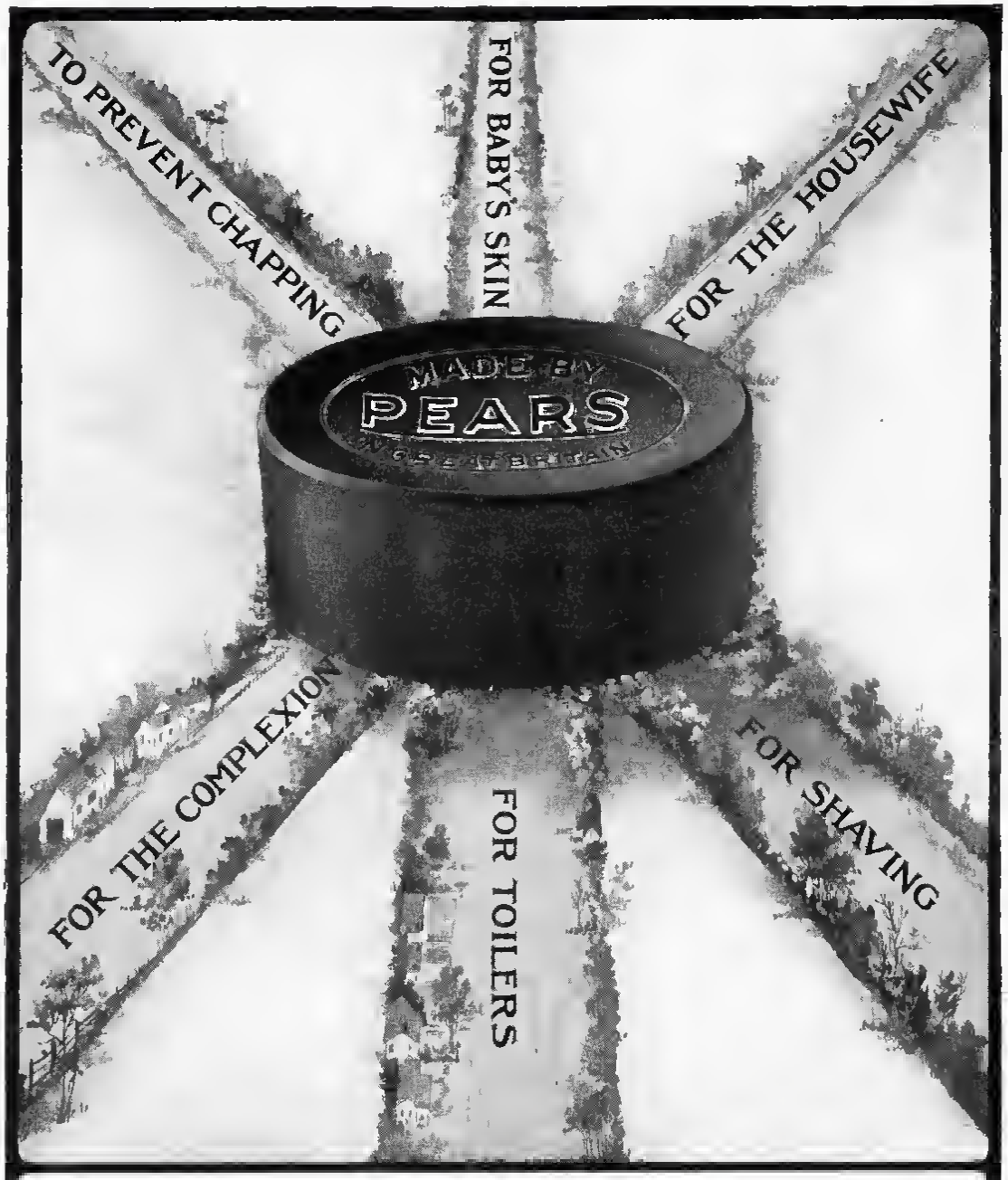
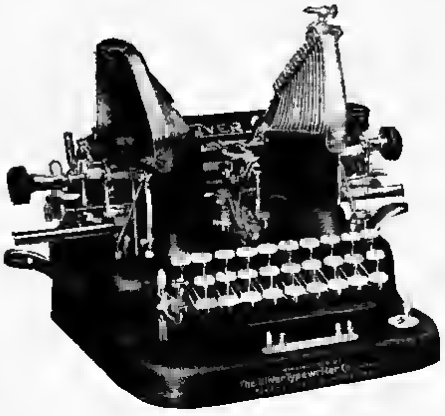


ALL ROADS LEAD TO
Pear's Soap

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

Get our Offer for Your Old Typewriter!

Any Make of Machine Accepted at Full Cash Value in Part Payment for a New Model Oliver Typewriter



Here's welcome news for the thousands who are simply waiting to get rid of old style machines before buying Oliver Typewriters.

A bona fide offer to buy any old typewriter—regardless of make or present condition—at a fair cash valuation and apply the money as part payment for a brand new Oliver.

Then easy terms—say $5 a month—on the balance, if it is not convenient to pay the difference in spot cash.

No need to sacrifice your old machine or wait until it becomes absolutely useless. We will take the "White Elephant" off your hands—RIGHT NOW!—and replace it with the splendid Oliver No. 5.

Send for our Liberal Cash Offer on Your Old Typewriter (Any Make) in Exchange for The Oliver Typewriter

Bear in mind that we are going to give you an absolutely new Oliver Typewriter—the latest model, fresh from the factory—when we take your old machine.

—A typewriter that combines a hundred different features in one simple, smooth-working machine!

—A typewriter that touches at every point the complete circle of writing requirements!

—A typewriter that fulfills every promise of its makers and meets every expectation of its purchasers!

Look over that old machine of yours and note the number of essential features it *lacks*.

Is your machine a visible writer? If not, here's a chance to trade for one that *writes in sight*, saving time, trouble and mistakes.

Does it have a condensed, scientific keyboard? If not, don't keep it. *We'll buy it!*

Of course your machine has no Vertical and Horizontal Ruling Device, for only the Oliver is equipped to rule lines on any sheet of paper without taking it out of the machine.

Has your machine a tabulator? If not, *get an Oliver* which tabulates *automatically*.

You'll not find adjustable Paper Fingers on your machine.

The Oliver has them and they handle paper of any width—from letter size down to inch-wide strips.

The Oliver has a Disappearing Indicator which shows the exact printing point. Has *your* typewriter an indicator that *indicates?*

All that is *missing* in your machine and all the good points that it *has*, are built right into the Oliver.

We ought to ask at least 50 per cent more for

The OLIVER Typewriter

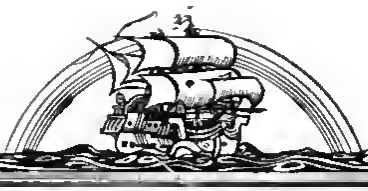
The Standard Visible Writer

than other standard machines sell for—to cover the costly improvements that make it the best on earth.

Instead of that we hold the price down to $100.00 and take old machines in part payment, at full cash value.

Write us a full description of *your* "White Elephant" and get our liberal offer.

The Oliver Typewriter Co., Oliver Building, 45 Dearborn St., Chicago



The Argosy for November

One Complete Novel

Six Serial Stories

Eleven Short Stories

"SHIPMATES WITH HORROR"

is the title of a decidedly original New Serial to start in the December Argosy, a story of the sea, packed with thrilling incident and surcharged with a mystery constantly cropping out with fresh manifestations to pique the curiosity of the reader. The Complete Novel is "The Man She Saw," a detective tale utterly unlike any other, but vitally absorbing from the very outset. "Fateful December 31st," "A Pressing Invitation," "In the Snow Belt," and "The Man Who Forgot" are Short Stories appropriate to the holiday season, while "A Fool Among Fools" smacks of football.

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.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

$1.50 a line. For Argosy and All-Story combined $2.25 a line. Minimum space four lines; maximum space twelve lines. Ten per cent. discount for six consecutive insertions.

As it is impossible for us to know each advertiser personally, we ask the cooperation of our readers in keeping all questionable advertising out of these columns

Forms for Dec. close Oct. 22d

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

We start you in a permanent business with us and furnish everything. Full course of instruction free. We are manufacturers and have a new plan in the mail order line. Large profits. Small capital. You pay us in three months and make big profit. References given. Sworn statements. PEASE MFG. CO., 1065 Pease Bldg., Buffalo, N. Y.

MAKE $2500 to $7500 yearly without capital. We teach you the real-estate and general brokerage business by mail; appoint you our special representative; furnish you readily salable real-estate and investments; help you secure customers and make you quickly prosperous. Particulars free. INTERSTATE SALES CO., 255 Times Bldg., New York.

LEARN MORE AND EARN MORE. We teach Business Correspondence, Law, Engineering, Accounting, Oratory and 150 other subjects. Noted and famous teachers. Low cost. Easy payments. Ask for catalog G. Name course wanted. INTERCONTINENTAL UNIVERSITY, Washington, D. C.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS. Start Mail-Order Business at home; devote whole or spare time. We tell you how; very good profits. Everything furnished. No Catalog outfit proposition. For "Starter" and *free* particulars address, A. R. KRUEGER CO., 155 Wash. St., Chicago, Ill.

BUSINESS BOOK FREE. Tells how you can secure the actual working plans, the money-making systems, schemes and short cuts of 112 great, big, business men—to increase your salary—to boost your profits. Book is free. Why not write now? System, Dept. 32-1, 151-155 Wabash Ave., Chicago.

$3,000 to $10,000 yearly easily made in real estate business; no capital required; we teach the business by mail, appoint you special representative, assist you to success. Valuable book free. THE CROSS CO., 2076 Reaper Block, Chicago. See our other advertisement in this magazine.

BUILD A $5,000 BUSINESS in two years. Let us start you in the collection business. No capital needed; big field. We teach secrets of collecting money; refer business to you. Write today for free pointers and new plan. AMERICAN COLLECTION SERVICE, 11 State, Detroit, Mich.

MAKE MONEY operating our new Vending Machines. They earn 300%. Only a small investment needed to start **earning** handsome income. Write quick for plan. CAILLE, Detroit, Mich.

"DOLLARS & SENSE" (Col. Hunter's great book) free with *Advertisers Magazine* one year at 50 cents. Indispensable to business men who advertise. Best "Ad-School" in existence. Sample magazine free. ADVERTISERS MAGAZINE, 736 Commerce Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

START MAIL-ORDER BUSINESS—Sell goods by mail; cash orders, big profits. Conducted by anyone, anywhere; we supply everything. Our plan positively successful; satisfaction guaranteed. Write for free booklet and sample catalogue. CENTRAL SUPPLY CO., Kansas City, Mo.

AN EASY WAY to start a mail order business that can be made to pay several thousand dollars annually; we furnish everything and show you how. $25 to $100 necessary to start. MILBURN-HILKS, 2231 La Salle St., Chicago.

SUN TYPEWRITER marks an epoch in the writing machine business; high value, low price. If you do not know about it, write for information and trial offer. SUN TYPEWRITER CO., 317 Broadway, New York City.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENT SECURED or fee returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. *Guide Book* and *What to Invent*, with valuable list of inventions Wanted, sent free. *One Million Dollars* offered for one invention; $16,000 for others. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress; sample free. EVANS, WILKENS & CO., Washington, D. C.

PATENTS THAT PROTECT.—Our three books for inventors mailed on receipt of six cents stamps. R. S. & A. B. LACEY, Washington, D. C. Established 1869.

PATENTS. *I procure patents that protect.* Advice and books free. Highest references. Best results. WATSON E. COLEMAN, Patent Lawyer, Washington, D. C.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

$5.75 paid for Rare Date 1853 Quarters.—Keep all money coined before 1875 and send 10 cents at once for a set of 2 Coin & Stamp Value Books. It may mean your fortune. C. F. CLARKE & CO., Dept. 15, Le Roy, N. Y.

CERTAIN COINS WANTED. I pay from $1 to $600 for thousands of rare coins, stamps and paper money to 1894. Send stamp for illustrated circular, get posted and make money quickly. Vanbergen, the Coin Dealer, Dept. A, Boston.

REAL ESTATE

GARY—THE NEW STEEL CITY. Home of United States Steel Corp. Lots $100 to $575. $5 and up monthly. No interest. No taxes. Titles guaranteed by Chicago Title & Trust Co. Cement sidewalks and accepted city streets. For maps and booklets address, UNITED STATES LAND CO., Inc., 600 Amer. Trust Bldg., Chicago

RICH FARM LANDS in the Dakotas and Montana now sell from $15 an acre upwards. Homestead lands me still plentiful close to the towns on the new Pacific Coast line of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway. Fertile soil; mild climate; ample rainfall; no irrigation required, long growing seasons; convenient markets. Books describing the present opportunities along this new line are free for the asking. F. A. MILLER, General Passenger Agent, Chicago.

PIANOS

"A dollar saved is a dollar earned"; the saving derived in buying a slightly used piano of a good make is large. We sell used pianos of standard makes from $125 up; they're much better than cheap new pianos. Delivery free anywhere; easy terms. For 63 years the Pease name has stood for fair dealing. Write for complete list. Pease & Co., 128 W. 42d St., N. Y.

WING PIANOS last longest and most successful.—Est'd 40 years. Recent improvements give greatest resonance. Sold direct. No agents. Sent on trial—freight paid; first, last and all the time by us—to show our faith in our work. If you want a good piano, you save $75-$200. Very easy terms. Slightly used "high grades," 1 Steinway, 3 Chickerings, etc., $75 up. Taken in exchange for improved Wing pianos—thoroughly refinished. Send for bargain list. You should have anyway—"Book of Complete Information About Pianos." 152 pages. N. Y. World says: "A book of educational interest, everyone should have." Free for the asking from the old house of WING & SON, 353-370 W. 13th St., New York.

FOR MEN

ALL SAFETY RAZOR BLADES SHARPENED, sterilized and made better than new for two cents each. Send your address for our convenient mailing wrapper. KEENEDGE CO., 551 Heinrietta Bldg., Chicago.

SHAVING COMFORT is experienced by using the famous Mah Razor, 300,000 in use in British Army and Navy. Dwarf $1.50. Booklet free. MAH COMPANY OF AMERICA, 1346 Monroe St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

MACHINERY

Electric Supplies and Novelties. Catalog of 200 free. If it's Electric we have it, and we undersell all. Ohio Electric Works, Cleveland, O., world's headquarters for electric toys, books, fan motors, dynamos, batteries. Fortune for Agents.

FLOOR POLISH

BUTCHER'S Boston Polish is the best finish made for floors and interior woodwork. Not brittle, will not scratch or deface like shellac or varnish. Send for free booklet. For sale by dealers in paints, hardware and housefurnishings. THE BUTCHER POLISH CO., 356 Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass.

FOR THE DEAF

THE ACOUSTICON MAKES THE DEAF HEAR INSTANTLY. No trumpet, unsightly or cumbersome apparatus. Special instruments for Theatres and Churches. In successful use throughout the country. Booklet, with indorsement of those you know, free. K. A. TURNER, 1265 Broadway, New York City.

DEAF PEOPLE.—Normal hearing can be permanently restored in cases of Catarrhal deafness by the *Massaeon*, a scientific electrical massage for the inner ear. Enables your ears to do their own work without dependence on any mechanical device. Endorsed by physicians everywhere. Thousands in successful operation. Write for free booklet. H. E. WOODWARD, Suite 851, 534 Sixth Ave., New York.

PHOTOGRAPHY

WE MAKE one 8x10 Bromide Enlargement for 25c, 5 for $1, or one 11x14 for 50c, 5 for $2, from any size film or plate negative. All work guaranteed or money refunded. Send us a trial order. F. T. KING & CO., 51 A Brounfield St., Boston, Mass.

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention THE ARGOSY.

AGENTS AND SALESMEN WANTED

THE "PUSH POINT," THE NEW LEAD PENCIL that is revolutionizing the pencil business. A big money maker. Agents wanted everywhere. Everybody wants them on sight. No *whittling*. Pencil always same length—lead used up to within half an inch of its end. Finest materials—best wood—highest quality Austrian Compressed Lead used in all grades. Retail price same as old style pencils. Good profit for live agents. A splendid advertising novelty. Write for full particulars. Sample box of 5 "*Push Point*" Pencils, postpaid, for 25 cents. LIPPINCOTT PENCIL COMPANY, 221 North 23rd Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

LADIES WANTED TO SELL DRESS GOODS, silk, and walstings. No capital required. Large elaborate sample outfit Free. IDEAL DRESS GOODS COMPANY, Dept. M., 338 Broadway, New York.

RESPONSIBLE MEN WANTED to handle the most complete and up-to-date line of gasoline lighting systems on the market. Salesmen protected in territory. ACORN BRASS MFG. Co., Dept. H. Chicago.

WE WANT ONE MAN OR WOMAN in every town to introduce our new household necessity; every woman seeing it is interested; our agents remarkably successful. Write for particulars. IMMEN MFG. Co., Hoboken, N. J.

Agents, here's your opportunity, photo medallions, photo pillow tops at lowest prices; we are the only manufacturer turning out medallions ready for delivery. Our Agents are making big money. FLACH PICTURE Co., 640 Larrabee St., Chicago.

We are the originators and only manufacturers of live soap and toilet article combinations with premiums, for agents. Attractive appearance, best quality, lowest prices. Toledo agent recently made $14.00 in eight hours. There's a reason. Investigate. DAVIS SOAP Co., 70 Union Park Ct., Chicago.

WRITE FOR THE BEST soap and toilet combinations for agents. Our soaps French milled. See our new Red Cross packages. PIERCE CHEMICAL Co., Desk 11, 152 Fifth Ave., Chicago.

AGENTS—$25 A WEEK EASILY MADE selling our 14 new patented articles. Each one a necessity to every woman and a rapid seller. No Scheme. Sample free to hustlers. A. M. YOUNG & Co., 204 Howland Bldg., Chicago.

AGENTS CAN EASILY MAKE $10.00 A DAY selling our Gold Window Letters, Novelty Signs, and Changeable Signs. Enormous demand. Merchants must have them. Catalogue free. SULLIVAN Co., 403 W. Van Buren St., Chicago.

AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY COUNTY to sell the *Transparent Handle Pocket Knife*. Big commission paid. From $75 to $300 a month can be made. Write for terms. NOVELTY CUTLERY Co., No. 77 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

Agents—Our Swiss Embroidered Shirt Waist Patterns and other Novelties sell at sight. $25 to $50 weekly easily made. Write today for our Illustrated (and sworn to) Catalog. U. S. EMBROIDERY MFG. Co., Dept. P., 96 E. B'way, N. Y.

Agents make $103.50 per month selling wonderful self-sharpening scissors and cutlery. V. C. Glehner sold 22 pairs in 3 hours, made $13; you can do it. We show how. Free outfit. THOMAS MFG. Co., 40 Home Bldg., Dayton, Ohio.

SELL KUSHION KOMFORT SHOES. Liberal profit; instructions make selling easy; wonderful special features eagerly welcomed by all. Write today if a hustler. KUSHION KOMFORT SHOE Co., Desk 11, Boston, Mass.

SALESMEN to handle our new Elastic Penholder as a side line; made with ventilated sides, bends with every movement. Positively prevents cramps. Patented. Well advertised and a big seller in stores. Send 7 2c stamps for sample. CUTTER-TOWER Co., 620 Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass.

Wanted Township or County Managers worth $5000 to $7000 yearly. Manage branch office. Sub-agts. earn $8 to $15 daily. New Germicide & Disinfectant. Territory protected. Unheard of profits. Red Cross Chemista Specialty Co., Chicago.

PHOTO PILLOW TOPS, Portraits, Frames and Sheet Pictures at very lowest prices. Rejects credited. Prompt shipments. Samples and catalog free. We trust honest agents. JAS. BAILEY Co., 74 Potomac Ave., Chicago, Ill.

WANTED—Man capable of earning $5,000 yearly to open branch office for *Diozo*, the new disinfectant. Your sub-agents can make $10 a day. Enormous sales. Amazing profits. Exclusive territory. PARKER CHEMICAL Co., Chicago.

AGENTS, male and female, can make $20 a day selling my Merry Widow and duchess waist Patterns, silk shawls and scarfs. New novelties every week. Catalogue mailed on request. JOSEPH GLUCK, 621 Broadway, New York.

THE ESTES CHEM. & SALES CO., 75 5th Ave., N. Y., requires bright people to distribute their specialties, *Dento-Blanc* (the *new* Tooth-Powder), etc. Write us. (Or, better—Begin *Now*; supply different samples, terms, advertising matter, ¼ doz. boxes *Dento-Blanc*, etc., 35c stamps, silver.)

Make big money handling our toilet articles and household necessities. No capital required. Credit given. Elegant sample case, 40 samples and free advertising. Magnificent opportunity for industrious men and women. Write at once and reserve territory. Jewel Mfg. Co., 920 Marshall Blvd., Chicago.

WE WANT GOOD SALESMEN to handle as side line two rattling good pat'd specialties that every shoe dealer and general merchant will buy. Pocket samples. Good Commissions. C. E. Bullard Mfg. Co., 134 Summer St., Boston.

AGENTS WANTED—*Continued*

EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY now being allotted for *Little Giant Household Pump*. Only thing of its kind, it has free field wherever there's plumbing. Removes all stoppages in pipes, saves plumbers' bills, prevents noxious gases. Everyone wants it, everyone can afford it, everyone can operate it. As strong in business world as among homes. Selling at top speed. 50,000 already in use. I can grant you absolute monopoly and fix you for life, if you are the right man. Address at once, J. E. KENNEDY, 803 Callowhill St., Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS make big money selling our new sign letters for office windows, store fronts, and glass signs. Any one can put them on. Write today for free sample and full particulars. Metallic Sign Letter Co., 55 N. Clark St., Chicago.

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BE A DOCTOR OF MECHANO-THERAPY, the wonderful new system of healing. $3000-$5000 a year. We teach you by mail. Greatly superior and more simple than Osteopathy. Authorized diplomas to graduates. Special terms now. Write today for prospectus free. AMERICAN COLLEGE OF MECHANO-THERAPY, Dept. 940, 120-122 Randolph St., Chicago.

Acting, Elocution, Oratory. We teach this fascinating and profitable art by mail and prepare you for the stage or speaker's platform. Booklet on Dramatic Art Free. Chicago School of Elocution, 934 Grand Opera House, Chicago.

EXCHANGE

WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF ARTICLES on our lists. Would you like to exchange that article you don't want for something you do? Write for plan. UNIVERSAL EXCHANGE, 632 Baltimore Bldg., Chicago.

GAMES AND ENTERTAINMENTS

PLAYS, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Minstrel Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Musical Pieces, Entertainments, Make Up Goods. Large Catalog Free. T. S. DENISON, Pubr., Dept. 43, Chicago.

MISCELLANEOUS

IF YOU WANT TO GET WELL AND STAY WELL, you can—without any drugs or medicine. My free booklet, "The What, The Why, The Way," proves that most human ailments are due to one cause, and tells you how to remove it. Write CHAS. A. TYRRELL, M.D., 321 D Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

HELP WANTED

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES are paid well for easy work; examinations of all kinds soon. Expert advice, sample questions and Booklet 18, describing positions and telling easiest and quickest way to secure them, free. Write now. WASHINGTON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL, Washington, D. C.

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE WANTED—Splendid income assured right man to act as our representative after learning our business thoroughly by mail. Former experience unnecessary. All we require is honesty, ability, ambition and willingness to learn a lucrative business. No soliciting or traveling. This is an exceptional opportunity for a man in your section to get into a big paying business without capital and become independent for life. Write at once for full particulars. Address THE NAT'L CO-OP. REAL ESTATE Co., Dept. K A.1., Washington, D. C.

LEARN TELEGRAPHY—Calls for our graduates far exceed supply. Operated by and under supervision of Railroad Officials. Railroad wires in school. Positions assured. Work for expenses. Catalog free. NATIONAL TELEG. INSTITUTE, Dept. 7, Cincinnati, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Memphis, Tennessee; Davenport, Iowa; Columbia, South Carolina.

Wanted—Railway Mail Clerks, Mail Carriers, Postoffice Clerks, $1100.00 yearly. Short hours. No "lay offs." November examination everywhere. Preparation free. Common education sufficient. Write *immediately*. FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. PA, Rochester, N. Y.

WANTED—Agents to solicit orders for Made-to-Measure Underwear. Those taking orders for Custom Shirts and Clothes preferred. We also manufacture guaranteed hosiery. TEXTILE M'f'g. Co., 269 E. Division St., Chicago.

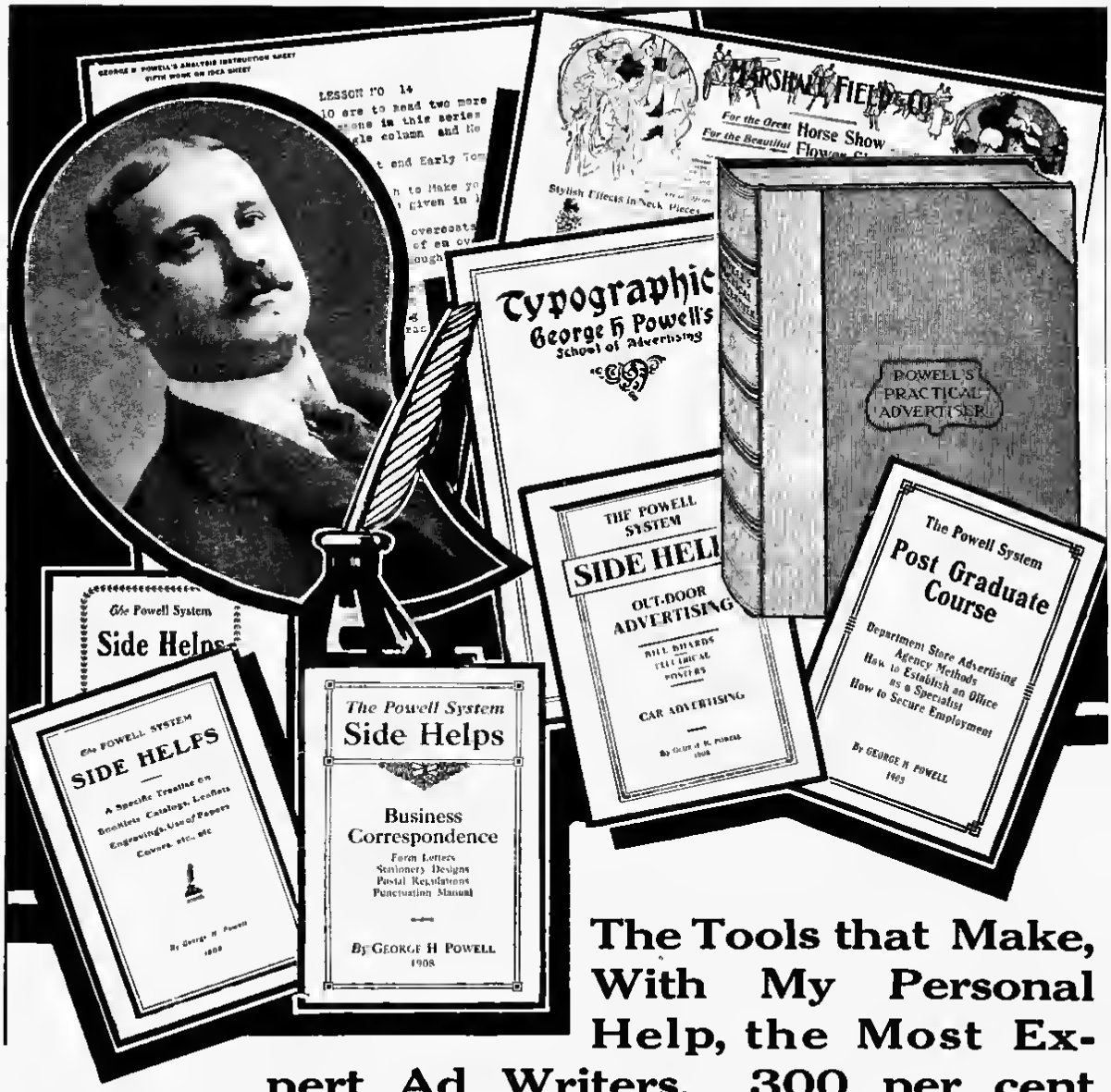
CIVIL SERVICE examinations will soon be held in every state. Full information, and questions recently used by the Civil Service Commission, free. COLUMBIAN CORRESPONDENCE COLLEGE. Washington, D. C.

TELEGRAPHY

Telegraphy—taught quickly. R. R. wire in school. Living expenses earned. Graduates assisted. Correspondence course if desired. Catalog free. DODGE'S INSTITUTE OF TELEGRAPHY, 36th St., Valparaiso, Ind. Established 1874.

POPULAR SHEET MUSIC

LATEST SONG HITS—10 Cents Each Postpaid. "Smarty," "Summertime," "Gypsie Ann," "I'm Not Mad at You" (great child song), "Sweet Polly Primrose," "When Autumn Tints the Green Leaves Gold." Catalogue for 2c stamp. Gordon Music Pub. Co., 209 W. 34th St., N.Y City.



The Tools that Make, With My Personal Help, the Most Expert Ad Writers. 300 per cent better than class or Oral instruction.

BY GEORGE H. POWELL

THE increasing demand for the trained ad writer is widespread—from manufacturers, retailers, newspapers and agencies, where modern advertising is fast becoming an absolute necessity in retaining old and securing new business.

Today the new concern must pay liberally, often prodigally, for quick-acting publicity, and the smart business man knows that a competent expert must be employed, instead of allowing a mere salesman or other subordinate to waste most of the advertising expenditure with foolish copy.

Add the further fact that hundreds of old established houses are constantly being made to feel the pinch of reduced trade through wide awake new rivals that employ modern advertising, and as a result are likewise adopting printers' ink, and it is plain why the present generation will not see enough *competent* ad men and women to do the urgent work.

The Demand for Expert Powell Graduates Increases Yearly. Salaries and Incomes $1,200.00 to $6,000.00.

The only question for the young man or woman who is attracted to this field of rich possibilities to decide is this: where can the best, most thorough instruction be obtained?

The old way, if one were fortunate enough to hold a menial position in some advertiser's business, was to rely on such meagre help as the advertising manager might offer.

The new way—the Powell System with seven years of marvelous success—gives by the greatest correspondence plan in existence more practical advertising skill in two months than the *incompetent* "practical office experience" can in six.

Another keynote: practical ad work *must* be prepared in solitude—it cannot be done in a class.

In a word, no advertising expert can give such instruction on the personal-contact plan as I can with the Powell Correspondence System.

The expert hasn't the necessary books, pamphlets and lesson papers, and is obliged to rely on make-shift "points" thought up on the spur of the moment. He has no definite plan, and his "student" would of necessity be obliged to prepare advertising without previous adequate study of principles and suitable models.

Most of the running talk of the expert as a substitute for the accurate analysis of the perfect correspondence system would be forgotten, while the latter prevents this.

My system is admittedly the most *complete* in existence, and it is practically the survival of the fittest.

It is *larger* than any other advertising course, and covers every department, besides giving a vast amount of extra side help instruction never attempted by any other course. An expensive booklet exceeding sixty pages is supplied for instruction on engravings, booklet making, etc., in contrast to nine pages of my nearest competitor. But I have avoided all padding and foolish matter not properly belonging in scientific instruction, and by segregating the weekly exhibit and analysis sheets and personal instruction from that which should be purely book instruction, I have made more expert ad men and women than all instructors combined have during the past seven years, and I alone have had the practically unanimous endorsement of America's advertising editors and managers.

COURSE WORTH $1,000.00

EDGAR WARNER, Adv. Mgr. & Principal
ST. CATHARINES
BUSINESS COLLEGE.

St Catharines, Ont., Sept. 5, 1908

MR. GEORGE H. POWELL,
New York

Dear Sir:—

Allow me to express my appreciation of your course in Advertising. I found the lessons not only interesting and well graded, but the knowledge gained very valuable. I also liked the plan of receiving two lessons at one time, and as each lesson contained from two to four printed ads to write, the rapidity with which I improved somewhat surprised me.

Your instructions were always concise and your personal criticism of work sent in makes every doubtful point clear and plain. This feature alone is *worth double the cost* of the course.

The ideas that I received have been worth a thousand dollars to me. I can now prepare our own booklets, catalognes, etc., and prepare advertising newspaper copy that brings the commendation of every live business man.

Very truly yours,
EDGAR WARNER.

As a specimen of this exclusive recognition accorded the Powell System, the following letter written Sept. 11th, 1908, to Mr. Geo. W. Flowers, Baltimore, Md., by the editor of the Advertisers' Magazine, Kansas City, Mo., will be of interest:

"Your favor of September 8th requesting my opinion of the George H. Powell Course in advertising instruction has been received. I consider Mr. Powell's Course by far the best on the market, and take pleasure in recommending it to you as full value for the price asked. I have had opportunity to examine very nearly all the correspondence courses on the market, and I have yet to find one that I would consider the equal of the Powell Course. You will make no mistake in enrolling with Mr. Powell."

I shall be glad to send my two free books—elegant Prospectus and "Net Results"—to those wishing larger salaries and business men wishing more business. Merely address me

George H. Powell, 1037 Metropolitan Annex, New York

'Ever-Ready' Safety Razor

$1 With 12 Blades

WE guarantee that the Ever-Ready is the **best shaving** safety razor money can buy. $5.00 makes specifically compared. Millions of men—daily users—prove our claim and we take all the risk convincing **you.**

Buy and try—to-day—there's many a dollar and many an hour the **Ever-Ready** saves you. Each of the **twelve blades** included in each outfit complete at **$1.00** is the finest specimen of blade making known to the razor art. Separately tested and protected—12 in each dollar outfit, together with safety frame handle and blade stropper, all in a fine case.

Extra Blades, 10 for 50c

They fit Yankee—Star and Gem frames, too.

You can strop **Ever-Ready** blades or exchange 10 dull blades for 10 brand new ones upon payment of 35c.

Ever-Ready outfits are sold by Hardware, Cutlery, Jewelry, Sporting Goods, Department Stores and Druggists throughout America and the world.

Mail Orders Prepaid upon receipt of $1.00.

American Safety Razor Co
320 Broadway, New York City
Montreal London Berlin Paris

THE ARGOSY

Vol. LVIII NOVEMBER, 1908. No. 4

BY BULLET PERSUASION.

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "Taking Big Chances," "The Tail of the Lumberbeast," "The Hoodoo Ranch," etc.

The thrilling break that came into the life of a peaceful fig planter, with an account of the forceful means he afterward took to assert his rights.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

A PLEA FOR HELP.

DRAW a line from the southeastern spur of the San Jacinto range of mountains, straight to the southwest for twenty-five miles, and your pencil will stop at my fig plantation.

You won't find it on the map—my plantation, I mean. Nor do I think you will find even a crooked little black streak to designate the tortuous path of Burro Creek, which is a small branch of the Carriso.

Anyway, it is not necessary to be too particular in locating my plantation, because I am not inviting anybody there to visit me. I doubt if I could even give them figs to eat.

In the beginning I knew about as much concerning figs as I did about the growth of cabbages on the planet Mars. But, then, I knew very little about anything else except rifles and horses and dogs, and when the time came for me to settle down and make something of myself I believed the southern part of California held out good promises for a return on the money I had to invest—which wasn't much.

The railroad books all said it was a lovely country all along the Southern Pacific, and the books sent out by land companies all had beautiful pictures of great trees in full bearing and well-fed looking planters holding up laden limbs for inspection.

And I had a liking for outdoor life, despising with my whole soul anything like a clerkship, either counting-house, bank, or ribbon-counter brand. In fact, I didn't care for any pursuit where you had to look through a window to see the beauties of nature and wait for a certain hour before you could go outside and get a breath of God's pure air.

But I am not going into the history of fig raising. Merely a word to explain how I met Consuelo.

I read government books on the subject of best fruits for that region. An importation of young cuttings of Smyrna figs had been received by the Department of Agriculture at Washington, which could be had for the asking, provided certain obligations in the way of care and regular reports were not forgotten.

So I invested, and now, when my story opens, this was my outfit.

I had twenty-five acres of young fig-trees doing fairly well, but I had not yet seen any figs. I had, however, managed to make my little farm of one hundred acres pay in quicker crops, and was pretty well satisfied.

I lived in an adobe house of five rooms. One of these was my bedroom. Another was the dining-room. A third was the kitchen. Another, the largest of all, was the general sitting and living room. And the fifth was the bedroom of Sam Tamarko and his wife, Namona.

Sam Tamarko was a half-breed, and

Namona was a good-looking young Moqui woman he had taken from a small branch of that tribe that had settled up near the San Jacintos.

I had several dogs, a good horse, four burros, and something I called by courtesy a cow.

Better than all, to my mind, I had a cracking good rifle, and I spent more time with that rifle and Bones, my favorite dog, than I did raising fig-trees—mind, I am careful not to say *figs*.

It was a picturesque, ruined old neighborhood, and the shooting along the Carriso wasn't bad. But sometimes I went farther south toward the border, where I occasionally picked off a brown Mexican bear.

And on the day my story really opens I was out after bear, and Bones was with me.

There was a rude wagon trail running almost north and south, and I was jogging along this not more than four miles from my fig plantation, when Bones stopped, sniffed, and then growled.

I had never met the Mexican bear so near my plantation, and looked around curiously, without dismounting from my burro. I saw no bear, but there suddenly burst upon my vision a galloping Mexican pony, ridden by a young woman.

Her dark hair was streaming out straight behind, and she was urging her pony to its utmost speed. I could see that the animal was almost exhausted, and that the girl was running away from something—I could not tell what.

She saw me, and, patting the pony on the neck, she galloped up to me.

"Oh, *señor,* save me! Help me, please!" she panted, using excellent English.

I saw that she was a very beautiful girl, and from her dress evidently from the region around Vallecita, the first town over the border in Lower California, or Mexico.

"What is the trouble, *señorita?*" I asked.

"Oh, take me to a safe place, *señor,* and I will explain. I cannot stop here. They are after me."

"Who?"

"Hernandez, the man to whom my father is selling me."

"Selling you? They do not sell their daughters in Mexico!"

"Ah—they do it all over the world. But will you not help me, *señor?*"

I could see that she was greatly terrified. Her brilliant eyes were now filled with tears, and she looked at me pleadingly.

"For the sake of my mother, then!" she cried. "My mother is an American, *señor.*"

"My place is a few miles from here," I said. "Can your horse stand it?"

"He must stand it."

"How far behind are your pursuers?"

"I don't know. I escaped from the house while they were talking about it. But I know they will come. I am sure they are not far behind me."

"And you are sure you do not wish to marry this man to whom your father would tie you, and that your mother thinks the same as you do?"

"I *hate* him, *señor.* And my mother is in tears."

"Then come with me. I'll take a chance at it. I may get a bullet into me for the meddling."

"Oh, if you are *afraid, señor*—I—"

"There, that'll be about enough. I'm not afraid. I'll keep him away from you now, even if you want to go to him. Ride with me this way. There is no need to kill your horse now. We don't know where they are."

"But they will surely come, *señor,*" she cried feverishly.

We started at a good lope toward the fig plantation.

"You are an American, and from the East, *señor,*" said my new acquaintance.

"Yes. How did you know?"

"I went to school there. I knew the accent."

"Well, to get better acquainted," I went on, as our little steeds kept pace together, "my name is John Denny. I am from the East, as you said. And I live almost alone on a farm."

"Almost alone?"

"Well, I've got a man and his wife with me."

"That is good, *señor.* The wife, I mean."

"She cooks."

"I mean for me."

"Oh!"

"My name is Consuelo Bonilla," she said. "My father owns a ranch near Vallecita. He is a Mexican of pure Spanish blood. My mother is an American lady."

"And this other chap—the one that wants to marry you. What's his position and nomenclature?"

"His name, do you mean?"

"Yes. What's his name?"

"Hernandez—Henrico Hernandez."

"Sounds like a blue-blooded don, too. Well, we'll give Señor Hernandez a run for his money, anyway. You really don't want to marry him?"

"Oh, marry *him!* I would rather die. I don't want to marry any one. Anyway, not a Mexican."

"We'll attend to that."

Suddenly it seemed to me that Bones was doing a good deal of sniffing as he loped alongside my burro, and I suggested that we ride faster.

There was no further conversation till we turned in through my gate in the osage hedge.

Sam Tamarko and his wife were standing in the doorway of my adobe house. They looked up amazed when they saw the girl with me.

"Quick," I said. "Sam, take the saddle off this pony aud turn him loose with the burros. Namona, take the *señorita* and hide her where the devil himself can't find ber. She is in danger. Quick!"

I had leaped from my burro and helped the girl to alight, although she seemed well able to do it alone.

The black eyes of Namona glistened, for she loved an adventure.

"Come, *señorita*," she said. "I will hide you."

They disappeared. I knew that the Indian girl, for she was little more than a girl, knew more about the region tban I did. And if anybody could hide Miss Bonilla she could.

Sam led the pony away, and soon returned with the saddle, which he shoved under his own bed.

"Let 'em come," he said grimly. "I guess I get my gun ready, too."

He got his weapon, a repeating rifle like my own, and made sure the magazine was filled.

"Where she come?" he asked. "Mex'co?"

"Yes."

"Huh! Kill 'em all!"

And he grinned as he sighted his gun at an imaginary foe.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

"THEY come," said Sam.

We could hear the galloping of horses.

Sam and I had remained on guard for two hours or more, and Namona had not returned. I wondered where she had taken the girl, but knew that I could depend on her loyalty and sagacity.

And now they were coming.

I had expected Hernandez, and Bonilla, the father of my refugee, and perhaps a man or two to help. But I was not prepared for the small cavalcade that stopped at my osage gateway.

One man rode in through the hedge. He was of medium height, and, I judged, twice my age, although it is difficult to tell the age of a dark-skinned Mexican after a certain number of years have rolled over him.

He was swarthy, and yet not bad looking. He was dressed in the gay colors so well liked by Mexican horsemen, and he carried a rifle.

His followers, to the number of about a dozen, remained on the highway, which was really little more than a trail.

"I bid you good morning, *señor*," began the leader. "I would ask if you have seen a young girl ride by here today?"

"I have seen several."

"Don't parley with me. I know there are not many young girls of the kind I mean around here. This is on the road to Vallecita, and I have ridden here many times. I see that you and your man are armed, as though waiting for some one. Is it not so? I fancy, then, that I am the person you would give a greeting with your gun."

"Do you want one?" I asked.

I didn't like the fellow's manner.

From his apparent age, I supposed of course I was talking to Bonilla, the father of the girl.

"You are insolent, like all Ameri-

cans," he said. "Know you, then, that I am Henrico Hernandez, powerful in Mexico, and you do well not to make me your enemy."

"I am not inviting you here," I answered. "If you don't like your reception, clear out. Get away. Take your gang and skiddoo. That means, in the elegant language of the East, disappear."

He began to look ugly.

I heard a peculiar sound from Sam. I glanced at him. He was glaring at the horsemen of Hernandez, some of whom were now riding inside my enclosure.

"Yaquis!" muttered Sam.

Now, although I have never seen the fact commented on in print, there existed a long feud and bitterness between the Yaquis of Mexico and the more peaceful Moquis of Arizona. And the handful of Moquis to which Ramona belonged, and to which Sam half belonged, shared the hatred the tribe felt for the warlike, thieving, uncontrollable Yaquis.

"You will do well to tell the truth," said Hernandez. "Yours is the first American farm this side the border. The girl ran away from her father's home last night, and probably rode all night. She is doubtless asleep in your hut now."

"You are at liberty to come in and look," I said, "but be careful how you speak of my house. An American regards his house as his castle, be it made of adobe or marble."

A slight sneer crossed his face, but without further talk he dismounted.

"Perhaps you would require my rifle before I enter your hospitable abode?" he suggested.

"No, keep your gun," I said. "I gave you permission to search my house for the missing girl. That's all. Cut up any other shindy and I'll shoot you like a jack-rabbit."

He started, and gave me a keen, penetrating, and unfriendly look.

"You are hiding something," he said. "If the girl is not here you know where she is."

"I do not know where she is."

With something like a curse rolling in a muttered voice from his throat he entered the house. I left Sam in the doorway and accompanied my unwelcome guest.

He looked in every room and peered in every spot where a girl could be hidden.

"Where are the women of the house?" he asked abruptly.

"There is only one, an Indian woman who does the cooking."

"So. Where is she?"

"Her tribe is up near the San Jacintos. I presume she has taken a horse and gone to visit them."

"So. You give her much freedom, then."

"Certainly. She is not a slave."

I could see that I had him guessing. His dark face wrinkled as he stood, after his inspection, not knowing what to do next.

Suddenly there was the sound of galloping hoofs outside, and the dark face of one of his Yaquis peered in through a glassless window.

"*Señor!* Master! The *señorita's* horse is here!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Hernandez. "Then you lied to me."

"I have not told a lie. And, furthermore, I don't allow people like you to call me a liar. Get out of my house or I'll kick you out!"

He glared at me in a perfect rage.

"Get out of my house!" I commanded. "Find what you can!"

"You have hidden her!" he cried, shaking with fury. "Or you have given her a fresh horse and sent her with your Indian woman to the hills."

"Get out of my house!"

I saw him fingering his rifle nervously, and brought mine into position.

"None of that," I said. "You are in my house. Nobody wants you here, and I have ordered you out. I am within my legal rights if I shoot you. If you shoot me it will be murder."

"Bah! I know your sheriff."

"And so do I."

Still, while he was speaking so defiantly he was moving toward the door.

"I will find her," he said, as he stepped outside. "I will search all California."

"That's nothing to me. Take your Indians away from here."

As a matter of fact, there was no reason why he should remain. He had convinced himself that the girl was not in the house.

Everything seemed to point to a departure, when, as bad luck would have it, Namona came marching in.

"Ha!" exclaimed Hernandez, almost screaming. "So your Indian woman returned quickly from her people in the San Jacinto hills."

"I did not say when she started," I replied.

"You lie! She has not been away. She is not dressed for riding."

The handsome black eyes of Namona flashed at him in dancing triumph. A smile of sarcasm wreathed her mouth.

"By Heaven! I'll find that girl!" roared Hernandez.

He was outside now, standing near his horse, and several of his Yaquis had gathered near him.

Sam Tamarko stood with his rifle in his hand glaring at the Mexican Indians, for whom he had imbibed a hatred from one of his parents, I didn't know which.

Namona, still grinning at the enraged Hernandez, came out and stood with her bare arms akimbo. When she saw the Yaquis her grin turned to a sneer.

"Yaquis," she said, turning to Sam.

"Moqui woman," said one of the Mexican Indians.

He rode to where she stood, and, leaning over, grabbed her by the arm.

There came a curse from Sam. Before I could stop him he had raised his rifle and fired. The Yaqui fell from his horse, dead.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

For a moment everybody, myself included, stood there as if we were stunned. Then Hernandez, rousing himself, leaped to his feet.

"Your man began this," he said. "I am not responsible."

The Yaquis were so stupefied by the sudden act of Tamarko that before they could shoot, he had seized Namona and whisked her inside the house. I could see that trouble was at hand, and hurried inside myself and slammed the door.

"You've brought disaster on us, Sam," I said reproachfully. "You should not have fired."

"Yaqui! He touched my wife."

There was no time for further reproaches. A dark face loomed up outside the window. A quick glance, a rifle-shot, and it was gone again.

Fortunately, the bullet did no greater harm than break a mirror.

I am not superstitious about the breaking of mirrors. But certainly that was the forerunner of bad luck.

Sam ran to the window and fired into a group.

Then, outside, there began the most demoniac yelling I had ever heard in my life. The Yaquis rode round and round the house, firing in through every window, whether they saw anybody or not.

And then I heard the voice of Hernandez trying to stop them.

But it was no use. And, fearing that they would kill Sam and his wife, not to speak of myself, against whom they probably felt no real hatred, I began firing too. This enraged Hernandez, and a regular battle began.

"I can shoot," said Namona, and she brought another rifle.

And she could shoot. She stood with her husband, and their rifles cracked simultaneously.

"Give up the girl," I heard Hernandez shout, "and I will call away my men."

I did not answer. Whatever happened now, I was detemined that I would not give up the girl to this enraged Mexican.

The fighting was furious for so small a lot of combatants. Sam was so frantic with rage that he exposed himself unnecessarily.

"Ha!" I heard him cry. "He is down."

I knew he meant Hernandez. The next minute a bullet came in through a window, and Sam fell to the floor.

Then a long howl of rage rose from the Yaquis. They rushed at the door, the lock of which was not particularly strong, as I was not in a hostile country, and half a dozen of them burst in.

I shot one dead, but with loud cries the others, some of whom were evidently wounded, snatched Namona from the

floor, and, rushing out, they leaped on their horses and were off like the wind.

Aghast, half stupefied, I stood alone in my battered house. And then, for the first time, I discovered that I had been wounded.

It was not a serious wound. Scarcely worth mentioning. I stooped over Sam, and found that he was still breathing. I picked him up and carried him to his own bed.

There I examined him, and found that a bullet had found its way in betweeu two ribs on the right side and out again.

I bathed his wounds, and with a strip torn from a clean sheet, which I was still civilized enough to use, I bandaged him up. Then I poured some brandy down his throat.

He opened his eyes.

"Where's Namona?" he asked.

"The Yaquis took her."

"Curse them! Curse them!" he yelled. "Get me up! I will go after them."

"Keep still," I commanded. "You will start those wounds bleeding again, and then it won't make any difference to you where Namona is."

"Curse those Yaquis! They abuse women!"

"Well, keep quiet. Give me a chance to get my wits together. We'll find Namona. Don't fret about her. They'll probably take her to Bonilla's ranch. No harm will come to her before we can get there."

He grumbled something in his weakness, and I feared that his violence would do him harm.

"Take a drink of this," I said, handing him a glass of brandy.

He had wonderful strength, and after the first fit of unconsciousness his wounds did not seem to render him helpless. He took the glass in his own hand and drained it.

"Now," I went on, "keep your senses. I've got a lot of work to do here, owing to your confounded hotheadedness. See if you can keep quiet while I take care of those we shot."

"Dogs! All dogs of Yaquis," he muttered.

There was the one I had hit lying dead on the floor of my general living-room. I dragged his body outside. The one Sam had shot first lay where he fell. And Hernandez lay some distance away.

In their triumphant abduction of Namona, the Yaquis had gone off, leaving their employer on the ground. Perhaps they thought he was dead, but I found him breathing.

As may be imagined, I felt no great love for the fellow, but I reflected that it had not been Hernandez who began the fighting. He had been ugly enough, and perhaps would have begun shooting anyway, and if he had, I would have been his target.

But it was not the time for supposing that something might have happened. I had to deal with what had happened.

I picked Hernandez up, carried him into the house, and placed him on my own bed. I did for him the same as I had for Sam. He was less seriously wounded, but he did not have the strength Sam had.

I had a more difficult job getting him back to consciousness.

"You—you take care of me?" he murmured wonderingly, as he woke up and realized what I was doing.

"Oh, yes," I said. "I am an American. We don't kill people while they are unconscious."

He turned his face away as though it was a bitter pill to be under this obligation to one who had defied and thus far outwitted him in his search for the girl.

My fig plantation was far away from any other. The sounds of the fighting could not be heard by any one unless it chanced that somebody was passing.

I went down to the hedge gateway and looked in both directions. I saw no one.

Of course I knew that I must make a report of the affair to the authorities, and thought of Jim Saxe first.

Saxe was the sheriff of San Diego County, and a friend of mine. He was a rugged, square-jawed, honest fellow, who knew nothing but his duty and the law. And if his best friend had broken the law, that friend would obtain no shelter or assistance from Jim Saxe.

His theory was that no friend of his *would* break the law. So, when a friend of his did so, the friendship ceased and Saxe became only the sheriff with a duty to perform.

I was in a quandary. I was not sure whether I had sinned against the law or not.

The girl had appealed to me for protection, and I had given it. I had not begun any fighting, but when it had begun I judged it to be my privilege to help defend my home.

Anyway, I had plenty to do before I went to see Saxe. He was at San Diego, miles away, and I had the two dead Yaquis on my hands. Whether to bury them or not, I did not know.

But I could not go to San Diego, on the coast, and leave Sam and Hernandez behind, wounded.

I settled the matter for myself, since there was no one else to settle it for me; and taking my spade, I dug a grave, made a rude box for each of the Indians, and covered them up.

This took some time, and Bones, as usual, squatted near me, looking on wonderingly at my operations. It was the first time he had seen me turn sexton, and he didn't know what it all meant.

"Now," I said to myself, "I'll see about the girl."

Then I stopped, and a queer feeling came over me. I did not know what Namona had done with her.

CHAPTER IV.

A TROUBLESOME SITUATION.

HERE was a dilemma, indeed. I had offered a young lady a safe hiding-place. She was there, and I did not know where it was.

Namona had been gone more than two hours. She had had time to go some distance and return, and I tried to think of the likeliest place in an hour's walk or run where she could have hidden Miss Bonilla.

I knew that at several spots along the Carriso there grew thick clumps of trees, but these little groves did not seem to me to be the safest hiding-places in the world. There was not one of them that could not be looked through by a man riding around them on horseback.

It was not a region where mysterious caves could be found.

If Namona had started Miss Bonilla off toward the San Jacintos with some mystic word that would give the girl the benefit of the friendship of the Moquis, then she was still on the way. But I did not think Namona had done this.

Her triumphant look when she returned indicated that whatever she had done or attempted was completed, and that she did not fear a search or pursuit.

I went into the house again to get my rifle.

"What is your name?" asked Hernandez.

"John Denny."

"John Denny, do you think I will die?"

"No, not if you keep quiet."

"What do you mean by that?" he asked in alarm as he saw me pick up my rifle. "Will you kill me, after all?"

"I have no desire to kill you, Hernandez."

"Ah, you know my name! Then Consuelo is here.

"I know your name," I answered. "I did think that you were the girl's father, Bonilla, until you told me she had run away *from* her father. Then I knew that you must be Hernandez, the man she feared and—"

"Oh, say it. It will not be new."

"I was going to add, hated. I don't know just why she hated you, and don't care. It's none of my business. But I met the girl on the Vallecita trail, and she begged me to help her and hide her. I brought her here. Any man would have done the same."

"And where is she now?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know, after hiding her?"

"I wasn't the one who hid her. I gave her to Namona, and told her to do it. And when she returned the fighting began, and I forgot to ask where the girl was hiding."

"And you will find her?"

"I'm going to try."

"Will you bring her here? If I am going to die, I would be happy to see her."

"I don't know yet what I shall do with her. I certainly shall not bring her here. There is no woman here now,

and she would not want to come. An American girl, born and raised in the West, would come here, and if a man tried to make love to her, she'd put a bullet through him. But Miss Bonilla doesn't seem to be that kind. Anyhow, I can't tell what to do until I find her."

His dark eyes followed every move I made.

"I am leaving you two here together," I said. "And what I say now applies to one as much as to the other. I don't want any monkey business while I am gone. You are not overmuch in love with each other, you and Sam, and either one of you, on a pinch, could get up. But if I find, when I come back, that either of you has hurt the other, I'll shoot you both. Understand?"

"I shall not move," answered Hernandez. "I am sore all over."

"I will wait," said Sam.

I shouldered my rifle, whistled to Bones, and went out. But I did not know in which direction to proceed.

I had not noticed which way Namona went when she took Miss Bonilla away, nor from which point she came when she returned. I believed my best plan was to start in a small circuit, keeping on enlarging it as I proceeded, until I found my pretty refugee.

There were several deep gullies on and near my farm, in any one of which the girl might be hiding, poor as that shelter might be.

I started. This was new business to Bones. Had I been going after bear or rabbits or any other game, he would know, from the direction I took and the region I was beating up, just what I was after and how he should act.

But this business of going round my own farm time after time, each time drawing farther away from it, had its puzzling aspect to the dog.

I did think of letting him smell the stirrups of the saddle, and see if he could trace her footsteps. But he was a hunting dog, and no bloodhound. I walked on, and he trudged at my heels, entirely at a loss as to the purpose of it all.

I explored gullies, all the time calling the *señorita.*

I received no answer. And finally, in my long unwinding tramp, I came to the ruins of San Miguel.

This was the remains of an ancient Spanish monastery. It was situated about a mile from my house. One wall was standing. All around was débris—blocks of adobe, fallen pillars, and pieces of roof-frames.

The old wreck had thus far escaped the degrading hands of tourists, who had carried away, bit by bit, half a dozen other old ruins of the same kind nearer to the railroads. But old San Miguel was there, a heap of useless rubbish, to be sure, but all there.

There was no cloister standing, no room of any kind, only the one bare wall at the eastern end. This would afford no hiding-place except for a person on one side of it from a person on the other. I walked around it, but the girl was not there.

I was about to start away when I heard Bones sniff. He had his nose stuck up in the air, and it was evident that he was studying something on the gently moving breeze.

"What is it, Bones?" I asked. "Is she here?"

Then I called her.

"*Señorita!* Miss Bonilla!" I shouted.

No answer came.

"*Señorita,* it is I, the American."

"I am here, *señor.*"

I looked around me in absolute bewilderment. The voice seemed to have come out of the ground.

"Where are you?" I asked.

"Under this mound of adobe."

I looked again in vain.

"I don't see you. There are many mounds of adobe," I called.

"See my hand waving?"

And sure enough, from a small opening in what seemed to be one of the ordinary piles of rubbish, I saw a small white hand beckoning.

I hurried to her.

"How in the world did you get in there?" I asked as I began to tear away the blocks.

"Don't!" she called. "Namona built me in. Isn't it fine? Nobody could find me here, not even you."

"But you want to come out, don't you? You can't be very comfortable in there."

"I am not uncomfortable. Has Hernandez come?"

"Yes."

"And gone again?"

"No, he hasn't gone again. He is in my house, wounded. We had a battle, and he was left behind, shot down. The Yaquis stole Namona."

"Oh! That is terrible."

"Yes, it's bad enough," I said. "But what bothers me more than Namona just now is what to do with you. Don't you want to come out?"

"No, not now. I won't trust Hernandez. See, I am comfortable. Namona is strong. She scooped out the place so the mound wouldn't be so high, and then built around me. And you can feed me here."

"But that's all out of the question. What will you do nights?"

"Why, I am safe enough nights. There are wolves, I know. But no wolf can get me here. And what else can I do? I can't go home now."

"But," I said, trying to see the serious side only of this, but realizing that my beauty had strange ideas, "you can't spend all the rest of your life here."

"But I can wait till Hernandez goes. Get rid of him as soon as you can, and then I will come out."

"And then what?"

"I don't know. I'll think about that while I'm here. I shall not return to my father to be sold like a horse or sheep."

"Are you sure you were being sold?" I asked, now rather out of patience.

"Yes. The price was a share in a mine Hernandez had discovered."

"Are you thirsty?"

"A little."

I had a small telescope drinking-cup I always carried with me, and the monastery had been built near a spring. The spring was still good, while the monastery was in ruins.

I brought her a drink, and thrust it in through the opening among the adobe blocks.

"Suppose I build a better place for you," I said. "Or why not let me take you to some town where you have friends?"

"No, no! You don't know Henrico Hernandez as I do. He is almost as powerful in the southern part of your California as he is in the northern part of ours. Get him off home, and I'll come out."

There was nothing to do but leave her. I knew she was safe enough. Human beings rarely passed that way, and the adobe pile that Namona had built was strong enough to resist any of the animals that might prowl near. And in fact, there were few of these.

"I'll bring you some supper," I said as I started off.

"Very well, *señor*. Don't make too much trouble for yourself on my account. I thank you for what you have done already."

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER UNWELCOME GUEST.

THIS sort of thing wouldn't do at all, I reflected as I trudged toward my house. A hole in the ground covered by a mound of old adobe blocks might do very well as a hiding-place for a young girl for a few hours in the daytime, but it certainly was no place for her to spend the night.

And Hernandez was seriously wounded. The nearest doctor that I knew anything about was some fifteen miles away, and I doubted if he would come out to my farm for a wounded Mexican and a less seriously wounded half-breed.

And, anyway, the day was drawing to a close, and if I went for the doctor Miss Bonilla would have to remain in that place all night, which I did not propose to permit.

I knew that if fever set in, as it very well might, Hernandez would be my guest longer than Miss Bonilla would care to remain in her queer hiding-place.

But what to do?

My nearest neighbor was five miles away on the east, and he lived alone with two Chinamen. Manifestly, this wasn't the place for my refugee to go.

Beyond him there was a little settlement, but from the little I had seen of the people I did not care to submit a girl as delicately reared and as refined as my quondam guest to their coarseness, and perhaps their insults.

The nearest people I could feel any great amount of confidence in were

Namona's relatives up near the San Jacintos. That was a long distance for her to travel, and she had been riding all night and must need sleep.

What to do I didn't know. Yet to leave her in the mound was entirely out of the question.

The day was almost gone. If I hoped to get her out of tbat place before dark I must think of something soon.

And I was still trying to hit on a plan when I reached my house.

It was already dusk. Two horses stood before the door.

When I entered I saw a tall old Mexican sitting by the side of Hernandez, and another, of a lower order, standing near.

"Ha! So you are the fellow who has helped my daughter, and almost killed the man she is to marry!" the elderly Mexican cried, leaping to bis feet and drawing a revolver. "I will show you to meddle with my family affairs."

I was appalled. Now, Miss Bonilla would have to stay in the old ruin.

"Steady, there," I said. "Go a little slow. First it will be polite to introduce yourself. My name is John Denny."

"I care not what your name!" he blustered. "And you already know mine. I demand my daughter."

"I have not seen your daughter."

"Liar! Do you mean to tell me that she did not meet you on the road and ask you to give her shelter?"

"Yes, she did that. And I brought her here and told an Indian woman—that man's wife—to hide her. She did hide her. Then the Yaquis stole her, and I have been looking for your daughter. But I have not set eyes on her face since."

He looked at me suspiciously.

"Better put up your revolver," I went on. "Two can play at that game, and, remember, you are in my house unasked. Permit me to ask how you happened to come here?"

"I did not think last night when Señor Hernandez started after my daughter that the chase would be long. I forgot that she had the fastest horse around. This morning, feeling alarmed for all, I started out myself. I met some of the Yaquis returning, and they gave me an account of what bad taken place."

"Well, did they have the Moqui woman with them?"

"Yes."

"You have some influence with the Yaquis, I presume, although they are a warlike and ungovernable race."

"Fortunately circumstances are such that the Yaquis are my friends. I have befriended them in the past, and they appreciate it."

"Very good. You know, then, that there is bad blood between them and the Moquis of this country."

"I have heard it spoken of. I have never seen a demonstration of it."

"You would have seen one had you been here this morning. But what I was going to say is this: Your daughter is under the care of the Moquis of the San Jacintos. And they are influenced by me, just as the Yaquis are by you. Now we will understand each other. If you ever expect to see the *señorita* alive again, not a hair of Namona's head must be harmed."

"Good!" grunted Sam.

"Do you mean to put a miserable Indian woman against my daughter as a hostage?" demanded Bonilla angrily.

"You heard what I said, and I mean every word of it."

"By Heaven, you are an impudent American!"

"I told him the same thing," said Hernandez weakly.

"It is so. You are a very impudent American," continued Bonilla. "But, as you say the Moquis have my daughter, and you control the Moquis, it will do me no good to kill you."

"Provided you could do it," I added. "I can shoot quick and straight. And I can talk pretty straight, too. Let me tell you this: I don't want you here."

Bonilla stared.

"You are hospitable, *señor*."

"I didn't want Hernandez here. Had he skiddooed when I told him, there would have been no shooting."

"Had he—had he what?"

"Skiddoo, in the new universal language, means to walk rapidly or ride at full trot. Now, listen. I have had about all I can stand of you people from over the border. I've been in Vallecita, and I have met many nice people there. But you two don't meet with my approval."

"Well—but Hernandez is wounded. He cannot ride a borse."

"I am not particular how he goes. I am even willing to lend you a team and a wagon. Or, I see that you have two horses. I will give you a double harness and a pole-wagon. I will even give you a mattress for him to lie on. And you can drive him home as nicely as you please. See?"

Bonilla put his face quite close to mine and peered into my eyes.

"Why are you so anxious to get rid of Señor Hernandez?" he asked. "Even so eager as to lose a good harness and wagon?"

"I said nothing about losing any harness and wagon. You are a rich man and a Mexican gentleman. Just now you are excited and enraged because your daughter has eluded you. I was not to blame for that. I am always ready to help beauty in distress. And when she said you were *selling* her to a man named Hernandez, and begged me to aid her to escape, of course I did so."

"And you say she is with the Moquis now?"

"She is under the care of the Moquis now, and I am the controlling influence with the Moquis of the San Jacintos."

"I am apparently helpless in your hands," he said, sitting down again and putting his revolver away. "I am helpless. Then you make it a bargain that if this Moqui woman you call Namona is returned safely you will restore my daughter to me?"

"I made no such bargain. The return of your daughter depends entirely upon her own will. I did say that if Namona is harmed by your Yaquis you will *never* see your daughter again alive."

He looked at me, and a gray ashen color almost drove the swarthiness from his face.

"You are a desperate man," he gasped.

"I am," I said. "Now I will get your wagon."

CHAPTER VI.

A REMOVAL.

It wasn't much of a job to get out the wagon from the shed, and it wasn't much of a wagon after it was out. But it was all I had, and I could ill afford the money to buy another.

But I was so eager to get rid of Hernandez, so that I might relieve the young lady from her disagreeable situation, that I would have let them take every horse I had.

I took the saddles off their two mounts, with the help of the Mexican who had accompanied Bonilla, and then harnessed them to the wagon. I made a comfortable bed in the bottom of the vehicle, put in a couple of fairly good blankets, and the Mexican drove round to the door.

"Your wagon is ready, Señor Bonilla," I said. "I regret that circumstances do not permit me to be more hospitable. But this man received his wounds in an attack on my house, and I cannot have him here. My own man is wounded, but so slightly that I can take care of him. Señor Hernandez is perhaps badly wounded and requires the services of a surgeon. He will be better off among his friends. You see I am isolated here, and he would not get the proper care."

"You are wonderfully eager, however, to have us go. I am disposed to think you have lied."

"He lied to me," said Hernandez. "And he is lying to you."

"Then my daughter is here."

"I have told you all I intend to tell you about your daughter," I retorted angrily. "I shall say no more, except to reiterate what I have said. If you wish to see your daughter alive don't let any harm come to Namona."

He seemed about to become furious again, but he saw that I had him absolutely at a disadvantage.

He did not know where his daughter was. Even if, as I had made him believe, without deliberately lying—which, however, I don't think I would have hesitated to do—she was up in the San Jacintos with the Moquis, he knew he could not get her without a command from me.

And if she was not there, but hidden somewhere nearer, he could not hope to find her that night. It was now getting dark, and a search, in a region unfamiliar to him, would be fruitless.

And he knew—or, at least, his acquiescent manner after the first ebullition of rage was over seemed to indicate that he knew—his daughter would be safe in my hands until the return of Namona.

I could not help smiling as I saw the face of Hernandez.

Wounded, losing all that he had come for, he lay like a dog, compelled to do whatever I commanded.

"Now, Pedro," I said to Bonilla's man, "we'll lift the *señor* to the wagon."

We carried Hernandez out and I placed him on the bed I had made, and covered him with a blanket, for the evenings were cool.

"Now," I said, "I will give you a bottle of whisky. Do not, however, give it to Señor Hernandez indiscriminately. If he feels faint, while on the way, it will brace him up. But if he has much fever do not permit him to have any. Wait till you reach a spring, and give him some water, and not too much of that. And now, good day, *señor.*"

He looked at me in the gloaming with an expression that was indescribable. Suspicion, hate, malice, mingled with what seemed to be a peculiar desire to say something friendly. He settled it by saying nothing.

He climbed onto the seat with his man, the latter took the reins, and they drove off.

I stood in the road till they had entirely gone beyond my view, and then I went into the house.

"How do *you* feel?" I asked Sam.

"Better, since you gave bim the bluff," said Sam. "What a straight face you kept. And your voice didn't tremble. Ah, he bit hard!"

"I told him nothing but the truth. Now I'm going after the girl."

"So. Then we'll have company to-night."

"Well, if she'll come. She's a very decided young lady, and may prefer that place where Namona put her."

"Where did Namona hide her?"

"Under a rubbish heap at the old mission."

He burst out laughing.

"Here! None of that. You'll be bleeding again. Keep quiet till I come back."

I whistled for Bones, and started off. It was quite dark by the time I reached old San Miguel, and I had to pick my way across more than one rubbish heap to where the girl was buried.

"Miss Bonilla!" I called.

"Here, *señor!*"

"All is safe. I did not bring your supper. I came for you. We will eat our bacon and sage-ben like Christians."

"Has Hernandez gone, then?"

"Yes. When I returned to the house, after discovering where you were, I found your father there."

"My father? Was he angry?"

"I didn't notice any signs of extreme joy about his manner."

"No, I suppose not," she said. "I don't suppose Hernandez will give him the share in the mine now."

"It wasn't your father's fault that you ran away."

"That makes no difference. If you promise to sell a man a horse and the horse runs away, the man doesn't pay you, just the same, does he?"

I laughed. Truly I had an interesting refugee. I was removing the blocks of adobe while we were talking, and some of them were so heavy I wondered how Namona had managed to lift them.

"Oh, I helped her with some," explained Miss Bonilla when I spoke of this.

I soon had her free, and she shook her dress with a laugh.

"I suppose I'm a sight," she said. "But we did give them the slip nicely. Oh, what an escape! I was to be married to-night. *To-night!* Well, thank Heaven, this is not my wedding night! Isn't it dark? I wish it was moonlight."

"Why? What difference does it make?" I asked.

"My feet are numb. I'll stumble."

"The road is pretty level. We'll walk slowly till your blood circulates again."

She was taller than I supposed, and we walked along at a good rate, keeping up a lively conversation.

She did not seem at all embarrassed, yet she was modest, and after the first few minutes out of her prison she was rather shy in her manner.

"I wonder what some of the girls would say to this adventure?" she said. "Of course, it would almost kill a full Mexican or Spanish girl. But my mother is American, you know, and my education is American."

"So is your nerve," I said.

She laughed.

She petted Bones, who made friends

with her at once. I wished it was moonlight, too. I had had but little chance after the first meeting to study her face.

Her voice was soft, rich, and musical. Her laugh was low and sweet to hear.

In this way we reached the house.

I soon had lights, and we stood and looked for a full minute at each other.

She was more beautiful than I had thought at first, and younger.

I put out my hand.

"Circumstances are strange," I said. "You must trust me. We will have supper together, and then the house is yours. I cannot make Sam give up his bed, because he is wounded. I have slept outdoors often, and you will feel safe if I am on the porch in a hammock."

"I feel safe with you anywhere," she said. "Where are the things? I can cook. I learned that at your American school."

CHAPTER VII.

A QUICK PROPOSAL.

THAT was the pleasantest hour I ever spent at my table in the adobe house.

Miss Bonilla managed the supper. I watched her graceful form as she moved from kitchen to dining-room, and back again, and Sam, forgetting his injuries, leaned on his elbows and watched with a grim smile of satisfaction.

There seemed to be something different in the house. It was lighter, more homelike, and there was an air of domesticity about it that I had never felt before.

This girl from Mexico seemed to know just what to do and how to do it. There was an easy comradeship about her, combined with a certain reserve, resulting in a charm I had never seen in a woman before.

When the meal was over she shut herself in the kitchen to "wash up," she said, and I went outside to smoke.

The night was calm, though it remained dark. I slung a hammock across the porch and slept there. Evidently my guest knew how to take care of herself, for I did not see her again.

In the morning, which broke clear and bright, I was out looking after the burros and my poor lonely cow, when Miss Bonilla stuck her head through a window.

"Don't forget my pony," she said.

"I couldn't."

"Yes, you could. Men do."

I turned to ask for some kind of explanation, but she was gone from the window.

Our breakfast was a repetition of our supper of the evening before, and while Miss Bonilla was again in the kitchen "washing up," I gave Sam what attention I could.

He was improving, and there was now no need to go for a doctor.

But he was anxious about Namona, as was natural.

"We'll get Namona," I said. "Wait till Bonilla has a chance to get things moving. He'll be back and bring Namona with him."

I didn't know Bonilla.

After I had dressed Sam's wounds and taken a look at my fig-trees, which needed no immediate attention, I took my rifle and wandered off with Bones to find some fresh meat for dinner. I succeeded in getting a turkey.

Of fruit we had plenty, and my vegetable garden gave us all we wanted of fresh table stuff.

"Have you got any flour?" asked Miss Bonilla before I left.

I did have some, put away in a japanned box to keep out insects. When I returned she had some bread and biscuits.

After dinner I sat on the porch, smoking my pipe and thinking.

Certainly, I was in a peculiar position. Miss Bonilla would not return to her home, and I did not know what else to do with her.

She was good company, but that sort of thing, while it might do in an emergency, could not be kept up.

While I sat there, and was on my second pipe, I saw a big gray horse turn in at the hedge gateway, and a big, rawboned fellow slid off the saddle at the porch. It was Sheriff Saxe.

"What the deuce is all this?" he asked. "I say, Denny, you are making a fuss in the world."

"What fuss?" I asked calmly. "Come here and smoke."

"I'll come there and smoke. Don't

worry. But here I've got a petition from Señor Bonilla, who lives in Vallecita, Mexico, to arrest you for abducting his daughter Consuelo."

"Well, why don't you?"

"Why don't I what?"

"Arrest me."

He took a seat on a bench opposite me and filled his pipe. He looked at me queerly.

"Why don't I arrest you? That's a nice question. I want proof. Where is the girl?"

"In the house."

"Your house?"

"Certainly, this house, which is mine if the deeds are correct."

"Did you elope with her?"

"I did not. She met me on the trail. She was running away from her father and a fellow named Hernandez, to whom her father was going to marry her for a consideration."

"Henrico Hernandez?"

"The same."

"Well, I am not surprised that she ran away. I've known Hernandez a good many years. He's a bad egg. But you can't keep her here, you know."

"I can't send her away."

"Why not?"

"She won't go. Ask her yourself. She is a young lady of very positive opinions."

"How old?"

"Oh, about eighteen."

"Gee whiz! Get her out here."

At my call the beautiful refugee came out on the porch.

"Miss Bonilla," I said, "this is Sheriff Saxe, of San Diego County. Your father has sent him word that I have abducted you. It is, I suppose, an international affair that will make trouble."

"How can it make trouble?" asked the girl, facing Saxe. "Nobody ran away with me. I ran away myself. Do you think I can be sold like a piece of furniture?"

A grim smile played around the iron mouth of Saxe.

"You've got grit, anyhow," he said. "Now, as a man I admire that grit. But as sheriff I'm bound to see that nothing is done against the law."

"Law! Does the law compel me to marry a man I hate? A man old enough almost to be my grandfather? Just because he has discovered a mine, or claims he has?"

"N-no, I don't say that. But you've run away from home, you know."

"And I won't go back."

"But where will you go?"

"I don't know yet. I have no friends who will want me. The only real friends I have are Mr. Denny and Bones."

"But your presence here is likely to make trouble for Mr. Denny."

"Then I will leave. I will go. Anywhere, except home. I will not marry Hernandez."

She said it so there was no mistaking her meaning. She was determined.

I looked at her, and I suppose my admiration showed in my glance.

Remember, since I had been on the fig farm I had seen few women, and none at all like this girl. I had lived a lonely life. She was like a ray of sunshine after a long siege of clouds and storm.

"You see," said Saxe, "as I understand it, a man cannot harbor a girl against the wishes of her father, be he Mexican or American, unless she is his wife. Then he can do anything."

"Oh!"

Consuelo glanced at me as she uttered this exclamation.

I felt a tingling sensation all over me. Why not, I asked myself, if she was willing, have her for a wife to make my life in the California wilderness more cheerful?

It was not offering her much, but the circumstances were so unusual that I knew something had to be done at once.

"You see," said Saxe wisely, "you are not of legal age. You can't leave your father's house and go off by yourself this way. If I am called upon to return you to your father, I've got to do it."

"Do you mean — do you mean you have come for me?"

"That is just what I mean."

She stiffened. Tears came into her eyes. She turned to me.

"Mr. Denny," she said, "you know from what I have escaped. You know that I will not go back. It would be

going back to degradation. I know it, and you know it."

"I know it," I replied, "but I am helpless in the matter. The sheriff says that if I was your husband I might protect you. I am not. I have been thinking, however. You are young, and it is easily understood that you do not want to marry Hernandez. Now, all I can offer you is a home as my wife.

"You have known me only a few hours. I have little to offer you except this home, as you see it, a strong arm, and a faithful love. I confess I never had much belief in love at first sight; but I have seen you several times in the past twenty-four hours, and I love you. Will you marry me?"

"Yes."

There was a heightened color in her cheeks, and she stepped to my side and put her hand in mine."

"Any woman could love you," she said. "I will be your wife. I could be happy here."

Saxe unwound his great length and blew a cloud of smoke in the air.

"Then I can't do anything," he said; "only, get the ceremony over with as soon as possible."

"It isn't the first time I've been asked to marry," said Miss Bonilla, "but it's the first time I ever said yes."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INTERRUPTED CEREMONY.

THERE was a broad grin on the bronzed face of Sheriff Saxe.

"How will you manage it?" he asked. "There is no priest within twenty miles."

"There is a justice of the peace at Descanso."

"At Descanso? Yes, so there is. Well, you want him, eh?"

I turned to Consuelo.

"Miss Bonilla," I said, "this means a great deal to me. I am lonesome, and want to marry you. But I do not want to take advantage of the difficult position you are in. Consider well before we take any further steps."

She flashed me a smile that reassured me.

"I don't think I will be the best wife, if that's what you want. I don't know everything. But so far as considering is concerned, I've done that. With a father like mine, and Hernandez waiting for me at home, and no one but you to look to, what considering do I need? If you think you'd like to marry me, I'm ready."

Saxe laughed outright.

"It's the queerest love-making I ever saw," he said, "but then, to tell the truth, I haveu't seen much. If Denny hadn't offered, *señorita,* I would."

"I wouldn't say yes to you."

The corners of his mouth twitched.

"I suppose not. I'm not twenty-four, strong as an ox, and the owner of a good farm. Well, I'll help the matter along. You want Brown, eh?"

"Yes."

"I'll stop at Descanso and tell him. Sorry I can't be here to attend the wedding. But now that the seriousness of the affair has been done away with, I've got more important duties. I'll tell Brown, though."

We had some refreshments, and he mounted his horse again and rode away.

"Have you really thought about what you are doing?" I asked Consuelo.

"Of course I have. You have lived so long with your old fig-trees and your rifle that you can't understand. I love you."

"I hope you will some day, but I doubt if you do now."

"I do now—John."

She came to me and, stooping, kissed me.

I had no further doubts. It was a short, swift courtship. It was not a courtship at all. I make no apologies. I am simply telling what occurred on the fig farm.

Descanso was fifteeu miles away. And Justice of the Peace Brown was not the swiftest individual in the world.

However, about five o'clock that same afternoon an old mustang that had seen service on the plains farther east came limping in through the osage hedge, and the round face of Justice Brown looked out from under a broad-brimmed sombrero.

"Saxe told me you wanted me in a hurry," he said. "I've nearly killed poor old Sancho getting here. What is

it, anyway? He said it was a wedding. But—"

"There are no buts about it," I said. "The circumstances are these."

I then gave him a full account of how Consuelo came to be in my care.

"Well," he said, "Saxe gave his own interpretation of the law, and I don't know but what it was a pretty good one. It's a queer case, but once the girl is your wife, nobody can take her away from you. Where is she?"

I called Consuelo. She blushed when she saw the justice.

"Do you know, young lady," he said, "that you are taking a serious step?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that it amounts practically to an elopement?"

"Yes."

"And are you ready and willing to marry Jack Denny now, knowing there may be trouble to follow?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are a nervy youngster. I'll take the chance because I sympathize with you. I know something about Hernandez. I wouldn't want my daughter to marry him. We'll get it over as quickly as possible. And then we'll eat. I'm half starved."

It was a small wedding-party. Sam, unable to keep himself out of it, came to the door and sat in a wicker chair to be a witness.

"Stand here under this fig-tree," said the justice, indicating a tree I had planted near the porch. "I've read of a man sitting under his own vine and fig-tree, but never heard of a man being married there. However, it is appropriate. Now, join hands."

Consuelo shot me one of those thrilling glances I had learned so suddenly to love, and then placed her hand in mine.

Brown began the ceremony.

"Do you, John, take this woman to be your wedded wife—" and all the rest of it.

"Do you, Consuelo—"

Suddenly there was the sound of galloping horses. Up the trail from Vallecita came a cavalcade of Mexicans and Yaquis, led by Bonilla himself. In through the osage hedge they came, and Brown, who knew the man who led, stopped in the middle of his ceremony.

"Ah, I am in time!" roared Bonilla.

He fired a revolver at me, the bullet just grazing my ear. Then, with a Yaqui horseman on his right side, he swept down upon us.

Consuelo gave a cry of fear and started to run into the house. But the Yaqui was too quick for her. He leaned over in the saddle. She was snatched up, and before either Brown or I had recovered enough to stop them, the whole cavalcade was galloping off toward the border.

Brown coolly took a cigar from his pocket and lit it.

"Well," he said, "I consider that well done. You didn't give her back. You were willing enough to do your part. And after all, a father has a right to his child."

"Has a right!" I cried. "Is she not my wife?"

"Well—that's a question. The ceremony was only half performed. Of course, so far as her intention and yours went, she is your wife. But I can't file any certificate that I married you, because I didn't."

"But I regard her as my wife!" I said.

"You may. You may regard her as your grandmother for all I care. I doubt, however, if you will find the law with you."

To say that I was enraged would be but poorly to express my emotions. Had the girl gone home of her own will, I would not have murmured.

But she had expressed her love for me. She had shown not only a willingness, but a desire, to marry me. And I had pictured our happiness in my cozy little home so much that now, when she had been taken away from me, I felt like killing both Bonilla and Hernandez.

Sam was standing up. He had forgotten his wound.

"Now, we have each a wife to get," he said. "Come—we will go into the place called Vallecita and get them."

My blood was boiling. Brown coolly went into the house, and of course I had to set food before him.

"If you take my advice," he said, "you will let this matter drop."

"But I won't let it drop," I replied angrily. "If I am half married to

Consuelo Bonilla, the other half of the ceremony will be performed."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll never get her," he said. "That gang is dangerous."

"I *will* get her, if I have to shoot my way to her side. Do you know, Brown, that a bullet is a great persuader?"

"I've heard so," he said, as he mounted his horse. "But I don't want to hear your plans. I might have to stop them."

CHAPTER IX.

A RAID INTO MEXICO.

As I watched the burly form of the justice ride out through my osage gateway I felt myself swelling with rage.

So far as my own intention, intelligence, and convincing thought were concerned, I was married to Consuelo Bonilla. And a gang of Yaquis, led by her father, had swooped down upon us in my own dooryard and carried her away to Mexico.

Sam Tamarko sat and watched me, the color rising in his cheeks.

"You told Bonilla," he said, "that the girl would be safe if Namona was safe. Now they have the girl and Namona, too."

"And, by Heaven!" I added, "we'll have them both back."

Strange though it may appear, the house was lonesome after she had been taken away. We had had only a supper and a breakfast together, yet she had brought such a blithesomeness to the adobe dwelling that now the place seemed dull, dark, and silent.

I got Sam fixed up so that he could stand my absence, put a saddle on my horse, and started for San Diego. I was no longer on the road than was necessary to save my horse, and when I rode into San Diego we were both covered with dust and the horse with foam as well.

I found Saxe without any difficulty.

"Hallo! On your honeymoon?" he asked.

"Honeymoon!" I said. "They've taken her away."

"Taken the girl?"

"Taken my wife."

"Come," he said, getting himself untwisted from the easy lounging way in which he usually sat and straightening up. "This sounds like bad business, whether it is or not. You say they have taken away your wife. Do you mean the Bonilla girl?"

"Yes, Consuelo."

"Now, then, who are *they?*"

"Her father and a gang of Yaquis."

"Tell me all about it."

"Well, you told Brown, didn't you?"

"Sure thing. Found him at Descanso and told him you wanted him in a hurry. He said he'd go right out. Did he?"

"Yes, he came. But while we were in the middle of the ceremony Bonilla and a gang of Yaquis arrived and snatched Consuelo right out of our hands."

"What did you let him do that for?"

"Nobody had time to think. But what can I do now? That's the question."

"What did Brown say?"

"He said that the ceremony wasn't completed. I could do nothing."

"Hadn't he pronounced you man and wife?"

"No. He hadn't reached that."

"Then you can't do anything."

"But I must do something. I consider myself married to her."

"Well, you might consider yourself married to the moon, but you couldn't get the United States army excited about it."

"But there's Sam's wife. What about her?"

"Oh, she's a Moqui. I wouldn't bother much about her."

"You're a satisfying cuss. I'm going to get my wife."

"You'd better get *a* wife first. You have no legal wife, or Brown would have told you."

"Good-by, Jim," I said. "I came to you, thinking you could help me. Since you won't, I'll help myself."

"God helps them that help themselves," he answered. "I'll do my best. I'll keep my mouth shut. Raid the border."

On my way back home I grew angrier at every step. As I recalled the beautiful face of Consuelo as she sat opposite

me at my own table, her sprightliness, her sweet voice, her low, soft laugh, my rage grew almost unbearable.

It was late at night when I entered the house after turning my horse loose in the corral.

I found Sam had company.

This was a tall, square-jawed, ungainly Moqui named Billy Barefoot. He was Namona's father.

"What this I hear?" he asked. "Yaquis come and take away Namona?"

"They took away Sam's wife and mine," I said.

"And you do nothing?"

"Yes, I intend to do something. I was coming to see you."

"You go to San Deego? What they say San Deego?"

"Nothing. I can't get any government help. We'll have to do it alone. How many good men have you got up in the San Jacintos?"

"No want too many men. Won't let over the border into Mex'co."

"Well, we'll want a half dozen good men—men that are afraid of nothing."

"Yes. Good men, not old men. Not boys. Good men. Let me think about that."

He studied a moment, his wizened old face working. The Moquis are not Stoics like the Apaches and Comanches.

"Ha! Half dozen? Six? I have six I trust. Little Elk, Red Two Legs, Bill Faraway, Tom Mud, Run Fast Jim, and me."

"Very well. Now, when can you have the other five ready to start?"

"Ha! They are ready now. All need is to tell them."

He darted away in that swift, noiseless fashion that had given him the name of Billy Barefoot, and, leaping upon his horse, was out of sight in a moment on his way to the San Jacintos.

The next morning early my force was at my door.

It was a picturesque gathering. They were well mounted, for this branch of the Moquis was far from poverty-stricken. And they were well armed.

Billy Barefoot led them.

"We ready," he announced as I met them at the door.

"I'll be ready in a moment."

"I want to go," said Sam.

"You! Don't you think we've got work enough cut out for us without taking along a wounded man? This is no picnic," I told him. "We may all be wounded ourselves before the game is played out."

"You bring Namona?"

"We'll bring Namona. Billy Barefoot wouldn't go if it wasn't for Namona. And we've got to pass the border ranger, somehow, and give him a tale he'll swallow. You stay here and keep quiet. Have a good feed ready when we come back."

"When you think you come back?"

"Ha!" exclaimed Billy Barefoot. "When we think!"

We left Sam standing in the doorway as we rode off, Billy Barefoot and I riding side by side and leading the little cavalcade.

I knew very well that this was a desperate mission I was on. I was not only invading another country under arms, but I was going deliberately into a region where Bonilla and Hernandez were powerful, and where I could not expect to find a single friend unless it was the mother of Consuelo, whom I had never seen.

There is, from Yuma to the coast, a government officer called a border ranger, who patrols the line between Mexico and the State of California. Others patrol other sections along the entire Mexican boundary.

I knew that the Yaquis both times they had visited me had somehow eluded this man, which was not very difficult, after all, considering the extent of his post.

We crossed the line without any difficulty and rode in upon Mexican soil.

"Now, Billy Barefoot," I said, "we carry our lives in our hands."

"So. Where is this Bonilla? We see about our lives."

CHAPTER X.

CONSUELO'S MOTHER.

THE road to Vallecita was far from good. For a portion of the way it led through open country, and then again there would be thick chaparrals of stunted evergreen or large forests of small redwood or oak.

There were hills on the left, the foothills of the Sierra de Los Cucaras.

The few people we passed gazed at us with some curiosity, but the sight of armed men, even Indians, riding together, was not an unusual one in Lower California.

Nevertheless, I did not consider it wise to take my little band of Moquis into Vallecita without knowing something about the situation there.

I had been to Vallecita, and knew the way, so did old Billy Barefoot.

I found a deep gully with a running stream at the bottom, into which we could ride from the beginning of the descent. I sent the Moquis down into this, where they would be screened by the outreaching trees which lined the sides, and I rode on alone to Vallecita.

It was not a difficult job to learn where the *hacienda* of Señor Bonilla was located, and having been well directed, I rode out of Vallecita to the eastward.

I found the place before nightfall.

It was a large white house, surrounded by well-tilled fields and cattle ranges.

I rode to the door, where a swarthy Mexican met me.

"What does the *señor* wish?" he asked. I could speak and understand the language, as could almost everybody who lived near the border.

"I desire to see Señor Bonilla," I replied.

"Señor Bonilla is not at home."

"Then, perhaps, the *señora?*"

"Ah, yes! The *señora* is at home. What name shall I tell the *señora?*"

"Tell her that Señor Denny would like to speak to her."

He disappeared inside the mansion, and soon was at the door again.

"The *señora* will be pleased to see the *señor*. I will have the *señor's* horse cared for. The woman will guide the *señor* to the *señora.*"

I looked for the woman. She was an old Mexican dame, wrinkled, leathery, but with eyes that were as keen as they were black.

"The *señor* will follow me," she said.

She led me to a large and luxuriously furnished drawing-room.

"I am pleased to meet you, *señor*. My daughter has told me all."

The woman who greeted me was tall and handsome. She was gowned in American style and held out her hand cordially.

"Then I am talking to Señora Bonilla."

"Mrs. Bonilla would be more American, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would," I said with a laugh. "Now, Mrs. Bonilla, did your daughter tell you that she was my wife?"

"She told me that a ceremony was begun and not finished."

"But did she tell you that it was her own desire as well as mine that the ceremony should be performed?"

"Yes, and it remains her desire now."

"Is she here?"

"No. I knew you would come. And I knew, and know now, that there will be trouble. Hernandez and my husband knew you would come. Hernandez says that you are a devil in a fight."

"Then, if she is not here, where is she? Have they sent her away?"

"They have not sent her away. They have taken her. Hernandez was not as weak as he pretended. He wished to make you believe that he was helpless, and while you were at work he intended to find Consuelo. But you outwitted him by compelling him to come back with my husband. He is wounded, of course, but he is not so weak as you thought. Now, if you will have some refreshments, I will explain just what the situation is."

She called the Mexican woman.

"Bring some wine, some cakes, and some sandwiches," she said.

"The situation," she went on, as she resumed the easy position in her large wicker chair, "is this: My husband, while occupying a position of some prominence and importance in this part of Mexico, is not rich. He owes considerable money, and, although his creditors are not pressing him, he feels uneasy about his debts.

"Hernandez, on the other hand, is wealthy, but has practically no high position at all. His manner of life is not such as to make him a good magistrate, and, therefore, he is nothing more than a rich Mexican idler.

"He has been, for a long time, a

friend of my husband, and, I fear, has loaned him money. Anyway, when Consuelo came back from the United States, where she had been at school, Hernandez fell in love with her, or at least pretended to, and wanted to marry her. Of course Consuelo is a beautiful girl. You saw that yourself, and I would be a strange mother if I did not know it and if I were not proud of the fact.

"I resisted. To be frank, I do not like Hernandez any more than Consuelo does. He is arrogant, cruel, and has many vices. I know that after the first romance has worn off my girl will not be happy with him. I prefer her to marry a good, honorable, young American, and she almost succeeded.

"Hernandez is a wandering sort of man, even though he is rich, and his wanderings, instead of taking him to Europe for educational travel, lead him among the Sierras in search of adventure. In some way he has won the friendship of the Yaquis, the worst type of Indian there is in Mexico. On one of his trips to the Sierras he discovered, or the Yaquis disclosed to him, a mine. A ruby mine he calls it, and he has really shown us some wonderful rubies he claimed were taken from this mine.

"For a time I succeeded in holding my husband with me in opposition to Hernandez as a suitor for the hand of Consuelo, but Hernandez knew my husband's debts and offered him a share in the ruby mine if he would compel Consuelo to become his wife.

"My husband's necessity was such that he yielded, and from being an opponent, he swung round to become an ardent advocate of Hernandez.

"As you know, my position as the wife of a Mexican gentleman is not the same as though I were the wife of an American. I could do little to help the poor girl, although she cried herself sick.

"On the night she ran away, my husband and Hernandez were talking over their plans. Although he is now in favor of having Consuelo marry Hernandez, he does not place implicit confidence in him. He rather doubted his large talk concerning the ruby mine. But Hernandez had convinced him so far that he agreed that the following night Consuelo should be his bride.

"I knew that Consuelo was going away. In fact, I assisted her. It was wrong, perhaps, but what could I do? I am practically a prisoner myself. And I did not wish my daughter to suffer as I have seen others suffer at the hands of a wealthy Mexican.

"So she went away. You know better than I do what took place over the border. But when she was brought back by her father, Hernandez was delighted, and grew suddenly better. He wanted to be married at once, but my husband had grown suspicious concerning the mine.

"Hernandez insisted on being married, and my husband insisted on seeing the mine first. Hernandez would not go up into the Sierras and leave Consuelo here, because he said you would come for her, and unless they were here you would take her away.

"So they have gone to the mine somewhere in the Sierras, and they have taken Consuelo with them. And they took Namona along as her servant.

"The trip is perfectly safe for them, for, as I say, Hernandez has great power over the Yaquis, and there are no other Indians in the Sierras. But it will not be safe for you."

"How long do you think they will be gone?" I asked.

"I don't know. If Hernandez proved that the ruby mine is there, he will probably demand Consuelo at once."

"And if the ruby mine is not there?"

"I shudder to think then what might happen. Hernandez is a desperate man, and the Yaquis will do his bidding. It is not impossible that a quarrel will ensue, and when Mexicans quarrel—"

I knew what she meant.

"I have some Moquis with me, Mrs. Bonilla," I said, "and I am going to find Consuelo. The ceremony that was begun will be finished or bullets have lost the force of their argument."

"I like you," she said, "and I hope that you will rescue Consuelo from a man I hate."

CHAPTER XI.

AN ATTACK.

It did not take me long to rejoin Billy Barefoot and his Moquis, and the old

Indian met me with eyes that were interrogation points.

"Well," he said, "you did learn?"

"I learned," I answered, "that we've got considerable more of a proposition than I had any idea of. They have gone."

"Gone? Yes. They were gone, anyway."

"Yes, they were gone from my place in San Diego County," I explained; "but now they have gone from Bonilla's home."

"Namona?"

"Yes; Namona was taken along as the servant of Miss Bonilla."

"Miss Bonilla?"

The tone, the accent, the facial expression of the old fellow as he said this cannot be described. I knew what he meant.

"Well," I said, "Mrs. Denny, if you like that better."

"Yes, I like better. How you like? Yes?"

"We won't go into that. Now, this mine is somewhere in the Sierra de Los Cucaras. The *señora* says that Hernandez has really discovered rubies there, but she does not know where."

"I do."

I looked at the old man in amazement.

"Do you mean to tell me," I asked, "that you know where a ruby mine is located among the strongholds of the Yaquis?"

"No mine," he grunted. "The Yaquis had the rubies before Hernandez saw the place. They do not mine them. They pick them up."

"Then Hernandez is simply using his supposed knowledge to enforce his agreement with Bonilla to marry Bonilla's daughter?"

"Not Bonilla's daughter now. Your wife."

"Well, both," I said.

"Come. We waste time talking. Little Elk, he waits too long; he grow sulky. Run Fast Jim, he never waits so long. We go."

And go we did, without further parley. When Billy Barefoot gave an order it was obeyed with an alacrity that showed how the five Moquis he had with him felt about hurrying on with the expedition. It did not seem to matter that seven of us had the entire tribe of Yaquis of the Sierras against us.

From the gorge in which they had camped while I was on my visit to Mrs. Bonilla we deployed into a trail that had been well used for many years. On this we made good time.

Now it was Billy Barefoot that led the way. On a small mustang, colored like a crazy-quilt, he went soberly, and even sullenly, in advance of his small company, saying nothing.

The trail led through a country almost unpopulated save for small farms that were far apart, or great expanses of grazing land that did belong to somebody, but were not under any sort of protection so far as I could see.

After a ride of an hour or more the road grew wilder, and we began an ascent into the nearest hills, the outposts of the Sierras.

Here Billy Barefoot grew even more sullen, but his little black eyes were constantly watching on either side of the trail for an ambush.

Suddenly he halted.

"Some way beyond," he said, "is a big town of Yaquis. Not like the Moqui settlement in the San Jacinto, but big, and only huts. But we do not fear these Yaquis."

He waved his hands at the Moquis behind him, and they grinned an approval of his words.

I was puzzled. Whether the hatred that the Moquis felt for the Yaquis had made them so eager to fight that they knew no fear, or there was some real reason why these Yaquis were not to be feared, I did not know.

We continued to ascend, and the way continued to grow rougher.

I do not know how long we kept on in that way, nobody saying much, for the Moquis, though eloquent enough when there is something really to say, were evidently deep in thought concerning the expedition. But suddenly old Billy Barefoot halted his horse again.

We were on a little pinnacle, not nearly so high as the mountains beyond, but high enough to enable us to have a view of the surrounding country, and the old Indian stretched out his arm in a melodramatic way.

"See?" he asked, squinting along his arm and extended forefinger. "Them Yaquis."

I did not need to look but once to be convinced. My heart sank.

Huts, indeed, they lived in, but if there were as many Yaquis as I saw huts I could imagine our own little band being wiped out of existence in less time than it would take to empty the rifles we carried.

But Billy Barefoot was not the kind to be wiped out.

"You," he said to me, his face as solemn and inscrutable as an owl's, "stay with horses. Can't fight Yaquis all at once. You wait. You watch."

He spoke in a low tone, and a jargon I did not understand, to the other Moquis, and they dismounted. The small horses were placed in a row, a long lariat running between two trees being used to hold them in a straight line. It was Billy Barefoot's way of doing things.

"You stay and watch," he said.

And then followed some more of the low muttered instructions that I was not supposed to know anything about, and didn't.

I looked with curiosity and wonder at these five men, taken from their chosen home in the San Jacintos, as they obeyed the old chief.

Billy Barefoot himself strutted away, with his rifle slung across his shoulder, much the same as though he was going after jack-rabbits. Then Little Elk disappeared in a totally different direction, losing himself from my sight in a clump of trees.

Then, with a grin and a grunt, Red Two Legs went off on an entirely different route. Almost following him, but taking a direction somewhat more casterly, Bill Faraway glided noiselessly out of our little camp. And so Tom Mud and Run Fast Jim went away, and I was left with the seven horses.

That Billy Barefoot was pursuing some form of Indian warfare of which I was ignorant I knew, of course. But it was amazing that six men of a peaceful tribe should venture to attack a town filled with the fierce Yaquis.

Alone I sat and smoked. Billy Barefoot had told me to wait and watch. I could wait; but there was little for me to watch, unless I felt like exposing myself to the Yaquis.

I peered through the bushes that screened me, and they all seemed to be going about their usual vocations, unmindful of the presence of an enemy. And to me that enemy seemed wofully inadequate to the work before them.

I thought of Consuelo, wondering where her father had taken her.

Suddenly there was a rifle-shot. It was so sharp, so unexpected, that I did not know from which direction it came. But the effect on the Yaqui village was wonderful.

I saw nobody fall, but men stood still in the lanes between the huts, and women rushed from the huts with children in their arms.

And then there came another shot. I saw nobody fall, but the Yaquis gathered into groups, and I could see that they were excited.

And then another shot from a different direction.

Whatever the game Billy Barefoot was playing, it seemed to be played well.

This continuance of single shots from every point of the compass seemed to paralyze the Yaquis. They were ambush fighters themselves, and had held the Mexican army in contempt for many years. And now they were getting a dose of the medicine they thought they owned, and it was disconcerting.

I saw one fellow, looking no more like a chief than Billy Barefoot, run into a hut and emerge with a gun. This seemed to be a signal for the others, although there was probably some spoken command.

It seemed as though every man and boy in the place dived into a hut and came out with a gun.

They drew together in an excited group, and then the single firing began again. After each shot, which seemed to hit nobody, but which certainly alarmed the Yaquis, they would look toward the direction whence it came.

This made them turn around, so that in the space of three or four minutes they had turned to all points of the compass.

The leader, who had been waving his gun in the air, suddenly started on a run. And then, to my complete demoraliza-

tion, so far as calmness and peace of mind were concerned, the entire crowd started in my direction.

CHAPTER XII.

A RIDE FOR LIFE.

I HAD read and heard a good deal of the fierceness of the Yaquis, and the long period of fighting between them and the soldiers of Mexico. But I knew nothing of their methods or habits.

I could see them, and there was no reason why they should not be able to see me. I was on the very summit of the hill, and the scanty growth of timber did not serve to shield me.

Then I suddenly awoke to the fact that I was in imminent and deadly peril. Whatever the plans of Billy Barefoot had been in trying to surround a town of huts with six men I did not know, and at that moment I did not particularly care. The thing was to save my own life if I could.

The shouts of the Yaquis could be heard plainly. I made a leap from stupid inactivity to what I think was the liveliest time of my existence before or since.

Springing toward the line of horses, I cut my own away, and, grabbing my rifle, I jumped into the saddle.

That horse, though not a very astonishing animal in the matter of intelligence, must have felt some surprise when I began to urge him to a sudden and furious speed.

I turned down the other side of the hill and spurred away on the poor beast's flanks as though I had gone suddenly insane.

I am neither the bravest man in the world nor the greatest coward. I suppose that I am about the same as the average man in time of danger.

But to sit waiting for something that I expected Billy Barefoot to do in my own interest, and then suddenly see a mob of howling and murderous Indians come pell-mell in my direction, was a little too much for my nerve.

It would have been surely an act of insanity for me to make any attempt to fight. Whatever immediate effect the few shots I might be able to fire might have, the inevitable result would be to infuriate the Indians all the more.

I glanced behind me, when I had put a fairly safe distance between me and the top of the hill, and saw something that did not cause me to let up on the horse.

Those precious Yaquis had gained the top, and now six of them, mounted on the horses I had left, were racing down the hill after me.

The beginning of my mad ride for life was easy enough; but as I drew nearer the foot of the hill, the road was nothing but a rough path made by hunters, and the country became rough and rocky.

Then, to make matters worse, I had not the slightest idea where I was going. I knew the danger that was behind me, and not very far behind, either. And there was every likelihood that I was getting nearer to dangers that lay ahead.

I cursed Billy Barefoot roundly.

My horse kept stumbling, and I was in constant terror lest he fall and break his neck and my own.

The surface of the land, after I left the hill, was all cut up. Great chasms yawned on the right, and to leave the crazy road that went along the edge was simply to go galloping over boulders and logs to certain destruction.

Even the road itself was unsafe. And when I glanced down into that ravine I shuddered. But I had to go on and take my chances, for the six yelling Yaquis seemed to be gaining.

I dared not take time to stop the horse and take a shot at my pursuers.

My rifle was slung over my shoulder, and was just then more of a nuisance than anything else.

I looked in vain for shelter. If there had been some sort of hut, or an old ruin like those of San Miguel, I might have made a stand. But this miserable country had nothing.

And then the inevitable happened.

My horse had slipped so often that he was much more exhausted than a run three times as far on a good road would make him, and he now stepped on a stone that rolled. He plunged to the ground, and, without knowing whether he was dead or hurt, I went sailing over his head and down into the ravine.

If the thing had to happen, the spot was a fortunate chance. Here there were trees, not only at the bottom, but growing out of what soil there was on the sides.

These broke my fall, but the crashing through branches was not pleasant, and I am not sure whether that or the landing on the bottom caused my consciousness to leave me.

When I woke again to the pleasures of life in the Yaqui country, I was lying half in a stream of water that flowed at the bottom of the ravine, sometimes in a torrent, and sometimes in broader and more sluggish fashion.

I came slowly to a realization of what had occurred, and remember that I was much surprised when I found myself able to sit up.

Then I felt to see if any bones were broken. My joy was great when I discovered none, although I didn't possess one that didn't feel sore.

My face and hands were terribly scratched, but otherwise, except for a great shaking up, I was uninjured. And my rifle, fortunately, had not been broken, and lay near me.

But where were the Yaquis? I knew enough of all Indian nature to be sure they would not abandon the pursuit and go quietly home. They would probably want me, even if it was only my dead body, to carry back to their village in triumph.

There was no trace of them, however. Of course, I knew they would not attempt to ride down the steep side of the ravine, but there must be, I knew, some way for them to get down on foot.

I picked up my rifle, and began to think of what was best for me to do. There were hiding-places now, but I was not so sure I wanted to hide. It was a splendid spot for cave bears, and a cave would be the only hiding-place.

I did not know how far the ravine extended in either direction. It had, I knew, a winding, crooked course, and the flow of the stream was back apparently toward the hill I had left. I knew that it didn't run up the hill, and thought probably the gorge made a wide turn.

I had no great admiration for that part of the country, but I remembered that Billy Barefoot had said the rubies were found on the shore of a lake, and this stream very likely ran into that lake.

It was only a chance guess, but it was to the lake I wanted to go.

I knew that Hernandez and Bonilla were there with Consuelo and Namona, and that it would be near the lake where I would be most likely to meet with Billy Barefoot and his men.

I had not gone very far along the stream when I heard voices. I stopped, and sank down behind a big rock.

Men were coming, talking a jargon that was unintelligible to me, and they were evidently much excited.

And at last I saw them. There were five of them now. Apparently they had done the same as my Moquis—left one to mind the horses while the others continued the pursuit on foot.

And they were going about it in a manner so thorough as to cause my blood to chill again. They spread out across the bottom, and were prying into every nook and cranny.

One, a miserable specimen of humanity, looking ugly and fierce enough to kill any man on sight, was coming directly toward the rock behind which I was crouching. In another moment it was certain that he would see me.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH BRUIN.

I DID not, in this dire extremity, lose time in stupefied inactivity, as I had when I saw the Yaquis coming up the hill. I fired.

But the fellow had already discovered me, and our two rifles barked their venom almost at the same instant.

Whether I was the better marksman, or had fired first, the shots were too close together to enable me to determine. But he fell, and I was not touched.

But now quick and incessant action was imperative. I knew enough about the nature of the Yaquis, and I still had four to deal with.

Swinging toward them, as they whirled toward me at the sound of the firing, I dropped down again behind the big stone.

Four times my repeating rifle let out its voice, and as many or more shots came from them.

I could hear their bullets strike the rock. I could also see the effect of my own shots. At the third, one of the four fell forward on his face, and at the fourth another sat down suddenly and began to examine his leg.

But it seems there is a reserve wisdom in these fellows. Seeing that I was backed by a stone wall, and sheltered in front by a rock that completely hid me except when I peeped up to shoot, the two who had not been wounded, or, at least, not wounded enough to bring them down, now turned and ran.

I could have shot them even as they fled. But as they were going up-stream, and, therefore, not in the direction I wished to go, I could see no reason why I should kill them.

I ran to where the least wounded of the three was seated and grabbed up his gun, which was an old Mexican weapon once used by the army of that republic. Then, as he looked at me with murderous hate gleaming from his eyes, I picked up the other two guns.

I had killed the first one I had fired at. But I knew the one who was muttering and nursing his leg was able to do all that was necessary for his comrades, so I went on down-stream.

I had plenty of ammunition for my own repeater, and when I found a convenient spot, I hammered the three old Mexican guns out of commission.

Then, with my own well-tried and trusty rifle again fully loaded, I went on.

And I went as fast as possible. In truth, this was not very fast. The stream at the bottom of the gorge outdid the gorge itself in eccentricity, and zigzagged from right to left and from left to right in such a way that about half the time I was wading or making some sort of bridge or ford.

Nevertheless, I did get ahead, and heard no more of the Yaquis I had left behind.

Of water to drink there was plenty, but I was hungry. Fighting Yaquis makes one forget his appetite for a time, but the gorge was so peaceful and quiet, except for the noise of the running stream, that it was difficult to remember that only a short time before the cañon had reechoed with rifles fired in deadly combat.

I felt no fear of immediate trouble. I doubted that the sound of a rifle would go very far outside the gorge, even if it went beyond the top at all. Therefore, I was prepared to shoot whatever I might see that was good to eat.

After perhaps half an hour more of my laborious march, keeping a constant watch for food in some shape, I spied a bear sitting on his haunches on a rocky ledge. Behind him there seemed to be a cave opening.

He saw me. In his slow, ungainly way, he turned and began waddling toward the cave. I fired quickly and hit him. But he remained on the ledge. The next thing was to get him.

It was a difficult climb to the ledge. But the sight of food ready to be cooked and eaten will take a hungry man up almost any kind of rocky wall.

I was bending over my victim, feeling more pleasure than over the killing of a Yaqui, when there was a growl behind me, and a larger bear rushed from the cave with a pecular sliding noise, and clasped me from behind.

He was a powerful fellow, and the shock almost carried him and me over the ledge. I had fallen to the bottom of the gorge once without serious injury, but those things happen so seldom I felt no desire to try it again, even with a bear for company.

My rifle had been knocked from my hand at the impact, and I could not get my hand into my pocket for my pistol. But, like many others who lived near the border, besides carrying a rifle and small revolver, I had, in a belt around my waist under my jacket, a long knife to be used in preparing carcasses of animals killed for food.

I managed to get this in my right hand, and then tried to twist myself to drive it into some vulnerable part of my hairy adversary.

It was not an easy thing to do. As a matter of fact, I didn't do it. I hacked away at his paws, which merely made him more angry.

My breath was being crushed out of me, and I must do something very soon, or this would be my finish.

Finding I could not turn, I fell.

With a growl he began dragging me toward the cave. But my act of falling had so suddenly disconcerted him that his grasp relaxed, and before he had reclosed on me I had driven the knife into his side three times.

I knew I had wounded him severely, but whether I had reached his heart sufficiently to disable him I could not tell.

He had his great front legs around me, and the pain of the wounds caused his grasp to tighten spasmodically, till I verily believed I was a gone case.

It had so happened, without any planning on my part, that I had fallen near my rifle. I succeeded in regaining possession of that, and jabbed the barrel against his side. Then I fired twice.

I nearly killed myself. Possibly he had been dying from the knife wounds, but when the bullet went into him, and then another, he stiffened out in his death throes, and his embrace became even more severe. And when he was dead, I found I could not release myself.

Here was now a situation turned, in a second, from the tragic to the ridiculous. I had been in danger from the embrace of a great bear. Now there was no danger, but the bear had so tightened his hold upon me that I was helpless.

Shooting would do no more good, and I laid the rifle aside. Then, exerting my entire strength on one of his thick legs, I pried at it till the perspiration poured from me, and yet I was no more free than before.

But I continued to work, wriggling, twisting, and finally did squirm from the big paws.

I certainly had plenty of food now, and was not afraid to cook it. There would probably be a search for me, both by my own Moquis, if Billy Barefoot got back his common sense, and by the Yaquis. And certainly by Bonilla and Hernandez if they heard of what had happened.

But search or no search, I was perched on a ledge that was very difficult to reach, and on which but one man could walk with safety at a time. And near me was a cave, probably not inhabited by any more bears, with an opening so small that I could hold out against a dozen.

Moreover, I was well armed, and also had food to last some time.

But I needed wood for a fire. There was plenty of it at the bottom, and I believed my agility, if I had to climb up on the ledge to avoid an enemy, would be sufficient to enable me to escape him. I decided to cook my bear meat down there. I would want water to drink, anyway.

I slid the smallest bear off the ledge and watched it go crashing down. Then I made my way to the bottom.

I was well supplied with everything needful, having roamed the hills and valleys of California enough to know what to carry. I had a water-proof match-box well filled, a pipe and tobacco, and a telescope drinking-cup.

I gathered a quantity of dry wood, and soon had a fire.

It was no unusual thing for me. I had eaten many a meal in the same way. If I had had Consuelo there, or had known she was safe, I would have been as happy as in my own hunting-grounds across the border.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PEACEFUL INTERLUDE.

PERHAPS it is because I have always been hungry whenever I have killed a bear while hunting, or because I have lived so long with only the mediocre cooking of Namona, but certainly there has never been anything so appetizing to me as the odor of a big piece of juicy bear meat cooking over a wood fire.

It requires some skill to cook this without a smoky flavor, but I had learned the art fairly well.

And I enjoyed waiting for my dinner, because I knew it was going to taste good.

The odor rose and floated out of the gorge, and I felt so secure that I even laughed as I thought what an appetite it would give the dinnerless Yaqui, who was probably still taking care of the six horses that had pursued me.

Of course, I had no salt or pepper, and no dishes. Nothing but my two

hands and my hunting-knife, but I had made good shift with these before.

And at last my feast was ready. I replenished the fire and cut another great bunk to roast, for I had conceived an idea.

Sharpening a stick, I speared the piece I had already cooked, and with my knife cut off a thick slice.

Taking this in my fingers, I sent my big and useful teeth through it, and was just in the glory of congratulating myself when I heard a grunt. I had heard no footsteps, but this was the grunt of a man. I leaped up, and seized my rifle.

"No need shoot," came a voice, and the owner of the grunt came from behind a slab of rock.

It was Billy Barefoot.

Shod as he was, in the heavy shoes the Indians bought from the agents, his step had been so light I had not heard it. He was indeed well named.

He stood looking at me with a broad grin, and his eyes lit up when he saw the bear meat.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Very good. You shoot him?"

"I shot him," I said, in no very friendly way. "I suppose, in the name of hospitality, I've got to invite you to have some. I'll tell you straight from the shoulder, though, I don't feel like it."

Without changing his grin he calmly sat down, drew his own knife, and cut off a slice for himself.

"Good. Very good," he said. "How you feel?"

"I feel a good deal like you'd feel, I suppose, if you'd been chased for miles by a half-dozen Yaquis that wanted to kill you, been hurled from a horse down a ravine, and attacked again by the same Yaquis."

"I know. But they no kill you. You kill them."

"I killed one. I wounded two. But it was not due to any extraordinary skill, courage, or wisdom on *your* part. What the devil do you mean by hiding yourself and the other five, and then sending the whole blamed village of Yaquis after me?"

He grunted out a laugh.

"Very good way. Now I explain while you eat. You mad with Billy Barefoot. Yes? But when I tell you, you won't be mad. See?"

"Not yet," I answered, cutting another slice.

"Ha! Just so. Now I tell you and you won't be mad. Long time ago some Yaquis come to our place and steal two Moqui girls. We come after them and they come here.

"Yaquis are wild, fierce, bad Indians, but they are not like Indians of our country. No. They go like buffaloes, all in a heap. And they fight, fight, very bad.

"That time I hide many long days around this place. I learn this gorge. I learn about the lake where they find rubies. Yaquis no use have for rubies. But when you told about rubies, I know right away.

"Well, we six Moquis can't fight all the Yaquis. So we shoot one side, two side, three side, four side. They think village surrounded, and all go get guns. Then they see you.

"We didn't know they would see you. We know they all go together *some* way. And so they did. Very bad they go after you, but they no shoot you, so very good. Now see. They will go on. Little Elk, Run Fast Jim, and Red Two Legs, all together now. They keep shoot, shoot, all time and run. So. Yaquis go on and on, so we don't fight. Tom Mud and Bill Faraway, they meet us at lake. I come look for you. I smell bear meat, know you great hunter, and find you. Very good. I will eat some more bear meat."

And he cut another generous supply.

"Well," I rejoined, somewhat mollified by what he had said, "I suppose your explanation does really explain, but all the same, we came here to find my wife and take her bome. Not to make her a widow."

He shook his sides with silent laughter.

"Don't make widow. Moqui Indian say good all the time till bad comes. You are not shot. Very good. We get wife."

"Where is she? Have you learned anything?"

"Yes. I'll show you to-morrow. We sleep here to-night."

"Sleep here? Why, there are Yaquis all around."

"No. Didn't I tell you they all go after Red Two Legs?"

"But *will* they all go?"

"Sure. Yaquis do that."

"And leave their women and children unprotected?"

"They don't need protection. Nobody harms them if the men drive away the enemy."

It might have been good reasoning from his point of view. I wasn't sure of it myself.

"There's a cave up there on that ledge and another bear."

I pointed up to the ledge.

"We'll kill him."

"He is dead. I killed him."

"You very great hunter. All know that."

"I didn't know whether I'd find you," I said, "and was going on alone. I imagined this stream might run into that lake you speak of, and I wasn't going to get this far and go back without my wife. And I thought I'd cook plenty of bear meat and put that in the cave, and if I got my wife and Namona I could hide here for a while."

"Ah! You think, you. Yes. We'll do as you say."

He straightway, after taking a drink of the pure water of the gorge, began hanging another piece of bear meat.

"And we take the other, cut him, dry him. Very good."

I left this work to him, and took my ease, with my back against the side of the gorge. After the scare he had caused me it was just that he should do the work.

We slept that night on the ledge. Billy told me to sleep without fear, and he would know if anybody came.

I knew him well enough to feel confident of this, and did sleep. After my experience I needed a good long rest. It was early morning when I woke.

Billy was already up and was squatting near me eating some more bear meat. I did the same.

We took the cooked meat into the cave. It was not a very large cave, and was light enough to see well, and we made a clean place for the meat on a kind of shelf.

The carcass of the larger bear he had prepared in his own fashion, and had hung pieces on limbs of trees to dry, after smoking them a little over the fire and performing some other stunts by which Indians can keep meat a long time.

"Now we go," he said.

With our rifles ready for instant action we started, Billy leading the way. There was no conversation. He trudged along with that wonderfully silent and wonderfully tireless gait of his, and I followed in his steps, which were always the best and safest when the water of the gorge had to be crossed.

In this way we walked for probably two hours, and possibly more. And the nature of the gorge was now constantly changing. It grew wider, and the depth was lessening.

The water, too, was increased by the addition of another stream that fell in a cascade from the top.

After a while we could see out through the wide mouth of the gorge, and beyond there was a pretty little lake.

We could see only a small portion of the lake, and Billy stopped.

"Come," he said. "Climb up."

CHAPTER XV.

A GLIMPSE OF CONSUELO.

CLIMBING was easy here. Billy led the way up a rude flight of natural steps in the rock, going in a slanting direction toward the mouth of the gorge as well as toward the top. And almost at the very end of the ravine he stopped again.

We were now on a broader table of rock, and the top was within reach.

"Keep still," he said. "Tom Mud and Bill Faraway up here."

Getting a grip on the edge he pulled himself up. Then reaching down he helped me.

There were three grunts when I was on top. The other two Moquis were there, just as he had said.

"Now look there—that way," said Billy Barefoot.

I looked. The lake was below us, and was surrounded by just such cliffs as formed the walls of the gulch through which we had come.

It was a place of marvelous beauty. The water of the lake seemed as clear as that of the gorge, and was perfectly still.

At tbe foot of the cliffs, between them and the lake, there stretched a shingle beach about six or seven hundred feet wide. And on this beach, within easy gunshot, there was a house of logs.

On a rude bench, evidently made on the spot, sat Bonilla and Hernandez. Hernandez had a paper spread out on his lap, and he was earnestly explaining something to Bonilla. Bonilla would nod once in a while to show that he understood.

And, standing in a listless attitude on the shore of the lake, with her hands clasped behind her, was Consuelo.

Although my acquaintance with her had been so slight, and my wish to marry her due as much to my desire to help her escape Heruandez as it was to any infatuation, a man doesn't chase a girl he believes to be his wife from one country into another, thinking about her all the time, without feeling more than when she left him. And I experienced a thrill of pleasure and great love when I saw her now.

I could see that she was unhappy. The prospect of being compelled to marry Hernandez after all must have seemed appalling to her. She was dressed in a gown different from the one she had worn when I had taken her home to hide her. She presented a neat appearance, and was the picture of a beautiful girl in distress.

I looked at her a long time. She stood so motionless, so absolutely lacking in interest in the beautiful scene before her, I longed to throw discretion to the winds, or the lake, or anywhere, and rush to her side.

But this would never do.

Some distance from this group there was a camp pitched at the very foot of the cliff, and here there were at least a dozen men. They were not Indians, but nevertheless were short, dark, and were all down on the shingle playing cards or some other game.

Their intense interest in what they were doing was evidence that it was some game of chance.

I could see no horses, although I knew of course that nobody would come to that place unless in the saddle, and unless they had had horses they would not have been there so soon.

I wondered what they had done with Namona. Then I felt grave fears for the woman, for I remembered that it had been the Yaquis who took her away. But again came the remembrance that Mrs. Bonilla had said they had brought her as a companion for Consuelo.

My anxiety lasted only a short time, for my Indian servant presently came from the house, carrying something. She went to where the two men sat and they called Consuelo.

Sbe went, evidently with great reluctance. Then all took glasses and drank something. It was evident that, despite the difficulties of transportation, Hernandez had, somehow or other, found a way to supply the house with needful things.

We were situated where we could watch with little fear of detection. Although the region was not heavily wooded, there were clumps of trees, and from these we could see and not be seen.

When Namona had returned with the glasses, Hernandez got up. He walked along the shore a short distance, and then picked something up. He returned to Bonilla.

He walked with evident difficulty. He limped and seemed to lean to one side. But I marveled that the man could walk at all. Though many things had happened since, it had not been so very long ago that I had sent him home with Bonilla in a wagon.

It puzzled me, until I recalled that Señora Bonilla had said that at no time had he been as helpless and badly wounded as he had pretended.

I could realize that such a ruse might have come into his head, for Hernandez certainly was no fool. If, by pretending to be helpless he could remain in bed at my house and watch and spy on me, he could, perhaps, find Consuelo.

Billy Barefoot touched me ou the shoulder. I followed his nod, and we moved farther away.

"Now you see," he said, "there are no Yaquis. Only *peons* that belong to Hernandez. They are not fighters like Yaquis, but they shoot."

"What are you going to do?" I asked. "Even if they are only *peons,* we can't very well make an attack on so many."

"No. We must think. We do nothing now only wait."

"But the Yaquis will come back."

"Not yet. They get much angry not catching Red Two Legs, and have fight with soldiers. We have time. Must not hurry. Lose all."

There certainly was good logic in this, much as my impatience impelled me to hurry at once to my wife's side. For, in my mind she was my wife without doubt or cavil.

I cared not for that law or whatever it was that debarred me because the justice had not yet reached the words that made us man and wife. It had not been the fault of either of us.

She was my wife, and I was willing to shoot up all Mexico to get her.

The problem was not an easy one to solve.

The *peons* had really done me no harm of their own will. And it was extremely possible that they did not know that any harm had been done.

They were there with Hernandez, and if the father of a girl wants to take her into such a place it was no business nor concern of theirs.

"Billy," I said, "if I could get a message to her we might get up some scheme."

"Yes, if we could."

The old Moqui wrinkled his brow at this thought. It was going to be no easy matter to get a message to Consuelo without attracting the attention of some one else. Had there been no men there except Bonilla and Hernandez, I would have thought it likely that Namona would go for water, wherever they got it, and that might help out.

But with those men to do the work there was little chance of even that hope.

But that idea of getting a message to Consuelo was one with potentialities. It was not only good in itself, but led up to other good ones.

If I could get a message to her, in some way that nobody would suspect, Billy Barefoot and I could work out the rest of it.

There was nothing to do but watch and see what chances there were.

So I lay down near the edge of the cliff. I feasted my eyes on her graceful beauty as she moved slowly about, always with that sad and listless manner.

The three Indians sat and talked in their own tongue, and played some game of their own.

And now again the problem of food confronted me. I wondered that Billy had not thought of bringing some of the bear meat with us. But I knew the Indians would not go hungry and waited till, in their own fashion, they would let me know.

I was aware that they never offered information till it was due. If I asked, the answer probably would be to wait and see. I suppose the difficulty they had in expressing themselves in English was the cause of this, for they certainly gabbled enough in their own tongue.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NOVEL SCHEME.

My watch, which I had not permitted to run down, and which had not been injured by my fall, told me, as did also a pretty healthy appetite, that it was noon, and time for dinner. But the three Indians were stolidly interested in their play.

Once Billy looked up, and I made a motion of putting something into my mouth.

He got up, ending the game abruptly, and motioned for all of us to follow. We walked quite a distance away from the lake and I found that my friends had established a camp.

"Is this safe?" I asked.

"Yes. They never come here, and if they do we are Indians and have a right to live in the woods."

They had shot some game, and we made out to satisfy our appetites, and I smoked a while.

I could think of nothing else than getting a message to Consuelo. Often it seemed to me that one of the Moquis could go in and speak to her, but then there was so much danger in that that I gave it up.

Certainly I could not go myself.

Having finished my pipe, I went back and returned to my occupation of watching. But now there was nothing to watch. The *peons* were eating, but Consuelo and her father and Hernandez had disappeared, undoubtedly into the house, since there was no other place to go.

But I had not long to wait. Consuelo came from the house alone, and resumed her old attitude by the lake.

I wondered what was going on in her mind. I knew of a case where a woman had stood like that on a river bank, her evident dejection attracting attention, and when somebody asked her if she was ill she answered by leaping into the water. Could Consuelo, I asked myself, be contemplating suicide?

This thought was so horrible that I almost shouted to her.

She never looked upward to the edge of the surrounding cliff. But even if she had I would not have dared to show myself. I could not let her see me without giving all the others a chance to see, too.

However, if the thing was to be done, it must be some brand-new scheme I had never heard of before.

I wondered how they got down there, but knew of course there were ways of scaling cliffs, and there was probably some easy method of descent.

I thought if I knew where that was I would sneak down at night and leave a note where she could find it.

But then there were possibilities of somebody else finding it.

Consuelo strolled leisurely along the lake shore. Then she hesitated and stopped again.

Next she stooped and picked something up from the ground. I thought, of course, it was a ruby. But she stepped to the water's edge and stooped down again.

She put what she had in her hand on the water and gave it a push. Then she began throwing pebbles at it.

As each pebble made a series of circles in the water she stood and watched them.

And yet she seemed to be taking no interest in what she was doing. It was clearly the act of a girl harassed by conditions, her mind full of misery, yielding to an idle thought to relieve the monotony.

But this simple act gave me the inspiration I needed. I knew now what to do.

It was risky, to be sure, but anything I tried would be that. And I was gaining nothing by waiting. Bonilla had come there to be convinced that there were rubies. And as soon as he was convinced, they would leave for home and my chance would be gone.

I hurried back to Billy Barefoot.

"Here," I said. "I've hit on a plan. What do you think of this?"

"I listen," he replied.

"You have noticed that my wife stands constantly by the lake looking steadily into the water, and sometimes walks a little, but always looking at the lake. And just now she threw in a piece of wood and tossed pebbles at it.

"Now, on the other hand, nobody else seems to have any use for the lake. I have not seen any one go near it. The Mexican *peons* play their games, and Bonilla and Hernandez are all the time at that paper, and I suppose after dinner they smoke and drink wine.

"Now, I am going to try this scheme. I am going to make a little boat. Oh, I am not to turn pirate and sail to the rescue of my wife. But I am going to make a little boat that will sail. And it will have a little piece of paper for a sail, or a piece of white cloth. And on this sail will be written my message.

"And there is a chance that she will see the little boat, and will wonder what it is, and will read the message."

The old Moqui stared at me till I almost feared his eyes would pop out of his head. He showed not the least sign whether he liked the scheme, but just sat and stared.

"Well," I said testily, "what about it? You told me to think of something, and that's all I can think of."

"Huh."

He got up, and without saying any more, walked to the cliff.

The *peons* were lolling around, smoking. Consuelo was strolling by the lakeside just as I said, her gaze vacantly directed toward the water, her mind full of the misery of her position.

Billy pointed across the lake.

"She never goes there. What will you do when your boat gets there?"

It was rather a problem. I knew nothing about the currents, if there were any in the lake. It would be easy enough to start the boat by launching it inside the gorge and letting it sail out on the bosom of the lake. But which way would it go then?

There could be but little breeze down in that hole.

"I'm going to try it," I replied finally. "If it goes on the other side I'll make another."

I confess that my knowledge of boat-making was limited. I could row a boat. But I couldn't whittle out a little man to row this boat to Consuelo. Rudders were things of mystery to me.

But I went at it with a will and a sharp knife, and the three Moquis stood and watched me with owl-like faces, trying to understand what I was doing.

This wasn't to be an elaborate toy boat such as are sold in the stores. All I wanted was something that would sail. I was afraid of a simple flat piece of wood.

As I progressed, one of the two, who seldom spoke, gave a grunt. He quietly took the knife out of my hand, went to a tree, examined it, and stripped off a piece of bark.

Then began some Indian stunts.

By whittling a piece of wood to make a needle, and by stripping the bark for thread, he had ready at hand his working material.

And in an hour I had a bark canoe that would float.

But I still had sense enough to know that it would not carry a sail without ballast. I fastened a key I had on my ring to the bottom, and felt that this key would hold the thing steady in whatever light wind it might encounter on the lake.

Of course, when he had built a canoe of bark, the Indian had gone as far as he could. The rest of it was as big a mystery to him as it was to me.

I fastened a little cleat at one end for the mast. Next I made the latter. Then I was stuck again.

If I wrote my message on paper and the boat tipped over, the message would be destroyed. I had nothing with which to write on cloth. I had not, on my San Diego fig farm, reached the dignity of a fountain pen.

"Ink," I said.

One of the Indians darted away and returned in ten minutes with some berries.

"Write much good," he said.

I waited no longer.

"Here," I said. "Take my knife and cut off the sleeve of my shirt."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PIRATE SHIP.

I DID not, of course, intend to use the entire sleeve, and stopped him when I had enough. I put my mind next on the method of using this.

I knew there was such a thing as a lug-sail, and had seen pictures of the kind of vessels using them. So I fashioned the linen in a square, and then put on the yard.

"Now," I said, "we've got everything but the message."

The berries were bruised, and their juice was a dark reddish fluid that smelled horribly and would probably stain the soul of a cast-iron monkey as red as a fiend's.

"Now my turn," said the old Moqui. "You write this: At night when the guns are fired she and Namona come to you in the ravine. You meet them at the gorge and go back to that cave. Stay there till I come to you. We must have horses. If they come, keep inside the cave and shoot."

It was the very thing. There was food in the cave, and I knew when I was there before that I could hold it against a dozen. Trying to make my writing as legible as possible, I wrote this message:

MY DEAR WIFE:

I am here, watching you. I have some Moquis. They will attack your place at night. When you hear the guns and have a chance, get Namona and come to the mouth of the gorge where the stream empties into the lake. I will meet you there.

Fear nothing. If you don't want to go back, I will know if you do not come. If you do want to go back dig in the sand with your foot.

Your loving husband,

JOHN DENNY.

I read this to Billy.

"Good," was all he had to say.

I now fastened on the sail, and with a feeling that somehow the plan could not fail, I went down the steps to the stream. I found a quiet little pool in which to try my boat before I sent it on the voyage

that meant so much to me, and to my great joy the little thing floated like a duck.

I then blew on it to see which way a breeze would send it, and turned the rudder a little bit to keep it going near the shore where Consuelo was.

And then, with my heart beating, I put it in the stream and let it go.

Providence sailed with that boat. It glided off, and then, caught by a little eddy, turned a little, but caught its balance.

It wasn't a bad-looking little craft, considering how it was made.

When I was convinced that my boat would sail I climbed up again and went to the edge to watch its progress.

There must have been a slight breeze blowing through the gorge, for to my delight the little boat kept steadily on.

Consuelo was still strolling around the beach, and Hernandez and Bonilla had not come from the house. And the boat had to pass Consuelo before it reached the place where the *peons* were playing.

I was too much interested in watching the boat to time its flight, but it did not seem a great while getting to Consuelo. She was not looking in its direction, and my heart sank. Would she turn in time?

She was stooping down. She picked up something. She seemed about to throw a pebble into the lake. She stopped, with her hand poised. Then it dropped to her side.

She stood staring at my venturesome craft, and then she turned and looked right toward our end of the lake. Even then I dared not show myself. It was enough that she saw it.

Whether she suspected something or not I did not know. But she glanced toward the house, and then toward the *peons*. Then she began strolling along with the boat.

It was constantly drawing nearer the shore, and she kept pace with it. And my delight almost made me shout when she took it from the water.

I watched her as she read the message. Then I saw her tear it from the boat and tuck it in the bosom of her dress.

Then she looked all around, and, seeing no one, began digging with the toe of her shoe in the ground.

"Huh!" said Billy Barefoot.

The other two said nothing, but they nodded their heads vigorously.

"To-night?" I asked.

"Yes, to-night."

That same night I was to have my bride. My heart thumped and pounded as it never had before. I felt that once I had Consuelo in my care I could not lose her.

Oh, what a day that was! The afternoon, of course, was nearly spent by the time Consuelo received the letter. But the remaining hours seemed the length of centuries.

I did not ask the old Moqui any questions about his plans. All I knew and all I wanted to know then was that that night I was to meet Consuelo and Namona and conduct them to the cave.

I ate a hearty supper and smoked and smoked. I needed no sleep. It was far from my thoughts.

"We go," said Billy about midnight. "You go."

"Good-by, old friend," I said, taking his hand.

"We come with horses." And they were off.

I had to be careful getting down the steps, for it was, fortunately, a dark night. When I reached the bottom I waited.

I have not the slightest idea how long I waited for the attack. It seemed all night, but it was probably an hour.

Then the crack of rifles told me the game was on.

I could hear shouts and cries. Then there came rifle-shots, evidently from the lake shore.

Now I was hot and cold with fear. What if, after all, Consuelo could not escape? What if the father and the lover suspected what the attack meant and held her back?

Suppose a bullet struck her by accident?

It seemed to me there were millions of things that could happen to frustrate my plan, after all.

I peered out into the darkness.

I could hear no footsteps.

The rifle shooting was going on at a terrific rate, and the shouting was incessant.

Suddenly—"John, where are you?" came to my ears.

"Here," I said, and in a moment I had her in my arms.

"Wife of mine!" I cried.

"Hurry," she said—"oh, in God's name, hurry! They will kill me for this if they get me again."

"They'll never get you while I am alive," I told her. "Where is Namona?"

"Here, master," she said in the dark.

"Then come. It is dark, I know, but it is safer than to have it light. The stream is not deep enough to drown in. Consuelo, you take my hand. Namona, take hold of Consuelo's dress and hang on."

In this way I led them gingerly, slowly, and tenderly, along the gorge. Step by step I felt my way, for there was ample time. There would scarcely be any pursuit that night.

"How did it work?" I asked. "What happened?"

"Oh," said Consuelo, "when I saw that little boat I was startled. I wondered who could be playing with boats, and thought that it must be some Indian boy. But I saw, when it got nearer, there was writing on the sail. And when I read it my heart almost stopped beating.

"Then, when the attack came to-night, my father and Hernandez ran out of the house. I called Namona, and here we are. We had no time to bring anything."

"We need nothing," I said. "What you have will do till we reach home."

"Where are we going now?" asked Consuelo.

"To a cave I discovered. There is food there, and if we are pursued I can hold it till the Moquis come to our relief."

"How will you find it in the dark?" asked my wife.

"I'm wondering that myself. Wait—I had a fire and cooked some bear meat. We'll find the cave all right."

And we went on in the total darkness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BY BULLET PERSUASION.

I WAS right about finding the spot where I had built the fire and roasted the bear meat. I caught the odor of the fire and meat, and then stopped.

If I could smell it, so could wild beasts, and there might be a dozen near the spot. This was disconcerting.

"What is the matter?" asked Consuelo. "Have you lost the way?"

"No, but I'm going to make a light. There may be some kind of animal around that meat."

I didn't know what to make a light of. I cursed myself for not thinking of that during the daytime and preparing torches.

"Who has anything on that will burn?" I asked.

"I have," said Consuelo—"a lace mantilla."

"Can you spare it?"

"I can spare anything for you."

I took it from her hand, and groped around till I found a stick. I wrapped the mantilla around that, and, taking my match-box from my pocket, soon had it blazing.

The gorge made a wild, weird picture in the dancing flamelight, and I waved the torch around. There was no sound of anything moving, and I could see nothing.

The light lasted till I had assisted the two women to the ledge and showed them into the cave, after I had explored it first.

"Make yourselves as comfortable as you can," I said. "I am going to sit outside and keep watch."

"May I sit with you a while?" asked Consuelo.

"I should be happy to have you."

She came and sat beside me. We talked long and earnestly about the future, until Consuelo's head rested on my shoulder, and she slept.

I kept my vigil faithfully till the dawn, and nothing happened. But I knew that a chase would be made after the two women.

"Have I slept here all night?" asked Consuelo.

"Not quite. It was almost morning, I fancy, when we got here. Now, what sort of place is that ring in the cliffs where you were? How do you get down there?"

"Why, there is a path that winds up and around. It is difficult."

"Then your father would not think you had gone that way in the dark."

"He would be more likely to think of the gorge."

"Well, we'll eat some bear meat, and

then you had better get inside. I'll shoot all, even your father, now. You are my wife."

I waited for two things. I hoped that Billy Barefoot would arrive with the horses before Bonilla found us. But I did not know where he was going to get horses unless he stole those belonging to Hernandez, and I didn't know where they were.

It was about ten o'clock when my anxious gaze down the ravine was gratified the wrong way. I saw Bonilla, Hernandez, and half a dozen men coming, all armed with rifles.

I at once got inside the cave.

There was little hope that they would pass the spot. The remains of the fire and the bear meat hanging in the trees gave proof enough that it was somebody's camp.

I was right.

"Here! What have we here?" shouted Bonilla.

Hernandez leaped to his side.

"They have been here," said Hernandez, looking around. "This fire has been out only a short time. Here, you fellows! Search everywhere. Look behind rocks and into holes. Be careful."

The cave was too light for all three to remain unseen. I crowded the women against the rear wall, and got my rifle ready for business. It was certain that some one would discover me.

I had not long to wait. Some one was climbing up. A head showed in the entrance to the cave.

"Here! They are here!" the fellow shouted.

I shot him, and he fell across the cave door.

"What? The devils shoot my men?" came the voice of Hernandez.

"And you, too, Hernandez!" I yelled back.

"By Heaven! That cursed American!"

I watched the mouth of the cave closely. I saw a rifle slowly protruded across the entrance. I fired at the wrist of the the hand holding it, and there was a cry of pain. The rifle dropped.

"Have you my daughter with you?" asked the voice of Bonilla.

"Come and see for yourself."

"Devil! You will shoot me."

"Like a dog!"

"Fiend!"

I knew there was no use parleying. I was too intent on the entrance of the cave.

A stone, thrown by some one at the bottom, came in. And then a regular bombardment began. None of the stones had any effect.

"Consuelo," shouted Bonilla, "will you return with me if I do not kill the American?"

"Don't answer," I said. Then I shouted myself: "Bonilla, if any man gets in front of this cave he dies. I am not afraid of you."

For a while there was silence. It was manifestly impossible to shoot inside the cave, and throwing stones seemed to have little effect.

Then there came the sound of a rifle at a distance.

"His devils have come!" I heard Bonilla cry.

"We are safe!" I cried exultingly to Consuelo. "It's old Billy Barefoot."

There were other shots, and they were answered from near the cave. Curses rolled up to us, and the cries of the wounded.

I knew it would be a bitter fight, for the old Moqui would never rest till all of one side were gone.

"Help!" I heard Bonilla cry. "Denny, save me. Your men are killing ours. I do not wish to die."

"We will not harm you," said Hernandez. "Give us the shelter of the cave."

"The argument of bullets is pretty strong, eh?" I yelled with glee. "Get out of range and stop shooting. They won't shoot you, and they will shoot your men."

"I promise, oh, in Heaven's name I promise, if you will stop this fighting I will give my consent," yelled Bonilla.

"You will let me have Consuelo?"

"Yes, I swear it by the holy rosary."

"And does Hernandez agree?"

"Yes," came the answer from Hernandez.

"Shall I?" I asked my wife.

"I would not like my father killed. And he will keep his word."

I crawled from the tent, taking my rifle. I could see the carnage that had been wrought.

Men lay on the ground dead or dying.

Bonilla was still fighting, but Hernandez was crouching behind a rock.

I saw old Billy Barefoot, and held up my hand. He understood, and the battle ceased.

"And now you go," I heard Hernandez say, and, in spite of his promise, he aimed his rifle.

I stood on the ledge and shot him through the head. He fell at the feet of Bonilla, dead.

There is little more to be told of the remarkable story of how I won my wife by the persuasive power of bullets. With Hernandez dead, Bonilla had no longer any reason to talk of Consuelo's marriage to him, and he did keep his word. All was plain sailing.

He had signed a partnership contract with Hernandez, which he had in his pocket. He was now the owner of the ruby-mine.

With him reconciled to our marriage, we rode back to his *hacienda,* where the unfinished ceremony was performed. And then, with his blessing and a goodly wedding-gift, we rode back over the border to the San Diego farm.

Sam was improved, and the reunion of him and his wife was a happy one. As for the six Moquis who had gone and come with me, their return was so welcome that the tribe succeeded in getting some white man's fire-water and celebrated in royal style.

We are building a larger house now, and, thanks to the ruby-mine, it doesn't make much difference whether the figs grow or not.

THE END.

MONEY TO BURN.

By WALTER DURANTY.

A terrific experience on a trestle, and the more heart-rending discovery that followed on its heels.

ON the little South American republic of Rio Blanco every citizen who is not a revolutionist aims at becoming a member of the government. But Señor Ulysse Gaspado, chief secretary to the minister of finance, looks anxious and bewildered this hot August morning as he sits on his wide veranda overlooking the market square.

Evidently an official position is not a bed of roses, after all. And yet the department of which he has charge is the most flourishing in the state. The money affairs of the country are being administered with unparalleled skill and success, and interest has actually been paid on the national debt, for Rio Blanco has a finance minister whose boast it is that he is a poorer man to-day than when he entered office.

What is it, then, that troubles Ulysse Gaspado and puckers his forehead into this frown of perplexity?

Perhaps he feels the strain of his work in the hot weather, or realizes that he is not man enough to do it properly?

Not so; the Finance Department runs like clockwork, and Gaspado knows well his own merits.

Wise as the foot of a mule they call him in Rio Blanco—no light compliment in this land of precipice and mountain.

The incongruous black mustache he has inherited from his Spanish father bristles up to meet the fair eyebrows and sleek flaxen hair that tell of a Flemish mother, and his chubby Dutch face lengthens in perturbation.

Señor Ulysse Gaspado is worrying about a lady.

For many a long day he has wooed with flowery gifts and speeches the lovely widow, Christina Dacosta, and last night at the presidency ball she blushingly consented to smile upon his suit.

But it is not right for an accepted lover to be gloomy and troubled. What, then, is the matter?

Is Gaspado jealous, or has he quarreled with his lady?

No; it is simply this: she is unwilling to marry him at once and leave Rio Blan-

co in order to spend their honeymoon in Europe.

When Gaspado softly murmured his desire for immediate union, Señora Dacosta was at first surprised and then amused by his ardor. Truly, this was a strange request from the stolid, emotionless official, whose Dutch appearance seemed to deny his passionate Spanish love-words.

Womanlike, she asked the reason for his request before refusing it, and he showed an unwonted confusion in his efforts to evade a reply. Finally she declared that she would never consent unless he told her; that she could not trust him for life if he would not trust her now; and he retired, baffled, to plan a new assault.

"She is no foolish girl, but an intelligent, broad-minded woman," he mutters to himself at last. "I will tell her all; surely she will understand. At any rate, I can delay no longer."

His face clears as he gets up and walks resolutely into the courtyard to summon his carriage.

In spite of his determination, Gaspado felt distinctly nervous as he embraced the triumphant Christina and assured her that he had come to tell her everything in proof of his confidence in her love and her discretion.

"You must know," he began abruptly, "that my superior, Anton Parana, minister of finance, is a poor man; in thirty years he is the first who has not enriched himself from the national treasury."

"Yes, indeed," replied the widow, "and I rejoice that my Ulysse is associated with so worthy a man."

Ulysse did not seem encouraged by her remark, and continued sadly:

"Ah, but in spite of his reputation and his boasts of honesty, Parana is not poor by his own wish. Soon after I became his secretary I perceived that he was guilty of embezzlement of public funds.

"By threat of exposure I compelled him to repay the money then and restrain his greed in future, and at last, seeing that it was impossible either to steal or get rid of me, he actually began to pride himself upon his enforced poverty, as if it was a proof of honor instead of incapacity."

"My clever Ulysse," sighed Christina, "how splendid of you to foil his wicked schemes! But why should this hasten your marriage—our marriage?" and she smiled at him deliciously. "Why cannot we be happier here than in a foreign land?"

"Your charms are worthy of Paris and London," replied Ulysse gallantly, "and, besides, I wish to resign my position, to retire from office."

For a moment Christina seemed astonished, then she cried enthusiastically:

"Ah, now I understand, my thrice noble lover. You cannot bear to remain with Parana—that old hypocrite whose professions of virtue must disgust you, who know him as he is. Tell me that you have resolved to endure it no longer; but why need we go to Europe because of your honorable resignation?"

Again Gaspado appeared embarrassed. After an uneasy pause he went on:

"It is not quite that, my dear, though of course, I mean—in short, there has still been embezzlement in the Finance Department. Money has been taken, and—"

"And this time you cannot discover the thief, and are determined to leave an office that is tainted?"

"No; I know all about the affair, but—"

"But it is a friend, and you cannot expose him, my generous hero?"

"Not exactly, that is—well, in fact, to put it plainly, I took the money myself, and unless I get away by the next boat there'll be trouble; and surely that is a good enough reason for going. Parana would give his ears to catch me tripping."

So saying, Gaspado leaned back as if relieved to have at last unburdened himself.

To his horror, the woman did not speak, but her face grew white and old, and the light died out of her eyes.

"You stole it!" she gasped. "You stole it, and you ask me to share it—me, Christina Dacosta! Oh, you reptile!"

Her scorn roused him to self-defense.

"If I had not taken it, some one else would. It is always so in Rio Blanco—in thirty years the finance ministers have always grown rich; it is the custom—"

"I do not care for the custom. I thought I loved an honest man, and I find him a thief. Oh, how I hate myself for having permitted your approach! But do not think," she cried, with a sud-

den spasm of fury, "that you will escape with your booty. I will denounce you to Parana. He will see to it that Señor Ulysse Gaspado, the clever, the able, the promising young statesman, meets the same punishment as the meanest sneak-thief from the streets."

In a tempest of rage she swept out of the room, shouting for her coachman, leaving Gaspado dazed and motionless, as if stunned by her outburst.

But his stubborn Flemish blood soon helped him to rally from the shock, and before Señora Dacosta had roused her sleepy servants from their midday *siesta,* her disappointed lover was galloping swiftly homeward, alert and ready to meet this sudden change in his affairs.

Gaspado was too shrewd a man to have only one string to his bow, and he had foreseen the possibility that his way to Europe might be barred. The alternative was to strike direct across country to the neighboring republic of San Jerome, where he would be safe, and whence he could easily take an east-bound steamer.

He would make for the frontier of Los Diablos, where the new railway crossed the American-built trestle-bridge over the Blanco River into San Jerome. Once on the other side, he could laugh at pursuit, and then for Paris and the delights of civilization.

It was characteristic of the man that he did not mourn for his lost love as he rapidly assumed the disguise he had prepared, and stuffed the crisp English notes and rustling American bills into a thick leather wallet.

Ulysse Gaspado was never one to cry over spilt milk.

Señora Dacosta's coachman was lazy, and her horses were fat; so that, at the very moment when bland clerks were assuring the indignant lady that it was out of the question to see Señor Parana at that hour, but that she might apply to his secretary, Señor Gaspado, an unpretentious little man with gray hair and whiskers trotted briskly out of the town in the direction of San Jerome on a horse that might perhaps have seemed rather too good for so humble a traveler.

As the splendid animal settled into his stride for the fifty-mile journey, Gaspado thanked the saints not only for his escape, so far successful, but also for having revealed to him in time the absurd and uncompromising honesty of the lady he might have married.

"And to think," he muttered, "that her late husband was also a politician! No wonder the poor man is dead. Who would have imagined that she would have behaved like that? She did seem so intelligent."

With a sigh of wonder at the strangeness of women, he dismissed the subject and devoted himself to pleasant dreams of a glorious future in the capitals of the Old World.

The town of Los Diablos was on the other side of the Blanco River. Two miles this side of the river there was a small station, then the line of the railroad swept up in a great curve to the new trestle-bridge which spanned the foaming torrent.

Though Gaspado did not expect that he would be traced, he prudently avoided the station, and, dismounting shortly beyond it, unsaddled his weary horse and sat stiffly down to consume a hurried meal, preparatory to walking over the bridge into San Jerome.

It was now half past ten o'clock, and there would be a train an hour before midnight. The heat had been followed by thunder and torrential rain, which soaked him to the skin, and the flooded stream roared loud in his ears as he plodded wearily round the curve of the track on to the bridge.

He had gone only a few yards when his foot slipped on the wet planking and he fell full length across the rails. He lay half stunned for a moment, and then tried to get up.

He could not rise; his leg seemed caught. He struggled to move, in vain; the foot was gripped tight between the timbers.

He made a strong effort, raising himself on his hands and pushing with his other leg, but failed utterly, and sank down breathless.

Supposing he could not get loose; he would miss the train. The train! Good Heaven, he lay right in its path!

The thought set him wrenching madly again at his imprisoned leg, fighting, sobbing, tearing at the slippery wood in an agonized strain upon every muscle in his body.

Exhaustion compelled him to abandon the struggle. He lay there gasping, his burning cheek against the wet iron. Even at such a moment he derived a feeling of relief from the coolness of the metal.

The physical weakness cleared his brain and stemmed his terror. He must face the situation calmly. It was impossible for him to free himself. He must shout and stop the train.

But would they hear him? The roar of the flood and the blast of the tempest would surely drown his feeble cries. Then he dragged off his coat and plucked at his drenched shirt to wave it as a flag of warning.

As his fingers snapped the collar-button he suddenly became conscious that it was night and dark, very dark. The lamp at the entrance of the bridge sent too wan a ray to show the waving of a flag.

What was he to do? As he clasped his dripping forehead and looked out into the darkness, he saw, far off, a glimmering light, low down like a newly risen star. Dumbly he stared at it, the only sign of life in all the waste of blackness. Then, with a pang, he realized what it was—the headlight of the train.

Desperately he fought for self-control. There was the great curve—perhaps he had still ten minutes. Ten minutes to think for his life, for all the joyous future he had promised himself.

Suddenly an idea came to him. He would light a flame of some sort. Matches? Yes, here they were, safe and dry in the metal box. Paper? Paper?

With tense haste he plunged his hands into pocket after pocket. Nothing—nothing!

Ah, an envelope—drenched and sodden with the rain. At last he drew out his wallet. Now he could feel dry paper—the thick leather had done its duty well. He fumbled among the crinkly bills. There was no other paper.

Could he spare a few to save himself? The light was nearer now. Reluctantly he struck a match, and, carefully shielding the tiny flame from the wind, watched it eat into one of the slips of paper for which he had sold his honor, with which he must now buy his own life.

The flame flickered weakly as the hissing rain-drops struck it, and the light of the train came on.

Another bill he sacrificed, and another, and another—slowly, as though they were the drops of his own heart's blood. Then, with teeth set to the resolve, he burned two and three, then five or six at a time.

Still the light of the train came on. It was very near now, and the man was half-crazed with fear as he flung the bills upon the blaze, heedless of the smart and sear of his blackening fingers. Still the light of the train came on.

In the panic-agony for his life he had forgotten what the rolls of paper meant as he held them to the flame and tossed them wildly into the air. One big roll—the last—there it is alight now. He waves it aloft like a torch.

Will they see it? No, no. Yes. The train stops at last—right by the entrance to the bridge. A voice that did not seem to be his own shouted feebly.

They came and forced open the death-trap with iron bars.

"I got caugbt," he cried—"I got caught!"

"Hell!" said the big Scotch engineer. "I'd never ha' thought to see a man's life saved by a hot-box. Why, we'd never ha' stopped—"

"What do you mean?" cried Gaspado. "Didn't you see the light I made? It burnt my fingers."

"Lord—no! Little we see in a storm like this. You are a lucky man this night. We stopped for a hot-box, that's all."

And that is how Ulysse Gaspado, ex-secretary to the minister of finance, came penniless to San Jerome.

A DITTY.

My true-love hath my heart and I have his,
By just exchange one for anotber given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven.

Sir Philip Sidney.

AN ELUSIVE LEGACY

By HARLAN G. STEELE.

What happened when a photographer closed out his business to drop into a supposed bed of roses, and found a mare's nest of trouble instead.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEIR AT LAW.

TO be acclaimed a hero—to breathe for one brief hour the intoxicating aroma of public applause! And then—to be chased out of town on a fifteen minutes' headway like a common tramp!

Ah, what a fall is that, my countrymen!

It all came about through Uncle John's legacy. Dick Behan, after an apprenticeship in one of the large, downtown galleries, had established himself in the photograph business in a small way with a studio just off Third Avenue on the upper East Side of New York City.

The stand was supposed to be a good one, for old Pinchot, two blocks below, who was a much inferior craftsman, was said to have made a fortune. But after a two years' try at the job, Dick found himself unable to do much more than eke out a living—and a pretty precarious living at that.

It was not that he was lazy or given to bad habits, unless an almost infatuated devotion to photography can be termed a bad habit. It was simply that the artistic, rather than the commercial, side of his vocation appealed to his nature.

A wedding-party who wished to be taken in stiff, conventional attitudes, with the groom's white-gloved hand laid like a protecting flour-sack on the bride's shoulder, would be driven from his doors by scathing ridicule; while the doting mother who wanted a clean, hard print of her pudgy offspring *sans* clothing and seated in a wash-bowl, could hardly be blamed for complaining when she received instead a sketchy, impressionistic thing of dark, Rembrandtish shadows.

"Shure," exclaimed Mrs. O'Rafferty, in towering disgust, "th' insultin' shcoundhrel made me little Aloysius look like a coon!"

Again, if there came a heavy snowfall, transforming the ugly streets and squalid tenements into things of beauty with its mantle of white, or if the park was all ablow and the sun shining on some rare June day, nothing could prevail upon Behan to remain in his shop and wait for possible sitters.

With camera slung across his shoulder, he would be out ranging the countryside, snapping a lovely bit of nature inland, or pausing on some solitary shore to focus the wild tumble of the waves upon the beach.

These frequent absences, coupled with the upper East Side's lack of appreciation for Rembrandtish effects, were not conducive to the accumulation of a bank account. On the contrary, custom so steadily dwindled that at last it had become a serious question how the next month's rent was to be scratched up, to say nothing of necessary supplies, board, lodging, and other expenses.

Then, just at this inauspicious moment, came the news that crusty old Uncle John had died intestate, and that Dick, being the sole surviving relative, was heir at law to his entire fortune.

Behan's first emotion upon receipt of the tidings was one of dazed incredulity.

He had never seen his uncle; indeed, he had almost forgotten the existence of such a relative. All he could remember was that his father and this brother had quarreled long ago, and that for over twenty years there had been no communication of any kind between his family and the grim old bachelor.

True, he was aware, in a vague way, that Uncle John had prospered and was supposed to be wealthy; but as to expecting any personal advantage from that fact, he would just as soon have looked for the ceiling of his studio to open up and rain gold dollars down upon him.

Could such a thing really happen to any one outside a story-book? And especially to so unlucky a beggar as himself?

It seemed hard to believe; yet he was certainly not dreaming, for there before him lay as tangible evidence a brief, businesslike notification from his late uncle's attorney, together with a newspaper obituary describing the deceased as a "retired capitalist."

"Retired capitalist!"

What an opulent, care-free sound the term had! It signified money safely invested in solid securities, a regular income paid at stated intervals, entire absence of financial fret or worry, the liberty to travel, to entertain one's friends, to enjoy life in any way one chose.

For a moment Behan felt an involuntary pang of envy for the being so happily situated; then as his glance fell once more on the lawyer's letter the thrilling realization dawned upon him that he was now one of these fortunate beings himself.

A great sense of relief swept over him. He snatched up the missive again, as though to reassure himself, and scanned it with eager eyes.

Yes, it was true—actually and undeniably true! No more would he have to give up his time and talent to uncongenial labor; no longer would he be obliged to retouch heavy, wooden faces in the effort to give them some semblance of humanity, or caper like a monkey to attract the supercilious attention of "drooling brats." He was free!

He shook his finger playfully at the big camera over on the other side of the room.

"No more 'demnition grind' for you and me, old girl!" he cried. "We are now 'retired capitalists.' We have joined the ranks of the plutocrats."

Under the circumstances a show of grief upon Behan's part would have been rankest hypocrisy; nevertheless, he conducted himself with a fitting regard for the proprieties, and paid all due respect to the memory of his departed kinsman.

He went at once to Ravenswood, the little town where Uncle John had resided, attended the funeral in the capacity of chief mourner, and sedulously molded both his mien and manner so as to give no indication of his inward elation.

Installing himself as master in the big house where the old man had maintained a hermit-like existence for so many years, he met all callers with an impressive decorum, and quite won the old housekeeper's heart by assuring her that she need fear no changes in the present *ménage*.

By the end of a week, however, he decided there would be nothing amiss in gratifying his natural curiosity, and therefore one bright morning strolled down the main street of the town to the office of G. Weatherby, the lawyer who had notified him of his windfall.

G. Weatherby, a somewhat saturnine-looking individual, glanced up from a perusal of the morning paper with a quizzical gleam in his deep-set eyes as his caller entered.

"Ah, young Mr. Behan, I believe," he drawled without rising from his seat. "Do you know, I've had a sort of premonition that you'd be dropping in before long. Felt it in my bones, as the old country people around here say."

Dick, realizing that he had to deal with an eccentric, merely smiled good-naturedly.

"Suppose you had unexpectedly tumbled into a gold-mine, Mr. Weatherby," he retorted, "don't you think you'd be tempted to look around a bit and see just how much ore was in sight?"

The attorney glanced up at him sharply, and then went off into a series of noiseless chuckles.

"Tumbled into a gold-mine!" he ejaculated. Again his face contorted, and his sides shook. "That is the best thing I have heard in years. Oh, it's good—very, very good!"

Behan began to grow a trifle annoyed. He was conscious of having said nothing very original or amusing, and this laughter seemed to him anything but the proper attitude of a counselor toward one of his most important clients.

"That is all very well, Mr. Weatherby," and he spoke a shade huffily, "but I came down this morning for a business conference, not to pose as a comic supplement. Perhaps, then, we had better get down to a discussion of my affairs."

The other's peculiar mirth ceased as

suddenly as it had begun. Again his face assumed its habitual expression of bored indifference.

"Your affairs, eh?" and the man stroked his chin. "Well, what do you want to know about 'em?"

"Everything," succinctly.

"H'm! That's a pretty large order, looking at it in one way; and perhaps not so large, looking at it in another. Maybe, in order to save time, you had better ask me in the form of direct questions exactly what you want to find out."

"Well, then, roughly speaking, what is the value of my inheritance?"

"The value of your inheritance? That, I should say, is very much as you may see fit to estimate it."

"As I may see fit to estimate it?"

"Yes. Six months ago it was easily worth one hundred thousand dollars. Now it may be worth double that, or—"

Visions of rapidly enhancing wealth danced through the young man's brain.

"Or?" he demanded excitedly.

"Not one darned cent," replied Weatherby.

CHAPTER II.

"GO WEST, YOUNG MAN."

FOR a second Dick was bowled completely over. Never doubting for an instant, from all he had heard and observed, that his uncle's death had rendered him independently rich, the lawyer's brusk announcement struck him with all the effect of an unexpected bucket of ice-water dashed suddenly upon his glowing hopes.

"Wha—what do you mean?" he stammered, recoiling a step.

In that moment of surprise the thought came to him that possibly this Weatherby might be attempting some crooked dealing, and his brow darkened; but the other speedily dispelled any such suspicion.

"No," as an answer to the unspoken suggestion; "an investigation will easily convince you that I am in no way concerned. The facts are simply that your uncle, a short time before his demise, went rather heavily into a gold-mining proposition which may or may not result in profit.

"Now, you will understand," he added, "why I had to laugh when you spoke of having tumbled into a gold mine, and why I said that the value of your legacy was very much what you might choose to consider it."

But Dick was paying very little heed to the semi-apology.

"A gold-mining proposition, eh?" he muttered. "Of course a large number of such schemes are frauds and swindles; but my late uncle, I have been given to understand, was a very careful man of business, a regular—"

"A regular screw and miser, eh? Well, so John Behan was; but I wouldn't advise you to bank too strongly on that. Indeed, my experience has taught me that those are the very people who prove the easiest marks for the 'con' men and bunko sharks. Why, if it wasn't for tight-fisted old farmers who will squeeze a dollar until the eagle shrieks, the shell-game and the seductive gold-brick would long since have become relics of the past."

"You mean, then," broke in Dick excitedly, "that Uncle John fell for a swindle which has swallowed up a good share of his estate?"

"No-o," returned Weatherby, with the caution of his craft, "that is a little stronger than I would care to be quoted. I simply tell you that your legacy is at present tied up in shares of the Verdee Mining and Smelting Company. What they may be actually worth, either now or in the future, I am unable to state."

"But your opinion," persisted Dick, "is that the whole affair is a monstrous swindle?"

Weatherby hesitated a moment; then seizing his caller by the arm, he drew him over to a window which looked out upon the main street.

"Do you see that old chap over there on the steps of the bank, with the crowd around him?" he asked.

Following the direction of the pointed finger, Behan perceived a portly and prosperous figure, silk-hatted, ruddy-faced, and gray-sidewhiskered, holding forth to a group of men who seemed to hang entranced upon his utterances.

"That," said the lawyer, "is Colonel Simeon P. Jones, our local edition of the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin.' About six

months ago he landed in Ravenswood with a satchel full of quartz specimens, a book of handsomely lithographed stock certificates, and a glittering story of a gold mine at Verdee, British Columbia, which only needed development to prove a second Comstock.

"I don't suppose that you, being a New Yorker," the lawyer proceeded, "can realize how easy it is to work one of these rural burgs. Not that you, or I, or any other decent man could do it; they wouldn't listen to us, if we offered them ten-dollar gold pieces for one dollar and ninety-eight cents. But let some fellow they never heard of before come along with a scheme they know nothing about, and if he has a silk tile, gray mutton-chops, and a plausible tongue, they will flock to him as though he were an inspired oracle.

"To cut the story short, Ravenswood has contributed not less than a million dollars to Colonel Jones, and in that contribution is every dollar of your Uncle John's fortune."

"Every dollar?" gasped Dick.

At the worst, he had not supposed the estate was more than impaired.

"Yes, sir; every blamed cent. Mr. Behan seemed to go fairly daft over the enterprise, I tell you. Nothing that I or any of his other usual advisers could say had the slightest effect. Stocks, bonds, securities of every sort, he turned into cash, and dumped into this precious scheme."

"But the real estate? Surely that big house must be worth considerable, and there is a farm besides, is there not?"

"Mortgaged up to the hilt, every last stiver of it, and the money gone to Colonel Jones.

"In brief," the other finished, "you might as well know at the start, Mr. Behan, that your inheritance consists solely and entirely of stock in the Verdee mines; and what that may be worth, I—"

But Dick stopped him with a wave of the hand. He had drawn his own conclusions from what he had heard, and from the appearance of the man across the street. To his mind, "shark" was written in every line of Colonel Jones's bland and smiling personality.

An ominous scowl upon his brow, he rose to his feet and started impetuously for the door. But Weatherby, with surprising agility, sprang out of his chair, and managed to head him off.

"What would you do?" he demanded.

"Get my money back from that old fraud," stormed Dick, "or else take it out of his hide!"

"Nonsense," the lawyer cut in with cool, dispassionate argument. "This is a case for craft, not for violence. In the present state of public sentiment here, you would accomplish nothing except to get locked up on a charge of assault and battery. There is a better way than that to get satisfaction."

"How?"

"Well, a million dollars can hardly be so cunningly diverted but that some clue will be left as to where it has gone. So, if I were in your shoes, I would waste no time here, but would go out to Verdee and find out for myself just how the land lies, and what Colonel Jones is doing with all this money."

"But," questioned Behan, "surely some of the folks here have made an investigation of the property, have they not? You don't mean to tell me they are quite such gillies as to have swallowed all that was told them without at least attempting to look it up for themselves?"

"Oh, yes, they investigated it," assented Weatherby with an ironic smile. "That is, they clubbed together and sent George Prentice, the bank president, out there to look into things for them, with the result that he brought back the most glowing report that one could wish. Prentice is a good, honest fellow, you see, square as a die, and a first-rate banker; but," again the lawyer smiled, "what he doesn't know about mining would probably fill several books."

"Still," broke in Dick eagerly, "he has been on the ground, and ought to be able to tell me something of the real conditions. Where can I find him, pray?"

"You can't find him; not unless you go to Verdee. Prentice, you must understand, has been made president of the company, and has gone out there to take personal charge of its affairs."

Dick looked frankly puzzled.

"But," he questioned, "if that is so, what need is there for me to go to Ver-

dee? You say this Prentice is honest. Then, since he is president of the company, what chance is there for skulduggery?"

"Bah!" Weatherby's lip curled. "You surely must know that the president of a company is very often merely a figurehead, simply occupying that position to be more easily hoodwinked. Colonel Jones," with significant emphasis, "is general manager.

"Now, mark you," and he once more assumed a tone of guarded caution, "I am not asserting that there is anything crooked in the deal. I only say that Prentice might easily be in a position where he would find it almost impossible to get at the real facts."

"Then, you think—?"

"I think," observed Weatherby reflectively, "that if I were in your shoes, I would say nothing to anybody, but would slip out to Verdee unheralded, and investigate matters there for myself."

Behan could not but assent to the wisdom of this suggestion; yet, as he did so, he colored up and looked embarrassed.

"Ah!" said Weatherby, readily divining the trouble, "a little short of cash, are you? Well, that can be remedied, I think. There are a few odds and ends still left to your uncle's estate which will probably bring in something. Give me a power of attorney to dispose of them for you, and I will advance the money you need for present expenses."

Accordingly, it was so arranged, and the papers having been duly drawn up and signed, Dick left to pack up and prepare for his trip to the Northwest.

For some time after he had left, the lawyer sat gazing at the power of attorney with an enigmatic smile upon his lips; then he stepped over to the telephone, and called up the office of Colonel Jones.

"It's all right, colonel," he said with a touch of elation. "He leaves for Verdee to-morrow morning!"

CHAPTER III.

"THE FLOWER THAT BLOOMS IN THE SPRING."

Dick was early at the station the following day, and while he loitered along the platform waiting for Weatherby, who had promised to come down and see him off, he caught his first glimpse of "Daffodil."

He christened her that in a flash of poetic inspiration the moment his eyes fell upon her.

Tall, willowy, and graceful, she wore a trim linen shirt-waist, a soft, gray-green traveling skirt with the jacket to match hung over her arm, and above the twists of her shimmering, fair hair a wide, flat hat, shrouded in a gray veil, and wreathed with a circle of yellow corn-flowers.

But inevitably as her *ensemble* reminded him of those delicate blossoms of early spring he so loved to arrange in artistic poses before his camera, it was not that so much which made the name "Daffodil" leap to his lips, as the smile which came and went upon her bonny face—a smile winsome and sunny as the drop of gold which nestles in the flower's heart.

Leaning against a post, Dick stood at one side watching her, stirred at the sight of such engaging loveliness, yet never for a moment dreaming that the experience was other than one of the fleeting incidents of travel.

But, to his surprise, when Weatherby presently joined him, the lawyer lifting his hat to the radiant vision, murmured "Good morning, Miss Daffodil"; then, with a quick clutch upon his companion's arm, drew Behan around the corner of the building.

"Daffodil?" exclaimed Dick incredulously. "Is that really her name?"

"Yes," with evident annoyance; "that is George Prentice's daughter, and she is leaving to spend the summer with her father out at Verdee. Was anything ever more unlucky than that she should choose this train?"

"Unlucky?" thought Dick.

Then he turned eagerly to the other.

"You must introduce me, Weatherby," he said. "It will relieve the tedium of such a long journey for us both."

The lawyer shied away from the proposition like a frightened horse.

"Are you crazy?" he protested. "What chance is there for you to visit Verdee *incog,* with her knowing all about you? No, the only thing for you to do,

is to wait over a day longer, and take to-morrow's train. We can but hope that she won't recognize your face after you get there, and place you as some one from Ravenswood."

But Behan scoffed at such an excess of caution, and so ridiculed the idea of delaying his departure that finally, especially since he did not further press his desire for the introduction, Weatherby gave a reluctant assent.

It must not be supposed, however, that the young man had by any means relinqnished his yearning to meet and know the charming girl whose name had so appositely leaped to his lips.

It occurred to him rather that by leaving the matter to chance, his wish was almost certain to be accomplished, and that, too, without necessarily disclosing his identity. He knew that a long railway trip is like an ocean voyage, conducive to iuformal acquaintanceship, and he felt also that, should necessity arise, he had a very potent instrument wherewith to break the social ice in the little black box with the sliding shutter which he carried in its leather-case at his side.

Therefore, in deference to Weatherby's entreaties, he did not follow her into the Pullman when the train steamed into the station, but boarding an ordinary day coach, rode a hundred miles or so up the road before he finally claimed the berth which he had engaged.

Nor, when he ultimately went back, did he intrude himself at all upon her notice. His play for the present, he felt, was like that of the philosophic "Br'er Rabbit" to "lay low an' say nuffin'"; and wrapped in his seeming indifference, he richly enjoyed the discomfiture of the two or three other male passengers who endeavored to obtrude officious and unwelcome attentions upon the girl.

The second day out, though, he had an opportunity to show her one or two small courtesies in a natural, gentlemanly fashion, and at last during the afternoon, when the train stopped at a division point to change engines, he decided that his time had come.

Miss Prentice, pinning on her hat, left the car for a stroll up and down the platform, and Behan snatching up his camera, followed hard in her wake.

To all appearances, the two were completely oblivious of each other's presence on the fifty feet or so of asphalt which they mutually occupied; but the photographer, casting an occasional surreptitious glance out of the corner of his eye, did not fail to note that as he produced his camera and started to operate it, the girl grew visibly interested.

Unconsciously her pace seemed to slacken when she passed him in her brisk up-and-down saunter, and she threw more and more frequent glances over her shoulder in his direction.

At last, she paused, hesitated, and drew near.

"Don't you think that would make a prettier picture of the place?" she suggested diffidently, pointing in the opposite direction from that in wbich Behan was aiming his lens. "At least, that is how I should like best to remember the place."

Dick turned, carefully concealing his elation, and scrutinized through half-closed eyes the prospect she had indicated — a stretch of meadow-land through which ran a winding river in the foreground, and farther on the clustering houses of the little town, with an artistic detail of gray stone church tower to the rear.

He glanced from her to it, and back to her again. Then he decided that the fitting time had come to make a bold stroke.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it would make an ideal view—with one addition."

"One addition?" she questioned. "What is that?"

"You in the front of it," he answered with a laughing sparkle of challenge in his eyes.

For a moment he feared he had been over-precipitate. She flushed, bit her lip vexedly, and seemed about to turn away.

But, after all, it is a rare beauty who can resist the fascination of being photographed, and Daffodil was no more immune to the spell of the little black box than the majority of her sisters.

"We-ell," she assented at last; "that is, if you are really certain the picture needs a figure in it to give proper effect. But tell me first," she paused with anxious inquiry, "is my hat on straight?"

And Dick knew by this that he had gained her confidence.

CHAPTER IV.

MASQUERADING AS OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

THEY were both so engrossed in the taking of the picture, that they entirely failed to hear the conductor's warning "All Aboard!" and were only recalled to their situation by the grind of the starting wheels upon the rails.

Then they had to scamper for it; and it may be remarked in passing, that nothing so tends to overcome any lingering stiffness between two young people as a brisk run with a common purpose in view.

Flushed and panting, they scrambled up on the platform together, and if Behan's arm encircled the girl's waist a little longer and a little more ardently than was strictly necessary, he may perhaps be excused on the score of a natural fear lest she might fall.

At any rate, she did not seem to resent it; for after gently disengaging herself, and smoothing back her ruffled hair while she regained her breath, she broke into a ringing laugh.

"That was worth while, wasn't it?" she said with unaffected zest. "I haven't had such an exciting race since I was a little girl in short frocks. But, oh," with a sudden anxiety, "I do hope you didn't lose the picture?"

"Never think it," he assured her. "I have it safe, all right," patting the little box upon his arm. "Why, I would have missed all the trains for the next week, rather than let it go."

"And have kept me posing there all the time, heedless of my hunger or thirst, without a qualm of compunction, eh?" she bantered. "That, I suppose, is what you call the artistic temperament."

"Well, the artistic temperament doesn't prevent me from being hungry right now," he retorted with a smile. "I don't know how you feel about it; but that little whiff of fresh air and the sprint has raised quite an appetite on my side of the house. What do you say to a foraging trip to the buffet-car? We can probably find a club sandwich and something to go with it back there."

Daffodil hesitated. She was traveling unchaperoned, and it behooved her to be wary in her acceptance of courtesies from chance acquaintances of the male persuasion. No "really nice girl" would, she knew, listen for a moment to such a proposition.

Still, this good-looking young fellow was so indubitably a gentleman, so ingenuous and frank. And a club sandwich did sound enticing.

"But I don't know you," she wavered. "We are absolute strangers."

"Oh, but that is speedily remedied," he rejoined. "We'll 'pretend' as the children do; and the game is, that I as Mr. Breen and you as Miss Parsons—those are not our real names of course, but they will do as well as any other—are old acquaintances, and by a delightful chance happen to have met again on this train. That would obviate all trouble with the *convenances,* wouldn't it?

"Besides," he urged, "since we are both going to Verdee, I have a very strong fancy that we will shortly be presented to each other in due and proper form, so we are, in a way, only forestalling our acquaintanceship a little."

It was this final argument which evidently carried weight with Miss Prentice.

"But," she questioned, "if that be so, why can we not start off under our true colors in the first place?"

"Oh, no; that would never do at all," he quickly demurred. "Under our true names we cannot possibly be old friends, and our conduct would be therefore highly reprehensible and improper; but as Mr. Breen and Miss Parsons, childhood playmates in Anyoldtown, who could point the finger of censure? Let the new acquaintance begin as it may, I at present hold out for the old friendship."

"Very well, then," she yielded; "only I must enter a decided protest against 'Miss Parsons.' The only woman I ever really detested in my life was called that."

"So? How would 'Miss Peach' or 'Miss Pretty' do then?"

"Worse and worse. No," she decided; "I shall be 'Miss Prunes-and-Prisms,' because I am going to be a very model of deportment; and you shall be 'Mr. Be-

have,' because that is the one thing you don't know how to do."

Accordingly, "Mrs. Grundy" having thus been whipped around a stump, the two adjourned in high feather to the dining-car, and there spent a diverting half hour or so, constructing over their sandwiches and tea all manner of fantastic reminiscences of their mutual experiences in "Anyoldtown."

After that it was, of course, impossible that there should remain anything standoffish or reserved in their respective attitudes. Indeed, by the end of the second day out their little fiction seemed almost to be based upon the truth, such good comrades had they become, and so long did they seem to have known each other.

Happily, Dick was wise enough not to attempt to encroach upon his advantage, and the girl, seeing and admiring this restraint upon his part, was all the more open and friendly with him.

More than once she would have broken away from their agreement, and told him who she was and all about herself if he had not prevented her.

"No," he would plead; "our new acquaintance will begin plenty soon enough. Let us hold to the old one while we have the chance."

And then he would draw off her attention by suggesting that he take another photograph of her.

Ah, the snap-shots that were made of "Miss Prunes-and-Prisms" during those four halcyon days! There were snap-shots of her in the car and out of it, walking, standing, sitting, eating, drinking, smiling, frowning, in almost every conceivable attitude and pose, and "then some."

It was an idyllic experience, and both of them grew a little pensive and thoughtful as they stood together on the rear platform the last night of their trip, while the train pantingly climbed the steep mountain grade toward Verdee.

They had come out there to take a flash-light of some curious natural rock formations which the conductor had told them would be well worth preserving. These phenomena were just at the end of a deep cut through which they had to pass, and the official had obligingly consented to stand by and give the signal for the flash at just the proper moment.

Into the cut they rumbled slowly, and Behan, his apparatus all in readiness, stood poised for the word.

But as he waited the train came to a halt with a suddenness which nearly jerked them all off their feet, and out of the darkness ahead was borne back to their ears a mêlée of quick voices, and a fusillade of pistol shots.

"A hold-up, by thunder!" gasped the conductor, diving back into the car. "Those blackguards are at it again!"

A hold-up. The word thrilled upon Dick's ear like that of "tiger" to the hunter of big game. After all, the camera-fiend is but another edition of the rampant sportsman.

He never thought of the possible danger. He simply realized that here was a chance for a snap-shot which would make him the envy of all his profession, and that by sheer luck he had everything ready to take it.

Thrusting an elbow through the guard-rail, and, with the camera and fixings in his hands, he swung out around the side of the car and peered eagerly ahead.

Up in front, by the red glow from the fire-box, he could see a shadowy group of men, with aimed rifles, evidently holding colloquy with the engineer, while other sinister forms were hurrying back toward the coaches.

Just an instant he hesitated, in order to decide upon his focus; then snap he pulled his trigger, and the report banged out like a young cannon, while the flash lit up the rocky walls of the cut with an effulgence like noonday.

In the glare he could see the bandits standing as men turned suddenly to stone, blinded, uncomprehending, completely taken aback.

Part of them, indeed, must have regarded it as a supernatural manifestation; for when he pulled the flash again he could see that some had fallen to their knees, and others were groveling, with their faces to the ground.

"Skiddoo!" a harsh voice of command barked from somewhere back of the right of way. "Pull your freight, fools! Can't you see they're ready for us?"

Behan turned quickly to the direction from which the order came, and exploded another charge of magnesium; but the

flash was a poor one, and all he could make out was a confused impression of fleeing men scrambling up the side of the cliff.

The attempt proved a disastrous one to himself, too; for just as he turned, the engineer, recognizing that he was no longer under duress, shot his hand forward to the throttle, and the train leaped out with a momentum which tore the photographer's arm loose from its hold, and hurled him off the steps and down the embankment.

CHAPTER V.

A SUNRISE MYSTERY.

BEHAN, although not knocked insensible, was so confused and dazed by his tumble that for several minutes after he landed he could only lie still and blink stupidly after the tail-lights of the retreating train.

His first conscious impression was that they would undoubtedly return to pick him up; but, as the chug-chug of the engine drew more and more rapidly away into the distance, he was forced to an understanding that such was in nowise their intention.

"The cowardly whelps!" he muttered resentfully. "They are afraid to come back, and are willing to desert me in order to save their own skins! They must know of my accident. Of course they know of it, for Daffodil would have instantly given the alarm! It is simply that they are a set of infernal curs!"

Nor was his righteous wrath unjustified; for his surmise as to the girl's action was exactly correct. As she saw him fall, she had staggered back with a quick gasp of horror; then, with ready presence of mind, had dashed inside the car and seized the bell-rope.

But the engineer, filled with panic, was paying no heed to signals just then. All he thought of was to put as many miles as possible between himself and those grim rifle-muzzles which had been poked so threateningly into his face.

Neither was the conductor the courteous and complaisant gentleman he had hitherto shown himself to Daffodil.

"Take your hand off that bell-rope!" he ordered fiercely, as he charged in at the forward door of the car. "This train doesn't stop anywhere between here and Verdee!"

"But you must stop!" she appealed to him agonizedly. "A passenger fell off when we started up. It was Mr. Behave, the gentleman who was back there with me!"

The conductor hesitated just a minute; then his fears made him reckless.

"I don't care," he declared stubbornly. "I wouldn't run this train back now if the Czar of all the Russias had tumbled off. I've got one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in currency up in the express-car, and the company would never forgive me if I risked that for the sake of a careless passenger."

"But he saved it for you in the first place," pleaded Daffodil. "It was his setting off the flash which frightened the train-robbers and drove them off. Just think, they may return and, finding him injured, wreak vengeance upon him for what he did."

"Very likely they have him already," retorted the conductor unfeelingly; "so I don't see where it's going to do any good to let them get us, too. No, the only thing to do is to get to Verdee as quickly as possible, and report the matter to the authorities. They'll send out and rescue him, if there's any chance of it being done."

And for all her prayers and protests, her stinging contempt and passionate entreaties, that was the most which Daffodil could extort from him, a promise that assistance should be despatched as soon as they reached Verdee.

With a sob at her utter helplessness, she had at last to sink into her seat and in an almost frenzied impatience, count the moments as the train seemed to her to crawl onward, although really urged to its utmost endeavors up the mountain toward their destination.

A realization of the trainmen's attitude, however, coupled with his natural indignation at such conduct, was in a way a good thing for Behan; for, by making him recognize that he was now dependent solely upon his own resources, it acted as a stimulus to restore his scattered faculties.

Struggling up on one elbow, he began to take an inventory of his injuries, and

soon discovered, to his satisfaction, that they consisted chiefly of a scratched shoulder and a badly torn pair of trousers.

Even the camera had emerged undamaged, for he had not relinquished his hold upon it as he fell; and since he had landed upon his back and side, sliding rather than rolling down the bank, it had almost, as by a miracle, escaped wreckage.

So much being settled, the next question was: What now to do?

The possibility that the train-robbers might return and vent their spite upon him did naturally suggest itself, but only for a moment. He knew that gentry of that sort usually have their rendezvous a considerable distance away from the scene of their operations, and he was satisfied that this particular band, from the way they had swarmed out of the cut, were now hastening to cover with all speed.

They would have descended upon him at once, if they had seen him fall; and since they had not done so, it was consequently clear that they had failed to witness his misadventure and, in all probability, were no longer in the neighborhood.

No; to his reawakening mind his most distinct cause for disquietude lay in a very different direction. He could not fail to foresee that through Daffodil's insistence, if from no other motive, the railroad company would immediately send out a party to his relief; and he had no desire for the prominence which such an entry into Verdee must necessarily entail upon him.

Obliged to tell his story and all about himself to a host of inquisitive officials, he would be a marked man, and it would then be as hopeless for him to prosecute the investigation which had brought him westward as if he should advertise his purpose in letters a foot long.

"Oh," he groaned in his chagrin, "what a mess I have made of it! What an infernal mess! And all because I couldn't resist the temptation to snapshot a few miserable road-agents!"

Suddenly, however, a brilliant inspiration came to him. He remembered that he had in his pocket a detailed map of the region thereabout, employed for advertising purposes by Colonel Jones in connection with his stock-selling operations.

Dick had clipped this from a newspaper the night before he left Ravenswood, with the idea that it might possibly be of use to him in his examination of the mine, but now an entirely different way struck him for turning it to account.

Might it not be, he questioned, that with this aid he could puzzle out some other plan of reaching Verdee than in the undesired clutches of a rescue party?

Spreading out the chart upon his knee, and with the aid of a dozen or so matches, he managed at last to make out where he was; and then he could hardly restrain the shout of triumph which sprang to his lips.

For, although the railroad curved in a wide circuit of nearly forty miles around the monntain in order to reach Verdee, his map showed him that as the crow flies he was not more than twelve miles distant, and that, moreover, a short climb up from the cut and back through the woods would bring him to a bridle-trail leading directly to the town.

Almost instantly he was up on his feet and ready to start. But first, he reflected, he must arrange some plan to allay Miss Prentice's anxiety and set her mind at rest.

Tearing a leaf from his note-book, accordingly, he hastily scribbled:

> To the Officials of the Railroad Company:
>
> Have had enough of the wild and woolly West, and am starting back afoot for Red Dog, where I shall take the first train East. Please express my grip and other personal belongings on the car to St. Paul. Behave.

"There," he muttered, as he thrust the communication into the cleft of a forked stick and propped it up beside the track, "that will be enough to assure her that I have suffered no great hurt, and will also throw the railroad people and authorities off the track sufficiently long for me to get in my innings."

Then, without further delay, he gathered up his camera, and, clambering out of the cut, struck off through the woods.

His progress at first was slow and cautious, for he had no wish to get lost in this unknown country; and then, too, he

was not free from certain lingering apprehensions that the train-robbers might still be in the vicinity.

By a stroke of luck, however, as he guided his uncertain course with the little pocket-compass on his watch-chain, he chanced to stumble on the trampled spot where the bandits had picketed their horses, and from this their line of flight led him through the more or less broken-down underbrush out to the trail.

Even there, though, his difficulties were far from over. A man familiar with the country could have reached Verdee, no doubt, in a couple of hours; but Behan was a stranger, seeking his way in the dark, and obliged to study out every foot of his road with map and compass.

"A trail!" he groaned more than once, as he stumbled over huge logs or floundered knee-deep in quagmires. "I wonder what these people would call a by-path!"

He lost himself more than once, too, and had to wander around in the dark, fearful every moment lest he stumble into some unsuspected pitfall or risk an encounter with a predatory grizzly or mountain-lion.

Nevertheless, all things must come to an end in some way or another, and eventually he reached the edge of a hill-side, from which he could see down below him, in the gray dawn, the chimneys of a smelter, while a mile or so off to the left appeared a cluster of houses which he rightly took to be Verdee.

As he sat down to rest, watching the rosy glow of morning flash from peak to peak, and the whole east become suffused with a glory of orange and gold and crimson, he realized that there was an activity of some kind in progress at the smelter. His curiosity aroused, he bent forward eagerly to peer in that direction.

The distance was too great, however, and he was about to give over the attempt, when he suddenly bethought him of the tele-photo lens in his camera-case. Ah, that little long-distance annihilator would solve the difficulty!

Hastily screwing it into place, and holding the camera in front of his muffled head like an opera-glass, he had no trouble in making out upon the ground-glass screen exactly what was taking place.

From the big dump-heaps of ore beside the smelter a half-dozen men were busily engaged in shoveling the stuff into cars which, when full, received a starting push and then traveled by gravity down a little track a short way into a wooded ravine, where they were lost to view.

This struck Behan as a bit peculiar, for he had always supposed that ore brought to the smelter remained there to be treated. But he was too ignorant of mining operations to become suspicious, had it not been that just as he was about to give over his inspection a young man, evidently in authority, came riding up and, pointing toward the sky, gave a quick order.

Instantly the shoveling was discontinued, the cars pushed as they were into the ravine, and the track leading down to it—rails, sleepers, and all—was taken up by the men and carried in after them. In ten minutes' time there was no more sign of a railroad running away from the smelter than if it had never existed.

"Well," gasped the astonished Dick, "there is a transformation scene for you that has got Kiralfy beat to a standstill! It may be all right, of course—I am not enough of an expert to say—but, speaking as a mere greenhorn, I have an idea that my investigation has struck pay-dirt first dash out of the box."

Then, partly because he did not wish to appear in Verdee until he had had a chance to explore that wooded ravine, and partly because he was dog-tired and worn out by his adventures, he curled himself up under a convenient bush and went to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRACKER TRACKED.

WHEN Behan awoke, the sun was well up in the heavens, and a glance at his watch showed him that it was after ten o'clock.

He was stiff and sore as a result of his night's exertions, but he knew that the best cure for this was a little wholesome activity, so he forced the sluggish flesh into submission, and after he had performed his toilet at a neighboring brook, with his watch-case for a mirror, his handkerchief for a towel, and his

fingers for a comb, was surprised to find how really fit he did feel.

"It's this mountain air, I suppose," he ruminated. "And, Jove, what an appetite it does give a chap by the way! I won't do a thing to the first eating-joint I strike! But before that I must attend to business."

And with a self-restraint worthy of a Spartan, he drew up his belt a couple of holes and turned his face away from the tempting flesh-pots of Verdee toward the mysterious ravine.

Nor did the investigation of this prove any light task. In the first place, he had to make a wide détour down the mountainside to get to it, in order to avoid observation from the smelter; and after he got close by he felt it further incumbent upon him to get down on his stomach and wriggle through a dense and mosquito-ridden underbrush.

These latter precautionary measures were undertaken in deference to his recollection of certain exploits in the "yellow-back" literature of his youth, and he persisted manfully at them until he had reached the ravine and found out what he wanted; but when it came to leaving in the same fashion his spirit rebelled.

"There's evidently nobody on watch around here," he grumbled. "What's the use of my going through all this tomfoolery a second time and being stung to death by those pesky gnats, merely in order to pretend I am doing something venturesome?"

Thus it was that a somnolent mountaineer, reclining behind some bushes on a farther slope, chanced a few minutes later to have his attention attracted by an unwonted commotion among the saplings at the head of the ravine, and, continuing to stare earnestly in that direction, was presently rewarded by seeing Behan come skulking out of the woods and take the trail toward town.

There was a shorter cut from where the mountaineer lay to the trail, intercepting it close by the smelter; so Dick had not long passed that point before the other was practically upon his heels.

The fellow seemed so unconcerned, however, so utterly bucolic, that the photographer never for a moment thought of suspecting him, and, quite at ease, proceeded on his way until he reached the village and the Palace Hotel.

Five or ten minutes later the mountaineer likewise strolled into the office of that hostelry, which was also the bar, and, jerking his head in greeting to the proprietor, inquired nonchalantly:

"Takin' to feedin' tramps now, Jack? I seen one jest come in."

"He ain't no tramp," indignantly protested the proprietor. "Guess you ain't on to the latest fashionable wrinkles down East, Lank Rake. That air gent is on a walkin' tower fer the benefit of his health an' in order to enj'y the scenery."

"Jest so," scoffingly. "I seen a bunch of the same kind ahoofin' it down the railroad track yesterday—fer the benefit of their health an' in order to enj'y the scenery. Gosh, Jack, I thought you'd been too long in the business to have a hobo trick like that turned on you. The feller's simply playin' to beat you out of his grub an' a shack fer the night."

The other raised his eyebrows in supercilious disdain.

"No need to strain yerself to look out fer my welfare, Lank," he observed dryly. "I ain't a sayin' but what looks may be agin the young feller, him havin' lost the trail an' got mixed up with some scrub-oak a comin' across the mounting; but as it happens, them four-flush surmises of your'n is beat by these four deuces," opening his cash-drawer to show four two-dollar bills, "which said stranger hands over to me in liquidation of his board an' keep. Hoboes, so fur as my observation goes, ain't in the habit of payin' in advance fer the best room in my house, nor of demandin' a bath, which at present is heatin' fer Mr. Behan in the b'iler on the kitchen-stove."

Even the mountaineer's skepticism had to give way before such an accumulation of evidence. He covered his defeat by motioning with his head toward one of the bottles behind the bar, and as he filled his glass repeating questioningly, "Mr. Behan?"

"Yes, Mr. Richard Behan, of New York City," pushing forward a dog-eared register which lay at one end of the counter. "Thar it is," and the landlord pointed out Dick's hastily scribbled signature; "an' here it is ag'in, on a tellygram which he give me to send," pro-

ducing a folded-up slip of paper from the cash-drawer.

Lank Rake inspected the message curiously.

"Say, Jack," he offered, "ef it'd be anything of a accommodation to yer, I'll take that down to the station fer yer. I'm a headin' that way right now, an' I kin do it jest as well as not."

The hotel man looked a little surprised, since the other was not usually of such an obliging disposition. Still, busy as he was, looking after the comfort of the new arrival, he was not inclined to question motives too narrowly, and therefore handed over the telegram without comment.

"An' by the way, Lank," he added, "ef you're goin' to the station anyhow, s'posin' you look after this stranger's trunk, will yer, an' git it up here fer him? He shipped it on ahead, he says; so I 'low you'll find it a layin' on the platform. Here's the check fer it, an' I'll square up with yer on the job when yer git back."

"All right," assented the mountaineer carelessly, and, shoving the check and message into his pocket, he lurched out at the door and down the street.

He had not proceeded more than beyond the landlord's sight, however, when he drew from his pocket the folded paper and laboriously spelled out its contents, which proved to be as follows:

G. WEATHERBY, Ravenswood:
Have secured undoubted evidence of crooked dealing, and shall lay it before Prentice at once in order that he may take immediate steps to protect myself and other stockholders.
R. BEHAN.

"Whew!" whistled Lank Rake, with consternation written large upon his face. "I knowed thar was somep'n wrong about him as soon as I seen him come sneakin' out'n them bushes; but this here is wuss'n I thought. I guess I don't want to lose no time huntin' up Ralph Jones an' lettin' him know what's up."

To his relief, however, the object of his search—Colonel Jones's son, and the manager of the Verdee mines in his father's absence—swung into sight at that very moment, cantering up the road on horseback with a young lady at his side.

Still, for all his expressed desire, Rake made no attempt to intercept the other or hail him. Indeed, he did not even glance in that direction, but, as he slouched up the street, he pulled three times at the ragged hat-brim above his brow, and the young horseman, a quick glint coming into his eye, slapped his gaitered calf three times lightly with his riding-stock.

CHAPTER VII.

DAFFODIL GETS A POINTER.

DICK BEHAN perhaps saw the covert signal exchanged between the mining superintendent and his henchman; for, his attention drawn by the clatter of hoofs, he had looked out from behind his flimsy window-curtain just as the couple on horseback swept by the hotel.

But though he may have seen, he of course attached no significance to the action; and, anyway, his eyes were all engaged with the girl rather than with the mountaineer or young Jones.

The latter he may have noted, indeed, as a dark, heavy-browed chap, rather good-looking except for a forbidding twist to his mouth; but the girl was Daffodil, and never had he imagined such a picture of grace and dash and beauty as she made in the saddle.

Her face glowing with the exercise under the Di Vernon hat she wore, with its long sweeping plumes; her slender figure becomingly set forth in her trim riding habit; her eyes sparkling with animation, and her perfect poise upon her mount, not only made an entrancing vision, but also betokened that she possessed a mind absolved from care.

Yet, somehow, the sight of her did not seem altogether enrapturing to the unseen watcher behind the window-curtain. He drew back with an unmistakable frown upon his face, and muttered sulkily:

"Doesn't seem to be grieving very hard over my departure, does she? At any rate, it looks as though she were able to console herself pretty quick."

But in this he did Miss Prentice a marked injustice, for she had passed a most anxious and miserable time, blaming herself in some illogical fashion for the mishap which had overtaken her companion on the train. Her present gaiety and high spirits were entirely due to the fact

that she had just been to the station and heard of the finding of Behan's note, with its natural inference that all was well with him.

"Such a relief as it is," she was saying at that very moment to Jones. "For I felt in a way responsible, don't you know, and if he had fallen into the hands of those awful train-robbers I should never have forgiven myself."

"Those awful train-robbers will probably never forgive themselves that he didn't fall into their hands when they had such an easy chance at him," retorted her cavalier sententiously. "On the whole, although it doesn't seem a highly valiant action, I guess he has done the wisest thing in heading back East. That gang would have got even with him sure, if he had lingered long around these diggings."

"But that is just what I cannot understand," she said, with a touch of perplexity. "Mr. Behave never struck me at all as the kind of a man who could be easily frightened off from any purpose he had in view. I cannot believe but that he had some stronger reason to turn back than merely because he was afraid of these bandits."

Young Jones bent his brows upon her in sudden inquiry.

"You have known him a long time, I believe you said?"

She had the grace to falter a second.

"Yes. Oh, yes; we were childhood playmates," with a slightly heightened color.

"At Ravenswood?"

She gave a little startled gasp, for the abrupt question had cleared up for her that puzzling familiarity of Behave's appearance which had struck her more than once during the westward journey.

As with a flash of recollection, she remembered now that this was the man she had seen with Weatherby on the morning that she took the train from home.

Her momentary flutter she disguised admirably, however, under pretense of having some trouble with her stirrup, and tbis adjusted, she turned again to her companion.

"You were asking if it were at Ravenswood that I knew Mr. Behave?" she said collectedly enough. "No, although I have seen him there upon occasion; but it was at quite another place that I met him," and an involuntary smile rippled over her lips at the thought of the fictitious "Anyoldtown."

Jones rode on in silence for a second or two; then he asked sharply:

"You spoke of him just now as a man not apt to be easily turned aside from his purpose. What was the purpose which was bringing him to Verdee?"

"Why, I don't know. What generally brings men out here? To look at mines, I suppose, or else for sport."

"Just so. But this Behave isn't a sportsman, is he?"

"No, I think not. At least, he had no guns or any of that sort of paraphernalia with him—that is, unless you count his camera."

But the superintendent impatiently brushed this last suggestion aside.

"Then it was mines which brought him," he muttered half to himself. He turned to the girl again. "Is he a stockholder in Verdee?" he demanded searchingly.

"How should I know?" drawing herself back a little haughtily.

She was beginning to be resentful of this continued cross-examination.

"But you are such old friends. I should have thought he might have mentioned it, knowing that your father was also interested in the property."

"Even old friends may have certain reticences. If he didn't care to speak of it, there is no reason why he should have done so."

"Ah, then you believe that he is interested in Verdee, but for some reason didn't want you to know it?"

"I believe nothing of the sort, nor did I intend to give any such impression. How can you twist my words around so?"

"I am not twisting your words," the other growled, with a surly attempt at apology. "I am simply trying to find out what was this fellow's errand; and, if I am not mistaken, it's wbat I suspected from the first. He's a spy."

"A spy?" she repeated, her eyes widening. "But how could that be? Isn't the mine open to inspection to those interested in it?"

It was Jones's turn now to redden and show confusion.

"Yes," he stammered, "provided they

let us know when to expect them. We object, though, to a lot of tenderfoots prowling around and drawing their own conclusions.

"And what's more," he added, with a vicious snap of his teeth, "we won't have it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A COMMITTEE ON ENTERTAINMENT.

REALIZING from Daffodil's face that he was perhaps speaking with more vehemence than discretion, Jones broke off rather shortly.

"Oh, well," he said with an attempt at a laugh, "what's the use of getting one's self stirred up over nothing? Behave, whatever his mission may have been, has gone back home, and there's an end to the matter."

And with that, he began pointing out to his companion the objects of interest in the surrounding landscape, and so continued until they had reached her own gate, where, after he had assisted her to dismount, he excused himself on the score of business, and rode smartly away.

Miss Prentice did not immediately go into the house, but stood gazing after his retreating figure, a light as of rebellion in her eyes.

A girl is not without some comprehension of what is in the wind, when, after receiving numerous letters extolling the merits of a certain young man, she is invited by her father to come half-way across the continent to a lonely mining-camp where the young man aforesaid is the only marriageable male in the place.

Nor were there any doubts in her mind since her arrival as to the readiness of Mr. Ralph Jones to fall in with the program arranged.

He had been at the train with her father to meet her the night before, and this morning he had appeared, bright and early, to act as her escort, showing, by every word and action, that he already considered himself her natural protector and associate.

No, Daffodil could not well cherish any illusions as to what was expected of her; and, if her expression could be taken as any guide, she was already in revolt against the plan.

It was not that she had taken particular exception to anything the fellow had said or done. His quizzing manner toward her, as of a lawyer with a refractory witness, she could pardon, remembering that he was used to dealing only with men.

It was rather that her feminine sixth sense, upon which women chiefly rely, warned her to distrust this man, just as the same intuitive guide had told her that she might freely trust and confide in Dick Behan.

Yet, the one was vouched for by her father, and was open and aboveboard in all his relations with her; while she could not blind her eyes to the fact that the other had enveloped himself in mystery and that, as Jones had intimated, his mission might well be hostile to the present management of the Verdee mines.

Indeed, she could hardly doubt that such was the case, remembering that she had first seen her late traveling companion upon the Ravenswood platform in close conference with her father's inveterate enemy, G. Weatherby.

"Yes," she told herself, "I suppose there can be no question but that his purpose was to play the spy, and do us harm."

Then, as the recollection came to her of Ralph Jones's face when, in discussing the possibility of any one's attempting to investigate the mine, he had passionately declared, "We won't have it," a little, fluttering sigh of relief escaped her lips.

"Oh, I am glad, glad," she breathed, "that, whatever his reason may have been, he decided to turn back."

She might, however, have felt less cause for thanksgiving, had she known of the conversation which was at that moment taking place between the mining superintendent and the man who had exchanged the mysterious signals with him near the Palace Hotel.

Riding away from her, Jones had proceeded to a secluded spot a little way off the trail leading from the village to the mines, and there waited impatiently until the mountaineer hove into view.

"Well," he demanded sharply, "what's up now, that you're off post, and so crazy to see me? Some boys been snooping around over by the ravine again, eh?"

"No, boss, 'tain't no boys this time; but a full-growed man, an' a stranger at that."

"A stranger?" with an unmistakable start.

"Yep, a feller that looks like a sure-enough hobo, but what's down to the Palace Hotel now, an' has give up eight dollars fer his board an' keep. Jack Avery says he's a tenderfoot on a walkin' tower through the mountings; but ef that's so, what was he doin' half a mile off'n the trail down at the mouth of the ravine? I didn't see him go in there, hut I seen him come out, an' he sure did have a sneaky look to him."

"H'm," young Jones frowned. "Still," he admitted, "it may be all right. A pedestrian not knowing the country, might easily stray off down there, and, if he was a tenderfoot, not recognize that there was anything doing."

"Yes, but how about this?" queried Lank Rake, producing Dick's telegram with a flourish, and handing it over.

The superintendent ran his eye quickly through the message, his brow darkening with a malevolent scowl.

"Richard Behan!" he exclaimed, as he came to the signature. "Why, that is the chap father wired me to look out for and take care of when he should arrive. But who would ever have expected him to come in across the trail.

"He must have smelled a mouse and dropped off the train at Red Dog. But to do it without a guide, and—

"Ha!" with a sudden thought. "This is 'Behave,' not 'Behan.' The telegraph operator got it wrong in father's message, just as we got it wrong here. This is none other than the duck who stopped the hold-up last night, and who left the plausible note saying he had hot-footed it back East.

"And now he has 'undoubted evidence of crooked dealing,' eh?" glancing once more at the telegram, "and is 'going to lay it before Prentice'?

"Well," and Jones's white teeth showed in a sinister smile, "I don't think he will; not 'immediately' at any rate."

"What are you goin' to do?" questioned Lank Rake. "Send a couple of the boys up to the hotel to kidnap him like we did that other short-horn that come pesterin' round?

"I kin do it slick as a whistle," he added eagerly. "I've got the job of deliverin' his trunk from Avery, an' ef I take one of the gang with me, we kin grab him an' git away with him afore he ever suspicions that thar is anything up."

Jones thoughtfully stroked his chin as he considered the proposition.

"No," he decided at length, "too risky. You know how hard it was to convince Avery on that other deal, and I doubt if we could pull the wool over his eyes a second time.

"Besides, you forget that I am a deputy sheriff now," pulling back his lapel with a mocking grin to show the little silver badge upon its under side, "responsible for the maintenance of law and order in this community."

Lank Rake stared at his companion, frankly puzzled. "Yer don't mean that yer goin' to let this maverick beller what he's found out all over the range?"

"Oh, no, we'll muzzle him all right; but we'll muzzle him in such a way that there'll be no inconvenient questions asked. This deal is going to be played strictly according to Hoyle. Listen."

And then, lowering his voice, he outlined in a few, crisp sentences the plan which had suggested itself to him.

Lank Rake stood listening, and as the other's purpose became clear, nodded his head from time to time in approval.

"Good," he ejaculated at length, emphasizing his commendation with a copious expectoration of tobacco-juice. "I'm to have two men stationed on every trail leadin' out of town, an' six scattered along the railroad track. While you an' me—"

"You and I, Lank," grinned Jones, "will see that due attention is paid to the distinguished stranger within our gates. We will be the committee on entertainment!"

CHAPTER IX.

ALL UNSUSPICIOUS.

"How soon will my trunk be along?" inquired Behan, after he had done full justice to the dinner provided by the Palace Hotel.

The landlord thoughtfully calculated upon the amount of procrastination to be

expected from Lank Rake, and answered with discretion:

"Not much afore four o'clock, 'tain't likely, now," he said. "I sent a man right down to the station fer it, but seems he ain't showed up sense. I 'low he's waitin' to see whether it don't come in on the 3.38."

"But, good Heavens," fumed Dick, "that throws me clear out. I have a very important call to make this afternoon, and I can't go in this rig."

The landlord's eyes wandered appraisingly over his guest's torn and mud-stained attire.

"Well, I don't know," he rejoined, "yer see, we don't go in so heavy fer full dress as you folks does on East. Who was it you was calc'latin' on visitin', ef I might ask?"

"Mr. Prentice," returned Dick, "and I hardly think—"

But the landlord interrupted to inform him that if such was the case, it made no difference, anyhow, since Prentice had gone out that morning with the posse in pursuit of the train robbers, and could not well be expected back before the following day.

"Yer see," he explained, "thar's been several of these here hold-ups, an' all of 'em has been when money was aboard fer the Verdee Mining Company. Consekently, I've heard that Prentice is a bit sore 'cause nobody ain't been ketched yet, an' I guess he went along himself this time, so's to make sure thar wasn't no shenanigan business about it.

"Howsomever," he added, "ef it's the Verdee people yer want to see, Ralph Jones is in town, an' he could prob'ly tell yer anything yer want to know."

"Ralph Jones? Who is he?"

"The superintendent."

"Any relation to Colonel Jones?"

"Only his son. An' I guess," with a willingness to gossip, "likely to ockerpy a similar sitooation with yer friend Prentice. Leastways, he ain't losin' no time with the darter, which come on last night. They say he's been with her almost every minute since she arriv'."

Dick pushed back his chair from the table with a totally unnecessary amount of force.

"No," he said hastily. "No, I have no business with Mr. Jones. Tell them to bring up my trunk as soon as it comes, will you?" he added as he started for his room. "I'll put in the time until then developing the pictures I have taken on the road."

Accordingly, on reaching his chamber, he straightened out the development kit, which was a part of his photographic outfit, and removing the roll of films from his camera, proceeded to get busy.

To his regret, he found that the flash-lights he had taken of the hold-up were failures, owing, probably, to his nervousness at the moment; but certainly no such fault was to be seen in the collection of snap-shots depicting Miss Prentice.

Recalled by the sight of them to the many happy hours he had spent with her on the train, Dick grew more sore than ever over the quickness with which she seemed to have forgotten him.

His first impulse in his jealous resentment was to destroy the whole set of negatives; but, upon consideration, he refrained.

"No," he said, "I will keep them just to remind me what fool dreams a fellow can build up, and to prevent me from ever thinking again that there's reliance to be put in any woman."

This was very silly, of course; but the young man in love has never been credited with any great degree of sanity, and those smiles which he had seen Daffodil lavishing upon her escort rankled deep in poor Dick's bosom.

Yet, since he had made up his mind to preserve the pictures, he went about it in no slipshod fashion. Every film was painstakingly developed, and as the afternoon was bright and clear, and he had plenty of sensitized paper in his kit, he resolved to lose no time in taking off the prints, but to finish up the job, and be done with it.

Thus, at last, he came to the final negative, the one he had snapped that morning through the tele-photo lens, and, as he held it up to the light, he was struck by its excellence as a photograph.

Every detail was clear and distinct—much more so, indeed, than the image of the scene as it had been manifested upon his ground-glass screen.

Here, he could plainly see the smelter, with its chimneys and ore-heaps, the cars and sidings, the workmen busily engaged

in tearing up the mysterious extension of the railroad and packing it off down into the ravine, and, finally, the young man in authority who—

Behan gave a quick exclamation, and bent lower to scrutinize the pictured face.

Yes, there could be no doubt about it. This was the fellow he had seen ride past the hotel that morning with Daffodil Prentice, and who, from the landlord's chatter, he realized could be none other than Ralph Jones, the superintendent of the Verdee mines.

But even as he stood there with the thing in bis hand, he heard sounds out in the hall betokening the arrival of his belated trunk; so, hastily fastening down the picture with the last of the Daffodil films over a sheet of sensitized paper, he left it upon the window-sill, and turned to fling open the door.

Grunting and sweating under their burden, Lank Rake and a companion bore in the trunk, and dumped it heavily on the floor.

"Careful there! Careful!" cautioned Dick, springing forward. "I have my big camera inside, and a lot of chemicals!"

"Might have a elephant from the heft of it," growled the mountaineer, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "I didn't know when I made the dicker with Jack Avery that I was bargainin' to move a house. Gosh, Mr. Behave, that's a reg'lar Noah's ark!"

"Behave?" ejaculated Dick, surprised at the use of his sobriquet.

"Yep, that's yer name, ain't it? Nothin' to be ashamed of in it, either, ef what they say you done last night is true."

Behan did not take the trouble to deny or explain. After all, what difference did it make now, since the purpose of his trip was practically accomplished? There was really no longer any reason for subterfuge.

Therefore, merely supposing that his identity had become known through the recognition of some one who had been on the train, and desiring to get rid of the men as quickly as possible in order that he might open his trunk, and assume more respectable apparel, he let the statement pass unchallenged.

Rake and his partner stumped out, and Dick busied himself emptying his trunk and transferring its contents to the large closet at one side of the room.

Then he selected fresh linen and a neat business suit from the stock at hand, and having donned these and taken a shave, began to feel once more like a civilized being.

Meanwhile, the afternoon had waned; far down in that valley, under the shadow of the towering mountains, sunset came early. Indeed, Dick's toilet was hardly concluded when the last farewell ray was flashed over the western peaks, and dusk fell upon the little village.

He stepped toward the door, intending to call for a light; but, even as he did so, there came a knock and the landlord appeared upon the threshold.

"Mr. Behave," he said with marked deference, "thar's a party of gents down in the barroom that would like to have the pleasure of yer comp'ny, ef you kin make it convenient."

CHAPTER X.

"PULL YOUR FREIGHT!"

WONDERING at the summons, and not understanding what could possibly be wanted of him, Dick nevertheless followed the landlord down-stairs.

His perplexity was relieved, however, when the door was thrown open into the bar; for a crowd, which completely filled the low-ceiled, smoky room, raised a cry of greeting, and a big, red-shirted miner sprang forward to grasp him by the hand.

"Gents," said this self-constituted master of ceremonies, drawing Dick into the center of the floor, "bere's the gamest thing that ever came down the pike. This is the boy we've all been talkin' about, what stood off a gang of road-agents with nothin' in his hands 'cept'n a dinky little pictur' machine. Give him three cheers to let him know what we think of him!"

"Yee-ow!" yelled the crowd with enthusiasm, and "Yee-ow!" and "Yee-ow!" again, until it almost seemed as though the roof would be raised with the noisy outburst.

A dozen hands were stretched out to seize Behan's; he was almost staggered

by the applauding slaps laid upon his shoulder.

Modestly he tried to disclaim any especial merit for his deed, and to ascribe it all to accident; but his admirers would listen to no such explanations.

They were determined to exalt him into a hero, and willy-nilly, he had to mount the pedestal.

Over and over again, he was called on to describe the routing of the bandits, and with each recital, especially as the bar was doing a rushing business, their approval of his conduct became more pronounced, their shouts of laughter at the discomfiture of the gang more uproarious.

Nothing in Verdee, they assured him, was too good for such a man as he. He had but to express a wish, and they would see that it was instantly attended to.

In fact, as the fiery liquor dispensed by Jack Avery took deeper effect upon them, Dick began to find their attentions rather overpowering, and was considering how best he might excuse himself and withdraw from the boisterous seene, when there came an interruption in the shape of a new arrival.

The door was roughly flung open, and into the assemblage strode Ralph Jones.

"Here, here, Avery," he demanded arrogantly, "what is the meaning of all this? You fellows are making enough noise to wake the dead. What is it all about?"

A score of voices tried to answer him; but the red-shirted master of ceremonies, awaking to the duties of his position, stilled them with a wavc of his arm, and staggered forward.

"Why shouldn't we make a noise," he hiccuped, "when we've got the bravest little man with us that ever hit the town —a feller that stood off a whole gang of road-agents with nothin' but a pictur' machine? Thar, Mr. Jones," pointing an unsteady finger at Dick, "Thar stands Behave!"

"Behave?" Ralph Jones gave a well-assumed start. Then he turned contemptuously toward the other. "What are you trying to give me?" be sneered.

"But it is. It is Behave," came from every quarter of the room. "He's been tellin' us all ahout it."

The mining superintendent laughed in scorn. "Behave?" he repeated. "Then, he's a very different looking man from the one described to me by Miss Prentice.

"And, besides," with the flourish of a clinching argument, as he produced the misleading note left by Dick at the scene of the hold-up, "here is a message undoubtedly from Behave in which he distinctly states that he has started back East. If that be so, what is he doing here in Verdee?"

The crowd, sobered for the moment, gazed uncertainly from one man to the other; and Jones, relying upon the advantage he had gained, swaggered up to Behan.

"Is your name Behave?" he demanded.

The whole affair had come so quickly upon Dick that he was dazed, confused.

He realized that as a stranger there, with no one to plead his cause, he must make no false step, and stopped to consider his answer. But this very hesitation told against him.

"Is your name Behave?" Every voice in the room was thundering the question at him now.

"No," he faltered; "but—"

His attempted explanation was drowned in the roar of yells, cat-calls, and hisses which greeted so fatal an admission.

Indeed, he would probably have received a good deal rougher treatment, had not Jack Avery leaped from behind the counter, and hustling his guest into a corner, stood before him in defensive attitude with a huge bung-starter in his hands.

"No rough-house, gents," protested the proprietor, "outside, you kin do what you please; but while he's under my roof, no one shall lay a finger on him. Ralph Jones, you're deppity sheriff; I call on you to help me protect this here man."

Jones, still with that disdainful smile upon his lips, pushed his way to Avery's side.

"But, who is he, Jack?" he questioned. "Where did he come from?"

Lank Rake, forcing a passage through the crowd, took it upon himself to answer.

"He's a hobo, that's what he is. I

seen him when he come in this morning, a hoofin' it over the trail."

"A hobo, eh? How about it, Avery? I didn't know you had gone into the business of harboring tramps."

"Nor I ain't, neither," protested Avery, with a vehement shake of the head. "I ain't a denyin' that the gent here looked pretty seedy when he come; but what with him a payin' in advance, an' a tellin' me that he was on a walkin' tower, I—"

But the rest of Avery's excuse was lost in a storm of derisive laughter, and Jones's lip curled.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, "it's as plain as the nose on one's face. The man is simply a faker, who thought he could reap a harvest by coming here and palming himself off as a hero."

"But the eight dollars he paid me," broke in Avery. "That don't look much like a hobo."

"Oh, that was only to make his game good and strong. Most of these fellows have some cash stowed away that they can draw on in case necessity arises. He's a tramp, I tell you; just a common tramp!"

"If you would only let me explain!" urged Dick, striving to make himself heard above the babel of voices, "I think—"

But Avery turned on him with a silencing scowl.

"Shut up, you fool," he muttered. "Less heard from you right now the better. They're gittin' mad clean through, an' ef you happen to rile 'em up any more, they're liable to go after you blood-raw."

Indeed, the justice of this warning was plain from the fact that several menacing rushes had already been made toward the corner as though to seize upon the prisoner. These had only been stayed by the determined manner in which the landlord brandished his bung-starter.

The air, too, was filled with vengeful cries of "Lynch him!" "String him up!" "Tar and feather him!" "Ride him on a rail!"

It was plain that only a leader was needed to start mischief.

But Ralph Jones had no intention of letting matters reach a crisis. Pushing Avery to one side, he himself took a stand in front of Behan.

"Stand back there, boys," he ordered, turning his lapel and flashing his badge at them. "The law requires me to prevent violence, and protect even such vermin as this."

He paused a second while his eyes sought Lank Rake's with the question: "Is everything ready?" then, at a reassuring nod from his subordinate, he continued:

"It goes against my grain; but in the position I hold, I can't stand for anything different. Seeing that I am here, this hobo is going to have fifteen minutes to clear. After that, I am going home, and if any of you get him, you can do what you please. I wash my hands of further responsibility."

Seizing Dick by the arm, he shouldered a way through the press, and thus conducted his charge to the front door.

The crowd made a move as if to follow; but Jones whirled about on them with a drawn revolver in either hand.

"No, you don't!" he exclaimed. "Not a man leaves this room until the fifteen minutes is up!"

Then he released his hold on Behan and pushed him across the threshold.

"Skiddoo, Bo!" he cried with mocking intonation. "Pull your freight!"

CHAPTER XI.

HARE AND HOUNDS.

For a moment Dick paused, blinking his eyes in the unlighted darkness of the village street.

The whole thing seemed unreal to him, fantastic as the topsy-turvy incidents of a nightmare, and he half expected to find himself waking up to the prosaic surroundings of his New York bed-chamber.

But, as he stood there, a fresh burst of clamor and cursing swept out to him from the noisy barroom, and brought home to him with stern significance the reality of his peril.

In fifteen minutes, that drunken, lawless crew, blind to reason or to argument, would be turned loose to search for him, and from what he had seen of their temper, he knew it would wo betide

him if he should happen to fall into their clutches.

Unarmed and alone, what chance would he have against an inflamed and riotous mob?

No, he must get away, must follow the gratuitous advice of Ralph Jones and "pull his freight"; and he could lose no time about doing it, either.

But whither might he flee? Where would he find himself safe from pursuit?

He was entirely unacquainted with the roads leading ont of the village, except the one over which he had come in that morning, and now, in the darkness, all the landmarks pointing to it were blotted out and confused.

Besides, he reasoned, knowing of his familiarity with that route, the men would be most likely to seek him there, and he remembered that there was no shelter or hiding-place along it, until one had passed the smelter.

The railroad track, which he guessed must be at the lower end of the street, seemed to afford him a better avenue of escape; for there his pursuers must be thrown at fault by the knowledge that he could have taken either one of two ways, and, furthermore, there would probably be station buildings and box cars on the sidings which would still further delay them in their search.

His decision was accelerated at this point by another chorus of yells and imprecations from the restrained pack inside; so, without further debate, he started off full tilt upon the way he had chosen—the way toward the railroad, along which Lank Rake's six men were posted ready to seize him.

Ignorant, however, of the greater peril into which he was speeding, eager only to escape the one he knew, Dick plunged on, stumbling through the darkness.

He must go now, that he knew. He could not hope to get a hearing to-night from that befuddled horde in their present humor. But he promised himself that he would not go far, and that to-morrow he would return to exact full reparation for the indignities which had been heaped upon him.

Strangely enough, the chief thing which aroused his resentment was the protection which had been extended to him by Ralph Jones.

"To think that I should be placed under obligation to that scoundrel," he muttered through set teeth, and at the same time have to endure his gibes and sneers! I am almost certain, too, from his manner, that he knew the truth. Was there ever such malicious relish in a voice as when he told me to 'skiddoo. Pull your freight'?"

"Skiddoo! Pull your freight!" It suddenly struck him that those words were strangely familiar. Somewhere before, he had heard them. Uttered, too, in a voice of the same quality, although with a different intonation—an intonation then, not of derision, but of alarm and chagrin.

Where had he heard them? Somewhere, certainly; and that quite recently, he was willing to swear.

In the vengeful ferment of his thonghts, however, his mind did not dwell long upon the subject, but presently was hammering away again at what he esteemed his especial grievance.

"To be indebted for my safety to a crook!" he raged. "And to have cut such a pitiable figure before him, too! To-morrow he'll probably describe it all to Daffodil with embellishments!

"But there'll come a day of reckoning. It's his turn now; but wait until I return and explode the bomb I've got laid up. Then, we'll see how he stands the gaff. If I am not mistaken, that ugly grin of his will be on the other side of his mouth."

Meanwhile, Dick was speeding as fast as his legs could carry him right into the trap which his enemy had set.

Jones's chief aim in the plot which he had formulated, had been, of course, to clear his own skirts of any responsibility for what happened to the stranger in camp, and he therefore had so arranged matters that in case of any question being raised, he should appear as the law-abiding official, the one person who had intervened to extend succor.

It cannot be denied, however, that the project gained a certain cruel zest to his mind from its feline and deceptive quality. All the time that he was holding back the mob, and pretending to give the fugitive a chance, he was secretly exulting in the knowledge that Behan, strain his energies as he might, was as com-

pletely lost to hope as the mouse under the paw of the cat.

But sometimes the poor mouse escapes an overconfident grimalkin; and in his calculations Jones had overlooked one point. The point, too, which seemed, on the face of it, Dick's worst stumbling block—his ignorance of the village pathways.

So, it happened that as Behan fled pantingly along the road which he believed extended to the station, but which really led in quite the contrary direction, he was brought to an indecisive halt by its sudden forking into three separate ways.

Which should he take? For a moment he was nonplused; then quickly noting—for by this time his eyes had become somewhat accustomed to the dark—that the right hand one appeared to be the more traveled, he took it on a venture.

Down it he ran, trusting to luck that he had made no mistake, and charged full into a barbed-wire fence which enclosed a place of considerable size. He had landed in a *cul de sac*.

Ahead of him he could see a white, two-story dwelling, set well back in a wide yard full of trees, while to the rear was a barn and the dim outline of several sheds.

It was, as a matter of fact, the show residence of Verdee; but although Behan did not know this, he realized plainly that it was too big for him to skirt, and that he must either cross the property or turn back to the forks.

The first was manifestly risky; for it was evident now that he had lost his bearings, and to take either of the other roads might precipitate him straight into the arms of his pursuers.

Yet, was the alternative any less hazardous? Crossing a piece of private property, he could hardly fail to arouse a watch-dog, and thus excite an alarm which would betray his whereabouts, and speedily bring his enemies down upon him.

Hesitating, uncertain, he stood there, his perplexed gaze meanwhile taking in unconsciously the details of this house which had barred his progress.

Plainly, there was a feminine member to the family; for the light from the open front door showed a fleecy shawl hanging over the back of one of the piazza chairs, and a dainty work-basket with its spools of embroidery silk rested on the step.

And, then, as he waited, debating what next, the piano was struck, and a rich, clear contralto floated out to him in the words of a song he had often heard hummed by "Miss Prunes-and-Prisms" during that never-to-be-forgotten journey across the continent.

He gave a great gasp of wondering relief. Blind chance had solved his dilemma and led him to the one haven of refuge open to him in all Verdee.

Strange as it may seem, the hurly-burly of his thoughts had been such in his flight that never before had the idea occurred to him of appealing to Mr. Prentice for protection.

Now, as if by magic, the hunted, apprehensive air of the fugitive dropped from his shoulders. He straightened up into quite his ordinary nonchalant manner, and opening the gate, strode boldly up the path.

The contralto voice in the cadences of the familiar song still floated out to him, the fleecy shawl and work-basket spoke eloquently to him of Daffodil's presence; but he resolutely closed his eyes and ears to their appeal.

It was the father, not the daughter, that he wanted to see, he told himself. A coquette, he hotly vowed, had no attraction for him.

No, it was on a man's business he had come, and he wished to see only the master of the house.

But, alas, the neat maid who answered his ring at the bell informed him that Mr. Prentice had not only not returned as yet, but that a message had been received from him stating that he would not be home before the morrow.

Should he put his pride in his pocket, then, and crave sanctuary of the lady—the lady he had deemed almost his, but who had shown herself so fickle and inconstant?

In his dire need, it cannot be denied that such a course presented a strong temptation. But he angrily fought it down.

Better almost, he told himself, the tender mercies of the mob, than, like a

craven, seek shelter behind the petticoats of Miss Prentice.

With an impulsive gesture, he turned away from the portal, and heard the maid close the door behind him.

And as he lingered a second on the porch, the night was suddenly shattered into fragments by a wild howl from over toward the center of the village—a fierce yelping as of a pack of hounds loosed to the chase.

The fifteen minutes was up!

(To be continued.)

THAT DROPPED CAR.

By ROBERT RUSSELL.

How Smithers came to have an unpleasant fact broken to him, not easily, but as it were in sledge-hammer fashion.

IF Smithers had not been so anxious to make the strongest kind of an impression on the young woman with whom he was to spend his half-holiday, the thing would never have happened, but the result would probably have been the same. At any rate, when Grace Forest had said, a few days before, that he might accompany her on the train to a suburban town a short distance outside the city, the young man determined to make every portion of the trip as perfect as possible, and finally to unbosom himself of the great love he persuaded himself that he felt for her.

Her visit was to be a short one, in which he was not to share, but he was confident that the granting of this favor by such a popular girl meant that she would not be averse to hearing his proposal.

It was this desire to appear to advantage in her eyes that led to the brilliant idea of spending his last three dollars ou the extravagant luxury of a taxicab to carry them both to the station. Their tickets were safely stowed away in his pocket. He knew that Miss Forest would be met at the station by her friends, so that when he was obliged to turn her over to them she would be in ignorance of the fact of his folly.

The beauty of the day made the long ride to the station extremely pleasant to the young man, and her graciousness and apparent appreciation of his thought for her comfort added much to his pleasure.

"But it was awfully foolish of you to go to the expense of this taxicab," she remarked.

"In one's affairs with some people nothing is foolish which adds to their pleasure," replied Smithers, with a hidden, intense meaning.

"I have a brother who is just starting in to practise law for himself," Miss Forest continued. "You see, I know how slowly the fees come in."

"But," replied Smithers, with becoming modesty, "there is a great difference in the amount of work, and consequent pay, that young lawyers make."

"At any rate, it was very kind of you to take so much trouble," said the girl; "and it certainly is pleasant."

"Point one," Smithers told himself.

Safely aboard the train, with the anticipation of their hour's *tête-à-tête* before him, the young man set himself seriously to work to disclose to the girl his keen insight into affairs which usually escaped the ordinary young person. He had some story concerning every place of importance which they passed, and he felt that his remarks were unusually brilliant and original. An abandoned quarry naturally suggested other industrial errors which stupid capitalists had made, and the subject of railroading came up.

"This road, for instance," remarked Smithers, "is very poorly managed. It has probably escaped your notice that this train is composed of two coaches which are occupied, and one that is barely filled. To my mind the carrying of that extra coach is a great waste of energy. Now, if I were at the head of this railroad, things would be done very differently."

And so it was with every subject which came up. This young man had some improvement to offer, in many cases his remarks really making an impression upon the girl.

The train had only covered a small portion of their journey, and was slowing up at a station, when a particularly scholarly dissertation by Smithers was interrupted by the brakeman, who shouted in an unusually plain manner:

"Passengers will please take the car ahead."

This bit of idiotic management of traffic brought forth more criticism from the young man, who grumblingly escorted Miss Forest into the forward coach, while the one they had just quitted was cut from the train. As a matter of fact, they were obliged to walk through to the second car ahead before they could obtain seats.

With renewed determination, Smithers again set himself to entertain the girl by his side, deciding that a very few moments, toward the end of their journey, would be sufficient to speak of personal matters. He had again reached a most satisfactory moment in their intercourse when another interruption occurred.

"Tickets, please," came from a dignified conductor.

Smithers reached for the little blue slips which had been inserted in the cushion of the seat in front of them. But no tickets were there. And then he remembered.

When they had moved from the rear car, now probably standing on some sidetrack miles behind them, he had forgotten to take their tickets with him.

"I left them in the other car some time ago," said Smithers with confidence.

"Sorry, sir," replied the conductor, "but you must get others. Where are you going?"

"To Charloton," replied the young man, losing some of his confidence; "and I should not be compelled to buy tickets twice."

"That's the rule," said the man in uniform. "Of course the road will refund you your money when we find the others."

"I have had occasion to notice," began Smithers, seeing nothing to do but bluster it out, "that this road is run in a very poor manner. This is merely an example. It's not the money I care about," with dignity; "it's the principle of the thing. I won't buy more tickets."

"Then you will have to get off at the next station," came firmly from the official.

"I think," said Miss Forest, "that it is too small a matter to argue about. Hadn't we better get more tickets?"

Anything to gain time, thought Smithers, as the conductor moved away, with the remark that he would return.

"I am very sorry," began the young man, "that my convictions are so strong. I presented our tickets to the conductor once, and after that we are entitled to a ride. I shall not buy more tickets."

And what a good reason he had as he thought of the ten cents, solitary in his pockets!

"Then I think I shall," rejoined Miss Forest, somewhat coldly.

This was terrible. All Smithers's visions of winning this girl faded from his mind. Why had he hired that taxicab, and thus put himself in such a position? Something must be done. Besides, there was his own return ticket, which was attached to that luckless missing bit of stiff paper.

He looked hopelessly about him, only to encounter the amused glances of the other passengers, and in the distance the tall form of the conductor returning to obtain their decision.

"I decline to buy any more tickets," said Smithers in desperation.

"This is humiliating," said Miss Forest. "I insist that either you buy the tickets or allow me to do so."

A great wave of hope crossed Smithers's face. He suddenly recalled catching a glimpse of a fellow he knew in the car behind.

"All right," sighed the young man, as though it were no longer possible to live up to the conviction of a lifetime not to allow oneself to be imposed upon. "It has occurred to me that in coming into this car I might have brought the miserable tickets with me after all, and dropped them on the way. We passed through the car behind, you know. I will go in there and look for them; and," with great condescension, "if I do not find them I will purchase others."

It all depended upon his unsuspecting acquaintance now.

Smithers rose, with the same air of resignation, and passed into the rear car, with a pretense of examining the aisle as he advanced. When he had reached the seat occupied by his friend, whom he had not seen in years, he cast a furtive glance behind him to be sure that Miss Forest was not watching him, and then grasped the other's hand in keen gratification.

"I'm in a horrible hole, Jim," he said. "Tickets lost—girl with me whom I hope to marry—no money—only going a little way—help me out, will you?"

"Surely, Smithers—glad to. How much do you want?"

It was a self-respecting person once more who sat down beside Miss Forest, and explained, in his most winning manner, that he would not have had this thing happen while with her for the world. Never had Smithers purchased articles with the enthusiasm which filled him as he handed over the necessary amount to the conductor, and received the little slips in return.

He recognized the fact, however, that the psychological moment for a proposal of marriage would not be presented on this journey, so he made the most of a now spoiled opportunity.

Miss Forest was very sweet during the remainder of the ride, in her attempt to show Smithers that she forgave him. As they descended from the train the girl asked him to see if her friends were waiting for her behind the station, while she looked to see if any others of the house-party whom she knew had come by this train.

The friends were there, and Smithers returned, but only to stand aghast at the sight presented to him on the little platform. There, in amused and animated conversation, stood Miss Forest and his benefactor of the train. They seemed not to have noticed his return, for he caught the remark from the girl:

"That *was* a peculiar experience, indeed; and you say your friend had no money? We had a like experience, but Mr.—"

Smithers could stand it no longer.

"Your friends are there, Miss Forest, and I will say good-by."

The blank expression on the face of Miss Forest's companion caused that young lady to burst into a merry laugh.

"Oh, Mr. Smithers! why didn't you explain to me? Mr. Gordon here has done so unwittingly, never suspecting that you were with me. But it's all right. Let me introduce him to you, Mr. Smithers; and, to show you that I forgive you, you shall be the first to hear of our engagement. We will announce it to-day."

"I wish—you—here's my train," said Smithers brokenly, and fled.

FROM FLAG TO FLAG.

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.

Author of "With Sealed Lips," "On Glory's Trail," "Their Last Hope," etc.

An American's strange adventures in his own country during the War of 1812, with an account of a historic achievement under fire closely woven into the fabric of the story.

CHAPTER I.

CHECK AND COUNTERCHECK.

"HALT, there!"

I favored the fellow who had stopped me with a gaze of lofty contempt that I have known to impose upon far wiser men.

But this awkward militia sergeant was too stupid to be affected thereby. I saw that I must resort to some plainer measures.

"You have dared to stop me without warrant or excuse," I said, in what I intended for cold rebuke. "Your confounded crew of scarecrows are pointing their muskets at me so awkwardly that one or two of the guns are like to go off at any moment. Then it may be a hanging matter for somebody."

"It's like to be a hanging matter," he assented with a silly chuckle, "but not for *us*. Step out of that boat now, lively, or—"

"But," I protested with excellent indignation, "this is an outrage. I am rowing quietly up the Patuxent for morning exercise, when you suddenly appear at a curve of the stream and level a half dozen guns at me. I've rowed close to shore to humor your whim—and to save myself from a stray bullet. But I fail to see why I should consider myself under arrest, or—"

"You talk a lot, friend," grinned the sergeant, "but the weddin' ceremony's the only place I know about where talk ain't the cheapest thing on earth. If you've got a pass, hand it over, and I'll 'pologize and let you go ahead. If you haven't a pass, you've no call to be on the river, and we'll have to—"

"I saw no signs warning me off. Surely, the river is free to all. There can be no harm in—"

"That's where you're wrong. The Patuxent's a mighty unhealthy stream for strangers these days. They're liable to suffer a whole lot from rush of rope to the throat."

It was a grisly jest, and I did not echo the dutiful roar of laughter that convulsed the speaker's followers.

"I beg you will curb your pretty wit," I remonstrated with an irony that was quite thrown away. "Amid all those cackles some one's musket will be by way of exploding, and then I'll literally 'die of laughter!'"

The self-appreciative smirk faded from his lips.

"Friend," he drawled, his eyelids narrowing, "we Yankees don't use the phrase 'by way of.' That's redcoat talk. I'll trouble you to step out of that boat in a hurry. Potter! McQueen! Grab hold of that prow and run her ashore! You others keep your guns on him!"

I was fairly caught. For a wild instant I had thoughts of jumping into the water and seeking safety by diving. But I was close to the bank, where the muddy river was too shallow for my need.

Again, my eye fell on my fowling-piece strapped to the thwarts. But before I could have unfastened and lifted it, my body would have been riddled with bullets.

Militiamen are of little use in battle; but on patrol duty they have a stupid doggedness that often defies the cleverest man. In the case of disciplined soldiery, my own military training and custom of command might have stood me in good stead. But against these farm yokels, new to their ill-fitting regimentals, it was of no avail. I must yield to the inevitable.

I remember once hearing the great Marquis de Lafayette say he would rather face the rapiers of a dozen hired bravos than the cudgels of half as many angry peasants. I was now in like case.

To avoid a useless scuffle and undue rough handling, I leaped ashore. I had scarce touched bank, when four of the fellows were upon me, and had me trussed and bound like any spitted fowl.

I made no struggle. I think this surprised my captors.

"Please have my gun and my lunch-basket brought along," I requested the sergeant as calmly as I could. "I do not care to lose them. Where are you taking me to?"

"To headquarters," he answered, less truculently. "It's only a few miles back. You'll—"

"See that my belongings get there safely, then," said I. "You will have enough black marks against your record before I'm done with you without having to account for my fowling-piece and—"

"What were you doing when we caught you?"

"You saw what I was doing."

"You were rowing up the river. What for?"

"For snipe. I'd planned for a day's hunting."

"Are you sure it was snipe?"

"What other game is in season this time of year?" I asked with intentional misunderstanding.

"Gunboats, for one thing."

I gazed at him stupidly.

"Gunboats," he repeated. "Commodore Barney's. Whole flotilla of 'em. Your people are anxious enough to find out where they are. But *you* won't be the man to bring 'em the news. Not

this trip. And if the provost marshal's the man I think he is, there won't be *any* return journey for you."

"Gunboats! Commodore Barney!" I gasped.

Then, fearing to seem to know too little of what was then the most talked-of theme in all the Chesapeake country-side, I added:

"Oh, you're speaking of the Barney flotilla that's been harrying Admiral Cockburn's war-ships all year and keeping the Chesapeake free from invasion? What have I to do with it?"

"Nothing now. Nor hereafter. Unless ghosts can spy."

"'Spy' is an ugly word, even for a militia bumpkin to use," I retorted. "If you think I was rowing up the Patuxent trying to find and sink Barney's gunboats with a fowling-piece—"

"Or to tell your friends where his flotilla is?" he suggested. "Cockburn might pay good money for that bit of information. But he won't get a chance to pay it while three companies of Maryland militia are scattered along both banks to stop Britishers from getting too curious. You're the fifth that's been nabbed since 1814 began."

"Then," I broke in with an admirable pose of dawning comprehension, "I'm supposed to be a British spy and trying to find whereabouts on the Patuxent Barney has hidden his gunboats to keep them out of Cockburn's way till the mobilizing of the English fleet in the Chesapeake is over? Is that it?"

"That's it," he agreed with another prodigious grin. "And now, if you can walk as well as you can make guesses, let's see how quick we can get you to headquarters. Fall in!" he shouted to his men. "March!"

I walked along as carelessly as I might between two of the soldiers. But I was not yet minded to give up the game. So, as we plodded on under the broiling August sun, I spoke again.

"Have you been long in the service, sergeant?" I queried.

"Ten months," he rapped out. "Joined in November, 1813. Why?"

"And a sergeant already!" I exclaimed. "A sergeant in spite of your stupidity in thinking a spy would row up the Patuxent in broad daylight, where every addle-pated jack-in-office could catch him?"

"Tell that at headquarters."

"If I had less to tell at headquarters, you'd wear your sergeant stripes longer. It'll go hard with some one for this day's mistakes."

"Shut up!" he ordered gruffly, as he turned on me.

I was glad of his surliness, for it betokened a growing doubt. And doubt was what most I wished to instil into his mind. But for that cursed slip of mine about being "by way of," I think he would have been content merely to warn me back and let me go my homeward course in peace. Now was my chance to wipe out that unfortunate lapse.

"You accuse me of being a British spy," I resumed. "It may be well to have a clear understanding between us, so that my case, when I state it at headquarters, shall not be prejudicial to you. I am not a spy. I am not an Englishman. I am an American. Romney is my name. If you had orders to prevent any one from going up the river, you could have ordered me back, and no harm would have been done. Instead, you charge me with spying, and you tie me up and march me between your men like a convicted felon. Once more I deny my guilt and make formal demand on you for release."

He halted, hesitating. The loosely marching squad shambled to a full stop. All looked at me with varying degrees of heavy curiosity.

"You're American, hey?" grunted the sergeant at last. "Where are you from?"

"Baltimore."

"What are you doing down here on the Patuxent?"

"Visiting friends. I went out this morning for a day's—"

"What friends?"

Racking my memory only for a moment, I spoke the first local name that sprang to my mind.

"I am guest at the manor-house of Colonel Jared Scholes," said I. "And he will see that you answer for your treatment of me."

The name produced an instant impression. But not quite the sort I had

hoped for. The sergeant scratched his head and looked at me in frank perplexity; yet made no instant move to set me free.

"You're stopping at Colonel Scholes's?" he muttered.

"Yes. The manor-house crowning the hill above the Bladensburg Turnpike. If you know the neighborhood at all, you'll—"

"Oh, I know the neighborhood," he made haste to reply. "I've been on duty here all year. I know the Scholes house, too. How long have you been stopping there?"

"Not quite a week," I answered, glad to see that I was bringing him to reason.

"What time did you leave his house on this shooting picnic we just broke up?"

"At about seven this morning. I took a boat from Clarges Landing—you know where that is?—and had been rowing about an hour when you overhauled me."

I fairly beamed on him. For at each word of mine his bearing was growing more and more deferential.

"So?" he ruminated, as I paused. "Maybe we *have* made a mistake, sir. And I hope you'll overlook it. How many folks are there at the Scholes house now, sir? A large party or—"

"No. At present I am the only guest. There are no—"

"That's queer," he murmured. "Some one was telling me the colonel was expecting quite a party there, this week or next. Maybe—"

"He is," I answered glibly. "But they don't arrive till to-morrow night. At present there is no one but the colonel, his family, and myself. But it is hot standing here. If you will kindly release me and apologize for your overzealous error, I will not mention the affair to the colonel or to any one. I—"

"Now, that's real kind of you," he cried delightedly. "And just to show our appreciation, we'll escort you right to the colonel's door—and inside. It's no trouble to us to go there. We were on our way, anyhow. You see, Mr. Spy, that's our headquarters just now. For the past month the manor-house has been chock-full of off'cers. It's queer you didn't happen to notice any of 'em during the week you've spent there. Fall in there! March!"

CHAPTER II.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

PERHAPS you whose eyes have followed my version of the foregoing scene may be as much at a loss concerning my status as I had hoped to make the thick-headed sergeant. So, briefly as may be, I will explain how I, Dick Romney, American, chanced, in this third year of the War of 1812, to fall captive to a squad of my own country's soldiers on charge of being a British spy.

I come of Colonial New Jersey stock and passed my childhood in my native State, varying this habitat by long visits to my mother's relatives in Bladensburg, six miles from Washington. (Hence my intimate knowledge of all the tract of country where now I found myself.)

My father—a former colonel in General Washington's own New Jersey brigade—dying when I was but fourteen, my mother went to live with a sister in England, and took me with her, my elder brother inheriting the broad New Jersey estates. Nor had I seen my native land again for full sixteen years.

I was educated in England, imbibing British customs and prejudices, as might any impressionable boy of my age; and had, through family influence, secured at nineteen a commission in King George's army.

Bonaparte kept his majesty's soldiers busy in those days, I can tell you. And the lieutenant with brains and pluck had rare chances of advancement.

I was a colonel at twenty-seven; and wore, as mementoes of the Peninsular wars, not only a sword-slash over the cheek, received at the assault of Ciudad Rodrigo, but a distinguished service order, pinned to my breast by no less a hand than that of Wellington, our "Iron Duke."

Well, by the spring of 1814 we had Bonaparte tied up safe and fast (as we thought) at Elba; and for the moment no other war save that with America menaced England. Some fourteen thousand of our Peninsular veterans were

ordered to the United States to help reduce Uncle Sam's already hard-pressed armies to utter submission.

My own regiment was one of those shipped across seas on this mission. Then it was that, somewhat to my own amaze, I found I could not draw sword against the land my father had risked life and fortune to set free.

I had thought myself a thorough Englishman. If I had not joined in my fellow officers' sneers at America, I had at least felt that my loyalty was all to the British flag, under whose shadow I had so long and so successfully fought.

When, in 1812, war had broken out between the United States and Great Britain over the latter's high-handed insults to Yankee seamen and Yankee commerce, I had been too busy fighting Soult, Dupont, and Masséna in the Spanish Peninsula to trouble myself over any problem farther afield than the nearest French line. Beyond the fact that America's many losses by land had been partly atoned for by her brilliant success in sea fights, the "War of 1812" had meant comparatively little to me.

But when the question of taking up arms against the old homeland arose, something within me cried out against the deed. On impulse, I sold my commission and resigned from the British army.

As I was loafing drearily about London, a month later—for nothing is so wearisome to a soldier as the days of enforced idleness following active service—news reached me of my elder brother's death and of my own heirship to the New Jersey property.

I planned to set out at once for America to take possession. But at the same time I learned that my old commander, General Ross, was to take four regiments of our Peninsular veterans and reenforce Admiral Cockburn on the Chesapeake. Stirring times were promised; and at thought of missing so much of the martial excitement which for years had been as meat and drink to me, I hit on a very natural and simple plan.

I stated my case to Ross, explaining that, though I could not turn against the land of my birth, I longed to follow the future deeds of my old Peninsular comrades. The talk ended by his appointing me honorary major on his personal staff; in strictly non-combatant capacity, and with the thorough understanding that I should be employed merely in a clerical position and not expected to aid in any way in his plans against America.

So it was that, late in July, I found myself with thirty-five hundred Peninsular veterans in Ross's camp at the mouth of the Chesapeake.

There, for the first time, I set eyes on that most picturesque daredevil of the age—Admiral George Cockburn, commander of the blockade which England was enforcing along all the Atlantic coast.

I verily believe the man was a bit insane. How else explain his boundless generosity and ferocious cruelty; his kindnesses and barbarities; his wild, gay boyishness and crafty strategic wiles? He was a mass of utter contradictions and, withal, the most lovable, grotesque figure of two continents.

It was at mess in the impromptu Army and Navy Club organized in our camp that the subject of Barney's flotilla had come up.

This fleet of gunboats had done more than everything else to mar Cockburn's blockading schemes. So he had mobilized his fleet in overwhelming numbers at the Chesapeake's mouth, not only to cooperate with Ross on an inland raid, but to crush Barney once and forever.

But, as though by magic, the whole flotilla had vanished before his approach. Its whereabouts was a mystery and a decidedly needful thing to determine.

For neither Ross nor Cockburn relished the idea of stripping the British fleet of such mariners as would be necessary for the invasion if, in their absence, Barney's gunboats might be expected to bear down on the ill-defended shipping and destroy it, leaving the advancing army cut off from escape.

Accordingly, Cockburn had sent out a veritable swarm of spies in search of the flotilla. But such as had not been captured had returned as ignorant as they had set out.

Cockburn was in a fine rage, I can assure you, and his language was a liberal education to even the most voluble teamsters in camp.

I had a theory of my own. I knew the course of the near-by Patuxent, and realized how easy it would be to secrete a whole royal squadron in some of its sheltered upper reaches. This news I did not impart to my friends. For, was I not strictly non-combatant—a mere spectator?

But in reply to a wrathful declaration of Cockburn's that "Not a man who trod boot-leather had the wit to find the pestilent Yankee hulks," I had made shift to reply modestly that I would be willing to wager twenty guineas I could locate the flotilla within forty-eight hours.

Cockburn snapped up the bet before it was fairly made. So I hastened to add that, though I was certain I could find Barney's fleet, I had no intention whatsoever of divulging its whereabouts. I offered, however, to seek it and, on my return, to state on my honor as an officer and gentleman whether or not I had discovered the flotilla.

Cockburn was vastly chapfallen at this addendum to my boast; but, like the insatiate gambler he was, took the wager on my own terms. Others of the mess, too, backed one or the other of us, until a goodly sum hung on the result.

I set forth, in civilian garb, on my own private quest, half the spare cash of the camp hanging on my success.

Lest you who read may judge this freak trivial, pray understand that it was an era of unbridled gambling, and that he who made and won the wildest wager stood highest in regimental fame. When the Constitution (Old Ironsides) fought and sank the Guerrière at sea, it is a historic fact that the battle was the outcome of a bet, and that the rival commanders, Hull and Dacre, had wagered a cocked-hat on the result.

Be all that as it may, I was but twelve hours on my search of the Patuxent's back-waters when my friend the sergeant, with his squad, overhauled me. My own folly had done the rest.

And now, thanks to silly blunders and overconfidence, I found myself under arrest as a spy.

At first, as the irritation wore off, I was inclined to laugh at my plight. Then, studying the matter more closely, I grew grave.

I could foresee that it would be no simple matter to explain to some prejudiced United States provost marshal's satisfaction that I had embarked on this mission merely to win a bet, and that I had given my word not to divulge to Cockburn—in event of my success—the whereabouts of the fleet. Also, that I, though on the British major-general's staff, was a non-combatant and had no designs against my country.

Yes, the whole thing would sound unconvincing. Disgustingly so. Instinctively, I tried to loosen my neck-cloth. It had begun to feel uncomfortably like a rope.

CHAPTER III.

THE GIRL.

It was high noon when we drew up in front of Colonel Scholes's great manor-house on the hill-crest overlooking the Bladensburg Turnpike. The sergeant left us standing there in the scorching sun of the driveway, the curious center of a hundred loafing soldiers, while he entered the house to report.

Five minutes later he returned and ushered me up the steps, across the deep porch and through the wide-open doorway into the central hall of the manor.

The cool and gloom of the place were grateful after our long, hot tramp. My eyes, growing used to the dim light as I was brought to a halt, showed me a stout man seated at a table in the center of the hall. About the place sat or lounged several officers and a civilian or two.

"This is the prisoner, general," reported the sergeant, saluting and falling back a pace at my side.

The man at the table looked up and surveyed my perspiring, dusty self with mechanical interest. Even in that brief instant of mutual scrutiny, I noted how harassed and bothered was his wrinkled face.

He had the air of a man who has been nagged almost to desperation. Nor, as I was later to learn, did this aspect belie him.

But there was something else in his face that set my heart to jumping in a fashion wholly unconnected with any

fear. It was a resemblance—of expression rather than feature—that made me forget my present danger and sent my mind flying back to the other side of the ocean.

Another moment, and I knew of what the man's not especially handsome visage reminded me.

A winding garden path beyond the mission guest-house near Madrid — a meeting with one I had not seen since childhood—the pressure of a girlish hand, the clear, frank look of a girl's eyes — a few days' acquaintanceship, whose memory I had never been wholly able to lose.

Why did this plump, middle-aged man recall all these visions to me? To me who stood in the shadow of the rope?

"Who are you?" I blurted out, even as his lips had parted to make the initial query of his examination.

It was the oddest, least-expected happening in the world—this inquisition of a general by his prisoner. And a ruffle of quickly checked laughter ran through the group of spectators.

One man — a civilian who, from a sofa near by, had been scanning a close-written document — looked up with eager, amused interest and thrust his paper into his pocket.

I did not expect the general to reply to my impertinence, unless to chide it. But he, as well as myself, seemed momentarily off guard.

For he answered, apparently before the peculiarity of my question had the opportunity to strike him:

"I am General Winder, in command of the—"

Then, checking himself with a frown, he added hastily:

"The examination will begin."

I scarcely heard him.

"Winder!" Now it was explained, this haunting likeness.

The Winders—doubtless relatives of his — had owned the estate next my father's in New Jersey. On the day when I, a hobbledehoy youth of fourteen, left for England, I had received a solemn, ardent proposal of marriage—my first and last—from no less a person than seven-year-old Dorothy Winder, my neighbor's only daughter and my own best beloved playmate.

She had on that day of parting tearfully begged me to come back as soon as I should be grown up, and marry her. With the pitying condescension of a big boy for a little girl I had gravely promised.

Nor had I given her, I fear, a second thought, for the next fourteen years. Then, two years before my return to America, we had met by pure chance at the guest-house outside Madrid.

She was making the "grand tour" with her father. For two blissful days I had prolonged my stay at the tumble-down old guest-house, seeking Dorothy's company at every moment and postponing dangerously long my return to duty.

For there was something about that tall, willowy girl, with her level gray eyes, that one does not find in European damsels. We had talked over old times, she had told me of the old home and of all that had happened in the uneventful routine of life there since my departure, and had listened with flattering interest to the tale of my few petty war experiences.

Then I had ridden away. But fast as I might ride or hard as I might fight, I could never thenceforth wholly rid myself of that odd, "hidden-laughter" expression of hers, nor the level, clear look of her eyes.

Those same eyes had stayed in my mind to the prohibition of many a gay escapade in which my comrades reveled. And more than once I had half wished I might rid myself of their memory.

When the chance had come to go to my own country again and settle down among the hills of my childhood, I had all along recognized my chief, if unconfessed, motive in taking advantage of it. Was I in love with Dorothy Winder? How can I say?

It never so occurred to me in those days. To think ever of her seemed natural. That was all.

I was still tracing idly that faint family likeness in my inquisitor's face, and he was forced to repeat a question I had let pass unheard.

"Your name?"

"Richard Romney."

"From—?"

"New Jersey."

"Jerseymen pronounce the 'r' in their State's name somewhat more distinctly than you do," he commented. "What section?"

"Pompton."

"Pompton, eh?" he snapped, looking up at me with a new cunning. "I chance to have relatives there."

"Squire Gabriel Winder?" I suggested. "His place adjoins mine on the right. On the left are the lands of the old patroon — Petrus Ryerson. The Winder estate on the other side touches the Schuylers'."

General Winder leaned back, clearly puzzled. The others, too, seemed more interested. The young man on the sofa was frankly enjoying the scene.

"You seem to have some knowledge of Jersey topography," admitted the general, "but it proves nothing. You say you are one of the Pompton Romneys. Yet you are several hundred miles away from home and talking like an Englishman. How do you account for that?"

"You must be William Winder, attorney at law, of Philadelphia," I countered. "Yet you also are some distance from home, and in the uniform of a general. Is the one harder to understand than the other?"

"Insolence will not save you, sir!" cried the general, flushing. "I warn you you will not help your case by such talk. You are under grave suspicion and—"

"Then, sir," said I, "if I might suggest, suppose we get down to business. I can lift that same 'grave suspicion' more easily when I know its nature. Up to the present time, we seem to be engaging in a rather useless genealogical contest. Can't we go faster? I merely suggest it."

"Sir!" thundered the now thoroughly irate general, "are you aware of your position? Are you informed who and what I am, that you—"

"I have had much useless information thrust upon me from time to time," I yawned.

There was a stifled snicker from the officers. But I saw the man on the sofa frown slightly. His bright, interested face showed a trace of disappointment, and I was almost sorry for my gross flippancy.

"I shall ask you to answer my questions truthfully," proceeded Winder, swallowing his wrath with a certain stiff dignity. "Remember, sir, truth will be best for you in the end. If you try to deceive me as to—"

"If I answer your questions at all," I retorted, "I shall do so truthfully. But up to now, permit me to remind you, the only questions you've done me the honor to ask were concerning my name and the geography of northern New Jersey. On neither of those counts, I take it, am I under arrest."

"You are under arrest, sir, on the charge of being a British spy."

"I can answer that accusation in one sentence. I am not a spy, and I am not British."

"You were found inside the lines in civilian dress. You speak with a strong English accent.

"There are probably several thousand civilians like myself inside the lines in civilian dress," I answered. "That gentleman on the sofa over there, for instance. Yet no one arrests them. As for my English accent, I was educated in England, like many another native-born American."

"If you are a soldier at all," pursued Winder, "you are not in the ranks. Your bearing and education prove that. Do you hold a commission in the British army?"

"I do not."

"Commanding officer to inspect guard mount!" called the man on the sofa, mimicking the high-pitched, nasal tone and clipping words of an English aide-de-camp.

At the sound, before I could recollect my pose of civilian, I had clicked my heels together, dropped my left hand to where my saber had been wont to hang, and made a half-face-about toward the door.

Then, too late, I saw the trap wherein I had fallen. It did not need the bellow of amusement from the others to tell me how habit had betrayed me into a maneuver which no civilian could have thought of executing.

I turned wrathfully toward the sofa. Its occupant, alone of all the bystanders, was not laughing.

His handsome young face showed

genuine regret. Before Winder could open his mouth, the man was on his feet beside me.

"I spoke without thinking, general!" he pleaded, his deep voice vibrant with contrition. "It was a scurvy trick to play, and"—with a graceful bow to me—"I ask this gentleman's pardon. May I beg that you will not take his impulsive act into consideration?"

"I am sorry, Mr. Key," replied the general, "but you must see how impossible it is for me to comply with your wish. You very cleverly stripped the mask from this fellow, and I thank you. The investigation now will be easier."

"But it is not fair," protested Key. "I took him unaware, and by recalling an order I used to hear when I was in England years ago. If I have prejudiced his case, will you let me make amends by acting as his counsel? Though I am not a military judge-advocate, yet, as you know, I am a member in good standing of the Washington bar. May I serve as his lawyer?"

"Tush!" fumed Winder. "The whole thing's cursedly irregular as it stands! We've caught a British officer in civilian dress inside our lines. What else is there to it? The case is clear. Prisoner!"—waving the protesting Mr. Key aside and wheeling about to face me—"have you any logical reason to offer why sentence should not be passed upon you?"

I had not. I knew how futile would be my plea were I to tell the whole truth. I was in a vise. Again that curious tightness of my neck-cloth and the sensation as of rope about my throat.

Well, it was the chance of war. Had it come in the regular performance of my military duties, I should not have murmured. But to have fought unscathed through the fearful Peninsular campaigns, and now, having laid down my sword, to die by hanging! To have braved Napoleon Bonaparte only to fall into the hands of William H. Winder, ex-attorney at law!

"The sentence of the court," began the general solemnly, "is that you be taken from this spot to the guard-house, and that at sunset—"

"I protest!" broke in Key. "The prisoner's guilt is not conclusively proven. That being the case, I warn you that I shall ride at once to Washington and lay the matter before President Madison. I believe he will grant a stay, if not a pardon."

I saw that shadow of worry and almost of fear creep back over Winder's puckered brow at mention of the President. He hesitated. Then broke into petty rage.

"Mr. Key," he stormed, "you are interfering where you have no business. I must request you to be silent and withdraw at once from this case. If you do not, I shall place you under arrest. I am master here! I am commander of the army of defense in the—"

"*Are* you?"

Key's brief query was respectful. Almost deferential. Quite free from slur or sneer. Yet it sent the blood to Winder's face, and his look of worry deepened.

What peevish retort he made, I know not. For just then I saw her.

She was coming slowly down the broad stair, her clinging white dress swishing gently at each step, her dainty little high-heeled shoes clicking a soft tattoo against the polished wood.

Down she came, the cool green light filtering through the closed blinds and seeming to caress the willowy lines of her figure. A single ray of sunshine through a nick in the shutters struck athwart her dusky hair, turning it golden and throwing a shimmering aura about her proud little head.

Oh, it was good to have seen her thus—cool, regal, girlish, infinitely lovely! It was good to have seen her, if for the last time on earth.

Forgotten was the death that loomed heavy above me; forgotten that mortal fear that had sanded my throat; the clash and quarrel of the two men over my tenuous life.

All I saw, all I knew, all I *cared,* was that she was coming toward me down the stairway. How she chanced to be there I no more paused to wonder than one wonders at the strange persons and places heaped together in some wonder-dream.

She reached the stair-foot, not ten feet away from me, evidently unaware that business was going forward. It was then

that both Winder and Key stopped their squabble and looked at me.

I suppose one of them had asked me some question I had not heard, and that, wondering at my silence, they had turned to note the cause.

For their eyes now followed the direction of mine. I felt, rather than noted, Key's little involuntary start of joyous surprise. Winder blustered pettishly:

"Please don't interrupt me just now, Dorothy. We are very busy."

She bowed and passed on. She had not so much as seen me. All the world grew at once very dark.

Winder was beginning to address me again when I heard a young officer, who had risen and bowed at the girl's approach, whisper in loud self-importance to Dorothy:

"The general's trying a spy!"

She turned, curious, toward our group at the table. And our eyes met!

CHAPTER IV.

A HAPPY RESPITE.

How Dorothy Winder recognized the spruce dragoon colonel of the Madrid days in the disheveled, dusty prisoner who leaned across her uncle's table, staring dazedly at her, I do not know. Women's eyes are better than men's for piercing mere externals.

But certain it is that, after one instant's survey, she swept forward with both hands outstretched.

"Colonel Romney! Dick!" she cried, dropping back, in the excitement of the moment, to the familiar address of our childhood.

And I, shouldering my way past the two guards who stood beside me, had sprung forward and grasped those cool, white little hands in my own hot, eager grip.

"Dorothy!" I muttered, confused, unreasonably happy.

It was my loss of self-control, I think, that brought her to herself and to the fact that others were present to whom my ecstatic, gawky greeting must be making us both ridiculous.

It is always the woman who first recovers self-possession. So it was now. She drew back slightly and, turning to me, said:

"You have come home at last? We hoped, in Pompton, you'd return, now that the estate is yours. But how did you run the blockade?"

"In the simplest possible way," answered I loudly, an inspiration coming to me. "I crossed with Ross's transports. You know I used to be in his brigade in Spain. After I left the army I wanted to come back and settle at the old home. So I put my case to Ross, and he gave me transportation, landing me safe at the Chesapeake. As soon as this invasion-scare is over and I can get conveyance of some sort, I shall start north."

It was not to her, but *through* her to the others, that I was talking. All at once the hitherto tangled affair had become absurdly simple. With Dorothy to identify me, my case took on quite a new color.

And even as I spoke I realized my words carried weight. The two guards had moved toward me again, but General Winder motioned them back, and himself rose and stepped forward.

"You know this gentleman, it seems?" he said rather unnecessarily to Dorothy.

"Why, of course!" she replied. "We were children together at Pompton. Then we met in Madrid, two years ago. This is Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Romney—General Winder, my uncle."

There was a somewhat awkward pause. I broke it by saying in explanation:

"Your arrival was decidedly timely, Miss Winder. Your uncle, under a misapprehension, was about to—"

The general purpled and tugged surreptitiously at my sleeve. But Key caught up my story at exactly the proper point, and went on, with a half laugh.

"Colonel Romney was met by a squad of skirmishers and brought here on suspicion. His own story and your recognition, Miss Winder, turn an annoying situation into a capital joke."

"I—I remember now!" exclaimed Dorothy with a little gasp. "Captain Vokes said you were trying a spy. Surely you didn't think—"

"Vokes was mistaken," rapped out

Winder hastily. "Colonel Romney, I suppose we owe you an apology. I hope you'll keep our unfortunate error to yourself. You see, in troublous times like these—"

He paused. The harassed, almost cowed look was again on his face. I was yet to learn how cruelly the man was hampered at every step, how severely and persistently the administration nagged and harried him.

From a naturally good soldier he was fast degenerating into a badgered, uncertain subaltern. To this trait, perhaps, I owed in part his willingness to drop the case against me rather than run the risk of a reprimand from the War Department for molesting an important New Jersey landowner.

"'Scuse me, gen'ral," muttered the sergeant who had captured me, tiptoeing forward and trying to gain Winder's private ear, "but that ain't the story he—"

"Pooh-pooh, man!" sputtered the general testily. "That will do. You've made a blunder that ought to cost you your rank, Sergeant McCrea. Be off! Next time, learn to discriminate between a spy and a gentleman."

As the discomfited McCrea shuffled back among his fellows, his lowering gaze met mine. I took no great pains to check a smile of malicious triumph. He caught the look, and I knew in a flash he still believed me a spy, and held me responsible for his reprimand.

His was one of those narrow, long heads that belong, as a rule, to a man who does not forget. Mentally, I made a note to be on guard against him should we meet again, and I felt it would be no fault of his if we did not.

I accepted Winder's invitation to remain to lunch, and until the heat of the day should be past. He went further by offering me a horse and a passport, to insure my speedier and safe journey north.

In the afternoon I had a long, delightful talk with Dorothy in the shaded gallery above-stairs. She was to have ridden across to an aunt's in Bladensburg directly after luncheon, she told me, as her visit to General Winder and his wife was at an end. And Key was to have been her escort.

She delayed the departure until sundown, at my urgent plea. Key was forced reluctantly to set off without her, for he had affairs of moment in Bladensburg.

He showed no outward chagrin at having to go alone; though I could see how unwillingly he gave up the prospect of the five-mile ride with her.

There was something very winning about the young lawyer who had so gallantly come to my defense. One could not help liking him. It was with genuine regret that I bade him farewell for what I then foolishly supposed was the last time.

It was a dreamy, utterly happy afternoon I spent on the long veranda at Dorothy's side. We talked of every conceivable subject save that which lay close to my heart. That could—*must*—wait until I had had chance to woo her in due form.

I foresaw a pastoral, beautiful courtship amid my quiet Jersey hills, when her visit to her Southern relatives should be finished and we should both find ourselves in the dear old Northern State again.

In the meantime I told her of the end of my soldiering and of my determination to live in America. It was on my tongue-tip to confess the ridiculous story of my twenty-guinea bet with Cockburn.

But the wager, which had seemed so amusing when made amid the riot and song of a mess-table, did not now appeal to me as the kind of thing of which this clear-eyed New Jersey girl would approve. So, like a fool, I let pass the opportunity.

Dorothy had much to tell me of the war. I was surprised at her ardent patriotism; for such was not then the tone of the country at large.

As history shows, the general feeling up to this time, in the War of 1812, had been of a decidedly lukewarm, passionless sort. It was hard to believe this faction-wrung, "moderate" nation was made up of the sons of men who had conquered at Yorktown, starved at Valley Forge, and died for their freedom at Concord and Lexington.

I commented on this to Dorothy.

"It will come!" she cried with cheeks aglow. "It will come! The spirit of

'76 is not dead. When it awakens, England will be made to feel it as she felt it once before; and she will be the first to cry for peace."

A faint curl of smoke smeared the southern horizon. It caught our gaze and Dorothy pointed toward it.

"Look!" she exclaimed, "another village sacked and burnt! More of 'Demon' Cockburn's horrible work. He has ravaged our coasts as mercilessly as though we lived in the days of the Norse pirates."

"Aren't you hard upon Cockburn? War is war."

"Is it war to burn defenseless villages and murder unarmed people? If so—"

"But Cockburn is an awfully good chap in his way."

"You know him?" she asked in pained amaze.

"I have met him," said I, with a belated caution.

She shuddered.

"I wonder," she went on, "if it is really true that he and General Ross mean to march on Washington."

It was *my* turn for amazement. Ross fondly hoped no American knew of his daring project to strike inland and attack the nation's capital. He and Cockburn had resolved to make the dash before sufficient troops could be massed to block their progress. Should they be successfully opposed—as even in their most sanguine moments they feared they would—it could be explained to the government as a mere reconnaissance.

If, on the other hand, by rare good luck they could seize Washington, it meant unheard-of glory for both.

"Is there talk of such an attempt?" I asked.

"That is why my uncle has been sent here," she returned, "and why the militia for miles around are concentrating. They say it is only the fear of Commodore Barney that holds the British back. If once they could find where his flotilla is hidden—"

Oh, what a temptation to put the question! To ask: "*Where* is it hidden?" But I could not use this pure girl's confidence as means toward the winning of my wretched bet. So I changed the subject and the conversation drifted pleasantly from politics to self.

"I go North next month," she said at last, as the sun hung low and I rose to depart; "I shall expect to find you settled as squire, peace justice, and all other titles that go with your position, by the time I reach Pompton. But won't you find it stupid to rust as a country gentleman after all your years of adventure?"

"No," I answered shortly.

"I should think you would," she persisted idly.

"*You* should think nothing of the sort," I retorted as I held out my hand in farewell. "It rests with you."

She seemed to understand all that lay behind my words. Or, perhaps it was the glow of sunset that flushed her wonderful face.

"In a month, then," said I, as, my good-byes to the others all spoken, I ran down the steps to where a trooper held my horse.

"In a month!" she replied gaily.

And there was no warning spirit to whisper to either of us a hint of the myriad stirring events wherein we two, side by side, were to play our part before that short month was at an end.

CHAPTER V.

ON RISKY WORK.

I HAD turned out of the grounds of the manor-house and was about to put my horse to a canter when, along the road toward me, advanced Sergeant McCrea. He had evidently been awaiting my exit, in order to speak to me on neutral ground.

The sight of the man touched me with compunction. He had made a clever arrest and had, in reward, received unjust rebuke and had seen his prey escape.

I drew up and awaited him.

"I'm sorry you got the reprimand," I said, tossing him a gold guinea. "You mus'n't let it discourage you, my man."

Now, in England, so condescending a speech combined with so lavish a gift from a colonel to a mere "non-com" would in those days have filled the latter with almost slavish gratitude. Hence—for I knew little of my own countrymen—his reply astounded me.

Catching the coin deftly in air he spat

contemptuously upon it and then, letting the golden disk fall to the road, ground it into the dust with his hobnailed heel.

"I'm not your 'man,' Mr. Spy," he growled, "but you're the 'man' of King George whose face is stamped on that guinea. I've showed you how we Yankees treat his face. Maybe my time'll come to do the same to your own. When it does—"

"Do you realize," I broke in, controlling my hot temper at his insolence and speaking quietly, "do you realize I could repeat that speech to General Winder and have you not only degraded from rank, but flogged as well?"

"You can get me 'broke,'" he retorted, "and I s'pose you will. But we don't flog free men in the American army. We leave that to John Bull and his officers who spy because they're too cowardly to fight. I've been waiting for you, mister. I wanted to tell you that you wriggled out of trouble pretty slick to-day, but I'm laying for you, and some day or other *I'll get you.* Understand? Some day when there won't be a petticoat for you to hide behind."

I saw nothing would suit him better than a furious verbal wrangle. But I had neither time nor wish to bandy words furtber with a Yankee sergeant. So I put spurs to my horse and, without a second thought for the fellow's threat, galloped off.

But the brief colloquy had had the effect of banishing from my mind the glamour of the long, happy afternoon. And I found myself riding on in a decidedly black, reckless mood. Then it was that my insensate idea came to me.

For a mile or so my northward road lay alongside the river. What was to prevent my continuing for a few miles farther along its banks on the chance of coming upon traces of Barney's flotilla? Could I but find the little fleet's whereabouts, I might, under cover of night, ride back to Ross's camp, arrive there by dawn, claim my wager, and at once continue my northern journey.

Armed as I was with Winder's pass, none could turn me back. It irked me to think of having boastfully declared to Cockburn that I could locate Barney's gunboats—and then to go North with my boast unfulfilled. Moreover, dozens of men at the mess, relying on my pledge and on my reputation for resource, had backed my wager heavily.

Why should I be the cause of these old friends losing money many of them could ill spare?

It was not as though I were going to reveal to Cockburn the whereabouts of the flotilla. As I have said, he had agreed to take my unsupported word that I had succeeded where his best spies had failed.

No, I do not pretend to excuse the folly of my whim. I am not a hero or a wise man. I have never claimed to be either. Perhaps that is why the mad notion took strong and stronger hold of me the more I thought it over.

Dusk had long fallen and the full moon stood low and red in the east when I halted my horse at last, after a two-hour reconnaissance of the upper reaches of the Patuxent. I had spent the intervening time scouring the shore, peering through the dim light into every sheltered cove. But I had seen no sign of the hidden flotilla.

My wild mood had died and I was about to turn back, unsuccessful, toward the turnpike; then strike off to the northern road.

Even as I came to the resolve my eye was caught by a distant spot of yellow light. Not that of fire, but a gleam as of moonlight reflected on some polished surface.

The gleam shone through a mass of foliage in a scrub-oak grove, perhaps a hundred yards from the road. The river ran parallel to the highway. This grove was at right angles to it. Yet, memory of the countless backwaters and bays along the stream's course started a train of reasoning in my mind.

The gleam I had seen was yellowish. Not like that from glass, but from bright metal. What metal body could be concealed in the grove?

I dismounted, tied my horse and advanced on foot, crouching and moving with the silent caution learned by long scouting trips; taking advantage of every bit of shadow along my route.

Coming to the grove's edge I saw that it was no ordinary patch of woodland, but a well-nigh impenetrable

thicket bordering a lagoon of considerable size. The spot of light I had long since lost and I was now walking by my recollection of its general locality.

So, creeping along in the shade, I skirted the wood, catching now and then a glimmer of water ahead of me, between the low-lying branches.

At a point a few rods from where I had reached the grove's edge, I noted a thinning of foliage and underbrush, barely three feet wide, from whence I could command a fair view of the expanse of lagoon. But the moon was still too low to permit me to gain more than a general idea of a shimmering, watery surface.

I must wait until the luminary should arise high enough to top that screen of leafage and shine unobscured upon the lagoon. Then I should be able to solve my doubts and to learn whether or not that spot of light had really come from some bit of brass-work on a gunboat.

I dared not advance into the wood, meanwhile, for fear of running foul of any shore-picket who might be stationed there.

Little by little the moon edged upward. I did not stand with bated breath, as do scouts in story-books. The whir of summer insects and the calls of whip-poorwills drowned any ordinary low sound.

At last a clear bar of moonlight fell across the lagoon, spreading until the waters were silver bright. I caught my breath as I watched.

For, on that gleaming surface, at regular intervals, and with no lantern showing, lay black, moveless hulks, their fantom spars rising like ghosts above the silent decks.

"One — two — three — four—five," I counted, and so on until I came to the full quota.

My bet was won! The whole missing flotilla was tucked away, safe and hidden out of Cockburn's reach, and awaiting its time to rush back to the scene of war.

With a smothered laugh at my own cleverness, I drew back out of the frame of boughs and—turned to confront a leveled pistol not eight inches from my head.

(*To be continued.*)

The Coat of Amos Koppercrust.

By GARRETT SWIFT.

The unsought romance that found its way into the life of a knight of the road, capped by an astounding revelation.

THE wind howled and shrieked around the eaves of Amos Koppercrust's house in demoniac and unholy glee. And it made its way in no pleasant fashion through the rents and tatters of Timothy Ringbottom's garments.

There would be no particular reason for mentioning this in the same breath were it not for the fact that Timothy Ringbottom was wearily, hungrily, and thirstily trudging along the highway toward the house of Amos Koppercrust. And upon this seemingly unimportant fact hangs a tale.

Being the first seen in the matter, Timothy Ringbottom must be first introduced. I hate introductions. They are usually awkward affairs, anyway; but Timothy Ringbottom must be introduced.

In his relation to mankind in general, Timothy Ringbottom could scarcely be called an asset. And as the chronicler of his fortune or misfortune, as you may decide for yourself, I should dislike to proclaim him a liability.

As a matter of fact, Timothy Ringbottom had done nothing so long that he had become accustomed to it. Not that Timothy was lazy. He had walked from Chicago almost to New York in earnest search of work. And he had always heard of opportunities farther on.

But when he wearily trudged farther

on the opportunities seemed, somehow, to evaporate, vanish into thin air, disappear around a corner, or something. And again Timothy would learn of opportunities farther on.

And yet, there was nothing wrong about the man himself. He had never committed a crime.

Stealing, barn-burning, abducting, kidnaping, forging, note-raising, murder, none of these as a matter of business had ever entered his head. Yet be was capable, so far as mere mental ability went, of doing any of these things.

No, Timothy Ringbottom had never done anything very wrong.

But, on the other hand, he had never done anything particularly good. The chief claim he had to the gratitude of mankind was the fact that he had abstained from the other things mentioned.

And here he was, on a road he fondly believed led to New York and unlimited opportunity and prosperity, so hungry he could scarcely walk, so thirsty he seemed to be chewing cotton, and with holes in his clothes big enough to fall through without bothering the broken buttons and suspenders that held them on.

And he wasn't a bad-looking fellow, this Timothy Ringbottom. He had an amiable face, an intelligent eye, and a way with him.

As we have already learned, he was wending his weary way toward the house of Amos Koppercrust, which leads up to the unpleasant necessity of introducing Amos.

Amos was of a far different type of man. He had always done everything and everybody.

He had an office in the city where he carried on a real-estate brokerage business, loaned money on first mortgages at five per cent, and on second mortgages at six, and foreclosed both as soon as he got a chance.

He was tall, thin, scrawny.

There was never any question in the minds of those who knew him that Amos Koppercrust had money. Nor, if there was any around, that he would get it.

His house was a pretty respectable affair for the Culbertson Road, and as Timothy Ringbottom approached it a peculiar sensation as of a premonition of a coming dinner arose in his mind.

The gate was open. Timothy entered. It gratified him to see that, unlike other rural residences, this place had no dogs to add to the already numerous holes in his garments.

So it was that from the highway he boldly walked to the front porch and rang the bell by pulling the knob in the orthodox way.

As Amos Koppercrust was not at home, another introduction becomes necessary, for Mrs. Koppercrust was.

Now, there were rumors that at one time—no matter how long ago—Mrs. Koppercrust had been a good looking, generous, and sociable young woman. What was left of her was inclined to be sociable still.

But in his sordid greed for gain, Amos Koppercrust had starved her, browbeaten her, kept her penuriously pinned down to household drudgery, till the faded face, retaining some of its one-time sweetness, seemed also to show a longing for that eternal rest that comes to most of us too soon.

When Timothy Ringbottom rang the bell, Mrs. Koppercrust opened the door.

"Madam," said Mr. Ringbottom, with an elaborate bow, "may I ask if your mother is at home?"

"My mother has been dead for years," said Mrs. Koppercrust.

"No one would have imagined so young a person as yourself to be an orphan," said Mr. Ringbottom. "Is it possible? Being a fact, not to doubt your veracity, it must also be possible. May I address you as miss?"

"No," said Mrs. Koppercrust, wavering between one desire to slam the door in his face and another to ask him in, "I am Mrs. Koppercrust."

"Lucky Koppercrust!" said Ringbottom. "I admire his good judgment and envy him his good fortune."

"Anyway," said Mrs. Koppercrust, "what do you want?"

"Madam," he replied, "you see before you a most unfortunate man. I am not only a most unfortunate man, but I am an unfortunate man in most ways possible. Leaving Chicago in possession of a respectable fortune, entrusted by a great railroad syndicate with a very important and secret embassy to another great railroad syndicate in New York, I

was set upon by enemies of my employers, robbed, beaten, and injured.

"I sent news of my unfortunate mishap to my employers, but they refused to believe me. As a result, I am still on my way to New York to complete my commission. Madam, even though dogs, wild beasts, and men tear me and rend me, I shall be faithful to my trust. No man shall say that I have failed in the performance of my duty."

"You poor, dear man!"

"But," continued Ringbottom, seeing his advantage, "I need the assistance of all kind-hearted people. I ask no money. I have no great need of money. Still, if in the excess of Christian charity that now illumines your youthful face you really wished to force upon me a small donation, I would accept it as a loan to be repaid after the reward of my honorable intentions has been reaped in New York."

"Good lands! I ain't got no money. I never see money. My husband ain't a poor man, nor yet he ain't such a rich one. But he—"

"Madam, I appreciate the situation without further words. Having taken you from your father's luxurious and refined home, he has failed to furnish you with those stipendiary forces to which your countenance shows you were accustomed. But you eat."

As Mrs. Koppercrust had always been as poor as a church mouse before she married the broker, she bowed and admitted that they did have enough to eat.

She invited the stranger in. She took him to the kitchen, where she placed a good dinner before him.

"Your husband does not appreciate you," said Ringbottom. "I never ate a dinner I enjoyed more than this."

It is a waste of words to tell that this was true.

"I wish I had some money to give you," said the hostess.

"And does not your husband sometimes forget? Does he not leave money where you might find it?"

"No. I've looked everywhere. I've spent hours trying to find some. He pays the bills. I've ransacked his bureau-drawers and every other place I could think of. He never forgets—where money is concerned."

"Ah, well, perhaps—it is cold weather now—you could take some unused garment that would better protect me from the wind, and he would never know that you gave it to an unfortunate but deserving gentleman."

"Why—I don't know. You do look shabby enough. I'd think you'd freeze. Your coat is all in rags."

"The result of trying to defend myself against rogues."

"'M! Amos isn't mean when it comes to his own clothes. He does sure have plenty of coats. Wait till I see."

She left him. She was not afraid. Although the house was well furnished, and there was silver on the buffet in the dining-room, she was so honored and flustered by what the glib foot-traveler had said that she never thought of danger.

And now, as the chronicler of the fortunes of Timothy Ringbottom, I am proud to say that her trust was not betrayed. Ringbottom never left his chair.

He was warm. He no longer felt the pangs of hunger. Thirst had no immediate terrors for him, for the tea was good. He was grateful.

"There," said Mrs. Koppercrust, returning with a rusty looking corduroy coat. "That coat's been a hangin' in the closet I don't know how many years. He ain't worn it. He'll never wear it again because he's too fat. It won't fit him. I'll risk it and give it to you."

"Madam, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will retire to the shed and change."

He did. And, with the old ragged coat on his arm, and clad in the rusty but warm corduroy, he bowed his thanks again and continued his way along the road.

But one meal doesn't last forever. There were places along the highway where he found no one at home. He might have broken in to steal, but no such thought ever came to his mind.

There were places where dogs were in sight, and they showed an unwarranted antipathy to him. So he trudged on. He threw away the ragged coat. It was a useless encumbrance.

Mile after mile he traveled. He grew thirsty and hungry again. He had been thirsty and hungry and cold so

many hours before he had met with the hospitable Mrs. Koppercrust that one meal had not fortified him.

He felt his knees growing weaker. He realized that he must have rest, but rest in that biting cold was impossible. And he did not feel so hopeless about the future as to want to die.

His step began to wabble. He even staggered. And, just as he was about to turn into another gateway, hours and hours after he left Amos Koppercrust's, he fell against the gate-post.

A small dog came and sniffed at him; and then, retiring to a perfectly safe distance, set up a fearful yelping. In a few minutes women came to the door of the little house.

And this leads up to the necessity of introducing Mrs. Clip. She was a widow. She was the sister of Amos Koppercrust. She was very poor.

When Samantha Koppercrust had married Josiah Clip the world looked bright, indeed.

He had the little farm. He was a hard working and frugal man. But the grim destroyer seems sometimes to love hard working and frugal men, so she was left a widow without children, and a small farm encumbered by a mortgage held by her ungenerous brother Amos.

By the time Mrs. Clip got to the gate, Ringbottom lay across the path unconscious.

"Gracious goodness, what shall I do?" she asked herself aloud.

She had no hired man. She and a woman servant tried to work the little place, getting the plowing and other heavy work done when it was needed by hiring somebody not permanently employed. She called this person now.

There was no one else in sight. She could see the long, undisturbed line of the canal, but not even a canal-boat was afloat. Navigation had closed for the winter. She looked up the road and down the road. None to help.

"This poor man has fainted," she said. "We've got to get him in the house, somehow."

"He's nothin' but a tramp," said the other.

"I don't think he looks like a tramp. He is some poor man out of work. I know he isn't a tramp. Look at the coat he wears. My brother Amos used to wear a corduroy coat like that. Tramps don't wear 'em."

So they dragged Ringbottom to the door and managed to get him inside.

When he recovered consciousness the savor of gruel made him open his eyes and see stars.

He was lying on a comfortable, old-fashioned lounge. His coat was gone, and the shabby remnant of a vest he had worn was also missing. A warm blanket covered him, and a good-looking woman sat waiting for him to wake up.

"I've made you some gruel," she said. "You fell, you know, right at my gate. I ain't rich. But I wouldn't turn a hungry dog away. And now, you must rest and get well. There are two women here. I'm a widow, and Jane Ann has been a widow twice. We ain't afraid, and you don't look so very dangerous. Now, take some of this and go to sleep again."

Was it a dream? Was this thing that had happened to him real? Ringbottom didn't know.

He looked around the room. It was cozy. It was warm. Real chairs to sit on around a real table.

Pictures—old-fashioned, perhaps, but real, were on the walls.

He looked at the stove and saw real fire.

It couldn't be a dream. He remembered tramping the weary miles till every step seemed like putting his foot into a blazing furnace. He remembered turning in at the gateway. He remembered feeling dizzy.

It wasn't a dream.

While he ate the gruel he looked at the widow. She was certainly comely. She wore a cheap but well-fitting gown. Then Jane Ann came bustling in.

There was no reason why Mrs. Clip should be afraid while Jane Ann was in the house. To Ringbottom she looked like a prize-fighter.

"We'll have leg of lamb and some of them peas, and pumpkin-pie," said Mrs. Clip. "And make the coffee good and hot."

Once more Ringbottom asked himself if he was dreaming. But the odors that came from the kitchen reassured him. He was left alone and went to sleep.

When, at last, he awoke refreshed, feeling something akin to a man, dinner was ready.

"Do you think you can sit up and eat?" asked the widow.

Could he? Could Timothy Ringbottom sit up and eat? Could a man who had tramped and starved and thirsted and ridden in freight-cars and slept in woods, sit up in that room and eat?

He almost howled.

"I've mended your coat," said the widow. "I guess when you fell you tore the lining. Just like a straight cut with a knife. But it's all right now."

"Thanks," said Ringbottom.

"It's all right," she said again. "I'm honest."

Ringbottom was honest, too, but he was hungry. He sat down and began active work on what Jane Ann put before him.

Mrs. Clip looked at him in surprise, as though she wondered why he had paid so little attention to her remark.

"Now, madam," said Ringbottom, when he had finished, "I cannot tell you in mere words how grateful I am. I am not yet, of course, as strong as I will be after a meal or two more. And I feel that I cannot continue my tramp without them. I'll make a bargain with you. You have said you were not afraid. There is no reason why you should be. I am just now a tramp; but if I get a chance to do honest work, I'll do it hard enough to make it hurt.

"You have a farm. You have no man to work it. There must be a room somewhere in the barn or wagon-house where I can sleep. I'll work for you for my board. I am not despondent. I want work, but, somehow, when work sees me coming it sneaks. How about it?"

"Why—as for the food—you are welcome. And goodness knows there's work enough to do. And there is a room over the wagon-shed where a hired man slept when my husband was alive."

"Then it's a bargain. Permit me to retire now. I'll take a look around and get to work."

He walked out. Mrs. Clip and Jane Ann looked at each other.

"Well! Did you ever!" Jane Ann exclaimed.

It was astonishing what things Ringbottom, who had never done much of anything, could do remarkably well.

Jane Ann viewed him with an admiration born of long disdain for ordinary men.

As his appetite was great, so was his strength. Neither of the women had to go out in the cold to do work.

He milked, took care of the horse, whitewashed the henhouse, got out the democrat wagon and painted that, brought all the water from the well, and stood ready at all times to do whatever Jane Ann asked.

And all the time the blue eyes of Mrs. Clip looked at him peculiarly and wonderingly.

"Well," said Ringbottom, after a week or so had passed, "I have partaken of your hospitality long enough. I am well and strong. I can go on now and find work."

"Land sakes!" said Jane Ann. "Ain't they work enough here?"

"But I must work for a living and not encroach on hospitality."

"But," said Mrs. Clip timidly, "we—you see—we've got sort of accustomed to having you around. It's made it real easy for Jane Ann and me. Hasn't it, Jane Ann?"

"Easy! Seems like a picnic."

"And—I was thinking," continued the good-looking widow. "I've been a strugglin' ever since my husband died. My brother is mean and won't help me. It's awful hard to pay the interest on the mortgage. And it's leap year. It ain't like as if I was a young girl. A widow knows her own mind and has privileges. And Jane Ann has been a widow twice, and she says I'm right.

"We've talked it over. So, now, you've worked on the farm and it's been easy for us, and I'm going to propose to you. Will you marry me and stay and be as good as you've been?"

Ringbottom sat perfectly still. Were these real words he thought he heard? Was this pleasant voice some phantasmagoria of a disordered brain? Was he really out of his head?

Or had he really been living in clover since he fell at the widow's gate?

"You seem surprised," said Mrs. Clip. "But you know it's leap-year."

"So it is," said Ringbottom.

Visions floated before him. He had never really had a chance. He had never had a home.

Thrown out into this grateful world we all know so well when he was nine years old, he had battled, starved, thirsted, and tramped till now, sometimes having work and other times an empty stomach.

Here was a farm he could work and make money on. He knew it only wanted a man with energy and some brains, and God knew he'd starved long enough to be willing to furnish the energy.

Here was a pleasant home, with everything to make him comfortable, with Jane Aun to do the housework, and a good-looking woman who would be his life's companion.

Tears came to the fellow's eyes.

"Mrs. Clip," he said, "I don't know what to say. I am nothing but a tramp. Why you ask me to marry you when you must know plenty of better men I can't imagine. Let me be honest with you. I do like you. I like your home. I am grateful. I could make money on the farm. Is it possible that you want to marry me?"

"I have asked you. I wouldn't ask if I didn't mean it. And you are not a common tramp, and I know it, so there. You are fooling all the time. If you agree, we'll get married."

"Manthy, I'll do it."

"Harness the horse," said the widow, jumping to her feet and giving Jane Ann a look that meant things. "I must tell my brother."

The horse was harnessed, somehow. Ringbottom felt so light-headed and light-footed that he had to take a firm hold on the earth to keep from floating away. But he got the horse harnessed, and the happy widow drove off.

Amos Koppercrust sat in his office, looking over some papers. It was interest-day for his sister. It was always interest-day in Amos Koppercrust's office for some one.

But Mrs. Clip was usually a few days late, and Amos frowned.

He looked surprised and pleased, however, when he saw her enter.

"Huh!" he said roughly. "On time for once, eh?"

"No, Amos," she said. "I came to tell you about the interest. I'm going to pay it, but I can't do it to-day. I'm going to be married, and then I'll pay it."

"Going to be—going to be married! You going to be married! Who you going to marry?"

"A man named Timothy Ringbottom."

"A fine name that. But what about the interest? Who's he, anyhow? When you going to pay the interest?"

"Amos," she said, with a sweet smile, "I'll tell you something. The day—or almost the day after I'm married, we'll pay you the interest and the *mortgage!*"

Amos gasped. He leaned back in his chair and stared.

"Where'd you meet him?" he asked.

"Oh, he came along. The right man always does."

Amos woke up.

"Manthy, I congratulate you on your good fortune. Of course, I'll wait. I was never impatient about the interest, anyhow. Take your time and bring Timothy up to the house."

"We'll come and see you," she said, and was soon driving homeward, the happiest woman in the world.

She was shy and happy at the supper-table.

"Manthy," said Timothy, "it's cold as blazes in that wagon-shed. As long as we *are* going to get married, let's go ahead."

"We'll go this evening."

And they did. Mrs. Clip dragged from some closet a pair of trousers and a vest that belonged to her late husband, and also a black frock coat.

"You'd better wear these, Timothy," she said.

In the hopelessly dazed condition he was in, Timothy would have put on anything she told him. She took his corduroy coat and carefully locked it in a closet.

"You won't need any of your money," she said. "I've got enough to pay the minister."

Anything went now. Timothy hadn't seen any money in so long a time that he scarcely recognized the name. But they went to the minister's and returned Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Ringbottom.

"There!" she laughed gleefully, when the horse had been fed and blanketed and watered for the night, the stable-door locked, and the chicken-house made secure. "You old rogue! You thought you'd fool me. You thought you'd win me without letting me know. Oh, you're a sly boots!"

"Win you—without letting you know? I don't understand—I always told you the truth, didn't I?"

"I don't say you ever told me a lie. But I found it when I mended the tear in your coat. And I think now we're married, and you can make the farm pay, we'd better use it to pay the mortgage."

"The mortgage? Pay the mortgage? Use what?" floundered the perplexed Timothy.

"Timothy Ringbottom, I'm your lawfully wedded wife. You can't fool me. I saw it. I counted it. I'll show you."

With a gay laugh, she rushed away and brought the corduroy coat. A swift cut of the scissors ripped the lining again.

"There!" she cried.

And Timothy Ringbottom almost fell in another fit when she flashed a roll of bank-notes in his face.

"Oh, yes. You're a tramp, you are! Two thousand good dollars! Tramp! Huh! Why, the mortgage is only five hundred."

Timothy passed his palsied hand over his brows.

"Was—was that—in the coat?"

"Of course."

"All right. We'll go see your brother to-morrow."

"Didn't you know it was in the coat? What makes you so white?"

"Nothing — only I was thinking of something. We'll go see your brother to-morrow. I'd been so happy I forgot the money."

Amos Koppercrust was, indeed, pleased to see his sister and her husband the following day.

"I suppose you intend to be married soon," he said before he had got it through his head that they were already man and wife.

"Amos Koppercrust," said Ringbottom, "let me talk to you as a man. I am married to your sister. I was tramping to New York to look for work, and was hungry and cold and ill-clothed. I stopped at a house on the road—your house — and your wife gave me food. My coat was ragged, and in the kindness of her heart she gave me a coat of yours —an old corduroy coat."

"What! That—"

"Stop a minute. I didn't know there was money in it. I know from what she said that you had money in hiding from her. I don't know why you had it in the house. I don't care. But now your sister is my wife. She thought that money was mine when I didn't know I had it.

"I'll make you a proposition. Her farm—our farm now—can be made to pay. Lend me fifteen hundred of this money and let me take up the mortgage with the other five hundred. I'll give you six per cent and pay you five hundred a year till the debt is paid. We need a little more stock to start with."

Amos Koppercrust sat and looked. There was the money. Timothy Ringbottom held it in his hand.

"I could have kept this money. I could have kept it," said Timothy. "But I never took a dollar dishonestly yet, though God knows I've needed it. You've worked for money. You've made money. Give me this chance to make a man of myself, and you'll never regret it. Remember—I could have kept the money."

A spasm swept over the face of Amos Koppercrust.

"I had the money hid," he said. "I had some doubts about the bank here, and didn't have time to go to New York, and didn't want my wife to know about it. She's extravagant."

"She is not," said Mrs. Ringbottom. "You've been so tarnation close with her. That's what."

There was a pause.

"I don't know—I don't know but I have," said Amos Koppercrust slowly. "And I'm so knocked down by finding a man so honest I almost feel like dedicating a church. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll go home and all four talk it over together."

They went. The farm of Timothy Ringbottom is a success.

A FALL OUT OF FATE.

By EDWIN BLISS.

An artist in difficulties, how a friend tried to help him out, and the part played by his pet antipathy in the process.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

A YOUNG artist, Dick Walters, in temporary financial straits, is threatened with eviction in case he cannot at once raise forty dollars for his rent. Returning to his room, disheartened, after an unsuccessful attempt to borrow money, he is informed by his friend Conner, a fellow artist, that the beautiful and eccentric actress, Mme. Burnham, has been there to order a portrait done. Conner offers Walters his own studio for the work.

The marshal and the landlord, meanwhile, disregarding a stay of execution which Walters has secured from his friend Masters, a lawyer, move Dick's furniture out into the street, and follow it with some of Conner's. The artists appeal to a policeman, who befriends them until the landlord, Abrams, accuses them of running a gambling-place in his house, and produces as proof a roulette-wheel and a faro layout. Upon this the policeman takes Walters and Conner into custody.

CHAPTER VI.

"KEEP A MOVIN'."

STERNLY the big officer led the two up the street. Even the nimble-witted Conner was too dazed to think of anything to say. Occasionally he tried to trap the policeman into conversation, but the man only turned a stony countenance upon him, and glared him into crestfallen silence.

Walters was too crushed to do anything but meekly follow without a word.

Just when he was in the very blackest depths of despair, their captor turned them abruptly into a little hallway.

"Now," he cried, "beat it quick! I'll give yez an hour t' get yer junk off th' street, an' if it ain't gone by then, I'll have t' telephone the Public Obstruction people and have it taken to their yard."

"But I don't understand," Walters stammered. "Aren't you going to arrest us, after all?"

"Of course not. I've had me oiye on th' little feller since I've been on th' beat, an' I know where he got th' junk he brought down-stairs, but I ain't ready fer a raid yet. We want t' get him strong, so he can't slip out."

"But if you knew he was running a gambling-joint, why did you humiliate us to the extent of arresting us in public?" Conner demanded indignantly.

"Oi did me best fer yez," the fellow earnestly assured them. "But if Oi'd ha' let on like Oi knew anything, Abrams would ha' closed up fer good. Oi had t' do it."

"Well, I think it's about up to you to help us find a man to move our things, then," Conner demanded. "We can't get any storage-men who will take them at this hour in the night."

"I'll show yez a man who hauls ice and coal. He lives in a little alleyway around the corner. I'll roust him out."

A stranger would never have suspected that any one lived in the little cut-in where they now went. Walters shuddered at the temerity of the policeman as he viciously pounded with his club on the door that first presented itself.

"Is this where he lives?" he queried.

"Sure, an' Oi don't know," the officer replied indifferently. "But it's somewheres around here. I'll soon find out," and he redoubled his hammering.

The artist said no more. This display of thoughtfulness on the part of their newly found friend made him more than ever grateful that they had enlisted his sympathies instead of antagonizing him.

*Began October ARGOSY.

Finally a head was thrust from a window and a very irritated voice demanded to know who came at that unseemly hour. Fortunately, it chanced that the Italian in question had a room there, and rented the cellar for his ice.

A very frightened little man was finally rousted out, and acknowledged, under pressure, that he was sometimes willing to do odd jobs of the kind mentioned—but never at such an hour of night.

"Come, Tony—get busy and pitch into th' job," the cop cheerfully requested, paying no heed to his protests.

"I no hava da time. I getta da sleep, makka da mon; no getta da sleep, loosa da mon; Tony getta da bed." Suiting the action to the word, the Italian was turning his back upon them, and almost succeeded in closing the door, when the cop put his foot in the way.

"Tony!" The Italian looked up in alarm at the ring of command in the officer's voice. "Get yer cart, and bring the things here; do yez understand?"

He bent over and whispered something in the man's ear, and the little fellow, with a frightened expression on his face, hastily acquiesced, and shortly reappeared struggling with his coat.

"I getta da things," he promised. "I taka dem here, tilla da man call."

"He says," trauslated the policeman, "that he will get them, but a storage-man must call for them."

They left the Italian as he was coming out of the cellar with his little push-cart, and strolled out of the alley.

"What did you say to him that made him change his mind so suddenly?" Conner queried.

"Told him that I was gettin' curious about that license o' his," the policeman explained. "Most all these Eyetalians are usin' th' first licenses they ever got. We don't bother wid them much, except in case of an emergency.

"Don't forget, boys," the policeman said in parting; "have a storage-man call, first thing in the morning."

Conner looked at Walters and Walters looked at Conner, when they had seen the man's burly figure disappear around the corner. "Now, what are we going to do?" they cried in a breath.

It was truly a situation to tax the ingenuity of the most resourceful. In the first place, they must get a lodging for the night; secondly, Walters must somehow manage to steer Mme. Burnham away from the ex-studio in the morning, and still not antagonize her to such an extent as to lose the order; thirdly, how could he, with no money or tangible means of support, obtain a place to paint her portrait and still have it the manner of studio that would suit her fickle fancy? All these things put his head in a whirl just to think of them.

"Well, I guess we'd better be looking sharp, or we won't find a place to put up for the night," Conner suggested. "Everything has turned out very nicely, hasn't it?" he added with a cheerful grin.

"Beautifully!" Walters groaned. "In fact, I don't see how they could well be much worse."

"Nonsense," his friend scoffed. "Take your own case, for instance. Suppose this had happened when madam was sitting to you? Don't you suppose she would have thrown over the whole thing? And even if she hadn't, you couldn't have done good work with the thing preying on your mind. Now, you're absolutely care-free.

"If you find a place, you'll be all right till you can finish the portrait. And all you have to do to find a place is to go out and look for it. He that is down need fear no fall. It's the truest saying of them all."

"Well, that's one way of looking at it," Walters agreed. "Now, it seems to me, the best thing to do is for us to separate and look for rooms. I've done you enough damage for one night."

Conner regarded him reproachfully.

"And do you think that I'm going to let you look for a place and leave me out?" he cried.

"Come, Conner, own up that I'm only a drag on you. You're mighty kind, but I know there are lots of fellows that can take one in, who can't find room for two."

"Why, what are you talking about, Walters? You don't suppose we're going any place but a hotel, do you? It won't be a week before you'll be a plutocrat, my boy. Do you actually

mean to say that you—the painter of Mme. Burnham—thought of going anywhere else?"

"Not yet, Conner." Walters had to laugh, in spite of his gloom, at the unflagging optimism of his friend.

Here he was in the most hopeless situation possible to imagine—without a roof to cover him—and Conner seemed to find great consolation in the fact that Abrams could never dispossess them again.

It was but a short walk to the great lights that glaringly indicated a hotel, and Conner made for it at a rate of speed that made it difficult for his friend to keep pace with him.

"For Heaven's sake, don't tackle that place," Walters implored him. "Why, man, that's the Prince, and we'll never be able to pay the bill in the world. Don't you know that it is the most expensive hotel in the city?"

"The best is always the cheapest in the long run," was the only answer he got. "Besides, it's the little fellows that are all the time looking out for the pennies. They think everybody is trying to beat them."

"All right." The artist capitulated with a sigh.

Only when he was thoroughly annoyed at the snickers of laughter that seemed directed at them did he notice that Conner, in the excitement of moving, had failed to change his coat, and was still attired in his painting jacket—a soiled and paint-bespattered garment, indeed.

Humiliated in the extreme, he still followed blindly, and approached the desk. A very tired looking clerk turned as they approached and eyed Conner suspiciously.

"Well, my man," he superciliously inquired, "what can I do for you? Didn't you see the sign at the side of the hotel —'Employees' entrance'?"

Conner straightened up with a withering glance at the man, which changed his attitude to one of perplexity. There was something about Conner that would have compelled courtesy from everybody, even if he had been dressed in a bathrobe.

"What can I do for you?" the clerk repeated in a far different tone from the one which he had just used.

"My friend and I wish two rooms and a bath," Conner requested.

"On which floor would you prefer them?" the man inquired politely, still scanning his strange guest with a puzzled expression.

"Any floor will do," the Irishman easily returned. "I'll have my trunks sent around to-morrow some time. Will you have the boy show us the rooms right away?" he added.

"Certainly, sir." The man was all alacrity now. "It will be fifteen dollars a day, sir. Shall I start your bill before the luggage arrives?"

It was a hint that was impossible to ignore, and Walters almost had palpitation of the heart before the ready-witted Irishman, not one whit abashed, reached down in the pocket which he knew held not a cent and drew his hand forth with an expression of dismay that would have done credit to any actor.

Hurriedly he scurried through his trousers, and finally, after finding them empty, reached into his coat, and then collapsed.

It took him fully a moment to recover from his mortification; then, with a crestfallen expression, he looked for relief to his companion.

"Why, Dick!" he cried. "I've left all my money in my other clothes. How in the world did you ever allow me to go out in my painting-jacket?"

He turned to the clerk with a propitiating smile.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, but my friend and I are both artists, and naturally forget little things that most people remember. I believe some call it the artistic temperament. It is most annoying, but I will have to ask you to postpone settlement of the bill until to-morrow morning."

"We would be very glad to accommodate you, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Conner."

"—Mr. Conner, but we have the most explicit instructions to demand payment in advance from guests arriving after six o'clock without baggage. I don't doubt for an instant, of course, that everything is all right, but we are allowed to make no exceptions."

"But surely," Conner protested, "you will be willing to wait till to-morrow?"

"I wish I might. If the proprietor was here, I am sure he would say it was all right, but if we were allowed to use our own discretion, we might make a blunder it would be impossible for us to recoup."

"But what shall I do?"

"I am allowed the responsibility of accepting your check," the man courteously suggested.

"But I left my check-book at home also."

"That can be remedied in a moment. I will get you a blank one from the cashier."

Walters gasped. After all the bluffing his friend had done, how was be going to side-step gracefully such a generous offer?

"No, that would be quite impossible," Conner retorted rather sharply. "Really, I am quite put out about this. Of course, I don't wish to lose track of my check numbers the way I should once I got in the habit of doing this."

Instead of answering back, the clerk became more fearful than ever of turning them away.

"Couldn't I send a boy around for a suit-case?" he suggested. "That would quite answer the purpose."

Walters recalled the jumble his furniture must be in, in company with the coal and ice products of the son of Italy, and in alarm pulled at his friend's coat-tails.

Conner took the hint, and turned a glowering face toward the unhappy clerk.

"Most certainly not," he snarled. "If it has come to a pass when a gentleman has to tote a suit-case to prove be's a gentleman, then I don't care to stop at a hotel where that is the way they treat prospective guests. Why"—and he laughed bitterly as he turned to Walters—"I expect next they will have the maid make an inventory of what clothing we have, to see if there is enough to meet the bill.

"No, thank you," and he bowed witheringly to the clerk. "I don't care for the rooms. *I countermand them now.*"

Conner turned and motioned his friend to follow, and despite the almost frantic efforts of the bewildered clerk to propitiate them, they stalked haughtily from the place, Conner muttering about the "outrage" as he went.

"Well, of all the unmitigated gall!" Walters looked at his friend in the keenest admiration, once they were well out of sight of the place. "Who on earth do you think you are? That poor fellow supposes he has turned down the main prop of the hotel. And you, with that filthy old jacket on!"

"Yes, this coat does complicate the situation somewhat." Conner gazed ruefully down at the garment in question. "In fact, unless we can get a suit-case out of that hodge-podge, I don't very well see what we can do. Do you suppose we can find one?"

"Well, *you* can," the artist replied hastily. "But I wouldn't go within a mile of that little Italian and wake him up again to-night for a hundred suit-cases."

"There's something in that, too," the Irishman thoughtfully muttered. "In fact, my boy, I see very plainly where we stroll away the hours 'twixt now and dawn, as the poets say, and subsist on beaming fancies of what the morrow has to bring forth."

"You mean, we will stay up all night outdoors?" Walters cried incredulously. "Why, I'll be too dead in the morning to *think* of anything to do, much less *do* it."

"Come, come. It's a lot better than being in the Prince and not being able to get the money to move. There's nothing in the world so deadly to the nerves of a man as to sit and see a bill he is absolutely unable to pay growing at a rate that would make the erecting of a sky-scraper look sick."

"And what are we going to do in the morning, I'd like to know?" Walters demanded. "I've got to telephone Masters, and see if he can't tell me that they couldn't possibly put me out, and make me walk the streets all night. Then get that stuff moved away from the iceman's; and, next, I'll have to steer Mme. Burnham away from the studio. After that—" and he waved his arms in a gesture of hopelessness.

"Let's go over in the park and sit down while we talk it over," his friend suggested.

"But we'll catch cold, sitting down in this weather. And besides, I'm completely worn out. I'd fall asleep, sure."

"Not for long enough to catch much of a cold or anything else," Conner retorted with a peculiar look.

"Now, Conner," the artist questioned, once they were seated on a bench in the park, "how am I going to get anything to do to-morrow, that will permit me to paint that portrait. It's hard enough to get a job where you can work all day, but to find a place where the work will be light enough to permit me to do other work is a facer."

"The first thing in the consideration of that question is to make a list of the things that are night-work. Now, there's waiting on a table—have you ever waited in a restaurant?"

"Not in the way you refer to," Walters replied with a sinking heart.

Had he come to a consideration of such a thing? Was it possible that this was he, listening to the possibilities of getting a job as a waiter!

"Well, that requires some experience, at any rate. Still, if you could carry five glasses without dropping one of them, you might have a chance in a saloon. There's not many tips there, but you get all you want to eat. Well, I guess that knocks the waiting chances out. It's too bad," Conner sighed. "My boy, your education has been sadly neglected. Every child should be taught to wait at table. It is a position where there is always an opening, and not half bad."

"Do you mean to say that you have been a waiter?" Walters cried in amazement.

"Certainly. You don't suppose I would let a chance like that slip, do you? Perhaps I may have served you—who knows?" he added whimsically. "Have you ever tried 'barking' for one of those side-shows down on Fourteenth Street? Now, that is a trifle more genteel than the other, but the work is a bit more wearing. And besides, your voice needs a thorough course of cultivation."

"Be serious!" the artist protested.

"Serious! I never was more serious in my life! It's easy work; the hours are short; and I know there's a place where they need a man badly. They pay ten dollars a week for a new man, and that would be sufficient to keep up your rent until you finished the portrait. That's all you'll need. The food will take care of itself."

"All right, then, if you know of a place where there's a sure opening," Walters consented sadly. "I guess my voice will answer the requirements. I had it cultivated for five years, so I can make plenty of noise."

"Hey! Keep a movin', there!" A prod in the ribs from a policeman's night-stick brought Walters abruptly back to the present. "'Re y'u dead?" the officer questioned sharply. "Get a wiggle on y'u!"

Ruefully the pair strolled slowly out of the park and stood a moment at the exit.

"I've often found it very pleasant to pass the time by taking a little stroll to the Battery and back," Conner suggested.

"I'm too dog-tired for it." The artist replied with a weary gesture. "Conner, I don't, for the life of me, see how I'm going to do a thing to-morrow. I'm completely fagged out."

"If you want to lie down and sleep, I know a fine place, right over the way. It's not very stylish, and the company isn't of the choicest, but the air is fine," his friend suggested. "That grating right behind the big building, where the heat from the furnace, coming through, beats any blanket ever invented. The rich little know of the luxuries of the down-and-out brigade," he added.

"What — with those poor devils!" Walters shrank back as from a blow. "Why, they're thieves and everything else," he protested.

Conner chuckled.

"I know they would steal everything we've got, but somehow or other it doesn't bother me much. All you have to do is to put your shoes under your head, and that makes the only thing of value we possess safe as in a deposit-vault in the trust company."

"I guess I'll try the Battery," the artist sighed. "Now, tell me about this 'barking' job," he added.

"My dear fellow, do you mean to say you don't know what a barker is? Well,

you've seen those fellows down at Coney Island who stand outside the side-shows and make it their business to tell a million lies about what's going on inside. That's a barker; a profession in which I was in former years of somewhat high repute. 'Step right up, ladies and gents! The price is almost noth-ing!'"

"Keep a movin'! Step lively, there!" a gruff voice growled from behind them at this point in Conner's interesting story of his experience, and once more Walters felt a prod in the rear.

"Well, after this, I won't linger any more," he declared. "Our next stop is the Battery."

"To go on with the duties of the barker," Conner continued, as though he had met with no interruption. "It is just the place for a man of your abilities. Think of it. You won't be tired out when you approach your work on the portrait in the daytime, and you will be assured of your rent. After that the way will be easy. I know it's rough and has many disadvantages, but it's better than having one of those cops rubbing it in on you that this is your moving night."

"But what is the show where they have the vacancy?" Walters inquired. "Tell me all about it, so that you can teach me their lingo and equip me for the position."

"All right," Conner agreed. "I used to be with them, so I can give you my old *spiel.*"

Heedful of the lesson the second policeman had taught them, he lowered his voice so that it would not be heard by any one in the vicinity, but it still had traces of the showman expert in the business of attracting the public.

"'Behold! Behold! Behold! Ladies and gentlemen—the wonder of the ages; the fiercest fighting animal the world has ever seen; he eats but once a day; he sleeps but once a week; he does not know the touch of human hand. Behold—behold—the five-legged animal with two heads; behold the Cat of—' Why, what's the matter?" he suddenly broke off as his companion gave vent to a dismal groan. "What's up?"

"A cat!" Walters groaned dismally. "Man alive, I would never live to finish that portrait if I had anything to do with a cat while I was about it! Cats are bad luck to me. I can't take the job."

CHAPTER VII.

SUCCOR.

"Now, don't be foolish!" Conner broke out. "Your nerves are upset, or you wouldn't think of letting a little thing like such a fool notion stand in the way of all your chances!"

"Foolish or not," the artist soberly replied, "I'm in mortal terror of tackling anything connected in any way with cats. They've seemed to haunt me all my life. I never could draw one, and the teachers in the art school made my life a burden trying to coach it into me. Why, just to-night, as I was coming home, feeling assured that nothing on earth could keep me out of my studio, a big black cat came prancing out of a doorway and marched along with me. I firmly believe that if I hadn't spotted that cat, I would be in my studio now. I know it sounds ridiculous, but it's a feeling I can't get over."

"If you feel that way about it, I guess it's no use talking," Conner sighed.

"But what are we going to do now?" Walters groaned. "Oh, hang it all, old man, I don't believe I ever will get a chance to paint her!"

"Don't lose heart, Dick! There's lots of other jobs waiting. The thing to do is to pick out just one of them and nail it. Besides, I don't believe you'd have made good as a barker, after all. You lack something for such an elevated profession."

"A minute ago you thought I'd be ideal for the place," Walters laughed. "Well, think of something, quick."

"Couldn't you manage to sell one of your pictures, if you were willing to let it go cheap?"

Walters groaned again.

"Why, Conner, if I did manage to sell one, they wouldn't let me have the money for at least two weeks. The last place I went to was that new magazine. The editor looked it over; said he liked it very much, and would be willing to pay five dollars for it. I was

so frightfully hard up that I was going to take it, when the generous fellow announced that he would mail me a check on publication."

"Tough luck!" Conner agreed. "But didn't you tell me you were doing a story with that fellow Banks? If he's as good as he says he is, and has such a strong pull with the editors, why don't you take him with you and make him sell one out cheap. Tell him that you'll do his next story for nothing if he will make a sale."

"I never thought of him before," and a great light dawned upon the artist. "We'll go up right away and see him. Then we can stay all night where it's warm."

Conner slapped him enthusiastically on the shoulder.

"It's a fine head you've got, boy! Come along to your friend — the celebrated Banks. But will he stand for it?" he queried, a sudden revulsion of feeling striking him. "It's an awful imposition, you know."

"Stand for it!" Walters cried with a laugh. "I should say he would. He's the strangest fellow about anything like that! He knows as little about artists and their ways as I do about writers. You know I have devoted most all of my time to painting for the exhibitions. Well, he's the greatest chap to study a fellow! Never seems to get mad at anything you do."

"He must be all right," Conner muttered reflectively. "It certainly was good of him to take up your work the way he did, and boost it by making it impossible to sell his story, which is in demand, without your drawing, which isn't. How far does he live from here?"

"Only a little way back in the old Washington Square district," the artist replied. "He's a great fellow for atmosphere and all that sort of thing. Got a studio with the most exquisite things from all over the world. You know, he's been sent on special stories all around the globe by the magazines and newspapers. I must admit that, for myself, if I had the money he makes, I would never live in one of those old joints, but have all the latest modern improvements they could cram in. Atmosphere is all right for a fellow when he isn't doing anything but dabbling; but for work, give me comfort."

"I'm thinking a joint on Washington Square would be a blamed sight better than the Battery—even if I do miss my before-breakfast constitutional," retorted Conner.

"Well, here's the place, and you'll soon have a chance to see for yourself."

Walters looked up at the great, darkened building, then went out in the street and called at the top of his voice: "Banks—oh, Banks!"

"You've got a nerve!" Conner growled. "Here's his bell. Why don't you ring it? He never will let us in after making all this racket."

A tousled head poked itself out of the window, and a peevish voice demanded to know what was the trouble.

"I've got Conner with me," Walters cried. "Come on down and be sociable."

"Can't do it," the man replied cheerily enough. "But you come up. Wait, and I'll let you in."

The window slammed shut, and they waited anxiously for the door to open. At last the man appeared in a most exquisitely brocaded dressing-gown of flowered pattern, and dainty slippers on his bare feet.

"Come on out with us?" Walters begged. "We're having a great time."

"Too tired to-night, boys! Come up yourselves, and stay a while."

For fear the invitation be withdrawn, Conner stealthily inserted his foot in the door-jamb.

After much effort, Walters was persuaded to accept the other's hospitality for "just a moment—understand," and they were soon in the author's room.

Conner stretched himself out on Banks's couch and promptly began to doze. It was a place that betokened the exotic in every way. Not a thing in it that was of any earthly use, except the gaudily upholstered chairs.

"Wbat's up?" Banks demanded. "You artists are the most eccentric lot I ever met in all my travels."

"We've been evicted," Walters calmly remarked, and, in nowise disturbed by a kick on the shins from the aston-

ished Conner, he went on to elaborate a tale that, for beauty of imagination, would have done credit to a man of even Banks's reputation.

"Evicted!" the novelist cried gleefully when the artist had finished. "I must use that. Everything is grist that comes to the writer's mill," he added apologetically. "I wish I could experience something like that once, but I've always been so devilishly popular that I can't manage to spend all the checks I get for my stuff. Now, I'll submit that theme for a story to Harry, right away."

"Harry who?" Conner queried.

"Why, Harry Truesdale—the editor of the *Planet* magazine. Don't you know Harry?" he cried in wonderment. "Why, Harry just dotes on my stories."

"Then he's the man to take the one I illustrated for you last week," Walters cried. "By George, old man, I need the money right away, and he'll like the pictures, I know. They are altogether in keeping with the spirit of the story. I'll go with you, first thing in the morning, and try to make a sale. I know the *Planet's* sort of material, and if those pictures aren't in line with what they like, I'm ready never to touch a brush again. Can you get away?" he added anxiously.

"Why, certainly; always glad to help a friend. I don't see any reason in the world why they should turn it down on account of the pictures," Banks added patronizingly.

"Well, now that's settled, I guess I won't go out again." Walters stretched himself luxuriously in a great rocker. "Just turn in, old man, whenever you get ready. Say, it was luck I thought of coming around here."

It was only the work of a minute for him to put aside all the trials and tribulations of the day. How long he slept he did not know, for his dreams were of a royal nature.

Banks woke him up with an air of ill repressed excitement.

"It's all right, Walters," he cried. "I managed to get Harry on the phone at his house and make an engagement for us before he took on any one else. But we'll have to hustle, for he said it was going to be a very busy day, and he had some other important people coming to see him whom it would be unwise to delay. I think it would be best to run over to the office as soon as we have a bite to eat, and wait for him, so we can tackle him the instant he gets down."

Conner agreed as to the advisability of this course, and commented on the other's excitement.

"You're like a boy with a new toy," he remarked.

Banks drew himself up with dignity.

"It is quite natural that I should be excited, sir. I am very much interested in placing Mr. Walters in a position where he will be able to do a great deal of my illustrating. I like his work as well as that of any one I have had since poor Smith died."

"No offense," Conner hastened to say. "I was just thinking how lucky the boy was to have such a man show an interest in him."

"But what are we going to do about keeping the *madame* away from that studio, if we're going to the *Planet* office?" Walters cried in sudden alarm. "Can you telephone her, Conner, that I will call in the afternoon?"

"Sure, if I can find out where she lives."

"You mean, you don't know her address?" the artist exclaimed in alarm.

"Why, no. I never thought to ask her. I don't know but that she might have taken it for impertinence if I had. I never dreamed of being put out last night."

"Who's that?" Banks queried. "If she's at all well known, I might be able to help you. I am acquainted with almost everybody of any consequence in town."

Walters tipped his friend with a sly wink to be very careful what he said, as Banks was something of a chatterbox.

"Mme. Burnham. We have an appointment with her," Conner evasively replied.

"The superb Burnham! An appointment with the glorious Burnham!" Banks cried in amazement. "Will you introduce me? I have longed to meet her for years, but something has always interfered."

"The fact is, neither of us knows her at all; but the appointment was made yesterday, and we were to meet her to-day. As soon as we get at all well acquainted, we will speak about it," Conner promised. "Do you happen to know her address?"

"Why, no. That is, I did know it, but have forgotten. However, my valet may be familiar with it. He has not missed a performance since she has been coming to this country. In fact, if I am not mistaken, he is one of the crowd of Frenchmen that drew her in her carriage from the theater to the hotel."

He rang the bell and his servant appeared at the door. "François, do you know at what hotel Mme. Burnham is stopping?"

The man's hands went up in the air in Gallic rhapsody.

"Ze Burnham! Ze sublime—Ze divine Burnham!" he cried.

"Yes, do you know where she is stopping?" Walters cut in eagerly.

"At ze Prince Hotel," the man replied, and was startiug off in another rhapsody when his master interrupted him.

"My friends have an appointment with her and wished to know the address as they had forgotten it."

With a backward glance of admiration and awe at any one big enough to have an appointment with his idol the man withdrew; and they could see that Banks was a much bigger man to him than he had ever been before.

"Well, Conner, do you think it would make her angry if I should send you in my place to make a later engagement? Tell her that I have decided to have my studio repapered. I can't stand to work in the light it gives. Doesn't that sound eccentric enough to suit her as a plausible excuse?"

The Irishman was on his feet in an instant.

"Splendid!" he cried. "But I must hurry before she gets out of the hotel. It looks a lot better for you not to appear too eager; say that your work has prevented your coming yourself."

He turned with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"I hope that same clerk is on duty. I wonder what he will say when he sees me being ushered to the Burnham's apartments?"

"Change your coat first," Walters laughingly suggested. "Borrow one of Banks. And don't forget to telephone the storage people."

"I've done that long ago. It's all right," he cried exultantly, slipping into one of the coats which the eager Banks was holding for him. "I'll beard the Burnham in her den! I—Conner!" he cried, dashing madly out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WATERLOO.

"You might have sent me," the author remarked as they heard the down-stairs door slam. "Conner's a fine chap and all that, but he's rather rough in his manner. Don't you think it might have been better to have a well-known man call on the *madame* than an obscure artist no one has ever heard of? You know I said I wanted to meet her."

Walters looked at him in amazement. Was it possible that the novelist was jealous of Conner being allowed to act in the capacity of errand boy for him?

"But we could not have kept your engagement with Mr. Truesdale if you had gone," he objected.

"That's so," the fellow replied, blushing. "Well, it wouldn't have been the first time I've broken dates with him," he blustered, recovering himself. "He can't afford to lose me for such a trifling thing as that."

"But I tell you I want to get the money to-day," the artist protested.

"Oh, yes," Banks said thoughtfully. "Well, we'd better be going."

All the way to the *Planet* office Dick's heart was beating like a trip-hammer. What if, after all, his work should not be satisfactory, was the one thought that obsessed him. Suppose, with all his experience, Banks had let his enthusiasm run away with his critical judgment? He was apt to do that. Walters knew that some of his ideas of art were absurd.

However, it was impossible that his pictures should be so badly done as to be turned down. Surely, Truesdale would not dare offend Banks to such an

extent. No, he was foolish to worry, even for an instant, about the possibility of failure!

At last they stopped in front of a great building which seemed to the artist to have a million frowns in every square foot of it. His companion hustled him into the elevator with such confidence that he called himself all manner of a fool to be frightened over a thing which he had gone through alone a score of times.

Banks spoke very familiarly to the elevator man as they stepped into the car, and Walters was considerably surprised to observe that the salutation was not returned with any great degree of enthusiasm, but merely acknowledged with an indifferent nod of the head.

As they got off at the top of the skyscraper, the artist found his nervousness intensified by the fact that instead of having a chance to regain his composure, they stepped immediately into a great room filled with books. Behind a railing were scattered numberless desks, with the name of the person occupying it tacked on the side.

Books—books — books — the publications of the firm, were everywhere.

Banks seemed to feel perfectly at home, and pointed out certain notables behind the railing—notables, Dick thought, ho did not at all resemble the sketches and photographs he had seen of them.

The novelist made it a point to bow to every man that raised his eyes from his work and looked in their direction. It was mighty reassuring to Walters, to observe that they all returned the salutation, rather distantly of course, but what could be expected in a big office of this kind where every one was working like mad?

The writer approached a very pretty girl, seated just inside the railing, and inquired if Mr. Truesdale had come down yet.

"We're expecting him any minute now," she replied with a hasty glance at the big clock in one corner of the room.

"Yes. I have an appointment with him at this hour," Banks informed her. "I can't understand his being late."

He just telephoned and said to hold Mr. Hopkinson if he should come, but he never mentioned you, Mr. Banks," the girl remarked.

"Strange!" the author's brow puckered thoughtfully. "However, I told him I would wait."

He seated himself comfortably on the great couch that ran around the enclosure, and lit a cigarette.

At that moment a scholarly, white-haired man stepped briskly in at the door, and, with a quick glance about, hastened toward the swinging gate.

"There he is!" Walters clutched his companion's arm in his hand with a nervous grip. "Catch him before he gets in that pen."

It seemed to him as if, should Truesdale once get to his desk, nothing could ever reach him—especially such an annoying personage as an artist.

"Oh, Mr. Truesdale!" and Banks planted himself firmly before the editor. "Just a moment, please."

"Has Mr. Hopkinson been in yet?" Truesdale inquired of the girl, quite ignoring Banks. "No? When he calls, will you kindly ask him to step back to my desk?"

"Mr. Truesdale," and Banks's voice was much more respectful toward "Harry" than Walters had imagined it could be to any one, "I wished to see you for a moment."

"Oh, Banks!" The utter weariness with which the editor recognized the author made the artist's heart sink like lead. "Well, what is it now, Banks?"

"A manuscript, sir, that—"

"Very well. I'll send it back—or rather I'll read it within the month."

He held out his hand for the document, and then for the first time noticed the big bundle of pictures under Banks's arm.

"What's this?" he demanded.

"Some drawings, to illustrate the story, which my friend, Mr. Walters, did."

Banks hauled forward the diffident artist and introduced him.

The editor grasped his hand warmly.

"Very glad to meet you, sir," he said in such a sincere tone that Walters knew in a moment that what he had feared was indifference of manner was merely his little joke with Banks. "Have you ever submitted any work here?"

"No, sir; but I have made a careful study of the style you seem to like in your magazine," Dick responded. "Will you tell me what you think of them now, sir?" he queried.

The editor hesitated an instant and was lost, for the ready Banks remarked casually: "Perhaps you may have seen Mr. Walters's work in Seamon's. He has been exhibiting there the past week?"

"Why, no, I don't believe I remember. However, since you wish it, I will be very glad to give you my opinion immediately."

He led them through the bewildering maze of desks to the last one in the extreme end of the room and hospitably drew up a couple of chairs before seating himself. Carefully untying the string around the drawings, he deliberately laid them upon the desk.

"Now, young man," he began, "I'm going to tell you exactly what I think of your work. If you don't want me to, you may take them away at once. I warn you that I am called a harsh critic, and nobody knows any better than I how much the truth hurts at times. Do you still want me to look at them?"

"Yes, sir," Walters tremblingly acquiesced.

"Very well." He turned over the first one.

It was a marine, and represented a man holding on to a life-preserver in the midst of a boiling sea. Mountains of waves rose all over the background, and in a little hollow rested a miniature ship —dwarfed into nothingness by the mighty ocean.

The editor frowned, studied the picture carefully, and without a word of comment passed to the next. It was another of very much the same type, and this one was also passed after a careful scrutiny.

The third was a scene on the Breton coast, and was handled with great fidelity in costume and so on.

The editor smiled.

"When were you last in Brittany, Mr. Walters?" he inquired.

"Last year," Dick replied, his heart bounding with hope as he saw that the man had recognized the scene. "It was a commonplace enough subject, and he had not even taken the trouble to give it a caption.

"I like that," Mr. Truesdale said very simply.

Walters turned with a triumphant smile to Banks.

"I told you that one was all right," he whispered. "And what do you think of the others?" he inquired.

"Execrable!" the editor replied with a smile that disarmed the criticism of harshness. "The figures are unnatural and the waves are altogether out of the general color scheme. In fact, I cannot conceive how the same man could have made the three drawings."

"But I followed my text carefully, sir." The artist remonstrated. "Every detail is as the story laid it out for me."

The editor turned to Banks.

"Have you the manuscript?" he inquired. "Ah, here we have it!" and he scanned the typed pages carefully a moment, following with one finger the painting of the unhappy artist.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Walters," he said. "You *have* followed the story."

"Then, you will take them?" Dick cried, all his spirits reviving.

"I very much doubt it. However, I will let you know as soon as I read the manuscript."

"But won't you read it now? If the pictures are satisfactory, I could use the money to the greatest advantage at the present moment."

"I think it would be quite impossible. It would hardly be fair to other and older contributors."

"But, really, sir, if you understood the situation you—"

"My dear Mr. Walters," the editor replied, "I don't believe there is a single situation that I don't understand. I was a free-lance writer for a good many years before I undertook the editorship of this magazine. But I can tell you, quite frankly, that you may as well tear up the two I first looked at. They follow the story, as you say, and—"

"You mean you don't wish my story?" cried Banks, bristling.

"My dear Mr. Banks, I have told you, for the last ten years, that your style was absolutely unsuitable to our publication. I don't believe from what I saw of the pictures that I wish the story."

"Then, we may as well go." The indignant writer gathered together the sheets of his manuscript, and started to tie up the illustrations.

Walters stood irresolute, undecided as to what to do. If the bottom of the earth had dropped out he could not have been more surprised than he was to hear of the true standing Banks had in the estimation of "Harry."

"You may leave the small one," the editor mildly requested. "I would like to talk with Mr. Walters; that is, if he has no objection to waiting a moment."

"But I don't understand at all," Dick stammered as soon as the outraged author had taken his blustering departure. "He told me that—"

"That is what I asked you to remain for," the editor informed him. "Your work is remarkably good, Mr. Walters, and I would like to see more of it. We can use this kind of thing. But never again allow an author to inveigle you into doing work with him. Unless the story is ordered, we don't know whether —no matter how good it may be—we can use it. You see, a magazine must be balanced. Different people want different things, and we must do our best to give them variety. Even if the story is accepted, and the pictures satisfactory, the art manager or I might think a different part of it needed illustrating, or your work might not suit the make-up of the magazine page. There are a thousand little things that will show you the folly of using your own judgment in this matter."

"But Banks told me that—"

"My dear boy, Banks is a necessary evil. He is a braggart and a liar. He has never, to my knowledge, had a story printed or even accepted. He preys on foolish artists who know nothing of him, in the vain hope that some day he may strike one big enough to pull him through the portals."

"But can't I sell you the little one?" Walters tried as a last resort.

"It would be absolutely useless to us," the editor answered.

(To be continued.)

FACE VALUE

By GEORGE M. A. CAIN.

A lucrative job that a college graduate tried his best to decline and the strange position into which it finally brought him.

"DARN such a face, anyhow!" Wilbur Wharton said it with a good deal of vehemence. He accompanied his words with a shaking of his fist at the reflection he saw in the huge mirror behind the tempting array of viands in the window of a second-grade restaurant.

He had just come out of another department store without securing a job. Unconsciously, he continued to address himself aloud.

"Where there is a job they tell me I'm too nice for it. It's a pity I wasn't born a girl, or given a plain face like a real man. Here, I've been standing this for years. 'Dolly,' at the High School; 'Beauty,' on the campus; 'Too pretty for any real work,' when I asked Uncle John for a place in his office.

"And he told Jeannette that, too. About the limit—having her say she liked me well enough, but I would have to do something besides look sweet before she could consider me seriously. Gee! I wish I dared spend this quarter for something to eat. Wish I had stayed at home in old Oklahoma. Wish—I've a good mind to give those pretty pink cheeks of mine a few slashes with a razor."

"I wouldn't do that. I'll pay you good wages for that face of yours as it is."

Wharton turned to behold the man who addressed him.

He was a magnificent-looking speciman. Tall, military in bearing, clad in long gray coat and trousers, wearing a wide, curly mustache and goatee—diamonds sparkling in the front of his broad

bosom and on his plump fingers. He might have passed for some sort of traveling evangelist had it not been for the diamonds, the shrewd sharpness of his eyes, and the cigar at an acute angle in his mouth.

He held out a big business-card, on which Wharton read:

PROFESSOR MARLBOROUGH,
Inventor and Sole Proprietor
of
MARLBOROUGH'S IMPERIAL FACE CREAM.
Consultation and Treatment. 343A Sixth Avenue, N. Y.
Petit Palace, Paris.

"Do you see that fellow over there, with that sign on a long rubber coat?" asked the professor, pointing down the block.

Wharton, much perplexed, admitted that he did.

"Well, the Worthington Complexion Elixir pays him a dollar and a half a day for that. I'll give you three dollars to wear a somewhat similar coat for me."

The look which Wharton bestowed on Professor Marlborough would have melted a more soluble substance. The professor did not melt. He continued:

"Now, look here. You're broke. Your home is in Oklahoma. Presumably no one knows you here. I'm making you a generous offer. Don't get hot about it."

"Say," exploded Wharton, "if you think I'm open for that sort of a job, you want to guess again about four times. I'm broke, and I'm hungry—a little. But I'm not a monkey on a stick yet."

"No," interrupted the professor a trifle warmly; "but you're a good deal of a fool. However, if you happen to get over it in a day or two, I might not find another face as pretty as yours; and you have my card."

Wharton walked away from the professor quite as rapidly as though he had possessed some notion of where he wished to go. He thought about as rapidly as he walked. And his thinking was not at all complimentary to Professor Marlborough, inventor and sole proprietor of Marlborough's imperial face cream.

But, by the time he had gone some thirty or forty blocks, his steps became less hurried.

His hunger had now reached a point where it compelled him to part with three-fifths of the value represented by his last quarter. Even after that he had to pull the buckle of his belt up to the final hole.

And, rather by accident than design, his footsteps turned vaguely back down the avenue. He presented his recommendations to three or four managers of various business houses on the way. But four o'clock found him standing on the curb, his face turned toward the signs on the second floor of a certain building, proclaiming in silver and gold the wonders of Marlborough's facial treatments and Marlborough's imperial face cream.

At precisely twenty-three minutes past four any of the passers-by who had taken the trouble to notice might have seen a certain remarkably handsome young man walk hurriedly, but dejectedly, across the same sidewalk and up the rubber-carpeted steps leading to Marlborough's parlors.

Even when he had agreed to perform the function, and the coat had been red-lettered to suit the purposes of Professor Marlborough, he would probably have side-stepped the whole proposition had not the professor clinched the bargain by offering him a dollar and a half in advance. The dollar and a half meant some sort of a place to sleep and something to eat, and it finished Wharton's last grain of pride.

And the next morning there walked up Sixth Avenue, across Twenty-Third Street, down Fifth Avenue, and back west on Fourteenth Street, a living advertisement that made even the venders of mechanical toys and campaign buttons rub their eyes.

He had a face that could not fail to attract attention by its marvelous olive and pink complexion. And, if it had not attracted attention by its own beauty, the long rubber coat beneath was sufficient to cause every one who passed to stare at it intently.

For the huge red letters across the front and back of the garment proclaimed to all the world:

I GOT MY COMPLEXION AT MARLBOROUGH'S.

At first the living sign-board walked rapidly, as though eager to get away

from everybody before anybody could see it. And the people stared. After a while it walked more slowly, as though growing indifferent to what the world might think. And still the people stared.

Long before noon it had come to spend more time standing on the corners than circulating through the streets. And the people continued to stare and *stare* and STARE.

And behind the lettered breast of the rubber coat, behind the flushed face of such unwonted beauty were the heart and soul of—Wilbur Wharton. Five weeks ago he had been graduated with honor from college. Three weeks since he had taken what money he could get from his uncle, who had seen him through school, and then turned him down as a business partner until he should have made his living unaided for three months. With that money he had come to New York, prepared to make any sort of living for the time—almost any sort but the sort he had found.

He had planned to go back at the end of the summer, with his head high, and some extra dollars in his pocket, provided he did not find something in the East too good to leave. He had pictured to himself how he would face them all with the pride of victory in his heart. And now, he wondered whether he would ever be able to face any one again.

Of course, none of his acquaintances would see him. None would ever know of his disgrace. He had even avoided giving his name to his employer.

But *he* knew. He would never be able to forget. Whatever story he might tell of successful enterprise in the East, he would know that he had earned his pittance by making a gazing-stock of himself.

He had a half-hour at noon for lunch. He removed his coat before entering a fair-appearing place, which advertised a *table d'hôte* for fifty cents. He was naturally of a buoyant disposition. After the dinner things did not look so dark.

After all, he was making a living. He was getting enough to keep him in a clean room, and give him three square meals. That was to his credit. Yes, it took real sand, such sand as even he had never suspected that he possessed.

At the worst it would be over in a few months. Perhaps something else would turn up meanwhile.

And, when it *was* all over, he would have a decent position with his uncle. He would have shown that he could earn his own bread and butter. There would be no more talk about his inability to do anything but look pretty. For they would never know at home that he had failed to do anything else.

He would go back alive—perhaps with a very few dollars saved—and that would be satisfactory evidence of his having made his way. No, thank God, they would never know about it. They would never hear from him or another how he had come to this.

He would never have to tell of the staring throng, of the laughing maidens who guyed him during noon hour, of the gibes from the sellers of pretzels and penny candy—of the whole horrible, disgusting, miserable affair.

In his effort to keep his spirits up to the point of going on, he allowed his mind to dwell on this one redeeming feature of the situation—that no one who knew him would hear of this. And then, just when this thought was beginning to lose its stimulating power, he lost it.

Straight toward him up the street, in a taxicab, gazing about with eager curiosity to see all the strange city could show, she was coming—Jeannette herself, and Uncle John beside her.

Wharton made a dive for the door of a big store. The porter promptly pushed him out. He glanced over his shoulder toward the approaching automobile. Then he started to run.

Instantly he realized that he could not get away in the crowd. He thought of keeping his back turned till the machine should pass. But he felt sure that the girl would somehow recognize him.

Half-cousins, they had known each other from childhood. He would know Jeannette from any angle.

The last thought was that of getting rid of the coat. But the automobile was so close that, before he could get the thing unbuttoned, the mischief would be done. He half turned his head to see how near it had come, and a way of escape opened most unexpectedly.

A coal-wagon had placed its chute at the mouth of an open man-hole. And

Wharton had turned his head at the precise moment not to discover the chute or the hole. He tripped over the one and into the other.

Grasping wildly at nothing, he sank into blissful obscurity. Rather, he had just had a flashing intuition that it was going to be obscurity, when his feet came in contact with solid bottom.

His head had not passed below the level of the sidewalk. What was more, the narrow limits of the orifice about him would not admit of his stooping to get his head below the sidewalk.

The crowd laughed first. Wharton could not see anything funny until he made sure that the red letters proclaiming a false origin for his dainty skin could not be seen while he remained in the man-hole. Then he began to realize how funny he must look with his head sticking out, and he laughed harder than all the crowd put together.

His laugh would have been too late for any of the others to join in had not Jeannette and her uncle drawn up and caught their first view of the show just when every one else was beginning to take it as a serious accident.

"Well, of all things," laughed Jeannette. "We've been looking for you all over town, Wilbur. And now, we find your head."

"I was afraid I would find you in a hole," roared Uncle John. Then, as Wilbur made no apparent effort to climb out, he stopped laughing. "Why don't you come out of it?"

"I—I can't get out!" cried Wharton.

His laughing had stopped, too. He was happy in the thought of staying where he was. The thought of coming out did not appeal to him. He pretended to make a frantic effort to release himself.

"I'm stuck," he exclaimed.

Uncle John climbed out of the taxicab. Jeannette followed. The old man came over and reached down for Wilbur's shoulders. Several of the men in the crowd that had gathered saw the point and joined in the effort to draw him out of the hole.

"Why, what are you wearing that rubber coat for to-day?" Uncle John paused to inquire.

"I—I—er—thought it was going to rain when I started out this morning," Wharton explained haltingly.

Uncle John grunted. Whether it was due to the exertion he now put forth, or some doubts as to the explanation, Wilbur could not tell.

Uncle John pulled. Wharton spread his knees apart against the brick sides of the hole, and tried to keep himself down. The beads of perspiration broke out on his face.

At first the would-be rescuers were out of unison in their pulling, and the advertisement for Marlborough's face cream was able to hold his position. It was Uncle John who suggested that they all pull together on the count of three.

"One, two—now, all together—three!"

Wharton came up about six inches. The top line of the red letters was dangerously near the surface. Then he had an inspiration. He emitted a groan.

"Wait—my foot—I think it's fast somehow."

The crowd let go and waited.

"But you'll have to come out some way," said Uncle John; and the crowd joined him in taking hold again.

Just at this moment a policeman appeared on the scene. His advent caused the helpers to fall back a little. It gave Wharton time for another thought.

"It's this blamed coat that sticks," he announced suddenly. "Can't some one cut the shoulders open so as to let me out of it?"

It was the work of a moment to rip the shoulder seams of the rubber garment. Uncle John and the policeman each put a hand inside under the coat and renewed the pulling. Wharton was afraid the coat would not slip off properly, and pressed harder with his knees.

Two or three other men came back to the task. Slowly they drew him upward another foot. Wharton's heart gave a great leap of joy. He was leaving the rubber coat in the hole.

He let go with his knees. He came up with such a rush that his rescuers nearly fell backward. Hastily wiping the coal-dust from his hand, he extended it toward his uncle. Then he shook hands with Jeannette.

He felt that he deserved a lot more congratulations than were being given him on his escape without injury.

He was about to climb into the taxicab, in response to his uncle's invitation, when the policeman drew up the remnant of torn rubber garment.

"Ain't you goin' to take this?" he asked, as he lifted the ugly thing aloft.

Its natural stiffness spread it out from the ripped shoulder. There was a loud laugh from the late rescuers, joined in by all who had gathered—all except Jeannette and Uncle John.

The old man gave one glance at the flapping rubber. His face grew very red—red as the letters he saw.

"Get in quick, Jeannette and Wilbur," he snapped furiously.

As he swung onto the step himself, he fairly shouted at the chauffeur: "Now, drive like the devil for the Waldorf!"

It seemed a long, weary ride to Wharton. Once he glanced sidewise at his uncle, to discover that old gentleman sternly gazing far ahead. Once he glanced at Jeannette, and saw tears in her eyes.

He had seen her cry with vexation on one other occasion, when they two had passed some urchins on the street at home, and overheard one say: "Golly, dat girl is almost as purty as de feller."

"As soon as you have got yourself cleaned up, please come to my room," ordered Uncle John, as the three left the elevator in the hotel.

Wilbur did not have the courage to look at either of his relatives. He started after the hall-boy, who led the way. The older man, however, brushed past the boy and, hurrying across the main room of the suite, slammed the door to his own bedroom.

Wilbur looked about to see where he should go for his ablutions. His eyes met Jeannette's. Fresh tears started in the girl's large orbs.

"Oh, Billy," she half whispered, half wept, "you've had an awful time, haven't you? But I don't care, it was just splendid of you, and—and—I love you for it."

Before Wilbur could reply she, like her father, had swept into one of the little rooms and closed the door.

There was a third door, and Wharton entered it. He was soon busy with the process of scrubbing his hands and face. It worried him that he had not his dinner clothes with him. It worried him more that he had an interview with Uncle John coming to him. But, Jeannette had just said she loved him, and the worries were all but lost in the noise made by his joyously beating heart.

Whence, it came to pass that he did not knock so very timidly at his uncle's door after all. He felt that he could stand several pretty hard lectures. It took all his self-control to preserve an attitude of proper humility under the circumstances.

The old man stood waiting for him. He looked pretty serious, and almost frightened away his nephew's lately acquired cheerfulness.

"Look here, my boy," he began quite gravely.

Wilbur had heard him begin like that before. His heart dropped a little further.

"You're going back with us to-morrow. You can get up early and get your things, wherever they are. We leave on the noon train."

"Yes, Uncle John," said Wilbur meekly.

"I think I shall need you in the business sooner than I expected. The fact is, my boy"—there was a catch in the old man's voice—"the fact is, you've shown spunk, and I'm proud of you. You can have about anything I've got to give."

"Anything?" asked Wilbur eagerly.

"Yes, anything," replied his uncle, with a nod of his gray head.

"Even Jeannette?" urged Wilbur.

"Yes, even Jeannette—if she's willing—and God bless you both."

IDLENESS.

THERE is no remedy for time misspent;
No healing for the waste of idleness,
Whose very languor is a punishment
Heavier than active souls can feel or guess.

Aubrey de Vere.

THE JAILBIRD

By BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "The Time Limit," "The Isle of Mysteries," "When a Man's Hungry," etc.

What happened to the man who resolved to live up to an evil reputation he didn't deserve.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

RELEASED from jail after a term of unjust imprisonment, Tom Robbins finds it impossible to hold long any position. After losing his place as bookkeeper to Dolman & Co., and applying in vain for aid to his father and his half-brother, Peter, he resolves to lead the life of a crook. The next day Dolman finds $2,000 missing from his safe, and Peter Robbins has his furniture factory at Peekskill destroyed by fire.

Near the town of Benford, not far from Peekskill, Tom helps to rescue from drowning a young girl, Angelina Green, and in return is given a home by her father, old Dr. Green, with whom he lives under the assumed name of Watson. He falls in love with Angelina, who is betrothed to young Alfred d'Arcy, son of a rich shoe manufacturer. Dr. Green is the inventor of a new process in the making of patent-leather, and Tom, believing that the D'Arcys are trying to trick the old man out of his secret, accepts a position in the shoe factory for the purpose of protecting the interests of his benefactor. Mr. d'Arcy tries to bribe him into getting the combination of the safe where the formula is kept, and Angelina, to show her trust in Tom, gives him the number.

Mr. d'Arcy next orders Robbins off on a business trip to Boston, but he refuses to go, alleging as his reason that he wishes to protect the Greens from certain tramps that have been seen in the neighborhood. The D'Arcys seem much disturbed at this information, and finally promise to send some one else to Boston. Robbins determines to ferret out the secret of their strange behavior.

CHAPTER XII.

JERRY THE LAG.

WHEN Tom reached home that evening he resolved to say nothing of what had occurred that day either to Angelina or the doctor.

"It's no good alarming them," he thought. "To tell them would do no good, and would only set them in a panic. Besides, it's just possible that I may be wrong. Perhaps the old man really did want me to go to Boston on business for the firm, and I may have been a fool to refuse.

"I don't think I was wrong, however. I think I'm correct in believing that they're up to some mischief. I'll keep my eyes open. That's about all I can do, I guess."

After supper the doctor announced that he was not feeling well. He was tired and would go to bed.

Angelina sat in the dining-room, busy with some needlework.

Tom would have liked to sit and watch her as she made the sewing machine fairly hum; but he felt uneasy and restless, and, fearing she would detect his mood, he announced that he would take his pipe and sit outside on the porch for a little while.

He sat in a big bamboo rocker, taking long puffs at his brier and musing over the events of that day.

"It's a queer game," he muttered. "What puzzles me is why that old villain and his son should have been so agitated by that harmless remark I made about tramps. I wonder if tramps have anything to do with their plans."

As he said the words he became conscious of a heavy footstep crunching the gravel path which led to the house.

In the gloom he recognized a rough-looking man coming toward the porch.

"Talking of tramps, I'll be hanged if this isn't one of the simon-pure brand. I wonder what he wants here. I wish I had a gun. He may be after mischief.

It isn't safe to go unarmed here. I'll certainly buy a revolver first thing to-morrow morning."

"Say, mister," began the man as he reached the porch, "I haven't had a meal for three days. Would you mind giving me a little supper?"

"We're all out of victuals, my friend," said Tom sharply. "All we've got is a couple of savage bulldogs and a pair of six-shooters. How would they do?"

"No, I reckon I'm not interested," replied the tramp. "Bulldogs may be all right if you're very hungry, but I reckon I ain't hungry enough for them. As for six-shooters, they never did agree with my stomach."

"Well, then, be off!" said Tom threateningly.

"Not just yet," returned the tramp. "I'm tired, and I reckon I'll rest here a little while. Couldn't put me up for the night, could you?"

"Nope," said Tom. "Our dogs don't like strangers, and they'd be liable to attack you. Those six-shooters I spoke of might go off accidentally, too."

"Well, mister," drawled the tramp, "I reckon if you really had dogs or six-shooters, you'd have produced 'em by this time. I'm too old a bird to be bluffed. By the way, would you mind coming over here under the lamp? There's something about your voice which sounds very familiar, and I'd like to see your face."

Fearing some trick, Tom made no attempt to move. The tramp struck a match, and, as it flared up, held it before the other's face.

"Well, I declare!" the hobo exclaimed with genuine surprise. "If it ain't an old pal of mine. Very much changed in appearance, 'tis true, and with a beard that's very becoming; but still recognizable to one who knows him as well as I do. How are you, Tom Robbins? Shake hands, old pal! You don't mean to say you've forgotten me, do you?"

Tom's face had gone very pale. By the flare of the match he had recognized the visitor.

"Jerry the Lag!" he exclaimed in horror.

"The very same. I thought you hadn't forgotten your old college chum at Sing Sing Academy for refined young gentlemen. How've you been, Tom? I little expected to find you here, old pal. They told me there was a boarder living here; but I never had the ghost of an idea that the boarder was none other than my old prison pal, Tom Robbins."

"For God's sake, keep your voice down!" gasped Tom. "What are you doing here, Jerry? What do you want?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Tom, I came here simply on a little reconnoitering expedition. Just wanted to look around a bit to get the lay of the land, so to speak; but, discovering you here, will alter all my plans, of course. I thought I was going to have quite a difficult job. I came prepared for it; but, seeing that I've met you, I reckon my work is going to be much easier.

"You can't tell how glad I am to see you, old man. I've been wondering all along what became of you after you left prison."

"Hush!" whispered Tom, in terror. "For Heaven's sake, don't speak so loud. There's people inside the house, and they'll hear you. Let's take a little walk, Jerry."

"All right," said the other; "I'm willing. I'm feeling sort of languid, and the night air may do me good. Let's see if you're armed first, Tommy. You'll excuse me for being careful, won't you? You can't trust anybody in these days of trusts and monopolies, you know."

He patted each of Tom's pockets in turn.

"No six-shooters, eh?" he mumbled. "That's good. I knew you were only bluffing about those dogs and those smoke-wagons. You ought to carry a gun, Tom. You can't tell when you may need one in these wild parts. Now, I never think of traveling without one. Somebody might rob me, you know. Can't afford to take any chances.

"See what a nice little 38-caliber I've got here. Pretty little toy, ain't it? Come on now. Let's take that walk. I'd just as soon talk here on this comfortable looking porch; but if you're inclined for a promenade, I'm willing."

Afraid that Angelina might overhear his companion's words, Tom hastily led him down the gravel-walk, and did not

stop until they were a hundred yards from the house.

"Now," he gasped, "we are out of earshot. Tell me quickly, Jerry, what do you want here? What's the game?"

"Well, I'll be candid with you, Tom, as pals should be with each other. I'm back at my old tricks again. I'm the slickest second-story man in the East, and I've got a big job on hand."

"What is it?" asked Tom breathlessly.

"That house we just came from."

"There's nothing there for you," cried Tom in alarm. "Honestly there isn't, Jerry. There's nobody but a poor old man and his daughter living there. They're horribly poor. Haven't got a red cent. It wouldn't be worth your while to tackle that job."

"There's a safe there," said Jerry smilingly. "You've forgotten the safe, Tom. I reckon there's something mighty valuable in the safe."

"There isn't, Jerry. Honest, there isn't," replied Tom earnestly. "There's nothing in that safe but a few papers of no financial value."

"Well, I reckon I'll need those papers," said the tramp with a laugh.

"What for?" whispered Tom hoarsely. "I tell you, Jerry, those papers are of no use to anybody but the owner. It wouldn't pay you to take them. It wouldn't be worth the risk."

"Bless your innocent heart, Tom, there won't be any risk," leered the other, patting his revolver-pocket significantly.

"You don't mean to say—" began Tom, too overcome with horror to be able to finish the sentence.

"That I'd shoot if necessary? Yes, that's right. That's just what I mean," replied Jerry. "I'm a peaceable man, if they'll let me be, but a holy terror when riled. I prefers the gentle way because it's the easiest; but if anybody tries to interfere with me in my work, he'd better order his coffin aforehand. Now, I'm going to have those papers in that safe, whether there's bloodshed or whether there ain't."

"But why do you want them?" cried Tom. "Haven't I told you that they are of no earthly value to you? Can't you take my word for it, Jerry?"

"Never you mind why I want them, Tom Robbins," said the other man. "That's my affair and not yours. Don't you be asking any embarrassing questions. I'm here to question you, not to be questioned. I've told you my business; now I want to know yours.

"What are you doing here, eh? What's your graft? What's your object in hanging around this old man and his daughter, eh? Are you after those valueless papers in the safe, too, eh? Come, out with it; tell me the truth as a pal should. What's your game, eh?"

"I've got no game," replied Tom earnestly. "I'm leading a straight life, Jerry. I am, indeed. I'm just boarding here with the old doctor and his daughter, who have been very kind to me. That's all."

"Humph! So you've reformed, eh? Become a church-member, I suppose, and an honored and respectable citizen of Benford, eh? I suppose you've got a spotless reputation around these parts and are looked up to by everybody, including the old doctor and his daughter. Perhaps you're going to marry the daughter, just like it happens in the story-books, eh?

"Oh, my, but you're a sly dog, Tom Robbins! I never gave you credit for such slickness. By the way, I suppose you go under your own name here?"

"No," said Tom with a sigh. "I'm known as Tom Watson."

"Ah! And nobody knows where you came from? Everybody thinks you've been perfectly proper and respectable all your life, I suppose."

"Yes," said Tom.

"Including the old doctor and his daughter."

"Including them," sighed Tom; "I hope you're not going to give me away, Jerry."

"Well, perhaps I am, and then again perhaps I'm not. It all depends on you, old pal. You wouldn't like the doctor and his daughter and all the town of Benford to know that you're an ex-convict and that your name ain't Watson at all?"

"Well, if it has to be, it has to be, I suppose," said Tom resignedly. "I suppose I can't expect any mercy at your hands, Jerry the Lag, after the turn I

did you in prison. You swore then that you'd get square, and I suppose you regard this as your opportunity."

"Well, that's where you do me a wrong," said Jerry indignantly. "I don't bear any hard feeling, Tom. It's true that you did spoil my plot to break from Sing Sing by refusing to be a party to it. It was a sure thing, and we could have made our escape as easy as pie; but you balked because you were too much of a coward to take a chance and kill a man or two.

"I did swear I'd get square on you for that, for I was very sore, Tom—any man would be—but, bless you, I've forgotten that. I bear no ill will now. I'm willing to keep my mouth shut and pretend that you're a perfect stranger to me. I'm willing to let you go on living as Mr. Tom Watson, a respectable citizen of Benford. I don't want to be mean and spoil your game, Tom."

"Thanks," replied Tom gratefully. "If you really mean this, it's very kind of you, Jerry the Lag."

"Oh, I've got a kind heart. I'll do just as I say, Tom, and I'll only ask one thing in return."

"Ah! What's that?" asked Tom apprehensively.

"Those papers in the safe. I want them. You'll have to get them for me."

"Impossible!" cried Tom. "I expected this, Jerry. I knew that you were not going to let me off for nothing. I'm sorry; but it can't be done."

"You refuse, eh?"

"I'm afraid I'll have to."

"You fully realize what the consequences will be?"

"I'll have to face them, I suppose," groaned Tom.

"No, you don't have to at all. Why not be reasonable and give me that formula?"

"Ah! You know that that safe contains a formula, eh?" cried Tom. "That was a bad slip of the tongue, Jerry. Now, I know why you're here. You're hired by that pair of scoundrels, D'Arcy & Son, to pull off this job. The unprincipled cutthroats! Well, you can do what you like to me, Jerry, but you sha'n't succeed in carrying out this dastardly work. I'll prevent you, if it costs me my life."

"Oh, no, you won't, Tom Robbins. You've got common sense, and you'll listen to reason."

"I tell you, you sha'n't get that formula," said Tom grimly.

"Come, Tom, be sensible," urged the other. "You don't want to be exposed to the whole town and to your friends here as an ex-convict. Why not be reasonable? Nobody will ever know that you had anything to do with this job. I swear I won't split. There's honor among thieves, you know. Even the old man and his daughter will never get wise.

"As soon as I've turned the formula over to D'Arcy & Son, as per contract, I'll be hundreds of miles away from here as quick as a train can take me. All you'll have to do will be to keep your mouth shut, and D'Arcy & Son will be blamed for the theft. Nobody will ever suspect you."

"I can't do it," said Tom. "I'm going to save that formula at any cost."

"Even at the cost of going to prison for nearly all the rest of your life," said Jerry the Lag quietly. "You've had a good taste of Sing Sing, Tom Robbins. You don't want to go back there for a long term of years, do you?"

"What do you mean?" cried Tom hoarsely.

"Burglary and arson is what I mean. I suppose you know that there's two warrants out for your arrest, Tom. You're charged with robbing a man named Dolman in New York City and with setting fire to your brother's factory in Peekskill. Arson is a very serious offense, old pal, and punishable with a long term of imprisonment."

"It's a lie—a dirty, contemptible lie!" cried Tom angrily. "They've trumped up these charges to ruin me. I'm innocent of both. I swear it, Jerry."

"Well, it's no use swearing it to me," said the other with a cruel laugh. "I'm not the jury. Looks to me, though, as if they've got a pretty strong case against you, my boy. Whether you're innocent or guilty won't make any difference.

"I suppose you realize that they'll convict you just the same and send you up for a nice bunch of years. You're an ex-convict, and no jury would give you a show. Your past is against you. You

could protest your innocence for a year, but it wouldn't do you any good. As soon as you're arrested you're as good as sentenced."

Tom groaned.

"I suppose you know that there's a reward of a hundred dollars offered for your capture. The police of this town would like to earn that hundred. A word from me would mean your arrest to-morrow morning."

"For God's sake, have mercy, Jerry!" gasped Tom.

"Of course I'll have mercy. Ain't I making you a reasonable offer? Give me that formula and your secret's safe, so far as I'm concerned."

"Oh, I can't; I really can't do it," cried Tom desperately. "I can't turn upon my benefactors in cold blood. They've been good friends to me; I can't betray them."

"Well, you won't help them any by refusing," said Jerry calmly. "I've been offered a big bunch of money to pull off this job, and, as you know, I'm a man that sticks at nothing. Do you know what my original plans were? Of course, I had no idea when I made them that you were living at the house.

"I came up here on a reconnoitering expedition, as I said before, to try to get a good look at that safe and learn the exact location of it. I intended to come back later to-night and blow the thing open. Of course, that would have attracted the attention of the inmates of the house; but I wasn't worrying about that.

"I had been warned that there was a boarder living there who might make trouble, and I had been advised to hit him on the head or plug him full of lead as soon as he showed himself. Of course, I never suspected that you were the boarder, old pal. I was going to hand out the same medicine, too, to the old doctor and his daughter. In a word, as soon as anybody stirred I intended to make short work of them with this," and he patted his revolver-pocket affectionately.

Tom shuddered.

"You see, old pal," continued Jerry, "if you really want to help these people, you'll get me that formula and save their lives, besides saving yourself from exposure and a long term of imprisonment. Now, what are you going to do about it? Hurry up and make up your mind."

"You wouldn't really murder them, would you, Jerry?" cried Tom, aghast.

"Well, I would not like to do it; but if it was necessary I wouldn't hesitate for a minute. My mind is made up, Tom. Either your promise to go back to the house and bring me that formula right away, or I'll go there now and take it by force. It's up to you, Tom Robbins; only, I warn you again that if you won't be agreeable and save me a lot of unnecessary trouble and bloodshed, I'll tip off the authorities and have you sent to prison on those charges. You know me, old pal. I always carry out my threats, don't I? Now, what are you going to do?"

"Give me a couple of hours to think it over, Jerry," begged the wretched Tom.

"A couple of hours! It's out of the question, Tom. What will I be doing while your thinkery-tank is at work? I'd die of ennui in the mean time. No, sir, I won't be mean, though; I'll split the difference with you. I'll give you a whole ten minutes to make up your mind."

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRUGGLE.

A MAN can do a great deal of thinking in ten minutes.

Tom Robbins realized this as he pondered over the ultimatum of Jerry the Lag. He knew that he was completely in the villain's power.

The prospect of going to prison again for a long term was horrifying. He knew that Jerry was right, too.

He didn't stand a ghost of a show. Once he was arrested, he was as good as sent away.

Then, too, Angelina and her kind-hearted old father would learn that he was an impostor, an ex-convict. That is to say, they would learn it if they were alive on the morrow to learn anything.

The chances were that Jerry would carry out his threat, go to the house and blow up the safe with dynamite. The

old man or Angelina would hear him and come down-stairs in alarm, then the desperate Jerry would commit murder without compunction.

He knew Jerry's character, having seen much of him during his four years' imprisonment, and realized that the wretch had no conscience.

Tom shuddered.

"Why, you're shivering!" exclaimed Jerry. "And it ain't a cold night, either. You must keep up your courage, Tom. It's an easy job and nobody will ever discover your part in it.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, old pal. We'll walk to the booze emporium and get a little good whisky. That will brace you up. Come on. You can think just as well walking, and I'll extend the time-limit five minutes."

As though in a dream, Tom followed his villainous companion, still trying to reason out what course he should pursue.

"Their lives are plainly in danger," he mused. "It seems to me it is my duty to save them by giving up that formula. As Jerry says, he would get it anyhow, even if I refused to give it to him. He's armed and I'm not. I couldn't prevent him from going to the house this minute and cracking that safe. I might raise an outcry, but that would only make bloodshed certain. The old man and Angelina would be murdered, and perhaps Jerry would kill me, too. Even if he did not he would tip off the authorities as to my identity and I should be sent to prison, which would be worse than deatb. God help me!"

There was another argument, too, which kept appealing to Tom Robbins. He tried desperately to wave it back, but it insisted on asserting itself.

If the D'Arcys got hold of that formula. young Alfred would probably jilt Angelina. It would be a hard blow for the girl, but she would get over it sooner or later. Then the field would be clear and he, Tom, would have his chance.

It was no use trying to deceive himself any longer. He knew now that he was in love with Angelina. He knew that it was more than he could bear to see her betrothed to Alfred d'Arcy.

By giving that formula to Jerry the Lag, everything would turn out satisfactorily for him.

His share in the shabby business would never be revealed. Jerry would be paid by the D'Arcys and would leave town at once, for his own sake. The D'Arcys would keep quiet to protect themselves, and when young Alfred jilted Angelina and, a little later on, the firm of D'Arcy & Son began turning out the new patent-leather, according to formula, Dr. Green and his daughter would surely believe that D'Arcy & Son were solely responsible for the robbery, aud would hate them accordingly.

He, Tom, could go on living a respectable life. Nobody in Benford would know that his name was not Tom Watson, that he was really Tom Robbins, an ex-convict. He would make Angelina love him. He knew that she cared for him quite a little already.

She couldn't really love Alfred d'Arcy or would she not have entrusted the latter with the combination of the safe? No, she had merely an infatuation for Alfred, which would disappear when she discovered the duplicity of the D'Arcys.

By the time they reached the saloon, Tom had almost made up his mind. He would give Jerry that formula. He tried to persuade himself that he was doing it to save the lives of Dr. Green and his daughter; but in his heart he knew that the other arguments had prevailed.

"Here's the booze emporium," said Jerry. "Let's go up-stairs where we can be alone. Your time is up, Tom Robbins. Come up-stairs and I'll order some drinks while we talk it over. I hope you've made up your mind to be sensible."

Tom did not answer! They climbed the rickety stair-case to the little sitting-room above the bar.

"Bring us some of your best whisky," said Jerry to the waiter. "None of your cheap sort, mind you. The best you've got in the house."

The waiter looked suspiciously at Jerry's shabby clothing.

"Show me first that you've got the price to pay for it," he said gruffly.

"Price!" scoffed Jerry, and threw a hundred-dollar bill upon the table. "How'll that do you?"

"Humph," said the man and examined the bill suspiciously.

Then he glanced at Tom Robbins, and the latter's more respectable appearance seemed to reassure him, for he left the room and returned a minute afterward with a bottle of whisky and two glasses.

Jerry poured out two big drinks.

"Here, old pal. Drink hearty," he said genially. "This'll make your teeth stop chattering, and put some fire in your veins. Ah, that's the way! Drink hearty, my boy. Here, have another drink. Here's luck to you and the doctor and his pretty daughter. I suppose she is pretty, ain't she? We'll take it for granted. Come, drink up, old pal, don't be bashful. That's right. Good whisky, ain't it?"

Tom was not a drinking man; but he felt the need of a stimulant just then, and he quaffed the fiery liquor eagerly.

"And now let's hear your decision, Tom," said Jerry, when they had emptied their glasses for the fourth time. "Do I get that formula with your kind assistance, or must I take it by force, at the sacrifice of human life?"

"I've been thinking it all out, Jerry," said Tom slowly, "and I've come to the conclusion that it's my duty to save their lives by helping you."

"Ah! That's the sensible way to look at it, my boy," cried Jerry heartily. "No, you'd better not take any more booze, Tom. Give me that bottle. You've had quite enough already. If you get jagged you won't be able to get that safe open without alarming the whole town. Be discreet, my boy, if you value your safety and your reputation. You don't want to be caught at the safe, red-handed, do you?"

Tom shuddered.

"That's just what I'm afraid of, Jerry," he whispered hoarsely. "The doctor or Angelina might come downstairs and detect me while I was at the safe. I'd rather go to prison for the rest of my life than have that happen."

"Well, you must manage it so skilfully that they won't hear you," said Jerry.

Tom shook his head.

"No, Jerry," he said, "I'm too much of a coward to attempt it. I couldn't carry out the job successfully. I'd make a noise and bungle it."

"Nonsense," retorted Jerry reassuringly, "why should you make any noise, Tom? It ain't as if you'll have to blow that safe open or even crack it. You don't mean to tell me that you don't know the combination, do you? I've reckoned all along that you did, of course. You're too smart to have lived in that house without learning that secret. I give you credit for that, Tom."

Tom Robbins suddenly saw his opportunity, and hesitated. If he could convince Jerry that he did not know the combination, and that he was therefore powerless to get the formula, the whole deal would be off.

Jerry could not expect him to crack the safe or blow it up with dynamite. The fellow must know that he was not an experienced burglar and that it would be folly to expect him to do a burglar's work.

Here was his chance to escape this whole dirty business. He could save himself from any participation in this crime by declaring that he did not have the combination of the safe. It was so simple a way out that it was a wonder it had not occurred to him before this. And yet he remained silent.

"Well," said Jerry impatiently, "how about it, Tom? I took it for granted you knew that combination. Do you or don't you?"

Tom made up his mind suddenly. He would be loyal to Dr. Green and Angelina despite the terrible temptation to betray them.

"No," said he hoarsely, "I swear to you, Jerry, that I don't know it." To himself he added, "May God forgive me for that lie!"

Jerry's face went white with anger and disappointment.

"Very well," he said calmly, "that settles it. You'll have to force the safe then and bring me that formula."

"But I cannot do it, Jerry. I've had no experience at safe-cracking. I'll spoil the whole thing, get myself in serious trouble, and not get the formula, either."

"I'll loan you some dynamite," said Jerry generously.

"I wouldn't know how to use it if you did," rejoined Tom.

"I've got a full set of tools," went on Jerry. "I think if I was to give you a

course of instruction you'd be able to do the job, all right. This is a great disappointment to me, Tom Robbins. I thought for sure that you knew that combination and that our work was going to be easy."

"I'm sorry," said Tom earnestly, "I really am, Jerry. I've got a suggestion, though. Why not put this thing off for a couple of days. In the mean time I'll do my best to learn that combination. I think I can manage it by then."

For answer Jerry the Lag winked one eye.

"You're a wise guy, ain't you, Tom Robbins?" he sneered, "but wise as you are you make one big mistake. You take Jerry the Lag for a fool, and in that you're wrong, very, very wrong.

"So I'm to give you two days to learn the combination, eh? Wait two long days? That would give you plenty of time to warn the old doctor to take the formula out of the safe and hide it somewhere. That would also give you plenty of time to leave Benford and get out of the clutches of the law, eh? You're a wise guy, Tommy, and no mistake, and I give you credit for it. But it won't work, my boy. It won't work. Now you listen to me."

The admonition was unnecessary, for Tom was listening breathlessly.

"One of us is going to leave this here saloon right now to crack that safe," went on the ruffian. "Either it's you or me who does the trick. I don't care how you pulls off the job. You can use dynamite. You can use these tools I've got in my pocket, or if you're lying to me about that combination, as I'm inclined to suspect, you can turn the knob and open the safe door like a peaceful, law-abiding citizen. I don't care how you work it; but you must bring me that formula immediately. Do you understand?"

"It can't be done," said Tom.

"Very well, then, you can consider the whole deal off. To-morrow morning I notifies the police here that there's a man named Tom Robbins in this town who's wanted for arson and burglary. You can't run far away in the mean time, and, besides, if you do run away, it'll be all the better for me; they'll blame you for this job.

"Remember, you're already accused of blowing open Dolman's safe in New York, so they'll give you credit for being an experienced hand at safe-cracking.

"And in the mean time I'm going to the doctor's house right now to pull off the job, as I originally planned. If the doctor or his pretty daughter happens to hear me at work and come down-stairs, they'll be killed. That's all. Good-by for the present, old pal. I'm sorry we can't do business together."

He rose from his chair and walked towards the door.

"Stop!" cried Tom hoarsely. "Take the formula if you must, but don't kill them, Jerry. Have pity on an old man and a poor young girl. You must have some heart, Jerry; you won't commit murder in cold blood."

"As I've told you a dozen times," said Jerry impatiently, "I've no desire to murder anybody. I'm a kind-hearted man. I want that formula, though, and I'm going to have it. If I'm interfered with I'll be obliged to shoot to kill. That's all."

He took another step toward the door.

"You'd better stay here," he called over his shoulder. "You'd better not come near the house while I'm doing the trick or you might get killed, too. Remember, I'm armed and you're not."

"Stop!" cried Tom in terror. "Don't go, Jerry. I've lied to you. I *do* know the combination of that safe."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jerry triumphantly, returning to his seat at the table, "I thought I would scare you into confession, old pal. So you'll do the trick after all, eh, like a good fellow? That's right."

"I'm afraid to open that safe myself," gasped Tom, "but I'll give you the combination, Jerry. You ought to be able to open the safe then, without disturbing the doctor or Angelina. God knows I'm only doing it for their sakes; for that reason and no other. I'll give you the combination, Jerry; but don't ask me to open the safe and get the formula myself, I couldn't do it."

"Very well," said Jerry, "I'll be generous with you, my boy. I don't see why I should take any risk, when I've got you in my power and ought to be able to use you to pull my chestnuts out of the fire.

Still, as I just observed, I'll be generous. Give me the combination and I'll do the trick myself."

"And you won't murder the old man and his daughter?"

"Not unless they are awakened and make it necessary for me to do it to save myself. If I know the combination, however, it's hardly likely that that will happen. I'm too old a hand at the job to make any noise getting into the place, and I'll oil the hinges of the safe so that they won't squeak. I guess they won't hear me. Hurry up and give me the combination, old pal."

"And you'll never tell a soul that you got it from me?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Not a soul, I promise."

"And you'll keep your mouth shut about my past?"

"I promise you."

"And you won't tip off the police?"

"I won't. I'll keep my word, old pal. Come! Hurry up and write that combination. Here's paper and pencil if you haven't got any. Hurry up now and write it before you change your mind."

The two men were sitting on opposite sides of the little table. There was nobody else in the room. Tom took the proffered pencil and paper, sighed and hesitated.

"Go on," said Jerry more impatiently. "What are you waiting for, you idiot. Hurry up and write it, I tell you."

"I don't like to do it, Jerry," groaned Tom. "It seems such a dastardly piece of work."

"You know what'll be the consequences if you refuse," said Jerry ominously.

"Yes," sighed Tom, "I guess I'd better do it. It will be the best for everybody. God knows it's only for their sakes I'm doing it. Only to save them."

He sighed again, but began to write some figures on the sheet of paper, sighing over each numeral as though he were signing his own death warrant.

"Here it is," he said hoarsely. "Here's the combination of the safe, Jerry, and may God forgive me for what I'm doing."

Jerry the Lag leaned eagerly over the table to seize the extended paper; but to his snrprise, just as his fingers were about to grasp it, Tom Robbins suddenly withdrew it.

"No! No!" he gasped, jumping to his feet, his face deathly white and his eyes dilated with horror. "I can't do it. I can't do it. Good God! What a cur I am! She entrusted me with the secret of the combination as a mark of her confidence in me, and I was about to betray it. I won't do it, no matter what the cost. You can do your worst, you cowardly scoundrel; but you sha'n't make a Judas out of me!"

He was about to tear the telltale paper into shreds when, with an oath, Jerry the Lag rushed around the table and frenziedly grasped his wrist.

"Give me that paper—you!" he cried. "You miserable, sneaking coward. I'm just about tired of your fits and starts. Give me that paper or I'll—"

He didn't finish the sentence, for, as he made a desperate effort to pry open Tom Robbins's clenched fist and seize the crumpled scrap it contained, Tom, with his free hand, seized the whisky bottle on the table, and brought it down with full force upon the scoundrel's head.

Jerry the Lag fell to the floor with a terrifying thud, blood streaming from his broken scalp.

"I've killed him! Good God, I've killed him!" cried Tom in horror, as he bent over the prostrate man.

"Not a sign of animation! Great Heavens, he's dead, sure enough! I'll have murder to answer for now. Was anybody ever so unfortunate as I. Goodness knows, he brought this on himself, though, the blackmailing sconndrel. Thank Heaven, anyway, I didn't betray Angelina's confidence. It makes me shudder to think how near I was to giving him this paper. That treachery would have been worse than murder."

He took a match and ignited the crumpled paper, crnshing the ashes with his foot so that nothing but dust remained.

Then he looked down again at the unconscious Jerry.

"I don't think he's dead," he murmured hopefully. "He seems to be breathing slightly. Maybe he'll come to, in a little while. Perhaps he's only stunned after all. At any rate I'd better get away from here as quickly as possible.

Somebody will be coming up-stairs in a minute or two and then I'll be arrested."

He again knelt beside the prostrate Jerry and uttered an exclamation of joy as he observed that the ruffian showed signs of returning animation.

Just then the six-shooter in Jerry's hip-pocket caught his eye and he stealthily withdrew it and put it in his own pocket.

"I guess I'll borrow this for a little while," he muttered. "Jerry may be coming to presently, and when he does I'll probably need this. He seems to be coming around all right. I reckon it's high time for me to take my departure. Thank Heaven, he didn't get that paper. The secret is still safe. I'm glad I realized my mistake at the last minute."

He crept slowly down the rickety stairs without attracting the attention of anybody in the barroom and ran swiftly toward the house of Dr. Green.

CHAPTER XIV.

BETRAYED.

It was midnight when Tom Robbins reached the Greens and crept up-stairs to his room.

He shuddered as he reviewed the events of the evening.

"I'm in a desperate fix," he gasped. "If Jerry dies I'll have to face a charge of murder. I suppose that will mean that I'll go to the electric-chair. As an ex-convict I'll stand no chance.

"And if Jerry lives I'm just as badly off, or worse. He'll be thirsting for revenge. I know that he never forgets or forgives. He'll expose me to the whole town to-morrow, and I'll be arrested and sent to prison for those two crimes.

"Angelina will learn the truth and shrink from me with horror. Serves me right, I suppose, for deceiving these good people, in the first place.

"Well, at any rate, I reckon the formula is safe for another day. Even if Jerry recovers I reckon he'll not be in a condition to come here to-night to crack that safe. That whisky bottle came down with an awful thud. I didn't know my right arm possessed such strength. I reckon, though, that if Jerry does recover he'll be around here for that formula before many days have passed. And if I've killed him, I suppose those scoundrels, the D'Arcys, will hire another thug to do their dirty work. That's why they wanted to get me to Boston—so that I would be out of the way. When they found that I was determined not to go, they instructed Jerry the Lag to kill me if I offered any resistance. They're a fine pair of rogues.

"I wonder why they gave up their original idea of getting me to do the job. Perhaps they discovered that I wasn't the man for it, or perhaps they fell in with Jerry accidentally, after making the arrangement with me, and thought that he could accomplish their purpose in shorter time.

"Well, no matter what happens to me, I'll do my best to fool them in their efforts to rob this poor old man. I'll keep Jerry's gun with me night and day, and I'll not hesitate to use it, if occasion offers.

"I think in the morning I'll warn the doctor that it would be advisable to remove that formula from the safe and hide it somewhere else. There's no telling what tricks those rogues may be up to. It's very evident that they are desperate, and are going to leave no stone unturned to get that formula in their hands."

He was wearied by the mental and nervous strain he had gone through and, a few minutes after his head touched the pillow, he was fast asleep.

He was awakened at eight by a knocking on the door.

He had been dreaming all night of ghastly scenes, in which Jerry the Lag figured prominently. Sometimes it was Jerry who lay dead before him, a bloody spectacle, and sometimes it was the old doctor and Angelina stretched lifeless upon the floor, while Jerry the Lag stood over them with a sardonic grin upon his evil face.

The knocking at the door caused him to open his eyes in affright.

"Who's there?" he cried fearfully.

"It's I, Mr. Watson," answered the voice of Angelina. "Oh, come down-stairs quickly, please; something terrible has happened. Please hurry!"

Tom hastily slipped into his clothes and hurried below, fearing the worst.

"I suppose they've found out about the murder of Jerry the Lag," he muttered grimly. "And the cops are waiting down-stairs to arrest me. Oh, well, I saved the formula, anyway. I guess there's nothing left but to face the music with a bold front. Death by electricity ain't the worst kind of a death, anyway."

With this exceedingly chilly comfort he opened the dining-room door, and was startled at the sight which met his gaze.

The old doctor was pacing up and down the room distractedly, clenching his fists and muttering incoherently. Angelina sat there pale as death, and weeping pitifully.

One glance in the direction of the safe enlightened Tom as to the cause of their emotion.

The safe was open. Its heavy iron door had been swung back on its hinges as far as it would go.

Tom gasped with surprise.

"Surely it can't be possible—" he began, when the old man interrupted him.

"It's more than possible. It's happened!" he cried passionately. "Some dastardly robber has opened that safe and stolen my formula. My formula! Do you heed me, Mr. Watson? My formula! Oh, my God, I'm ruined; I'm ruined! All my hopes are blasted. All my dreams of fortune are at an end. My formula has gone. Some sneaking wretch has stolen it. Oh, my Heavens, I shall go crazy!"

"Who can have done it?" asked Tom, white to the lips.

"I wish I knew," cried the old man. "Old as I am, I'd kill him! I'd show him no mercy, if I had him in my grasp. The treacherous dog!"

Tom walked toward the open safe and examined the lock.

"Why," he gasped, "it hasn't been forced open!"

"Forced open! No!" screamed the old man; "I should say not. It's been deliberately opened by somebody who knew the combination. There are only two persons in the whole world who are supposed to know the combination—my daughter and me. Who else can have discovered it?"

Tom looked searchingly at Angelina, who was sobbing violently.

"Could it be possible that she told young D'Arcy after all?" he mused.

"Do you suspect anybody, sir?" he asked, turning to the distracted doctor.

"Do I suspect anybody?" cried the unfortunate old man. "How can I help it? I suspect everybody. I suspect you. God forgive me, I even suspect Angelina. Somebody has betrayed me. I'd just like to find out who it is!"

"Oh, father!" cried Angelina in horror. "How can you say that? How can you suspect me?"

"You and I were the only two who knew that combination, my girl!" cried her father wildly. "Not another soul knew it. I never told it to anybody but you. How can I help suspecting you? I don't think that you stole the formula, but I am afraid that you were tempted into giving the secret of the combination to somebody—to young Alfred d'Arcy, probably.

"Oh, my God, if I find that it's true, if I find that it was he who has done this dastardly thing, I'll kill him! I swear I will! As for you, my girl, if I find out that it's you who betrayed my secret, I'll never speak a word to you again as long as I live. I swear it!"

"Oh, father, father!" gasped the girl. "How can you make such terrible threats?"

She burst into a paroxysm of wild sobbing, and her father, unable to contain himself any longer, hastily left the room, banging the door behind him.

After he had gone Tom looked at Angelina, and Angelina looked at Tom.

"Oh, Mr. Watson," cried the girl passionately, "give us back that formula! For the love of God, give it back to us! Oh, I trusted you so. It was cruel of you to betray us. Oh, why did you do this terrible thing? There is still time to make amends. You see the awful suffering you have caused. Give me back that—"

"Stop! Stop, Miss Angelina! Stop, I implore you!" cried Tom in agony. "Why do you think it was I who stole it? I swear to you, Miss Angelina, that I have never touched that safe. You'll believe me, won't you?"

The girl cast upon him a look of scorn.

"No," she cried passionately, "I cannot believe you, Mr. Watson. I wish to

Heaven that I could. You are the only person besides my father and myself who knows the combination of that safe. It must have been you who opened it in the night and stole its contents.

"Oh, how could you do it? How could you do it? I gave you the secret of the combination to show my confidence in your honor. Oh, you cannot deny—"

Before she could finish the sentence the old doctor had entered the room and rushed upon Tom.

"I heard what she said! I heard what she just said!" he screamed, seizing the unfortunate man by the throat. "Like a fool she entrusted you with the combination, and it is you who have robbed us, you cur, you traitor, you thief, you ingrate! Give me back my formula or I'll strangle you!"

Old and feeble as he was, his grasp upon Tom's throat was so tight that the latter spluttered and gasped for breath.

"Give me back my formula, I say. Give it to me, if you value your life. I've got strength enough left to kill you, and I'll do it, unless you return to me what you have stolen, you treacherous thief."

It is probable that his frenzied fingers would have choked the life out of the surprised Tom, who was too dazed to offer any resistance, if Angelina had not rushed to her father's side and come to his victim's aid.

"Father, father! What are you doing?" she screamed. "Can not you see that you are killing him? Oh, for God's sake, stop! Remember that he saved my life."

At her words the unfortunate old man released his hold and sank, weak and exhausted, into a chair.

"Oh, what am I doing? What am I doing?" he moaned. "I'm crazy with grief and despair. Give me back my formula, Watson, and you shall leave this house, unharmed and unmolested."

Tom struggled to regain his breath.

"I swear to you, Dr. Green," he gasped, "that I know nothing about the disappearance of your formula. I swear to you that I have never opened that safe. You believe me, do you not?"

"No," said the old man, "I don't believe you. I believe that it was you who stole my formula. I believe you are a thief—a dirty, contemptible, sneaking thief. We took you in and befriended you, and this is how you repay us."

With a groan, Tom turned to the girl.

"Surely you won't refuse to believe me, Miss Angelina?" he cried. "Surely you can look in my face and read there that I am telling you the truth? I swear to you that I am innocent of this awful crime, and as anxious as you and your father to discover the thief. You believe me, don't you?"

"No," retorted the girl, her eyes blazing with scorn; "I don't believe you, Mr. Watson. I should like to have faith in you, but I cannot. Somebody who knew that combination opened that safe. It must have been either my father or yourself. Oh, I was a fool to trust you—a weak, foolish girl. I realize my mistake now."

"So you realize it now, do you?" growled her father savagely. "You realize it now, when it's too late. You must have been crazy, girl—stark, raving mad—to give him that combination."

"But he seemed so loyal to us, father," cried the girl, sobbing afresh. "He seemed so faithful that I wanted to show my confidence in him."

Tom groaned again.

"Confidence? Fiddlesticks," snapped the old doctor. "Why should you have shown any confidence in him, you silly girl? Why should you have trusted him? He was a stranger to you, and strangers are never to be fully trusted. You knew nothing about who he was or where he came from. We took him in without asking any questions. How do we know even that his name is really what he says it is? For all we know he may be a desperate criminal hiding from justice."

Tom winced.

"I wonder if he knows anything, or if that was just a chance remark," he thought. "I wonder, too, who could have opened that safe and stolen that formula. It couldn't have been Jerry the Lag. Even if he recovered sufficiently to be able to come here, he didn't know the combination.

"At least, I'm positive he didn't learn it from me. The table was too wide for him to see the figures as I wrote them, even if he could read figures upside

down; and he certainly didn't get a chance to see the paper afterward. When I left the room it was in crumbled ashes, which could have told nothing.

"No, it couldn't have been Jerry the Lag. Then, who on earth could have done it? It couldn't have been the old man himself. He would have no reason to steal his own formula. And it could not have been Angelina.

"Ah! couldn't it, though? Isn't it possible, despite her denial, that she stole that paper at the request of that scoundrel, D'Arcy? Women will do anythiug for those they love. Either she stole it for him or gave him the combination, and he stole it himself. That's what must have happened. She's lying now, and accusing me to save herself and her lover. Well, I won't betray her.

"She's trying to throw the blame on me, which plainly shows that she doesn't love me; and, if she doesn't love me, I don't care what happens to me."

He was aroused from his reverie by the angry voice of the old doctor.

"Well, Watson," he said, with forced calmness, "I'll give you just five minutes to make up your mind. Either you return that formula to us, in which case you can leave here a free man, and nobody shall ever hear a word from us about your treachery, or I will summon the police and have you arrested for theft."

"It isn't necessary to summon the police, doctor; they're here already," said a voice outside the door, and to the surprise of the doctor, Angelina, and Tom, Chief Johnson, of the Benford police force, entered the room, followed by a constable.

"Good morning," said the chief pleasantly, nodding to the doctor and Angelina. "I presume this is my prisoner."

He fixed his keen eyes on Tom.

"What's your name, mister?" he asked affably.

"Tom Watson," said Tom.

"No, I don't mean your alias. I mean your real name. It's Tom Robbins, ain't it?"

"What do you want of me?" growled Tom sullenly.

"Well, personally, I don't want anything, Mr. Robbins," said the chief pleasantly. "But I rather think that the police of New York want you for burglary, and the police of Peekskill wants you for arson; so, being as you're so very much in demand, I reckon I'll have to ask you to come along with me."

"Burglary and arson, and his name isn't Watson, after all!" gasped the astonished doctor.

"No," replied Tom bitterly; "my name isn't Watson. My name is Robbins, and I'm an ex-convict. I've just finished a four-year term in Sing Sing. You might as well know the truth. You can do what you like with me now. I don't care."

"An ex-convict," gasped the doctor. "And living under my roof. Oh, my God, what a fool I've been! You hear what he says, Angelina? Perhaps you realize now how crazy you were to entrust him with the combination of the safe."

But Angelina did not answer. She had fallen back in her chair, in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XV.

A VISIT FROM D'ARCY.

"I SUPPOSE this means a hundred dollars reward to you," remarked Tom Robbins to Chief Johnson on their way to the lockup.

"I reckon it does," replied the policeman, with a chuckle. "It will come mighty handy, too, let me tell you."

"Would you mind answering me one question, chief?" asked Tom.

"That all depends upon the question, my friend."

"Who put you on my track? I've been living here for weeks. I've passed you on the street several times, and you never recognized me."

"No—I'll admit that. You don't look much like the picture they sent me, and your beard is very deceiving," said the chief apologetically.

"Very well, then. How did you discover me at last?" asked Tom eagerly.

"Well, that's a secret, I rather guess," replied Chief Johnson.

"You were tipped off by Jerry the Lag, were you not?" asked Tom.

"Who on earth is Jerry the Lag?" demanded the chief in surprise that was

evidently genuine. "I've never heard tell of him, my friend."

"Maybe you don't know him by name. He's a rough-looking fellow, and the cleverest burglar in America. Just now he's dressed like a tramp."

"Well, it wasn't any tramp who tipped me off. As a matter of fact, seeing that you're so anxious to know, I don't mind telling you that I was put wise to you by an anonymous letter received this morning."

"Ah! By an anonymous letter—the crafty scoundrel!" muttered Tom.

"Yes, an anonymous letter—a letter which said that I might be interested to learn that the strange man who boards with the Greens, and who calls himself Tom Watson at all, but Tom Robbins, the fugitive from justice.

"I acted immediately upon receipt of the information. I'm not the kind of man to let any grass grow under my feet, you understand. Of course I thought that the letter was phony, and that you'd be able to give a good account of yourself. I never expected that you'd confess right off that you were Tom Robbins, and an ex-convict. I'm very grateful to you for doing that, my boy. It has saved me a lot of trouble."

"And you've no idea where the letter came from?" asked Tom.

"None whatever. To tell you the truth, I don't care, so long as the information it contained is correct."

"Well, that letter undoubtedly came from Jerry the Lag," said Tom calmly. "I'm glad that he was able to write to you, because that shows I didn't kill him. I'd hate to have a murder on my hands. Maybe you heard about a row in Logan's saloon last night, chief?"

"Yes, I did," was the reply. "So you were mixed up in that, too, eh? I met Logan this morning, and he told me all about it. According to his story, two men—one a tramp, and one apparently respectable—went up-stairs to the private room and ordered several drinks of whisky. I suppose you were one of the two men, eh?"

Tom nodded.

"Well, Logan says that the two men were up-stairs for a short while, and that nobody paid any attention to either of them. In a little while one came down and went out. They heard him go out, but thought nothing of the fact that he was alone.

"Well, about twenty minutes afterward, Logan says, the other fellow, the tramp, staggered heavily down-stairs, and Logan met him on the stairway and noticed that he was deathly pale and that he was bleeding profusely about the head. From this fact Logan reckoned that there must have been a fight. Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me what really did happen."

"Nothing much," replied Tom. "Logan was quite right. We had a quarrel and a fight, and the other man was worsted. The other man was Jerry the Lag. So he left twenty minutes after I did, eh? I'm glad to hear that. I thought that I'd killed him. I reckon he was only stunned. Where is he now? Miles away by this time, I reckon?"

"I don't know," said the chief, shrugging his shoulders. "If he isn't miles away now, he'd better be before long, if he knows what's good for him. If he is the desperate character you say, I won't have him hanging around Benford."

When they arrived at the jail Tom was turned over to the turnkey and locked in a cell, with plenty of time for reflection on his hands.

"So this is the end of all my good intentions, eh?" he muttered bitterly. "If I had carried out my original plan and become a desperate crook so as to get my revenge on society I couldn't have ended up worse than this. I suppose I'll go to Sing Sing again, for the rest of my life. Oh, well, let them do as they like with me. I don't care.

"That old doctor was horrified when he learned the truth, and the girl fainted. I guess I shocked them. Serves them right. I want them to think the worst of me. I want her to believe me a bad egg. What difference does it make to me what they think? The old doctor believes that I stole his formula. Well, let him believe so.

"Their opinion, good or bad, doesn't cut any ice with me. I don't care a snap of the fingers for either of them, father or daughter. They're nothing to me."

But, despite his contemptuous words, in whatever direction the unfortunate man

looked he could not escape the fancy that he saw the reproachful eyes of Angelina gazing at him.

"I reckon I do care, after all," he muttered, with a lump in his throat. "I reckon, when it gets down to facts, that I'd rather have that girl's respect than anything else in the world. Well, I've lost it, so what's the use of brooding over the thing. I suppose I was born unlucky, and it's no use fighting against the inevitable."

An hour later, however, he was seized with an idea.

"I don't care what becomes of me now," he thought. "They can send me to prison for the rest of my life if they wish; but I would like to clear myself in her eyes. I'd like to explain to her about how I came to be sent to Sing Sing. I don't want her to think the worst of me. I suppose she regards me now with horror and disgust. I'd like to make her believe that I'm not quite so bad as she thinks me. I wonder if she'd come here if I were to send her a note. I might try it, anyway."

He called the turnkey.

"Say, boss," he said, "is there anything in the prison rules against my sending out a note to a friend?"

"Humph! No, I guess not. I'd have to read the note first, though," replied the turnkey.

"That'll be all right." Tom took out a pencil and a piece of paper and wrote:

DEAR MISS ANGELINA:

Believe me, I am innocent of all they charge me with. I have done time in prison, but I was sentenced unjustly. I can explain it all. Would you grant me the great favor of paying me a visit here before I am taken away to New York?

"I guess that will bring her," he muttered hopefully as he folded the note and handed it through the bars to the turnkey.

"She'll not refuse me this last request. I came near losing my life trying to save hers. They can't deny that. They can't take that consoling thought away from me. Out of gratitude for that she ought to grant this last favor I'll ever ask of her."

For hours he waited in an agony of impatience. Fifty times at least he asked the turnkey if the note had been properly delivered.

Suddenly his heart beat rapidly with joy and expectancy. There were footsteps outside the cell, and the turnkey approached.

"There's a visitor to see you, Robbins," he announced.

"Bring her here, quick, please," begged the prisoner eagerly.

"I didn't say it was a she. It's a he," said the turnkey gruffly, and Tom uttered a cry of rage and disappointment as a man's face peered at him through the bars.

(To be continued.)

THE HAWKINS HARVESTER.

By EDGAR FRANKLIN.

A diabolical invention of the conscienceless millionaire with an insensate desire to make things easy for his fellow-men.

THERE was a long, sweet stretch of peaceful months, during which I nurtured the fond and foolish belief that Hawkins had at last been forced from his rôle of chief hoodoo to my own existence.

Wealthy man, genially inventive constructor of malevolent mechanical madnesses though he be, Hawkins and I met as strangers.

We still lived on the same block in New York. We still trod the same pavements. We still frequently rode downtown on business mornings on the same "L" train. But we never spoke as we passed by.

We never exchanged the smallest, iciest of nods—albeit more than once I caught a wistful eye directed at me over the top of the inventor's morning paper.

At those moments, I presume, a well-grounded wonder was perambulating Hawkins's brain; it is not every one who can pass through the series of demonstrations to which he treated me during our past acquaintance — and then pull out alive.

Hawkins, then, seemed to realize that there had arisen between us a barrier impassable and impregnable as a square mile of twelve-inch armor plate; and the bruises and abrasions on my person healed up at last, and life began to take on much the same cheery aspect it had worn before I encountered Hawkins and his damnable inventions.

And then summer arrived.

Hawkins, you know, has his country home next to mine, far up in the heart of the Massachusetts Berkshires; and when you are at odds with your neighbor in such a locality—and more particularly when your wife is a friend of the enemy's wife—something very like uncomfortable constraint is likely to arise.

By reason of which constraint, perhaps—the summer situation having been endured for a matter of two or three weeks—a wild spasm of Christian forgiveness suddenly gripped my heart on that fateful, brilliant afternoon.

Forgiveness, at least, seems the prettiest name for it. It may have been plain hysteria or a touch of the sun or the first signs of senile decay. Whatever it was, it came abruptly and with marked force, and took the shape of a fixed decision to forgive Hawkins.

I would go to him and forgive him, coldly and formally. If he expressed deep contrition, I would add a few kind words and leave; and after that the greater distance that remained between us for the rest of time, the better. The annoying constraint would at least be removed.

By some accident on the hired man's part, the tanks of my touring-car had been filled that morning. I cranked the motor, and, climbing in, headed for Hawkins's.

It is a very small run; in a matter of five minutes I was rolling up Hawkins's drive, and, with something of an internal chill, was tooting the horn in the old familiar way.

A startled maid appeared. She looked at me. She rubbed her eyes, and said:

"The—ladies have gone driving, Mr. Griggs. They won't be—back until evening."

I announced that I was after Mr. Hawkins himself. The young woman permitted herself a gulp, and—

"Mr. Hawkins—Mr. Hawkins has gone over to the Hayes farm, sir. If—you want to see him, you'd better hurry."

"Eh?"

"Yes, sir. He's been gone some time now, and—and he may not be there long, and—"

Her voice seemed to fade. The girl herself backed into the doorway. I gave a final stare at her. She disappeared, and perhaps with something of a grunt I sent the car down the other drive and along the road again.

What on earth was Hawkins doing at Hayes's place—the biggest farm in the county? Had he picked Hayes as a new victim, or— I dropped speculation in an absent-minded study of the scenery.

It would be just as easy to forgive Hawkins on somebody else's property as on his own, little as that might be saying.

Ten minutes more of easy going, and I came up the long approach to Hayes's solid old farmhouse.

The wide old vine-clad veranda was there. I would line up beside it and make inquiry for Hawkins; I would deliver the oration that was already beginning to stick in my throat, and— From behind the vines rushed a too, too familiar figure.

It was Hawkins—Hawkins coming down the three steps with brilliant smile and outstretched hand, straight for my machine; and from his lips came:

"Griggs!"

I straightened up and stepped out. I squared my chest and took a long breath as I began impressively:

"Hawkins! I—"

"Griggs! Not another word!" cried the inventor joyously. "Not one single word! I forgive you, absolutely and completely! No!"

My lips had opened again.

"It's *all* right, old man! I won't hear an apology or the hint of an apology, Griggs! You've acted like a chump, and you know it now—and we'll let bygones be bygones, and consider the whole thing dead, buried, and forgotten. Now,

come up here and have a glass of Hayes's cider!"

He wrung my hand again and waited breathlessly. For my part, I leaned against the car and tried to get a limp lower jaw back into place. So *I* was forgiven! *I*—

"And you've arrived exactly at the psychological moment!" Hawkins babbled on happily. "You've come when—"

Hawkins stopped short. For a second or two be listened intently; then, with a startled little cry, he dodged for the sheltered recesses of the porch—and I followed with a single leap.

And from somewhere to the rear of the house had come a sudden wild neighing—a galloping, and then a thundering of hoofs—and down past the house raced Hayes's big mare, traveling at perhaps a fraction of a second less than a mile a minute!

She was taking no account of possible obstacles. Her whole mind and energy seemed bent on tearing the top layer from the drive in her course to the public highway.

At her heels came a colt, shrieking rather than neighing like a normal horse, and pounding great clods into the air behind him!

And then they were gone—gone down tbe highway in an impenetrable cloud of white dust; and as Hayes himself appeared and raced wildly after them, Hayes's hired man suddenly shot into view. He whizzed dazedly around the corner of the house; he tripped; he fell; he slid to a wild, kicking standstill at the foot of the steps.

Like a rubber ball, he bounced to his feet again. He staggered wildly about for an instant; then he confronted Hawkins, and mouthed, as he dug at the gravel in his eyes:

"You—you—better come up quick, mister! She's steamin' t' beat the band, an' the critters is nigh crazy skeered! That there mare—"

Hawkins stiffened for an instant, then relaxed with a roar.

"Didn't I tell you to call me as soon as tbe gage went to six pounds, you confounded—" He broke off and leaped into my machine. "Get us up to the barn, Griggs! Quick!"

I suppose it was the fatal instinct returning to me. I obeyed swiftly; and perhaps thirty seconds later shut down the power suddenly before the stable.

Hawkins was gone almost before we stopped—gone into the barn at a gallop. And that usually placid structure was surely worth observation.

From the cracks in the sides, from the cracks in the roof, from the open door and windows, came cloud upon cloud of steam. From the door, also, came a tremendous hissing. And from the depths of the place, as the hissing stopped abruptly, came:

"Got hold of those horses, Henry? All right. Sure of it? Griggs!"

"Yes," I answered faintly.

"Back your car away about a hundred feet and then get out and come here!"

Again I obeyed—and again instinct aided me a little; I ran the motor behind the stone wall of the adjoining field. After which I approached the barn slowly—and came to a dead standstill.

For there was a strange chug-chug within the structure now. The doors swung open. And through them came what seemed to be the cream of all Hawkins's inventive nightmares.

Fully nine feet in height, the unholy contrivance seemed to combine the external details of a traction-engine, a steam-roller without the rollers, a flying-machine with skeleton wings, a collapsible hay-rake—and there was a strong hint of the ordinary auto-truck in the big red body at the rear.

In the middle seemed to be the boiler; beside it a saddle and possibly sixty-five or seventy levers and valve-handles and gages; and in the saddle sat Hawkins, keen-eyed and smiling tensely.

"Out of the way a little, Griggs!" he called. "She may slide a bit—"

The warning was not exactly necessary. A fragment or two of wits bad returned, and I was standing on the wall by the car even before his words ceased and the dear, familiar smile of supercilious contempt came to his lips.

He pulled another one or two of his levers. The contrivance came down the little incline with a rush and a bounce. Hawkins pulled again, and the thing stopped beside me with a jerk that sent its engineer's arm around the smoke-stack and brought a grunt from his throat.

He straightened up again on the instant, however, and eyed me with a smile as he announced:

"Griggs! The Hawkins Harvester!"

"Hawkins—"

"The salvation of the general farmer—the eliminator of farm labor—the blessed simplifying element of future agriculture. Look! You catch the general idea of the thing at first glance, of course?"

He waited for no denial.

"Primarily, she drives herself—the farm-horse wiped out of existence! Next, every operation takes place from the saddle here; the farmer himself runs it alone—and the farmhand is wiped out, too.

"And last, but best, the machine will plow, harrow, plant, mow, rake, reap, and bind every product of the field, and finally either pack it in the barn for winter or cart it automatically to the nearest market, whether it be two or two hundred miles distant from the harvest field!"

"Hawkins—" I began again.

The inventor's back was turned to me; his voice rang out cheerily:

"Now, I'll throw all the details out into view, as they would be in action. Watch."

I watched. I was rather too thunderstruck to do anything but watch. And as I watched it seemed that I dreamed of a farm-supply catalogue, or that I had been dropped into a wholesale farm-supply salesroom recently jarred by an earthquake.

A clank, and what was unquestionably a tremendous mowing-machine apparatus shot out on the side nearest me. Another clank, and a correspondingly huge hay-rake hung over it. A third, accompanied this time by an uncanny rattling of chains, and a vast net-work of heavy iron came into view, and Hawkins called proudly:

"That's the complete reaping and binding apparatus over there, Griggs. Picks up and bundles everything in sight, without jarring a single wheat-berry out of its pod. Now we'll see the triple-bladed plow and the harrow and—"

"Hey! Mr. Hawkins!"

I turned with the inventor. Between us stood Hayes himself. His face was smeared with perspiration and dust; his person seemed to have accumulated much of the highway, and his breath was nearly gone; but through all the grime shone the might of a righteous man's anger.

"Mr. Hawkins," be roared, "you ain't going t' try that there thing here to-day er any other day! I got all I want of it! Now that derned mare o' mine's gone—and she'll break her neck before she ever gits back, not t' mention killin' the colt!"

"Why, Hayes—" gasped Hawkins.

"That's all right! I know ye've paid me good money t' let yer build the blasted thing in my barn over winter, and t' keep it secret—an' I've let yer dratted mechanics eat me outer house an' home fer five dollars a week, an' I've had the barn all messed up with tools an' grease, an' set on fire twice with yer forge, but—"

Interesting details seemed to be coming. The Hawkins Harvester had a past. I listened intently.

"But this is too derned much!" Hayes was continuing. "You git the crazy engine offen this place, an' if I ever see it back here—"

Hawkins, as it were, was standing in his saddle.

"Hayes," he declaimed coldly, "I have paid you at your own figure for everything I have received. A verbal contract is perfectly legal, whether you know it or not, and our agreement was that I was to make a trial trip over that ten-acre hay-field to-day, cut and rake the entire field, and bind a certain small portion of it into bundles, by way of experiment."

"Then you can consider her canceled, Mr. Hawkins. I ain't going—"

"On the contrary," came in ice-drops from Hawkins, "the demonstration is going to continue! Out of the way, please."

"Look here, you!" shrieked Mr. Hayes.

The harvester gave a roar of steam that sent both of us several feet farther from its interesting mechanism. One tremendous clatter of iron and steel, extending over thirty seconds, and mower and rake and binder had folded up placidly, and the wheels of the machine itself were moving.

"Hawkins, if you dare—" The farmer's voice was drowned in steam.

"Hawkins!" I pleaded loudly.

The harvester merely swung around,

and with a good deal more grace than one could have expected. It was bound for that hig hay-field on the other side of the barn; and Heaven have mercy on the man who sought to delay it!

It swung quickly through the gateway and into the mass of waving hay, as Hawkins called out to me:

"Griggs! Note *every* detail of the working!"

For the moment I was ignoring the harvester. Hayes himself appealed to me as vastly more interesting.

As concerns outward and visible manifestations of white-hot rage, I have never seen anything to equal Mr. Hayes at that moment. His complexion, even through the dirt, was that of arctic snow; his eyes glittered like sparks from an electric welder; his breath came in spasmodic gasps, and his hands opened and closed with a queer series of snaps as the harvester swept into the hig field and lowered its mowing-machine.

"An' arter all I've stood, the derned fool's goin' t' ruin that hull field an' the Lord knows how much more, an'—"

Hawkins was working close to the wall; incidentally, his knives were blithely clipping off dozens of wild raspberry bushes and hurling them into the next pasture. Hayes's breath came in a last, long whistle:

"And he ain't goin' t' do no more, hy heck!" he roared.

Hayes started for the barn. I started for Hawkins. It's a horrihle, hideous thing to see a man killed in cold hlood; and if ever a mortal looked bent on murder, it was Hayes.

Therefore, I made after Hawkins at top speed. He was at the other end of the hay-field now. He had very literally cut a swath, and one some fifteen feet wide.

At the moment he was engaged in turning his strange engine; and hefore I came up with him the harvester was rushing down upon me and tossing hay to the four winds.

Hawkins removed his hat with a polite, triumphant how.

"Anything on earth to beat it?" he queried in a bellow.

"Hawkins!" I screamed. "Get out of here—get your machine out of here! That man is after you! He'll be here in a second, and the Lord knows what he'll do! Get away before—"

The harvester paused momentarily. Hawkins's sardonic grin faced me around the corner of the smoke-stack.

"My dear Griggs," he said serenely, "I am perfectly aware of my exact rights, in this as in every other case. There are many things that I shall explain later; but here and now let me assure you that I know what I am doing. And if Hayes elects to get just a little hit gayer, he'll pay me cold cash for having this field mowed automatically and raked over, or —Holy Moses, Griggs!"

I stared at him. Hawkins was standing in his saddle once more and glaring, wide-eyed, toward the harn.

"Say!" he gasped. "That—that fool's gone mad in good earnest! He—"

I turned swiftly. And I made tracks for another portion of the field; for Hayes was approaching with a gleaming pitchfork of size that exceeded the normal almost as completely as did the harvester itself. His eye was even wilder than before; his fingers were clenched lovingly around the handle; and as he raced up he thundered:

"*Now* you'll get out!"

"Hayes! I warn you—" Hawkins screamed.

And the scream rose suddenly to a shriek of agony, for the big tines seemed to have found some part of his anatomy; and the sinister voice added:

"You get that thing out of here alive, er I'll do it after you're dead!"

I was going to cover my eyes. I could not. Too many things were happening at once. For a start, there was a wild hiss of steam from the harvester, and a clanking—and Hayes went down with a crash.

He was up in an instant, gripping his pitchfork anew; and as he did so the harvester started with a jerk and a roar.

Hayes went after it. Hawkins looked back. The harvester quickened its pace, and Hayes quickened his; and the odds were rather more than even money on Hayes and the pitchfork.

Hawkins seemed to realize it. His arms swung in wild panic for a second or two; then his hands hegan to tug at levers, in a wild effort to escape.

There seemed to he something of the desired result. The harvester shot ahead

at very creditable speed. It was a good, conscientious harvester, too, and it did more.

With a deafening crash, it let down its huge hay-rake; and Hawkins looked back in frenzied amazement, and dragged at more of his mechanism.

The harvester responded obligingly by unlimbering its huge binder; and wheels aud bands and racks began to clatter and spin frantically.

In the saddle, apparently, tbere was another struggle. The sole result was that three tremendous plow-blades appeared suddenly before the machine, dug themselves into the ground, and took to tearing up cart-loads of loose dirt and hay.

And then the harrow—ah, the harrow! That decided to appear almost instantly. In a matter of seconds it was engaged in gathering hay and earth clods and hurling them about in a happy, indiscriminate, care-free way.

Hayes staggered backward. Perhaps he realized that the Hawkins Harvester had become unmanageable; perhaps he did not. At all events, he merely stared and mouthed for the moment.

A man with a battery of Gatling guns might have attacked the harvester safely from a distance. Hayes possessed only a puerile pitchfork. With the Hawkins Harvester plunging wildly toward the bars of the young fruit orchard, Hayes made a wide détour for the barn—and for another short space I forgot him.

For that harvester was enough to absorb the attention of a dozen men. It seemed entirely happy now, although the gifted inventor had been again reduced to clutching the hot, belching smoke-stack as he directed his great eyes at me.

"Griggs!" he shrieked, above the din. "The—thing's gone—wrong! You get in front and jump up here, on this bar, and—"

His breath left him in a single violent puff.

The harvester had tried to eschew bars and leap the barbed-wire fence to the orchard. As a consequence — perhaps merely as a tiny joke—it removed some dozen feet of fence, hurled it into the binder, converted it into a compact little bundle, and threw it straight at me.

I dodged rapidly. The harvester careered ingenuously onward—and Hawkins seemed to lose interest in me as he tugged and twirled at the steering-wheel.

And he *did* accomplish something. Before his course altered, the mower had removed just seven of Hayes's choicest young plum-trees and filliped them toward the binder. The binder responded almost in *blasé* fashion, by bundling them without an effort and kicking them into the air.

A roar of despair escaped Hawkins. He stared back; he stared forward; and I held my breath.

Now it was coming. He was going to miss the bars that led out of the orchard and toward the house. He was going to strike that stone wall and go to eternal smash!

He struck it. And there was no smash, for the harvester merely plowed that cemented stone wall out of its path, and pitched angrily at the hedge beside the path.

It was a good, strong hedge, but it went like the proverbial chaff. Twenty seconds, and Hayes's ten years' growth was cut and bundled neatly and thrown by the roadside. And the harrow reached back and gave it a violent kick, by way of good measure.

Somehow, as I tagged behind at dangerously close range, a daze came over me. In a matter of five or six minutes—counting out the mare and her colt—that harvester must have done at least two or three hundred dollars' worth of actual damage, and it was still going.

Nay, it was moving at rapidly increasing speed. And even more, it was headed straight for the Hayes homestead.

Suppose it should hit the house amidships? There was no reason to assume that it wouldn't remove the aged foundations and tear down the walls, and then—But its course had changed suddenly.

With a mad chorus of panting snorts, the harvester veered a trifle and made for that beautiful side porch, with all its vines and its lattice-work and its slender columns.

And then—it seemed to be over in a second, almost!

The plow-blades removed the underpinning neatly. The columns and the flooring came down with a roar that suggested the San Francisco earthquake.

Hayes appeared suddenly around the corner of the house as the harvester made a futile lunge at the outdoor kitchen and decided to steer for the smoke-house.

He was carrying something in his hand, and I had not superintended the blasting on my own property to mistake the something.

It was dynamite, in sticks, and one of them was raised over his head!

And, somehow, forgetting home and family and all, I rushed madly at the harvester and bellowed:

"Jump, Hawkins! Jump! He's going to blow you up! Jump, for Heaven's sake! Jump clear, and—"

Hawkins arose and gave one wild look backward. His teeth shut. He stood fairly upon the saddle for an instant—then he flew through the air and cleared the entire mechanism, to roll helplessly at my feet.

I had no attention to give him. The harvester was roaring onward, a dozen yards distant, with Hayes trotting determinedly after it, the big stick still upraised.

Then he paused suddenly. He watched the affair skim by his smoke-house, and his arm went up higher, and the stick flew up through the air—and the earth seemed to open suddenly and throw forth plows and harrows and mowing-machines in a single burst of flame, and—

I think that quite a space must have elapsed, because both Dr. Brotherton and the constable must have come all the way from the county town.

Brotherton was just removing a hot bandage from my forehead as I opened my eyes and sat up. He surveyed me with a grin, and:

"Well, you're not dead, Griggs, anyway; but I'd steer clear of having my head collide with a two-hundred-pound plow-blade hereafter."

"Am I—hurt?"

"Not so's you'd notice it," responded the doctor. "There are no bones broken—I don't know why. Able to drive your car home?"

Several blinks at the sunshine, and I announced tbe probability of such a proceeding. Then I began to look at Hawkins, sitting on the porch-steps with a bandage or two in evidence, and with the constable on one side and Hayes on the other.

"Hawkins is settling up—in fact, I believe be has settled up, to the tune of several hundred cold plunks," murmured Brotherton dryly. "He decided to avoid arrest, and—"

Hawkins had risen and was coming toward us uncertainly. His face was white and pained, but distinctly ugly.

"I'll get your car, Griggs," Brotherton suggested, as he strolled up the lane toward the barn.

"Well, they've mulcted me," Hawkins observed fiercely. "They've trimmed me for just seven hundred dollars, on a blackmailing threat of arrest, Griggs. They've insisted on my—"

The car was bowling gently toward us.

"Hawkins," I said, "be thankful that they didn't stick you with a knife, or that Hayes didn't hurl another dynamite stick at you, or—"

"Ah! That's where I've got him!" said the inventor hoarsely. "That's the count that'll take him through every court in this State. Five thousand dollars, all told, I spent on that machine, and he dared—"

Gently but firmly I placed Hawkins in the motor. He seemed to rebound. He stood erect, and roared toward Hayes:

"*To-morrow morning—*"

Then he sat down suddenly.

A carriage was coming up behind us. A lady was in the carriage, and the widening whites of her eyes were visible as she stared at Hayes's home.

Really, there was much to see. There was the place where the porch had been; there was a deep hole in the ground, and the few standing bits of the smoke-house; there were pieces of iron and steel, fragments of belts and cog-wheels and levers and chains and great chunks of boiler-plate and big driving-wheels—the whole with a frieze of valve handles and smaller steel rods.

The lady continued to stare, and slowly her gaze wandered to my machine as I murmured:

"Your wife, Hawkins!"

Without a sound, Hawkins slid to the floor of the automobile. From the depths behind me came a faint, wailing noise:

"Home, Griggs! For the Lord's sake, home! *Your* home!"

"Easiest Thing in the World."

By JOHN H. FREESE.

The strange adventure that befell a New Yorker on his way to dine with a friend in Brooklyn.

THE telephone bell rang viciously, and the editor wheeled impatiently in his swivel-chair. Whenever he was especially busy that telephone always went on a rampage! He slipped the receiver from the hook and waited.

"Well?" he snapped, after receiving no word.

The blood coursed slowly to his head. Some day he was going to be stricken with apoplexy while holding this same receiver to his ear! The buzz of the vacant wire aggravated his ear-drum. He jabbed angrily at the hook for a full minute, then waited again.

"Number, please?"

The voice was soft and sweet, but had no power to propitiate him. He knew that Central was chewing gum!

"Number?" he cried. "Here you ring this phone like mad and bother the life out of me until I answer it, and then you ask me what I want! I want you to connect me with the party you cut me off from."

He slapped his fist upon the table to emphasize the words as if she could see him.

"I'll try to get them again," the unruffled young woman sweetly responded.

After an interminable wait her voice came soothingly to his burning ear.

"Number, please?"

"Number!" the editor was strangling in his wrath. "I told you that—"

"Oh," replied the voice reproachfully. "I forgot to tell you, didn't I? I couldn't find it."

"Give me the manager. I'll see whether he can find it."

"Manager's out," she curtly answered.

"You mean you won't let me talk with the manager?" he roared.

"Manager's out. Call up again."

The editor slapped the receiver back upon the hook. From a peaceably inclined man he had been transformed in one short moment into a raging breath of destruction.

He hammered until his knuckles ached upon the office door next his own, but no answer came. Fuming still more, he paced angrily across the hall and pushed open the door of his assistant.

"What's the matter, John?" The young man looked in amazement at his superior's purpled visage.

"Can I use your telephone?" the editor answered. "I want to get the manager of Central, and the girl won't give him to me."

"Help yourself," and the assistant motioned him to a chair.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling. Br-r-r-r-r. Ting-a-ling.

"That's your phone, I think," the young man remarked just as he was taking down the receiver.

The editor made about three bounds in reaching his own room.

"Hallo!" he roared.

"Hallo, is that you, John?" A voice he recognized well, hailed him. "I want you to come over to dinner tonight. It's very important."

"Who are *you?*" the editor inquired, out of sheer perversity.

"Don't you know me?" the voice was surprised. "I'm Frank."

"Frank who?"

If he couldn't get the manager he would make some one uncomfortable, at any rate!

"Frank Sommers. We dine at eight."

"Oh-h! Frank!" He had to be pleasant now! "I'm awfully busy, old man," he hesitated.

"Well, you've got two hours to dress and get over here. I'll bet you're only reading a manuscript that can wait till to-morrow. Come on. Be a good fellow and hurry along. It's really important."

"But I'm interested in this manuscript. I want to finish it to-night."

"Interested in a manuscript?" the friend inquired suspiciously. "I didn't know editors ever got interested in manuscripts. Well, read it on your way over here."

"What is there so important about my coming?" the editor wanted to know.

"Why, a friend of Lucy's dropped in from Chicago to-day and she's thinking of staying here. She wants to write. Lucy and I both thought it would be a mighty good idea to let her hear your advice on the subject. You see, she's become discouraged and intends going home to-morrow."

"That's a good idea," the editor remarked. "That's what I would advise. Tell her so, and how sorry I am that—"

"Nonsense! This girl can write good stories, and there's no sense in her dropping it because you're too lazy to come over here. Lucy would never forgive you."

"But," the editor remonstrated, "you know I always have the very dickens of a time getting around in Brooklyn."

"Easiest thing in the world," his friend scoffed, with that assurance and civic pride that is the birthright of every man living across the river from Manhattan. "You just take the elevated at the bridge and get off at Greene Street. Then you walk two blocks straight ahead, turn to the left, and there you are."

"Where?" sarcastically.

"At my place, of course. Second house from the corner."

"What corner?"

"Listen," resumed the Brooklynite patiently. "I'll go over it again, and if there's anything that puzzles you, just interrupt me. You take the elevated—"

"What elevated?"

"Nostrand Avenue. You get off at the Greene Street station and walk ahead—"

"Ahead of what?"

"Ahead! Ahead! In the direction you would bave gone on in the car if you hadn't got off. Then you turn to the left and my house is the second from the corner."

"What corner?"

"Northeast. Just ask any one and he'll tell you where Frank Sommers lives. Do you understand?"

"Yes-s," the editor assented dubiously. "But I wish you'd hold the wire till I make a note of it."

He repeated the directions, as he had taken them down on his little writing-pad, and found them satisfactory.

Again he picked up the manuscript and tried to read, but found the story had lost its savor. If there was one thing he hated to do worse than another, it was going to Brooklyn. Still, he had promised, and the time was drawing near.

Barring accidents, he would arrive at seven. Consequently, as he had never journeyed across without accidents, he thought he had better be hastening. Slipping the manuscript into his coat he hurried to his hotel, where he changed to evening dress, and descended the Subway stairs in the next block.

The rush was on when he struggled up the stairs of the bridge. Thousands and thousands fought to gain the multitudinous platforms where the cars waited to take them across. "Nostrand Avenue! Nostrand Avenue!" John Weldon kept repeating over and over as he was carried off his feet and up the steps. He breathed a sigh of relief as at last he felt the river air strike his face.

It was a labor of some moments extracting a promise from the guard to call him at his station, but when he had finally succeeded, he breathed a sigh of relief and a great load seemed lifted off his mind. The car gradually dropped its passengers until there was a vacant seat in the center into which the editor dropped, completely fagged out. His station was almost the last on the line, and, in searching about for something to while away the time, he bethought him of the manuscript he had brought along to read during the trip.

It was a thrilling story, a new story, a story such as it was seldom his good luck to read. As far removed from the tired, cut and dried things the professionals submitted to him as night was from day. Weldon reveled in it's freshness and vivacity; he even enjoyed the earmarks of the novice that occasionally cropped out.

He must find this man—George Wilson. He wanted more stories like this

one. Breathlessly, he was carried along with the tale.

The author called it "The Pursuit," and it was the tale of the escape of an innocent convict from the New York Tombs. The detective is always close on his heels. He has pursued him from one end of the city to the other. The editor had just reached a point where it seems impossible for the man to get away.

Weldon glanced up from the story. The car was empty save for a woman in the forward end. "I must be almost there," he told himself.

He would only finish the page he was now half way down, and then he would put the thing aside temporarily.

A sharp gust of wind fluttered through the open window at his side and snatched the flimsy sheet from his hand. With a little gesture of impatience, he leaned over and reached for it.

The tantalizing thing seemed possessed by some imp of mischief, for every time he would get his fingers on it away it would go again. The cramped space between the seats gave him no choice but to squeeze himself down between them, and thus get enough elbow-room to capture the leaf. With a sigh of relief, he felt the ends of the paper crumple in his hands and he drew it in.

There was a blinding flash of light and something like an explosion. Weldon started and looked about him.

The car was in absolute darkness. Grumblingly he laid down the story. Here he was within a few blocks, at least, of his destination and an accident had to occur. With the patience of the born New Yorker, ready to put up with anything pertaining to miserable train service, he waited silently.

He drew his watch from his pocket and tried to make out the time. It was too dark. With a sigh, he replaced it and again proceeded to bide his soul in patience. After what seemed to him an interminable period, he revolted, and, guiding himself by the seats, wended a cautious way to the platform of the car to find out what had happened.

The guard was gone; likewise the motorman. As he was on the forward car, he decided the accident must be in the rear somewhere, and, accordingly, walked through car after car. They were all empty as the grave—and dark accordingly.

He raised his voice and shouted for a trainman to tell him what was the trouble. The only sound that came back was the echo of his own dismal voice.

He reached over to a window and threw it wide. He thrust his head out and looked up and down the track.

A shudder passed through him. They had shunted him into the yards—probably for the night. He had evidently been on one of the "extras" requisitioned for the nightly rush. The story! That was probably why the guard had overlooked him. Possibly at the exact moment the man had ordered all out of the train, he, Weldon, had been under the seat hunting the sheet of paper, and the guard, not seeing him, had taken it for granted that he had alighted at Greene Street.

The editor looked dolefully about him. The car had rounded a sharp curve a few hundred feet down the road, and the tiny glitter of the electric lights there caught his eye. Their radiance was totally inadequate to illuminate anything about him, but they threw a glare upon the multitude of shining rails that wound away in every direction, like huge serpents of the night.

There seemed to be a thousand rails and a hundred cars here. Cars—cars—cars—everywhere, nothing but cars and rails. Raising his voice, he hailed the dark, dismal things. There was no answer.

There was no use staying here, so he strayed again to the platform. There was only one thing to do, and that was to get off and walk back to a station—how far that was, he knew not.

He looked meditatively down, when a sudden recollection made him shrink and draw away.

The third rail! How many, many times he had read of the havoc and death lurking in that innocent-appearing bit of metal.

"Innocent"; that was what the newspapers always called them. He looked about for an innocent rail. They seemed about as wicked to him as a thing could be.

He shook his head sadly. None of the rails looked innocent to him.

The mosquitoes hissed and stung and whirred about. There had been a plague of them the last week. Anything was better than this! He must get to the railing somehow and call down to the people on the street!

Gingerly dropping from the last step, he planted himself between a pair of rails that bristled threateningly about him, and figured on the distance to the scantling that bounded the elevated structure on his right. He could not count the tracks that intervened. Most of them glittered and glimmered in the electric light, but there was another which he had good reason to suspect did not show itself—the *innocent* third rail.

Gingerly he threaded his way across to the right. Every time he stepped on an unusually crackly piece of cinder in the road-bed he jumped. He wondered if the third rail made a noise.

The editor felt very sorry for himself during that thrilling excursion. He wondered what his friends would say could they see him trying to keep his faith with Frank Sommers and braving death to do it.

He wondered whether they would blame Frank for enticing him over to Brooklyn when he hadn't wanted to go—and hoped they wouldn't. He had forgiven him, out of the fulness of his overflowing heart, and he trusted his friends and relatives would do likewise.

It was his own fault, he argued, this trip. He should have been strong and steadfast and refused to go. He owed it to himself as well as others. But he had been thoughtless, and was reaping his reward, if he didn't hit the fence first.

R-r-r-r-r-r! The editor jumped. A new danger! Another train was being run into this desolate waste. He could not see which track it was on because of the sharpness of the curve ahead. One thing he knew, and that was that this was no place for him.

The third rail was momentarily forgotten, and he bounded over the tracks with an agility he had not mustered since his childhood days. Every moment he expected to see a blinding headlight bearing down upon him; every instant he fully expected to—

Crash! He stumbled forward and gave a yell of terror. He felt himself flying through space. With a wild swing of his arms, he clutched the wooden railing and hung to it, trembling in every muscle.

His foot ached fearfully. He looked down at his shoe and found the tip of it dented and crushed. It was the toe with the corn on it. It was not the third rail, after all, but a raised track he had caught his pump in.

He leaned over the guard-rail and gazed longingly down into the street. There were not many people abroad, but still anything would serve.

He raised his voice and shouted. No one paid any attention. Finally his heart gave a mighty bound as, in answer to one of his calls, a woman stopped.

She carried a large bundle tied up in a huge sheet. Evidently she was a washerwoman, but that made no difference to the editor.

He yelled again—this time louder than before. She turned her head to the right, to the left, looked intently at the ground, then started on her way. Desperately he shouted once more. Again she stopped and repeated her process of searching.

Weldon fairly howled as she started off. This time she glanced in the right direction. She caught his agonized white face peering down at her and rushed under the pillars.

"Hallo!" yelled the editor, unfathomable relief in his voice.

Harsh and faint rose the answer:

"Ye dirthy omadhaun! What are yez callin' afther a dacint woman fer?"

She shook her fist wrathfully at him.

"I can't get down," Weldon yelled, seeing her misinterpretation of his motives.

"Sure, an' it's not mesilf that's askin' yez t' get down," she retorted. "Divil a word did Oi say t' yez till ye sphoke furst."

"I don't want to talk with you," he explained in a hoarse tone. "I want to get down."

"Then wot were yez afther spakin' t' me fer?"

"I—I— For Heaven's sake!" he cried in despair. "I'm stuck here. Won't you please get me down?"

"Sure, an' it's mesilf that wuz niver

much of a climber," and she glanced regretfully at the pillars.

"Tell somebody I'm up here."

"I'll tell Mrs. Grady when Oi get home," she reassured him.

"But a woman can't help me down!" He was in utter despair by now.

"She'll be afther tellin' Mike, her husband. Shure, he's th' sthrongest bye in Brooklyn. He'll get yez down."

"When will you see her?" Hope renewed sprang within Weldon's sore heart.

"If Oi'm not very late wid me washin', I'll run over t'-noight; ithwise, fur-rst thing in th' mor-rnin'."

The woman shouldered her bundle and was walking off, when he again hailed her.

"For Heaven's sake, call a man on the street! I don't want to stay here and take my chances of you're not finishing your washing to-night."

She put down the bundle and bared her arms combatively.

"An' if it weren't fer me rheumatiz an' me sixty years," she cried, "I'd be afther climbin' up there just t' bate yez!"

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Weldon in surprise. "What in the world have I done to offend you?"

"Call a man on th' sthreet!" she cried. "An' is it Bridget McGarrity has t' listen t' any one tellin' her t' spake t' a sthrange man?"

"But for my sake!" he pleaded.

"I'll have yez t' know that Oi'm a *lady!*" She snatched up her bundle and made as if to leave, then turned to throw a parting shaft over her shoulder: "An' no *gintleman* would suggest to a lady t' spake t' a man she never set oiyes on afore."

The editor gazed sadly after her departing form. She swung along the walk witb the outraged dignity of a goddess. Weldon had lost even the chance of Mike's coming around now.

Again he searched the horizon for some one to assist him. He had used up so much of his voice in talking with the wash-lady that he must husband this his only recourse. He resolved to depend on men thereafter. The question of etiquette and the proprieties due from a man on a siding some fifty feet in the air was one of which he had never made a study.

A policeman strutted past, swinging his billy aimlessly. His coat was open and his hat reposed on the back of his head. Here, at last, was the very man to call!

Weldon raised his voice frantically. The officer stopped and looked in every direction.

"Why," thought the editor, "can't they look bere first, for once?"

Again he yelled, and tbis time the policeman glanced up.

An expression of utter bewilderment overspread his rubicund countenance. He scratched his head and sauntered under the pillars.

Clearly he was not a man to deal with an emergency. Again he gazed at the figure silhouetted against the sky.

"Hallo!" yelled the editor.

The shout seemed to bring the officer to his senses, for he flourished his stick wildly.

"Come down out o' there!" he called commandingly.

"I can't."

The answer seemed to enrage him.

"Come down out o' there," he said more threateningly. "Come on, **now!**"

"I can't get down," the editor answered pacifically. "I'm stuck here."

"I'll run y'u in fer resistin' an officer if ye don't come down."

"How can I resist you when I'm up fifty feet in the air?"

"Y'u're refusin' t' obey."

"I can't obey."

"I'll run y'u in."

"All right." Weldon was now completely adrift from his temper. "I don't care a hang what you do with me if you'll only get me down."

"I'll get y'u down all right enough," the policeman responded grimly.

"Well, that's all I want."

"An' if I can't, I'll call out th' force," the angry cop continued. "Y'u can't come that game wid me!"

"Call the force, then. I want to get down."

"Y'u're resistin' arrest."

The policeman glanced dubiously about. It was seldom a man had the effrontery to dare him and the rest of the police force in this manner.

"You come on down, now!" he cried again.

"You're a fool!" snapped the editor. "What do you suppose I'd be here for if I could get down? For my health?"

"Don't get gay." It was the invariable retort of a befuddled brain.

"Why don't you ring up the reserves, or tell the trainmen there's some one on the siding that can't get off? They'll send a car along and take me down."

"Come on, now; don't give me any more o' yer lip," the man bellowed. "I'll run y'u in fer swipin' juice first thing you know."

"For what?" Surely this was a most bewildering charge to bring against an inoffensive citizen whose only crime was being marooned among railway tracks.

"Swipin' juice! That's what!" the cop continued triumphantly. "Y'u'll get ten years fer that."

"What is it, though?" inquired the editor.

The penalty that he would find meted out to him was suddenly dwarfed by the philological instinct that made him long to know what was meant by the dastardly crime of "swipin' juice."

"What is what?" growled the cop.

"Swipin' juice."

"Come on, now, don't tell me y'u're there because y'u want t' be— Yu—"

"Tell you I'm up here because I want to be?" Surely of all amazing twists of fancy this was the most marvelous. "I'm up here because a great, big, blockhead of a cop can't think of how to get me down! Why, you haven't enough brains to—to—"

The editor paused, at a loss for an adequate invective to hurl at the man below. He had to content himself with impotently shaking his fist.

"I can't get y'u down, eh?"

The officer was so enraged by the taunts that he was almost dancing about the pillar in his frenzy. Somehow he was inimitably like a small fox terrier that has treed a squirrel.

"I'll show y'u whether I can or not."

"Then do it, you big chump! You don't know enough even to call a car out!"

"Y'u're under arrest fer swipin' juice an' resistin' an officer in the discharge of his duties!" the policeman howled.

"Just a moment, please." The editor held up his hand impressively. "You may not be aware of it, but there are libel laws in this country, and I'll sue you when I get down for accusing me of—of—" He turned helplessly and looked about him for inspiration. "Swipin' juice," he ended feebly.

"That's no libel."

"Well, if it isn't I'd like to know what is."

"That's only tappin' th' third rail."

"Exactly what I'm trying not to do," the editor assured him emphatically.

"Then what else are y'u doin' there?"

"Trying to get down."

"Y'u're tappin' th' third rail," positively.

"I don't even know which the third rail is. I haven't even touched it."

"Well, you don't want to," responded the policeman grimly. "I'd run y'u in fer commitin' suicide an' a nuisance if y'u did."

"You'd arrest me for every crime in the almanac, wouldn't you?"

"I would."

"Which is the third rail?"

"The third one, of course."

"Third from which direction? From this scantling, or the one on the other side?"

"Why do you want to find it?" asked the policeman.

"I want to know so I won't find it."

"Well, go to the other side and count every third one. That's it."

"I'd probably find it while I was getting there. I want to get down. For Heaven's sake, man, help me down!" The editor was well-nigh frantic by this time. "Arrest me for murder, swipin' juice, suicide, everything and anything—*but get me down!*"

The limb of the law removed his helmet and scratched his head meditatively for a moment. "I'll call out th' reserves when I get back t' th' station-house," he finally called up.

"What's the use of waiting?"

"Oh, I ain't afraid. Y'u can't get away."

"Fool!" Weldon hissed.

The cop grinned amiably back at him as he buttoned his coat preparatory to taking his departure.

"Y'u can't get away," he called cheer-

ily, and, swinging his willow, strolled amiably across the sidewalk to where a little frame saloon stood.

The editor's fingers twitched with a convulsive desire to twine them about the fellow's bull neck. In potent silence he watched the doors swing to behind the stalwart figure; then burst into a fit of language that shook the riven air and enveloped him in a purple haze. The very idea of—

"Hallo, mister!"

Weldon leaned over and glanced down in surprise. That any one should notice his predicament without first making him rasp his throat ten different ways to attract attention was something he had begun to think out of the range of human possibility.

A small, dirty-faced boy stood there, looking up at him with big, round, wondering eyes.

"Hallo!" the editor responded dolefully.

This child could do nothing to help him.

"Gee!" the boy gasped. "How'd y'u get up there?"

"I was shunted in here."

For a moment the boy said nothing; then his whole being exploded in one envious sentence:

"Say, it must be great t' be grown up! I couldn't never get up there."

"I hope not," the editor responded grimly.

"Did y'u climb th' pillar, or was y'u beatin' y'u're fare?" the infant continued.

"It was a mistake."

"If I climb up half-way will y'u haul me over th' railin'?" he queried eagerly.

"No, I won't! Don't you dare come up here!" Weldon scowled angrily down to deter the child, who was already shinning rapidly up the square pole.

"Stingy!" The boy dropped to the ground and glared at the enemy above him.

"Sonny"—it took long thought to bring the idea—"I'll give you a quarter if you'll get somebody to help me down from here."

"Le's see th' quarter first," greedily.

The editor produced the necessary coin from his pocket, and held it alluringly in the glare of a neighboring arc light.

"Y'u'll take it back when y'u get down," argumentatively.

"I'll give it to you now." Weldon sent the coin spinning to the ground, and the child pounced on it ravenously.

"I'll call th' cop," he shouted gleefully, preparing to run toward the saloon.

"No, no, no!" It is impossible to put on paper the sliding scale of horror at the idea. "Tell your father."

"He'll take away the quarter."

"Don't tell him you've got a quarter." So shameless had this predicament made him that Weldon was ready by now to teach little children the lesson of deceit.

"How much'll y'u give *him* fer gettin' y'u down?" It was awful—this child's openly avaricious nature.

"Ten dollars," Weldon responded haphazard.

There was a flutter of dust where the boy had been. The editor breathed a great sigh of relief. He was certain that at least an effort would be made toward his liberation now.

Breathlessly he waited. Presently not one, but two men, came dashing to the scene, in the wake of the speeding urchin.

"Here he is!" shouted the boy gleefully. "Here he is!"

The editor gazed with pleasurable twinges of joy at the great broad-shouldered chaps who came racing around the corner.

"Show me your ten!" the foremost breathlessly panted.

His chest was rising and falling with his unaccustomed exertions.

"I'll do it fer five, mister." The man who brought up the rear held up two fingers of his hand as he made the bid.

The father turned angrily and said something indistinguishable to his rival. Only the boy appreciated the full meaning of the disaster about to overtake his house. He shrilled to the one in the air: "Hey! You promised my ole man th' job!"

The editor pondered the question for a second. Instinct said, "Save your five"; conscience said, "Hold to your bargain." But then entered the fact that the man had forfeited his claim to any control over his conscience by demand-

ing money for assisting a man in a dire predicament.

The length of time taken to bring the still small voice of Conscience to the fore over the demon Avarice in the shape of five dollars, while short, was sufficient for many things to occur not down in the books.

The retorts between the two men had become hotter and hotter until they were shouting at the top of their voices. Their faces were red and hot and angry, and they shook their fists at each other the while they busied themselves in calling upon the hidden stores of cursing secreted about their persons. A crowd had begun to collect, and its members were already taking sides in the argument.

"I do a job for ten dollars and he offers t' do it fer five," the father of the urchin urged.

"Who got the job?" A large, judicial appearing man swept through the throng, which opened before him with a respect that augured considerable standing in the community.

"I did," the urchin stepped forward aud scratched his bare toe around in a circle. "Th' feller asked me t' give it t' me old man."

"Then it's a scab job you're trying t' get," and the arbiter turned to the under-bidder.

"Who says I'm a scab?" The fellow looked threateningly round the circle of faces. "Th' job's only worth five dollars. It's overchargin', the old man was tryin' t' do."

"What's th' job?" The peacemaker turned again to the child, who pointed silently toward the man on the siding above them.

All eyes turned curiously toward him, and the editor felt a strange stage fright creeping over him.

"What's th' job y'u want done?" demanded the arbiter.

"I want to get taken down to the ground."

Long time the important man scratched his head while the crowd critically took stock of the situation and ventured widely divergent opinions.

"I think it's worth th' ten," the interceder finally concluded. "It's a scab job at five."

"I've been in th' union since it was organized, an' this is th' first time I've ever been called a scab," protested the low-priced laborer.

"Scab! Scab!" hissed the crowd.

The taunt seemed to drive the fellow frantic, for he turned and landed wildly—at the same time effectively—upon the head of his opposing bidder. In a moment there was a mad scramble of arms and legs and feet and fists.

The tumult was at its height when the officer with whom the editor had disputed, came rushing from the saloon, and soon, with the assistance of his club, had things adjusted to a state of perfect quiet. He listened for a few moments to the eager explanations from all sides, then brushed the crowd away with a lordly wave of his club.

"Startin' a riot are ye now?" he inquired indignantly of the man hanging on the rail above. "I'll call the reserves this time an' take y'u along wid me."

He strode angrily toward the opposite side of the street and marched briskly around the corner. After all, even though he would be arrested, the editor felt that anything would be pleasurable after his present experience. Surely his evening dress and appearance and manner would be enough to persuade any sensible man that he was not trying to steal electricity, or any of the other idiotic things of which the dunderheaded policeman had accused him. Moreover—

"Well, well, well!" A merry gentleman in evening dress stopped and stared aghast at the spectacle Weldon presented, waving frantically to him from the railing of the siding.

"Come over here!" called the editor.

This man was a gentleman, or at any rate was dressed like one, and would certainly have sense enough to follow any instructions given him.

The man sauntered leisurely under the tracks.

"I'm a gentleman," the victim first informed him.

"Good! So am I. But what in the dickens are you doing up there?"

"They shunted me on a siding and left me here for the night. I missed my station—the last one down the road."

"Can't you get down?"

"No."

"Can I assist you?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I don't know."

Both thought long and earnestly. It was a problem that might well bave taxed the brains of any one but a piano-mover.

"I'll come up," the man suited the action to the word by clasping the elevated pillar and—to the great detriment of his apparel—rising a few feet.

"What good is your getting up going to do you or me?" the editor snarled impatiently.

"I never thought of that." The man looked foolish for a moment until another idea struck him.

"I'll get a ladder."

"Where could you get a ladder that would reach up here?"

"I'll go to a paint shop. They painted the outside of my place and it was higher than this."

The man was a bit irritated at the manner in which his suggestion had been received.

"Paint shops are all closed," the editor objected. "And, besides, I don't want to have anything more to do with labor. They'll be boycotted for working after union hours."

"I don't see what we can do, then," the would-be rescuer said with a doleful sigh.

"Could you call out the hook and ladder company of the fire department?"

A great burst of inspiration had swept over the editor.

"They won't send out just one. And, besides, they would—"

The man's face lit up and he slapped one hand with a mighty whack into the other as an idea struck him. "I'll put in an alarm. When they come around, you yell."

"But," the editor objected. "What will they say?"

"I'll run after I put in the alarm."

"But won't they arrest me?"

"What for?" the man cried in surprise. "You haven't turned in any alarm."

"All right," Weldon assented gloomily: "Anything's better than being up here. Go ahead."

The man was starting toward the fire-box on the corner when he stopped, struck witb a sudden thought.

"Come over to my house when you get down," he suggested. "How long have you been up there?"

"What time is it?"

"Half-past eight."

"About an hour and three-quarters."

"Well, you must be pretty hungry. Come over and have a bite with me."

"I have a dinner engagement at eight in the next block or so. But I'll drop in and thank you some time soon. Where do you live?"

"No. 38 Becker Place."

"Where's that? How do you get there?"

"Easiest thing in tbe world. You—"

The editor smiled. It was always the same with these Brooklynites. Every location was the easiest in the world.

He listened in a haze to the elaborate directions and lied glibly about coming over in a day or so to pay a short visit to his benefactor.

"A note would serve amply," he reflected. He was never coming to Brooklyn again!

There was a slight noise from across the street. He started nervously, for the man had broken the glass of the fire-box and had turned in the alarm.

The editor watched his retreating coat-tails as they merged hastily into the night, and sighed a great and weary sigh.

For a moment he waited, straining his eyes through the darkness and listening with all his ears. The period of suspense was short. Far down the street he saw a small speck, then heard a mighty clanging of the gong. Faster and faster it came until, by the time he made out its outlines distinctly, it seemed a menacing demon of black smoke, nickel polishings, straining horses and flying sparks.

This was a terrible thing to rescue a man with. Almost the editor would rather have remained where he was all night. However, there was no alternative now, so he raised his voice and yelled at the top of his lungs.

The men had jumped from the rear of the engine and were rapidly attaching the hose to the fire-plug on the corner.

Clang! clang! clang! From the same direction whirled a great, long hook-and-

ladder wagon. The men—about ten of them—sprang from their stands and grouped anxiously about the foreman, who was peering in every direction to make out any signs of fire in the neighborhood.

The editor raised his voice still higher and fairly howled to them.

The foreman glanced up at the desolate figure on the "L" siding, and sharply commanded the men to plant the ladder against it. In a trice he was clambering up the thing two steps at a time, ax in hand.

"Follow me, boys!" he called out. Small need for the command. The entire lot, save two left at the water-plug, were already at his heels. Weldon felt strangely elated at the furor his presence had created.

The foreman vaulted lightly over the railing and faced him. Men tumbled over helter-skelter, and grouped about.

"Where is it?" gasped the captain of the engine company.

"What?" serenely inquired the editor, his innocent manner strangely belying the thumping heart that was agitating his bulging white-bosomed shirt.

"The fire! Quick, man!"

"What fire?"

"Who called us out?"

The tone was sharp, crisp, and commanding.

"I didn't. I couldn't get down. Maybe somebody saw me and put in an alarm," Weldon suggested.

"An alarm! For you!" Never had the editor felt so unutterably small as under the foreman's withering gaze. "How did you get here?"

"The car passed my station and left me here."

"And *you* are the alarm?"

The disgust in the other's voice was absolutely indescribable.

"Yes, sir." Abject his manner; abject his inner self.

"What for?"

"I wanted to get down. To go to dinner."

The foreman looked him over from head to foot.

"Well, you're the first man that ever used the fire department of New York for a valet," he slowly remarked.

"I don't understand?"

"You want to get to dinner, you say. Well, wouldn't you like me to call up the chief and have him send his automobile around and take you where you want to go?"

The editor was silent, even under this injustice.

"Do you know what it costs the city every time we roll?" The man dropped his bantering tone and spoke sharply.

"Every time you do what?"

"We roll? Every time we go out on a fire call?"

"No, sir."

"Well, fifty dollars for tires alone."

"That's very expensive," Weldon ventured.

He could think of nothing better to say, though he recognized the idiocy of the remark the instant it had escaped his lips.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Whatever you say," he humbly agreed. Fifty dollars seemed a lot of money for a roll. "But I didn't put in the alarm," the editor added.

"Well," and the man looked him over again. "You give me your name and address and I'll put it down in my report-book. I have to account for every roll we make. Will you promise to make good for the price if the fire commissioner thinks it's up to you?"

"Yes." Weldon was ready to do anything to get out of this second mess! Slowly he drew from his pocket a card and penciled his business address on it. The foreman silently took it and motioned him down the ladder.

Weldon drew a breath of relief as at last he set his feet upon the pavement. He had never duly appreciated it before—this sensation of unutterable joy the asphalt gave him.

The foreman smiled at the expression on his face. "Good-by, Alarm!" and he held out his hand pleasantly.

"Do you know anything about Brooklyn?" timidly ventured the editor.

The man nodded. "Lived here all my life."

"Well, can you tell me where—" he took from his pocket the small piece of paper on which he had jotted down the directions from the phone a year ago—or was it really only two hours? "Can

you tell me where I can get to the Greene Street Station of the Elevated and walk two blocks ahead, turn to my left, and get to the second house on the northeast corner?"

"Easiest thing in the world!" the foreman responded. "You just— Why, what's the matter?"

The face of the editor had gone purple with rage.

"Please," he begged, "please, I ask you not to say that 'easiest thing in the world' again. That's what you all say. Just tell me where I can find the place, and don't comment."

The foreman looked at him in surprise.

"All right," he finally assented with a laugh. "Walk three blocks down that way," and he pointed, "then turn to your right. Walk five blocks east and—"

"Do you know whether there might be a cab around here?" the editor sadly interrupted.

"Around the left-hand corner you will find one."

There was a clang, clang of preparation and the engine, together with the hook and ladder, were off. With a wave of his hand the foreman swept out of sight and the editor walked off slowly in search of a cab.

Ten minutes later he was wearily ascending the Sommers's steps. A maid answered the bell and ushered him into the reception-room, where he found a hostess whose indignation was speedily dissipated by a glance at the wan, white face of her tardy guest.

"It makes no difference whatever," she reassured him. "I want you to meet Miss Wilson, and tell her what to do regarding her career."

The editor smiled faintly at the word "career." All amateurs used it when they asked his advice regarding their future.

"She tells me she has already sent you a story," his hostess went on. "Perhaps you may have read it."

She stepped to the folding doors, and, pushing aside the portières, called to some one within.

"George, will you come here a moment. I want you to meet Mr. Weldon."

A vision in white showed for an instant against the dull blue of the curtains.

"Mr. Weldon, this is the young lady Frank was speaking to you about over the telephone, Miss George Wilson."

Weldon scarcely knew how he got through the introduction. She was certainly a dream of loveliness! And this was the author of the tale that had caused all his troubles! He recalled now that he once knew another woman whose name was George.

"What was the name of the story you submitted to Mr. Weldon?" continued Mrs. Sommers.

"'The Pursuit!'" the editor burst forth, producing the manuscript from his pocket. "That was what I was reading when—"

"You've read it, then?" The girl stepped eagerly forward. "Would you advise me to stay and write, or go back home?"

"I would stay," he quietly answered. "Miss Wilson, your story was so clever that it even fooled me. It was all so vivid."

"And you will help her?" Mrs. Sommers eagerly suggested.

"I shall be delighted," Weldon's acquiescence was so emphatic it brought an involuntary smile to the lips of the hostess. She was very fond of them both.

"Then you will stay with me, George," Mrs. Sommers said with decision.

"I think it would be easier for Miss Wilson to get around to the offices with her manuscripts if she lived in New York," the editor timidly suggested.

"Easy to get around!" the Brooklynite bridled. "Frank!" she called her husband, "John advises George to live in New York; says it is so easy to get around there. What do you think of the difficulty of going there from our house?"

"Easiest thing in the world!" he blustered. "Why—"

"I have no doubt," the editor sadly acquiesced.

"And you really think I will make a success?" asked Miss Wilson.

"Easiest thing in the world!" answered the editor, looking down at her.

Then they all went in to a somewhat delayed dinner.

SECRET ENEMIES.*

By F. K. SCRIBNER,

Author of "A Conflict with Cæsar," "The Eagle of Empire," "The Ravens of the Rhine," etc.

The man with a difficult trust to execute in a strange country and threatened by foes whom he has no means of knowing.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ARRIVING in Paris to visit his friend, Victor de Marrast, Sir Harold Campbell discovers that the marquis has been consigned to the Bastile through a *lettre de cachet* in the hands of some powerful enemy. Campbell sets out in haste for the Château Bleaumont to aid Mlle. de Marrast, whom he has reason to believe is also in danger. At an inn some distance from Foulon he rescues her, with the help of Jean Labrie, De Marrast's butler, from three Frenchmen who have decoyed her from Bleaumont. During the fight which takes place, *mademoiselle* mounts a horse and rides alone to Paris, whither Campbell follows her. Here he takes lodging with M. Reuel, a relative of Labrie's.

Through an accident Campbell learns that Jacques, a treacherous under-butler of De Marrast's, is in the employ of some follower of the Duke of Orleans. At the Hôtel de Marrast he discovers that *mademoiselle* has left for Versailles, after receiving a message from the Vicomte de Lesse, who purports to be a very dear friend to De Marrast. He also learns that the aged Comte de Plauex is being kept prisoner in his apartments in the *hôtel*. Campbell and Labrie force their way into the *comte's* room past a fellow who is guarding the door. Then, convinced for an instant that the guard is innocent of any evil intent, Campbell lowers the pistol in his hand. The mistake is a fatal one.

CHAPTER XI.

A CLOSE CALL.

SEIZING his opportunity, and with the agility of a trained acrobat, the man suddenly sprang back a pace and, raising his foot, by a well-directed kick sent the weapon spinning toward the ceiling out of Campbell's hand. The next instant he hurled himself upon the astonished Scotchman.

The violence of the unexpected attack sent Campbell to the floor with a crash which shook the room. He felt the powerful grasp of the other upon his throat, and, stunned for the moment, could offer no resistance.

Pinning his enemy down, the man looked about for the knife he had dropped a few moments before. The expression upon his face showed he would not hesitate to drive home the blade if he succeeded in regaining possession of it, but fortunately the knife lay just beyond his reach, and to recover it he must loosen his hold upon his captive's throat.

Campbell struggled desperately, for he realized that in a few moments he must be choked into insensibility. Seizing with both hands the wrist of his antagonist, he sought to break his hold, but the brutal strength of the man was well fitted for such a contest. The ceiling, the walls of the room, the leering face above him, began to swim in a dizzy haze; the tension of his muscles relaxed, and his fingers, numb and powerless, released their clutch upon the other's wrist.

Then gradually consciousness returned, for the pressure upon his windpipe had relaxed. Everything still swam dizzily, and his body seemed to be held down by a leaden weight, but his lungs were no longer bursting from the death grip upon his throat.

For the second occasion, Jean Labrie had interposed in the nick of time.

During the first moments of the unexpected attack the butler had remained as one paralyzed, the curtain-cords hanging limply in his hand. Then, as Campbell ceased his struggles, courage returned to him.

*Began August ARGOSY. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

With a sharp indrawing of his breath, he sprang forward and dropped the loop of the cord over the assailant's shoulders. By a sudden twist the silken rope tightened about the man's bull-like throat, and Labrie, scarcely knowing what he did, twisted and pulled with the frenzied strength of desperation.

For a moment the fellow sought to free his neck by seizing the cord with one hand, but even his strength, augmented by passion, was unequal to the task. With a growl of rage, he let go Campbell's throat, and tried to insert his fingers between his own and the tightening noose.

At that moment, had Labrie weakened, all must have been lost, for did the other succeed in loosening the cord he could have crushed the butler by a single blow. Half-choked, dragged back by the tension of the rope, his great strength might still have gained the victory had not Labrie resorted to a last desperate measure.

Feeling the cord slipping between his fingers, he threw himself backward upon the floor, bracing his feet against Campbell's extended legs. The sudden jerk which followed this maneuver threw the other off his balance; endeavoring to save himself, he let go the rope, which tightened with a horrible pressure. And it was at this moment Campbell returned to consciousness.

For several moments he lay still, realizing only that a struggle was taking place near him, and that a strangling, choking noise filled the room. Then, with an effort, he half rose and brushed his hand across his eyes.

The purple face of his late antagonist, and the hands beating the air impotently, met his gaze; then it traveled farther, to the figure of Labrie, prone upon the floor and tugging at the cord with all his strength.

For a moment he remained benumbed and spellbound, his eyes riveted upon this novel combat.

The body of the choking man heaved convulsively, and he threw out one hand wildly. As he did so his fingers came in contact with the hilt of the knife lying on the carpet.

Campbell was unable to move; as through a haze he saw the hand tighten upon the weapon. With a last supreme effort, the victim summoned all his departing strength and struggled to his knees, dragging Labrie along the floor and nearer to him.

Unable to see, his breast bursting, the fellow raised the knife and struck blindly downward. But the effort had come too late. The tension of the cord grew tighter, the blade of the knife buried itself in the carpet, and the man rolled over upon his face.

Campbell staggered to his feet, and the butler, weak and panting, rose also. For a moment the two remained motionless, gazing at the silent figure upon the floor, the cord still tightly twisted about his neck. Then Campbell took the rope from Labrie's hand and untwisted it rapidly.

It required but a superficial examination to determine that relief had come too late. The man, who had been brought to the Hôtel de Marrast as the jailer of the old nobleman, was dead.

Campbell turned to Jean Labrie, whose hands were trembling and whose face was the color of chalk.

"It is but retribution, my friend, for he would have killed us, as I fear he has already killed the Comte de Plauex. Come!" said he in a grave voice.

He passed on into the room beyond, which he found was a large apartment, having at one end an alcove partitioned off by heavy curtains. The place was dimly lighted, and, going to the window, he pushed back the inner wooden shutters.

As he suspected, the entrance to the house lay directly beneath him, and it was from this window the count had dropped the note.

Labrie, standing on the threshold between the two rooms, watched him in mute silence, but at intervals he turned and looked at the dead man lying on the carpet in the anteroom. Campbell crossed the floor and parted the curtains guarding the alcove.

On a bed within lay the form of the old French nobleman. At first Campbell believed that death had visited this place also, but on leaning over the pillow he saw that the count was breathing faintly —the labored respiration of one who has sunk into sudden and complete unconsciousness.

A hurried examination revealed the

cause of this deathlike stupor. The upper garments of the old man bore evidence of violence. The old-fasbioned stock was torn and twisted, the white ruffles of the shirt below rent and crumpled. Apparently a relentless hand had seized the unhappy De Plauex, dragged him across the room, and hurled him with savage force upon the bed.

Campbell did not need to be told the reason of this outrage upon the person of a feeble old man. The jailer had discovered his charge in the act of dropping the paper from the window, and had used his brutal strength unsparingly.

That swift retribution had visited the fellow afforded no great satisfaction; the old nobleman might be dying, and the secret he desired to reveal was locked behind the tightly closed lips. Campbell did not doubt for a moment that, in some manner, the count had discovered the identity of the marquis's enemy, and because of this discovery had been imprisoned in charge of the ruffian, who had received orders to permit no one to communicate with him.

He turned quickly to Labrie.

"A physician—haste is imperative—I fear the Comte de Plauex is dying!"

The butler, aroused by the commanding tone, turned toward the anteroom.

"*Monsieur?*" he stammered.

"Hasten!" cried Campbell, and bent again over the silent form on the bed.

Labrie vanished into the corridor.

Campbell lifted the unconscious man in his arms, propping him higher up on the pillows. Then he looked about for water.

Seizing a carafe from a stand on the farther side of the room, he hastened back to the bed and bent once more over the count. As he did so the clank of spurred feet sounded in the corridor. Turning sharply, he saw a man hurriedly cross the threshold of the anteroom. Casting a quick glance at the body on the floor, the newcomer advanced to the door of the count's apartment.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST IN THE BLACKNESS.

It did not require keen perception on Campbell's part to guess the identity of the man who had so unexpectedly appeared. Labrie had told him De Lesse was an officer in the service of the king, and the newcomer wore the gold-and-blue uniform of a royal guardsman.

He noted that he was a clean-cut fellow of about his own age, with a handsome, high-bred face, easy carriage, and a manner denoting a will which he knew how to use when occasion demanded. Now the square jaw was set in stern lines, and the steel-blue eyes were darkened by a frown as he glanced from Campbell to the form propped up on the pillows.

For a moment he remained motionless, one hand resting lightly on his sword-hilt; then the frown upon his face grew darker.

"*Monsieur,*" said he in a cold voice, "it would appear that I have arrived at an inopportune moment. It would seem the Comte de Plauex has already received a visitor."

The cutting coolness of the tone stirred Campbell's anger, believing what he did of the man before him.

"If you expected to find this room occupied only by a helpless old mau and a hired ruffian. your coming is indeed inopportune, *monsieur le vicomte,*" he answered dryly.

The other permitted an unpleasant smile to cross his face.

"Ah!" said he coldly, "so it appears you know me, *monsieur.* And I, in turn, have heard something of an Englishman who has seen fit to interfere in the affairs of the Marquis de Marrast. But I did not suspect that such interference would lead to the murder of an old man and—his body-guard."

For a moment Campbell remained silent; in a flash it came to him that the other proposed to use the situation to his own advantage. He no longer doubted that the Vicomte de Lesse was numbered among the enemies of the marquis—that he was "the wolf" who had entered the Hôtel de Marrast.

"*Monsieur,*" said he steadily, "you do not for a moment believe that the Comte de Plauex received violence at my hands; as to the other—a man defends his life from the knife of an assassin."

The *vicomte* shrugged his shoulders.

"It is only permitted me to know what I have seen. I enter the house to find a

dead man lying upon the floor; another, my friend the count, is either dead or dying. I find you, a stranger, in the act of strangling him. Can you explain that, *monsieur?*"

Campbell realized he was caught in a pretty trap, for the expression upon the other's face showed he was perfectly satisfied with the situation. Everything depended upon Labrie, who alone had witnessed what had really occurred; but would Labrie be permitted to tell what he knew? Would the word of a butler prevail against the power which had sent a French nobleman to the Bastile?

The *vicomte* was watching his face closely; suddenly he burst into an unpleasant laugh.

"Ah, *monsieur!*" he said dryly, "you are wondering why you ventured to play with fire; it is only a fool who does not guard his own safety. Come, let us understand each other. I do not deny you are a brave man, but bravery does not always go with wisdom, and perhaps I can teach you something of the latter. It is true your friend, the marquis, has requested a trifling service, but a man is not expected to throw away life and liberty recklessly. Besides, another thing must be taken into consideration: I can assure you that Mlle. de Marrast has nothing to fear; I have constituted myself her protector."

He flecked a spot of dust from the gold embroidery of his uniform.

"Come, my friend," he continued, "let us deal no longer with surmise, but accept the true conditions of the matter. You have been misinformed as to what I have to do with this affair. I desire to make *mademoiselle* my wife; but for some reason the marquis had other plans in view. Those plans are doubtless known to you, *monsieur;* in fact, in summoning you to Paris, De Marrast was only carrying out his idea: to unite his sister to a foreigner—yourself, M. Campbell."

He paused; then, as Campbell did not reply, went on:

"There you have the situation in a nutshell: I desire *mademoiselle* for myself, but I meet the opposition of her brother, whom she is bound to obey. And what follows? Why, De Marrast finds himself in the Bastile, and the lady is left to do her own choosing. A man must protect his own interests, and that is what I have done, *monsieur.*

"On the day upon which *mademoiselle* becomes my wife her brother will obtain his liberty; what more can be desired? Probably I shall be challenged to fight De Marrast, but of course that is none of your affair. Against you I have no personal animosity, provided you cease to interfere in what does not concern you; return to England, satisfied that your services are no longer required in this business."

"And if I should think otherwise—that my duty to De Marrast is not fulfilled?" asked Campbell.

The *vicomte* shrugged his shoulders.

"Several things might happen. I might kill you now, and it would be believed I acted in defense of the count. Or I might turn you over to the police, charged with being a garroter; we know how to deal with such in France, my friend."

"And the alternative?" responded Campbell calmly, though he desired to seize the other by the throat.

"As I have already stated. You will be permitted to leave this house unmolested, provided you swear to depart from France within twenty-four hours and interfere no more in this affair. You see I am inclined to be generous. Choose, *monsieur;* in either case your service is at an end."

For several moments Campbell did not speak; he was debating if he was longer justified in pursuing the course he had undertaken. It certainly appeared that no great harm could come to *mademoiselle,* and, if the *vicomte* spoke the truth, the marquis would speedily be liberated.

Then the thought of retiring from the field in the face of a threat restrained him.

"*Monsieur,*" said he, "the fact yet remains that the Marquis de Marrast has not withdrawn his appeal—an appeal made in the hour of his extremity. Because I am threatened with danger does not lessen my obligation in the matter. You are a soldier and appreciate the situation."

"Perfectly, *monsieur,*" replied the other dryly. "As you also appreciate that your zeal has been misdirected. You can imagine the marquis's feelings when

he discovered he could no longer be in the position to oppose objection to my suit for his sister's hand. Your arrival was hourly expected; through your interference my plans might be frustrated. De Marrast seized the opportunity; relying upon your chivalry toward a friend in need, he has—shall we say it is the story of the cat and the monkey? It is you, *monsieur,* who is engaged in pulling the marquis's chestnuts from the fire. But I am accustomed to meeting difficulties and — overcoming them. It would appear that I have done so in this case, and—to my satisfaction."

He glanced toward the inanimate form of the old nobleman.

"Unfortunately the Comte de Plauex was pleased to mix himself in this affair; that he has suffered the consequences is no one's fault except his own. It remains for you, *monsieur,* to take warning that I am not to be trifled with; this matter must lie between De Marrast and me. I shall know how to meet such conditions as arise."

"And you mean to say that you have permitted the count to be assaulted? You do not stop even at assassination to gain your ends?" demanded Campbell with rising anger.

The *vicomte* smiled.

"You have forgotten that it is you who stand accused of having assaulted the Comte de Plauex; I have nothing to do with it," he replied coldly.

"And while we stand talking he may be dying."

"So much the worse for you, if you do not adopt the course of wisdom in this matter," answered De Lesse.

He took out his watch and glanced at the dial carelessly.

"I think you understand the situation, and to discuss it further will be a waste of words, *monsieur.* I shall permit you a quarter of an hour in which to decide upon an answer. At the end of that time I will return, possibly with a physician—at any rate with those who will obey what I order them to do. You may even retire with some honor, for, under certain circumstances, I shall make it appear that it is you who killed that fellow in the anteroom in defense of De Plauex. On the other hand—"

He returned the watch to its fob, and the unpleasant smile played about his lips.

"On the other hand, *monsieur,* I shall feel it my duty to turn you over to the police on the charge of having murdered the count and his body-servant. It is to be England or the Conciergerie."

Campbell felt himself powerless. The Frenchman was on his guard, and it would be useless to resort to violence. He also understood perfectly that no opportunity would be given him to escape from the room during the other's brief absence.

There was indeed the window, but a drop of thirty feet into a crowded boulevard would be madness.

De Lesse backed across the threshold into the anteroom, reached the outer door, and stepped into the corridor. As he did so he removed the key and inserted it in the lock on the outside.

"A quarter of an hour, *monsieur,*" said he significantly, and, closing the door, turned the key.

For a little time Campbell remained standing motionless beside the bed.

Whether or no the man whose cunning had outwitted him had told the whole truth, and Mlle. de Marrast really stood in no danger, mattered little. He must, perforce, accept his conditions and promise to leave France, or become a prisoner charged with the murder of a French nobleman.

Suddenly he started and turned sharply toward the bed, for a faint, tremulous voice broke in upon his thoughts. With an exclamation, he bent down and looked into the face of the old count. The dying had returned to life—De Plauex's eyes were open, and in them the light of recognition.

Forgetting for the moment his own affairs, Campbell seized the carafe, and, pouring a quantity of the water into his palm, began to bathe the old man's forehead. It was evident the count had returned to full consciousness; the sturdy spirit which had resisted thirty years of confinement in a dungeon had not yielded to the brutal assault of an enraged jailer.

He made a feeble motion that the water-bottle be held to his lips, and, when he had swallowed a portion of the fluid, a new lease of life conquered the lethargy.

"*Monsieur!*" he murmured, "are you listening, *monsieur?*"

Campbell fell upon his knees beside the bed. The old nobleman closed his eyes for a moment, and it seemed as though he would again relapse into unconsciousness, but with an effort he aroused his flagging energies.

"It was the *vicomte?*" he asked in a voice from which all tremor had departed. Then, before Campbell could reply, he continued feebly:

"I have heard much which passed between you, *monsieur,* and in part that man has told the truth, yet you must put no trust in him. It is true he desires to marry *mademoiselle,* but do not think he will obtain the marquis's freedom. Of a lesser branch of the De Marrasts, he covets the title and estates. With De Marrast in the Bastile and *mademoiselle* his wife, he may obtain his desire. It is he who sent the marquis to a dungeon, and do you fancy he will be the one to give him freedom? Already he has taken steps to assume his place in France; for *mademoiselle* he cares nothing, save that in marrying her she becomes his slave."

The voice trailed off into a low murmur; a tremor passed through the old man's body, and for a moment it seemed the spirit had departed. Then, by a last supreme effort, the count summoned back the flickering spark.

With that supernatural strength which is sometimes given to the dying, he raised himself clear of the pillows.

"*Monsieur,*" he whispered in a firm voice, "it yet remains to you to save the marquis."

"And how?" cried Campbell. "In God's name, tell me how, *monsieur*—for I am powerless!"

Slowly the old nobleman raised his arm, and his hand, no longer trembling, pointed to the wall on the opposite side of the room.

"The third panel from the corner—press the fluted molding, *monsieur*—the third panel from the corner!"

The last words were barely distinguishable; for a moment the outstretched arm remained rigid, then the body of the count collapsed and the head fell back upon the pillows. A final gasp issued from between the parted lips—then silence.

Campbell's hand was trembling as he replaced the carafe upon the table. He had lost all count of time, and even that moment might mark the passing of the final minute of that fateful quarter of an hour. The dead no longer required his services; it remained for him to serve the living.

Almost in a daze he crossed the room and stopped before the paneled wainscoting. Counting from the corner, he passed his fingers along the carved woodwork of the third panel, pressing firmly.

He had reached a point near the baseboard, when, in answer to his touch, a faint click rewarded his efforts. Under his hand the panel slid back slowly, revealing an opening sufficiently large to permit the passage of a human body.

The interior of this aperture was hidden in darkness, but Campbell did not hesitate. Casting one final look at the still form on the bed, he stepped into the opening, and, turning, closed the panel behind him. The snap of the powerful spring showed that his method of exit was no longer visible to any one who might enter the room beyond.

By feeling with feet and hands, he discovered he was in a narrow passage, scarcely three feet wide and only high enough to permit walking upright. Where this passage might lead he did not stop to consider; it was sufficient that it afforded escape from the Vicomte de Lesse and those who would accompany him when he returned.

With the greatest caution, feeling on either side and before him, Campbell plunged forward in the darkness. For a score of feet the passage continued on a level, then the foot he advanced met only space; he dropped upon his hands and knees and groped in the blackness; his efforts were rewarded by discovering that he had reached the top of a flight of steps.

He descended carefully, counting as he did so; at the bottom of the thirtieth step he came again to a level and judged the passage now ran parallel with the first floor of the house. For the first time he stopped and wiped the perspiration from his face; the atmosphere through which he had been moving was filled with a sticky dampness.

Once more he began to follow the

passage, and presently reached a second flight of steps; but these numbered scarcely a dozen, and at the bottom he found the stone pavement slippery with moisture. Then suddenly his outstretched hands came in contact with a hard, metallic substance.

It was an iron door completely blocking the way.

For the first time he began to doubt the wisdom of groping through an unknown labyrinth. Then the thought of what lay behind bolstered up his courage; he judged also that De Plauex would not have directed him into a trap, and there must be some means of escape from the passage, even to one not familiar with his surroundings.

With infinite patience he began to examine every inch of the door. At first no bolt or spring rewarded his efforts; but at length, reaching upward, he touched, a little way above his head, the end of a rusty chain.

Thrice he pulled upon it, only to waste his strength and bruise his hands; but at length, having exerted all his muscle, a bolt, holding the top of the door to the ceiling, gave way. To push the iron barrier outward now became easy, and as it yielded, a gust of cold, damp air struck his face.

Beyond lay impenetrable blackness, and he realized that the way before him was no longer a narrow passage leading between stone walls. Reaching out and upward, his hands encountered only space; he believed himself to be in a great underground vault, the extent of which it was beyond his power to guess.

Step by step he crept forward, and the black void had no ending. He began to fancy he had missed the way; that the original passage branched off at right angles with the one he had been following since descending the second flight of steps, and that he was now only plunging deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth, to be buried finally in a living tomb.

Could he have touched anytbing with his hands it would have given him confidence; but on every side, except where his feet trod, was only seemingly endless space. Finally he stopped, and a feeling of fear crept over him.

Then, suddenly, as though by instinct, a thought came to him. He remembered what he had read about the wonderful underground world of Paris: that immense labyrinth of vaults and passages, a series of hidden streets beneath the pavements of the city.

The solution now seemed clear. The passage from the Hôtel de Marrast ended at the iron door: beyond lay the mysterious sewers and catacombs of Paris.

For the moment a fresh fear seized him. Once lost in the mazes of these sewers, he might wander for days and finally perish. Only by a supreme exertion of will power did he refrain from turning about and rushing blindly back through the darkness.

He remembered now how simple it would have been to remain concealed in the passage behind the walls of the house until night, when escape through the count's apartment might have been possible.

Then, suddenly, a feeling of utter recklessness replaced the moments of panic. Men had found themselves in the underground world of Paris, and, unaided, had reached the open air. Surely there was an end somewhere, and to reach it was not impossible.

Setting his teeth firmly together, Campbell again moved forward with the dogged determination of one who has burned his bridges behind him.

How long he continued the weary tramp it was impossible to determine; but suddenly, when he least expected relief, a gleam of light appeared in the distance.

Fearing it might vanish as quickly as it had shone forth, he began to run. Once he stumbled and fell headlong, but scrambled to his feet, unmindful of bruises.

Gradually the light drew nearer, and he could see that it came from the flickering rays of a lantern; the person who carried it was moving toward him.

Panting, Campbell slackened bis pace, and the light approached more slowly. Tben the dim outlines of the man who carried it became visible.

Campbell uttered a boarse cry and rushed forward. The lantern-bearer stopped suddenly, backed away from the center of the passage, and raised the

light above his head; at the same instant he drew a glittering object from beneath his coat.

Halting a dozen yards away, Campbell stared at the fellow in astonishment. The rays of the lantern revealed its bearer's face plainly.

It was the under butler, Jacques, who a few hours before he had seen a prisoner in the hands of the guard at the gate of the Tuileries.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONCE OF THE KING'S GUARD.

It seemed as though the man with the light hesitated whether to spring forward and use the knife he held in his right hand, or to dash the lantern to the floor and plunge the passage in darkness. It was plain he wavered between astonishment and fear, undecided whether to fight or to retreat.

As for Campbell, for the moment surprise held him dumb; then he realized that unless he made the first move the other would be of uo service to him. Already the man had apparently reached a decision, for he was crouching for a spring.

"*Monsieur,*" said he in as calm a voice as he could muster, "I was thinking I would not begrudge a hundred francs to be guided from this place; I am now inclined to offer double that amount. You appear to be in a hurry to plunge deeper into the bowels of the earth; I, in turn, am as anxious to see daylight once more."

For another moment the Frenchman retained his threatening attitude, then it dawned upon him that not only did he stand in no danger, but that the other was even appealing for assistance. His grip upon the handle of the knife did not relax, but he straightened himself and advanced the lantern a little.

For the first time the light revealed Campbell plainly.

"*Mort du diable,* it is the Englishman!" he cried in astonishment.

"So it would seem, my friend," replied Campbell dryly. "Come! I will not pretend not to know who you are, for we met two nights ago in the corridor of the Hôtel de Marrast; and it is also apparent you have recognized me as the person to whom the Comte de Plauex delivered a letter, entrusted to him by the Marquis de Marrast. Why you are here I will not inquire, but I desire to ask you a question. Where am I?"

M. Jacques stared into his face for a moment; then a grin, which overspread his bruised and battered countenance, took the place of his expression of amazement.

"*Mille tonnerres!* and so you do not know where you are, *monsieur?* Surely you did not fancy you were taking a walk upon the boulevard?"

He chuckled at the joke he fancied he had perpetrated.

But Campbell was in no mood to permit the conversation to drift into humorous channels. He understood that in some manner the man had escaped from his captors, and was returning to the Hôtel de Marrast by the underground route, in order to avoid being recognized on the street, and again taken into custody. He answered gravely:

"It is true I do not know where I am, but douhtless you can enlighten me, and I am willing to pay you well for your trouble. Although I have reason to believe you have been my enemy, I think it is possible for us to understand each other."

"And how do you know I have been your enemy, *monsieur?*" demanded the man suspiciously.

"Well, it was not difficult to discover that, especially since my return to the Hôtel de Marrast, which I have just left, in order to avoid the police, who are anxious to arrest some one," replied Campbell.

As he hoped, this declaration had the desired effect. His companion's face exhibited both apprehension and curiosity.

"And why are the police anxious to arrest some one in the Hôtel de Marrast?" he demanded gruffly.

"Because the Comte de Plauex has just been assassinated," replied Campbell shortly.

"*Nom de Dieu!* what are you saying?" cried M. Jacques.

"Only that the count, au old man, has been strangled; and do you know the reason? Because he was unfortunate enough to discover who it was that sent

the Marquis de Marrast to the Bastile. If you are returning to meet your master, my friend, beware, or he may betray you also."

The words produced the effect which Campbell had hoped. In referring to the Vicomte de Lesse he had only carried out an idea which had taken root in his mind; the other's action now confirmed fully the suspicion the scene which he had witnessed before the gate of the Tuileries had engendered.

A ferocious expression appeared upon the face of M. Jacques; he began to tremble so violently that the flame of the lantern was in danger of being extinguished.

"*Monsieur,*" cried he in a terrible voice, "I have already been betrayed. Do you know why you find me sneaking back to the Hôtel de Marrast like a thief who fears the light of day? It is because I am going to kill that *ci-devant:* that traitor who promised to make me rich, and, instead, would have permitted me to be chained to an oar in a galley at Toulon."

He thrust the knife back into his belt, then, with his free hand, pointed to the bruises upon his face.

"Look, *monsieur,*" said he hoarsely, "because I defended myself they dragged me over the pavement, and he, sitting on his horse, spoke no word in my behalf. Why should I longer conceal anything? He is your enemy, also, and you will know what to do."

He paused for a moment, struggling for breath; then threw out his hand with an imperative gesture.

"Listen, *monsieur,*" said he savagely. "You take me for an ordinary servant: even such a one as that Labrie. But I am a soldier of France, who for ten years has worn with honor the uniform of the king. It was because this precious Vicomte de Lesse detected me in a theft that I fell into his power; but I was drunk at the time and did not know what I was doing.

"And what did he do? Instead of putting me under arrest he promised to say nothing, provided I consented to serve him faithfully. It was that or disgrace and imprisonment, and I chose the safest way. It was he who took me to the Hôtel de Marrast and persuaded the marquis to offer me employment. I was to watch everything and report to him daily.

"*Mort du diable!* it was a dog's life, but I had no choice in the matter. He pretended to leave France, but all the time he was at a château in the country, awaiting his opportunity. If the marquis was got rid of it was he who would succeed to the title and De Marrast's property; only *mademoiselle* stood in the way. Then he conceived the idea of marrying her, for in that case he would be free to do as he chose.

"But believe me, *monsieur,* though the girl had some liking for him, she was steadfast in refusing his advances. Then he obtained from his patron, the Duke of Orleans, a *lettre de cachet;* it is probable he stole it, but that is no matter. It was very simple: to fill in the blank with the name of the Marquis de Marrast. And then what happened? The marquis was dragged off to the Bastile.

"It was just then *you* appeared, *monsieur,* and the *vicomte* had not counted on that. It was I, under instructions, who was required to play the spy on the old count; and it was I who read the letter he left lying on the table in the library. Had I been more skilled in that sort of business I would have concealed or destroyed it: for not doing so I received a pretty lecture from my master.

"Well, when you had gone, there was nothing for me to do but keep watch on the old nobleman, and then last night the *vicomte* put in an appearance, making it appear he had just arrived in Paris. Something he said made the count suspect him, but as I had nothing to do with that I can tell you nothing. But this morning, quite early, who should appear but *mademoiselle.*

"I knew the *vicomte* was at the Tuileries and sent a message telling him she had come back to Paris. Afterward, thinking I might have an hour to myself, I went to the Rue de la Cité; well, the first thing I saw was you, *monsieur,* entering a restaurant. I entered also, believing you would not know me, and I desired to see what you could be doing in such a quarter of the city.

"Then it struck me the *vicomte* should know you had returned to Paris, close on the heels of *mademoiselle.* I hast-

ened to the Tuileries, and just as I arrived who should come riding out but the Duke of Orleans, and among the gentlemen behind him, the Vicomte de Lesse. In my excitement I forgot myself and rushed forward, brushing against the duke's horse. For that I was ordered to be put under arrest and taken to the Conciergerie, which meant Toulon, and perhaps a life sentence in the galleys.

"I cried out, calling upon the *vicomte* to save me, but he never uttered a word of protest. A single sentence to the duke would have ended the matter and I should have been freed. But I understand perfectly well he desired to get rid of me, for there was no longer any spying for me to do. A man who is sentenced to the galleys can tell no tales, *monsieur.*

"The soldiers, my old comrades, handled me roughly; it is a wonder I was not killed outright, for I did not submit tamely. After a little I was sent, with two guards who were ordered to take me, to the Conciergerie, where my name should be entered as having insulted the Duke of Orleans on the public street: one could not commit a worse crime in France.

"Now, I cannot tell you just what happened, *monsieur,* for I was too dazed to take much notice of anything, but I had gone only a little way when a body of citizens surrounded my captors. Some one shouted that I was being taken to the scaffold because I had failed to salute a party of royalists. On all sides arose the cry: 'Death to the aristocrats!' Then the mob began to attack the soldiers who guarded me.

"I stood still, for I scarcely realized what was taking place; then suddenly some one whispered in my ear: 'Run, citizen, or reinforcements may arrive and there will be too many for us.' I did not need a second invitation. When I recovered my breath I found myself on the bank of the Seine, and quite alone.

"For a long time I crouched down behind a pile of rubbish, not caring what became of me. I knew I was a marked man, and to venture upon the streets meant the Conciergerie. All I could do was to wait for night and then hide myself somewhere.

"Then after a little, a terrible rage took possession of me; from a soldier I had become an outcast, and it was all due to that *ci-devant,* who proposed to rob his cousin of his liberty and riches. While he was enjoying himself I should starve, and finally die like a dog in the gutter.

"Well, after a time I began to cool down, and then a resolve came to me. I might indeed die, but that fiend should go before me; and before I killed him he should know the reason I did it. I figured out he would return to the Hôtel de Marrast, for I had sent him word that *mademoiselle* was there. So much the better, for he would die in her presence, just when he thought he had succeeded in everything.

"I knew a secret passage connected the house with one of the underground sewers, for I have made use of this route more than once. I got up and went along the bank of the river; from a boatman I obtained a lantern for a few sous. Then it was no great trick to find the entrance to this branch of the sewer, because I had marked it on a previous occasion. You know the rest, *monsieur,* for I had walked scarcely fifteen minutes when we met. Had you not stopped me I should have gone straight to the Hôtel de Marrast and entered by the cellar."

M. Jacques drew the back of his hand across his mouth.

"Well, *monsieur?*" he concluded shortly.

Campbell had succeeded beyond his expectations, and he understood he now had a powerful weapon in his hand with which to strike his enemy. But just then there was something more important than permitting the ex-soldier to stick his knife into the *vicomte.*

"My friend," said he in a grave voice, "I will not deny you have strong provocation, but just now you cannot hope to accomplish much. The *vicomte* is in possession of the Hôtel de Marrast, and if you approach him you will be arrested. *Mademoiselle* is no longer there, and even now he may have followed her."

Campbell then proceeded to explain just what had occurred that morning, and how he had escaped from the count's room by means of the secret passage behind the panel.

M. Jacques listened attentively, and

the expression of his face was not pleasant to look upon. It was plain his rage against the *vicomte* was so terrible that he would not have hesitated to throw himself upon him even on the crowded boulevard.

In fact, the man had given up everything as lost, and thought only of revenge.

But as Campbell concluded his expression changed.

"*Tiens!*" he cried, "you say that *mademoiselle* was driven away in a coach that devil sent for her?"

"As I have told you: under the excuse that she is to be taken to Versailles in order that together they may see the king," Campbell replied.

"*Sacré bleu!*" growled the ex-soldier, "and do you fancy, *monsieur,* the girl will be taken to Versailles? And how will this *vicomte* meet her there when he went straight from the Duke of Orleans to the Hôtel de Marrast?"

"I do not think *mademoiselle* will reach Versailles to-day," answered Campbell soberly.

"Nor to-morrow," replied M. Jacques with an unpleasant laugh.

Then, after a moment's silence:

"Fortunately, *monsieur,* I have kept my eyes and ears open, and may prove of some assistance in this matter. It may be possible I can do a service for *mademoiselle,* whom I have wronged, and at the same time accomplish what I have planned."

"And how is that?" Campbell demanded.

"Well, this *vicomte* has a house, or at least he is master there, not much over half a league from the outskirts of the city. I know the place well, for it was there I reported to him often. Now it is in my mind that that is just the place where *mademoiselle* will be taken. No one will suspect anything, and with that De Charny to guard her she cannot escape until the *vicomte* gives the order to set her at liberty."

"I do not fancy De Charny will keep her, but, go on, my friend," interposed Campbell dryly.

"But De Charny is the *vicomte's* right hand, and acts for him in everything," replied the other.

"Then his master must need fight left-handed, for I left De Charny dead, or seriously wounded, at an inn some leagues from Paris," answered Campbell.

"So much the better, for the fellow was an excellent fighter; then it will be all the easier," answered his companion. "As I was saying, the girl has probably been taken to that house, and of course the *vicomte* will go there also, when he has finished his business at the Hôtel de Marrast. What have we to do but follow? you to rescue *mademoiselle,* and I—"

He touched the handle of the knife significantly.

Campbell could scarcely suppress an exclamation of satisfaction. By a wonderful stroke of good luck he had discovered what, under other circumstances, might have been impossible.

"Let us leave this place at once!" he cried.

"With pleasure, *monsieur,* but you have forgotten that I dare not show myself; and, besides, we cannot accomplish anything by daylight. The house is guarded and we should have only our trouble for our pains. Besides, there should be more than two, or we will be driven off or else taken prisoners."

Campbell recognized that he spoke the truth. It would be no light matter to force an entrance into a guarded house within half a league of Paris.

He began to question his companion, who replied that the place, although not large, was strongly built and stood some rods back from the road in a grove of trees. Assault would not be impossible, but it must be quick and decisive, or reinforcements from the neighborhood would come to the assistance of those who defended the building.

For a few moments Campbell remained in a brown study; he was wondering where a sufficient force might be obtained to attack the house that night. There were plenty of reckless spirits in Paris, but to persuade any one to venture on such an undertaking might be difficult, and, besides, there was no time to waste.

Then an idea struck him: M. Reuel and the Rue de la Cité! It might even be possible to summon Jean Labrie, if Reuel would send a messenger to the Hôtel de Marrast.

He hastened to acquaint the ex-soldier with what was in his mind.

M. Jacques listened to the plan in silence. Then he nodded.

"*Parbleu!* it might be possible, for the Rue de la Cité is not over particular as to how it turns a franc. We can at least try it, *monsieur.*"

He took up the lantern, which during their conversation had been sputtering on the damp bed of the sewer.

"Although we cannot go at once to the Rue de la Cité, I can at least permit you to see daylight. Come, *monsieur,*" he said shortly.

For perhaps a mile Campbell followed his silent guide under the streets of Paris.

Finally, far ahead, a glimmer of light pierced the darkness. It grew larger, the somber gloom gave place to a misty dawn, and at length a great circular pipe was visible in front of them. It was the final length of the sewer, and its end opened upon the Seine.

M. Jacques blew out the lantern.

"I will stop here, *monsieur,*" he announced briefly.

Campbell looked at his watch. It was two o'clock; he had been traveling through the underground passages for over three hours.

Going to the mouth of the pipe he gazed out across the surface of the river, inhaling great breaths of the warm July air; then, after a little, he returned to the ex-soldier, who now presented a grotesque figure.

Covered with dirt, through having been dragged over the cobblestones at the gate of the Tuileries, his clothing torn, and his face bruised and caked with dried blood, it seemed improbable he would be recognized even should he venture upon the streets.

But when Campbell suggested this the man shook his head.

"No, *monsieur,*" said he, "I am safer where I am; for a few hours longer the rats and I will keep company."

He smiled grimly and seated himself upon the bottom of the sewer.

Then, after a few moments of silence, he added:

"But as it is necessary that some one should go to the Rue de la Cité, there is no reason why you should remain here; and you have nothing to fear."

"But afterward? I can scarcely find again the entrance to this place," suggested Campbell.

"It will not be necessary; after nightfall go to the tavern in the Rue de la Cité, where you saw me this morning. You can then tell me what you have done."

"And you will be there?"

"Certainly, for I shall leave this place as soon as it is dark. Do not fear I will fail you, *monsieur;* I do not forget that we are to strike a blow against this *vicomte,* who is just now thinking his plotting has succeeded."

Campbell turned again to the mouth of the sewer; from it to the narrow beach at the edge of the water was a drop of half a dozen feet. On the edge he paused.

"To-night—at the tavern?" said he.

"Yes, *monsieur,*" replied the other shortly.

Campbell dropped upon the bed of pebbles under the mouth of the pipe.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WOLVES OF PARIS.

It was half an hour later when Campbell entered the Rue de la Cité and for the third time that day climbed the stairs which led to the rooms of M. Reuel.

In response to his knock a gruff voice bade him enter. Pushing open the door he stepped across the threshold; a man who was seated near the window arose quickly, with a little exclamation. It was Jean Labrie.

Campbell saw that the room was occupied by three others, one of whom was M. Reuel; his companions were evidently residents of the Rue de la Cité, or of a similar quarter of Paris.

Each met his gaze with a sullen stare, then glanced at M. Reuel interrogatively.

"It is M. Campbell, the Englishman," said the owner of the room gruffly.

"A *ci-devant?*" The questioner's voice was filled with suspicion.

"Possibly," replied M. Reuel, "but he is not the enemy of the people." Then, to Campbell: "Well, *monsieur,* your coming is unexpected?"

The brief sentence conveyed a ques-

tion; Campbell hastened to reply. He saw that these men suspected him, and just then he desired their good-will.

"Labrie has told you of what occurred this morning?" he began.

"He has told us; also that you were probably dead. It seems he was mistaken," replied M. Reuel.

Campbell sank into a chair, for he was dreadfully weary; until that moment excitement had kept him up. He had forgotten that he had had practically no sleep for sixty hours.

Labrie seized a water-pitcher from a stand in the corner and filled a glass. When Campbell had swallowed a few mouthfuls he felt somewhat refreshed, but was obliged to rest heavily against the table.

"*Monsieur,*" said the butler of the Hôtel de Marrast, "do not hurry yourself, though we are anxious to hear what you have to tell us."

But Campbell controlled his weakness by an effort.

"For nearly four hours I have been wandering through the sewers of Paris," he explained.

"So it would seem, *monsieur,*" replied M. Reuel, and glanced at the visitor's mud-bespattered shoes and clothing.

Campbell proceeded to relate everything which had occurred, from the time Labrie had left him to summon a physician to the moment when he dropped from the mouth of the sewer.

When he finished his four companions looked at one another. Then one of the strangers began to laugh.

"Pardon me, *monsieur,*" said he, "but I was thinking what that *ci-devant* must have thought when he unlocked the door of the room and found only a dead man to turn over to the police. He must have fancied you were the devil and had flown out of the window."

"He was in a terrible rage," put in Labrie, "and I can tell you they searched the apartment carefully; even tearing the bed in pieces. As for me, I thought that *vicomte* had really killed you and concealed your body, for he is very cunning. And so you have met that fellow Jacques. Well, when I see him there is a little matter to be settled between us."

"*Tiens!*" broke in M. Reuel sharply. "you are to do nothing, my friend. You have heard what *monsieur* has just told us; this ex-soldier is going to prove useful. Already he has offered to lead some one to the house where your *vicomte* has taken the girl; turn him loose among the *ci-devants* and he will be equal to half a battalion when it comes to fighting for the people. There is going to be plenty of work for all of us."

Labrie began to mutter, and relapsed into sullen silence. M. Reuel turned to Campbell.

"*Monsieur,*" said he, "it is plain why you have come here for the second time to-day; you understand perfectly well you can do nothing without some assistance. What you desire is that we take from the hands of one nobleman the sister of another."

"And why should we, who are of the people, trouble ourselves about the safety of a *ci-devant?*" demanded one of the others gruffly.

"I will not ask any one to do such a thing for nothing," began Campbell, for he knew of no other reply to this argument.

M. Reuel made an impatient gesture.

"You are addressing members of the National Assembly, and you talk of offering a few paltry francs; it is always that way with you *ci-devants:* as if the common people are to be bought and sold like so many cattle," said he in a stern voice.

Campbell began to apologize, but the Frenchman interrupted.

"But we uderstand, *monsieur,* your anxiety. Two facts I have in my mind: this Marquis de Marrast has proved himself a friend of the people, for he, among others, endeavored to persuade the king to receive at Versailles the *Tiers Etat* as befitted those whom we represented—the backbone of France. On the other hand, it was this Duke of Orleans, who is the patron of the Vicomte de Lesse, that urged the king to do otherwise.

"On the 10th of June Louis insulted us, and his Swiss even fired upon the multitude who followed to back up our petition. And on the 19th matters became still more unendurable: the king ordered closed the doors of the building in which the National Assembly held its meetings. That also the Marquis de Marrast opposed, therefore it became

easier for this *vicomte* to bundle him off to the Bastile."

"From which we will liberate him, in the name of the people," broke out one of the other men.

M. Reuel signified that the interruption was untimely, and continued:

"We are not without gratitude, though at Versailles they consider we care for nothing but to fill our stomachs. Under ordinary circumstances it would be nothing to us what became of this sister of a nobleman, but I am thinking of the Marquis de Marrast, who spoke a good word for the people, and that other who would permit a Frenchman to be sent to the galleys at Toulon because he brushed against the horse of that wretched duke. We will teach this *ci-devant* a lesson, *monsieur*—and deliver the girl to yon.

Campbell began to express his gratitude, but again the other checked him.

"It is to serve our purpose, more than your own, I have consented to aid you," said he gruffly.

Jean Labrie was rubbing his hands together.

"*Parbleu!*" he muttered, bringing his fist down on the table, "yes, we are going to teach them something: those who have imprisoned the marquis, and murdered an old man."

M. Reuel cut him short also.

"And now, *monsieur,*" said he, "there is no reason why you should not rest until evening; in the mean time I will attend to everything."

Campbell did not need a second invitation, for to keep his eyes open a half-hour longer seemed impossible. M. Reuel led the way into another room in which stood an iron bedstead. He motioned toward the latter and retired, closing the door.

It seemed to Campbell he had slept for scarcely a moment when he was aroused by a hand shaking him vigorously. Opening his eyes he saw Jean Labrie bending over him.

"It is nine o'clock; come, *monsieur,*" explained the butler.

For several moments Campbell struggled with the drowsiness which weighed heavily upon him, then got upon his feet. Looking throngh the window he saw that it was already dark; arranging his attire, he followed Labrie into the larger room.

M. Reuel was standing beside the window, which was open. Through it drifted a strange, ominous sound which bore some resemblance to the dull, sullen murmur of the sea beating upon a rocky shore. By a little gesture the Frenchman summoned Campbell to his side.

"Look down, *monsieur!*" said he briefly.

Campbell leaned across the sill. Fifty feet below the narrow Rue de la Cité seemed to be filled with a moving mass which swayed backward and forward. Above this restless surface gleamed here and there flaring torches, and from it arose the sullen murmur which had at first attracted and puzzled the young Scotchman.

"Look!" said the Frenchman calmly, "the children of Paris, *monsieur.*"

To Campbell it appeared an angry mob, surging up and down the narrow street. His companion read his thoughts and smiled grimly.

"And there are scarcely three hundred down there, while in Paris there are many thousands—in the Rue St. Jacques, De la Vannerie, the Faubourg St. Antoine—the Rue de la Cité is only a little corner, *monsieur.* At Versailles are the king and his nobles; here in Paris a guard surrounds the Tuileries, bayonets bristle before the Hôtel de Ville, and cannon frown from the bastions of the Bastile. Because of their vaunted strength these *ci-devants* mock at the petitions of the people, who possess only their bare hands with which to defend themselves."

He stepped back from the window, the grim smile still playing about his lips.

"Come, *monsieur,*" said he gravely, "they are waiting to follow you to the house of the Vicomte de Lesse; do not try their patience."

Campbell had expected a handful of recruits: not more than half a dozen, and in their stead he found a restless mob. He hesitated and drew back.

To join in a private assault against a personal enemy was one thing, but to lead a rabble through the streets of Paris quite another. It was rebellion against the king's authority.

M. Reuel noted his hesitation.

"*Mort du Dieu!* are you afraid, *monsieur?*" he demanded roughly.

Campbell squared his shoulders; it was too late to turn back. To save Mlle. de Marrast he must accept the assistance which the National Assembly offered him, even if it ended in the Conciergerie, or something worse.

Without a word he signified to his companion that he was ready to follow him down the stairs whence Jean Labrie had already gone.

Reaching the level of the street the personality and actions of the mob became plainer; the crowd which filled the Rue de la Cité seemed to be composed of every manner of man who inhabited the lower quarters of Paris.

A few were armed with weapons, but for the most part the waving hands brandished clubs fashioned from spokes torn from cart wheels. Here and there a pike arose, like a slender tree, above the surging mass. On such implements there were to be borne later heads, hewed from the shoulders of aristocrats.

Many in the crowd were half-clothed, but a few wore uniforms which had once covered the backs of the king's soldiers. Now and then Campbell could see a red cap, balanced on an unkempt head; such appeared to be treated with respect by their neighbors.

When M. Reuel appeared in the doorway opening on to the street, the shouts of the mob redoubled and took form. A huge fellow brandished a cart spoke almost under Campbell's nose, while he bawled in his ears:

"Long live the National Assembly! Long live the Citizen Committeeman! *A bas les ci-devants!*" (Down with aristocrats).

And the mob took up the cry, howling like a pack of hungry wolves.

M. Reuel pushed his way among those who crowded nearest, and Campbell, his brain in a whirl, kept close at his heels. Upon the threshold of the little tavern the Frenchman halted and motioned to his companion to enter.

Campbell obeyed, and, as he stepped into the uncertain light shed by the few sputtering candles, a man who was seated at a table in the corner of the room arose and greeted him. It was M. Jacques.

"*Mort du diable!*" cried the ex-soldier with a hasty gesture toward the street, "is it the revolution, or only your *garde du corps* you have out there, *monsieur?* At first I forgot I no longer served the king and expected to be torn to pieces; but it is evident they are only waiting for some one."

"It is for us, my friend, to lead them to the house of the *vicomte,*" replied Campbell hoarsely.

"*Nom de ciel!* it is not a fortress we are going against, *monsieur.*"

Campbell explained. For a moment his companion remained silent; then shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it is all the same to me, so long as I am permitted to be the first to reach that villain; but have a care, *monsieur,* or *mademoiselle* will die of fright. Come, I am ready," he growled.

For many months afterward Campbell remembered that march through the streets of Paris, when at every moment he expected to find himself engaged in a fight with the authorities. But the mob was not molested, but increased in size as it proceeded across the Seine, through a gate at which the guard made no opposition, out upon the country road, following the guidance of M. Jacques.

And at last the latter stopped and pointed out a grove of trees standing some distance back from the highway.

"It is there," said he, turning to M. Reuel.

For it was Reuel who was directing everything, and his word swayed the mob in what direction he chose. Campbell became impressed with the feeling that he was only a mere spectator, swallowed up and carried forward in the human torrent which rolled along the road from Paris. And this torrent might at any moment turn and overwhelm him.

A short consultation followed the ex-soldier's announcement, then the leader summoned to his side several of his followers who were better armed than the majority of the rabble. He beckoned to Campbell.

"I shall surround the place, which I see is protected by a stone wall," said he. "Then, in company with these citizens, we will approach the house and demand admittance in the name of the people. Are you armed, *monsieur?*"

Campbell replied that he had a pistol.

"Which I do not think you will be required to use, still no one can tell what may happen."

M. Reuel gave an order, and the mob, disintegrating, spread out like an immense fan, encircling the grove of trees completely. As far as one could see, a line of torches flared red in the darkness; and if these did not attract the attention of those in the house the sullen murmur of the encircling host must have warned them that an unusual thing was happening.

M. Reuel waited until everything was arranged to his satisfaction, then approached the wall, pushed open an iron gate, and walked boldly up the path which led to the entrance of the dwelling.

Campbell looked curiously at his companions. Those who accompanied him and the leader through the gate numbered half a dozen; the ex-soldier, Jean Labrie, and four citizens. These latter were armed, two with muskets, a third with an immense cavalry saber, and the fourth carried a pike.

M. Reuel knocked loudly upon the door; a window above his head opened and a gruff voice demanded who was there and what was wanted.

"Open in the name of the people!" replied the committeeman sternly.

There was a moment's silence, then the voice answered:

"Go about your business; this is the house of M. the Vicomte de Lesse—we do not recognize your authority to demand admittance."

M. Reuel turned to one of his followers.

"Place the muzzle of your musket against the lock of the door—and fire," he ordered sharply.

The man did so. The report echoed through the grove and was answered by a howl from the encircling mob. The panel of the door was shattered, for the musket had been charged with pieces of iron and lead slugs.

An oath came from the window, and an answering shot from a pistol; but the bullet did not hit any one. M. Reuel looked upward.

(To be continued.)

AT MY LADY'S SERVICE.

By RADNOR M. COOTE.

The wrong man to the rescue, and how he turned out to be the right one in a tight place after all.

"ALL right; I've got the message." Bennett hung up the telephone receiver and turned in perplexity to Griswold, sitting at a desk near him.

The two young lawyers shared the same office—stenographer, law-books, and everything pertaining to the legal profession, as well as the personal matters of each other's daily life.

"Another promise broken," he continued. "Another proof that one should never swear to do anything unless the character of the thing is clear."

"Trouble, Ben?" queried Griswold.

"Nothing serious, I guess."

"Well, go ahead and tell me."

"You know, Gris, how much legal work I have done for Miss Trowbridge, and how many times we have talked over the phone together? Well, of course we have become pretty well acquainted, though we have never seen each other. We have even come to the point of having violent discussions concerning the respective merits of automobiles—which is a subject about which you know nothing, and with which you have no sympathy—and she had great respect for my knowledge, it seems.

"About a week ago, when I managed something connected with her property rather successfully, and at some trouble, I made the foolish remark over the phone to her that there was nothing I would not do for her—no engagement I would not break, in order to receive her words

of praise. Of course she laughed, and said that men were very willing to make such promises, but fulfilling them was another matter; and she said it as though she had had some experience in the line. Well, some way, the tone of her voice—or something, perhaps the recollection that she has the reputation of being the most beautiful girl that ever visits this city—made me swear by all that was holy that I meant what I said—and I did, too.

"Now, just this minute comes a message from her over the wire that she wants me at once; and, *where* do you think?—five miles out of the city, on that forlorn State road. Of course it would be a great pleasure to go—and help her, but in five minutes I have to argue in court the most important case of my extensive legal career, as you know—and I simply cannot go. She will understand when I tell her about it, and will not blame me, but I would like to be able to keep my word—just for the romance of the thing, if nothing more."

Griswold, "Merry Gris," his friends called him, looked at his friend in mock sympathy.

"Sentimental Ben," was all he said.

The latter was arranging his legal papers, preparatory to leaving for court, when he stopped suddenly, and regarded the laughing eyes of the other with anxiety.

"Say, Gris," he said slowly, "suppose it was something serious. Suppose she needs some one badly?"

"Well, let her get some one, then," replied the other.

"But she expects me," objected Bennett, "and perhaps relies upon what I said the other day."

"There's a possibility—" began Griswold, but was interrupted by his friend.

"Of course," he said, "you must go for me. If I can't keep my word, I can at least send a substitute, and come out there myself just as soon as my case is finished. Come on, now—hurry up."

The suggestion evidently appealed to the adventurous nature of Griswold, and his gay mind instantly seized at the chance of extracting some humor out of his friend's request.

Bennett had scarcely reached the court-house before Griswold was seated in the trap he had ordered from a nearby livery stable, and was well on his way toward the spot in the State highway, where his friend was expected.

An automobile would have been a more rapid means of reaching his destination, but the young man's ignorance of the mechanism of such vehicles was as dense as was Bennett's knowledge of the entire motor outfit.

To accomplish the purpose for which his friend had sent him, in a stereotyped manner, would have been impossible for Griswold, and he had thoroughly made up his mind to present himself as Bennett. when he rounded a curve in the road and came upon the party of whom he was in search.

The glad cries that came from the two girls sitting by the roadside assured Griswold that he was expected—or, rather, that Ben was. The meeting was so sudden, the greeting so cordial that there was no time to conceive of new plans.

"Yes, I am Bennett," lied the young man; "I got your message some time ago. But, you see, my automobile—"

And then a horrible suspicion seized him.

Standing at the side of the road, showing no indication of life, was a huge touring-car. Griswold's eyes lingered upon its mysterious machinery a moment, and then sought confirmation of his fears in the costumes of the girls.

Motoring outfits enveloped them. Yes! They evidently belonged to the car, and the car belonged—anywhere but here, waiting for Griswold to ascertain the cause of its refusal to run.

"You see," laughed the girl who had introduced herself as Miss Trowbridge, "we foolishly thought we could run the car ourselves—and we could, if the old thing had only not balked; but, just before we telephoned you it stopped dead. We can't imagine what is the matter.

"Of course, we thought of sending word by the farmer who drove by and offered to telephone for us from his place several miles up the road. Instead of telephoning to the garage, however, for a man who makes a business of helping motorists in distress, I conceived the brilliant idea of testing your promise and sending for you. I—I'm awfully glad you came."

"And I, that you sent for me," again prevaricated Griswold, with a quizzical glance at the machine.

"This is Miss Martin," continued Miss Trowbridge; "and now that everything has come out so nicely, I suppose all you have to do is to touch some one spot with your magic intuition and start the car for us."

"Oh, it may not be so simple," Griswold warned her, as he tied his horse to the fence and turned to a solemn contemplation of the thing standing sullenly there before him.

His course of procedure was plain. Examine the machinery, test every screw and valve in sight, and delve for those which must be hidden somewhere; and try to kill the time until Bennett should appear.

Confess to the deception now he would not, and a moment's thought concerning the girls standing beside him convinced him that they would appreciate the humor of the situation when the time came for explanations.

"I think possibly it may be the spark-plugs," suggested Miss Trowbridge, as Griswold began the tampering which he sincerely trusted would not injure the works.

"Oh, no," he replied; "it can't be that," said the young man, in his ignorance, moved as far from the suggested seat of difficulty as possible.

"You might see if the gasoline has run out," put in Miss Martin.

"In a moment," he murmured, not having the faintest idea where that necessary liquid was stored, and in the hope that he would find it by chance.

"The difficulty is far more apt to be in connection with the gulch," wisely commented Griswold, sure that he had heard that word used by his motor-mad friends.

"The what?" asked Miss Trowbridge in wonder.

"Oh, I forgot," hastily interjected the man, angry at himself for running the risk of making such a mistake. "You are not one of the thoroughly initiated as yet, and possibly do not understand what I mean. You see, automobiling has become so common that we"—modestly—"who cousider ourselves experts, have private names for the more intricate parts of the machine. The gulch is—is—the very basis of the theory of the working of the automobile. It is—"

Griswold stopped, and gave vent to a slow whistle of amazement as he pushed violently back and forth the small brass levers connected with the steering apparatus. He had no idea of the use to which these things were put, nor was there any cause for his whistle of amazement, but some important discovery was necessary to enable him to cease his description of the "gulch," which was getting him into deep water.

"What is it?" cried both the girls at once.

"I think I have discovered the cause of the trouble," answered Griswold; "and I am sorry to say it is rather serious."

He stood for a moment, shaking his head in doubt, glancing occasionally down the road to see if Bennett was by any possibility in sight. Suddenly he seized a long thing of brass which extended from the side of the car, and moved it forward.

"Oh, won't that make it go?" queried Miss Trowbridge.

"It doesn't seem to."

"I mean, wouldn't it if the machine was all right?" she added.

"I can't imagine this machine all right," sighed the young man.

They had been at work investigating for some time, and Griswold considered that he had earned a smoke. With the idea of occupying as long a period as possible in the preparation of his luxury, that he might give Bennett an opportunity to come to his rescue, he seated himself on the stone within an inch of which the automobile had run in its last flight, and slowly filled his pipe.

"I know you are tired," apologized Miss Trowbridge, "and it's awfully good of you to help us, but I think we had better get in your trap and drive back to the city. It's getting late."

"I should love to take you," said Griswold; "and, if I can do nothing after one more try, perhaps we had better return in that way. But," he continued, with his eyes upon Miss Martin, who seemed to him far more interesting than the celebrated beauty, Miss Trowbridge, "I hate to let the thing get

the best of me. It's so humiliating, you know."

There was an absolute silence on the part of all, each mind intent upon the solution of the problem before them. Then, suddenly, a great inspiration seemed to come to one of the party.

Miss Trowbridge moved hastily to the starting apparatus. Miss Martin, standing directly in front of the machine, caught the inspiration and stood rigid. Griswold, at a loss, remained seated on the stone, his hand resting on the front wheel of the motor.

There was the sound of a quick turn of a crank, a rumble and whir, a sudden leap of the machine—and then, silence again.

"It's lucky it stopped," exclaimed Miss Trowbridge as she assisted Miss Martin from the ground, where she had been thrown by the sudden starting of the car, "or you would have been badly hurt."

She turned toward the place where Griswold had been sitting, and continued: "You see, Mr. Bennett, you did set the clutch in the slow speed, so that the car would start as soon as the engines did. I—"

The engines had stopped again, and both girls rushed around to the stone which had been the man's resting-place. He was near it still, but lying with his head almost under the machine, his arms outstretched, his eyes closed, and one leg pinioned between the hub of the rear wheel of the car and the stone.

"Oh!" cried both girls, aghast.

Then, in a moment, they dashed to the rear of the machine and pressed with all their strength against it. But the heavy automobile did not move an inch, and the same result followed their attempt from the front. Griswold was pinioned fast.

"Miss Martin," he called hoarsely, "I'm all right—don't you bother your head about me. My—my friend will be here soon."

"But you'll die like that," cried the girl, coming in anguish to his side.

"I—I *am* rather twisted, but I can stand it."

His courage was wonderful.

With ever lessening strength, the girls continued their attempts to move the machine, but no success followed their efforts.

At length Miss Martin, with a glance at the pale face on the ground, threw herself beside Griswold and gently raised his head to her lap.

"Is that better?" she asked.

"Perfect."

"How *can* you stand it? It must be awfully painful."

"I'll confess, I—"

An exclamation from Miss Trowbridge interrupted him, as Bennett dashed around the bend in the road, and brought his automobile to a standstill near the agitated party. His first glance at the disabled car brought forth a tremendous roar.

"Think of *Griswold* to the rescue of a motor party!" he shouted.

"I don't know who you are, sir," cried Miss Trowbridge; "but, for Heaven's sake, help our friend out of his terrible position."

"Why, I'm Bennett," replied the young man as he turned and followed the girl. "I—"

When he saw his friend lying on the ground Bennett made an impulsive dash to his side.

"Gris!" he cried, and then he stood motionless by the side of the car.

Was it possible that one of the humorous eyes of Griswold executed a wink from its place in the soft folds of Miss Martin's gown?

"Before you relieve me," said Griswold slowly, "let me confess that I have impersonated you, my dearest friend, before these ladies—and see—see my reward."

"Oh, help him!" came the female voices.

But Griswold held up a staying hand.

"No—not until I am forgiven," he said melodramatically.

"Oh, whoever you are—" began Miss Martin.

"I can't understand," cried Miss Trowbridge. "This is incomprehensible." Then, turning to Bennett: "Can't you see the man before you? Why, his leg—his leg—it *must* be crushed to pieces—and broken?"

"Possibly it is both," came a voice from under the automobile; "but it's also wooden!"

TAKING BIG CHANCES.

By SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "A Lump of Bullion," "The Tail of the Lumberbeast," "The Great Bank Robbery," etc.

The series of fearsome happenings that set wide-awake a certain little sleepy village on the Atlantic coast.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW IT ALL HAPPENED.

WITH my pull on that thin little wire, the solution of the mysterious visits to the house lay before me. The entire grate of the fireplace in the dining-room lifted at the inner end as though it was on hinges. I did not take time to make any examination. I crawled into the room, with Joel after me.

"Ah!" he said. "We are safe. They will hardly tackle us to-night. And now, if you've got time, you can take this bullet out of my leg."

As a matter of fact there was no bullet in his leg. He had been shot in the fleshy part of the thigh, and the bullet had plowed right through. All he wanted was a little bandaging; the salt water had nearly stopped the bleeding.

We were both pretty well shaken up by our experience.

"And now the thing is over for the present," I said, "for Heaven's sake tell me how you learned that the secret way was through the chimney under the fireplace. I never thought of trying that, it looked so solid."

"It is solid. Even if you had tried it you couldn't have moved it. But she told me how."

"She? The girl? Has she recovered as much as that?"

"Sure. Mother says she's all right, except for that wound in her shoulder. Of course, when I got here I expected to find you. I rang the bell, and nobody came, and that surprised me.

"I rang again and waited, and still nobody came. Then I gave her a yank that durn near pulled her out altogether.

"Mother came to the door, looking as if she was astonished.

"'I thought Mr. Dell would answer it,' she said. 'He went to smoke while I attended the girl.'

"Well, I looked all around, through the house and outside, and the only place I could smell cigar-smoke was in the library. I told mother.

"'Is the horse outside?' she asked.

"'Yes,' I said.

"'It's queer,' said mother. 'It ain't like Mr. Dell to go far away at a time like this.'

"The door of the girl's room was open and she heard us.

"'Is Mr. Dell missing?' she asked. I answered that you were. She called us in. 'Look in the fireplace,' she suggested. 'There's a tiny hook about halfway up on the right side. Get your finger in that and pull. Look down.'

"Well, I did. Ever get a surprise? That chimney is three times as big below the floor as it is above. And it goes right on down through the cellar-floor into that cave. No wonder we didn't find it. Why, you might tinker with that old fireplace a week and never find that hook, and if you did find it you wouldn't know what to do with it. Oh, it's a great scheme, that. I don't know how she works, but you've seen she does."

"Well, they won't come up to-night," I said. "They are soaking wet, even if you haven't drowned them. And one can watch, or we can block up the fireplace. I want to get the girl's story."

Mrs. Bankred had heard us talking. She came to the kitchen, where I had been working over Joel.

"Lordy! Whatever has happened?" she cried aghast, as she saw Joel, with his trousers off, and one leg bandaged, and his clothes in a wet heap on the floor.

"I found him as I said, mother, tied to the iron ladder," said Joel. "I didn't have much time to lose. And I had a little scrimmage and got dumped in the sea. But it's all right."

"But that bandage?"

"Oh, that ain't much. When you have a fight you expect to get a little hurt. But how's the girl? Mr. Dell wants to get her story."

"That's what I came out for—that and to see how you were. She is all right, only there is a little fever setting in, and I think we ought to have the doctor. I thought you could go, but—"

"So I can. This ain't much. And the horse is there. I'll go get the doctor if Mr. Dell will let me have some clothes, and you go get her story."

Off the brave fellow limped, and I accompanied Mrs. Bankred to the girl's bedside.

In the excitement of getting her there, and trying to resuscitate her, I had paid very little attention to her face, except to note that it was handsome rather than beautiful. Now, as I entered, her eyes, which had been closed before, looked at me with a peculiar expression.

She held out the hand of the uninjured side.

"I am so sorry," she said, "that I fainted before I warned you. It was so weak of me."

"It seems to me," I answered, "that you have done heroically as it is. I understand, from the conversation of the two men who captured me, that you were wounded trying to get to me to warn me."

"I jumped from the boat," she said, "and I was shot in the water."

"What devils!" I passionately exclaimed. "Strange that you should be with them at all."

"I have escaped," she explained, "but they always found me. And I have never been up North before. I knew nobody. I feared nobody would believe my story. And then, after Mr. Wratton was killed, I dared not go."

"Because you played a part in his murder?"

"Don't!" she cried, and her eyes filled with tears, while sobs shook her frame. "I did—but I did not know it. I did not know it."

"I can believe that well enough," I said, "after what you have done for me. But why didn't you leave me some information about the secret passage when you wrote the note?"

She opened her eyes wide.

"I thought I did! Didn't I say anything about it?"

"No. Your note was hurriedly written, and rather incoherent. I suppose in your excitement you intended to and omitted it."

"Oh—what a blunder—and it might have saved so much," she said, closing her eyes.

Tears were running down her cheeks, and I knew the girl, however blundering she might be, was sincere. She was only a girl, scarcely eighteen, and could not be expected to plan with an adult head.

"Now, what can you tell me?" I asked.

"About the two mur—the two men who were killed?"

"Yes, and about yourself."

"Beginning with myself, if you will let me, my name—I think—is Kate Danella. My father is dead. At least I have always been led to believe that, and I think it is true. My mother lives in Nassau, New Providence. William Wratton was her brother."

"Your uncle? And you did not denounce his murder?"

"He was a wicked man. He robbed my mother. And it was another uncle, Ferdinand Danella, who killed him. One was as bad as the other."

"Tell me about it—how it was done."

"My mother was left by my father in very good circumstances. He had owned a line of ships running from England to South America and the island ports, and she had her brother, William Wratton, take up the management. He was a wicked man, and used the ships for purposes my mother would not dream of. And then, little by little, he began to get the best of her, and finally he sold her out and bought the line of ships for a mere song. So it was really my mother's ship he sold, the Scipio.

"And my father's brother, who is no better than William Wratton, got his gang of cutthroats together telling my mother he would get the money for her. But it was not his intention to give my

mother anything. He is a terrible man, this Danella. He has lived North here, and knew all about this house. It belongs to a man he knows, and who is now in England.

"The owner's name is Matika. They are remnants of a gang that used to carry on a great smuggling trade, and this house was used by the gang even before my uncle was born. It was a regular trade, and in those days there were men in Broggan who knew all about it and helped the gang.

"The secret passage through the lower part of the chimney made it possible to land goods at low tide, and go and come, even when the officers were watching the house. Broggan has not always been the sleepy place they say it is now. Some of the people here are living on what was made by their ancestors in this very house.

"Perhaps they know it, and perhaps not. I know all this from hearing my uncle and others of the gang talk. They tried to have no secrets from me. They looked upon me as one of them until I refused to murder you.

"William Wratton, my mother's brother, came here to sell the Scipio. Ferdinand Danella, my father's brother, knew of it, and told my mother he would see that she received the money. The Scipio was too large and too slow for Wratton in these days, and he wanted a smaller and swifter vessel.

"Danella knew all this, somehow, and proposed coming here in the Muriel, his own vessel, almost like a large yacht. He asked me to take the voyage, and not knowing what horrors I was destined to meet, I accepted the invitation.

"Danella planned the whole thing. You see, the captain and crew of the Muriel are half-way decent men and did not know what was contemplated by Danella and the four men with him. They would smuggle rum or tobacco, but when it came to murder and robbery they could not be trusted. So Danella had to plan. And this was how it was done:

"One of the gang whom William Wratton did not know, waited until he had sold the Scipio for cash, and then met him and said he understood Wratton wanted a swift vessel. So he did, and after they had talked about it Wratton agreed to take a trial trip on the Muriel. Danella was on board, but pretended to be ill, so that he and Wratton did not meet. But I saw my Uncle William, though he did not recognize me. I had been away to school in England for a long time.

"But Danella told me to introduce myself and explain my presence on the Muriel by saying she had hailed from Nassau, and I had taken the trip for my health.

"Wratton looked queer, but he did not say anything. Being a wicked man himself, he was always suspicious of every one, and always on guard. Then Danella compelled me to accompany him to this house. We came up the secret passage, but I had no idea what his plans were. He forced me to write a letter to Wratton that I had got into trouble while on shore, and was in an old stone house that had been turned into a prison. And I had let a prison guard make love to me, and this guard would permit somebody to come up through the chimney to rescue me, but whoever came must be careful.

"Wratton knew nothing of the old house, while Danella knew all about it. And Wratton was an adventurous man, anyway. Danella knew he would come.

"Then Danella locked me in a room alone. I heard Wratton come, and when he was in the room, another of the gang with him, I heard him cry out. He recognized Danella.

"It was done quickly, and I screamed, and tried to break out a window and escape. That's why they left the body. I screamed so loud, and it was nearly daylight, they were frightened. And then the next day you came, and they could not go back. But they got the money.

"I guess you understand it all now. It was one of the gang that killed Warson. You see, Warson had been looking at the Muriel from below here, and one of the gang went ashore. They drank together, and Jim, the one who shot me, told him a lot of stuff that wasn't true.

"He intended to get Warson drunk and kill him then. But when Warson was half drugged into insensibility he got suspicious, struck Jim in the face and ran away. That night they came in and killed him."

"Why didn't they kill me?"

"You were not dangerous then. They had done enough."

"But why did they compel you, a mere child, to come here to kill me?"

"Because they were afraid of me. They knew that I intended to expose their crimes. And they wanted to make me as wicked as themselves, to compel me to hold my tongue from fear. I was crying all the time, and watching for a chance to escape, and Danella knew it.

"He swore he would compel me to compromise myself, so that for my own self-protection I would keep still about them. That's why he sent me to kill you. If I did that I would never dare expose him. Instead of killing you I wrote that letter. Men were waiting below for me in the launch. I was terribly frightened. I scarcely knew what I was writing. Anything to warn you."

"That accounts for your saying nothing about the fireplace," I said. "And now—"

But suddenly the girl was lying back limp on her pillow, in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XX.

WHERE BROGGAN CAME INTO THE STORY.

"Dr. Griggs, Mr. Dell."

Joel limped to the door of the room, and then away again.

In the doorway stood the typical old country doctor. Tall, inclined to stoutness, grim as to face, with kindliness brimming over in his eyes.

"She has fainted, doctor," I said. "And I wish you to do everything in your power for her. I have just listened to a very strange and interesting story. When you get her so that you can leave her for a time, if you will come to the library I will tell you the story while you take a look at Joel's leg."

"Joel's leg seems to have been attended to pretty well, sir," he answered. "We will bend all our energies on this poor girl. Joel has told me much. Evidently she is a brave girl, for so young a one."

"Do all you can. It's my bill," I said, and I joined Joel.

"The first thing," I began, "is to block this confounded fireplace, so that we'll have no surprises. We'll lay the ghost, as they say in ghost stories."

"Let's see how she works," said Joel.

We pulled the hook again, and it was marvelous how the heavy grate swung up. It left an aperture amply large enough to admit the body of a good-sized man, and if there was an ordinary fire in the grate all it would do would be to spill it backward, upsetting it a little, but not placing the house in danger.

The floor of the fireplace was a flat stone that just covered the hole. This was fastened to a horizontal bar of iron, hinged at the back. And beyond that was an iron ball that balanced the whole contrivance sufficiently to enable even a child to open the fireplace. Back of it there was a sort of pocket to give the ball, which was at the end of an iron balancing-rod, plenty of play room, and might also serve as a secret hiding-place for gold or silver or other booty. Of course there was none there now.

"I don't like to spoil this arrangement," I said. "It's fine. It not only serves as a secret way into and from the house, but it gives a direct communication with the sea at low tide without making a long détour around the cliffs. We'll just jam a barrel or something in there temporarily. That will keep them out."

"I don't fancy they'll come again," replied Joel. "Too many of us know about it now, and they can't massacre all Broggan. They know the girl is here, though. They may try to get her."

"They won't get her," I said savagely. "They won't get that girl again while I'm alive."

"Eh? So soon?" queried Joel.

"I didn't say anything to make you stare. The girl was shot trying to come and warn me. Isn't that enough to make me want to protect her?"

"Sure."

After we had jammed the fireplace for security I took a look around outside the house, but there was no one there. I returned. The doctor was examining Joel's leg.

"You did very well," he said. "The wound is nothing."

We all lit cigars.

"How is your patient?" I asked.

"She's all right. Wants a little nursing, and I've arranged for Mrs. Bankred to take her home. Mrs. Bankred is the

best nurse in Broggan. Fortunate thing you happened to strike her."

"It was not a happen. She was the only woman in Broggan I knew."

I then repeated the story the girl had told.

"It is a most interesting story, and a straight one," said the old physician. "She is a brave girl. I asked her how she received the wound. It seems she had, just as she told you, been brought here to murder you. Her uncle and the rest of that amiable crowd thought that if she actually committed a murder she would keep her mouth shut. Well, she told them that she had. They were delighted. But, lo! They discovered this evening that you had not been harmed. They were lying offshore, around the point where you could not see the Muriel.

"Her uncle gave her a beating, and was going to put her in irons. She heard at the same time orders for two men to put out in the launch and do the job she had failed to do, before you did them any harm. Being a good swimmer, she leaped into the sea, and one miscreant they call Jim, who wanted to marry her, called to her to come back or he would shoot her.

"She paid no heed, and he did shoot, and she sank for a moment. I suppose the fellow thought she was dead. Well, she swam ashore, but a girl like that can't stand a bullet wound like a man, and though she reached your door she fainted before she could warn you.

"But, thank God, you are safe now. It won't be a difficult matter to seize the Muriel now."

"By Jove! I must attend to that at once," I said.

I rushed from the house, and leaving the doctor to wait for me, I drove at a furious pace to the station at Vaders. Here I telegraphed in all directions to intercept the Muriel and arrest all on board as murderers of William Wratton and David Warson. Then I drove back, and found the man of medicine still there.

"You have a rather unceremonious way of taking your departure," he said; "but you did well. I was going to tell you before you rushed away that I knew something about this smuggling business myself, but we physicians do not disclose secrets confided to us by patients.

"Of course, the tales of the old house being haunted were bosh. They were invented years ago by those engaged in the traffic. They made lights dance at night in the windows, and did everything in order to give flavor to the story.

"The owner of the house, Matika, although he perhaps never actually took part in any of the work, reaped a benefit. Nobody in Broggan knows him. He bought the place from his uncle's estate, and his uncle, like Miss Danella's, was one of the rankest old freebooters and smugglers the world ever saw.

"There's many a cask of Jamaica rum and pound of tobacco been brought up through that old chimney."

"I wonder if this Matika would sell the place," I said. "I rather like it."

"I fancy he would be glad to. It has brought him in no revenue."

"I'll have Jicks write him. By the way — Jicks, being agent, must know something about that chimney."

"No; Jicks knows nothing about the chimney. Nobody in Broggan knows about it. I only guessed it one day when I attended a wounded West Indian. I swore I would never divulge the secret."

We had a pleasant chat. Then I drove the doctor home, and it was daylight.

There was activity on the sea that day. Boats shot out of harbors all along the coast, from Boston to Cape Hatteras. Ferdinand Danella did not have time to change the name of his swift vessel. He did attempt to give battle, knowing there was no hope for him if captured, and was killed by a well-directed shot.

The others surrendered.

The six hundred thousand dollars was found intact in Danella's stateroom, and was at once placed subject to the order of Mrs. Danella, of Nassau. Officers of the law and representatives of newspapers crowded the house, and full statements were made and sworn to.

Kate Danella was removed to Joel's house, where, under the care of Mrs. Bankred, she steadily improved. I spent a great deal of time there after she got well enough to sit on the porch.

We like Broggan pretty well, now, Kate and I, and—but what's the use? I've told all the story you want to hear. The rest is easy.

THE END.

THE CLUE THAT COUNTED.

By FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

A mystery of the Triangle, and the blind alleys into which seeming trails to its solution led

"WELL, mebbe I buy a big order if he sell me cheap."

Schwartz shambled through the open door of the shop, the darkness of which was intensified by the sudden change from the bright sunlight without.

For a moment Schwartz stood just within the threshold of the basement; then, becoming accustomed to the gloom, he cast his eyes around the room in search of the strange man who made his living by selling chocolate and chocolate-beans to the cheap pedlers and candy-makers in the neighborhood.

Chocolate Bill, for that was the only name he was known by, had arrived in the Triangle — so called by the police from the fact that it is a three-sided block—about a year before, and opened his shop with a stock of the commodity that had given him his nickname, which he informed the curious he imported from Mexico.

Business had prospered with him, for it was quickly noised around among those interested that he sold his goods cheaper than any one else in the city. Still, he contented himself with his basement hovel in the slums of New York—the front room serving as the store, while the doorless opening in the rear, hung with a piece of cheap print for a curtain, hid from the view of his customers the little chamber he used as kitchen, sleeping and dining room.

As Schwartz's eyes became accustomed to the semidarkness, he glanced curiously around the room, wondering the while why the Mexican had not appeared in answer to his heavy tread across the creaking floor. Then a strange premonition came over him, and casting his eyes around in an endeavor to pierce the gloom, he called, "Bill! Bill! I want to buy!"

There was no reply. Not a sound penetrated the murky, musty atmosphere.

In a far corner the Jew could discern what he at first glance thought was a pile of rubbish. A new courage seemed to come over him, and with a heavy tread he strode toward it, straining his eyes as he neared the stuff.

Standing over the heap of old rags, upon which he now saw the old Mexican stretched, he emitted a harsh laugh.

"Asleep, are you? A fine man for business."

But the shopkeeper made no response —he seemed to be in a deep slumber.

Schwartz bent over him again.

"I want to buy, Bill." Seizing the Mexican's shoulder roughly, he added: "Mebbe I buy—"

But he proceeded no further. Jumping back as if bitten by a poisonous reptile, he stood for a moment rooted to the spot, then with a scream of fright dashed toward the open doorway.

Tearing wildly through it, he rushed into the arms of a passing policeman, and seizing him in a grip of terror, pointed dumbly toward the room that looked so dark and mysterious from the hot sidewalk.

"Well, wot's bitin' yez?" demanded the policeman roughly.

"In—there!" Schwartz pointed at the door with a long, lean, dirty finger that trembled with alarm.

The hardened officer quickly scented trouble of some description. Facing the fear-stricken pedler, he demanded gruffly: "Wot's in there?"

"Bill—Chocolate—"

But the policeman cut short the teeth-chattering Jew.

"Of course Bill's in there. Wot ails ye? Come wid me, and we'll see wot's wrong in the cellar."

"No—no!" Schwartz begged, as the officer seized his arm firmly. "I see it. He's—dead!"

The officer's jaw dropped for a brief

second, but he quickly regained his composure.

"Bill—dead? Thin ye'll surely come wid me!"

Holding his club threateningly in one hand, his grip tightened upon the other's arm, as he determinedly led the trembling Jew to the threshold, then stooped and rapped loudly upon the sidewalk, a sound well recognized by the inhabitants of the quarter.

It brought cautiously peeping heads from every window in the thickly populated neighborhood, and caused those upon the streets to stop and stare fearfully at the man who had taken this means of summoning aid in the shape of other members of the police force.

II.

THE officer and Schwartz were instantly surrounded by a pushing, jostling crowd of rough-looking men, who formed a circle about them

"Wot's de guy did, Casey?" queried an unknown youth bearing all the earmarks of the typical slum tough.

"Nothin' that interests you, Finn."

Turning quickly, the policeman added to a youngster who had wormed through the gathered crowd: "Git back there! Ivery one of yez git back!"

At that moment the gathering instinctively separated to make a path for the two policemen who, with drawn clubs, were running toward them at top speed to the aid of the officer who still held Schwartz, now at any moment liable to collapse with fright upon the sidewalk.

"What's up, Casey?" breathlessly queried one of the newly arrived policemen.

"Don't know yet, but I'll soon find out," was the reply. "Hang onto this!"

He pushed Schwartz roughly into the other's arms. "Follow me into the cellar," he added.

The three officers headed toward the door of the Mexican's hovel, the crowd parting to make room for them; and as they disappeared within the gloom of the basement, forming themselves into a solid mass around the door, those nearest it peered curiously into the shop.

With Casey in the lead, the policemen strode to the center of the ill-smelling room, the one who had Schwartz in custody being forced to push the terror-stricken man before him.

"Where's Bill?" Casey demanded, facing the trembling Jew.

"Over—there!" was the almost inaudible response.

Following the direction indicated, Casey walked to the farthest corner, and after bending over the dead Mexican, quickly arose and walked hurriedly back to the spot where the other officers and their prisoner had remained.

"Git the wagon, Tom," he ordered. "I guess this Jew may know somethin' worth while. Chocolate Bill is dead!"

"Do you think he's been murdered?" was the calm query of the officer who held Schwartz.

"Dunno. But we'll take this fellow along till we do."

The policeman addressed as Tom had already wedged his way through the crowd that now formed a solid mass, reaching from the door to the curb; and hurrying to the nearest police-box, hastily sent in a summons for the patrol-wagon.

With tears in his eyes, and a face from which all color had fled, Schwartz questioned brokenly: "I ain't—done nothin'. You ain't goin' to arrest me, are you?"

"Oh, ye'll git a bit of attintion, all right," Casey answered coolly.

Stepping to the corner of the room again, he bent over the dead Mexican and struck match after match as he studied the man who looked as if sleeping, so natural was the position in which he lay.

When he again straightened up and slowly advanced to the side of the other policeman, there was a grim deepening of the lines about Casey's mouth.

"Another case for us, Frank," he announced briefly. "Another mystery of the Triangle."

At that moment the clang of the patrol-wagon announced its arrival, and the policeman who had summoned it made a passage through the steadily increasing gathering as the other two officers half led, half pushed Schwartz toward the conveyance and helped him in.

As the driver started the horses, Casey

swung off the step to take up his duty of watching the place until the arrival of the coroner.

As the wagon moved off, Schwartz uttered a piercing cry of despair; and burying his face in his hands, moaned: "I ain't arrested! I ain't—done nothin'!"

III.

It was only a few hours later when Howard, the detective who had been placed upon the case, arrived at the shop of the murdered Mexican. The body had been removed a short time before, and was now at the morgue, awaiting a claimant.

It had required no detailed autopsy to decide the cause of the man's sudden death. The hasty examination by the coroner had revealed what Casey had already found—deep finger-prints upon the man's throat, proving conclusively that an iron grip had suddenly fastened around the Mexican's windpipe, stilling any possibility of a call for help and quickly cutting off the supply of air, without which no man can live.

Schwartz had been taken to the nearest police station; and after a quizzing by the sergeant, which resulted in nothing new—the Jew steadily maintaining that he had gone to the shop to purchase a supply of chocolate and found the shopkeeper dead upon the floor—he was hurried to the magistrate's court for arraignment and remanded to jail without bail to await the outcome of the detective's attempt to solve the mystery.

"It's glad to see ye, I am!" exclaimed Casey, as the detective pushed through the people who crowded close to the door of the shop.

The news of the murder had traveled like wildfire through the district, bringing the curious to gape in at the open door. "It's a nasty joint to hev to spind much time in."

"So you're here on the job, eh?" was the detective's response.

"Yis, and durned glad I'll be whin I'm off it," Casey declared. "Whin ye take charge of the case, that lets me out."

"Come away from the door and tell me all you know. First see if there's a key. If there is, shut and lock the door."

The policeman did as directed, then followed the detective to the barrels and boxes that formed a counter at the rear of the room.

The details, as far as the officer knew them, were quickly imparted to Howard, at the conclusion of which he made a hasty examination of the place with the aid of a dark-lantern, watched closely by Casey.

Glancing hurriedly into corners and finding nothing to which he attached any importance, he strode into the little room at the rear.

"Know anybody that would know this Mexican's name, or where he is from?" Howard suddenly demanded, facing the policeman.

"Sure, I niver heard he had any other name but Chocolate Bill."

A grunt was the detective's comment, and he continued his investigation. But nothing was in sight except dirt, rags, and refuse.

"The demised was not overly clean," Howard muttered, kicking at a pile of old papers heaped in one corner.

"Wot can ye expect of a dirty greaser?" Casey remarked.

"Only dirt, it seems. Hallo, here's a letter!"

Howard leaned over, and picking it up, glanced at the paper with the aid of his lantern.

"Can you read Spanish, Casey?" he queried, a twinkle in his eye the policeman could not see.

"Ye know very well I can't," came the reply in injured tones.

"Hallo, here's another! Spanich, too, and the same handwriting. Perhaps they are clues—and perhaps not. At any rate, they seem all we shall unearth at present."

Stepping toward the outer room, Casey following closely at his heels, he added: "I'm going to find out what these contain first. I'll make a closer examination later. Come on, we'll lock the place up. I'll take care of the key. So far, there isn't much to work on."

IV.

A short car ride brought the detective to police headquarters. With the aid of an interpreter, the letters were

soon translated, and revealed the correct name of the murdered man as Manuel Castro. They were from his father and couched in endearing terms, both acknowledging the receipt of fifty dollars and hoping for the continuation of the son's success in business.

The result was a telegram despatched to the police of the town from which the letter was posted, asking for information of one Manuel Castro and any details regarding him that could be learned, and also informing them of his sudden death.

While awaiting the reply, Howard busied himself upon other matters that demanded his attention, expelling from his mind temporarily the case that to him meant little more than the ridding of the world of an unnecessary character.

But the telegram that awaited Howard upon his arrival at headquarters the following morning caused him to open his eyes in astonishment, and to read it a second time, then hasten to his chief for a brief consultation.

As he entered the room, he extended the telegram to the man behind the desk, who glanced up inquiringly from the papers he was perusing.

"Well, Howard?" His tone betrayed a trace of impatience.

"Here's the answer we wired for to Mexico yesterday in reference to that murder in the Triangle, sir," the detective said, holding out the telegram.

Without a word, the chief took it and read aloud in a low tone:

> "Manuel Castro well known here. Is very wealthy man. Sends fifty dollars month to invalid brother. Is big dealer in chocolate beans. New York address, 53 East Jersey Street."

The chief's brow was deeply knit as he looked up into the detective's face; but for a moment he did not speak, apparently lost in thought.

"Any traces of opulence around his place?" he queried at length.

"Not unless dirt and rubbish constitute it, sir," Howard laughed.

"Very wealthy man," the chief repeated, glancing at the telegram. "These foreigner's ideas of wealth are sometimes amusing."

Then he added quickly: "But he may be a miser. Still, his sending fifty dollars a month to Mexico would be a strange proceeding for a miser. I think —yes, Howard, you go there and make a thorough search. Thorough, mind you! Hunt for loose boards or hiding-places in the walls. Then report to me."

Howard bowed and left the room, a feeling of distaste uppermost in his mind at the task before him.

He gathered in a brother detective, and the two made their way to the Mexican's place, and then began a systematic hunt for anything that might prove a clue.

The task proved an unpleasant one, and more than once the two men railed at their misfortune in being put on a case that seemed so hopeless, and, in addition, such a dirty one.

Bag after bag of chocolate-beans were moved from one part of the room and piled one upon the other in a corner that had first been carefully inspected. But not a clue of any description was unearthed.

Howard then fell to pawing over the pile of rags upon which the murdered man had been found, while the other carefully inspected the contents of a heap of papers in another corner.

"Wonder if this means anything?" Howard exclaimed, holding up in the glare of his lantern a dirty, frayed cuff. "Here's one — six — one — scrawled on this rag."

"Don't know," was the response, "but this surely does."

Howard glanced questioningly at the other and saw he was directing the rays of his lantern upon a piece of paper.

"What is it?" and Howard hurried over.

"A receipt for one hundred and forty dollars paid to M. Castro, and which M. Castro evidently forgot to sign and return."

"Well, this is something, anyway. If we find nothing else, this may help us. Henry Krauser — 180 South Eleventh Avenue, eh? Well, Mr. Krauser will soon hear from us. I'll take charge of this."

Holding out the soiled cuff, Howard added: "And this—one-six-one—may be a telephone number. We'll finish

our search, and then work upon these two clues. Perhaps—say, Jim, our business is strange sometimes—we never know what the smallest thing may lead to, eh?"

V.

HOWARD paused for a moment, gazing up at the large gilt sign upon the windows of the second floor.

"Krauser, importer of laces," he muttered aloud, then entered the building; and walking up one flight of stairs, opened the door of the establishment, to find himself in a well-furnished, up-to-date shop of the better class.

A short, pompous man approached him with the affable greeting: "Good morning, sir."

"Good morning," Howard replied, taking in the room with one sweep of his eyes. "I wish to see Mr. Krauser."

The face of the other hardened for an instant—his first thought had been that his caller was a buyer—as he replied: "I am Mr. Krauser."

The officer was a man who did not believe in formalities, so he jumped directly into his subject.

"I called to see you regarding a certain Mexican, Manuel Castro by name. Are you acquainted with him?"

"Yes, in a busines way," was the reply. "I have bought goods in small quantities from him. But why do you ask?"

For answer, Howard displayed his shield.

"Why, has he got into trouble?" Krauser inquired, almost fearfully.

"It seems he did; but whatever it was, it is ended now," the detective answered. "In fact, the Mexican is dead."

"Dead!" the other repeated in surprise.

"To be more exact, he was murdered—yesterday morning." Howard's tone was calm, almost cold.

"Murdered!" the lace dealer exclaimed in alarm. "Why—why, this is terrible! Why—only a few days ago—let me see, it was last week, I bought quite a supply of drawn work from him. He had the best grade of that work I have ever been able to find."

"But it isn't the quality of his laces that I came to inquire about," Howard interrupted impatiently—the excitement of the other annoyed him. "I want to learn all I can about him. What do *you* know?"

"But surely you do not connect me in any way with this awful deed?" Krauser queried in alarm. "Why, I have never even been to his place of business, which I understand is located in a vile part of the city. Tell me—why am I brought into the case? It will ruin me—"

"This is how I learned of you," Howard broke in, holding out the paper he had found only a short time before.

The lace dealer took it in his trembling hands, read it, and then observed: "The receipt for the last lot of goods I purchased from him. I sent it by messenger with the money. But he did not sign it, saying he would send the receipt later. And he is dead—it is terrible!"

The detective was fast losing his patience; and as he took the paper again, he broke in with a plainly audible trace of annoyance in his tone: "The details I care nothing for, sir. Tell me, in as few words as possible, what you know of this man."

Krauser was quickly calmed by the authoritative manner of the other.

"Really, I know so little—"

"In the first place, was he a man of wealth?"

"Oh, I hardly think so," was the quick response. "In fact, I think he was a very poor man, from different things he told me. He said he had to sell his goods so cheaply that there was hardly any profit in it at all. And he also told me he had an invalid brother in Mexico whom he supported."

"Then, you would not consider him a miser?"

"Oh, no, not at all. He seemed too well educated to stoop as low as that. I could never understand the man. He was well read upon all the topics of the day, spoke English and French as fluently as his own tongue, yet was—well, dirty beyond description. And the hovel he lived in I understand—"

"I *know* all about that," interrupted Howard. "When did you last see him?"

"About a week ago. He brought me a splendid line of new laces that he had just received from his native town. Here are some of them."

Krauser stepped toward the other end of the shop, but the detective's quick remark halted him.

"I care nothing about them. Did you see him after that time?"

"No, I did not. I hadn't enough cash in the store to pay him—he would not take a check, you know—"

The detective's eyes lighted up.

"He would not take a check, you say?"

"Oh, no; only cash for him, so I told him I would send the money the next day. But I forgot it entirely, until he called me on the telephone—"

"Oh, so he is familiar with the use of the instrument."

Howard's brow was knit in deep thought as he instinctively felt in his pocket for the dirty cuff that he hoped would prove a clue of some description.

"Yes, he seemed to be. In fact, he had called me a number of times upon different matters. As I said before, he called me, saying he had not received the money as I had promised, and asked if I couldn't send it right away, as he needed it very much. I said I would, and despatched my boy with it. He returned without the receipt, saying that Castro took the money and thrust it into his pocket; then turned again to the two men who were in the room with him. My boy waited, and then he asked for the receipt; but Castro said he would send it. And now *you* have it."

"There is nothing more?" the detective queried, a far-away look in his eyes.

"No, sir; nothing."

"I think I will see this boy of yours," Howard said. "Where is he?"

"I do not know—in fact, I haven't the slightest idea. I discharged him last Saturday."

"But you have his address, surely?"

"No, I have not," Krauser replied slowly. "He came in one day looking for work; and as I needed a boy, I hired him."

"And you trusted a boy you didn't know with one hundred and forty dollars in cash to deliver to this Castro?"

The officer's tone showed plainly his surprise at such a proceeding.

"Yes—but I did not tell him the contents of the envelope. Besides, he may be in any day. I told him to call again in a week or so, as business might pick up, and I would then take him on again. I only discharged him because I had nothing for him to do."

Howard's face showed plainly that the entire case was being rapidly revolved in his mind, and the other forebore breaking in upon his train of thought. Suddenly the detective looked up and, reaching in his pocket, took out a card, which he extended to Krauser.

"If the boy shows up again, hold him on some pretext or other and communicate with me instantly," he said. "If I do not hear from you by—well, I'll call again soon."

Without another word, he turned toward the door. As he opened it, the lace dealer queried anxiously: "Will my name be connected with this awful affair?"

"No, not in any way," was the reply, as Howard made his way down-stairs.

Once again upon the street, he paused and, glancing up toward the windows of the lace shop, murmured under his breath: "I wonder if the boy—no, I don't think he would be able to identify the men he saw at the Mexican's. I guess the next move is the cuff."

He felt in his pocket to make certain he had it.

"The greaser apparently was accustomed to use the telephone. I'll follow that number along these lines."

With a look of determination upon his face, he walked rapidly down the street.

VI.

HOWARD returned to headquarters, where he learned that a telegram had been received from the Mexican authorities, asking the police to hold Castro's body for further instructions as to the forwarding of same. He also learned that a coroner's inquest upon the case would be held the following day; and that Schwartz, although loudly and tearfully proclaiming his innocence in tones and wails that penetrated every cell in the jail, was still held in durance vile.

As he was about to follow up the clue of the number scrawled upon the cuff, an officer stepped up to him and, tapping him on the shoulder, said: "The chief wants to see you."

Howard went directly to his superior's office, and was greeted with the question: "Anything new on the Triangle case?"

"Nothing definite, sir. I found two clues, but have not been able to run them down yet. They—"

"Well, tell me about them after you have run them down. I'm too busy at present with facts to go into possibilities. I just thought I would tell you that when this Jew was searched, they found something like a hundred and thirty-four dollars on him."

"Then, I guess, we had better hold him for sure," the detective broke out triumphantly.

"Why, what's new?" was the query of the other.

"Only this, sir. I learned a short while ago that the Mexican, Castro, received one hundred and forty dollars a few days ago in payment for some laces he sold. And this poor, poverty-stricken Jew having a sum so near it upon his person, may mean something."

"Yes, it might."

"At any rate, I shall follow that up as rapidly as possible, and will let you know later."

A nod of approval from the chief announced that he considered the interview at an end, and Howard quickly withdrew.

It was but the work of a moment to communicate with the coroner's office to find the hour set for the inquest upon the Mexican's body; and making a mental note of it. the detective hurried to the offices of the telephone company, determined to get a list of every telephone line in the city that had one-six-one as a designation. As there were over thirty branch offices in town, he realized he had quite a task before him.

Reaching the main office, some difficulty was encountered before he arrived at the department authorized to give the information he desired; but at length he was directed correctly, and, with pencil and note-book, busied himself taking down the names as given him.

At the conclusion of his task he thanked the clerk and walked out, realizing that, while the work before him was not of a difficult character, it would undoubtedly be lengthy in the extreme.

Hurrying back to headquarters, feverish to begin upon the job, Howard carefully studied each name he had written down. His first thought—and hope—was that one of them would be Mexican.

But, strange to say, every name seemed distinctly American—there was not one among the entire thirty odd that even sounded foreign.

"I guess I'll have to take the whole bunch in rotation and hope for luck," Howard told himself, "and in that way I surely cannot miss any. But I fear my chances of success are small. It does not stand to reason that every one in an office knows of the friends—or acquaintances—of every one else in that office."

Continuing to stare intently at the list before him, he suddenly exclaimed:

"A detective agency, eh? Mr. Franklin Hayes, Detective Agency!"

A smile broke over Howard's face.

"I guess I'll make that the first one, although I waste time in calling up old Frank Hayes. I know his prices, and his rates are the highest in the city. Oh, well, I'll soon cut him off the list."

Picking up the telephone, he called impatiently: "One-six-one—Main."

For a moment he continued his steady gaze at the names he had noted in his memorandum-book, when a voice at the other end broke into his thoughts.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Hayes Detective Agency?"

"Yes, sir," came the reply over the wire.

"Is Mr. Hayes there?"

"I'll see, sir. Who is this?"

"Howard—Central office."

"Just a moment, sir."

"Waste time," the officer grumbled aloud as he waited impatiently for the voice of the man he was calling.

"Hallo, Howard, what's on your mind?" broke in upon the detective suddenly.

"I only want to ask you if you ever heard of a Mexican named Castro, and whom I want to locate."

For a full moment no reply came;

then he nearly sprang out of his chair in his excitement as the voice at the other end of the wire announced: "I know of such a party, yes. But what's wrong with him?"

"You know him?" Howard demanded eagerly.

"I think so. But come up, and I'll see you. I don't like to talk over the wire."

"I'll be there as quickly as a street-car will carry me. Good-by!"

Dropping the instrument, Howard seized his hat and dashed out of the building. As he stood upon the street corner awaiting a car, he asked himself: "Now, what the devil has that greaser had to do with Frank Hayes?"

The trip to the office of the detective agency seemed unnecessarily long; but he was finally ushered into the presence of the man who had been so strangely connected with the Triangle mystery.

After an exchange of greetings, Howard asked: "So you have had dealings with Manuel Castro? I mean the one who lived in the Triangle."

"Yes, that's the man, I guess," was the reply. "Not very choice neighborhood, eh?"

"You know, of course, that he was murdered—"

"Murdered!" Hayes looked at the other as if unable to believe the announcement he had just heard.

"Yes, he was found yesterday morning in his shop, strangled. I haven't seen anything of it in the papers, so guess they have not got hold of it yet."

"Murdered yesterday morning!" Hayes repeated, as if in deep thought. "Then that explains everything."

It was Howard's turn to repeat: "Explains everything! What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you, and you can judge for yourself. This fellow Castro, whom I have never seen, called me on the telephone some weeks ago and inquired if I would undertake to find a certain person for him. I replied that that was a branch of my business; and he explained that he was most desirous of locating a fellow named Porter, who had formerly been a sergeant in the United States army and had seen years of service on the Texas border.

"As he could give me no clues at all, I informed him that the cost might be more than he would care to pay. I plainly heard him laugh; then he told me to go ahead, regardless of expense, and asked how much I wanted as advance payment. I said one thousand dollars, and he promptly told me it would reach me in the morning, together with the details he had given me over the phone."

"And he sent it?" Howard demanded, unable to give full credit to the story he had just heard.

"Yes, the next morning brought a package by express; and upon opening it, I found it contained exactly one thousand dollars and a letter requesting me to call for more when needed."

"Then he did have money!" Howard exclaimed. "He was a miser!"

"As to that I know nothing. But I do know that after much search we located Mrs. Porter, the man's mother, and she gave us her son's address. He is out of the army and living in Arizona, where he has accumulated quite some wealth. His mother thought he was mining out there."

"What do you suppose there was about this soldier that would be of interest to the Mexican?"

Howard's tone was proof that he, for the moment, was all at sea and floundering around, endeavoring to grasp some scrap of evidence upon which to rest.

"As to that I cannot say. But I have something more to tell. Two days ago Castro called me on the phone—that and writing have been his only means of communication with me—and asked me to hurry my search. I informed him that I had completed it, and the papers would be ready that afternoon, if he would call for them. I'll admit I was curious to see this strange man."

"And he came?" Howard broke in.

"Not at all. He asked me to send them to him, saying he could not leave his place, as every movement he made was watched. I thought this strange, but the questions I asked failed to bring out anything further. Consequently, I mailed the documents to him night before last."

"I—I—" Howard exclaimed in confusion. "It's a tangled case, isn't it?"

"Rather," was the cool reply, as the other man smiled grimly.

"I think I'll make another search and see if those papers cannot be found in his place. If not—Heavens, that gives two motives—the papers and robbery. Because I now feel certain this Castro had money."

"It appeared so to me, the way he handed it out."

"If I cannot locate the papers you sent him, you have duplicate copies, of course?"

"Yes, and they are at your disposal."

"Thank you; but before I call for them, I'll try to find the originals." Howard had already risen from his chair, anxious to get at the work that increased in mystery at every turn he made.

"I am interested to know of your progress. Let me hear of your success."

"I will, indeed. Good day."

As Howard closed the door behind him, his brain was in a muddle. Events had taken such sudden and unexpected turns that for a moment he was at a loss just what step to take.

Walking along the street, he gave full vent to his feelings.

"I'll tear that old den inside out to uncover those Hayes papers. If I can't find them—well, that's another motive for the crime."

VII.

THE remainder of the day Howard spent in a minute search of the two rooms that constituted the murdered Mexican's store and dwelling. But there seemed nothing in sight but dirt.

Completely discouraged by the failure, he made direct for the agency to secure copies of the papers that now seemed to play an important part in the rapidly deepening mystery.

Hayes promptly handed over the documents and the officer headed for police headquarters, where be carefully read the details of the search for the ex-soldier, and for which Castro had willingly paid a large sum of money.

At length he left the office; and going to his home, endeavored to shake off the feeling of depression that had secured so firm a hold upon him, as he realized the slight chances he had of unraveling the case that gathered tangles hourly.

The question that surged through his brain continuously was: "Why was Castro so anxious to find Porter?" But cogitate as he might, there was no reply forthcoming, so he retired at an early hour, to secure the rest he needed to be fresh and alert on the morrow.

The next day at headquarters he and the chief were closeted for some time, going over in detail every point of the case. The outcome was that immediately after tbe coroner's jury adjourned Howard was to take the first train West, locate this ex-soldier, and find out all he could from that quarter.

"You know your game, Howard," the chief remarked. "I don't need to tell you how to proceed. Get back as quickly as possible. I'll see that this Jew is held until we are certain of his innocence."

The detective left his superior officer, feeling in a brighter mood tban he had for some hours; and shortly afterward he was at the coroner's inquest, relating in detail all he knew of the case. The result was that Schwartz was led back to jail, tearing his hair and beating his breast and calling wildly for the gods to intervene and prove his innocence.

A hurried trip to his home was Howard's next move to pack his bag, and an hour later found him comfortably seated in an overland train, bound for Arizona. The long, tiresome trip was at last over, and with a feeling of relief he stepped from the train and walked along the rough platform toward the station at the other end.

A glance in the direction of the town showed rows and rows of single, unpainted, one-story buildings grouped indiscriminately, behind which stretched the level prairie, ending at the base of the mountains plainly discernible in the distance.

Approaching the station, Howard faced the rough, unkempt men who were gazing curiously at him. He walked up to them and, in his most devil-may-care tone, queried: "Any of you men know a fellow here by the name of Porter?"

For a moment no one replied; tben a heavily bearded man advanced a step or two and, after staring critically at the man before him, answered the question with an inquiry of his own:

"Wot's he look like?"

"Never saw him myself," Howard replied quickly. "Only know his name."

"Wal, stranger, folks round here ain't overly much on names, ye know. Leastwise, in this town they ain't."

"Well, I'll stay around a few days," the detective remarked. "Perhaps I'll find him. What's the best hotel in town?"

"The best!" the spokesman retorted. "They ain't no best here, stranger. They're *all* good."

"I see." The detective was a trifle taken back at the sudden reply. "Well, I hope I'll see you boys again before I leave."

With a pleasant nod, Howard turned toward the scattered buildings, and seeing a sign before him that proclaimed the structure upon which it was fastened to be a hotel, he headed directly for it.

As he entered, he was pleased to note that the interior was cleaner than the exterior; and approaching the barkeeper—the barroom also served as an office—he announced: "I'm going to be in town for a few days. Can I secure accommodations here?"

"Sure, and the best in Uncas, which is sayin' a good deal. Just wait a moment till the boss returns, and he'll show ye to a room. I don't dare leave the bar alone. If I did, some one would like as not come in and walk off with it, room and all. Have somethin'?"

"Thanks, I don't mind."

Howard had all he could do to prevent his face betraying the effects the drink had upon his system. To him it seemed little more than rank poison. It was whisky of the cheapest kind, and yet ranked as first-class stuff in that town.

"Stranger here, ain't ye?" the barkeeper queried, smacking his lips as he gulped down the large portion he had poured out for himself.

"Yes," the detective replied, swallowing hard in an effort to wash down the vile liquor that seemed to contract the cords of his throat. "Am on my way to the coast and stopped off here to see an old friend, who lived here the last I heard of him. Porter's his name. Do you know him? I believe he is quite a wealthy miner."

"Don't know any miner by that name. In fact, never heard the name here that I kin remember."

The detective's face fell, and he could not conceal his disappointment at this second blow to his hopes.

"That's strange. I thought every one here would know him."

"Guess you'll find he's picked up a new name since he landed here, stranger. Most all of 'em do, ye know."

"Is that so?"

"Yes," was the drawled response.

For a moment neither spoke, then the barkeeper broke the silence:

"Now, come to think of it, ye're the second person what's been inquirin' 'bout that name."

Howard was instantly all attention.

"Yes," the other continued thoughtfully, "I'm sure that was the name; but I wouldn't be so certain, either. Leastwise, it runs in my mind it was Porter."

"And did he find him?" the officer queried anxiously.

"Yes, I b'lieve the old general was the man he was looking for, as I remember hearin' one of the boys remark. But bein' as the fellow what was lookin' for him was a greaser, none of the boys was particular 'bout minglin' with him."

Howard could not speak for a moment. Discoveries were coming in such rapid succession, he feared he would lose one before he had properly grasped it.

"You say it was a greaser who was looking for him?"

"Sure, and a darned ugly lookin' cuss he was, too."

"But this man you call General—"

"I believe they call him that because he was in the army once. That's the only name he's known by round here. He lives in a hut at the end of the street with a half-breed woman what he married. But he ain't been sober for near a month, I guess. Drunk all the time, and imagines he's a general of a large army. It's funny to see him when he gets carryin' on."

"I wonder if he's at home now?" Howard questioned.

"Shouldn't wonder if he was, 'cause he went out in that direction only 'bout half an hour ago."

"I'll just take a stroll out that way.

I'll leave my bag here and be back presently. Which house is it, and how do I get to it?"

"Jest keep goin' to the end of this street and ask anybody there where the general lives. They all know him."

"All right, I'll try to find him."

Taking from his pocket a handful of cigars, the detective threw them upon the bar.

"Have some smokes?"

"Don't mind if I do."

Howard stepped to the open door and pointed up the street.

"This way, eh?"

"Yes, straight ahead. I'll mind your bag till you git back."

VIII.

HOWARD picked his way carefully along the dirty, dusty highway that served as a street, glancing interestedly from one side to the other at the huts and shanties that lined it.

The detective was thankful the town did not cover any more area than it did; and as the open lots between the buildings became more frequent, a look ahead showed him the one he sought.

As he neared it, a huge, half-starved dog ambled out toward him. The officer mopped his face with his handkerchief and patted the dog's head as he mused: "Doesn't look like my idea of what a wealthy miner's habitation should be."

With the dog at his heels, sniffing suspiciously, he walked determinedly to the open door of the shack and rapped noisily upon it. An unkempt woman answered the summons.

"Is the general at home?" Howard queried.

"Yes, he is," the woman snapped. "Do ye want to see him?"

"If you please," the detective returned in his most affable tone.

Without another word, the woman disappeared within the hut again, and after a brief wait, shuffling footsteps announced the approach of the man the officer had come so many miles to interview.

As he came in sight, Howard felt certain that, just at the moment when success seemed at hand, failure had come instead. Because this dirty, shiftless looking fellow surely was not the man he wished to find. But he quickly threw off his disappointment.

"How do you do, general?" was his pleasant greeting.

"Wal, what do ye want?" was the snarled inquiry.

"I want to talk to you a moment."

Howard pretended not to notice the other's disagreeable manner. Drawing a cigar from his pocket, he extended it calmly.

"Will you smoke?"

For a moment the man gazed at the detective steadily with his beady eyes, then almost snatched the cigar from his hand. Howard lit one himself; and then, as he blew a cloud of smoke into the air, observed: "You never saw service on the Texas border, did you?"

The little beady eyes into which the visitor stared so unwaveringly dropped, and then came the retort: "Mebbe I did—and mebbe I didn't."

The detective realized that to gain the information desired he must be diplomatic; so, not appearing to notice the answer, he went on: "I am trying to locate a fellow who spent considerable time there. His name is Porter."

The other gave a visible start.

"Say, stranger," he began in a more pleasant tone, "ye ain't a greaser, are ye?"

"Good Heavens, man, do I look like one?" Howard laughed.

"No, ye don't."

"Then why do you ask?"

"Oh — because I thought ye might be." Then he added quickly: "Everybody down here is suspicious of greasers."

The detective smiled reassuringly.

"You say this feller yer lookin' for is named Porter? What's his first name?"

"Let — me — see." Howard was caught this time, as he did not remember having heard it. "I cannot recall it just at the moment, but I understand he is a wealthy miner in this town."

The other sniffed harshly.

"If you kin find a wealthy person in this whole layout, miner or anything else, you'll do more'n even the natives here kin do."

A grim laugh followed, but was cut

short by a look of suspicion, as the man added: "Who told ye he was a wealthy miner?"

"His mother," Howard responded. "She—"

But he was cut short by the actions of the man, who nervously seized his arm as he entreated: "Tell me, stranger, have ye seen her? How is she?"

Before the detective could reply, a harsh female voice called from within the cabin: "General! Come here!"

The man glanced around fearfully for a second; then his hands dropped to his side, and he slunk sheepishly within the cabin without a word, leaving Howard standing on the doorstep, gazing wonderingly after him.

For some moments the detective waited for his return, unable to account for the sudden action; then he heard some one walking toward him. At that moment the woman whom he had first encountered, and whom he surmised was the general's wife, appeared in the doorway.

"The general says he don't know no one by the name of Porter, and that ends it," she snapped decisively.

IX.

HOWARD was so taken aback by the unexpected closing of his interview that for a moment he did not reply, but stared wonderingly at the woman before him, undecided just what to do.

"But I wish to talk some more with your husband, madam," he remarked. "We have not finished our conversation."

"I finished it for ye, strauger," she asserted threateningly. "If ye know when ye're well off, ye'll git."

"But I—"

"Carlo!" the woman called.

At the sound of his name, the huge brute leaped to his feet, and with a bound was at her side. "If I say the word, this dog'll muss ye some. Are ye goin'?"

Howard realized he was in a tight place, but knew, too, that if he gave in now the chances were that his trip would end in utter failure. These thoughts flashed through his mind in less than a second, aud in less than another he had whipped out his revolver and had it leveled at the dog's head.

Without taking his eyes from the animal, he remarked coolly: "If you speak to him, he's a goner."

At that instant the general's voice was heard, as he roughly commauded: "Git out of my way! I'm goin' to be a man again."

Howard looked up to see the general push his wife aside.

"Git out of here, Carlo! Come, stranger, let's take a walk. Put up yer gun—they're bad things to flash in this country, and have been the cause of a certain depopulation of the town. Yer American, and so am I. Come."

Following his lead and unable to fathom the new turn of events, the detective accompanied the man as they slowly walked out toward the open prairie. But Howard was suspicious; and, instead of replacing his revolver on his hip, put it in the side-pocket of his coat, keeping his hand on the trigger, so that at the first sign of trouble he could shoot through the garment.

As they approached a little grassy knoll, the general said slowly: "Let's sit down here—and talk."

He threw himself full length upon the grass, and Howard seated himself beside him, but for a moment neither spoke.

Suddenly the general sat up, a peculiar expression stamped on his face.

"Stranger, I'm Porter!" was the announcement that almost startled the detective, so abrupt and unexpected was it.

Before he could reply the other went on hoarsely: "And I'm tired of this life—tired of bein' a dog—I want to be a man. And what's more, I'm *goin'* to be. I say, I'm *goin'* to be!"

Howard noted the fierce look in the man's eyes, but refrained from speaking, thinking it better to let him tell his story in his own way:

"Seems a lifetime to me since I came out to this country that God forgot centuries ago. But I'm goin' back now. She's always talked it out of me before; but now I'm goin', an' if she don't want to come, she can stay."

His voice softened, as he continued: "She's got Injun blood in her veins, and can't see nothin' 'cept the West; but I'm an Easterner, and when ye spoke of havin' seen my poor old mother— Well, I jest made up my mind then and there,

and to the devil with that greaser's money. I'll take no more of it."

"That greaser's money?" Howard repeated.

"Yes, for six years he's bought me; but he can't do it no more. There's a payment due in a few days, but he'll git it back. I'm through with him!"

The officer could hardly contain himself, so wild was his curiosity to question. He felt certain this man held the solution to the Castro murder, just in what way he could not decide.

But he feared to question, realizing that the other would tell more if allowed to go his own gait.

A smile spread over Porter's hardened face.

"Yes, I'll see my old mother in a few days. I can't hardly realize it, stranger. Many and many a night I've dreamed about it—seen her sittin' in her old chair readin', just as she used to when I was a young feller and livin' home—that was before I joined the army—and then she'd look over her glasses at me for a moment and smile; and then come across to me and place her dear old arms round my neck and tell me just what a comfort I was to her in her old age."

He paused a moment; then his face hardened again, and he angrily broke out: "But it was only a dream, and I realized I was as far away from her as I ever was."

His head sank upon his chest for a moment, Howard counting the seconds before he would speak of the mystery that he hoped would soon be unraveled. Suddenly Porter sat up erect.

"Stranger, have ye seen my mother?"

"No, I have not, I am sorry to say," was the quick response.

"Then ye don't know her, do ye? I wonder how she is."

His face took on a thoughtful look.

"I wonder if she's aged much. She—" He paused and questioned in a suspicious voice: "Look here, ye ain't told me who *you* are."

"Me? Oh, my name is Howard." The detective pressed his finger lightly upon the trigger of the revolver that was concealed in his pocket, fearing some outbreak as he announced calmly: "Officer Howard, of the detective bureau of New York City."

Porter's face broke into a smile.

"I dunno what ye want me for, but I'm yer willin' prisoner. Take me back to New York as quick as ye want to—the sooner the better. I'd sooner go back there dead than remain here any longer alive."

"But I am not here to arrest you," Howard quickly corrected him. "I only want some information that I think, perhaps, you can give me."

"If it's about Estario, you can get it from me, all right," the other announced. "But, honest, I'm sorry ye don't want to arrest me and take me back. Stranger, I'm sure disappointed."

"But who is this Estario?" queried the detective almost fearfully, scenting some new complication in the name that was distinctly Mexican.

"Him!" An oath escaped through Porter's gritted teeth. "He's the greaser that's kept me in this sun-baked, whisky-flooded country till I almost forgot there was civilized cities east of them mount'ins yonder."

X.

For some moments Howard refrained from breaking the reverie into which Porter had fallen. At length he repeated: "Who is this Estario you spoke of?"

The other raised his head slowly.

"Ye know who I thought ye was when ye first came? I thought ye was one of his agents. There was one snoopin' round a few weeks ago to see, I suppose, if I still looked healthy. How that man would like to see me kick the bucket, 'cause then I'd take his secret with me! They's an old sayin', 'Dead men tell no tales,' and I suppose that's what he's always thinkin' when he thinks of me."

"But this secret—"

"Is jest what I'm goin' to tell ye. I kin do so now and not be dishonorable. Ye see, he pays me in advance to keep my mouth shut; and as his last quarter's payment is 'bout up, I kin tell ye and not be betrayin' any trust. 'Cause he'll git his next payment back by the following mail."

"You can trust me, I assure you."

Porter ruefully threw away the stump of the cigar he had so much enjoyed.

"Ye haven't got another round, have ye?" he asked half hesitatingly.

"I surely have," Howard replied quickly, and fumbling in his pocket, drew out a good one and handed it to Porter, who bit off the end, and striking a match, was soon blowing clouds of smoke into the air.

"It's six years since I smoked auything as good as this. We don't git 'em like this out here."

He settled back comfortably upon the grass.

"'Bout six years ago," he went on, "jest before my term of enlistment in the army expired—and I had served three terms—a greaser came to me one day and asked me if I'd like to make enough money to always live in comfort, without working a stroke. I was gettin' tired of army life in that wild country, where any moment ye're liable to get shot up by Injuns or greasers, and they're both bad when they git a goin'. Naturally, I was open to any suggestions comin' my way. If you had been there, ye could understand my feelin's better."

"I think I can realize them," Howard remarked, feverish for what was to come.

"No, ye can't—ye got to be there and go through the life 'fore ye can," Porter asserted positively. "But about this greaser—I'll cut out all the details and get down to the actual facts. This Estario was a power in the Mexican government, and a man worth barrels of money. Well, he had doue something the others in the government didn't like—durned if I know what it was—and they clapped him into jail.

"Jail life wasn't exactly to his likin'; so he, havin' plenty of money, got some men together and they formed a band to help him escape from prison, and wanted me to get him across the border and into the States. Well, I did, curses upon the white-livered cuss!"

"Why?" Howard regretted having spoken, the moment the words had escaped his lips.

"Why!" Porter almost shrieked. "Because it leaked out soon after that I had sneaked some worthless greaser across the line, and there wasn't no place in the army for me after tbat. When my time was up I was mighty glad to sneak out of the barracks. I couldn't do notbin' but come out here, as he had told me to, 'cause the only thing I knew about was army life, and I was done with that. That fiend went to New York, and I suppose is there yet. Leastwise, I get my money in an envelope that is mailed there. But I get no more. I'm goin' East myself, and if my woman won't come, she kiu stay here."

"But, tell me one thing. Do you suppose the Mexican government is still after this Estario?"

"Don't ye know a greaser never forgets, but waits his time? They'll git him yet, you wait and see."

"But I wonder—"

"But, come to think on it, stranger," Porter interrupted, "ye ain't told me why ye come way out here to see me. I got so interested in my own story, I clean forgot that mebbe ye had one of your own, too."

"I have," Howard replied, "and I want your help."

"Fire away!" was the other's calm order. "I'm in fer doin' anything I can fer you."

Howard leaned a trifle closer.

"Well, in the first place, do you know a Mexican named Castro?"

Porter gave vent to a loud guffaw.

"Say, stranger," he said, when his mirth had somewhat subsided, "s'pose I asked if ye knew a feller named Smith in the United States. Ye'd laugh hearty, wouldn't ye? Well, when I tell you there's more Castros in Mexico than there is Smiths, Browns, or Joneses in the whole United States, ye can realize why I laughed."

"But this fellow's name is Manuel Castro," the detective interposed with just a tinge of annoyance in his tone.

"Ain't much better, stranger, I'm sorry to say. But, come to think on it, although there's bunches of Castros, I don't believe I know a single one. Mebbe if I saw him I might know him, though. What made ye think this particular greaser was on my visitin' list?"

"But I don't think you'll ever see him. He was killed—murdered a few days ago."

"How am I connected—"

"I'll tell you," quickly put in the detective, noting the look of suspicion that

had returned to Porter's face. "He wanted to find you, and a detective agency had been employed by him to locate you. They found your mother, and she told where you were. The day after the agency sent their report to this Castro, he was discovered in his shop, strangled to death, and the papers cannot be found. Thinking, perhaps, you might be able to throw some light upon the case—how finding you would interest this Mexican—I came out here expressly to see if you could help us trace his assassin."

For a moment Porter did not reply. When at last he looked up into Howard's face, there was a decided softening of his features. "Stranger," he said, "I've got an idea. I'm pretty well acquainted with greasers and their habits, and I wouldn't be surprised if I might know who's at the bottom of this. I'm goin' back East with ye, if ye'll travel with a tramp like me. I've got a little money saved up, and my livin' here is ended; I'm goin' to start out and earn another, quick. And my poor old mother is waitin' for me at the other end of the railroad."

He quickly sprang to his feet. "Stranger," he exclaimed, "I'm more glad than I can tell ye, when I think of what yer call to-day has done for me. Come on home—I want to tell the woman."

XI.

As the two men approached Porter's hut, for it was little more, they saw his wife seated on the doorstep. As she caught sight of them, she hurriedly rose, and was in the act of going inside when her husband called: "Marty, wait a minute."

The woman turned, and stood, undecided; and as the men reached her, Porter said: "Marty, we're goin' to leave Uncas."

"Where we goin'?" she asked simply.

"To New York. We'll see my mother," he replied quickly.

A smile broke over her face, and she exclaimed: "Good! I never had a mother. Now I have yours. General is good."

"All right, go in and pack up what ye want to take with ye," Porter drawled. "We'll go in the mornin', on the early train."

"But what will you do about your house here—and your household goods?" the detective queried, casting his eyes toward the open door.

"That!" Porter jerked his head toward the building, then laughed contemptuously. "Why, leave it for some poor devil. They'll be one along to lay claim to it and bring his worthless body in it and call it home, just as I did near six years ago. I dunno who claimed it before I did, and care a durned sight less who does after me. We'll meet ye at the station in the mornin' for the east-bound. That is, if ye don't object to travelin' with two people rigged up as we will be. Ye see, clothes ain't of no account out here. But as soon as we git to a decent town, we'll both git fitted out so we won't shame ye any longer than we have to."

"Pshaw! You talk foolishly," the detective interposed; at the same time he could not help but wonder what his traveling companions would look like when they boarded the train together the next morning.

"Wal, mebbe I do and mebbe I don't. But, remember, I ain't always been what I look like now. I had pride myself once, and it's comin' back to me right now in great big chunks."

Howard smiled to himself. The earnestness of this man was a new thing to him—something he had never witnessed before—and as he turned to go, he remarked: "You will be busy getting your things together to-day, so I'll not disturb you again. I'll meet you at the train to-morrow."

"Yes, we'll be there." There was a thoughtful look in his eyes as he added: "I can't realize I'm goin' to see my mother so soon. But I've got another idea about goin' to New York. Mebbe I can help ye about this Castro's sudden demise."

"You can!" Howard exclaimed in surprise. "In what way?"

"Well, I know greasers better than ye do. And I've got an idea."

"What is it?" the officer inquired eagerly. "Can't you tell me?"

"Not now, stranger. Anyway, it's

only an idea. But I'll tell ye on the train to-morrow. I've got to git busy now. Don't tell any of the boys the general's leavin' town. I want to jest slip out, quiet like."

Turning toward the door, he added: "So long till to-morrow. Don't miss the train."

XII.

Long before train-time Howard was nervously walking up and down the station platform, his eyes glancing continually in the direction from which Porter would come. And as the minutes passed and he did not appear, his fear that the man had changed his mind overnight increased to such an extent that he was on the point of making another visit to his shack, when he saw the couple hurrying toward him.

As they drew near, he was agreeably surprised at the appearance of both. Porter had shaved, and they showed the effects of a goodly application of soap and water; and although their clothes were not of the latest cut, they looked very presentable.

"Thought you had changed your mind," the detective remarked.

"Not much!" Porter exclaimed, dropping his old satchel. "I've got to git our tickets."

One of the men who had come down to the station to see the train come in—one of the few excitements that ever stirred the town—sauntered up to Porter.

"Where ye goin', general?" he inquired.

"Me and the woman's goin' to take a little trip," he replied, hurrying on down the platform.

The heavy train rumbled in, and the little party clambered aboard, the hangers-on upon the platform watching them curiously. Mrs. Porter stared wonderingly around the car, and finding two empty seats together, Howard motioned her to one of them.

"The general and I will take this one," he remarked. "We have something to talk over."

A frightened look came into her eyes, and her lips trembled a trifle as she queried: "You won't leave me?"

Howard hastened to reassure her.

"Oh, no, we'll be right here."

At this she smiled and settled herself back in the seat.

"Well, general, you've something to tell me," the detective began.

"Yes, I have," the other slowly drawled. "You're a detective; and when I git to New York, I'm goin' to be one, too. That is, on one case, anyway. I'm goin' to hunt Estario. He might be able to tell me something about this Castro, who evidently was in some one's way upon this earth."

"Do you think—"

"That's all it is so far," Porter interrupted. "Only thinkin'—but mebbe some day it'll be *knowin'*."

"I don't think I understand you," Howard remarked.

"Well, I only know this much. When Estario first skipped, the Mexican authorities offered ten thousand dollars reward for his capture; and they ain't people what forgets a thing. They'll never be satisfied till he's been caught. And I've got an idea he's somewheres in New York. If he is, and I can find him, that ten thousand would go a long way toward makin' me an' the woman comfortable for the rest of our lives. Our wants ain't extravagant, ye know."

"But his capture doesn't help me in my search," the detective interposed.

"Well, I'm not so sure of that," the other returned calmly. "I've been doin' a heap of thinkin' since yesterday, and considerin' what ye told me about this Castro wantin' to find me—well, he may be after that reward, and Estario may have got wind of it and thought his presence upon this earth rather objectionable."

"By Jove!" Howard exclaimed excitedly. "Perhaps you're right!"

XIII.

The long journey was a severe ordeal to Howard, so anxious was he to get to New York and work upon the clue Porter had given him.

A brief stop was made in St. Louis, where the general—for as such the detective continued to address him—and his wife had purchased a complete outfit.

"Seems sorter homelike!" Porter exclaimed, glancing around interestedly,

when they finally alighted at the Grand Central Station. Turning to his wife, he added: "Marty, this beats Uncas, eh?"

But she did not reply, and the three walked rapidly out to Forty-Second Street.

Suddenly Porter queried anxiously: "I say, stranger, ye ain't forgot my mother's address, have ye?"

A look of consternation spread over the detective's face.

"Why, I never had it," he replied; then his tone changed to one of cheerfulness as he added: "But I can get it easily enough."

"How?" Porter's spirits had sunk nearly to the point of despair.

"I'll tell you what we are going to do," the detective went on. "Of course, I've got to report to the chief as soon as possible. We'll go down there together; and as soon as I've seen him, I'll phone to the detective agency that has your mother's address. I could do it now; but it will take a few minutes, and I must get to headquarters. Come on."

Reaching their destination, Howard said: "Now, I'm going to report, and you wait here on the sidewalk. I'll be back in a moment."

"Don't forget to get my mother's address," Porter called after him.

"I won't," was the reply.

Howard's interview with the chief certainly showed conclusively that the time was not ripe to have a medal pinned on his coat for cleverness. Perhaps it was because the chief was not in a particularly pleasant mood, owing to a much-wanted crook having slipped through the fingers of one of his men—an incident the newspapers had got hold of, and for which he was criticized severely.

"Well, I don't care how you get your man, but get him!" was the comment after Howard had briefly related his experiences of the last few days.

"Yes, sir," the officer replied, rising from his chair and realizing that the conference was over.

"Oh, Howard, just a moment," the other called as the detective was leaving the office.

The chief fumbled among the papers on his desk. "Here's a wire I received this morning from the Mexican government. It may have something to do with this case."

Howard took it and slowly read the message it contained:

> Special agent of government *en route* to New York. Please give him any help you can. M. DEXTRON.

"Make anything out of it?" the chief queried as Howard finished the perusal.

"I don't know, sir."

"Well, report here to-morrow morning, anyway. He ought to be here by that time; and as your acquaintance with these people has been rather extensive in the past few days, I'll let you help him. That's all."

"Very well, sir," the detective assented, and quickly took his departure.

In the outer room he asked the man at the desk: "Are they still holding that Jew on the Triangle mystery?"

"Sure, and a merry life he's making for the others in the jail. He's got 'em all nearly crazy with his yelling and bawling. His trial isn't set as yet."

Without a comment, Howard went to the telephone-booth, and was soon talking to Franklin Hayes, who was able to give him Porter's mother's address. Jotting it down in his note-book, the detective walked slowly and disconsolately out of the building, and advanced to where the couple awaited his coming.

As Porter caught sight of him, he rushed up, a strange light in his eyes:

"Why ye been so durned long? They's—"

"I hurried as quickly as I could," Howard hastened to interrupt. "I've got your mother's address."

"Well, I'd rather ye'd been out here than gettin' that," the other angrily returned. "While I was standing here a dirty lookin' greaser come strollin' by, and kept lookin' into my face until he had passed. In less'n a minute he come by again with another greaser. They both stared again, an' then stood upon the corner there watchin' us. They hustled around it when they seen you comin'."

Howard quickly turned toward the corner indicated. There was no one there.

"Do you think—"

"I ain't thinkin' nothin'," the other broke in roughly; "I know they're up to some deviltry."

"Then, why didn't you stop them—hold them till I came?"

"Say, stranger, I ain't no policeman," the other sneered.

"Come, let us see if we can trace them."

Howard turned and ran toward the corner, Porter and his wife hurrying after him.

When he reached it, he gazed eagerly up and down the street—there was no sign of what he wanted in sight.

XIV.

"CAN'T you describe them?" Howard pleaded hopelessly.

"Say, stranger, can ye describe an Injun?" the other laughed. "Of course not, 'cause they all look alike. Well, it's the same with greasers."

"Then there is nothing we can do," the detective replied.

"Nothin' at all. Ye weren't here, and that's all there is to it. I'm goin' to see mother, if ye'll give me the address."

Howard was trying to think of some plan of action, and replied absently: "I'll go as far as the door to make sure you don't get lost."

The three boarded a street-car, and were soon on the up-town journey. But it was not a jovial party. Howard was busy with his own thoughts of the failure that stared him in the face, while the other two were staring open-eyed at the sights around them.

For some blocks this continued, when, as the car stopped to take on more passengers, Porter seized the detective's arm in a grip of steel. Pointing to a man who had just crossed the street, he whispered: "There's one of the cusses!"

Howard was on his feet in an instant. With his eyes riveted on the man indicated, who was slowly sauntering down the side-street, he fumbled in his pocket; and ripping out the paper in his notebook upon which he had written Porter's mother's address, he exclaimed: "Go up there. Any one will direct you. I'll follow this man, and will call on you later."

The car had already gathered speed; but Howard rushed to the rear platform, sprang off, walked rapidly, and was soon back at the corner from which he could see his man, only half a block away.

Then followed a brief time of shadowing. The man led the detective to the nearest Subway station, boarded an up-town train, and got out at the Seventy-Second Street station, Howard never losing sight of him for a second.

Walking to Seventy-Fourth Street, he entered a large, pretentious house through the basement door, and Howard took up his post of watching for him.

A long wait of two hours passed before any one emerged, when suddenly the same man hurried out; and reaching the sidewalk, glanced fearfully up and down the street, then started again at a rapid pace in the direction of the Subway.

The detective hurried across the street after him, and at the sound of the quick footsteps the stranger turned; and seeing Howard so close to him, broke into a run.

"Halt, or I'll shoot!" Howard called.

The man glanced over his shoulder as the detective drew his revolver, then came to an abrupt stop.

"What do you mean, sir?" he demanded in English when Howard reached his side.

"I mean you will come with me," the detective panted.

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"A fine country, where a man cannot even run for a car. Very well, I come."

Without further conversation, the officer led his prisoner to the police station, only a few blocks away.

While the sergeant at the desk was making the entry of the arrest—he put the fellow down as a suspicious character, according to Howard's instructions—the prisoner queried: "I can furnish bail?"

"Well, that's your affair," the sergeant answered.

"All right. I write a message and you deliver it for me, eh?"

"Yes, I'll do it, all right."

The prisoner was taken to a cell, and, being given some paper, hastily scrawled a note in Spanish, directing that it be sent to the house in Seventy-Second Street, which he had just left.

"Hold that note," Howard ordered. "We'll deliver it later. I want you to get in touch with another man before this fellow is bailed out. I'm not taking any chances of losing a big capture. Send a man to this address—" He was rapidly turning the pages of his note-book. "Confound it, I haven't got it!"

He stared blankly at the policeman, then a smile broke over his face. "But I can get it, after all."

Taking the phone, he was soon talking again to Franklin Hayes, and for the secoud time was noting Mrs. Porter's address in his book. As he hung up the receiver, the bell rang violently.

The sergeant answered it, Howard hurrying out at the door. Before he had gone many feet a policeman called him back.

"Headquarters wants you on the phone!"

"What next, I wonder?" Howard muttered as he picked up the receiver.

The man at the other end informed him he had been told to call up every police station, asking them to tell Detective Howard, if he came in, that headquarters wanted him.

"What for?" he demanded.

"Wait a moment and I'll see if I can find out," was the answer.

The officer counted the seconds, realizing that every one of them might be precious just at present.

"Hallo!" came over the phone. "We just received word from a man named Krauser that he wants to see you immediately."

"All right," the detective replied.

Turning to the sergeant, he fumed: "Now, how can a person be in two places at once? I know what I'll do—I'll phone him."

Hastily looking up Krauser's telephone number, the connection was quickly established.

"Hallo, Mr. Krauser," he called, "this is Howard. I believe you called me."

"Yes, that boy of mine came in a short while ago, and is here now. Do you want to see him?"

"Ask him what the two men he saw in Castro's shop looked like? Ask him if he thinks they were Mexicans?"

After a few seconds' delay, the reply came back. "No, he says they were Jews. Will you be right down?"

"No!" Howard snapped. "I don't want to see him now. Good-by!"

XV.

WITHOUT another word, Howard strode from the police station, and springing upon a car, was soon walking across Ninety-Seventh Street, in the direction of the East River—Mrs. Porter lived far over on the East Side.

At last he reached the house, and a climb of two flights brought him to Mrs. Porter's apartment.

In answer to his ring, Porter himself came to the door.

"Come in, stranger!" he exclaimed, his face wreathed in smiles.

"Not now, general," Howard remonstrated. "I want you to come with me to the police station. I've arrested that greaser."

"Jehosephat! Do you know, I clean forgot about him, I was so glad to see mother. Sure, I'll come, and durned glad to do so. Wait till I get my hat."

In a moment he was ready, and together the two men hurried to the police station. As they entered, Howard ordered: "Sergeant, now you can send that letter I told you to hold."

He and Porter sauntered down the corridor to the cell where the Mexican was confined; and as they stood before it, Porter announced positively: "Yes, that's one of the cusses."

The prisoner made no comment, but turned his back upon them. For some moments Howard and Porter endeavored to draw the man into conversation, but to no avail—the man was as one stricken dumb.

"There's no use trying him now, general," the detective asserted. "I *think* he'll be more willing to talk at headquarters." There was a peculiar emphasis to his tone. "They've a way of *making* a man talk there," he added.

As they turned from the cell, heavy footsteps and raised voices could be heard approaching them from the other end of the corridor.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" an angry voice demanded.

Howard and Porter stepped to one

side to allow the enraged person and the policeman who accompanied him to pass.

The detective felt a grip upon his arm, and at the same instant Porter sprang in front of the angry man. "Well, Mr. Estario, you didn't expect to find me here, did you?" he said.

The person addressed started back as if shot, but as quickly regained his composure.

"I do not understand you, my man. What do you mean?"

"You always was a cool cuss, particularly when I was escortin' you across the border. My name's Sergeant Porter!"

But the other smiled blandly.

"I must say you have the advantage of me, my dear sir. I never met you before."

"Probably not that you wish to remember." Porter's temper was rising rapidly. "But *I* remember! I remember how you exiled me for six long years, away from everybody I knew, just for the sake of a few dollars. If I had wanted to be dishonorable, I'd have skipped after I got the first payment. But it's my turn now."

Looking at Howard, he added: "The Mexican government wants him, and wants him bad. So bad they're willin' to give ten thousand dollars for him. Lock him up!"

The Mexican's calmness suddenly left him; and with a cry of rage, he sprang at Porter. But Howard was quicker, and sent him sprawling upon the floor with a heavy blow in the face.

As he fell, a glistening object rattled noisily upon the stone pavement. It was a small dagger.

With no attempt at gentleness, the man was thrust into a cell, and the door clanged noisily after him.

"Pretty close call, general," Howard observed.

"That's nothin'," the other sniffed.

"Well, let's go down to headquarters and report," Howard added, "and then I'll communicate with Mexico. If that reward still holds good, to-day has been a profitable one for you."

As the two men entered headquarters building a short time later, a swarthy individual passed them, and one of the men standing around called: "Say, Howard, that man's been in with the chief for some time, and the chief's been inquiring if you were around."

Another policeman had already run after the stranger, and the speaker continued: "We called up Seventy-Sixth Street station, where we knew you were a little while ago, and they said you had left."

As the man who had gone after the stranger returned with him, and escorted him to the chief's office, Howard followed, first telling Porter: "Wait here till I come out."

The chief glanced up as the two men entered.

"Howard," he announced, "this is Mr. Sanchez, head of the Mexican secret-service, and he has told me some strange things. In the first place, this Castro, who was murdered, was one of his best men, and here in New York in search of a fellow they want badly down there. Castro's shop and his chocolate-beans were only a clever disguise. He was bot upon the trail of the man he was after, when he suddenly—well, died."

"Who was he tracing?" Howard queried eagerly of the Mexican.

"Bruno Estario," was the reply.

"The very man I caught only a half-hour ago—or, at least, a friend of mine caught him."

"You — are — sure?" Sanchez exclaimed, springing to his feet.

"Certain! The same man who helped him to escape, caught him. He's held at Seventy-Sixth Street station now. There were two of them."

"I cannot—believe!"

"Well, we can quickly prove it to you," the chief interrupted. "I'll send for them, and we'll soon decide it. Do you know this Estario?"

A knowing smile broke over the Mexican's face.

"Yes, I know him."

Two policemen were despatched to bring the prisoners to headquarters; and as they departed, Sanchez turned to Howard. "I congratulate!"

"For what?" the chief demanded. "He hasn't solved the mystery of who killed Castro."

"Wait. This Estario—he know."

The entire case was discussed by the three men until they were interrupted by

the entrance of the two policemen and the prisoners.

"So! Bruno Estario! At last we meet!" Sanchez hissed.

But the other made no reply.

"I have the pleasure to take you to Mexico as company," Sanchez taunted.

Estario faced his accuser.

"You think so, but you will not. I will stay here, and be hung, because *I* killed that detective of yours, Castro, who thinks himself so smart to mask for over a year as Chocolate Bill. I knew him all the time. I knew every move he made; and when he got too close upon my trail, I *killed* him!"

"You killed Castro?" the chief exclaimed in amazement.

"Yes, I killed him!"

"Señor Estario lies!" burst out the other Mexican. "His pride makes him crazy. He would rather die than go back to Mexico a prisoner. But while there is life there is hope. He will yet be a free man, to enjoy his wealth."

The quickness with which things were happening was almost too much for the listeners to grasp, but Sanchez burst out: "Estario does lie! He has not the nerve to kill a man, and would not as long as his wealth lasts to hire for him servants who will do his dirty work. Ask him how he did it?"

"Yes, how did you do it?" the chief demanded.

For a moment there was no reply, then the other said sadly: "Pedro is right. While there is life, there *is* hope, and I hope for a pardon some day from the Mexican government. I did not do it!"

"But I did!" the other prisoner asserted. "I did it in self-defense. I knew Castro, and just what his mission was here in the city. The *señor* know, too. So I watch Castro as a cat watch a mouse. I was aware of his every move."

He was now talking excitedly. "I know he has a detective agency looking up a man—the same man I see outside as we come in — to try and trace the *señor*. I know when the agency send him those papers; and the next morning, when he opens his shop, I am waiting there. I demand the papers, and he laugh at me, then he rush at me. I jump one side and get strong grip on his throat. He struggle, but I still hold him. I know if I let go, he kill me. So I hold his throat!"

He paused, then added regretfully: "I hold it too long—too long. Those papers I take. I have them, here in my pocket!"

A few words more, and the two prisoners were led to separate cells, one to await the transfer to Mexico, the other to face the ordeal of a trial for his life.

The wheels of justice were quickly set in motion for the release of Schwartz, the unfortunate Jew still in jail, charged with a crime of which he was absolutely innocent.

As Howard and Sanchez left the chief and met Porter in the outside room, the Mexican exclaimed: "I am glad to meet you, and I congratulate. Meet me here to-morrow. I will have the reward for you then."

There were tears in Porter's eyes when he shook hands with Howard, as he left the building.

"Stranger," he said, "ye'll never know what ye have done for me and Marty."

WHEN THE DANCE IS DONE.

Now the flush autumn, homing from the dance
  Of summer sunbeams, dreaming o'er the words
Of suing winds, and humming still the last
  Mazurka of the orchestra of birds,

A moment pauses by the river's glass,
  To scan the signs of weariness that show;
Then lays aside her purple and her gold,
  And slips beneath her coverlets of snow!

Aloysius Coll.

CRACKED EGGS

By ROBERT CARLTON BROWN.

What happened when a fellow in hard luck deliberately expended his last fifteen cents on a clean collar.

I CAME on from Marshall, Michigan, with seventy dollars pinned in my inside vest-pocket and a bee in my bonnet that I was going to get a job right off the reel at one hundred and fifty a month. That is a huge salary in Marshall for a young man, and I naturally felt quite chesty over my prospects.

But—after ten days in New York City I had neither the money nor the job.

It was then that I bethought myself of my mother's school-day friend, Mr. Wright, who, when passing through Marshall during my absence, had left his address for me and asked that I look him up when I came on to the city.

He was a big man in the grocery line, and now that my job had fallen through, I thought I might as well go over and tackle him for one.

I remembered that mother had given me his address and told me to be sure to call upon him. So I spent an hour looking for the direction, but it was not among my effects.

I had a vague notion that mother had told me where the address was, but rigid search did not reveal it.

When I was down to my last cent I wrote home for the address of Mr. Wright in quite a casual way, as though it were not a matter of meat and drink to me. Then I looked around for the wherewithal to get my next meal.

The only jewelry I possessed was a pair of gold cuff-links. I took them out, rolled up my sleeves, and tried to get used to going without them. But in ten minutes they were back in their places and I had decided not to "hock" them.

Sentiment had something to do with it, but, as a matter of fact, I had a sort of moral scruple against pawning anything. I had never borrowed money, and I didn't like to begin now. Sort of a provincial idea, possibly, but I've found it most satisfying.

Suddenly I thought of my books. There were possibly ten in the lot, and I liked them all. But books can be replaced. I had bought them with my own money, I felt that there was little sentiment attached to them, so I suddenly decided that it would be an easy way out of the difficulty to sell the lot.

A short scrutiny showed me that they were of no particular value. There was Crabbe's "Synonyms," my little gift edition of "Omar," a few popular novels, and my good old copy of the "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table."

That was the only book that I could not bear to part with. I usually had it with me, there was something very close and intimate in our relations. I knew every blotch on its well-worn covers.

For some minutes I debated. Then, forcing back my feelings, I added this treasure, wrapped them all up, and started for a near-by bookstore.

The dealer looked the bunch over with a deprecating air, and my spirits kept going down a little further with each one that he picked up.

"That Crabbe is worth forty cents; I can give you about a dollar for the rest of the bunch, I guess," he told me finally.

I picked up my beloved "Autocrat."

"What is that one worth?" I asked.

He took the volume from my hands.

"Hadn't noticed it," was his comment, as he turned to the title page.

Then he looked interested.

"Blue and gold edition," he exclaimed. "Well, they're not very scarce, but there's a fair demand for them. I'll give you sixty cents for it."

I hesitated. The fact was, I had never before considered my copy of the "Autocrat" with regard to its cash value. It all came to me in a new light. This book, priceless to me, was worth only sixty cents to the world.

Crabbe at forty, and the rest at a dol-

lar. That would be only a dollar forty. I had figured on two dollars anyway. It was hard, but I needed the money.

"Well, sixty cents will be all right," I agreed, thinking that the first dollar I got after I connected with Mr. Wright would be spent in getting back my volume.

He threw the books to one side and gave me a two-dollar bill.

The crinkle of it was mighty consoling. I sighed when I was forced to break the two-spot to spend a quarter for my first meal that day.

Then I went home and sat around waiting for a reply to my letter. I grew to have the utmost faith in my mother's friend in the grocery business; he was my last hope, and surely would not fail me.

I couldn't bear to write home for money. I would far rather trust to luck and Mr. Wright. I had started off with seventy dollars, and that was a lot in the little home town; they would not be able to understand what I had done, what extravagances I had fallen into in such a short time that had made me run through this princely sum in ten days.

A shiny nickel and a bright dime were the only coins that remained to rub against each other in my trouser's pocket when mother's letter came.

I picked it up eagerly. Now—now I would get the address, go to the man in the grocery business and get a job from him; the folks would never know how close to starvation I had really come.

The letter opened with a few notes concerning local happenings, and I rapidly skipped to the part that interested me most just then.

"About Mr. Wright's address—" I read. "Don't you remember, my boy, I told you that we wrote it down for you just before he left, as you weren't there to take it down yourself?"

Yes, I remembered that. But where?

"Just take up your copy of the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table' and you will find it carefully written on the back page."

Then I remembered. Mother had told me about it before. She had explained at length how she had made it clear to him that the book and I were inseparable companions, and that I would never lose the address if it were written there.

What a fool I had been to sell it! Why, even at the time, it had been against my better judgment.

"Just take up your copy of the 'Autocrat'—" I quoted.

Oh, if I could only have done so!

Why hadn't I remembered that the address was there? Why hadn't I given in to the sentiment that possessed me to keep the book?

But this was no time for remorse. It came to me suddenly that there might yet be an opportunity to remedy things.

Leaping for my hat, I slammed it on and dashed off for the book-stall where I had sold the volume.

The proprietor was not in. I eagerly asked his assistant to show me what copies he had of Holmes's masterpiece.

He brought out several different ones. I looked at each. The covers were sufficient to show me that the book I was seeking was not among them.

Did he remember selling one bound in blue cloth, and the name printed in gold?

No, he had no memory for that; but the "boss" might know.

While waiting for the proprietor I hunted through the whole shop, turned every odd book that I came to, and peered into all sorts of dark holes in search of the volume. But it was nowhere to be seen.

Then I began again to curse my stupidity. Mother did not correspond with Mr. Wright, and nobody at home would be able to give me the address. It was irretrievably lost.

And now what was I to do? The foundation had suddenly been knocked from my dreams. I missed the pedestal on which I had been snoozing, and suddenly dropped to earth.

Everything seemed hopeless. I had a vague intuition that I would never recover the book. There was nobody to blame but myself, and I felt my disappointment the more keenly on that account. Here I was, with nothing in the world but my pride—and fifteen cents.

"When will the proprietor be back?" I asked abruptly, the stuffiness of the shop and the oppression of my thoughts making me faint.

"I don't know exactly; you might leave word for him and drop in later," suggested the clerk.

I thought rapidly for a moment and then, taking out a pencil, scribbled a note to the dealer, giving my address and offering two dollars for the book, requesting that he send it over if he had not already disposed of it.

Then I left at once.

Suddenly the realization stole over me that my collar was dirty and wilted. I didn't have the money to pay for my laundry, and I must have another collar at once. My pride would not allow me to go about like this.

Then I thought of food; I should save my fifteen cents for that. But of a sudden, a giddiness possessed me; I felt a desire to be absolutely penniless, and it was with the exhilaration of a spendthrift that I stepped into a furnishing shop and spent my last cent for a collar.

When I came out I gradually realized the foolhardiness of my act, and began to feel that I was very hungry. Everything was blue. I looked on the world through the bluest glasses. The world offered no hope. Here I was—

My musings were suddenly cut short.

A large, heavily packed wagon had made a sudden swerve and skidded into the track of a fast-coming trolley-car. There was a bump. The frenzied driver pulled his horses up short and tried to jerk them from the track. They wheeled sharply, and with a jolt the top-heavy load swung far out. A crash! The wagon and its contents lay overturned across the street.

In my peculiar state of mind the incident struck me as funny. I smiled, for the wagon had been loaded with crates of eggs, and several of the boxes had burst —the yolks and whites were mingling in pools on the pavement.

Then I saw the driver pull himself out from the wreckage, and I slowly realized that the thing wasn't such a joke after all.

I saw him rise and gaze ruefully at the wreck. Something in his eyes hurt me. I felt a big sympathy for the fellow; he was about my age. Our situations seemed analogous.

Somebody would have to pay for those eggs, I knew; and, somehow, from looking at the young man's fixed face, I felt pretty certain that he would be the one to suffer.

The thought came to me—if I could only help him? But how could I? Surely I was in no position to pay for the broken eggs!

Feeling a bond of sympathy, I hurried over to where he stood.

"Who will have to pay for the broken eggs?" I asked.

"I will, I guess, for most of them, anyway," he answered, his eyes still fixed in a meaningless stare.

"But can't you do something?" I asked nervously.

"No," he replied dumbly. "Some of them are flowing over the street already, and the rest will be pretty soon. They're all cracked, there's no doubt about that. And what good is a cracked egg?"

The thing did seem rather hopeless. I had never thought before—of what good is a cracked egg?

Determined to help him in some way, feeling that we were in the same leaky boat, and both needed somebody to help bail, I tried hard to figure out a solution.

Suddenly an inspiration seized me. I glanced quickly at the boxes, the yolks and whites were streaming through the cracks of most of the cases already.

Grabbing him by the shoulder, I cried, "Wait here, I think I can help!"

With that I tore across the street and rushed into a large bakery shop.

I explained my idea to the proprietor in a moment. He was enthusiastic, and accepted the hurried offer I made him.

Back into the street I rushed. The young teamster was standing there with the same blank expression, while the motorman and conductor of the blocked car, with several policemen, were trying to clear the track of the cases and wagon.

Already they were dragging the wagon along to get it out of the way so that the cars could pass. Crates of eggs were bouncing out of the back of it continually, but the men worked on to clear the road, regardless.

Seizing the driver I shouted to him: "Come on, grab up one of those cases and carry it to the bakery there!"

I could see by his eyes that he didn't understand, but he dumbly obeyed, and I, after urging several youths to follow my example, picked up one of the dripping crates and rushed over to the basement of the bakery shop.

By that time the baker had turned out half a dozen of his men to help us and, inside of eight minutes, every crate had been rushed to the bakery.

The remains of many eggs were on the street, but the bulk of the load had been transferred.

Then the baker came up to me with a smile.

"That was a good offer of yours," he remarked. "We'll both make money by it. Here I've been paying twenty-four cents a dozen for eggs, and you offer these to me at fifteen. All I need for my cakes and frostings is the yolks and the whites; I don't care for the shells."

"What good is a cracked egg?" I smiled to myself.

The teamster didn't get the drift of things right away, but when the baker counted out full payment for the load at fifteen cents a dozen, he gazed around at the tubs into which the workers were putting the contents of the cracked shells, and a dim light of understanding spread over his broad face.

"Why, why, I was going to sell these for only twenty cents a dozen," he broke out. "They were going to a big jobber. My company'll be out only five cents a dozen."

"Well, I guess they can stand that," I smiled.

"Stand tbat! Stand that!" he was gradually warming up to the realization of the whole affair. "Why, when they find out that I had presence of mind enough to sell the cracked eggs they'll do nothing but talk about it. I'll get a raise in pay. Other fellows have tipped over loads and had to pay for them, and lost their jobs into the bargain. This'll be such a new idea for them they'll raise my pay sure."

I was delighted. He was so frankly happy about his deliverance, be had not had time to thank me, and I appreciated his warmth of spirit.

Suddenly he extended a wide hand.

"Say, you're all right," the teamster grinned.

"Have a drink?" he asked, as an afterthought.

I thanked him, told him that I didn't drink, and started to walk off.

"Here!" he called after me.

I stopped and turned toward him.

He looked at my suit. It was bedraggled and dripping with the yolks and whites of eggs. I hadn't noticed it in the excitement.

"Let me show how much I thank you by paying to have that suit cleaned and pressed," he offered, peeling off a two-dollar bill from the roll that the baker had handed him.

It was a sore temptation. It was no more than right that I should accept it. Yet something held me back. I guess it was that blooming pride of mine.

He took my refusal very badly. His manner was dissatisfied. I knew that he felt he must do something for me, and I was just about to reconsider his offer to have my clothes cleaned, when he burst out:

"Well, you'll come and eat dinner with me, anyway. It's time for noon hour. We'll go out and take care of the horses and then find a place to feed our faces."

I remembered then that I was still hungry. My acceptance was therefore eager, in spite of myself.

We took the horses to a safe place and I waited until he called up the company and told them the news.

Turning to me with a smile, he remarked:

"They took it just the way I thought they would. I get a raise sure. That's what you might call a lucky mishap."

"It was that, all right, and I'm glad I could help," was my reply.

He insisted on taking me to an expensive place to eat. But, knowing that he could ill afford it, I selected a simple little restaurant and we sat down opposite each other.

I guess he noticed from the way I tore into my food that I was down and out; anyway, after two or three crude attempts, he finally asked:

"Aren't having hard luck, are you?"

The thing was too vivid to be put aside. I had to tell him the whole story.

"And the address was in the book," he repeated at the finish. "Well, that's a shame. No wonder you're feeling kind of down. After thinking you wouldn't part witb it, an' then giving it up for sixty cents an' losing a job by it—Say! That's almost as bad as tipping over a wagonload of eggs."

I told him that the similarity of our situations had struck me before.

He chewed the remark over in his mind for some moments, and then delivered his opinion:

"Our situations were alike. But now they're altogether different. You helped me out of my pickle an' I ain't made a move to help you."

"Oh, that's all right," I laughed, "my position is rather helpless, anyway."

"Not on your life it ain't," he answered quickly.

There was a spirit of good fellowship in the reply that made me mighty happy to think I'd been able to befriend him.

"But there's no chance," I repeated dully, "I'm much obliged to you for the thought, but the book's gone and that's the only hope I had."

"Well, even if the book is gone, we'll find some way out of it," he answered.

I half believed that we would, his determination seemed to be growing so strong.

For some minutes we both sat silent. Then he looked up to ask:

"What was that fellow's name that you wanted to see?"

"Mr. Wright."

"And you said he was in the grocery business?"

"Yes," I replied.

"What are his initials?"

"I don't know," I answered slowly; "you see, mother always spoke of him as just Mr. Wright, and I never heard his first name."

"That makes it hard," he replied, "but we'll find him. Come, we'll get out of here. I'll take the afternoon off and help you out."

I hadn't thought before of the possibility of looking the man up, but the suggestion offered a hope, and I fell in with it readily when the teamster assured me that he ran no danger of losing his job by taking the time off.

We had sponged off most of the stains from the eggs on my clothes, and were both in fairly good trim when we began our round of the different grocery stores, asking everywhere for Mr. Wright. My friend was known to them all, and in a short time we were on the trail of three Mr. Wrights in the grocery business.

It was two-thirty when we found the last one. I hadn't given up hope, because my companion wouldn't let me; so we marched up to interview this third Mr. Wright.

Having briefly sketched my story to him, I asked, quaveringly, if he were the right Mr. Wright.

To my boundless surprise he answered:

"Well, I should say I am. I remember writing my address in that book for you, and I'm mighty glad to see the son of my old schoolmate."

I had arrived at the haven at last, and my reception merited the struggle.

I believe there were tears in my eyes when I turned to grasp the hand of the good driver who had led me to him; anyway, I know I was mighty happy. He was, too.

He waited in the hall for me while I finished my arrangements to start to work the next morning for Mr. Wright, and my pride did not keep me from taking a week's salary in advance.

When I stepped out of the office, I congratulated myself on having bought a clean collar with my last fifteen cents. At least I was neat, in spite of the eggs, and those stains were excused by the story.

My new friend and I talked it all over on the way home, and we came to the conclusion that it's a mighty good thing to lend the helping hand occasionally. Even as a business investment it had paid both of us, and paid us well.

We parted at my door and I hurried in to change my clothes.

NOVEMBER.

On my cornice linger the ripe, black grapes ungathered;
Children fill the groves with the echoes of their glee,
Gathering tawny chestnuts, and shouting when beside them
Drops the heavy fruit of the tall black-walnut tree.

William Cullen Bryant.

AN OVERLOOKED POSSIBILITY.

By LLOYD THACHER.

Taking a chance with a check on a long-distance gamble.

IT was two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, in a large law-office. The significance of its being Saturday afternoon lies in the fact that pay-day came at that time in the week.

Some of the clerks and office attendants were apparently preparing to leave, while others were frankly determined to await the arrival of the cashier, who had most unaccountably failed to turn up. All the members of the firm had left an hour before, ignorant of the anxiety in the minds of their employees.

Sanders, though a highly paid and much trusted lawyer connected with the firm, was as keenly eager as the smallest office-boy for the arrival of the cashier, because a combination of unhappy circumstances had left him with but two cents in his pocket.

"He can't have run off with the pay-money," remarked one of the clerks.

"He's got legs," replied another.

It certainly was an unusual state of affairs, and the gravity of the situation can only be appreciated by those who, at some time in their lives, have been compelled to rely on a weekly wage for their sustenance.

It was, therefore, upon a group of extremely anxious faces that the cashier gazed when at last, about 2.30, he entered the office.

"Been tied up in the Subway," he announced. "I'm awfully sorry for you fellows, but you'll have to wait until Monday for your pay. The bank closed at twelve."

Sanders was, perhaps, the most unhappy one of the force. He said nothing, but turned resignedly to the solving of an interesting legal proposition upon which he was at work.

Troubles do not always come in numbers, and his disappointment over the financial situation was much lessened by the fact that, after an hour's work, he found a solution to the legal dilemma which had perplexed him for a week.

Pleased with his success, he was leaning back in his chair, when the ringing of the telephone attracted his attention.

"Why don't one of the office-boys answer it?" he said to himself.

Again came the telephone call, and Sanders looked round the office.

"Everybody gone, eh?" he muttered, and proceeded to answer the call himself.

"Hallo! Yes, this is the number. What?" A moment's pause followed, while Sanders moved his chair closer to the phone.

"Oh, it's you, Mary! When did you get in town?"

There was another much longer pause, while the young man was apparently receiving some interesting information.

"At the down-town ferry, are you? And you want me to come immediately? Surely I will—something very urgent—want me to bring plenty of money? What? All right, in about half an hour."

Sanders hung up the receiver with a very happy expression on his face, which suddenly changed as he realized the position he was in.

The girl who had just spoken was the only girl in the world for him. Here she was, waiting for him on her way through the city to her home, a day's journey distant, and relying on him, as she had said, to help her in the most serious dilemma she had ever known.

Money was needed temporarily, and he sat there with just two cents in his pocket, and no means of immediately obtaining more.

Never had his mind worked so rapidly over any legal matter as it did now in considering how he could obtain some cash. Then the solution came to him.

It was after banking hours, and a check could not be deposited until Monday, on which day he would get his pay.

His own little town, some three hundred miles away, was the proud posses-

sor of a bank in which, from time to time, he was accustomed to deposit small amounts. The fact that he had no balance there at this time did not interfere with his plan. He would draw a check to-day, and early on Monday morning would send his salary to the bank. The amount would be more than enough to cover his check.

The latter, going through the ordinary channels, could not possibly reach the bank before his deposit did. He would be able to help Mary, and perhaps persuade her to tell him something that for years he had longed to hear.

It was a little dangerous, no doubt, but surely not wrong under the circumstances. Nothing but the miscarriage of his letter containing the money-order for the amount of the check could defeat the successful working out of the plan, and there was the same possibility that the mails might fail to carry the check safely. At any rate, Sanders was determined to try the scheme. He had half an hour in which to accomplish it before the girl would expect him.

Hastily putting on his hat and coat, he left the office, locking the door behind him.

His first thought was to get the money at the cigar-stand in the building, the proprietor of which had known him for years; but he had forgotten that it was Saturday afternoon. He became painfully conscious of this fact when he found the stand closed for the day. He soon realized that it would be a difficult matter to find any place of business open at this hour.

It is needless to recount the many rebuffs which he received in trying to cash the check. The time allotted to him was rapidly diminishing as he stood on the corner of the rather deserted street, trying his best to think of some wealthy business man who knew him, and who was likely to remain at his office late on half holidays.

Then came the inspiration—Rand & Company—about a mile up-town, had known him and his family ever since he could remember, would be sure to give him the money he required. They always kept open late. He also realized that Mr. Rand was Mary's guardian, and that it would be to him that he would have to go if Mary should give the answer to him which he hoped and prayed that she might.

There was great necessity for haste, and the young man jumped on a car.

The approach of the conductor, however, brought new complications. Sanders remembered that he had but two cents in his pocket. Making a clean breast of that fact to the official, a good-natured, elderly man, he received the information that he must get off at once. The conductor seemed interested in the young man, however, and asked him how far he had intended to go, what was his purpose in going there, how he happened to be so foolish as to get on a car, expecting to ride when he had no money, and numerous other questions, to which Sanders gave lengthy and lucid answers.

At length, with something of humor in his eye, the conductor pulled the bell-rope and remarked: "This is your street, young man. Never try to beat the railroad again."

Realizing that the kind-hearted collector of fares had done in one way what he could not do in another, Sanders alighted and entered the place of business of Rand & Company.

Mr. Rand himself was there, and heard the young man's request that his check be cashed with rather an uncompromising expression.

"It's a bad principle," he said. "I think I know you, and I am sure that I knew your father; but I have always made it a practise never to cash checks for people not dealing with us."

"But I need the money *so* badly," replied Sanders; "and I assure you that the check will be all right."

"You are a friend of Mary's, I believe?" continued the older man shrewdly.

"I sincerely hope so," replied Sanders, thinking it best, from the mysterious and urgent tone which the girl had used in speaking to him, not to mention the fact that he was going to see her soon.

"All right," concluded Mr. Rand; "I'll cash your check, but be sure that it is good, or I will use whatever influence I have with the girl to have nothing more to do with you."

Sanders drew his check for fifty dollars with a decided feeling of thankfulness in his heart, received the money, and start-

ed by the quickest way for the place where be would find the girl.

It was nearly half-past five when at last Sanders stood before her, and heard the beginning of her story.

"But we had best hurry up-town," he interrupted, "or we cannot accomplish what you want done. You can tell me all about it as we go along."

Taking a hansom, and directing the driver to reach a certain address as quickly as possible, Sanders asked her to begin all over and tell him how he could help her.

"You see, Frank," she continued, "when I passed through this city, on the way to the place where I have been visiting, I saw the most perfect little hat you can imagine. Without a thought I bought it, and sent it home by express. Then I made the horrible discovery that I had left myself without enough money for my trip. It was the silliest kind of a thing to do, but not half as bad as my next step.

"I had heard about pawn-shops, but, of course, had never been inside of one. I was ashamed to go to Mr. Rand; so, having only a few minutes to catch my train, I went into one of the horrid places, where we are going now, and pawned my ring for twenty-five dollars. I dare not go home without it, for my aunt and the whole family would never stop laughing at me; but I knew, Frank, that you would be glad to help me until I get some money and send it to you. I don't want them ever to know."

The young man smiled at her seriousness, and assured her that it certainly was the biggest kind of a pleasure for him to help her.

By the time they had reached the pawn-shop she had forgotten her shame over the incident, and was only fearful that they would not reach the place before it closed, at six o'clock.

They were fortunate in this regard, however, and, having secured the ring, decided to occupy the time before her train left with a little drive and dinner.

The drive was a momentous one for both. While Sanders hated to take advantage of an occasion on which he had done the girl a favor, he was not able to withstand the temptation to tell her of his love. It was in a quiet place, in the large park, that be found Mary had understood long ago, and, understanding, had been glad. It only remained for him to see Mr. Rand, and get his approval.

This Sanders determined to do that very evening, after he had put Mary on the train.

The girl had not been gone five minutes before Sanders was at the telephone in the station, trying to arrange for a conference with Mr. Rand. The person at the other end of the wire informed him, however, that Mr. Rand had gone out of town, and would not return until early Monday morning.

Sunday was a long day to Sanders, but it passed at last, and the eagerly looked for Monday morning came. Sanders's first duty was to get his salary and send a money-order for fifty dollars to the bank at home.

As he dropped the important letter into the mail-box, a tremendous sigh of relief escaped him. The check which this amount was to cover could not possibly reach the bank as soon as this letter.

It took the young man but a short time after that to reach the office of Mr. Rand, and to send in his name to that gentleman. The messenger returned in a moment, with the most remarkable of replies.

"Mr. Rand says he cannot see you," said the boy.

"Please tell him it is very important," urged Sanders, "and will take but a moment."

Again the boy returned, this time with a much stronger message.

"Mr. Rand says he never wants to see you again, but that he will write."

"He can't have said that," rejoined Sanders in amazement.

"But he did," continued the boy; "and he said you knew why."

"I haven't the faintest idea; and I *must* see him. Go back, again, please, and say it is most important."

The boy returned the third time, much excited.

"Mr. Rand is very angry, sir, and says to have you put out if you won't go."

This settled Sanders, and he was soon standing on the street, gazing up and down, trying to account for the other's strange behavior.

What had he done? It couldn't be about the check, for there had not been time for it even to be deposited yet.

At last he gave up trying to solve the mystery, and returned to his office, determined to write or wait for the letter Mr. Raud had said he would send.

It was a very forlorn day for the young man, and his legal work suffered a good deal. The hours dragged through some way, however; night came, as it has a way of doing, but with it little sleep for Sanders.

It was a very worn young man who presented himself at the office the following morning, and found there the expected letter. It was rather different from what he had expected, for it said that the writer had possibly been hasty the day before, and would see the young man that morning and explain, if any explanation were necessary.

Eagerly, therefore, Sanders again sought the offices of Rand & Company, and was ushered into the angry presence of the head of the firm.

"Now, young man," began Mr. Rand, "listen to what I have got to say, then you may tell me what induced you to do as you did; but do not interrupt me.

"When I cashed your check Saturday something seemed to tell me that there was a mystery about it. I did a thing I have very seldom done. I spent two dollars and called up your bank on the long-distance telephone, and inquired if you had fifty dollars on deposit, as I had just cashed your check for that amount. They informed me that you had not a cent in the bank, and that they would have to protest the check when it arrived, which would probably be on Tuesday."

Several times Sanders had attempted to speak, but the rising wrath of the older man deterred him.

Mr. Rand continued: "Of all the meanest, lowest—"

The entrance of a messenger-boy with a telegram interrupted the irate man. He opened the message, and sat gazing at it with perplexed eyes: then he read it aloud:

> Phone message wrong. Deposit arrived this morning. Check will be honored.

"I see, young man—it was not businesslike, but not what I thought it was. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes," replied Sanders; "I want to marry your ward."

"I shall always be glad to grant you any little favor like that," replied Mr. Rand.

In League with the Black Vultures.

By HAROLD C. BURR.

A job for a brave man and one that turned out to require something less noble than courage.

> WANTED—A young man to start immediately for South America. Must be brave and have a bridled tongue. Apply to S. Saveros, 27 Park Lane.

THE young fellow on a bench in Union Square read the advertisement four times, and waited twenty minutes before deciding.

It was his second week as a city lounger, and he had grown desperate for work. Day after day he had haunted the park, and became one of the bench brigade. Hope and despair often held pitched battles before his hungry eyes, and despair always won out.

He was on the rocks. Alone in a country town, he had ventured to the city and found out his mistake. Nobody wanted anybody because of hard times.

Two minutes ago he had picked up a section of a morning newspaper on the seat beside him and stumbled across the advertisement of hope. South America was a far cry. But he didn't care. It held out a possibility of food and shelter.

Yes, Nick Draper rather thought he'd

investigate the original advertising genius, S. Saveros.

He deserted Union Square and shaped a course down-town.

Park Lane could easily have been named "Anarchist Alley." Draper had heard of the place in the newspapers. Bombs and red flags lurked hidden behind dingy building fronts in that notorious neighborhood. But he had figured it out, and disposed of that probability. There were no kings and queens to be assassinated in South America.

No. 27 turned out to be a cigar-store. Evidently business was not flourishing, if tobacco was the sole source of the proprietor's income.

There was no moist, fragrant odor as the prospective customer entered. It was all dry and dusty and parched looking. Show-case and the banked cigar boxes behind were soiled and caked with dust.

A thin board partition, provided with a door, divided the store in half. As Draper pushed through the front entrance a bell rang over his head, and a man issued from the hidden regions beyond.

He was spare and Spanish. The yellow skin of his face was like sun-baked parchment. His eyes were as black as twin coals, his movements restless, quick, eager.

You would have rated him a fine chap to strangle a man on a dark night.

"Mr. Saveros?" Draper intimated, whereat the other nodded shortly, a shade suspiciously. "I saw your advertisement in the *Herald*. If you care to examine me, perhaps I might do for the work."

The South American thawed a trifle.

"Ah, you have answered, *señor*," he said. "The work you speak of is daring beyond all. But it is a great work and most honorable. If you undertake the mission and never falter, you will strike a blow for humanity, *señor*. But come, follow me. We will go in the back room, where we can smoke and talk in peaceful security. This way, *señor*."

Draper went after him around the end of the counter. In the screened-off half of the store were some chairs, a pine table, and a bed that cried to high heaven for a chambermaid.

A cheap colored print of the young King of Spain hung on the wall for the world to see. Plainly, Saveros had not banded himself with his ribald countrymen of the quarter.

He tossed out a package of cigarettes, scraped a match along the table-edge, and held the tiny flame for Draper to suck at.

"The mission concerns two countries," Saveros began, finding his words cautiously, and standing the cigarette-box end on end as he went on: "One is pink on the man-made map of the world, the other blue, but the people, *señor*, are of one heart united. Both have red blood—red and warm. Our idea, we of the League of Black Vultures, is to—what do you *Americanos* say?—to merge, to make one noble country of two little pig-sties!

"Rio Santa and Porto Pinto united! What a grand, what a glorious, what a powerful country! As one we could compete with Brazil in trade and war. We of the Vultures are of both places, political exiles and many, praise the Virgin! But we want two brave men. One we have secured. The other—maybe you, *señor*."

Draper could feel the lure of adventure flow within him.

"Fire ahead! I've a thousand ears to hear," he said.

"We want revolution, but no bloodshed," Saveros pursued in his dry, even little monotone. "Rio Santa and Porto Pinto are ruled by twin oppressors. Each has a butcher *presidente*, who leads army and state by the nose. Santa Maria! it makes the blood foam! *Señor, señor!*" he shouted in a convulsed whisper. "Once we capture those dictating devils we have won. That is our cause. But we dare not do this ourselves. We are watched and wanted."

"You are operating from here in the States?"

"Partly—yes. But not wholly. That would be fruitless, useless. Why—you can see. I am one of the agents sent out by the league to scour the globe for helpers. There is no hurry, and we have money in abundance."

Draper was looking him over shrewdly.

"Let me understand you, Saveros. You want me to capture one of these *presi-*

dente fellows and turn him over to your band of revolutionists. The other one seems to bave been provided for. You count on that to carry the day, turn the troops, I take it. But suppose I get caught touching off the fireworks? It may be a case of prison and the firing squad."

"The advertisement said the applicant must be brave and silent," said Saveros enigmatically.

If that scared Draper, he hid his fear easily.

"I see," he nodded carelessly. "What else is there? Who pays my fare to the banana lands?"

"All that is detail. Your ticket for Rio Santa will be bought and turned over to you immediately you decide to go. Ample funds will be provided. You will have sealed orders delivered to you. Once at the capital of Rio Santa, you will open them and follow instructions. And if the venture is successful, *señor,* you will receive as your share of the reward ten thousand dollars!"

"Get out there!" scoffed Draper. "You're stringing me."

Saveros drew himself up proudly.

"On the honor of a Spanish gentleman. My word, *señor,* has never been doubted."

"Beg pardon, old man. But, you see, it's been so long since I've seen the green side of a dear old dollar bill that ten thousand of them sounds kind of like a parade. Well, I'll go you, of course."

Nick Draper pressed out his ashy cigarette-stub with his thumb and forefinger.

"How about some advance money?" he added. "I'm hollow enough to echo."

Saveros smiled, reached across and grasped his hand.

"That is good, *señor,* and I am glad beyond speech. Many have applied, but you only suit. Be back here at eight o'clock to-night. Then all will have been arranged."

He stared Draper over thoughtfully. "Your clothes are poor and you are hungry. I will give you money out of my own private purse for present needs. You are our brother now."

And two days later Nick Draper was a passenger on a South American coaster bound for Rio Santa. He had scoured himself and togged out his person in blue serge, low shoes, and Panama straw. None of his will-of-the-wisp friends of Union Square would have, could have, recognized him as he leaned prosperously on the rail and bemoaned the green disgrace on the Goddess of Liberty.

A bulldog revolver bulged one corner of his bip; Saveros's envelope of sealed orders was in his breast-pocket. He was happy and expectant.

He thought of the open-mouthed astonishment of the crowd at Silkins's grocery out home if it had seen him then, and smiled amiably.

The first sight of Rio Santa looks like the back drop of a South American comic opera. Blue water, sandy beach, quaint white city, green palm-trees—all these greet the eye. Draper was reminded of an advertising poster of a tropical steamship company he had once seen.

The water near shore was crowded with soapy shoals and sand-bars, and they had to land the passengers in skiffs. It was proposed to scoop out a channel to the ancient docks some day. But the government had postponed and postponed, and the story had become a legend.

Draper, on his sea legs, found lodgings in a subdued part of town. Now was come the time to open his sealed instructions. He locked the door of his room securely and brought out his letter. First, he read his name scrawled across the face, turned the envelope over, inserted a thumb at either end, and ripped open the flap. Inside was a single narrow strip of paper. Draper screwed his forehead and read slowly:

> Consult Alfonso Carazo at No. 7 Plaza. The password is "Liberty." The Holy Mother guide your arm!

"Now, what the devil does that mean?" mused the Yankee emissary. "You never can tell about these cutthroats who play their cards in the dark. But I'm too deep in the game to back out now. I'll just keep Nick Draper's fingers crossed and his eyes wide open and shoot off my little popgun if I get a flea in my ear! Now for No. 7 Plaza."

He found the place without difficulty. It was a great warehouse of some sort facing the public square, and Carazo seemed to be the janitor. Otherwise, the place was deserted.

Draper found him by adroitly worded questioning at the wine-shop next door. He rose timorously out of a huge packing-case as soon as our tyro swashbuckler called to him, but when Draper whispered the password of the Vultures he was all confidence.

"You are the second man, then?" he whispered back. "The other has been despatched to Porto Pinto. Come this way, *señor*. You are, indeed, lucky to come at a session. But make no noise."

He picked his way a dozen steps among the bales and turned suddenly.

"*Señor,* the oath has not been taken. You must swear by all you hold sacred that you will never talk of what you will see and hear here. Your promise before we proceed. You must be loyal, whatever befalls."

Draper hesitated. Promises were ticklish things to break, and so many contingencies could arise. But that old insistent call to adventure urged him on, and he bowed to the dictum of Carazo.

"All right," he said, raising his right hand, "I swear to be good."

Carazo moved on, satisfied, Draper close behind him. The way wound in and out through a wooden maze of stacked boxes. By and by they went down a shaky flight of stairs in the dark.

Beneath the steps the guide paused, and Draper heard his knuckles rap on what was evidently a door. A narrow perpendicular ribbon of yellow light barred the gloom. Whispers between Carazo and an unknown, and the ribbon widened and the Yankee was allowed to enter.

Six men were in a little compartment-like cubbyhole. Packing-crates answered for furniture. Cobwebs festooned the ceiling.

Draper blinked at the feeble oil-lamp and took mental stock of his new companions. None were engaging looking personages, and he cuddled his hand in his side-pocket where his revolver lay. Carazo had closed himself out and departed, so our adventurer introduced himself airily.

"Good evening, gentlemen." He knew enough broken Spanish to see him through. "I'm Draper, late of New York and one time billed for the discard. But a friend of yours sent me down here to seize a bold, bad dictator. I am ready. Who are you?"

One of the company came forward.

"Ah, you are welcome, *señor,*" he avowed. "We have waited long for the right spirit to lead us. The good Carazo says you know the password, and that is sufficient, even had we not had a letter from our brother in the North. He described you and you answer well. But, *señor,*" he went on, spreading his hands in implied apology, "a Black Vulture must know how to swoop. Can you swoop, *Americano?*"

Draper grinned.

"Why, yes," he said carelessly, "I guess I can manage to learn. But I can't work blindfolded," he hinted.

"To be sure you cannot," the other hastened to reply. "We have called a special meeting of the league. We are legion as the sand on José Felipe Beach. The hour of dawn is here. The voice of liberty and unity is everywhere clamoring to be heard. It comes over the sea by day; it sobs in the night wind. We'll win, we'll win, we'll win!"

His voice had risen and died.

"But I paint pictures with words," he went on. "*Señor,* it is the time for swift, brave action. A blow must be struck at the heart of despotism. To you the honor falls, the second of your race. One of your countrymen has gone to Porto Pinto on like service. Señor Draper, you must shoot the Dictator of Rio Santa! Am I not right, my brothers?"

There could be no mistaking the nods and softly spoken words that traveled around that circle.

Draper had whitened and his thoughts flew into a merry-go-round. This was decidedly more than he had bargained for.

The League of Black Vultures had shown its evil hand. It was a secret gang of murderers.

He thought quickly. So that cigar-store Indian in New York had said there would be no bloodshed! Saveros had lied by the clock. Nick Draper wasn't

going to turn murderer, but he'd see this thing to a finish.

It was beginning to grow exciting. And he'd pledged his word. No, he wouldn't welch.

So he mused in the space of time that was given him, and a grim smile played around his mouth. He bowed his consent, and the head rascal went into details.

"Such is your part, and your share of the fulfilment will be large." The South American's eyes shone black and wild. "You should not have such a hard road to travel, *señor*. It will be simple to arrange an audience with *el presidente*. You are, let us imagine, a promoter from big America. You would discuss politics with the ruling devil. Then the minute you see him—a quick eye and a puff of smoke and fire! You see, you see, *señor?* But no fooling, no betrayal. If you waver, the carrion will gnaw your bones. You see?"

Yes, Draper saw. It was all fiendishly unadorned. But he managed to hide his anger and nod his head to signify he understood.

Later, when he had mounted the creaking stairs, threaded his way to the cool, pure evening air without and strolled back to his room, smoking a reflective cigarette, he was half sorry he hadn't backed out. But it was too late now to grieve over bygones.

II.

THE greatest man in Rio Santa was Dictator de Rivera. He had provided for himself spacious quarters. The palace was like the country place of an American millionaire. The building was white, splashed with red awnings, dented by shady verandas. Around all was an iron railing skirting a green lawn.

The soldiers of Rio Santa, stationed within the grounds, matched the color scheme of the house — white uniforms with crimson cuffs, stripes and collar-bands. *El presidente's* official office was to the right of the main hall as you went in.

Here, from ten to twelve behind a maplewood table, flanked by his secretary, sat the autocrat of the republic. He dictated, interviewed, made laws. And said secretary was an American girl who was master of laughing brown eyes and a Remington typewriter that rattled under her flying fingers. So much for dry statistics.

Thither on the morrow repaired Nick Draper, trapped tool of the League of Vultures, murderers' scapegoat, cool, collected. He had planned his campaign through the night watches, and if De Rivera wasn't a coward it was bound to go through without a hitch anywhere.

He had no trouble reaching the inner portal. The stenographer was demurely taking notes and the dictator was opposite her, mopping his forehead, talking, walking. He was all white duck and perspiration. Draper coughed, and he whirled around on him.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Presidente," Nick said quickly, "but may I have you alone for two minutes? I promise you my news bears no delay." He turned as if it was quite settled and bowed to the girl. "If the young lady will oblige?"

The dictator signed for her to leave, and she gathered her notes into a rough heap and went out. Once she was clear of the room, Draper darted a shrewd glance around.

There was only one door and a single window—behind him, to his satisfaction. Also the secretary had saved him an awkward necessity and closed that door after her. No one would disturb them if he worked fast.

Presidente de Rivera had seated himself, his olive face curious, and the newly recruited free lance did the same on the other side of the maplewood table.

"You are of the States and a stranger?" intimated the ruler of Rio Santa. "The Señorita Blake should have waited. You are a countryman of hers, and she is homesick. But what can I do for you?"

"Nothing," declared Draper bluntly. "Mr. Presidente, did you ever hear of the League of Black Vultures?"

The dictator was a trifle surprised.

"Ah, then you know of them—that cowardly organization?" he demanded. "They fly at you from cover when it's dark. I have instructed my secret police. They will be wiped into the earth,

You come from them? You come to warn me? But I want neither advice nor threats. I have no fear."

"Don't deceive yourself," pleaded Draper in haste. "Take a good look at me and listen to what I've got to say. Your enemies are everywhere and plot to take your life. I myself have been sent here to kill you, De Rivera! Whoa, there! Not so fast with that gun-arm."

Draper had him covered as quickly as a cowboy could have turned the trick. He went on evenly, looking along the silver pipe of his leveled weapon.

"But don't be afraid. I don't shoot down men who can't shoot back. That isn't the Yankee way. Yet I have promised and devised a little scheme to get around that difficulty. We will rise together, you and I, walk to far corners of the room, count ten, turn and fire. I suppose the quickest man wins. How's your sporting nerve? You will observe a slight pressure of my forefinger would send you to eternity right off the reel. I wouldn't strongly advise you to dicker, to dodge. I'm getting restless. It's a gentleman's chance."

De Rivera had been caught by Draper's pointing revolver half out of his chair. But in the old days he had been a soldier who had seen fighting, and his courage was good.

He looked casually about him and comprehended his daredevil visitor had him foul. But if the situation was delicate, he was not to be outdone. He inclined his head stiffly, and that was all that sealed the compact beyond chance of change.

But it was enough. Each man knew, instinctively, that the other could be trusted to deal from the top of the deck, face up.

Neither spoke as they backed against the maplewood table and started slowly toward their corners. Draper had watched the dictator pull out a drawer and rummage around some loose papers for his pistol. He had watched the fat, stubby fingers grip the butt, curve around the trigger. Now he closed his eyes as he walked and thought of his past sins.

He reached his end of the room first and waited. It would be all over in a second now. Suddenly, he heard the *presidente* counting. The Yankee kept even with him, measuring off the numbers. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten!

Nick Draper pivoted around and twitched bis first finger sharply back. He fired purposely wide. Through the smoke of his own discharge he saw his enemy's revolver spurt out at him.

On the heels of that a boring pain struck into his shoulder, spinning him sideways against the wall. And before he could wipe the sudden mists out of his eyes a draft of cool air blew the smoke around the room and something white and lithe darted into the lead zone.

It was the girl back again. There she stood between the dueling men like a disordered, outraged, frightened queen She was trembling.

"Oh, stop!" she panted. "Don't —don't hurt each other! Don't sboot— any more! What has happened? This is dreadful. You—you mustn't—either of you!"

Draper had taken out his handkerchief and was binding it awkwardly about his wounded shoulder. He winced as he drew the loop tight.

Capture and prison and death would have to be reckoned with now. He had played the game and lost out. But he caught himself looking up at the girl while he worked.

It was an odd time to think of sucb a thing, but he had a mad, glad desire to tuck back a strand of her autumn brown hair that had slipped out of her pompadour. But Draper was a man in such things and couldn't understand.

The tableau Miss Blake had created was galvanized back to life the next second. A shadow slanted across the floor, darkening the light in the room. Somebody had paused at the open window behind Draper. Like a sound out of the invisible a voice cried aloud in furious hate:

"The Yankee pig has betrayed us!" it screamed. "Death to the despot!"

Draper, nearest, whirled toward the speaker. The vapor of smoke was slowly curling out of the window and upward, caught by the gentle breeze. But an evil face stared insolently into the room from without.

It was one of the Vultures Draper had seen at the warehouse yesterday. Be-

fore a move could be made to stop him he shot forward his right arm, and report after report banged at the end of his hand.

At the first shot the dictator raised his hands and pitched headlong, half under the maplewood table. The girl was rooted to the carpet by the horror of the deliberate attack.

The Yankee had laid aside his revolver to manipulate his bandage with some amount of certainty. Now one thought swamped all else.

A woman was in danger. The fiend at the window was wild with the lust to kill, but in his excitement his aim was fortunately bad. Nick flew to the girl and hurried her bodily away.

The palace and lawn were in an uproar of terror. Men ran for their arms helter-skelter, taking up the cry: "The dictator is dead! The dictator is dead! Long live liberty! Long live the people!"

Beyond the grounds the town took up the shout. The League of Black Vultures was alive. Revolution had come again to Rio Santa.

Draper scarcely breathed until he reached the hall with the fear-stricken girl.

"Are you hit anywhere?" he took a precious second to ask fearfully.

"No, no." White pallor had blanched her cheeks and her voice wavered. "But you—your shoulder! You can't run, can you?"

He saw how hard she was trying to be brave.

"Never mind me," pressing her limp hand tighter. "It's only a scratch. Which way shall we go? You know the house better than I do. But don't hesitate. Some of those rebellious rascals will break in here any minute."

"There's a back door down in the cellar," she said, eager to help him. "Perhaps we can escape them that way. I'll show you the stairs."

"Come on, then, and don't let go of me."

Two minutes later they were groping around a black pit of mystery under the house. It was as dark as if a jet curtain had been drawn around them.

Draper put out his free hand and moved it about in a half-circle before his face. He took cautious steps and listened.

The girl had been swallowed up in the gloom at his side, but he heard her trying to catch her breath in sharp, little gasps. Only a vague murmur of sounds came from the regions above stairs.

"The door's over there," whispered Mabel Blake, tugging off to one side. "What a dreadful, spooky place!"

But under her lead they brought up against a solid wall. Draper bethought himself of his matches. He reached in his pocket hopefully, but drew out his hand, disappointed.

The box had been lost somewhere along the line of flight. There was nothing to do but edge carefully along the wall, Draper in the lead. Perhaps that would necessitate a circuit of the whole cellar, but it was a sure way of finding the door of deliverance.

The noise above had heightened. A smothered cheer was heard by the lost man and woman in the dark. The next instant feet tramped and pounded overhead, and then the light strengthened feebly.

Draper looked over his shoulder and drowned down a cry of sudden dismay. He had made out the glow of lanterns on the cellar-steps. The lights moved downward, swinging to and fro, and shadowy men showed behind them.

"Rout them out, men of Rio Santa!" some one gave command. "Kneel and fire low. The pest-house rats are here somewhere. Manuel saw them run this way."

Draper's heart shot into his mouth. The rebels on the stairs were going to rake the cellar from center to circumference with a fine-tooth comb of flame. He could see the yellow streaks spitting through the black gloom, could imagine them circling nearer and nearer until he was cut down and the girl—

He leaped frantically in front of her. No, they mustn't shoot the girl at any cost. He could give himself up, and, doubtless, that would insure her safe conduct.

So he wrapped his curved hands around his mouth and shouted up at those flickering lights: "There's no one down here to fight," he called out. "Won't you let the young lady with me go? She

had no part in this quarrel. I surrender."

A short silence followed his words. Then: "Who are you, *señor?*" questioned the lantern-holder who had spoken before. "Step forward and. fear nothing. My men will have you covered. Are you a citizen of Rio Santa?"

"We are American subjects, each of us. The *señorita* was *el presidente's* secretary."

Draper and the girl came forward to the foot of the steps where the light was better. Their captors wore army uniforms, and the pointing Mausers of the party were drawn and ready to pump out leaping death at the first sign of flight or hostility.

Mabel Blake shivered and drew a little closer to the man beside her. No word was spoken to them once the prisoners were surrounded.

Now that he was in the toils of the scamps, he had, in a measure, gone back on, Nick Draper looked for a short shrift and no favor. The victory of the insurrectionists was apparently sweeping, complete.

There had been no battle to dispute their seizure of the reins of the republic, only the butchering of a *presidente* that the tale might be written in blood.

Ah, well, it didn't so much matter what became of him, Draper told himself. There were harder, worse things in life than dying, and he was alone, penniless. But all at once a slim hope buoyed him up.

If the American consul heard of his plight that might save him. The protection of the Stars and Stripes was his by birthright. He became full of the idea. How to get word to the consulate was the problem.

The fellow in charge of the cellar detachment detailed two of his turncoats to escort the prisoners up-stairs. Draper was cuffed along and generally handled roughly, but he was thankful that Miss Blake came in for no share of the abuse.

In the upper hall they were conducted into the very room where the little drama of South America had taken place.

Here a sensation struck them numb with amazement. It was too sudden for words, too startling by far to remain normal about.

Draper stared as if the moon had dropped out of the dome of the sky. Mabel Blake gave a little scream of only half-realized delight. Behind the maple-wood table sat the Dictator of Rio Santa, alive and grim and well, not even wounded!

The hard lines of his olive-yellow face relaxed to pleasantry.

"*Señor,* you are astounded. And the *señorita,* too. No, I was not slain, and you who would have killed me, are my captive. But you are curious.

"At the first shot I dropped to the floor for safety. They thought me dead. You see how I fooled them? My troops swarmed my lawn like headless gamecocks. I went to the window and called to them in confidence and love. I made a speech of pardon. The tide turned again, *señor.* I sent into the cellar to find you — to bring you here. In an hour there will be no more rebels in Rio Santa. The government will remain intact."

"Let me speak to him for you," Mabel whispered to Draper. "Your shoulder must hurt frightfully and it ought to be dressed. Perhaps I can get him to forgive you."

Draper nodded. She went impulsively over to the dictator and spoke softly to him. He looked at her, hesitated, and gave some orders to the soldiers who held Nick. They saluted and departed.

"You have been interceded for, *señor.*" De Rivera joined his finger-tips and considered Draper thoughtfully. "The *señorita* has a woman's kind heart. I, in addition, have been thinking. You might have shot me in cold blood. You are honorable, *señor.* I am gratified. See, I show mercy and will find a government position for you, if you so desire!"

Nick Draper, hardly alive to his salvation yet, thanked him profusely. He gave back Miss Blake the shy smile she was bestowing on him.

That was two months ago next week. Some there are in Rio Santa who see a good old Yankee romance ahead. Who knows? Stranger things have happened.

Anyway, Nick Draper can tell you that Cupid goes armed with a Mauser in South America.

A complete list of new Victor Records for November will be found in the November number of Munsey's, Scribner's, McClure's, Century, Everybody's, Current Literature, Pacific Monthly; and December Cosmopolitan.

To Good Housekeepers!

Dear Madam:—

A SHABBY piece of furniture never *looks* worth sending out to be refinished—It really *is* worth it. You forget that it isn't the *wood* that is worn—it is the *finish*.

Replace the *finish*—the piece is as good as new. When you do this yourself, the expense is slight and the labor nothing.

You must first *remove* the old finish. Varnishing over it looks *cheap*—shiny—home-made.

The old finish is a coat. Johnson's Electric Solvo takes this off quickly, easily. The piece is then left "in the white"—new wood—to be finished as *you* like.

Choose one of Johnson's Wood Dyes (14 shades). A shade to suit you. If too dark, add alcohol, if not dark enough, add our Flemish Oak Dye, No. 172. You'll find the dye thin like water. It enters the wood pores evenly—it brings out the beauty of the grain—the lights—the darks.

JOHNSON'S
ARTISTIC WOOD FINISHES
JOHNSON

You cannot make a "spotted" job if you try. It contains no varnish to *cover* the beauty of grain. It is a dye that accentuates the effect you want. Each shade is always the same.

The finishing is equally simple. Johnson's Prepared Wax is pastelike. It is applied with a soft cloth. It dries instantly. Rubbing with a dry cloth then gives a velvety protecting finish of great beauty.

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Geo. L. Harding, Binghamton, N.Y.

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(Rev.) W. W. Cox.

Windsor, Vt.,
March 8, 1908.

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Robert L. Patrick.

Jacobs Creek, Pa.

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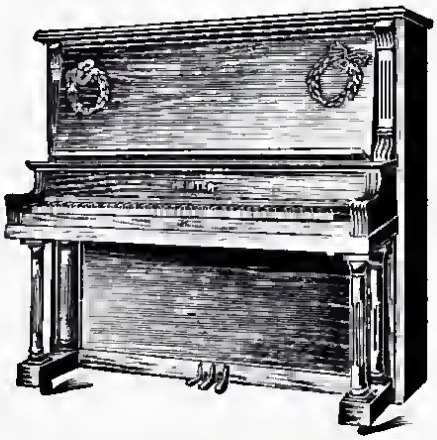

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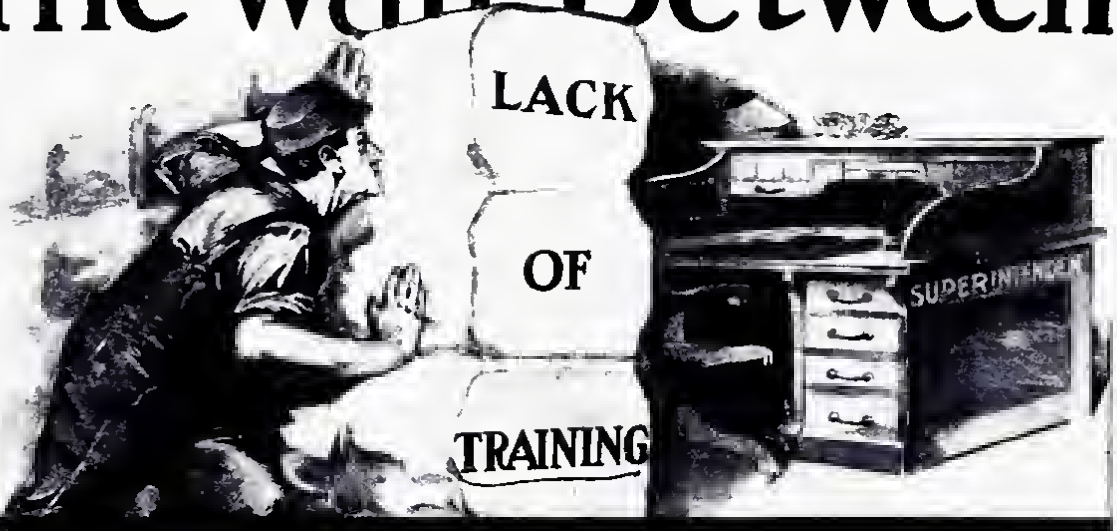

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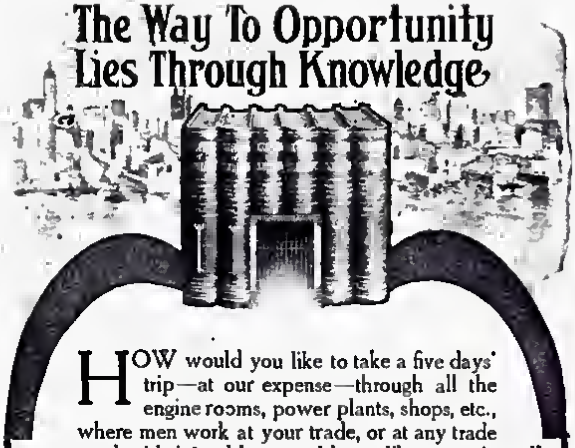

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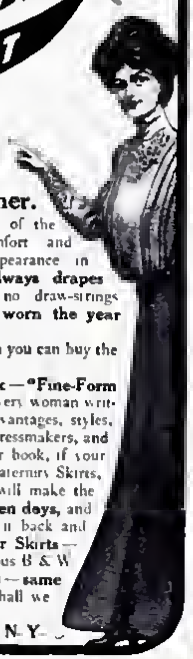

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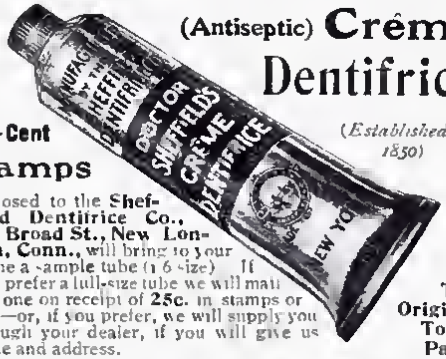

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The top ring, in Tiffany mounting, is only $40.00; the beautiful Tiffany twin ring (two gems of choicest quality), $75.00; and the magnificent diamond cluster (so closely set as to look like one large diamond), $85.00.

TERMS: $4.00 a month pays for the Tiffany, and $7.50 and $8.50 a month for each of the other rings.

A discount of 8 per cent for cash in full.

WRITE FOR CATALOG and special discount sheet at once, even if you do not intend to purchase right away. Do not think of buying a diamond or any article of jewelry, cut glass or silverware until you have seen this catalog and our special 40 per cent discount sheet.

No need to write a letter, your name and address on the coupon will do.

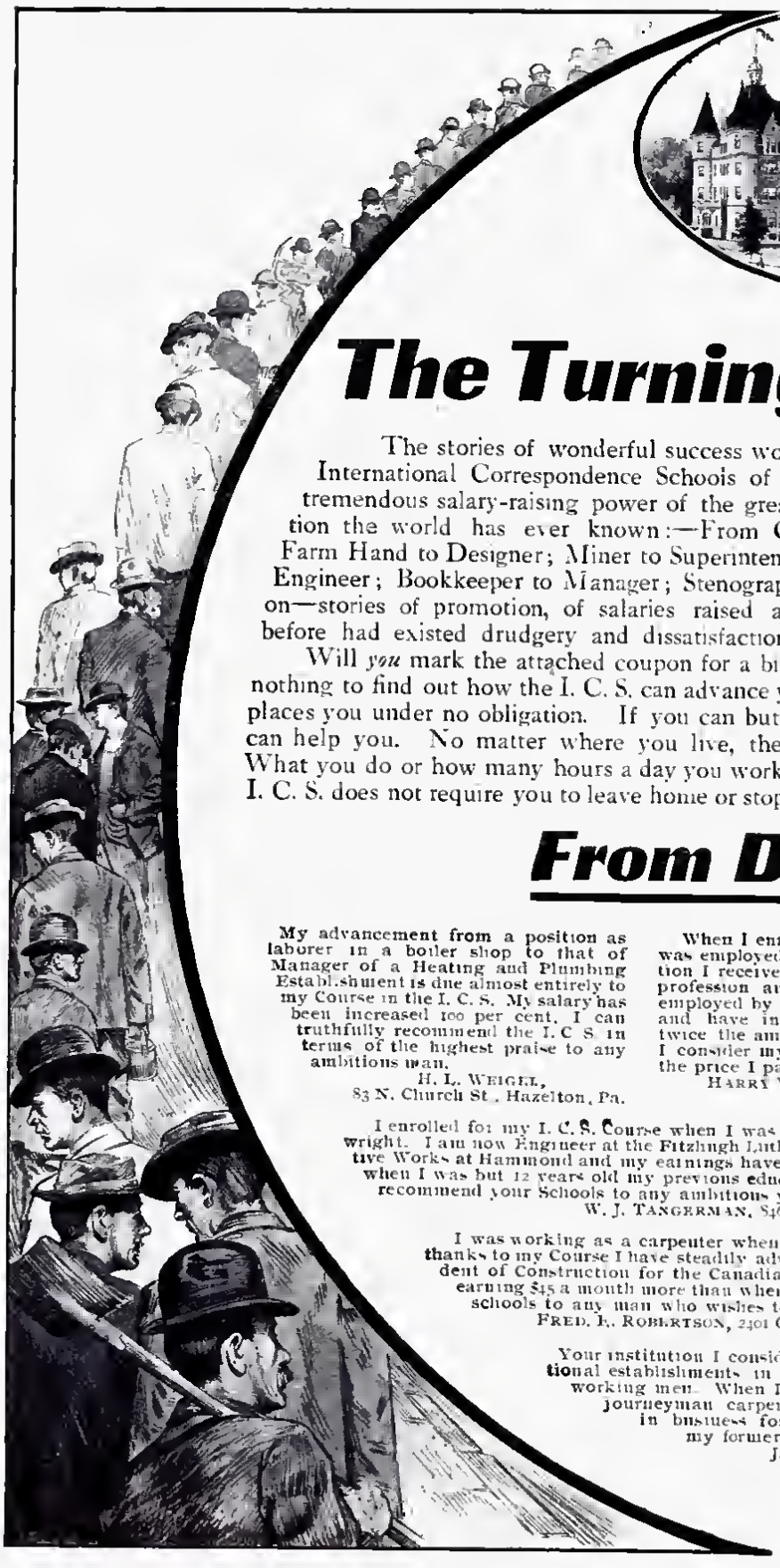
GEO. E. MARSHALL
(Inc.)
W. S. HYDE, Jr., President
A. S. TRUE, Secretary

Suite 1128, 103 State Street, CHICAGO, ILL.

GEO. E. MARSHALL (Inc.), 103 State Street, Suite 1128, Chicago, Illinois.
Without any obligations on me, please send me free, prepaid, your latest catalog and explanation of your no-money-down approval offer, also explanation of your term payment plan.

Name .....

Address .....



The Turning Point

The stories of wonderful success won through the help of the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton, Pa., prove the tremendous salary-raising power of the greatest man-helping institution the world has ever known:—From Carpenter to Draftsman; Farm Hand to Designer; Miner to Superintendent; Blacksmith to Chief Engineer; Bookkeeper to Manager; Stenographer to Treasurer—and so on—stories of promotion, of salaries raised and independence, where before had existed drudgery and dissatisfaction.

Will *you* mark the attached coupon for a bigger salary? It costs you nothing to find out how the I. C. S. can advance you. Marking the coupon places you under no obligation. If you can but read and write, the I. C. S. can help you. No matter where you live, the I. C. S. can reach you. What you do or how many hours a day you work makes no difference—the I. C. S. does not require you to leave home or stop work—mark the coupon.

From Drudgery

My advancement from a position as laborer in a boiler shop to that of Manager of a Heating and Plumbing Establishment is due almost entirely to my Course in the I. C. S. My salary has been increased 100 per cent. I can truthfully recommend the I. C. S. in terms of the highest praise to any ambitious man.

H. L. WEIGEL,
83 N. Church St., Hazelton, Pa.

When I enrolled for my I. C. S. Course I was employed as a steamfitter. The instruction I received enabled me to advance in my profession and I am now Chief Engineer employed by E. G. E. Wallace, of Rochester, and have increased my salary to nearly twice the amount it was when I enrolled. I consider my Course to be worth ten times the price I paid for it.

HARRY WORMHOOD, R. F. D. No. 3,
Rochester, N. H.

I enrolled for my I. C. S. Course when I was working as a helper to a millwright. I am now Engineer at the Fitzhugh Luther Company Car and Locomotive Works at Hammond and my earnings have been doubled. As I left school when I was but 12 years old my previous education was necessarily scant. I recommend your Schools to any ambitious young man.

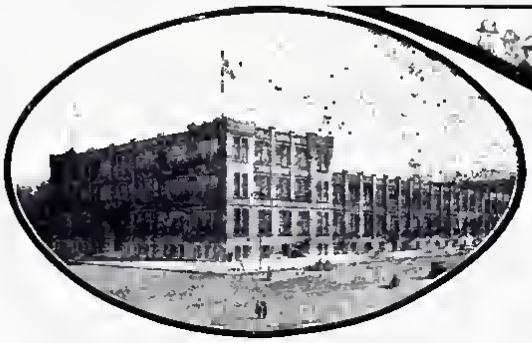
W. J. TANGERMAN, 846 Hickory St., Hammond, Ind.

I was working as a carpenter when I enrolled with the I. C. S., but thanks to my Course I have steadily advanced. I am now Superintendent of Construction for the Canadian Bank of Commerce and am earning $15 a month more than when I enrolled. I recommend your schools to any man who wishes to better his position.

FRED. E. ROBERTSON, 2401 Granville St., Vancouver, B. C.

Your institution I consider to be one of the best educational establishments in the country, especially for working men. When I enrolled for my Course I was journeyman carpenter. I am now a Contractor in business for myself, and have doubled my former earnings.

JAMES D. HINKLE,
6 Weber Ave., Akron, O.



of the Poorly-Paid

Perhaps you have a liking for some other line of work. It may be you want to qualify for promotion in your present position, or that you want to break away from a "dollar a day" existence. The I. C. S. will make you a specialist in *your chosen line of work*—will train you for promotion—will raise your salary. Mark the coupon.

The best proof that the I. C. S. can raise your salary is the three hundred and more *unsolicited* letters received from students every month reporting salaries raised and promotion given wholly through I. C. S. help. Mark the coupon.

Let the I. C. S. be the turning point in your aim for success. There is an I. C. S. way to help you. Will you buy a two cent stamp to learn what it is? Then, mark and mail the coupon **NOW.**

to Success

When in charge of the erection of cotton mill machinery I took out my Course in the I. C. S. The excellence of your instruction was of great benefit to me in advancing myself to a position as Assistant Superintendent of the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills of Atlanta, Ga., operating 60,000 spindles, and to double my earnings.
J. McD. GAMEWELL, 57 Elizabeth St., Atlanta, Ga.

I was a railroad stenographer earning a salary of about $5 per week when I enrolled for my Advertising Course in the I. C. S. I am now Advertising Manager for the Wright Taylor Co., of Louisville, Ky., and my earnings have been very greatly increased. I consider your Course so excellent that I am constantly advising young men to enroll with you.
CHAS. F. CLARK,
c. o. Wright & Taylor,
Louisville, Ky.

International Correspondence Schools,
Box 806 D, SCRANTON, PA.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for employment or advancement 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	Plumber & Steam Fitter
Commercial Law	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Civil Service	Building Contractor
Chemist	Architect's Draftsman
Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Structural Engineer
Elec. Engineer	Banking
	Mining Engineer

Name _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

The Good Barber Says:

Get a Razor That Strops (Sharpens)

I do not use an *unstropped, dull* razor, because it would not shave comfortably or cleanly.

Besides,

doing so would irritate your skin, giving instead of a shave a "scrape," which pulls and draws.

Therefore,

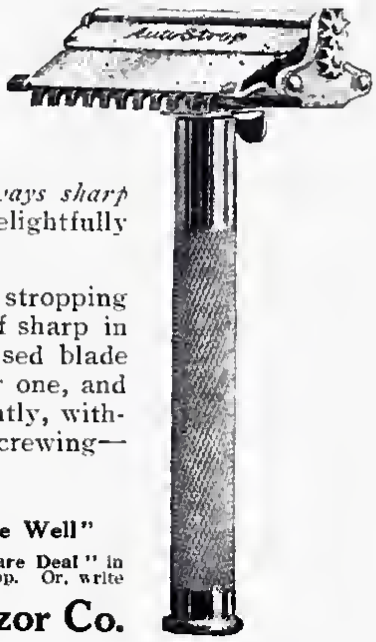
I strop (*sharpen*) my razor frequently so as to shave you properly and leave your skin smooth and cool.

Maybe you've tried to shave with one or several of the different "no-stropping razors," and not having the skill or means of keeping them stropped (*sharp*), have quit in disgust.

NOW, HOWEVER, "A WAY OUT" HAS BEEN FOUND IN THE

AutoStrop SAFETY RAZOR Strops Itself

—placing in your hands a really wonderful expert *mechanical* barber.



Its *self-contained* stropping (*sharpening*) arrangement makes the AutoStrop the "last word" in Safety Razors.

It strops (*sharpens*) automatically, and being *always sharp* gives the well-groomed man what he desires—a delightfully clean, smooth, safe shave each time used.

It is not unscrewed or taken apart for either stropping (*sharpening*) or cleaning; the AutoStrop strops itself sharp in about one third the time it takes to remove a dull used blade from any other Safety Razor to replace it with a new one, and you clean it just as conveniently, without taking apart—without unscrewing—without any trouble at all.

STANDARD OUTFIT

Complete as illustrated, consists of Quadruple Silver-Plated, Self-Stropping Razor, 12 AutoStrop blades, One Horse-Hide Strop. All in Handsome Leather Case. Size 2 x 3¾ inches.

PRICE, $5.00

By comparison worth at least double.

AutoStrop Maxim:

"You Lather Well, and I'll Shave Well"

If your dealer wishes to give you the "Square Deal" in Safety Razors, he'll sell you the AutoStrop. Or, write

AutoStrop Safety Razor Co.

345 Fifth Avenue, New York

FOR FREE BOOKLET

NOTE—AutoStrop Razors are sold under a guarantee which *protects* purchasers *absolutely*.

GIVE THE OLD SAFETY RAZOR TO THE BOY AND TREAT YOURSELF TO A MAN'S RAZOR.

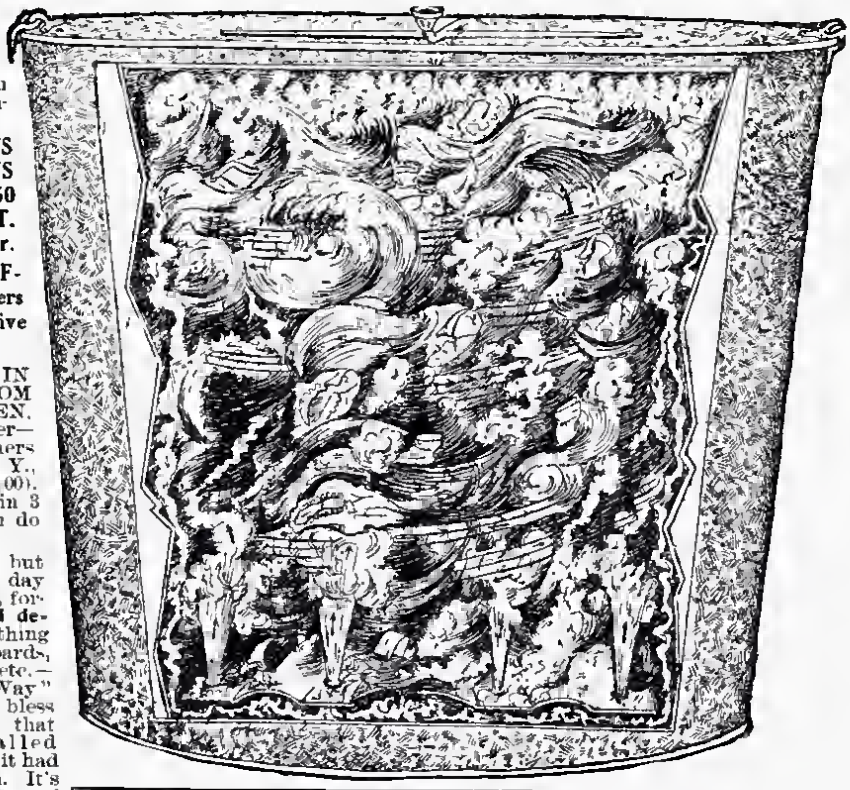
SOMETHING NEW, DIFFERENT, UNEXPECTED.

Readers listen sharp, don't miss! Investigate—best thing ever happened. Hundred years coming—here at last Full grown. So startling you may not believe at first. Astonishing, yet absolutely true.

INGENIOUS OHIOAN INVENTS A NEW OEVICE THAT CLEANS FAMILY WASHING IN 30 TO 50 MINUTES, WHILE YOU REST. No rubbiag, no chemicals, no motor.

SEE HOW SIMPLE, EASY, OIFFERENT. Tbonsands of users praise it. Circulars sent free, give full details.

NO SUCH DEVICE SOLD IN STORES—DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING YOU HAVE SEEN. Nothing else like it—great seller—enormous demand. Customers delighted. R. O. Cowan, N. Y., places 13 in 6 hours, (profit $9.00). Mrs. J. Brown, Pa., sold 10 in 3 days, (profit $30.00). You can do the same.



Miracles don't happen now, but listen—there's no more wash day troubles—now dead, wiped out, forgotten. There's **new invented device** for cleaning clothes—nothing like it. Good-bye to wash boards, washing machines, troubles, etc.—Their day is passed. "Easy Way" of cleaning clothes is here to bless our dear women. Invention that killed wash day is small—called "**Easy Way**," not human. If it had life it would have a stomach. It's claimed a stomach has millions of small tissues, each with a kind of suction. This apparatus has no stomach, yet there's things inside, things that move—a place for dirt—has awful appetite for dirt—**goes after all the dirt** in all clothes at same time. Small, but mighty—silent, but powerful.

FREE SAMPLE TO AGENTS.

SALESMEN—MEN—WOMEN—all or spare time—at home or traveling—showing—taking orders—appointing agents—"Easy Way" new. Wonderful seller—Agents reaping harvest of dollars. When operated, people stop, look. 12 see, ten buy. C. O. Garrett, of Ohio, showed 7 families, sold 6, (profit $18.00). A. B. Verrett, of La., sold 8 one day, (profit $24.00). Mrs. Gerrish ordered sample—then dozen—then 100, (profit over $300). Write for FREE Sample 1908 offer, etc.

Costs Nothing To Investigate—Write Today—Do It Now.

Operated on stove—water inside, then soap, then clothes—move knob occasionally. Dirt lets go as hot water, suds, scalding steam and vapor begin movements. **8 to 10 minutes**—clothes clean—rinse, dry, that's all! Next batch same operation—same water—**30 to 50 minutes family washing clean.** You just wait between batches—child can do it. Laundries clean clothes without rubbing,—the "Easy Way" does the same at your home. Does the combined work of wash boiler, wash board and washing machine. When through, set away on shelf—that's all—no more attention. No wood, all metal, sanitary, should last lifetime. light, easy handled. **Woman's God-send.** Cleans laces, white goods, bed clothes, woolens, colored clothes, etc., without injury—**no rubbing, no chemicals.** Saves drudgery, clothes, labor, fuel, health and looks. No experiment—going on daily—you can do it. Customers everywhere delighted and praise it.

LAURETTA MITCHELL, O., writes:—"Done big washing with 'Easy Way' in 45 minutes. Sold three already." **J. W. MEYERS, Ga.**, orders 12 more, says:—"'Easy Way' **greatest invention for womanhood, forever abolishing miserable wash day.**" **F. E. POST, Pa.**—"**Done 2 weeks' washing in 45 minutes.** Clothes cleaned **without rubbing.**" **J. H. BARRETT, of Ark.**, after ordering 38 says:—"Grandest invention I ever heard of."

Price, only $6.00 complete—ready to use—sent anywhere—not sold in stores. **Guaranteed satisfactory, or your money refunded. Send no money, simply your name and address. Circulars, Tsstimonials, free.**

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46,712 Appointments were made to Civil Service places during the past year. Excellent opportunities for young people. Each year we instruct by mail thousands of persons who pass these examinations and a large share of them receive appointments to life positions at $840 to $1200 a year. If you desire a position of this kind, write for our Civil Service Announcement, containing full information about all government examinations and questions recently used by the Civil Service Commission.

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Taught Any Man or Boy

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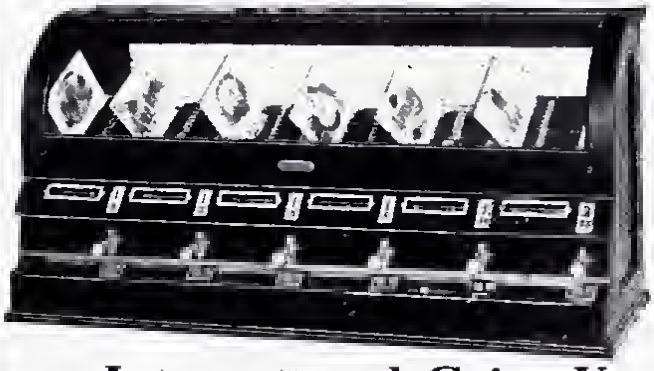
From $10.00 to $50.00 a Day

CAN BE MADE WITH INTERNATIONAL CIGAR VENDING MACHINES



Go into the Automatic Cigar Vending Business

where a coin-in-the-slot machine does all the work, attracts purchasers, takes the money and automatically delivers any selected shape, size, or price cigar in perfect condition and absolutely without failure. Can't be cheated. All you have to do is to collect the money from the machines and keep them stocked with cigars. There is big money in the cigar business—

You Can Make

a splendid, sure and regular income on an investment of a thousand dollars and upward, according to size of territory covered, and secure monopoly of the cigar business of your town or county by owning and operating ten or more

International Cigar Vending Machines

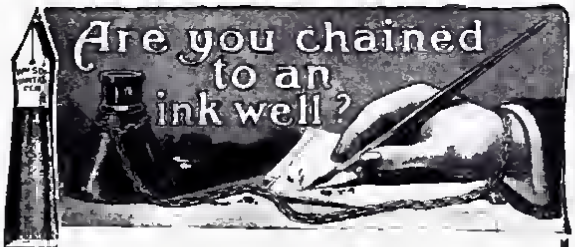
The first and only perfect working automatic coin-in-the-slot cigar vending machine. Never fails—infallible delivery—never makes mistakes—exposes bad coins and delivers every cigar in perfect condition. So simple it never gets out of order. No clerk hire—no store rent—no Government license required—works 24 hours out of 24 every day in the year. Not affected by Sunday laws.

Doesn't interfere with your other business—less than an hour a day required to look after a plant of 100 machines. If you have a thousand dollars or more to invest, put it into International Cigar Vending Machines and insure yourself

An Income for Life. We will sell you a number of machines, give you the exclusive right to operate them in your choice of towns or counties if not already sold and protect you from competition for all time to come

Quick Action Necessary. Live investors everywhere are rapidly taking up desirable towns and counties. WRITE TO-DAY (before somebody else gets the territory you want) for full information, descriptive booklet and names and addresses of people now successfully operating our machines. State what territory you desire. Ask Dun, Bradstreet or any St. Louis bank about our reliability and the capital back of our business.

INTERNATIONAL VENDING MACHINE CO. 222 Chestnut Street, St. Louis, Mo.



WORSE still, are you trying to use a leaking fountain pen or one that writes only by "fits and starts?" If so, provide yourself with a Williamson Fountain Pen and enjoy complete pen-satisfaction.

The Williamson Fountain Pen solves every pen trouble. Always ready and perfect in action, it never soils the fingers or blots the paper.

The flooding so prevalent in other pens is entirely overcome by our "Auto Feed," a late invention which gives qualities to the Williamson Fountain Pen and makes it excel even the pen you think is best.

Made in 250 styles, at prices to suit you. Our "Auto Feed" Fountain Pen is "Non-Flooding."

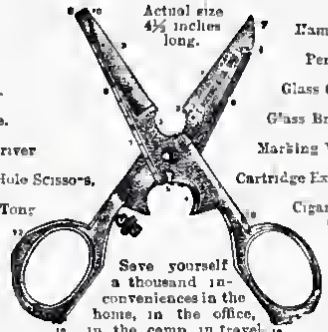
At all discriminating dealers. Ask yours, or write us for free booklet and name of dealer.

WILLIAMSON PEN CO.,

41 Williamson St., JANESVILLE, WIS., U.S.A.

Greatest of All Scissors

18 Tools Combined. Only $1.00



6. Ruler.
1. Scissors.
7. Measure.
8. Nail File.
9. Screw Driver
2. Button Hole Scissors.
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Hammmer 12.
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Save yourself a thousand inconveniences in the home, in the office, in the camp, in travel—in fact anywhere. Carry a pair of our **18-tools-in-1 Scissors.** Put up in elegant leather metal-tip sheath. Money refunded if not pleased

Wm. C. Hocking & Co. 456 Marine Bldg. Chicago

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WE TEACH YOU TO PLAY THE CORNET OR ANY BRASS INSTRUMENT through the mail, send a beautiful instrument to learn on, and **give it to you absolutely free** at the end of your short course of simple lessons, easily paid for weekly. Write today for scores of testimonials from pupils all over the U. S. and Canada who earn good money through our course. **No previous knowledge of music necessary. Pupils all ages** and as far away as Alaska. Distance makes no difference.

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PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS

In Holiday Packages

NO present you could make would be more surely, or more thoroughly appreciated. "President" Suspenders are so much better than the commonplace kinds that pull and strain with every move, that any comfort-loving man will congratulate you for your sensible choice of his gift. There are different weights and lengths to suit all requirements—all made with the highest quality of elastic webbing.

This year "President" Suspenders for Christmas gifts come in boxes that are genuine works of art, their covers being decorated with beautiful color pictures by the most celebrated French artists.

Don't risk disappointment by accepting any substitute—there's no suspender like the "President." The guarantee on every pair reads—Satisfaction, New Pair or Money Back.

Price 50 Cents

Sold by all dealers, or sent prepaid to any address on receipt of price. ***Buy today*** as many pairs as you will need for your friends.

THE PRESIDENT 1909 ART CALENDAR

is a masterpiece. It consists of four panels, three of them reproducing in eight colors the exquisite work of celebrated French artists, together with an artistic cover panel on which the calendar is printed. There is no printing or advertising on any of the art panels. They are worthy of frames or suitable for decorating any room. Sent postpaid on receipt of **25 cents.** Order at once as the demand is heavy and the supply limited.

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W. A. SHRYER, *Pres.*,
American Collection Service.

Be Your Own Employer

Establish an Honorable and Paying Business for Yourself — Build Up a $5,000 Business in Two Years

We teach you the Collection Business in all its branches, tell you what to do, how and when to do it.

Merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and all business houses have accounts to be collected everywhere. They will pay you well for this service. *Ask them.*

Turn Spare Time Into Dollars

A few moments' study each day devoted to this course will soon prepare you for the Collection Agency Business. Many students gave but part of their time. The following are extracts of letters on file in our office:—

The first claim I received was $112.00, which I made short work of, making 50% for collection, thus more than paying for my complete course.
CARL H. VOGT, Los Angeles.

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FRANK E. WELSH, Baltimore.

Through our Collection Service have just received a fee of $500 00.
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I have not done over 30 hours' real work so far, just my leisure time, and yet I have actually made $61.90. A little over $2.00 an hour. Not so very bad considering my inexperience.
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We send business to gradnates opening agencies. We want representatives everywhere. *Grasp this opportunity* to become independent.

Be the owner of an Agency and become a part of a rapidly growing organization having a chain of offices throughout America, each providing business for the other and operating on uniform lines.

Lawyers, merchants, business managers, and credit men have been benefited by the American Collection Service Instruction.

W. A. SHRYER, Pres.

AMERICAN COLLECTION SERVICE
135 State Street
DETROIT, MICH.

SIGN THIS COUPON. It will not obligate you or cost one cent. INVESTIGATE. It may mean dollars for you. NOW Do IT.

W. A. SHRYER, Pres., American Collection Service, 135 State St., Detroit, Mich.

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Will You Accept This Business Book if We Send it Free?

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One hundred and twelve of the world's master business men have written ten books—2,193 pages—1,497 vital business secrets. In them is the best of all that they have been able to squeeze from their own costly experience about

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A 9,059-word booklet has been published describing, explaining, picturing the work. Pages 2 and 3 tell about managing businesses great and small; pages 4 and 5 deal with credits, collections and with rock-bottom purchasing; pages 6 and 7 with handling and training men; pages 7 to 12 with salesmanship, with advertising, with the marketing of goods through salesmen, dealers and by mail; pages 12 to 15 with the great problem of securing the highest market price for your services—no matter what your line; and the last page tells how you may get a complete set—bound in handsome half morocco, contents in colors—for less than your daily smoke or shave, almost as little as your daily newspaper.

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ANY STYLE
DIAMONDS

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Day or night. You can own a diamond equal in brilliancy to any genuine stone at one-thirtieth the cost

BARODA DIAMONDS
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stand acid test and expert examination. We guarantee them. See them first, then pay. Catalogue Free. Patent Ring Measure included for FIVE two-cent stamps.

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Wonderful

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Mr. Edison says: "I WANT to see a Phonograph in every American Home."

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Try this great latest style phonograph in your home; play the beautiful Edison gold moulded records, and if *then* you do not care to keep the outfit, return it at our expense. We do not charge you one cent for the trial.

$2.00 a Month now buys a genuine Edison phonograph, easiest possible payments at rock-bottom prices—*and no interest on payments.* Our beautiful catalog quotes absolutely rock-bottom prices — the magnificent latest style Outfit No. 5 — at about one *fourth* the cost of inferior imitations.

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Remember free trial—*no money down.* You cannot imagine how old and young enjoy the Edison—the endless variety of stirring music, the comical minstrel shows and songs. Send for our free catalog and free trial certificate anyway.

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Without any obligation on me, please send me free, prepaid, your catalog of Edison phonographs, your free circulars of the great Outfit No. 5 and terms of payment.

Name .....

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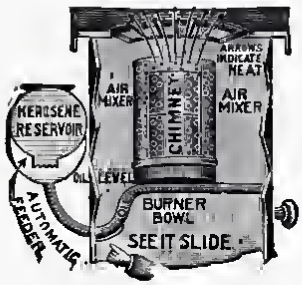

SECTIONAL CUT OF GENERATOR.

BURNS BARRELS OF AIR

NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT.

MOST WONDERFUL COMBINATION HEATING & COOKING STOVE EVER INVENTED

CAUSING GREAT EXCITEMENT WHEREVER EXHIBITED. Fuel drawn principally from atmosphere. **Uses 395 barrels of air, while consuming one gallon of oil.** Wood, coal and oil cost money. **ONLY FREE FUEL IS AIR.** Supply unlimited. No trust in control. Air belongs to rich and poor alike.

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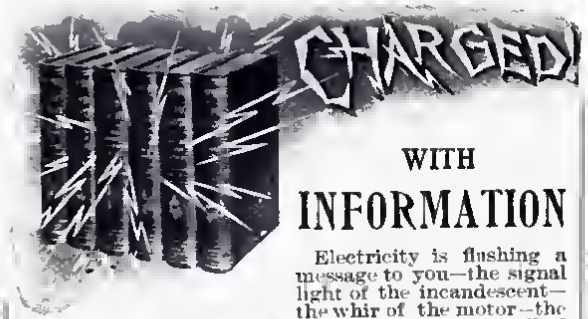

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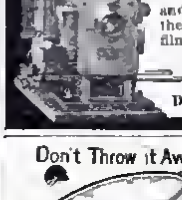

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