ARGOSY

Issued Weekly

A NURSE NAMED ALLENBY

by Bertram Lebhar

10¢ MAY 1 $4.00

JOHNSON'S CARBON REMOVER

In

YOU can keep your motor snappy and full of "pep" by ***preventing*** the accumulation of carbon. Don't wait until your engine is choked and caked with it. Use Johnson's Carbon Remover every 500 miles, then the carbon is removed while it is soft and powdery, eliminating the frequent grinding of valves and ***keeping*** the motor ***always*** clean. No experience or labor required—you can easily do it yourself in ten minutes—and the cost is trifling.

Easy—Clean—Safe—Quick

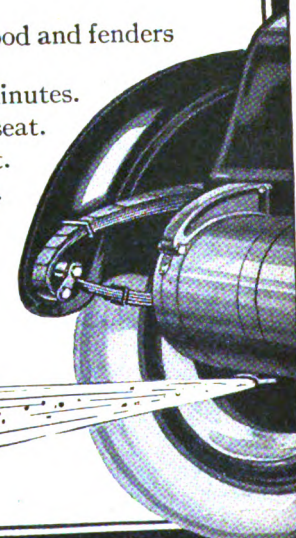
Johnson's Carbon Remover is the easiest, cleanest, safest and most satisfactory remedy for carbon. It will save you from $3.00 to $5.00 over any other method without laying up the car. Johnson's Carbon Remover, the engine laxative, will stop that knock—quiet your motor—save your batteries—and reduce your gas consumption.

JOHNSON'S CAR SAVERS

Johnson's Cleaner and Prepared Wax—make body, hood and fenders look like new.
Johnson's Hastee Patch — can be applied in two minutes.
Johnson's Valve Grinding Compound—gives a velvet seat.
Johnson's Stop-Squeak Oil—a wonderful spring lubricant.
Johnson's Auto-Lak—a splendid one coat body varnish.
Johnson's Black-Lac—the perfect top dressing.
Johnson's Radiator Cement—liquid.

Write for our folder on "Keeping Cars Young"—it's free.

S. C. JOHNSON & SON - Racine, Wisconsin, U. S. A.



Out

THE ARGOSY

Vol. CXX ISSUED WEEKLY NUMBER 3

CONTENTS FOR MAY 1, 1920

FOUR SERIAL STORIES

ONE COMPLETE NOVELETTE

FOUR SHORT STORIES

Next week you'll find that

"THAT KIND OF A MAN"

BY KENNETH MacNICHOL

is your kind of a man

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer
Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $6.00 to Canada, and $7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered
PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1920.
Entered as second-class matter September 28, 1917, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

112 Piece Hand-Fired

$1.00 DOWN

For this beautiful Normandy Blue Bird Dinner Set. The most astounding value for the money ever offered. There are other Blue Bird Dinner Sets on the market today at prices probably lower than those quoted here, but these sets cannot begin to compare with this one, either in the size and shape of the different pieces, in the weight and quality or in the richness of the decorations. Send coupon and $1.00 today.

Famous Blue Bird Dinner Set

This Blue Bird Dinner Set is made of the best quality of American, snowy-white, semi-porcelain, all hand, double-fired. It is modeled in the new Puritan shape—typical of the grace and beauty of the Puritan maid. The decoration is exquisite. The coloring of the blue bird's deep plumage with natural shaded breast, contrasting with the cluster of foliage in natural colorings—the wide band of deep blue on the edge of each piece, against the snowy-white semi-porcelain—and the clear crystal glaze over all, accomplish a rare harmony of color design. This 112 piece set, consisting of only useful pieces, is a complete service for 12 people.

The sizes and actual measurement of the 112 piece set are: 12 dinner plates [9 inches], 12 pie plates [7 inches], 12 fruit saucers [5 inches], 12 bread and butter plates [6 inches], 12 soup coupes [8 3-4 inches], 12 cups, 12 saucers, 1 cream pitcher, 1 sauce boat, 1 deep salad dish [9 3-4 inches], 1 fancy pickle dish [7 3-8 inches], 1 covered butter dish [3 pieces], 1 covered sugar bowl [2 pieces], 1 medium meat platter [11 1-2 inches], 1 large meat platter [13 1-2 inches], 1 bread plate [9 inches], 1 round potato dish [8 1-4 inches], 1 covered vegetable dish [2 pieces], 1 oblong vegetable dish [8 1-2 inches] 12 butter chips. Shipping weight about 100 lbs.

Money Back if Not Satisfied

We have no dissatisfied customers and don't want any. Order Complete Blue Bird Set shipped to your home today. If at the end of 30 days you are not entirely satisfied with it, return at our expense and we will refund your dollar and any freight charges you have paid. No special discount from this advertised price.

Just $1 and Coupon

Mail them to us today. Have this complete Blue Bird Set shipped to you on 30 days trial. Pay the balance in the easy monthly payments if you are satisfied. Read the coupon and mail it today.

L. FISH FURNITURE CO. EST. 1854

L. FISH FURNITURE CO.
Dept. 1455 Chicago

L. FISH FURNITURE CO., Dept. 1455, Chicago

Enclosed find $1.00. Ship special advertised Complete Blue Bird Set No. A114. If I keep the outfit I will pay you $2.75 a month. If not satisfied, I am to return the complete set within 30 days and you are to refund my money and any freight charges I paid.

☐ No. A114—Blue Bird Dinner Set—$1.00 down, $2.75 a month, total price $31.45.

Name .....

Address .....

Post Office ..... *State* .....

If you only want Furniture, Rug, Stove, Phonograph, Watch and General Household Catalog, put X in box ☐

An Amazing Secret of Personality

If it Doesn't Prove its Value to You in 5 Days, It Won't Cost You a Penny

By Albert L. Pelton

IT was the opening night of one of the big musical revues at a New York theatre. The great audience was "warmed-up" and enjoying itself enormously. It was welcoming its favorite head-liners one after the other as each one of them added his or her act to a splendid bill.

There was a pause, and people who looked at their programmes just then found an unfamiliar name upon them. A slim young man in "black-face" make-up, with his hands in immense white gloves, stepped into the spotlight. Something in the electric air of assurance with which he did it made even the seasoned "first-nighters" sit up expectantly.

Then he began to sing, and dance—and next minute he "brought the house down!" The whole house laughed again until the tears came! After the **third** encore was over, and after the audience had failed to get more than a bow, instead of the **fourth** encore that it wanted, people began to turn to their neighbors and say excitedly:

"What a wonderful personality! He certainly puts his songs across in great style. Who is this fellow anyway?" They never had to ask who he was after that! Next morning everybody knew that he was a great big hit.

The Strongest Power for Success

After the Prince of Wales heard him he wanted to take him right back to England—yet if you put Eddie Cantor beside a man with a really fine voice Eddie himself would probably be the first to admit that it wasn't a bit like him. Then he would add that his **own** voice showed the effects of German propaganda during the war, and hadn't "come back" yet—and his grotesque way of saying it would make you laugh again, in tribute to his PERSONALITY—the real secret of his instantaneous and continued success!

What was it that enabled Mary Garden, an unknown music student in Paris, to take the place of the indisposed prima donna in the opera "Louise"—and finish the performance with an ovation from her critical audience? Her magnetic Personality—for people who heard her then and later have said that many voices have more quality than hers. What is it that packs every moving picture theatre when a new film of Charlie Chaplin is billed? What is it the "fans" expect when Babe Ruth comes to bat? A home run! Because home runs are part of Babe's **Personality.** What gave Clemenceau his pet name, "The Tiger?" What made him worthy of his later title, "The Father of Victory?" His unbeatable **personal** passion for France to win.

Better Than Brains

Look into every business and profession in the world and you will find **Personality** lifting its possessors above the crowd—above the heads of many others who may indeed possess more ability, more "mere brains," but who lack this supreme Power for Success! The world pays its biggest rewards to **Personalities.**

What was it that enabled George Westinghouse to secure recognition and financial backing for his famous airbrake after Commodore Vanderbilt had refused to see him and said: "There's a fool outside there who wants to stop the New York Central trains by jamming wind against the wheels. Tell him to go away?" Westinghouse's driving, unbeatable **Personality.** How was it that Charles M. Schwab rose from a stake-driver's job to financial and industrial

generalship? Through his invincible **Personality.** Back of every business success, big or little, you will find a man who has developed his personality—**who** never stops developing it.

You Have a Unique Personality—Develop It!

Now let's examine Personality a moment. What is it? Personality is the group of qualities which make **you different from every other individual in the world!** What enables your friends to recognize you three blocks away? Not your face, for your features are a blur at that distance. It is the way you walk, the way you wear your hat, the way you "hop" a street car—it's your **personality.**

Some personalities are timid, some aggressive; some are quiet, some loud, some gain success quickly, with a brass band, some arrive at it steadily and slowly, by burning much "midnight oil," through sheer, dogged persistence. But the test of every **successful** personality is **originality**—is in being different. Charlie Chaplin's success has caused several other movie actors to adopt his derby, his absurd shoes, and his clothes, but they remain rank imitators. They are really failures because they have neglected to develop their God-given originality—the personal, inborn traits which might make them **different.** You can be a big success in your line—yes, but you must be yourself—you must develop your own **personality!** It is new, original and forceful. It will carry you to the success you dream of. Discover it! Develop it!

I have been making a deep, careful study of this supreme success-quality for years. I have seen its wonderful results, some of them in my own life, and I wanted intensely to discover the laws for the development of successful Personality.

An Astounding Discovery

And I found the way! I found it by meeting a genius! This man, this deep thinker, had discovered a few simple laws that any man of average intelligence can use in developing his personality. These laws are sufficient to enable you to grow indefinitely—you can't exhaust their application in your lifetime—yet you can learn **how** to apply them in a few simple lessons.

This man I met, this genius, had merely written down the laws that govern the development of Personality. I persuaded him to explain them fully—in the form of lessons—and he did it. For a long time after he finished writing the nine lessons, which he called "the Power of Personality," he did not print them. He knew the laws and rules were correct, but he wanted to be sure they were stated **clearly,** so that everybody could understand them. So we both circulated the manuscript copy of this course among our friends. Some of the things these lessons have done for them in the development of Personality are astounding! I could hardly believe their effects on people if I had not seen them with my own eyes.

In each case where the man or woman applied the laws earnestly, big results came—and came **quickly.**

Wonderful Results of Lessons

One of these people was a man who lives in my home town. He has always been regarded as a rank failure. All his life, from boyhood to the age of fifty, he has worked and slaved. I knew that he had real ability in his line—he is a construction engineer—but he seemed to have always just missed success. He was in debt, with a son and a daughter to educate. He read the lessons I sent him, eagerly, thankfully. In a few weeks he learned to assert himself—to claim success as his birthright. Then he got a contract to build steel bridges from the very concern which had turned him down the year before. Since then more big commissions have come to him, for nothing succeeds like success. People say in wonder: "I didn't think he had it in him!" I knew he had it in him; I knew he only needed to develop his true personality! Now he is happy, prosperous and on the way to be rich—but he regrets that he didn't have the "Power of Personality" lessons years ago. Now they are ready to develop Personality all over America —your **Personality** if you say so. Understand, I don't claim that "Power of Personality" will make you rich in a week, but I do know that, as you apply the simple laws and rules, you will be astounded at the personal forces you will discover in yourself—and your **Personality** will open out like a flower in the warm sunshine. Then you will begin to succeed in a big way—and your success will astonish the people who see it. With the "Power of Personality" lessons you will receive several ingenious blank charts—and upon these you will mark down your daily and weekly progress in developing this supreme success quality—**Personality.** Your collection of these charts will soon be a "moving picture" telling the story of your Achievements—and **this** is even better—your bank-book will tell you the same story of Success, in terms of dollars and cents!

Rich opportunities will open up for you. Driving energy will manifest itself in your work. You will thrill with a new power—a power that nothing can resist—the power of your developing, expanding personality. You will gain an influence over people that you never thought possible. It will enable you to get them to do what you want—and do it gladly. No matter what business you are in, your developed **individuality** will make you a conspicuous success in it.

Prove All This at My Expense

I know that this sounds like a lot for nine little books, and a few charts, to accomplish for you. But try them yourself at my risk. It is a lot, but the lessons in these little books have been tested in many lives and have "proved up" in every case. One of the first students of "Power of Personality" called these lessons "Fortune Seeds." This is just what they are. You can grow thousands of dollars by planting them in your life, but you can't lose a penny. Here is my offer:

Send me no money, not one cent. Just jot your name and address on the coupon below and mail it to me —and by return mail the "Power of Personality" lessons will come to you.

Keep the course for five days. Study it in your leisure time. Learn to analyze the amount of Success Personality you now have, and make a chart of it. If the course doesn't show you a clear, simple method for multiplying your income many times—just as it has for hundreds of others —mail it back to me. You won't be out a cent.

But if you become enthusiastic, and find "Power of Personality" just what you have been groping for all your life—if you feel that it will do for you what it has done for others—send me only $5—and keep the course.

I am not offering you paper and ink and binding—but a "secret," a method, a key to the treasures locked up in your own Personality, the part of you that is **remarkable, different and successful without limit,** if developed.

Mail the coupon, or write a letter now—and begin to uncover the riches that await your discovery within yourself.

Pelton Publishing Company,

54-J Wilcox Block, Meriden, Conn.

Pelton Publishing Company,

54-J Wilcox Block, Meriden, Conn.

You may send me "Power of Personality" in nine lessons. I may return the course in 5 days if I decide not to keep it. Otherwise I will send you $5.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines:

	LINE RATE	
Munsey's Magazine . .	$1.50	Combination line rate $3.50 less 2 per cent cash discount.
THE ARGOSY COMBINATION		
The Argosy All-Story Weekly : :	2.00	

June 5th Argosy Combination Forms Close May 12th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

SELL SOFT DRINKS—Make $10 to $50 a day. Just add cold water to our soft drink preparations and you have the most delicious drinks you ever tasted. Ten kinds, Orangeade, Grape-Julep, Cherry-Julep, etc. Thirty big glasses, 25c, enough for 200 for $1. Eighty-five cents clear profit on every dollar selling these delicious drinks by the glass at ball games, fairs, dances, picnics, etc. Big money selling the small packages to families, stores, etc. Send 10c for enough for 10 large glasses and particulars postpaid. Morrisey Company, A 4417-20 Madison St., Chicago.

AGENTS: Reversible Raincoat. Two coats in one. One side dress coat, other side storm overcoat. Guaranteed waterproof or money back. Not sold in stores. Big commission. Sample furnished. Parker Mfg. Co., 106 Rue Street, Dayton, Ohio.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WEAR A BEAUTIFUL NEW SUIT made to your own measure **Free,** and make $35 to $50 every week? You can be the best dressed man in your town and earn a lot of extra money if you write at once for our beautiful samples and wonderful offer. The Progress Tailoring Co., Dept. 285, Chicago.

AGENTS: $100 WEEKLY possible introducing new winter automobile fuel. Specially adapted to cold weather. Starts easy. Adds power, mileage and reduces operating expense. Endorsed by thousands. Territory going like wildfire. Act quick. $28 sample outfit free. L. Ballwey, Dept. 2, Louisville, Ky.

PANTS $1.00, SUIT $3.75. MADE TO MEASURE. For even a better offer than this write and ask for free samples and new styles. Knickerbocker Tailoring Co., Department 540, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS—MAKE A DOLLAR AN HOUR. Sell Mendets, a patent patch for instantly mending leaks in all utensils. Sample package free. Collette Manufacturing Company, Dept. 306-B, Amsterdam, N. Y.

DROP Everything else. Sell Guaranteed Silk hosiery and underwear all or spare time, direct to consumer. Big money maker. Big commissions. Prompt deliveries. Samples now ready. C. & D. Company, Dept. E, Grand Rapids, Mich.

PHOTO PILLOW TOPS, PORTRAITS, Frames, Mener Rolls, Pennants, Patriotic Portraits and Pictures; Medallions, War Books, Service Banners. Prompt shipments; samples and catalogue free. 30 days credit. Jas. C. Bailey Co., Desk A-5, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS: Reversible Raincoat. Two coats for the price of one. Something brand new. Not sold in stores. Latest style. Every man wants one. Binford sold 26 coats in five days. Write quick for sample and territory. Be first to introduce this big new seller. Thomas Raincoat Co., 1607 North St., Dayton, Ohio.

Hustlers make big money selling patented **Spring Maid Fibre House Broom.** Outlasts 6 corn brooms. New exclusive features make it big seller. Every woman wants one. Write to-day. Sample $1.50. Sterling Products Co., 36 S. Desplaines, Chicago.

SALESMEN WANTED TO SOLICIT ORDERS for Lubricating Oils, Greases, Paints and Roof Cement. Salary or Commission. Previous experience unnecessary. Address: The Lennox Oil and Paint Co., Dept. A, Cleveland, Ohio.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything. Men and women. $30.00 to $100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. Ragsdale Co., Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

SALESMEN—Side or main line, to sell low-priced 5,000-mile guaranteed tires; 30x3½ non-skid sells for $12.95; other sizes in proportion. Good money-making proposition for live wires. Write Consolidated Tire Co., 618 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

GET OUR PLAN FOR SELLING ARION PHONOGRAPHS at home. No canvassing. Quality equal to high-priced instruments sold in stores. Low price gets you the business—quality builds more business for you. Big profits. Write today. Arion Phonograph Company, 404 Arion Bldg., Elkhart, Ind.

BIG MONEY FOR AGENTS. 100% PROFIT selling soaps, toilet preparations, medicines, flavorings and spices. Agent's outfit free with first order. Brown Chemical Co., Dept. 206, St. Louis, Mo.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS

LANDLESS MEN. Be independent on hardwood lands in Kalkaska and Antrim Counties, Michigan. Fine for grains, fruit, poultry, truck, dairying. Good fishing, hunting. Fine climate, railroads, markets, schools, churches. Only $15 to $35 per acre. Easy terms. 10 to 160 acre tracts. We help settlers. 20 years' experience. Largest Company in U. S. Write for free booklet. Swigart Land Co., Y1245 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

PHOTOPLAYS WANTED BY 48 COMPANIES: $10 TO $500 each paid for plays. No correspondence course or experience needed; details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. Producers League, 388 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

BIGGEST MONEY-MAKER IN AMERICA. I want 100 men and women quick to take orders for raincoats, raincapes and waterproof aprons. Thousands of orders waiting for you. $2.00 an hour for spare time. McDonough made $813.00 in one month, Nissen $19.00 in three hours; Purviance $207.00 in seven days. $5,000 a year profit for eight average orders a day. No delivering or collecting. Beautiful coat free. No experience or capital required. Write quick for information. Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. Y125, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—YOU CAN GET A BEAUTIFUL FAST COLOR ALL WOOL "MADE-TO-MEASURE" SUIT without a cent of expense. Write Lincoln Woolen Mills Co., Dept. 25, Chicago, Ill., for their liberal suit offer.

AGENTS: SELL NEVERFAIL IRON RUST AND STAIN REMOVER. HUGE PROFITS. BIG LINE. SAMPLE. Write today. Sanford-Beal Co., Inc., Dept. A, Newark, N. Y.

AGENTS—$40 TO $100 A WEEK. FREE SAMPLES. Gold and silver Sign Letters for stores and office windows. Anyone can put them on. Big Demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431-H N. Clark, Chicago.

SEND 2c POSTAGE for free sample with particulars. No splashing water strainers. Easy seller. Returns big. Experience unnecessary. Seed Filter Co., N 73 Franklin St., New York.

SELL What Millions Want. New, wonderful Liberty Portraits. Creates tremendous interest. Absolutely different; unique; enormous demand—30 hours' service. Liberal credit. Outfit and catalogue free. $100 weekly profit easy. Consolidated Portrait Co., Dept. 22, 1036 W. Adams Street, Chicago.

AGENTS FOR "SECRET OF BEAUTY" toilet preparations. Large profits. Quick sales. Fine repeater. Send stamp for samples and terms. Heron Co., Dept. 30A, Cleveland, Ohio.

Mexican Diamonds flash like genuine, fool experts, stand tests, yet sell for 1-50th the price. Few live Agents wanted to sell from handsome sample case. Big profits, pleasant work. Write today. Mexican Diamond Impg. Co., Box 88, Las Cruces, N. Mexico.

Insyde Tyres—Inner Armor for Auto Tires. Doubles mileage, prevents 90% of all punctures and blowouts. Thousands in use. Tremendous demand. Big sales. Liberal profits. Details free. American Automobile Accessories Co., Dept. 165, Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS—Our Soap and Toilet Article Plan is a wonder. Get our Free Sample Case Offer. Ho-Ro-Co, 137 Locust, St. Louis, Mo.

$10 WORTH OF FINEST TOILET SOAPS, perfumes, toilet waters, spices, etc., absolutely free to agents on our refund plan. Lacassian Co., Dept. 425, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS. If you have an invention write for our Guide Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., 630 F, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—Write for Free Illustrated Guide Book and Evidence of Conception Blank. Send model or sketch and description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Free. Highest References. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms. Victor J. Evans & Co., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. Promptness assured. Send drawing or model for examination and opinion as to patentability. Watson E. Coleman, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

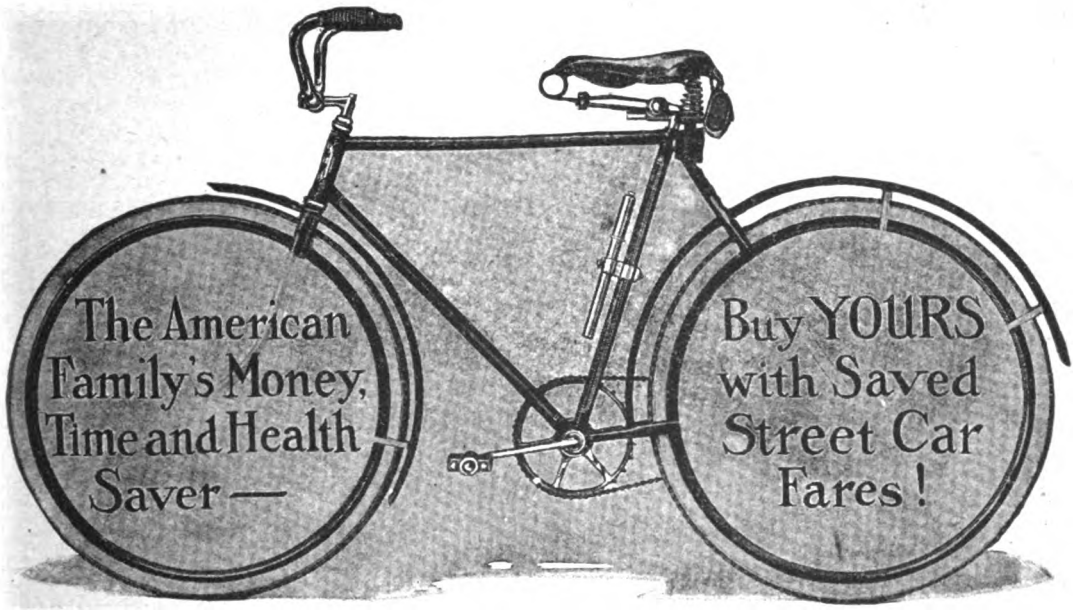
AUTOMOBILE SCHOOLS

BE AN AUTO OR TRACTOR EXPERT. Unlimited opportunity for civil and Government Work. 5000 successful graduates. Write at once for our big free catalog. Cleveland Auto School, 1819 E. 24th Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

PHOTOGRAPHY

FILMS DEVELOPED—10c.; Prints 4c.—8x10 enlargements 50c., by one of the best Kodak finishers in the United States. Cash with order. Stamps not accepted. For better than ordinary finishing try Brown Studio, Lake Elmo, Mich.

Classified Advertising continued on page 8, back section.



Columbia BICYCLE

Ride a Bicycle

Don't go on *spending* that good money you could be *saving* by riding a Columbia.

Don't go on *wasting* that good time in delayed trolley schedules you could be *saving* by riding a Columbia.

Don't go on *crowding* yourself into stuffy cars when you can build *health* and *strength* and ride wherever you want to ride—in solid comfort—on a Columbia.

See the Columbia at your dealer's. Get a close-up of its trim design, its light but rugged build, its ease of operation, its equipment detail, its enduring finish, its thoroughness of construction.

For every member of your family there is a model *just right.* The prices are as moderate as a strictly high-grade bicycle can be sold for.

The 1920 Columbia Catalog pictures and describes all models. Send for it and see your dealer today.

WESTFIELD MANUFACTURING COMPANY

44 Lozier Ave., Westfield, Mass.

Try This Wonderful Machine 10 Days Free

You can now enjoy the wonderful, energizing, health-giving power of Violet Rays in your own home! This famous treatment, formerly obtainable only from eminent physicians and beauty specialists at high fees, is now brought to you for your personal use, and at a trifling cost, through the new Vi-Rex Violet Ray Machine. This new invention, so simple that a child can operate it, applies to your body all the remarkable, vitalizing effects of Violet Rays.

Rid yourself of headaches, catarrh, constipation, lumbago, insomnia, nervousness, neuritis. Relieve your pain from rheumatism, neuralgia, indigestion. Give yourself beauty treatments—remove eczema, pimples, blackheads, obesity. You can make your body alive with vitality, your skin smooth and fine of texture, free from blemishes and sallowness. Sooth your nerves, build up your strength, feel the thrill of real vigor and "pep," and have a clear, unblemished complexion. All this you can have by the use of Violet Rays.

Try Violet Rays for

HERE is a partial list of ailments treated successfully with the Violet-Ray Machine.

Asthma	Eczema	Pains
Barbers' Itch	Eye Disease	Paralysis
Boils	Falling Hair	Pimples
Blackheads	Hay Fever	Rheumatism
Catarrh	Headache	Skin Diseases
Chilblains	Goitre	Sore Throat
Colds	Insomnia	Sprains
Constipation	Lumbago	Tonsilitis
Dandruff	Nervousness	Whooping Cough
Deafness	Neuralgia	
Earache	Neuritis	

Not a Vibrator

This instrument is not a Vibrator. It does not contract the muscles or shock the nerves. Its magic rays pass through every cell and tissue, creating "cellular massage"—the most beneficial electrical treatment known. It leaves no soreness after use, only a delightful sensation of agreeable relief. Violet Rays are used in nearly every modern sanitarium, hospital and health resort. Physicians, osteopaths and chiropractors everywhere use and endorse them. Like thousands of others, you will be amazed at the quick, gratifying results from Violet Ray treatments.

VI-REX ELECTRIC CO., Dept. 95
326 West Madison Street, Chicago

Please send me, without any cost or obligation, your free book describing your Violet Ray Machine, and details of your free trial offer.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....

STATE.....

Send for Booklet and Special Offer

Through our special, liberal offer, you can try Violet Ray treatments without risking a penny. Use this wonderful machine for ten days. If you do not find quick relief, if you do not feel better, sleep better, eat better, look better, send it back and you will not be out one penny.

We want you to know in detail about the magic action of Violet Rays. We want you to see for yourself how it has helped thousands of others. We want you to learn what physicians, sanitariums and beauty specialists think about this wonderful new Violet Ray machine. Learn how you can have superb health and radiant beauty. See for yourself the superior points of quality of this instrument which attaches to any lighting socket. All this you will find in this great health and beauty book which will be sent you free. Simply mail the coupon or write a postal or letter. Do this now, before our special free trial offer is withdrawn.

VI-REX ELECTRIC CO., Dept. 95, 326 West Madison Street, Chicago

In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

THE ARGOSY

Vol. CXX SATURDAY, MAY 1, 1920 No. 3

A Nurse Named Allenby

by Bertram Lebhar

Author of "Come Across!" "Thumbs Down," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A STAR IN ECLIPSE.

FOR a moment Fenton's keen eyes looked searchingly into those of his visitor; then the dubious frown which had darkened his pleasant, smooth-shaven countenance dissolved into an ironical grin.

"Very good, Eddie!" he scoffed. "Really, old man, you did it so well that if I didn't happen to be acquainted with your past record I might have fallen for it. However, you can't—"

"Don't!" the other interrupted him, leaning forward in his chair with a gesture half impatient, half imploring. "For pity's sake, Fenton, don't take that attitude. Every smart Aleck of a city editor I've visited this morning has used almost exactly those same words in turning me down, but I—I didn't expect that sort of treatment from you."

Eddie Travers, publicity man of the Apex Pictures Corporation, got up from his chair and paced the floor of his friend's office agitatedly.

"Great Scott! If you take this thing as a joke, we're lost," he continued. "I have come to you as a last resort. I know how busy you are, Keith, and I swear that I wouldn't have taken up your valuable time if I didn't have genuine cause to apprehend that Miss Vane is in great peril. I give you my word of honor that this thing is on the level. Surely you ought to be able to tell when a man's in earnest!"

Keith Fenton, former lieutenant of police, now the head of the Fenton Private Detective Agency, shrugged his shoulders.

"There was the Russel diamond case," he remarked pointedly. "That was five years ago, but I haven't forgotten yet how you had me and the rest of the central office chasing for a week after those mythical gems. I have long since forgiven you for that little affair, Eddie, but I still recall that you appeared to be quite as much in earnest then as you are now, and that you didn't hesitate to take up my valuable time on that occasion in order to use me to hang some publicity on your musical

comedy queen. In the circumstances you can hardly blame me now for being a bit dubious about this remarkable disappearance of your motion-picture star."

Travers groaned. "Is a man never to be permitted to live down his past?" he protested. "I admit that I was an arch faker in those days. I had to be, in order to hold down my job as bell-ringer for a musical-comedy production which would have died from dry rot if I hadn't resorted to heroic measures. But the times have changed, Fenton. That sort of publicity work doesn't go nowadays. I swear that I haven't pulled off a plant since I went into the picture game. I don't have to. Press-agenting for the movies is a perfectly legitimate and honorable profession. We can get enough genuine stuff into the papers without having to resort to faking."

The detective's eyes twinkled. "I suppose that little squib I read in last Sunday's *Earth* about Miss Veronica Vane's million-dollar salary was what you would call genuine stuff?"

"Oh, I confess that I exaggerate sometimes. We have to stretch the truth a bit, even in the pictures. But I—we don't have to do the sort of stunts which were expected of me in the old musical-comedy days. At the Apex shop, and in every other reputable picture concern, they draw the line at such downright plants as the hoax I put over on you central office sleuths with the Renie Russel diamond robbery. I'd get fired if I tried anything like that in my present job."

Eddie Travers sighed. "That's one reason why I'm here now pleading with you, Fenton, to help us find Miss Vane. I'll admit that even my boss has a suspicion that I had something to do with her mysterious disappearance. And so do the bonehead operatives from the private agency he has retained to investigate this queer case."

"Ah! So you have already put another agency on the job?"

"Yes. Solbaum, our president, called up the Shapiro concern yesterday and engaged them to handle the case. He came to the conclusion that it was no use expecting anything of the local authorities."

"The Shapiro Agency, eh! Well, Abe Shapiro is a pretty live wire," commented Fenton, who was too broad-minded, and, incidentally, too good a business man, to speak disparagingly of a competitor.

"Shapiro himself may be all right," rejoined Travers glumly, "but the cheap apologies for sleuths he's put on the case certainly haven't impressed me favorably. They hadn't been on the job four hours before they arrived at the conclusion that the disappearance of Veronica Vane was nothing but a press-agent plant, and ever since the fools have been spending most of their time shadowing me, in the expectation that I'll make some move that will tip them off to the present whereabouts of our leading lady." He paused. "I'm willing to bet a week's salary that there's a couple of them outside here now waiting to pick up my trail when I leave. I know that they followed me here."

Fenton grinned. "Isn't it awful to have a bad reputation!" he chuckled.

"Confound them!" growled his unhappy visitor. "I'm fully convinced that if it depends on those birds Miss Vane will never be found." He put out his hand pleadingly. "Won't you help us, Keith? You are my only hope, old man. I've come to you on my own hook—without Solbaum knowing anything about it—and I'm prepared to pay for your services out of my own pocket."

"Indeed!" said the former central-office man, arching his eyebrows. "My fees are pretty steep, you know. There are other agencies which wouldn't charge nearly as much—"

"I don't care what your bill is. I have a few hundred in the bank, and if that isn't enough I know where I can borrow some more. If you'll take the case, Keith, we won't haggle over your fee."

There followed a short interval of silence. During it a change came over the detective's manner. He looked at his would-be client sharply.

"Why should you be willing to go to this expense?" he demanded suddenly.

"Because, as I have already mentioned, my job is at stake. Solbaum suspects that I engineered this mysterious business, and

those bone-heads from the Shapiro Agency are encouraging him in that belief. It's up to me to clear myself. I—that's one reason."

"What are the others?"

Eddie Travers hesitated. "Well, I—naturally I'm anxious on Miss Vane's account. I feel sure that the poor girl has met with foul play. If—I'd give everything I have in the world to see her back safe at the studio."

"You must take quite a friendly interest in the lady," Fenton remarked.

"I love her," the other declared impulsively. "That's something I've never confided to another living soul, Keith. I'm not the sort of chap to wear my heart on my sleeve, and I realize that I don't stand any chance with her, so I'm not keen on spilling my secret. But I'm telling you now because I want you to understand just what this thing means to me—why it is preposterous to suppose that I could have had a hand in her disappearance. Good Heavens!" he continued savagely. "Could anybody that knows me believe that I could be such a cad as to compromise a girl like her? If she alone had vanished, it might be different; but to ruin her reputation by linking her name with the Jap's—"

"The Jap?" Fenton cut in. "What do you mean?"

"Haven't I told you that another member of our company is missing, too—Ito Yamada, our Japanese actor?"

"No; I don't believe you mentioned that detail. You haven't told me anything yet, except that your film star has been mysteriously missing for three days under circumstances which cause you to apprehend that she has been kidnaped. Did Yamada drop out of sight at the same time?"

"At the same time, and the same place," the publicity man groaned. "They were together when it happened, and both have vanished. Isn't that enough to convince you that my story is on the level, Fenton? You must have a mighty poor opinion of my character if you think that just for the sake of getting a story in the papers I'd give people a chance to insinuate that Miss Vane has run away with the Jap. Heaven forbid that I should try to hang that kind of publicity on her!"

"Then, why did you go to the papers?" Fenton demanded. "You admitted a few minutes ago that you have been the rounds of the newspaper offices this morning."

"That was to try to persuade them to take up the hunt for the missing girl," Travers explained. "I was in hopes that they would be sufficiently interested to assign their star police reporters to the case. I assure you that I was emphatic enough in trying to impress on them that I didn't want anything published about the mysterious affair—not, at least, until after Miss Vane was found."

"And you couldn't make them believe that," said the detective whimsically.

Travers shook his head and scowled. "The fools laughed at me. The more I insisted that I wasn't looking for any publicity this time, the more those dubs of city editors jeered. At length I realized that it was useless to expect any help from them, and, in my desperation, old man, I came to you, confident that you, at least, would have sense enough to understand that even a press agent can tell the truth sometimes."

Fenton tilted back in his desk chair and gazed reflectively at the ceiling for a while.

"Well, I suppose you might as well let me have all the harrowing details," he decided presently, leisurely drawing a memorandum pad toward him. "I don't promise to take the story seriously, Eddie; but at least you've got me interested to the extent that I'd like to hear it."

CHAPTER II.

INTO THIN AIR.

THE story which the publicity man of the Apex Pictures Corporation proceeded to unfold was certainly remarkable enough to strain the credulity of a much less sophisticated auditor than the head of the Fenton Detective Agency. That was one reason why the latter listened to it from beginning to end without scoffing. His experience in solving hundreds of in-

tricate problems in crime had taught him that the more improbable a story sounded the more likely it was, in certain circumstances, to be based on the truth. The average liar's first thought is to be plausible. It is only the honest man, or the fool, who will offer testimony apparently so preposterous that it is foredoomed to be received with ridicule.

Eddie Travers, Fenton reasoned, certainly was not a fool. In the various hoaxes he had perpetrated in the course of his career as a press agent he had always taken great pains to cloak his deceptions with verisimilitude. His success in that respect had reached the heights of positive genius. Consequently, the fact that he was making no effort now to spin a yarn which promised to stand the acid test was decidedly a point in his favor.

"At ten o'clock last Monday morning," Travers began, "a big touring car, packed to capacity with members of our company, started out from the studio to make some exteriors. In the party were Miss Vane; Haldane, our leading man; Ito Yamada; Bob McCullough, our director; Nevins, the camera-man; and several other actors and actresses whose names it is hardly necessary to mention now, as they do not figure prominently in the story.

"The outfit was bound for Hillhaven, a village some distance up the Hudson River. To be more exact, their destination was a small island situated on the river directly opposite Hillhaven. On that island is an ancient, untenanted château, in a very dilapidated condition, which had been selected by our location man for some of the scenes in a new play we were putting on.

"Well, to get to the point of the story, the party reached the island all right, without anything out of the way happening—except that their car was followed all the way to Hillhaven by two men in a roadster."

"That sounds like rather an interesting detail," Fenton put in.

His visitor shrugged. "Except for its value as a possible clue, it is an incident so insignficant, compared to what happened later, that it is hardly worth mentioning. We are not even sure that those fellows were really interested in our party. They may, of course, have had some perfectly legitimate reason for taking the same route. It was only the fact that they seemed so determined not to pass our car, and at the same time to keep it constantly in sight, which caused our people to pay any attention to them."

The detective started to ask a question, but decided to wait until later.

"Arrived at Hillhaven," Travers continued, "the troupe parked the car, and proceeded to the island in a launch which had been hired for them in advance. They had no difficulty in locating the château; for it was the only structure there. The island is covered by an estate which was laid out by a French nobleman a hundred years ago. The Frenchman built the château, and lived in it for a number of years, with his family. Later, I believe, it passed into the hands of some of his descendants, but for the past twenty years the place has been unoccupied, and has been allowed to fall gradually to pieces. Its dilapidated appearance, and its peculiar type of architecture, made it exactly suited for some of the exteriors of our new play; and Tom Baxter, our location man, was enthusiastic about his find.

"Immediately on landing, the company lost no time in getting to work. McCullough, our director, at once began rehearsing an outdoor scene, in which all hands took part, with the château for a background. When, finally, that piece had been shot, Bob got busy with the next item on the program, which necessitated Veronica Vane and Yamada entering the château and posing together at one of the upper windows.

"'Not afraid of ghosts, are you, Veronica?' McCullough asked laughingly. 'If you are I'll go up there with you.' There was some talk in the village of Hillhaven about the house on the island being haunted.

"She declined his offer. 'I don't believe in ghosts,' she declared. 'Besides, if we should encounter any spooks on our way up-stairs, I shall feel quite safe, with Mr. Yamada beside me to shoo them away.'

"Then the pair went inside the ancient structure, the front door of which was unlocked, and a few minutes later they presented themselves at the attic window.

"With McCullough directing them from the grounds through a megaphone, and the camera planted on a hill several yards away, they rehearsed their scene: Veronica was supposed to be kept a prisoner on the premises, and was trying to throw herself from the window. The Jap, who was her jailer, had got on the job just in time to prevent her from carrying out her desperate intention. I needn't tell you now the plot of the whole play, but that was the bit of action they were putting across.

"There was to be a thrilling struggle between the girl and the Jap, which was to be witnessed by the hero from the grounds below. The hero, of course, was played by Allan Haldane, our leading man. He was thus to become aware that the girl was being held a prisoner in the house, and later he was to effect her rescue—but that part doesn't figure in my story.

"Well, Miss Vane and the Jap had to rehearse that struggle several times before they had it exactly the way McCullough wanted it. At length, however, Bob was satisfied, and gave the order to shoot.

"'All right, folks!' he then yelled through his megaphone. 'Everything fine and dandy. Come on down!'"

"What did he want them to come down for?" Fenton interrupted. "I understood you to say that there was to be a rescue scene?"

"That was to be made at the studio later on. It called for an interior set, and they were using the château itself only for the exteriors. In the movies everything isn't as it seems, you know. There may be a distance of a thousand miles between one side of the window and the other."

"Of course," assented the detective, with a slight frown. "Well, go on. What happened then?"

"The pair left the window, evidently with the intention of rejoining their companions on the grounds below," said Travers. "And that," he added tensely, "was the last that has been seen of either of them."

"What!" cried Fenton. "You mean to say that they disappeared *inside* that house?"

The publicity man nodded. "Sounds uncanny, doesn't it?" he exclaimed, with a nervous laugh. "But it's a fact, Keith. After leaving that window they vanished into thin air. That was three days ago, and nothing has been seen or heard of Miss Vane or Yamada since."

The detective's brow wrinkled meditatively. "Of course, their companions made a thorough search of the premises?" he inquired.

"Of course. Then several minutes had elapsed without any sign of the couple, the others began to wonder what was keeping them. McCullough was not alarmed at first. He supposed that Miss Vane had taken it into her head to go on an exploring trip through the old house before leaving. After a while he went inside the premises to tell her to hurry, as there was a lot more work to be done before the sun went down.

"It was then that he began to realize that something was wrong. He says that a weird silence reigned within the place, and when he called to them there was no response except the echo of his own voice. He went from floor to floor and from room to room looking for them, and when he failed to find any trace of them he called in the rest of the company.

"For an hour they searched every inch of the ancient structure, from attic to cellar, without result. Not only were the searchers unsuccessful in finding the pair, but they discovered nothing to throw a light on the manner of their strange disappearance. There were no indications of violence—no collapsed floors, or anything of that sort. The interior of the château appeared to be in perfectly normal condition. Miss Vane and the Jap had simply vanished, without leaving a clue behind."

"Did they search the island as well as the house?" Fenton asked.

"They certainly did. Although Miss Vane is not the kind who might be suspected of playing practical jokes—she is an unusually serious young woman—McCullough at length came to the conclusion

that she and the Jap were having some fun with him, and must have sneaked out of the house by another exit. That didn't seem possible, as the rear doors were bolted on the inside, and all the windows were latched. Still, deciding to work on that theory, Bob ordered his companions to go on a hunt through the estate. He felt sure that the couple must still be on the island, as the launch was still in its place. They kept up the hunt until after dark without success. Then they gave it up and returned to New York.

"Most of the company still clung to the hope that the thing was a practical joke—that Veronica and the Jap had found some way of leaving the island without being observed by their comrades, and would be waiting at the studio when the party returned, chuckling over the anxiety they had caused. But this hope was not fulfilled. Miss Vane and Yamada were not in evidence at the studio that night, and they did not show up for rehearsal the following morning.

"McCullough, fully convinced by this time that the situation was serious business, went immediately to Solbaum, our president, and reported what had happened. The boss laughed at his fears at first. It was not long before Solbaum jumped to the conclusion that I was at the bottom of the mysterious disappearance, and I was called on the carpet and ordered to 'fess up, the old man telling me angrily that much as he valued publicity for the Apex productions, the continued absence of Miss Vane from the studio would put him to considerable expense by holding up the work of the entire shop, and he didn't intend to stand for it.

"Of course, I protested my innocence, and in the end managed to convince him to the extent that he decided to call up the Shapiro Detective Agency and instruct them to look into the matter. Even then, however, the boss wasn't fully satisfied that I didn't know more about the case than I was willing to admit. As I have told you, I have reason to believe that he still regards me with suspicion—and so do those bone-head operatives from the agency."

Travers paused. "That's the situation to date, old man. I admit that the whole story sounds like a pipe-dream, but I swear to you that it is straight goods. I firmly believe that the unfortunate girl has met with foul play, and—"

"Why that?" Fenton interrupted. "What reason is there for suspecting that your leading lady's mysterious vanishing act was involuntary?" He hesitated. "Taking your word for it that you had nothing to do with the affair, there still remains the possibility of—er—an elopement."

An angry flush suffused his visitor's countenance. "I won't stand for such an insinuation from you," he cried. "The Jap is a married man—married to one of his own race. Veronica is the last girl in the world to be suspected of running off with another woman's husband, even if he were a Caucasian. Besides, she—I happen to know that she is in love with—er—some one else."

"Indeed! That's interesting. May I ask who the lucky man is?"

Travers was silent for a moment.

"McCullough," he answered presently, through his clenched teeth.

"The director, eh!" The detective's eyebrows went up. "Are you sure of that?"

"Positive," was the gloomy response. "I wish to Heaven that I could feel a little less sure. I told you before, Fenton, that I realize that I don't stand any chance with her myself. That is what I meant. She likes me, all right, but she—it has been evident to me for some time that she likes Bob McCullough better."

"Were they engaged?"

"Not openly; but I have an idea that there is a secret understanding between them." The publicity man sighed. "You will realize now, Keith, that, even if she could be capable of such a thing, it is preposterous to suppose that Miss Vane could have voluntarily run off with the Jap."

Fenton made a note on his memorandum pad, then drummed musingly on his desk with his pencil.

"You say that your location man selected that island for the scene of the new

play?" he remarked suddenly. "Do you know how he happened to discover its existence?"

"Yes, I can tell you that. He didn't discover it himself. The location was suggested to him by the author of the scenario."

"Who was the author?"

"A chap named Mortimer. At least, that was the name that was typed on top of the manuscript. He is a new man to us, and none of us have ever seen him in person. The scenario came to us through the mails, and it was such a rattling good story that the head of our scenario department accepted it immediately, and sent the writer a check. The story was in synopsis form, and down at the bottom of it were a couple of lines suggesting that the château on the island of Hillhaven would make a fine location for some of the exteriors. That suggestion was turned over to Tom Baxter, our location man, who went out there to look it over and reported favorably."

Fenton's eyes glinted. "I'll take the case," he announced decisively.

"You will! Thank goodness!" exclaimed Travers fervently. "Old man, I shall never forget this to my dying day. All the money I have in the world, and all I can borrow—"

"We won't talk about money just yet," the detective cut him short, smilingly. "There will be no charge for my services, Eddie—unless I find that you've been slick enough to put another hoax over on me. In that event my fee will be ten thousand dollars. The blow to my self-esteem would be cheap at that figure. But, frankly, I'm not expecting that I'll have to make out a bill. I am fully convinced that your story is on the level."

CHAPTER III.

A HOUSE WITH A HISTORY.

ALTHOUGH he had served for years in the New York police department before resigning from the central office to conduct a detective bureau of his own, Lieutenant Keith Fenton did not bear the least resemblance in external appearance to the metropolitan police detective of melodrama. Smooth-shaven, pleasant-faced, faultlessly attired down to the slightest detail, any one meeting him for the first time, and given three guesses as to his exact status in the community, would have decided offhand that he was "a gentleman of leisure"—a wealthy clubman of the younger set.

A second guess, taking into consideration the forceful lines of his countenance, which were partly camouflaged by his careless smile, might have put him down as a man of affairs in the business world—a director of financial institutions, a high administrative official of a railroad, or something of that sort.

The third attempt, getting its inspiration from a certain dreamy expression which was to be observed at times in Fenton's keen, gray eyes, and in the curve of his mobile lips, might have classified him as a man of letters—a philosopher, a novelist, or even a poet. But it would have taken a good many guesses before one would have arrived at the conclusion that this dapper, mild, youthful-looking chap was a professional investigator of intricate problems in crime, a foe to the underworld more feared and respected by criminals petty and great than any other police official or private detective in the United States.

Fenton's professional methods, too, were not in the least bit patterned after those of the typical detective hero of a best seller or a seven-reel feature film. He had never used the cocaine needle as a first aid in stimulating his deductive powers. He had never recovered a fortune in diamonds by leaning back in his easy chair with his eyes closed and compelling the thief to walk into his presence by telepathic communication.

He had never solved a murder mystery by dipping the victim's eyeballs in a chemical solution and discovering the image of the assassin photographed thereon. Nor, on the other hand, was he in the habit of bullying a suspect into making a confession by beating him half to death with a hickory stick, which a good many people believe is the only deductive meth-

od the metropolitan police ever employ when working on a case.

Hard work, horse-sense, an almost infallible memory, infinite patience, the power of concentration, a live imagination, and a thorough appreciation of the potential value of apparently insignificant details—these were the chief ingredients of the formula which Fenton used in his business. He claimed that they constituted the sole secret of his successful career.

"Any intelligent man who isn't willing to take too much for granted and who is prepared to work with his feet as well as with his head, can make a first-class detective," he once smilingly told a newspaper reporter who had come to interview him. "Legwork plays almost as important a part as brain-power in our business, you know. You can't win a game of chess without moving the pieces, and you can't expect to get your man in the crime game unless you are willing to go after him.

"These armchair sleuths have never made much of a hit with me. As a detective Edgar Allan Poe was a great story writer, but I am convinced that he never could have tracked a robber in real life. It's all very well to work on the theory that two and two always make four, but unless you get out and hustle you are liable to overlook the fact that four times 1 make four also.

"That's where your cock-sure deductive specialist would fall down on a practical test. He would shut his eyes to the possibility that there were more ways than one of working out the sum. Instead of chasing after the four ones until he had callouses on the soles of his feet, he would go after the pair of deuces, and find himself in a blind alley."

"Then you don't attach any importance to the scientific methods of the modern criminologist?" the disappointed interviewer had asked.

"Oh, I am not so narrow-minded or archaic as to maintain that we can't get any help from science," was Fenton's response. "The finger-print system, and the other Bertillon processes, are of great assistance to us in solving some of our problems, of course, and no real detective could afford to scoff at the deductive work of Professor Gross; but the point I am trying to make, old man, is that none of these things can take the place of hard work and horse-sense. Genius has been defined as an infinite capacity for taking pains, and that is as true of the detective genius as it is of the top-notcher in any other branch of human endeavor."

This being his way of thinking, it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, after Eddie Travers had left him, Fenton did not spend much time gazing musingly at the ceiling of his office in an endeavor to evolve a complete and detailed theory which would satisfactorily account for the mysterious disappearance of Miss Veronica Vane and her Japanese companion. Instead, he looked up a time-table and learned that he could catch a train to Hillhaven if he left his office immediately.

Five minutes later he was seated in a taxicab on his way to the Grand Central Station, and fifteen minutes after that he was a passenger on a New York Central train which was speeding northward.

During that trip he had difficulty in restraining his active imagination from building up a theory about the queer case from the facts already in his possession. He resolutely subdued the inclination, however, and forced his thoughts in another direction. Theorizing about a case before he had actually begun to investigate it was a luxury in which he never permitted himself to indulge. In his opinion it was always an unwise thing to do; one's imagination, if given free rein at that early stage, was likely to blind one to the facts, or, worse still, to tempt one to adjust the facts to the theory instead of the other way around.

He wished to approach this problem with an absolutely open mind. Not until he had visited the ancient château on the island and made a thorough examination of the premises could he afford to speculate as to the manner in which the motion-picture star and the Jap had vanished and the reason for their continued absence from the studio.

The extent to which Travers's remark-

able story had aroused his interest was evidenced by the fact that he was making this journey to Hillhaven himself instead of turning the preliminary investigation over to a subordinate. The Fenton agency employed some exceedingly competent operatives, and the concern handled too much business for its head to be able to give his personal attention to every case, from start to finish. His business had got to that enviable stage now when he could afford to pick and choose his work, handling only the more important or interesting investigations himself, and merely supervising the work of his assistants on the remainder.

It will be seen, therefore, that in spite of the cynical attitude of the Park Row editors, and the operatives of the Shapiro agency, Fenton had been deeply impressed by the dramatic possibilities of the situation which the publicity man of the Apex Pictures Corporation had brought to his attention.

But although he was practically convinced of Eddie Travers's good faith in the matter, the detective realized that he could not afford to take it for granted just yet that the adroit press agent was not once more up to his old tricks. That was why he had decided to visit the house on the island alone instead of taking one of his operatives with him to aid in the investigation. If this thing turned out to be a hoax, after all, he didn't care to give his subordinates a chance to chuckle over the way their chief had been fooled. His self-esteem bade him embark on this expedition unaccompanied, although his instincts assured him that he was not going on any fool's errand.

Arrived at Hillhaven, Fenton found a picturesque little village, snuggling against the sloping right bank of the Hudson, which looked like a page out of Washington Irving. From the quaint, venerable aspect of the houses, and the public structures, one got the impression that there had not been much building going on there since the day of the creator of *Rip Van Winkle;* and, although the village was not much more than fifty miles from New York City, the few people the detective encountered in the vicinity of the railway station looked as if they might have been contemporaries of the immortal *Rip*.

Turning his steps toward the river's edge, Fenton saw the tiny island with the château on it. That part of the story, at least, was no figment of the press agent's imagination.

The Hudson curves sharply at Hillhaven, and the river at this point is exceedingly broad, so that the island seemed to be situated on a peaceful lake. It was not in the middle of the stream, but was separated from the village by a strip of water so narrow that if it had not been for the strong current, a small boy might have managed to swim across to it. Despite its near proximity, however, the thick foliage made it impossible to see much of the château from the mainland. From where he stood only its faded, red roof, protruding above some of the tree-tops, was visible to the detective.

He walked northward along the shore for a few yards until he came to a dilapidated boat-house with a sign on it announcing that one Joe Smith had row-boats and launches for hire, and was also a purveyor of fishing-tackle. Mr. Smith himself, gray-bearded, bronzed, and with the upper part of his torso bereft of all covering except a tattered undershirt, lolled against a post, puffing serenely on a much blackened corn-cob pipe. From his venerable appearance Fenton guessed that he must be one of the original settlers of Hillhaven, and, therefore, the very person to give him some information he wanted.

"Pretty looking spot, that," the New Yorker began, nodding in the direction of the island. "Can you tell me who owns it? I suppose it's private property?"

"Yes, it's private property, sir," the proprietor of the boat-house assented. "But as to who owns it—well, I reckon that ain't such an easy question to answer. It's a matter that's been keeping a bunch of lawyers busy for some years."

"Oh, the property is in litigation?"

Mr. Smith nodded. "There are so many claimants, and their lawyers have got things so tangled up between them that the house is liable to fall to pieces before the courts come to a decision," he declared.

"In the mean time, is anybody occupying the premises?"

The old man shook his head. "The place ain't had a tenant since old Miss Louise de Bethune died there twenty years ago," he replied. "At least, not a flesh-and-blood tenant." He grinned. "The reason I put it that way is because there are lots of folks around here who have an idea that the house on the island is haunted—that spirits are still in possession of the property. But I don't attach any importance to such fool stories myself. I've never believed in spooks, and never will."

"Quite right," Fenton agreed. "But what gave rise to this rumor? I suppose there must have been some basis for it?"

Mr. Smith removed the corn-cob from between his teeth and emptied out its ashes by knocking the bowl against his heel.

"Yes, I suppose you might say there was—er—some basis," he admitted slowly, as he packed in a fresh wad of tobacco. "Some of the folks who have rowed over to the island and visited the château have heard strange noises inside the old building, like invisible people moving around. That was in the daytime. And sometimes, at night, piercing screams have come to us from across the water like the cries of a woman in pain or terror.

"Neither of those things signify ghosts, to my way of thinking. Screech-owls and rats is probably the right answer. But there are lots of superstitious people living in these parts, and they think different. The history of the old spinster, Louise de Bethune, encourages them in their belief.

"She was a queer, eccentric old soul who lived all alone in yonder house for years, and never came over to the mainland. And she died by her own hand at last—hanged herself from the bedpost with a pair of green stockings knotted together. That, of itself, would be enough to make some people imagine the place was haunted, even without the screams and the scurrying noises that have been heard there since her death."

"Did she build the château?" the detective asked.

"Oh, no; that was built long before she was born. The estate was laid out and the house erected by her grandfather, the Count de Bethune, a French nobleman who came over to the United States more than a hundred years ago with Prince Joseph Bonaparte, brother of the great Napoleon.

"I suppose you've heard tell of Prince Joseph, sir, and how he happened to come to America?" the old man continued. "That's history, of course. He was ex-King of Naples, and ex-King of Spain, and the great Bonaparte's favorite brother. After Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo and imprisoned on the island of St. Helena, Joseph came to the conclusion that it wouldn't be healthy for him to remain any longer in Europe, so he beat it over to this country, bringing a bunch of treasure and many of his faithful retainers with him. Among his followers was this Count Henri de Bethune I've been telling you about."

"But Joseph Bonaparte settled down in Bordentown, New Jersey," interrupted Fenton, who had not stopped reading history when he graduated from public school. "He bought an estate there and lived on it, surrounded by his court. So what was this Count de Bethune doing in this part of the country, so far away from the others?"

The venerable proprietor of the boat-house shrugged his shoulders. "I can't tell you why he didn't want to live with the rest of the bunch," he rejoined. "I suppose he had his reasons. All I know is that he came here and bought this island and built the château on it. He lived there with his family for years—right up to the time of his death. I understand, too, that he was mixed up in a plot to rescue the great Napoleon from his prison on the Island of St. Helena, and bring him to the United States.

"That was long before my time, of course; so I can't say whether it's true or not; but I've often heard my granddad tell of the queer goings-on over on yonder island while the count was living there—the strange boats that was always anchoring in this part of the Hudson, and the mysterious men that went ashore there; so it's quite likely that there is something to these stories about a rescue plot."

"It's an interesting bit of romance, anyway," Fenton remarked, a glint of excitement in his eyes. Then, after a pause: "I see you have boats to hire. I suppose if I rented one there'd be no objection to my rowing over to the island and looking the château over? The place is open to the public, eh?"

"Well, as I said before, the island is private property; but there won't be anybody there to forbid your landing," old Smith told him. "There ain't even a caretaker on the premises, but you'll find the front door unlocked, so you won't have any trouble in getting into the house. There was some motion-picture folks went over there the other day in a launch they hired from me, and they got in, all right. The boat 'll cost you a dollar an hour, sir; but even if you don't use it an entire hour you'll have to pay a dollar. That's my minimum charge."

"I guess we won't quarrel about that," said the detective, with a laugh. "I'll pay you two dollars in advance. You've got me quite interested in that château. I expect to be over on the island at least a couple of hours."

CHAPTER IV.

FENTON'S DISCOVERY.

FENTON'S visit to the château on the island did indeed consume more than two hours' time. It was after dark when he rowed back to the landing of Smith's boat-house, but from the expression of satisfaction on his features it was evident that he did not consider that he had had his trouble for nothing.

He had landed on the island and effected an entry to the old house without difficulty. As the boat-house proprietor had predicted, he had found the front door of the château unlocked.

The house stood in the center of the island, which was almost a perfect oval in shape, so that on all sides of it there was considerable ground between the structure and the river.

Entering the high-ceilinged, spacious reception-hall, the detective, without at first spending any time exploring the lower chambers, had climbed the broad, creaking staircase and ascended to the attic. He wanted first to examine the room in which Veronica Vane and the Japanese actor had last been seen.

There was furniture in some of the rooms —massive, dust-covered pieces which would have made an antique dealer's eyes glisten; but the greater part of the furnishings had been removed, and some of the chambers were entirely bare, the attic being one of these.

Fenton, however, spent considerable time in this empty room, sounding the walls with his knuckles and examining the joints of the paneling with a close scrutiny. When he did not find what he wanted there, he went from room to room, repeating the same tactics.

Descending to the floor below, his patient efforts were at length rewarded. Sounding the mahogany paneling of a huge sleeping chamber, his groping hand accidentally came in contact with a concealed spring, and a section of the wall suddenly opened up, revealing a hidden staircase.

He was not surprised; it was what he had been looking for, and what he had confidently expected to find ever since he had heard from old Joe Smith the interesting legend of the Count de Bethune's activity in a plot to rescue the great Corsican from the island of St. Helena and smuggle the illustrious prisoner into the United States.

Fenton had heard that story before, but the version which had come to his attention had not suggested that the château on the island in the Hudson River played any part in the ambitious plot. According to the legend as he had heard it, the historic estate of Joseph Bonaparte at Bordentown, New Jersey, was the headquarters of the conspiracy, and it was the intention of the plotters to bring the little emperor to Prince Joseph's estate on the Delaware River and conceal him there for the remainder of his days.

But now that he had learned that the Count de Bethune had detached himself from the rest of the party of exiles, and at the same time was rumored to have been an active participant in the plot, an

interesting possibility had suggested itself to Fenton. Perhaps it was to the château on the little island off Hillhaven on the Hudson River that the great Napoleon was to have been brought, instead of to the Bordentown estate; and perhaps when the Count de Bethune had erected the château he had made secret preparations for the concealment of his illustrious guest.

Such preparations, he had reasoned, would be likely to include a hidden chamber in which the royal fugitive could take refuge in case representatives of the new republic came to search the premises. Devices of that sort, his reading had informed him, were an architectural fashion of those days.

And now here was this discovery to confirm his hunch. Whether the concealed staircase had been built for the accommodation of the famous prisoner of St. Helena, or whether it had been put there for some other purpose, was immaterial. The fact remained that its existence seemed to offer a promising clue to the mystery he had come to solve. That historic plot of a hundred years ago could have nothing to do, of course, with the fate of Miss Veronica Vane and her Japanese companion, but the secret stairway itself might throw some light on the manner in which the motion-picture actress and Yamada had suddenly disappeared almost before the eyes of their astonished comrades.

He paused for a moment to admire the antiquated but ingenious mechanism which controlled the sliding panel; then taking an electric search-light from his pocket, and keeping his other hand on a more formidable weapon in another pocket, he stepped through the breach in the wall and descended some thirty steps, formed in the thickness of the partition.

At the bottom of the flight there was a heavy door which was unlocked, and which swung open with a screech of rusty hinges under his pressure. He now found himself in a narrow chamber, some twelve feet long by seven broad, which contained a huge, handsomely carved bed and some other pieces of massive furniture. There were no windows in this room, but its light and ventilation came from an ingeniously contrived opening in the ceiling which went straight up to the roof of the château, where its true purpose was concealed by an ornamental turret.

Fenton spent some time in making a careful examination of this chamber. The marks of several feet in the thick layer of dust which coated the uncarpeted floor particularly claimed his interest. Some of these prints obviously had been made by the tiny shoes of a woman; the others, it was equally obvious, were impressions left by more than one man.

The detective was quite sure of at least two distinct sets of masculine prints, and he was not certain that there were not more. There were unmistakable indications, too, that most of these impressions were of recent origin.

He followed this trail to the other end of the room, where it brought him to a small door which opened onto another flight of stairs leading down to total darkness.

Guided by the rays of his flash-light, he descended this narrow, steep, creaking stairway which seemed to be interminable. At length, however, he found himself in a damp, ill-smelling tunnel which evidently was burrowed below the foundations of the château. His electric torch, focused on the stone walls and floor of this cavern, suddenly revealed to him a small object which he stooped and picked up eagerly.

It was a wire hairpin, and its discovery afforded the detective considerable satisfaction. For it was not unreasonable to assume that it had dropped from a woman's coiffure—and it was of much too modern a model to have been left there by any fair contemporary of the noble Count de Bethune.

There were no distinct impressions of footprints on the damp, stone floor of the tunnel, but making his way down the full length of this subterranean passage Fenton came to a short flight of stone steps which suggested a way in which the missing motion-picture actress and the Jap might have left, or been taken from, the château without attracting the attention of their companions on the grounds outside.

At the bottom of these steps water

splashed and swirled. They led down to a roofed channel broad enough to permit the passage of a rowboat, or even a launch. It was a safe guess that this underground channel offered a direct means of communication to the river.

In all probability the original owner of the estate had contrived this "getaway" as a means of leaving the château, unobserved, in case of emergencies which would render it inadvisable for the fugitive to remain in hiding in the secret chamber upstairs.

With these interesting discoveries Fenton retraced his steps up-stairs, and, after spending a little time in exploring the other rooms of the ancient building, went back to his rowboat and returned to the mainland.

Old Smith was waiting for him at the landing.

"Well, here you are!" the boat-house proprietor exclaimed, with evident relief. "You've been gone such a powerful long time, mister, that I was beginning to be scared that the goblins had got you." He grinned. "Didn't meet any spooks, did you?"

"Being a truthful man, I can't say that I did."

"Or hear any noises?"

"Oh, I heard those scurrying noises you mentioned; but there isn't any question that your theory of rats is the answer to that mystery. The place is simply swarming with those vermin."

The detective paused. "By the way, I believe you said that a party of motion-picture actors hired a launch from you the other day and went over to the island to make some pictures."

"That's correct."

"Did you see the party when they returned?"

"No; I can't say that I did. They came back very late—after dark—and I didn't wait for them. They had paid for the launch in advance, so there was no necessity for me to be on hand."

"While they were over there making pictures, did you notice any other craft, besides the launch, in the vicinity of the island?"

The old man frowned reflectively. "There was the Albany Day Line boat," he answered presently. "It went up the river at its usual hour."

"Any other?"

"I don't recall any—except a small power yacht which had been anchored on the other side of the river for several days past. But that wasn't exactly in the vicinity of the island, so to speak. It was way off over there, near the opposite shore."

Fenton's eyes glinted. "What's become of that yacht now?" he asked.

"You can search me. It must have weighed anchor that very night, for when I looked out that way the next morning I noticed that it wasn't there any more."

"You don't know who owned it, I suppose, or what it was doing there?"

"No, sir; I don't. I can't tell you anything about the craft—not even its name. There was nothing about it to interest me in it particularly. Private yachts often anchor in this part of the river. I suppose it belonged to a pleasure-party up here for an outing."

The detective promised himself that he would try to find out something more about that yacht later on. Learning, however, from the boat-house proprietor, that there was a southbound train due to arrive at the station in ten minutes, he decided to return to New York immediately.

He went back to the city not at all regretful that he had taken the trouble to make this trip to Hillhaven. He believed that he had made some headway in his investigation. The finding of the hairpin in the subterranean passage encouraged him to believe that he had solved the mystery of the manner in which Veronica Vane and Ito Yamada had vanished.

But, despite the discoveries he had made, the greater part of the mystery still remained unsolved. Fenton realized that his work on this interesting case had only just begun.

Assuming that the girl and the Jap had left the château by the secret stairway, and had departed from the island via the underground channel in a small boat which had either taken them ashore or aboard the mysterious yacht, what was the meaning

of their clandestine departure? Had they taken these steps of their own free will, or had they been overpowered and carried off by assailants concealed on the premises? What had become of them since, and what was the motive for their queer disappearance? Was the Japanese actor a party to a well-laid plot to kidnap the star of the Apex Pictures Corporation, or was he, too, a victim of the conspiracy?

These were questions that still had to be answered, and the head of the Fenton Detective Agency was resolved to find those answers before he was much older.

CHAPTER V.

MERELY MARY BROWN.

EARLY the next morning Fenton entered a tall office-building on upper Broadway, in the vicinity of Times Square, and, alighting from the elevator at the nineteenth floor, visited the general offices of the Apex Pictures Corporation.

"Mr. Travers in?" he inquired of the young woman in charge of the waiting-room.

"He's in conference just at present, sir. If you care to take a seat and wait, I'll send your card in as soon as he's disengaged."

The visitor was just about to say that he would call again later, when a door at the far end of the corridor opened, and the man he wanted to see made his appearance.

Eddie Travers's countenance was white and haggard, and there were drops of perspiration on his forehead. It was apparent that the "conference" in which he had just been participating was not of a very pleasant nature. His face lighted up, however, as he caught sight of the detective, and he came toward him eagerly.

"I'm mighty glad to see you, Keith," he exclaimed. Then, wistfully: "You don't—it can't be possible that you have news already?"

"Not a great deal. I am here more to get information than to give you any," Fenton told him. "I want to have a talk with you, Eddie."

"All right. Come along to my office, old man," said the press-agent, mopping his perspiring brow with his handkerchief.

"Phew! I've just been through a tough session in the boss's room," he continued, as he led the way toward the publicity department. "Shapiro, the detective, and some of his fool operatives, are in there with the governor, and they've had me on the carpet again. Talk about your third degree! I've never in my life put in such a disagreeable half-hour.

"Those bone-heads absolutely refuse to be convinced that I don't know more about the disappearance of Miss Vane and the Jap than I am willing to admit, and the bullies went pretty near the limit just now in their efforts to make me 'come across.'" He sighed. "As though I wouldn't be only too glad to tell them everything I know about the case—if I had anything more to tell."

The two men passed through a big room in which a half-dozen young women were industriously pounding typewriters, and into a smaller room, the walls of which were decorated with colored posters, and with large, framed portraits of past and present members of the Apex Company.

The detective stepped up to one of these framed photographic enlargements—the portrait of a dark-eyed, attractive young woman whose lips were curved in a faint, Mona Lisa-like smile.

"This is the lady?" he inquired, studying the picture with interest.

"Yes; that is Veronica Vane. A fairly good likeness of her, too—although it fails to do her justice." Travers laid his hand appealingly on his friend's arm. "I leave it to you, Keith—you who are a professional student of human nature—could a woman with a face like that be capable of anything wrong? Could it be possible that a girl like her could have run off with the Jap—disappeared with him of her own free will?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders. "The cleverest female swindler I ever matched wits against had the face of a saint," he remarked cynically. "Not that I'm insinuating that there's anything wrong with the character of your vanished leading lady, my boy, but—my experience has

taught me the folly of trying to size up people by their looks, especially when we've got the other sex to deal with."

He passed on to another framed portrait. "This, I suppose, is Ito Yamada?"

The publicity man nodded, a dubious frown darkening his face as he gazed on the strong, impassive, Asiatic countenance which stared at them from the picture.

"Yes; that is the missing Jap. I'd give a whole lot to know just what part he plays in this mysterious affair," he said, tensely. "He always impressed me as being a pretty decent, likeable sort of chap, but we don't know a great deal about him. This is his first season with us, but he had been in the pictures before we got him. He came to us from the Blue Ribbon Picture Company."

"Where did they get him?"

"Direct from college. He was educated in this country—at the University of Transylvania, I believe. It might be worth your while to see the Blue Ribbon people about him, though. It's just possible that they can give you some more detailed information about his past—in case you feel that the matter ought to be looked into more closely."

"I may have a talk with them later. Just at present, though, I am more interested in learning the details of Miss Veronica Vane's past than the Jap's." Fenton seated himself at the publicity man's desk. "By the way, is that her real name, or merely one that she has adopted for the screen?"

"You've guessed it," said Travers with a laugh. "It's a secret that we wouldn't care to have become public property, for professional reasons, but I don't mind admitting to you that she wasn't known as Veronica Vane when she first came here. Bob McCullough, our director, was responsible for that change. When he undertook to make a star of her he insisted that Mary Brown was a bit too commonplace for our advertising."

"Mary Brown! So that's her real name, is it?"

"It was what she called herself at that time." Travers hesitated. "To be perfectly frank with you, though, I am not prepared to say that even that is her right name, either. There is considerable mystery about her past, and I think—I've always had an idea that she might have reasons of her own for concealing her identity."

"Ah! That sounds promising!"

Travers frowned. "Whatever those reasons are, I am absolutely confident that they are worthy ones," he declared emphatically. "Let that be clearly understood, Keith. A girl like her simply couldn't have done anything of which she had cause to be ashamed. You'd say so yourself if you knew her."

"Very likely," said Fenton, with a noncommittal smile. "How did your director happen to discover her talents as a movie-actress?" he asked after a pause. "How did it come about that she joined the Apex company, I mean?"

"She came here as an 'extra.' We were putting on a big society drama a year ago, and McCullough asked the agency to send him a lot of extra people who wouldn't look out of place in a ballroom. Miss Vane—or Mary Brown—was one of those the agency sent Bob to select from. He picked her without a second's hesitation as just the type he was looking for, and, although she didn't have anything to do in that scene but wear an evening gown, and strut around with the rest of the mob, the pep she put into her work, and her good looks, attracted the director's attention.

"The result was that when the scene was shot and the rest of the extra people were told that they wouldn't be needed any more, Miss Brown was offered a small part in another picture in which she had a better chance to show that she had more than a pretty face and a slender figure to qualify her for a movie career. To cut the story short, she made good, and became a regular member of our company. It wasn't long after that before McCullough went to the boss and told him that he was convinced that there were stellar possibilities in the little lady, and that if he were given a free hand and proper support from the publicity department he would stake his reputation as one of the best directors in the business on his ability to make a second Mary Pickford out of her."

"And that was less than a year ago!" Fenton commented. "Miss Veronica Vane, alias Mary Brown, has certainly had what our newspaper friends would call 'a meteoric rise.' Tell me, what particulars did she give about herself when she first went on your pay-roll?"

"Hardly any particulars. She wasn't asked to. You see, she came to us as an 'extra'; and we don't demand family-trees in such cases, or even references. We take the agency's word for it that the people they send us are sober and not subject to fits—"

"But after she won her promotion from the extra list and became one of your regulars—surely she was asked to give some biographical details then?"

The press-agent walked over to a cabinet and drew therefrom a long manila envelope.

"Here's all the information she gave us. You can see for yourself that it isn't very much. In order to take some of the strain off my overworked imagination I keep this set of records. As soon as any new actors or actresses join our outfit I go to them and ask them to fill out one of these blanks in order that I may handle their publicity intelligently, and with as little departure from the truth as possible. They don't have to answer all or any of the questions if they don't want to, but they are usually eager enough. Well, here's the way Miss Brown filled out the form, in her own handwriting, the day she was given a regular job here."

Fenton examined the contents of the envelope. Dated nearly a year ago, the paper told him merely that the name of the subject of the autobiographical data was Mary Brown; that she was born in the United States; that she was unmarried; that both her parents were dead; that she was educated in the public schools; that she had never had her name in the newspapers; that she could mention no incident in her career "of a romantic or adventurous nature" which might make "good newspaper or magazine copy."

Against the printed question: "What is there of further interest about youself which you think the public might like to know?" she had written the laconic response: "Nothing." The remainder of the long list of questions, some obviously pertinent, and others seemingly on the verge of impertinence, she had left unanswered altogether.

"Apparently the lady was not keenly alive to the advantages of publicity," Fenton remarked, smilingly, as he handed back the paper to Travers.

"Oh, it wasn't that. She gave me *carte blanche* to go as far as I liked in writing her up. She assured me that she had no objection to being featured in the newspapers, and did not underestimate the benefits she would derive therefrom. Only, I would have to draw freely on my inventive powers, she said, in giving the public her history. She simply didn't have anything to tell me which could be helpful. She was plain Mary Brown, and her private life life had been so devoid of incident that the public couldn't possibly be interested in the real facts about her. That was the way she put it."

Fenton was reflectively silent for a while. "Well, how do you know that wasn't the tuth?" he asked presently. "What reasons have you for assuming that she had a past which she was trying to conceal?"

"Her behavior when I went to her and asked her to fill out the paper, for one thing. I recall that she was obviously quite agitated at first by my request. It struck me even at that time that she—that her earlier career wasn't as colorless as she wished to have me believe."

"And later?"

Travers hesitated. "Later there were several other things came up to strengthen my suspicions. When I got to know her better I had opportunities to observe that she was not happy in spite of the success she was achieving in her career. There was always an air of sadness about her, and something about her manner which suggested that she—that she was afraid as well as unhappy—afraid of some hidden danger which seemed to be constantly menacing her."

The detective arched his eyebrows. "That, after all, may have been merely your imagination," he suggested.

"No; it wasn't. Even before this awful business on the island there were certain

occurrences which told me that my anxiety was well-founded. I discovered some time ago, for instance, that Miss Vane was being shadowed."

"Shadowed!" Fenton echoed sharply.

Travers nodded. "When I was walking home with her from the studio one evening, several months ago, I noticed a couple of skulking, villainous-looking fellows hanging at our heels. They followed us all the way to her apartment. There isn't any question that she was the object of their interest."

"Did you speak to her about them?"

"Oh, yes; I called her attention to them as soon as I noticed them. I wanted to turn back and thrash the brutes. She wouldn't hear of it, however. She begged me to take no notice of them."

"Of course, you pressed her for an explanation?"

"Yes. I pleaded with her to take me into her confidence. I told her that it had been evident to me for some time that she was in trouble, and assured her of my eagerness to do anything in my power to help her. She thanked me gently, and said that if she ever needed the help of a friend she would not forget my kind offer. She protested, however, that I was attaching too much importance to the incident—tried to make me believe that she thought those two loafers were merely a couple of mashers. It was apparent from her manner, though, that she was more upset than she was willing to admit."

Fenton was greatly interested. "Did you ever run across those men again?" he asked.

"Not the same pair; but a month or so later I noticed a couple of other fellows, whose looks I didn't like, loitering outside the studio."

"They may not have been interested in your leading lady."

"There isn't the slightest doubt that they were there to spy on her; for I happened to have occasion to call on Miss Vane that evening at her home, and I saw them crouching in the shadow outside her apartment-house. I recognized the beasts immediately.

"And then there was that mysterious gray roadster with the two men in it which followed our party to Hillhaven on the day she and the Jap disappeared," the publicity man continued, with a scowl. "I mentioned that detail to you yesterday, I believe. Of course it may have been only a coincidence that those fellows were traveling over the same route as our machine, but in view of what had happened before, and what has occurred since, I cannot help thinking that they had something to do with what took place on the island."

The detective stroked his chin meditatively. "Tell me," he said, suddenly, "what was Miss Vane's attitude toward Yamada? I suppose they were good friends?"

"I have never observed any indications to the contrary. They weren't at all chummy, though, if that is what you mean. The Jap always kept pretty much to himself. He never had a great deal to say to any of us—loquacity, of course, is not a characteristic of his race—and he was particularly tongue-tied in the presence of women. Acted as though he was afraid of the other sex; and he treated the leading lady about the same as he did the other women members of the company."

"Did he draw a big salary here?"

"Not very. He wasn't a star, you know. He was a fairly good actor, but not good enough to play leads. He was down on the pay-roll for a hundred and fifty a week."

"And Miss Vane?"

"Her contract calls for a thousand a week. That's confidential, though. Nowadays the public has no respect for a film star who doesn't command at least a million a year."

Fenton smiled. "You can rely on me not to betray your secret," he promised. "Still, a thousand a week is an income not to be sneezed at, even in these times of high rents and food profiteers." He paused. "One could almost afford to keep a private yacht on that salary. I suppose your leading lady didn't go in for that sort of thing?"

"Private yachts! Indeed not. She lived very simply. I happen to know that she banked the greater part of her earnings. If—"

Travers did not finish the sentence. He was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone on his desk, and, with an apology

to his visitor, picked up the instrument and listened intently.

The message that came to him over the wire had a startling effect on him. When he turned again to Fenton his face was ashen, and his body was shaking as though he had an attack of the chills.

"They—they've found Yamada," he exclaimed, hoarsely.

"Found him!"

"Found his body in the river, just below Yonkers. Good God, Fenton! I told you that poor girl had met with foul play."

CHAPTER VI.

"A CHAP NAMED MORTIMER."

IT was the New York *Daily Planet* which had called up Travers on the telephone. The paper's Yonkers correspondent had just sent in a bulletin to the effect that the captain of a tugboat had brought ashore a grim bit of flotsam which he had noticed drifting in the Hudson.

It was the body of a male Japanese, and from its condition the Yonkers police were of the opinion that it had been in the water for at least three days. Death appeared to have been caused by drowning, as there were no marks of violence on the remains. A silver cigarette-case, found in one of the pockets, bore the engraved initials: "I. Y."

Receiving these meager details from his correspondent, the city editor of the *Planet* had instantly recalled the visit he had received from Eddie Travers the day before, and had instructed a reporter to get the publicity department of the Apex Pictures Corporation on the wire.

"That doubting smart Aleck is eager enough for my story now," Travers remarked bitterly to Fenton, after he had got through at the telephone. "He's chasing a reporter up here to get all the facts. And I suppose all those other grinning idiots on Park Row will be following suit. Now that poor Yamada has been found dead they'll be willing to concede that the thing isn't a press-agent plant."

"Perhaps the man found in the river isn't Yamada, after all," Fenton suggested. "The body hasn't been identified yet."

"Oh, it's he, all right. There can't be any question about it. The initialed cigarette-case belonged to him. I've seen it in his hand many a time. Besides, men of his race aren't found in the river every day. It couldn't be another Jap. That would be too much of a coincidence."

Travers got up from his chair and paced the floor of his office agitatedly. "What the deuce can be the meaning of it all, Keith?" he asked. "With the facts I've given you, what do you make of it? Do you suppose that—that they've done away with Veronica as well as the Jap? Is there any hope that she's still alive, or will—will her body be found, too, presently, floating in the river?"

"Let us hope not," the detective responded grimly. He frowned meditatively. "After all, it's a little too early yet to be sure that even Yamada has met with foul play. The situation has an ugly look, I must admit. But if that body they've picked up really is your Jap's, there still remains the possibility that his death was accidental. He may have fallen overboard while he and the woman were leaving the island by the underground passage."

"The underground passage!" the other echoed, with an inflection of bewilderment.

Fenton smiled. "I haven't told you yet about my trip to the château on the island and the discovery I made there yesterday, have I?" he said. "I was thinking aloud just now, more than talking to you, but I don't mind taking you into my confidence. I must ask you, however, not to mention anything about what I am going to tell you to the newspapermen when they come here to interview you. For the present I would prefer that my discovery be kept a secret—even from the authorities, who, I have no doubt, will now actively interest themselves in the case."

He gave Travers a brief account of his success in finding the secret stairway in the château, and told him of the hairpin he had picked up in the tunnel, which seemed to favor the theory that the missing motion-picture actress had been down there.

"But whether she and the Jap took that route of their own free will, or whether they were carried off by force, is a question

that even this startling news we have just heard does not answer," Fenton concluded. "As I have said, it is quite possible that Yamada's drowning was an accident. He might have fallen into the water while he and Miss Vane were attempting to navigate the underground channel in a small boat. By the way, do you happen to know whether he could swim?"

"Not a stroke," the publicity man informed him. "Miss Vane was like a fish in the water, but the Jap was no swimmer. Still, I can't believe that his death was accidental. What reason could that girl have had for leaving the château in that mysterious way? And how did she or Yamada happen to know of the existence of the secret staircase?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders. "I am not saying that I favor that theory myself. I am merely pointing out that it is a possibility that has to be taken into account in considering this problem." He was silent for a moment. "You were telling me yesterday, Eddie, that it was the author of the scenario, himself, who suggested that the château be used for some of the scenes in his play?"

"That is correct. He had put a note to that effect down at the bottom of his synopsis. It isn't unusual, you know. Authors often make suggestions of that sort. Beginners, especially, have the habit. Old hands at the game know better than to risk getting the director's goat by horning in with unsought advice, but novices can't resist trying to run the whole works. Sometimes they even go to the length of suggesting what members of the company should be cast for their characters."

"Isn't it rather peculiar, then, that serious attention should have been paid to this writer's suggestion?" Fenton remarked. "I believe you said that he was unknown to your scenario department."

"They had never heard of him before," Travers assented. "But his story was such a rattling good one, and the way it was handled showed such expert workmanship that McCullough, when the script came into his hands, thought it might be worth while to have Baxter, our location man, run out and take a look at that château. He had enough respect for the author to take his hint seriously. Besides, it was rather a difficult matter to find a location in this vicinity which just fitted that play. The shape of the house, and the position of the adjacent scenery played an important part in the plot of the story, you see."

A glint came to Fenton's eyes. "Can you bring me that manuscript now?" he asked, a note of eagerness in his voice. "I should very much like to have a look at it."

"I guess I can get it for you. The original from which the continuity was made, is no doubt still on file in our scenario department. I suppose it is the original synopsis that you want?"

The detective nodded.

"I'll go and look it up." Travers's eyes suddenly opened wide. "Great Scott! Is it your idea that the author of that script was mixed up in this infernal conspiracy—that he knew about the secret features of the château, and submitted the play to us solely with the idea of luring Miss Vane out there?" he exclaimed excitedly.

"I think, at all events, it will be worth my while to spend a little time looking up this mysterious Mr. Mortimer," Fenton told him. "I believe you said that Mortimer was the chap's name?"

"Yes—Stanley Mortimer. That was the name typed at the head of the story. And his address must be on the manuscript, too—otherwise they couldn't have sent him a check—so you ought not to have a great deal of trouble in looking the fellow up."

Fenton made no response to this, but a whimsical smile curved his lips. He had his doubts as to whether the task of locating the author of the scenario was going to be quite so easy as his friend imagined.

The publicity man went out to visit the scenario department. He was gone for some time, but when he came back he had some typewritten pages in his hand.

"Sorry to keep you waiting so long, old man," he apologized. "While I was outside I took the time to spread the news about—about the tragic fate of poor Yamada. You ought to have seen the boss's face when I sprung the sensational tidings on him. I guess he's convinced at last that

poor Veronica Vane's disappearance was no plant of mine. He realizes now that it's dead serious business. Even my worst enemy could hardly suspect me of being capable of going to the length of killing a man for the sake of a newspaper story." He thrust the manuscript into the detective's hand. "Here is what you want."

Fenton examined the typewritten pages intently. "Written with a Lockwood Visible machine," he muttered. "That ought to be helpful."

"Good heavens! How can you tell offhand what make of typewriter that chap used?" Travers exclaimed, incredulously, "You don't mean to say—"

"That every typewriter is its own betrayer?" the other cut in with a laugh. "Yes; I do mean to say just that, my son. Evidently you are not aware that the identification of typewriting has become an exact science. No two machines in the world write exactly alike. Not only is it possible for the expert to detect the make of machine used, by examining a specimen of typewriting; he can go much further than that. He can pick out the very machine on which the specimen in question was produced, from among a thousand others of the same model.

"Although I have given some study to the science, I don't claim to be an expert myself," Fenton continued. "If it becomes necessary to trace this particular typewriter I shall probably retain the services of a friend of mine who is a specialist in that line of investigation. But I would be a pretty poor detective if I couldn't tell instantly that this manuscript was turned out by a Lockwood Visible.

"The style of lettering is distinctive. I happen to know that no other machine has this unusually large, bold-faced type, which is a feature of the Lockwood. You may have seen it mentioned in their advertising." Fenton folded the manuscript and put it in his pocket. "I hope there is no objection to my taking this with me?"

"That will be all right. Are you leaving now? Going to interview this fellow, Stanley Mortimer, right away, I suppose?"

"If I am fortunate enough to find him at home," the detective replied dryly.

He proceeded to the address which was typed beneath the author's name. It was a number on Third Avenue, in the vicinity of Fifty-Ninth Street. The place proved to be a dingy tenement building with an uninviting-looking bakery and lunchroom on the ground floor.

Fenton entered this bakery. The lettering on the window announced that its proprietor was named Aaron Kolb, and the address on the manuscript ran: "Stanley Mortimer, care of Kolb."

"Mr. Mortimer in?" he asked the man at the counter.

"Mr. Mortimer! I don't know the party, sir."

"Stanley Mortimer. He has his mail addressed here, doesn't he?"

The fellow's face lighted up. "Oh, yes; there was a young woman in here a few weeks ago who was expecting a letter addressed to a party of that name. She asked me to hold it until called for."

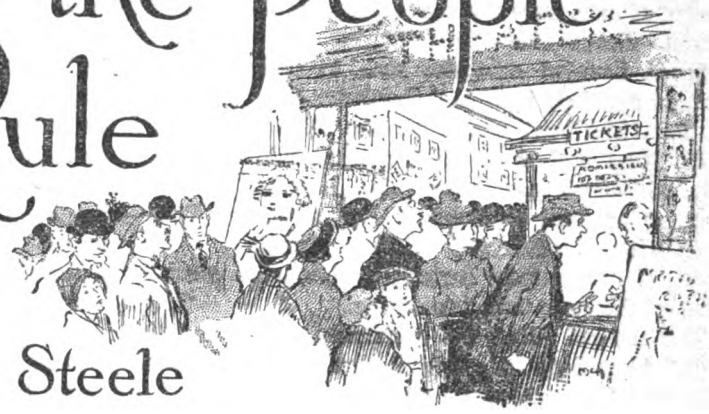
"A young woman, eh! Where can I find her?"

"I couldn't tell you, sir. The letter arrived a few days later, and the same party called for it. I handed it over to her without asking any questions."

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)

Let the People Rule

by Rufus Steele



THE State convention of the Silver Party was getting the first genuine thrill it had known since the days when silver was a national issue. The convention was in a ferment over the business of indorsing a man for Governor.

For sixteen years these undying Silverites had put forth no hopeless standard-bearer of their own, but quadrennially had given indorsement to the regular candidate of the despised Republican or the despised Democratic party, accordingly as the one or the other could point cautiously to his silver "leanings." It would have been fatuous, however, for either William Swank or Matthew Foote to pretend that his principal had any interest in the white metal beyond its convenience as a purchasing medium for the lesser necessities. Wherefore Swank and Foote, like the good campaign managers they were, had undertaken to bind to them a sufficient number of the delegates with hoops of steel—some said, of gold.

It looked now as if the binding had been overdone. When the name of Timothy Sage, Republican candidate for reelection, was offered for indorsement, about half the delegates rose to their feet and cheered. Genuine excitement entered the situation when, upon presentation of the name of Buckley Belden, Democratic candidate, the other half of the convention arose and tried to outdo the previous demonstration.

"Move nominash close!" shouted a voice, and there were so many seconds that Delegate Rupert Russ needed his full power of lung and gesture to obtain the floor.

Mr. Russ was slender, youthful and not unknown. He was editor-owner of the Montezuma *Reveille*. Before the Republican convention met he had loosed the thunders of his triweekly, non-partizan newspaper against the renomination of a man who had no more served the public interest from the gubernatorial chair than from his former seat in the lower house of Congress. And when Timothy Sage had been unanimously renamed by his callous-eared and shameless party, Rupe Russ had trained his editorial guns upon the Democrats.

It was their solemn duty to acclaim some spotless commoner and give the outraged citizenry an opportunity to avenge the renomination of Sage. And when a purblind Democracy, instead of heeding, had given its unbroken support to Buckley Belden, owner of six rural banks and sixteen tax-evading herds of cattle, the *Reveille* had turned a searchlight upon the unparalleled opportunity of the Silver Party to return to power by naming the public savior.

Indeed, Rupert Russ had gone farther. Running his editorial eye up and down the ranks of the poor-in-purse-but-rich-in-reputation, he had found the man. He had proclaimed him to the commonwealth through the *Reveille*, and he was naming him now upon the floor of the convention,

"And when I say," he concluded, "a fearless, justice-loving, righteous citizen, I mean that considerate neighbor, that honest master of men from the mines, that simple patriot—Bartholomew Hogue!"

Seven bearded delegates rose to their feet, swung their hats, and shouted. Four of them had been sitting on one side of Rupe Russ and three on the other side. The whiskered ones were mine foremen who, at on time or another, had shared shift with Bartholomew Hogue. Their shout, if turned loose underground, would have set the main tunnel to caving.

The roll-call lifted the excitement sky-high. First Sage led, then Belden. Bartholomew Hogue received eight votes—the votes of Rupe Russ and his little flock of hairy-faced foremen. Of the remaining sixty-two votes of the convention Timothy Sage and Buckley Belden each received thirty-one.

The gathering broke into an uproar. Above the pounding of the chairman could be heard the repeated shout, "Make Hogue withdraw!" For answer Rupe Russ elevated his slender form to his chair and shook his head in protracted negation. At the back of the hall Sage's campaign manager, Bill Swank, and Belden's manager, Matt Foote, came hurriedly together. Neither had left a stone unturned. Each knew that nothing could break the deadlock until that solid eight deserted Hogue. In which direction would they finally desert? Swank was first to speak:

"I don't want to bet this thing blind any more than you do, Foote. Let's be sensible. Let's pull down both our men and let this old gravel-scratcher of a Hogue carry off the nomination. That will sidetrack the Silver Party bugaboo and leave us with an even break. Are you game?"

Mr. Foote was game. In two minutes the names of the tied candidates had been withdrawn, the secretary had cast the unanimous vote for Hogue in the absence of anything else to do, and the convention, having been deprived of a big fight, was determined to have its big joke.

"Speech! Speech! Speech from our standard-bearer!" the delegates yelled.

Bartholomew Hogue, perspiring and bewildered, was led down the aisle by Rupe Russ and assisted upon the rostrum. He thanked the convention. "What's your personal platform?" some one yelled. Rupe Russ straightened with proud expectation. Bart Hogue had the typewritten answer sizzling in his inside pocket, where Russ had placed it for ready reference; but alas, in the excitement Hogue had forgotten.

"My personal platform," he stammered. "Why—why, I say, let the people rule."

"Give us your planks! Give us your planks!" yelled the delighted audience.

"Well," Hogue struggled, "I say capital and labor have got to stick together, because they are natural partners.

"I say more water in the dry sections and more dry land in the wet sections of our great State.

"I say make the cattlemen and sheepmen pay their just share of the taxes, instead of beating them by hiding half their herds.

"I say—I say— Why, I say let us give the ballot to our wives, our daughters and our sweethearts."

The convention smiled, laughed, scoffed, and went into a merry ague of joy. Rupe Russ was dazed. He saw a pleasant platitude in his man's first declaration, a platitudinous pleasantry in the second, a tactical blunder in the third, and in the fourth a frank invitation to the people to laugh the candidate out of the race.

So far as Rupe knew no man in the State was thinking about the buzz-saw of woman suffrage, and perhaps not even a single woman. Yes, there was one woman—that teacher of the Squaw Creek school to whose two unosolicited contributions upon the suffrage subject he had given space in the "People's Forum" column. Her name was—Helen Hogue!

Now he saw it. Fate had reached down to hand Bart Hogue the opportunity of a lifetime and his own daughter had snatched it away! In the bitterness of his disappointment the young editor kicked over his chair and mingled his jeers with the jeers of the many.

II.

THE State press published the account of the Silver Party convention at the left-

hand edge of the front page. The item drew its importance from the amazing personal platform of its single nominee, the candidate for Governor. In the editorial columns this platform was dissected and discussed. Scarcely an editorial writer overlooked the opportunity to relieve the accustomed soberness of his page with a little real hilarity.

"Our good-natured friend from the mines," declared the Capital City *Expositor*, "may be said to have quit running before he began. The people see in the four singular planks of his platform nothing but handy material with which to turn him out a political coffin."

The *Reveille* did not laugh. After his first outburst in the convention, Editor Rupert Russ steadied to the fact that his man had been nominated and that his duty was to do everything in his power to elect him. He pronounced Bartholomew Hogue the emancipator and pointed at those four shining planks as evidence of the candidate's unequivocating sincerity. Also he spent the two days following the convention in a busy endeavor to forget it.

He went out of the beaten news paths in keeping his mind engrossed. Thus he met Sagebrush Samuels, whose vivid portrayal of the genuine wild-west hero had endeared him to the moving-picture audiences of all the States and most of the foreign lands.

"Be glad to give the *Reveille* all the facts it wants," said Samuels, as he whistled for the Indians to get over the brow of the hill and told the settler's wife to start for the spring with her water-bucket and baby.

"Trouble is, you won't believe the facts when you hear 'em. You won't believe that forty million people will see this little three-reeler I'm making right now inside the next six months. But it's a fact. Why, say, do you know that there are four times as many moving-picture theaters as schoolhouses even in our own wild and woolly State and that about one-sixth of our population drops in every day to see what's doing on the screens? And they believe what they see, brother. Here, you Apaches, git down lower and chuck those cigareets!

"Yes, sir; it's the only way to teach the great lessons of the day. Come on, Molly; thump the kid on the off side and make him cry a little. You won't believe it, but as a public educator and influencer of public opinion, the moving picture has got the whole pack of newspapers hamstrung, hobbled and hogtied. Grind on 'em, Pete, grind on 'em now! What you hand the people on the screen, if you can make it seem like it is on the dead level, they're going to swallow—bait, sinker and all. Say, I could turn out a single reel of a thousand feet telling the story of Jonah and the whale and there wouldn't be a scriptural doubter left in the world. Seeing is believing, and—"

The editor of the *Reveille* had laid violent hands upon the sagebrush hero.

"Tell me," he demanded, the light of a fanatical purpose leaping in his eyes, "how much would you charge to grind me out a four-reel story if I furnished the scenario and the star, and how long would it take you to do it?"

Long after Molly and the baby had been rescued from the Indians that afternoon Rupert Russ tarried at his editorial desk in deepest thought. Occasionally he snatched a sheet of yellow copy paper and picked up a pencil, but the writing never progressed beyond the figures "$6000!"

A man came in and sat on the corner of the table. He was a big-boned, ample man who radiated a sort of grizzled kindliness. Honesty shone out of his weather-beaten face like chalk out of a sea-beaten cliff. Russ pushed aside the yellow sheets and looked up.

"Bart," he inquired, "exactly how much actual coin of the realm can you raise to help elect you Governor of this State?"

The visitor lifted a buckskin sack from his vest pocket and a gold watch slipped out of it. The watch was studded with small diamonds and an inscription showed it to have been given their foreman by the night shift of the Tiger mine.

"I can get $200 on that," said Hogue.

"What makes you think so?"

"I've done it—twice."

"Then that would make $700. I can slap a plaster on this printing outfit that will raise $500."

It was Hogue's turn to look incredulous. Russ caught the glance around.

"I've done it before," he murmured, "more than once." Then he glanced at the yellow sheets bearing the figures $6,000, and sighed. The outer door rattled. A young woman looked through the glass partition and entered the sanctum. She was brown-eyed, wavy-haired, and spectacled.

"I'm Helen Hogue," she said. "I've brought to you as papa's manager the $300 I had in the bank." She counted out fifteen twenty-dollar pieces upon the desk. "And besides, I have a telegram. After the convention I sent a message telling the national committee what papa was standing for, and this is the answer." She handed to awed Rupert Russ a drab sheet which unfolded to show these typewritten words:

New York, July 9th.

HELEN HOGUE,
MONTEZUMA, ——

Newspapers here confirm your statement of splendid stand of brave Bartholomew Hogue on behalf of equal rights for American womanhood. We expect his campaign to wake up Western States. Be assured our stanch support. National committee authorizes contribution five thousand dollars to Hogue campaign fund and draft goes forward to-day.

MARGARET BEECHWOOD JOHNSON,
Secretary.

For a moment the editor of the *Reveille* saturated his blistering lips. Then he picked up a pencil, made a hasty column of figures and totaled it:

$200
500
300
5000

$6000

He got up as one staggering through the jewel-hung caverns of a dream and imprisoned Helen Hogue's substantially gloved hand in both his own, but almost immediately he set the girl free.

"No," he corrected himself, "it couldn't be anything less than the hand of God!"

III.

EVERYBODY knew that the fight between Governor Sage and Buckley Belden would not be a kindergarten affair. The Governor had long been seasoning in the political simmer. Belden was new to politics, but old at the game of getting what he went after, and his war chest contained a sinewy plethora. Add to this the field marshal abilities of Mr. Bill Swank and Mr. Matt Foote, and it will be seen that the people had a reasonable basis for their expectation.

Montezuma snuggled in the shadow of the purple hills. It was the point at which the agricultural interests of the lowlands and the mining and grazing interests of the uplands might be said to meet. It was customary for the cohorts of both parties to go there to fire the opening guns of a State campaign.

The first day of September would find a lot of people in town. The miners would be in by evening to celebrate a generous pay-day. Both Swank and Foote billed their principals to speak at Montezuma that night. Sage would address the people at the Opera House, Belden at the Atheneum Pavilion. In order to make sure that Bartholomew Hogue would not attempt to make a noise in his home town on that evening, Swank and Foote also paid the rent on two other available auditoriums.

Rupert Russ heard of this and laughed. He had no funds for hall rent. He laughed again when he learned that Swank had even gone to the extent of reminding the local chief of police that Montezuma had an ordinance prohibiting political speech-making on the public streets. Perhaps Swank's solicitude was inspired by this notice, which had appeared that week on the front page of each of the three issues of the *Reveille*:

7:30 P.M. FRIDAY, SEPT. 1 7:30 P.M.
In Front of the Reveille Office
THE NEXT GOVERNOR
Will Take the People Into His Confidence
DON'T MISS THE GREATEST SENSATION
Ever Pulled Off In This State

The Sage and Belden meetings, two blocks apart, were announced for eight o'clock. Their bonfires were lighted and their bands began playing at seven. It would be a historic night. Montezuma suppered promptly and started down-town.

Some of the people were going to the Sage meeting and some to hear Belden, but all set out early so that they might go round by the *Reveille* office and see what Rupe Russ was up to. Could he actually be trying to puff life into the campaign of old Bart Hogue? Anyway, walking two blocks out of the way was a small price to pay for a good laugh.

What the crowd discovered in front of the *Reveille* office was a large American flag. It hung on a frame mounted at the edge of the wooden awning above the sidewalk. At seven thirty citizens were jostling good-naturedly and asking each other about the promised excitement. The flag fell. A white screen was disclosed and immediately the rays of a calcium began to flicker upon it. A moving-picture machine was preparing to operate from a window across the street.

The words "Our Next Governor" were flashed, and the face of Bartholomew Hogue, ten or twelve feet from ear to ear, was smiling down. The picture dissolved into Hogue speaking to a crowd of men, apparently to the convention that nominated him. These words appeared:

> I say, let the people rule! My platform has four planks: First, capital and labor must pull together, because they are natural partners.

There followed a carefully conceived, carefully pictured story of a mining strike. Miners were passing down the shaft. Smoke poured from the smelter stack. In the office the mine owner was busy with his clerks and accountants. A committee, headed by the president of the union, appeared and demanded a decrease in hours and an increase in pay. The owner refused and ordered the committee from the door. The men poured out of the shaft. The smoke died out of the stack. Clerks closed their desks. Rioting was shown, then the suffering in miners' homes. Wives were wan-eyed, children went supperless and crying to bed. Fathers took to drinking. The mine owner was presented with his notes by the bank; he faced ruin.

Suddenly Bartholomew Hogue appeared. He asked the mine owner to meet for a conference with the strike committee. The owner refused. Hogue, as Governor of the State, repeated his demand in the name of the people. The owner gave in. The committee came. Hogue talked to both sides. Visions pictured his eloquent description of the suffering in the miners' homes. Visions showed how he outlined the owner's troubles with the bank.

"Gentlemen," Hogue declared, "You are both wrong. We must settle this strike by give and take." He produced his plan of agreement. Both sides read it and affixed their signatures. The picture closed with the mine owner and the president of the union clasping hands while Governor Hogue blessed them both and reaffirmed the natural partnership existing between capital and labor.

Five hundred persons saw the picture start; nearly five thousand saw the reel end. The mine owner and the strike leader were played by professional actors. Bartholomew Hogue was played by himself. The man proved to be a great screen actor because he could not by any possibility be anything but himself. The curious audience became the absorbed audience. The ending left them fascinated. Spontaneously they cheered.

The hour was seven fifty. A band played up to either edge of the crowd, wheeled and sought to lead the throng off to two brilliantly illuminated but unoccupied auditoriums. Brass bands seemed suddenly bereft of their ancient bell-wether abilities. The crowd started, hesitated, and turned back. A new reel was unfolding.

> Second plank. More water in the dry sections, more dry land in the wet sections of our great State.

The spectators were carried on invisible wings through the desert country where the jackrabbit ruled, and then into the marsh regions where was no life save the countless waterfowl. Next the audience was wafted to the bank of a mountain stream. Bartholomew Hogue was there. He had completed a water-gate and a ditch. He opened the gate and let a stream go scurrying down the channel. The scene cut back to a desolate acre in the desert. The life-giving current of water arrived and over-

spread it. Followed a vision in which settlers in great wagons were pouring upon the new lands of plenty, singing as they came.

The scene changed to the marsh. Hogue, rubber-booted and covered with mud, was vigorously swinging his spade. He had established the first little drainage canal. A vision suggested the glories to come with full reclamation. In another instant there was Bart Hogue on the screen, four times his normal size, clasping a legislative bill in each hand and giving assurance that when he was Governor the transformation of the wastes should receive his earnest attention.

In the wings of the Opera House Governor Sage was intimating to the local citizen who was to preside at the meeting that in all his career he had never been shown such a teetotally unblessed lack of respect. He could not understand it. All he was sure of was that he would be everlastingly condemned before he would step out upon the stage and address that unhallowed audience which, including his own wife, numbered just eleven persons and the band.

Off-stage at the Atheneum Buckley Belden was nervously fingering the typewritten pages of a masterly political oration and demanding to know what Matt Foote meant by presenting him with an audience of nine, only four of whom were voters.

Campaign Manager Swank personally led the Sage brass band in a fresh assault upon the crowd in front of the *Reveille* office, and at the same time the Belden musicians, inspired by the leadership of Campaign Manager Foote, hurled themselves against the opposite edge of the human mass. The crowd, too interested at first to pay any attention, at last became aware of the double assault and gave way. The bands marched to the center, whereupon the mass closed solidly once more. Swank and Foote fought their furious way to freedom, but the bandmen, hampered by their instruments, accepted the situation, joined forces and proved by a series of melodic offerings that in union there is strength.

It was during the exposition of Hogue's third plank about making the cattlemen and sheepmen pay their just part of the taxes that the crowd gave repeated outburst to its feelings. A hidden mountain cañon was shown to have been turned into a corral. Herders were slipping their stock into it and obliterating the tracks. The climax showed Governor Hogue holding the scales of justice. A merchant and a farmer had thrown their taxes into one side; a cattleman and a sheepman were endeavoring to slip away from the empty pan at the other extreme, but the steady arm of Hogue drew them back and forced them to disgorge until the scales swung in righteous balance. The reenforced band did its noblest with "Hail, Columbia," yet hardly a note was heard above the hoarse approval that swelled from five thousand throats.

Fourth plank: Let us give the ballot to our wives, our daughters, and our sweethearts.

The audience was swept into a drama of fraudulent elections. Plotters were striving to send to the Legislature scoundrels who would aid them in looting the treasury. The decent element saw itself in danger of being outvoted. Crooks of all types and finally drunkards, who had to be brought up in vehicles, and assisted into the election booth, were handed ballots which they voted without examination.

Then the picture switched to wives busy in the home and the flower-garden. The children were kissed and sent off to school. Appeared Bartholomew Hogue and explained the situation at the polls. The women were indignant; they were ready to fly to the rescue of the State, but each lifted her wrists to show that she was bound. The picture faded with Hogue reaching out with the scepter of the law to strike the shackles from the helpless arms. It was a trite little story, with which the crowd was more or less familiar, but seeing it was somehow very different from hearing it, and the audience did not conceal the fact that the barb of exasperation it carried had gone under the skin.

There was a quick rush of policemen along the curb. They shouted, shoved and intimidated. Into the lane they opened an automobile pushed its way. In the back sat the was-to-have-been chairman of the Republican meeting and beside him Gov-

ernor Timothy Sage. The chairman whooped through an unintelligible introduction and Sage planted his feet in the unsteady cushioning of the seat.

"Fellow citizens!" the Governor bellowed. "I come to you, asking fair play. I come to resent an outrage. I come to protest against this scurvy, mountebank trick played upon me and upon you by—"

The remaining words were lost in the spontaneous rumble of a mighty laugh. The moving-picture operator had started again on his opening reel. Upon the screen, directly above the head of the gesticulating speaker in the automobile and about ten times as large, appeared the genial face of Bartholomew Hogue with his earnest plea that the people be allowed to rule.

Again and again the Governor tried to break in, but he was whistling against the breakers of the sea. He continued to shout, but now his sole object was to communicate something of importance to the driver of his automobile. The car began to move, the crowd fell back, and Governor Sage shot away to the peace and quiet of his hotel—and not exactly to peace and quiet, either, for he found a gentleman striding up and down the St. James lobby and venting his feelings by sending the great red rocking-chairs sprawling into a position which suggested that they were praying for their lives. Pure eggplant was the color now assumed by Mr. Buckley Belden's face.

IV.

It was afternoon of the day after. The door of the sanctum of the *Reveille* was locked. Its dusty glass partition had been further opaqued by the drawing of a faded green curtain. Half a hundred visitors—some bubbling over with an excess of congratulations, some fermenting with daring and sudden schemes—learned from an ink-smeared printer, whose robust person blocked the counter gate of the outer office, that there was no chance whatever of the editor being able to receive them that day.

The editor was occupied. In the barricaded sanctum he bent a rumpled head over a mess of telegrams that strewed his desk. When he lifted his gaze he let it rest upon the sublimely uncomprehending countenance of Bartholomew Hogue and the steady brown eyes of the teacher of the Squaw Creek school.

"Every morning paper in the State made a lead out of it," he said, "and every afternoon sheet is wiring me for a personal yarn. Lord, if I only had a hundred hands to write with! But that end of it's all right; the afternoon fellows can revamp the A. P. dope and make it as darned lurid as they please. Here's what's got me stuck."

He gathered up a separate pile of yellow telegraphic sheets.

"The ten biggest movie theaters in the State have wired for the film, saying they'll make it their feature for Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Lord, if I only knew just how strong it's safe to talk back to this bunch!"

"You mean"—Helen Hogue's eyes snapped as she came to the point—"you mean you don't know which nine of them it is safe to tell that they will have to await their turn?"

Rupert Russ let himself relax in a laugh.

"Say, you don't think I undertook this round-up with a shoe-string, do you? These big fellows don't want anything but a first-run picture, and that's what they'll all get. Ten copies of the film are in that safe right now, just itching to be dropped into the express office."

"Splendid!" cried Miss Hogue; after a moment she inquired: "Then what in Heaven's name are you worrying about?"

"The money part," Russ replied.

"Maybe I could get a few dollars to cover the express charges if—"

"The theaters pay the expressage," the editor interrupted. "You don't seem to understand. We are going to need money like fun during the next few weeks, and I'm wondering— Say, you're a good business woman; how do you think a telegram like this would hit each of the big ten?"

He scribbled rapidly, then read aloud:

"Film forwarded by express. It will cost you $250 for three days and will seem like a gift when you see how it jams your house."

V.

Sagebrush Samuels had told only half the truth. He had said that one-sixth of the

total population visited the moving-picture theaters every day, whereas it now seemed to certain proprietors fortunate enough to have secured the great Bartholomew Hogue campaign four-reeler that between the hours of noon and midnight fully half the population sought admission to their twilighted palaces of entertainment. Neither had Mr. Samuels exaggerated the simple power of a sincere picture over an audience. None of the spectators laughed, none scoffed; but always they applauded and frequently the customary quiet of the picture house was broken by a cheer. It was a thoughtful and talkative audience that streamed out of the place.

At the end of ten days Rupert Russ was turning down orders. He was selecting the towns and the theaters in which he wanted the film copies shown. The outlying districts discovered that the request most likely to be honored was one written on the letterhead of a local Bartholomew Hogue campaign committee showing actual signs of life.

Presently bonfires were built in the street and Hogue speakers addressed the crowd awaiting its turn at the inside of the theater. The speakers drove home the lessons of the screen. Occasionally Bartholomew Hogue himself appeared at these bonfire stands. Always he was under the personal escort of his campaign manager, the editor of the Montezuma *Reveille*, and never did his speech extend beyond the reiteration of the four famous planks of his platform. People struggled to touch his hand as though he were some awesome hero of the stage.

The plan adopted by Timothy Sage and Buckley Belden was to ignore their contemptible rival. It was not easy for them to remain silent after what happened at Montezuma on the campaign's opening night, but William Swank and Matthew Foote counseled their principals that to mention Bartholomew Hogue and his upstart manager was but to advertise them. In a week the people would have forgotten, and Hogue would never be heard of again. The affair at Montezuma was regarded as a never-to-be-repeated fluke of chance. It would seem that in their study of modern social forces neither Mr. Swank nor Mr. Foote had ever wasted a moment in pondering the possibilities of a plain white muslin screen.

But as the weeks went by, and the people fought their way into any place of amusement where the Hogue film was to be exhibited, the astute Sage foresaw the tide of sentiment that the picture must set in motion. Deliberately he worked out a plan. He would reach into old Bart Hogue's unhidden past for a weapon with which to slay him. The Governor sent Swank to line up the newspapers, and to provide them with half-tones, made from old photographs, with which to illustrate the big sensational story of the campaign.

Sage delivered his blow at a huge meeting at Esmeralda. The town was the mining center. Hundreds of drillers and muckers were present with their wives. Sage recalled the great accident of ten years before in the Monitor mine, when twenty-one men had lost their lives.

Why had the tunnel caved? Why had those brave men had no warning? Why had they been given no chance to save their lives? There was only one man living who could answer these questions. He was the guilty foreman of the Monitor mine. Did the people realise that the man with the stained hands was the same Bart Hogue who now had the unspeakable effrontery to ask them to make him their Governor?

Swank had done his work well. The Governor's charge, illustrated with pictures vividly recalling the half-forgotten horror, went through the entire State press. Sage's personal organ, the Capital City *Expositor*, said editorially that no reply could be expected from Bartholomew Hogue because the facts bespoke his doom.

The *Expositor* did not know, of course, just as Timothy Sage had not known, that when it came to persons with the fixed habit of pasting interesting or unusual bits of paper into scrapbooks for possible future reference, Miss Helen Hogue would have to be mentioned with distinction. For two days there was more or less consternation in the *Reveille* office, and then as midnight approached and the weary editor kicked his shins while he read his final proofs, the wavy-haired school-teacher slipped in, her

brown eyes sparking flashes that threatened to wreck her spectacles. All she did was to drop a crumpled and somewhat yellowed letter upon the desk and all she said was: "'Rupe, I got it!"

VI.

On Saturday night, ten days after Sage had delivered his broadside at Hogue, twelve thousand persons squeezed into the Capital City Baseball Park. These persons had received printed and oral assurance, beginning with an announcement in the Montezuma *Reveille,* that at the hour of eight the Bartholomew Hogue campaign film would be shown and that in a new fifth reel a little inside State history relating to the famous Monitor mine horror would be released to the world.

Somewhere in the neighborhood of second base a gigantic screen had been erected. The projecting machine had been set far back, so as to enlarge the figures to the full dimensions of the screen. The throng laughed, cheered and developed its emotions as the familiar drama of the four planks was unfolded. Then came the new reel, with its utterly simple story.

Bart Hogue, his hair darkened to take ten years off his age, was shown as the foreman of the Monitor mine. He was taking his owners on some kind of an expedition through the tunnels. He pointed to the lagging and declared that it was unsafe. He pleaded for money with which to retimber the mine. Impatiently the owners denied his request. The foreman was shown brooding over the matter in his home. An idea came and he seized his hat and went out into the night. He was going, the caption said, to tell his story to the new member of Congress from his district and ask for the passage of a Federal law that would force mine owners to safeguard the lives of their men.

The first sensation came when the foreman was admitted to the new Congressman's home. In the clever make-up of the actor who played the Congressman the spectators had no difficulty in recognizing Timothy Sage. He was greatly interested in what the foreman had to say, and when the drawings showing the timbering of the Monitor mine were laid before him, he leaped up to exclaim: "I will put a law on the statute books to protect the lives of these miners if it is the only thing I ever do in Washington!"

The scene shifted to the national capital. Sage had prepared his bill. He exhibited it to fellow-members of the House. A conference was held with the lobbyist of the mining interests. He stormed and said the bill would never do because it would cost his people millions. Sage was shown in meditation. At length he tore up his bill and wrote a letter to the mine foreman back home.

Hogue was shown receiving that letter. It almost broke his heart. He tucked it into his shirt and entered the mine. The cave-in followed. After a suggestion of terrible happenings, the foreman was shown bending over the bodies of the twenty-one dead. From his shirt he drew out the Congressman's letter and read it again. Suddenly, in letters twelve inches high, the typewritten letter with its autograph signature, flashed upon the screen:

House of Representatives.
Washington, D. C.,
Jan. 12, 19—.

Bartholomew Hogue, Esq.,
Esmeralda, ——

Dear Sir:

I regret that circumstances do not permit my introducing a bill looking to the greater safety of mine-timbering at this time, but I hope in the future to take the matter up again.

Yours very truly,
Timothy Sage, M. C.

VII.

The retirement of Governor Sage from the race for reelection was allowed to filter through the public consciousness without formal announcement. His friends explained that the mainsprings of his action were ill health and his inability, in the brief time before election, to controvert certain slanders put upon him by the unscrupulous use of a moving-picture device whose proper function was the amusement of children. It was too late to remove his name from the ballot, but he earnestly hoped, it was understood, that no well-meaning friend would vote for him, but that all citizens would

unite in the overwhelming election of that pillar of the commercial world, Buckley Belden.

Rupert Russ was disgusted.

"We put too much dynamite in that one," regretfully he explained to Helen Hogue. "We should merely have punctured him and left him dragging along in the race. By blowing him clean off the face of the earth we've shunted the entire opposition into Buck Belden's hat. I'm afraid it means more work for the bomb factory, sister. You and I have got to take a little secret trip up into Mountain County, where Buck has set a world's record raising the kind of cows the assessor can't see. I've got to cultivate the tax collector and you're going to be a lunger and go to Beaver for your health. In a week you and the lonesome station-agent up there will be such pals that he'll be letting you play with the railroad company's books."

As the campaign approached its final fortnight an ease born of assurance was to be discerned in the Democratic candidate's bearing. True, the ten copies of the famous Hogue campaign film—minus the fifth reel, which disappeared with the elimination of Timothy Sage—were still filling picture houses every afternoon and night, but Mr. Belden's representatives brought him word that the excitement had subsided, and that such claptrap methods were not to be feared. Still, it is doubtful whether the conservative Mr. Belden would have ventured reference to the film in one of his own big meetings had he not been deeply provoked. He was saying to a pleasingly sympathetic audience that he would not raise the tax rate when he was Governor and that the burden of taxation was now equitably carried, when some rowdy interrupted with the query: "What about the herds of cattle that hide in the mountain cañons and never pay any taxes at all?"

Into Buckley Belden's shaven cheek there leaped the eggplants of wrath.

"I know where you got that insane notion!" he rasped. "You got it from that contemptible, infernal moving picture being peddled around by this loafer Hogue and his friends. I tell you it's a lie. It's an insult to the cattle owners of this State. It's an insult aimed at the assessor of Mountain County and at me, because I happen to graze more beef there than anybody else. I tell you Assessor John Becket is an honest man and I challenge—I challenge—I challenge any man, woman or child to prove there was ever a B. B. brand steer that didn't pay its taxes!"

Matt Foote groaned in the wings.

"Sufferin' cyclones!" he exclaimed as Belden came off the stage. "How could you give 'em an opening like that? Couldn't you see that guy was planted there to make you put your foot in it? I wouldn't have had this happen for a million dollars! I'm afraid—afraid—oh, hell!"

In twelve hours the thing that Mr. Foote so greatly feared had come upon them. The *Reveille* was out with an announcement that occupied half its front page. The people of the State were invited to gather in Candidate Belden's home town on the following Saturday night to witness the initial projection of the most startling campaign film ever made. No details could be given in advance. Its nature would have to be guessed from its title. It would be called "The Miracle."

Now the thriving town of Meridian, county-seat, and home of Mr. Buckley Belden, had an opera house, a fair pavilion and numerous halls, yet when Rupert Russ visited that future metropolis to secure accommodations for his Saturday night event, he found that some unnamed person had preempted every auditorium having more than a hundred chairs. Neither would the police authorities issue a permit for a down-town exhibition that would block the business streets. The resourceful Rupert turned at last to the grassy court-house square. He smuggled the projecting machine into a jury-room having a conveniently placed window, and on Saturday afternoon his carpenters set up the open-air screen within twenty feet of the wall of the county jail.

As night fell thousands packed into the court-house square. They gave a pleasant cheer for Hogue, but they sent up salvo after salvo for Belden. They were the hosts of the opposition stronghold, but they were willing to lend at attentive eye.

A hush went over them when the white light of a calcium began to play. A murmur of expectancy arose when the words of Buckley Belden's recent challenge were thrown upon the screen.

"The Miracle" opened with scenes in the cattle country. Cowboys galloped about and showed their dexterity with the rope. They threw the calves and dragged them up to the branding fire. A cowboy tried the brand by setting it up against a board. "B. B." was the imprint it made. A buggy drove up and an elderly man got out. The audience laughed. The ambling actor, lugging a bulging black bag, was giving a very good imitation of Buckley Belden.

He received the reports of the foreman and issued his order for carrying on the work. A cowboy galloped in with news. Assessor John Becket was approaching the ranch. Activity ensued. Riders leaped to the saddle and two-thirds of the herd were sent crashing through the brush into the cañon. The assessor, easily recognized by his unusual beard and the patch over his left eye, arrived and was greeted by Belden. He produced his books, counted the steers in sight and set down the figures. He made off as though to investigate the cañon. The owner lifted a watermelon from his mysterious black bag. He called the assessor back, the two split and devoured the melon and the assessor got into his buckboard and drove away.

The scene shifted to the office of the county tax collector. Belden came in, produced the assessor's statement and paid his contribution to the upkeep of the State. The collector made an entry in his records. An enlargement of the page filled the screen and it was seen that Buckley Belden has paid his taxes on seven thousand cattle.

The scene changed to the railroad station at Beaver. The pens were full of cattle. The beef shipment was on. Buckley Belden stood by and watched his cowboys load his fat steers into trains. The station-agent was checking up the cars and making entries in his book.

Suddenly in a dark window opposite the court-house square a lighted match described a circle. It was a sign, a command. A dozen ruffians whom Matthew Foote had planted in the foremost row of the crowd leaped forward and seized the guy-lines of the screen. The great cloth twisted, ripped and tore out of its frame. And yet "The Miracle"—as by some miracle indeed—continued to unfold its tale. There was but an instantaneous quiver of the image as the cloth disappeared and, lo! the picture fell true and flat upon the smooth gray wall of the county jail.

Few realized that an assault had been made. The crowd was intent upon the tale, and the tale went steadily on. The railroad agent made out a receipt and handed it to Belden. The agent duplicated the figures upon the stub of his book. Suddenly the reproduction of that stub flashed out upon the wall. It showed that Buckley Belden, while paying taxes on seven thousand cattle in Mountain County, had shipped from Beaver, its railroad point, nineteen thousand head!

VIII.

TOWARD midnight of election day the favored ones who had sat in the office of the Montezuma *Reveille,* while telegraph and telephone were bringing the news from many crossroads and towns, arose, shook hands with Bartholomew Hogue and streamed out on their homeward way. The returns would continue coming in all through the night, but they would only emphasize an already patent fact. Rupert Russ took no heed of his guests as they slumped out at the door. He was crouched at a proof-desk in a corner covering the fly-leaf of an atlas with rapid pencilings. In equal absorption Helen Hogue was bending above his shoulder. The Governor-elect came over and rested an affectionate hand upon the arm of each of them.

"What mighty problem is Rupe trying to figure now?" he inquired.

"Trying to figure," the editor of the *Reveille* replied, "just how soon you'll have time to take me into the family."

"He was not," protested the teacher of the Squaw Creek school, endeavoring to mask confusion with a show of spirit. "We were merely estimating how many hundred miles of film it would take to elect a man President of the United States!"

The Rose Parasol

by

Peter Ward

Author of "Ali's Revenge—and Allah's," etc.

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

JOURNEY'S END.

BEAUTY and the beast traveled the South Seas together. Beauty stood on the bridge of a transport and watched a small, bluish haze on the horizon deepen to violet and then black. The beast stood in the well-deck forward and looked up at the bridge. So intent was his gaze that beauty's aunt, the admiral's lady, said: "Priscilla, my dear, I think that man has stared at you enough. Is there no way to make him stop, or must we move?"

Priscilla Hadden lowered her gaze to the well-deck. She looked at the man, and her gaze seemed to travel through him, through the deck, and to plumb the depths of the sea. This is the manner in which well-bred girls of old New England families "squelch" impolite men. Her eyes were cool, deep, and, in the light of the rose parasol she carried, very blue; his were brown, opaque, and shallow as an animal's.

His gaze did not falter, and a somewhat mocking smile gathered about his eyes. In a moment it became a struggle—beauty matched against the beast to see who should first avert the eyes. For a long minute she held his look, then her glance wavered, and she turned her head toward the island that was rising slowly out of the sea. The beast had won, and the mocking smile deepened about his eyes.

"Well, of all the impudence!" exclaimed the admiral's lady, "to what part of the world are we coming?"

She moved off like a square rigger under full sail and the girl followed in her wake, with a delicate flush creeping up her cheek.

The navigating officer overhead the latter part of the exclamation and said, "That's Guam, ma'am. That cliff is Orote Point. The island to the left there is Cabres Island. You can just see Sumay and the cable station and Gabgab Beach."

As the old transport nodded through the swell at the eight knots prescribed by government economy, Orote Point began to stand out like a nose; a white line became a strip of sandy beach; another white line became the low surf breaking on Luminao Reef; what looked like a stranded lemon-crate turned into a square cable station; two black dots riding the swell came to be small launches which, no matter what the method of propulsion may be, the natives call "steamers."

At about two miles out the anchor rattled down and the ship swung her nose to sea. One of the steamers bumped her nose against the side and a smart marine came over the rail.

"Admiral Cranbourne left his compliments and asked that every assistance be given Mrs. Cranbourne and Miss Hadden in landing," he said to the navigating officer.

Although Guam is administered according

to the old Spanish law, it is under naval government in peace or in war, and the admiral who governs it is more or less absolute. Therefore, his word is one to be listened to by lesser men, and the navigating officer bustled about carrying hand-luggage himself and overlooking the hoisting of trunks from the hold. He accompanied them to the side when the landing stage went down.

"In spite of the indifferent accommodations and the somewhat miscellaneous company," said the admiral's lady as she went over the side, "the voyage has not been unpleasant. I shall be at home on Thursday afternoons, and if you should come ashore I shall be glad to see you."

"Perhaps," said the girl, as she gave the officer her hand, "perhaps Thursday would not be the best day for Mr. McNear."

"My dear," said Mrs. Cranbourne, "my at-homes have always been on Thursdays, and I see no reason why I should change."

Even so, beauty was not to be rid of the beast. A detachment of marines who had come out for their thirty-month exile tumbled into one of the steamers, and all other passengers must occupy the second. The man stepped jauntily in and took his seat next to beauty; she felt him brush her sleeve all the way to the pier, but kept her head averted.

The step was high at landing, and the launch yawed widely. She made one or two ineffectual attempts to land. He vaulted lightly to the pier, took one slim hand in his, and put his other hand under her elbow. She felt herself lifted and set gently on the hot planks. She murmured: "Thank you," without looking at him, but brushed her elbow where his hand had touched. The admiral's lady he left to scramble out with the help of an embarrassed marine.

On the pier the young woman was to see how kindly the tropics treat those of her sex who belong to the temperate zone. A thin woman, seemingly middle-aged, stepped forward and held out both her hands.

"Priscilla!" she said.

"Edith!" gasped the girl.

"Don't tell me that I have changed so much as all this," said the woman, laughing a little bitterly as they embraced. "We all lose a bit of weight and color out here."

After the first greeting the two women parted and looked at one another; the thin one with a trace of envy at the fresh color of her friend; the other with a touch of distaste at the undeniable rouge on the cheeks and lips of the other. That distaste was reflected a bit in the look which the admiral's lady cast upon the older woman.

"Mrs. Cranbourne," said Priscilla Hadden, "this is Miss Chapin, whom I have known ever since we were children. She is a sort of third cousin. It is four years since I have seen her."

"Indeed!" said the admiral's lady, who was herself a Hadden, but distantly, "you don't look like a Hadden."

"And I can't say that I should have known you for one," said the other with a touch of sharpness, "but come. The car is waiting to carry us to Agaña."

They climbed into the small car and whirled off over the coral road. The beast stood on the pier and watched the rose-colored parasol dwindle in the distance. A native walked past carrying a basket piled high with fresh pineapples and mangoes.

"Fres' fruit," he called; "fres' fruit."

"You're right," was the beast's mental comment, "fresh fruit."

CHAPTER II.

AT HOME.

TO a girl born and bred near Boston there was much in the palace at Agaña to be interesting. It was not a palace in the European sense of the word; instead, it was simply a two-storied stuccoed structure with a low veranda jutting from the ground floor. The best room in it was the long drawing-room—a shaded place, as cool as any on the island, with full length windows that looked across dark groves to the sea.

The furniture showed the curious mixture of Orient and Occident so characteristic of the white man's home in the East. The floor, made of *ifil* wood, dark, like mahog-

any, and polished until it reflected the bright lamps above, bore a mixture of native mat-rugs and the products of American looms. A bamboo settee stood next a gilt chair; a teak table around which dragons writhed carried a patent reading-lamp, so adjusted that the light would fall upon a Morris chair.

On the first Thursday "at home" a long table carried the silver tea set which Mrs. Cranbourne had brought in her cabin all the way from San Francisco. That lady herself sat behind the tea urn like a Puritan goddess. She had arranged everything in the Boston manner—a chair at her left upon which those perched who came up one by one to worship; on her right, and near the long window, the bamboo settee, upon which she installed her niece. Those who passed her preliminary examination she promoted to the honor of talking with the girl. Edith Chapin stood near the table and presented those who came up one by one to pay their respects.

"Lieutenant Kane, Mrs. Cranbourne."

A second lieutenant of marines came up in stiff white duck, almost glazed from native starch and bowed over the hand which the admiral's lady stretched out to him.

"Sugar, Mr. Kane?"

"Yes, please."

"Cream?"

"Yes, please."

He took the cup in a hand much more used to juggling a rifle. A small dish of sliced lemon stood near his elbow; he could think of nothing to say or nothing to do, so he dropped a slice into his cup and then stared like an idiot at the soured cream that floated in his tea.

"The fact is—the fact is," he said desperately, "I—I don't like tea. It—it makes me sick."

"I should think it would if you drink it that way," said Mrs. Cranbourne coldly. "Constellacion, take Lieutenant Kane's cup."

A native girl, who moved among the guests with the grace of a princess, took the cup while the young man arose with the perspiration breaking out on his brow. But he found a friend in Priscilla Hadden, who, after a subdued laugh at his discomfort, said: "Come here and tell me about the island. I am so interested in everything."

He dropped into a seat at her side with the fatuous smile of the "nice boy" who has found a "nice girl." His place at the side of Mrs. Cranbourne was taken by Captain MacDougall, a hardy soldier who had spent most of his life in the tropics. What was an admiral's wife to him?

Long years in the army had given him a Confucian calmness of mind; life to him had ceased to be moral or immoral, interesting or uninteresting; it was simply a paraded to be attended and finished. He looked at the tea in his cup as though it were poison.

"Captain MacDougall," said Mrs. Cransbourne, "you are a man of long experience in the islands, and I want to ask you about something very dear to my heart. I should like to see this island made dry."

"Dry!" he exclaimed, stung into momentary earnestness.

"Yes," she said, "don't you believe in prohibition? I want to see the place quite free of liquor."

"That may be all right for some parts of the world," said the soldier; "I don't believe in it for the part I happen to be in. I don't think it would go here."

"Why should there be a different code of conduct for this part of the world?"

"My dear madam," said the captain calmly, "I wish I knew why. I do not. I only know there is. Guam is not Boston."

"So I perceive," said the admiral's lady, with a touch of ice in her voice.

"I don't think you can make the island dry any more than you can make the native women moral," the soldier went on calmly. "Is this your first experience in the Orient?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Cranbourne.

"I thought so," said the captain, setting down his untasted cup. "People change after they have been out a while."

"I should like to see," said the admiral's lady, "climate or country, man or woman, who could change a Hadden!"

Fate, in the person of Edith Chapin, answered her challenge by saying: "Mr. Daniel Kavanaugh."

The admiral's lady looked a bit startled when she saw the beast standing before her. She did not speak for a moment, and in that moment he bowed with a great deal of courtesy, seated himself, and said: "Two lumps, please, and cream."

Unconsciously he had found one road to her heart. People who took anything but cream and sugar in their tea seemed to the admiral's lady to be somewhat outlandish.

"I think we have seen one another before," said Kavanaugh easily.

"Indeed! I do not remember."

"It was on the ship," he said, with a glance toward Priscilla Hadden, who, in that dark room, looked like a lily growing in a gloomy woods. "We came on from Honolulu together, but you and your niece kept your cabins so closely that I did not have the pleasure of seeing you as often as I should have liked."

"I remember," said his hostess, softening visibly, "and what do you do on this island?"

"I am a commercial agent," he said; "one of the few honest ones in the Pacific."

"So I have found a moral man at last!"

"Oh," he said, laughing silently, "I have been called many things, but never that."

"I hope you are not a gambler or a drunkard."

"I have been known to do both," he said easily; "I am not doing either at present."

"Good!" she said. "I shall prove you moral yet. Do you go to church?"

"I have been known to do that, too. Perhaps my interest is not so keen as that of others."

"Good!" cried the admiral's lady again. "You are just the kind of person I am aiming to help. I have cabled for two chaplains, and I hope that they will be assigned soon and sent out. In the mean time you must come to see me often."

A line of visitors was piling up, and she waved him away with a smile, but he was not banished to the outer darkness; instead, he was promoted to a place by Priscilla Hadden's side.

"Priscilla, my dear," she said, "this is Mr. Kavanaugh, whom you will remember seeing on the boat."

"Your aunt has a curious memory," said Kavanaugh as he took the slim hand in his. "At first she did not remember me at all, but in the end she remembered me quite clearly."

She made room for him on the bamboo-settee, but did not meet his eyes. She drew away slightly into a corner, and pulled her skirt about her a bit.

"That must have been," she said, smiling slightly, "when you told her that you would patronize one of her chaplains."

"Yes."

"Shall you do so?"

"I do not know. It might make a difference if you wished me to."

The cool, blue gaze turned toward him, but faltered midway. She looked instead out across the dark groves to the summer sea. The delicate color crept again to her cheeks. After a moment she said: "What are those trees out there?"

"That first grove," he said, while the smile came and went about his eyes, "is an *ifil* grove. The floor is made of the wood. Those trees with the very dark leaves are mangoes. That one standing by itself is a bread-fruit tree. When a native woman has a child for which she cannot account, she says the father of it is the bread-fruit tree. Rather pretty explanation, I think."

New England nuns do not hear such remarks ordinarily; the color deepened slightly in her cheeks. After a moment she said:

"And are there many—such?"

"Many what?" he asked easily "Bread-fruit trees or unaccountable children?"

She did not answer, and he went on: "There are many of both. Perhaps the charitable thing to do is to believe that there are so many children because there are so many trees. I have no doubt that that servant of yours could tell a tale about the bread-fruit tree. How else could she speak English as well as she does? She has probably lived with some chap some time."

She looked at Constellacion with that curious incomprehension that the good person has when looking at a criminal. When the Jesuit fathers and Spanish adventurers came through the islands long ago they left the print of old Castile upon the people,

both in blood and manners. A native hut may be squalid and the one chair have no back, but the master of the house offers that chair with the grace of a Spanish grandee. Of all the persons in that room none had more grace than Constellacion, and only one more beauty.

"Ah, well," said Kavanaugh, "the French have it when they say: *ca ne fait rien.* And the Spaniard says *mañana,* meaning that to-morrow is time enough to worry. And being so close to the equator makes a difference."

"It ought not," said the girl.

"It does," he replied. "Tell me, what is a Hadden? I heard your aunt say that nothing could change a Hadden."

"I am one," said the girl diffidently, "They come from around Boston."

"And the admiral's wife is one," he said, "but not a pure-blooded one, because she boasts of it. A real Hadden never boasts of it. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"If you won't tell me, I will tell you what it is to be a Hadden: It is to be an uncloistered nun if you are a woman; if a man it is to be a monk without a monastery. The first one that landed on Plymouth Rock lifted his voice in prayer, and damned mince pie. The second governor of the colony was a Hadden."

"The third," she corrected.

"Thank you," he said. "After all, I am guessing a bit. The leading preachers for generations were Haddens. The first of the abolitionists and the last of the prohibitionists belong to the family. To be a Hadden means to be without red blood. In the woman it amounts to a pale but real beauty; in the man to bloodless good looks. If they could boast, they would say that there has never been a loose man among them, or a light woman. Is that right?"

"That is what is said of them," she replied. "How did you know?"

"Oh," he said, smiling easily, "I have been about some, and people from their part of the world run fairly true to form. And a Hadden never changes?"

"You heard my aunt say so."

"But they never have gone much into the East?" he insisted.

"No, they have stayed fairly close to New England."

He was silent for a moment, and then concluded his inquisition by saying: "Since you are a Hadden, they must be all right."

"And now," she said, "since you have lectured to me on my own family, tell me what it is to be a Kavanaugh."

"You tell me," he countered. "I told you about yourself."

She was silent for a moment with the smile coming and going about her lips.

"I give it up," she said finally. "You see, I have never known any one quite like you before."

"It will not take you long to find out," he said, a bit cynically. "In a place like this every man is his brother's keeper. Why have you not looked at me? You are not afraid of me, are you?"

"No," she replied, and turned the clear blue gaze full upon him. He returned it composedly, while the mockery deepened about his eyes. The color mounted in her cheek, and it was her eyes that wavered first.

"Mr. Kavanaugh must not monopolize you altogether," cut in the admiral's lady. "It is not as though he were never to see you again."

Kavanaugh became suddenly indifferent. In fact, he seemed to yawn mentally. He arose, said: "Perhaps," bowed, and left the room.

That night, as the New England girl lay in her bed watching the broad moonlight on the tree-tops, his figure was insistent before her. What there was about him that troubled her so she could not tell; he was not a remarkable man in appearance, although he was trim enough in the semi-military duck that he wore.

He had the indefinite age that long residence in the tropics gives a man; he might be anywhere between twenty-five and forty—certainly she thought he could not be under thirty-five. His face was a bit broad at the cheek-bones; the mouth small and full; the eyes opaque and dark, with a faint flush about them. She had a photographic memory of his hands—broad, thick-fingered, heavily veined, with a light fell of black hair on the back.

Although she did not fully realize it, Kavanaugh was the first *whole* man she had seen; a man guided by few impulses, most of them natural, with his feet in the mire, from which generations of moral evolution have tried to raise man. The riveter feels his perfect command of muscle as he balances on a beam far above the street, and in his talk sneers at the univerversity professor. He is profoundly right in his sneer, for the intellectual man with his constant milling over of unreal things, with the uncertainty that the search of truth brings, can never be the *whole* man that purely physical beings are.

The artist feels it, and chooses for his chisel or his brush the frontiersman, the cowboy, the iron-worker, the woman, because all of them are profoundly physical beings fairly close to the stone age.

Such was Kavanaugh, and he carried the impelling sense of reality that the eight-foot giant of prehistoric France might carry should he come to life on the boulevards of Paris to-day.

So clear was his presence to her that when a tap sounded on her door, she shrank into her bed and pulled the clothes about her. The tap sounded again, and a soft voice said: "*Señorita,* may I come in?"

"Yes."

The door swung open, and the New England girl looked for a long time at what seemed to be a ghost of old time. Constellacion wore a billowy skirt of canary silk, a black bodice of velvet, heelless slippers of satin. A comb of old ivory held the masses of blue-black hair pile high on her head; the shoulders and arms were bare save for a lacy *mantilla,* or scarf.

Constellacion stood in the doorway for a moment and then floated toward the bed and into the moonlight. She stood for a moment with her hands on her breast, and then said: "You are quite comfortable, *señorita?*"

"Yes."

"Are you pleased with my service?"

"Yes, Constellacion."

"You make me very happy, *señorita.* It is a pleasure to serve you."

She stood for a moment silently with her eyes down.

"*Señorita,*" she said, "would you have the kindness to tell me where it is that one gets so beautiful a rose parasol as you carry?"

"Why, anywhere," said the girl smiling. "I bought that one in Honolulu."

"Honolulu," replied the dark girl. "That is very far away, is it not?"

"Yes, but I think they will send for one through the shop here."

"And the *señorita* would not be displeased if her poor servant carried one also?"

"No, Constellacion. I should be very happy if you did."

The servant swept the floor in a low curtsy.

"I will not trouble you more, *señorita.* May St. Anna watch you to-night and bless your slumber." She turned to leave the room.

"You are very beautiful in that dress," said her mistress, sitting up in her bed. "Where are you going?"

"I am going to a *fandango,*" said Constellacion. "You honor me by saying that I am beautiful."

"And what is a *fandango,* Constellacion? You see, I am ignorant of all these things."

"And may the saints keep you so," replied the servant. "It is a dance at the home of my friend, Anna Gumataota Porja. The soldiers will be there."

"Officers?"

"Rarely, *señorita.* Usually only the soldiers and the sailors from the ships."

"Does Mr. Kavanaugh come to these?"

"I do not know, *señorita.*"

As the girl turned to go again, Priscilla stopped her by saying: "How is it—why do you speak English so well, Constellacion?"

The dark beauty cast a glance at her mistress, and then looked away.

"I have been a servant in white families for years, *señorita.*"

"But you do not speak American; you speak English."

"Yes, *señorita,* a servant in English families."

She swept the floor again in an old-world bow, and turned to go.

"Constellacion," said the New England

girl softly, "it is best not to let my aunt hear you go or come in. She may not like it."

"Saints bless your slumber," was the whispered reply. "I shall take much care."

The door closed gently, and Priscilla Hadden leaned on her elbow and watched the night. Sleep did not come easily in this climate; the soft, hot wind blew on her cheek, and she could feel her heart beating fast and was conscious of a curious confusion within her. Down by the beach a guitar tinkled, and a voice came to her, softened by the distance to a melancholy thread of sound.

She felt like an outsider; the night seemed to be big with some secret, and she felt a vague dissatisfaction at not knowing what that secret was. Constellacion knew; she was a complete woman, untrammeled by centuries of inherited inhibitions.

Very vaguely she wished that she could have gone to the *fandango*. Just as sleep was about to settle on her heavy eyelids, she sat up suddenly. It occurred to her that she had suggested to Constellacion that the latter deceive the admiral's lady.

CHAPTER III.

ONE STEP DOWN.

SHE awoke the next morning with a sense of irritation. The sun beat in through the reed curtains. Some one rapped strongly on her door. Mrs. Cranbourne's voice sounded through the hall with a hint of irritability in it:

"Priscilla, are you never getting up? I have been up for hours."

The girl lay quiet for a long minute without answering. She felt rebellious, where a week ago she would have felt contrite. It was hot and humid; her clothes lay limp and starchless on the chair; the small shoes were almost wet.

"Coming," she said listlessly. The admiral's lady opened the door and came in, wiping her brow.

"What a country!" she exclaimed. "The brass tray is one blot of green, and the tea set needs polishing every morning. What is more, I can find no one who takes the least bit of interest in doing it. I have worked on it myself for an hour, and I suppose it will be as bad to-morrow morning. That Pedro is absolutely unreliable."

"Ah, well," said her niece, "this is not Massachusetts."

"Don't tell me that," cried the elder lady; "it is all I hear from morning till night. That is no reason for slackness or unpunctuality. Your Miss Chapin promised me a magazine yesterday, and I waited for it all day. Did it come? No. Captain MacDougall crossed the square this morning, and he was *drunk*. I know he was, because he waved at me. And now you lie abed until all hours of the day. Getting anything done," she concluded fiercely, "is like *eating flannel!*"

She stalked out, and her niece arose contritely. Constellacion moved quietly about the room, putting things to rights. There was no trace of fatigue in the girl; the dark eyes were as bright as if she had slept the night through. When the New England girl came from her bath with the honey-colored hair curling into little tendrils about her ears, the servant said: "Shall I leave now, *señorita?* There is nothing that I can do until you have gone out."

"No," said her mistress, "please stay, and tell me about the *fandango*. Did you have a good time?"

"Why, yes. It was a very nice party. The music was excellent, *señorita*, two violins, and one sailor brought a drum. We have never had a drum before. However, there was much drink, and some of the men were—" She smiled, and spread her hands expressively.

The New England girl shuddered a bit, and the quick-eyed Constellacion caught the expression of disgust and did not go on.

"And what else, Constellacion?"

"A fight, *señorita*, as usual."

"A fight! How terrible!"

"Terrible?" echoed the servant in naive wonder. "There was no one killed." She was silent again, waiting to see which way opinion would jump.

"And what—what was the fight about?" asked the girl, interested in spite of her disgust.

"What do men always fight about, *señorita*—a woman."

"Do they?" said the mistress, shuddering again. "I did not know that." She went to the dark girl, laid her hand on her arm, and said: "Constellacion, I am not a mission woman, and I do not interfere, but I am afraid that these parties are not just the thing—" She finished with a smile, and the servant looked at her with mixed admiration and wonder.

"I know you must be right, *señorita*, but I have never known anything else. And in your country do not men fight over women?"

"Some do, Constellacion, but good women do not have much to do with them. You are a good girl, Constellacion, I am sure."

The dark eyes were averted.

"Perhaps, *señorita*, but now I think I hear the mistress calling." Although there was no sound of Mrs. Cranbourne's voice, she slipped out of the room.

At breakfast the admiral's lady said: "Mr. Kavanaugh sent a message saying that he wants us to ride with him this afternoon. Do you think it is quite right for us to go?"

Her niece was silent a moment. In spite of an instinctive dislike for Kavanaugh, there was something in him that fascinated her, and she said: "Yes. Why not?"

"I do not know," replied the good lady; "I am not quite certain about him. He looked so queerly at you on the boat. It positively made me shudder. However, I think he needs the refining influence of woman's society. He is very blunt at times, but I suppose that comes from being away from civilization so long. After all, there are so few women out here of the right sort. I have not quite reached the point where I want to see him at my table, but as he improves, that may comes in time. I told him that I thought it would be pleasant for you to have Lieutenant Kane along. He is a nice boy."

For the first time in her life the girl suspected that "nice boys" were a bit boring. But she assented to the trip, and listened patiently all afternoon to the nice boy's talk about the differences between the manual of arms as practised by the United States marines and the United States infantry.

Kavanaugh sat in front next to the admiral's lady and listened indifferently to her. Pricilla could see his hands on the wheel—hands that held her eyes with their touch of the beast. Evidently he lent a sufficiently attentive ear to his companion, for after the ride Mrs. Cranbourne said: "After all, I think he will *do*."

Time began to flow in the swift, quiet way characteristic of the warm, sea islands; one day is so much like another that they become blurred like a swift motion-picture. The girl took a steadily lessening interest in the state teas; the dinners invariably dragged from the moment the guests sat down until they rose. There were occasional rides with Kavanaugh, who politely side-stepped the teas and dinners. But Mrs. Cranbourne always sat beside Kavanaugh, and the "nice boy" usually sat in back with Priscilla Hadden.

Gradually her interest centered in Constellacion and Kavanaugh. When she was alone with either a curious tumult arose within her; she watched them as one might watch a caged tiger. They had the same possibilities of interesting action.

In the first days of her residence she tried to read, but with that warm, damp wind blowing it was impossible to keep her mind on the intellectual papers that made up the library of the admiral's lady. On a hot morning she took her rose parasol and walked across the square to Edith Chapin's three-roomed bungalow. Her soft-soled shoes made no noise; through the open door she saw her friend reading. When she called the magazine disappeared under the cushions of the chair, and Edith Chapin came as near blushing as a woman can who has been doing mission work in the tropics for years.

"Good morning," said Priscilla Hadden, as she dropped into a chair. "Have you anything to read? I am bored almost to tears."

"Oh, yes," said the other woman readily, "here are several magazines. There is an awfully good story in here called 'Diana's Answer.' I am sure you would find it interesting."

"What makes you think I would?" asked Priscilla Hadden, with her gentle smile playing about her mouth. "Have you read it?"

"I must admit that I have been too busy," said the other, "but Mrs. Cranbourne said it was good."

"Edith Chapin," said her guest, laughing outright, "you know that none of these magazines has been opened."

"Well," said the older woman, "I have been too busy. How can I read all those and keep my work up at the mission?"

"What do you read?"

"Nothing much."

"You are fibbing," said her delighted guest. "I saw you reading as I came in."

For a moment Edith Chapin avoided her friend's eye; then she said: "Well, I am not going to lie about it. Here it is."

She took the magazine from under the cushions. It had a tawdry cover, was printed on shiny paper, and the first few pages were given over to pictures of beautiful bathing girls. Priscilla Hadden took the book and ran through the pages.

"Fancy Miss Ellsworth's prize-pupil reading this," she said. "That good lady would turn in her grave if she thought this was in your house."

"I know," said the other, with a touch of bitterness, "it is all right for people to talk; things are different out here."

"I tried to read 'Diana's Answer,'" said Priscilla; "Mrs. Cranbourne recommended it to me, too. As far as I could see, the climax came where the heroine arched her eyebrow and the catastrophe came when she could not get it unarched. It would have been interesting at home, but not out here."

A title caught her eye—"The Lifted Veil"—and a picture of a girl in a negligee. She dropped into a chair and began to read. Her eyes raced through the pages, and the curious tumult rose within her. The other woman spoke to her, but she did not hear, and Edith Chapin did as people do in that part of the world—folded her hands and waited.

"That was a thriller!" was the girl's comment as she finished; "where did you get this?"

"At the Enlisted Men's Club. They all come there, but this is the only sort they read."

"May I borrow it?"

"Yes. Provided you do not let your aunt find it. You would be ruined for life."

"What do I care if I am!" exclaimed the girl suddenly.

"My word!" said the astonished mission lady. "Whatever is the matter with you?"

"I wish I knew," said her guest, rising and padding across the room. "Everything I have ever done seems so silly. Why haven't I lived! Other people have."

"What other people?"

She came perilously near saying: "Constellacion and Kavanaugh." Instead, she dropped into a chair and said: "Lately I feel so bored one minute and excited the next. It seems as though something exciting were going to happen, but it never does. Not that it makes much difference how I feel," she added with the gentle smile; "you have other problems than my silly emotions."

"I know what is the matter with you," said the older woman; "you are not acclimated yet. It makes a difference. When I first came out I felt as you do. I went into the mission and worked hard. But what can you do? All the moral instruction in the world does not seem to save the girls, and the children thrive, anyway."

"Save the girls from what?"

"From having more children."

Priscilla was silent for a moment and then said: "Aren't they just as happy—in the end?"

Edith Chapin shrugged her shoulders. "I suppose so. At least it does not make the difference it would at home. All I can do is to help them as much as possible after they are in trouble."

"Life is certainly different here," said Priscilla.

"Life is certainly dull here," was the reply, "unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless one goes to the devil. Thank Heaven, I have never done it. But those that do seem to be fairly interested in life. So far the sum of my iniquities is light fiction. I do not know whether it is best

to marry any of these men. After all, they are more or less rotters—at least most of them."

"Mr. Kavanaugh?"

"Yes. You can see it in his face."

The good humor and quietness came back into the younger girl's face. The tumult was gone within her; she stooped and kissed her friend on the cheek.

"You are a dear," she said, "to listen to my vaporings. I wonder if it would be such a crime to take this magazine back to the palace? Some of these stories look like thrillers."

"Choose for yourself, only do not get me into it."

Priscilla Hadden concealed the magazine carefully in the rose parasol and walked back to the palace, where she put it in the bottom of her trunk.

The rises and falls of life are all relative. From a certain standpoint, the man who jumps a foot in the air, pushes the earth away from himself a foot. To a woman bred in a more casual atmosphere the reading of such a magazine would have meant nothing; to a New England nun it was a distinct step down. Paraphrasing a certain prize-fighter's boast, Kavanaugh had been heard to say of women: "The better they are, the harder they fall."

CHAPTER IV.

TWO STEPS DOWN.

THE time came at length when the admiral's lady allowed her niece to ride with Kavanaugh without her own gracious presence. That day the girl got into the car with her heart racing as though she were going on a real adventure. Kavanaugh said nothing until they had crossed the square and got onto the white road.

"At last," he said, and smiled at her.

She kept her head averted and said: "At last what?"

"Seeing the princess without the dragon in the offing," he said easily.

"Are you so glad, then?"

"I'll say I am," was his reply. "I am not a polite man by nature, and it almost broke me trying to be nice to her."

"Why?" she said, with a laugh bubbling in her throat. "Don't you like my aunt?"

"Your aunt," he answered deliberately, "is a fool."

She flashed a look at him and the flush rose in her cheek, but there was that about Kavanaugh which made most women a bit afraid of him, and she said nothing until after a long pause.

"And how about me?" she said a bit awkwardly. "Remember, we are both Haddens."

"The difference is that you are young and beautiful," he answered, a bit ironically, "and that makes all the difference in the world."

They sped along a road cut in the side of the hill, with trees reaching their tops up to it and the sea lying bright and blue far below. Ahead of them two bullock-carts blocked the way.

Kavanaugh sounded his siren, and the natives looked around stupidly, but kept the road. He drew up to them and stopped. The siren sent out a long blast. Still the carts kept the road. The flush about Kavanaugh's eyes deepened. He threw the car into low gear, put one wheel carefully against the solid wooden-wheel of the bullock-cart, and pushed it off the road so that it hung perilously on the steep slope.

The driver shrieked, jumped into the road and pulled a knife. His mate joined him. The white man drove carefully between the two carts, put on his brakes and jumped out. One native he picked up bodily and threw into the bushes; the other sped away, chattering like an ape.

And how did the descendant of a hundred law-abiding Governors and lawyers take all this? She sat during the fracas with her hands tightly clenched and the blood racing through her veins. The first word that escaped her was: "Wonderful!"

But as they drove on the tumult died within her breast, and she turned a bit from Kavanaugh as the memory of his open profanity came back to her. Still she could feel his presence at her side, even though she did not look at him, and could feel him watching her. They passed the cable station, cut across to Agate, and ran along Tipalao Bay. It was almost

dusk. Kavanaugh stopped at a wide patch of road and pulled out his cigarette-case.

"Have one?" he said, while the mockery deepened about his eyes.

"No, thanks," she said a bit faintly.

"Afraid?"

"No," she said shortly. Talk died between them, and the girl said, after he had finished his cigarette: "I think we had best be going now."

"Right you are," said he, as he put the car back into the road, and drove her home. But as she got out he said: "You will go with me again, won't you?"

She tried to meet his eyes, but failed.

"Yes," she said, and went indoors.

She went again, but not until Kavanaugh had called for her twice. The time between she had spent in a somewhat searching analysis of herself, with the result that she had found a double nature within her: on the one side her old life, with all its checks, inhibitions and negatives; on the other a stirring new life grouped somehow or other about Kavanaugh.

She had heard the gossip about him in the island—every one seemed to agree that he was a "devil" without knowing just why it was that he was called such. Whenever he came for her there was a faint but real struggle within her: on the one side something that told her to stay away from him; on the other, voices of the warm night, swift motion, and his own presence summoning her to go with him. Twice her decision was against going, and at those times Kavanaugh swore a bit, smiled ironically, and drove away.

At the third time, however, he won, and she climbed in beside him, and they drove across the square under a half-moon that silvered the old ship's bell that stood in the square and the gun-barrel of the sentry who lounged near it.

As the white road unrolled before them, the warm tumult came up in her breast again. The warm, damp air blew against her cheek, and she took off her hat to it. By the light of the dash-lamp she could see the strong hands gripping the wheel and the faint flush under his eyes.

He drew up again at the wide patch of the road. The hill was cleared below them and fell straight and black to broad sea. Kavanaugh drew out his cigarette-case again and repeated his question of the former ride.

"Have one?"

Again she shook her head, but this time with a smile.

"Why not?" he said, "what are you afraid of?"

"Nothing," she replied.

"Of course," he said, "no one of your family is afraid of anything."

"Why do you always say such slighting things about my family?" she asked, a bit troubled.

"Not I, my dear lady," he said easily. "I think too much of one of them to say slighting things about them."

"Yes, but you are always making fun of me and my aunt."

"If I do," he said bluntly, "it is because you deserve it."

She was silent for some time, not because she was offended with him, but because she was interested in this novel idea.

"Why do we deserve it?" she asked at length.

"Because you and your aunt like the young men with whom any mother could trust her daughter. Since I do not come under that classification, naturally I—"

She laughed outright—a gentle peal that made him sit up and say: "Do that again. I like it."

"You are a strange man," she said.

"I don't suppose you have seen many like me. You can scarcely be used to cavemen."

"People say that you are—you are—"

"A bad egg," he cut in easily. "Well, there are not many things I have not done. Your aunt would say that I was a thief because I have grown rich on the natives. I have drunk as steadily as I could. I may have played the rotter with women. Can a Hadden think of anything worse?"

"Yes," she said a bit faintly.

"What is it?"

"To desert one and boast about it afterward."

He looked at her curriously and was silent for a moment.

"I may have done that, too," he said at length.

"But you have enjoyed yourself in all this, haven't you?" queried the girl.

"I'll say I have," he replied promptly, "but of course there is no end; when one does one thing there is always something just a bit ahead."

"How can you bear to be with us?" asked the girl. "With all this sort of life, you can scarcely find us interesting."

"How can your bear to be with me?" he countered.

"Curiosities are always interesting," she said, with a flash of humor.

Kavanaugh laughed with her, threw away his cigarette, and took out a fresh one.

"Have one?" he said again.

"I wonder what—I wonder what they taste like?" she said, with the trouble coming back in her voice.

"Try it and see," he said easily, and added as she sat silent: "Of course you ought not. Think of what your aunt would say."

"She would never know unless you told. But of course you are not to be trusted."

"I suppose not. But in this case it is not to my interest to tell."

"Why?"

"Oh," he said mockingly, "the devil wants to bring every one to the fire, doesn't he?"

"After all," she said after a moment. "there cannot be much harm in smoking one cigarette."

She put out her hand and took one from the case.

"You see," she said slowly, "I do it of my own accord."

"Yes," he answered, while the fine wrinkles deepened about his eyes, "I see."

"Light it for me."

He put the glowing end of his cigarette against hers.

"Don't!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Why not?"

Whatever his emotion had been, it passed quickly, and he held his cigarette to hers until it was well alight. She lay back in the seat and puffed awkwardly, and he watched the reflected glow on the smooth cheek and the little spark of light in the blue eyes.

"I have wanted to smoke," she said, "ever since I have been out here. I never thought of it at home."

"A few thousand miles nearer the equator does make a difference," he replied. "I think we had best be going now."

"Why is it," she said, coughing slightly as the smoke went into her nose, "why is it that I always say 'Why' to everything you say?"

"Because you are a child, learning to live, and I am your teacher. You want to know why I suggest going back instead of you?"

"Yes."

"Because it is to my interest to do so. If I keep you out too long this time, you will not come again."

"In that case," she heard herself saying, "we had best go back at once."

He backed the car into the road, and they sped on homeward through the night. The girl lay back, her old self soothed to sleep by the beauty of the night and the swift motion. The cigarette burned down to her fingers, and she threw it away with almost a sigh of regret.

When she reached home she found that Lieutenant Kane expected to call. After the thrilling ride with Kavanaugh, she felt that a nice boy's talk would put her to sleep; so she complained of a headache and went to her room. A tap came at the door, and Constellacion came in, her arms piled with clean linen from the native laundress. When she had put it away, she turned to go, but her mistress said: "Don't go, Constellacion, come and talk to me."

"Yes, *señorita*," said the servant, and came obediently to the bed.

"Constellacion," she asked, "how old are you?"

"Seventeen," was the reply. "Why should you ask?"

"Are you married?"

"No, *señorita*. There is Manuel Jesus Porja, the brother of my friend, Anna, who would marry me, but I hope I have a better fate than that. A poor girl cannot always choose. It is better to live with a white man along the beach than to marry some of these men of my own race, although I am myself three-quarters Spanish."

"Never!" said her mistress, sitting up in bed. "Constellacion, you would never consider—living—living by the beach."

"Of course not," said the quick-eyed girl as she caught the horror in the voice of her mistress. "I was but jesting."

She turned to go, but the New England girl called her back and said a bit hesitatingly: "Constellacion, you have—have never done a thing like that—have you?"

"I, *señorita?* Praise Heaven—no!"

She crossed the room quickly, but turned and came back again.

"Madam," she said earnestly, "I could no more lie to you than I could in confession. You look too much like one of the blessed saints themselves. Besides, it is the custom of you women to ask us such questions. I did—I did live with an Englishman once. But you will not tell the mistress, will you? I want so much to stay with you."

There were tears in the dark eyes, but whether the tears of Mary Magdalene or tears of fear Priscilla Hadden could not tell.

She put out her hand and said: "No, Constellacion; I would never tell any one."

"How else could I speak English so well," said the girl simply.

Her mistress thought of what Kavanaugh had said the first time she had spoken with him.

"Don't cry, Constellacion," said Priscilla with her gentle smile. "After all—perhaps—it is not such a crime—out here."

"Thank you, *señorita*," said the servant gratefully, "you wish to comfort me by excusing me. But if you are kind to me—"

"As I shall be always," said Priscilla Hadden.

The dark girl dried her tears, and a smile rippled around the full mouth.

"Perhaps the *señorita* will be kind enough to tell me," she said after a pause, "where one could get such a small, yet such a beautiful hat as that which you wear?"

"Why, I don't know," said her mistress, smiling, "anywhere. You can make one easily enough."

"Thank you," said Constellacion gratefully. She picked up the hat and fingered it with calculation in her eye. "A bit of cloth here, a large piece here, and turned up so," she said.

"Yes."

"Thank you again," said the girl, as she stooped quickly and pressed the slim, white hand to her lips. "I shall not trouble you longer. Saints bless your slumber."

She went out softly, and her mistress watched her go with a bit of rebellious feeling. Shocked as she was at Constellacion's frank confession, the girl had lived and lived deeply. So far, she herself had gone so far as to smoke a cigarette. The next day a packet of them joined the magazine in the bottom of her trunk.

CHAPTER V.

DOWN AND UP.

AFTER the first ride with Kavanaugh she saw him frequently. He even came to the state teas and talked religion with the admiral's lady. He called on Edith Chapin, but an evening spent with her told him that he had nothing to fear in that quarter. She was too indifferent, saturated through and through with that moist, warm wind which takes the starch out of clothes and the backbone out of good resolutions.

Priscilla rode much with Kavanaugh and learned curious and fascinating things about him. One was that by leaning close to him she could make the broad hands tighten on the wheel, and the dark flush deepen about his eyes. But he never offered her the least disrespect.

It was the morning after such a ride that she took the rose parasol and walked across the square to Edith Chapin's. Her friend was reading a multicolored magazine, and there was a faint hint of tobacco smoke in the air. As Priscilla dropped into a chair she said: "Edith, don't I smell tobacco smoke?"

"Yes," said her friend readily. "Lieutenant Kane dropped in here this morning. He was smoking."

"Edith," said the girl, "Lieutenant Kane is on duty at the cable station."

The older woman threw up her hands.

"I surrender," she said, and added a

bit defiantly: "What if I have been smoking?"

"Nothing," was the response; "but I think it very inhospitable in you not to offer me a cigarette."

Edith Chapin stared at her younger friend for a moment. The girl returned the look with a boldness which contrasted oddly with the natural gentleness of her face. The mission lady shrugged her shoulders, took a cigarette-case from the table-drawer, and offered one to her guest.

"Now a light," said Priscilla.

Edith Chapin gave her a light and pulled the screen across the door.

"That is not the first cigarette you have smoked," she said after a moment.

"No," said the girl readily. "Mr. Kavanaugh gave me my first one."

"Kavanaugh!"

"Yes, Kavanaugh!" mimicked her guest, "Why not?"

"I don't know," said the older woman. "Only you must have heard what people say about him."

"I have never heard any one say that he was uninteresting," retorted the girl; "and, after all, that seems to be the greatest crime out here."

The mission lady looked long at the New England girl. Some subtle change had come in the face since she had stepped off the steamer at Pitti Pier. The mission lady had not seen it before, and it was hard to say just where the change lay. There was the same small oval outline to the face, the same smooth skin, and the same cool, blue eyes.

But before the face had seemed sometimes almost graven in its immobility; now a hidden excitement seemed to play under the white skin.

The girl sat and puffed at her cigarette and tapped the floor with her foot. The mission lady arose after a moment and said: "You know what you are doing, my dear. I must leave you now, but will see you soon." She took a pile of new pamphlets that had come out and went on to the mission.

Her guest settled down in the big chair and looked out upon the heat-ridden square. Although the sun shone intensely, the wind that blew in, heavy with the scent of mango leaves, was damp. Across the square the soldiers dozed in the verandas of the barracks. The ship's bell struck the hour sharp and clear in the hush.

To the men and women who lived on that summery beach, she thought, life was not a thing of problems. They splashed in the warm surf, ate fruit that seemed to ripen in a day, drank *tuba* until they were stupid, fought, played, bore children, and in the end died like flies from measles and flu.

That was one kind of life, and she was not sure that it was worse than her kind of life. Last night had been a wakeful one because the tremendous moon was up. She stretched her arms above her head and yawned. It was too great an effort to get up to go to the couch; she curled up in the chair and closed her eyes. The leaves of the magazines on the table rustled like dry palm leaves in the breeze. The soft bosom with the startlingly white triangle of flesh at the throat rose and fell gently, and she slept as peacefully and as naturally as any of those brown children under the palms.

She stirred at the sound of a soft footfall. Kavanaugh stood over her with one hand on the back of her chair; the other lay on hers. The blue eyes opened and looked into his from under half-closed lids. She had no difficulty in meeting the gaze; whatever bar there had been between them seemed to be broken by the touch of his hand. Her lips, redder than when she had landed, curved in a slow smile. His hand gripped hers so tightly that she said: "Don't. Not so hard." He relaxed his grip, but her hand remained in his.

"Hello," she said softly, "how long have you been here?"

"I don't know," he said huskily, while the flush deepened about his eyes, "a long time, I think."

"How did you know that I was here?"

"Miss Chapin said you were. I saw you, and took the liberty of coming in."

Again the lips parted in a slow smile.

"I hope—I hope you enjoyed your look," she said.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "you are tantalizing!"

"Why did you not wake me up?"

"Why should I?"

"Oh," she heard herself saying, "you might not have found me so tantalizing."

He leaned over quickly and pressed his lips to the honey-colored hair.

"Careful," she warned, "it is too late now. I hear Miss Chapin coming."

He drew back and passed his hand across his face. The girl sat up with a quickly-drawn breath, adjusted her skirt about her knees and tucked in the stray ends of light hair.

"Hello," said Edith Chapin, coming in, "I did not expect to see you here so long."

"The fact is, my dear Edith," said the girl, laughing with a touch of excitement in her voice, "that I fell asleep and would still be sleeping if Mr. Kavanaugh had not waked me."

The mission lady looked at the two—the girl sitting with her hands clasped tightly on her knees and a faint flush in her cheek; Kavanaugh standing calmly with no touch of expression in his face other than his habitual expression of ironical indifference. The New England girl was the first to speak.

"'I want a cigarette," she said. "Who has one?"

Kavanaugh glanced at the mission lady, and Priscilla laughed outright.

"Oh, she knows how far I have fallen, don't you?"

"No," said Edith Chapin, with a touch of sarcasm in her voice, "I don't, and I don't think you do."

Kavanaugh took out his cigarette-case, and the three helped themselves. When the curls of smoke rose in the air, the mission lady began to laugh. Priscilla Hadden paused and said: "What are you laughing at? I do not see anything funny about this. Tell me the joke."

"Oh, I don't know," gasped the other, "but you, a Hadden, and schooled as you were, sitting here and smoking, and Mr. Kavanaugh standing by like Mephistopheles and enjoying it all."

The New England girl coughed a bit as the smoke went into her nose.

"Are you enjoying it?" she said to Kavanaugh.

"Of course," he said, "why not?"

"Well, I suppose it is amusing," said the girl, and laughed herself. "All the same I am enjoying this. What has my schooling to do with me now? I can't even remember what a school looks like."

"Neither can I," said the mission lady, "and I suppose it is a good thing that one does forget. You could be a lot unhappier if you remembered everything. Everything is so lazy out here that you forget the mainland in the first month."

Such is indeed the kindly character of the East, and that is perhaps why almost everyone there is finding an anodyne for some trouble of the heart, head, or purse. Men may not be happy in the Orient, but forgetfulness dulls their unhappiness.

"Home," said the New England girl again, "a white house and elms are all that I remember. But let us talk about something interesting. What were you doing at the mission this morning?"

She curled up in the big chair with her chin on interlocked hands. There was excitement in her eyes; Edith Chapin, looking at her, thought she would scarcely have known her for the same quiet creature who had landed less than a month ago.

"Oh," said the mission lady, "I had to be there to give evidence about a sergeant's wife who is to be deported."

"Why should they deport a sergeant's wife?" asked the girl.

"My dear," said Edith Chapin, "she was human."

"I do not see why they should deport her for that," said the girl. "If what one hears is true there would be no one left on the island but Miss Chapin, my aunt, myself, and," mockingly, "Mr. Kavanaugh."

So they fell into a discussion as to whether or not the sergeant's wife should be deported. Priscilla Hadden was against it; Edith Chapin for it; Kavanaugh was a watchful neutral. He listened to the girl's laughter and to her talk flowing in the easy path of innuendo and double meaning. A little smile played about his lips.

Edith Chapin said finally: "Well, I must be jogging on to the mission. More evidence and what not." Kavanaugh arose with her.

"Let me take you in my car," he said,

"I ought to do something for the good cause."

As they passed to the door Priscilla Hadden fell a peg lower. She drew Edith Chapin aside and whispered: "Tell Mr. Kavanaugh to come and see me to-night." That obedient lady did so.

Left to herself, the girl looked out of the window a bit discontentedly. The morning had been interesting—at least to that side of her nature which was now fully awake. A month ago she would have died at the stake rather than say the things she had just said; the look that Kavanaugh bent on her as she awoke would then have sent the blood to her cheek.

She arose, lighted a cigarette, and took up a magazine. It was a gun-fighting story, and she became so absorbed that she did not hear the solid footfall on the veranda. She looked up only at the exclamation of horror which escaped the admiral's lady's lips. The girl dropped the magazine instinctively, but the cigarette was evidence which could not be so easily concealed.

"Great God!" gasped Mrs. Cranbourne, and there was no blasphemy in her ejaculation. "I never thought that I should live to see such a thing!"

Her niece dropped the smoking end from her hand and ground it under her heel. She could say nothing; but her face was crimson.

"But, my dearest! Smoking—" Tears of real grief welled up in the good lady's eyes. She picked up the magazine. "And you were reading this?"

The girl nodded without speaking. Once or twice Mrs. Cranbourne tried to speak, but she was a reserved woman, and the words that came naturally to her lips sounded totally inadequate.

"You never did this at home?" she said finally.

"No," said her niece faintly, "only since I have been out here."

"Not under my roof, I hope."

The niece shook her head.

"Who ever induced you to begin?"

"No one," lied the girl. "It was my own doing."

"Of course," said Mrs. Cranbourne, "it is not the thing itself which is so wrong; it is what goes with it."

The girl bowed her head and thought of what had gone with it; Kavanaugh's caress, the careless talk of a half-hour ago.

"Priscilla," said her aunt, "you know how hard it is for me to interfere with other —other people. But you must know that this sort of thing can not go on under my roof. I am right, am I not?"

"Yes," said her niece without looking up, "I—I shall never do it again."

Mrs. Cranbourne softened at once.

"Heaven knows what there is in these islands that makes people do strange things," she said tragically, "but they do."

She came over to the bowed figure of the girl and put her hand on her shoulder.

"I am going back to the palace now," she said a bit huskily. "Will you go with me?"

The girl nodded, arose, took her parasol, and the two walked across the square. Once inside the long, cool, drawing-room the older woman put her arms about her niece awkwardly.

"My dear," she said, "I—I do not want you to think me—unsympathetic. I—I shall always trust you, and you may be sure that I—I will never again speak to you about your conduct. You are a Hadden—that is enough."

She went out, leaving a niece who oscillated between shame, abject self-abasement, and hurt pride at being caught like a naughty child. The seesaw in her nature had ceased again—now it was the old life that was up, and a wave of crimson agony passed over her as she thought of what had passed in the mission lady's bungalow.

Lieutenant Kane spent the evening at the palace. So completely was Priscilla Hadden her own self that she really enjoyed his company.

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

KAVANAUGH needed no urging to make him accept the invitation which Priscilla Hadden had given him through the mission lady. He was in very good humor

when he took out his car to run on to the palace—in such good humor that he stopped at the Officers' Club, to which Captain MacDougall had given him a card.

The Officers' Club enjoyed a precarious existence since the landing of the admiral's lady. While the admiral was absent in the Philippines, she could not go far with her plan of ridding the whole island of liquor, but she had so worked on the mind of the second in command that both the Officers' and Enlisted Men's Clubs faced imminent drought.

Captain MacDougall sat at a table preparing for that same dry spell. He beckoned to Kavanaugh, and the civilian went across to sit with him.

"How do you stand the heat?" asked the soldier, benevolently.

"Very well, thanks," said Kavanaugh, twirling his glass, "old campaigner and all that."

MacDougall leaned across the table.

"And how's your wife?" he asked, in what he meant to be a whisper.

For a moment Kavanaugh's fingers were still; then he took a slow mouthful of liquor and said: "What wife?"

"You mean *which* wife, don't you?" replied MacDougall, laughing silently. "The one I was thinking of was a light-haired one in Nagasaki. English girl. You go in for blondes, don't you?"

"She is still in Nagasaki," said Kavanaugh shortly.

"You need not worry about me," said the soldier, benevolently. "One gentleman does not interfere with another gentleman. You go to your church and I go to mine. That's my motto. Not a word from me."

"Thanks," said Kavanaugh, briefly, finished his drink, and went out. He stood for a moment in thought. There would be no ride with the New England girl to-night; he left his car at the club and walked across to the palace. He sent his name in to Priscilla, who sat in the long drawing-room with Mrs. Cranbourne. When the native boy came and did his best at pronouncing Kavanaugh's name, the girl shuddered a bit and said: "Please tell Mr. Kavanaugh that I cannot see him."

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Cranbourne, looking up. "I thought you liked Mr. Kavanaugh."

For a moment the girl hesitated. She could say a word now that would bar him from the house forever. But outside she could see the moonlight on the mango leaves and she said instead: "I do not feel quite like seeing him. Please tell him that I will see him some other time."

When she went up-stairs to her room, Constellacion awaited her.

"*Señorita,*" she said quickly, "I am unhappy to see you so sad. Your sorrow is my sorrow. Is there anything that I can do for you? Is it a headache? If so a small glass of gin will cure it."

"No, thank you, Constellacion," said the New England girl, with her gentle smile. "In my country girls do not drink gin."

"And why not, *señorita?* A small glass with a little lime juice is excellent."

"I don't know why," said Priscilla Hadden, "they just don't."

"Nor smoke?"

"No," said her mistress, after a pause, "they do not smoke."

"Nor go to *fandangoes?*"

"No."

"They must all be nuns," said the dark girl, after a moment.

"They are," said Priscilla, "uncloistered nuns."

"And is that why you are unhappy, *señorita?* You see, I do all these things, and am happy. You do none of them and are unhappy. Is that it?"

"No," replied her mistress, smiling again, "it must be the moon, I think."

"Why," asked Constellacion, "is there no moon in your country?"

"Oh, yes. But no such moon as this. It never makes one feel—as this moon does."

The servant was silent for a while and then said: "I will not trouble you more, *señorita.* Whatever you do must be right because you do it." She curtsied low and went out.

Her mistress sat by the window for some time after she had gone. It was quite true that this mellow moon was not like that of New England, nor this breeze like that

which she knew along the Connecticut shore. The ebb and flow began again within her; for most of the day the Puritan side had been up; now the other began to stir within her.

She thought of what a lovely night it would be to ride with Kavanaugh along the white shell road. After all, she might have been a bit hasty in not seeing him. All that she had done, she had done of her own accord, and a small voice whispered within her that it was quite possible for her to see him without doing anything of which her Puritan side might be ashamed.

The object of her thoughts played safe for several days. He passed her several times in the village, but there was nothing in her greeting to indicate that any new rumor was going around the island about him. Mrs. Cranbourne nodded to him in apparent friendliness and this convinced him of the fact.

He called at the palace, and spent a quiet evening. He was curiously disappointing to the New England girl; to see him sitting there near the lamp and to hear talk about naval policies knocked all her ideas of him in the head. She had come to expect that he would always be exciting; when he came into the long drawing-room her pulse had quickened a bit. But now, except for the physical reality of the man and the broad hands clasped on the knees, he might have been Lieutenant Kane.

And it was so easy to forget in that island. After a few days the shame she had felt at being caught by the admiral's lady began to lessen. The affection, too, which the sudden generosity of Mrs. Cranbourne had excited faded somewhat, and she began to be conscious of a bit of boredom in that good woman's company. It was the fate of the admiral's lady to inspire respect, but not love. A more sympathetic woman might have turned the tide that was flowing in the girl's heart; that triumph was not to be for Mrs. Cranbourne.

Even so, it was the admiral's lady who settled the conflict. It was the third time Kavanaugh had brought his car around; each time there had been a bit of struggle in the girl's mind; each time she had said: "No," and gone to bed feeling like a martyr. This time Mrs. Cranbourne said: "Won't you enjoy riding to-night? It has been so beastly hot all day."

"No, I think not," said her niece, with a bit of panic.

"I think you had best go," said the good lady; "you go up and get ready, and I will speak to him."

She arose without waiting for an answer, and the girl went up, feeling that Fate had decided. All nature seemed to be conspiring against her. There was no moon up, but the starlight was so strong that the roofs and broad tree-leaves showed faintly silver. They rolled slowly across the square and on to the main road. The hum of the wheels on the road; the steady, soft wind against her cheek soothed her, and she slipped down in the cushions and let herself drift.

She put out her arms suddenly and said: "Isn't it wonderful!"

"It will do," said Kavanaugh. "Hadn't you noticed it before?"

"No," was the reply, "one learns a great deal."

"Sometimes," said Kavanaugh, "I think you have changed a great deal since I saw you on the boat, and sometimes I think you have not."

She laughed—a short, silvery peal.

"I could not have stated my case better myself," she said. "I did not like you much when I saw you on the boat."

"Why not?"

"You looked—you looked like such—an animal."

"Perhaps I am," he said simply. "Do you find me less so now?"

"Oh, I don't know!" she exclaimed, sitting up, "I am not going to worry about anything any more. Have a good time. Can't you go any faster than this?"

"Sure," said Kavanaugh, "as fast as you wish. I only hope we do not meet any one."

He pressed his foot to the accelerator pedal, and the car seemed to leap from under them. The song of the tires went up an octave; a long blast from the siren stabbed the night ahead. The white road rushed upon them in a long wave; dark tree tops were vivid green for a

blinding second as they swept around a curve. Hills showed suddenly steep ahead; they rushed them, and a black gulf yawned for a moment at the top before they plunged on down. The girl leaned forward with her lips parted, and the light hair blown close to her head.

Ahead of them a pane of light grew out of the gloom. Kavanaugh stopped the car.

"That was wonderful!" said the girl, with a long breath. "Why did you stop?"

"I am thirsty," said Kavanaugh. "Do you mind if I go and get a drink?"

"Where?"

"That hut there is a native café."

He opened the door and stepped out. She looked at him a moment and said: "I am going with you."

He shrugged his shoulders and held the door open.

"I cannot see why I should not," said the girl, arguing with an invisible adversary; "I cannot see why I shouldn't. It would be exciting to see such a place."

She slipped her arm through Kavanaugh's, and they walked over to the door. Kavanaugh looked in and said: "Fine. No one here."

Inside a ship's lamp, hung in the peak of the roof, threw a soft light on the clayish floor, three tables, and a half-dozen backless chairs. A slipshod boy arose and bowed low to them as they entered.

"*Aguardiente,*" said Kavanaugh as he sat down.

The lad looked inquiringly at the girl. She shook her head. The boy set a small glass before Kavanaugh. He twirled it in his fingers and looked at the girl opposite. The fine blood was racing under the smooth cheek, and the small hands were tightly clasped on the table in front of her.

"Happy?" he said.

"I'll say I am," she replied, smiling back at him.

He tipped the glass and let the liquor trickle through his lips.

"That must be very good," she said, "you seem to enjoy it so much."

"It certainly splashes," said Kavanaugh. "Another one, boy."

The lad filled Kavanaugh's glass from a wicker-bound demijohn.

"Have one?" said Kavanaugh.

"No, I think not."

"Don't if you are afraid," said Kavanaugh, while a smile gathered about his lips.

"Afraid of what?" said the girl, throwing back her head.

"Afraid of drink," said Kavanaugh. "Demon rum is an awful thing."

She put out her hand quickly, took his glass, and touched it with her lips.

"Pooh!" she shuddered, "what stuff! How can any one bear to drink that?"

"See how easy," said Kavanaugh, taking a mouthful of liquor and swallowing it slowly.

"Man!" he said: "That certainly is good! But it is no drink for a beginner. How about a little grape juice with a dash of *tuba?*"

"I hope it will taste better than that," she said, and shuddered again.

Kavanaugh spoke to the native boy, who set before her a thin, purplish drink. She tasted it, sipped again, and nodded to his look of inquiry.

"To what shall we drink?" he said. "This is your first one, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said, while her mild devil awoke within her breast, "but let's drink to the last one. That interests me more."

"You *are* coming on," said Kavanaugh, "but it is the first one that counts. Let us drink to that."

She nodded, too excited to think of what hidden meaning there might be in his words. The drink was a smooth one, with a dash of sugar at the bottom to take away the raw taste of native liquor. The girl sat still with her hands tightly clasped, feeling the pleasant tide mounting in her veins.

"Isn't it odd," she said, as her eyes began to darken a bit, "that I have never noticed what vivid color there is in these native huts?"

"Yes," said her companion, "it is odd."

"I have been in them a dozen times with Miss Chapin," said the girl, "and they seemed to be so dull within. But there is really a wonderful contrast in the brown of the thatch and the brown of the walls. And that open door at night looks like a patch of black velvet."

Kavanaugh said nothing, but sat watch-

ing the flush mounting in her cheek and the fine nostrils quivering delicately. She returned his gaze squarely.

"If I were a man," she said suddenly, "I would drink."

"Thank you," said Kavanaugh; "you are my best apology."

"I would drink all the time, and gamble, and have a wonderful time generally."

"Again I have to thank you," said Kavanaugh. "Will you have another?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said, laughing a bit breathlessly, "what will it do to me?"

"Nothing more than this has done."

"In that case, I must have another."

Kavanaugh spoke to the slipshod boy, who filled her glass. She sipped it; then sat for a long time quietly happy.

"My word," she said, pressing her hands against her temples, "how silly I have been!"

"Please explain."

"The second time you saw me you told me what fools my sort are, and you are right. Ever since I have been out here I have been thinking about the two ideas of life, and now I know that my idea of life is wrong. I know it as plainly as if some one had told me."

She took another sip from her glass.

"Probably some one *has* told you," said Kavanaugh quietly.

"Is my face flushed?" said the girl, putting her hands to her cheeks.

"You have a charming color," said her companion.

"Heavens! I feel as if I were burning up. My eyes feel queerly, too. But I am so happy! Isn't it wonderful that I came to-night? I did not want to at first. Are you glad that I did?"

He nodded.

"Why?"

"My dear girl," he said, "why does the magnet go to the iron?"

"Nonsense!" she said, laughing a bit breathlessly; "that is a compliment, and compliments are not reasons. Tell me why."

She threw back her head and looked at him from under half-closed lids. Her lips were parted, and he could see the rapid pulse beating faintly in her throat and the quick rise and fall of the rounded breast.

"Why do you like to see me?" she challenged. "I certainly cannot be as interesting to you as other women."

"Come," he said abruptly, "we must be going. And let me warn you against looking at me in that way."

"I don't want to go," she said, putting her hands on the table, "I want another of these."

"Like them, do you?" said her companion, a bit grimly.

"Yes."

"At any rate, we must be going."

She sat still, shaking her head, but he took her by the hand and led her out to the car. His abruptness gave her a bit of a thrill, and she let her hand linger in his. She slid down into the cushions and laid her head against his arm. Nature seemed on tiptoe to tell her some great secret—that secret that had been troubling her since she had come out.

"Not much like home, is it?" said Kavanaugh, as they slid out from under the trees into the starlight.

Not only was home dim to her, but the palace and the admiral's lady as well. For the moment she was as much cut off from them as from the white house and elms in Massachusetts. The only realities in the world were the car, the man beside her, and the astounding beauty of the night. Kavanaugh drove fast, and she laughed outright as they passed a bullock cart drawn up on the slope out of their way.

He slowed down as they turned into the square. The palace was dark except for the two dim lights in the hall. They stood in the darkness of the veranda and Kavanaugh's simile of the magnet and the iron held; but it was she who leaned close to him. In an instant his arms were about her and his lips pressed hard against the honey-colored hair. The tingling in her veins died away to a subdued happiness, and she lay in his arms, profoundly content. She put up her face to him, and Kavanaugh gathered the flower of her first kiss—a flower which he had been waiting long to bloom, and which he now took as a connoisseur might cull a precious rose. She put up a tremulous hand, whispered: "Danny," and drew away from him.

He, ever watchful, said: "I must be going now."

"You aren't tired of me already?"

Kavanaugh fished from his repertoire of compliments the stalest of the lot.

"How could any one ever be tired of you?"

Even so she was too confused to notice. He kissed her again, hummed off across the square, and she stole up to bed. The subdued happiness became more and more subdued, and as she lay like a long flower in her bed waiting for sleep, the still, small voice began to speak. She turned in her bed when she thought that she had taken her first drink, but, like the cigarette, it was "the sort of thing that went with it," that counted.

In her school days a bashful youth may have pecked at her cheek; there was nothing bashful in Kavanaugh's caress; it was a true lover's kiss, and she stirred again as she thought that she was not in love with the man.

The soft wind blew across her. Already the country was putting its stamp upon her; there were almost imperceptible hollows in the cheeks, and dark lines under her eyes.

When she had settled that she was not in love with Kavanaugh, the question came to her: "Was Kavanaugh in love with her?" It took only a moment's thought to settle that. His parting remark, a trite compliment, tritely spoken, came back to her: "How could any one ever be tired of you?"

She fell asleep, resolving never to see the man again.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FANDANGO.

THERE was something in Captain MacDougall's walk as he crossed the square that made the sentry snap to attention.

The admiral's lady had succeeded in making the club dry, and he was treading the straight, narrow, and uncomfortable path. He walked across to Edith Chapin's bungalow and tapped.

"Come in," called the mission lady, and when she saw who it was, added: "This *is* a surprise. Sit down."

He seated himself with a nod, and switched his legs with a shark-bone swagger stick.

"I am sorry that I have nothing to offer you," said his hostess, with a smile. "You may smoke, if you like."

He nodded again and lighted a long, dry, Manila cigar.

"That girl staying at the palace," he said, abruptly, "a pretty nice girl."

"One of the best," answered Miss Chapin. "You aren't thinking of marrying, are you?"

"No," he replied. "Is she?"

"Not that I know of."

The soldier was silent for a time.

"Kavanaugh's no good," he said, suddenly. "Ordinarily I pay no attention to any one's business, and ask the same favor. But she's a nice girl. She took two drinks with him at a native joint the other night. I was looking for a man who was absent without leave, and saw them."

"What is the matter with Kavanaugh?" asked Edith Chapin. "Anything special?"

"Married, for one thing. Nice girl in Nagasaki, white; probably several native women wondering when he will return. He used to be a beach-comber and a drunk."

"Perhaps she can reform him."

"She did not look it the other night. No hope of that. They never come back outside the story-books."

"Are you going to speak to him?" she said.

"Not me. I am no sky pilot. I thought you might drop her a word. Well, maybe you had better not. They do go down, though."

"The pretty ones do."

"Gad, she's pretty enough! Looked like a saint in that darned hovel. Made me think of a lot of things I haven't thought of for years. I sha'n't do anything. It's up to you. He's married, though, and that's flat."

They were both silent for a moment—a pair who belonged to the tropics. He had come out an ambitious lieutenant; but what good is ambition in a climate like that with Washington eight thousand miles away? She had come out with a zeal for the mission, but that, too, had faded.

"After all, I don't suppose it makes a big difference," said MacDougall finally, picked up his swagger stick and left.

Edith Chapin tried to think intently of her younger friend, but no one can think intently at that time of the day, and she finally shrugged her shoulders and said: "If she can have a good time, let her have it. It's none of my business. After all, there can't be anything serious."

For a full week Priscilla Hadden kept her vow not to see Kavanaugh in spite of moon, soft wind, heat, and boredom. He came to see her twice, but each time she fled upstairs before her aunt could say anything, and refused steadfastly to see him.

Then, on a hot evening, he telephoned, and while she had her resolution keyed up for that night, he surprised her by asking to see her, not that night, but the next. The sudden change threw her off her mental balance, and she promised almost against her will to see him.

The next morning she spent in expectation amounting almost to agitation. In spite of herself, she thought again and again of the few moments she had spent with him in the gloom of the veranda, and the warm tumult came up strong in her breast. At noon a note came from Kavanaugh.

> My dear Priscilla:
>
> May I ask you to excuse me to-night? I forgot that I promised Concepcion Guererro to come to her birthday party, and that dear girl will be heart-broken if I do not come. She lives in the long house just where the road runs into the beach; you will probably hear the party before the evening is over.

She laid the note down with an exclamation. Just why she should be disappointed when conscience should have been pleased at the turn of affairs, she could not say. But disappointed she was, and spent a restless *siesta*. She strolled across to Edith Chapin's bungalow, and in the course of the conversation said: "Have you ever been to a *fandango?*"

"Yes," said the other, "I went to one once on a sort of a slumming party."

"Was it—fun?"

The mission lady shrugged her shoulders. "I stayed only a few moments. The guests seemed to be having a good time. The girls wears lovely costumes. I fell so much in love with one that I bought it on the spot."

She opened a cedar-scented box and took a costume such as Priscilla had seen Constellacion wear—a crimson skirt of billowy silk, a bodice of black velvet, an ivory comb, and a lacy black *mantilla*.

"Oh!" cried the girl, jumping up and clapping her hand, "let me take it home and try it on. I should love to see how I look in it."

As she crossed the square she saw Mrs. Cranbourne getting into the car.

"My dear," she said, as Priscilla crossed to her, "I have just heard that Captain Talbot's wife is very sick and I am going to see what I can do. I do not plan to come back to-night. Shall I send some one to stay with you?"

For a moment the girl's heart seemed to stop beating.

"No," she said quickly; "if I am lonesome I can send for Edith Chapin."

An hour later Constellacion came in and said: "*Señorita*, since the mistress is gone for the night, may I go, too? There are some things at my home that I should like to get."

Her mistress smiled at her.

"You aren't going to a birthday party, are you?"

"No, *señorita;* it is my home that I wish to go to."

"Very well," said the girl, still smiling, "of course you may go. Have a good time."

At dusk she laid the costume out on the bed, saying to herself: "It would be such fun to see how I look in it."

She dressed carefully, piled the light hair high on her head, and put the comb through it, draped the *mantilla* about her shoulders, and stood before the long mirror. The Eve within her told her that she had never looked so well in her life, and the Eve within her also told her what a shame it would be to let such a flower waste its sweetness on the desert air.

She went down into the drawing-room, walked up and down it until she felt that she could manage her skirts properly, and

sat down. What she needed was an audience.

The telephone bell tinkled, and Lieutenant Kane's voice came over the wire. Instinctively she put her hand over the mouthpiece while he asked if he might come to see her that evening. Her first impulse was toward disappointment, and she covered the mouth-piece so that young Kane might not hear the half-uttered exclamation that escaped her.

She always felt a bit guilty when she was with him, for he was such a clean lad—a "nice boy," even though he was probably three years older than herself. It would be something of a lark to let him come, and she pictured to herself his astonishment when he should see her in the Spanish costume.

She kept him waiting for a moment, deciding what she should do. But if he did come, after the first few minutes he would want to play cards, or he would talk endless shop about his sergeants and his mess, or rifle practise. Her blood cried out for something a bit more thrilling than that, and she suddenly said: "No," in the receiver, and hung up.

Fate pointed to but one thing; she wrapped herself in a big cloak, draped the *mantilla* about her head, and walked swiftly down the road that led to the beach. The lights told her where the party was, for every window in the long house was luminous. She paused for a moment when she saw a group of men standing about the door, but pulled the cloak up to her chin, and walked boldly in.

The long room was green with foliage. A trio of lamps shed a yellow light upon the brown, polished floor. At one end of the room sat a quartette of musicians—one with a violin, another with a guitar, and two with native fiddles.

A young girl whose rounded figure showed a strong strain of native blood, stepped forward and bowed deeply.

"*Señorita,*" she said in Spanish, "I welcome you." Priscilla returned the greeting in faltering Spanish, and looked about for Kavanaugh. He was nowhere to be seen. She took the hand which the young hostess offered her, and the latter conducted her to the top of the room, and offered her a cup. The cup was of old silver, but the jar from which she filled it was commonest clay.

Priscilla drained the cup, as in courtesy she must, even though the punch was fiery with *aguardiente,* and looked again for Kavanaugh. She did not see him, and taxed her poor Spanish to the utmost in asking for Constellacion.

"Alas, *señorita,*" said her hostess, "I have not seen her for some time. She does not come to our parties as she did."

Priscilla took a seat by the wall where she would be somewhat concealed by a branch of coco-palm. One by one the girls drifted in, but the men lingered by the door. Concepcion looked at her guests, checked them off on her fingers, and nodded to the musicians. They struck into a tune. The men came in somewhat unceremoniously, seized their partners, and sped off over the floor—couple after couple, until the room was full of billowing skirts—black, corn color, and crimson.

And did they dance as they should have in those lovely old costumes? Did they step the quadrille or minuet? Instead they danced as people used to do on the Barbary Coast.

A soldier came over to the New England girl and said: "How about a dance, little one?"

She shrank farther out of sight behind the palm and said:

"No. I am waiting here for some one particular."

"Well, you ought to give us a look, at least," said the soldier, putting out a hand and pulling the *mantilla* partly away from her face.

"Don't," she gasped, "Please!"

He let go quickly, and a brick-red flush spread over his face.

"Well, I didn't mean to scare you to death," he said awkwardly, and went back to face the chaff of his comrades.

Never had the conflict been keener in her breast than now. The music set the blood thrumming in her heart, but she felt the acute shame of being at the beck and call of men she did not know. She kept her eyes on the floor. If there had been some way of slipping out she would have done so, but

now her whole thought was to make herself as small as possible.

A voice at her side said: "I thought there was a chance of your coming."

She looked up, and Kavanaugh stood there, the flush a bit deeper about his eyes, and the eyes themselves a bit brighter than usual.

"Danny!" she breathed. "Why have you kept me waiting so long!"

"Discipline," he said. He dropped into the chair beside her, and took both slim hands in his. "Do you want to dance?"

"I am crazy to," she exclaimed softly; "that is, to dance with you."

The music strummed into a Spanish waltz. They were the first on the floor. The punch began to work in her limbs, and she floated as lightly as thistledown. All of her trepidation fled; she felt the strong arm about her and lay quietly in it.

"Bravo!" cried Kavanaugh when they had finished.

He led her to the tall jar of punch, and as she sipped from the silver cup, he lighted a cigarette.

"My word!" he exclaimed, "you are a knockout in that dress!"

"Thank you, *señor*," she said, and swept the floor in a low curtsy. There was no lack of color in her cheeks, and the eyes were black with excitement.

"What shall I say you look like?" he said, eying her meditatively. "A lily growing out of a poppy comes nearest to it, if such a thing were possible."

After the third dance Kavanaugh kept his arm about her when they walked to the top of the room; at the fifth he danced with his cheek against hers; in the sixth he kissed her openly. The lights seemed to dance happily with her; although she could scarcely breathe in his grasp, she floated on a delightful sea.

As the evening wore on and the punch lowered in the tall jar, the party became a bit noisy. The girls laughed unreasonably; the men stamped their feet on the third beat of the waltz. One girl wore shoes that were too small for her; she sat down, took them off, and danced in her stocking feet. One couple bumped another couple, and the four went down. The girls screamed at the fun, but the men put up their fists hazily and had to be hustled outside. They came back in a moment with their trade-marks on one another.

One soldier whom his comrades called "Bull," the same who had spoken to Priscilla Hadden, was out of luck with his partners. The refusal of the New England girl to dance with him had started a joke, and one after another the girls followed her example. He caught one, but she broke from his grasp, and he pursued her around the hall. He caught hold of her at the turn; there was a muffled rip, and the black bodice came off in his hand. She sped from the room like a fawn, while "Bull" waved the thing triumphantly.

"Good old Bull," roared his friends, and clapped their hands and screamed with laughter.

And how did the descendant of a half-dozen Massachusetts Governors take all this? She sat in the corner of the room beside Kavanaugh and laughed until she could have cried.

"How funny!" she gasped. "I have never seen anything so funny in all my life!"

Well after midnight, Kavanaugh said: "Come. I think we had best be going." He took her out to his car and she climbed in and sank down in the cushions.

"Listen to the music," she said dreamily. "Isn't it beautiful?" The low surf broke less than a hundred yards away; through the gloom she could see the white tops booming and fading. Kavanaugh was silent for a time and then said: "What would you say if I told you I were married?"

His words came to her through a rosy mist.

"That waltz is wonderful," she sighed, and then she said in answer to his question: "What would I say if you were married? Nothing, probably. Interesting men always are.

"After all," she continued, feeling the soft wind on her forehead as they started up the hill: "What difference does it make?"

She closed her eyes in sheer delight at the swift flight up to the palace. Life before

had been so pale; since she had known Kavanaugh even the stars seemed to burn more brilliantly. They got out at the palace and went into the veranda. Kavanaugh put his arms about her; the beat of her heart seemed to choke her.

"There is no one—no one inside," she said breathlessly.

She felt his sudden stillness.

After a moment he asked: "Where is Mrs. Cranbourne?"

"Gone to the Talbots," she whispered, almost inaudibly.

He let her go out of his arms. She opened the door silently and led the way into the long drawing-room. It was close inside; the windows were shut and the curtains drawn. She took off her cloak and threw it on the bamboo settee. Her shoulders moved spectral through the darkness; although she could not see him, she could feel his presence as plainly as if it had been broad daylight.

"Shall I light—the light?" she said.

She passed slowly across to the table. In an instant his arms were about her and his lips crushed to hers. Then through the hushed square came Mrs. Cranbourne's clear voice, saying to the sentry on the main guard:

"Good-night, sentry."

The New England girl felt the sudden tightening of Kavanaugh's body, could almost feel the dark flush pass over his face. She heard him curse softly and felt herself half carried to the long window. They stood there for a moment while the solid footfall came up the steps, into the house.

It paused for a moment in the hall, and in that moment Kavanaugh opened the window and they stepped to the veranda. Then they heard Mrs. Cranbourne mounting the stairs, and Kavanaugh breathed a long sigh. The girl leaned against the shutter and brushed the hair away from her forehead. Kavanaugh seized her by the wrists and said: "This thing has gone far enough! You can't play with me! I must see you—to-morrow. Where can we meet?"

She did not answer, and he said: "You will see me, won't you?"

"Where—where could I see you?"

"You know better than I."

A light gleamed from the upper story.

"Danny," she said, "you are hurting my hands."

"I could strangle you," he said chokingly, "if you do not see me to-morrow."

"I believe you would," said the girl dreamily. "What a brute you are!"

"Tell me!" he said. "Do you want to drive me crazy?"

"Come to see me to-morrow at two," she said, nestling in his embrace, "I do not think—that my aunt will be here. In case she is, you can take me—walking."

"You promise to see me?"

"Yes."

"On your honor?"

"Yes," she replied. "I can still promise on that." Kavanaugh turned with an exclamation and strode off to where his dashlight showed faintly in the darkness. The girl stole quietly in and sat in the long drawing-room until everything was quiet above. Then she crept up-stairs. Even so, Mrs. Cranbourne heard her and called out: "Is that you, Priscilla?"

"Yes," said her niece as she slipped into her room: "I was just getting up to see—to see if you were here."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

SHE awoke next morning close to noon, with the struggle in her mind full grown. It her fitful slumber it had been going on; should she see Kavanaugh at two? It was the turning-point in her life; if she did it could mean nothing but a triumph for him and all that he stood for; if she did not see him this time, she knew that she would never see him again.

She lay for a moment thinking tensely; then Mrs. Cranbourne came in, veiled and gloved, with a black medicine case in her hands.

"I am going back to the Talbots," she said. "They still need me. I expect to be gone until to-morrow. And what in the world has become of Constellacion?"

"I told her that she could go home last night," said the girl, without meeting her aunt's eyes. "Isn't she back yet?"

"No," said the admiral's lady impatiently. "It is past eleven, and she is not back yet. But I suppose it is too much to expect any one to be punctual in this part of the world!"

No sooner had Mrs. Cranbourne gone out than Edith Chapin tapped at her door. There was an air of some strain about her as she came in; she said: "Good-morning!", and was silent. The girl was too much preoccupied with her own problem to say much, and the conversation languished between them. At length the mission lady took a long breath and dived into her immediate task.

"You were at the *fandango* last night, weren't you?" she said.

"Yes," said Priscilla, without meeting the look which the older woman bent upon her. "How did you know?"

"Not much goes on in this island without my hearing of it at the mission. You went with Mr. Kavanaugh, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Priscilla, I think I ought to tell you that Mr. Kavanaugh is married."

"How do you know?" said the younger woman, after a moment's pause.

"Well, I was told," said Edith Chapin, "by some one who knows."

"This island is full of people who know things."

"Well, he is, anyway," said her caller, "and now that I have told you there is a big load off my mind."

"I knew it," said the girl, as she bound up the honey-colored hair. "He told me some time ago."

"Thank Heaven for that," said the mission lady, springing up with a long sigh of relief. "That settles it. You know what you are doing, and in spite of the fact that I am a missionary I hate to interfere. If you knew what an effort it was for me to speak to you, you would appreciate my doing so. You do not mind, do you?"

"It's your business," said Priscilla.

"Dear, dear," said Edith Chapin, kissing her on the cheek, "where is that lovely disposition you were famous for? However, I have done my bit, and I will not bother you any more. Good-by."

After her caller had gone, the struggle began again in the girl's mind, and this fresh bit of news made astonishingly little difference in the odds. Somehow or other, she had suspected it all along; what interested her in him was not the prospect of marriage; she did not see at the moment that this knowledge would have made any difference in her conduct.

The ship's bell in front of the barracks struck noon, and she went down to a listless lunch, and after it went into the cool drawing-room.

There she sat down to await what seemed to her no less than fate.

She had succeeded the night before in dancing down the old life, but with daylight and the stamp of Mrs. Cranbourne's personality on everything about her, it lived again. The silver tea set and the brass things about the room with their uncompromising polish were a regiment in themselves. They spoke of the old life—a life of reserve, propriety, and honesty.

On the other side was the curious stimulation which comes to every person who, bred in the temperate zone, goes into the tropics. The soft, damp wind saps old foundations, and unless new ones are laid quickly the inevitable crisis turns that person away from the old life.

There was the strength, too, of Kavanaugh's physical reality and the strength of his "discipline." He had not been uniformly agreeable to her; there were times when he had been blunt to rudeness. If he had been her slave always, she could have turned him away as easily as she could turn away Lieutenant Kane. But Kavanaugh always kept the advantage on his side, and she felt keenly that little touch of fear and fascination which most good women feel in a man who is not so good.

The clock stood at one and then crept around to the half hour. The ship's bell rang three times, and she stirred, but did not rise. The minutes marched slowly on toward the quarter. She sat with her eyes fixed on the square and her cold hands lying unclasped in her lap.

"Oh!" she said faintly. "If only I had stayed at home!"

She buried her face in the cushions and lay for a time. She heard a faint grit of

gravel as some one crossed the square, and looked up.

The old hymn says:

God moveth in mysterious ways,
His wonders to perform.

The person she saw crossing the square seemed at first glance to be herself. There was the same trim skirt, the small, white hat, and low-heeled shoes. A rose parasol topped off the figure, which moved, even, with her own smooth walk.

Beyond the figure she saw Kavanaugh coming. He caught sight of the rose parasol, paused for a moment, then increased his pace, and spoke. The rose parasol moved a bit, and Priscilla Hadden saw that this replica of herself was her dark maid, Constellacion.

There is a psychological balance as well as a physical one; a straw may change the slant of a character as well as alter the position of the beam on the scale. In one blinding flash it came to the girl that she had been going down while Constellacion had come up. She remembered that Constellacion went no more to *fandangoes*, because her new moral sense told her not to go; while she had gone because her newly dulled moral sense told her to go.

"Oh!" she breathed, putting her arm across her eyes, "what a *creature* I have become!" She sank into a chair while a wave of crimson agony swept over her. In that one moment all her Puritan ancestry came to life and pointed shaming fingers at her. The crux of her agony lay in the fact that all her steps downward had originated in herself.

Kavanaugh saw her through the long window; he nodded to her and in a moment she heard his confident step in the hall. He appeared in the doorway with his hat in his hand, and started to speak. Then she did the last un-Haddenlike thing that she was ever to do in that island. A vase stood near her; she took it and put all her shame and anger in her arm. The vase crashed above his shoulder.

He stood for a moment with his mouth open, then a flush passed over his face and in the trail of it came the ironical smile.

"Home, James," he said, shrugging his shoulders, turned and went out. She sank into her chair and hid her burning face in her hands. After a time she heard another step in the doorway and looked up to see Constellacion standing there watching her mistress with affectionate concern.

"*Señorita,*" she began, "I hope you are not angry with me for staying away so long. I—"

Her mistress gave her no time to finish. She ran across the room and threw her arms about Constellacion.

"You angel!" she breathed. "You dear angel!"

After a somewhat embarrassed moment, the servant drew back and looked at her mistress. Not much had escaped those dark, soft eyes, and she said, as she stooped to pick up the broken fragments of the vase:

"*Señorita,* I saw the young officer—Kane is his name, I think—playing tennis as I came by the officers' court." She gave her mistress a sidewise smile and slipped out of the room.

It came to her that a great part of young Kane's talk had been about tennis and about a tournament in which he was to take part. She wiped the tears from her face and went to the window. Across the square and down the road she saw the end of the courts and Lieutenant Kane slashing, rallying, sending whistling overhands to an opponent whom she could not see. In his immaculate whiteness he seemed the incarnation of clean manhood.

He was up to the hilt in a hard game, and had a handkerchief bound about his temples to keep the sweat from his eyes. The ball came back to him like a rifle bullet, and she admired the clean stroke with which he met it and sent it back. Here was a man who was all youth, all honest strength—a man who could put his whole soul into a clean game and smile when he lost.

She put a bit of powder on her nose, took her hat and parasol, and walked toward the courts. Lieutenant Kane won all his matches that day—never before had he enjoyed such an appreciative gallery.

(The End.)

Lonesomeness*

by George Washington Ogden

Author of "The Duke of Chimney Butte," "The Listener," etc.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

SETTING out from the town of Jasper to make his fortune at sheep-raising, John Mackenzie, ex-schoolmaster, found adventure with the crossing of Poison Creek; a woman chained like a dog, whom he released, later engaging in a Homeric battle with her husband, Swan Carlson, who, with his bare hands, had strangled two sheep-herders.

But Mackenzie's agility and cold nerve brought him off victor. Leaving Carlson senseless on the floor of the cabin, he journeyed onward until, sighting a sheep camp-wagon, he met for the first time Joan, daughter of Tim Sullivan, sheep-owner, whom Mackenzie had come to see about a job on shares or otherwise.

Refusing the girl's offer of her influence with her father, since he preferred to bargain with the latter on his own account, Mackenzie promised, however, that if he was successful he would teach her all that he knew.

"It's a bargain, then, if I get on," said he.

"It's a bargain," nodded Joan, giving him her hand to bind it, with great earnestness in her eyes.

CHAPTER V.

TIM SULLIVAN.

"YES, they call us flockmasters in the reports of the Wool Growers' Association, and in the papers and magazines, but we're nothing but sheepmen, and that's all you can make out of us."

Tim Sullivan spoke without humor when he made this correction in the name of his calling, sitting with his back to a haycock, eating his dinner in the sun. Mackenzie accepted the correction with a nod of understanding, sparing his words.

"So you want to be a flockmaster?" said Tim. "Well, there's worse callin's a man, especially a young man, could take up. What put it in your head to tramp off up here to see me? Couldn't some of them sheepmen down at Jasper use you?"

"I wanted to get into the heart of the sheep country for one thing, and several of my friends recommended you as the best sheepman on the range, for another. I want to learn under a master."

"Right," Tim nodded, "right and sound. Do you think you've got the stuff in you to make a sheepman out of?"

"It will have to be a pretty hard school if I can't stick it through."

"Summers are all right," said Tim, reflectively, nodding away at the distant hills, "and falls are all right, but you take it winter and early spring, and it tries the mettle in a man. Blizzards and starvation, and losses through pile-ups and stampedes, wolves and what-not, make a man think sometimes he'll never go through it any more. Then spring comes, with the cold wind, and slush up to your ankles, and you out day and night lookin' after the ewes and lambs. Lambin' time is the hard time, and it's the time when a man makes it or loses, accordin' to what's in him to face hardship and work."

"I've heard about it; I know what I'm asking to go up against, Mr. Sullivan."

"You want to buy in, or take a band on shares?"

"I'd rather take a band on shares. If I put what little money I've got into it I'll go it alone."

This story began in The Argosy for April 24.

"That's right; it's safe to let the other man take the risk. It ain't fair to us sheepmen, but we have to do it to get men. Well, when we hit on a good man, it pays better than hirin' poor ones at fifty dollars a month and found. I've had old snoozers workin' for me that the coyotes eat the boots off of while they was asleep. You look kind of slim and light to tackle a job on the range."

Mackenzie made no defense of his weight, advancing no further argument in behalf of his petition for a job. Sullivan measured him over with his appraising eyes, saying nothing about the bruises he bore, although Mackenzie knew he was burning with curiosity to go into the matter of how and when he received them.

Sullivan was a man of calm benignity of face, a placid certainty of his power and place in the world; a rugged man, broad-handed, slow. His pleasure was in the distinction of his wealth, and not in any use that he made of it for his own comfort or the advancement of those under his hand. Even so, he was of a type superior to the general run of flockmasters such as Mackenzie had met.

"I'll give you a job helpin' me on this hay for a few days, and kind of try you out," Tim agreed at last. "I don't want to discourage you at the start, but I don't believe you've got the mettle in you to make a flockmaster, if you want to call it that."

"All right; I'll help you on the hay. Before I start in though, I'd like to borrow a saddle-horse from you to take a ride down the creek to Swan Carlson's place. I wouldn't be long."

"Carlson's place? Do you know Swan Carlson?"

Mackenzie told in few words how much he knew of Carlson, and his reason for desiring to visit him. Tim's wonder was too large to contain at hearing this news. He got up, his eyes staring in plain incredulity, his mouth open a bit between surprise and censure, it seemed. But he said nothing for a little while; only stood and looked Mackenzie over again, with more careful scrutiny than before.

"I'll go down with you," he announced, turning abruptly away to get the horses.

It was evident to Mackenzie that Sullivan was bewildered between doubt and suspicion as they rode toward Carlson's ranch, which the sheepman said was about seven miles away. But he betrayed nothing of his thoughts in words, riding in silence mainly, looking at the ground like a man who had troubles on his mind.

The silence of abandonment was over Carlson's house as they rode up. A few chickens retreated from the yard to the cover of the barn in the haste of panic, their going being the only sound of life about the place. The door through which Mackenzie had left was shut; he approached it without hesitation—Tim Sullivan lingering back as if in doubt of their reception—and knocked. No answer. Mackenzie tried the door, finding it unlocked; pushed it open, entered.

Sullivan stood outside, one mighty hand on the jamb, his body to one side under protection of the house, his head put cautiously and curiously round to see, leaving a fairway for the terrible Swan Carlson should he rise from a dark corner, shake himself like an old grizzly, and charge.

"Is he there?" Tim asked, his voice a strained whisper.

Mackenzie did not reply. He stood in the midde of the room where his combat with Swan had taken place, among the débris of broken dishes, wrecked table, fallen stovepipe and tinware, looking about him with grim interest. There was nobody in the other room, but the blood from Swan's hurt trailed across the floor as if he had been helped to the bed. Tim took his courage in both hands and came just inside the door.

"Man! Look at the blood!" he said.

"There's nobody here," Mackenzie told him, turning to go.

"She's took him to the doctor," said Tim.

"Where is that?"

"There's a kind of a one over on the Sweetwater, sixty miles from here, but there's no good one this side of Jasper."

"He'll die on the way," Mackenzie said.

"No such luck," said Tim. "Look! There's the chain he tied that woman of his up with."

"We'd better go back and get at that hay," Mackenzie said. "There's nothing I can do for Carlson."

"There's the table-leg you hit him with!" Tim picked it up, plucking off the red hairs which clung to it, looking at Mackenzie with startled eyes. Mackenzie mounted his horse.

"You'd better shut the door," he called back as he rode away.

Tim caught up with him half a mile on the way back to the hay-field. The sheepman seemed to have outrun his words. A long time he rode beside Mackenzie in silence, turning a furtive eye upon him across his long nose now and then. At last it burst from him:

"You done it!" he said, with the astonished pleasure of a man assured against his doubts.

Mackenzie checked his horse, looking at Tim in perplexed inquiry.

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

"You laid him out—Swan Carlson—you done it! Man!"

"Oh, you're still talking about that," Mackenzie said, a bit vexed.

"It would be worth thousands to the rest of us sheepmen on this range if he never comes back."

"Why didn't some of you handle him long ago? A man of your build ought to be able to put a dent in Carlson."

"I'll fight any man that stands on two feet," said Tim, with such sincerity that it could not have been taken for a boast, "you can ask about me far and near, but I draw the line at the devil. I've stood up with four men against me, with meat-cleavers and butcher-knives in their hands, when I used to work as a sheep butcher back in the packin'-house in Chicago, and I've come through with my life. But them was friends of mine," he sighed; "a man knew how they lived. Swan Carlson's got a wolf's blood in his veins. He ain't a human man."

"And this man is worth three hundred thousand dollars!" thought Mackenzie. And he knew, also, that the greatest treasure that the flockmaster could count was one not so greatly appreciated as a thousand sheep — that brave, ambitious little rebel, Joan.

"Maybe you've got the makin' of a sheepman in you," Tim said, thoughtfully, as they came in sight of the hay. "I've got an old man I could put you under till the dogs got used to you and you learned their ways and found out something among the thousand things a man's got to know if he intends to make a success of runnin' sheep. Old Dad Frazer could put you onto the tricks of the trade quicker than any man I know. Maybe you *have* got the makin' of a sheepman in you. I'll have to think it over."

Tim took the four days they were at the hay to think about it. At the end of that time, with the hay in stack and the mowing-machine loaded into the wagon for the rough journey to the ranch, Tim spoke.

"I've decided to try you out, John," he announced, but shaking his head as he spoke, as if he doubted the wisdom of the venture. "I'll leave you here with Dad Frazer—he's over on Horsethief, about six miles across from Joan's range—and let him break you in. You understand, you don't go in on shares till you're able to handle at least two thousand head."

"I agree on that."

"And then there's another little point." Tim shifted his feet, jerked up his trousers, rubbed his chin in a truly Irish way. "That girl of mine, Joan, she's got it in her head she wants to be a lady, and go to college and put on agonies. No use in it, as I tell her. No girl that's got money needs any of the education stuff. I got on without it, and I made my money without it. Joan she wants you to give her some lessons. She made me promise I wouldn't take you on unless you'd agree to that as part of our conditions and contract."

Mackenzie had no need to put on a face of thinking it over seriously; he was entirely sincere in the silence he held while he revolved it in his mind. He doubted whether more learning would bring to Joan the contentment which she lacked in her present state. It might only open the door to a greater longing, or it might disillusion her when her feet had left these wild, free hills, and set a pang in her heart like a flame for the things which knowledge closes the door against the return for evermore.

"I'll tell you how to handle her to be rid of her soon," said Tim, winking craftily, seeing how the wind stood. "Discourage her, tell her she ain't got the mind for books and Latin and mathematics. All the mathematics she needs is enough to count her sheep and figure her clip. Tell her to put books out of her head and stick to the range, marry some good sheepman if one turns up to her taste, or pass them all up if she likes.

"But tell her to stick to sheep, whatever she does. She can be the sheep queen of this country in fifteen years; she's as handy with 'em now as I am, and I tell you, John, that's something that's hard for me to say, even of my own girl. But she is; she's as good a sheepman right now as I am or ever will be. But you don't need to tell her that."

"I don't believe she'll take it, but it's the soundest advice I could give her," Mackenzie said.

"Work up to it gradual, lad; it can't be done in a day. Make the lessons hard, pile the Latin on heavy. Lord, I remember it, back in the old country, old Father MacGuire layin' it on the lads under his thumb. Devil a word of it sticks to me now, not even the word for sheep. I tried to remember some of it when they sent me up to the Legislature in Cheyenne; I wanted to knock 'em over. But it had all leaked out. Discourage her, man; discourage her."

"Yes, that might be the greatest kindness I could do her in the end," Mackenzie said.

"I'll drop you off over there; you can stay in camp to-night with Charley and Joan. To-morrow I'll come back and take you out to Dad Frazer's camp, and you can begin your schoolin' for the makin' of a master. But begin early to discourage her, John; begin at her early, lad."

CHAPTER VI.

EYES IN THE FIRELIGHT.

"THEY call it the lonesomeness here," said Joan, her voice weary as with the weight of the day. "People shoot themselves when they get it bad—green sheepherders and farmers that come in here to try to plow up the range."

"Crazy guys," said Charley, contemptuously, chin in his hands where he stretched full length on his belly beside the embers of the supper fire.

"Homesick," said Mackenzie, understandingly. "I've heard it's one of the worst of all diseases. It defeats armies sometimes, so you can't blame a lone sheepherder if he loses his mind on account of it."

"Huh!" said Charley, no sympathy in him for such weakness at all.

"I guess not," Joan admitted, thoughtfully. "I was brought up here, it's home to me. Maybe I'd get the lonesomeness if I was to go away."

"You sure would, kid," said Charley, with comfortable finality.

"But I want to go, just the same," Joan declared, a certain defiance in her tone, as if in defense of a question often disputed between herself and Charley.

"You think you do," said Charley, "but you'd hit the high places comin' back home. Ain't that right, Mr. Mackenzie?"

"I think there's something to it," Mackenzie allowed, soberly, nodding his grave head.

"Maybe I would," Joan yielded, "but as soon as my share in the sheep figures up enough you'll see me hittin' the breeze for Chicago. I want to see the picture galleries and libraries."

"I'd like to go through the mail-order house we get our things from up there," Charley said. "The catalogue says it covers seventeen acres!"

Mackenzie was camping with them for the night on his way to Dad Frazer's range, according to Tim Sullivan's plan. Long since they had finished supper; the sheep were quiet below them on the hillside. The silence of the sheeplands, almost oppressive in its weight, lay around them so complete and unbroken that Mackenzie fancied he could hear the stars snap as they sparkled. He smiled to himself at the fancy, face turned up to the deep serenity of the heavens. Charley blew the embers, stirring them with a brush of sage.

"The lonesomeness," said Mackenzie, with a curious dwelling on the word; "I

never heard it used in that specific sense before."

"Well, it sure gets a greenhorn," said Joan.

Charley held the sage-branch to the embers, blowing them until a little blaze jumped up into the startled dark. The sudden light revealed Joan's face where she sat across from Mackenzie, and it was so pensively sad that it smote his heart like a pain to see.

Her eyes stood wide open as she had stretched them to roam into the night after her dreams of freedom beyond the land she knew, and so she held them a moment, undazzled by the light of the leaping blaze. They gleamed like glad waters in a morning sun, and the schoolmaster's heart was quickened by them, and the pain for her longing soothed out of it. The well of her youth was revealed before him, the fountain of her soul.

"I'm goin' to roll in," Charley announced, his branch consumed in the eager breath of the little blaze. "Don't slam your shoes down like you was drivin' nails when you come in, Joan."

"It wouldn't bother you much," Joan told him, calmly indifferent to his great desire for unbroken repose.

Charley rolled on his back, where he lay a little while in luxurious inaction, sleep coming over him heavily. Joan shook him, sending him stumbling off to the wagon and his bunk.

"You could drive a wagon over him and never wake him once he hits the hay," she said.

"What kind of a man is Dad Frazer?" Mackenzie asked her, his mind running on his business adventure that was to begin on the morrow.

"Oh, he's a regular old flat-foot," said Joan. "He'll talk your leg off before you've been around him a week, blowin' about what he used to do down in Oklahoma."

"Well, a man couldn't get the lonesomeness around him, anyhow."

"You'll get it, all right, just like I told you; no green hand with all his senses ever escaped it. Maybe you'll have it light, though," she added, hopefully, as if to hold him up for the ordeal.

"I hope so. But with you coming over to take lessons, and Dad Frazer talking morning, noon, and night, I'll forget Egypt and its flesh-pots, maybe."

"Egypt? I thought you came from Jasper?"

"It's only a saying, used in relation to the place you look back to with regret when you're hungry."

"I'm so ignorant I ought to be shot!" said Joan.

And Mackenzie sat silently fronting her, the dead fire between, a long time, thinking of the sparkle of her yearning eyes, smiling in his grim way to himself when there was no chance of being seen as he felt again the flash of them strike deep into his heart. Wise eyes, eyes which held a store of wholesome knowledge gleaned from the years in those silent places where her soul had grown without a shadow to smirch its purity.

"There's a difference between wisdom and learning," he said at last, in low and thoughtful voice. "What's it like over where Dad Frazer grazes his sheep?"

"Close to the range Swan Carlson and the Hall boys use, and you want to keep away from there."

"Of course; I wouldn't want to trespass on anybody's territory. Are they all disagreeable people over that way?"

"There's nobody there but the Halls and Carlson. You know Swan."

"He might improve on close acquaintance," Mackenzie speculated.

"I don't think he's as bad as the Halls, wild and crazy as he is. Hector Hall, especially. But you may get on with them, all right—I don't want to throw any scare into you before you meet them."

"Are they out looking for trouble?"

"I don't know as they are, but they're there to make it if anybody lets a sheep get an inch over the line they claim as theirs. Oh, well, pass 'em up till you have to meet them—maybe they'll treat you white, anyway."

Again a silence stood between them, Mackenzie considering many things, not the least of them being this remarkable girl's life among the sheep and the rough characters of the range, no wonder in him over her impatience to be away from it. It

seemed to him that Tim Sullivan might well spare her the money for schooling, as well as fend her against the dangers and hardships of the range by keeping her at home these summer days.

"It looks to me like a hard life for a girl," he said; "no diversions, none of the things that youth generally values and craves. Don't you ever have any dances or anything—camp-meetings or picnics?"

"They have dances over at Four Corners sometimes—Hector Hall wanted me to go to one with him about a year ago. He had his nerve to ask me, the little old sheep-thief!"

"Well, I should think so."

"He's been doubly sore at us ever since I turned him down. I looked for him to come over and shoot up my camp some night for a long time, but I guess he isn't that bad."

"So much to his credit."

"But I wish sometimes I'd gone with him. Maybe it would have straightened things out. You know, when you stay here on the range, Mr. Mackenzie, you're on a level with everybody else, no matter what you think of yourself. You can't get out of the place they make for you in their estimation of you. Hector Hall never will believe I'm too good to go to a dance with him. He'll be sore about it all his life."

"A man naturally would have regrets, Miss Sullivan. Maybe that's as far as it goes with Hector Hall, maybe he's only sore at heart for the honor denied."

"That don't sound like real talk," said Joan.

Mackenzie grinned at the rebuke, and the candor and frankness in which it was administered, thinking that Joan would have a frigid time of it out in the world if she applied such outspoken rules to its flatteries and mild humbugs.

"Let's be natural then," he suggested, considering as he spoke that candor was Joan's best defense in her position on the range. Here she sat out under the stars with him, miles from the nearest habitation, miles from her father's house, her small protector asleep in the wagon, and thought no more of it than a chaperoned daughter of the city in an illuminated drawing-room. A girl had to put men in their places and keep them there under such circumstances, and nobody knew better how to do it than Joan.

"I'll try your patience and good humor when you start out to teach me," she told him, "for I'll want to run before I learn to walk."

"We'll see how it goes in a few days; I've sent for the books."

"I'll make a good many wild breaks," she said, "and tumble around a lot, I know, but there won't be anybody to laugh at me—but you."

She paused as if considering the figure she would make at the tasks she awaited with such impatience, then added under her breath, almost in a whisper, as if it was not meant for him to hear: "But you'll never laugh at me for being hungry to learn, will you?"

Mackenzie attempted neither comment nor reply to this, feeling that it was Joan's heart speaking to herself alone. He looked away over the sleeping sheeplands, vast as the sea, and as mysterious under the starlight, thinking that it would require more than hard lessons and unusual tasks to discourage this girl.

She stood at the fountain-edge, leaning with dry lips to drink, her wistful eyes strong to probe the mysteries which lay locked in books yet strange to her, but wiser in her years than many a man who had skimmed a college course. There was a vast difference between knowledge and learning, indeed; it never had been so apparent to him as in the presence of that outspoken girl of the sheep range that summer night.

What would the world do with Joan Sullivan if she ever broke her fetters and went to it? How would it accept her faith and frankness, her high scorn for the deceits upon which it fed? Not kindly, he knew. There would be disillusionment ahead for her, and bitter awakening from long-wrapping dreams.

If he could teach her to be content in the wild freedom of that place he would accomplish the greatest service that he could bring her in the days of her untroubled youth. Discourage her, said Tim

Sullivan. Mackenzie felt that this was not his job.

"Maybe Charley's right about it," she said, her voice low, and soft with that inherited gentleness which must have come from Tim Sullivan's mother, Mackenzie thought. "He's a wise kid; maybe I would want to come back faster than I went away. But I get so tired of it sometimes I walk up and down out here by the wagon half the night, and wear myself out making plans that I may never be able to put through."

"It's just as well," he told her, nodding again in his solemn, weighty fashion; "everybody that amounts to anything has this fever of unrest. Back home we used to stack the wheat to let it sweat and harden. You're going through that. It takes the grossness out of us."

"Have you gone through it?"

"Years of it; over the worst of it now, I hope."

"And you came here. Was that the kind of an ambition you had? Was that all your dreams brought you?"

"But I've seen more here than I ever projected in my schemes, Miss Joan. I've seen the serenity of the stars in this vastness; I've felt the wind of freedom on my face." And to himself: "And I have seen the firelight leap in a maiden's eyes, and I have looked deep into the inspiring fountain of her soul." But there was not the boldness in him, nor the desire to risk her rebuke again, to bring it to his lips.

"Do you think you'll like it after you get over the lonesomeness?"

"Yes, if I take the lonesomeness."

"You'll take it, all right. But if you ever do work up to be a sheepman, and of course you will if you stick to the range long enough, you'll never be able to leave again. Sheep tie a person down like a house-full of children."

"Maybe I'd never want to go. I've had my turn at it out there; I've been snubbed and discounted, all but despised, because I had a little learning and no money to go with it. I can hide my little learning here, and nobody seems to care about the money. Yes, I think I'll stay on the range."

Joan turned her face away, and he knew the yearning was in her eyes as they strained into the starlit horizon after the things she had never known.

"I don't see what could ever happen that would make me want to stay here," she said at last. She got up with the sudden nimbleness of a deer, so quickly that Mackenzie thought she must be either startled or offended, but saw in a moment it was only her natural way of moving in the untrammeled freedom of her lithe, strong limbs.

"You'll find a soft place on the side of the hill somewhere to sleep," she said, turning toward the wagon. "I'm going to pile in. Good night."

Mackenzie sat again by the ashes of the little fire after giving her good night. He felt that he had suffered in her estimation because of his lowly ambition to follow her father, and the hundred other obscure heroes of the sheep country, and become a flockmaster, sequestered and safe among the sage-gray hills.

Joan expected more of a man who was able to teach school; expected lofty aims, far-reaching ambitions. But that was because Joan did not know the world that lifted the lure of its flare beyond the rim of her horizon. She must taste it to understand, and come back with a bruised heart to the shelter of her native hills.

And this lonesomeness of which she had been telling him, this dread sickness that fell upon a man in those solitudes, and drained away his courage and hope—must he experience it, like a disease of adolescence from which few escape? He did not believe it. Joan had said she was immune to it, having been born in its atmosphere, knowing nothing but solitude and silence, in which there was no strange nor fearful thing.

But she fretted under a discontent that made her miserable, even though it did not strain her reason like the lonesomeness. Something was wanting to fill her life. He cast about him, wondering what it could be, wishing that he might supply it and take away the shadow out of her eyes.

It was his last thought as he fell asleep in a little swale below the wagon where the grass was tall and soft—that he might find what was, lacking to make Joan content

with the peace and plenty of the sheeplands, and supply that want.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EASIEST LESSON.

"WHY do they always begin the conjugations on *love?*"

There was no perplexity in Joan's eyes as she asked the question; rather, a dreamy and far-away look, the open book face-downward on the ground beside her.

"Because it's a good example of the first termination, I suppose," Mackenzie replied, his eyes measuring off the leagues with her own, as if they together sought the door that opened out of that gray land into romance that quiet summer afternoon.

"It was that way in the Spanish grammar," said Joan, shaking her head, unconvinced by the reason he advanced. "There are plenty of words in the first termination that are just as short. Why? You're the teacher; you ought to know."

She said it banteringly, as if she dared him to give the reason. His eyes came back from their distant groping, meeting hers with gentle boldness. So for a little while he looked silently into her appealing eyes, then turned away.

"Maybe, Joan, because it is the easiest lesson to learn and the hardest to forget," he said.

Joan bent her gaze upon the ground, a flush tinting her brown face, plucking at the grass with aimless fingers.

"Anyway, we've passed it," said she.

"No, it recurs all through the book; it's something that can't be left out of it, any more than it can be left out of life. Well, it doesn't need to trouble you and me."

"No; we could use some other word," said Joan, turning her face away.

"But mean the same, Joan. I had an old maid English teacher when I was a boy who made us conjugate 'to like' instead of the more intimate and tender word. Poor old soul! I hope it saved her feelings and eased her regrets."

"Maybe she'd had a romance," said Joan.

"I hope so; there's at least one romance coming to every lady in this world. If she misses it she's being cheated."

Mackenzie took up the Latin grammar, marking off her next lesson, and piling it on with unsparing hand, too. Yet not in accord with Tim Sullivan's advice; solely because his pupil was one of extraordinary capacity. There was no such thing as discouraging Joan; she absorbed learning and retained it, as the sandstone absorbs oil under the pressure of the earth, holding it without wasting a drop until the day it gladdens man in his deep exploration.

So with Joan. She was storing learning in the undefiled reservoir of her mind, to be found like unexpected jewels by some hand in after-time. As she followed the sheep she carried her books; at night, long after Charley had gone to sleep, she sat with them by the lantern light in the sheep-wagon. Unspoiled by the diversions and distractions which divide the mind of the city student, she acquired and held a month's tasks in a week. The thirsty traveler in the desert places had come to the oasis of her dreams.

Daily Joan rode to the sheep-camp where Mackenzie was learning the business of running sheep under Dad Frazer. There were no holidays in the term Joan had set for herself, no unbending, no relaxation from her books. Perhaps she did not expect her teacher to remain there in the sheeplands, shut away from the life that he had breathed so long and put aside for what seemed to her an unaccountable whim.

"You'll be reading Cæsar by winter," Mackenzie told her as she prepared to ride back to her camp. "You'll have to take it slower then; we can't have lessons every day."

"Why not?" She was standing beside her horse, hat in hand, her rich hair lifting in the wind from her wise, placid brow. Her books she had strapped to the saddle-horn; there was a yellow slicker at the cantle.

"You'll be at home, I'll be out here with the sheep. I expect about once a week will be as often as we can make it then."

"I'll be out here on the range," she said, shaking her determined head. "A sheepman's got to stick with his flock

through all kinds of weather. If I run home for the winter I'll have to hire a herder, and that would eat my profits up; I'd never get away from here."

"Maybe by the time you've got enough money to carry out your plans, Joan, you'll not want to leave."

"You've got to have education to be able to enjoy money. Some of the sheepmen in this country—yes, most of them—would be better men if they were poor. Wealth is nothing to them but a dim consciousness of a new power. It makes them arrogant and unbearable. Did you ever see Matt Hall?"

"I still have that pleasure in reserve. But I think you'll find it's refinement, rather than learning, that a person needs to enjoy wealth. That comes more from within than without."

"The curtain's down between me and everything I want," Joan said, a wistful note of loneliness in her low, soft voice. "I'm going to ride away some day and push it aside, and see what it's been keeping from me all the years of my longing. Then, maybe, when I'm satisfied I'll come back and make money. I've got sense enough to see it's here to be made if a person's got the sheep to start with and the range to run them on."

"Yes, you'll have to go," said he, in what seemed sad thoughtfulness, "to learn it all; I can't teach you the things your heart desires most to know. Well, there are bitter waters and sweet waters, Joan; we've got to drink them both."

"It's the same way here," she said, "only we've got sense enough to know the alkali holes before we drink out of them."

"But people are not that wise the world over, Joan."

Joan stood in silent thought, her far-reaching gaze on the dim curtain of haze which hung between her and the world of men's activities, strivings and lamentations.

"If I had the money I'd go as soon—as soon as I knew a little more," she said. "But I've got to stick; I made that bargain with dad—he'd never give me the money, but he'll buy me out when I've got enough to stake me."

"Your father was over this morning."

"Yes, I know."

"He thinks *my* education's advanced far enough to trust me with a band of sheep. I'm going to have charge of the flock I've been running here with Dad Frazer."

"I heard about it."

"And you don't congratulate me on becoming a paid sheep-herder, my first step on the way to flockmaster!"

"I don't know that you're to be congratulated," she returned, facing him seriously. "All there is to success here is brute strength and endurance against storms and winter weather—it don't take any brains. Out there where you've been and I'm going, there must be something bigger and better for a man, it seems to me. But maybe men get tired of it—I don't know."

"You'll understand it better when you go there, Joan."

"Yes, I'll understand a lot of things that are locked up to me now. Well, I don't want to go as much all the time now as I did—only in spells sometimes. If you stay here and teach me, maybe I'll get over it for good."

Joan laughed nervously, half of it forced.

"If I could teach you enough to keep you here, Joan, I'd think it was the biggest thing I'd ever done."

"I don't want to know any more if it means giving up," she said.

"It looks like giving up to you, Joan, but I've only started," he corrected her, in gentle spirit.

"I oughtn't talk that way to you," she said, turning to him contritely, her earnest eyes lifted to his, "it's none of my business what you do. If you hadn't come here I'd never have heard of—*amare*, maybe."

Joan bent her head, a flush over her brown cheeks, a smile as of mischief at the corners of her mouth. Mackenzie laughed, but strained and unnaturally, his own tough face burning with a hot tide of mounting blood.

"Somebody else would have taught you—you'd have conjugated it in another language, maybe," he said.

"Yes, you say it's the easiest lesson to learn," she nodded, soberly now. "Have you taught it to many—many—girls?"

"According to the book, Joan," he returned; "only that way."

Joan drew a deep breath, and looked away over the hills, and smiled. But she said no more, after the way of one who has relieved the mind on a doubted point.

"I expect I'll be getting a taste of the lonesomeness here of nights pretty soon," Mackenzie said, feeling himself in an awkward, yet not unpleasant situation with this frank girl's rather impertinent question still burning in his heart. "Dad's going to leave me to take charge of another flock."

"I'll try to keep you so busy you'll not have it very bad," she said.

"Yes, and you'll pump your fount of knowledge dry in a hurry if you don't slow down a little," he returned. "At the pace you've set you'll have to import a professor to take you along, unless one strays in from somewhere."

"I don't take up with strays," said Joan, rather loftily.

"I think Dad's getting restless," Mackenzie said, feeling small under her censure, as he always felt, hastening to cover his mistake.

"He goes away every so often," Joan explained, "to see his Mexican wife down around El Paso somewhere."

"Oh, that explains it. He didn't mention her to me."

"He will, all right. He'll cut out to see her in a little while, more than likely, but he'll come drifting back with the shearers in the spring, like he always does. It seems to me like everybody comes back to the sheep country that's ever lived in it a while. I wonder if I'd want to come back, too?"

It was a speculation upon which Mackenzie did not feel called to make comment. Time alone would prove to Joan where her heart lay anchored, as it proves to all who go wandering in its own bitter way at last.

"I don't seem to want to go away as long as I'm learning something," Joan confessed, a little ashamed of the admission, it appeared, from her manner of refusing to lift her head.

Mackenzie felt a great uplifting in his heart, as a song cheers it when it comes gladly at the close of a day of perplexity and doubt and toil. He reached out his hand as if to touch her and tell her how this dawning of his hope made him glad, but withdrew it, dropping it at his side as she looked up, a lively color in her cheeks.

"As long as you'll stay and teach me, there isn't any particular use for me to leave, is there?" she inquired.

"If staying here would keep you, Joan, I'd never leave," he told her, his voice so grave and earnest that it trembled a little on the low notes.

Joan drew her breath again with that long inspiration which was like a satisfied sigh.

"Well, I must go," she said.

But she did not move, and Mackenzie, drawing a little nearer, put out his hand in his way of silent appeal again.

"Not that I don't want you to know what there is not there," he said, "but because I'd save you the disappointment, the disillusionment, and the heartache that too often go with the knowledge of the world. You'd be better for it if you never knew, living here undefiled like a spring that comes out of the rocks into the sun."

"Well, I must go," said Joan, sighing with repletion again, but taking no step toward her waiting horse.

Although it was a moment which seemed full of things to be said, neither had words for it, but stood silently while the day went out in glory around them. Dad Frazer was bringing his murmuring flock home to the bedding-ground on the hillside below the wagon; the wind was low as a lover's breath, lifting Joan's russet hair from her pure, placid brow.

And she must go at last, with a word of parting from the saddle, and her hand held out to him in a new tenderness as if going home were a thing to be remembered. And as Mackenzie took it there rose in his memory the lines:

> Touch hands and part with laughter,
> Touch lips and part with tears.

Joan rode away against the sun, which was red upon the hill, and stood for a little moment sharply against the fiery sky to wave him a farewell.

"So easily learned, Joan; so hard to forget," said Mackenzie, speaking as if he sent his voice after her, a whisper on the wind, although she was half a mile away. A mo-

ment more, and the hill stood empty between them. Mackenzie turned to prepare supper against the coming of Dad Frazer, who would complain against books and the nonsense contained in them if the food was not on the board when he came up the hill.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHEEP-KILLER.

IT was dusk when Dad Frazer drove the slow-drifting flock home to its sleeping-place, which to-morrow night very likely would be on some hillside no softer, many miles away. Only a few days together the camp remained in one place, no longer than it took the sheep to crop the herbage within easy reach. Then came the camp-mover and hauled the wagon to fresh pastures in that illimitable, gray-green land.

Dad Frazer was a man of sixty or sixty-five, who had been an army teamster in the days of frontier posts. He was slender and sinewy, with beautiful, glimmering, silvery hair which he wore in long curls and kept as carefully combed as any dandy that ever pranced at the court of a king. It was his one vanity, his dusty, greasy raiment being his last thought.

Dad's somber face was brown and weathered, marked with deep lines, covered over with an ashy, short growth of beard which he clipped once in two weeks with sheep-shears when he didn't lose count of the days.

Frazer always wore an ancient military hat with a leather thong at the back of his head drawn tight across his flowing hair. The brim of this hat turned up in the back as if he had slept in it many years, which was indeed the case, and down in the front so low over his brows that it gave him a sullen and clouded cast, which the redundancy of his spirits and words at once denied.

For Dad Frazer was a loquacious sheep-herder, an exception among the morose and silent men who follow that isolated calling upon the lonely range. He talked to the dogs when there was nobody by, to the sheep as he scattered them for an even chance between weak and strong over the grazing-lands, and to himself when no other object presented. He swore with force and piquancy, and original embellishments for old-time oaths which was like a sharp sauce to an unsavory dish.

Frazer was peculiar in another way. He liked a soft bed to pound the ground on after his long days after the sheep, and to that end kept a roll of sheepskins under the wagon. More than that, he always washed before eating, even if he had to divide the last water in the keg.

Now as he was employed with his ablutions, after a running fire of talk from the time he came within hearing to the moment the water smothered his voice over the basin, Mackenzie saw him turn an eye in his direction every little while between the soaping and the washing of his bearded face. The old fellow seemed bursting with restraint of something that he had not told or asked about. Mackenzie could read him like a thermometer.

"What's the matter, Dad — rattlesnakes?" he asked.

"Rattlesnakes nothin'!" returned the old man.

"I thought another one had been crawling up your leg."

"Nearer boey constructors! Anybody been here but Joan?"

"No."

Dad came over to the tail of the wagon, where Mackenzie had supper spread on a board, a box at each end, for that was a sheep-camp de luxe. He stood a little while looking about in the gloom, his head tipped as if he listened, presently taking his place, unaccountably silent, and uncomfortably so, as Mackenzie could very well see.

"You didn't lose a dog, did you, Dad?"

"Dog nothin'! Do I look like a man that'd lose a dog?"

"Well, Dad," Mackenzie said, in his slow, thoughtful way, "I don't exactly know how a man that would lose a dog looks, but I don't believe you do."

"Swan Carlson's back on the range!" said Dad, delivering it before he was ready, perhaps, and before he had fully prepared the way, but unable to hold it a second longer.

"Swan Carlson?"

"Back on the range."

"So they fixed him up in the hospital at Cheyenne?"

"I reckon they must 'a'. He's back runnin' his sheep, and that woman of hisn she's with him. Swan run one of his herders off the first rattle out of the box, said he'd been stealin' sheep while he was gone. That's one of his old tricks to keep from payin' a man."

"It sounds like him, all right. Have you seen him?"

"No. Matt Hall come by this evenin', and told me."

"I'm glad Swan got all right again, anyhow, even though he's no better to his wife than he was before. I was kind of worried about him."

"Yes, and I'll bet he's meaner than he ever was, knockin' that woman around like a sack of sawdust the way he always did. I reckon he gets more fun out of her that way than he does keepin' her tied."

"He can hang her for all I'll ever interfere between them again, Dad."

"That's right. It don't pay to shove in between a man and his wife in their fusses and disturbances. I know a colonel in the army that's got seventeen stitches in his bay winder right now from buttin' in between a captain and his woman. The lady she slid a razor over his vest. They'll do it every time; it's woman nature."

"You talk like a man of experience, Dad. Well, I don't know much about 'em."

"Yes, I've been marryin' 'em off and on for forty years."

"Who is Matt Hall, and where's his ranch, Dad? I've been hearing about him and his brother, Hector, ever since I came up here."

"Them Hall boys used to be cattlemen up on the Sweetwater, but they was run out of there on account of suspicion of rustlin', I hear. They come down to this country about four years ago and started up sheep, usin' on Cottonwood about nine or twelve miles southeast from here. Them fellers don't hitch up with nobody on this range but Swan Carlson, and I reckon Swan only respects 'em because they're the only men in this country that packs guns regular any more."

"Swan don't pack a gun as a regular thing?"

"I ain't never seen him with one on. Hector Hall he's always got a couple of 'em on him, and Matt mostly has one in sight. You can gamble on it he's got an automatic in his pocket when he don't strap it on him in the open."

"I don't see what use a man's got for a gun up here among sheep and sheepmen. They must be expecting somebody to call on them from the old neighborhood."

"Yes, I figger that's about the size of it. I don't know what Matt was doin' over around here this evenin'; I know I didn't send for him."

"Joan spoke of him this afternoon. From what she said, I thought he must be something of a specimen. What kind of a looking duck is he?"

"Matt's a mixture of a goriller and a goose-egg. He's a long-armed, short-legged, gimlet-eyed feller with a head like a egg upside down. You could split a board on that feller's head and never muss a hair. I never saw a man that had a chin like Matt Hall. They say a big chin's the sign of strength, and if that works out Matt must have a mind like a brigadier general. His face is all chin; chin's an affliction on Matt Hall; it's a disease. Wait till you see him; that's all I can say."

"I'll know him when I do."

"Hector ain't so bad, but he's got a look in his eyes like a man that 'd grab you by the nose and cut your throat, and grin while he was doin' it."

Mackenzie made no comment on these new and picturesque characters introduced by Dad into the drama that was forming for enactment in that place. He filled his pipe and smoked a little while. Then:

"How many sheep do they run?" he asked.

"Nine or ten thousand, I guess."

Silence again. Dad was smoking a little Mexican cigarette with corn-husk wrapper, a peppery tobacco filling that smarted the eyes when it burned, of which he must have carried thousands when he left the border in the spring.

"Tim was over to-day," said Mackenzie.

"What did he want?"

"About this business between him and me. Is it usual, Dad, for a man to work a year at forty dollars a month and found before he goes in as a partner on the increase of the flock he runs?"

"What makes you ask me that, John?"

"Only because there wasn't anything said about it when I agreed with Tim to go to work here with you and learn the rudiments of handling a band of sheep. He sprung that on me to-day, when I thought I was about to begin my career as a capitalist. Instead of that, I've got a year ahead of me at ten dollars a month less than the ordinary herder gets. I just wanted to know."

"Sheepmen are like sand under the feet when it comes to dealin' with 'em; I never knew one that was in the same place twice. You've got a lot of tricks to learn in this trade, and I guess this is one of them. I don't believe Tim ever intends to let you in on shares; that ain't his style. Never did take anybody in on shares but Joan, that I know of.

"It looks to me like Tim's workin' you for all he can git out of you. You'll herd for Tim a year at forty dollars, and teach Joan a thousand dollars' worth while you're doin' it. You're a mighty obligin' feller, it looks like to me."

Mackenzie sat thinking it over. He rolled it in his mind quite a while, considering its most unlikely side, considering it as a question of comparative values, trying to convince himself that, if nothing more came of it than a year's employment, he would be even better off than teaching school. If Tim was indeed planning to profit doubly by him during that year, Joan could have no knowledge of his scheme, he was sure.

On Joan's account he would remain, he told himself, at last, feeling easier and less simple for the decision. Joan needed him, she counted on him. Going would be a sad disappointment, a bitter discouragement, to her. All on Joan's account, of course, he would remain; Joan, with her russet hair, the purity of October skies in her eyes. Why, of course. Duty made it plain to him; solely on account of Joan.

"I'd rather be a foot-loose shearer, herdin' in between like I do, than the richest sheepman on the range," said Dad. "They're tied down to one little spot; they work out a hole in their piece of the earth like a worm. It ain't no life. I can have more fun on forty dollars than Tim Sullivan can out of forty thousand."

Dad got out his greasy duck coat with sheepskin collar, such as cattlemen and sheepmen, and all kinds of outdoor men in that country wore, for the night was cool and damp with dew. Together they sat smoking, no more discussion between them, the dogs out of sight down the hill near the sheep.

Not a sound came out of the sheep, bedded on the hillside in contentment, secure in their trust of men and dogs. All day as they grazed there rose a murmur out of them, as of discontent, complaint, or pain. Now their quavering, pathetic voices were as still as the wind. There was not a shuffle of hoof, not a sigh.

Mackenzie thought of Joan, and the influence this solitary life, these night silences, had borne in shading her character with the melancholy which was so plainly apparent in her longing to be away. She yearned for the sound of life, for the warmth of youth's eager fire beyond the dusty gray loneliness of this sequestered place. Still, this was what men and women in the crowded places thought of and longed toward as freedom. Loose-footed here upon the hills, one might pass as free as the wind, indeed; but there was something like the pain of prison isolation in these night silences which bore down upon a man and made him old.

A sudden commotion among the sheep, terrified bleating, quick scurrying of feet, shook Mackenzie out of his reflections. The dogs charged down the hill and stood baying the disturber of the flock with savage alarm, in which there was a note of fear. Dad stood a moment listening, then reached into the wagon for the rifle.

"Don't go down there!" he warned Mackenzie, who was running toward the center of disturbance. "That's a grizzly—don't you hear them dogs?"

Mackenzie stopped. The advance stam-

pede of the terrified flock rushed past him, dim in the deeper darkness near the ground. Below, on the hillside where the sheep bedded, he could see nothing. Dad came up with the gun.

The sheep were making no outcry now, and scarcely any sound of movement. After their first startled break they had bunched, and were standing in their way of pathetic, paralyzing fear, waiting what might befall. Dad fired several quick shots toward the spot where the dogs were charging and retreating, voices thick in their throats from their bristling terror of the thing that had come to lay tribute upon the flock.

"Don't go down there!" Dad cautioned again. "Git the lantern and light it—maybe when he sees it he'll run. It's a grizzly. I didn't think there was one in forty miles."

Mackenzie took hold of the gun.

"Give it to me—hand me another clip."

Dad yielded it, warning Mackenzie again against any rash movement. But his words were unheeded if not unheard. Mackenzie was running down the hillside toward the dogs. Encouraged by his coming, they dashed forward, Mackenzie halting to peer into the darkness ahead. There was a sound of trampling, a crunching as of the rending of bones. He fired; ran a little nearer, fired again.

The dogs were pushing ahead now in pursuit of whatever it was that fled. A moment, and Mackenzie heard the quick break of a galloping horse; fired his remaining shots after it, and called Dad to fetch the light.

When the horse started, the dogs returned to the flock, too wise to waste energy in a vain pursuit. At a word from Mackenzie they began collecting the shuddering sheep. Dad Frazer came bobbing down the hill with the lantern, breathing loud in his excitement.

"Lord!" said he, when he saw the havoc his light revealed; "a regular old murderin' stock-killer. And I didn't think there was any grizzly in forty miles."

Mackenzie took the lantern, sweeping its light over the mangled bodies of several sheep, torn limb from limb, scattered about as if they had been the center of an explosion.

"A murderin' old stock-killer!" said Dad.

Mackenzie held up the light, looking the old man in the face.

"A grizzly don't hop a horse and lope off, and I never met one yet that wore boots," said he. He swung the light near the ground again, pointing to the trampled footprints among the mangled carcasses.

"It was a man!" said Dad, in terrified amazement. "Tore 'em apart like they was rabbits!" He looked up, his weathered face white, his eyes staring. "It takes—it takes—Lord! Do you know how much muscle it takes to tear a sheep up thataway?"

Mackenzie did not reply. He stood, turning a bloody heap of wool and torn flesh with his foot, stunned by this unexampled excess of human ferocity.

Dad recovered from his amazement presently, bent and studied the trampled ground.

"I ain't so sure," he said. "Them looks like man's tracks, but a grizzly's got a foot like a nigger, and one of them big fellers makes a noise like a lopin' horse when he tears off through the bresh. I tell you, John, no human man that ever lived could take a live sheep and tear it up thataway!"

"All right, then; it was a bear," Mackenzie said, not disposed to argue the matter, for argument would not change what he knew to be a fact, nor yet convince Dad Frazer against his reason and experience. But Mackenzie knew they were the footprints of a man, and that the noise of the creature running away from camp was the noise of a galloping horse.

CHAPTER IX.

A TWO-GUN MAN.

"YOU know, John, if a man's goin' to be a sheepman, John, he's got to keep awake day and night. He ain't goin' to set gabbin' and let a grizzly come right up under his nose and kill his sheep. It's the difference between the man that wouldn't do it and the man that would

that makes the difference between a master and a man. That's the difference that stands against Dad Frazer. He'd never work up to partnership in a band of sheep if he lived seven hundred years."

So said Tim Sullivan, a few days after the raid on John Mackenzie's flock. He had come over on hearing of it from Dad Frazer, who had gone to take charge of another band. Tim was out of humor over the loss, small as it was out of the thousands he numbered in his flocks. He concealed his feeling as well as he could under a friendly face, but his words were hard, the accusation and rebuke in them sharp.

Mackenzie flared up at the raking-over Tim gave him, and turned his face away to hold down a hot reply. Only after a struggle he composed himself to speak.

"I suppose it was because you saw the same difference in me that you welched on your agreement to put me in a partner on the increase of this flock as soon as Dad taught me how to work the sheep and handle the dogs," he said. "That's an easy way for a man to slide out from under his obligations; it would apply anywhere in life as well as in the sheep business. I tell you now I don't think it was square."

"Now, lad, I don't want you to look at it that way, not at all, not at all, lad."

Tim was as gentle as oil in his front now, afraid that he was in the way of losing a good herder whom he had tricked into working at a bargain price.

"I don't think you understand the lay of it, if you've got the impression I intended to take you in at the jump-off, John. It's never done; it's never heard of. A man's got to prove himself, like David of old. There's a lot of Goliaths here on the range he's got to meet and show he's able to handle before any man would trust him full shares on the increase of two thousand sheep."

"You didn't talk that way at first."

"I took to you when I heard how you laid Swan out in that fight you had with him, John. That was a recommendation. But it wasn't enough, for it was nothing but a chance lucky blow you got in on him that give you the decision. If you'd 'a' missed him, where would you 'a' been at?"

"That's got nothing to do with your making a compact and breaking it. You've got no right to come here beefing around about the loss of a few sheep with a breach of contract on your side of the fence. You've put it up to me now like you should have done in the beginning. All right; I'll prove myself, like David. But remember, there was another fellow by the name of Jacob that went in on a live stock deal with a slippery man, and stick to your agreement this time."

"I don't want you to feel that I'm takin' advantage of you, John; I don't want you to feel that way."

"I don't just feel it; I know it. I'll pay you for the seven sheep the grizzly killed, and take it out of his hide when I catch him."

This offer mollified Tim, melting him down to smiles. He shook hands with Mackenzie, all the heartiness on his side, refusing the offer with voluble protestations that he neither expected nor required it.

"You've got the makin' of a sheepman in you, John; I always thought you had. But—"

"You want to be shown. All right; I'm game, even at forty dollars and found."

Tim beamed at this declaration, but the fires of his satisfaction he was crafty enough to hide from even Mackenzie's penetrating eyes. Perhaps the glow was due to a thought that this schoolmaster, who owed his notoriety in the sheep lands to a lucky blow, would fail, leaving him far ahead on the deal. He tightened his girths and set his foot in the stirrup, ready to mount and ride home; paused so, hand on the saddle horn, with a queer, half-puzzled, half-suspicious look in his sheep-wise eyes.

"Wasn't there something else that feller Jacob was workin' for besides the interest in the stock?" he asked.

"Seems to me like there was," Mackenzie returned carelessly. "The main thing I remember in the transaction was the stone he set up between the old man and himself on the range. 'The Lord watch between thee and me,' you know, it had on it. That's a mighty good motto yet for a sheepherder to front around where his boss

can read it. A man's got to have somebody to keep an eye on a sheepman when his back's turned, even to-day."

Tim laughed, swung into the saddle, where he sat roving his eyes over the range, and back to the little band of sheep that seemed only a handful of dust in the unbounded pastures where they fed. The hillsides were green in that favored section, greener than anywhere Mackenzie had been in the sheep lands, the grass already long for the lack of mouths to feed. Tim's face glowed at the sight.

"This is the best grazin' this range has ever produced in my day," he said; "too much of it here for that little band you're runnin'. I'll send Dan over with three thousand more this week. You can camp together—it 'll save me a wagon, and he'll be company. How's Joan gettin' on with the learnin'?"

"She's eating it up."

"I was afraid it 'd be that way," said Tim gloomily; "you can't discourage that girl."

"She's too sincere and capable to be discouraged. I laid down my hand long ago."

"And it's a pity to ruin a good sheepwoman with learnin'," Tim said, shaking his head with the sadness of it.

Tim rode away, leaving Mackenzie to his reflections as he watched his boss's broad back grow smaller from hill to hill. The sheepherder smiled as he recalled Tim's puzzled inquiry on the other consideration of Jacob's contract with the slippery Laban.

What is this thou hast done unto me? Did I not serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore, then, hast thou beguiled me?

"Tim would do it, too," Mackenzie said, nodding his grave head; "he'd work off the wrong girl on a man as sure as he had two."

It was queer, the way Tim had thought, at the last minute, of the "something else" Jacob had worked for; queer, the way he had turned, his foot up in the stirrup, that puzzled, suspicious expression in his mild, shrewd face.

Even if he should remember on the way home, or get out his Bible on his arrival and look the story up, there would be nothing of a parallel between the case of Jacob and that of John Mackenzie to worry his sheepman's head. For though Jacob served his seven years for Rachel, which "seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her," he, John Mackenzie, was not serving Tim Sullivan for Joan.

"Nothing to that!" said he, but smiling, a dream in his eyes, over the thought of what might have been a parallel case with Jacob's, here in the sheep lands of the western world.

Tim was scarcely out of sight when a man came riding over the hills from the opposite direction. Mackenzie sighted him afar off, watching him as each hill lifted him to a plainer view. He was a stranger, and a man unsparing of his horse, pushing it up-hill and down with unaltered speed. He rode as if the object of his journey lay a long distance ahead, and his time for reaching it was short.

Mackenzie wondered if the fellow had stolen the horse, having it more than half in mind to challenge his passage until he could give an account of his haste, when he saw that the rider had no intention of going by without speech.

As he mounted the crest of the hill above the flock, he swung straight for the spot where Mackenzie stood.

The stranger drew up with a short grunt of greeting, turning his gaze over the range as if in search of strayed stock. He was a short, spare man, a frowning cast in his eyes, a face darkly handsome, but unsympathetic as a cougar's. He looked down at Mackenzie presently, as if he had put aside the recognition of his presence as a secondary matter, a cold insolence in his eyes.

"What are you doing over here east of Horsethief?" he inquired, bending his black brows in a frown, his small mustache twitching in catlike threat of a snarl.

"I'm grazing that little band of sheep you see down yonder," Mackenzie returned evenly, running his eyes over the fellow's gear.

This was rather remarkable for a land out of which strife and contention, murder and sudden death were believed to have passed long ago. The man wore two re-

volvers, slung about his slender frame on a broad belt looped around for cartridges. These loops were empty, but the weight of the weapons themselves sagged the belt far down on the wearer's hips. His leather cuffs were garnitured with silver stars in the Mexican style; he wore a red stone in his black necktie, which was tied with care, the flowing ends of it tucked into the bosom of his dark-gray flannel shirt.

"If you're tryin' to be funny, cut it out; I'm not a funny man," he said. "I asked you what you're doing over here east of Horsethief Cañon?"

"I don't know that it's any of your business where I run my sheep," Mackenzie told him, resentful of the man's insolence.

"Tim Sullivan knows this is our winter grazing land, and this grass is in reserve. If he didn't tell you it was because he wanted to run you into trouble, I guess. You'll have to get them sheep out of here, and do it right now."

The stranger left it to Mackenzie's imagination to fix his identity, not bending to reveal his name. Hector Hall, Mackenzie knew him to be, on account of his pistols, on account of the cold meaness of his eyes which Dad Frazer had described as holding such a throat-cutting look. But armed as he was, severe and flash-tempered as he seemed, Mackenzie was not in any sort of a flurry to give ground before him. He looked up at him coolly, felt in his pocket for his pipe, and filled it.

"Have you got a lease on this land?" he asked.

"I carry my papers right here," Hall replied, touching his belt.

Mackenzie looked about the range as if considering which way to go. Then, turning again to Hall:

"I don't know any bounds but the horizon when I'm grazing on government land that's as much mine as the next man's. I don't like to refuse a neighbor a request, but my sheep are going to stay right here."

Hall leaned over a little, putting out his hand in a warning gesture, drawing his dark brows in a scowl.

"Your head's swelled, young feller," he said, "on account of that lucky thump you landed on Swan Carlson. You've got about as much chance with that man as you have with a grizzly bear, and you've got less chance with me. You've got till this time to-morrow to be six miles west of here with that band of sheep."

Hall rode off with that word, leaving a pretty good impression that he meant it, and that it was final. Mackenzie hadn't a doubt that he would come back to see how well the mandate had been obeyed next day. He did.

If there was anything to Hall's claim on that territory, by agreement or right of priority which sheepmen were supposed to respect between themselves, Tim Sullivan knew it. For a month past Tim had been sending him eastward every time the wagon was moved, a scheme to widen the distance between him and Joan and make it an obstacle in her road, he believed at the time. Now it began to show another purpose. Perhaps this was the winter pasture claimed by the Hall brothers, and Tim had sent him in where he was afraid to come himself.

It seemed a foolish thing to squabble over a piece of grazing land where all the world lay out of doors, but Hector Hall's way of coming up to it was unpleasant. It was decidedly offensive, bullying, oppressive. If he should give way before it he'd just as well leave the range, Mackenzie knew; his force would be spent there, his day closed before it had fairly begun.

If he designed seriously to remain there and become a flockmaster, and that he intended to do, with all the sincerity in him, he'd have to meet Hall's bluff with a stronger one, and stand his ground, whether right or wrong. If wrong, a gentleman's adjustment could be made, his honor saved.

So deciding, he settled that matter, and put it out of his head until its hour. There was something more pleasant to cogitate—the parallel of Jacob and Laban, Tim Sullivan and himself. It was strange how the craft of Laban had come down to Tim Sullivan across that mighty flight of time. It would serve Tim the right turn, in truth, if something should come of it between him and Joan. He smiled in anticipatory pleasure at Tim's discomfiture and surprise.

But that was not in store for him, he

sighed. Joan would shake her wings out in a little while, and fly away, leaving him there, a dusty sheepman, among the husks of his dream. Still, a man might dream on a sunny afternoon. There was no interdiction against it; Hector Hall, with his big guns, could not ride in and order a man off that domain.

A shepherd had the ancient privilege of dreams; he might drink himself drunk on them, insane on them in the end, as so many of them were said to do in that land of lonesomeness, where there was scarcely an echo to give a man back his own faint voice in mockery of his solitude.

Evening, with the sheep homing to the bedding-ground, brought reflections of a different hue. Since the raid on his flock Mackenzie had given up his bunk in the wagon for a bed under a bush on the hillside nearer the sheep. Night after night he lay with the rifle at his hand, waiting the return of the grisly monster who had spent his fury on the innocent simpletons in his care.

Whether it was Swan Carlson, with the strength of his great arms, driven to madness by the blow he had received, or whether it was another whom the vast solitudes of that country had unhinged, Mackenzie did not know. But that it was a man, he had no doubt.

Dad Frazer had gone away unconvinced, unshaken in his belief that it was a grizzly. Tim Sullivan had come over with the same opinion, no word of doubt in his mouth. But Mackenzie knew that when he should meet that wild night-prowler he would face a thing more savage than a bear, a thing as terrible to grapple with as the saber-tooth whose bones lay deep under the hills of that vast pasture-land.

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)

Foundation Soap

by Wolcott LeClear Beard

DESPERATELY I was laboring in an attempt to finish an article which, if I succeeded with it, would bring in a small but much needed sum of ready money. It was a difficult and most trying thing to write. It concerned itself with a question of abstract science, and yet, strangely enough, was to be published in a financial periodical. It had therefore to be couched in language which the readers of such a periodical would understand; and even a very simple technical term would, as a rule, be out of their ken.

The weather was hot and exceedingly oppressive. My head was weary. I was further distracted by Harry, a young cousin of mine.

It was true that Harry made no disturbing sound. He made, indeed, no sound of any kind, but sat in a corner, silent and wrapped in angry gloom. By turns he would nurse the skinned knuckles of each hand in the palm of the other. From time to time, in a cautious and gingerly manner, he would touch his left eye, which was rapidly assuming somewhat the appearance

of an overripe plum. Once or twice he tried to rearrange a collar that was far past any aid other than that of the laundry. Otherwise he did not stir; but his mere presence, in view of the circumstances, and especially in view of his utterly disreputable appearance, was annoying.

At length Harry sprang to his feet. He did it so suddenly that I was startled into dropping a great blot on my neatly written manuscript.

"There he is now!" he cried.

A key rattled in the lock as he was speaking, and there entered the intimate friend whose apartment I share. Tall, dark, rather melancholy and very handsome, notwithstanding his astonishing resemblance to Mephistopheles as that diabolical gentleman is ordinarily pictured, my friend stopped short, nodded to me and fixed his gaze upon the disarranged countenance of my cousin. Then turning on his heel, he opened a closet that was devoted exclusively to his use, extracting therefrom jars and bottles and other things. From one of the jars he began anointing Harry's eye with some greasy substance emitting a villainous smell that gave me no clue to its nature.

"One assumes, of course," he sighed, rubbing away at the swollen eyelid, "that you were injured by running in the dark against an open door. That method of producing results such as these I find to be so nearly universal as to admit of practically no exceptions."

"I got that bum lamp," growled my truthful cousin, reddening under the gentle sarcasm, "because a fellow dotted me one with his fist."

"Delightful!" was my friend's comment. "Please go on, Harry. One longs to hear!"

"You've heard all I'm going to tell you," returned Harry, doggedly. "I won't go on."

"Then," rejoined this friend of mine, "I fear I'll have to do the telling myself. You were with a young lady—a young lady whom you find, naturally enough, most attractive. The young woman's father was on the floor above that where you and she were sitting. You heard footsteps going up the stairs—stealthy footsteps. You knew that the father was in possession of something which certain other people were anxious to obtain, and that of late he had lived in constant fear of robbery. You ran in pursuit. You were met by the intruder, who endeavored to escape. He 'dotted' your eye; you responded on his and by way of interest knocked several teeth down his throat. Nevertheless, he succeeded in escaping. Presumably after ascertaining that nothing had been stolen and endeavoring to reassure the young lady, you came here to await my ministrations—which," he added, tucking in the end of a bandage, "are now completed."

Harry's jaw dropped, and his one visible eye grew round with amazement.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped, rising. "Were *you* there? But no—hang it all—you *couldn't* have been!"

"I wasn't," laughed my friend. "As a matter of fact, I was spending the evening with your father. I came directly here from his house. You, by the way, had better go back there and turn in. For you're not contemplating a return to the scene of your late—er—diversion, are you?"

"No," answered Harry. "There'd be no use in that. The old man is all worked up over what happened, and the girl is with him. He has a shotgun trained through a hole in the door, so that all he has to do is pull a string fastened to the trigger in order to sweep the stairs with buckshot. But what's the good of my telling you? You know these things already, I s'pose—and all the rest besides. Who the girl and her father are, and everything else there is to know."

"Who the girl and her father are—yes," admitted my friend. "But by no means everything there is to know. I'm not omniscient, Harry."

"Pretty blame' near it," returned Harry, with profound conviction. "I think you're the devil—as people say. *Sherlock Holmes* was a fool compared with you."

Harry left, slamming the door behind him, and evidently deeply vexed that what he plainly had regarded as a cherished secret should in so inexplicable a manner have become known. And in the present instance I must admit that my own mystification was as great as his.

Now, I don't like inexplicable mysteries.

Still less do I relish being mystified by this friend of mine. It does not often occur and its very rarity, I suppose, rendered my exasperation the greater. But my friend, offering no enlightenment, stalked moodily across the room and seated himself there, where I could not see him without turning, so I scorned to ask questions, and huffily returned my attention to the work that his coming had helped to interrupt.

At this point it occurs to me that my friend, and perhaps I also, require a few words of explanation.

It may not have escaped notice that thus far I have carefully refrained from the mention of my friend's name. This is because the name is at once so peculiar and so appropriate that it needs to be explained along with the rest of him.

His name, then, is Porton Satansfote. The patronymic, it is true, is supposed to be pronounced as though it was spelled "Sanote"; but its spelling, taken in connection with the Mephistophelian appearance to which I have already referred, rendered some nickname such as the one by which he was known to his intimates almost as inevitable as death, or taxes, or labor troubles, or anything else that must occur.

Thus "Porton" was contracted to "Poor," and "Satansfote" corrupted into "Devil." As "Poor Devil" my friend was known, for much the same reason that an elephantine mastiff might be given the name of "Tiny." For in ordinary usage a "poor devil" is one who struggles vainly against misfortune; while in dealing with Porton Satansfote, Fortune, from his birth, had given over her proverbial fickleness to become his steadfast friend.

Porton's wiry strength and bodily activity were almost simian, transcending those of most acrobats. His mind was brilliant and its reflexes the quickest I have ever known. Manual dexterity came to him as a birthright. Every one liked him—and deservedly. Though as yet he had inherited no fortune, lack of money never troubled him; money seemed to flow into his pockets—and out again—of its own accord. In his three-and-thirty years he had been nearly everywhere and in his peregrinations had collected more junk, mental, material, all interesting and for the most part useless, than I ever had known that the world contained.

It was my recollection of some of this junk that prompted a question; a question which, in view of the fact that it had no bearing upon my nephew's recent adventure, I did not hesitated to ask.

"Porty," said I, "what in blazes was in that stuff you rubbed on Harry's face? And where did you get hold of it?"

"Part I got in China and part in Peru—two salves—mixed 'em together—don't know what they're made of. They're both intended to cure bruises, and they do. Together they're a wonder. Harry won't know he ever had a black eye by to-morrow."

Once more envy and wounded vanity prompted my mind to a useless railing against my lot. Though forced to write irksome articles in order to exist while waiting for a practise, here was I, Nathan Wilcox, a physician of attainments said to be beyond the ordinary. But I couldn't entirely obliterate a severe facial contusion within the space of twelve hours or less. No more could any other doctor. Yet, Poor Devil, by casually mixing two salves, probably compounded by old women living on opposite sides of the globe, could do it—for if he said he could do it, he could; I knew that.

My present unworthy fit of envious spleen had, however, a deeper source than this, though the way of it was much the same. Poor Devil had an ungratified ambition, and only one. He longed to be a detective. Not a human detective, but the sort about which one reads in fiction. The sort who solve abstruse problems in criminology off-hand with polished ease, while experienced and competent professionals, who have been compelled to come to them for advice, turn green with reluctant envy. The sort of which *Sherlock Holmes* is the impossibly brilliant example.

I say "impossibly" brilliant, and do not retract the statement. Did any one in real life attempt to draw conclusions from the tenuous premises often sufficient for the uses of this fictional character, he would go entirely wrong more often than other-

wise. Yet, on the other hand, close deductions drawn from apparently trivial facts often will teach us far more than is commonly believed. I, I flatter myself, possess their power of deduction to rather an uncommon degree. But Poor Devil has it not at all.

Is it then to be wondered at that I prized the one desired quality that I possessed and Poor Devil did not? Or that when he showed so astonishing a knowledge of Harry's doings—a knowledge which apparently could have been gained only by marvelous deductive powers, is it to be wondered at that I should feel bitter disappointment to find my one point of superiority seemingly gone? I do not ask if it was worthy—but is it to be wondered at?

The disappointment had, however, one good effect. It enabled me to concentrate my attention upon the work in hand, so that in a short time I had finished the article in a manner so unexpectedly satisfactory that for the moment the disappointment was forgotten.

"There!" I exclaimed, pushing back from my desk. "Sixty dollars—and four hours of work!"

"Eh?" returned Poor Devil, absently; then began to count, apparently to himself. "Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, nine hundred."

"I said that I'd just finished my article," I responded, rather testily.

"Good!" said he; and went on counting. "Forty, sixty, eighty. Two thousand."

I turned then, and for the first time saw that Poor Devil was counting bills—yellow-backed bills—two thick piles of them.

"Hundred—and fifty—two hundred—and fifty—what's the article about?" he asked, without looking up.

"The *Ultima Materia*," I answered. "A subject that I know as much about as does anybody in the world—and as little. For nobody knows anything at all—as I have just stated in what I've written."

At my first words I saw Poor Devil's eyes look quickly up from his task. For the first time he was paying more than perfunctory attention to what I said. Now he finished counting, doing it rapidly and in silence. Then he rose and came toward me, with a pile of the bills in each hand.

"It's odd that you should be writing on that subject just at this time," said he. "But are you quite sure, Nat, that what you've said is the truth? I mean that nobody knows more of the *Ultima Materia* than we do."

"Do you mean to tell me," I started to ask in return, "that the old alchemists knew more than the scientists of—"

"I didn't mean to tell you anything," interrupted Poor Devil. "I asked you a question, that's all."

I was about to answer that question promptly and with a scornful negative. A moment of thought, however, prevented me from thus committing myself.

The *Ultima Materia* is matter reduced to its lowest terms. The only matter—material—call it what one will—in existence. The material of which all substances are made, so that all are alike in foundation, differing only in form. The "philosopher's stone," as the medieval alchemists called it during their centuries of search for this foundational substance in order to use it for raw material from which to manufacture precious metals. Modern science, it is true, has denied the existence of this substance—but only, when all is said and done, because science has failed to discover it.

And then, if the question of the *Ultima Materia* still was one of academic and not of practical interest, why should I have been commissioned to write an article discussing it for the *Authoritative Financial Gazette*—of all periodicals in the world?

No. On the whole, I thought it vastly wiser not to answer Poor Devil's question with a sweeping and ill-considered negative. Though I tried hard not to show it, I was much impressed, in spite of myself.

"You have something up your sleeve," said I, as carelessly as I could. "So spill the answer, Porty—I'm listening."

"Part of the answer is this," replied Poor Devil; and laid on the desk beside me one handful of yellow-backed bills.

"There are two thousand dollars in that bunch," he continued. "I have the same amount in my other hand. The money

was given me by your uncle, Harry's father, Jared Wilcox. He gave it on the off-chance that we might be able to discover, before ten o'clock to-morrow morning, whether or not the *Ultima Materia* has been discovered; and if it has been for an attempt to get hold of the details—the formulæ and so on—of its production. And this amount, remember, is given just as payment for *trying* to do these things. If we succeed we get much more. Your Uncle Jared considers the matter serious enough for that. So just let what I've told you sink in for a little, Nat—and then say what you think."

I tried to allow Poor Devil's words to "sink in," as he said, but for a time with little success. My mind was in a whirl, above which a solitary fact stood prominently forth. Though my Uncle Jared was rich, though his "Punjaub Bouquet," his "Laundry Elf," and other saponaceous products are plentifully sold throughout the civilized world, my Uncle Jared still was commonly supposed to value a dollar little, if any, less than he did his immortal soul. Yet—and this is the fact to which I referred—here was Uncle Jared actually giving four thousand of these precious dollars for an attempt which, as it seemed to me, had not one chance in a million of success. The affair must indeed be a serious one to bring about such an attitude on Uncle Jared's part.

I tried to arrange my whirling thoughts in order to picture what might take place should the discovery of the *Ultima Materia* become an assured fact. Seeming to divine my attempt, Poor Devil assisted it.

"You know well enough that lead, gold, and silver are metals that are closely allied to each other, but that they're now thought to be elements—indivisible. But suppose that this was found to be untrue—that all were simply different forms of the *Ultima Materia*. Then each could be made into either one of the others. Imagine gold at the present price of lead. Imagine the bank—and the treasury—reserves of the world of no more value than the contents of so many storehouses of plumbers' supplies. Imagine the consequences—the paying power of all peoples disrupted and gone—starvation, bloodshed and anarchy over the entire earth. Just think of it!"

I was thinking of it. It was more than possible. In the circumstances named it was inevitable. The vision that rose before my mind fairly sickened me.

"But what cause have you to believe that the *Ultima Materia* has been discovered?" I cried. "Uncle Jared must have reasons. But what are they?"

"Do you know old Horace Hazen Shipman?" asked Poor Devil.

"I used to, in a way," I answered. "He was one of Uncle Jared's circle of friends—about all the circle of my respected uncle's friends that there was, I imagine. It was years ago, when I determined to become a doctor instead of going into his factory that Uncle Jared gave me up as a bad job and refused to have anything more to do with me. Before that I used to see old Shipman around the house. He and Uncle Jared were both widowers, I recollect, each with one child; only Professor Shipman's was a little daughter—all arms and legs and occasionally toothless. Her father and my munificent uncle were great pals—had been close friends for centuries."

"That's the man," nodded my friend. "But he and your uncle aren't pals any more. They quarreled—and, honestly, Nat, I believe that to quarrel with that old friend of his almost broke your uncle's heart."

"His *what?*" I sneered.

"His heart," repeated Poor Devil. "He has a heart, it seems, even though it mayn't be easily reached. So don't try to be funny and cynical, Nat; it isn't in your line. They quarreled, as I said. I don't know the details of their scrap, but it began, I understand, with some discussion concerning organic chemical formulæ—whole dislocated alphabets—used by your uncle in his manufactures."

"Nothing new in that," was my comment. "Those two old fossils always were flinging such formulæ at each other's head. Those 'dislocated alphabets,' as you call 'em, formed practically their sole topic of conversation."

"Very likely," agreed Poor Devil. "But on this occasion they went on to talk of the *Ultima Materia*. There have been rumors

of late, coming from no one appeared to know where, that the *Ultima Materia* has been discovered, and is about to be given to the world. These rumors have caused a distinct unrest in financial circles. The merest chance of such a thing gives the bloated bondholder a darting pain in his tummyful of undigested securities—as well it may. So the discussion became acrimonious."

I have already said that I possess certain powers of deduction. In the present case deduction was automatic. What I had just heard, coupled with what I already knew, enabled me mentally to visualize what probably passed between those two prosy old men almost as distinctly as though I had been present at the time.

Thus I could see them seated in Uncle Jared's ugly, mid-Victorian library. On one side of the table was my uncle, solid, stolid and obtrusively prosperous, with the glow of the old gas droplight falling strongly on his bulldog face, set in its frame of gray bristles. Opposite him the lank, shabbily dressed form of the professor bent eagerly forward, his thin, intellectual countenance twitching with nervous excitement and his eyes alight with fanatical flame. I could even sense his arguments—if positive statements such as he would make could be called arguments.

Though unknown to popular fame, Horace Hazen Shipman was undoubtedly a great scientist. He was a seeker for truth. Science, abstract and undefiled, was his god, before which everything else must bow. Nothing could be more probable than that the *Ultima Materia* should be his quest—his life's ambition. Should he believe this quest to be nearing its end, he would make no secret of his belief—and hence those rumors. To him such a discovery would quite certainly be incomparably the greatest even that the world had ever known; an event beside which the ruin of his nearest friend, of his friend's friends, and even the plunging of all civilization into bloody anarchy would dwindle to insignificance.

Readily could I imagine this man as having made his discovery. Almost could I hear him gloating to my uncle over the sensation that such an announcement would cause. I could also hear my uncle as he carefully expounded, in financial terms of one syllable—so to speak—the incalculable disaster that it must create. But the professor nevertheless would scornfully insist upon giving his discovery to the world. Whereupon, Uncle Jared would inevitably and profanely denounce the professor as a criminal lunatic—and the flare-up would follow as a matter of course.

So vivid were these imaginings that I walked excitedly up and down the room, describing them to my friend in much the same words that I have here set them down. He listened attentively, nodding assent.

"Good work!" he cried, as I finished. "The scene must have been substantially as you described it. Can you go on from there and deduce what happened? It would save a lot of time if you could."

"Only in a general way," I was forced to admit. "I haven't enough facts to do more."

"There are facts that you probably have forgotten," remarked Poor Devil. "For instance, the years that have elapsed—enough of them to turn that leggy little daughter of the professor's into a remarkably pretty girl, with a full complement of excellent teeth. Nothing could be more natural than that the two old boys should fondly plan that their children should marry, nor that the said children should agree to that plan with considerable enthusiasm. After the quarrel a parental order was issued canceling this arrangement. That follows as a matter of course. So does the fact that the order was disregarded by the two persons chiefly concerned."

"Harry hasn't confided his love affairs to me—and I didn't bother to figure out unessential facts," said I.

"They're far from unessential," Poor Devil rejoined. "But we'll drop them for the moment. Just cast your eye on this."

From his pocketbook Poor Devil extracted a slip of paper, which he handed to me. On it, in his own hand, had been copied a note. I read it:

JARED:

This day I have completed my discovery. The formula is even more complete—more satisfactory—than I hoped. At one time I

contemplated offering it to you as a gift, in token of our friendship, that had endured for so many years.

To my grief, you have rendered this impossible. The formula, however, must not be lost to the world. Therefore I shall give it to whomsoever desires it—let the consequences to you be what they may.

HORACE.

"That came to your uncle by mail yesterday evening, and I copied it down," explained Poor Devil. "What do you make of it?"

It was some time before I cared to commit myself to a reply. Very rarely have I been puzzled as that apparently simple note puzzled me. The *Ultima Materia* had been discovered and was to be given to the world; these facts, as I realized with a sensation of sickening dismay, seemed plain beyond the possibility of doubt. But the tone of the note—its methods of expression—were things that I could not understand at all.

Those things were utterly—diametrically—opposed not only to my own deductions, but also to all facts as I knew them. Every line implied a desire for reconciliation—for compromise. It meant, if it meant anything, that Professor Shipman had assumed the attitude of a child who, after having squabbled with its playmate, says: "If you won't come and make up with me, I won't give you the stick of candy I got for you." I said as much to Poor Devil.

"That's what I thought," he replied. "It's what your uncle thought. So he tried to 'make up.' Tried first by telephone and then by means of a personal visit. You can imagine what such a course must have cost that stiff-necked pride of his. But—moved, as I honestly believe, more by the desire to regain his old friend even than by the fear of seeing the world plunged into anarchy—he did it. And was turned down. Cold!"

"Turned down!" I echoed. "Turned down how? What did the professor say?"

"Nothing. Wouldn't see him. Refused utterly—or so I gathered. And that got the avuncular goat for fair. He was mad—of course—but he was frightened a thousand times more than he was angry. Scared so badly that he, a pillar of the church and a model of respectability, went to a private detective-agency and bribed an ex-burglar employed there to break into the professor's laboratory and steal all notes and every formula to be found, and to do it before Monday—day after to-morrow—morning. Frightened so badly that when he met me on the street he took me to his house, and after a talk gave me the job and the handout I just split with you."

"Had the burglar failed?" I asked.

"He hadn't reported when your uncle met me. He came while we were talking, and threw up his job. I didn't wonder; he looked as though he'd been rolled downhill in a barrel of loose castings. There's nothing slow, let me tell you, about that boy Harry when it comes to scrapping. You ought to be proud of him, Nat. You surely ought!"

"So *that* was how you knew where Harry had been and what he'd been doing!" I cried.

"Sure," admitted Poor Devil. "After I'd heard your Uncle Jared's tale, had seen the burglar's condition, and then saw Harry and heard what he said, it didn't need a *Sherlock Holmes* to guess that he—Harry—and the ex-burglar had been in violent collision."

Turning as he spoke, Poor Devil left me to go delving again among the contents of that closet which held so incredible a quantity of his smaller and more miscellaneous possessions. For the moment I paid no attention to his doings, being occupied with my own thoughts.

My first cogitations, I must admit, were most pleasurable because, from the explanation that Poor Devil just had given, I could see that my superiority in powers of deduction was still unchallenged. The impending disaster to all mankind which now, to my way of thinking, was made a foregone conclusion by the threat contained in Professor Shipman's note, very soon drove all lighter and lesser considerations away. It was the utter hopelessness—practically the impossibility of this disaster being averted through any agency of ours that served most to depress me.

The ex-burglar had failed; and by failing he had rendered the possibility of our success even more remote than it had formerly

been. I thought of Professor Shipman's increased vigilance. I thought of the shotgun described by Harry, so fixed that by the pulling of a string it would sweep the only stairway with buckshot. I thought of other things.

"Porty!" I burst forth. "What foolishness it all is—I mean any attempt to get hold of those formulæ. Of course the professor will have copied them. And if he hadn't—and even if we managed to lay our hands on his only notes—he could work them all out again."

"Your uncle doesn't believe that the professor has copied those formulæ. Says he'd be afraid to make a copy of his discovery until he's placed it on record, for fear somebody else might get hold of them and claim the credit. And as for working it out again—well, it's the labor of thirty years, which would require some time to repeat, and in that time measures could be taken. I don't know what measures—but any measure, no matter how severe, would be not only justifiable, but laudable in circumstances such as these. And then—Nat, just come here for a minute, will you? I want to show you something."

I went to him. He was standing at an open window, looking out through a powerful pair of binoculars that he had taken from that closet. As I came he handed them to me.

"I just found what I was looking for," said he. "It's on the top story of that tall building, over there, and the third window from the eastern end."

I leveled the glasses, and after a little search found the desired window. The sight made me start. Through those strong lenses it was as though I stood just outside the window of Professor Shipman's laboratory, looking within. On an acid-stained kitchen-table steamed three or four beakers and the like, standing each upon a small electric stove that was connected to a light socket. Because all the sockets were put to this use, the sole illumination was furnished by a candle, stuck in a bottle that also stood on the table.

The candle's soft glow fell upon the professor himself. In an attitude of deep despondency he sat leaning over the table, upon which his elbows rested, while his face was concealed in his hands. By his side, with her arms around him, knelt his daughter, Alice, who had once been the leggy child I used to know. Now she was more than merely pretty. For the moment at least, her face, as she pressed her soft cheek against his, was beautiful; for it shone with love and sympathy and the longing to comfort. Before, behind, and on both sides, the rough, working details of the laboratory shaded off into indistinguishable shadowed masses as the feeble radiance of the candle lost its power.

"I didn't know that they lived there," said I, lowering the glasses.

"Neither did I until to-day," answered Poor Devil. "I fancy they must just have moved there. But it was because they live there that your uncle handed us the job of trying to get those formulæ. And I don't mind owning that I don't half like the job—now. That man doesn't look to me like one who would allow the whole world to wallow in blood just to gratify his personal vanity. Listen, Nat! Wasn't that a ring at our door-bell?"

It *was* our door-bell that rang. Poor Devil, while speaking, had slipped out of his shirt and shoes and now was pulling a thin, dark sweater over his head, and it therefore was I who went to answer the summons. As I opened the door, a surprise met me—two surprises, in fact. First, there stood my Uncle Jared. Secondly, he shook hands with me, and tried to smile.

He tried to smile, I say, but he did not really succeed. His face was so worn and haggard that in spite of myself, I pitied him. But try as I might I could think of nothing appropriate to say. Therefore I remained silent, and it was he who first spoke.

"Nathan," he said, "all mankind is prone to error. I may have been wrong in attempting forcibly to specify what your life's work should be. But at all events a time like this, when the life of our civilization lies trembling in the balance, brings home to us the triviality of our personal differences. So, my boy, I think we had better let bygones be bygones."

Now, the discovery of the *Ultima Materia* may be an attainment that approaches

the miraculous; but even so, it stood simply nowhere, in my estimation, when compared to a speech like that, coming from that uncle of mine. I began to believe with Poor Devil that at the bottom he was human. And after all he and Harry were my only relatives.

"I'm glad, Uncle Jared, that you feel that way—awfully glad!" said I with deep sincerity.

"Good!" he exclaimed; then addressed Poor Devil. "Has anything yet been attempted?" he asked. "My anxiety was so great that I could not keep away."

"I was just going to make my try," Poor Devil replied. "I'm very glad you came, Mr. Wilcox. I want to have you take a look—over there, at that window."

He handed the glasses to Uncle Jared, who took them, focused them and brought the professor's window into their field. With my unassisted eyes I could see that the group was unchanged, but that while Uncle Jared looked Alice rose, and, kissing her father, went out of the zone of candlelight into the surrounding shadows, apparently leaving the room. I saw that Uncle Jared's hands were trembling as he lowered the glasses and turned away from our window.

"A great intellect gone wrong!" sighed my uncle, with deep feeling. "No other supposition will fit the facts. It is inexpressibly sad. When one comes to think of that poor girl—but we must act, not think, Porton. You had better make your attempt, my lad—and at once!"

Poor Devil nodded assent and went on lacing up a pair of rubber-soled gymnasium-shoes. I took off my coat. Poor Devil looked at me inquiringly.

"If you're to turn burglar I'll trail along," said I, doggedly, in answer to that look. "I got half the money, didn't I?"

"You divided the money I gave you with my nephew?" demanded Uncle Jared, again speaking to Poor Devil.

"Of course I divided it; he's my partner," growled Poor Devil, defiantly, as though he had been caught in a crime. "But," he continued, "Nat can't be of any use in trying to enter that laboratory. He'd only be a nuisance. He can watch from here, and give warning if any one comes."

Uncle Jared said nothing; only nodded with what I took to be approval. I also refrained from speech, for argument with Poor Devil is usually a very unsatisfactory proceeding.

Having laced his soft shoes, my friend stopped, thought for a moment, and then went to a trophy of South American weapons, collected by him, which decorated one of our walls. From it he selected a short *pocuna*—a blow-gun—of heavy wood, bored with the polished accuracy of a rifle-barrel. He did not take the quiver of deadly, poisoned darts that belonged to the savage arm he had chosen, but instead extemporized a supply of ammunition by kneading some bread into a puttylike mass.

"What on earth—" I began to ask. He interrupted me.

"No time to answer silly questions now, old chap," said he. "Wish me luck—I'm off!"

Even as he spoke, he swung out of the window and dropped to the roof of the building next us. It was a drop of quite fifteen feet, but Poor Devil landed on his feet as lightly as a cat could land, and with the *pocuna* held out of harm's way, high above his head. He tossed his blow-gun to the roof of the second building from our house, which was eight feet or so higher than the first one, and—this time, like a monkey, rather than a cat—swung after it, crossed it and dropped to the roof of the third house to vanish, momentarily, from our sight.

I had made up my mind by that time what to do. I remembered a tall step-ladder that stood in a closet in the hall outside our apartment. I ran and fetched it and slid it out of our window. Uncle Jared tossed his top hat onto a divan and peeled off his frock-coat.

"You, too!" I cried.

"I ask no man to take a risk I dare not take," said he. "Hurry, Nathan!"

I slid down the ladder to the next roof; Uncle Jared followed me, going down like an old-time lamp-lighter. I am rather small, unfortunately, and by no means of powerful physique. Never, until then, did I realize

how lasting an effect a laborious youth could have upon a frame naturally strong, like that of Uncle Jared. He handled that heavy step-ladder with as little apparent effort as though it had been an umbrella. Never in the world could I have done as he did; we made infinitely better time across those roofs than would have been possible for me to accomplish unaided.

The roofs were all of different height, and there were many of them. The second one from the end, as we found, when we reached it, rose a good twenty feet above its neighbors. Uncle Jared, standing on the ladder's top, lifted me so that I managed to gain its coping, and then I helped him from above. A double, insulated electric-wire, partially torn from its fastenings, told how Poor Devil had managed it. But that ascent had sorely taxed even his agility, as he afterward owned to me.

Now, however, a far more serious obstacle confronted my friend. The building wherein the Shipmans lived not only rose higher than any between it and our home, but it also was separated from them by the width of an alley. By full ten feet of space, extending downward to the pavement, I don't know how many stories below. On the near side it was bordered by a rather high and narrow coping; on the farther side by the spider-webby balconies and ladders of a fire-escape.

On this coping stood Poor Devil. He had hesitated, as well he might. He had hunted up a bit of partially decayed clothesline, from which he had made a sling, so that the blow-gun could be hung on his back, leaving his hands free. I held my breath as he gathered himself for a spring.

It was a standing jump—it had to be; the coping precluded the possibility of a run. I shuddered, and so did Uncle Jared, as Poor Devil launched himself into space. To my strained senses he seemed, for a sickening instant, to hang almost motionless in the air. Then the downward course of his trajectory brought him within reach of a fire-escape rail. With hasteless, cool precision, his hands and feet found holds. As he stepped over the railing, I heard my uncle's retained breath burst forth with a whistling note of relief. He slid our ladder over the edge of the roof upon which we stood, but instead of descending, he turned and spoke to me.

"For the present, Nathan, I think we had better stop where we are," said he, in a low tone. "From this roof we can see; we cannot from any other."

He was right. From the room upon which we stood we could see, though not very well. Our eyes were practically on a level with the sill of that laboratory window. The candle was still burning there. Alice had gone, and had not returned. Her father now sat, gazing absently at a gray-yellow, granular substance which he would lift in his hands and allow to filter back through his fingers into the earthenware dish from which he took it.

I heard a quick intake of Uncle Jared's breath and knew that it was caused by the sight of that substance; knew that he, no more than I, had any doubt as to its nature. For naturally, since I had begun to write about the *Ultima Materia* I had pictured it in my mind. These grains with which the professor was toying corresponded exactly with what I had imagined it to be.

We saw Poor Devil as he ascended, not quickly, but with the greatest care to make no sound, from the fire-escape upon which he had landed to the one above. The laboratory window was not over this balcony, but was considerably to one side. Poor Devil leaned over, and took a cautious peep, then withdrew. We saw him take the *pocuna* from his back and the kneaded bread from his pocket, roll a pill of the proper size—at least as large as a hickory-nut—insert it into the end of his blow-gun. He placed the blow-gun to his lips, took careful aim, and puffed mightily.

That projectile of dough must have flown very straight, as projectiles that Poor Devil sent had a way of doing. The candle-flame, against which it evidently had been directed, vanished instantly. Hardly had it gone when Poor Devil swung over the railing and in through the laboratory window. There followed a moment of silence as though—so it seemed to my excited imagination—the room stood startled and aghast. Then there arose a roar of rage, oaths, the tinkle of broken glass and a clat-

ter as though of furniture violently disarranged.

"Come!" said Uncle Jared.

He ran down the ladder, and I was close behind him. He crossed the roof and halted on the brink of that gap.

"Get hold of that ladder and help!" hoarsely whispered my uncle.

Together we ran out the ladder so that it made a precarious bridge between roof-coping and fire-escape.

"There is no occasion," remarked Uncle Jared, in the old didactic manner that I knew so well, "for both of us to fall to the bottom of this—er—abyss. If the ladder will support my weight, it surely will bear yours. Therefore, I will go first."

Before I could remonstrate he had started, walking from step to step—on the edges of the steps, of course—of the ladder, and balancing with outstretched arms against the eccentric sidewise teetering of our extemporized bridge. Once I distinctly heard it strain and crack, but it held. Not daring to delay for fear my courage might fail me, I also stumbled across. When I reached the fire-escape, Uncle Jared was climbing to the fire-escape balcony above, and in a moment I was hard upon his heels.

It was surprising what agility was shown by that stodgy, elderly relative of mine. He swung over the railing and into that window not as gracefully, to be sure, but almost as quickly as Poor Devil himself had done. To say that I feared this last test is a very weak and inadequate manner in which to express what I felt. But I did it—did it with my eyes tight shut, and with something like an unaccustomed prayer on my lips, I crawled over the window-sill and found myself standing on the floor of that pitch-dark laboratory, feeling like an utter fool—and like a badly scared fool at that—without the faintest notion of what I should do next.

Though I don't think I have mentioned it, it is nevertheless true that all this time, while Uncle Jared and I were reaching our present goal, the row in the laboratory continued unchecked—in fact, if anything, spasmodically increasing. Spasmodically because for a few seconds it would seem about to die down, but only to take another hold, and a stronger one, upon vociferous life before it had time to die at all extensively.

I don't suppose, now that I can think of it collectively, that this state of affairs could possibly have lasted for anything like a minute, no matter how long it seemed to last. From the first the human voices concerned in the noise were more than one, though I couldn't guess how many. Then I heard my Uncle Jared's voice join the rest in a profane note of indignant anger.

My duty seemed clear, then. I lunged forward to offer aid. Something struck my elbow—a hot something, that seared in an instant through my shirt and well into the flesh beneath—and then my voice was added to the rest. I rushed forward, angry all through, lashing out blindly with a fist—promptly to have my knuckles nicely broiled in less time than anything I think ever was broiled before. Stumbling against an overturned chair, I stooped in order to wrench off one of its legs to use as a club—and something that felt like a red-hot hand spanked me as I stooped. I straightened—though I suppose that fact goes without saying—and also I yelled again.

Then the door opened. The room was flooded with light. It revealed Alice Shipman, her face pale and frightened, holding high a great electric torch. It showed the overset tables and chairs. It showed Harry, my young cousin, with his bandaged head. Also it showed the professor, Poor Devil, and Uncle Jared, each tenderly nursing some portion of his anatomy. But most of all, it showed those little electric stoves.

Plainly the startled professor, in springing to his feet when Poor Devil's projectile extinguished the candle, had upset the table upon which those beastly little stoves had rested. Now they swung free—five of them—suspended by their connecting cords, at just the distance from the floor calculated to enable them best to work on professor and invaders alike. And well had they performed their tasks!

Yet, in the moment of hush that followed the revealing light, I saw Harry and Alice beginning to sidle toward each other as though she were a magnet and he a bit of soft—very soft—iron; which strikes me as

a very neat simile. I also saw her look at him reproachfully.

"I thought I told you to go home and go to bed," said she.

"With you—and your father—at the mercy of any crook who might choose to come and rob you?" he demanded. "Not me—shotgun or no shotgun!"

"I—I feared you might come back—and that my father might pull the string by mistake—and so I took the cartridges out of it before I went down-stairs," she owned, sheepishly.

They moved closer to each other, and my powers of deduction enabled me to perceive that they were not desirous, just then, of attention from outsiders. So I turned my eyes in the direction that Poor Devil's already were turned, and looked at my respected relative and the professor, his erstwhile friend.

And their eyes were on each other. The two old boys now reminded me more strongly than ever of children who had quarreled, were longing to make up, but each of whom feared to make the first move because he was doubtful of the way that an overture would be received. To my astonishment it was my uncle who extended the olive branch.

"Horace, you have a burn, there on your cheek—a bad burn," he said. "You should attend to it—at once."

Could there be a more idiotic speech—coming, as it did, from a person who, with companions, has just effected a burglarious entrance into the jealously guarded sanctum of another? I can't think of any. Yet, its absurdity never seemed to dawn upon the professor's mind. I doubt if he even comprehended the words. He took a hesitating step forward, and half extended his hand.

"I knew you'd come, Jared!" he said. "I knew you couldn't continued refusing to see me—"

"Refuse to see you! I refuse to see *you!*" roared Uncle Jared. "Horace, you talk like an imbecile! I came to see you instantly I received the note you sent—and was refused admittance."

"But I went to your house," answered the professor, frowning in perplexity. "I followed my note there. I was most anxious to see you. But I was told—very curtly told—that you were 'not at home.' Could it be, Jared—is it possible—that we—?"

"That we crossed each other—like a pair of old fools—as we are!" roared my uncle. "And you won't publish that formula now, Horace—"

"Jared," said the professor, interrupting in his turn, "I have worked on that formula for months, off and on. I meant it as a gift for you—a surprise. That was the reason I never mentioned it—except in that note; and I fear that I was not sufficiently specific in that to give a clear idea of my intention. But I was agitated—greatly agitated—when I wrote."

"You mean to say that you intended the formula for the *Ultima Materia* as a gift for me?" asked Uncle Jared, in blank astonishment.

"The *Ultima Materia!* What are you talking about?" cried the professor.

He was evidently utterly at a loss to understand. So was Uncle Jared—so, for that matter, were Poor Devil and I. But the professor's mind, evidently, was dominated by a single thought.

Stooping, he scraped from the débris that littered the floor a handful of that granular substance that we had seen just before making our sensational entry. He went to a sink and moistened it, then rubbed his palms together. His hands at once became completely covered with a froth of snowy lather.

"Soap!" cried Uncle Jared.

"A soap-powder. The best and forty per cent the cheapest to manufacture of any on the market—and I've analyzed them all. And it's for you, Jared—all for you!"

"And this is what we broke in here to get because we thought it was that *Ultima Materia*—the stuff that would disrupt the world if its discovery became known because it's the foundation of everything that the world contains," mused Uncle Jared.

"Why will you persist in harping upon the *Ultima Materia?*" asked the professor, impatiently. "If no one forestalls me I shall probably discover it. It was one of my experiments to that end which gave me my first hint of the formula I've worked out for you. But the *Ultima Materia* after all

is a purely academic question, while this soap—"

"The *Ultima Materia* is the foundation of the world and all that the world contains," said Uncle Jared, still pursuing his own train of thought, "and this new discovery of yours, Horace, is the foundation of a new and better understanding between you and me—a foundation that never can be stirred. So we will christen that discovery 'Foundation Soap.'"

"'Foundation Soap.' How excellent!" beamed the professor, pleased like a child.

He went to a cupboard, from which he took a peculiarly shaped green bottle, apparently very old, and two—only two—tiny glasses, which he filled from the bottle, and one of which he extended to Uncle Jared.

"We aren't in on this. For the love of Mike, let's go!" said Poor Devil, plucking at my damaged shirt-sleeve.

I looked around us. He was right. Already Alice Shipman and Harry had faded away to some paradise of their own. Their respective parents had forgotten their existence and also Poor Devil's and mine, in their joy at this reconciliation of their own. We had no place in our environment.

We went to the door—not that by which Alice had entered, but the other, giving on the stairs and guarded by the shotgun from which she had removed the cartridges—and opened it. I looked back. Uncle Jared and the professor had raised their glasses.

"Foundation Soap!" said my uncle.

"Foundation Soap!" the professor echoed.

Then they drank, almost a thimbleful apiece, their first taste of liquor, probably in forty years. We went down the stairs.

In silence we traversed the single block of empty street to regain our rooms just as the east was turning gray. Our burns were smarting—but Poor Devil anointed them with something out of a jar which he said he had obtained in Hayti, and the smart presently departed.

And then, those two old men were happy in their restored friendship, the young man and the maiden rejoiced that notwithstanding a proverb to the contrary, the course of their true love once more was smooth. As for us—with those four thousand dollars safely filed away for future reference, had we cause to repine for this work of one night? Truly I thought not!

I tried, by recounting the above facts, to bring Poor Devil to a similar state of contentment, but vainly. His memory of the outcome of that errand to accomplish which we had keyed ourselves to such lawbreaking courage, still rankled in his mind.

"And the great disaster is averted—we mustn't forget that," said he, with elaborate sarcasm. "The world has decided not to wallow in blood. Instead it's going to wash itself, all nice and clean, with Foundation Soap.

"Foundation Soap! Oh, *rats!*" he added as an afterthought; then stalked moodily away to bed.

The Butt of Neptune's Jest

by George Mariano

CHAPTER XXII.

DAN'S TRAP SPRINGS.

DAN'S lips parted in a gasp of amazement that was a very nearly equal mixture of fear and hurt. The fear was for the end of all this effort at self-rehabilitation. In spite of all the discouragements, he had kept that effort up thus far—had even renewed it in face of the last discouragement. It was about his only genuine pride in himself, that he had done so. It was woful to find that the effort had been in vain.

But the hurt was keener than the fear. Who—who but Marion—could have told the captain the truth about him?

The thought that she could betray his confidence even to her father was more than he could bear. No words of self-defense came to his lips. He did not even try to think of any. He wished the captain would go and leave him alone—wondered why the man didn't go.

And then he had something else to wonder about. Captain Hope suddenly threw out his hands in a gesture of despair—

"Oh, this is too much!" he cried. "I can't do it. You're not dishonest, Dan Corwin. You never told me you'd been sick—you wouldn't have lied if you had told me so. You still look like a ghost. I was the one who told you that you'd been sick—and I did it because I wanted to give you a chance to come back. More than that, I needed a mate. There is a limit to the obligation of truth-telling.

"Your case was past that limit. I don't know whether mine is or not. You've guessed the worst. God knows I never did anything like this before. I've had no money that wasn't mine by every right. I guess, if I were less of an amateur as a thief, I'd hardly worry over the silly chance that the company would ask you whether I lied about a fog or not.

"I am an amateur. I'm a thief, too, if you will. And I'll keep the loot, too—even this money you refuse to defile your hands with.

"I had to be a thief or a murderer. I couldn't get up the nerve to do the murder. This cost the company a thousand dollars—it saved me my honor. I can get the money back to the company—all they've lost. The rest is mine—it must be mine. And you—"

"I could hardly imagine how it should become my business to betray you, anyhow," Dan interrupted.

The captain, who had not lifted his eyes while he told the dark truth, now stared into Dan's face a moment. Suddenly he got up—holding out his hand.

"I think I shall be feeling better from now on. Until this chance came I—was under terrific strain. You and I will get on, I hope. You'll believe I'm going to square the company's loss, won't you?" He was pitifully anxious to stand true, Dan thought.

"I do believe it," Dan told him.

"Will you take the next watch, Mr. Corwin?" The parting was on the simple footing of master and mate.

This story began in The Argosy for April 3.

"Aye, sir," Dan responded. The captain opened the door, stepped out. Dan heard a sudden grunt of surprise.

"You!" came the exclamation in the captain's voice.

"Ah—good morning, captain," came the drawled response. It was the voice of Panama Liz.

Dan could never quite explain to himself why he did the next thing. He had counted on this moment alone—in a wild hope that his unhampered thought might discover some means to escape the horrible doubt of Marion's fidelity to him. But, no sooner had the captain closed the door behind him with evident haste, than Dan had it opened again.

He did not open it far. The captain and the woman in black had paused just beyond it. The room next Dan's was empty. That on the other side of the passage, occupied as a stateroom by the missionary couple, opened into the saloon and presented a blank and well-lined wall to the tunnel. No doubt the two considered themselves safe from eavesdroppers.

"—just thinking, Charlie," the woman was saying, in that voice in which she had once shown Dan exactly what he might and might not expect to do to her, "it's an ill revolution that blows no one any good. Your little conversation with your young and innocent mate led me to the clever thought. Oh, yes—I heard it. It started me on several rather interesting lines.

"You know—revolutions down this way are the balm usually of disappointed politicians. Wasn't it funny to realize that they might be the balm for disappointed and aching hearts?"

"Damned funny." The response ground through hard-pressed teeth.

"Charlie—my heart still aches." The woman spoke with less drawl. "But, aren't you going to ask me into your room for a little drink?"

They turned out of the passage. For an instant Dan hesitated on the brink of following them. Had he been arrayed in anything less startlingly visible than a cheap white cotton night-shirt, he might have done so. For all the sleep he got between then and daylight, he might have done so. He had never been so thoroughly aroused in his life.

For the time being he was ready to leave the question as to what Marion might have told the captain about him, or why she had told. He had a personal grudge against that faked-up widow out there, which loomed larger now than even love. For the personal part of it had been almost lost in the increment of the grudge on behalf of another.

From the beginning he had liked what he saw of the real Captain Hope. The man's confidence in him this morning had aroused sympathy to increase the liking. He understood little of the exact significance of the snatch of conversation he had heard between the captain and the woman. But he had already known that she was the cause of the predicament the skipper had humiliated himself to admit; and he had come to know the tone the woman used as boding no good for the man on whom she used it.

"I'll stick to this ship for a while," he grimly promised the face that looked back at him as he hastily shaved before breakfast. "Long enough, at least, to see how it looks with that black she-devil ashore."

Ten days later he was inclined to curse himself for a fool in his decision. It was hard to keep up the belief that a man could be of quite so completely dual personality as the captain must be to have shown himself sincere that evening and yet to treat a man as he treated Dan each of the half dozen lucid intervals he seemed to have during those days. If Hope had really thought he was going to behave any better, he must be deeply disappointed in himself. To Dan it seemed that he kept drunker and otherwise worse as the days went on.

Dan had taken the ship into Antofagasta himself. He had had to secure the clearance papers and get the ship away again. Hardly had he done so when the captain, in a waking moment, came blustering to the bridge and insisted that not all the cargo had been secured, and that a return must be made.

Dan, who knew better, having been able there to do business entirely with the accredited agents of the ship's owners, let him turn the ship around and start back. But

the captain had not stayed long. He sent again for Dan and turned over the remainder of the watch to him, with:

"D'y' think I'm going to stay up here to undo all your fool blunders?"

Dan had waited only long enough, then, to make fairly sure that the captain had returned to the task of sleeping off whatever combination of dopes were in his system, and had then turned around again and headed south. He was wondering now how soon the captain would wake up once more and pour all his wrath out upon this deliberate disobedience of orders.

Nor was he getting much comfort out of such little communion as he could enjoy with the captain's daughter. He was too tremendously busy to talk much with any one. It looked to him that Marion was drifting from that love which had seemed to spring up at first sight between them. Certainly she lost few opportunities to remind him that he was assuming too much authority to expect better treatment than he got from her father. The question whether she had betrayed to her father her lover's confidence assumed secondary importance to the general question whether any display she made of regard for the lover was not rather a play to hold him in her father's service.

She knew—as did everybody else aboard but her father—that the ship was being sailed in exactly the opposite direction to that last given by her father.

"Well," Edwards had said, in taking Dan's direction to maintain the southward course, "y' understand that I don't know anything about *your* orders. If I'm going to take the bridge and go this way, you're taking the whole responsibility."

"I'm taking it," Dan said curtly. "If there's a fuss about it, I'll stand the gaff."

And Marion tried to argue with him.

"Dan—you haven't any right to do it. You know that. What master of a ship in the world would you expect to stand such deliberate defiance from his mate?"

"Marion," he had demanded wearily, "didn't you want me to stick to the ship and do the best I could?"

"The best you could—as its mate," she distinguished. "I didn't want you to take the ship and run it to suit yourself."

Even his statement that he knew of a German doctor in Valparaiso for whose abilities he had some respect, failed to convince her that he was not running more or less amuck. As for the doctor, he himself was more doubtful than he spoke. He had recalled that Blake had mentioned such a doctor in telling the story of one of their English guests on the Ciudad de Lima. The Englishman, it seemed, had been drowning his sorrows at being in so foreign a clime, after the fashion of a startlingly large proportion of the white residents in habitats more normal for other races.

With something more than the brutal directness and singleness of purpose, which, a few years later, was to make his whole people anathema to the rest of the world, the old German doctor had, according to common report, advised his patient as follows:

"If I t'ink you bring dot rum-stinkin' breath by my house again, I t'row you der window out dis time and break your neck. But you get dot breath a few times more and you can't come by no doctor in dis world. Der devil will be treatin' your case mit der bake cure.

"Here—take dis and sober up. Den you stay sober and get well, or go to hell."

Dan hoped to find that doctor in Valparaiso, and to get him to give the captain some such vigorous advice. He rather hoped that the captain would not begin to follow it until they had been six days out of Valparaiso and he had carried out his little scheme for seeing Panama Liz ashore in Ancud.

Another fortnight found Dan on the bridge of the steamer, not a thousand yards from the spot where, almost exactly a year before, he had run another ship to its doom on Death Reef. Then he had acted according to his skipper's orders, at a time when he should have got those orders changed. Now he deliberately defied every order of his skipper, who was not in condition to change one if he were asked. It is questionable whether he was much more certain of himself now than in that hour of disastrous doubt.

No—he was not afraid. He could look over to the point where the flickering light

on the buoy marked that fatal ledge's southern end almost without a shudder over the thing he had brought to pass there. He was weighed down with so many present worries as to render him numb against those of the past.

This was his last, desperate gamble. The nearer it had come the more desperately a gamble it had seemed. So far, to an extent, it was working as he had planned. The very smoothness of the preliminaries forewarned of pending disaster in the final coup.

Dan was not feeling lucky. Nothing of recent occurrences was of a nature to give him that sort of feeling. It was a grave question whether he had any right to be on the ship at all. At Valparaiso the captain had awakened up, with the vessel nearly loaded. That which made Dan question whether his fits of rage were all insane, was his memory of previous ones. When Captain Hope had discovered where they were, he had ended his usual tirade with the act of hurling a roll of uncounted bills at his mate's head and ordering him to get off the ship and stay off.

Dan had taken the money. It was more than was due him. That fact would hardly have disturbed him in the mood of the moment. Marion had come to his room and pleaded with him, while he packed his things, to stay aboard a while, in the hope that her father would relent and rehire him.

That had been more encouraging than any other thing Marion had done or said. In urging that she had added a plea that he, in future, show a little respect for her father's commands. But the fact that she wanted him to stay had made it tempting enough so that he followed her advice.

The captain had never apologized, never mentioned the event again. Neither had he made any effort to get another mate, though he had put in two really sober days during the week of unloading and loading that had been passed in Valparaiso. Dan had been ashore and back several times—most of the business there had fallen upon him, as at Antofogasta.

He had sought and found the German doctor, who had interviewed the captain in his own quarters. From the speed with which he had come out at the end of five minutes, Dan had been compelled to conclude that there had not been a German victory. The man had not even stopped to insist that Dan pay the too-well-earned fee for the visit. The captain had been half drunk at the time; he had been entirely drunk ever since.

And here was Dan—perhaps an officer, perhaps no better than a stowaway passenger—threading a ticklish channel into a port, without anything resembling authorization from company or captain, his purpose none other than that of causing an arrest on a charge he did not even intend to attempt to prove—the arrest of a presumably paid passenger—a passenger who had hitherto proven herself quite too clever for either himself or his much cleverer captain.

"Well," he muttered grimly to himself, "you need never say again you didn't act on your own decision."

And then he saw that which seemed to offer an almost incredible hope of success. It was the morning watch—he had kept the bridge since midnight. And now, in the gray of dawn, the little launch which did duty as a revenue cutter was putting out from the narrow bay to ascertain the cause of the unexpected visit of the ship.

Oh, it was going to be too easy. That boat held plenty of harbor police to carry three of Panama Liz down the ladder and aboard it. If only the big captain of it were aboard! During the loading of Blake's ship that tall, sturdy half-Spaniard had been the first resident of Ancud to tempt a wish for acquaintance from Dan. Even then they had made such friends as they could over the bar of language.

And—here came Liz herself! And she was adorned with a flowered kimono, probably over a *robe de nuit*. She'd land as stranded as she had left him. Poetic justice was no name for it. He rattled the telegraph for quarter speed, ordered all hands on deck to stand by the anchors, bade the boatswain get the accommodation ladder into place with all speed.

Dan often wondered how he ever lived through the eager suspense of those next moments. It seemed impossible that the

woman, standing on the deck and studying the shore with what seemed suspicious interest, should fail to recognize the place or to sense her peril. Yet she stayed—stayed while the hails were exchanged between the launch and the ship, while the latter stopped her engines and the motor-tug drew alongside and made fast to the ladder, while the officers aboard it clambered up and onto the ship's deck.

"Mr. Edwards," Dan called down to the second mate, who was hurrying out to greet the boarding officials without knowing what he might have to say to them, "will you take the bridge?" He ran down and met Edwards at the second deck. "Keep her steering and straight for the light till we bear straight north on that church spire. If you don't hear from me before, reverse the engine and back out a length as you came, then—call me to lower the hooks."

"But—what the devil is up?" Edwards demanded.

"Don't get so interested in what's up that you miss the bearing," Dan called over his shoulder. "*Ola—señores!*" he then greeted the waiting officers below.

"*Ola—Señor Cor'in!*" It was the captain of his desire; Dan was on the deck wringing his hands in a nervous ecstasy of eagerness in another ten seconds.

"The captain is ill," Dan began to explain then. "I stopped here to turn over to you a prisoner. I've kept her aboard as a passenger all the way down here. She's—"

But he did not need to tell the captain who the prisoner was. The woman had started back through the passage. Dan but lifted a finger toward her.

"*Ola—la bella Señorita Liz-zee!*" cried the captain of the launch. "For twelve months I have been without the hope to give you the hospitality of our *cárcel*. And now the despaired-of desire is mine! What is the charge, *señor?*"

For once Panama Liz seemed momentarily off her guard. She blinked in astonishment at the sudden turn of things. She looked unable to decide whether to try a dash for the rail and over it, or one into her room.

"She picked my pocket of a hundred dollars in American notes a year ago, Señor Capitan. If you will be so good as to take her along, I will follow to make the charge before the *juez* as soon as I can drop the anchors."

"*Bueno*—we—" But the harbor officer's voice was drowned by a terrific shriek in the raucous voice of the woman, who took advantage of the start she gave them to leap inside her door and slam it in their faces.

Dan had figured on a scene. He had felt confident that, even if it should rouse the captain, Hope would back him up in almost any scheme which offered a chance to get rid of the woman.

He had quite discounted the danger of that bit of evidence that he had once registered in a hotel as her husband. It might help her anywhere else but in Ancud. Here that might signify that he had introduced a disorderly character into a reputable hostelry. She was too well known to make any one believe she had a husband who would honestly confess the fact.

The hour of the morning he had counted sufficient protection against anything that could affect his standing with Marion Hope. No brawling of Panama Liz's would get the girl out of her room into strangers' presence in any hasty negligee. Nothing she could overhear from the passage would hurt, since that must be in Spanish, which she could not understand. Even if the woman vented her helpless rage by assaults upon his reputation shouted in English to Marion herself, the girl's dislike for her would take from them any weight.

The only danger had been lest Marion see that accusing bit of paper cut from the posadera register, if Panama Liz still retained it, as she said. Now, it appeared, that danger had been averted. The paper couldn't be shown through an iron door. With Marion in her night-clothes that door would stay shut.

And then it did not appear that any danger had been averted. Hopeful as Dan was that the captain would support him, it was with a glance of apprehension that he turned as he heard the click of the lock in Hope's door.

The next instant the apprehension had turned to a gasp of consternation. It was Marion herself who came out of that door!

"Please come quick and help me," she called, her face white with fear with which the scene passing outside had nothing to do. "I thought my father was asleep. But—I can't get him awake."

At the same instant Panama Liz was shouting through her door in Spanish:

"Don't bother to break it in. I'm coming right out. I'll show you why this young whipper-snapper wants you to arrest me. Then we'll see the captain—he's not too sick to see *me*. Perhaps you won't need to go back empty-handed, at that."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARION SEES SOME.

WE will have to reach some place where we are much wiser than here before we can ever guess to what extent the wish is father to the thought. Marion had been undergoing an evolution which almost amounted to a revolution. Her love had not been divided, but there were now two loves instead of one, to an extent which had not at all been the case with the other man she had thought she loved enough to marry.

It was one thing to tell Dan that he was acting clear beyond his authority and to an extent hardly any conceivable circumstance could warrant. It was quite another thing to believe it and keep on believing it. For she loved Dan. There were moments when she was almost afraid she was guilty of loving him more than she did her father—a sort of sacrilege against the older, lifelong love.

And to believe of one she loved this way, that he was persistently, obstinately, pig-headedly violating all the laws of a rather strongly tradition-bound vocation, to an extent for which it would be hard to find any right excuse—it was highly disquieting.

After all, it was not Dan's ship. Not one of his disobediences had been in any way matters of life and death emergency. The vessel had not once been in a situation where its safety depended at all on his action. If need be, he could have lain at anchor or drifted for hours instead of overrunning by nearly a day the course her father had prescribed. Getting out of Antofogasta without any orders from her father had been equally needless. Why need he care if the ship delayed? It was none of his business.

The only reason she could guess for such overzeal had been furnished by Mr. Edwards in connection with Hawks. It was not a nice reason.

"Sure," Edwards had said of the then mate, "anybody can see what's his game. He figures the company 'll get wise your father ain't up to handling a ship any more. Then they'll hand it over to the man who's showed what he could do without a skipper."

She could hardly be the daughter she was and get any comfort out of that explanation of the actions of her lover. But some things were very evident. Dan was made unhappy by her criticisms of his actions; yet was clearly refraining from giving her any full explanation of those actions.

Then her search for some excuse other than Dan's seeming treachery led her back to her father. Did Dan know things about his condition of which she was being kept in ignorance? It was hardly pleasant to admit that a man of the sea might have good navigator's reasons for counting some of her father's orders the mere ravings of a lunatic to which no heed need be paid.

But—had she even tried to find out what ailed her father? Hadn't she been too submissive to his orders herself—in staying outside his room whenever he indicated the wish to be alone? Hadn't she accepted too readily the statement that he was merely tired and resting? Hadn't her acceptance of that statement been due to a dread of finding things worse than she wanted to believe?

A dozen times during the day preceding the ship's arrival at Ancud she had slipped to her father's door. Half that many times the cabin boy had appeared to deny her entrance. The other half—well, five times she had not, at the last moment, been able to summon courage to turn the knob when she felt it in her fingers. The dread of his displeasure in disobedience, the worse dread of finding him in a condition—

No—she would never believe him what so many others did. She knew him better

than that. But—to find him in a condition that others might mistake for intoxication! She had turned back the sixth time when the knob seemed checked in turning.

But, having got that far toward an investigation, it was hard to sleep without finishing the task. At length she got up and dressed herself. But, as she opened her door she caught the odor of the strong cigarette she had come to identify with the mysterious and wholly offensive woman in widow's weeds. She caught a glimpse of an unwidowlike kimono. The woman was walking off sleeplessness, it seemed. Marion waited. She wanted no prying curiosity of that female's about this visit to her father's quarters.

Twice more she peered out, only to see that the woman still walked. It was easy, in the darkness of her room, to fancy her pursued by some evil memory which would not let her rest. Marion grew more and more impatient.

Then she caught the gleam of a light outside her stateroom's porthole. Instant fresh alarm arose. What was this? Where was this? Where were they? Not another stop was due before the entrance of the Strait. They could not have got half that far so quickly. But—light buoys are indications of near-by shores.

The night was going—she could distinguish the tops of the waves. But—where was the brighter flush of the east? Was that the Southern Cross just fading off to starboard? And—why, they were running at half—no, quarter—speed!

What new deed of utter rashness was that boy on the bridge attempting here? Why a landing? Surely her father should be aroused, consulted about it, at all events. Once more she pushed her door ajar. Mrs. Bartington was just leaving the passage—stepping to the rail. She, too, was curious. She would stay there a while, to satisfy her curiosity.

Marion crossed the passage diagonally, almost in a jump. This time she turned hard on the knob. It gave—the catch was weak. She had the door open.

Heavens! What reek was this? No—*no*—it could not be that. It was some medicine with plenty of other smell than that of the predominating alcohol. But—why didn't he get some fresh air?

She rushed to his side. She listened to his breathing. It was abnormal, labored, too fast.

What was it—the coma of death? There was something uncanny, unnatural, unwholesome about it. Oh, what a fool she had been to expect that he merely rested so many hours and days on end!

"Daddy! Daddy!" she whispered frantically into his ear. There was no indication that he heard at all; no flicker of change in his breathing.

"Daddy!" she spoke aloud.

She looked wildly about the room, as if in search of something with which to arouse him. There was a nearly empty brandy bottle. No doubt he had felt this coming on and had tried to ward it off with stimulant. There was enough of it on his breath now to indicate that it did not offer hope of resuscitation.

There was too little light—she felt around his table until she found a box of matches. With these she got to the medicine closet.

An enormous bottle of laudanum, a little over half full—that would be the last thing to give him now. The smaller bottle of the mysterious salts which had helped Dan back to consciousness! She took it down. But—wasn't there a trace of that pungent odor here already? It had waked Dan, only to speed him back to heavy sleep. Perhaps that was partly responsible for her father's present stupor. He had used that in efforts to brace against some faintness. She dared not give more of it—hardly knew how he had used it, anyway.

These bottles had stood in front of the others. She now searched amongst them. Her ignorance of drugs was pitiful. She gave up the search. She didn't know enough about those things to use them. She went back to the sleeper. She must rouse him, somehow. If she could but get him half awake, he might tell her what to do for him.

She shook him gently—shook him harder. She was trembling with fear lest he wake up and, failing to recognize her at first, use on her some such terrible language as his

sick peevishness had wrung from his lips at the various faults of the men of his crew.

A piercing shriek in the passage startled her almost hysterical. She had been hearing the sounds of men lowering a ladder—of greetings between Dan and strangers who spoke in Spanish. But—what was this?"

At all events it had not even disturbed the breathing of her father. It had been the voice of the woman in black—a terrifying voice. Was it possible that men had come aboard to arrest her for some past crime? She was not in condition to reason out such weird suggestions—they but flashed upon her in her distress.

But whatever was going on about the woman could well wait while something was done for her father. Perhaps one of those Spanish-speaking men outside knew something of medicine. Perhaps—Dan—

She ran out. In the passage the group was standing about the woman's door. The woman was shouting something through it. Dan turned—looked as if he saw in her a ghost.

But her father! Nothing else mattered. She spoke quick and fast—the urge of her need arising to combat whatever of their business might delay their instant response.

The woman—still arrayed in the rather shocking kimono—came out while Dan seemed about to come to her. In her hand she was waving a piece of paper—apparently a page of some blank book. Heaven knew what she was shouting so strenuously—and Marion didn't care. But Dan was hesitating.

"Oh—come!" she urged him.

Dan looked back. But the woman seemed to have caught sight of her—of the open door behind her—and to have heard her call for help.

"*Si—vengid!*" she shrieked. "You bet we're coming," she put in English. "I guess your father 'll see if a man can run a woman passenger off his ship like this. Maybe I'll be able to interest you a little, too, my pretty little Miss Hope— *Vengid! Vengid! Vengid todos—a ver al Señor Capitan!*"

Marion gave a look of terror at Dan—the only one of them whose speech she could understand. His own look matched hers. It seemed as if he had suddenly lost his wits. He let the woman rush by him, the others following with looks of confusion, as if they didn't know whether to do this or something else.

Mrs. Bartington pushed her aside. Marion seemed unable to summon spirit to resist. It was as if she caught the helplessness reflected on Dan's face. She had wanted help—it seemed she had brought on a riot.

Then Dan was coming to—too late. He had rushed past her—he was shouting to the men in Spanish. If tone of voice indicated anything, it was that he bade them stop the woman from something—Marion rushed in to see.

"*Captain! Captain!*" The widow's voice was a thing to rouse the dead. "Captain! *Charlie!*"

Marion stopped dead. Nothing she had ever seen had indicated even remotely that her father had known this woman anywhere before her arrival as a passenger at the Mexican port. His given name on those coarse lips startled as if it had been a slap on her own cheek. It aroused an even hotter resentment. No insult to herself could sting as this insult to her father.

"*Charlie! Charlie!*" the woman bawled again, in the very ears of the sleeper. Marion started toward her, wondering if she had not gone primitive enough to snatch the wretched hag back by the hair of her head.

"Oh—I'll wake him up!" The woman had straightened up and started toward the medicine closet. It stood open, as Marion had left it.

"Stop her!" Marion cried. The woman had snatched down the bottle of the mysterious salts. "She'll kill him!"

Dan seemed to echo the words in a language the men closest could understand. They leaped forward and caught at the woman's hands. She struggled an instant to free herself, shrieking vilely as she fought. Then she laughed as she flung the bottle against the wall over the bed, and it shattered over the covering.

Before the acrid fumes had reached to any of the bystanders, its perceptible effect on the sleeper was startling. His

breathing steadied, slowed at the first inhalation of the drug-laden air. At the second or third his eyes opened in a bewildered stare about him. But, as he sat up to get a better look at the unexpected crowd in his room, the strong scent had assailed the first of the Chilean officers. He coughed, looked a little frightened, as the galvanizing effect of the stimulant shot through his system. Then he rushed from the room. Another was at his heels.

But one of them had better judgment. He dashed through the open door of the forward little den, and worked furiously at the porthole screws. Dan bethought him to drop the after window.

"Wh-what's this?" the captain was saying, getting control of his voice even with the two syllables. His hand struck a bit of glass or a wet spot on the cover; he drew it back quickly. But, before he could have thought of the broken bottle in connection with the scene before him, Mrs. Bartington had assumed the center of that scene.

"Yes—you may well ask what is it!" she screamed. "I'll tell you what it is—and then I'll tell them if you'll make them give me a chance.

"It's *him!* It's that miserable little cur of a mate of yours! God knows the dog's life he's led me before—but I hardly thought he'd do this—*this!*

"Captain—captain! Look—look out that port! Your ship's run into Ancud—*Ancud!* He thought nobody'd catch him here and stop him. And he'd be rid of me. He never did like his wife around when another pretty woman was there. He got so he never liked me at all.

"He's stolen our marriage certificate—he's stolen everything else of mine. Now he thinks I can't prove anything. But look—look!

"He forgot this! He didn't know I had it. He dares to try to have me—his wife—arrested—*jailed*—for taking a little of the money he would never give me to buy the bread for my mouth or clothes for my body.

"Look! You have his name on your roll. Is that his signature, or am I a forger?"

But the captain was not looking. As she reached her climax of accusation in shrieking the fact of what Dan had attempted to do to her, Hope's eyes raised to the young mate's face. He half rose from the bed. He looked as if something akin to the hope that had given his family name had been born within him.

The woman, having shown the damning page to him, was extending it to the view of the remaining port officials, shrieking at them in Spanish what she had just shrieked in English. A laugh from their captain was echoed by the skipper of the ship.

"*Madam!*" he cried. "You don't imagine anybody's going to take very seriously the fact that any man registered *you* in a second-rate hotel as his wife, do you?" He laughed again. And the officers were laughing so sympathetically that it looked as if one of them were saying the same thing to her in Spanish. He tossed the bit of paper toward the door. It fell almost at Marion's feet.

For the first time it drew the captain's eyes toward his daughter. He seemed to view her with hardly less consternation than had shown in Dan's face at sight of her. But his attention was almost instantly taken back to the other woman, upon whom he looked with the consternation amounting to fear, turning utterly abject.

Mrs. Bartington had seemed beaten, scared for a moment, as the piece of precious paper failed so dismally to change her situation. But now she bent her eyes upon the frightened face of Captain Hope.

"Say, captain," she hissed. "Cap-tain! Are you—going—to—let—them take—me—me—off this ship?

"Are you? *Are* you? *Are you?*" She was going slowly nearer and nearer. Her lips were drawn back from her teeth to give her the look of some hideous beast—Marion thought of a hyena.

"*Are you?*" Mrs. Bartington's voice broke at the top of its range.

And Marion saw that her father's eyes wavered—shot in her direction without coming far enough to meet hers—went back to the horrid face bending nearer and nearer, as if about to bite him.

"Why—no—no, I—I don't know as I want that. I—"

"No—you don't—want that," echoed the woman. Marion wondered whether she judged the menacing tone aright—hoped that it was the heady effect of the fumes she had inhaled.

"Mr. Corwin—haven't you made a slight mistake?" the captain asked mildly, but with a meaning glance that demanded an affirmative answer.

Dan threw up his hands in a gesture of despair. "It seems so," he groaned.

What did it—what could it—mean? Marion's head was whirling. The woman had claimed to be Dan's wife—had been laughed at for claiming it. Yet the creature had some hold over Dan—it almost seemed as if she had a hold on her father. Certainly that menacing look had taken out of his cheeks the flush of color brought at first by the powerful drug which had stimulated him back to consciousness.

All concerned seemed to find the moment very awkward save the wretched hag, who leered in triumph, first at Dan, then at the officers whom Dan had evidently brought to take her. Marion wished they had done so. She wished she were out of this.

Her father was trying to say something in Spanish—was getting up and going to the cellarette for glasses and some wine, obviously to break through the embarrassment of the situation. The woman in the kimono was giving herself the satisfaction of jeers at her would-be captors. One of the native officers got angry enough to say something threatening.

Mrs. Bartington took this as her cue to retreat. As she reached the door, she suddenly stooped and picked up the piece of paper which had availed her so little. With a leer toward Dan, she held it out to Marion—

"Here, my dear—a little memento of the interesting moment," she said, pressing it into the girl's hand and swept on out of the door with an imitation majesty of demeanor which one might have found grotesque, pitiful, or disgusting, according to his sense of the eternal fitness and decency of things.

Dan seemed suddenly to recall something, and slipped hurriedly from the room. Marion looked about the group, realized that no place for her was left in that company, and went out. She wanted air. She was not sure what had so nearly stifled her in the room. It was as she was passing her own door on her way to the forward deck that she noticed the fact that she still held the page of some blank-book with writing on it.

Her desire for air was forgotten in the instant. She wanted to disprove something more than she wanted breath. She went inside and closed the door of her room. She opened a little box on her bureau, took out a single sheet of writing paper.

The one note Dan had ever had occasion to write her had assumed a place in her sentiments. Anyhow, nothing could have been a sincerer demonstration of real love than that humble apology for things said in a moment of semi-delirium. But no—

"Daniel Corwin and wife." She shuddered at the last word. Then, as the conviction became irresistible that the same hand had written his name there and at the foot of her treasured note from him, she grew sick at heart. She wanted air—she wanted—

She got out into the passage, to the rail. Up on the bridge she could hear Dan, in a voice that strove to be firm and crisp, but failed, directing Mr. Edwards as to the next moves with the ship. She watched two sheets of paper drift aft in the air, settling slowly, till they lay upon the surface of the sea. The ship was hardly moving. She saw them soak and sink.

Marion's innocence was not of that blissful ignorance in which such a maid might safely have grown up half a century ago. Her aunt had told her enough to enable her to understand the sordid things one may hardly miss in the newspapers of to-day. She could not conceive of Mrs. Bartington having been such a woman as Dan could have dreamed of marrying at any time since he was old enough to marry at all. A sufficiently close acquaintance to make her interested in the news of the case had won a divorce from her husband. She knew why men registered—as Dan had registered—at some hotels.

Suddenly she heard her name spoken from behind her. Dan's voice was full of pleading as he uttered it—

"Marion!"

She braced herself, wheeled upon him.

"Mr. Corwin—please—*please*—never speak to me again," she cried. Then she dashed past him, into her room. Silently there, her face buried in her pillow, she cried some more.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SMOOTH SAILING OF A SORT.

DAN turned away. At the after end of the passage Captain Hope was making the best of his poor Spanish to speed the Chilean officers back aboard their own little vessel. It flashed upon the mate that he himself owed some apology—probably in substantial form—for having got them into a rather stupid mess.

He joined them. Silently he slipped to each, one of the Chilean notes in his pocket, without any great effort to keep his gratuity within too reasonable bounds. The captain of the little guard bade him a sympathetic farewell.

"That woman got me for fifty pesos once," he whispered. "I wish I might take her yet."

"Mr. Corwin, will you come into my room?"

Dan felt relieved, in spite of the sharp tone of the order. There had shown in the captain's manner a certain tense nervousness, as of a man who found it more and more difficult to retain control of himself. Dan had counted on another tirade administered in the open. It was much better than he had expected to have it in the seclusion of the skipper's quarters.

Hope did not offer him a seat or take one. He stood with his back to the door, after he had closed it upon them. His pent-up exasperation kept him silent for a moment, panting for breath.

Dan returned his hard gaze. He was in no humor to take abuse. He had come suddenly to the end of his endurance. He wished the port were any other in the world but Ancud. His memories of that town were such that he could not bring himself to go ashore with the port officers unless he had to do so.

Perhaps it was the look of sullen indifference to anything he might say that kept the captain from saying more to the mate than he did—at the start. Something, at all events, held down the usual string of profane and senseless abuse. Instead of that came the query, almost quiet in tone, though tense enough to be more dangerous than loud bellowing.

"Well—what did you do it for?"

Dan stared back another moment. Then—

"I'll tell you what I did it for," he opened up. Before he could draw breath to go on, the captain had cut in:

"That's what I told you to do. Don't bother about any introductions to the story. You've run the ship into one of the damnedest harbors on this coast, and I've got to get her out quick."

He was not wholly reasonable—or he would have saved time by letting Dan take his.

"I did it to save you from drinking yourself to death, if you want to know," Dan flung at him.

The captain flinched; there was fear in the eyes that searched Dan's. But he pulled himself together again for the bluff he must make.

"To save *me*—from anything?" he paraphrased Dan's explanation. "I don't think I quite understand. The lady exhibited something which might have given you some personal reasons for wishing to relieve the ship of her presence. But—what had I to do with it?"

"I guess you know that better than I do," Dan retorted. "I wasn't much worried over what she had on me."

"Good God! Man—are you crazy?" suddenly cried the skipper. "Do you really mean to tell me that? You mean to say you've diagnosed my case as one of trouble-drowning; jumped to the conclusion that this woman has something to do with it; concluded, on the strength of that, to sail my ship a hundred miles off course into a dangerous port, to try to get rid of the cause of my troubles?

"You expect me to believe you've a mind that works like that? And then—say—would you be good enough to gratify

my curiosity as to what it is about me that so excites your sentiments that you are ready to break all the rules of the sea in my behalf?"

He had seemingly lost the desire to curse or abuse—the irony of the situation was stronger than any mere profanity.

"Oh, it wasn't so much jumping," Dan returned, falling back on his own sullen indifference to steady his voice and nerve. "Everybody knows you're drinking yourself to death—but Marion. I'm afraid she found it out this morning. It's been my misfortune to overhear a few snatches of conversation between you and that woman. She was calling you Charlie before you came out of your sleep this morning, before all of us, and in a shriek the whole ship could hear, so far as that's concerned. A member of your crew told me Panama Liz was making you drink yourself crazy, before I'd been on your ship two hours."

"Who—who?" cried the captain.

"If my duties as mate include tattling, I'll just add another case of forgetting where I belong," Dan snapped. "And I think I can assure you there won't be much more of the forgetting. The little thing that excited my sentiments about you is dead and overboard. From now on this ship will sail, so far as I'm concerned, by your orders, if they land her on the rocks or the south pole. When your orders run out, if I can't get more out of you because you happen to have pickled your tongue and brain together—she'll drop anchor or drift. If obedience is your idea of a mate, you'll find me a little wonder, Mr. Hope—from right now on—and for the simple reason that, from right now on, I don't give a damn what becomes of you or your ship or myself—or anybody else aboard. Have you any orders for me now, captain?"

"You damned, impertinent whelp—get out of my sight before I give you the beating you deserve!" exploded the skipper.

"Aye, aye, sir." Dan laughed recklessly, and headed for his room. He kicked off his shoes and flung himself upon his berth.

"The devil with everything!" he muttered through clenched teeth, shaking his fists at the ceiling in a gesture of defiance for the world. "If this was only any other hole in the ground but Ancud, I'd quit, if it was to swim ashore."

Suddenly Dan sat up again.

"What's that you said, Dan Corwin? *What's that?*" he addressed the reflection of his face that stared back at him across the little room from the glass over the bureau.

"Quit, is it? *Quit!* That's the word you used!

"Say—she doesn't think any too well of you now, and that's a fact. But the things she thinks aren't so—and she may find that out some time. But, if she ever says you're a quitter—because you've *quit!*

"She won't have to say it—because you'll know it's so. Is it a man you are, Dan Corwin? Or is it a soft boy trying to get a pretty girl to pet you and like you?

"The devil with everything—with her, so far as you're concerned, if that's the way she feels about it and you can't make her feel any different. But you—Dan Corwin—you quit when the ship's sunk under you or you're kicked off it. If I catch you quitting, I'll throttle you with my own fingers for the —*quitter*—you'll be."

His tense mood broke in a laugh.

"And I don't know," he began again, "as it's quite quitting time with the girl. There'll be no quitting time there, either, until she's been to the altar with some other man.

"But—all the same—we'll let the blessed shipper sail the ship for a while. It can't go much worse for you than it's been going, anyway. And—here's for a sleep."

As the days went by after that, Dan began to think this was the only part of his resolution that worked well. The girl avoided him—it seemed as if she had come to avoid every one on the ship. But the captain was attending to the navigating, was keeping sober, was showing himself the sort of skipper Dan still believed he had been once in his life.

It really looked as if Dan's warning that, thenceforth, the ship's fate was in his hands had taken salutary effect—or that he had awakened to a better realization of what he was doing to himself. He assumed the master's place in every respect, and Dan was quite ready to confess that he filled the place perfectly.

Everything seemed to take on the usual form for a ship properly manned. The obedience of the crew stiffened. Things were kept in that perfection of order and regulation which had been impossible with but two men to divide all the authority above deck between them.

Dan's personal relations with the captain were pleasant—or would have been pleasant if they had never been more personal. Like everything else, they had dropped into place. They were strictly those of master and mate. Captain Hope seemed to regard it as unnecessary to refer in any way to the previous conditions.

Corwin ceased to pay active attention to affairs beyond his business. He took the skipper's directions and followed them to the letter in everything. There was no reason in the world why he should do otherwise. Save for the times when he happened to attend to the sighting for the captain, he took no trouble even to ascertain the position of the vessel. With the captain running things, he had no spare time for idle investigations beyond his own affairs. Hope kept things moving, kept the crew busy—and Dan was the man to do the immediate pushing.

Just beyond the end of the long bar that stretched from the east coast of South America on the northern side of the Strait of Magellan, there was a twenty-four-hour blow that proved a test of seamanship. The captain kept the bridge through it all. It was just before Dan went to relieve him, when the weather had subsided sufficiently to warrant a skipper taking a rest that Edwards stopped to give him a warning as they passed.

"This 'll be the end for a while. He needs a nip now—and he'll take that. And then—good night."

Pretty much the same fear was already in Dan's mind. Now it was sufficient to cause him to stop for a moment in the chart-room.

"What 'll you do if he doesn't come up?" he asked himself, as he saw that the course as planned had been broken up by the shifts to which they had been put by the weather, and that it would involve some further shifts to reach it again.

And he knew that he would do as he had done before. He would sail on according to the best of his judgment. These were conditions where the safety of the ship depended on doing so. And—well, it had been quite a while since he had told the captain that he would hold anchor or drift in such a case. Dan was too Irish to hold a bad resolve long.

But even these fears proved wasted. The captain was back on the bridge at the next eight bells—long enough to give perfectly clear directions to Edwards for another watch. And he took the third again himself.

"Ecod!" exclaimed Edwards. "I never thought he'd pull through that."

Dan thought the captain had pulled through more than Edwards knew. On the way down from his own watch, he had seen Panama Liz waiting for the captain at the end of the passage. There was something more in her smile than the merely polite thing she affected when living up to her part of the late Bartington's widow. So much depended, in Dan's mind, upon what that woman might say to the captain, that he felt justified in standing at the foot of the stairs long enough to overhear:

"—to arrange for my continued passage, captain—right on through to New York."

That had been enough to keep Dan awake during his off watch. But it was rather on account of its possible effect on Marion than for the sake of any other that he dreaded what he still believed the greatest peril to the captain's sobriety, if not his sanity.

CHAPTER XXV.

OBEYING ORDERS.

IT was quite clear to all on the City of Altoona that a change had come over the captain's daughter. She kept to her room. If she greeted any of the officers or passengers, it was with a pleasantness obviously forced. She dodged encounters with them all so perceptibly that they came to return the compliment.

The truth was that Marion was suffering her disillusionment with all the keenness

it can bring to natures like hers—natures that are capable of an almost fierce loyalty to their loves. Her idols were mostly in pieces about her; the one to which she clung with a faith which would not admit the doubts that assailed—was yet tottering as she held it up.

Naturally rather disinclined to easy friendships, she had hardly got past speaking acquaintance with the engineers or the missionary couple. To her they had never been nearer than most of the people we meet, mingle with in business or society, and drop again without any more interest in their going than we had in their coming. She was the sort who begin love hard, even though they may begin quickly, and lose it only with torn fragments of their hearts.

Her sentiment for Bob Harvey had never amounted to more than friendship, yet it had been strong enough to pass for love with herself, until he proved unworthy of the esteem on which the friendship had been based. She had learned the real meaning of love with the coming of Dan Corwin. Now she told herself again and again that she hated him worst for having made her waver in her loyal faith in her father.

And that was ample proof that the wavering here was real. The same unconscious feeling was at the bottom of her growing distaste for the society of every other person on the ship except her father. They all counted him a drunkard. If she had been as sure as she tried to make herself that he was not a drunkard, she might have taken their opinion with less resentment at them for holding it. She felt that they made it harder for her to retain her last faith in humanity.

Her feeling toward the woman who called herself Mrs. Bartington had been intensified from the mere impersonal loathing of a debased creature to a personal hatred she could not have concealed had she tried a lot harder than she did. For that woman had done more to shake her confidence in her father than all the other things she had seen.

Try as she would, she could not down the feeling that some mystery lay behind the fact that Mrs. Bartington had called her father by his first name when she was frightened and angry enough to forget appearances. The readiness with which the woman turned to the medicine closet and picked the strange drug which had so promptly done what she wanted it to do for the man in his stupor—it was another shadow of a familiarity with his private quarters that was intolerable for the girl to concede as existent. And then—there had been the way she had looked, and the way he had quailed and weakened before her look, until he had refused to let her be taken under arrest from his ship.

To have known that woman—her father must be the sort of man whom it was possible to conceive of as a drunkard. The man she believed—made herself believe—her father to be could not have been caught in that woman's toils in any imaginable fashion.

"My dear"—Mrs. Bartington never lost an opportunity to harass with her intrusive presence—"I thought perhaps you'd be glad to know I've just arranged with your father for a change in my little program. I'm not going to leave you at Montevideo. I'm sailing right through to New York."

"O-oh!" Marion gasped, drawing farther along the rail beside which she was standing.

"Y-yes, my dear—aren't you glad?" The woman was a little taken aback by the glitter in Marion's eyes. She got no answer to this query. Marion dashed to her father's room.

He answered her knock with an invitation to enter—as he had done during the past few days with an encouraging regularity. She went in and closed the door.

"Father," she demanded, without a word of greeting—"you are going to let Mrs. Bartington stay on the ship all the way to New York?"

"Why—why—who said so?" he stammered.

"She did," Marion cried, her heart stung by his evasion.

"Well—have you any reason why she shouldn't stay on the ship to New York?" he then asked. "She's paying her fare, of course."

"I don't wan't her—I don't think she's fit to stay on any ship—I hate her,"

Marion cried, with rising passion. "Tell her she can't go."

"But—my child—do you really know anything against her?"

"I know what happened at Ancud," she argued.

"But—why, Mr. Corwin himself admitted that was a mistake. I could hardly take any action against the woman on account of that." Her father would not be anything but evasive, it seemed to her. .

"She goes at Montevideo, or I do." She suddenly panted the first defiance against his wishes she had ever been guilty of.

"Marion—I—I don't want to reprimand you as if you were still a child. But I think I ought to send you to your room—to do a little thinking." His voice shook a little as he finished. Marion hardly noticed it. She left his room and made for her own. For a moment before she burst into tears she stood waving clenched fists at the wall—

"*Damn her!*" she stormed. "There, I've said it—damn her! Damn her! Damn her! Damn all of them. Oh—I won't believe it—won't believe it—won't—won't—*won't!* Oh—heaven! Oh, Daddy! Oh, God!"

She flung herself upon the bed in a passion of weeping. It was becoming a too frequent condition for her—for the good of her nerves—perhaps for the good of her soul. Few things are more dangerous for a soul than the effort to maintain a faith against every evidence and reason God has given it.

Had Dan known of the interview with Marion, he might still more have wondered at the captain's continued sobriety. He had really much to learn—if he should ever learn it—as to the psychology of drunkenness. He was sufficiently satisfied that the man had definitely braced against the dangerous weakness, so that he took no heed whatever of the unusual graciousness with which he was halted on his way to the bridge to take the night's first watch, two days after the events which had given him a moment of suspense.

"Good evening, Mr. Corwin," the captain called genially from the window of the chart-room. "You're a pretty experienced man of the sea. What do you make of the weather? The glass reads twenty-eight and an eighth."

"I've been through here only once before, sir," Dan responded. "I'd hardly care to guess at any weather within five hundred miles—or a thousand from Cape Horn."

"I suppose you noticed our company to starboard," the captain now mentioned.

"I saw her smoke this afternoon," Dan answered. "Do you think she has come nearer?"

"Quite a bit," said Hope. "That's one reason why I'm worried about the weather. If she's the ship I think she is, her captain knows a lot more about these waters than I do. It looks to me as if she's veering in toward St. George Bay. I think I'll do it, anyhow. It will give us smooth water, and won't cost much time. I could wait to see what course Captain Davids does take, but ours is considerably the faster ship. We have her a couple of points to southward now. Even if he does sail straight on, we'd lose more by waiting to see it.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Corwin, we'll make for the bay. Just hold the course as it is, fifteen degrees east, after you pick up Cape Blanco light, and straight on until you make it exactly southeast by east. Then head due east by the compass. You won't make that before almost eight bells, anyhow, even in this wind. I'll be ready for the middle watch."

Carefully Dan repeated the directions after him, nearly word for word.

"Yes—that's it," said the captain—"due east until I come. We'll hold that for the whole middle watch, anyhow. But that needn't trouble you. You have your directions."

"Aye, sir," Dan assented.

"If you find the bridge uncomfortable—unless the wind gets too heavy, don't hesitate to come down to the pilot-house. I've meant to tell you that before. You don't need to stick to the bridge merely because I happen to like it."

"I prefer it myself, sir," Dan answered.

For he had recovered from the momentary shock he had got when he had learned

of the proximity of his one-time captain. The Anduria, it seemed certain, was already behind.

No danger whatever of his being recognized in the dark. He smiled, wondering whether that had not ceased long since to be a danger, anyhow. Yet he knew he would not have smiled had the prospect not been so good for escape from encounter with Captain Davids.

He ceased smiling very shortly as it was, and for reasons sterner than the heavy and rising, following sea which frequently lifted the propeller for an uncomfortable race in the air. He had not escaped Captain Davids. Montevideo was too near. There was but the barest chance that the Anduria had call for any port this side of the Uruguayan capital. Outside that chance there was none at all that the City of Altoona would clear the port of Montevideo before the slower ship could reach the harbor.

To be recognized by Captain Davids while in any way displaying the fact that he was an officer on a ship, was about the one thing Dan had not figured into his resolves to stick to his calling. Now, the more he thought of such recognition as a no remote possibility, the bigger it loomed as a peril. The more he thought of Captain Davids, the less he could succeed in convincing himself that the man would have forgiven and forgotten ere this.

Davids was not the sort to forgive or forget. Just he could be—kind under some circumstances. He had done better than justice to Dan before; but under the strict injunction that the penalty's suspension depended on the culprit's quitting forever the opportunity to repeat the dereliction.

His personal alarm kept him from any worry over the ship. He did as he had been commanded—almost entirely by proxy through the boatswain's mate who handled the wheel. That he had not acquainted himself with the nature of the ground over which his orders would take him; that the captain's geniality had held a touch of the affectation Marion had once mentioned as the symptom of an approaching " spell "—these did not enter his head.

He had picked up the light on Cape Blanco a little after three bells. The wind and waves were so absolutely straight behind the ship as to leave it quite easy to keep the course without needing to allow for the slight twists such a sea would have given the ship, had the waves struck from any other quarter. He was able to keep tabs exactly on the light for the two hours that brought him to where it shone precisely from a point southeast by east of his position.

It was after making the turn that Dan began really to wish he had looked over the chart a little. His remembrances of Cape Blanco and the adjoining water were of the haziest. On the run down with Captain Davids they had passed the point well out to sea. He recalled vaguely that it was a place of difficult shoals, as indicated on Davids's charts.

It was the constant swerving of the ship which caused him such uneasiness as he felt.

It made difficult any absolute certainty that he was maintaining a perfectly true course as the net result of the veerings now necessary. By the very nature of the course prescribed, it could not be any too far off the shoals—a more gradual turn could have done if there were plenty of room.

But he had little more left of the first watch. It was certain that the next half hour could hardly get them ashore. After that—

Dan drew a long breath. The first strokes of the bell were bringing the captain's watch from their berths, grown uncomfortable with the rolling. Suppose the captain did not come!

He steadied himself. After all, the course could not be dangerous. The wind would sweep them off any shore toward which they might be getting close. And—he had his directions. There had been every indication of perfect competence on the captain's part of late. He was unlikely to prescribe a course without making due allowance for a sea condition of which he was thoroughly cognizant when he gave the orders. There must be plenty of leeway. Hope had said they would hold

this course throughout this middle watch. He would not have said it if it could not be done safely.

And yet—he wished he knew. Once he had taken a skipper's reckonings against his own sights. The results had been such as to warn him against repeating that folly. Now he feared to trust any man's reckoning but his own.

"Steady—steady!" he muttered at his own nervousness, though he covered the fact by clutching at the rail to save his balance in the lurch before a heavy sea.

"Steady!" There was really no comparison between that other case and this. Davids's reckonings had been doubtful at best. His own had been far more likely to be right.

Captain hope had not laid his course by any dead reckoning. It had been absolutely correct thus far. And this was sailing by land-marks. The light was still there. He hadn't lost his bearings at all yet.

Lord! But that was a sea! He had not quite realized what was in the weather. It was bad business to land on a beach in this—

Steady! Any beach he was likely to land on would be too calm to worry over, with the coast to windward. The tide would be low now. He could land high on a windward beach and get off again in a couple of hours. Besides—why should he imagine that Hope would have given a course to beach the ship?

Another sea! It flung its crest across the deck below. Dan called a word of caution down to the men, though it was not needed. He was growing over-cautious himself. But they were big seas. And he would be glad when the vessel was well out of them under the shelter of Cape Tres Puntas. He wished he knew better how long he might expect to have to sail before reaching that shelter.

And here came another. And—

Dan felt his hair rising on his scalp, the sense of a chill like a dash of cold water. The wave was breaking—just ahead! He heard the distinctive crash of the curled top tumbling over. It came—as was to be expected—from well to port. But—

Great God! There was the same boom of breaking water to starboard!

CHAPTER XXVI.

SARGASSO.

FOR the second time in his life Dan croaked orders and jerked the telegraph lever with the sickening sensation that he spoke and moved too late. There were differences. This time it was not his fault that he had obeyed orders too accurately.

But, as he realized all too well, the blame would lie the same as before. He was on the bridge.

"Hard a-port!" he had hoarsely bidden the two men he had put on the wheel, while he jerked the telegraph to "Full speed astern." But he was only too sure there was no hope of getting about or backing off the shoal for which he was headed.

He stood a half minute—a minute—two minutes—waiting for the first bump that would mean the vessel had grounded.

Then a wild hope sprang up. The ship was actually backing—and it had not hit. For once the miracle had happened in his behalf.

"Starboard helm—quick!" he shouted for the reversal of the steering. The steam gear rattled fast as the men spun the wheel over. Dan reached a shaking hand for the telegraph again, waiting for the moment when the turn could best be completed with forward motion.

Then he pushed it back and forth. It seemed as if he must suffocate in that gale, from sheer suspense.

What was the matter below? Why didn't they run their engines? He jerked frantically at the telegraph, replaced it at the order they seemed unable to obey—"Full speed ahead."

And then he knew—he had backed into kelp. His heart sank. The propeller was fouled thick. It would not turn half its normal speed. There would be no forward thrust if it did. In spite of what it was doing the ship still backed—backed toward—backed into the breakers.

But no—the propeller was clearing itself.

The engines were picking up. They would catch less going forward. And—the stern had not hit yet. There—

"Starboard helm!" he cried again—he had had to reverse that command before. The ship was answering forward steering now. If he could but run her off—it surely could not be that he had come far to the south of Tres Puntas. Probably a dozen shiplengths to the north, and he would be clear. If he could make those lengths!

She was doing it. They were out of the breakers. Now a little east of north! He glanced back, and saw Cape Blanco light astern, but well off the port quarter.

Kelp—seaweed—it was nothing else. He knew it now. But, by the way that light was blinking behind the waves, he must be almost at the end of its twenty-one miles of visibility. And—it couldn't be far to the end of the kelp.

Oh, he was out of it now. Clear! Safe!

He felt faint with relief. And then he got over the faintness and the relief. Head on, he had shoved straight in with the breakers all about, great walls of sea that crashed up under the stern and pushed it farther and farther.

Once more he telegraphed for reversed engines. Sluggishly they took up their task with the weed-bound propeller—too slowly—and yet slower and—

Dead!

He was helpless. The great bulk of steel beneath him was as helpless as a drifting scow. Its momentum carried it farther and farther into the surf, while Dan clung to the bridge's rail and waited for the dull thud that would be the beginning of the end.

The surf ended abruptly. The lifeless hulk drew her stern beyond it all. But the drift was slower and slower.

With a sudden wild impulse to know the worst, Dan dashed down into the chart-room. The captain had left the lantern burning low. Dan turned the flame up and stared down at the wide white sheet of heavy paper.

A fresh horror seized him. The captain had indicated his intended course with a line. That line had passed, with abundant room, between two weed-grown shoals. And—

The error had been his own. Had he kept straight on—breakers or no breakers—he would have passed through safe to the deep and comparatively calm waters of the bay. In terror—natural terror, since he had not known whither he went—he had turned. He had turned into one bank of tangling weeds, had got out of it, crossed the channel he should have kept, plunged into a second bank into which the wind was now driving him deeper and deeper toward the point where the ship's draft was greater than the few fathoms of the water's depth.

His fault! His error! His failure to obey! Even as he sank down into the chair before the chart, there came a thud that, he knew, wrenched the great plates and frames, though the jar was scarcely to be felt by a human being. Dan shuddered. It seemed as if he were paralyzed, unable to think or move, as he waited in fascinated horror for the next dull jerk that would mean another blow at the vital bottom of the ship, waited while the slow, heavy swell, to which the thick kelp held the waves behind the breakers, lifted the huge thing under him higher and higher, then dropped it lower and lower, until—

Dan leaped to his feet in sheer start. He had not expected anything like the heavy jerk that ended the second drop. He had not expected the shriek of terror that came up from the passage below—the terror of the evil woman brought suddenly to what she believed was the end of her wretched existence.

It was like the second recurrence of a horrible nightmare—those next moments. The rush of feet hither and yon; the wild cries of directions from men who really knew nothing to do; had nothing to do; the oaths of men who knew they had nothing to do—it was all as it had been before. It wanted only the appearance of the captain with eyes ablaze in a face of pallid white.

No—it wanted that he should be on the bridge. It was his place now. God knew whether the captain would come out of his stupor even while the ship sank under him.

There were orders to be given, order to be maintained, passengers and crew to save—the boats must be got ready for lowering at the final signs of the ship's breaking up, some one must be up there to see that the lowering was done right—must be all over the ship if that were possible, but certainly in the place from which he could see and make himself heard all over it.

Dan staggered to his feet. Another of those sickening lurches that no ship of steel was ever built to stand! It was enough to feel this time; it almost jerked him from his feet. Another shriek from the woman who had nothing in her life with which to shield herself from the terror of death!

Dan dashed up the bridge stairs, fearful lest the next drop would hurl him from them and render him helpless for the last assistance he could render.

Hardly had he reached the top when the last dread analogy between this and his first disaster was established. He shrank back from the opening in the floor after one glance down into the captain's face, as the light of the lantern below swung for a moment full upon it.

"Off—off that bridge!—you! Get off that bridge!" The voice that had stopped him was hoarse with rage and fear. "Get off, before I go mad to think I was ever fool enough to let you on it—before I shoot your carcass off it into that kelp. Off! *Off! Off!*"

The more than half insane man had reached the top, was rushing toward Dan, a pistol in each hand. He pressed forward, in his madness blocking the stair-head against Dan's retreat that way.

It was not fear of the weapons which backed Dan to the rail. He would have taken the chance of a shot in an attempt to disarm the man had the attack come in any ordinary circumstance. But the feeling of his own utter failure, of his hopeless future, the feeling that the wild-eyed skipper was justified in anything he might say or do—took from him all heart for fight, brought the sense of having no right to fight.

He gave one glance over his shoulder, at the blackness below. Quick, intuitive flashes told him there was nothing he could do aboard—with that madman in command—to save anybody there. And the madman would know, even in his madness, what he was to do, and would do it. As for himself, nothing could make things worse for any one so futile as his existence had proven. With a swift turn and a leap he had vaulted the rail and was plunging downward in a long dive for the black water below.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SEA'S OWN TENTACLES.

DAN'S plunge had not contemplated suicide. For that there was in him too much of the combination of Irish temperament and religion which makes his people almost immune against the last act of despair. Dan's desperation had been sufficient to take the fight out of him, to render him recklessly indifferent as to the chances he took in this mode of flight—but it was short of intent to wilful self-destruction.

The instant he had struck the water he was struggling frantically with the long, wet weeds, the unexpected feel of which brought the chill sense of tentacles reaching out to grip and tie him under the water. He had not taken the kelp into his hasty consideration. As a matter of fact, his terror of its grip on him was largely imaginary. He came up so swiftly that his head struck on some heavy bit of driftwood with a blow that almost stunned him.

To this he clung instinctively, while he sought to drag his wits back into condition to think—at least to gather some will to action not wholly the product of frenzy such as the contact with the slimy weeds had momentarily induced. His first sane effort brought the assurance that the thing which had nearly knocked out the last of his wits was amply large to keep him afloat so long as he might be able to cling to it. His strongest thrusts hardly brought a quiver of movement in what seemed to be a long and heavy timber. It might be possible even to balance himself over it, stretched full length, if he grew too tired to hang from it as now.

The water was colder than he had

thought to find it. He quickly decided that the air would prove warmer in the long run. The timber seemed very heavy. He started to move along it, lest an attempt to climb onto its end would merely sink it.

Suddenly there was a tremendous splash behind him and to his left. The timber was jerked from his grasp as if by a heavy blow. For one fraction of a second he thought something had been hurled from the ship above. Then a slippery bulk shot under his feet, almost jerking him after it as an abrupt angle in its end caught and twisted his legs beneath him.

The next instant Dan was upon the timber, every nerve and muscle of his frame aquiver with cold horror. The thing that had struck the log had aimed at him. He was in the lair of a shark. Before he could adjust himself to the precarious perch below, a flash of light threw everything about him into bold relief.

He knew Captain Hope was sending up a rocket as signal for aid. But neither the ship's need or prospect of getting help interested him so much just then as what he had seen hardly a yard beyond the spot to which he had scrambled on his timber. This was a flat surface of planking hardly less than a dozen square feet in size. The stringer on which he rested was probably a ship's timber to which a good deal of planking still held. Kelp-covered shoals are ever the final resting places of all the ocean's drift which does not grow too heavy to float before reaching them.

It was some moments before he could summon courage to attempt gaining the raft thus provided. The great fish that had struck at him had left him in what would have been a cold sweat of fear, had he not been too wet to feel any sweat. But a second rocket showed him plainly that the timber joined the raft. He could have walked on it, so far as concerned any danger of its turning with him. But he crawled carefully—the incessant rise and fall of the heavy swells made care necessary. And the heavens might have started to fall on him without his raising his eyes from the surface of the water to note the fresh disturbance. He had made no personal observations of a shark's ability to leap for a prey on the surface—and he desired no experience.

But once in the center of the raft, with a good five feet of four-inch planking between him and any point from which the ferocious fish might attack, he grew calm enough to take some interest in what might be going on aboard the huge bulk of iron which had moved but a few feet from him since he had leaped from its bridge.

A third rocket shot into the air. Up on the deck he saw the preparations making for the lowering of the boats. A sudden wave of regret came over him. Above the boom of the surf but a few hundred yards away, he could hear the sharp commands of Edwards and the skipper. They seemed to be having some trouble in holding the frightened sailors in order.

Up there was action and need for more action. And he was out of it. Never provided with a full complement of officers since he had known her, the ship was now deficient by one more. There would be that much less chance with the boats. There were enough of these to carry the crew and passengers—there were none to spare in poor launching. He shuddered to think what would happen to any who depended for salvation upon life-preservers. It was too much to hope that the shark was alone.

Why was he not there? Why had he left them to add his share to their dangers and work? Why hadn't he taken the chance of a leap at the captain in his frenzy? He cursed himself for a coward.

Oh, God! Was that Marion whose white dress showed even in the darkness above the ship's high edge? Did she need him? And—

Merciful Heaven! The vessel was gone already. The flare of the fourth rocket showed her deck-line buckled all out of true. Her frames had given, her plates below must have crumpled up. Water must be pouring into her as if her sides were sieves. She could not wholly sink in the present depth of the water; but she would topple over and dump everybody in the grassy, shark-ridden water.

Her instant peril was realized aboard. The crew were crowding into the boats.

Dan heard the captain bellowing in rage beside the first boat on this side—

"Women first, damn you! I'll shoot the next man that moves toward that boat. Here—Marion—here, madam—here, you! Quick now—no—back—*back*, I say. —— —— you, will you get back! Now—lower away—

"Keep this side the breakers until the other ship comes. You'll never be able to get through them on this side. She's only a couple of miles back. Don't get—"

His words were interrupted by a sudden scream, ending in a series of splashes blended into one hissing roar. Dan heard the captain shriek another curse. Then there was one more splash.

Dan got to his feet, colder with this fresh horror than all the others had made him. He was in time to catch a glimpse of the white of the lifeboat's side as, with a rush of the ropes through the blocks, it came hurtling down upon the heads of the helpless women and men it had dumped before it into the grass-tangled sea.

The whole awful thing had caught him in the midst of a realization that his own plight was serious—a discovery that, much as he might regret his absence on behalf of those who needed him, he regretted more on his own behalf.

They would be rescued. He would be left here in the darkness, unable to make himself heard above the sea's roar. The great hull would hide him from view of those who might possibly see from the shore full fifteen miles away. The sharks would prevent his leaving this perch for any attempt to get into range of glasses on the beach by clambering up to the top of the wreck.

But now he stepped swiftly to the edge of the raft. He must get them to its comparative safety. They could not hear him above their own cries of fear. The heavy planking gave a little under his weight.

He leaped back with a shudder. He had momentarily forgotten the shark. The downward glance, in effort to pick a comparatively thin spot in the weed tangle, had served to remind him. At the same instant the creak of pulley blocks brought another reminder, that there were other hopes than his too narrow raft for those who still floundered in the water, even for those who had been wounded or knocked senseless by the falling boat. Probably they were all provided with life-preservers. Nothing he could do could prevent any or all of them becoming the prey of the sharks. The boat could do that better than he.

Could it? Hardly could the oars have had time to be drawn through half a dozen strokes before Dan's fascinated eyes saw the red side-light of the ship start swiftly in a quarter-arc toward the sea—saw the deck-line sink, then rise from its opposite side. For one brief instant the whole deck stood out in the dim light of the lanterns which swung level until they sputtered out.

Like a last mocking grin from fate, the bridge had come down to within less than a hundred feet of the spot on which he stood—that part of the vessel on which his unfitness to stand had been the cause of all this. The green starboard light at its rail seemed to blink at him before it smoked itself black and went out with a little flash as the oil poured into the flame.

But this was no time to think of fancy pranks of fate. Had the boat escaped the toppling side of the ship? Had the helpless people in the water been crushed down into the mud of the bottom to make their last struggle for air and life there? The decks had all been clear—not even the captain seemed to have remained for the ignominious end. Dan's eyes throbbed with the strain as he sought to see some sign of the dory's white. His own raft was nearly upset by the heavy wave the ship's turning had made.

Slowly—it seemed to Dan, though it probably took him but seconds—he knew the boat was gone. It seemed that all the rest were gone. He could see nothing—nothing but the great curved sweep of the City of Altoona's side.

Slowly the ghastly thought grew into an unbearable grief—he was the cause of their going. His blunder had turned a splendid ship into that shapeless hulk. His blunder—and they were gone—

She was gone. Marion—the girl he had loved and lost and still loved and would always love—dead!

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!" he groaned.

And here came the other ship—the gleam of her bow-light shot across the wide bosoms of the swells. She was running up signal lights on her derrick mast—he read them slowly as they shifted to spell out the message of hope—

"We'll make the lee side of the shoal and have boats to you," he translated the thing that was spelled in lights that might have been spelling safety had they not shone too late for all but him.

For him? No—he would hide himself from their view if they came too near. He would stay here—until he starved and died. He knew that not even that fate could ever drive him to end his life by the shark's aid. But—they should not take him to safety and leave her dead.

The other ship was shifting her course to fulfil her promise. The bow-light shone straight across at him, brightened as the center of its reflector came directly into line with his eyes.

Was that something that had moved while the long, broken beam touched it? Dan could not be sure. The red port-light failed to show it. The stern-light—

It was—it was some one moving in the water! God knew who it was. There had been not less than eighteen in that boat when it had spilled over. But—one chance in eighteen that it was Marion!

"To hell with the shark!" Dan cried, in a sort of fierce ecstasy. The faintest of hopes was a pinnacle of joy compared with the absolute blank of his previous moment's despair. He flung himself forward into the water with all the push he could give, toward the spot where there had seemed some sign of life.

Five minutes of swimming through the tangled weeds had well-nigh driven from his thought the memory of the shark's existence. It appeared that he could never cover the distance he must make, that anyone could drown a thousand times before he could reach—her. He could not think of its being any one but Marion.

Surely this was the place. He had tried to mark it well by the method that is second instinct with a seaman—the spot just below the forward davits—it would be almost exactly the line of the derrick-mast.

What if it were but the derrick-boom waving slowly from its hinge at the base of the mast? Dan had not thought of that. He groaned now that it came to him as the most probable explanation of what he had seen.

He would find the boom's end and be sure. One direction was as likely as another to bring him to a better object of his efforts. He circled again. Two of the difficult strokes—and—

Dan thought he would drown under the weight of hope's fresh impulse. He touched the thing again—it was what he had thought—a hand. He caught it—it was a woman's hand, soft and small.

"Marion! Marion!" He tried to shout at the top of what voice he had breath for.

But he must not waste time here in fruitless efforts to get her to respond to her name. He got his left arm under her neck. There was a life-preserver. It had come off and hung from its strap almost free. Marion should have known better how to put it on; some one should have helped her. But—

He must get back to his raft.

Oh, Heaven! The seaweed. He no longer had free use of his hands to push it aside. It bundled up over the head of the half-drowned burden—clung and dragged at the arm that supported her. It tangled about his own head; long streamers off it washed clear over his face as he swam on his back; they got into his mouth as he tried to breathe; they shut up his nostrils; it seemed that his legs, sufficiently impeded with shoes and clothing at the best, were becoming as fouled as the propeller of the lost ship must have been.

He could scarce move at times. Over and over he was forced to stop and waste time and energy in pulling off some of the kelp so that he could use his free arm and his legs at all.

Suddenly he realized that his strength was giving out. The discovery came as a surprise. It was a thing that had not happened to him in swimming since he was a boy. He raised his head enough to get some bearings.

Good Heaven! Was that all he had done? It seemed as if he had hardly shifted the angles of the deck and bridge at all. For a moment he wondered if he were not nearer the bridge than his raft. He knew better. And the float was the sort of thing onto which a half-drowned person could be dragged out of the water and resuscitated.

He must make it. He fought down the ache, forced himself to breathe deep and long, pushed harder against the quickly gathering weeds. No—he would not trouble to look back again. He needed even the strength he would waste in looking. He could see the upper edge of the bridge enough to keep from turning hopelessly around as he swam on his back; and that must be his consolation until he was nearer the raft.

But—what was that? Had the thing his foot had struck moved? He began to thresh furiously with his flagging strength stimulated by the terror of the dark, hidden thing against whose attack there could be neither warning nor struggle. But now his fear was not for himself, but for he helpless form he strove with all his threshing yet to keep at the surface.

The instinctive, almost involuntary and entirely bootless floundering into which that touch had driven him had used up the last of his strength. He found himself completely exhausted. His muscles refused to move. Only the second instinct of the trained swimmer enabled him to float and pant for breath so rapidly that he kept too little air in his lungs.

Once more terror galvanized into action. He dragged himself up, coughing, strangling. Came the realization that he had used the limp form he would rescue as a drowning man uses anything in reach. And he had plunged the head far below the surface and held it there.

He tried to steady his nerves, to drive away the panic that was assailing him—that could only end in death, since it would deprive him of all sane use of the swimmer's means to keep afloat. Again he tore at the weeds that tangled in his arms and legs.

A stroke—a stroke that pained him from head to foot as if with the blows of a hundred hammers—a breath that seemed too much work for the good it did him—another stroke—another—

His hand struck the end of the log against which he had first bumped his head after his plunge from the ship's bridge. A moment he floundered hopelessly, unable to grasp at the thing. Then he hung, gasping, coughing, strangling—slipping!

No—he could not stay here. He could not hang on. He must do more—do it whether he could or not. He must get her onto the float. It would not matter whether he got onto it himself, save that he would have to, in order to drag her there.

Twice he lost his grip on the log—once his burden all but dropped out of his grasp. He had reached the planking spiked to that big timber. He could clutch at the twisted end of a long dowel projecting above the level. But—he could not raise himself.

After all, he must lift her first. He would never try to lift himself. She would have to lie there—he would have to hang here, until the shark got him or he lost the strength to hang on and went down.

With a heave that seemed to tear his arms from their sockets, he thrust the limp form upward until it bent at the waist, and toppled, face down, on the planks, Lord, but she was heavy! He had never dreamed that Marion was of such weight—or such girth.

What—what if it were not Marion? What if it were—

Oh, God! No! He would not believe it. No—he would get out there yet and haul her up and bring her back to life and—love—God help him!

But he could not get up. His tired muscles had no strength in them.

His brain was going—in his ears beat something that sounded like oars and could not be oars. Before his eyes things brightened with a quick flash, then darkened again. He could not turn to see what it was. He knew—it was the reaction of nerves slowly losing their grip on life.

Well—he had saved her—yes, *her!* It must be she! Perhaps—perhaps Captain Hope—perhaps even Captain Davids would forgive him when they saw what he had done. Perhaps—surely, God would forgive

him. It was a little easier to forgive himself.

What was that? A voice—"Steady—mate! Hold hard!" Yes—he must keep steady as he went out. Oh—it wasn't so bad as he had feared. The light was beginning to shine—

Could it be that heaven's gates were opening at the end of his futile life—could it be because this last thing he had done was good, and—

But there was nothing angelic about the voice which suddenly burst behind him with:

"The mate—and her! Leave them—leave them—

"Leave him! —— —— him—he sunk my ship! and now he's brought her —— —— ——" Captain Hope's voice trailed off into unprintable profanity, as Dan opened his eyes and, in the full light of an electric torch, caught sight of the face of the limp form three men had turned over from the position to which he had got it.

And then all lights were going out for Dan Corwin. It did not matter. Nothing mattered. Nothing could ever matter. He had seen the coarse visage of Panama Liz!

He came back to consciousness with another voice in his ears—another voice high and harsh with sudden, fierce indignation—the voice of the other captain under whom he had sunk a ship—

"Him! Him! Your mate! Dan Corwin!

"By the Eternal, I told you I'd send him to prison if he ever dared mount the bridge of a ship again—and I'll do it if it's the last thing I do in this world."

But that did not matter. In the depths of his misery nothing could add to what was already infinite woe.

(To be concluded NEXT WEEK.)

The Fifth Husband

by Artemus Calloway

PETE gazed with open-mouthed wonder as Short Legs Jady unfolded his tale of wo. Mr. Jady's story of his troubles was long, it was blue, and was related in a manner indicating that Mr. Jady considered this world a howling wilderness and had discovered it to be full of wo.

Short Legs was sitting humped over in one of Pete's time-worn cane-bottomed chairs, his rakish, straw-colored felt hat resting on the floor beside him. From time to time he glanced anxiously toward the door, as if half-expecting some one whose companionship he wasn't exactly anxious for.

Mr. Jady's ordinarily happy-go-lucky expression had been supplanted by a look of dark, hopeless gloom, while in his rolling eyes there burned an expression of deep, brooding resentment, intermixed with fear.

A macaw screamed in the jungle back of the house, and Mr. Jady sprang to his feet.

"Set down, brudder. Keep yo' shoes on. Dat ain' nothin' only 'scusin' a macaw, an' dem fussy birds ain' nothin' to be skeered of," counseled Mr. Jady's host.

With a sheepish grin, Short Legs re-

turned to his chair. But every time the macaw shrieked, Mr. Jady jumped and squirmed around until Pete thanked his lucky stars when the bird became silent. Mr. Jady's power as a conversationalist then improved.

Pete's many years of experience on this earth had taught him that he who proves a good listener is considered a wise man. And Pete gloried in being considered wise. For this reason and because of his sympathetic grunts he was making a big hit with Mr. Jady.

Bones, Pete's dog of uncertain pedigree, seemed to have absorbed some of his master's sympathetic attitude. Stretched at Pete's feet, his ungainly head resting on his forelegs, he gazed at the wobegone visitor as if he fully understood every word that individual uttered, and that being a man-dog, and fully acquainted with the uncertainty of the female mind, his heart ached for a fellow being in distress.

Short Legs' voice, deep and rumbling, at times not unlike distant thunder, went on and on. He had much to relate, and understood his task thoroughly.

"Yassuh, Mistah Pete," he was saying. "I's heerd all de cullud fo'ks 'roun' head say as how you's been down heah in Honduras a long time, an' how you knows ev'ybody, an' knows de whys an' whuffos o' ev'ything, which is why I's come to git you to he'p me out'n disyeah mess I's done got in."

Pete straightened in his chair. His chest expanded just a bit. Praise of his abilities makes no man your enemy, and certainly not if that man is a Pete. Originally from the States, but for more than twenty years past a resident of Honduras, Pete gloried in his knowledge of that country and its inhabitants.

"Sho' is been down heah a long time. Ev'ybody knows me. Mos' ev'ybody calls me Slave'y Time Pete. Some calls me Pete Presley, which is mah name. Mighty few 'Merican niggahs heah lak us is, mos'ly white 'Mericans, white natives, black natives, an' British objects, an' I's mighty glad you's come to be wid us."

Short Legs shifted uneasily in his chair. "I wuz glad mahse'f, Mistah Pete, but I can't say dat I's kep' on bein' glad. When a man gits disapp'inted in his ma'ied life, de worl' begins to look kind o' scrambunctious."

"Sho' do," agreed Pete in no uncertain tones. "But is you quite sho' dat yo' troubles is all ambitious?" Pete knew some lengthy words, too.

"How you means ambitious? I jes' don' prezactly understan'."

Pete looked at his visitor as if feeling great pity for such ignorance. "Ambitious," he said slowly, "means sumpthin' whut is sho' 'nough. If'n I thinks dat somebody is tryin' to do me dirt, an' is troubled 'bout it, an' den fin's out dat dey is, why mah troubles is ambitious."

"Dat's right. Well, I esspects mah troubles is ambitious, all right. Jes' lak I been tellin' you I wuz livin' over dah at Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, wukin' foh de Fruit Company. I hadn't been down dah long, havin' jes' got down fum de States. Den Missus Fatima Brown come over dah fum Tele. She wuz visitin' frien's, an' right away I liked her mighty well. O' course I heerd 'bout how she's got property heah in Honduras, but dat didn't make no diff'nce wid me. I don' hol' nothin' lak dat agin a nice-lookin' 'oman."

Short Legs paused for a moment and peered out the door. There was nothing of interest in sight. The only sign of life outside the house was an iguana sunning himself in the top of a nearby palm, and a few chickens around the front gate.

Short Legs continued: "Dat 'oman is one o' deseyeah kin' o' womens whut makes you sympathise wid her right away when she gits to tellin' you 'bout how sad she wuz when her husban' died. Putty soon I done got marryin' in mah haid. Seems lak she wuz 'flicted de same way, so us's ups an' gits ma'ied."

Short Legs shuffled his feet around, straightened his tie, and appeared to be thinking deeply. Then he went on:

"Dat paht o' it wuz all right. I done give up mah job in Barrios an' come over heah, 'cause you know dey's transferrin' some o' de peoples fum de plantations over dah to de ones heah, lak dey does some times. Dey wuz also good reasons why I

wuz anxious to git away fum over dah, an' I wuz glad to come to Tela to live."

Short Legs paused impressively. Bones bounced up off the floor, ran to the door, and after looking around a bit, came back and made himself comfortable on the floor again.

"Now I fin's," continued Short Legs, "dat mah wife is got de property whut she is claimed to have. An' I's done foun' out *mo'*. Instead o' bein' a widow 'oman *one* time, she is a widow 'oman *fo'* times, an' she's got one o' de meanest little ol' boys 'bout twelve yeahs ol' I evah is seed. Dat 'oman didn't tell me nothin' 'bout no husban' 'scusin' jes' only one. An' she nevah tol' me nothin' 'bout dat boy *a tall*. An—"

At this point Short Legs' voice took on a tone of deeper resentment than had been apparent since he entered the room.

"—dey's another thing dat's wrong, an' dat's de wust o' all. An' dat is dat Fatima wa'n't lis'n to movin' out o' dat house o' hern whut us lives in, an' *ev'yone* o' dem fus' fo' husban's is done died in dat house. An' dey all died in de night time, too!"

Pete nodded a brisk assent. "Sho' is de truf! I 'membahs all 'bout dem husban's. You see, Fatima is been mos'ly in favor o' 'Merican niggahs as husban's de las' times she got ma'ied, but de fus' time she ma'ied a British object fum Jamaica. Dat's whuh she got all dat property. It b'longed to him. She's a 'Merican niggah 'oman an' I 'lows as how she thinks she's got all de property she needs, an' a quick riddance o' her fus' husban', she'd stick to 'Merican niggahs after dat."

Pete reached down and patted Bones on the head before continuing. "Sho' wuz pow'ful 'bout dat fus' husban'. His name wuz 'Zekiel Hogg. I kin 'membah jes' as cleah as if'n it wuz dis mawnin', 'bout his death. Seemed lak he'd been 'roun' town kind o' late an' after he got home him an' Fatima had a 'spute. Dey got dat all fixed up, an' 'Zekiel went to bed.

"Dey ain't many real p'is'nous snakes in dis country, but one o' dat kin' wuz in dat bed. Po' 'Zekiel jes' only lived 'bout th'ee hours after makin' de 'quaintance o' de snake. 'Course nobody ain' blamed Fatima, 'cause dey knowed she ain't put de snake in de bed. Fatima might chop you up some wid a razor, but she wouldn't put a snake in yo' bed. Dat snake jes' got dah on his own account. Dat's liable to happen anywhah dey is snakes."

Short Legs nodded understandingly. "But anyhow," continued Pete, "she wuz lef' a widow wid one boy child. De nex' th'ee husban's wuz 'Mericans, same as you. De fus' one o' dat crowd wuz Sincere Goodgame. Sincere done had a fondness foh gin, an' one night 'bout midnight he died fum delirious tinpans. Dat's whut de doctah said is been ail Sincere. Den, Theoretical Butterick wuz husban' number th'ee."

Pete paused impressively. "Po' Theoretical jes' only lasted th'ee weeks. One night jes' after midnight, somebody called him to de do', an' when he stepped out dah, somebody took an' shot po' Theoretical daid. He jes' ain't kicked but 'bout two times. 'Course dey wa'n't nothin' strange 'bout dat, as Theoretical had a lot o' enemies 'roun' town, 'count o' bein' a crooked sort o' niggah, but bein's he wuz de third husban' to die in dat house, an' in de night-time, too, people commenced feelin' kind o' cu'ious 'bout it."

Short Legs shuddered. *He* was feeling kind o' cu'ious right then. Pete continued: "Den come husban' numbah fo'. Dat wuz Jugberry Brown. Jugberry done drunk ten o' twelve glasses o' gin down at de Railroad Salume one night, an' when he got home Fatima had cabbage foh supper. Jugberry done et hisse'f a lot o' dat cabbage an' went to bed.

"Nex' mawnin' about ten minutes to one, de doctah advised dat all de doctahs an' medicine in de worl' couldn't save po' Jugberry. De doctah wuz right so fur as one o' de doctahs an' part o' de medicine wuz concerned. At prezactly th'ee minutes after one Jugberry's spirit wuz flew.

"No suh!" And Pete shook his head solemnly. "I wouldn't live in dat house jes' even one night foh all de money dey is in de worl'! Not even if'n it wuz a thousan' dollahs."

Both host and guest were silent for a few minutes. Then Pete looked Short Legs straight in the eye. "Wid de essception o'

de fus' husban', ain' none o' dem niggahs lived in dat house long 'nough to git familious wid whuh he hangs up his pants. An' you's husban' numbah five. How many nights is you spent in dat house?"

A convulsive shudder passed over Short Legs' body. "Jes' only th'ee, countin' to-night. An' to-night ain' come yit."

Short Legs raised his hat from the floor, looked at it carefully for a moment, and dropped it again.

Pete ran a hand over his shiny head, which was entirely bald except for a little fringe of gray at the back, drew a long-stemmed clay pipe from his pocket, and after filling and lighting it, sent great clouds of smoke floating through the room.

Short Legs, after waiting for a moment, continued: "Dat little ol' boy o' mah wife's jes' pesters de life out'n me. I ain't lak dat boy one bit."

"Sho' is one bad little ol' boy. I knows him," sympathised Pete.

"An' now dey is sumpthin' else whut is been added to mah troubles," said Short Legs mournfully. "Look lak de devil is been settin' up nights plannin' trouble foh me. Over dah in Puerto Barrios befo' I become a husban', I done had up a little case wid a 'Merican yaller gal, named Benzine Rose. Dey wuz also another man whut laked her. He goes by de name o' One Shot Joe. He gits dat name 'cause he ain' never been took but one shot at no niggah he's got a expute wid. One shot allus do de bus'ness. He'd a took dat one shot at me one time, 'scusin' I done vacated de premises when he got his shootin' i'n out."

Short Legs shook his head slowly and rolled his eyes as if the memory of that narrow escape yet remained with him in its most unpleasant form. "Right den an' dah I broke off wid dat Benzine gal, but she didn't broke off. She jes' kep' pesticatin' 'roun'. You knows dey's some womens whut ain' sati'fied less'n somebody's gitten shot up 'bout 'em. Benzine is dat kin'."

Pete nodded understandingly. Short Legs continued: "Well, 'bout dat time One Shot Joe went 'way fum 'roun' dah. He went up on de Guatemala plantations somewhah. He felt dat I'd be sho' an' let his gal 'lone, an' his jedgment wa'n't tellin' him no lie. An' now what you thinks happened?" Pete didn't know, and said so.

"Well, I gwine tell you whut's done happened. Dat Benzine gal done come over heah, an' got her a job cookin' foh some white fo'ks. An' fuddermo', dat One Shot Joe he gwine be over heah to-morrow. Now I see whut gwine happen. Dat gal done met me down de street dis mawnin' an she smiled at me sumpthin' scan'lous. An' if'n mah wife see anything lak'n to dat, dey ain't gwine be 'nough left o' me to wad one o' deseyeah little single barrel shotguns, an' One Shot Joe he gwine finish up dat little bit whut mah wife leaves."

"Job had one mos' hilarious time countin' 'longside o' you," Pete commented.

"Job wuz overflowin' wid joy o' de soul, countin' 'longside o' de disturbances whut is makin' me wish de moon would drap on me. An' sumpthin' is got to be did."

"Jes' whut is it you wants me to do?"

"De fus' thing, I wants mah wife to move out'n dat *husban' dyin' house*. After dat I thinks I'll be more able to prognosticate some wid mah haid. I's heerd you's de smartest man 'roun' heah, an' I wants yo' persistence. If'n you'll git mah wife to move out'n dat house I'll give you fifty dollahs good cash moneys foh yo' trouble. An' I's got de cash. Jes' is got dat 'mount."

"Whut you's aimin' to do heah?"

"Mah wife done 'low as how she gwine set me up a little sto' bus'ness. But fus' I wants it git moved, 'cause I knows if'n us stays in dat house, some o' dese mawnin's I gwine wake up daid."

"Well, I thinks I kin persuade yo' wife to move, but I ain't takin' *no chances* 'bout money matters. You pay me ten dollahs in 'vance foh de trouble I gwine be put to, an' come wid me over to de United Fruit Company offices whuh Mistah Phil Rozier wuks at, an' us'll git a paper fixed up whut say you gwine pay me forty dollahs mo' when de movin' is did. I 'grees to have you moved in two weeks."

Short Legs did not relish the idea of paying the ten dollars in advance, but having no alternative, he reluctantly did so, and forty-five minutes later, chuckling over the

agreement that he had drawn up for the two men, Phil Rozier locked a signed paper in his safe, and turned back to his work.

Leaving Short Legs as soon as possible, Pete proceeded to make the acquaintance of Benzine. Benzine was what is known as a " high yaller," and Pete didn't find her in the least hard on the eyes. Besides that, she had sense. Not long after his call upon Benzine, Pete proceeded to call upon Mrs. Short Legs Jady. Mr. Jady was not at home.

With Mrs. Jady Pete held much conversation, most of it dealing with the kind of vampirish creature Benzine was. Mrs. Jady, it appeared, had heard something of the one-time affair between the yellow girl and Short Legs. And Mrs. Jady loved Benzine not.

Mrs. Jady was a big woman. Mrs. Jady was a black woman. And Mrs. Jady was a woman with a mind of her own.

" I gwine keep mah eyes open," she announced. " An' if'n I sees any monkey-shines gwine on, some niggah gwine think Gabriel done blowed his trumpet."

Early next morning Mr. Short Legs Jady called upon one Mr. Peter Presley. He had dallied not in his journey, had Mr. Jady, and he dallied not in getting to the subject that was uppermost in his mind.

" Mistah Pete, us is got to do sumpthin'. An' us is got to do it quick."

Pete glanced at Short Legs sharply. " Meanin' 'bout which?"

" Dat Benzine is done rented a room fum some fo'ks whut lives right nex' to us, an' is done moved in. An' she been makin' eyes at me. An' mah wife is been makin' eyes at bofe o' us. She done got all het up, mah wife is. She done 'low dat it look lak she gwine be a widow agin, an' dat disyeah time she think she gwine git in de co'ts 'bout it. When a niggah 'oman git to thinkin' an' tawkin' lak'n to dat, she done got her min' on a razor."

These words were music to Pete's soul. The conversation with Benzine had brought good results. He had not expected her to get located so soon. " Things sho' is lookin' bad foh you, Brer Jady," he commented.

Mr. Jady sniffed. " Don't only look bad. Things *is* bad wid me. Now you mus' hurry up an' git mah wife in de notion to move out'n dat house. One Shot Joe is gwine be heah to-day. An' if'n dat gal is lookin' out o' her window makin' eyes at me when he git heah—well, dey gwine be a niggah fun'ral in dis town, an' mah wife is gwine be a widow agin."

" One Shot Joe gwine wuk on de plantations?"

" I don't think so. I think he got some money saved up, an' I hear he gwine staht a salume heah. I don' keer whut he do, if'n mah wife jes' only moves out'n dat house an' us gits way fum dat gal. Maybe One Shot Joe'll marry her, an' den all will not be so wuss."

That afternoon Short Legs was at Pete's house again. This time he was scared stiff. " I done met mah stepson, Romantic," he told Pete. " An' he 'low as how One Shot Joe is heah, an' is been at mah house lookin' foh me. Dat Benzine gal is dah, an' mah wife is dah. An' bofe mah wife an' One Shot Joe want to fin' me. Sumpthin' gwine happen 'roun' heah dat all de fo'ks gwine tawk 'bout, but I ain't gwine do none o' de tawkin'. I gwine be sleepin' out yonder in de grave-yahd."

" Whut do One Shot Joe want wid you?"

" Romantic—dat's a fine name foh a boy, ain't it? Well, Romantic is done said he don' know whut, but I nows whut it is. He jes' need a little target practice an' he wants me to be de target."

" Whyn't you go find out?" asked Pete. Short Legs gazed upon Slavery Time Pete as if he knew that individual must be hopelessly insane. " Whyn't you twist a rattlesnake's tail?" he demanded. " I ain't gwine commit no susincide."

And then Short Legs looked out the door and saw One Shot Joe. Joe stepped inside the gate and Short Legs leaped out the window.

" Whu'd dat little Short Legs niggah go?" One Shot Joe wanted to know a moment later.

Pete appeared thoughtful. " If'n he ain't stopped, I respect he done gone somewhuh."

" You's a fol!" snorted the other. " Tawk sense wid me."

A slow grin spread over Pete's face.

" Yassuh, I sho' gwine do dat. Now whut you wants wid Short Legs?"

This question brought on considerable conversation and ended by One Shot Joe handing Pete ten dollars. " Now, ol' niggah," cautioned One Shot Joe as he left the house, " if'n you double-crosses me, you knows whut gwine happen wid you. You knows mah reputation."

" Sho' do. An' I ain' gwine do no double-crossin'. An' ain' gwine nothin' happen wid me."

After One Shot Joe left, Pete strolled away from his little home, which was situated on the east side of Tela, just a little way from where the homes of the United Fruit Company employees stood. His steps led downward. On the bridge spanning Tela River which divided new and old Tela, he paused for a moment watching half a dozen fish swim lazily around in the water below. Then he moved on.

Inquiry at the Jady home brought the information that Short Legs hadn't shown up. Pete indulged in more conversation here, and as he was leaving Mrs. Jady handed him a ten-dollar bill to place with what he already possessed.

Late that afternoon Short Legs showed up at Pete's little house, tired and hungry. The day had been spent in the jungle, or at least that part of it that had elapsed after Short Legs' hurried departure, and the vines, undergrowth, and mosquitoes had been most unkind. Food and coffee had wonderfully reviving effects, and Short Legs soon appeared to have regained some of his conversational powers.

" I tell you whut I done decided," he declared. " I done foun' out dat I's too much ma'ied, an' I's gwine 'way fum heah. I gwine slip over dah to mah wife's house, an' tell her some excuse 'bout whuh I been. Den I gwine wait till in de night, an' git some o' mah clo's, an' go fum heah."

Pete thought deeply for a minute. " All right, Short Legs, dat seems lak de bes' plan to me. You go on over dah an' slip in. 'Pears lak One Shot Joe ought not to be ramblin' 'roun' after you now."

Pete waited until after Short Legs had left the house, and then followed along behind, mumbling to himself. " Wonder whut One Shot Joe is so anxious to git up wid dat Short Legs foh nohow. I sho' is havin' to wuk foh dis money."

Short Legs paused and listened when he reached the front door of his wife's home. A dim light burned in the front room, but all was quiet. He tiptoed into the room.

Leaning back in Fatima's best rocker, calm and serene, was Benzine. Short Legs started right out again. And then a strong hand reached out and clutched him by the throat. Short Legs whirled like a cat, and found himself gazing into the dreaded face of One Shot Joe!

" Tuhn mah husban' loose," a voice boomed, and Fatima entered the front door, closely followed by Pete. Pete, in his hasty search for One Shot Joe in order to tell him where he might find Short Legs, had discovered Mrs. Jady instead.

" You is de hardest niggah to keep up wid I evah is seed," complained Mrs. Jady. " Heah Mistah One Shot Joe, who is ma'ied to Miss Benzine, is bought dis house, an' is livin' in it, an' us couldn't fin' you to sign de papers wid me."

" Dey ma'ied? You done sol' dis house?"

" Yeah, us is ma'ied," laughed One Shot Joe. " Us got ma'ied in Guatemala. Benzine laked dis house de fus' time she seed it. An' I ain' mad wid you no mo'. I jes' been tryin' to fin' you to tell you 'bout it, an' git you to sign de papers so us could pay yo' wife de money. She done bought another place an' is already pahtly moved."

" But I thought you wouldn't move fum heah?" gasped Short Legs, turning to his wife.

" 'Pen' on who lives nex' door to me!" snapped his better half, glaring at Benzine. Benzine glanced at Pete and laughed.

" An' ev'ybody is happy an' de goose hangs high," laughed Pete as his hand closed over some crumpled bills in his pocket, and he thought of forty dollars more coming his way.

" Huh!" grunted Short Legs, as he, too, thought of that forty. " If'n dat ain' jes' lak niggahs! Run a man to death an' skull-drag aroun' heah lak dat when straight out bus'ness would be heaps cheaper, an' a blame sight me' easy on de mind."

Naked Men of Naga

by Gordon MacCreagh

Author of "Tact And Some Diplomacy," etc.

CHAPTER X.

THROUGH THE LINES.

SUDDENLY his rifle barrel, reaching forward, touched something! Something that yielded soft, and shrank back! His finger tensed on the trigger and he thrust boldly forward to keep the contact. Then the silence was shattered by a chattering howl of terror of unmistakable caliber, which was immediately followed by a blundering, crashing flight off to the right.

The pent breath of Van Eyck in the rear escaped in a thin whistle, and Poonoosawmi squealed, once, in his excitement.

"Gor-blast! Shut up!" hissed Smith, bounding back to them. "Come ahead now! That yelping coolie will draw them better than a brass band!"

He caught Van Eyck by the arm and half dragged, half lifted him along, steering him between snags and stumps with what seemed to the other's inexperienced eyes an inhuman clarity of vision. Under cover of the yelping coolie's flight they made another sixty yards or so; and then Smith suddenly stopped again with such abruptness that Van Eyck ran into him.

A bamboo stem had slicked against another loudly. Van Eyck's blood was racing through his veins with a full force pressure that was something entirely new to him. He could not help noticing it, even in the present excitement, and focussing his scientific mind upon its analysis.

It was not fear, of that he was sure; for he felt that he wanted to whoop and dash forward as he used when he played three-quarter back at college. It was rather a fierce exhilaration, new to him, born of the jungle and the night, and the new, strenuous game that he played.

"What's up now?" he whispered eagerly.

"Sh! They've got the hearing of bats! Don't know. Bamboo stems don't rattle so near to the ground."

They stood as they had been struck, balanced on precarious toes, not daring to put foot to ground. The faintest suggestion of a rustle came from ahead. Something else had made the foolish move first. Smith reached out a vast hand for Poonoosawmi in the dark, and lifted him clear of crunching leaves.

"Probably only another coolie," he whispered. "But divide him."

He knew the value of diverting the attention of whatever was before them by approaching from different directions. Poonoosawmi at once slunk off a few feet to the left. Smith handed his rifle to Van Eyck and stalked cautiously forward. Again they were lost to Van Eyck's view, and he was left waiting in tense expectation.

He could hear the faint, receding rustlings of the two stalkers till they were drowned out under the pounding of his heart against his chest. Hammer, hammer, it went, till he could stand it no longer. He began to step gropingly forward. Suddenly a quick scuffling came from in front—something had risen from a crouching position—and then the menacing command:

This story began in The Argosy for April 17.

"Who comes; stand still!"

Immediately Poonoosawmi's voice broke from toward the left in a thin whine:

"Mercy, great chief, I am but a coolie, a poor man who—"

A harsh snarl of abuse cut him short. The leaves underfoot crunched twice, and a dim shape loomed up in a patch of starlight poised in a splendid figure of a javelin thrower! Van Eyck gave a choking gasp and started forward on the run. And then, out of black nothingness, Smith leaped.

His great form struck the spearman at about shoulder height and hurled him many feet away from his intended victim, and together the merged mass thudded to the soft ground! Van Eyck's skin tightened in tingling prickles, expecting the momentary shriek which would bring swift-footed help crashing through the night. But no sound came. Only limbs writhed and sprawled in the dark.

Shortly came a grunt of satisfaction from Smith; then a straining creak, and a moment's hideous silence; and then a thick, chucking snap! A great gorilla form bulked up against the dimness, and Smith's voice came, panting from exertion:

"Right ahead now, boys! That'll be the last of the line. Another hundred yards, an' then we're clear—"

Van Eyck would have raced forward; but Smith laid a vast, restraining hand on his shoulder. Not till a full hundred had been traversed with the same methodical caution was a little more speed allowed. Van Eyck's exhilaration began to pass from him, and he felt that he wanted to ask questions. Poonoosawmi's voice drifted from ahead, cheerfully bloodthirsty.

"Marshter, it is pity. If only marshter had inspiration to tear off that damn fellow's head I could carry for proof of Naga depredation."

Smith growled. "Huh? All right, you go back an' fetch it, goblin brat; we'll wait."

Poonoosawmi giggled; and Van Eyck knew that he stood wriggling in coy discomfort.

"Oah, no, marshter, I think more important is now instructions for future guiddance."

"You've got all I can tell you," said Smith. "Follow the bamboo brakes right down the valley, an' then keep the river bank. It's longer; but it's three times easier going. You know what to say, Van Eyck. Travel like all *jekannum* was after you; and when you get there don't show him all your presents at once. Poonoosawmi'll tell you how. So long. An' good luck. I'll tell 'em you're safe."

He gripped his hand once and faded out as he spoke. A few faint, swiftly receding rustlings and he was gone. Poonoosawmi chuckled as he hunched up his pack.

"All right, sar. Now is time for flying like the bats in the hell."

Van Eyck swung behind him, lean and ready. "Go ahead, and stretch the limit," he muttered. "You won't lose me."

The professor was sitting at the table of intricate patents, scribbling. He had extracted a shiny little electro-plated lamp from the packs, and by its light he was transcribing in a microscopic hand notes and formulæ from a mass of papers before him. It was the girl who held the rifle and peered anxiously into the surrounding gloom.

She gave a suppressed shriek as she swung round and heaved the weapon awkwardly to her shoulder. Then she gasped: "Oh!" with relief, and let it down hurriedly. Smith grinned hugely as he took it from her hand.

"Keeping watch?" he asked, with a wicked twinkle. Then to the mute inquiry in her eyes: "It's all right, miss. We got through without any trouble, an' I saw them well on their way. All they got to worry about now is leopards; an' only a fool gets caught by them."

She closed her eyes with a long, tremulous breath; and then suddenly she swayed. With the relaxing of the tension which had held her she wilted in visible stages, and sank into one of the precarious chairs. Then her brown fists clenched slowly, and she began to get a grip on herself again. Smith astounded himself by laying a gnarled paw on her shoulder and assisted her to her feet.

"You're all tired out, miss," he said, and his tone was almost fatherly. "This out-

door life is kind o' new to you, I suppose. I guess you don't see much Indian fighting round your home section nowadays. But there's nothing to worry about. You better get to your tent and bunk in."

She obeyed meekly. At the tent flap she suddenly turned and faced him bravely.

"Mr. Smith, once again I have to beg your pardon," she murmured, scarcely above a whisper.

"Huh?" snorted Smith, blandly ignorant of any occasion for the apology. "What's been happening now?"

The girl looked up into his puzzled face; and then with a sudden impulse she held out her hand.

"Good-night, you most amazing man," she said, and darted into the tent.

Smith swung round to the professor, who had been absorbed in his writing all the while.

"Professor Sahib, guess you'd better crawl under the blanket, too; you may have to do a lot of running to-morrow."

The professor murmured a vague something and scribbled assiduously. Mentally he was back in his comfortably study in Chicago.

Smith hesitated a moment; he had no experience in dealing with inspired men of science. Then he picked up the patent lamp and extinguished it.

"Too tempting a mark for a spear," he said coolly.

The professor snatched for the light with immediate irritation; and then the imposing sight of that burly figure bulging huge above him in the fire glow—which was not anything at all like anything he had seen in his comfortable study in Chicago—brought him back to his immediate surroundings.

"Oh, ah—I was transcribing some of my most important data with a view to concealing it upon my person in case—"

"No need, chief," Smith interrupted him, gruffly. "If the Greek can grab the loot he gets all the information he wants, anyway; an' if"—the pale brows met in a thick, corrugated line and the lips in a thin, straight one—"if we get 'out o' this hole, the swag goes with us, you can lay to that. Better roll in. I'll watch—though it's hardly necessary for this night."

The professor was unusually docile. He picked up a blanket and commenced to make for himself a wofully uncomfortable bed on the ground. Smith took pity on his ignorance and showed him how to scrape a hollow for his hip bone, and left him murmuring resolutions about studying the marvelous ways of the outdoors, which were so inadequately represented in modern seats of learning.

Smith felt under his shirt to make sure of his Pflüger automatic, and stalked off to make an indefinitely cautious tour of the surrounding bamboo thickets before settling down to his long night's vigil.

He found nothing, of course. No stealthly warriors crouched in the shadows anywhere within spear throw. Satisfied that no hostile movement was intended for that night at least, he arranged a couple of packs for a back rest, squatted in cross-legged comfort, and rested his rifle between his knees. Then with a long sigh of contentment he fished for his pipe all the way round to the back of his shirt.

For all his cheerful assurances to the others, he wanted to think and plan and put himself into the position of his adversaries in order to look at the thing from their angle and try to guess what they would do in the circumstances. It was this trick which he had acquired which counted for so much of his success in his dealings with natives.

But he could plan nothing. His mind kept swinging back like a compass needle to its point of attraction—the tent that glimmered ghostly white in the star glow.

With methodical intentness he raked up every incident, every look, every action of the splendid girl who slept the dead sleep of exhaustion within. But the word, girl, was almost blasphemy. He quickly changed it—the goddess whom he had sacrilegiously spanked less than three weeks ago.

As he reviewed each incident, each seemed more astonishing than the last, and more inexplicable. Most of his dealings with her seemed to have been stormy clashes; yet in the intervals she seemed to be so humble, and, just now, so gracious. But how was he to know why goddesses did what they did? He was unable to deter-

mine even what he thought about goddesses, now that he knew them better; but it was a disappointment to find that they could have fits of hysteria and could weep.

As a matter of fact, Smith's real conception of a reincarnated deity from classic mythology was a rather grim sort of Valkyrie, who could go whooping through the jungle and could keep pace with him in everything that he did—it never entered his mind that even a goddess might lead him. So he wondered just what grade of goddess this might be; and he asked himself incessantly—what he could never answer—just how much worship should be accorded to this goddess.

As he wondered he felt the urge of sleep—for even giants can grow tired—and he was able to decide, as was proper and efficient, that sleep would be the practical thing to do in preparation for a strenuous morrow. So, with matter-of-fact deliberation, he thrust the troublesome conjecture from him and composed himself to rest.

All of which was in itself an answer to his question. Only he could never see it.

Smith was awaked by noises; far away, barely discernible noises, yet sufficient to convey a warning to his brain, which slept as animals sleep, alert to any unusual sound. He awoke quietly without any start; and without moving he slowly opened his eyes to search through narrow slits the vista immediately in front of him.

Satisfied that no danger hung over him, waiting his alarm, he shook himself, and stood up for a more thorough inspection. He was unable to see the sun through the network of slender stems, but its approximate height told him that he had slept long.

Listening between the gentle puffs of the wind, which swept in clicking, rustling waves overhead, he could hear faint voices and distant shouts. Far away crunchings and snappings of dry twigs came nearer. He grunted and frowned.

"H-m! That's them, all right. The runner must have made top-hole time. Garsh blame, I'd like to know just how many he's brought with him! Wonder if old man Pembe thought it important enough to come himself. No, he couldn't, though; couldn't ha' made the distance; he's too fat."

Muttering to himself in this way, he busied himself with enamel plates and tin cans. "Nothing good ever came o' staying hungry," he muttered, and he scratched dry twigs for a fire. Apparently he was absorbed in his work; yet he kept a wary eye open for movement among the further clumps.

His cheerful clatter aroused the girl, who emerged presently, looking as miraculously fresh and dainty as though she had just come from her own boudoir in Commerce Street. The professor still snored gently. The girl shook him, and he came back to consciousness with queer guttural gaspings and gurglings.

Smith was squatting over the fire. Without turning, he called:

"Breakfast ready in five minutes, folks. Set out the silver, 'cause I guess we'll have callers."

On the stroke of the fifth minute he rose and stepped to the table with a savory pan in one hand and a pot of coffee in the other, for all the world as though he were an exorbitantly paid guide conducting a millionaire party through the Maine woods.

"Good morning, miss. Good morning, Professor Sahib. Fine day for a fight, isn't it?"

It was his way of being cheerful to dispel alarm. Since some sort of trouble was inevitable, and since everybody knew it, why not talk of it? he argued. The professor grunted a morose acknowledgment. Being a man, he looked as weary and unkempt as the girl looked fresh. She was unable to respond to Smith's humor; but she asked quietly:

"Why do you say 'callers?' Has anything happened during the night?"

"Don't ask me. I was the watchman, so I went to sleep," said Smith, easily. "What I mean is, the messenger's got back, so they're due to make a move right soon."

Smith's estimate of the native mind was correct. While they still sat at the table he reached for his rifle and rose, tightening his belt. A grimly determined smile played about his mouth. The first act in the play was about to open; and Smith intended that the applause should be his. The girl shot a frightened glance at him.

"Nothing to worry, miss," he said easily. "This gun is only for show. This is going to be talkee-talkee."

He jerked the weapon into the crook of his arm and strode out. Among the furthest clumps tall, naked figures were moving. Smith jammed his khaki sun helmet jauntily over one eye and stalked with huge strides to meet them.

There was a marked hesitancy among them at the white man's cool aggressiveness. Then several others grouped themselves round a commanding central figure, and advanced rather diffidently to meet him.

Smith thrust his rifle to the front with belligerent bluff, and strode to within six feet of them—just far enough to shoot, should anybody attempt to rush him. There he stood and scowled ferociously at them.

There were six of them, splendid, naked animals, all armed with spears as tall as themselves, and narrow wicker shields. As do animals, so they lowered their eyes furtively before the white man's fierce glance.

"What is this uproar that you make in the Lushai country, ape people?" he demanded, in a booming bellow, with crafty reference to the trespass.

CHAPTER XI.

MINUS ONE.

THE leader of the Nagas was an enormous man, taller even than Smith by at least five inches, and nearly as wide. He, too, was as naked as a wild ape, save that a band of plaited brass wire round his left arm proclaimed him a sub-chief. He alone dared to meet Smith's eyes.

For a while he gave stare for stare; but no untutored savage could face for long eyes which glared with such calculated belligerence from under fierce, yellow brows whose very paleness served to focus attention on the cold, steely glitter beneath.

The man stared defiantly, blinked a few times, and gave way. He thrust to the front a tall youth, leaner than the others, and paler brown, evidently a hybrid. This man spoke a halting Hindustani.

"To the sahib, salaam. The great chief, Mata Pembe, who is lord of ten thousand spears at Danaghor, also sends salaam. His word is that the sahibs who wander without aim in these evil jungles should condescend to receive shelter at Danaghor under his protection; and for that purpose he has sent bearers of the sahib's burdens."

Smith understood native diplomatic procedure from its earliest beginnings.

"Aho? Bearers?" he jeered. "How shall naked monkeys carry what other cattle ran away from?"

The man never winced. "Because, sahib, there are many of them," he replied, with bold insinuation. "Very many more than the coolies who fled and left the sahibs alone, three of them, and a woman."

"Many, indeed!" shouted Smith, with a guffaw. "Doubtless the whole of your great chief's following, fifty whole men, and an interpreter. Wah! Yet the packages of sahibs cannot be befouled by the hands of tree apes. My word, therefore, is this: Say to this chieftain that my order is to tell the man Pembe that in his ape settlement is a *kintali*, a half a white man, the smell of whom is offensive to men, and that therefore we travel with speed *away* from the direction of Danaghor."

The man interpreted without hesitation. An interpreter's business is to relay words; their offense is for those at whom they are aimed. It was quite clear that they had hit.

The chief poured a flood of words back at the interpreter, rolling his eyes, shooting out his splay lips, and almost beating the man in his rage. Smith cut him short by producing an ominous click with the bolt of his rifle.

"Cease!" he thundered. "My order is ordered. I go to my place; and from there I go hunting. Any animal, with a tail or without, that I see, I shoot at; and thou, mouthpiece of a little jungli chief, hast perhaps understanding that the sunlight slanting through the bamboo *topes* is most favorable for long shots."

With that, with cool effrontery he turned his back on the frothing savages and strode toward the camp. The small of his back crawled as he went; but he was relying on his estimate of native indecision; and the

effect was worth the unpleasantness. The girl awaited him with sparkling eyes. Even the professor was moved to enthusiasm.

"Oh, you've sent them away?" she cried. "They ran so fast behind the trees! Have they really gone?"

It was Smith's first indication of the effect of his bluff. He had not dared to look back before. He smiled a little bitterly, and shook his head.

"No such blooming luck. They made their bluff, and I raised 'em, that's all. It all comes down to this: They don't want to start a war unless they have to. All I'm worried about is whether the Greek has given Pembe *backsheesh* enough to outbalance the fear of military reprisals. What we got to play for is time. 'Cause even if the Greek has persuaded him, they'll look for a chance to grab that loot at night rather than rush us; an' by that time maybe Van Eyck has done some persuading himself. Nothing to do but wait."

He stood with his hands in his pockets, swaying on widespread feet, and frowning thoughtfully. Then his jaw thrust itself out in square pugnacity, and his teeth clicked together so that his voice came hissingly through them:

"'N' even if they do rush, by Goramighty, I can hold 'em! I'm going to file the points off my bullets to dum-dum 'em. Hit a man in the chest an' it 'll tear his whole back out. I've got plenty of room for good far shooting, an' they'll have plenty of time to think between getting here an' seeing the first few busted all apart."

Even the professor was shaken out of his scientifically interested attitude by this grim glimpse into the business of killing men. As for the girl, she gazed on Smith with wide, horrified eyes. But Smith turned away with intent directness on the business on hand to get out the file that had once before been so useful.

That waiting was the hardest thing that had happened to them yet. Watching helplessly for hours for an attack by yelling, naked men, and praying that the forlorn line thrown out in the dark of the night might take hold and bring assistance, was a nerve-racking ordeal. At least, it was very palpably hard for the other two.

As for Smith, all the watching he seemed to do was an occasional swift flicker of his eyes over the landscape; and he certainly did not pray. He whistled shrill inharmonies through his teeth, and ground grimly away at the bullets.

As he ground he looked over to the girl, sitting, tense and white; and he wondered what goddesses thought and how they felt when they sat surrounded by danger. He knew that she felt by no means as he felt; and he knew that the things he thought about were never, even in moments of peace, the same things that she thought about.

He found himself in a vague way wishing that he might understand the ways and emotions of these people who seemed to belong on the other side of such an intangible gulf.

The goddess seemed so pitifully a woman just then, a brave woman, and patient and sweet—*almost* a goddess, in fact—but not like his Valkyrie. The girl, as a matter of fact, had shed, under the nerve-wearing stress of danger, all the little defensive mannerisms of conventional life, and the bare soul of the woman stood out. So many startling things had happened in such quick succession that she seemed to have completely lost her usual calm mastery of herself and of her men folk.

Here in the jungles, surrounded by events such as are apt to happen in jungle places, she felt strangely femininely weak. Instinctively her heart yearned for a man on whom to lean for protection; and with splendid feminine sophistry the thought that came to her mind was not of a strong, dominant man of the outdoors who circumvented difficulties and dangers by sheer nerve and grim persistence; but of a slender, studious man of the laboratories who knew the same conventions that she knew, and who thought just about the same things that she thought.

By some queer twist of telepathy Smith's mind turned on the same slender leader of their forlorn hope. He wondered how he had progressed. Of his safety he felt assured; but how he had succeeded in his diplomatic mission was the question.

He pictured him hopefully, loping back at the head of a band of fierce little Lushais, and he debated shrewdly whether the young

man of science would be up to the physical strain.

He wished that the young man might have been more like himself. There was a conscious pride in the thought. He, Smith of the jungles, would surely have persuaded the Lushai chief, and he would most surely have come back at the head of a band of sweating, hard-pressed men.

Yet the young man would surely try his level best; of that he was certain. The clean-cut grit of breeding gave confidence. He liked that clean-cut directness of manner and speech; and presently he found himself wishing with a strange mutation of view that he might have been a little more like the young man. He wished that he might have started life under different circumstances. Perhaps he, too, then, might have acquired that mysterious something which is described as *clean-cut;* and he might have been able to think just about the same things that the girl thought.

There was a vague regret in the realization that the young scientist had some intangible quality which he could never attain.

And then he jerked himself out of his dreams with an oath that startled the others. Good Goramighty! If he had been brought up under other circumstances he would not be the cunning, experienced Smith of the jungles, Jehannum Smith who, people said, could do things that nobody else could do; and who in thunder, then, would drag this bunch of babes in the wood out of this mess?

His start had been opportune. Something was happening. There were noises, far away, barely discernible noises, but this time they came from the opposite direction from which the noises of the morning had awakened Smith. Faint shoutings grew nearer. Rustlings and snappings of twigs approached from the distance, and presently they could be heard passing the camp on both sides. A dark figure slipped past a distant opening, retreating warily before approaching menace.

The girl looked at Smith without a word; but the flush that enriched her white cheeks and the eager appeal in her troubled eyes were almost a command to speak. Her fingers gripped on nothing till the round knuckles stood white against the healthy brown of her hands, hanging on a sign from Smith.

Smith stood up with a slow grin and stretched his shoulders luxuriously. It was a physical relief from a long mental tension. The grin spread and split his weather-beaten face in deep furrows; and then he nodded at her.

"Yes, that's them. The boy got through, all right. An' it looks like he's brought the gang."

Smith's surmise was very nearly true. In another minute a lean little black figure came into view running with labored steps between the bamboos like an eager hound. It staggered into the camp, and threw itself gasping at Smith's feet.

Smith lifted him up with vast tenderness and propped him on one of his knees, feet stretched out, arms limp, and back against his own broad chest. He knew from his own ring experience that that was the most comfortable position that had ever been devised for a spent and breathless man.

With the free hand he reached for a water pot and lifted it to the eager lips. Poonoosawmi drank in great gulps, and rolled his eyes while his lean chest heaved in throbbing spasms.

"Good boy!" Smith muttered. "Good little brat of the devil." And as soon as he saw that the boy could speak his urgent question was: "How many men?"

But the girl broke in with the only matter of real importance: "Where is Howard?"

Poonoosawmi was callously efficient. "Fifty men, marshter," he panted. "All damn fierce fellows; and the son of the brother of the seventeenth wife of the chief is leading them. Just they are coming. There, marshter can see among the bamboo topes."

"Where is Van Eyck, sahib?" the girl insisted, clutching at his sleeve with both hands.

Poonoosawmi looked at her with an ape's cunning in his beady eyes, and lied without a moment's thought.

"He, missy, is fragile student of carriage habit of travel; he is too much tired, and

the jungle fever is abiding with him; therefore he is staying in the chief's house."

There was still a vague trouble in the girl's eyes. Intuition told her that there was something underlying the glib explanation. But further question was not possible then.

A score or so of smallish, sturdy, very dark brown men had loped up and squatted immediately on their haunches. Each man, as he sat, drove a long, broad-bladed spear into the ground before him and then squatted motionless, staring with owlish eyes. Others came up every second, and joined them.

They were a burly-looking gang, with the big chests and powerful legs of mountaineers. Their faces, while surly, were of a higher type than that Nagas, and their advanced civilization was demonstrated by the fact that they wore clothes. That is to say, each man wore a *lungi*, a strip of nettle cloth, about four inches wide, which passed between the legs once and tucked into a cord back and front at the waist.

Poonoosawmi pointed out the man whose intricate relationship to the chief assigned to him the leadership. Smith advanced and raised his left hand, holding it at the elbow with his right in greeting. The man responded with a curiously shy gravity. Smith beckoned him and his men forward.

"Possession being nine points better than an argument, let's move the army up a bit beyond our ground an' have the camp behind us," he remarked, with shrewd caution. The men heaved themselves up with grunts like buffaloes coming out of a wallow, and trooped after him. As soon as they were out of earshot of the camp Smith demanded to know about Van Eyck.

"Marshter, I am not telling true thing to weeping missy," said Poonoosawmi, confidentially.

"I know it," said Smith. "I've seen you lie too often. What's the trouble?"

"Trouble is this, marshter: That swine chief is saying: 'My young men I will send; for invading Nagas is bloody disgrace. But regarding the white men, how shall I know that promised increment of *backsheesh* is forthcoming? Therefore I will keep the sahib; and if not, then I will swing by the leg above the road to my fortified fort! And this, marshter, is unholy dilemma; for all *backsheesh* in camp is already delivered into his hands."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DUEL.

SMITH'S eyes narrowed immediately. Poonoosawmi's final observation was unpleasantly true. Everything that might possibly appeal to a jungle chief had already been sent as an inducement. Smith knew the chief as a shrewd and grasping bargainer, and a vindictive man in a deal. The threat about stretching the hostage between two saplings was no empty talk, either. He had seen the thing done. But all he said was:

"The bloody 'ell he will? He talks like he'd forgotten me. I'll let him know."

There was no time for further conjecture. A scuffling group of Nagas was beginning to come into view at the further end of the vista. They ran to and fro with the aimlessness of ants; till presently the huge chief appeared and shouted orders. With much excited clamor an eager group drove two spears between two dense clumps of bamboos which formed a sort of natural gateway, and impaled another spear horizontally on the points of the first two. Then all retired behind the barrier.

It was evident that they proposed a parley. This was the "door" through which sacred customs decreed that negotiations must be carried on. Smith smiled grimly. He knew that the conference would be a battle of wits which the losing party would most surely put to the further test of a battle of spears—unless they could be convinced that they would just as surely lose that, too.

As he approached with his army the naked warriors all squatted on their side of the barrier; only the big chief and his immediate following stood within the door. This meant that hostilities were not imminent.

It was the first opportunity that Smith had had to estimate the numbers of his opponents. There were some twenty more

of them than his own relieving force. But he took the immediate aggressive.

He strode right up to the door, accompanied by Poonoosawmi, who stuck to his coat tails, and by the intricate relative. The Naga chief retreated a few paces before the hard determination in his face, and left him in possession of the barrier. That was one point gained. Smith smiled at the interpreter with amicable nastiness, and his bull voice was almost gentle.

"You see, ape without a tail, that *men* have come to my order."

The interpreter replied, unmoved:

"We have no hunger to quarrel with our friends, the Lushai people."

"Yet," said Smith, insinuatingly, "you make war in the Lushai country, which is insult that must be immediately avenged."

The wife's relative evidently understood; for he translated to his people, who gave clucking noises of assent. A conference followed among the opposing leaders, a loud discussion in which the squatting warriors joined with grunted exclamations.

While it progressed the professor and the girl hurried up, both carrying rifles. Smith's impulse was to send them back at once; but he was glad of the show of strength. The giant chief gave instructions in a belligerent tone to his mouthpiece.

"Yet again," said the man, with cunning effrontery, "there be many of us—and more whom the sahib does not see."

"Liar," said Smith. "Moreover, what be many naked toads against the *bandook* guns of the white men?"

The big chief seemed a little nonplused, and looked furtively aside. Advice came in a hissing whisper from the clump of bamboos to his right. The interpreter leered.

"We have no feud with the Lushai people at present," he said quickly.

It was a cunning point. The hillmen clucked and muttered among themselves. They had a very vivid conception of the endless blood feuds which would harass them as the outcome of a tribal fight. Smith saw that it was necessary to counteract the influence at once.

"Yet when we have destroyed the last of your little herd there will be none left to carry the tale of the feud," he said with bombastic confidence. The hill men seemed pleased at the suggestion of their valor.

There came more sibilant counsel from the prompter behind the bamboos. Smith's eyes turned in their direction with narrow hostility. The interpreter had a brilliant proposal.

"This is the word of our chief to the Lushai people. It is our chief's order that we bring the white men to his place. But since the white men are friends of the Lushais, who are great warriors, the great little chief here says, it is well; let the white men go with their friends, and let us take only their baggage as loot to our chief. Thus shall the feud and much blood-letting be avoided."

The young hill chieftain translated with eagerness to his men, and it was immediately apparent to Smith that his were very lukewarm allies. They had come, ordered by their chief to save the white men. Well, they argued, with direct savage reasoning, what concern of theirs was the white men's baggage? Certainly not worth the inauguration of an endless border feud. Smith had to take a firm stand.

"Wallah! Monkey talk! Of what avail is white men's baggage to a naked ape patriarch who lives in a tree? Our baggage is ours and it stays with us, whether the men of Lushai stay or no. Then shall the feud be between the Nagas and the white *sirkar;* and of that quarrel is there yet a memory that stings like hot sand."

The giant Naga chief leaped high in the air and advanced with truculent ferocity close to the barrier. He growled to his mouthpiece, who threw Smith's words back in his face.

"Yet when we have destroyed the last of the white men there will be none left to carry the tale of the feud to the white *sirkar!*"

It was an ominous threat. Smith could see from the faces of the hill men that the impersonal matter of the white men's fate weighed very lightly in the balance against the certainty of a bloody feud within their own home villages. A convincing hiss

came from the bamboos. The interpreter stepped forward with a triumphant grin.

"Moreover, the feud with the *sirkar*, if it comes, will be with the Naga people, not with the Lushais."

"Hau!" A shout of surprised revelation came from the hill men. While the Nagas, many of them, leaped to their feet and snatched their spears from the ground. The girl, with splendid resolution, raised her rifle to her shoulder, and the professor followed her lead. Smith's mind raced. The situation had reached the point which he had expected. The savages, tired of words, and worked into fighting mood with all this talk of battle, were hovering just on the brink. A word one way or the other would decide them.

Then inspiration came. Smith sprang before the barrier and lifted his arms in the air for a hearing.

"Yet," he shouted, "fools, if white men disappear in Lushai country, then will the *sirkar* surely exact an accounting from the Lushais."

It was the hill men's turn to leap to their feet and shout a fierce refusal of the trap into which they had so nearly been led. The giant Naga chief saw that he had been outmaneuvered, and he leaped among his men in a fury, inciting them with bombastic rhetoric to immediate attack. Only the cold rifle muzzles, of which they had had such horrid experience, held them wavering. But it was clear that they placed an immense confidence in the prowess of their huge chief.

A cold anger began to come into Smith's heart against this bellicose ruffian. But for him all trouble might have been avoided—for him, that is to say, and for that malignant whisperer behind the bamboo clump.

Then another inspiration came, a splendid flare of the smoldering recklessness in him to which his soul leaped out. Again he bounded before the door and shouted for attention. The yelling mob gradually quieted down to hear what the white man had to say. Smith's rugged form stood out like a defiant gladiator.

"Listen, O people of small understanding," he shouted his defiance. "This is custom among you, and therefore I offer this word. When the chiefs among two villages fight by agreement the feud that follows the killing is a law only to the two families, and does not spread blood over the whole people. Is it not so?"

There was a silence, a furtive inquiry of what possible trap might underlie this new departure. The young hill chief gazed on the giant Naga bully with a horrid self-conciousness. The giant grinned and made a boastful gesture to his mouthpiece.

"It is so," said the man. "It is sacred custom among us, and the word of our gods is thus made clear."

"It is well!" Smith flung his bomb with truculent defiance. "Now, therefore, I will fight yon shouting braggart, yon empty wind-bag who fights with his mouth; and thus there shall be no feud at all."

A gasp and a long silence followed this entirely unlooked-for challenge. It needed an appreciable interval of time for so astounding a proposal to soak into the primitive mind. Yet it was eminently feasible. If the white man were to die, who would take up the feud; and if the big chief were to die—but that was not to be thought of.

That so mighty a chief should be slain in single combat was not within the bounds of possibility. Shouts of approval began to be heard as the more intelligent minds assimilated the idea. They explained laboriously to the others, and the clamor became universal. The Nagas vociferated with flashing, yellow eyes, full of eagerness, for victory was assured. The Lushais were equally willing; for this did they wash their hands of the whole troublesome matter.

But the interpreter was stealthily prompted.

"Nay," he shouted above the uproar. "The *Sahib* has a *bandook* gun."

Smith instantly spurned the insinuation. He was carried away by the lust of the born fighter.

"With spear and shield will I fight him; or with my empty hands; or with my teeth!" he hurled his dare.

An exultant yell greeted the announcement, and the Naga warriors surged round their chief, urging him on. He was by no

means loath. All that he hesitated about was a certain nervousness on account of the white man's prestige, which was firmly ingrained among his people.

But since this foolhardy white man was offering to meet him in personal combat according to the native custom, suddenly his resolution was made. He strode to the doorway of spears and grimaced ferociously with terror-inspiring intent.

But certain ceremonies had to be concluded, and preparations made. They were simple; yet they required a vast amount of argument and noise. An oath had to be taken between the leading men which would be binding upon both peoples under fear of obsession by countless devils. Then a spear, duly rendered taboo, had to be laid on the ground a certain distance from the door. The space between them was the battle-ground, guarded by fiends who would enter the stomachs of intruders and starve them to a wasting death.

The professor and the girl had understood nothing of all this, of course. They had stood, tense and nervous, watching the swinging balance of their fate. Now they found opportunity to ask anxiously what it all meant. Smith was under the spell of a grim exhilaration. He handed his rifle to Poonoosawmi, and removed his coat for freer movement.

"I'm going to bust the gorblimey liver an' lights out o' this blighter," he muttered, with a reversion to his barrack yard dialect.

"Is there going to be any danger?" the girl began to ask tremulously. But Smith was all unheeding. He was borrowing a shield and spear from the nearest Lushai warrior and getting the feel of their unaccustomed balance. He knew nothing, of course, of spear fighting, but he was exalted to a sublime recklessness by "the fierce joy that a warrior feels." He had a supreme confidence, moreover, in his own splendid strength and in the memories of a long list of triumphant combats of every description, from broken tumblers in a blood-spattered barroom to bayonets in a soggy trench.

The giant chief gave an awe-inspiring shout, and bounded high in the air through the inviolable doorway. On the ground of combat he postured and leaped, slapping his thighs, and drumming on his wide, hairy chest. Smith crouched with the instinct of a heavy-weight boxer, and stepped warily over the prostrate spear on his side, his eyes snakily cold and alert. The duel was on!

The great savage shouted and stamped disconcertingly; and then suddenly, with a tremendous bound, he cleared the intervening distance and drove his spear in a vicious lunge at Smith's chest. Another savage would have taken it on his shield; but Smith knew nothing of shields. He quickly side-stepped just as he would have to a blow. The thin eighteen-inch blade passed under his armpit.

In a flash Smith noted the position as a possible trap for a future occasion. Here was one of his advantages; it was the swift-thinking mind of a civilized man trained as a clever heavy-weight fighter.

But a boxer counters. Smith had returned nothing as yet. He saw an opening and essayed a tentative thrust. The chief stopped it easily with his shield, and laughed loud in derision; and then Smith learned for the first time that a wicker shield takes a grip on a spear point and may very easily wrest it from one's hand. Point number two learned.

The chief bounded forward again with confidence, and thrust rapidly, twice. The first was a feint; but Smith could read the intent of a feint in an opponent's eyes almost as well as a light-weight. The second was the real thrust, a fierce drive for the stomach. By sheer luck Smith's shield was in the way; for he always fought with a low swinging left. But the thing cumbered him. He was unused to it, and it was in his way. He threw it from him.

A shout broke from the onlooking savages. Had Smith only known that to a man who dares to throw away his shield there comes a moment of inestimable advantage, he might have ended the fight then and there; for his adversary's spear-head stuck in the loose shield, and, finding no resistance, required time to shake free.

But Smith, alas, was unprepared. The alert chief ran backward and disengaged his weapon before Smith could seize his

advantage. The savage leaped high again with an exultant shout which his fellows echoed, and advanced, showing his big, yellow teeth in a cruel grin, and stepping high to demonstrate his confident style. The white man was his easy prey now.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FLYING MARE.

SMITH grinned coldly. He understood the savage's exhilaration, and he knew that he was due for a surprise. A heavy spear, when one has got the feel of its balance, is very similar, indeed, to a bayonet.

The big savage postured a moment to win the adulation of his people, and then chose his mark deliberately and thrust with an air of confident finality. His blade clicked against the shaft of Smith's spear, held in both hands, and sped aside; and instantly Smith's point dropped in a swift arc and licked out past his neck.

The chief bounded backward with a yell of surprise and dismay, and his fellows saw a thin line of red begin to ooze from the brown bulk of his neck.

Smith's grin was as thin as the red line, and this time it was he who did the confident advancing. He found time now to note out of the corner of his eye as the other stood off in uncertainty that the professor was leading his daughter away from the scene. In his battle lust he grinned coldly again with scornful intolerance at the thought of "squeamishness"—the Valkyrie whom he pictured as his ideal would have stood at the side lines and whooped him on. The comparison was not complimentary.

He advanced warily again, circling with deadly intentness, holding his weapon in both hands in "position two for attack."

The slow-witted savage was confused by this novel method of approach; but some flash of inspiration caused him to shout again and thrust desperately. Again the blade clicked against hard wood, and Smith's deadly point shot out once more for his jugular vein. He threw his shield up, and the blade smacked into it with a vicious force which drove two-thirds of its length through the other side almost into his face. Immediately the desperate instinct of long shield practise impelled him to twist with all the force of his arm and to jerk back violently.

This time Smith, in the eagerness of his attack, was unprepared for defense. The spear was snatched from his hand! The giant looked at it, sticking to his shield in incredulous amazement for a moment, and then he hurled it far from him, throwing the entangled weapon where no sudden rush could regain possession!

A roar of frenzied yelpings acclaimed the feat. Smith shot a desperate glance after his weapon and saw that it was hopeless. The savage whooped with exultation, and bounded an incredible height into the air. There was a quick crowding of men along both the side lines with ready spears; for immutable custom demanded that there should be no escape of a vanquished man from the lists, even to his friends.

But escape is a possibility which does not come into the mind of the fighting white man. Smith's eyes flew back to his opponent's face, and he crouched, tense and alert, on the balls of both feet. The giant howled once more, and rushed on him with blade lifted high for an annihilating stab!

Smith, unarmed, acted instinctively just as he would in a ring. On the fractional second before the blow descended he stepped swiftly inside of it into a clinch. The blade ripped through the collar of his shirt; he could feel the cold pressure of it against his spine; and the giant's wrist thudded against his shoulder. Instantly Smith gripped him in the orthodox way by both upper arms.

The giant was nothing loath. With his unbeatable bulk he was derisively sure that he would crush this presumptuous white man. And then for the first time he realized the white man's inhuman strength!

Asiatics, as has been exemplified time and again by sundry ponderous Turks of the mat, though they may attain to vast bulk, never acquire that wiry hardness of muscle that comes to a hard-trained white man. Smith, though only six feet tall, had a gorilla chest of forty-seven inches, and a

massive arm as thick as most men's legs and as knottily hard as the limb of a tree.

He thrust a thick forearm against the big savage's throat and wound an anaconda grip round his naked waist; then his great shoulder muscles bunched with the sudden strain he put upon them. The savage gasped, once, in choking agony, and writhed with desperate effort. A habit of his people came to his aid.

According to custom, his naked body was well greased with coconut oil. Smith's arm slipped from the gagging throat, and the straining neck snapped back with relief. The giant found his head for a moment hanging over Smith's shoulder. Instantly, with savage desperation, he dropped it lower and buried his big, yellow teeth in the bulging muscle.

Smith grunted an involuntary: "Oof!" But the position was splendid. Despite the lacerated muscle, he twisted swiftly round, gripped the great head with both hands, slipped his hip under the bulging body, and with a superb heave, threw the giant over his head!

The fall, the "flying mare," is always a bad one. The huge savage fell with a crash; and with his impact on the merciful bed of bamboo leaves a sympathetic grunt was dragged from his followers. They had followed the astounding battle with animal fascination, and for a moment, in their lust to see a kill, they differentiated not at all between the two giant males who struggled for supremacy. The animal impulse was to rush in and rend the loser. But shortly their more human side came into the ascendancy again, and they half rose from their squatting posture and howled encouragement and advice to their leader.

The giant was dizzy from the fall; but he had managed to retain a hold on his spear. Again his oiled body enabled him to stagger to his feet under Smith's clutching hands. He turned desperately, and lunged blindly at the white devil who crowded in on him with such terrible hands. Smith was just able to snatch his body aside as the vicious blade zipped once more under his armpit.

It was the chance which he had noted. His mind responded instantly to the preconceived idea. His arm shut down over the weapon and held it tight against withdrawal. Then, watching his time between tugs, his hand slapped up and closed with steely grip on the haft.

A slow grin began to break the set fierceness of his face. Slowly he pushed the giant from him at the end of his own spear. With keen eyes on the other's face in wary watchfulness for trickery the other hand stole up to the haft.

It was all slow and snakily watchful and deliberate. The savages looked on, fascinated into silence by the extraordinary scene. Smith's thick fingers groped a moment for a satisfactory hold. Finding it, he smiled his thin smile; and then, with a sudden effort, he broke the hardwood shaft off like a carrot, short by the head!

With the same slow deliberation he pushed the goggling savage to the farthest end of his useless stick, and stood on widespread legs, breathing deeply and regarding him with cold derision. The giant stood in dazed astonishment. The incredible thing was slow to register in his dull mind.

His following, tense and quivering, bowed their heads and moaned. Fierce as was their impulse to rush, howling, to his aid, they dared not overstep the devil-guarded boundaries of the spears. But though men might be haunted to death, inanimate wood and iron were unhurtable. Some treacherous genius had an inspiration.

"*Sama, Baba!*" a sudden yelp arose; and a long, yellow-hafted spear flickered across the interdicted space in an easy arc.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAIL'S END.

THE chief heard the call. He half turned and saw the priceless chance. With a superb bound he leaped for it and caught it in mid air. Then with a wolfish shout of renewed hate and confidence he whirled the weapon up and rushed once more upon Smith.

There was no help for it. Smith had come through the furious engagement with

no worse than a grazed spine and a lacerated shoulder. Nobody could expect to fare so well again. His derisive eyes hardened to thin slits. He grunted, as the savage came in, like an angry bear. As before, he stepped swiftly in, and as a great grizzly rips its upward devastating stroke, so he stabbed upward with the spear-head in his hand.

The giant's chest thudded into his own. For a moment the pressure of his own weight held him up, and then he sagged slowly to the ground, his nerveless, great hands clawing spasmodically with each throb of his heart at Smith's shirt and breeches and leggings!

"*Awah! Ammoe-ee-ee-ee!*" A tremulous gasp of pent-up awe went through the crouching Nagas like a moaning wave. for a moment Smith stood with head thrown back, and glared triumphant defiance, lips curled back over his teeth in a fierce grin, the victorious snarl of the dominant male. Then an angry, insistent memory began to gnaw at his primal elation and to drive slowly the glare from his eyes and the snarl from his lips, and they became again coldly hard. It was once more the shrewd, quick-thinking human.

By the holy goramighty, I'm going to get that man!" Smith shouted, and he rushed without hesitation at the stricken Nagas. Though they had not understood his words, his expression had been easy to interpret. The savages shrank before this terrible white devil, and the guilty thrower of the spear gave a wild yell and tore his way through the mob.

But Smith's thought was far from the faithful follower; his animosity carried back to an earlier incident. With direct intent he rushed behind the clump of bamboos which had concealed the maliciously whispering brains of the Naga general staff. Before the startled warriors could recover themselves he rushed out again, dragging a frantic and futilely resisting figure of a man, lean and swarthy, who was dressed in white man's clothes!

Aroused to action by his piercing squeals, some of the Naga warriors made as though to rush to his assistance. But the taboo strip of ground with its hungry ghosts halted them, wavering, at its brink. A few raised half-hearted spears; and immediately Poonoosawmi, with a squeal, lifted his master's rifle to his shoulder.

Smith bounded forward, trailing the abject figure like an empty sack, and took the dangerous weapon away from his fire-eating servant.

"Gimme that!" he grunted. "Those fellows won't trouble us any more. They were bucked up only by the chief an' by this—this porcupine thing." He shook the "thing" so that its teeth rattled and its head lolled loosely on its lean neck.

"Now I'm going right back to camp to tell the folks. You stick right here an' see that our half-hearted friends don't make any dicker with those other robbers. Call the taboo on their crossing and talking to each other. You know how to tell 'em about devils."

He slung the limp abjectness to his shoulder, and strode hilariously to where the professor and the girl waited with wide, questioning eyes. Never a trace was there in his face or his demeanor that he had just fought a grim and deadly fight—his exhilaration at his capture, a piece of good fortune beyond all the bounds of dreams, had driven all the ferocity from him.

"Look what the monkeys have left, folks," he called joyously, as he approached. "You know, I had a suspicion that all that clever back talk was this polecat all the time. I kind o' smelt him in the air, like something with more kick than all the naked niggers put together. Now we'll just"—he swung the wretched man with rough unceremony to the ground—"we'll just twist his tail till he tells us—" He stopped abruptly and pounced on the man like a huge cat. A suggestive chink had sounded from his waist line as he fell.

Smith ran an expert hand under the grimy shirt, and in a minute he sprang to his feet with a crow of delight, holding aloft a fat, heavy belt.

"Aha!" he chuckled. "Whee-ee-ow! So you carried what was left with you, friend 'Poulos! Man, if you—I mean, Stink-cat, if you knew how handy this was going to be in a little while you'd—this is going to be so almighty useful, you animal,

that I'm going to spare you. I was going to pull all your arms an' legs off an' let you go; but now, for this, I'm going to take you with me whole."

He whirled to the others in a blaze of high spirits, a reaction from the grim tension of a little while ago.

"Folks, we'll break camp right now an' start to rescue Van Eyck right away. We can't make it all the way to-day any more; but I want to put distance between us an' that Naga gang an' get well into Lushai territory, so they can't hatch any new plot. We'll reach the Ugo Banda stockade tomorrow in time for breakfast. Camp-fire entertainment to-night will be a monologue entitled: 'The Horrible Confessions of a Howling Greek.' At least, if he don't confess, he'll howl."

Smith was a busy man at the stockade the next morning. It had been necessary to interview a surly chief, who fawned upon him before the interview was concluded. A fat and heavy belt had figured in the interview, and a part of its contents had passed to the chief.

Van Eyck had been redeemed. Elaborate arrangements had been made with the chief for porters and guides—and armed guards; though none of the party could understand what could be the need of armed guards when Smith was with them.

When everything had been settled, Smith smiled with the dramatic impulse which he loved, and exploded this bomb among them:

"Folks," he said, and there was almost regret in his voice, "it's here we part company. You go on alone—south. I've got business—north!"

They only stared. Smith elaborated.

"Yes, that's the dope. Chief Ugo-Banda gives you escort to Aijal; and there you'll find a Wesleyan mission house where you can rest up for a few days. From Aijal you'll make Chindwin River an' get a flotilla boat down to Mandalay. Then to Rangoon; an' from there you'll travel by B. I. line to Calcutta, an' find Mr. Nicholson waiting for you."

He arranged their itinerary with the cheerful impersonality of a Cook's tourist agent. Still they stared and laughed a little nervously and stammered:

"Yes, but—but why aren't you—we'd much rather go with you."

Smith's grim smile came out.

"I'll bet you won't! I'm going right back through Naga country to Dimapur!"

They gasped. That was all. There was something insane about this. Smith had mercy on their mystification.

"Well, it's like this, now: your journey 'll take all of a month; an' then you'll have made a trip that few white folks have ever done. I'd like to come with you, fine; *but*, since there's such a goramighty hurry to get your papers an' things to Nicholson for the sake of your country—I mean, of your business, I suppose he'll have to have them. I can make Dimapur in ten days—if I start *now!* I'm guessing that none of you are aching to go with me through the same old, uninteresting territory, so I'll take the lot an' bust through alone!"

The daring of the thing seemed a little impossible, even for Smith.

"Yes; but—but how?" they asked feebly. "You can never get through those frightful Nagas again."

"Easy. I'll go round by the country of the other chiefs whom this stink-cat *didn't* bribe to hold you up. An' he—itself—is going to be a coolie an' carry the pack with the most important dope in it!"

This would be lyric justice. But even so, it seemed inadequate in view of the scoundrelly agent's treachery. Even the girl could not refrain from remarking as much—in spite of the fact that she stood very close to the tall young scientist, and had been radiant all morning.

Smith looked long at the hang-dog prisoner, and his eyes grew very cold and hard and narrow.

"We-ell," he said at last, slowly, weighing out his words. "He's clever. Awful clever. He's done nothing that the law could take hold of without more proof. If I take him back to Dimapur, they'll have to let him go."

The Greek squirmed hopefully, and smiled at the reflection of his own cleverness. Smith smiled, too, and continued, with cold emphasis:

"But some of those chiefs whose share of the *backsheesh* this insect gave to Pembe—"

The man suddenly yelled like a maniac, and groveled at Smith's feet, babbling an incoherent stream of prayers and whinings and groans for mercy. Smith drew away from him daintily.

"Poonoosawmi," he said, "you may kick him again!"

Then briskly, as Poonoosawmi complied with demoniac alacrity:

"Well, folks, as I have already stated, I got to make arrangements. If you'll sort out the packs I must take it 'll save time; an' time is what counts with those packs."

He drew Van Eyck away with him. His attitude was furtive.

"Son," he said earnestly, "I'm going to slip away; 'cause I'm no hand at saying good-by an' hearing 'Thank you's'; an' you've got to help me. Wish I could take you with me. I'd like to keep you a year; an', by goramighty, I'd make a top hole jungle man out o' you. But—she needs you!"

He stood the young man off at arm's length and inspected him critically. Then he nodded—slowly—which meant satisfaction. But his murmur was full of regret.

"Though if I could train you for a year you'd be almost worthy of her."

(The End.)

The Aniline Blues

by Paul Steele

"Ah got de blooze; Ah got de blooze;
Ah got de al-co-co-holic blooze;
No mo' beeah, muh heart to cheeah;
No mo' whisky dat useter make me frisky;
So long, highballs; so long, gin;
Oh, tell muh when yourah comin' back agin!
Ah got de blooze; Ah got de blooze;
O since they amputated muh booze—
Lawdy! Lawdy! war am—well—
Yo' know Ah don't have tuh tell!—
Bloo-oooo-ooze!—
Ah got de al-co-co-holic blooze!—
Some bleeze!"

THE rolling baritone of Eph Landry, known as "Virginny Ham" because of his Afric origin in that romantic commonwealth in the States below the St. Lawrence River, stirred forest echoes. Perched upon the truck loaded with newsprint and colored fibers, he stepped on the brake and cracked his whiplash about the waving ears of his six-mule team. The truck clattered down the other side of the short, sharp hill, heading for the station. Hard hoofs set small stones rolling and puffs of dust spiraling in the rough road.

The popular melody boomed from Eph's ebony throat with nothing of the lugubrious quality suggested by the context. Instead, the resonant tones bubbled with optimism, joyously challenging clouds that are ever trying to enshroud the soul of man when morn has started another day.

This blitheness was in sharp contrast to *Le Gros* John MacNair's dour mood o' the dawn. He stood huge in the doorway of the log office-building. His beetling black brows knitted ferociously as he watched Eph Landry's woolly nubbin head, crowned with a faded golf-cap, disappear above the high box-seat over the rise. His ear caught the tonal gladness.

"Since they 'amputated yer booze,' eh?" savagely reflected his Calgary Scotch mind that was grim, keen, uncompromising. "Ye lunk o' soot, ye lie! Ye've had yer wee drink this morn, before yer chow; you and God knows whatever mair mothers' sons around here. While I've had none! The dr-rry law be damned!"

For a moment Big John MacNair continued to fill the ample doorway of the rude office wherein several persons were working. With big hands thrust in the pockets of his red-and-yellow mackinaw, he scowled at the harnessed order which his rough-and-ready genius had created out of nature's sublime chaos. He gazed upon the works of his brain and hands yet found no pleasure in them.

There stretched the dam spanning the rushing Les Dames River, one of the wildest of northern Quebec's streams. Experts had declared the dam could not be built in the winter time. The La Mere Company, Consolidated, of Quebec and New York, had sent an S. O. S. call to MacNair, who had just finished another "impossible" job among the American Rockies.

MacNair had rushed to New York, listened, grunted, and departed for Canada with a *carte blanche* letter of credit. Arriving at La Mere tract with a roughneck clan he had toiled through a wolfish winter. Spring had revealed the finished dam. It won its spurs that first season by holding back ten million feet of spruce pulp-wood packed in the narrow gorge.

Now, in the second season, the mammoth plant was in full operation. It stood far north of Quebec, well in the Hudson Bay district. The paper, wood pulp and sulphite mills, housed in great buildings of gray stone quarried from Lonesome Hill near by, thundered and buzzed. The sounds mingled with the roaring of foam-crested waters pouring in a veritable cataract over the dam.

The section east of the north-coursing river was dotted with symmetrical rows of neat log cabins. Fifteen hundred souls dwelt where had lain stark loneliness; paper makers, wood pulp and sulphite workers, woodcutters and drivers, river men and their families. A permanent village was planned, with all improvements, as soon as might be.

Big John's gaze swerved to the mills in which the permanent office quarters were not quite ready. From the station, built near the sawmill which droned the swan song of rent timbers, came the staccato thud of sledges, steel ringing on steel. At last even the North Dominion Railroad Company, in reply to MacNair's insistent calls, was laying the branch to the mills, and it was to extend for miles up the river.

John MacNair, *Le Gros,* deserved the pseudonym of size which the *voyageurs* of the region had given him. He stood an inch over six feet, with gladiatorial shoulders. He had a fifty-inch chest, yet his waist was small and he possessed flanks as flat as a runner's.

His appearance suggested a minion of Captain Kidd, returned to waves of verdure rather than of brine. The face under the knockabout gray felt hat was swarthy and covered with a beard that swept his breast. Long black hair fell shaggily below the corner of his mackinaw. A Roman nose, at which many a fist had aimed in vain during checkered wanderings in rough places, jutted above a shaven upper lip. Gleaming black eyes revealed the man's inspiration and his power. He wore a woodsman's rough costume, with trousers tucked into high-laced boots.

MacNair, crowding forty years, walked from the doorway across the clearing toward the mills with the easy stride of youth. The lithe, loose grace, the co-ordination of nerve and muscle, were remindful of the report that his veins contained a strain of Indian blood.

Big John, master of fundamentals, technical lore, and of men, walked frowningly through his university, which was now, as always, hedged by the four azure walls of shifting skies. Midway he paused and glared.

Baptiste Lameaux, a *Canadien* roustabout, was idling at his job of cleaning forest débris from the clearing that in time would be a grassy park. With gaze cast across the foaming Les Dames, Baptiste thought of other things than work. There was song in his soul which bubbled to his

lips, shaded by a wispy black mustache. A vinous sparkle in his jetty eyes told MacNair that, like Virginny Ham and others, he had preceded breakfast with something else, and wetter.

An ode to love, in a jackdaw voice, warbled Baptiste, with dreamy gaze cast at frostbitten, fire-hued groves of Daphne across the river, while chill autumnal breezes strewed the frozen ground with withered leaves. The rune was a reedy parable of the elusiveness of love:

La belle Marie, she is *ma chérie,*
He smile lak a cheepmunk up a tree;
She jomp lak a doe when I come near;
O *sacré bleu!* He ees gone, I fear!

"Ba'tees!" thundered dreaded *Le Gros.* "Jomp to the job in a hurry or ye follow Marie!"

Leaving Baptiste frantically "jomping," MacNair, whose peevishness was a matter only of recent months in his ensemble of qualities, strode on toward the mills. Other outside men saw him coming and bent to their tasks. They could not understand this recent acerbity, but the rod of iron with which he had always ruled was lately tipped with pepper.

He entered the great doors of the machine room. Four big machines crashed in deafening diapason. Streams of watery pulp gushed from the tanks, spread over the traveling screens, reached the steam-dryer rolls red-hot, reeled over and under till they emerged upon the winders in a smoking, finished sheet. Two of the machines were running news print; the other pair were turning out colored fibers, respectively blue and yellow.

Barefooted machine tenders and back tenders were looking after the runs. With a glance, which showed him that all was moving smoothly, MacNair stalked through to the analine vat room in the rear, between the machine room and the wood pulp mill. Here revolved the "porridge" in the large circular tubs in contrasting blue and orange hues.

Without pausing, in his passage to the wood pulp mill, MacNair cast a sidelong, speculative look at the two tenders as he passed them. They looked sleepy-eyed; he could have wagered that they had come late to work, for a bibulous reason.

Both were stalwart chaps. One was short and broad and the other was tall and thin, but "cordy." The shorter man, prematurely bald and black-browed, named John Fresney, had been dubbed "Thunder" in deference to his bellows of rage in his frequent fights. The taller man, red-haired and with a hair-trigger temper, was nicknamed "Lightning" because of his dangerous disposition. He figured on the payroll as Ptolemy Dodge.

The pair had come up from the States during the summer. Being short of hands MacNair had set them to work. They soon showed themselves natural leaders of their rough kind, through owning the hardest fists.

The beginning of autumn saw divers troubles spreading through the plant that were directly traceable to these two mischief makers. However, to the mystification of his chief assistants, John MacNair retained their services, did not even reprove them for tardiness and other cardinal sins.

Big John's assistants had ventured to call his attention to their faults once or twice. "Oh, let it go for now," was his invariable answer. Wondering, they complied. It was certain that MacNair was not afraid of any living man. Some whim was ruling him, with which they had nothing to do, so they dropped the matter.

That something was afoot they suspected, for MacNair would not brook repeated infractions of discipline, and disintegrating influence, interminably. But folk generally learned what the reticent giant meant to do after he had done it.

MacNair, leaving the pulp mill for the sunlit clearing, gloomily stared at a long line of pulp logs ascending on a conveyer. Suddenly his look became animated. He started toward the meager figure of a shabbily dressed man coming from the forest toward him.

Big John had never spoken to the man. He had observed him several times from a distance. The fellow did not see him at first and MacNair walked obliquely till he was within two hundred yards of him. Then he cut across to intercept him.

Beholding MacNair, the man hesitated momentarily, then came on, visibly ill at ease. However, MacNair grinned encouragingly and nodded, while his keen gaze assayed the roughly dressed figure at closer range than upon any previous occasion when his eyes had beheld it.

The stranger's tow hair and pinkish eyes showed from under a plaid cap. His skin was dead-white, his nose blunted. His long upper lip and the weak chin below it twitched with some nervous affection. He was short and slight and sneaking, and pit-patted along with hunched shoulders and head thrust forward, while he involuntarily darted quick, uneasy glances from side to side.

His aspect and furtive movements somehow suggested a cautious rabbit. So strong was this impression that one almost expected his nose and ears to twitch in company with his Aztec chin.

"Mornin'," boomed MacNair as he halted.

"Mornin'," answered the other. His voice was a fretful squeak, produced from a shallow larynx.

"Looking for work, maybe?"

"N-no, not exactly."

"What's yer name? Where ye from?"

"I'm—Tom Rudd. Don't belong no partic'lar place."

"An' ye're not looking for work?"

"No."

Suddenly MacNair's big hands shot out under the little man's armpits. With blood curdling ease he lifted him clear of the ground, hoisting his startled rabbit's face to a level with his own quizzical gaze. He grinned like a swarthy pirate while Rudd wriggled.

Big John considered for a moment and shook his head.

"Ye're right," he acknowledged. "Ye're too light to work." And he set him down. Rudd, scared though unhurt, scurried toward the south woods road as if he had been in the hands of Satan.

Big John cast a whimsical glance after him before turning to tramp back to the office.

"Go it, Bunny-face!" he reflected. "'Stealaway' is a good name for you, an' I christen you that with a bottle o' grape juice. I'll keep this eye peeled for you, and get you, sly as y' are. Blast the dr-rry law!"

One of his clerks was just entering the office with a mail pouch from the station. MacNair gloomily repaired there to immerse himself in its contents.

II.

It was nearly six o'clock that evening. The roar of the paper mill, which ran ceaselessly night and day, reverberated above the thunder of the water pouring over the dam. Dusk had settled thickly; the lighted windows of the buildings and surrounding houses stared like burning eyes. The velvet shadows of encroaching forests lay black under a cupping sky that would soon be spangled with the light of northern stars.

Oil lamps burned within the log office-building in the center of the mill clearing. Annie Haynes, the last of the force remaining in the big main room, put away her ledgers in the safe and turned the combination lock. Rising from the task to her Amazonian height, she glanced toward the open door of the inner office where Big John sat at his desk.

Standing there, garbed in white soft blouse and dark skirt, the girl made a magnificent picture. Masses of lustrous black hair were wound in becoming fashion above ears as well shaped and as keen as any feminine pair in Canada. Black eyes, piercing and beautiful, rested upon MacNair with concern. The face presented the inspiring blend of beauty and intelligence. Too, there was an intangible adventurous quality, which explained why a young woman well-placed in a Toronto business house had resigned her position to take another in the north amid scenes wherein civilization was harnessing elementals for utilities.

Evidently in her early twenties, the "right-hand woman" of John MacNair, who directed the office detail, was a veritable Juno. She was barely an inch under six feet tall and splendidly proportioned. Her liking for her eccentric employer, whom she had not met till some months

previously, after she had answered an advertisement he had sent to various large Canadian newspapers in search of a capable office manager, was pronounced. His personality appeared to fascinate her, as indeed it did most folk.

Others about La Mere, deeply conscious of Annie's charms, had speculated whether MacNair, though accounted a confirmed bachelor, could hold out against them. However, if his eyes gleamed more brightly or his pulses beat any faster in her presence, they were none the wiser.

The evident concern of a lady of such loveliness for his moody state was lost upon MacNair, whose back was turned toward her as she stood in the doorway. At her light steps, crossing the floor toward him, he swung about in his swivel chair and glanced up at her. His bearded face held a wobegone look alien in a creature of uncompromising strength of body and of mind. It summoned from her lips words she had wished to utter before, but had not presumed to speak. They came with a rush while she forgot the errand for which she had wished to see him.

"You're not well, Mr. MacNair. You're not like yourself at all—lately."

He stared up at her, his black eyes alight with quizzical Scotch humor though his unsmiling lips remained dour. A slow flush of confusion at her temerity crept over her round cheeks.

"Well, lass?" His voice was like the gentle growl of elements that could soothe or sunder, as the mood willed. "Aye, I'm well. I ken what ye mean. I have the alcoholic blues."

"The—*what?*"

Though his face remained grave his telltale eyes twinkled impishly at her amaze. "Sit down, lass," he invited, indicating the next chair. "I'll tell ye."

She complied, while her eyes questioned him. "Ye see," he chuckled, "the few that rolls in the gutter because o' whusky, they've made many mair men sad that would never clutter up poorhouses through drink. One o' that many is myself, lass."

"No," she answered, while wondering what he was driving at, "I'm sure of that."

"So, said he, "the dr-rry wave rolls over us all, sot and sane alike, and it's a lovely world; yes, no! For things are just as they were except worse—for now the law is a joke; first in Ontario, now in Quebec, as 't will be in the States a little later. For the people 'll keep na law they sneer at. 'Tis bad, that, for it leads to anarchy and wild whiskers."

Reflectively he jammed fresh tobacco into the bowl of a short black pipe and lighted it. "Now, lass, till the day the dr-rry law went into effect in this *sapree* province I had my wee three drinks o' whusky per day—the first before breakfast, the second before supper and the third before going to bed. Always so since I was a lad; never na mair, na less. But on a day I emptied my last twa quarts into the river here, and since then I've the alcoholic blues."

"Afraid the habit would grip you, I suppose?" she hazarded.

His answering look held mild surprise. "*Habit?* Lass, 't was but three drinks per *day*, not per *hour!* 'Twould have been the same when I was ninety as now. I was never drunk in my life! 'Twas my privilege, taken away because the world has a few bums. I poured it out through respect for the law."

"For the *law?*" she repeated uncertainly.

"Yes!" he answered, with some slight impatience that told her his nerves were worn raw. "Y' see, 't was on the day when Quebec went hallelujah, where Ontario had gone before. I could do na less than obey the law. What else could I do, who am hired to enforce discipline? So into the river went my twa remaining quarts that sad morn, and not a drop I've had since, nor will while I'm in Quebec.

"But I miss it, lass, I'll say, those three wee drinks per day, and the loss makes me mair snappish than I care to be. So, if I'm put out without reason sometimes around here, ye maun na mind it, and ye'll know the reason is this foolish law I'm keeping because 'tis my habit to keep laws."

"That does you credit, Mr. MacNair," she told him gravely, though torn with an almost irresistible desire to laugh at his

dour face. "But I can't say that you seem to have much company among the men here in your observance of it."

"So ye've noticed it, too?" he answered savagely. "Yes, I'll grant ye I seem to be lonesome in my unhappiness. Most o' the boys appear to be keeping their spirits up by trickling 'em down. Contraband goods, lass, and nifty bootlegging going on. I've been on the watch, but I've na caught them yet. But I'm onto the combination that's working it, I'm thinking. It's Thunder and Lightning and Stealaway."

He grinned morosely at her blank look, and deigned to explain. "Thunder and Lightning are two vat tenders in the aniline room. Stealaway is a rabbit-faced runt who hits this settlement from the devil-knows-where every little while, and then fades in the same general direction."

She began to laugh. "I've seen him! He *does* look like a bunny!"

"Yes. And he's the bootlegger, all right; I'll bet on it. I'm giving the three of 'em rope. They'll hang themselves!"

"You have evidence—" she began.

"No. I've just a hunch. 'Tis but lately I've suspected bootlegging, for I knew the boys would *cache* a quantity from the dr-rry day o' tribulation. But they would 'a' run out before now, and 'tis running in steady again from somewhere, I know. Virginny Ham and pop-eyed Ba'tees', and a job-lot of others are happy in the mornings and after evening chow. And something tells me lately that this lop-eared Stealaway is responsible.

"Now," he summed up moodily as he rose, ready to go to his supper, prepared by Virginny Ham's wife in Big John's cabin, "I'm wishing no one harm or loss o' liberty, but if I'm to obey the law, whatever, so must they all around here."

His somber look lightened with a quizzical smile as he walked with her to the door after she had donned hat and jacket. "If I'm to go whuskyless, because 'tis the law, so must they!"

He left her at the door of her cabin, where she lived with her younger brother, William, who held a clerkship in the office. She watched his big figure swinging toward his own adjacent place. Her eyes were filled with laughter—and something more serious.

Then, before she pressed down the latch of the door, her gaze wandered toward the forest fringing the settlement. It became absorbed.

Darting past a lance of light which streamed from a distant window was a meager figure she recognized. She had seen it more than once, and intuitively discerned its quality of furtiveness.

Why was the wisp, nicknamed "Stealaway" by *Le Gros* John, hanging around the outskirts of La Mere on this particular evening?

Annie Haynes's brother had gone back to Toronto for a fortnight. Hastily she made ready and ate her supper, keeping an eye on the windows. But it was an hour after she had finished her dishes that her sharp gaze detected a huddled figure furtively working around the rim of the shadowed clearing. A stray moonbeam betrayed its presence to her.

Hastily donning a black woolen toboggan cap, and flinging a dark cape over her shoulders, she hastened out into the chill night.

She glanced toward the log office building in the center of the clearing. It was dark. She believed, however, that it would be soon lighted. For it was a nightly habit of Big John's to work in his office for a couple of hours.

Slipping behind a huge pile of pulp-wood, she watched Stealaway ducking across an open space to a mill door, which he entered. It opened into the aniline vat room, admirably suited to the purpose which the girl was now convinced it served.

The two tenders, pseudonymed "Thunder" and "Lightning," had been lately working from noon till midnight. A window of the room directly faced that of the office wherein MacNair worked each night, across a space of three hundred yards. Immediately the girl grasped how the trio managed to carry out so successfully the smuggling scheme of which Big John suspected them.

She soon confirmed her assumption. Cautiously gaining vantage next the wall, she saw dimly the rabbit-like face of Steal-

away glued to the pane. He was watching the office that was still dark.

Annie gathered that he was waiting till MacNair should reach the office before dispensing what contraband "wet" goods he had presumably brought to the mill. Big John was dreaded too fervently by his men to warrant them in taking chances till they were certain he would not be on hand to interfere. When he was seen at his desk the stealthy program, defying Quebec's dry law, would begin.

Swiftly Annie turned to retrace her steps. The figure of a man, who had approached noiselessly, loomed in her path. She recoiled in dismay. A palm, clapped to her mouth, stifled her sharp little cry of consternation, a powerful grip drew her away from the wall, and the door.

III.

A QUARTER-HOUR later the patience of Tom Rudd, otherwise Stealaway, who had told MacNair that morning that he didn't belong "any particular place," was rewarded. His twitching nose had been flattened against the window-pane while his eyes sought the dark office-building opposite. When Big John appeared, and he was assured that the feared giant was not prowling about to interrupt him and his confederates, they would busy themselves with the duties of this latest visit of his. Rudd traveled over a wide territory in northern Quebec, calling at various camps, and managed to reach La Mere every three or four weeks.

It was dark near the window where he stood behind a pile of casks which screened him from the glance of anybody passing through the aniline beater room. Squat, black-browed, bald "Thunder" Fresney and tall, quick-tempered, red-haired "Lightning" Dodge, undershirted and overalled, were tending the vats. They were lookouts for the mill side.

If Big John chanced to come through from the machine room or the pulp mill either of them was supposed to cough as a warning. Twice before, in the space of two months, Stealaway had heard that cough and cowered in the shadows till MacNair had left the mill and gone to the office, leaving the little smuggler free to dispense his contraband supplies of whisky.

No cough had sounded this time, and now, Stealaway Rudd grunted softly with satisfaction. A flare of light appeared in the office window. Rudd's pinkish eyes blinked blissfully at sight of a big, bearded, mackinawed figure topped with a gray knockabout hat and with trousers tucked in high lace boots.

Framed in the window the figure stood for a moment, somberly staring toward the mill, then turned and slid into the chair before the desk, becoming absorbed in work.

Rudd stepped from behind the casks. "Hi! Thunder!" he called softly, "MacNair's in his office. Come and flash yer signal to the gang!"

Fresney approached and, with a wary eye upon the black-bearded figure before the desk in the distant office, drew a lighted lantern from under a discarded mill felt jacket and waved it in a series of cabalistic flashes in front of the window. This signaled that the coast was clear and brought a number of dark forms that had been waiting in forest shadows, hurrying guardedly toward the mill.

Meanwhile, Rudd rolled out from behind the casks, which held acids, a little keg of "squirrel" whisky which he had spirited into the aniline vat room after dark. It was equipped with a spigot. The system was now ready to work.

Thunder, who had taken Stealaway's place at the window, was to watch there to see if MacNair remained at his desk. If he quit the office and started toward the mill, everything would be put innocently to rights before he reached it. Lightning was to guard the outer door through which the "regulars" would come, each with his bottles to be filled from the keg. Stealaway filled the bottles and received the money, giving Thunder and Lightning a percentage, both in cash and whisky, for their services.

It was a cunning scheme, conducted under the paw of the lion. Stealaway had hit upon it after learning of MacNair's habit of nightly work in the office. With the boss under steady surveillance they

couldn't lose. Small wonder that, though Big John had searched far and wide for the plan of distrubution, he hadn't found it!

Thunder, carefully waving the lantern, chuckled as he noticed the black-bearded figure in the opposite office-window absorbed in work upon the desk. A cloud of crouching forms joyously approached the outer door. "All right, fellows!" called Thunder, above the slushing thrum of the revolving beaters.

A knock sounded upon the outer door. The crimson-thatched Lightning opened it cautiously and peered out.

With a startled yell he tried to close it. But it banged back upon him, sending him sprawling. A man bounded inside.

At Lightning's yell Thunder rushed from the window into the open space in front of the vat where the aniline blue sludge was stirring. His deep bellow of consternation followed Lightning's yell. His eyes protruded like white-rimmed marbles.

Le Gros John MacNair was literally divided against himself. He sat in his office, three hundred yards away—and also he stood among them inside the open door!

While Thunder stood stupefied, staring at the gray knockabout hat above gleaming eyes and black pirate's beard, Lightning acted. In the instant when Stealaway, realizing something was wrong, raised his gaze from the keg with which he was tinkering, and fell to quaking, the red-haired Dodge flung himself furiously upon MacNair.

With miraculous suddenness he rebounded, sailing through the air like a grotesque bird and landing in the vat of aniline blue.

Then Fresney, with a murderous bellow, tried his luck. He came waddling in like a gorilla. He seized a hammer from a cashead in the instant before he closed with MacNair. An iron hand twisted his wrist; he dropped the hammer. He felt himself lifted by an arm-and-crotch hold; he pitched over Big John's shoulder, and spreadeagled into the vat where Dodge was floundering.

Rudd tried to run by the big man. MacNair clutched him with one hand by the collar and laughed quietly, glancing at the keg.

"With the goods, eh, Stealaway?"

Twisting in his grasp, Rudd whirled and bit his wrist like a rabbit.

"All right, be a blue bunny!" growled MacNair. Lifting the screaming little man, he nonchalantly tossed him into the vat from which the two howling tenders were dazedly trying to emerge. Without paying further attention to the dyed trio, he kicked in the head of the keg. The raw whisky spread over the floor, its pungent aroma causing MacNair's nose to wrinkle.

There came a rush of footsteps through the open door. "Oh!" cried a silvery voice, "I heard the racket—rushed here—so you're safe?"

MacNair turned to look, as the three strangling conspirators drew themselves from the blue ooze over the rim of the vat. Big John's eyes twinkled.

"Aye, lass, I'm safe. Ye're a braw man, my girl!"

Through the open doorway came teamster Eph Landry, "Virginny Ham," his empty bottles in his pocket, sent by the wondering gang outside to reconnoiter and find what the racket was about. Eph came cautiously, with black face and apprehensive, shiny eyes.

Whatever he expected to see, it was more than he anticipated.

With a squeal of superstitious terror Eph Landry loped out again into the shadows of the night, shouting a warning to the lurkers.

"Mah Gawd, boys, beat it! Theah's two Big Johns in theah, *a holdin' hands!*"

A little later the office was for a second time that night employed as a lady's boudoir, while MacNair remained outside, his pirate's face embellished with a whimsical grin. At last Annie Haynes rejoined him, again correctly accoutered in skirts, cape, and toboggan cap. They walked toward her cabin.

"Lass," said John MacNair, "'twas a clever hunch you had in the minute after ye saw me hangin' around by the door, and I clapped my hand over yer jaw so you

would na scream. 'Twas you guessed they'd not start workin' till they thought they saw me in the office, and ye remembered well that I've always extra clothes and boots and hats in the locker there. I hung around in the shadow till your light flashed on after ye had gone around the clearin', and sneaked in the office by the back door.

"And I tell ye, when I looked across—before I went in—and saw ye framed in the window, I thought it was myself, barring an inch or so in height. But tell me—for ye rushed away too fast to explain—how did ye manage the whiskers?"

Annie Haynes's black eyes—the same hue as his own—sparkled in the frosty air. Her firm cheeks pinkened. She looked like no man, but every splendid inch a queen as she paused by her door.

"My hair is long, and the same color as your beard," she reminded him. "Most of it I trussed it under that gray hat of yours. I let enough hang for the whiskers, and held 'em with a little paste on the chin. I had an awful time just now soaking the stuff out of my hair. That's what made me keep you waiting."

Big John's booming laugh woke the forest echoes. Then he grew serious. He laid a big hand on her arm.

"Lass," he proposed, "Black Eph said something about *two* MacNairs. And why not? Annie MacNair: 'twould sound well, I'm thinking!"

It was the next morning. *Le Gros* John MacNair was at the desk in his private office. In a chair at his side was his lovely, demure *fiancée,* Annie Haynes, who promised to be as capable a wife as she had been a first office assistant. Big John had been consulting an atlas of the world, with a verbal demonstration, while referring intermittently to a pile of personal letters on his desk. They had been coming to him for six months, from all parts of Canada, America, and from overseas.

Suddenly a burst of song from outside summoned their attention. They would know that resonant Afric voice anywhere. It was that of Virginny Ham Eph Landry. It warbled a favorite strain, the swan song of swash, the jinx of joy, the doom of soul-warming ribaldry:

> "O since they amputated mah booze—
> Lawdy! Lawdy! war is—well—
> Yo' know Ah don't have tuh tell!
> Bloo-oooo-ooze!
> Ah got de al-co-co-hol-ic
> Bloo-oooo-ooze!"

The matin joy which had tinctured that booming baritone, in the northern mornings, was no more. In its place was a sobbing mournfulness, the tragic shadows accompanying the context. It was a desolate, throbbing, minor strain, the wail of one who knew too well that his booze had been amputated by the foray of Big John MacNair.

Eph's mules scrambled up the short hill upon the other side of which lay the station. His wagon carried a choice assortment of aniline blues, which were being consigned to a Quebec hospital to be bleached out.

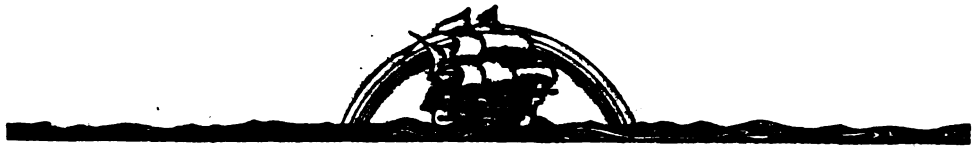
The blues showed a pleasing assortment of shades. An esthetic sense would have delighted in them. Thunder was a sort of robin's egg blue. Lightning was shaded off to cobalt. Stealaway, who had earned immersion because he bit like a rabbit, was all to the whetstone.

John MacNair stopped work, looked and listened for a moment, then turned back to the atlas, indicating the letters.

"Yes, lass, law's law, but if we can keep ahead of it, that's law, too. Now I'll wire them to put on a man,and we'll be married and beat it. Here's offers for me from all over that ha' been piling up. The States?

"Till recently—yes. Not now. Canada's in the same water boat. Mexico's wet, but 'tis no man's land. I must have my three drinks of whusky per day; na mair, na less. I promise ye that. And legally. I'm a man of law.

"I think we'll take first this offer in England. If she gets out o' luck, there's France, and the world is still wide after that. But I think ye've a lot o' traveling ahead, along with me. For from now on I'm movin' to keep ahead of the dr-rry wave. I'll see the world for three drinks per day. 'Tis my right, within the law!"



The Log-Book

By the Editor

THE date of this ARGOSY—May 1—for many years signified moving day all over the country. Recently, especially in the big cities, October 1 has come to dispute first place with it in landlords' annals, but with the housing problem so acute as it now is, May 1 will undoubtedly turn many minds to fresh threshing out of the problem, "Where to live." A recent news item indicated that the trend of population's center, formerly in Indiana, is now steadily eastward. This is a progression in the wrong direction, with a tendency to give serious reality to the flip phrase, "The worst is yet to come." There ought to be lots of room in the West. How about it, you readers of the Log-Book who live in, say, Portland, Oregon? Let us hear from you.

Whatever kind of a man—or a woman—you may happen to be, you'll like

"THAT KIND OF A MAN"

BY KENNETH MACNICHOL

Author of "Enough Is Plenty," etc.

for its appeal is universal, a rare tale of love in its most complete expression, of sacrifice supreme, and of a subtle charm difficult to define, yet none the less real and actual, and, above all, convincing. Save and excepting the sinister *Moreno*, with his sneering smile, here you will find figures that are not shadow-shapes, posturing stiffly, like marionettes, but figures that live and move for your beguiling: *Grew*, the mighty; *Taine*, of the sick soul; *Jess*, rare flower of woman; and *"Faro" Carroll*, gambler with fate, but a "square shooter" in more senses than one. This begins as a two-part serial in THE ARGOSY for May 8.

Sired by the lightning, mothered by cave-bear and tiger, worthy descendant of *En-ro*, Carver of Tusks, and of him who followed, was *Menzono-mon*, Slayer of Wolves, who loved not the sacrificial stone.

"THE CAVE THAT SWIMS ON THE WATER"

BY PAUL L. ANDERSON

Author of "The Lord of the Winged Death," "The Son of the Red God," etc.

the third of this very interesting series dealing with the prehistoric, has to do with an absorbing phase of the development of a race, the supermen of their day and age. For even as *En-ro* brought the Red God into birth, followed by the fashioning of the

Winged Death, so *A-ta,* and she a woman, devised the third, and an epoch-making discovery it proved. This is published complete in THE ARGOSY for May 8.

Charles Tenney Jackson brings a dainty touch to his story of the race-horse and the Baptist minister's daughter in "A LITTLE PRAYER FOR RAIN" next week. *Jimmy* is a real character, and I feel sure will have all your sympathies, in spite of the desperate deed he does. "MAN NOR GOD NOR DEVIL," by Victor Lauriston, is a tale of extraordinary stripe, and I am pretty sure will provoke considerable discussion among you. All admirers of "Yellow Soap"—and that includes practically every reader of THE ARGOSY—will be delighted to find a short story by its author, Katharine Haviland Taylor, in the issue for May 8, and when I tell you that its name is "MUCH STRANGER THAN FICTION" you who have read certain comments of mine in the Log editorials of late will surely expect something out of the common.

KNOWS WHAT HE LIKES AND DOESN'T

Memphis, Tennessee.

I have just finished reading "In Quest of Yesterday." I think it was impossible, but I liked it just the same. "Going North" was good, too. "Drag Harlan" was all right. Get out some more like "Skack of the Everglades." All the short stories are fine, with the exception of "The Sun God Functions" and a few others. I sure was lonesome when the printers went on a strike, 'cause I couldn't get the good old ARGOSY.

I hope this gets by the waste-basket. Use my name. BERNARD REILLY.

PUTTING IT ON THE MEN

Salinas, California.

This is my first letter to the Log-Book, but I've just got to tell H. D. Rettburg, of the January 31 issue, that speaking of rouge and powder they *don't all do it.* And if the boys would appreciate a good girl, even though she be plain, there would be less rouge sold. But they don't—the boys, I mean. They want a classy dame, as they say, and one doesn't look so classy when she's not all dolled up. Some are so plain without the powder they're not looked at twice. Believe me, if more boys would admire character rather than looks there would be more girls not using it.

ELVA J. SCHEFFLER.

ROUGE VERSUS TOBACCO

Emmett, Idaho.

I have been a reader of THE ARGOSY for three years, and like it fine. I always read the Log-Book, and find the letters very interesting. In THE ARGOSY for January 31 I note with special interest H. D. Rettburg's letter explaining his dislike for powder and rouge, which is not as alarming as he puts it. I want to say right here, if Mr. Rettburg thinks that powder and rouge ruin one's complexion and skin, has he ever stopped to think of that dangerous weed the men use—tobacco? I have never heard of any one going to her grave from the use of powder and rouge. But the death-rate of the tobacco-user is alarming, and, speaking of the men forming a union to go on a strike against girls who use powder, I wonder what the results would be if the girls refused to have anything to do with the boys who smoked.

With three cheers for THE ARGOSY.

A GIRL WHO POWDERS.

THERE'S VERSE THAT'S BEEN WORSE

Grundy Center, Iowa.

Enclosed please find check for four dollars to cover my subscription to THE ARGOSY.

Here's to THE ARGOSY,
I've no kick to make;
It is one magazine I'll never forsake.
The stories are brimful of action and pep,
And for pleasing its readers
It sure has the "rep."
From index to Log-Book
It is stuffed like a tick
With the best of good fiction
That's printed, by Hick."

A. J. SHIRK.

ONE OF MANY "YELLOW SOAP" INDORSEMENTS

Los Angeles, California.

I should like to add a few words of appreciation for your magazine. I have been an almost constant reader of THE ARGOSY since before it became a weekly, and words cannot express the enjoyment I have taken out of it.

One of your latest serials, "Yellow Soap," by Katharine Haviland Taylor, is the best I have read for months. I don't know how it will end, but it is so full of sympathy and human understanding one feels the author should have been a poet instead.

Thanking you for the opportunity of reading your splendid magazine, and with best wishes for its continued success, (MRS.) L. D. WELDON.

MORE STORIES BY RED EAGLE COMING

Manila, Philippine Islands.

I have been a reader of THE ARGOSY for several years now, and I cannot do without it. I get the magazine every week at a news-stand. "Thews

of Battle," "Ships Triumphant," "Booty," "Riddle Gawne" were all good stories. Let us have more short stories by Chief Henry Red Eagle. His stories are great. I'm a lonesome lad in khaki, and reading is about the only thing that I have to do over here. I hope that this does not hit the waste-basket, as I would like to correspond with some of THE ARGOSY readers.

Wishing THE ARGOSY all the success in the world,

PRIVATE ALBERT E. ANDERSON,
Dept. Hospital, Med. Dept., U. S. Army.

PREFERS JUST AN ORDINARY MAN

Providence, Rhode Island.

Here I am again. I want to say a few words about "Yellow Soap." I think it is one of the best stories of its kind I have ever read. The author certainly understands human nature.

"Drag Harlan" was a fine story, but as a real man Drag was impossible. Who wants a hero that kills at least one man every day? I for one prefer just an ordinary man who wears white collars and keeps his finger-nails clean, and whose wildest dissipation—now that prohibition is here—is going to the movies or getting into a game of African golf. That fellow who wrote the letter saying so much about girls powdering must be very young or very narrow-minded. I would like to show him the letters I got from all over the United States and Canada just because the editor headed my last letter to the Log "From a Girl Who Powders." ELSIE D. PIERCE.

A PURVEYOR OF CHEER

New York City.

As I have never written to you to let you know what I think of your magazine I thought I would sit down and do so. I want to let you know what a companion it has been to me. When I was over on the other side doing my duty, I didn't see very much of it, but since I got back to our dear old U. S. A. I have taken it up again.

I am alone in this country, and haven't any friends to speak of, except those in the shop where I work. THE ARGOSY has been one to me. It has brought comfort and cheer into my heart. It has filled my lonely heart as no other companion could.

I have no fault to find with any of the stories, as I like them all. But still we all have our favorites. Most of all I like the stories of the great Northwest. I was born in Alaska, and so that is why I like them, as they take me back once more. So please give us more stories of that country and I'll thank you beforehand. Such as "The Saint of Bon Desir," "What God Destroys," "Law of the Trail," "Whose Gold?" "Going North," and such. Well, anything, as long as it is about the great white silence.

A sincere reader. Good luck to your magazine.

EDWARD S. FARROW.

THE TRUTH ABOUT COAL MINES

Lisbon, Ohio.

In reading "The Hoodoo Mine" (September 20) and the criticism of William F. Dudley (November 22) I am struck with the fact that the "Wild Man from Montana" wanders far afield from the subject-matter of the story. Any one who has gone down into a coal mine knows quite well that it can be just as terrifying, actually, to be down at a depth of two hundred feet as to be much lower in the bowels of the earth, and, as the story deals with mining and western Pennsylvania, I cannot see any reason for the "frantic outburst" of Mr. Wild Man. Brother Jenks, your story is very vivid in its delineation of life under and above ground at a mining camp, and as I have spent twenty-six years among such scenes, it brings back—oh, so poignantly!—their actualities and realities.

During my husband's lifetime we lived among the mines in several counties in western Pennsylvania, and in eastern Ohio, and in western Maryland. My remembrance of mines in those places is that those having a depth of two hundred feet are in the minority, while the shallower ones and those having drifts and slopes are in the majority. And let no one venture to say they are not *mines*. I have known miners to walk several miles underground in order to reach their room or entry after going down a shaft of less than one hundred feet, and that is a common experience.

I do not speak from hearsay; I have been in many of them. It used to be my custom each Saturday night to go into a mine, about twenty-two miles south of Pittsburgh, with my husband, while he dug and loaded his "engine coal," and sit, safely ensconced on a pile of props while my husband worked. That was a slope mine, and had an output of several hundred tons *per diem*. While there it did not make much difference about the depth; it was the immensity which counted.

I have also a vivid recollection of a time when I assisted friend husband to haul our winter supply of coal to the surface of a small mine, which had a shaft of thirty feet deep. To sit at the bottom and load the coal into receptacles, to be drawn up with a windlass by my husband, was my job, and I would rather have been the editor of our favorite magazine, facing a battery of criticism than to think about the "sump" of unknown depth to the right of me and the almost endless wastes of water beyond, all faintly gleaming by the light of my lamp, and me all alone.

One point upon which I must touch in Mr. Jenks's letter is regarding the depth of mines in the old country. Husband worked in a mine which was six hundred yards straight down. The first landing was three hundred yards, and at that the cage stopped first. I was down several times, and I felt no more fear than when in the shallower mines. That was the Pendlebury shaft of the Knowles & Co. colliery, Lancashire. A deeper shaft adjoined two miles away, and I was told it was nine hundred yards, and that it was the deepest in England or Europe.

But this has no bearing upon the main point of Mr. Jenks's very carefully written story, and I merely mention such for Mr. Jenks's benefit. I thank him and you for the story. It was fine, both as a story and a picture. I shall look eagerly for more from him.

Anyway, I am ashamed of Mr. Wild West man. I always imagined the men of the West were more careful of the feelings of a fellow mortal. But maybe he is an exception, eh?

For fair play and a love of reading,

SARAH HUTH.

BEGAN MANUFACTURING JULY 6 1876

W. L. DOUGLAS

"THE SHOE THAT HOLDS ITS SHAPE"

FOR MEN AND WOMEN

$7.00 $8.00 $9.00 & $10.00 SHOES

BOYS' SHOES $4.50 $5.00 $5.50

W.L.Douglas shoes are sold through 107 of our own stores direct to the wearer at one profit. All middlemen's and manufacturing profits are eliminated. W.L.Douglas $9.00 and $10.00 shoes are absolutely the best shoe values for the money in this country. W. L. Douglas name and the retail price stamped on the bottom guarantees the best shoes in style, comfort and service that can be produced for the price.

Stamping the price on every pair of shoes as a protection against high prices and unreasonable profits is only one example of the constant endeavor of W. L. Douglas to protect his customers. W. L. Douglas name on shoes is his pledge that they are the best in materials, workmanship and style possible to produce at the price. For twenty-six years it has been our practice to sell W. L. Douglas shoes in our own stores with only one profit. This has saved the wearers millions of dollars.

The quality of W.L.Douglas product is guaranteed by more than 40 years experience in making fine shoes. The smart styles are the leaders in the fashion centers of America. They are made in a well-equipped factory at Brockton, Mass., by the highest paid, skilled shoemakers, under the direction and supervision of experienced men, all working with an honest determination to make the best shoes for the price that money can buy. The retail prices are the same everywhere. They cost no more in San Francisco than they do in New York.

W. L. Douglas shoes are for sale by over 9000 shoe dealers besides our own stores. If your local dealer cannot supply you, take no other make. Order direct from the factory. Send for booklet telling how to order shoes by mail, postage free.

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W.L.Douglas

President
W.L.Douglas Shoe Co.,
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Earned $2200.00 in Four Months

SO CAN YOU Oldham was a telegraph operator at a telegraph operator's pay and 53 years old when he found his fortune in a junk-pile of old, worn out tires. One day he read in an advertisement similar to this, of the money making opportunities in the Automobile Tire Repair business. He answered the ad, and got Haywood's story — all the facts. He read what others had done — how hundreds of men are making upwards of $4000.00 a year making old tires new, repairing punctures, blow-outs, retreading the millions and millions of automobile tires. He determined to act. He wrote me for my proposition. I sent it. Then he bought a Haywood outfit and started in business in his old home town. In 4 months he made $2200.00, as much as he made in 2½ years as a telegraph operator.

HAYWOOD'S TIRE SURGERY GIVES NEW LIFE TO OLD TIRES

YOU CAN MAKE $2500.00 TO $5000 A YEAR

Think! You men who are seeking a permanent, big paying business of your own. The possibilities in the same field that is making OLDHAM a fortune. It is a field practically new. Uncountable millions of automobile tires are thrown in the junk-pile; tires that can quickly and profitably be remade by Haywood's Tire Surgery and Haywood Equipment—tires that can be put back into service and run 4000 to 5000 more miles. You can do it, equally well or possibly better—Oldham's record of money making—it's being done every day; it's facts within reach of every ambitious, determined man. If you are that calibre you will sit down now and write Haywood for full particulars. When you get all the information you want, you will jump at the opportunity. You will see an opportunity bigger by far than we can hope to tell in the limited space of this magazine.

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M. HAYWOOD, (Founder of Haywood System of Tire Surgery.

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I have ready to mail you the day I get your request, a fascinating book—all about tires — how to repair them by the **Haywood Method** — how to start in business — how to build up trade — what to charge. You needn't write a letter—just tear out the coupon right now, fill it in and mail. In 48 to 72 hours you can have the whole proposition right in front of you. It's a case of walking right into $2500 to $4000 a year and up. Use coupon, or send a post card.

M. HAYWOOD, President **Haywood Tire & Equipment Co.**
828 Capitol Avenue
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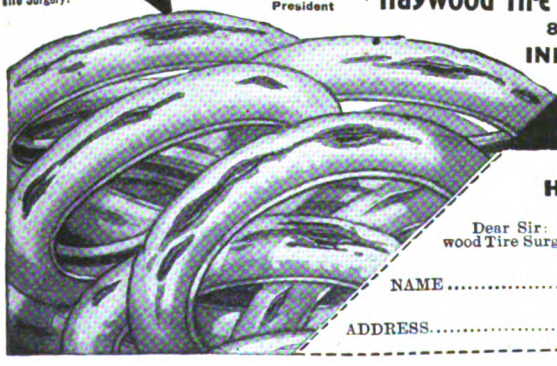

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Dear Sir: Please send me by return mail your free book on the new Haywood Tire Surgery Method and the details of your free school of tire repairing.

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ADDRESS .....

Classified Advertising continued from page 6, front section.

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you will like this Camel Turkish and Domestic blend!

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Camels never tire your taste no matter how liberally you smoke. They are always appetizing — and satisfying, because they have a desirable, mellow body.

Camels leave no unpleasant cigaretty after taste nor unpleasant cigaretty odor. In fact, every angle you get on Camels is so different from any other cigarette that you will be won as you were never won before!

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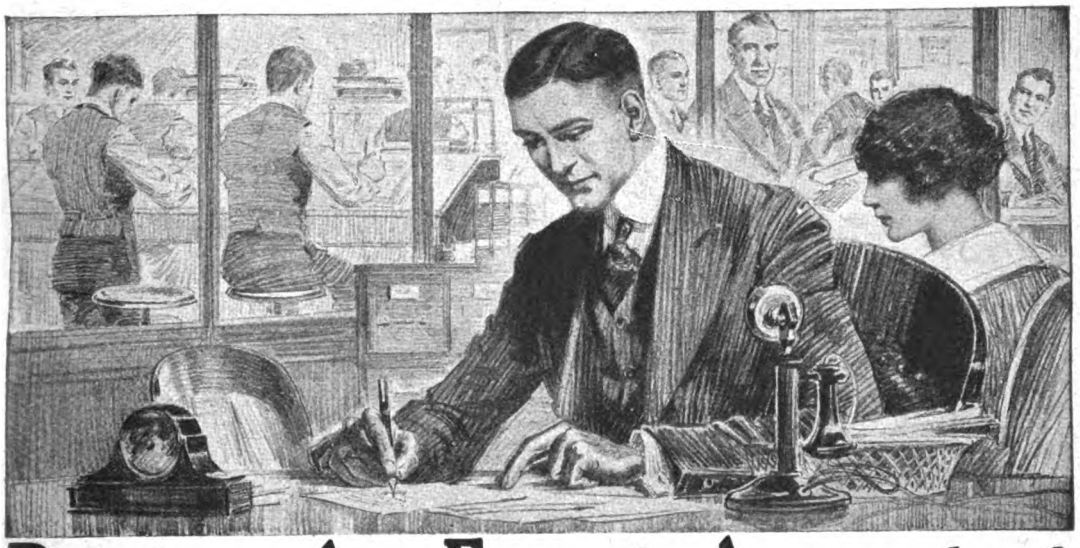
Winston-Salem, N. C.



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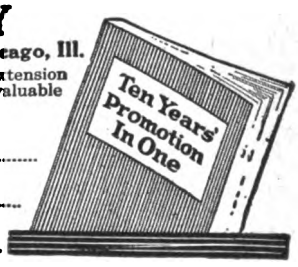

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$3,000 for 12 Words

WHEN Sir A. Conan Doyle was paid a dollar a word he set a record in the history of writing. You may earn *$250 a word* in the great international Eveready Contest *beginning June 1 and ending August 1, 1920!*

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For the best answer that conforms to the Contest Rules, to be judged by the Art Editors of *LIFE, three thousand dollars in cash will be paid.* For the hundred and three next best answers will be paid prizes ranging from $1,000 down to $10.

Anyone may enter. There is no cost or obligation of any sort. Contest Rules and special Contest Blanks free, at any of the fifty thousand stores showing the picture. If two or more contestants submit the same identical wording selected by the judges for the awarding of any prize, the full amount of that prize will be paid to each.

The quickest way to find a store showing the Eveready Daylo Contest Picture is to look for the window sign reproduced at the right. Full particulars may be obtained from these dealers.

List of Prizes

1 First Prize	$3000
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3 prizes, each	500
4 prizes, each	250
5 prizes, each	200
10 prizes, each	100
10 prizes, each	50
20 prizes, each	25
50 prizes, each	10

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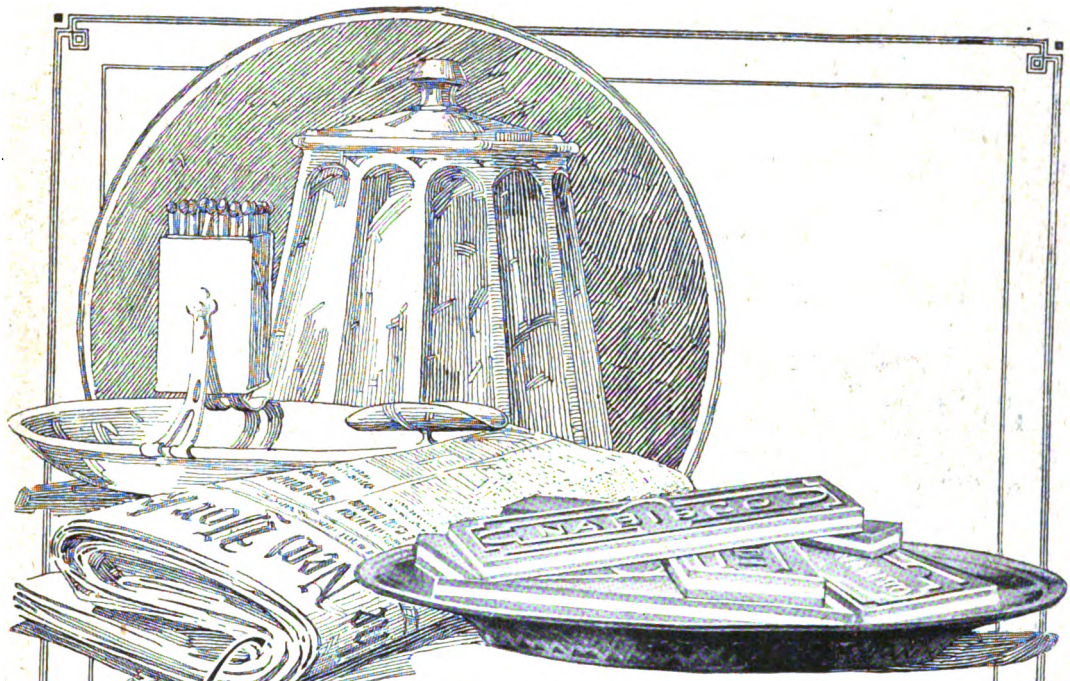

for His Sweet Tooth

BEAR in mind that NABISCO Sugar Wafers appeal to his sweet tooth just as they do to maids and matrons, boys and girls. Remember also that these tempting wafers are as appropriate for between-meal nibbles as they are for formal repasts and all occasions of entertaining.

Sold in the famous In-er-seal Trade Mark package.

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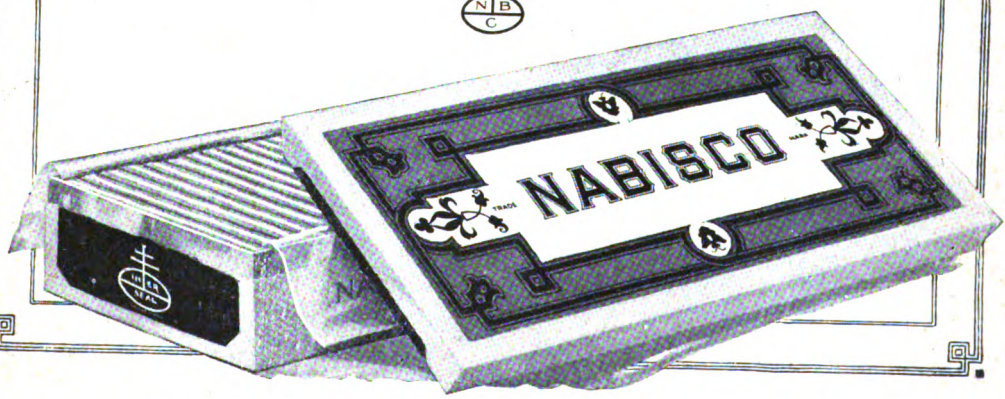

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"You're a wonder, Dear. 'Union Forever,'
I say—particularly, Topkis Union."

CUT loose and in generous proportions, Topkis Athletic Underwear has few points-of-contact with your skin. It is made from finest-grade nainsook with the skill of the hand-sewn garment. Seams are stitched to stay. Buttons are put on with the bachelor in mind.

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