with some bitterness.

Hebron laughed.

"My dear fellow, but for me you would be lying at the present moment in the mortuary, awaiting an inquest, and your friend, Miss Ogilvie, not a penny the richer for her loss of you. If the worst comes to the worst, you will still have to thank me for a pleasant year of

life and a little nest-egg for your—may I say your widow? As for my profit, I may tell you candidly that it would not be sufficient to attract me, if it were not that the thing itself appeals to my sporting instincts. It is my weakness.

"I would rather make a pound any day by a new deal that I've maneuvered out of my own head than a thousand by an old one that any fool could manage. Of course, if you don't like it, you can leave it. What do you say?

"Here is the bargain, clear and simple: I spend one thousand pounds on you, half of it to insure your life for ten thousand, the other half for you to do as you like with. In return you give me a twelve months' bill backed by your friend for two thousand. If you can meet it at the end of the twelve months the deal is finished. If you can't you come down here and complete the program that I interrupted.

"I may say that it was excellently thought out and but for your want of capital would never have roused a suspicion. Next year if you find it necessary to repeat the episode, I can promise that you will have a sixpence to pay the bathing people and sufficient over to make suspicion impossible. And Miss Ogilvie — or Mrs. Colvin as she will probably be then, will benefit to the tune of two thousand pounds from your insurance."

"And you to the tune of eight thousand?" said Colvin dryly.

Mr. Hebron smiled complacently.

"Exactly so, and little enough, too. I may make it twenty thousand, if the chances seem going against you. But that is my own venture and I shall not call on you for the premium if I lose it. Your liability is fixed."

"Two thousand pounds or my life," said Colvin in his dry emotionless voice.

"Payable a year hence," added Hebron, and he knew that in the words lay the greater part of Colvin's temptation.

Twelve months! What might he not achieve in them? Twelve months, unhampered by any of the sordid cares of poverty, any anxious concern for Gertrude!

Hebron had proposed that he might marry her! Why not? Surely there could be no help and incentive like her companionship to make him paint again and paint well. And with the financier's patronage—for it was part of the plan that Hebron should pass the young artist off as his protégé in order to account for the heavy insurance with which nominally he would safeguard himself from loss of the heavy outlay he was supposed to be expending on his career—with the financier's patronage, and the entrée it would give him into the society of the very rich, if not of the highly aristocratic, it would be strange if he did nothing to fulfil the promise which the critics had seen in his work.

When once he started, two thousand pounds would not be a very great sum to make in a year. And the thought that it must be that or death would surely give him impetus to do such a year's work as no man had ever done before.

The old lost sense of power began to stir in him again. His swim and its sequel indeed marked the turning-point in his illness. It had supplied the change and excitement needed to stir him from his mental and moral apathy.

Not that Colvin recognized the fact. The stirring of new hope and spirit in his heart he ascribed entirely to Hebron's proposal. When he thought of rejecting it, he saw himself returning to the utter dejection and impotence of yesterday.

And he would have to write and tell Gertrude that he had been cheating her with false hopes, that every cheerful item he had put in his letter of the morning had been the lie of a man contemplating suicide.

He could not do it. It would be easier to kill himself after all. But if he must kill himself why not delay it as Hebron suggested? There would be a chance then of life. There was none now.

When he left the hotel at last, he still had the feeling of a man in a dream, and the dream was still a pleasant one. For he had money in his pocket as well as a check to send Gertrude in repayment of all she had lent him.

Insensibly it gave him a sense of independence. His step was more spirited than it had been since his illness as he returned to his lodgings to write afresh to his sweetheart and tell her the good news that he had found a rich patron.

And the hopes that he expressed in his letter were no longer unreal. He meant to do great things.

It was a delightful reaction from the mood of the morning, and if at moments the thought of what he had paid for it obtruded itself like a dark shadow, he forced it away impatiently. He had a whole year before him.

III.

A NEW PERIL.

It was not till a fortnight had gone by that Jacob Hebron could spare his new protégé for a visit to Gertrude Ogilvie, although the ostensible reason of the visit was to obtain the signature from her which would place her as well as Colvin at the Jew's mercy if his two thousand pounds was not repaid at the end of the year.

The insurance preliminaries had demanded the young man's presence in town, and it was necessary that the artist should be seen with his patron and introduced to some of his friends by way of establishing the connection which was to account for the transaction.

And Colvin did not feel that the fortnight was wasted. His physical and mental health had improved greatly, thanks to good living and easy circumstances, and although he had not actually begun to paint, he was already projecting pictures which he felt would be successful, and was eager to start on them.

One of the financier's wealthy friends, taking his enthusiasm for the painter in all seriousness, had commissioned Colvin to paint her portrait. It was a beginning, he told himself, and he was glad that he had this much of actual good-fortune to tell Gertrude.

In his heart he was almost afraid of meeting her. It had been comparatively easy to write her agreeable half-truths. But to meet the clear eyes which he had never yet been able to deceive! To encourage her happy, innocent anticipations of the future, knowing all the time that the part left untold would, if she knew it, change all her happiness to horror and dismay!

This was the ordeal awaiting him, and he was not sorry for the respite which gave him time to school himself to face it, despite his burning impatience to snatch from the year all the happiness it could give.

Gertrude had not yet given up her situation. The disappointments of a hard life had taught her prudence, and the convenient departure of her persecutor on a business trip of some duration rendered her decision no longer pressing. She had contented herself with giving notice of her intention to leave at the end of the term.

Colvin had been sorry to hear of her decision, and he was wondering, as he took the long railway journey, how he could possibly persuade her to cast formality to the winds and marry him at once.

It promised to be a difficult task when Gertie was so conscientious in her duties, so considerate for her employers. To her a couple of months would seem such a little while to wait for their happiness. She could not guess, and he could not try to make her understand, that for him it represented, for all he knew, a whole sixth part of his life.

As it happened there was no necessity. He reached his destination at a dramatic moment half an hour after the unexpected return of Gertrude's persecutor.

In the grounds of the house as he approached it, he came upon his sweetheart engaged in an uneven struggle with a big overdressed man who was trying to kiss her.

Frank Colvin was a slim man and he had not yet fully regained his strength after his illness, but there are moments when the will seems to rise superior to mere questions of muscle, and the bigger man went down like a sack of flour before the artist's blow.

He found himself sitting stupidly in a wheelbarrow that had broken his fall, holding his hand to his bruised mouth. Gertrude had thrown herself into her lover's arms, sobbing hysterically, and Colvin told himself that if only for the power that it gave him in this moment to protect her, his bargain with him was justified.

He pressed her in his arms and comforted her.

"You cannot of course stay in this man's house another hour, darling," he said. "I was coming to take you away

and ask you to marry me at once, and this puts an end to any hesitation you might have felt in leaving your charges. I will see Mrs. Dugdale and give her a full explanation of your reasons for going so abruptly while you pack your belongings."

He had turned toward the house with his arm still around her as he spoke. The crestfallen man in the wheelbarrow was being helped out of it by his gardener, who had hurried to his assistance.

"Mrs. Dugdale is not at home," Gertrude explained between her sobs. "She was away when the horrible person came home and I was going out to avoid him when he saw me and followed."

"So much the better," declared Colvin cheerfully. "We will leave him to explain your departure to his wife, as well as he can, until you have time to send her your explanation through the mail. How long will it take you to pack?"

"Not more than a few minutes. I have only one trunk."

"And that we can carry between us, I should think, as far as the station, to save time. There is a train back to town in twenty minutes."

She raised no demur. He was thrilled by the knowledge that she had given herself up wholly to his guidance, a guidance which chimed so well with her hysterical eagerness to get away from the position which Major Dugdale had made unbearable.

Dugdale was following them slowly with the gardener, and Colvin, standing on guard in the hall while Gertrude packed, more than half expected a war of words if not an actual struggle before he was allowed to leave the house with his prize. But Gertrude's persecutor was content apparently with what he had seen already of her champion's prowess, for he entered the house by another way and did not show himself.

In less than half an hour from the time of the lovers' meeting, they were in the train, planning the very speediest means of being made man and wife at the end of their journey.

The sense of haste and bustle suited Colvin's mood. This was the pace at which his year should be lived.

Carried away by his air of masterly decisiveness, Gertrude Oglivie could only gaze at his animated face with adoring eyes and allow all the timid promptings of her unselfish prudence to be lulled into silence. Frank needed her to complete his return to health, to help and encourage him in the career which was to justify this beneficent Mr. Hebron's faith in him.

There was no fear of the all-important patron being annoyed by his marriage. He had indeed suggested it, and was insuring his protégé's life on her behalf, in order that Colvin should not be disturbed by any anxiety as to her future.

"I think Mr. Hebron must be the kindest and best man in the world," she said with glowing eyes when her lover gave her the news. "I feel as though I could almost kneel down and worship him for his goodness to you, and all the happiness he has brought us."

Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"There is no need to do that, darling. It is purely a business transaction. He sees that I can make money if only I have a start, and counts on getting his outlay back with interest. I have had to write him out a promise which he wants you to endorse as an extra precaution against my trying to get out of it."

"As though you would," she said easily, and as he produced the bill and a pen she scribbled off the signature he required without question.

What he had been looking forward to anxiously as something that would require careful diplomacy and some amount of subterfuge was achieved without any effort on his part, and the last shadow left his face. He gave himself up completely to the enjoyment of the moment, admitting no alloy in it.

Afterward, when he had to look back upon this day as the one day of complete happiness that his bargain with Hebron gave him, he was glad to remember that his enjoyment of it had been perfect and undimmed by a single cloud.

The next morning he called on Hebron in his city office, to deliver up the bill and receive in return the financier's check for four hundred pounds.

"And are you thinking of marrying Miss Ogilvie?" Hebron asked casually, as he examined the prettily-written signature.

Colvin smiled slightly.

"We were married yesterday," he replied.

The fat little Jew showed no surprise at this prompitude.

"Well! I wish you happiness—if it is only for a year," he said cheerfully, and the young man unconsciously squared his shoulders.

"I intend our happiness to last a good deal longer than that," he answered firmly.

His wife had been disappointed, so far as one can be disappointed in an existence where everything is perfect, because she was not allowed to accompany him. She was full of eagerness to see the beneficent patron, but was quite ready to understand that a busy financier must not be interrupted by anything apart from business in his office hours.

And her husband was to join her, as soon as his business was transacted, at a neighboring restaurant, where they would have lunch preparatory to a delightful search in the suburbs for rooms with a studio.

Colvin made his way to the rendezvous impatiently. He grudged every moment that he was away from his sweetheart—his wife—and his face brightened when he caught sight of her neat, graceful figure seated at one of the tables in the almost empty restaurant.

But the smile left his face as Gertrude looked up from the newspaper she had been reading and her eyes met his. He was conscious instantly that something had happened to disturb her, and his heart sank horribly. There was no room, no time in his scheme for the unforeseen.

"What is it?" he asked, as he joined her.

Gertrude was controlling her voice with an evident effort.

"Oh! I am so glad you have come," she cried, her pretty lips trembling: "I was just going to try to meet you. I felt all along as though our happiness was too great to be real, that something must happen to spoil it all. Oh! It is terrible!"

She was handing him the paper as she spoke, her finger on the heading: "Fatal Assault; Tragic Death of a Popular Member of Parliament!"

Colvin seemed to know, before he read another word, that the member of Parliament was Major Dugdale, and that the press, never content with recording a sudden death when there was a chance of suggesting a crime, was trying to make him (Colvin) responsible for what was certainly a very awkward and distressing coincidence.

It seemed that Dugdale, who was under treatment for fatty degeneration of the heart and other physical derangements, had collapsed and died with shocking suddenness almost as soon as he entered the house after the scene in the grounds. With the assistance of Dugdale's gardener, who had witnessed Colvin's blow, the newspaper reporter had managed to make a lurid "story" of the affair, in which Colvin found himself referred to as "the mysterious visitor," "the stealthy assailant," and worse.

His name apparently was not known, and the description which the gardener gave would have made him laugh, if laughter had been possible in his disturbed mood. But it was known that "the governess, Gertrude Ogilvie," had left the house with the stranger, and it was suggested that this would serve as a clue to his identity and arrest.

Colvin looked up from the paper to find Gertrude gazing at him with tragedy in her eyes.

"You cannot have killed him? It was only one blow."

He laughed impatiently.

"Killed him? Of course not. A blow in the mouth hurts nobody seriously. And if he died of the excitement, it was the excitement of being found out, and the only person who can be blamed is Dugdale himself. The paper was hard up for news; that is all. You must not let it frighten you, dearest."

He spoke confidently to reassure her, but his face was white as he read through the newspaper account again, and saw his position already prejudiced as much by the laudation bestowed on the dead man, as by the sinister view taken of his own hasty departure—"flight," the journal called it—from the scene of the struggle.

"Whatever shall you do?" Gertrude demanded tremulously.

"Have lunch," he answered, nerving himself to indifference. "After that I suppose it will be better to call at the

police-station and tell them what actually happened."

Gertrude was trying bravely not to cry.

"I could not eat anything," she said. "Oh! Frank, supposing they send you to prison!"

He laughed at the suggestion to reassure her, but it was the fear which had struck a chill to his own heart and made his face gray.

He could not, of course, be seriously held responsible for Dugdale's death. The tragic fears with which his wife had been inspired by the sensational newspaper report were preposterous, but the thought of losing his freedom even for a day while his innocence was being established became intolerable, when every day in the one short year meant so much to him.

"I have a good mind to let them find me for themselves if they want me," he said, as they made a pretense of eating their meal. "There will be an inquest, of course, and the medical evidence will show that my blow had nothing to do with the death. They would only want our evidence and waste our time if I communicated with the police. It is not really our concern and I don't see why we should not mind our own business and look for a studio."

Gertrude concurred with an eagerness that showed panic. She could not have been more anxious for him to avoid the police if he had already been sentenced, and urged him to take an assumed name and to find rooms where there would be no chance of his meeting anybody who knew him.

Colvin interrupted her with a wan smile.

"But I want to meet the people who know me, darling," he said, "because I want them to buy my pictures—a lot of pictures, before the year is out. If it were not for the waste of time, I should go direct to the police. As it is, well, let us follow out our program, and find rooms."

"Let us go back to the hotel first, and get our luggage before they see the papers," she urged, and Colvin gave an undecided assent.

He was anxious to avoid anything that looked like flight, and yet it was intolerable to think that he must waste time on the death of a man like Dugdale, if it was only to give evidence at his inquest.

They finished their lunch hastily, and drove back to the hotel, Gertrude at least consumed by a very fever of impatience, which showed itself justified.

At the hotel a detective was waiting for them with a warrant for Colvin's arrest on a charge of causing Dugdale's death.

Frank tried hard to take it indifferently, if only for his wife's sake.

"I suppose I shall be allowed bail," he said, and the detective laughed.

"That is very likely," he replied with jocose irony.

IV.

HARD AS FLINT.

On the day of his arrest Frank Colvin was taken back to the district where Major Dugdale had made himself excessively popular in his lifetime by the geniality and open-handed generosity which so often distinguish a libertine, a district in which the emotion of the moment was a desire to show sympathy to the dead man's widow and family. The next day he appeared before a personal friend of Dugdale's who did his utmost to discredit the evidence of the prisoner's wife and committed him for trial on a charge of manslaughter, scoffing at the idea of allowing bail to so dangerous a malefactor.

The trial took place nearly three months later—an intolerable three months to a man who counted them not as other men do, but as the fourth of a lifetime.

Colvin did not doubt for a moment that the result of the trial would be to establish his innocence of any responsibility for Dugdale's death. As soon as his case was heard fairly he would be set at liberty and he kept himself sane by projecting in detail how he would earn the ten thousand dollars in eight months instead of twelve when once he was free.

He would not employ a lawyer to defend him. It was bad enough to lose time on a charge so preposterous; he was steadfast in his determination not to spend on it a cent of the money he had borrowed at so great a risk.

It was an unfortunate decision, for

when the day of the trial at last arrived, his innocence and his untrained powers of defense showed themselves equally futile against the clever and practised legal fencers whose duty it was to see him convicted. And again, although the judge this time was not a friend of the dead man's, every man on the jury belonged to the district where Dugdale was popular. Without any hesitation they found him guilty of manslaughter and the judge, who had his own views on the subject, gave him the lenient sentence of two years' imprisonment.

Colvin laughed when he heard it, the laugh of a man beside himself.

"You are sentencing me to death," he said, but only Jacob Hebron, who was in court to see how the game progressed, knew that it was more than an injured man's cry of exasperation.

Hebron had refused to concern himself with the affair in any way, although Gertrude, distressed by her husband's obstinate refusal to spend any money on his defense, had appealed to his patron to exert his wealth and influence on his behalf. Hebron's curt refusal had damped the ardor of her worship a little, and left her puzzled.

She had been so terrified at her husband's position, so conscious intuitively of what the prejudice against him would result in, that the two years' sentence came to her with a certain degree of relief.

It was terrible to think that Frank must suffer so long, but it was better than the separation of seven or more years that she had dreaded, and not the least painful and pathetic part of their meeting—when she was allowed to see him in prison—was due to her brave effort to make the two years appear short to him.

They were both very young, she said, and they would be very young still when the two years had passed and they could really start on the happy life they had planned together, on the career that was to justify Mr. Hebron's faith in him.

The prisoner did not say a word to dim the happy anticipations of reunion which helped her to support her grief, but the unconscious irony of her consolation cut all the more keenly because he was forced to remain silent.

To remain in prison even for nine months longer meant that for him there was no life beyond the prison walls to look forward to, no reunion with the wife he loved.

The certainty, and the thought that but for his economy in the matter of legal assistance he might have been free, made him desperate. He realized too late it is not to the best cause but to the best lawyer that the law's decision is given, and he decided to procure counsel and to appeal against his sentence.

The expenses promised to leave him and Gertrude barely enough to live out the year, with the utmost frugality, but it was better to think of making his grand struggle handicapped by straitened means than to give up the hope of making it at all. He was trying to assure himself now, that given *six* months of liberty, he could still, by desperate labor, achieve the titanic task Jacob Hebron had set him.

Plenty of painters were making two thousand pounds in half a year, he told himself, and there were plenty of instances of men who had achieved a position with a single picture. If it was a miracle he was forecasting, it was better to do that than despair.

But only determined sanguineness and complete ignorance of the ways of the law had permitted him to promise himself the six months. There were a hundred delays in the slow course of his appeal, and he saw the six months he had promised himself slowly decreased to five, to four, to three, to two, to one, as he chafed still in forced inaction.

When at last the slowly moving course of justice cleared his name and set him free, it wanted just three days to the anniversary of his bargain with Jacob Hebron.

The court had decided unanimously that there was no evidence whatever to prove that Dugdale's death had been caused by Colvin's assault, and that if the assault was not justified by Dugdale's own conduct, Colvin had acted in the *bona fide* belief that his fiancée had been insulted.

This would have been very pleasant hearing for a man who had his life before him, and could thus return to it with an untarnished name, the victim of

an acknowledged injustice. But for Frank Colvin the acknowledgment that his imprisonment had been unmerited seemed only to emphasize the tragedy of it.

Now he had everything that a man could desire to make life worth living, liberty, a cleared reputation, a wife longing to clasp him again in her arms, and a child whom he had never seen; he had health and strength—for the privations of prison life seemed only to give him energy and vigor, and the realization of power to do good, perhaps great, work with his brush—everything except the money that would enable him to buy his life from the man who had purchased it.

And for the want of that sordid money, he must give up everything. Unless—and it is impossible for the man in full mental and physical vigor to abandon hope absolutely—unless Jacob Hebron would admit that he had not had a fair sporting chance of keeping his bargain—and would give him another year.

He was prepared to promise him four thousand pounds at the end of it, instead of two. He had long ago nerved himself to make the two in six months and his zest for a titanic task had only increased with inaction. Surely Hebron must see the fairness of it, and given the chance, even with all the odds against him, he would show that he deserved the right to live.

When he desired it so earnestly, the very intensity of wish must give him power to earn the sum that he required for his ransom. But all his hopes centered on Hebron agreeing to a new bargain.

He had been released quietly and informally before the finding of the court was made public. As yet Gertrude could not have heard of it, and he conquered the almost uncontrollable longing to hasten to her side, to see her and the child that had been born to him while he was behind prison-walls.

He could not endure her congratulations, her ecstatic joy at their reunion until he knew whether he was to live or die, and he traveled direct from prison to Jacob Hebron's office, without a word or a message to his wife.

A fever of impatience consumed him, and it turned him sick with disappointment and thwarted eagerness to learn that Mr. Hebron was away on his annual summer holiday. When he heard where it was that the financier had betaken himself a chill of fatalistic fear ran through him.

It seemed in some way to make the result of his interview with the man who held his life in his hand a thing already decided. Hitherto he had told himself that it was necessary for him to see Hebron before he could join his wife and child. He had desperately avoided any thought of the alternative to his hopes.

Now, in a reaction of fear, he no longer tried to deceive himself; all his feverish impatience to see the financier was due to the fact that Hebron had it in his hands to determine whether he would be able to meet Gertrude at all, and in his heart he feared that the Jew would make it impossible.

The very fact that he had gone down to the little watering-place where their bargain had been made and where, if necessary, the compact was to be completed by his death, seemed to him a fatal augury, although Hebron could not yet have heard of his release, and his presence there was fully accounted for by his annual habit.

It was convenient for Hebron to be there, he told himself with a sudden stoical apathy of despair. It gave him the only excuse he could possibly offer Gertrude for going down to the sea without seeing her.

He must write and tell his wife that, when their future depended so entirely on Hebron, he felt that he must find out how he stood with him, and whether he would have a home to offer her, before he dared fold her in his arms and rejoice with her over their reunion.

It would sound strange to her no doubt. But how could anything he did appear otherwise than strange to her, when every instinctive impulse of love and longing was checked and rendered impossible of expression by the overshadowing question of which she knew nothing.

It would seem strange to her, but it would give her no suspicion of the truth,

especially if he added that Hebron had proved agreeable and that he was coming home with a mind at rest about the future. After that it would be easy for Hebron to explain that Colvin had filled up the time while waiting for the train by having a swim, and had overestimated his strength. Gertrude would never suspect, and though she would grieve for him—well! she would not be destitute.

It was only if he refused to carry out the compact that she would be worse than destitute, that she would have reason to regret their marriage. There was no way of escape except by Hebron's permission, and Colvin's fever of impatience returned, growing stronger with every moment that the train carried him onward to the sea, and to his meeting with the man who held his life in his hand.

He found Hebron at the Grand Hotel again, and again—for Colvin had been released at a very early hour—at lunch in his favorite corner of the great dining-room.

But he did not invite Colvin this time to join him at the meal, and since Frank had been too impatient to think of breaking his fast since leaving the prison-gates, a sense of physical faintness and hunger which the sight of food served to make conscious, was present with him through the interview.

The financier appeared very pleasantly surprised to see him.

"Your appeal has been successful then?" he said, as he shook hands. "I thought it would be. But I have seen nothing in the papers."

"My complete exoneration will be in the evening editions, I believe," said Colvin, and found his voice trembling in spite of himself.

For he had told himself that if Hebron would give him grace, he could yet get back to his wife before she heard of his release from the papers and wondered at his absence.

To get back to Gertrude! The hope presented itself in vivid contrast to the alternative; the height of human happiness against the lowest depths of despair, and the knowledge that a few more moments would tell him which was to be his fate made it difficult for him to control his agitation.

Hebron lowered his voice slightly.

"It is very fortunate that you are out of prison," he said. "I was wondering how you would manage to carry out the contract when they surround you with so many precautions. It would scarcely have seemed fair to harry your wife if you really had not the power to relieve her. What excuse did you give Mrs. Colvin for coming down here?"

The artist's lips tightened.

"None," he replied shortly. "I have not seen my wife."

"That is a pity," said Hebron, with a little frown of annoyance. "You should have done everything quite naturally. You have three days left, I believe, and I have no desire to hurry you. If you had spent them with your wife, you could have left it to me to wire making an appointment with you here."

Colvin interrupted him, his voice hoarse.

"I am not a stone," he said. "I can't see my wife, and let her rejoice over our reunion—if it is only a reunion for three days. I would rather kill myself to-day, if I must kill myself."

Hebron shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh! to-day if you wish. It is for you, of course, to decide as long as you keep within our agreement. I was only thinking of appearances. You do not wish Mrs. Colvin to suspect that your death is due to anything but an accident."

Colvin's heart felt like lead. He had been imagining that he had a man to plead with, not this cold, inhuman machine. He knew already that his appeal would fall on deaf ears.

But he made it all the same desperately, addressing himself to the other's love of gain rather than to his humanity. If he would give him another year, he would pay him four thousand pounds for his bill instead of two.

Jacob Hebron considered the proposition seriously from a business point of view, and explained clearly and conclusively why he could not entertain it. He had made a bargain by which he would make six thousand pounds. It would be preposterous to change it for one by which, after spending more capital on the insurance premiums, he would still make either the same sum or two thousand pounds less.

"My dear fellow, it would be prepos-

terous," he concluded. "I am really surprised that you could think such a proposal worth making."

"I thought it possible," said Frank quietly, "that you might be sufficient of a sportsman to admit that I have not had a fair chance, even if you have no pity for my wife and child."

"A wife and child that you owe to me," returned Hebron with a ring of righteous indignation in his voice. "You use my money to marry and then trot out your wife as a reason why you should keep me waiting for my returns. And then talk about sporting instincts! No, a bargain is a bargain, and it is not my fault that the luck has gone against you.

"If you can meet my bill, well and good! If not—well! I may remind you that at the rate the tide is running out you will find very little water in the bay in another hour or so. You have a sixpence for your suit, I suppose, and money to leave in your pockets. It is not really my concern whether it is taken for accident or not. There is no suicide clause in the insurance agreements. But it is always better to do a thing neatly than clumsily.

"If you write a line to your wife, offering some explanation why you came down here before going home, it will save a good deal of talk afterward. Shall we go into the writing-room?"

Colvin rose with white lips, his eyes blazing.

"No, thanks, Mr. Hebron," he said with the quietness of controlled passion. "I have three more days, and if you will not make them more, at any rate you shall not rob me of what I have. I am not going to be hurried to suit your convenience."

The financier threw out his fat little hands in expostulation.

"My dear fellow, it was your own suggestion to get it over and done with."

But Colvin did not hear him. He was striding out blindly through the dining-room with its crowd of gaily-dressed women and well-groomed men, consumed by a sudden passion of rage and hatred against the man who treated his life as a mere pawn in a sordid scheme of finance, who counted his longing for life and wife and child as nothing against the risk of losing a few thousand pounds.

The personal feeling was something new. He had looked upon his bargain not so much as a bargain with Hebron as a bargain with fate. He had challenged fortune by pawning his future to provide for the present, and so far as he had felt any emotion about Hebron in the matter, he had been grateful to him for making the challenge possible.

But now abruptly he saw himself the plaything, not of fate, against which it is possible to summon some amount of stoical resignation, but of a man, and his whole soul rose in revolt.

He had left the table feeling that if he remained he would fling himself upon his companion and strangle him, if only to prove that one man's life is as good as another's. His mind was full of wild schemes of killing Hebron before he killed himself to avenge himself for the unforgivable insult the man had paid him of counting his life cheap.

Colvin felt in his rage that the other deserved to die, but he could not afford to kill him. He could not, in dying, leave a heritage of disgrace to his wife and child.

Hebron had known what he was about when he encouraged him to give himself hostages who could suffer when he himself was dead. For the sake of Gertrude and the child he would have to die tamely, exactly as Jacob Hebron had planned that he should die.

There was no help for it, unless he was prepared to rob them of their one certainty of a competence and plunge them into a struggle against destitution foredoomed from the first by Hebron's bill and the vindictive use he would make of it.

The longing to see his wife which he had been able to keep at bay while there was still a hope that he might be able to do so, returned again, no longer to be controlled now that he seriously faced the idea of never seeing her at all.

He could not die without a single glimpse of her dear face. He must not speak to her. He must not let her know that he was near.

It would be too cruel to let her think even for an hour that he had really come back to her, and that they were going to be happy together. But he must see her.

He had three days of life, and life had ceased to hold any other purpose.

He ran all the way to the railway station.

V.

A SHOCK OF A NEW SORT.

WHEN the prison-walls swallowed up her husband of a day, Mrs. Colvin had found a home with a former nurse of hers. Mrs. Belmore had just become a widow and would have been compelled to leave her delightful little cottage in the country but for the timely arrangement which served to supplement her slender means.

In her interviews with Frank in prison, Gertrude had drawn charming word-pictures of her home. When she found him depressed by the expense of his appeal, she had tried to encourage him by saying how cheaply they could all stay on at Mrs. Belmore's, when he gained his freedom. There was a big room with a north light that he could convert into a studio, and thanks to dear old Mrs. Belmore's wonderful management, living seemed to cost scarcely anything.

In all his thoughts of the struggle to which he had looked forward with such sanguine hope, he had pictured this rose-covered cottage with its idyllic calm, its freedom from the disturbing cares, as the scene of his efforts, the place where all the wonderful pictures stored ready in his mind were to be put on canvas.

He had pictured the place vividly, the place that sheltered his wife, and where his child was to be born, and although he had never seen it, he felt that he must know it without a word of direction. He would know the room where Gertrude sat on sunny afternoons with the windows open to the sweet-scented garden, he would know the window of her bedroom under the gables. How often he had thought of it!

In the train as it carried him toward the scene of so many day-dreams, he was planning how he could make sure that Gertrude should never hear of his visit. After his death she must have no slightest chance of learning about the stranger who had lurked round her home, lying in ambush to catch a glimpse of her and her child. Gertrude understood so quickly.

Despite his burning impatience, he decided that it would be unsafe to leave the train at the village station, where he would probably be the only passenger to alight, where it was possible that Gertrude, having heard of his release from prison, might be waiting in the hope of welcoming him. In an excess of caution he disembarked two stations before his destination and found himself with a walk of eight miles before him.

He covered them rapidly, still without breaking his long fast, his mind busy all the way. But while yesterday he had been planning means for winning the right to live, he could think of nothing now except how to see his wife and child. His thoughts refused to travel beyond that one moment.

The dusk of late evening was gathering over the country when the sign-posts informed him that he was within a mile of his destination, and he went forward with caution, feeling that any person he met might describe him afterward to Gertrude. Then, as he turned the brow of a hill and saw the village lying below him, he forgot caution and abruptly broke into a run. For from the thatched roof of a cottage nestling in the hollow, a pillar of smoke was rising into the still evening air, and a fatalistic premonition absolute in its certainty told him that it was the cottage he sought and that he had arrived to find it in flames.

In five minutes his breathless running had brought him to the scene of the fire.

In the old-fashioned garden surrounding the cottage a collection of some half-dozen villagers ran hither and thither distractedly, one man working desperately at the well, another bringing out furniture from the window of one of the rooms as yet untouched by the fire. As Colvin joined them an old lady with white hair appealed to him hysterically to run back for a ladder.

The staircase was impassable, she cried almost incoherently, and in the top room, under the gables, was an invalid with her ten-weeks' old baby asleep.

Oh! for a ladder, a ladder! Why did nobody bring a ladder?

Colvin pushed her aside, as she would have turned him back, and ran forward to the door of the burning house. Other men might think of ladders. In his mind

was room only for a single thought, the realization that only a double flight of stairs lay between him and his wife and child.

All the eager longing that had been with him through the day concentrated itself into the single purpose, and he had a strange wild joy in the very heaviness of the odds against him. He did not underestimate the forces against which he had to pit himself. In the little smoke-filled hall he came upon a woman with a pail of water. Colvin stopped to dip his handkerchief in this and bound it over his mouth as he hurried forward to the staircase, creeping low.

It was the upper flight that was actually in flames, but the dense volumes of smoke rolling down from it had well-nigh suffocated him by the time he reached the middle landing and paused for a moment in an embrasure near the window comparatively clear. Above him the flames roared and crackled.

But it was only one flight now, and the imminent danger that the flaming pathway might collapse before he could attempt it forbade him to pause for more than breath. Setting his teeth he plunged into the smoke again, and gripping a charred hand-rail that was hot under his touch, he shut his eyes and guiding himself by the rail made a last desperate rush upward.

His hands and face were blistered, his clothes smoldering, he had almost lost consciousness of everything except that his eyes were hurting horribly, when he realized that the stairs had given place to a level floor again, and stumbling forward he fell, by chance rather than any conscious search, against the closed door behind which Gertrude had just been awakened by the warning cries beneath.

She was at the window looking down at the distracted group in the garden and vainly seeking there for any promise of help when a sound at the door made her throw it open. She had closed it quickly behind the man who entered before she recognized him, and with her baby still clasped to her breast threw herself into his outstretched arms with a sigh of content.

"Oh! Frank, I am so glad you have come," she murmured with the simplicity of perfect faith. All her terror and distraction had gone. Her husband and protector had come to save her.

And to Colvin, as he strained mother and child together to his heart, it seemed that this was a perfect end to all. They would all die together, a death which, however terrible, had in it nothing of disgrace.

But it was only for a moment that he could think of death complacantly for Gertrude and his baby. They must live. For them to have a moment's pain was horrible. And grotesquely enough—since the sordid and prosaic is never eliminated from human thought even in its sublimest moments—he thought of the insurance on his life that would be wasted if neither his wife nor child lived to enjoy it.

Already as he held them in his arms, his eyes were searching the little room for means by which they might escape. A return by the stairs was plainly impossible. He shrank from the thought of it for himself. For Gertrude and the baby it could not be thought of at all.

But there was the window, and willing hands beneath. If only he had a rope.

His quickly searching eye had found it already. In a corner was a trunk strongly corded, the trunk that he had carried from Major Dugdale's to the cars, and he released his wife reluctantly to untie it with eager fingers.

The cord let down from the window was still some twelve feet from the ground, but already somebody had found a ladder, a small, impotent ladder which, raised against the house, came wofully short of the window under the gables, but enabled one to reach the dangling cord, and he drew it up again deftly to attach it securely to a blanket that held the baby.

Gertrude caught her breath as he lowered it and found the burden received by eager hands below.

Frank drew up the rope again and turned to his wife.

"The cord is thin," he said, "but we must trust it. It is your only chance."

The smoke in the room was already suffocating them, and outside the flames roared and crackled on their way from the staircase to the thatched roof.

"I don't want to be saved, darling, if you are not," she said, clinging to him,

but he smiled bravely into her loving eyes.

"I shall follow when you are safe, dearest," he replied, and tied the rope around her. "Good-by, my darling, and Heaven bless you if I don't get down."

The flames were crackling against the door, threatening every moment to break through, and he tore himself from her clinging embrace.

He felt a giant still as he lowered her with a last effort of strength and endurance, and saw her received into the eager hands of those below. The flames had eaten their way through the door by now and were leaping toward the open window.

But Colvin moved very deliberately as he tied the cord to the iron bedstead and crossed once more to the window. The cord that had seemed too thin to bear even Gertrude's slight weight was frayed, and a strand had been cut through by the friction of the window-ledge as he lowered her to the ladder. It seemed scarcely possible that it would bear his weight.

But it was his only chance of life, and the fact that he had decided to die had escaped him, as it always escapes the mind of the man who is threatened by an involuntary death. The flames were almost at the window as he released his hold of the ledge and began to descend hand under hand.

The next moment the thin rope broke and let him fall with a dull thud to earth.

It was a fortnight before Colvin, who was suffering from a broken leg, shock to the nervous system, and a somewhat serious concussion, regained consciousness and convalescence sufficiently to inquire the date. When he heard it he asked his wife whether she had heard from Jacob Hebron.

Gertrude nodded.

"Yes, he has presented a bill for two thousand pounds which he says that you owed him. I did not know that he had expended as much on you, but when I remember that it was only through his help that we were able to marry, I do not grudge him a cent of it, and I paid him very cheerfully. I was very glad to be out of his debt. Of course I know that he has been awfully good to you, but somehow I do not like your patron, and I am glad that you are not going to depend on his patronage any longer."

The invalid looked at her with wondering eyes.

"You have paid him?" he gasped in amazement.

"Yes, dear. It seemed only a trifle. But of course you have not heard what a rich young woman I have become. My great-aunt Marjorie, to whom I have scarcely given a thought, took it into her head when she died to leave me all her fortune. So you must be quick and get quite better and help me to spend it."

Her charge lay quite still for a little while after the announcement. Then he sought her pretty little hand and kissed it with a passion that was in itself a proof of returning strength.

"I am going to get well quick, darling," he said, "and by Heaven, what pictures I'll paint after we've had our honeymoon!"

SECOND PLACE.

You change your heart, *ma belle coquette,*
As easily as your glove,
And I know you'd pine and pout and fret
In the chains of a lifelong love.

If we were married, you'd flirt with Jim,
Or whoever the man might be;
So I'm content you should marry *him*—
For then you'll flirt with me.

Harry Romaine.

THE SHAFT OF LIGHT.*

By DOUGLAS PIERCE.

Concerning the vengeance of a coward and some strange turnings in the road of destiny.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

In a vain endeavor to corner the wheat-market, Harry Flick, county treasurer, and Bob Toron, deputy, steal all the available funds of Tombertville. Flick, in whose name all transactions stand, is persuaded by Toron to flee the town, taking precautions to make it appear that he has committed suicide by drowning. Actuated by a desire to save his wife the shame of his conviction, Flick consents, but entreats Toron to shield his wife from all ill.

Toron, having failed after three years to persuade Mrs. Flick to marry him, decides to dazzle her with wealth, tries the old game, fails, and decamps, taking with him one of the Flick twins. Twenty years elapse, during which Charlie Flick, who has been taken to New York by his mother, grows to manhood and becomes a successful lawyer. One night at the Glasco Theater he sees some wonderful acting by a girl who, he hears, is a full-blooded Indian. The manager, a friend of his, invites him to a celebration supper behind the scenes, and he goes, to meet the beautiful and gifted Wau-wau-tay-see.

Charlie and Wau-wau-tay-see, or Ruth Scarlett, as she is known on the stage, make a hit with each other; she insists on his becoming her lawyer in litigation concerning some lands of hers which have been jumped by one Ralph Terry. He goes to see her at her apartments, and before he leaves they have plighted troth, Ruth tattooing on his wrist the totem of the Beech Lake Indians and the firefly, her personal sign-manual.

Meanwhile, old Harry Flick goes prospecting for gold, the earth opens in a yawning hole, and with a stifled cry he is borne down into a seemingly bottomless abyss. Struggling against a raging current, he at last manages to clutch the branches of an uprooted tree, and comes back to earth, to find under the tree a rich deposit of iron ore. He files his claim, and then falls ill. Terry finds him with friendly Indians, learns part of his secret, and is recognized by him as Toron. He keeps up the bluff of being Flick's friend, and sends for his "son," Jack Terry. Him he sends to New York to steal the marriage certificate, and this is done, but the lad shows fight after having discovered that Flick is his father. Terry eludes Jack's vigilance, and the latter lavishes his care upon the old man. Suddenly news arrives that Indians on the war-path are coming, and that they haven't "got a minute to lose!"

CHAPTER XV.

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

HAD any one come up quietly and soberly to Jack Flick and told him that he was in peril from an Indian uprising he would probably have received the news with a derisive grin and gone on indifferently with whatever business he had in hand.

But panic breeds panic, and in the face of the undoubted terror of this Paul Revere who had come to warn him he felt the cold clutch of a grisly horror at his throat.

His estimate of the reds, hitherto, had been a sort of contemptuous tolerance of them as hewers of wood and bearers of burdens. He had felt no more fear of them than of so many cowed dogs; but now, confronted by the actual fact of an outbreak, his mind recurred to the tales of savage atrocities related to him by early settlers, and a vivid picture danced before his eyes of what might be expected.

His first impulse, therefore, was to heed the advice given him and fly at once, but almost before the thought was definitely formulated he remembered the disabled and helpless condition of his companion.

"Hike?" he repeated, staying the stranger, who was already starting off. "In what direction? By the lake trail?"

"Lord, no!" ejaculated the other with emphatic remonstrance. "They're humming like angry bees along every mile of

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it. And the road to Fort Bois is just as bad. The only way that I can figure out is to cut across the range and through the swamps and try to reach the St. Louis River, and so down to Duluth."

"But I have a feeble old father on my hands," protested Jack. "He could never take that journey in the wide world. Isn't there some other trail that is open?"

The stranger regretfully shook his head.

"That is the only chance," he declared, "and even that is doubtful, the way those devils are spreading out through the country."

"Very well, then," returned Jack quietly, although his cheek had grown a trifle paler, "I shall just simply have to stick it out here."

The other man glanced at the defenseless cabin under the lee of the bank.

"Are you crazy?" he expostulated. "Why, it wouldn't be no time at all until they had tossed fire down on the roof of that shack and burned you out. Then they could butcher you at their leisure. Guess you don't know what a scrimmage with them fiends is like," he added grimly.

"All the same, I shall have to stay," was the reply.

The stranger threw up his hands with a gesture of impatience at such reckless obstinacy and again started off; but he had gone only a few steps before he turned and came back.

"Look here," he urged, "there ain't no sense in sacrificing two lives to them devils when one of them can be saved. The old man's time is about due, anyhow, and being helpless, they might show him some pity, but you are sure to get the full program. Better cut him out, then, and come with me. It's got down to one of those cases now where a man's first duty is to look out for himself."

"No," refused Jack once more. "Him and me, we'll stick it out together. I've got ten ca'tridges left, and eight of 'em'll find a mark." He paused. "The last two we'll save for ourselves!"

"Ten ca'tridges!" gasped his companion. "Only ten ca'tridges! Land knows, I'm short of ammunition myself, but I can't stand for that. Here, let me divide."

He jerked half the shells out of the belt about his waist and thrust them into Jack's hand.

"Ain't there nothing more I can do for you?" he questioned eagerly.

The lad was about to answer no, but a suggestion popped into his mind, and he asked the stranger if he would carry two messages for him to the outside world.

"If you get through," he directed, rapidly penciling a line or so on two separate sheets of paper torn from an old note-book, "file these at the first telegraph office you reach."

"To Mrs. Susie Flick, New York City; and to the sheriff at Tombertville, Ohio," read the other, to show that he had the addresses correct. "All right; they shall go.

"And now," he went on, "I shall really have to slide. I'd stay and fight with you, boy, if there was even half a chance; but you must realize yourself it ain't nothing short of suicide, and I've got a wife and kids to think of. Give us your fin, anyhow, though. I like a game man, even if he is a dern fool!"

Their hands clasped, and had he received the slightest encouragement the stranger would undoubtedly have lingered to urge still further argument in favor of leaving. But he was wise enough to see that it would be merely so much breath wasted; so, with a last shake and a heavy sigh, he turned once more to the trail and soon was lost to sight in the woods.

Jack stood gazing after him for a space, struggling with the temptation to follow which despite himself surged up in his heart; then, recalled to the imminence of the peril which threatened, he hastened toward the cabin to put it in as good a state of defense as possible.

He was in something of a quandary whether or not to tell old Harry of the impending ordeal, fearing the effect of the agitation which would probably result; but he found, when he got inside, that the invalid was already informed.

The stranger's excited voice had carried its message to his ears, and the old man was sitting up on the side of the couch, his eyes bright, a grim resolve stamped upon his grizzled features.

"Jack," he cried as soon as the son

made his appearance, "you've got to take that fellow's advice and go. Don't bother about me. I seem to bear a charmed life, and even if they do get me, it will be small loss. But you are young, with all the world before you, and you shall not throw yourself away in any such senseless fashion. Go, I tell you," pushing at him with his feeble, trembling hands. "Go, while you still have the opportunity!"

If anything had been needed to harden the boy's determination this self-sacrificing appeal would certainly have accomplished it. His face settled into obdurate lines, and a glint of defiance flashed into his eye.

"Pshaw!" he rejoined, snapping his fingers. "I ain't taking everything for granted that that there snipe-shooter had to say; and even if his story is on the square, we ought to be able between the two of us to stand a few Injuns off for quite a spell—maybe until the soldiers can get up from Fort Snelling," expressing a hope he was very far from sharing. "The colonel'll sure get a move on himself as soon as he finds out what is doing."

But the other was not to be imposed on by any such affectation of confidence. He shook his head with impatient skepticism.

"What that stranger said was true, Jack," he insisted, "and you know it as well as I do. We'll never be able to hold this cabin half an hour. They'll pile fire down on us from above and smoke us out before we'll have time to turn around."

"That may all be," admitted his son, a trifle testily, "but what better can we do? There ain't no other place around that would give cover to a woodtick; and perhaps, dad," optimistically, "they'll overlook that conflagration scheme you all seem to be so set on fixing up for 'em."

"Not they," broke in the old man. "That's the first dodge that will occur to them. I tell you, my son, it's a hopeless case. You've simply got to go."

But Jack was paying small heed; a new idea had suddenly struck him, and his eyes were lighting up with reawakened hope.

"By George, dad," he cried, "I believe there is a chance for us, after all! That hole where you broke through when you started up your flume! Why can't we hide down there for a spell until the danger is past? They'd never think of looking for us there; and even if they did, they'd be afraid. I asked one of the bunch that was here why they always gave it such a wide berth, and he told me it was 'bad medicine'; a devil of some kind lived down at the bottom."

The old man grasped at this solution, but on second thought his face clouded over.

"No," he decided regretfully, "it won't do. We might be held there for a week, and we couldn't stand it for so much as half a day. Cramped up on that little narrow ledge, we should inevitably fall off in a very short time and be swept down to that terrible darkness." He shuddered at the recollection. "For my part, I'd rather take my chances against the Indians."

Jack realized the force of the objection.

"Gosh," he muttered, "if I just had time to rig up a canoe or a raft of some kind, but I suppose that is out of the question. The hunter said the Injuns were only two hours away, and that means they will be here before I could get fairly started at it."

His glance roved desperately about in quest of an inspiration.

"Ah!" he cried, springing to his feet with the answer in his grasp. "The very thing! Look!" pointing to the heavy door of the cabin; "here is a raft already made to order, and big enough to give us all the elbow-room we need. We'll float her on the stream, anchor her to the tree with a rope, and there we'll lie as snug as a ground-hog in his hole until it's safe to poke our heads above the surface again."

Even while he was speaking he had leaped to the opening and was wrenching the door loose from its hinges, and with the last word he had it up on his strong young shoulders and was staggering under its weight down to the edge of the abyss.

There was indeed necessity for haste. Too much time had already been wasted in discussion, and their ruthless foes might be expected now at any minute.

Swiftly their ark of refuge was lowered by a rope into the gulf, and following it Jack himself descended, carrying the old man on his back.

One more trip he made to the cabin to procure the medicine-chest and a bag of food which almost came to grief through his haste in letting them both down, and then, as a last precaution, to wipe out their telltale footprints in the bed of the ravine he raced up the bank to the water-gate and turned on the flow from the lake.

The released torrent plunged in a swirl of muddy foam over the brink; but it contained no terrors now for old Harry, for although his rude vessel tugged at its tether under force of the accelerated current, the moorings held, and the only motion imparted was that of a gentle and not unpleasant rocking.

Jack, suspended in a rope sling which he had roved about the upturned base of the sycamore still standing in the hole, remained near the surface, in order to reconnoiter cautiously, at intervals, and report the approach of danger.

Nor had he long to wait before he was furnished with all the confirmation he required as to the truth of the hunter's warning. Scarce fifteen minutes could have elapsed when his searching gaze caught the glint of something moving amid the bushes on the hillside.

He hurriedly ducked his head, and waited apprehensively for the bullet which would show that he had been discovered; but it was evident that the glance of the picket had been turned in another direction.

Slipping over to the other side of the tree, where the spray from the cataract to a certain extent veiled his movements, he again carefully raised his eyes to the level, and now perceived that the entire rim of the depression was fringed with a line of stealthily advancing warriors.

Through the tree-trunks he could catch, now and again, the glimpse of a feathered head-dress or a flash of sunlight upon the metal of their weapons, or, failing this, note a stirring in the bushes caused by their sinuous passage.

Manifestly, they were about to adopt the approved tactics of Indian warfare and attack in a circle. The lad's blood ran cold within him as he realized the narrowness of his escape, for he and old Harry could not have withstood this host the space of five minutes. There must be, he reckoned, at least two hundred in the party.

And then his eye was caught by a sparkle of flame, a faint puff of smoke, from over on the steep bank behind the cabin. A moment it flickered and smoldered; then, catching a great mass of dead leaves and moss piled upon it, burst into a roaring blaze.

Immediately twenty braves were behind it, prodding and pushing with long poles, until under their exertions, like the eruption from a volcano, the fiery flood swept down upon the defenseless roof, kindling its dry thatch and combustible pine walls in more than twenty places. A half-minute more and the entire shack was flaming like a bonfire.

"Gee!" muttered the audience of one down in the pit, aghast at the spectacle. "I guess we wasn't wise to shake that old dry-goods box. We wouldn't have lasted there no longer than a fish already in the skillet!"

Hitherto, the scene had been as quiet as a Sabbath morning in New England. The only sounds throughout the little valley had been the splash of the waterfall, the rustling of the wind through the pines, the whistling of a bird high up in air—the harmonious music of nature's orchestra; but with the toppling over of the burning brush upon the roof of the cabin, as though it had been a prearranged signal, the forest resounded to the shrill yelping of the war-whoop, and down the bank from every quarter came leaping the painted and exultant savages.

Shouting and brandishing their weapons, they closed in toward the blazing hut; but as they saw no singed and smoke-blackened figures staggering forth to meet them, they halted in surprise and came on more slowly.

Was it possible that these palefaces preferred incineration to taking their chances in a fight in the open? Was the fierce joy of the torture to which the redskins were looking forward so eagerly to be denied them?

Then one more observant than the rest noticed that the door of the shack was open and pointed out the fact with a cry of startled wonder.

At the sight, two venturesome braves, spurred on by the applauding shouts of their comrades, dashed forward through the ring of flame and smoke to investigate, but a moment later they reappeared, minus eyebrows and with their head-feathers scorched, to report that the cage was empty, the birds flown.

A howl of baffled rage met the announcement; but it was only for a brief space. All signs showed that the fugitives had been there shortly before, and burdened with the old man even the redoubtable "Cornstalk" could not have traveled far.

Instantly the whole party was ranging the territory about the cabin, eyes to the ground, bodies thrust forward, eagerly seeking some clue to the trail pursued by their escaping victims. And as he watched, Jack fervently thanked his lucky stars for the impulse which had suggested to him the turning on of the water.

Presently one of the seekers gave a sharp yap of delight, and the whole crowd tumbled in that direction, to fall rapturously upon the tracks of the friendly hunter where he had come through that morning; but one of them who seemed to be in authority, after an examination of the footprints, showed them their mistake, and pointed out that this could be neither of the men for whom they were hunting.

Accordingly, a squad of six only was told off to pursue this less-desired quarry, while the main body still remained in the ravine to continue their original search.

"They'll get tired pretty soon and give it up," reflected the hidden spectator; but therein he found himself mistaken.

They did presently abandon their quest, it is true; but instead of taking up the march, as he had anticipated, they came trooping back into the gully at a call from their leader, and, to his dismay, began preparations for a camp.

"It's sleep in the cellar for me and the old man to-night, sure," Jack was forced to admit, and accordingly, he unfastened his supporting rope and descended to acquaint his companion with the nature of their present plight.

With the Indians in such close proximity, he realized that it was rather hazardous to remain at his perch any longer; and besides, the cold shower-bath he was receiving from the cascade had chilled him to the bone.

He stayed all afternoon with the old man in their cheerless retreat, but when the shades of night had fallen he ventured once more to his conning-tower, and then was able to learn why the Indians had chosen to remain.

Their number, he could see, was greatly increased, and was being constantly augmented by fresh arrivals.

This was manifestly the place agreed upon for a rendezvous by all the revolting tribes. A huge council-fire blazed on the site of the late cabin, lighting up with its ruddy glare the entire ravine, and beside it stood the red-stained war-post.

While Jack gazed one after another of the chiefs squatted about arose, and having made due oration, circled with solemn step around the blaze to the approving cries of his comrades. Faster and faster beat the tom-toms, and more and more rapid became the dancer's movements, until at last, having worked himself up to a frenzy, he would hurl the tomahawk in his hand, to stick quivering in the war-post, while he himself sank exhausted to the ground and another took his place.

Thus all the chieftains pledged fidelity to their undertaking, and as the night darkened the excitement grew and the weird ceremonies became more fantastic.

It was a revelation to Jack Flick, who had hitherto regarded the subjugated race only with an indifferent contempt. These horridly painted naked forms leaping and capering in the red glow of the flames seemed to him no longer men, but imps from the bottomless pit disporting themselves at some satanic revel.

He could appreciate now as never before the sturdy courage of the pioneers of his country, to whom such exhibitions of wrought-up savagery had formed a constant menace, yet who had gone on, unfalteringly, building up their white man's empire regardless of the inherent cruelty and subtlety of their barbarous foes.

But the youth had not yet seen the worst that was to take place at this saturnalia of frenzy. Suddenly a wild chorus of whoops resounded from the silent woods, and down the bank came plun-

ging a new party of about twenty braves, laden with the spoils of pillage.

Unheeding the ceremonies in progress, they broke through the circle about the fire and immediately usurped the place for their own. Frantically they started to dance and to gesticulate, until at a signal from their leader every man of them jerked from his belt and held high in air—Jack sucked his breath sharply back between his lips almost in a sob—a reeking human scalp fresh-torn from the head of its owner.

The sight seemed to set the Indians on fire. Instantly the entire concourse was on its feet and dancing, while the tigerish howl from a thousand bloodthirsty throats split the air into ribbons with its reverberating roar.

The watcher could bear no more. Weak, overcome, almost in a collapse, he slipped from his perch and fairly fell from branch to branch as he made a swift descent to the bottom.

"What are they doing now?" whispered old Harry, drawing close to Jack when he had thrown himself down, trembling, upon the raft.

"Don't ask me!" with an arm before his eyes as though to shut out the recollection. "It looks like there was a million of them devils up there, and Hades is broke loose for sure!"

"Still, we are safe." The old man strove to speak encouragingly, thinking it was fear that so unmanned the boy. "As you said this morning, none of them would dare to come down after us even if they knew we were here."

"I wasn't thinking of *us!*" disclaimed Jack scornfully. "Why, for half a cent I'd be willing to go up there and mix in with them right now, merely for the pleasure of ridding the earth of eight or ten of them before they could get me. Do you know, dad," with bated breath, "I seen one of them brutes hold up a scalp by long yellow hair—the hair of a little girl ten or eleven years old? Oh," he groaned, clasping his tense hands together in the impotence of his wrath, "if Ralph Terry is responsible for this day's work he shall pay for it to me!"

"Is he up there with them?" questioned Harry eagerly. "Is he one of the party?"

"No. I heard his name mentioned several times in their shouts and cries, but he is not among them. Oh, trust him to be foxy enough to keep out of harm's way himself. He has brought all this about; but when the trouble is over and the reds are cleaned up he wants to be able to show he had nothing to do with it. But, curse him, he shall pay for it to me!"

The old man, seeing the lad's excited state, forbore to ask him any more questions at the time, but, quieting and calming him, urged him to sleep.

"You have had a trying day of it, and will need all your strength for to-morrow," he counseled, "so, take some rest now while you have the opportunity. I will mount guard here in your place."

Jack stoutly insisted that slumber was out of the question for him, but presently, under the other's solicitations, he was induced to lie down, and gradually the fatigues he had undergone, coupled with the lulling movement of their craft, sent him off into a doze.

When he awoke it was with the bright light of a torch flashing in his eyes, and to his horror he beheld Ralph Terry, backed by a phalanx of peering warriors, standing not five feet away from him in the lower branches of the tree. A leveled revolver was in the renegade's hand, a smile of malevolent triumph on his face.

Terry, Jack instantly realized, must have arrived after his own descent from the surface, and having heard the Indians' story, had been able, from the circumstances of the missing door and the flow of water, to form a pretty shrewd conjecture as to the present whereabouts of the refugees. The broken rift, of course, held no supernatural terrors for Gush-ke-wau, and with him to lead the way, his savage allies had consented to follow.

That no warning of their approach had been given was explained by the nodding attitude of old Harry, who—faithless guardian—squatted at the other end of the raft, lost in a peaceful nap.

All this was comprehended by the lad at a glance, and at the same time he recognized the absolute helplessness of his position. Their weapons lay with the slumbering sentinel, and the slightest movement to reach for them would,

he well knew, end his career then and there.

But one alternative was open, and Jack promptly accepted it. His sharp hunting-knife, fortunately, lay right beside his hand. With a single jerk he caught it up and severed at a stroke the taut rope which held them to their moorings!

Instantly the swift current seized their craft and hurled it down the stream. A shot rang out, smiting his ears with its multitudinous echoes in the vaulted cavern, and then two more shots in quick succession; but all of them, owing to the darkness and the pitching of the raft, missed their target.

Ten seconds more and the little vessel was around the curve, sheltered by that jutting point of rock which once before had saved old Harry's life.

"We're safe!" hissed Jack in his companion's ear, holding him aboard their frail support by main strength; for, dazed and alarmed by his sudden awakening, the old man was struggling to leap into the water.

"We're safe!" repeated the boy, but even as he spoke he caught himself short with a gasp. They were safe from Bob Toron's bullets, yes. But they were adrift on an unknown flood, being hurled along at express speed—whither?

CHAPTER XVI.

SIGNED: "A FRIEND."

THAT same evening Mrs. Flick sat in the peaceful comfort of her quiet library engaged in the congenial task of rereading a letter from Charlie.

The missive had arrived earlier in the day, but, engrossed then with her household tasks, she had scanned it hurriedly, to get merely the gist of it. Now she was giving to it the attention she felt so important a document deserved.

It was an interesting communication, describing the boy's trip up to the head of the Great Lakes, and speaking enthusiastically of the courtesy and kindness which had been extended to him during the time of his stay in Duluth.

"Business before pleasure, however," he concluded; "and although I would like to tarry here longer, I feel that my first duty is to inspect the property which I have come out to investigate, and I shall therefore leave for the upper country to-morrow morning. I may be out of touch with civilization for so long as a week; but do not get alarmed, mother dear, at not hearing from me. I have engaged an efficient Indian guide, and everybody tells me that I shall get along without any trouble. Indeed, I am looking forward with a good deal of anticipation to the experience.

"And, by the way," he added, "you may also calm your fears concerning the possibility of an encounter between me and the redoubtable Terry, or Toron. I am evidently not going to have the pleasure of making the gentleman's acquaintance on this occasion, for, deeming it well to be prepared, I have put some casual inquiries in regard to him, and learn that he is supposed to be at present in Dakota, having announced, on his last visit to Duluth, that he was starting for a hunting-trip out there within a few days."

A visible relief came into Mrs. Flick's eyes as she perused that final paragraph. The dread that Charlie might fall into the power of the man who had wrought such havoc in her own life had been a haunting, ever-present terror to her ever since the boy had started away from New York.

For that reason, too, she had used every argument and entreaty which her mother-wit could compass to dissuade him from going, and when she had failed, placed the blame for her son's obstinacy, with an injustice thoroughly feminine, upon the innocent shoulders of his fiancée.

"Do not ask me to meet her now, Charlie," she had snapped out with the air of having a grievance when, on the day after her visit to the theater, he had withstood a two hours' siege of prayers and pleading. "I could not treat her decently, nor will I be able to until after you are safe back in New York. I could overlook everything else in her, but I cannot forgive, at present, the selfishness which makes her encourage you in so desperate a risk. It is to her interest, of course, but if she really loved you she would not think of letting you embark upon so hazardous a mission."

Accordingly, poor Charlie, like many another well-meaning man, became a mere buffer to stand between the jealous antagonism of two women who loved him, and the more he sought to bring them together the more they strained apart.

Mrs. Flick, sore and resentful over the influence which her rival seemed able to exert, held to her word, and the actress, her racial pride aroused, speedily adopted a similar policy of aloofness.

So, the young lawyer, realizing at last that there could be no peace until his mother was assured that all danger for him was past, had hurried up his departure, and was now writing from the point where he was about to take up the final stage of his journey.

"Four days since it was sent," murmured Mrs. Flick, glancing at the postmark as she folded up the letter and carefully put it away. "That means, if he is to return inside of a week, that he is already more than half through with this harum-scarum expedition. Three days more and I may be hearing from him again.

"Yes," she admitted musingly, "I suppose I have been a trifle foolish in opposing the boy so bitterly when he had his whole heart set on the project, but it was more than I could endure to see him a mere puppet in the hands of that creature. Oh, why," she broke out—"why could he not have chosen a wife whom I could care for, too?"

She sat there for some little time frowning rebelliously over the disappointment, but presently the maid came in with the evening paper and she turned from her repining, with a little sigh, to glance through its columns.

There was the usual run of news—a legislative inquiry which was unearthing some scandalous revelations, a murder case still wrapped in mystery, the marriage of two foreign royalties; but none of these particularly interested Mrs. Flick. Her glance wandered idly down the sheet until she finally spied in one corner a brief telegram from Minneapolis stating that a detail of ten soldiers had been sent out to quell a slight mutiny which had arisen among the Beech Lake Indians.

"Oh, I do hope that Charlie is nowhere in the vicinity," she exclaimed, with a swift throb of the heart.

But immediately she chided herself for allowing her anxieties to run away with her.

"It certainly cannot amount to much," she strove to reassure herself, "or they would have sent more than ten soldiers. Yes; see, the article itself says: 'No especial trouble is expected, as it is believed the mere presence of the troops will be sufficient to check any further attempts at disorder.'"

Nevertheless, she was not entirely at her ease over the matter, and when an instant later the door-bell jangled in a resounding peal it brought her to her feet with wildly fluttering pulses.

She did not wait for the maid to answer the ring, but hurrying to the door herself, found waiting there a blue-uniformed messenger with a telegram.

"Ah!" she cried, with quick relief, "it is from Charlie. He has finished his business sooner than he expected, and this is to notify me of his safe return."

So assured was she that such was the fact that her hand was perfectly steady as she signed the book, and she even paused a moment to turn up the light in the hall before she tore open the message.

But then a groan of despair broke from her stiff lips, and she reeled back, clutching at the stair-rail for support. The yellow slip fell from her nerveless fingers and floated to the floor; but even there her stricken gaze could plainly read the typewritten lines, which seemed to stamp themselves upon her brain in letters of fire:

"Keep Charlie away from the Northwest. Dangerous Indian outbreak in progress!"

It was the message which Jack had sent out by the hand of the hunter, and was signed, simply, "A Friend," but Mrs. Flick never thought of doubting its veracity.

"'Keep Charlie away from the Northwest'?" she moaned, wringing her hands. "Heaven knows, I tried to, but he would not listen to me. And now he will be sacrificed! What can I do? What *can* I do?"

Overcome by her feelings, she was pacing frenziedly up and down the hall;

but the confession of helplessness wrung from her lips brought a sudden response to her mind.

What could she do? Nothing of herself, truly. But there was one who could do something—one who knew the ways of these Indians, who was, in fact, one of them herself and should have influence over them.

The mother's trembling faintness passed with the need for action, and her voice was calm despite its urgency as she called the maid to summon a cab and to fetch her bonnet and cloak.

Nor did she lose her self-control when, having overcome the objections of the stage-door Cerberus, she followed swiftly in the wake of the guide who led her to the star's dressing-room at the Glasco Theater. It was only when she was in the bare little apartment, left alone and told she would have to wait until the act was finished before she could see Miss Scarlett, that her feelings surged up in a tide of bitterness that threatened to overwhelm her.

Have to wait! Good Heavens! *Wait!* when every passing moment might be a chance lost to save her son's life.

Yet, she told herself, it was only what she might have expected. What did this actress care who had sent her bonny boy out so carelessly to face this peril? Her vanity would not permit her to forego one single hand-clap of her nightly meed of applause!

And then she heard a girl's voice out in the corridor demanding excitedly: "Where is she? Had I known that Mrs. Flick was waiting for me I should have left the stage at once, curtain or no curtain!"

The door of the dressing-room was flung open and the girl entered, her eyes distended, her face pale underneath the rouge.

"Charlie!" she gasped, clutching at the elder woman. "You bring me bad news? What has happened to him? Tell me!"

Mrs. Flick silently held out the message.

"Go," she pleaded. "You alone can save him. Promise me that you will go!"

A curious expression flashed into Ruth Scarlett's dark eyes. She knew what the other woman did not—that for her to return who was considered dead entailed a far more serious risk than any that might threaten Charlie Flick. Yet she did not hesitate a moment.

"Yes; of course I will go," she said quietly.

She stepped to the door and summoned the call-boy.

"Ask Mr. Glasco and my understudy to come here at once," she directed.

The repressed training of years was asserting its sway, and after that first agonized cry when she entered the room she gave no other sign of emotion.

To her came then the understudy, almost openly jubilant, although carefully disguising her satisfaction under a show of concern. And with the understudy came also Glasco, with vehement protests. But the girl held inflexibly to her decision.

"But you can certainly go through the other two acts to-night," insisted the manager, catching at a last straw when he found all his arguments and appeals in vain. "There is no train to the West until one o'clock."

"Ah!" said this resourceful maiden, "but, you see, I intend to charter a special. Please telephone and make arrangements to have one ready for me inside of half an hour."

The two women whom a common distress had drawn together were curiously silent during the swift automobile ride which carried them down-town, nor did they have much to say on the boat crossing the ferry; but when they had walked down the long train-shed to the engine with the single car waiting for its lone passenger Mrs. Flick, in a sudden rush of tenderness, caught the Indian girl in a close embrace and murmured brokenly, "My daughter!"

And knowing only too well that such a title could now never be hers, Wau-wau-tay-see's proud stoicism gave way for a moment in a burst of tears. Just for a few heart-beats it lasted; then she gently disengaged herself, and with the final cheering exhortation, "Have no fear, mother, I will save him!" climbed aboard.

The conductor waved his hand, the engine moved out into the night, and the woman who had been called "the most

finished product the red race has yet given to civilization" was on her way back to the reservation!

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN THE SUN ROSE.

SWINGING and swerving, the unwieldy craft to which Jack and his father clung was borne on swiftly to the impenetrable darkness shrouding the gloomy depths of the cavern.

For a moment after they rounded the turn they could discern the flickering reflection of Terry's torch upon the rock-walls; then it, too, was blotted out, and absolute blackness closed in upon them.

By a common impulse they had thrown themselves flat upon the raft, in order to avoid collision with the lowering roof of the tunnel; and it was well they did so, for so sharp were the turns in the channel, and so frequent the rapids down which they plunged at breath-catching speed, that in any other position they must inevitably have been flung off into the stream.

Perilous enough, indeed, was their hazard as it was; for, with the wild rocking and tossing, it was only by the exercise of all his strength that Jack could manage to hold himself and the old man on at all. Then, too, there was the constant possibility of striking an obstruction against which their frail bark would go to pieces, or of a sudden cataract to toss them as so much driftwood into the maelstrom at its foot.

And even supposing they should survive all these hazards, what of that other omnipresent question—whither?

How long that nightmare of horror lasted neither of its participants could conjecture. For days, weeks, months, years, they seemed to swing on through a blackness so intense that it could be felt.

Down—down ran the channel all the time, and the speed of the hurrying tide was like that of a charging squadron. An idea struck Jack that they must be nearing the center of the earth, and a fantastic fear awoke in him that they might have escaped all the hidden perils of rock and reef and waterfall only to be scalded to death in the end when the river should come in contact with the subterranean fires.

Already, to his active imagination, the temperature seemed to be mounting, the atmosphere growing thick with steam.

And then their ark was suddenly shot into an ice-cold flood, borne outward and up, and finally, with its two half-drowned occupants still clinging to it, tossed to the surface of a sheet of water.

A splendor of gold and violet and scarlet smote as with fire the eyes wearied by the long straining through the darkness, and to both men came the instant thought: "This is death!"

But when nothing further happened and Jack finally ventured to unclose one eye to the glories which had so blinded him he gave a single look, then bounded to his feet in a very ecstasy of joy.

The scarlet and the gold and the violet were no flaming sword marking the gates of Paradise, after all, but merely the dear old sun rising with his usual resplendent accompaniment over in the east.

And this place? He could not believe his eyes for a moment; then the familiarity of the scene forced conviction. This was the northern end of Beech Lake, and yonder, down upon the horizon, lay the island ruled over by Baim-wa-wa.

Close beside where they floated on the placid surface the waters heaved and frothed in a "boiling spring" shunned by the Indians as the manifestation of an evil spirit, but his recent thrilling experience had given the lad a clearer explanation for it. He now realized that the phenomenon was caused by the debouchment here of the subterranean stream down which he had just traveled, and his eyes widened as he recognized the speed at which they had been carried.

From the head of the lake to the ravine in the hills was counted as a trail of forty miles; yet, calculating the time when they had been cut adrift as about two o'clock, he and his companion had made the journey by sunrise, or at a rate of about twenty miles an hour.

The chief thing now, however, was not to wonder at the circumstances of their remarkable escape, but to take advantage of it.

He turned to old Harry, who still lay, inert and awestruck, hugging the raft,

and after some difficulty convinced him that they were no disembodied shades waiting for Charon to ferry them over the Styx, but still denizens of the good old United States, entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Then he swam to land, towing the raft in behind him with the fragment of rope still hanging to it, and having carried his fellow-passenger ashore, proceeded to make the best of the situation.

The best was not very good, it is true, for they were drenched to the skin, and destitute of everything save the clothes upon their backs. Blankets, food, weapons, and medicine had all been lost either during the course of their journey down the river or in that plunge beneath the waters of the lake.

They did not dare even to light a fire, although the flint-stones lying about the shore and the nails in their boots provided a method. They could not forget that they were still in the heart of an enemy's country, and that the first sign of smoke would bring over a party from the island to investigate.

Nevertheless, Jack was not disposed to be downcast. He was so thankful to see the light of day again after his harrowing voyage that he would have endured without a murmur a much harder lot than that which now faced him.

Nor did he have much fear of a visit from the Indians. Their dread of the spot where he was now cast was such that unless their suspicions became aroused they would be very careful to avoid coming within the radius of its spell.

His chief present concern, indeed, was in regard to his father, for he could not but apprehend bad consequences from such an experience to a man just convalescing from rheumatic fever.

He did, however, what lay in his own power to avert calamitous results by stripping off the other's wet clothing and subjecting his patient to a massage treatment so unsparing that its victim was obliged to plead for mercy.

Finally, when the garments of both had been thoroughly dried in the sun and a breakfast had been made from the berries which grew at hand, he raked together a pile of leaves, and these comrades of misfortune forgot their troubles in the blissful unconsciousness of sleep.

For five days they lay hidden in the friendly thicket, subsisting on roots and berries, and recuperating their strength for the tasks still before them; for Jack's plan now was to embark once more upon their raft, and by means of it reach the outlet of the lake, some twenty miles away, whence, by following various intersecting watercourses, they could float down to the Mississippi and the settlements.

At last came a night which seemed to favor their project. Moonless and cloudy, it settled down with a brisk breeze blowing from the north that would help to accelerate the lake's slow current.

The door—a rude bow of hickory withes having been attached to it for a cutwater—was brought down to the shore and launched, and then, the old man having been settled in the stern, Jack, with a stout, flat sapling for a paddle, pushed off, and bent himself to the labor of navigating their course.

He had intended to pass close to the shore of the island, as the most direct route to his destination, but a bright fire there, which threw its light far out over the dancing waves, compelled him to alter his purpose and veer over toward the western bank.

Probably three miles had been made in this direction, when the boy, glancing up to determine his location, suddenly gave a soft whistle of dismay and drew his paddle from the water. On the shore which they were so sedulously hugging, and not more than a mile and a half ahead, a blaze was flaring out in answer to the one on the island, and by its light he could see scores of warriors embarking in canoes. The war-party from which they had escaped at the ravine was evidently returning to headquarters.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Jack, turning his paddle with a sweep and driving the raft to shore. "Maybe that wasn't a close shave. A half-hour more and we'd have been right in the thick of 'em."

Some time they had to rest there, close in under the willows on the bank, until the savages, whooping and exultant in the triumph of their return, had all been transported across and the beacon-fire on the shore had burned down to embers; but at last they deemed it prudent to

proceed, and Jack began to ply his clumsy oar faster than ever, in order to make up for lost time.

Eventually they arrived at a point well opposite the island, and the sight which now broke upon their vision was enough to spur the young oarsman to even more desperate exertions.

A dozen fires gleamed weirdly through the tree-trunks, and in this glow of illumination one could plainly make out the painted forms as they leaped and capered in preparation for some approaching ceremony. Their yells, continuous and ear-piercing, came across the water to the refugees like the blasts from a hundred steam-whistles.

Vigorously, then, Jack pushed his boat along, his gaze only wandering from the course ahead to turn an occasional fascinated glance toward that terrifying spectacle ashore; but all at once he stopped rowing with a jerk, and throwing himself flat upon the raft, laid a quick hand upon his companion to enjoin a similar action.

Out of the mist and darkness round about there shot swiftly into view between them and the island a graceful birch-bark canoe in which sat a single occupant. Not ten yards distant did the little vessel pass, and both men crouched lower, scarcely daring to hope they could evade a challenge.

But they need have entertained no fear; the glance of the figure in the boat was steadfastly directed toward the island, and almost frenziedly the paddle was digging through the water in an effort to reach it.

Just then, however, came a crack like the report of a pistol, and the paddle, overtaxed by the fierce energy the canoeist was applying to it, snapped off close to the handle.

"Oh!" came a despairing cry from the canoeist, and Jack could hardly repress an exclamation of astonishment as he recognized it as the voice of a woman. "Oh, am I to fail now? I must reach the island in time! They are plainly preparing to torture some helpless victim, and it may be Charlie! Oh, not that—not that!"

A sob strangled in her throat.

"I promised Mrs. Flick that I would save him, and I will do it!"

As the determined words rang vibrant from her lips she threw her hands above her head, and diving into the lake, struck out valiantly for the shore.

Jack, with a quick comprehension, caught the hand of his father in an impulsive clasp.

"Dad," he whispered thrillingly, "did you hear that? Brother Charlie is over there in the hands of those merciless butchers!"

(To be continued.)

FATE AND A BUTTON-HOOK.

By JOHN QUINCY MAWHINNEY.

How a commonplace implement seemed to intertwine itself with a romance in the budding stages.

THE train was still some distance from its destination when the early morning sun, streaming through the berth windows, roused the slumbering Dixon from the meshes of Morpheus. Throwing aside counterpane, sheets, and blanket, he sat upright and instigated a search for his timepiece.

"Holy smoke—eight-thirty!"

Cautiously parting the buttoned curtains he peered forth and felt rather embarrassed to find that several passengers were already up and dressed; he had intended rising earlier.

Donning as much clothing as possible—and more than necessary under the circumstances—he emerged from his bed and hastily made his way, suit-case in hand, to the men's dressing-room. After rearranging his toilet, he began a hunt through the satchel for his button-hook. But nothing of the sort materialized.

"Well, I'll be doggoned!"

He scratched his head perplexedly,

forced to conclude that this insignificant but very necessary implement had been left out in the packing. He felt rather foolish, and glanced at the feet of his fellow passengers, but was disgusted to observe that they one and all preferred the "laced" type of foot-gear. Anathematizing his own selection of button-shoes, he slapped shut the suit-case and shuffled back to his berth, which the porter was now reconverting into day use.

He watched this gentleman work for a few minutes and then sat down in a seat adjoining his own. And as he glanced up the aisle his pulse gave an extra beat—there was a button-shoe protruding slightly into the passageway!

Gazing interestedly at the foot adornment, he noticed that the instep was high and curved, the heel much higher; that the top was brown, with buttons to match, and that undoubtedly it was a woman's shoe. This deduction was confirmed by subsequent observation, and to his side he quietly summoned the porter.

Now, let it here be stated that Dixon was as backward with regard to the opposite sex as a chicken is toward water. The more the pity, because in every other respect he was a man to the backbone, athletic, good to look upon, and a great favorite among the fellows.

"Porter," he said, *sotto voce,* slipping a coin into a willing hand, "do you see the lady down there on the left—the one with a comb in her hair?"

"Well, sah, they all pretty much seem to have combs in their hair," began the darky perplexedly.

"Of course, of course," interrupted Dixon testily; "but the one I mean—"

"The comb?"

"No, the hair! It has all those little waves in it—"

"Marshal waves," broke in the porter knowingly. "I sees who yuh-all mean now."

"Then go and ask her, very quietly, mind you, whether you can borrow her button-hook."

"Me? Why, I don't need a button-hook—"

"No, you monkey, of course you don't. But I do. Request the loan of it very courteously, but don't point me out before the entire car if she happens to ask who wants it. Use your discretion."

The porter replied that he would, although it was quite evident that he was ignorant of the meaning of the term. He started on his mission, and Dixon watched his movements with a great deal of trepidation from behind an upside-down magazine.

Three minutes later the porter returned with the desired implement, and Dixon, holding it from view, made his way again to the men's dressing-room. As he hooked the last button, the train came to a stop, and the passengers began to alight.

Rushing back into the car proper, he looked hurriedly about for the porter, but that dignitary was nowhere visible. To heighten his chagrin, the seat previously occupied by the owner of the button-hook was vacant. She had evidently just left the train.

Out on the platform rushed Dixon, but it was no use. "She" had disappeared. Decidedly, the situation was embarrassing. But there did not seem to be a ready alternative to retaining possession, so he pocketed the silver hook and, after securing his suit-case, called a cab and was driven home, in rather a disgruntled mood.

II.

THAT evening Dixon attended a very exclusive dance, urged to the ordeal by his fast friend Doc Bradley, and owing to the preliminary anxieties incident thereto the button-hook train episode was forgotten.

But the next day, while Dixon was seated in his "den" toying with the little implement that was still causing him considerable agitation, his door was flung open and the generously proportioned Doc swooped in upon him with his usual breeziness and bellowed greetings.

"Hello, old top!" exclaimed Dixon, without rising; "take a couple of chairs and sit down. I'm too tired after that fandango last night to move a limb. Hardest work I've done in years, sliding around the floor with those fluffy little things in silks and laces."

"What about your cross-country foot-races?" interjected Doc laughingly.

"Easy in comparison," replied the yawning Dixon. "Those girls last

night must have been out of practise—that is, all excepting one!"

His face lighted up with a new expression as the remembrances of a certain waltz recurred to him.

His companion laughed.

"There's always just one, isn't there? Which young lady more than the others claimed your especial attention?"

"Miss Meredith," replied Dixon simply. "You know, Doc"—after a short pause—"I'm a terribly bashful jay—can't get it out of my system, somehow—that is, until last night. After Miss Meredith had talked to me a while, I forgot all about my failing, and say" (confidentially), "when she danced with those other ducks I had an awful queer feeling in my chest. She's very pretty, isn't she, old man?"

"Yes," yawned Doc; "very pretty indeed. What's this?"

He had picked up the button-hook and was regarding it with an amused smile.

"I hope you haven't come to using such femininely got-up things as these, Dick?"

"Oh, Lord, no!" exclaimed the other man.

And then he told his friend how the fancy implement had come into his possession.

"You are detectively inclined, Doc," he added. "See what you can do in locating the owner of the thing for me. I don't want her to think I am a thief, you know."

"There's a monogram on the end," observed the other. "It reads 'R. M.' intertwined.

"Is that so?" exclaimed Dixon. "I hadn't noticed it. Now you have a clue to work on. I'd like to keep it as the reminder of a very busy moment in my life, but it would hardly be polite to retain a borrowed article. So we must make a stagger at finding the owner. I'll leave it to you. Say, Doc, didn't Miss Meredith look sweet in that—that—what kind of a dress do you call it?"

"How do I know? I'm not a woman. Of course she looked sweet; she would be that in anything, and I'm glad to see that you have at last wakened up to a realization that all the pleasure in the world is not restricted to kicking a football, pulling an oar, or trying to kill yourself on that high-jumping nag of yours. I tell you, my boy, the love of a woman has all those things beat eighteen different ways to home base; I know, for I've been there—er—several times. But returning to the hook: I'll see what I can do, and I'll let you know in a couple of days. Meantime, say nothing about it to any one."

"I don't intend to go gabbling it about; think I want to get laughed at? But let me hear from you as soon as possible; she had rather pretty back hair, from where I sat in the train. And, Doc, in case you see Miss Meredith, remember I've helped *you* out lots of times."

III.

Two days later Doc called to make his report, but his mouth stuck open in amazement to find the bashful Dixon in bed; the physician had just left.

"What in the name of all that's puzzling is the matter?" he exclaimed finally.

The man on the bed smiled sheepishly.

"Tried to take one rail too many on the nag yesterday; spilled me in the dust and rubbed it in by rolling over on my right arm. Cracked it below the elbow, and here I am."

"Serves you right," rejoined Doc; "you're too blamed reckless; you need somebody to look after you, and somebody whose feelings you'll be afraid to hurt by continually jeopardizing your skin. Does it hurt?"

"Not in the least; feel fine as a fish. What did you detect regarding the button-hook?"

"Something that will make you forget you ever had any arm to break or that such a thing as a horse exists," replied his friend mysteriously.

Dixon tried to sit upright, but emitted a yell of pain as he used his lame arm in the endeavor. Doc rushed to his assistance and propped him up with a bunch of pillows.

"What's the answer?" he asked, after being comfortably fixed, and reaching for a cigar with his left hand.

"That's just what I came to you to get," replied the other man; "but as your writing hand is out of commission, I suppose I shall have to do the deed

myself. Cast your eye on this, my countryman!"

"This" was as follows:

> If the lady from whom I borrowed a button-hook bearing the initials R. M. will send me her address, I shall be only too happy to return the instrument, which I have retained through no fault of my own. Write D., P. O. Box 162.

"Well?"

"Well, that's self-explanatory, of course. I inserted it among the 'personals' of the *Chronicle* yesterday evening. And who do you suppose answered it?"

"How do I know? Haven't the slightest idea," replied Dixon unconcernedly.

His friend regarded him with a quizzical expression for a brief pause, and then answered: "Your friend—Miss Meredith."

"*What!*"

Although Dixon's arm was impaired, there was nothing whatever the matter with his lungs. After exploding thus he sat like a rock and stared at his friend with unbelieving eyes.

"Calm yourself," replied Doc soothingly; "merely a little coincidence. Unfortunately, however, the letter she wrote in reply to the advertisement was used by our careless friend Smithson to light his pipe; it was lying on my table and he didn't realize its importance."

"The gilly!" exclaimed Dixon disgustedly; "I'd like to sit on his head. I'd prize that letter above anything I possess. So the hook belongs to her! Well, jumping tadpoles! Isn't that fate pure and simple, old man—isn't that fate? Say, I knew I was in love with that girl the moment I caught sight of her back hair, Doc. By Jove, it's remarkable, isn't it? To think—but what did you do? Send it to her?"

"Not yet. I came here to have you answer the letter. But it occurs to me that it would be a good scheme not to let her know it was you who borrowed the button-hook. See? I met her this afternoon, but of course I didn't mention the newspaper stunt. I had an idea you might want to have a little fun. She was—"

"Say anything about me?" interrupted Dixon impatiently.

"Enough to fill a couple of chapters; but I carry no tales, so don't set your pumps a going. I'm only interested now in the button-hook."

And he sat down and wrote the following:

> MY DEAR MISS MEREDITH:
>
> I have received your brief note which claims the borrowed button-hook. I am only too happy to restore it to you, but in parting with it I am dispossessing myself of something more than the mere implement. Before I was aware that it belonged to you, I had the pleasure and honor of making your acquaintance, and now that I do know you, I am loath to part with the memento of our first meeting—yet not a meeting. I regretfully, therefore, return it to you, together with my grateful thanks for your kindness in loaning it to me, a person at that time unknown to you.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> D.

"We'll mail this to her," announced Doc after reading what he had written; "but we'll not put the button-hook in; we'll just forget to enclose it, and that will compel her to answer your letter. Besides, the apparent absent-mindedness will betray your streaks of genius."

Saying which, he added the post-office box number and sealed the letter.

"That epistle will start her guessing, all right, all right, won't it?" laughed Dixon, rather guiltily. "Little by little, in subsequent letters, I'll let it out who I am, and after a while, by the time I'm well, we'll be all hunky-dory."

And after that matters did become rather thickened.

An answer was received in which the omission of the button-hook was noted, but the larger part was given over to an attempt at discovering who its present possessor might be. The leading questions were hard to dodge, but the versatile Doc was equal to the occasion, and answered with the finesse of a prime minister, though still concealing the identity of Dixon.

And after three or four communications had been exchanged, she guessed who the writer was, much to Dixon's edification. Medicines were not in it compared with the soothing qualities of those letters, and about the third one he began to dictate them himself. He

would no longer trust to his friend Doc to say what he wished put down. Mention of the button-hook was gradually dropped, although he still retained it, having hung the thing with a piece of ribbon on the wall, where he could see it constantly.

For a man who heretofore had been the essence of bashfulness, he was making such strides—on paper—into the affections of at least one of the fair sex that Doc was holding jubilee with himself, so pleased was he over the state of affairs.

Then one day came a note from Miss Meredith that puzzled the convalescent considerably; nor could the strategic Doc throw any light on the matter. It read, in part, thus:

> . . . and I want to ask you, as a very special favor (and I have a very good reason for so doing), that you do not, after we have met again, make any mention of the button-hook or of any of my letters to you, or yours to me, for at least six months. At the end of that time you may, if you remember . . .

"Some girlish whim or other," was all that Doc could suggest as an explanation, and advised Dixon, knowing women so well himself, to accede to her request, intimating that doubtless she had a big surprise for him at the expiration of the stated time.

The next day, after having been confined to the house for several weeks, Dixon called on Miss Meredith in his runabout, and together they spent a very pleasant afternoon. Indeed, every following afternoon, when the weather would permit, they were to be seen in the park or on the boulevard, and by the time the six months was up Miss Meredith was Miss Meredith no more.

Before starting on their honeymoon, the effervescent Doc called to spend an hour with them. He wore a perpetual smile and looked at Dixon in an amused, retrospective way.

"What's the matter with you, anyway?" asked the bridegroom.

Doc laughed and glanced at the bride.

"Have you asked her about the button-hook?" he inquired.

"What button-hook?" queried the girl, looking from one to the other.

"*What* button-hook?" repeated Dixon. "Why, the one you asked me to make no mention of for six months; you surely haven't forgotten all our letters about it?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," declared the newly made Mrs. Dixon. "Button-hook — six months — letters? What do you mean, Ralph?"

"Mean? Why, goodness gracious, Rose, surely you remember my borrowing a button-hook from you on a train once upon a time and—and—why, it was that that indirectly led to our marriage, dear."

"I insist that you never borrowed a button-hook from me; you've been flirting with some other girl, sir. Murder will out," she added, laughing.

But Dixon whirled around on Doc, to find that individual holding his sides and trying to suppress his merriment.

"Oh—oh—this is too—too good!" he chuckled; "after getting them together I'm liable to part them before the honeymoon; and that would be awful. Awfully glad I mentioned the button-hook before you two got away; if I wasn't here to explain, I tremble to think what might happen."

"But what is the explanation, Doc? Rose surely must remember—"

"Rose can't remember anything about those letters, because she didn't write them; I had the honor. You see, when I inserted that advertisement in the paper I received this reply—I keep it always in my wallet:

> "DEAR SIR: The button-hook you borrowed and forgot to return, and which bears the initials M. R., belongs to my husband, Michael Rand, so please return it to the address below and oblige
>
> "ELIZABETH G. RAND.

"You will note," continued the chuckling Doc, "that the monogram is composed of R. and M. We read it R. M., but rightly it is M. R. The only coincidence occurs in the fact that Miss Meredith's initials happen to be the same, only reversed. Therefore, inasmuch as Ralph here had fallen head over heels in love with you, and inasmuch as I had been trying for some time to make him see the folly of single life, I decided not to destroy a romance so evidently intended, but to nourish and encourage it.

"So I wrote letters from Ralph to Rose and from Rose to Ralph, ending with one from Rose that demanded no mention be made of the affair for at least six months. I knew where you two would be about that time, judging by the progress made the first two weeks. I had another button-hook especially made for Mrs. Rand and sent to her, so that closed that end of the affair. The other two ends, yourselves, have now been tied together, and everybody is happy. What?"

Dixon regarded his friend for a moment with a foolish smile, and then, walking over to him, grasped his hand and wrung it heartily.

"Doc, you're a brick, but not one that's made of mud. You're all gold, of the highest carat. Get into the carriage and come to the train with us; time is flying."

WHEN A MAN'S HUNGRY.*

By BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "King or Counterfeit?" "No Way Out," "Who and Why?" etc.

From five thousand a year to nothing a day. How it came about and what happened next.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MAN PROPOSES.

THE enormity of the intelligence on the bulletin staggered Baldwin. He remained staring dazedly at the top line without attempting to read what followed.

But a man standing at his side supplied the deficiency. He was reading the announcement aloud to a woman companion, and Baldwin listened as one in a dream.

"'Ocean liner Mystic lost with all on board,'" the man read. "'Incoming liner reports seeing big ship sink in mid-ocean. Went down within a few minutes—before boats could be lowered. Cause of tragedy a complete mystery.'

"Gee whizz!" exclaimed the man. "That's bad—very bad. I wonder what could have been the matter with her to cause her to sink so quickly?"

"I pity the unfortunate people who had folks on board," said the woman. "This terrible news will bring suffering to many homes."

"Well, it's lucky it happened at this time of the year," declared the man. "The passenger-list couldn't have been very heavy, you see, although, of course, the accident is bad enough as it is. Come on, Bess. Let's step around the corner and see the printing-presses at work. They tell me it is an interesting sight. It's no use standing here any longer gaping at that bulletin."

They moved away, and Baldwin's eyes vacantly followed their retreating forms.

The logic of the man's last sentence suddenly struck him. It was no use standing there gaping at that bulletin-board. He must shake off this trance-like feeling. He must be up and doing.

When the average man hears bad news his first instinct is to rush to somebody else with the information. It was so now with Baldwin. He felt that he must share the startling intelligence with somebody.

He thought of old Mr. Watson, his uncle's friend. He would return to him at once and tell him that the Mystic was lost and his uncle drowned.

With this intention, he left the crowd and started up Broadway, but before he had gone a block he wheeled around and took the opposite direction.

He had changed his mind. He would not go to old Watson first. He would go to the typewriter girl at the Empirial. He had promised her that as soon as he learned anything about his uncle he would let her know.

**This story began in the May issue of* THE ARGOSY. *The four back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 40 cents.*

"I wonder how she will take this bad news," he mused as he walked briskly toward the hotel. "I suppose she will faint or scream or go into violent hysterics. All women do one of these things under such circumstances.

"I suppose it will be quite a shock to her—although, after all, I don't see why she should feel it very much. She wasn't in love with my uncle. She admitted that fact to me. It would have been a most unromantic marriage."

He entered the lobby of the Empirial this time without hesitation, blissfully confident of the fact that he was well dressed from head to foot and in no danger of being seized by the collar by an overzealous officer of the law.

The girl was sitting at her desk busily pegging away at her typewriter. She looked more adorable than ever, Baldwin thought. In fact, every time he met this girl, it seemed to him, she revealed fresh charms.

Baldwin managed to think this despite the weight which was on his mind, which shows that he was badly smitten.

As he stepped toward her the girl looked up from her work and, recognizing him, greeted him with a radiant smile.

"I was wondering what had become of you," she said. "I was getting quite anxious."

"Anxious—concerning me?" inquired Baldwin eagerly.

"Yes. I was afraid that in your search for your uncle some harm might have befallen you. I am glad to see that you are safe. I suppose you have not yet found any trace of the old gentleman?"

"Yes, I have," replied Baldwin sadly. "I have discovered that he sailed on the Mystic."

"Oh!" cried the girl, in great surprise. "Is that so? Then, he is now on the ocean?"

"No," replied Baldwin solemnly, "he is now under the ocean. The Mystic has gone down with all on board."

The girl received this information with a little cry of horror.

"Now comes the fainting-fit, or the shrieks or the hysterics, I suppose," Baldwin told himself apprehensively.

But nothing of the sort occurred. The girl's face was deathly white. Baldwin noted that there were tears in her eyes; but he also noted, to his great surprise, that she was looking at him with an unmistakable expression of compassion on her features.

"You poor fellow!" she said softly. "I am so sorry for you. I really am."

"Sorry for me!" gasped Baldwin, in amazement. "Aren't you—aren't you sorry for yourself?"

"Of course I am sorry to learn that the poor old man is dead, although it seems that my first suspicion was correct, after all, and that he *was* running away from me after promising to marry me; still, I bear him no ill will. I am sorry that he has met with such a bad fate. But it is for you that I am most sorry. It must be a terrible blow to you. You loved your uncle devotedly, did you not?"

Baldwin coughed uneasily.

"Well, no," he said. "I can't honestly say that I loved the poor old man devotedly. That would be putting it a little too strong, I am afraid. I don't want to be a hypocrite, you know. I despise hypocrisy. The fact is, my uncle and I were never very much to each other. We never could get along together. Nevertheless, I can honestly say that I am very sorry to lose him. He was my only kin, you know, and, after all, it is a great blow to lose one's only blood-tie."

"But you gave me to understand that you loved him dearly," cried the girl, in surprise. "You told me that you couldn't live without him—that you couldn't even eat until you succeeded in finding him."

"Well, I spoke the truth," retorted Baldwin grimly. "You see, I was dependent on my uncle. His disappearance left me without means. I came to this city to look for him without a cent in my pocket. I don't mind confessing now that I have had a hard job obtaining anything to eat since he disappeared."

"You poor fellow," said the girl sympathetically. "I wish I had known that. I did not dream that you were dependent on your uncle."

"Of course you didn't. I would not have had you know it for worlds. Inas-

much as you were expecting to marry the old man, I didn't want you to know that by doing so you would be cutting me out of my inheritance."

"It was very generous of you. And you have actually been in want since you came to this city?"

"I should say so," said Baldwin grimly. "You remember, the last time I was here you reproached me for not wearing an overcoat."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Well, the reason I did not wear one was because I had none to wear—I had pawned it for the price of a breakfast."

"You poor fellow!" said the girl again. "Well, now your troubles are all over. I suppose you will now be rich?"

"Rich! What do you mean?" cried Baldwin, in amazement.

"Why, you say you are your uncle's only kin. If he is dead you will inherit his fortune."

Baldwin laughed a little bitterly.

"Oh, no," he replied. "I have no hopes in that quarter. Just before he left Reading the poor old man saw fit to cut me out of his will. I shall not inherit a cent of his money."

"But if you are his only relative who else is there to inherit it?" inquired the girl wonderingly.

Baldwin shrugged his shoulders.

"He may have decided to leave his fortune to almost anybody. Who knows but what he has made you his heiress? By Jove, I shouldn't be at all surprised if that is just what he has done. He has probably altered his will in your favor."

"Do you really think so?" cried the girl. "Well, if he has done that I shall not accept the money. I shall give it to you, and insist upon your taking it. It rightfully belongs to you."

"Well, that is what I call generous," said Baldwin, looking as grateful as if his uncle's fortune had actually been handed over to him. "Of course, I shall not permit such a sacrifice."

"But I shall insist," she declared.

"I shall not accept such a sacrifice unless you are willing to make a still greater sacrifice and give me yourself along with the money. How does that proposition strike you?"

"It strikes me as being the most extraordinary proposal I have ever heard of," said the girl, with a smile. "But of course I do not take you seriously."

"I don't care whether you take me seriously or otherwise, so long as you take me," went on Baldwin eagerly.

"But surely you must be joking. Why, we scarcely know each other. We have only met three times," protested the girl.

"That doesn't matter. I have heard of couples who have known each other for years before they were married, and who have been unhappy afterward nevertheless," rejoined Baldwin. "The first time I saw you I made up my mind that you were the only girl for me. The second time we met I resolved to cut out my poor old uncle and make you prefer me despite my penniless condition. So, you see, this is no sudden rash decision on my part. If you want me to accept my uncle's money from you you will have to submit to my terms."

"Well, after all, your uncle may not have left his money to me," said the girl. "That is only your supposition, you know. He may have left his fortune to charity, or to build libraries."

"In that case," said Baldwin, "I shall have to go to work and earn enough to support the two of us. How would you like that?"

"I think that I should like that best of all," answered the girl softly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BALDWIN'S SACRIFICE.

OLD James Watson sat in his library reading the latest edition of the evening newspapers. There was an expression of great grief on his face as he turned from one paper to another.

"I am afraid it must be true," he sighed. "All the papers tell practically the same story. I fear there is no chance of the report being without foundation. What a terrible tragedy! The Mystic lost! My poor old friend Jarvis Cox! It is awful—awful. And to think that I came near being on that ship myself! What a narrow escape, to be sure!

"Poor old Jarvis!" he continued to ruminate sadly. "He was always a good friend. At college there wasn't a

better fellow than Jarvis Cox. What a boy he was, to be sure! A wild youngster. Somehow or other, that scrapegrace nephew of his strongly reminds me of Jarvis in his youth.

"By the way, I suppose that wild young man will now inherit his uncle's fortune; for, despite his threats to do so, I don't think Jarvis was the kind of man to cut off his sister's child and leave his money to an outsider. I'll predict that when my poor friend's will is read it will be found that the nephew inherits everything—and it is sad to think what will become of all that money when that young scamp gets possession of it."

His meditations were interrupted by the sudden entrance of the butler, whose face wore an expression of great surprise.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said. "That person who swept the snow away from the house a few hours ago, sir, has come back, and says he must see you about something very important."

"Certainly I will see him," said the old man. "Show him right up, Parsons."

As Baldwin entered the library old Watson noted the young man's altered appearance with considerable satisfaction.

"In those new clothes he looks every inch a gentleman," he mused. "Now that he has got out of that shabby suit and employed the services of a barber, he looks exactly like poor Jarvis in his youth."

Baldwin's glance rested on the pile of evening papers on the table.

"I see that you are already acquainted with the bad news, Mr. Watson," he said gravely.

"Yes," answered the old man. "It is terrible. You have my heartfelt sympathy, my boy."

"Thank you."

"I suppose you feel your loss very keenly, eh?"

"Yes, I am very sorry to lose my uncle. I won't pretend that we were overfond of each other, but he was my only living relative, you know."

"I think he *was* fond of you," said Mr. Watson. "There was much about your conduct that displeased him, but I think that deep down in his heart he had a warm regard for you."

Baldwin sighed.

"I hope not," he said. "If I thought that such was the case I should now feel heartily ashamed of myself, for I am willing to admit that I have made a poor return to him for all his kindness. I am afraid I treated him very shabbily.

"He and I saw but little of each other, although we lived in the same town. We were almost as strangers to each other. I begin to see now that this may have been largely my fault. Perhaps I ought to have shown him more attention. My only justification is the thought that the old man disliked me, and that it really pleased him to see as little of me as possible. If I thought your theory was correct—that he really did care anything about me—I should reproach myself bitterly."

"I think that when your uncle's will is read you will find that I am right," said the old man grimly. "I believe you will find that, despite your deep ingratitude, he has forgiven you and made you his heir."

"I hope not," responded Baldwin solemnly. "I should like to know that the poor old man had forgiven me, of course, but somehow or other I hope he has not made me his heir. I don't think my conscience would allow me to take the money."

The old man arose, and walking over to Baldwin, extended his hand.

"My boy," he cried, "I am glad to hear you say that. It shows that you are made of the right kind of stuff, after all. I wish your uncle were alive to hear you talk in that strain."

"Besides," continued Baldwin earnestly, "I do not need the money. I have made up my mind to turn over a new leaf this very day. I am going to earn my own living."

"Good!" exclaimed old Watson approvingly. "That is the right spirit. If you like, I will give you that job as private secretary."

To the old man's surprise, Baldwin shook his head.

"No," he said; "that would be a sinecure. I don't want a soft snap now. I want to do really hard work. If you will find me a job in a busy down-town office, Mr. Watson, I will gladly take it, and do my best to make good."

"That's the way to talk, my lad. I am glad to see that your reformation is so thorough. How I wish that your poor uncle were alive to witness it!"

"Amen!" responded Baldwin mournfully.

The butler again entered the room.

"Mr. Jarvis Cox, sir," he announced unemotionally.

"What!" yelled old Watson and Baldwin in unison.

"Mr. Jarvis Cox is down-stairs in the reception-room, sir," replied the flunky, apparently surprised at the startling effect of this announcement upon the two men.

Baldwin looked at old Watson, and the latter looked at Baldwin. The faces of the two had turned deathly pale.

"Impossible!" gasped Mr. Watson.

"What can it mean?" muttered Baldwin.

The flunky stood there waiting patiently for his orders.

"It can't really be he. It must be an impostor," whispered his master tremblingly.

"Or else my uncle's ghost," added Baldwin.

"Well, we'll soon see," said the old man. "Ask him to come up here, Parsons."

"Very good, sir."

And a few seconds afterward Baldwin's uncle entered the room.

It was Jarvis Cox, without doubt, and in the solid flesh.

"How are you, Watson?" he cried heartily. "I suppose you've heard of the Mystic being wrecked. I have come to let you see that I am safe. I guess you thought—"

Then he stopped short, suddenly noticing his nephew's presence.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know you were acquainted with my friend Watson. How the deuce did you get here, young man?"

"The very question that I was going to ask you," said Baldwin. "How the deuce did you get here, uncle? You are supposed to be lying at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, you know."

Jarvis Cox shuddered.

"I guess I would be there," he replied, "if I hadn't changed my mind a few minutes before the Mystic sailed and decided not to cross the ocean, after all. But even though I am not drowned, I am in trouble enough."

"Trouble?" repeated old Watson and Baldwin in chorus.

"Yes—great trouble. Listen, Watson; listen, Frank, my boy. I want you to help me. I don't know what to do. I am at my wits' end. I am afraid to face her, and yet I fear it must be done."

"Face *her!*" cried old Watson, in genuine amazement. "Who the dickens do you mean by *her,* Jarvis. You haven't been getting into trouble with a woman, have you?"

"Yes, I have," admitted Baldwin's uncle, avoiding his friend's stern gaze. "I have gone and made an infernal old ass of myself. I have gone and proposed marriage to a young woman, and I don't want to marry her. You must help me, Watson. *You* must help me, Frank."

"Let us hear the whole story," suggested Baldwin. "If I can be of any assistance to you, my dear uncle, I assure you, you can command me."

"That is kind of you, my boy—very kind," said the old man gratefully. "I will tell you all about it. As a matter of fact, you are really responsible for my troubles. I was very much displeased with you, Frank. I got to thinking of your ingratitude toward me. I said to myself, 'Why should I go on supporting this young profligate who doesn't care one snap of his fingers for me?' I decided to cast you off.

"As I suppose you know, I inserted an advertisement in the Reading paper disowning you entirely. And then the foolish thought entered my head: 'Why should I go on leading a life of loneliness? Why should I not get married and have some one to care for me?' I made up my mind that I would do it. I remembered that the last time I had visited New York I had stopped at the Empirial, and had there made the acquaintance of a charming young lady who did typewriting. I determined to ask this young woman to be my wife.

"I came to New York, proposed to her, and after some demur she accepted me. We decided to get married right away. I went to a clergyman to arrange

for a quiet wedding. The minister agreed to perform the ceremony. I hailed a hansom with the intention of returning immediately to the hotel.

"On the floor of the cab lay a discarded copy of an evening newspaper. The big head-line on the front page happened to catch my eye. I picked up the paper and read the story. It was an account of an aged millionaire who had married a young typewriter girl. The young wife was eager to inherit her old husband's fortune, so she put poison in his coffee and killed him.

"That newspaper article scared me badly. Somehow or other, it seemed to me to be a direct warning. How did I know that I should not encounter a similar fate? I hastily stopped the cab and got out.

"I was in a great panic. As I stood on the sidewalk wondering what to do I happened to meet Watson, here, who told me about his having bought a passage on the Mystic and not being able to sail. That seemed like an inspiration. I purchased his ticket, determined to flee to Europe, for I was afraid to face that poor girl and tell her that I had changed my mind.

"When I got to the pier, however, something seemed to tell me that I ought not to take the trip, and I let the Mystic sail without me. Since then I have been trying to pluck up enough courage to go back to that poor girl and tell her that I do not want to get married. But I must confess that I am afraid to face her. Now, how can you help me?"

"Easily," said Baldwin. "I will save you from this distressing scene. I will go to the young lady and inform her that you have changed your mind."

"But supposing she refuses to release me?" cried the old man timorously. "Supposing she insists on getting married?"

"In that case," said Baldwin heroically—"in that case I will offer to marry her myself."

Baldwin's uncle uttered a cry of mingled hope and joy.

"The very thing!" he shouted. "The very thing! Of course, she will be disappointed, but I think she will accept the compromise. This is very good of you, Frank. It is really very generous of you, my boy. I am afraid I have wronged you. You are a better fellow than I thought. But I will make amends. I will reinstate you in my will. I will renew your allowance—in fact, I will double it."

"Thanks," said Baldwin. "That is very kind of you, my dear uncle, but I don't think I shall need any allowance. I am going to work. I am going to earn my own living."

THE END.

Much Ado About a Quarter Million.

By F. K. SCRIBNER.

The startling outcome of a detective's efforts to recover some missing bonds.

I WAS sitting in my office at police headquarters smoking an after-lunch cigar. The detective bureau, of which I was the head, had just cleared up an intricate case, to the credit of myself and my staff of associates.

No later than that very morning I had received a highly congratulatory note from the mayor. It was therefore with an unusual degree of satisfaction that I leaned back in my chair and watched the smoke drift toward the ceiling.

The sudden opening of the door broke in upon my pleasant meditations. The doorman, who drew a modest sum per annum from the city treasury for wearing a police uniform and holding down a chair in the little anteroom adjoining my office, tiptoed across the threshold.

He always tiptoed. I do not remember ever having seen the man place his feet squarely on the floor. He apparently deemed it a necessary requisite for an official attached to the detective bu-

reau to move with the silent caution of one following a suspect.

This idiosyncrasy had frequently annoyed me, but on that particular afternoon I glanced at him benignly through the cloud of tobacco-smoke.

"What is it, Haggerty?" I asked briefly.

He tiptoed across the room, laid a card on my desk, and said solemnly:

"He's waiting outside, sir, and—he looks the right sort."

It is one of the duties of the head of a detective bureau to meet all degrees and conditions of mankind—cranks, informers, and well-meaning garrulous individuals who fancy the department will be the wiser for their interference; persons who *suspect* a crime has been committed and think the police should be put next to it at once; weeping women who have mislaid a baby, or jewelry, as the case may be; ex-criminals who desire to square themselves; applicants for a position on the force; political heelers who imagine new dignity is acquired by keeping in touch with the guardians of the city's welfare.

I had trained Haggerty to make a careful discrimination, so, when he announced that the visitor was "the right sort" I picked up the card with a feeling that my half-hour of repose was at an end.

It was such a card as is carried by gentlemen who move in fashionable circles; across its white surface I read the name:

MR. JENNINGS ELWOOD.

There was no address engraved in the lower left-hand corner, as was customary.

"You will show Mr. Elwood in," I said shortly, and deposited my half-finished cigar in the ash-tray.

Haggerty tiptoed to the door, threw it open, and commanded in solemn tones:

"You will step this way, sir."

The words were followed by the appearance of my visitor, Mr. Jennings Elwood, and a glance told me he had come on business; a prosperous banker or broker is not in the habit of wasting valuable time interviewing the police unless he has something of import to communicate.

And judging from appearances, the man who entered the room in so dignified a manner was the prosperous head of either a banking or a brokerage establishment. I am seldom far astray when it comes to sizing up a person's occupation.

Mr. Elwood glanced curiously around the office. He was apparently one of those substantial citizens of whom the great republic is so justly proud.

Somewhere in the neighborhood of sixty years or thereabouts, his hair was just verging between iron-gray and a silvery white; his face was clean-shaven, and expressive of determination; the eyes, which looked out from behind gold-rimmed glasses, intensely blue in color, and the mildest it had ever been my fortune to note.

He wore the conventional black frock coat, and carried a highly polished hat and a gold-headed cane—just such a man as the name on the card implied.

"Have I the honor of addressing the head of the metropolitan secret service bureau?" he asked in a well-modulated voice.

"You have," I answered briefly.

He removed his glasses, polished them in a nervous manner, and replaced them carefully upon the bridge of his aristocratic nose.

"Not to intrude unnecessarily upon your valuable time, I—I will at once state the nature of my errand," he went on, then hesitated.

"I shall be pleased to hear what you may desire to communicate, Mr. Elwood. In what manner can I assist you?" I asked.

"It is a most painful duty that has fallen upon me, I—" He stopped abruptly and repolished his eye-glasses nervously.

"It is a part of my occupation to listen to painful revelations," I suggested.

"But possibly not of as disagreeable a nature as mine will be, for—I have come to request the apprehension by the police of my brother, Mr. Gaynor Elwood," was the unexpected answer.

"Kindly state your reasons, clearly and concisely; it may be we shall find a speedy way to obviate the necessity of what you desire, Mr. Elwood."

I saw he had made the statement most unwillingly, and ran rapidly over in my mind the numerous cases where the assistance of the police had been called in to adjust family difficulties; but—they had been confined to a class to which, obviously, my visitor did not belong.

He cleared his throat and accepted, with a show of hesitancy, the chair I offered him.

"I know practically nothing of police methods," he went on, "but I am given to understand that publicity is one of the essentials necessary—"

"Not always," I interrupted; "it naturally depends on the nature of the case. You may proceed with perfect frankness, sir."

I am not given to sentiment—in my official capacity—but I saw he was genuinely ill at ease. He studied the head of his cane for a moment, then raised his eyes with a quick gesture of resignation.

"I desire to have my brother, Mr. Gaynor Elwood, arrested for — grand larceny," said he weakly.

"I see. Please state the case more fully; you believe your brother has been guilty of misappropriating what does not rightly belong to him?"

I was trying to make it as easy as possible for my caller to continue.

"I do not believe—I know!" replied he decidedly.

He wiped his glasses for the third time, allowed them to drop to the length of their cord, and went on:

"I am a resident of Boston, as is my brother, Gaynor Elwood; we are engaged in the profession of banking, and, I might state, our house is one of the most substantial and oldest in New England. We handle hundreds of thousands of dollars of—other people's money.

"The day before yesterday we closed a transaction which necessitated placing in the hands of a certain banking-house in this city negotiable bonds to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars—a clear quarter of a million. As both my brother and myself had for some weeks contemplated a visit to New York, we decided, in lieu of forwarding the consignment in the usual manner, to convey it ourselves from Boston; with two of us to guard the bonds, there seemed little to be feared, especially as no one but two of our most trusted employees knew of the contemplated transfer.

"We left Boston shortly before twelve last night, my brother carrying the bonds in a black sealskin satchel. Upon arrival at the Grand Central Station this morning, we called a cab, the driver of which I directed to proceed to the Fifth Avenue Hotel. My brother, Gaynor Elwood, entered the vehicle and seated himself, holding the satchel between his knees; I was about to follow, when I discovered that I had left my cigar-case, an expensive one, in the sleeper. Acquainting my brother with the carelessness of which I had been guilty, I hurried back into the station, where I was so fortunate as to recover my property from the porter, who was at that moment entering from the platform."

He paused for a moment, shifted uneasily in his seat, and continued:

"I returned at once to the sidewalk, where I saw the cab still standing at the curb. The door was closed—a wise precaution on the part of my brother, I thought—and I turned the handle, at the same time telling the driver we were ready to proceed. But as I was on the point of stepping into the vehicle with a laughing comment upon my unwarranted good fortune in regaining the cigar-case so easily I drew back, dumb with astonishment. The cab was empty!"

He paused and rubbed his hands nervously together.

"You are positive you opened the door of the right cab? Think well, Mr. Elwood," I said.

"Positive," he answered. "I recognized the driver perfectly, and there was no other cab near the sidewalk."

"And the driver? Did he notice when your brother left the vehicle?"

"He did not; my brother must have slipped out of the door on the street side, for the driver would have seen him otherwise."

"But it is possible your brother may have left the cab only momentarily; did you wait a reasonable length of time for his return?"

"I did—over half an hour—though from the first I knew it was useless."

"And why did you think that?"

"Because," he replied soberly, "I found this lying on the seat of the cab."

He produced his wallet, and abstracted from it a sheet of paper, which he handed to me. It was a hastily written note, in lead-pencil, and read:

> God forgive me, but the temptation is too great; you will never see or hear of me again.
>
> G.-E.

"And this is in your brother's handwriting?" I demanded.

"It is; and that is the whole case, sir," he answered.

I twisted the note slowly between my fingers. Here was what appeared to be the larceny of a quarter of a million of dollars in negotiable bonds—bonds which the holder might easily convert into cash.

I saw an important case ahead of me, a case involving not only a large sum of money, but one of the oldest and most aristocratic names in Boston. I drew forward a pad, and put to Mr. Jennings Elwood the following questions, jotting down brief notes as he replied:

"When your brother entered the cab in which you left him seated with the sealskin satchel between his knees you are positive the satchel contained the bonds?"

"I am positive the bonds were in the satchel."

"You are equally positive no one knew the nature of the contents of the satchel except your brother and yourself?"

"Only the cashier and his assistant, men who had been in our employ for twenty years or more."

"And men you trusted?"

"Implicitly."

"You have every reason to believe that no one in New York knew you brought the bonds from Boston? That no one who possessed this knowledge followed you to this city?"

"I am positive."

"During your conversation while on the train is it not possible you might have made some mention of the bonds which was overheard?"

"We refrained from mentioning the bonds at any time after leaving the bank in Boston."

I put a few more questions of a similar trend, then asked suddenly:

"Have you ever had reason, Mr. Elwood, to suspect your brother was in financial difficulties, or that he desired to possess, for any purpose, a large sum of money?"

"I am not aware that my brother was cramped for funds, though I believe that of late he has lost somewhat in speculation," was the answer.

"Has he seemed worried or ill at ease?"

"He is a man who naturally worries over little things, but I do not recollect that this trait has been more marked of late."

"Then, you do not think your brother was in pressing need of funds—so much so that he would be led to commit a crime in order to obtain ready money to a large amount?"

"So far as I know, he was not, and he understood that my bank-account was at his service."

I had made no headway in that direction, though of course it was possible that Mr. Jennings Elwood did not know of all the worries of Gaynor. I put another question:

"Have you ever had reason to suspect, Mr. Elwood, that your brother might be—let us say under the influence of a delusion; in other words, has he always been perfectly sound mentally?"

My visitor shifted uneasily on his chair and fell to polishing his eyeglasses with nervous vigor.

"My father died in a retreat for the insane, but—I have never noticed symptoms of the dread malady in my brother," was his answer.

I jotted down a few notes on the pad; I was beginning to believe I saw the solution of the case—sudden insanity. If Gaynor Elwood had not been in need of funds—in fact, knew that he might draw upon his brother for a large sum, if necessary—yet had deliberately absconded with a quarter of a million, the theory of insanity was most reasonable, especially as the taint of that disease ran in the family.

Had I been in Mr. Jennings Elwood's

place, such a solution must have come as a relief, painful as it was to know one's own brother had gone insane. It was better than the other—that he had deliberately, while in his right senses, made off with the contents of the black sealskin bag.

This phase of the case also promised a more speedy apprehension of the missing banker. Probably he had been seized with the idea that the bonds were really his own and he might use them as he pleased; such being the fact, it was scarcely probable he had left the city.

It was the duty of the department to hunt for and catch a crazy man; unless, with an insane cunning, he had covered his tracks, it would not prove so difficult a task, after all.

I obtained a complete and concise description of the missing man, the places he usually frequented when he visited New York, and such other details as might be useful in a search for him.

"I trust that by to-morrow at the latest we may turn your brother over to you, Mr. Elwood," I announced then. "A message sent to the Fifth Avenue Hotel will reach you?"

"I shall remain there, at your disposal, and will be ready to hurry to police headquarters at the first summons," he answered. Then, with some hesitation:

"If you are so fortunate as to apprehend my unfortunate brother I presume I will have the option of acting as I think best in the matter; it will not be absolutely necessary that he be held for the larceny of the bonds?"

"Unless you desire to press the case, I think that can be satisfactorily arranged; the first thing is to recover the bonds—and your brother," I replied.

He bowed himself out, and I touched the bell which summoned Haggerty.

"Send Davis and Ford to me at once," I ordered sharply.

They were two of the best men in the department, and had handled more difficult cases than the one now up to us. When they answered my summons I gave them all the facts in the case as I knew them, and they departed on their errand.

Then I took some further steps on my own account, for the standing of the parties concerned and the amount of money at issue aroused all my personal interest in the case. I believed we were looking for a crazy man, but it might transpire that I was mistaken; Mr. Gaynor Elwood might have taken those bonds because he needed the money they represented.

I sent a call to each precinct in the city giving a detailed description of the man we wished to find; this put the entire police force on the watch for Gaynor Elwood.

Having covered the city pretty thoroughly, I sent a wire to the chief of police in Boston asking for information about the Elwood brothers. Then I put on my hat and left the office, to keep an engagement with a friend up-town.

It was well toward the latter part of the afternoon when I returned to my desk. Haggerty handed me a telegram from Boston. I tore it hastily open and read the few lines scrawled across the yellow sheet:

> Banking-house of Elwood Brothers sound. Jennings reputed worth several millions; reputation of the highest. Junior partner Gaynor, eccentric—been confined in private asylum for insane. Both absent from city. Family reticent.

So, my late visitor had withheld the information that his brother had been confined in a private asylum—probably family pride. The knowledge confirmed the theory I had formed—we were looking for a crazy man, and not a genteel criminal.

Jennings Elwood's neglect on this little point might have proved serious, but fortunately the information had come in time. Why is it that some people persist in withholding important information from the authorities when they expect the police to render them assistance? It is frequently the cause of failure, for which the police are blamed.

I went home for dinner, leaving word that I was to be called up by 'phone if any of the boys had a report to make. It was close upon eleven o'clock that night when the whir of the bell brought me to the receiver. A voice which I recognized as Ford's came over the wire.

"That you, chief?"

"Yes; what is it?" I returned.

"We've got our man."

"Good! At headquarters?"

"No; we're at the Plaza—watching him."

"Then he don't know?"

"Not yet; we're waiting for instructions."

"You had all that were necessary."

"Under ordinary circumstances; but this seems different."

"What do you mean?"

"The company he's in."

"Entertaining friends, eh?"

"Yes."

The names of three gentlemen of national reputation — two United States Senators and a member of the Cabinet— came over the wire. Then a fourth, the head of one of the largest banking firms in the world.

I emitted a whistle of surprise. Gaynor Elwood, a lunatic, in such company! I could picture the surprise of his companions when they learned the startling truth.

"Are you *positive* you have the right man?" I 'phoned.

"Sure; name—G. Elwood—on the register; the clerks know him, and we've heard him addressed as 'Elwood' a dozen times."

"Keep him spotted. I'll be with you in twenty minutes," I called back, and hung up the receiver. It didn't take me long to catch an Elevated train, which put me down at Sixth Avenue and Fifty-Eighth Street; from there it was only a step around the corner to the Plaza.

Ford and Davis were waiting for me in the office. The former jerked his thumb in the direction of an alcove. I strolled leisurely across the marble floor and took a careful scrutiny of the party, which occupied the couch and a couple of comfortable chairs.

All were talking and smoking cheerfully. In the white-haired, dignified-looking gentleman seated on one end of the couch I recognized Mr. Gaynor Elwood.

I rejoined Ford and Davis.

"Just step to the 'phone, one of you, and call up Jennings Elwood, at the Fifth Avenue," said I; "this is going to be a delicate matter."

It was my intention to wait until Mr. Elwood's arrival before taking further steps in the affair, but on the reappearance of Davis, who had gone to the 'phone, I saw I must tackle the job as I found it. A message from the Fifth Avenue said that Mr. Jennings Elwood had left the hotel a half-hour before in company with a couple of friends; one of the latter had informed the clerk that they should not return.

This was a surprise, but doubtless Elwood knew his own business; I should probably see him at headquarters in the morning. In the meantime, it was my duty to secure the person of the man we were after.

Presently two of the gentlemen with him arose, shook hands, and departed; there remained the Cabinet member and one of the Senators.

I saw no reason for waiting around the hotel half the remainder of the night, and decided to get my disagreeable duty over as soon as possible. With this intention, I approached the three men seated on the couch.

"Mr. Elwood, I believe?" said I pleasantly.

The three looked up in surprise, and my man answered rather gruffly:

"I am Mr. Elwood; have you any business with me?"

"If I might beg a moment's private conversation," I suggested.

He arose, flipped the ash from his cigar into the cuspidor, and led the way half across the office.

"Well, to what am I indebted for the honor of this interview? If you are a reporter, I will tell you at once that I have nothing to say," said he, half impatiently.

"I am not a reporter, and under the circumstances will it not be wiser to avoid a scene? You are wanted at police headquarters, Mr. Elwood," I replied.

He looked at me in astonishment.

"Police headquarters? Who are you, sir?" he demanded.

I informed him quietly, noting from the corner of my eye that Ford and Davis had edged toward us, ready to step in if he became suddenly violent.

But instead of an outbreak he looked at me with a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

"My dear fellow! So, that's why

you ve been watching me for the past half-hour? Is it as a witness or as a prisoner I am wanted?"

"I trust neither, but a friend of yours happens to be at headquarters, and your presence there is necessary," I answered.

It was best to humor him, for at any moment he might become violent; if we could get him to headquarters through a deception the rest would be easy.

"I was not aware that I have any friends who frequent Mulberry Street. Who is it?" he asked dryly.

For a moment I hesitated; then answered:

"A gentleman who claims to be a Mr. Elwood, of Boston; the resemblance between you is somewhat striking."

He gave a sudden start, and his lips quivered.

"Good God!" cried he, and before I could interfere turned and went hurriedly back to his distinguished companions.

I heard the Cabinet member's expression of startled surprise, and saw the Senator gravely shake his head. Then the trio came toward me.

"We will go to police headquarters at once," said Mr. Elwood sharply. "Will this thing have to get into the papers?"

"Not necessarily — if everything is carried out quietly," I answered.

He was evidently sane enough to wish to hide his arrest from the public.

We walked carelessly across the office, the Cabinet member and Mr. Elwood in advance, the Senator and I following, and Ford and Davis bringing up the rear.

"This is indeed a most painful duty, sir," I began.

The Senator shook his head gravely.

"It runs in the family; usually one out of each generation," he replied.

"Then, you knew that Mr. Elwood is insane?"

"Most certainly; I have known the family for years. It is one of those painful burdens which are frequently given us to bear. The Elwoods are particularly sensitive on the subject, and I trust, chief, you will keep this matter away from the newspaper boys."

"It can be arranged, if there is no disturbance and the bonds are forthcoming," I answered.

We had reached the sidewalk, and in the confusion incidental to calling a carriage the Senator allowed my remark to pass unnoticed. Mr. Elwood and the Cabinet member were already in the vehicle; I touched Ford's arm.

"Go up and guard the door of Elwood's room; the bonds may be in there, and we must take no chances of having them stolen," I whispered.

Then I followed the Senator into the carriage, the door was slammed, and we rattled southward toward headquarters.

During the drive no one attempted conversation. Mr. Elwood leaned back in his corner with closed eyes, his companions puffed silently upon their cigars, and I saw no reason for interrupting their meditations.

Although I was a little surprised that the statesmen should accompany us, it was but natural; doubtless they desired to make arrangements with Mr. Jennings Elwood for the care of the prisoner. Perhaps I should have told *them* of the little deception I had practised, but it was then too late; they could not turn back without risking the danger of an outbreak on the part of the lunatic.

We pulled up before headquarters, and Davis, who had occupied the box with the driver, opened the door of the carriage. We filed into the somber building, and through the dimly lighted corridor to my office.

The night attendant met us on the threshold of the anteroom.

"Three gentlemen been waiting over an hour for you, sir," he began; then catching sight of my companions, threw the door wide open and stepped aside.

Looking into the room, the unexpected greeted me. On the official chairs were seated three men—and one was Mr. Jennings Elwood, the person of all others I most desired to see at that moment. He was nervously polishing the head of his walking-stick, but looked up quickly as we entered.

For a moment the two Elwoods regarded each other in silence. Then Jennings arose slowly to his feet.

"Ah! So, they have found you? The bonds! What have you done with the bonds?" he cried excitedly.

His crazy brother was the cooler of the two under the circumstances.

"It's all right," he said; "the bonds are safe, and you shall have them in the morning. Don't worry or get excited; they haven't been stolen this time."

Jennings Elwood dropped back into his chair with a sigh of satisfaction. One of the men who were seated near him stepped forward and shook hands gravely with my prisoner; he evidently understood the case perfectly, and I saw he was a doctor.

"Most unfortunate, Mr. Elwood, but there need be no publicity," said he gravely.

I threw open the door leading into the office and motioned to the visitors to precede me. We would soon have the business over with, and I should probably see no more of the brothers Elwood.

The Cabinet member, the Senator, Mr. Gaynor Elwood, and the doctor filed solemnly into the inner room; I looked toward Jennings Elwood, who seemed to be lost in contemplation of an electric bulb between the windows. He felt my eyes fixed upon him, and looked up suddenly.

"Go in and fix it up, chief; whatever the doctor wishes I'll agree to," said he wearily, and sank back in his seat.

I understood he wished to avoid a possibly painful interview, so entered the office without him, closing the door behind me. The four men were silently awaiting my coming.

"Well, gentlemen?" said I, and glanced toward the doctor.

"I do not think we need remain here longer, for I am satisfied Mr. Elwood will accompany us quietly—now that he has seen his brother and is assured the bonds are safe. It is most fortunate you were able to bring Mr. Elwood here to-night; it saves us many anxious hours, for the patient might break out at any moment—with those bonds on his mind. I must confess that when I humored him to the extent of accompanying him to police headquarters I had no idea we should be so fortunate as to meet Mr. Elwood so opportunely," said he.

Who was the man talking about, and who was he humoring? It seemed to me that I was doing the humoring, and losing sleep in the bargain.

"I fancy we shall have no trouble at all, and can drive quietly to the station with no publicity," added the doctor.

"Thank God for that!" said Mr. Gaynor Elwood fervently. Then to me:

"I want to thank you, chief, for the assistance you have rendered us in this most unfortunate matter, but if you had told me Dr. Thompson was with my brother I should have been spared much anxiety."

"The chief was unaware I was with Mr. Elwood; he was absent when we reached headquarters," put in the doctor.

"But he told me my brother was here, and you say that you accompanied him to headquarters," said Mr. Gaynor Elwood, in surprise.

"Certainly I did, for had I refused to humor him to that extent there might have been a scene in the hotel. He declared he had an important engagement at police headquarters before leaving town, and nothing would do but he must come here to-night."

"An engagement at the detective bureau?" asked Mr. Elwood, in surprise.

"Gentlemen," said I desperately, "in placing Mr. Elwood under custody I thought it wise to employ a little deception; his brother was at headquarters this morning, but I did not think to find him here to-night."

The Senator—"Place Elwood in custody?"

The Cabinet member—"What is the man saying?"

Mr. Elwood—"My brother here this morning?"

"It was at the request of Mr. Jennings Elwood that I placed the prisoner under arrest at the Plaza to-night; it now only remains for—"

"At *my* request? *I* request you to arrest *myself?* Impossible!" cried my prisoner.

"I said at the request of Mr. Jennings Elwood," I reiterated sharply.

"But I never made such a request; never saw you until this evening, sir, when you accosted me," retorted Mr. Elwood with considerable heat.

"*You* did not, but Mr. Jennings—"

"*I* am Jennings Elwood!" came his astonishing assertion.

"Certainly. You are talking with Jennings Elwood," arose in chorus from

the Cabinet member, the Senator, and the doctor.

"But I went to the Plaza to arrest Gaynor Elwood, charged with having purloined negotiable bonds to the amount of a quarter million dollars."

Suddenly a look of comprehension overspread the doctor's countenance.

"Wait a moment!" cried he. "You went to the Plaza to arrest *Gaynor Elwood*—at the request of his brother, the gentleman in the next room?"

"I did; and to avoid a scene I used a pardonable deception," I replied.

"Good God! and you took me for the —my brother?" cried Mr. Elwood.

For answer I opened my desk and took out the notes I had jotted down when the other Mr. Elwood laid the case before me.

"If you will read those, perhaps we may reach an explanation," said I, and put the notes in the doctor's hand.

He read them carefully, then passed them to his companions.

"Ah!" cried each in turn, and the Senator added:

"We might have suspected—a most peculiar situation."

His lips quivered in a poorly suppressed smile.

But to me the thing was not so humorous. The doctor broke the painful silence which had settled over the office.

"I think a brief explanation will clear the atmosphere; the chief's mistake was, under the circumstances, most natural, and, as the Senator suggests, *we* should have guessed the truth. I will explain that the gentleman who is at present waiting in the other room with one of my staff *is Mr. Gaynor Elwood.* For several months past he has been confined in a private asylum for the insane, under treatment for a delusion which takes the form of the belief that some one is systematically robbing the banking-house of which he is one of the heads; he also cherishes the additional delusion that he is Jennings Elwood, and that the latter is Gaynor, and is insane.

"Yesterday the patient effected his escape from custody and came to this city. As now appears, he hurried to police headquarters, where he told an imaginary though highly realistic story of the robbery of certain bonds which had been entrusted to his brother. Naturally, the police were misled into interesting themselves in the affair; Mr. Jennings Elwood is found at the Plaza and brought to headquarters under the supposition that he is the purloiner of the bonds. Am I not correct, chief?"

"You are," I answered dryly. "I certainly supposed it was Mr. Gaynor Elwood whom my men traced to the Plaza, especially as they found the signature 'G. Elwood' on the register."

"Good gracious, I see!" exclaimed Mr. Elwood; "that is because my J can be so easily taken for a G."

I did not think it necessary to comment upon this simple statement. I was thinking of how I had set the machinery of the department in motion to run down a fake; of Ford cooling his heels guarding an imaginary bundle of bonds up at the Plaza.

The Senator was pulling on his gloves.

"The chief has assured me that this matter will not reach the ears of the reporters," he ventured.

There was just a shade of laughter in his voice.

"I will repeat that assurance," I replied dryly.

"Then," said the doctor, "we had best go at once. A train leaves the Grand Central for Arden at two-twenty; it is now a quarter past one o'clock. We will be at the sanitarium by a quarter to four."

I shook hands with my distinguished visitors and—the real Gaynor Elwood; he seemed to be in excellent spirits for a lunatic about to be taken back to an asylum.

"I must compliment you, chief," said he quietly, "on the quick recovery of the bonds, as well as for the secrecy we have been able to maintain in this deplorable affair. If there are further thefts, and there will doubtless be more, I shall know where to come for assistance. Whenever you happen to be in Boston don't fail to drop in on me."

"Yes, I repeat the invitation," added Mr. Jennings.

When they were gone I closed the door and began to kick myself—mentally. I was interrupted in this pleasant pastime by the entrance of three of the night reporters.

"What was it, chief? Anything interesting?" they demanded in chorus. Then one added:

"The parties who just left referred us to you for information."

"Gentlemen," said I stiffly, "you are wasting your time—and mine. *That* was a party of high-rollers out to do the town while the great city lies asleep. That's all there was to it."

I tendered my box of cigars, and the fellows lighted up. Then I picked up my hat, switched off the electric bulbs, and went home.

THE STAR PERFORMER.

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

A big find for the Great American Novelty Entertainment Company, and then some.

DAVIS'S black cigar was sending out clouds of smoke, and if there had been a soft-coal-nuisance law in Duffriesville the senior member of Davis & Blake, proprietors of the Great American Novelty Entertainment Company, might have found himself in jail, always with the proviso that Duffriesville had a jail.

Anyway, Davis was oblivious of the existence of all laws, and had trouble enough of his own just then.

Blake was busy writing in the big bare-floored room, and his face reflected the gloom that clouded the sometimes handsome countenance of Davis.

"It beats the deuce," remarked Davis, "that just as we get started toward easy money something happens. Can't the blamed fool be coaxed?"

"No," growled Blake. "I told him the show depended on him. He says his stepmother, who is now a widow, is going to be married, and he wants to go East to the wedding."

"What is his overwhelming interest in his stepmother's wedding?" asked Davis, blowing some more soft-coal nuisance into the circumambient atmosphere.

"Oh, I don't know. Something about some money his father left. Just how his being at the wedding is going to affect his inheritance I don't know. He was examining a revolver, so I suppose he is going to shoot his stepfather once removed and prevent things."

"That comes," said Davis, "of not having 'em sign contracts. Nobody gets a job with us after this without signing a contract for a year at least."

"I always said so," remarked Blake. "Here's Kitty Shine gone again. This is the third time she's left us to see about her divorce case."

"But she was never married."

"I know. But you can't argue with a woman."

In truth, gloom had settled down upon the Entertainment Company and seized it for its own. Davis & Blake had rented a vacant space of ground in Duffriesville, advertised extensively, and now the most important of their billed performers were leaving. All because Davis had been, for some reason or other, averse to contracts.

Blake had finished his writing, and was searching in his pockets, with considerable ostentation, for a cigar. He knew he didn't have one, but there was another, just like the one Davis was smoking, sticking out of Davis's vest-pocket. But Davis was too absorbed to notice Blake's evident discomfort.

There was a sudden knock on the door.

"Come in," growled Davis.

A young man entered. He was rather well dressed, his complexion was pale, his hands white, and he had the look of a man who had never been on familiar terms with hard manual labor.

"Well?" asked Davis.

"Is this the head office of the Davis & Blake Great American Novelty Entertainment Company?" asked the newcomer.

"It is," said Davis. "What do you want? Represent a paper?"

"Nay," answered the young man. "I am not a journalist. I have come for a job."

The proprietors both stared at the young man. His appearance was far from suggestive of a circus vocation.

"What kind of a job?" asked Davis.

"I'll tell you. I'm broke. I won't hide anything. I'm as flat broke as a bald-headed man trying to sell a hair-tonic. I haven't had a square meal in a week. A loaf of bread and cup of coffee looms up to me now like the bill of fare at a royal banquet."

"I've felt that way," said Davis, going down into his pocket for a dollar that wasn't there. But when you talk of a job you must have something to offer."

"I have. I can entertain a crowd anywhere. Give me a job and I'll bring money in like floods in the spring thaws."

"What's your specialty?" asked Blake.

"Prairie-dogs."

"Prairie-dogs? Trained?"

"Trained! I should say so. I've got five. They march in uniform, ride one another in races, play house like married people, do everything. Bill me for to-night."

"Too late," sighed Davis. "Where are the dogs?"

"Here."

The stranger shook his coat and five of the little Kansas pests cavorted on Blake's desk. One stepped in the ink and destroyed what Blake had been writing, one ran up into Davis's hair and began scratching, and then, at a whistle from their owner, the five scurried to cover under his coat.

"Very good," said Davis. "I'll prepare a contract. What's your name?"

"Oliver Ollister, sir."

Blake nodded and began to write.

"Hold on," exclaimed Mr. Ollister. "This is the first chance I've had in a long time to eat square meals and sleep in a bed. Make that contract as good for me as for you. How long is it for?"

"One year," said Davis decidedly.

"Then, fix it this way. I'll work a year for twelve hundred dollars, with keep for myself and my pets. If anything happens except death on either side I am to receive the full twelve hundred dollars. Is that square?"

"If what happens?" asked Davis.

"Well, I don't know you people. I might work a month and get no money, and get fired in some place I couldn't even walk out of. I want to be protected."

Davis, unmindful of the reproachful looks on Blake's face, lighted the cigar that had been showing so temptingly from his pocket and spent a moment in deep thought.

"Fix it that way, Blake," he said finally. "We've been slack before. Don't make any mistake now."

In half an hour Mr. Oliver Ollister had signed a contract that was eminently fair for both sides. Then Davis got busy with a second-class printing establishment and had handbills sent out with a lot of boys who managed to get about one-third of the bills into the hands of citizens and the other two-thirds over the bridge or burned in a vacant lot.

Nevertheless, Duffriesville became aware of the fact that the celebrated Oliver Ollister and his trained prairie-dogs would appear with the Great American Novelty Entertainment Company.

There was a fair tentful, and Oliver Ollister made good. It is doubtful if there was a man in the audience who would not have killed a prairie-dog with a club anywhere else. But these trained little fellows amused them.

And they were wonderfully well trained, too. They were dressed in uniform, and four privates, with a gaudy captain, gave an exhibition drill. Then their clothing was changed, and Mrs. and Mr. Prairie-Dog kept house, visited by Dr. Prairie-Dog and Minister Prairie-Dog, while the servant prairie-dog cut up all kinds of shines.

The children especially were amused, and the next night the fame of Oliver Ollister had grown apace and the tent was crowded.

Davis was so delighted that he treated Blake to a cigar, and Blake reciprocated with a highball.

On the following morning Davis and Blake were in their room, and had congratulated each other for the hundredth time on the success of Oliver Ollister, when the door opened and a tall, raw-boned Kansan entered.

"Pardon," he said, unhinging his six feet of bone and muscle and flopping into a vacant chair. "I hate ter spoil the show, but I'm goin' ter bust it up."

Davis stared, and Blake glanced toward the window. He was calculating the distance to the ground. Blake had been in circumstances where the knowledge of the distance from the window to the ground had been important.

"Bust up the show?" repeated Davis. "Haven't we obeyed the law?"

"You, individually, hain't done nothin'. But you've got the worst murderer in Kansas showin' off prairie-dogs, an' I want him right now."

"Do you mean Oliver Ollister?"

"I don't mean no Oliver Ollister. I mean plain Jim Hyke. Why, he's been in jail in Tonkerville fur over a year. He killed old Silas Wackerman, stole his money, an' blew it in. Oliver Ollister? Good!"

"But look here," said Davis. "We can't permit you to arrest our star performer like that unless we are sure he is the man you want."

"Don't I know? W'y, if he hadn't showed trained prairie-dogs he'd never been suspected. But bein' as how he does show trained prairie-dogs, he is the man I want."

"But look here," persisted Davis. "Just what connection is there between trained prairie-dogs and a murder? Explain your position in this matter."

"I will. You see, Tonkerville ain't much of a place, but it has got a few men with money, an' one of 'em was old Silas Wackerman. He was a crank, this Wackerman, an' didn't have faith in banks. He kep' his money in the house. Well, he was killed one night—hit with a club an' knocked senseless—an' the money was took. His neighbors didn't hear any outcry, an' so we was a long time fin'in' out who done it. But we finally lined up Jim Hyke, an' he didn't have no allerby, so we put him in the lockup.

"Tonkerville ain't got any court, an' we had ter take Jim ter Topeka. Well, they was a delay, an' Jim was kep' in the Tonkerville lockup. The jury was disagreeable, an' thar Jim stayed. Well, one day the keeper, wot's Deputy Sheriff Jones, myself, noticed Jim had a playmate in his cell. It was one of them prairie-dogs, er gophers we call 'em, an' how the little cuss got in the cell I didn't know.

"Well, I watched. I told ye Tonkerville wasn't much of a place, an' the cell was a ordinary room in the shed alongside my house, an' no floor in it, nor winder. Well, the blamed gopher had burrowed up to git some grub from Jim. Then another come, an' they was good company fur Jim, an' he played with 'em an' taught 'em tricks. I've seen 'em parade like soldiers, an' play house. Nobody knew a gopher had brains enough to learn them things, but Jim Hyke found some brains in 'em somewhere.

"Then another come, an' another, till he had five. Five gophers, an' the county payin' five cents a head fur killin' 'em. But Jim begged fur his pets, an' I didn't want to be too harsh, seein' I was bein' well paid fur keepin' him, so I let him have 'em.

"Well, one day he was missin'. I knowed the place was kept locked, an' I couldn't understand. Well, I hunted. Know what? Them pesky gophers had burrowed holes an' runs under the wall, an' Jim broke the lot of 'em into one an' crawled out at night, takin' the gophers with him."

"Well—well," said Davis. "And you are sure our Mr. Ollister is your Jim Hyke?"

"Sure. Who else would have trained gophers? Now, the thing is, where is he? I've been to the tents, an' he hain't there."

"Not there!" exclaimed Davis. "Has he gone again?"

"Nobody knew where he was," said the deputy sheriff, "so I come to you."

Davis was plunged in gloom. He did not care so much about Jim Hyke being a murderer, but here, just as fortune seemed about to nestle in his lap, another serious loss must be borne.

And he recalled that under the terms of the contract if Jim Hyke went back to the Tonkerville jail he must be paid twelve hundred dollars for performances he could never give.

"Here," said Davis, as he handed the deputy sheriff two tickets. "He'll be back in time for the show to-night. He won't break his contract. It's too good for him. I can't stop you from taking him. But wait till after the show."

This was fair enough to the deputy sheriff, and he went away satisfied.

That night there was a bigger crowd than ever, but no Oliver Ollister and his trained prairie-dogs.

The deputy sheriff was angry. Davis tried to pacify him. Blake explained the terms of the contract, and showed how impossible it would be for them to conceal Hyke and pay him a hundred dollars a month for doing nothing.

Saturday the show left Duffriesville and went to Loomers. Loomers was a growing place, and amusements were scarce. The announcements of the Great American Novelty Entertainment Company made no mention of Oliver Ollister and his prairie-dogs, but had as the star attraction Princess Magulda of Andamann and her trained goffarotinots.

Nobody knew what a goffarotinot was, and everybody wanted to see the Princess Magulda from Andamann.

The princess was dusky of hue, and had a great mat of kinky hair, in which silver and brass ornaments were stuck without regard to order. She was tall, and wore a magnificent robe described as the royal robe of Andamann, but which was really a Navajo blanket done over quickly to suit the occasion.

Davis smoked more cigars than usual that night, and Blake drank more highballs. If anybody recognized the five goffarotinots as the five prairie-dogs of Jim Hyke it was not mentioned. Everybody got his money's worth, and Davis said the Princess Magulda was a bigger drawing card than Oliver Ollister.

And two nights they played in Loomers. Then the third night, when the tall princess was completing her performance, a tall, straight, salmon-colored individual with a peculiar eye stalked toward Davis and made a low obeisance.

"Most worthy master," he said in English, "I must inform you that the Princess Magulda is a runaway slave and that I have been pursuing her many months."

Davis looked bewildered.

"But they don't have goffarotinots in Andamann."

"It is the favorite royal dish."

"What'll we do now?" asked Davis, hopelessly, of Blake.

"Leave him to me," said Blake. "Here, Mr. What-you-may-call-'em, listen. Who are you, anyway?"

"I am the agent of the King of Andamann. I speak English because I have been to England to school. I am high in the police of Andamann. Magulda is not a princess. She killed one of the king's wives and fled with many precious jewels and a valuable crown. I was sent to pursue and capture her. I have been in England, and now in this country I find her. I have papers. I shall take her back to Andamann, where she shall be beheaded."

Blake laughed.

"I'm sorry we hit on that name," he said. "You see, this person we billed as the Princess Magulda isn't a princess at all, and doesn't come from Andamann. In reality, he's a man. But for business reasons we named him the Princess Magulda. You know, American people like to be fooled. If we simply said he was an American with trained prairie-dogs they wouldn't pay to come and see him. As the Princess Magulda he's the star performer."

"Oh, no," said the agent of the Andamann police; "I am that. I don't like this butternut stain any too well, so I'll wash it off to-morrow. And I'll take you along with Jim Hyke. You know why he's wanted. And I'll lock you and Davis up for assisting a murderer to escape."

And the sheriff grinned at Blake, who looked ruefully at the tent.

"It's all up, Davis," he said, as he thought he smelled one of Davis's soft-smoke nuisances approaching. But it was only a hired man to whom Davis had given a cigar.

And Blake, three days later, in the jail at Tonkerville, received an encouraging letter from Davis, which read:

> Don't worry, old man. I don't. I'm in St. Louis, and expect to have you out in about a month. See if Hyke can't get his prairie-dogs to work again and burrow you out. The lawyer here say that Kansas law is a stiff proposition to get up against, and I don't know whether to hire a Topeka lawyer or take a trip to Europe. Looks just like Europe now. Anyway, I can't pay Hyke twelve hundred dollars. You'd no business to let him sign that contract. I knew it would bring bad luck.
>
> DAVIS.

A WAVE OF TROUBLE.

By J. F. VALENTINE.

What happened to a best man on his way to a wedding.

I HAD risked almost my immortal soul— But there, I had better go back to the very beginning and relate the several incidents as they really happened.

Janet Terry lived at Rosedale, a little suburban town on the Central Railroad of New Jersey, about sixteen miles out from New York. And when, after a brief engagement to Bruce Gordon—my one great chum—they were making arrangements for their wedding, it seemed natural that I should be selected for best man.

I am afraid I did not appreciate the honor. In fact, I begged them to get some one else—I felt sure I would make some awkward mistake, detesting, as I do, social occasions of any description. But they were firm in their determination.

"Why, Lester, just think," insisted Jane. "You and Bruce have been chums since you were youngsters. You must do it. You will, won't you?"

It seemed impossible to refuse, and I agreed to do my best, but I could not overcome the feeling that in some way I would make a mess of things.

If it had been going to be only a house wedding, it would not have been quite so bad. But a large church affair, where you are paraded before so many—where the slightest mistake shows so plainly. However, if anything went wrong Jane and Bruce would have only themselves to blame.

A few days before the date set for the wedding I realized that it was going to be hard for me to get away from business in time for it. In fact, an unusually heavy rush necessitated my working every evening.

But I was determined to keep faith with Bruce and Janet, even if business had to suffer. Accordingly, realizing the day before that it would be impossible for me to leave early enough to go home and dress, I brought my clothes with me, intending to dress at the office and go direct from there to Rosedale.

It was fortunate I had used such foresight. The rush that day was heavier than ever, and as the hands of the clock verged toward six, I sent the boy out for sandwiches, then dressed, and rushed from the office with just eleven minutes in which to catch my train. This would get me to Rosedale at 6.43, giving me just time to get up to the Terry home and leave there with the bridal party, due at the church at seven, the hour set for the wedding.

I hurried down the hall toward the elevators—my office was on the eighteenth floor—watching all the while to hail one on the downward trip. But none appeared, and I stood in front of the shaft waiting impatiently.

Suddenly the signal-lamp of one turned red, a sign that an elevator was descending.

As it came in sight, moving very slowly, I stepped over to the gate, hardly able to wait for it to be opened. Slowly and deliberately the operator threw it back, and closed it after me with a bang.

Down we shot, and I crowded close to the front, to be the first one out. But suddenly, and without any apparent reason, our car was stopped between the third and fourth floors.

At first I did not think so much of it. But as half a minute went by and we did not start I questioned the operator anxiously.

"What are you waiting for? Why don't you go on down?"

"Have to wait for the car that's down to come up," he replied.

I pulled out my watch again. Heavens! Another minute gone! Could I make that train in eight minutes?

My patience was exhausted.

"But you must run on down," I insisted. "I've got to get a train."

"Sorry, sir, but it's against orders," was the operator's cool reply.

"Confound your orders!" I angrily exploded. "Run down—I'll take the blame. I am a tenant here, and ought to have something—"

"Can't help it, sir. Orders is orders with me," the fellow interrupted.

There were two other passengers in the car, but up to this moment they had taken no hand in the discussion. Now one of them suddenly spoke up.

"Surely, Tom, if the gentleman is in a hurry—"

"In a hurry?" I repeated, in a tone that was a combination of disgust and anger. "Hang it all, I suppose I've missed my train—"

The sudden downward movement of the car checked my speech, and the car in the next shaft flashed by us on its upward trip. I pulled out my watch—I had just seven minutes left. Could I make the ferry in that time?

Dashing out into Fulton Street, I banged into a person who was just entering the door. He passed some remarks about me that were not very complimentary, but I had no time to contradict his assertions.

Across Broadway I tore, and down Cortlandt Street, picking my way as best I could through the steady stream of homeward-bound commuters, and as I reached the corner of West Street I saw by the large clock on the front of the Pennsylvania ferry-house that I still had two minutes to spare—and that I had created a new record for a cross-city dash!

I took to the street—the sidewalk was crowded—and raced down in the middle of the car-track into the Central Railroad ferry-house.

Fortunately, there was no one in front of the ticket-window, and having counted out the exact change on my way down the street, I called, "Rosedale, round trip." Seizing the little piece of yellow cardboard, I rushed through the waiting-room and on to the ferry-boat. Then I heaved a big sigh of relief, feeling that my bad luck was at an end.

The dash across town had left me nervous and warm, and feeling certain there would be more air at the front of the boat, I walked through the cabin, and opened my overcoat to get the full benefit of the breeze I found there.

I realized that this was rather an imprudent thing to do in my overheated condition, and had begun to button my coat again, when—slap, bang, swish—a wave from another boat broke against our bow and splashed me thoroughly, paying particular attention to my white expanse of shirt-bosom.

For a moment I stood unable to decide just what to do. I certainly could not go to the wedding in this condition. And as Mr. Terry is a very large man, and I am just the opposite, I knew I could not borrow a shirt from him.

A little rapid calculation and I figured out that our boat would arrive at Communipaw—barren of all shops—at about 6.08. If there were a boat back to New York at 6.10 I could be in New York again at 6.18.

On my way down to the ferry I had noticed a little men's furnishing store on Cortlandt Street. If they were only open, I could get a shirt there—my clothing was not in such bad condition—rush back to the ferry, catch the 6.30 train, bribe a deck-hand to take me down into the engine-room to change my shirt, and get to Rosedale a few minutes after seven. Anyway, I reasoned, weddings are never on time, and I would be only a few minutes late.

By rushing to a boat that was preparing to leave the slip in Communipaw, I managed to squeeze through the gates as they were being closed.

By this time I was in a highly nervous condition, and as I paced the front deck it seemed as if we would never reach the New York side. But the boat cut rapidly through the water, and as we neared the slip I prepared to rush off.

I was one of the first to leave the boat, and dashed up West Street to the little store I had previously noticed.

"Have you any dress shirts?" I demanded breathlessly.

"Sure," replied the clerk, as he slowly walked to the opposite side of the store. "What kind?"

"Why, white, of course," I quickly answered, rather nettled at his slowness, and at what I considered an idiotic question. "Please hurry," I begged; "I must catch a train."

"All right, sir. Size, please?"

"Fourteen and a half."

He pulled down a box and ran rapidly through it. "Very sorry, sir," he announced, "but we're all out of that size. In fact, the smallest we have is size sixteen. You see, we're going out of business, and aren't stocking."

I waited for no more, but tore out and back to the ferry-house.

I knew there were no other stores in the vicinity. There were two about three blocks up the street, but I was certain they were closed, as I had noticed them taking in the show-cases on my way to the ferry.

I knew just how Bruce would feel if I did not come. So, there was only one thing to do—get the 6.30—and when I reached Rosedale make explanations to everybody.

As I left the store I glanced at my watch—it lacked two minutes of the time. Could I make it?

I raced wildly down the street and into the ferry-house, pulled out a nickel, and dashed up to the ferry ticket-office.

Blocking the entrance there was an elderly woman making some inquiries regarding trains.

"Do you think she will come on that train?" she inquired of the agent.

"Really, madam, I could not say," he replied.

"Well, now, I don't know what to do. She said in her letter—"

I could not afford to lose my train even if I did have to be rude, so I pushed past the woman and dashed on, never waiting for my two cents change.

I know that woman considered me lacking in all the rudiments going to the making of a gentleman. But I had no time to apologize. I ran on into the waiting-room, just in time to hear the gong ring and have the gate almost slammed in my face.

The gate-tender was on the other side, and although I tried to explain that I must get that boat, he only laughed and walked away. I could not help thinking that it was fortunate for him that the gate separated us—I believe I should have torn him limb from limb had I got my hands on him.

But what good would it do me to get angry? I could not get the boat now. I walked over to where there was a framed time-table hanging on the wall. Carefully scanning it, I found that the next train to Rosedale left New York at 6.45—only fifteen minutes' delay.

It could not be helped—that would have to be the train for me. I had almost begun to think I would not be able to get to Rosedale at all. But I had done the best I could.

In a way, it was Bruce's fault. Why did he choose such an unheard-of hour to be married as seven o'clock? If he had only made it eight—

But he had not, and realizing that now I surely had missed the ceremony, the only thing was to look forward to explanations. He would have plenty of friends there who would gladly help him out, I knew, when they found I did not arrive. Undoubtedly he would be quite sore—I really could not blame him—but I knew he would understand.

I paced up and down the waiting-room as these thoughts were flitting through my mind. The bump of a ferry-boat into the slip brought me back to the realization that this time I certainly would not miss the train—this being the one ahead of the train-boat.

As I walked through the gate to the boat all the animosity for the gate-tender I had displayed only a few moments previous had fled—I was reconciled to the fact that I would be late for the ceremony, and under existing circumstances perhaps it was for the best.

I walked leisurely to the train on the other side, and finding plenty of seats, settled back in one to rest comfortably after all my violent exertions. Presently the last boat arrived, and the cars moved out of the train-shed. At last I was on my way.

Through Bayonne we flew—the first stop was Elizabeth—and I felt that the explanations my delay demanded would soon be over. As we whizzed past the last station in Bayonne and approached the long trestle over Newark Bay the brakes suddenly ground against the wheels, and slowing down quickly, we came to a dead stop on the bridge.

"What new trouble?" I groaned, feeling certain that some unseen power was determined I should not attend that wedding.

After a few moments the passengers became restless, and some of the more inquisitive ones left their seats, going out on the platform to satisfy their curiosity.

I was getting nervous, and decided to find out the cause of delay. As I walked down the aisle a brakeman appeared in the door and called out: "Everybody, please, get out and take the train that is backing in on the east-bound track."

Reaching the platform, I leaned out, and as far as I could see there were trains stalled ahead of ours, from the farthest of which could be seen people getting off and on to a train which stood on the other track.

As it backed slowly toward us, stopping every few feet to take on more passengers, I forgot for the moment all about my appearance and the wedding in the new incident that presented itself.

Turning to the brakeman, who was standing down on the trestle, I inquired, "What is the trouble?"

Without even deigning to look in my direction, he mumbled, "Wreck up ahead."

The objective point of my journey into New Jersey suddenly came back to me, and I again questioned, "Can I get to Rosedale on this train that is backing up?"

"Yep," was the brakeman's curt reply.

As the other train stopped alongside a tall, smooth-shaven man tried to brush by me—I was standing on the lower step of the car—and but for a firm hold I had upon the rail he would have knocked me down onto the trestle.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized, as I turned and glared angrily at him.

"There will be room for all," I snorted.

"But this delay is terrible for me," the stranger declared. "I left New York on the six o'clock train—"

I did not hear any more of his troubles—I had my own—and his criticism of the railroad was lost as I stepped down and mounted the platform of the other train. It was crowded; all seats taken and the aisles packed.

The passengers of the one train behind us were quickly picked up, and after heavy snorting and puffing by our engine we were once again on the way to Rosedale.

Only two stops were made, each one taking quite a large number of our passengers. As the train pulled into Rosedale I hurried out to the car-platform and jumped before the train had fully stopped.

Seeing an antiquated cab drawn up at the station, I rushed toward it, and caught sight of the elderly person who had nearly bumped me off the car, also running, and evidently intent upon reaching the vehicle before I did.

"The old fool!" I muttered, as I broke into a run. He was only a few feet behind me when I jumped on the cab-step and yelled to the driver, "Go ahead!"

But before the horse had responded to the crack of the whip the smooth-shaven man had his foot on the step, and tugging at the door-knob, gasped, all out of breath, "Please—let—me—"

I waited to hear no more. Here was an opportunity to get even for his nearly knocking me off the car-step. With almost fiendish glee, I reached through the upper part of the door, and placing both hands on his shoulders, pushed him off.

The horse having already started to trot, the man swung around, his hand slipped, and he rolled over on his back in the roadway.

The driver, who, from the way he laughed, had evidently greatly enjoyed the little scene, now leaned down to inquire: "Where to?"

"Mr. Terry's," I answered briefly.

I settled back on the faded cushions, trying to enjoy the gathering twilight—it was now ten minutes of eight—and to memorize a brief account of my misfortunes, to relate to Janet and Bruce.

But after the many mishaps of the trip, now that I realized my journey was nearly at an end I found myself in a state bordering on nervous collapse. And as I unbuttoned my overcoat and looked at my mussed, wrinkled, and water-spotted shirt-front I settled back in absolute despair.

There was only one consolation — I had done the best I could.

As we entered the Terry grounds and pulled up under the porte-cochère I

noticed an absolute lack of life around the house.

"Heavens! I'm in for it," I muttered as I rang the bell.

"Yes," I mused, awaiting an answer to my ring. "They have all gone to the church. There is at least one satisfaction, though—they have found some one to take my place."

The door was being opened quietly, and seeing before me a very neat domestic of evident Irish extraction, I remarked, with a significant smile, "I don't suppose Mr. Gordon is in now, is he?"

"No, sor," she replied, as she eyed me carefully. "Shure, he wint down-town, but he'll be back soon."

"Yes, I suppose so," I remarked, unable to suppress the smile that was playing around my lips, caused by her avoidance of the wedding question.

"Are ye a frind of Misther Gordon?" she inquired, evidently not certain whether to ask me in or not.

"Why, of course I am," I answered, still smiling. "I was—"

"Thin, ye've heard about it?"

"Yes, indeed I have."

Somehow, I lost my desire to smile as I noted her serious face. She evidently considered weddings very sad occasions in one's life.

"Will ye come in and wait, sor? He'll soon be back."

"Yes, I rather think I will," I replied, as I entered the hall and turned into the library, which was a perfect mass of festoons and decorations.

"Mighty pretty," I commented, as I seated myself in a large easy chair which gave me a view of the two roads from the village.

I was not sure on which one the procession would return, and as they would surely have the carriage-lamps lighted, I could easily see them long before they reached the house.

"It's either an awfully long ceremony or else they started very late," I remarked aloud as I strained my eyes.

I picked up a magazine, and drawing my chair close to the dim light on the table, looked over it carelessly, continually glancing up in an endeavor to catch a glimpse of the returning wedding procession.

But none came. Pulling out my watch, I glanced at it—8.15. What could be keeping them? Occasionally I could hear muffled footsteps on the floor above, but not a word. Why, it seemed almost gruesome.

Suddenly there was the noise of horses' hoofs and carriage-wheels approaching. It was now too dark to see from the window, but I heard them turn into the drive. And as I strove to pierce the gloom of the early evening I heard another coming right behind the first one. And they, too, turned into the driveway.

"Here they come," I decided. "But it's mighty funny they don't light up the house a bit. Perhaps the maids have gone to sleep—"

But as I heard the muffled patter of footsteps down the stairs I knew the servants were up and about. And from the way they were hurrying I judged they realized that they had been negligent regarding their duties and were hastening to make up lost time.

"That's a funny thing," I muttered, as the maid rushed directly to the door instead of first lighting up. "But I suppose she wants to be the first to congratulate the bride. I think I had better wait till they come in before rushing out."

As the maid stood in the open doorway I heard her ask softly, "Is thot ye, Misther Gordon?"

"No," a voice slowly answered. "But I wish to see Mr. Gordon."

From the other carriage, which I could see had pulled up just behind the first, a man had sprung out and was now hurrying rapidly toward the veranda.

He was already at the steps, when, hearing the dialogue between the stranger and the maid, he called out: "I am Mr. Gordon. What can I do for— Good Heavens! Is that you, Uncle Horace?"

For a moment I could not believe my eyes or ears. By the aid of the dim light that shone from the hall, I could plainly see that Bruce was alone—and also that the gentleman he called "Uncle Horace" was the person whom I had pushed from the carriage at the station. And he was evidently a relative of Bruce's.

"Yes, my boy," he was saying, "I

am almost afraid I am too late to minister—"

"Oh, it's not as bad as that, although the pain is very severe—"

"What pain?" interrupted the elderly gentleman.

It was now Bruce's turn to be surprised, and as he had let his uncle into the hall, and they were now standing directly under the large lamp, I could see their faces very plainly, although they had not as yet seen me.

"Why, uncle, didn't you get my telegram?" he questioned, a puzzled look diffusing itself over his countenance.

"Your—telegram?" gasped the other.

I was drinking in every word. "What was coming now?" I asked myself.

"Then, you do not know about Janet?" Bruce inquired, his voice softened to almost a whisper. I could plainly see the elderly gentleman shake his head as Bruce continued: "She fell to-day and fractured her leg—"

"Heavens above!" broke in 'Uncle Horace.' "Then, there is no wedding?"

"We had to postpone it. We sent—"

I could stand it no longer, but rushed forward, stammering: "Bruce, is it really so?"

"Well, of all things!" he exclaimed, as he shook my hand cordially. Then added slowly: "Yes, I am sorry to say it is. But tell me, didn't either of you get my telegrams?"

We both answered in chorus: "No."

"Oh, I nearly forgot to introduce you two. This is Mr. Stedman, Uncle Horace, who was to be my best man. Lester, Dr. Fleming, my uncle, who was to perform the ceremony."

As the doctor gripped my hand warmly he remarked: "Mr. Stedman, I am glad to meet you again."

"Why, have you met before?" asked Bruce, in surprise.

"Yes—we have," replied the doctor in a peculiar tone.

"Well, I didn't know that," remarked Bruce. "But to get back to to-day, it is fortunate there was no wedding, after all. What a lovely wait we would have had for both of you!"

I explained the cause of my delay in as few words as possible.

"But you say you telegraphed us?" I added.

"Yes, of course I did. The accident happened at two o'clock—poor girlie, she was trying to help with the decorations, and slipped from a ladder. I was afraid you would leave the office early to go home and dress—"

"And you sent it there?" I interrupted. Then continued, as he nodded his head: "I didn't go home. I brought my clothes with me in the morning, and dressed at the office."

"And I left Bridgeport at nine o'clock this morning, as I had some little business in New York," broke in Dr. Fleming.

"Well, of all things!" commented Bruce.

As no one spoke for a moment, I inquired: "I suppose Janet is not ready to see any one as yet?"

"No, I am afraid not," he replied rather sadly.

"Then, I shall return to New York on the next train."

"And I—" began the doctor, but was interrupted by Bruce, who finished for him: "Will stay overnight with us, at least."

As I prepared to take my departure, after expressing my sympathy to Bruce, and was shaking hands with Dr. Fleming, the latter leaned over and remarked in an undertone: "Isn't it strange what one will do when in a highly nervous condition?"

THAT BOSTON GIRL.

Her voice is sweet,
Her style is neat,
She'd move the world with but a pen;
Her mind is clear,
Her sight, though near,
Is long enough to capture men.
What matters it
Her learning then?

The Anti-Climax of a Bad Man.

By BURKE JENKINS.

The sheriff who nominated himself, and the secret that lurked in his system.

"STRANGER, your name, sah?"

"Caldwell," I answered; "nephew to Colonel Caldwell."

"What!" exclaimed the spokesman of the crowd. "Honored to make your esteemed acquaintance, sah. You will pardon my apparent bruskness, but we must know our friends in these here parts. We're electing a sheriff, you see, and according, we can't be too careful."

I nodded my appreciation of the force of such caution, and without more ado mingled freely with the assembled mountaineers.

One after another, candidates were named only to be met with such comment as:

"He's too narrer-chested."

"Ain't got but one eye, and can't shoot straight with that!"

"Got too many chillun to leave," etc., etc.

Finally a raw-boned hunk of angularity unwrapped himself from a nail-keg, and I beheld before me one who was destined to become a stanch friend, "Dog" Hankly.

"Feller citizuns," drawled Dog, "I reckon as how you fellers'll come to the right conclusion finally. Now, I know it ain't jist the regular thing fer a man to nominate hisself, but seeing as how I know myself pretty tolerable well, why, I jist name you Dog Hankly fer sheriff of this here county."

The hilarity that met this outburst was general and instantaneous.

"Why, Dog, you'd shy at yer own shadder," cried one.

"How 'bout the Widder Perkins's rollin'-pin that time you popped the question? Why, that same female had you paralyzed, Hanky."

This came from a five-footer of bristly mustache.

"Dog, old feller," broke in another patronizingly, "you're plumb all right at trainin' dogs, givin' the devil his due, but shore, now, you know right well enough you don't possess the sand to make the mortar for a sheriff of this locality. 'Tain't a tea-party, five-o'clock neighborhood."

"Friends," and Dog drew himself up almost to straightness, "I'm none good at the speechifying. If I wuz I'd go on ter show you how it ain't no sign a feller ain't got grit even if he is afraid er his shadder, or, worse yet, shemale critters. But it strikes me that wunst I writ twelve times in my copy-book this here line: 'Actions speak louder than words.' This same bein' some true, I'm here ter say that, as the main object o' this here election is ter git a man who can hold his own against Kinston and his gang, I'm ready ter do that same."

"Aw, come, now, Dog, we've wasted time enough," broke in some one. "One squint at Kinston's hip-pocket'd give you fever 'n' ager fer a week."

"I mean jist what I say!" emphasized Dog, bristling somewhat. "And to show I do, why, I—I'll *take* Kinston hisself when he stalks around town to-morrer, if you'll give me the warrant."

The joke of all this was too much for the crowd; so, with loud acclamations and much guffawing, they invested Dog Hankly with the necessary power, and awaited impatiently the coming proof.

Even I delayed my visit to a mine to witness the outcome of this boast of Hankly's as to his handling Kinston, the desperado whose notoriety had reached far beyond the bounds of this little county. For nonchalance in cold-blooded murder, Kinston had branded himself king.

By ten o'clock we were all on hand, grouped about the store, before which ran a low porch without a rail.

Neither Kinston nor Hankly had shown up yet, and accordingly, everything was feverish conjecture and expectancy.

Finally a dust-cloud down the pike spoke of another arrival. From the cloud emerged Kinston of the steely orb.

With his characteristic precision, he eyed every man before dismounting; then he threw the bridle-lines over his pony's head, reached easily to his hip, slung forward his holster, and came, with an easy stride, among us.

He was granted his usual little "circular space of safety," as he called it, and finally, planting his back against the side of the house, he lounged into easy attitude and bit off a chew.

Not a sign of Dog Hankly yet!

"Bet he won't show up at all!" grunted the five-footer disgustedly, in an aside.

"Take yer!" answered another, "fer dog my cats if there he ain't."

From his low shanty across the road emerged Dog in all the casualness of a small errand. He was picking his teeth with a fish-bone.

Half-way across the road he threw away the bone, straightened a little, and made an unswerving line for Kinston, on the porch.

Breathless is no word for the state of our suspense.

At first Kinston eyed him casually, as was his wont. Then, Hankly's direction deflecting by not a hair, he took on a quickened interest and toyed casually with the pistol-grip.

Dog strode on forward with no waver.

Up jumped Kinston.

"Far enough, you!" he cried. "Whirl your circle, or I'll let in daylight!"

He brandished that pet of his.

On came Dog.

"Br-r-rh!" growled the pistol.

On came Dog.

"Whang!" zipped the next shot.

On came Dog.

Six times that iron coughed, with no swerving on Dog's part.

Then a wild fear crept into Kinston's face. He threw the discharged weapon at Hankly's head; Hankly ducked, and past him sped Kinston in a pretty dodge.

He gained his horse, mounted, and clattered out of town.

We were all too paralyzed to speak. Even Dog Hankly did not see fit to break the silence. Instead, he strolled on back to his cabin.

We saw him pass on out to his shed, and fifteen minutes later he once more hit the road. This time he was mounted, and by a long rope leash he led the last hound which he had been training for my uncle, Colonel Caldwell.

The next afternoon, at about three o'clock, a small boy brought startling intelligence.

Two men, a horse, and a dog were coming up the road.

We filed out to witness events. Dog Hankly sat astride his cayuse; from the saddle-pommel stretched a rope, and at the other end strode Kinston, the mighty fallen, securely bound.

Well, did they make that lank Dog Hankly sheriff? Did they apologize in a superabundance of profuseness?

I should smile.

And Dog and I grew old together, for business and health kept me long in that region.

Men came from miles around to see and meet the man who had stood the fire and made the capture of Kinston, the outlaw.

Late one autumn afternoon, as Dog and I sat chatting on his back porch, the topic turned to that "opportunity" which is supposed to knock once at every man's door.

"Somethin' in it!" grunted Dog musingly, "if yer couple it with luck and a little ingenuity."

"I don't exactly catch your drift," I answered.

He looked sharply around to see if any one was by, and then, leaning over, said:

"I'll jist bust if I don't tell some one how I got this here reputation of mine."

"Your reputation about that Kinston affair—about your being the bravest man in the Old North State?"

"Exactly!" he answered.

"Well, I sure won't tell," I pledged.

"Yer see," said Dog, "when Kinston sprang by me and got away I got plumb disgusted, and made up my mind to take that hound I'd been training over to your uncle to change my spirits.

"Now, I got along by the spring

down there at Doe's Crossing, and thought I'd take a drink. According, I approached the bushes around the water, and what should I hear but a voice come out of that shrubbery.

" ' Don't shoot, Hankly,' it said; ' I'll come peaceable.' Then, sir, out crawled Kinston, scratched with briers and clean out of heart. I played the card which had fallen right in my hand—bound him up some secure, and brought him along. Yer see, I'd kind of ' got his goat ' by walking up to that there bloody gun of his."

" That's just it," said I. " Surely, facing that fire was brave! "

" Well, not exactly as might be supposed," exclaimed Dog. " Yer see, the day of the election I had seen Kinston buy two quarts o' booze. So, that night, the night before the gun-play, I slips off to his cabin in the woods, rolls him over in his dead drunk, and takes the bullets out of that old muzzle-loading revolver of his.

" Phew! " sighed Dog, in relief. " I'm glad to get that out of my system after all these years! "

IN THE LABYRINTH.

By ARTHUR DENSMORE.

The remarkable adventure of a young man who had put his foot in it, and then seemed to sink deeper at every step.

BESIDES possessing some skill as a dentist, Slimmins had once or twice said a rather good thing. This gave him the notion that he had a reputation as a cynic to maintain, and resulted in his gradually developing into a public nuisance.

Sometimes he made unkind remarks about the city government. Sometimes he discharged his satirical arrows at womankind or at marriage. This did not prevent his pausing in the act of filling a tooth long enough to stare at Ethel De Puyster whenever she tripped across the street in front of his place.

He had never met Miss De Puyster, and he assured himself that notwithstanding her pretty face and dainty figure, and her father's wealth, he would not marry her even if he had a chance. Then he would fall to thinking how pleasant it would be if after a hard day's work he could go home to a nice little house of his own in Bay Avenue—a wedding present from Papa De Puyster—and hear the strains of his favorite musical comedy being played on the piano as he approached and catch a glimpse of Ethel through the window, and—

But at about that stage he would recover, and begin to swear at himself and beg himself to remember that he was not a marrying man.

Now, Ethel De Puyster sang sometimes. She had studied under the best teachers at home and abroad, and she could have appeared in grand opera if she had chosen, but of course her father would not hear of it. Therefore, she remained in Tracyton and sang in the choir of the First Presbyterian Church, and occasionally in concerts at the town hall.

At the concerts she sang arias. People fidgeted about until she had finished, and then clapped their hands and told one another it was grand, fervently hoping all the while that she would not do the same sort of thing in response to an encore.

I suppose Ethel knew well enough that the Tracyton public didn't really care for arias. And I suppose she knew, too, that if she sang " Annie Laurie " or something of that kind, and threw a great deal of feeling and expression and all the rest into it, her listeners, after furtively dashing away a tear or two, would remark: " Oh, she sings a simple little thing like that real well, you know, but of course she can't render classical selections."

So, Ethel, being a wise young woman, went in strongly for the classical.

At the annual concert and ball of the Tracyton lodge of Odd Fellows Miss De Puyster did the mad scene from

"Lucia." On his way to his dental parlors next morning, Slimmins paused at the open door of the barber-shop, which was on the same floor, to express his opinion of this portion of the program.

I do not remember exactly what he said, or the simile by which he sought to describe Ethel De Puyster's trills. This lapse of memory is the less painful to me because I do distinctly recollect that Slimmins was not at all in good form that morning, and that the joke, even for him, was very flat.

He spoke loudly, in order that a man some distance down the corridor who had been arrested for something or other the night before and was awaiting the arrival of Judkins, the lawyer, might experience a momentary cheerfulness by hearing it.

Having finished his facetious remarks, Slimmins turned to go, and thereupon, right at the head of the stairs, coming up from the street, he encountered Miss De Puyster.

There was a look in her eye which told Slimmins, not only that she had heard what he had just said, but also that she was wanting in appreciation of his peculiar brand of humor.

Slimmins lifted his hat and confronted her with a very red face.

"I hope, Miss De Puyster—" he began.

The girl directed an icy stare at him.

"I don't think I have the honor of your acquaintance," said she. "Have you enough gentlemanly instinct to cease blocking the corridor and let me pass?"

Slimmins stepped aside, crushed, and Miss De Puyster, her head held high, sailed majestically along to the manicurist's rooms. Then Slimmins went into his own rooms, and was very unkind and unreasonable toward his assistant all day.

A man never knows that he really wants a thing, you know, until he learns that he can't have it, and Slimmins did not realize how badly he wanted Ethel De Puyster until he had put himself beyond the possibility of acquaintance with her.

Also, Miss De Puyster did not realize how much she— Never mind. We won't multiply illustrations for the sake of proving a general rule with which everybody is familiar.

As is usual when a man begins the day with such an embarrassing episode, Slimmins's troubles increased as the hours passed. He tried to pull a tooth for old Mrs. Grumper and broke it off short near the gum. Whereupon Mrs. Grumper grew most indignant and said she was a fool to come to him at all, because anybody could see by looking at him that he didn't know his business; and she went away threatening, in a loud voice, to sue Slimmins for damages.

After that a twelve-year-old boy came in to have Slimmins put in a filling. Whenever Slimmins approached him the boy yelled—and yelled very loudly indeed—so that when Slimmins had occasion to pass the barber-shop, a few minutes later, he heard some one within say, manifestly with the intent that Slimmins should hear: "And he never hurts anybody. Oh, no!"

On the whole, then, Slimmins was in a rather ugly frame of mind as he locked the door of his place that afternoon. When he had finished his evening repast he lighted a cigar and sauntered upstreet.

Gradually something of his customary equanimity returned. It was late in May, and Glenwood Park, one of those inland pleasure-resorts which are indispensable to street-railways, had just been opened for the season.

Slimmins decided that nothing could be better for his tired nerves than a three-mile ride in an open electric car, with all the attractions of the park at the end of it. He happened to remember, too, that the show in the rustic theater was one for which he had an especial fancy.

When Slimmins arrived at the park and began to stroll about the grounds he found that the management had added one or two new means of entertainment. Presently he came to the "Egyptian Labyrinth." It cost ten cents to enter the labyrinth, and a great deal of ingenious effort to get out again.

Slimmins examined it very carefully before he went in. He walked all around it, and felt sure he had discovered the plan on which the thing was constructed. Then he entered, and after aimlessly wandering about for a few moments, concluded to put his theory into practise.

Accordingly, he started along what he conceived to be the most direct route to the entrance. When he turned the first corner he escaped colliding with a young lady who was approaching in the opposite direction.

He raised his hat and apologized. The young lady smiled in response, but as she recognized Slimmins the smile died on her lips and a look of scorn spread over her bewitching features.

The young lady was Miss De Puyster, you see.

Slimmins continued to meander about the labyrinth for about two minutes after he left Miss De Puyster before he encountered her again. This time she did not smile, even briefly.

She stopped short and scolded Slimmins. She said that of course, after the way he had behaved that morning, one could hardly expect decent conduct from him, but that if he thought she would submit to his following her about in that way he was laboring under a very serious error. That if he didn't stop it at once she would apply to the police for protection.

Poor Slimmins murmured something by way of explanation which Miss De Puyster treated with disdain. Then he went on, as he believed, toward the entrance, while Miss De Puyster, cherishing a similar belief, proceeded with equal confidence in the opposite direction.

Wherefore it happened, very shortly, that Miss De Puyster, passing through the opening which connected that aisle with the next, met Slimmins, who was coming through from the other side. Miss De Puyster was walking with the rapidity of desperation—desperation born of the growing consciousness that she could not find her way out of the labyrinth.

Slimmins was walking more slowly, but with bent head and downcast eyes. He was moody—annoyed—embarrassed. Consequently, neither saw the other in time to avoid a collision.

Miss De Puyster, in a confused endeavor to maintain her equilibrium, threw her arms about the nearest available object. This object, of course, was Slimmins.

When she recovered herself and perceived what she had done she quite collapsed. The last straw had been added to the day's burden of troublesome incidents.

She sank down upon the grassy carpet of the labyrinth, covered her fascinating countenance with some wonderful creation in lace—and wept.

Slimmins had feared she would shout for the police. Now he rather wished she had done so. Clumsily he endeavored to administer consolation.

"I'm tremulously sorry, Miss De Puyster," he said, "if I've done anything to cause you—"

"You!" broke in Miss De Puyster, between sobs. "I hope you don't think I'd cry on account of anything *you* could do. It isn't that at all. I bet a box of chocolates with Helen Jenks that I could find my way out of the labyrinth all by myself—and—I ca-a-an't."

Slimmins's heart grew buoyant.

"Oh, is that all?" said he. "Well, you just follow me, Miss De Puyster. I'll show you the way out."

"I won't," wailed Miss De Puyster, shaking her head vigorously.

But a moment later two beautiful, even though somewhat tear-dimmed blue eyes looked at Slimmins above the edge of Miss De Puyster's handkerchief.

"Are you sure you know the way?" queried their owner.

"Quite sure," said Slimmins.

Then he took from his pocket a small memorandum-book in which he kept a record of his professional engagements. On a blank page he drew a plan of the labyrinth.

"This indicates where we are now," he said, making a little dot on the plan. "So, we just go over here, and down here, and out there—and there we are."

"Why, how simple!" said Miss De Puyster. She was standing now with a hand on one of Slimmins's shoulders and her chin almost resting on the other. "But how do you know you've figured it out right?"

"Oh, I studied the thing pretty carefully before I came in," explained Slimmins modestly. "You can get something of an idea by looking at the outside, you know."

"I don't quite see how," said Miss De Puyster, "but I don't care, so I get out without the aid of the official guide. That was the wager, you know."

So Miss De Puyster followed in Slimmins's wake—followed him for nearly half an hour. At last she became suspicious. Her lip began to curl, and an occasional sarcastic comment escaped her.

A dislike of Slimmins, stronger even than she had previously entertained, arose within her. She covertly slipped the blade of her penknife through the canvas wall as she passed. Five minutes later she found herself before that very same slit in the canvas.

"You're a fraud," shouted Miss De Puyster indignantly. "It's all a scheme to enable you to force your companionship upon me. Leave me this instant."

Slimmins expostulated. It was useless.

Then Slimmins heard a voice on the other side of the canvas partition. A man was approaching along the adjacent passageway, and as he came opposite the opening between the two aisles Slimmins perceived a blue coat and brass buttons.

Miss De Puyster was several feet away and headed in the opposite direction. Slimmins slipped through the opening and held a conversation with the guide in low, hurried tones. When he stepped back he had a copy of the official plan of the labyrinth and the guide was a dollar richer.

The tone of assurance in which Slimmins announced that he had solved the difficulty occasioned a slight return of confidence on the part of Miss De Puyster. But she still hesitated and looked at him suspiciously.

"It's easily proved," urged Slimmins. "We've only a little way to go now before we reach the entrance."

"Well, I'll give you this one chance," she reluctantly acquiesced, "but if you fail—"

She did not finish the sentence. It was quite unnecessary. The thought of what failure would mean brought forth beads of cold perspiration upon Slimmins's brow.

Five minutes later Miss De Puyster introduced Slimmins to her dearest friend, Miss Helen Jenks, who was awaiting her just outside the labyrinth. Having won her wager, Miss De Puyster came, in due season, into the possession of a pound of most excellent chocolates, while Slimmins—

Well, the next time you are in Tracyton stroll out toward Bay Avenue and particularly notice the house on the corner of Geneva Street. That is the house in which Slimmins lives—a wedding present from Papa De Puyster, you know.

THE HORSE THIEF.

By JOHN MONTAGUE.

The thrilling experience that befell a newcomer to a region where short shrift is given to those who can't prove protestations.

IN the bottom of the cañon he lay, pale and unconscious, his face turned upward and a small stream of blood trickling from his cheek—a cheek which bore the pallor of the East rather than the rugged tan of the West. Near by lay his horse—dead.

Out from a little cabin farther up the gorge ran a frightened girl in calico. She had seen horse and rider take the fatal plunge from the ledge above; with the fleetness of a deer she sped to his side.

Quickly obtaining water from the creek some yards away, using his sombrero as a basin, she bathed his forehead and washed away the stains of blood which were dyeing his blond hair an ugly red. She was thus able to stanch the flow, for the cut was not deep.

Under her gentle treatment the young man soon regained consciousness, and drew a long breath. Then he opened his eyes and looked at his companion curiously.

He saw that she was quite pretty and young—possibly eighteen; that her eyes were darker than her hair, and that her skin betokened invigorating outdoor life. She smiled, and again touched his burning forehead with her dampened palm.

He closed his eyes, and sighed audibly.

"My! but that feels good!"

"Are you hurt?" she asked, still holding his head in her hand.

"Hurt? Why— Oh, yes, now I remember. We took a spill over the ledge, up yonder, didn't we? How's my horse?"

A look of regret stole into her eyes as they fell on the unfortunate beast, and she replied softly:

"I suppose he is done for. And it's a miracle you escaped."

"Yes, so it is. I have much to be thankful for; but I always have been a tough customer.

"I feel rather sore and bruised," he added, rubbing his arms as he rose to his feet, "as if I had been in a railroad wreck. Wonder how long I have been lying here?"

"About ten minutes," she answered, rising also. "I saw you fall, and ran down to help you. I live in that little cabin up the gorge, my father and I. He is a miner."

"Oh, he is!" exclaimed the stranger. "Then, perhaps he will know the man I am looking for. My uncle. His name is Playfair. Did you ever hear of him?"

She shook her head.

"He came out when the rush here began. I've had a terrible time the past two days. Got lost on the prairies. Started for Badger, but took the wrong direction. Ran out of provisions, and couldn't find any water. Thought for a while I'd go crazy. As a last resource, I allowed my horse to have his head. I should have done this long before, but egotistic man always thinks he is much wiser than mere beast. Found out I wasn't. I must have lost consciousness, for I don't remember coming into these mountains. The horse smelled the water, I suppose, and in his eagerness to get to it tried to come down over the side, poor fellow. Awfully kind of you to fix me up this way."

"When I saw you first," she said, "you were lying on your horse's neck as though asleep. But come up to the cabin and have something to eat; you must be famished. Dad will be along pretty soon; it is nearly supper-time."

The stranger paused only long enough to remove his saddle from the dead animal, and then accompanied the girl up the cañon. He ate like a starved wolf, and she enjoyed his satisfaction as much as he relished the meal.

After she had placed everything on the table she sat down, and they chatted genially together.

They were in the midst of their conversation when a knock on the door was heard.

"Come in!" called the girl.

The door opened, and a short, deeply tanned man appeared. He was dressed as a miner, and a huge black mustache drooped from either side of his upper lip. He bowed to the girl, and then paused, catching sight of the stranger.

"Oh, I didn't know you had company," he said, and his face did not brighten.

"That's all right," replied the girl. "This is Mr.—"

"Travers," supplied the visitor, with a smile.

"Mr. Travers, Mr. Ryan," she finished.

Then she explained how Travers happened to be there.

They were soon joined by the girl's father, a man of perhaps fifty-four, tall and rugged, with iron-gray hair and eyes to match. His face was smooth, and he listened with impassive but respectful attention as his daughter retold the story.

He shook his head when she asked him if he had ever known a man named Playfair, but added that names in the West, at that time, were as easily lost as the proverbial needle in the haystack. He had kept more or less to himself, prospecting on his own hook, possibly assisted by one or two other men. At the present time, Ryan—or "Red Ryan," as he was called on account of his hair—was his only employee.

As it was Travers's intention to become a miner for gold, he accepted Sanderson's invitation to remain and work with him. His decision was not received with shouts of joy from Ryan, for in the newcomer, he felt instinctively, had come a rival for Sanderson's daughter, although there were no grounds for this assumption aside from the fact that both were young and he was not.

Days passed, and Travers changed his Eastern garb for the rough jeans of the

prospector. His face lost its pallor, but the stamp of the East could not be eradicated. He was a sore spot in Ryan's daily life, and the latter made no pretense of concealing his enmity.

Then came a morning when old man Sanderson made a great find; gold in abundance was uncovered, and the men were beside themselves with joy.

Back to the cabin they rushed and told the girl the good news. She shared their wild enthusiasm, but with a woman's keen insight into the future demanded of her father that he file a claim for the ground at the land office in Badger, to protect his discovery from land-jumpers. It was determined to do as she suggested at the earliest possible moment.

It lay between Ryan and Travers who would ride to Badger and file the claim, with the decision falling to the latter after a private session between father and daughter. The girl did not share her father's confidence in Ryan, and persuaded him to despatch Travers on the mission.

When Ryan learned that the younger man was to be sent he was furious. He had counted on spending a night or so at the gambling-tables in Badger. He said nothing, but his demeanor was anything but agreeable.

The next morning Travers started away on Sanderson's black mare, a handsome and high-spirited horse. He was cautioned both by the old man and his daughter to tell no one the purport of his journey, nor to allow the news of the discovery to leak out in any way. His duty was to get to Badger with the least possible delay, file the claim, and return.

He promised to carry out faithfully the trust reposed in him, and galloped away, after having given an extra pressure to the little hand that slipped into his own when he mounted the mare.

Ryan was not around at the departure, but no significance was attached to his absence, inasmuch as he often went away early in the morning to prospect by himself. He had not been home all night, but Sanderson and his daughter were not aware of this fact.

Travers galloped on. He was not much used to the saddle, and had all he could do to hold in check the mettlesome animal under him. She had not been exercised lately, and endeavored to bolt at top speed as soon as they reached level ground. Travers held her in, however, for the journey was quite a long one, and he did not want her winded. He had promised to be back the next day.

He had covered possibly twenty miles, when he became aware that some one was galloping in his rear. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw a horseman evidently trying to overtake him, and a flash of the sun revealed that he held a gun in his hand.

Travers thought of outlaws and highwaymen, and slid his holster around until the butt of his revolver was within easy reach.

The black mare, hearing another horse thundering behind, strove to strike a faster pace, and Travers was compelled to use both hands on the reins to hold her in. He glanced again over his shoulder, and saw that his pursuer had him "covered," and that he was within easy revolver-range.

"Hold on, thar!" the other shouted. "Where you a goin' with that mare?"

"Badger," Travers called back.

"That's Sanderson's hoss or I'm a liar!" continued the newcomer, drawing up abreast of the Easterner.

"Who said it wasn't?" retorted Travers.

"How'd you come by it?"

"I'm a friend of his."

"Never saw you before."

"Never saw you, either."

"Stranger out here, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Been here long?"

"Not very long."

"What's your business?"

"Miner."

The other laughed.

"Them hands of yours looks like a pianner-player's," he said, eying Travers narrowly. "Sure you didn't steal that mare?"

"You have your gun in your hand or you couldn't say that," snapped Travers, laying his hand on his own weapon.

"Stop that!" yelled the other, "or I'll bore you through. I know you stole that mare; I heard early this morning that Sanderson's hoss had been taken. You fit the description of the hoss thief

mighty well, too, so I'll have to ask you to stop at Big Bill's shack, down the road, when we get thar."

"Can't stop," replied Travers; "I'm in a great hurry."

"Your kind usually is in a great hurry," sneered the other.

"I'm on an errand for Sanderson; promised him I'd get to Badger as soon as possible. I didn't steal this horse; the idea is ridiculous."

"Well, if you can convince the majority of the boys you didn't you'll be allowed to go, but you can't pull the wool over my eyes. We've had dealings with your kind afore in these parts, and hoss stealing is gettin' to be too blamed popular. So, slow up, 'cause here's Bill's ranch-house."

Travers saw how futile argument would be in the face of so much determination, and decided it would be best for him to stop. Several men came out of the shack at their approach, seeing their friend had his gun in his hand.

"What's up, Hank?" asked a big-boned rancher as he glanced over at Travers.

"Caught this feller up the road a kiting along on Sanderson's black mare," explained Hank. "He says as how he is a friend of Sand's, but I ain't never seen him hereabouts afore."

"I ain't, neither," confirmed another of the men.

"And furthermore," continued Hank, with evident relish, "I heard this mornin' that this very mare had been stolen, and this feller fits the description of the hoss thief to a T."

"Where you bound for, stranger?" questioned the big-boned man, whom the others addressed as Bill.

"Badger," replied Travers, his lips in a line.

"Business?"

"Private."

"Tell us what it is."

"Can't."

The men's faces expressed their disapproval.

"We'll have to hold you till we hear from Sanderson," said Big Bill after a pause. "It's his hoss, and we don't know you. If you stole her, you know what you'll get, I reckon. Bring him inside, Hank."

Hank moved toward the mare, but at the same moment a piece of brown paper was blown out of the cabin. The horse shied and started off at full speed, knocking Hank down in its flight. Travers did not try to rein her in this time, but lay flat on her back.

The ranchmen ran for their ponies and soon were in full pursuit, but the mare had few equals in that region, and kept the lead. They were afraid to shoot for fear of killing the horse, but they spurred their own beasts to their utmost speed.

So did Travers. He realized that this was his opportunity to escape, and he doubtless would have succeeded had not fate been against him.

The mare stuck her left hoof into a prairie-dog hole and sent her rider sprawling. For a moment he lay stunned, and before he could remount he was pounced upon by the bunch of ranchmen and made prisoner.

They bound his arms with a lariat and placed him back on the mare, but this time they took the precaution to hold the reins themselves. Between Bill and another of the band they led him back to the cabin.

Hank came galloping up to meet them, having recovered his senses, and with him was a second person in whom Travers recognized Red Ryan. His heart gave a jump of delight, for now he felt he need have no further concern. Ryan would clear away the suspicion against him.

But in this he was mistaken; he reckoned without full knowledge of his man. Ryan had a grievance against him, and now was his opportunity to get even. He absolutely refused to recognize Travers, saying he knew nothing about him. The younger man's eyes fairly blazed with indignation, but he could do nothing in the face of such odds.

Ryan further stated that Sanderson's mare had been stolen, and that he was on the lookout for the thief.

Travers was stunned with astonishment. The revenge this man was taking on account of petty jealousy seemed hideous. By a word he could have cleared the suspected man, but instead of that word he piled up damaging evidence against him.

"Well, I guess that's all we want to

know," said Big Bill after the accusations and denials were over. "You can take the mare back to Sanderson, Red, and we'll do the honors with this gentleman. Hank, fetch along the rope. We'll utilize the tree out at Baldy Point."

II.

SANDERSON'S daughter was getting herself a bite of lunch, when the door was thrown open and Red Ryan walked in. He had been drinking, and his face was flushed.

"Rose, I want you to marry me, d'ye hear?"

"I hear most things, Red, but not that," she laughed.

"Well, I want you to listen to it," he continued thickly. "I've always loved you, Rose, and I've waited three years for you."

"I never asked you to wait for me, did I, Red?" she asked, drawing some biscuits from the oven.

"No, you didn't," he snapped; "but you never told me not to wait. I'm goin' to be rich some day, and I'm a goin' East; I want to take you along with me. You used to be pleasant enough to me."

"I'm still pleasant to you, am I not?" she inquired, wheeling around.

"Not since that light-headed coyote dropped into the cañon and came to live with us, you ain't," he snarled, coming close to her.

She laughed easily.

"Oh! Why, I think I've been just as pleasant since he came."

"So you have—yes, a darn sight pleasanter—to *him*. I get left out in the cold. Why didn't your dad send me to file them papers in Badger?"

"You drink, and might have got mixed up in a game, Red," she replied, looking him straight in the eye.

"Well, I'll bet he gets mixed up in somethin' worse than a game," sneered the other, seating himself.

"What do you mean?" demanded the girl, grasping him by the shoulder. She did not know why, but a premonition of pending danger seemed to possess her.

Ryan was silent. His lips were curled in a cruel smile, and his bleared eyes roved restlessly from one point in the room to another. Suddenly he fastened them on the girl.

"This is the last time I'm goin' to ask you," he said. "I want you to be my wife."

"I couldn't be your wife, Red, if I wanted to," she whispered, her face the color of crimson. "Because I—I promised him to be his!"

The man sprang to his feet as though stung by an adder.

"What!" he cried. "Him! That yellow-haired, elegant-mannered pup? Don't you tell me that, Rose Sanderson!"

"But I am telling you, Red. He asked me before he left, and I promised him. We're going East in about a year—"

The other man burst into a coarse and cruel laugh.

"East? Ha! He might visit the East in the spirit, but never in the flesh."

"What do you mean?" cried the girl, grim fear now gripping her heart.

"Mean? Why, I mean that your choice is dangling at the end of a rope, or will be in about an hour—as soon as the boys can get him out to Baldy Point."

"What! What for? You lie, Red Ryan! You lie!"

"Well, wait and see if he comes back. They caught him on your father's black mare and thought he stole it. I heard about it a couple of hours ago, but it was none of my affair. Besides, I love you, Rose, and I want you."

And he threw his arms around her.

"You coward! You brute! You cur! Let me go—let me go! Dad! Dad! Let me go, I tell you!"

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to ride to Baldy Point! Perhaps it isn't too late. Maybe I can get there in time!"

"No, you don't! I won't let you go! It's too late now, anyway!"

He strove to hold her, but he might as well have tried to restrain an infuriated tiger. The blood was fairly boiling in her veins, heated by the hatred for the coward before her, and by the love she bore the man she hoped to save.

"It's no use, I tell you!" shouted Ryan as she dashed out of the door and to his horse at the post. "They've had time to string up twenty like him!"

But his words were lost on the girl.

She had sprung into the saddle and urged the horse out of the cañon.

Reaching the plateau above, she headed the animal toward Baldy Point, a distance of twenty miles, mostly over the prairies, but partly through several gullies, deep and treacherous, while a stream would have to be forded.

She crouched as low as possible on the horse's back, so that her body would not act as an impediment in the wind; the tears were blinding her, but her teeth were tightly clenched, and she whispered encouraging words to her mount. Could she make it?

A slight rain began to fall. Mile after mile she covered, the animal bearing up nobly under the fast pace, but when half the distance had been traversed she could feel the heaving sides beneath her knees and knew the speed must be slackened.

Her mind was a turmoil of terror. She began to pray; between her prayers she urged the faithful animal on. But now his step grew less steady, and the girl's tears flowed afresh. She implored, supplicated, and commanded the animal not to fail her. She patted his neck; she leaned forward and kissed his mane; she cried aloud to him.

But the pace had been too hard at the start. The animal began to breathe ponderously, his legs wobbled, and finally, with an almost human cry, he sank to the ground, completely exhausted.

The girl shrieked in agony. Her hair was disarranged, and her eyes wild with fear.

The fall of the horse bruised but did not hurt her. She sprang to her feet, and tried to urge the animal to do likewise; but nature had been overexerted—the beast lay as though dead, except for the heaving sides.

The girl started to run. She reached the creek, and plunged in recklessly. Up the side of the gully she plodded, her shoes covered with mud, her dress soaked, and her hands and arms scratched by the brambles through which she fought her way.

She prayed aloud, and staggered on, her muscles strained to the utmost. But her will was of iron, and she continued to forge ahead, now sobbing her lover's name in broken tones, now calling on Heaven to provide some delay in the hanging and give her strength to finish her journey.

But there is a limit to human endurance. After tottering forward for another mile Rose Sanderson collapsed and fell in a heap, still calling aloud her lover's name. Then she became unconscious.

III.

BEFORE the determined cavalcade, their prisoner in the center, had reached Baldy Point they had picked up, *en route*, seven or eight cowboys and miners who wanted to be in at the finish. They viewed the supposed horse thief with interest, for though he had committed an unpardonable act, he had taken a big risk, and his nerve appealed to them.

Again, he showed no signs of "caving in," but rode with his eyes to the front, his face set, as though carved in stone. His hat was gone, and his hair was tossed by the wind.

He had tried to convince them that his horse had bolted of its own accord, and that he had had no intention of trying to escape, but his assertions were received with doubting laughs. He could have stopped the animal, but had let it run on.

The Point reached, the horsemen dismounted and waited patiently for the ceremonies to begin. Big Bill was the leader, and took it upon himself to do the talking.

"This community has been afflicted by your kind much too often lately," he began. "Horse-stealing has got to stop, and we are going to see that it is stopped. You won't confess that you stole the mare, but we believe Red Ryan before we do you, because we've known him quite a while. You are a stranger in these parts, and the evidence is strong enough against you to do away with ceremonies. But we'll give you five minutes to have your say if you want to talk. Maybe you want to send word to some one."

Travers's arms were bound behind his back. Hank stood by with the noose in his hands, the other end having been thrown over the limb above. The rest of the men had drawn their guns.

The Easterner looked from one to the other, but saw no hope in any face.

"Men," he said in a low, even voice,

which trembled, not from fear, but from the injustice of his position, "we all make mistakes. You are making a great big one now. It is true I am a stranger in these parts, but I have my reasons for being here. Sanderson is a friend of mine, and I did not steal his horse. I was on my way to Badger on an errand for him—an errand whose purport I cannot divulge. If I leave any word at all, it is, please to tell him I tried my best to fulfil my promise to him, and would have done so had it not been for Red Ryan. Red Ryan is a liar and a coward, and if I asked a favor before I am strung up it would be to allow me to meet him man to man. But he is not here; he has gone, afraid to face me at the end.

"He lied when he said I stole the horse, but I will not tell you why. It is a private matter. I wish to leave a written message, if I may. Just a word or two to Sanderson's daughter. She is my sweetheart, and was to have been my wife in a few months."

"What?" exclaimed Big Bill doubtingly.

"I'm telling you the truth," continued Travers calmly. "If you men were not so hasty, and would wait until I could send for her, I could prove I am innocent."

Several of the crowd moved uneasily. The sincerity of the stranger's appeal made them doubt his guilt. Hank, however, remained unmoved, and placed the noose over his head.

"If we wait and give you any more time you'll be apt to try to give us the slip again," he said harshly. "Want to say anything more?"

"Nothing, if you are not willing to give me a little time—say till to-morrow morning."

"What brought you out here?" asked Big Bill, hesitating to give the word to string up the stranger, but still not wishing it to be noticed that he doubted his own convictions.

"I came to find a certain person," replied Travers, "an uncle, who came out here during the first rush to the gold-fields. Perhaps some of you men may have heard of him. It may be, however, that he is dead. His name is, or was, Playfair."

"*What!*"

Big Bill roared the word; his eyes opened wider than his mouth, and with a rush that would have discounted a maddened bull he threw his powerful arms around the stranger's neck and nearly choked him to death.

"What!" he yelled again. "Playfair! Why, *I'm* Playfair!"

Travers disengaged himself and looked unbelievingly at the man before him.

"You?" he gasped.

"Yes. And are you Jimmie Travers, my sister's boy?"

"Yes. I'm Jim Travers."

The funeral procession was now turned into an hilarious reception to Big Bill's nephew—Big Bill, whose family name had been lost years ago among the mining-camps and never found, even when he gave up mining and became a rancher.

Travers was allowed to go to Badger and fulfil his secret mission, but he was accompanied by no less than fifteen of Big Bill's friends, headed by Big Bill himself.

And the following day the body of horsemen, while making their way back to Sanderson's, came across a badly tattered girl in calico who was still endeavoring to reach Baldy Point, and whose eyes were swollen and red. When she was taken into the arms of Travers words cannot paint the expressions that suffused her face or the feelings that filled her bosom.

PERCHANCE.

PERCHANCE you loved me in another life;
If so, 'tis strange you do not love me now.
That bliss is o'er; but through the inward strife
Of spirit, oft I wonder, dearest, how
And where we met. Perchance, in some new sphere
My heart will find what it has longed for here.

Martha A. Kidder.

A DEAL IN CALLIOPES.

By A. ROBERT GROH.

A long journey for a big object, and the snare that lay back of it all.

"IT'S a queer world, anyhow."

Four ragged figures were seated around the dingy stove in the main room of the Eureka lodging-house. The man who broke the silence was a wiry little fellow with thin red hair, parchment face, and a prominent nose.

He removed one roughly shod foot from the stove, as he spoke, and put the other in its place, packed down the tobacco in his pipe with a stubby finger, and blew out a cloud of smoke before one of his companions roused himself enough to ask:

"Wot's the matter, Red?"

Red allowed an impressive silence to elapse before he answered.

"You guys knows I was staying at the Waldorf-Astorial three years ago," he remarked, casting a bleary eye around.

"An' now yer stayin' at the Eureka Popular Fambly Hotel—rates by the day, thirty cents," said Long Tom, with a grin.

"True," assented Red. "Too true. Fortune was waiting on me then. Now her daughter, Miss Fortune, is me handmaiden. And all along of the orneriness of man. And, mark ye, had it not been fer the tender heart of lovely woman me bones would now be parching beneat' the blazin' sun of the African desert."

"Well, now, droppin' of yer poetry, tell us about yer hard luck," whined Long Tom.

"Me and Pump and Jerry had cleaned up a good lump of mazuma out of the deal with the Snegambian prince," resumed Red. "We had lived like millionaires fer two years. One day, when the reserve fund was getting low, me man brings a card into me apartment. It bore the name of Biff McAllister, which I hadn't seen fer three years, and him and me hadn't parted the best of friends.

"Well, you oughta seen that feller when he come prancing into me rooms. Say, he had Solomon in all his glory looking like a dirty two-spot. A ice-cream suit with the pants turned up at the bottom, a red vest with green spots, a checkered tie with a big sparkler in the middle of it, patent-leather shoes with gray gaiters, composed his get-up. He carried a gold-top cane, and was smoking a cigar the size of a cop's billy.

"He extends his fin and gives me the glad greeting, and tells me he is staying in Chi, giving me the name of a swell hotel. Replying to mine asking him where he found his gold-mine, he gives me a song and dance about a king in Africa named Bambaloo. Biff told me he had sold the king a automobile, price $500 second-hand, fer a bag of di'monds that was worth $29,834 in the American market.

"Well, I sees a chance fer me and me friends, all of us being admirers of the gems. So I asks Biff the address of King Bambaloo, and after considerable hesitating he gives it to me with full directions how to get there.

"He also tells me that what King Bambaloo wants more than anything is a calliope, because, Biff says, the heathens worships things that makes loud noises.

"I gathers Pump and Jerry together immediately and lays the plan before them. We had about four thou. left between us, and we resolves to pervide the benighted heathens with something to worship in the shape of a calliope at profits like building a State capitol.

"That same day I prices the calliopes and makes a bargain fer one. It was a big rip-snorter, and made a noise like four thousand hyenas. I just pictures to meself how King Bambaloo will fork over the di'monds when he sees that thing and hears it.

"Two days later the good ship Skidho sails out of the harbor with Pump and Jerry and me on board and the calliope down below covered up nice. We was in good sperrits, but one thing I didn't like

was that Biff was down to see the ship sail. He waves his handkerchief at us as the ship draws away and yells 'Bung voyage.'

"To make things worse, there was a black cat on board, and it walks in front of Pump with its tail up. I never knowed that sign to fail fer bad luck.

"Twenty-three days we continues the voyage acrost the ocean, and finally arrives at Madagaba, on the west coast. There our real troubles begins. We gets the calliope off the ship, and there's a bally chap in a uniform. He looks at the calliope, and then figgers up on a pad.

"'Forty-six poun's ten an' six,' he says.

"'What fer?' I asks him.

"'Dooty,' he says.

"'T'ell with dooty,' says I. 'This here is one of our instruments—our fambly organ. We ain't going to sell it.'

"'Oh!' he says. 'Well, let's hear ye play a tune on it.'

"Pump was fer firing up and trying to make good, but I see it wa'n't no use, so we gives up the coin, which the same amounts to two hundred and fifty American bucks.

"We was lucky, or leastways we thought we was lucky, getting started fer the interior. A man turns up right away with a pair of yaks with humps on their shoulders. He agrees to haul the calliope fer forty bangshai a day, and we figgers that's cheap enough and gives him the contract. We also carried a guide and a interp'eter, at twenty-five bangshai per each.

"Then the bad luck that black cat on the ship brung us begins to tell. A elephant attacks the calliope the second day we was out and batters it up considerable. So, the next day we fires up to see if it is in working order. Pump plays a tune on it which he said was 'Bonnie Bells.'

"It was a lucky thing we had started up fire that morning. We hadn't gone more than a mile before sudden comes a yell from the woods and we sees about four thousand savages sweeping down on us yelling and waving their spears. Pump and me and Jerry stands like statutes, and the niggers all skedaddles as fast as their black legs can carry them.

"I always contended, me friends, that wisdom is more to be desired than stren'th, and that a wise man is equal unto seven warriors. That's the reason why me parents brung me up and ed-dicated me careful. At this crisus me careful eddication showed itself.

"The heathens was nearly upon us, still yelling and waving their spears. Suddently me brain evolutes a scheme. With one leap I'm on to the calliope and working the keys for all I'm worth. The calliope makes a noise in them woods like seven thousand boiler-shops. The savages stops, wavers a minnit, and then turns and runs yelping away, while I keeps up the noise with the calliope.

"Well, arter that we keeps fire in the biler all the time, and more than once we saves our lives by playing tunes in that there jungle. Our niggers come back after I druv off the savages.

"When we was sixteen days out we started living on half-rations, and poor Jerry was sick, and riding in the calliope.

"It was the twenty-third day when we finally arrives at Kala Bash, the capital of King Bambaloo's kingdom. Fellers, when I remembered what Biff told me about 'the magnifercent capital of the kingdom of King Bambaloo' I nearly weeps. Could I have laid me hands on him then I would have put his light out. The 'magnifercent capital' wa'n't nothing but a village of huts that looked like soup-bowls upside down.

"The whole village turns out to see us, and when I seen them bowing down and worshiping the calliope I thinks this is easy meat, after all, and in spite of all our hard luck.

Direct to the palace we goes. It was a larger soup-bowl than the rest. On each side of the door is two niggers armed with spears. They tells us that we must make a present to the king before we can see him.

"We didn't have nothing but my watch, and I didn't want to give that up. But finally I makes an agreement with Pump and Jerry that I'm to get paid fer the watch out of the di'monds we get from the old king.

"So, me watch disappears into the palace, and after a while the guard comes out and tells us his imperial highness will see us the next day. They takes us

off then and gives us one of the soup-bowls to stay in.

"Everything was going right, and we was feeling pretty good. They brung us a lot of fruit and stuff to eat, and when we had et it the servant brings in a box of cigars. Yes, sir, General Booth perfectos they was. We looked at each other and couldn't say a word. Pump takes the box and looks it over.

"'They was packed less than four weeks ago,' he says.

"And we left New York two months ago," I says.

"For a while we couldn't say a word, but gradually we recovers and smokes the cigars. In about half a hour the servant brings in something that takes the breath out of us more than the cigars ever thought of doing. It was the New York papers of a date four weeks after we left with our calliope on board the Skidho.

"Well, we was clean flabbergasted, and we sat there looking at the papers sort of silly-like. Finally Pump speaks.

"'Say, I ain't sick, am I?' he says.

"We shook our heads.

"'These is surely the New York papers?' he continues.

"We told him we agrees.

"'But how did they get here?' says Jerry. We couldn't come to no other explanation except that the mails was a lot faster than the Skidho, so we let it go at that.

"Next day we was up early, this being the great day we had worked so long fer. Pump was to do the talking to the king, he having been a politician and handy with his tongue.

"Jerry and me watches fer the ambassidors to come fer us. Pump stays inside the soup-bowl practising his speech.

"Finally we hears the noise, and down the street—or, rather, the space between the rows of soup-bowls, comes the niggers yelling like a lunytick asylum. Suddenly Jerry grabs me by the arm.

"'What's that?' he says.

"'What?' I asks him.

"'That,' he says, pointing.

"And then I seen it. It was a buggy—one of these swell ones they call a Standhope. About forty niggers was pulling it. Down the street they come, and before we could get our breath back from this su'prise we was bundled into the buggy and Pump was pulled out of the soup-bowl and thrown in, too.

"Up the hill we goes a flying in the middle of the yelling crowd.

"At the palace they stops, and we goes in. A curtain hanging acrost the room still divides us from the king.

"'The great King Bambaloo will hear the prayer of the white messengers. Speak,' says a voice which we didn't know where it came from.

"Pump he limbers up his talk-box and speaks his piece:

"'The Great Sperrit has sent his voice to the beloved King Bambaloo. The Great Sperrit desires that King Bambaloo will give to the three white men a bag—er—three bags of the bright stones which come from the mountain. The Great Sperrit has spoken.'

"The interp'eter makes this over into the language of Kala Bash, and then we waits. A voice comes from the other side of the curtain, and finally the interp'eter translates it:

"'The great King Bambaloo will see the three white messengers,' he says, and then the curtain is suddenly opened between us and the king.

"Gee! Them cigars and newspapers and the buggy wasn't nothing to what we seen then. We was looking for skulls, bones, and tommyhawks and such-like.

"What we seen was a little white man in white pants and shirt. He was smoking a brier pipe, and he had a grin on his ugly mug. We stood there like a bunch of statutes.

"'Walk right in, gents,' he says, and you coulda knocked us down with a magic wand.

"Finally I gets me voice back.

"'Where's King Bambaloo?' I asks.

"'Yer humbile servant,' he says, grinning like a hyena.

"'What?' we all yells to once.

"'Be seated, gents,' is all he says, motioning us to chairs.

"We noticed the walls was fixed up with pictures of American prize-fighters and actresses and all sorts of little dewdads. A pile of newspapers was on the table.

"'Smoke, gents?' says the little shrimp, handing us a package of Fluke's Mixture.

"But we waves him aside. We was all too stunned to think. He sets there looking at us and grinning and smoking. Finally he speaks.

"'It is a unexpected pleasure to me to see youse gents in me capital,' he says. 'How is things back in old York, anny-way? I ain't been there fer four months.'

"'We don't open our faces to answer no insults,' I says finally. 'What kind of game is this, and what perticular kind of fraud are you?'

"'Ha, ha!' he says. 'Well, I might return the compliment. What kind of frauds are youse, coming here trying to sell a old calliope fer three bags of di'monds and calling it the voice of the Great Sperrit?'

"The king laughs some more of his disagreeable cackling, and Pump fidgets around in his chair like he'd like to grab him by the neck.

"'And me having traveled with a circus three years and played the old "opie" in parades,' continues the king.

"We was all paralyzed, er else I guess we'd have killed him right there. Finally he resumes.

"'I suppose youse wonder who I am,' he says. 'In private life me name is Spike Dugan. I was barkeep in Dutch's place on the Bowery fer six years. T'ree years ago I tires of me job and takes a boat to South Africa. But everywhere I still has to work, so I finally decides to get a job as king, and here I been, setting on me throne ever since.

"'It's a nice life. I'm convenient here with papers and everything direct from New York, and me only two days from the coast.'

"'Two days?' we yells all together. 'It took us twenty-three.'

"Then the king laughs fit to bust his ugly neck.

"'Ye see, Biff McAllister, he's a friend of mine,' he says. 'Well, I gets a letter from him some time ago stating he's going to get even with a certain man, which the same, I think, is this chap' (pointing at me). 'It was my niggers met youse at the boat, and it was them that's been leading youse around in a circle all them twenty-three days. You wasn't futher than thirty miles from Kala Bash at any time.'

"The king bends down to laugh, and in that minnit Pump makes a spring and lands on his neck. The king was a little feller, and Pump is good size. The king lets out a yell, however, and in a minnit a hundred niggers had hold of us and drug us off.

"The king was mad clean through. He give some orders, and we was drug off through the streets and dumped in a deep pit full of mud at the bottom. We laid there all that night. In the morning the king come to the top of the pit and yelled down to us:

"'Youse will jump on to a prints of the blood royal,' he says.

"He makes more fun of us, and finally tells us we are to stay in there till we starve to death. I knowed Spike Dugan's record in New York well enough to know he meant it, too.

"Two days we stayed in that there pit without nothing to eat. We was getting weak, and Pump was beginning to talk dippy already, when as I was dozing off the night of the second day I feels something touch my ear. I reaches up and finds it's a rope. Then I hears a voice—a lady's voice.

"'White man climb up,' it says.

"I rouses the fellers, and then shins up the rope as fast as I could. As I comes over the top there stands the lady in the moonlight.

"Well, fellers, she was colored, but she was one of the nicest-looking women I ever seen. She wa'n't very dark, and she had long hair, and her cheeks was kind of red through the dark color. She smiled at me as I came over the top, and put her finger on her lips.

"Pump come up next, and he got plumb dippy over the woman. He bowed down at her side and kissed her hand, and he never was much hand fer women, neither.

"When Jerry come up the woman motioned fer us to foller her. She glided through the woods so fast we had to run. She took us to a soup-bowl, where she give us a bag of grub, and then she took us through the woods again, about an hour, till we come to a big river. She pointed down the stream.

"'Walk two days,' she says. 'Come big ship; take white man home.'

"She looked so pretty standing there in the moonlight pointing with her bare arm

and smiling at us, showing her white teeth, that Pump walks right up and throws an arm around her shoulder and kisses her. We all stands there su'prised, and the woman fetches Pump a slap on the jaw that lays him on the ground.

"The minnit she done it she stoops and lifts him up, smoothing his hair. Pump soon recovers, and I asks her why she done all this fer us.

"'My father real chief of Kala Bash,' she says. 'White man come in and kill my father. Me hate him, and me kill him soon. Me like white man here.'

"She looks at Pump, who was looking at her. It was love at first sight fer sure. She was more of an Indian than anything else, and she looked like this here Pokerhontas that saved that feller John Smith.

"It was affecting to see the parting. Pump wanted to stay right there and get married to Ag-a-ka-kee, which was her name. But she smiled at him and said he must not—that the king would kill him.

"She told him he could come back if he wanted to. So, Pump had to go, but he kissed her good-by and they took on something awful when we parted. We had to drag him off, and she waved her hand at him till we was out of sight.

"We got a chancet to work our way home from Madagaba on a freighter, stoking coal. Since we got home me and Jerry has been looking for Biff McAllister.

"Pump has a job, and is saving all his money to go back and marry Ag-a-ka-kee and pry old Spike Dugan off his throne. Then him and Ag-a-ka-kee is going to be king and queen, and he is going to have me and Jerry fer some sort of officers if we want the job."

THE CALL THAT COUNTED.

By JOHN H. WILSTACH.

How a hot summer day came to be made still hotter by what was seen in a listless glance out of a window.

THE hot, monotonous summer day was drawing to a close. We were all absolutely wilted, and lounged around the office with the bored air of insects caught on fly-paper.

There had been absolutely nothing doing all day, but we had made a brave bluff of earning our salaries. That is, Will and Strather matched coins; Mr. Plate, the secretary, dictated things of no importance to the typewriter-girl, and I divided my time between keeping off flies and wiping away perspiration.

I longed to be out in the country or at the seashore, and thought enviously of the men who were having their vacations. If there was anything more tiresome than the city on a summer's day, I had yet to discover it.

Picking up a morning paper, I tried to get interested in its contents, but I found little to attract my attention. The last murder trial had just dwindled to an end, and the head-lines gave no promise of a new sensation.

I threw the sheet to the floor, and wondered, with a yawn, if there was anything new under the sun.

But it was too hot to think or to exert oneself in the slightest degree. Little did I foresee the strenuous events of the near future.

I glanced at my watch, of course with no reason at all. If only something would happen to break the monotony! The sun seemed to be shining with greater strength than ever—if such a thing were possible.

I arose and strolled over to the window, and started to pull down the shade.

We were on the twentieth floor of the Shire Building, and below I could see the roofs of many houses.

I gazed out at them with a listless air, and, curiously, Dan Daly's old lyric came into my mind. I hummed it languidly:

"Same old get up, dress, and tub;
Same old breakfast, same old club;
Same old feeling, same old blue;
Same old story—nothing new!"

The same old view confronted my gaze. But no! Could I believe my eyes? From the top floor of the building nearest to us smoke was pouring in a rapid stream.

But there was no excitement anywhere apparent. Perhaps the place was on fire without the occupants being aware of it.

It was impossible that people in the street could see the smoke, as it was coming from the rear.

"Will—Strather!" I cried; "look here—quick! House on fire!"

The coins the two men were matching dropped to the floor unheeded.

They sprang to their feet, both at the same time, dashing into Mr. Plate, who had stopped his dictation and started toward where I stood.

All were now as excited as we had been listless before.

"What's up?" demanded Will, who recovered first from the collision.

I pointed out of the window with a gesture of alarm. Smoke was still pouring in a steady stream out of the top story of the building in question.

"House on fire," I explained, "and the people in there don't seem to know about it. What's to be done?"

"How do I know?"

"But," I insisted excitedly, "we must get busy at once. Every second counts."

"I am entirely aware of that fact, replied Strather sarcastically, "but what are we to do? It's too far to call out to them."

At that moment the president scented something and burst in among us. Instantly he became more violently excited than we had been.

"We can't stand here idle!" he exclaimed. "Cannot any of you men think of something to do?"

"I know a chap who is a clerk in the building," remarked Strather with an air of finality.

"What good does that do?"

"Suppose I run over and tell 'em about it," broke in Will, whose laziness was a watchword.

"You *run!*" said the secretary, with contempt.

"But something must be done."

"Yes, of course," broke in the president; "but what?"

"It's beyond me."

"Same here."

At that moment our stenographer joined us and looked with alarm at the smoke.

"Why not telephone?" she suggested sweetly.

It took woman's wit to think of the very thing that should have occurred to us at once.

In an instant the atmosphere was electrified. We all started for the 'phone at the same time, but Strather's long legs won the race.

Then, with the receiver to his ear, he burst out:

"Where the dickens are we telephoning to?"

"Yes, who are we to call up?" added Will.

We looked at one another in dismay. Every instant the fire was gaining headway.

"I don't suppose we could call up the Carlton Building?" I said, rushing for the telephone-book and rumpling through the leaves. "It wouldn't be in here under that name. Don't any of you fellows know anybody with offices there? I'm sure I don't."

All clutched their heads in an endeavor to recall some concern located in the structure the flames were now doing their best to wipe out of existence. It was the stenographer who once again came to the rescue.

"I know a girl who works over there," she said. "Let me see—I think the firm name is Schlussell & Doyle. I can't remember the telephone number."

But I was already hurtling my way through the 'phone-book toward the S's, where, after getting the *u* before the *h* times innumerable, I finally located the party, Strather, meanwhile, glaring at me from his stand at the wire and calling out:

"If you are not the slowest nag that ever—"

"Do hurry," implored the typewriter-girl, and the appealing look in her eyes made me slam my way through the pages.

The air was alive with excitement.

"Five hundred and fifty-five J Broad!" I yelled to Strather, who stood glaring at me with the receiver in his hand.

"Five hundred and fifty-five J Broad!" he screamed to Central.

"No, not four hundred and fifty-five J, but five hundred and fifty-five J!"

We found ourselves swearing a blue streak at the poor service.

A couple of minutes passed, but not in silence. We excitedly watched the smoke continue to pour out of the top story of the Carlton Building.

At last I saw by the look on Strather's sweat-covered face that he had got connection.

"Hello! Is that the Carlton Building?

"Can't understand what you say. Your place is on fire. What? Yes, top floor."

He flung up the receiver with a sigh of relief.

"We've done our best. Let them get busy now Let's get around to Todd's room, where we can see the street."

There we stood clustered at the window.

"Why didn't somebody think of calling up the fire department?" Strather wanted to know.

"Or the police," added Will.

"Both would have been quicker," I added; "but most people's brains are not built to think fast in emergencies."

Time passed—only a few minutes, but each contained sixty nervous seconds. Finally, after what seemed to be an age, the screech of a fire-engine could be heard in the distance. An instant later it swung into sight, stopping between the Dott Building and the Carlton.

A man rushed from the Dott Building and beckoned to the chief.

We breathed a sigh of relief, when Will broke forth shrilly:

"They have entered the wrong building!"

It was all too true. The firemen were running, with the hose, up the stoop of the Dott Building. And smoke was streaming out of the back windows of the Carlton at a greater rate than before.

I wiped the sweat from my face, and together with the rest demanded that Strather get the right number. The excitement was getting on my nerves.

We were at fever-heat, from both the turmoil and the humidity of the sweltering summer day.

At last he got right connection.

"Get the firemen started on your top floor!" he exclaimed. "Smoke's pouring out at a rapid rate!"

We waited eagerly for the reply.

"What do they say?" demanded the president.

We hung on Strather's words. He wiped his brow and mumbled something under his breath.

"They say," he said, "that there is no fire in the building at all."

"Then, what is the smoke?" we broke in simultaneously.

"They've been taking a flash-light photo."

The president groaned.

"Two 'phone calls to no purpose. Hope they didn't count. No one got any good out of 'em."

We had to laugh at the absurdity of the thing.

"So, there is no fire at all," I said ruefully. "Those firemen ought to be notified."

We all looked rather shamefaced. Indeed, it seemed a case of much ado about nothing.

That evening, as I made my way homeward, I bought an extra. My gaze was attracted by head-lines on the first page. When I had read them I gasped with astonishment.

"Fire in Dott Building put out by fire-engine that had been called to a false alarm next door, at the Carlton Building."

The newspaper fell from my hands, and I thanked Heaven for the act of Providence. Our mistake had been the means of saving many lives.

Surely, it had been a 'phone call that did count.

TRIALS.

TRIALS make our faith sublime,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Lift us to a holier clime,
Make us strong to do and bear.

Cowper.

CUPID AS A TOUT.

By J. S. FENDER.

The surprising thing Elsie did when an acquaintance turned out to be a fraud.

DAVID MORELY stopped short in the doorway. Dumb amazement was written across every line of his face.

He leaned heavily against the door-jamb and stared helplessly into the deserted room, toying with two black Havana cigars which he held in his hand.

He had invited his caller to join him in a smoke, and stepping into his own room for a sample of his favorite perfectos, he had returned quickly, only to find the visitor gone.

Suddenly a draft of cool night air fanned his face, and he hurriedly crossed the room into the front hall. There he found the outside door wide open. He closed it mechanically, and returning into the library, called softly:

"Elsie—Elsie, dear."

"Yes, father; just a minute. I'm pouring some wine for you and Mr. Kipple," came a sweet voice in answer.

"You need not trouble yourself, daughter; he is not here."

"Not here, father! Why, what do you mean?"

Elsie hurried into the library, all excitement.

She glanced about the room; then ran impulsively to the great oak table standing in the center.

After one eager glance over it, she fairly screamed:

"Father, he has taken Mrs. Hart's diamond brooch!"

Clinging to the edge of the table for support, she stood there pale and trembling.

Her father began to search over the floor. Finding no traces of the brooch there, he soon straightened up, and in a voice pitched high with excitement inquired:

"Did Mrs. Hart leave her brooch here?"

"No, father; she loaned it me to wear. I went over to her house last evening to ask her how she liked my new gown. She thought it a perfect dream, but she said that my neck looked bare without an ornament, and insisted upon my wearing her diamond brooch, which she attached to a little gold chain. I didn't want to wear it, but she would not hear to anything else. She wanted me to make a hit at her house to-night, she said."

"Well, how did this rascal get it from you?" snorted the old man.

"We had been sitting here talking about the dance. He asked me if he might look at the brooch, saying that it was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. I handed it to him, and while he was examining it I thought of the fine bottle of wine Mr. Kruger gave you the other day, and I proposed he meet and join you in a glass before he left. I called you, and went to pour the wine; then you—"

Here Elsie dropped into a chair and burst into tears. Morely stood in front of her, pulling nervously at his beard.

"Oh, father, whatever shall we do?" she continued through her tears. "We can never repay Mrs. Hart—we are too poor now. She might have me arrested."

Morely did not reply at once. He did not share his daughter's fear of arrest. In fact, he looked at the loss of the brooch from an entirely different standpoint. He was speechless with rage at the thief's audacity.

After some minutes of thought, however, he seemed to arrive at some conclusion. Still holding the cigars in his hand, he placed one in his vest-pocket, and lighting the other, asked coolly:

"Who is this young scalawag?"

"I don't know, father; he—"

"You don't know!" thundered the old man, quickly changing his manner, and switching his pent-up anger from Kipple to his daughter.

"No," replied Elsie appealingly. "Mrs. Hart did not even know him. He

just arrived in Louisville to-day. He called on her, and introduced himself as a friend of her son George, who is at Yale. She invited him to her reception to-night, and introduced him to me. He was very pleasant, and we danced four dances together; then—"

"Then he brought you home," interrupted Morely.

"Yes, father, he asked me if he might. I gave him permission because I knew that Helen and Charles preferred to be alone together. I went to Mrs. Hart's with them. Bob and I quarreled, you know."

"Humph!"

There was no further reply on Morely's part. The long pause that ensued was only broken by Elsie's sobs.

The old man was thinking hard, but could conceive of no motives for the theft other than those born in the mind of some wild spendthrift who suddenly found himself face to face with a wilderness of debts. For Kipple had impressed Morely as being a very well-bred gentleman.

But the suave Mr. Kipple was no such man. Indeed, he was none other than a full-fledged professional burglar. He had just been released from a five-year sojourn in the State penitentiary for forgery. In that time he had concocted many schemes to be worked out when he was free. His term over, he came directly to Louisville to begin operations. He had put up at one of the best hotels, and was figuring out the lay of the land, when an unlooked-for incident occurred.

He was standing in the hotel lobby one morning, and as being a good listener was part of his business he managed to overhear the conversation of two men near him. Here he learned of Mrs. Hart's reception, and of the achievements of her son at Yale.

He was shrewd enough to know that by passing himself off as this son's friend he could gain easy admission into Mrs. Hart's home, and, as has been seen, the scheme worked to his entire satisfaction.

Tact with women was his strongest forte. This, combined with his taking personality, soon made him at home with the Harts.

The first thing he saw, on meeting Elsie, was the glittering brooch. It was enough. He became very attentive to her at once. He even made several bold attempts to induce her to sit through the waltz with him, but Elsie's passion for dancing was too much for him, and it saved her from losing the brooch sooner than she did.

Then he boldly asked leave to accompany her home, and owing to the fact that she had quarreled with her lover, he obtained a ready acquiescence to his request.

When Morely went after the cigars Kipple was planning some sort of Raffles exit. But now the thing was much simpler.

Morely meanwhile, in an effort to console Elsie, remarked:

"That fellow's conscience will bring him back with the brooch; you mark my words."

Elsie could make no reply. With a tear-stained face she arose, kissed her father, and retired to her room, where she spent a sleepless night.

But Morely, with the strength of his conviction that Kipple would return, sat up. And Elsie, on arising early the following morning, found him asleep in his chair, still waiting.

She was on her way to see Mrs. Hart in less than two hours after breakfast, but the time had seemed an age to her.

"My dear Mrs. Hart, I misplaced your brooch last night when I got home. I told Minnie to find it, and I'll bring it over this evening. I was in such a hurry to get down-town this morning that I could not wait."

The idea of gaining time was paramount in Elsie's mind. So, she told this fib without the least scruple, and it went all right with Mrs. Hart because she knew Elsie to be an incurable bargain-hunter.

"It was so sweet of you, dear, to let me wear it," Elsie continued.

"Now, don't suffer the least uneasiness about it, my dear," rejoined her friend. "I am going to Lexington on the twelve-o'clock train, Elsie. You can wear the brooch until I return, on Friday. That's your birthday, you know, and," whispering in the girl's ear, "I have a surprise for you."

"If she only knew!" Elsie thought, and her face paled.

"Why, what is it, child?" queried Mrs. Hart, noticing the change in Elsie's usually rosy cheeks.

"Nothing—nothing at all, dear. Really, I must be going," and with a brave attempt at smiling she kissed her friend and hurriedly left the house.

Down the street she flew, her heart in a flutter of anxiety. But every effort to trace Kipple was fruitless.

"I had been planning to give you a little surprise on your birthday, Elsie," said her father that night, "but I am afraid we will have to postpone it until next year."

"It's all right, father," Elsie replied, looking wistfully at him.

"Perhaps we might economize and soon have enough to pay Mrs. Hart for the brooch," went on Morely, almost glad the affair had occurred, because it would teach his somewhat extravagant daughter a lesson she would not soon forget.

"Yes," she replied, brightening, "that's what we will do. It's the only way. We will begin at once. I'll work, too."

She went to her desk immediately and wrote letters canceling all social engagements, even to the most informal affairs. This was not an easy task for her, and was only accomplished after copious tears had been shed.

Next she called Minnie to her, the only servant retained in the house, and after giving the girl some plausible excuse, discharged her.

Now came the difficult task. She wrote an advertisement, under an assumed name, applying for dresses to make. Calling her father, she sent him to insert it in the *Morning Chronicle*.

Then she began looking about the house for articles to sell. She could find nothing that she felt strong enough to part with, until she thought of the antique punch-bowl, a relic of her father's better days. She was just debating over the disposal of this when the door-bell rang.

"Minnie—Minnie!" she called, and her poor discharged maid suddenly appeared in the door with her grip, ready to leave.

"Do me one favor before you go, Minnie," Elsie said. "Answer the door-bell. If it is a stranger, admit him. If it is Mr. Bob Graham, tell him I am out."

It was a woful face Graham stood gazing into, as he listened to the disappointing message. He asked no questions, however. He simply sent his compliments to Elsie, accompanied by a token of his complete willingness to make up their past quarrel, and went away.

Minnie returned to her former mistress bearing a great bunch of American beauties and an expression even more woful than the one she had carried to the door.

"It was Mr. Bob, Miss Elsie," she explained. "I delivered your message, and he told me to say that he hoped Miss Elsie was not ill, and to please accept these flowers, and that you would understand."

"Yes, I know all about it," Elsie snapped. "You may go when you please, Minnie."

II.

THE Friday following the Monday on which Kipple had stolen the brooch Elsie was busily sewing on the only dress she had received in answer to her advertisement. She had promised to deliver it on Saturday and was now hurriedly putting in the last stitches.

As her needle flew back and forth she was lamenting over the small amount she was to get for it, after all her hard work.

"Only ten dollars!" she reflected. "That is not half enough. And it takes so long to earn it, too. I must try something else. I can never, never get enough sewing, and I just won't sell any of our things!"

With a sigh, she dropped her needle and fell to musing dejectedly.

"I'm twenty-one to-day. Mrs. Hart will be home, and she will give me something—I know she will. I'll be compelled to tell her the truth about the brooch. Oh, I shall—"

Here her eyes suddenly caught the meaning of the great black head-line at the top of the newspaper lying in front of her on the floor. "Tips on to-morrow's races," it read.

Like a flash of lightning a thought shot through Elsie's mind—a flippant fancy destroying all reason. She straight-

ened in her chair and stared at the fascinating line as one transfixed by some powerful charm.

Under ordinary circumstances she would never have noticed it. It could have conveyed no meaning to her even if she had. But now it was like a good fairy arriving with its magic wand in the hour of her sorest need.

"I'll go to the races!" she exclaimed.

She did not stop to reason about the matter, nor did she even take into consideration that there was a chance for her to lose. She stood face to face with a great problem. Here lay the solution. While she had not the slightest knowledge about how a bet was placed, she had a vague idea of the thing, from stories Graham had told her.

The clock struck two, and Elsie sprang to her feet. Hurrying to her room, she made a hasty toilet, and emerged in an incredibly short time, carrying a small roll of bills, covering every cent she had in the world. She counted it out on the table. Fifty dollars! The sum represented more economy and more effort than she had ever known before.

What she was about to do did not seem in the least wrong to Elsie. She was filled with the idea of repaying her friend. It never occurred to her that she might not win.

So, under the circumstances, it was not surprising to see her board a street-car for the race-track in high spirits. She was doing what she thought was best and right, and that was sufficient excuse to her mind.

Although trembling with excitement, she tried to interest herself in the shop-windows as the car passed by. But she fidgeted from side to side, and incessantly opened and snapped shut the catch on her purse.

At length the lady who sat beside her, guessing the cause of Elsie's agitation, asked pleasantly:

"Are you going to the track, my dear?"

"Yes," replied Elsie. "Are you?"

"Oh, I go every day."

"Do you, indeed? Well, this is my first time. I wonder if you would be kind enough to show me what to do?"

Elsie spoke with a desperate effort to appear calm.

"I shall be delighted, my dear. Which horse will you play?"

"Firefly," Elsie promptly answered, with a fine show of knowing all about it.

"Ah, you sly little rogue!" laughed the lady. "Is it the horse or the mount?"

"Oh, the mount," affirmed Elsie, determined not to appear entirely ignorant of racing terms.

She wondered why the woman laughed, but, hiding her embarrassment as best she could, she made a very bad stagger at joining in the mirth.

"I must have made a break," she thought, "but I shall not let her know it was unintentional."

"I fear you will lose," the lady said now. "It has been raining, you know, and Firefly is not a good risk on a muddy track. Buckshot is the horse to play to-day. You take my tip, little girl, and play him. You will get fine odds on him. I have reliable information that he never lost on a wet track."

Elsie could not understand what difference the condition of the track made, when all the horses ran on it at the same time, but the lady was sure about it, and she decided to play Buckshot.

She found her companion very agreeable company on the remainder of the trip. They talked about horses and races, and the lady related several stories which seemed highly plausible and interesting to Elsie. But she found herself laughing more than once at things to which she could see no point.

In a short time she was following the lady up the broad stairs of the grand stand, on her way to the betting-ring. She moved as though she were treading on air. In truth, she was too much excited to know the difference even if she had been.

The betting-ring was situated in the center of the immense grand stand—a vacant place extending out from the first row of seats of the central section to the railing overlooking the track. The railing and the first row of seats, with their concave sides, facing each other, formed the circumference of a perfect circle.

Elsie followed the lady along the aisle to the center of this circle, where the latter left her for a minute. Looking up into the sea of faces on the various

tiers, Elsie felt as Daniel might have done when he first gazed about him in the den of lions.

But she soon collected herself, and became vitally interested in her more immediate surroundings. A feeling of awe crept over her. Never had she seen so much money. She never dreamed that there was so much in all Louisville.

She gazed, wide-eyed, at the stacks of silver on the book-makers' tables, and she felt ashamed of her poor little fifty dollars.

In her all-absorbed interest in the frenzied gamblers about her Elsie had not seen the man whose eyes had been riveted upon her since she first entered the betting-ring.

Graham—for it was he—had been on the point of going to her several times. He thought she was going wrong, and that it was his duty to interfere.

He walked toward her now, and was in the very act of speaking, but his tongue failed him.

"No," he thought; "has she not refused to see me three times? Here she is, playing the ponies. She is nothing to me now. Let her work out her own salvation. If she wins or loses, let it be her own choosing, not mine."

He sighed, and moved away.

"The next race is ours, dear; place all you have in the world on Buckshot," cried Elsie's companion of the street-car, rushing to Elsie's side.

And Elsie did, and received a yellow ticket in exchange.

"The odds are fifty to one, dear," cooed the lady as she and Elsie seated themselves in the fifth tier.

"Well, suppose Buckshot should lose?" Elsie wanted to know.

"You would still have a souvenir, my child," laughed the lady, pointing to the precious ticket Elsie held in her hand.

Elsie was somewhat nettled by this reply, but the bugles sounded for the second race, and she became at once absorbed in the sights around her.

She watched the horses eagerly as they filed into the track. Each seemed more perfect than the one preceding, until Buckshot entered. She was disappointed. The old horse seemed as much unconcerned about his surroundings as the old man who sat beside her.

But she fixed her eyes upon the animal and uttered a little prayer to herself.

The horses made several attempts to start, but each time they were called back.

"That starter doesn't know his business," remarked the old man with the silk hat to his neighbor.

"He couldn't start a fire," replied Elsie's indignant companion.

But hardly were the words out when the flag fell and the crowd yelled:

"They're off!"

Everybody except the old man at Elsie's side jumped to his feet.

"Buckshot is two lengths ahead!" cried Elsie's friend, and Elsie stood up in her seat in order to see over the heads of the people in front of her.

"Oh, I do hope he wins!" she cried, her face red with excitement.

But the words had no more than passed her lips when the horses rounded the first quarter and Firefly, who had been creeping up easily beside Buckshot, let out enough to land a good length ahead; Captain Bill, following in her wake, sailed up beside Buckshot, and the old mud-racer was hopelessly pocketed.

The wild crowd filled the air with cries of "Firefly!"

Elsie's heart was beating an anvil chorus. She could not bear to look. Her brain reeled, and she swayed from side to side.

Suddenly the cries of the people about her dwindled into a loud buzz, like a great swarm of angry bees.

The lady sprang to Elsie's side, and clutching her arm, cried above the din:

"Now pull for Buckshot!"

Channing, Buckshot's mount, by a deft piece of generalship had freed his horse from the pocket, and as they neared the half Buckshot was on the outside, a nose ahead of Captain Bill.

"Come on! Come on!" muttered Elsie's companion to herself.

"He is laying low at second place, dear. He is just where he should be. He will hold it until the stretch, then Channing will let him out and he'll finish with a length to give away."

As the horses neared the three-quarter Buckshot began to pull up slowly but easily. Captain Bill was fighting with Hallelujah for third place. The rest

were running as best they could to get a show over these two.

The great throng was pulling for the favorite, Firefly, who still kept the lead, but now only by half a length.

Elsie was pulling for Buckshot at the top of her voice and snapping her fingers in time with her shouts, as her new friend did, though very softly.

Suddenly her clenched fist shot through the crown of the old man's silk hat. She was filled with horror as she lifted the hat on her rising arm. But luckily everybody was too much interested to notice the incident.

She soon forgot it herself, for at this point the horses sailed into the stretch. Buckshot was sneaking past Firefly at every jump. Captain Bill still clung doggedly to third place.

Channing laid into the old mud horse with whip and spurs. The horse responded, game as ever, and let out every ounce of speed he possessed.

Elsie was almost fainting with excitement. She pulled with all the energy of her soul for Buckshot. But the old horse's day was over. Firefly, in a few jumps, slipped away from him, and Captain Bill came nosing in for second place with all his might.

Channing rode as though the rising of the sun depended on his winning the race, and Buckshot seemed of the same mind. He sailed under his rider, exerting every effort to keep Captain Bill's nose away from his flanks.

They flashed under the wire, Firefly two lengths ahead, Buckshot second by a nose, Captain Bill running him hard for the place.

The crowd made a rush for the bookmakers, to cash in before the next race. They surged past Elsie in a desperate scrambling mass.

But she saw nothing. She only heard the awful din, and realized that she had lost.

She fell in a dead faint, not to the floor, but into the arms of Bob Graham.

He whirled her home in his auto, caring for nothing and heeding no laws. He had Elsie, and had won the biggest stake of his life.

She revived in a short time. Opening her eyes, she saw her father, Graham, and Mrs. Hart all standing about the couch upon which Bob had placed her. She thought them specters of an awful dream.

But when her eyes fell with conscious intelligence on Mrs. Hart she told her story through her tears, up to the point where Buckshot, fifty to one, ran a hopeless race.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she sobbed. "I don't know how—"

Here Mrs. Hart came to the rescue.

"Listen, Elsie," she said. "That brooch was given to me by your mother when you were a little girl. I was to keep it until you were grown. This is the day I agreed to give it up. I came back from Lexington on purpose to do it. You have lost a brooch, dear, but you have gained a friend. Look, here is Mr. Graham; he brought you home. Come, give him your hand."

Elsie looked at Graham, smiled, and put out her hand.

"I'll buy you six brooches to-morrow," he whispered.

A BACK-YARD TRAGEDY.

WHEN the pale stars began to shine,
Beneath the linden-tree
She sat—no ear, no eye, save mine
Was there to hear or see.

She sat, and sang, as in a dream,
A slow, soft song of love;
Methought that in her eye did gleam
A ray from heaven above.

And now her flute-notes louder soar;
But, ah!—a sudden pain.
Well aimed, that brick! A voice next door,
"It's Jones's cat again!"

A QUESTION OF POLICY.

By EDWARD P. CAMPBELL.

Getting even with a business firm, and the quick play of wit the outcome necessitated.

IT was closing time. Clerks hurried for the elevators, anxious to get home. There was one that hung back. His name was Howard Cottonwood, and he had failed to balance his books.

About five-thirty he uttered an exclamation—he had found the error, now he could go. Just as he was passing out at the door, a messenger-boy thrust a telegram in his hand. Tearing it open, Cottonwood read:

I expect you this evening. HELEN.

Of course, this made him feel good; then he suddenly realized that he did not have any money, and that he needed a dress shirt. Nice state of affairs, with no one around that he could "touch."

The only thing to do, he told himself, was to go to John & John, the place where he had been dealing for over a year, and ask to be trusted.

"Surely they will stand for two dollars!" he reflected.

The man in charge, however, told him that it was a question of policy with the firm not to have accounts.

Howard said all kinds of things, but to no purpose. He left, declaring that he would soon show them a thing or two—and he did.

Passing a pawn-shop, he entered. "Uncle" let him have "five" on his diamond pin, and with this he was able to get a shirt at another place.

There was not a minute to lose if he was to arrive at the Trowbridges' on time. He did not wish to give Helen any cause to worry.

She was waiting for him. It would be some time before the rest of the guests would arrive, and they went into the conservatory. It was known to all their friends that it would not be long before they became man and wife.

The first thing she did was to show him a long list of presents that she had to make to different people, and asked where would be a good place to buy neckties, gloves, and so on.

Howard thought for a moment, then said: "Don't go to John & John; but across the street from them is a new store. It is a bully place."

She thanked him; then they talked about things nearer the heart.

The battle was on. Howard did not miss a chance of telling his friends about the "new store."

While business had been good with John & John, it now began to fall off. They could not understand it. All the carriages stopped on the other side of the street. Strive as they might, they could not hold their heads up. There were rumors of their impending failure.

Howard Cottonwood was one of the first to read about it. He was highly elated. He had paid them back in their own coin, he told himself as he entered the office where he worked. His uncle motioned him to come into the private office. He looked worried.

Without wasting any time, he told Howard that he had lost about ten thousand dollars, money he had invested in a gentlemen's furnishing store—John & John. They had gone to the wall; now he was ruined.

Howard staggered as though he had been hit with a club. Through him all this had happened.

He made a clean breast of the whole matter, at the same time assuring his uncle that what he had done he could undo. Snatching up the telephone, he soon had Helen on the wire. He told her, for reasons best known to himself, that they should be married at once. She was willing. Next he sent word to the papers of their coming wedding.

Helen Trowbridge was the only daughter of Richard Trowbridge—the multimillionaire. Naturally the news

caused every editor in town to send a reporter to the mansion to interview every one in sight.

Howard beat them all. When they arrived they were told that Miss Trowbridge and Mr. Cottonwood had gone down-town to do some shopping. They had left word that they were going to stop at John & John's to buy a few things. The reporters lost no time in betaking themselves there.

The reporters were in great luck, they told each other. They were just in time; managed to get a list of all the things that the couple had bought—even took a picture of them coming out of the store.

Howard did not let things rest here. He had secured the service of a press-agent, and played the incident for all it was worth.

The carriages did not stop any more on the other side of the street, but once again in front of John & John.

The wedding trip was soon over. Howard had some important matters to attend to. He had a long talk with his uncle and his father-in-law. The outcome was that John & John established stores from coast to coast. Wherever you go you find one of their shops. The press-agent keeps the public informed as to what is doing.

"To think, my dear," Howard Cottonwood said, one day, after he had greeted his young wife and she had made herself comfortable in his new office, "if it hadn't been for that little telegram of yours, I dare say I would still be working for my uncle or your father, and the Universal Haberdashery Stores of America would not have been formed with me as president of the two-million-dollar concern."

"But you haven't told me," broke in Helen, "where you got the two dollars to buy the shirt."

"By Jove! I forgot all about it; I pawned that little diamond pin you gave me as a present. Come, get on your things; we must go up and see 'uncle.'"

With that the young couple drove rapidly to a certain pawn-shop, and soon the pin was back in its old place.

The policy of the company is: "No credit to any one."

THE MESSAGE OF THE ROSE.

SWEET JACQUEMINOT, I bend to thee
And kiss thy perfumed petals rare,
And beg that thou wilt tell for me
My heart's fond story to my fair.
When she shall come with dainty tread
To breathe thy sweets—ah, then for me,
When o'er thee bending, lift thy head,
Give her this kiss I give to thee.
And may thy gentle touch convey
Unto her my heart would tell,
For dare I speak, this would I say,
Sweet Jacqueminot, I love her well.

Meet thou her eyes, and like the flush
Of thine own bloom, then will her cheek,
Adorned with sweet confusion, blush
To hear the vows I bid thee speak.
And let thy every gentle art
Of sweet persuasion plead for me
Until thy story move her heart
To love's impassioned sympathy.
And when she takes thee for her own
To lie and lie upon her breast,
I would thy fate were mine alone,
For I could know my love is blest.

James King Duffy.

HOW MEN MAKE BIG SALARIES.

BY VICTOR FORTUNE.

The Story of Workers Who Make Their Work Pay Big Dividends—How They Do It.

Does your work pay?

Not just day wages, but a good, round, stiff salary.

If not, why don't you make it pay?

You see men about you who earn dollars where you earn dimes, yet they work no harder than you.

Why don't you make your work count, too?

You can.

What makes the difference? Luck?

Not often. What then?

In one word—*training*.

To illustrate: A. M. Fowler, Springfield, Mo., was a journeyman pattern-maker when he faced the proposition that now confronts you.

HOW ONE MAN DID IT.

His first step was to enroll for a Mechanical Course in the International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pa., an institution whose sole business it is to raise the salaries of workers. Mr. Fowler is now General Manager of the Phœnix Foundry and Machine Company, Springfield, Mo., at an increase in salary of about 400 per cent.

In telling how he made *his* work count, he writes:

"I must say that I think the International Correspondence Schools the greatest boon existing for the working man. In my own experience, they have been worth to me, without any exaggeration whatever, *thousands of dollars.*"

That is how one man did it. Take another case: Russel Cooper, 2340 North Penn St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Mr. Cooper was janitor of a church at the time he enrolled for the Electrical Course of the I. C. S. Within two years he became Electrician in charge of the Main Shop of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. He is now Superintendent of the Indianapolis Light and Heat Company. He writes:

"My earnings are now over six times as much as when I enrolled, and I can see even further progress ahead."

AN INCREASE OF 1,000 PER CENT.

How G. A. Collins made *his* work pay would read like romance if it were not actual fact. Mr. Collins was a chainman with a Railroad Maintenance of Ways Department at the time of enrolling with the I. C. S. After a few months he was promoted to rodman, and then to transitman. Not being satisfied, he resigned and went into irrigation work for the government. Now he has an office of his own as Civil Engineer and, in addition, is Chief Engineer of a large coal company. He reports: "My earnings have been increased during this time 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."

1,000 per cent is a pretty fair return on the small investment required for an I. C. S. Course, isn't it?

Mr. Collins' address is 717 New York Block, Seattle, Wash.

Here is the name and address of another worker who made his work return big dividends with aid of the I. C. S., Joseph Cain, Searles, Ala.

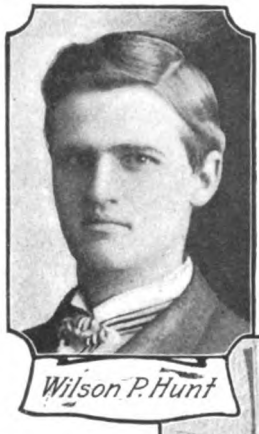
When Mr. Cain enrolled for one of I. C. S. Mining Courses he was a Mine Foreman at $90 per month. He now holds the position of Mine Superintendent with the Alabama

Consolidated Coal and Iron Company, at a salary of $225 a month. Mr. Cain says:

"I know of no other method than the I. C. S. by which a man can advance so quickly and surely."

Advancement quick and sure, right where you are, is the record of I. C. S. men throughout the world. At your present work, without the loss of a minute's time or a dollar's pay, the I. C. S. takes you, trains you and shows you how to make that work pay, how to advance in it, or how to change to a more congenial occupation

The I. C. S. can do this because it has a staff of 2700 people and an invested capital of $6,000,000 devoted to the express purpose of training you *to make your work pay.*



When a man who is willing to do his part gets the I.C. S. organization behind him, don't you think it ought to help—*a little?*

Take, for instance, the case of a young man like Wilson P. Hunt, Moline, Ill. While still a machinist's apprentice, 20 years of age, Mr. Hunt enrolled for the Mechanical Course. On finishing the course and receiving his diploma, he became a draftsman and then a machine designer. Later he started the Moline Tool Company, Moline, Ill., becoming Secretary and Superintendent of the concern. The I. C. S. supplied just the help needed by Mr. Hunt to realize his ambition.

FROM APPRENTICE TO PROPRIETOR.

When Chas. E. Norberg, 1026 Albany Street, Los Angeles, Cal., got in line with the I. C. S., his income began to increase in a most surprising way.

Mr. Norberg's remuneration as carpenter was $3 a day when he enrolled for the Architectural Course. He tells us: "Previous to this I had only a common school education, but the instruction given was *so plain, so easy to follow, and so practical* that I have now become a General Contractor, and my earnings range from $75 to $100 a week. The I. C. S. is certainly a great blessing to the wage earner."

What Mr. Norberg says about the simplicity of his instruction is characteristic of all I. C. S. lessons and text books. They are easy to *learn;* easy to *remember;* easy to *apply.* Not even a common school education is required, only the ability to read and write. But one obstacle can stand in the way of the success of an I. C. S. man—his own lack of ambition.

Still another Californian who dates his rise from his enrollment with the I. C. S. is Albert K. Harford, 854 Fifty-third Street, Oakland, Cal.

At the time of enrolling Mr. Harford held the position of engine-room storekeeper at $35 a month. Let him tell what happened in his own words:

"For those who have to work for a living, there is no better way of advancement than through the I. C. S. Their excellent instruction and help enabled me to advance from one position to another rapidly, and I am now Foreman Machinist for the Pacific Steamship Company, at a salary of $130 per month."

WHAT A BRICKLAYER DID.

Does training pay? Can *you* make it pay? Ask Daniel K. Albright, 319 McKean St., Kittanning, Pa. Mr. Albright writes:

"When working as a bricklayer at bricklayers' wages, I was *induced* to en-

roll in the I. C. S. After studying nights, through the perfect manner in which the schools carry on their instruction, I was soon able to read blueprints and was appointed foreman at an increase of wages."

Note that the I. C. S taught him, not to work harder, but *to read blueprints*—trained him to make his work *pay*.

Was Mr. Albright satisfied with this advance? Being a true I. C. S. man—*never!* Hear the rest of his letter:

"Resigning this position (foreman), I entered the employ of the Kittanning Plate Glass Company, of which firm I am now General Superintendent, and my earnings are now nearly 600 per cent. more than when I enrolled. The I. C. S. instruction is so simple and easily understood that any man may gain unspeakable good through it."

Knowing what he does now, how much persuasion do you think would be necessary to *induce* Mr. Albright to enroll with the I. C. S., if he had it to do over again?

WHAT WOULD PERSUADE YOU?

If you were really awake to your own interests, how much persuasion do you think ought to be necessary to induce you to write and ask how the I. C. S. can help you?

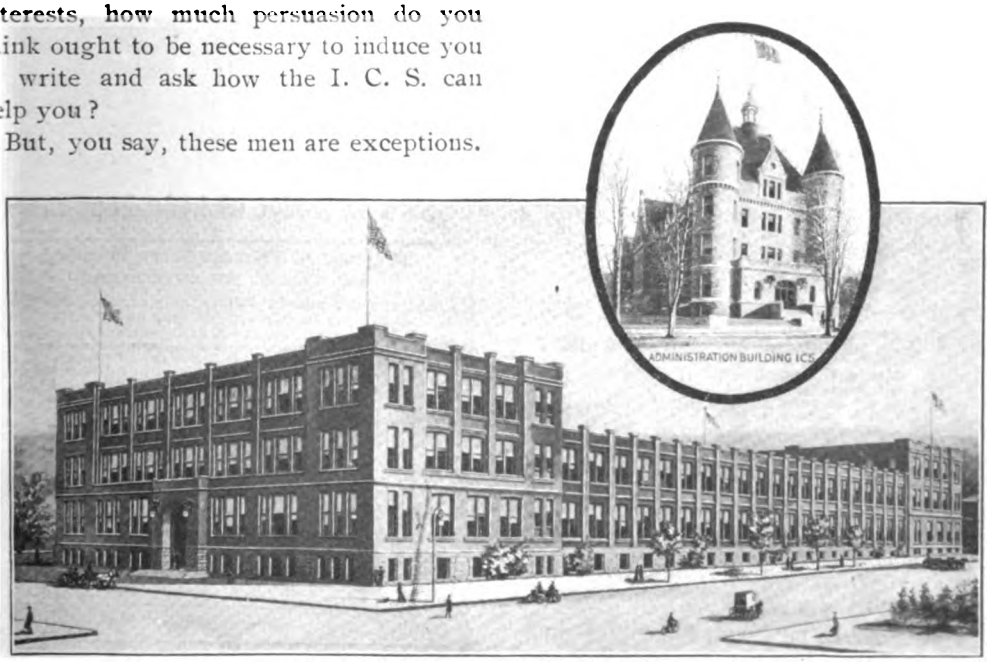
But, you say, these men are exceptions. On the contrary, they are cases picked at random out of thousands of successful I. C. S. men. The I. C. S. has gone to the trouble of putting a thousand of their names and addresses with their stories in a book, which will be sent to you for the asking. The I. C. S. organization is so perfect that it reaches, instructs and trains these men in any state of the Union or in any part of the world.

Here is former street railway worker T. T. Buzzill, care of J. E. Henry & Son, Lincoln, N. H., who writes:

"I knew nothing about electricity when I took out my course in the I. C. S. I now have charge of the telephones and lights for J. E. Henry & Son, and my salary has been increased 100 per cent. *I would never have been able to get above the pit work in the power house, if it was not for the instruction received from the I. C. S.*"

Another New Englander, Harry E. Green, Waterville, Me., a former transitman, writes:

"I now have an office of my own and have increased my earnings 200 per cent. My course has made me more valuable to



ADMINISTRATION AND INSTRUCTION BUILDINGS—I. C. S.

THE SOLE BUSINESS OF THIS GREAT INSTITUTION IS TO RAISE SALARIES.

my customers, and I have been enabled to understand many things which I could not have learned otherwise. I will gladly correspond with anyone desiring to better himself by taking a Course."

Henri B. Bixler, Akron, Ohio, a former mill-hand in a screen-door factory, testifies:

"I have advanced to Superintendent of Construction of the Tri-County Telephone Company, and have increased my earnings 250 per cent. All this success I attribute to the I. C. S. I consider this method of instruction the *best plan in existence* for the young man who has his own way to make in the world."

A SURE AND QUICK WAY.

The I. C. S. gives a man who has no regular trade or profession a paying start. Before enrolling with the I. C. S., Harry M. Moxley, 1427 Williams Building, Cleveland, Ohio, was office boy, farmer boy, and painter by turns. He writes:

"After I had gone a short way in my Course, the Students' Aid Department secured for me a position with a firm in Cleveland, and from that time I have had steady advancement up to my present position as chemist with the Cleveland Steel Casting Company. During this time I increased my earnings $80 a month. My experience with the Schools proves that the I. C. S. plan is the most *sure* and *quick way* for any ambitious man to gain advancement and increased earnings."

The Students' Aid Department, which helped Mr. Moxley to obtain a higher position, is organized specifically to assist all I. C. S. men in their efforts to make their work pay. Its connection with the largest employers of trained men in the country has enabled it to place thousands of men in better positions at larger salaries. During 1906, voluntary reports were received from 3376 I. C. S. men who had been advanced in salary or position—only a fraction of the thousands who were advanced and did not report. What the I. C. S. did for them, it can and will do for you.

ARE YOU GETTING YOURS?

This is an era of unexampled wealth. These dozen men named are just a few of the thousands whom the I. C. S. has helped to place in the stream of prosperity. They are *trained* to get their share, and are getting it.

Are you getting *yours?* If not, why not? It's waiting for you!

The I. C. S. points the way, but you must take the initiative. The first step is yours. The expression of willingness must come from you. Are you willing to write to the I. C. S. and ask to be shown how to make your work pay? Or are you content to sit back with small wages and let your companions, who work no harder than you, walk off with all the rewards?

Bear in mind, no man need leave his own state, or town, or work. Right where he is, the I. C. S. is most valuable. *It goes to the man*, stands by him, works with him and for him, equipping him to secure that due share to which his energy and talents entitle him.

Why labor for little, when with training you may have much? Indicate on the following coupon the position you prefer. Cut out coupon and mail at once. Do not be a laggard in the race! *Make your work pay!*

Here is a List of Good Positions

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	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Civil Service	Building Contractor
Chemist	Architect's Draftsman
Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Structural Engineer
Elec. Engineer	Bridge Engineer
	Mining Engineer

Name _____

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A BLANK COUPON FOR YOU.

On the same day throughout all America—the 28th of each month—the new Victor records for the following month are on sale by dealers.

Stories of Success

(From Real Life)

THERE'S genuine inspiration in this volume of True Stories of Real Success, issued by the Publicity Department of The Oliver Typewriter Company.

There are Stories of Courage, Stories of Pluck, Stories of Strategy—stories that tell how business battles are fought and won.

"The Rise of the Local Agent" cites typical examples of success attained by Oliver men who began at the bottom and by persistent effort won their way to the top.

The Oliver Sales Force is a body of picked men, several thousand strong, under experienced leadership—and it has made a record without a parallel among similar commercial organizations.

The work of a Local Agent for the Oliver Typewriter fosters a spirit of wholesome and refreshing independence.

There is just enough of *supervision* on the part of Commander-in-Chief and Division Commanders to give *confidence* and inspire *enthusiasm.*

—Just enough *personal responsibility* to develop the quality of *initiative.*

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We can place several young men of acceptable qualifications in well-paying positions. Each successful applicant will be given a course of training in **The Oliver School of Practical Salesmanship,** absolutely free. Write at once.

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The Standard Visible Writer

occupies a commanding position in the writing machine field, having passed all other typewriters in popularity and sales.

It is the original visible writer and boasts a score or more of distinct advantages over all competitors.

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Ask the nearest Oliver representative to demonstrate the machine. Send for the **OLIVER BOOK,** which tells the whole story in words and pictures.

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY

Oliver Typewriter Building, 45 Dearborn Street, Chicago

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Like Grape-Nuts and Cream.

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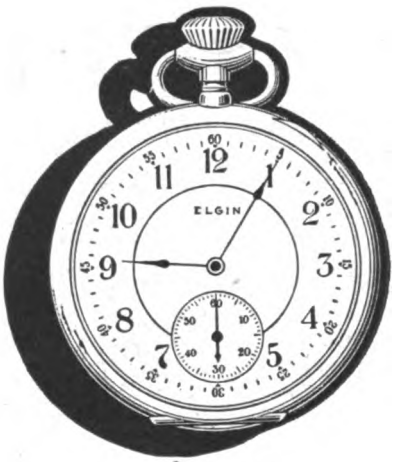
They eat it freely with cream, for it has the peculiar, mild but satisfying sweet of grape-sugar, and the natural taste of a child often intuitively recognizes a food that will agree with and richly nourish the system.

"There's a Reason." for

Grape-Nuts

Made by Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.



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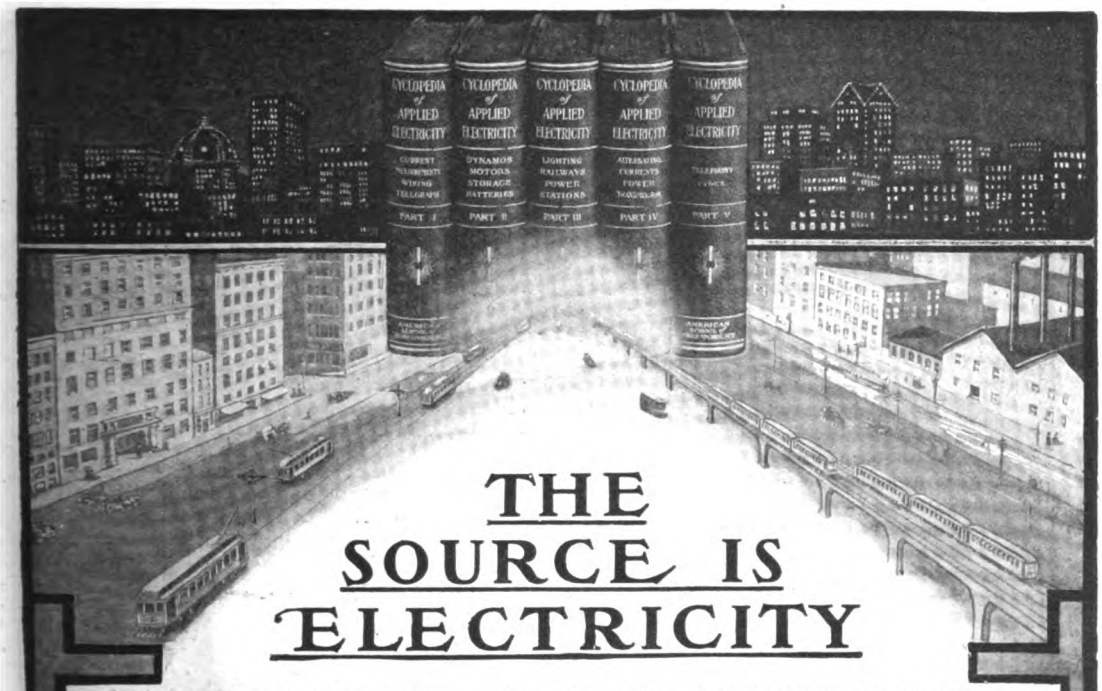

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¶ Under these circumstances with such opportunities open before you, do you think you can make any mistake by devoting a few hours a day to ***the study of electricity?***

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