ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

What Was That?

by Katharine Haviland Taylor

Author of "Yellow Soap," etc.

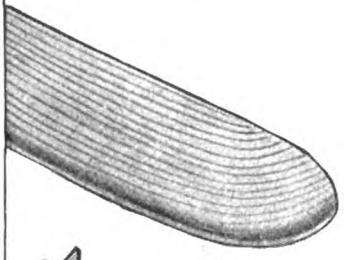
There's mystery in every line

Some Blade!

You "hop to it" with a smile, and finish up the same way, when the Durham-Duplex is on the job. Good-bye to scraping and "pulling". Good-bye to face-burning and skin irritation.

The famous two-edged, detachable Durham-Duplex Blades are the longest, strongest, keenest blades on earth, oil-tempered, hollow-ground and scientifically stropped to an edge of surpassing sharpness —and guarded to prevent cutting.

It's the greatest blade ever. You'll say so yourself after a single shave with this real razor.



DURHAM-DUPLEX RAZOR CO.
Jersey City, New Jersey
FACTORIES
JERSEY CITY, U. S. A. SHEFFIELD, ENG.
PARIS, FRANCE TORONTO, CANADA
Sales Representatives in all Countries

Standard Set
One Dollar

Razor with attractive American ivory handle, safety guard and package of three Durham-Duplex Blades (6 shaving edges). All in handsome American ivory case.

Additional Blades
50 Cents for a package of 5

DURHAM-DUPLEX

A Real Razor-made Safe

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

VOL. CXXVI | CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER 9, 1920 | NUMBER 2

FIVE CONTINUED STORIES

ONE NOVELETTE

SIX SHORT STORIES

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.

Entered as second class matter July 15, 1920, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

6-Piece Set
Fumed Solid Oak

$1.00 Down

A Room Full of Furniture

Send only $1.00 and we will ship you this handsome 6-piece library set. Only $1.00 down and then $3.00 per month, or $34.90 in all. A positively staggering value, and one of the biggest bargains we have ever offered. Look at this massive set, clip the coupon below and have it shipped on approval. Then see for yourself what a beautiful set it is. If you do not like it, return it in 30 days and we will return your money. All you have to do is to send the coupon with $1.00. This magnificent library set is not shown in our regular catalog. The value is so wonderful and the demand so great that there aren't enough to go around, so send today sure. Either have set sent for you to see, or tell us to mail catalog.

6 Pieces This superb six-piece library set is made of selected solid oak throughout, finished in rich dull waxed, brown fumed oak. Large arm rocker and arm chair are 36 inches high, seats 19x19 inches. Sewing rocker and reception chair are 36 inches high, seats 17x17 inches. All four pieces are padded, seats upholstered in brown imitation Spanish leather. Library table has 24x34 inch top, with roomy magazine shelf below, and beautifully designed ends. Jardiniere stands measuren 17 inches high, with 12 inch top. Clip the coupon below, and send to us with $1.00, and we will ship the entire six pieces, subject to your approval. No C. O. D. Shipped knocked down to reduce your freight charges considerably. Easy to set up. Shipping weight about 175 pounds. **Order by No. B6139A. Send $1.00 cash with order; $3.00 monthly. Price $34.90. No discount for cash. Pieces not sold separately.**

Act Now—While This Special Offer Lasts

Don't wait a day longer. Sit down today and send in coupon for this 6-piece Fumed Solid Oak Library Set. For a limited time only are we able to offer you this stupendous bargain. Prices, as you know, on everything are going up, up, up. It is impossible to tell just what day it will be necessary for us to increase the price of this wonderful Fumed Solid Oak Library Set. So act, but act quickly. Fill out coupon, send it to us with first small payment and we'll ship you this wonderful 6-piece Fumed Solid Oak Library Set.

Free Trial Coupon
Straus & Schram
Dept. 2277
W. 35th St., Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $1.00. Ship special advertised 6-piece Fumed Oak Library Suite. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If I keep the suite, I will pay you $3.00 monthly. If not satisfied, I am to return the suite within 30 days and you are to refund my money and any freight charges I paid.

☐ 6-Piece Library Set No. B6139A. $34.90.

Name .....

St., R.F.D. or Box No. .....

Shipping Point .....

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

If you ONLY want catalog put X in proper box below
☐ Furniture, Stoves and Jewelry ☐ Clothing

Send this Coupon

Along with $1.00 to us now. Have this fine library set shipped on 30 days' trial. We will also send our big Bargain Catalog listing thousands of amazing bargains. Only a small first payment and balance in monthly payments for anything you want. Don't delay. Act now while this special offer lasts. Send the coupon now.

Easy Payments!

Open an account with us. We trust honest people, anywhere in the U. S. Send for this wonderful bargain shown above or choose from our big catalog. One price to all, cash or credit. **No discount for cash.** Not one penny extra for credit. Do not ask for a special cash price. We cannot offer any discount from these sensational prices. **No C. O. D.**

30 Days' Trial

Our guarantee protects you. If not perfectly satisfied, return the article at our expense within 30 days and get your money back—also any freight you paid. Could any offer be fairer?

Free Bargain Catalog

Shows thousands of bargains in furniture, jewelry, carpets, rugs, curtains, silverware, stoves, porch and lawn furniture, women's, men's and children's wearing apparel.

Straus & Schram, Dept. 2277, W. 35th St., Chicago

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
THE ARGOSY COMB'N	
The Argosy All-Story Weekly	2.50

Minimum space four lines.

Combination Line Rate $4.00 Less 2% cash discount

Oct. 30th Argosy Combination Forms Close Oct. 2nd.

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. Y130, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—BEST SELLER; JEM RUBBER REPAIR for tires and tubes. Supersedes vulcanization at a saving of over 800 per cent.; put it on cold, it vulcanizes itself in two minutes, and is guaranteed to last the life of the tire or tube. Sells to every auto owner and accessory dealer. For particulars how to make big money and free sample, address Amazon Rubber Co., Dept. 707, Amazon Bldg., Philadelphia, Pa.

SALESMEN—$7 WILL BUY $2,500 DEATH BENEFIT; $12.50 weekly indemnity for either accident or sickness, as specified; $25 per week hospital benefit for any accident or sickness, and many other new and attractive features not offered by any other reliable company. Reliable representatives wanted. L. B. Smutz, Mgr., 803 Laclede Gas Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS—TO EARN BIG PROFITS with our quick-selling non-alcoholic extracts, toilet articles and household necessities. Open territory. No money required. We trust you. Hurry! Write today. Dept. 225, The Linro Co., St. Louis, Mo.

$65.00 A WEEK AND YOUR SUIT FREE—IF YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR STARTLING OFFER. Write us at once and we will send you a full line of samples and everything necessary to start at once, absolutely free, postage prepaid. Spencer Mead Company, Dept. 1195, Chicago.

Isayde 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—LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS AGENTS to sell hosiery, underwear, shirts, dresses, skirts, waists, shoes, clothing, etc. Write for free samples. Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York.

$10 WORTH OF FINEST TOILET SOAPS, perfumes, toilet waters, spices, etc., absolutely free to agents on our refund plan. Lacassian Co., Dept. 614, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS—YOUR OWN CLOTHES FREE and $60 a week. Start in your spare time. Tailoring business simply great this year. Write American Woolen Mills Company, Dept. 1433, Chicago, for cloth samples of 60 big sensational sellers.

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.

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

AGENTS EARN $50.00 A WEEK AND YOUR OWN clothes free, selling our famous made to measure suits and overcoats. Selling outfits free. Commonwealth Tailors, Dept. 12, Occidental Bldg., Chicago.

AGENTS MAKE $200. PRIVATE PARTIES FROM $50 TO $100 A WEEK. Write to the Magnalium Mfg. Co., 514 Brown Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

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.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

$6000.00 A YEAR IS YOUR PROFIT FROM 4 SALES A DAY. Davidson sold 96 one week. No experience needed. The Aladdin light is a sensation wherever introduced. Five times as bright as electric. Won Gold Medal. Farmers have the money, they need this light, and 9 out of 10 will buy. Also big opportunity in small towns and suburbs. Excellent spare time and evening seller. **No Capital Required.** Sample on free trial. Write for agency proposition while territory still open. Mantle Lamp Company, 501 Aladdin Bldg., Chicago.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR. Soaps, Extracts, Perfumes, Toilet Goods. Experience unnecessary. Carnation Co., 200 Olive, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS: SOMETHING NEW. WIRELESS GUARANTEED UMBRELLAS. Adjust new top in minute. Handles collapse to fit suitcase. Other features. Popular prices. Free sample. Parker Mfg. Co., 206 Dike Street, Dayton, Ohio.

SALESMEN—City or Traveling: Experience unnecessary. Send for list of lines and full particulars. Prepare in spare time to earn the big salaries—$2,500 to $10,000 a year. Employment services rendered Members National Salesmen's Training Association, Dept. 133-R, Chicago, Ill.

TAILORING AGENTS. Take orders for our Guaranteed Made to Measure Raincoats. Everybody needs one. $8.50 profit on one coat. We deliver and collect. Profits in advance. Sample Outfit Free. Write quick for our liberal proposition. Davico Raincoat Co., Dept. A, 803 W. Madison St., 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.

YOUNG MAN, WOULD YOU ACCEPT a Tailor-Made Suit just for showing it to your friends? Then write Banner Tailoring Company, Department 400, Chicago, and get beautiful samples, styles and a wonderful offer.

SALESMEN—Side or Main Line—to sell low priced 6,000 mile guaranteed tires: 30x3½ non-skid sells for $13.95; other sizes in proportion. Good money making proposition for live wires. Master Tire Co., 1414 So. Michigan, Chicago.

SALES AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY COUNTY TO GIVE ALL OR SPARE TIME. Position worth $750 to $1500 yearly. We train the inexperienced. Novelty Cutlery Co., 77 Bar Street, Canton, Ohio.

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 St., Chicago.

DAVIS' LUCKY 'LEVEN SELLING BETTER THAN EVER. $3.35 value sells for $1.25. Mrs. Lewis sold 280 in 7½ days—profit $200. "37" varieties of other big winners—150%-250% profit. Great crew managers' proposition. E. M. Davis, Dept. 58, Chicago.

AGENTS: 2 IN 1 REVERSIBLE RAINCOAT. One side handsome raincoat, reverse side fine dress coat. Something new. Latest style. Not sold in stores. Guaranteed waterproof. Big seller. Write for agency and sample to workers. Thomas Raincoat Co., 1607 North Street, Dayton, Ohio.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

FREE TO WRITERS—a wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED FOR PUBLICATION. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss. or write Literary Bureau, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

WANTED: COMPOSERS OF VERSE OR MUSIC to write at once. Brilliant opportunity for good talent. Address, Burrell Van Buren, L-5 Grand Opera House, Chicago.

WRITE A SONG POEM—LOVE, MOTHER, HOME, COMIC or any subject. I compose music and guarantee publication. Send words today. Edward Trent, 652 Reaper Block, Chicago.

WRITERS: HAVE YOU A POEM, STORY OR PHOTOPLAY TO SELL? Submit MSS. at once to Music Sales Company, Dept. 60, St. Louis, Mo.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

At 4 o'clock on the Morning of Aug. 15th

Way up in the pines of Northern Wisconsin.

Our third morning there. Three days' growth on our faces.

Shave was the word.

Dipped a finger in the water. Liquid ice!

Felt of the old beard again. Looked at Harry. He laughed, "Why hesitate?"

"It'll be a hard pull"—and I quivered again.

"Not on your life," says he. "Watch me."

A tube was in his hand. Squeezed a bit of olive-colored cream on his wet brush. Whisked up a lather on his face. No rub-in, no other bother. Just took up his razor and started shaving!

Every stroke of the razor took off the whiskers clean as a whistle. I never saw a razor look so good to use. In a moment I, too, was lathered with the cream from Harry's tube.

. . . . Oh Man, what a wonderful shave!

How smoothly the razor slipped over my skin! How cleanly it took off every hair! . . . And how good my face felt after this quick shave. So soothed and refreshed.

That was my discovery of Palmolive Shaving Cream. I've learned a lot more about this cream since. How it acts on the oil-coat on the beard—how it stays foamy on the face—how it serves as both lather and lotion.

But I'll not talk further about this cream. I'll just say, take my advice and dispatch a letter for 10-day free trial tube.

THE PALMOLIVE COMPANY
MILWAUKEE, U. S. A.
Large size tube at your druggist, 35c

MAKE this test. Lather your face with any other soap or cream. Watch how quickly it dries on your face, irritating the skin. Then try Palmolive. Note that it stays foamy and moist ten minutes, thus lubricating the shave. No re-lathering necessary. Send for free trial tube of Palmolive to see what it accomplishes.

FREE

A 10-day tube of Palmolive to every man who requests it. Just mail the coupon. Try this cream at our expense. Note what a vast difference it makes in shaving. Clip the coupon now.

THE PALMOLIVE COMPANY
Dept. No. 136, Milwaukee, U. S. A.

Please send me a free trial tube of Palmolive Shaving Cream.

Name.....

Address.....

Learn Motor Mechanics By Big Shop Standards

I prepare you for the biggest-paying jobs on the farm and in the city—or to start a profitable business of your own by teaching you up-to-date standard big shop methods instead of the one-man, small-shop way. Our test and trouble work alone is worth the price of the whole course. Our graduates are recognized everywhere as exceptionally competent workmen.

Learn in 7 Weeks

Here you learn by doing, under master mechanics, with the most modern equipment and motors of latest design, including the Liberty motor,—every detail of the care, repair and operation of auto, truck, tractor, stationary gas engines, farm lighting plants, and aeroplane mechanics.

Special Business Course or a complete training in shop records and management included in regular course. No age limit. Life membership privileges. (No colored students.)

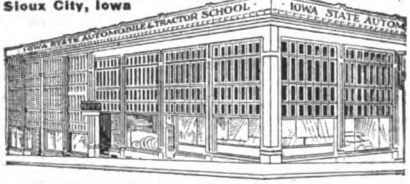
Y. M. C. A. Membership—swimming pool, gymnasium, etc., no extra charge.

Free Book. Send for it today. It tells all—shows all.

FRANK D. HENNESSY, President

IOWA STATE AUTO & TRACTOR SCHOOL

756 Nebraska St.
Sioux City, Iowa



"The Quality School."

Pronounced by official inspectors "One of the best schools in the country."

ANY STYLE PANTS NOW $3.48

Send no money

Made to Your Order

Biggest Value Ever Offered Beautiful pants to your order, of fine quality striped worsteds, through and through weaves for dress or business, guaranteed to give you two solid years satisfying wear or MONEY BACK, tailored any style or size—No Extra Charges—parcel post or express prepaid. **Biggest $8.00 value ever offered or money back.** Write for 60 cloth samples, FREE SPECIAL THIRTY DAY TRIAL OFFER, one Pair to a customer **$3.48**

$3.48 Buys $8.00 Pants

Make Big MONEY You can earn $25 to $50 a week sending orders for your relatives and friends. Your spare time will do. COMPLETE OUTFIT and simple directions in first mail—FREE.

Send us your name—TODAY.

Chicago Tailors Ass'n 515 S. Franklin St. Dept. K 649 Chicago

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FREE TRIAL

Cut out this ad and mail it to us, with your name and address (no money); and we will send you our **FAMOUS KARNAK RAZOR** by return mail, postpaid. You may use the razor for 30 days **FREE**; then if you like it, pay us $1.85. If you don't like it return it. **SEND NO MONEY.**

MORE COMPANY, Dept. 453 St. Louis, Mo.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

HELP WANTED

BE A DETECTIVE; $50-$100 WEEKLY; TRAVEL OVER WORLD; experience unnecessary. American Detective Agency, 322 Lucas, St. Louis.

FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN, $140-$200. Colored Porters by railroads everywhere. Experience unnecessary. 836 Ry. Bureau, East St. Louis, Ills.

STOP DAILY GRIND. BE NO MAN'S SLAVE. Own your own business. Start silvering mirrors, auto headlights, tableware, etc. Plans free. Clarence Sprinkle, Dept. 19, Marion, Indiana.

WHY WORK FOR OTHERS? We will start you in a business of your own that will pay you $100 a week or more. Absolutely no investment required. Write now for information regarding this interesting offer. Novelty Distributing Company, Dept. "A," 118 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago, Ill.

BE A DETECTIVE—BIG PAY; EASY WORK; great demand everywhere; fine chance for travel; experience unnecessary; we show you. Write for full particulars. Wagner, Dept. 203, 186 East 79th Street, New York.

WRITE NEWS ITEMS AND SHORT STORIES for pay in spare time. Copyright book and plans free. Press Reporting Syndicate, 433, St. Louis, Mo.

WANTED EVERYWHERE—Men to become Finger-print and Identification Experts; big demand, fascinating work. We teach you how. Address Dept. A, for facts. Federal Finger Print Institute, Kansas City, Mo.

DO YOU want to earn $3,000 to $5,000 a year? You can do it easily. See Anderson Steam Vulcanizer Display Ad in this issue.

LADIES TO SEW AT HOME FOR A LARGE PHILADELPHIA FIRM. Good pay; nice work; no canvassing. Send stamped envelope for prices paid. Universal Co., Dept. 26, Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

REAL ESTATE—MICHIGAN

GOOD LAND ON CREDIT. BIG OPPORTUNITIES for you in Kalkaska and Antrim counties, Michigan. Make a home on hardwood land growing big crops of clover, alfalfa, grains, potatoes, etc. $15 to $35 per acre. Easy terms. 10 to 160 acres. Schools, churches, railroads, markets. Own your own home. Booklet free. Swigart Land Company, Y1245 First National Bank Building, Chicago, Ill.

TELEGRAPHY

TELEGRAPHY (BOTH MORSE AND WIRELESS) and Railway Accounting taught quickly. Tremendous demand. Big salaries. Great opportunities. Oldest and largest school; established forty-six years. All expenses low—can earn large part. Catalog free. Dodge's Institute, S St., Valparaiso, Indiana.

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.

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.

INTEREST TO WOMEN

IN ONE YEAR I REDUCED MY WEIGHT FROM 265 LBS. TO 190 LBS. BY MY SPECIAL METHOD. No medicine. Send your address and two-dollar bill at our risk and receive this method complete. Rita Moore, Room 506, 21 Maiden Lane, New York, N. Y.

TYPEWRITERS

NEW, REBUILT AND SLIGHTLY USED TYPEWRITERS $8 up. Portable machines $10 up. Write for our Catalog 260-J. Beran Typewriter Co., 58 W. Washington St., Chicago.

BOOKS

AUTOMOBILE ENGINEERING, 5 vols. set. Am. Tech. Society, fine condition, $16.00—cash with order. We carry the largest variety of Technical Books, and Books of every description. Send for catalogues. Goldman's Book Store, 424 So. Dearborn, Chicago.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

51 DIFFERENT STAMPS, also packet 5 unused, China ship set, 2 scarce animal stamps, large $1.00 United States revenue, perforation gauge, millimetre scale, ruler and price lists. All for 9c! Sudden Service approvals. We buy collections. Fennell Stamp Co., Dept. F, Fullerton Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Make Money—Win Fame Be An Architect

A profession that will place you on the pedestal of success

All you need is a right start and HERE IT IS!

There is no more interesting profession in the whole wide world — nor one that is better paid. A first-class architect has all he can do all the time. He associates with the best people—is looked up to by his fellow men and stands in the front rank as a citizen. All that stands between you and this enviable position in life is training. There is nothing difficult about it — just a determination to win — and we'll help you.

Some of the things we teach you—all essential to a real success in this wonderful field:

Mathematics and Physics; mechanical, freehand and perspective drawing; drafting; design; carpentry and joinery; interior finishing; masonry; steel construction; heating and ventilation; estimating and contracting.
Every subject made interesting from start

There is nothing "dry" or hard to understand in this course—

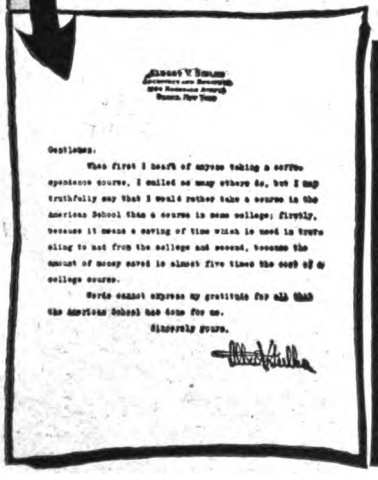
Where technical terms are used they are explained and simplified. The texts contain hundreds of illustrations and elaborate yet easily understood charts and diagrams. Read the letter printed below — then decide to do even better. Now is the time to start.

You can earn while you learn —turn spare hours into dollars

If you are working now, there is no need to give up your position. Just keep right on at your present job—but take the idle hours, the hours you are probably wasting now and turn them into golden, useful hours. It takes but a few hours a week for a very short time to gain enough proficiency to increase your present earning power. Through the American School of Correspondence you have

An opportunity to gain fame and fortune
MADE EASY OF ATTAINMENT

Our course has been prepared by men who have made successes in the architectural field. All work done by our students is supervised by practical architects. Every student is thoroughly grounded in every phase of architectural work. Our beautifully printed bulletin on this subject tells all about it.



Gentlemen.

When first I heard of anyone taking a correspondence course, I called as many others do, but I may truthfully say that I would rather take a course in the American School than a course in some college; firstly, because it means a saving of time which is need in travelling to and from the college and second, because the amount of money saved is almost five times the cost of a college course.

Words cannot express my gratitude for all that the American School has done for me.

Sincerely yours,

Hundreds write us telling of SUCCESS

Ask for copy of our Latest Bulletin Free

It contains a complete outline of the course, also scores of letters from former students who attribute their success to our instruction. **Mail us the Coupon now!**

American School of Correspondence

Dept. A-75, Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

START NOW, MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

American School of Correspondence
Dept. A-75, Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago

Explain how I can qualify for position checked:

.....Architect	.....High School Graduate
.....Building Contractor	.....General Education
.....Automobile Engineer	.....Common School Branches
.....Auto Repairman	.....Lawyer
.....Aeroplane Mechanic	.....Mechanical Engineer
.....Civil Engineer	.....Shop Superintendent
.....Structural Engineer	.....Employment Manager
.....Surveying and Mapping	.....Steam Engineer
.....Business Manager	.....Foreman's Training C'rse
.....Cert. Public Accountant	.....Machine Shop Practice
.....Accountant and Auditor	.....Photoplay Writer
.....Bookkeeper	.....Sanitary Engineer
.....Draftsman and Designer	.....Plumbing and Heating
.....Electrical Engineer	.....Telephone Engineer
.....Electric Light and Power	.....Telegraph Engineer
.....Fire Insurance Expert	.....Wireless Operator

Name .....

Address .....

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY
WEEKLY

VOL. CXXVI SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1920 NUMBER 2

What Was That?

by Katharine Haviland Taylor

Author of "Yellow Soap," etc.

CHAPTER I.

HOW IT STARTED.

I ENJOY seeing the works, particularly that one small wheel, without which nothing would go. Now that it's all over, I like to recall that cold March afternoon when I saw a bomb floated on the English Channel. I was painting in Paris when the war broke out, and at once hurried home. On the way I encountered an English boy I'd met at Le Monte Dore, and, of course, I fell on his neck.

He was a touch of something known, and I did feel lonely, for "home" was a pretty general term then. I didn't know where it was going to be, nor—how nice it would be, which was worse.

He took me down below Dover, where, with some other men, he was experimenting with bombs under government control. They launched one of the affairs so that I could see it.

"Look at the little beggar!" said my friend, in a tone that was almost caressing. "A bit calm, isn't she? But—she'll make some jolly hell when she 'up and busts.'"

And the suggestion of Nan Severance was quite as innocent in appearance as that bomb, and it acted quite as that bomb was meant to; so—it isn't strange that the remembrance of the start of our plan and that bomb launching should hold hands in the store-house of my mind. I never think of one without the other.

It happened this way: Nan blew in the nine-by-twelve cupboard I call my "Studio" when I write home—Ohio—and said: "Lord, but I'm tired of life!"

"I'm with you," I replied, surveying my canvas.

"Painting an omelette?" she asked, as she sank down on a box-couch.

"Tulips," I answered, "background for a girl in white—string of amber beads—trying to be a magazine cover—this morning I thought it was all right, and then I ran out of yellow ochre and by the time I'd fussed around getting it I was all out of tune."

I didn't get much sympathy. "Well, at least you can do what you want to—or *try* to," she said, looking at my canvas between narrowed eyelids, "while I have to correct proof or starve, and what ideas I have—things that really might work up, go stale. I know I could write if I ever had a chance."

"I know, Nan," I answered, as soothingly as I could.

"You don't," she answered viciously. "I just wish that I could have a whole summer to write in, a whole summer in which I wouldn't have to read proof, worry about rent, think of food, or—"

At that moment Midgette Grant, who isn't quite one of us, came in.

For one thing, her dad supplies her with lots of the cold hard, and we struggle for it—that makes a divide. Then she bobs her hair and does all those things artists of any sort who live below Fifteenth Street are supposed to do and very often don't, which is another divide. She had been crying.

"Dearest boy from home," she explained, "really *was* lost. I had hoped every day to hear that he wasn't. Now after a lapse of two years he would have turned up if he had been alive, wouldn't he?"

"War?" asked Nan, a little contemptuously. Midgette's sentimentalities and wanderings annoy her. "Yes, and he didn't care whether he was killed or not. That's what makes it sad."

"Oh, stuff!" said Nan. "Never knew anybody who didn't really want to live. Hand a pistol to any conversational suicide. He'll scream and say, 'Don't point that thing at me!'"

"You don't understand," said Midgette hotly. "This was different. This boy *didn't* talk. He was only silent. And before it happened, he was simply a darling. He could have had me any time, and I tried to let him see it every time we met—"

"Before what happened?" asked Nan, this time with real irritation showing in her voice.

"Before his father was murdered," replied Midgette.

"Murdered?" repeated Nan. She likes things of that sort. She says they stir her plot sense into more active being. "Tell me about it," ordered Nan. Midgette shook off her furs and settled. And then she told the story—told it well, which was unusual for her. Here it is:

"The whole thing was strange," said Midgette, settling herself with Nan on the box-couch. "It has never been explained, which keeps it alive in the small town where I lived. The facts are these: Rudolph Loucks, the father of this boy who has failed to turn up, was murdered on the hillside above his bungalow which lies close against a creek. Rather romantic, the way it was done; very strange. And, as I said, never explained—"

"Go on," said Nan.

Midgette picked up a glove, fingered it, then resolutely put it down, after which she drew a deep breath and proceeded. "This Rudolph Loucks had a great deal of money, controlled almost every business enterprise in the small town, was bad, vicious in some ways—but for some reason liked by men. I think he had a gift for comradeship.

"Anyway, his bungalow was a resort for all sorts—some of them first families, some of them otherwise; and the entertainment varied with the caliber of his guests. He lived in town, but kept old Nathan Greenleaf, a woodsman, untaught naturalist and carpenter, in a cabin near by to keep the fires of his bungalow going in winter, and the road to it cleared.

"Rudolph, senior, liked to motor out there in the dead of night with a crowd, skate to music, have a hot breakfast, and motor back to town after hours of daylight asleep. He looked like a heavy-jowled, too-well-fed satyr, and I have often thought that some of his more inky affairs were only the fruit of imagination, turned sour.

"The night of his murder showed one of them, when he persuaded the daughter of a hotel-keeper of the flats to go with him to his bungalow. She was only seventeen, but a clear-eyed youngster that a man, even a bad one, would think twice about hurting. I suppose he liked her freshness, and did not care much what he hurt.

"Somehow he persuaded her—for all she would babble was, 'I didn't wanta, but he made me—oh, Gawd, oh, *Gawd!* I didn't wanta!' She started with him up the long road that winds around Greyson's Hill. On the other side of this lie his bungalow and the creek, I think about three miles from town. The night was stormy,

a heavy snow was falling, and a mind made it drift. No one but Rudolph Loucks would have tried so long a trip on that wild night.

"I think you can see it, if you try; the plodding horses—a motor would have refused to travel those heavy roads—the jaded man beginning to feel the stimulus of a new drink, the frightened girl. He knew the game, and he wanted to win this one, so he narrowed his little pig eyes, bit his lips, and feigned a careless air. And here's the mystery. Halfway up the hill he stopped his carriage, looked back of him, and waited; something was behind them; after a moment the little girl heard it.

"'G'wan,' she whispered, 'Can't yuh g'wan? *Some one's coming!*' He gripped her arm so cruelly that he left a black mark on her flesh, and with a word silenced her; and then he went on at a furious rate, now and again looking into the swirling snow behind them. Again they stopped, again he listened. Then he lit a cigarette, and Vera Struthers saw that he was white and that his hands shook.

"'Get out,' he ordered. She did, sinking to her knees in the snow, and he followed her. He puffed at his cigarette a moment, staring toward the town from which they'd come.

"'You heard something?' he asked in a whisper.

"She began to speak, but paused, for through the heavy air came the muffled sound of a plodding horse and the sharp crack of a whip.

"Then Rudolph Loucks did something which has been explained only by guesswork. He quickly tied her hands behind her with a muffler and directed her to a farm-house, and said: 'Send some one after me—' She stepped to the roadside, lurching miserably, and he started on, faded from sight and hearing, and the wind was the only sound.

"Then again came the sound of horses' hoofs, and a sleigh flashed by. Vera said there was only one person in it. But the light was dim, the snow thick and no one ever really knew how much she had seen and heard or how much she imagined.

"Two hours later she reached the farm-house. Half frozen, and almost speechless, she told them to look for Rudolph Loucks. 'Some one followed us,' she said. 'He tied me, I dunno why. He says fer youse to follow him!'

"Over and over she repeated her injunction. I suppose the night with its horror had left her numbed, and the pressure of his curt order was the only one which she could feel. The farmer's son, a pathetic wreck of a boy with a clouded mind, took up the refrain and chanted it: 'Some one followed us,' he sung, 'he says to follow *him*. Some one followed *us*, he says to follow *him*—'

"In the middle of this dirge news came that Rudolph Loucks had been found, shot in the back, face down on the snow, in a rolling field which lay above his bungalow. It was about four when they came upon him. The snow had drifted over tracks, and the horses stood, heads drooping, too near to freezing even to tremble from the horrible cold. The snow lay in uneven little heaps, where it had drifted over footprints, and a great, scarlet blotch colored the snow which was below Rudolph Loucks's head and chest.

"Twenty feet away lay a pistol which belonged to the town banker, and in a pocket of the dead man's coat was a jagged piece of paper torn from a corner of the London *News*, the only subscription to which is taken by our local clergyman, and on this was written in the clear, bold unmistakable writing of Judge Harkins: 'I'll get you so—' and the rest was gone. It was supposed that the entire word was 'soon.'"

"Who did it?" asked Nan, reaching for a match box and lighting up. "That judge?"

"No, he was in New York."

"The clergyman?"

"Lord, Nan, certainly not! He couldn't have hit him if he tried!"

"The banker?"

"Hardly. He had pneumonia, and there were two trained nurses to testify where he was that night."

"Well, how'd they get his pistol?" asked Nan, sitting forward.

"No one knows," replied Midgette.

"No one knows anything, no one was convicted; every man in town was suspected, every motive on earth thought of, every reason on earth investigated."

"Why did he tie that girl's hands?" I asked.

"I suppose," answered Midgette, "so that she wouldn't be suspected. Perhaps he was sorry for some of the things he had done. People have a way of being sorry when it's too late, you know. If she had been found with free hands she'd have been thought guilty, of course."

"Where is she now?" I asked.

"Haven't the least idea," said Midgette. "I know she left town. Had to; the trial was thrilling."

"I should think so!" said Nan. "And it's his son who's among the missing?"

"Yes."

"Did he have a wife?"

"Certainly not! That dear, innocent boy who—"

"I meant the father," said Nan.

"Why don't you say what you mean?" asked Midgette, but slightly mollified. "Of course he once had a wife, but she died when Rudolph, junior, was about eighteen. I suppose she was too wearied by her husband's ways to go on."

"Any women who might have wanted to hurt him?" I asked.

"Thousands, I imagine; but how would any one of them get hold of Frank Lethridge's pistol? He is an absolutely confirmed woman-hater. Won't even have one in his house as a maid. Keeps a Jap.

"No, you can't solve it, Nan. Better detectives than you are gave it up. Why, that famous man from Pittsburgh, what's his name? Wonderful head—he frankly acknowledged it had him going. There were so many chains of evidence, each one leading to a different person. There was the pistol, the London *News*, the judge's writing; there was the sleigh, and the man who had hired it for the evening—"

"Who was he?" asked Nan.

"A Norwegian draftsman who had just come to town. He was found blindfolded and gagged in an up-stairs room of the Struthers Hotel, the very one which Rudolph Loucks had persuaded Vera Struthers to leave that evening."

"Didn't her father know how he had got in?" I asked.

"No," Midgette replied. "He didn't. The room opened on to the roof of an adjoining building, and the Norwegian had been dragged in through this. He said he had been gripped by some one who had crept up back of his sleigh, blindfolded, gagged, and hauled him up innumerable stairs, and tied him in this room. It was hours before they found him."

"Whom was he going to take out?" Nan asked, flicking the ash from her cigarette on top of my best hat, which was lying on the floor at the end of the couch.

"I don't know," Midgette answered. "But that had nothing to do with it, nor had he. They—who ever they were—simply wanted a sleigh, and didn't dare hire one. Rather slick, wasn't it?"

"Where did this happen?" Nan asked.

"Just at the beginning of Greyson's Hill. Probably the murderers were waiting there, and decided it was too near town to fire a shot with safety."

"Seems funny that they couldn't find any one, any reason," I said. I laid down my palette, lit a one-plate gas burner, and began to heat water as I spoke.

"Tea?" said Midgette. "Good! Yes, doesn't it? But, as I said, the evidence was confusing. Every one was suspected, and no one could be condemned, or whatever it is you do to 'em. Sandwiches? Oh, April, don't bother!"

I am April Barry.

"What happened to the son? You said he was lost?" Nan asked. She was full of questions.

"Yes—" Midgette wiped a tear away, and went on: "Father wrote me about it to-day. Said that the cousin had taken over management of the estate, and that the bungalow was for rent at an absurdly cheap figure because no one seems to want it. Rudolph, junior, had rented it before the war to some one who used it only for business—boat-house business. *That* fellow was shot at the battle of Chateau Thierry, and Rudolph's cousin bought the boats from his mother. Wonderful busi-

ness opportunity for any one who wanted it, but the spot is too much for our neighborhood."

Nan sat up, jammed out the light of her cigarette on the window sill. "April, you told me last month that you were hard up; I know I am. Why don't we take over that place for this summer? Run a tea-room, rent the boats, make a little, and have our mornings free for work?"

Something cold gripped me. That shiver must have been sent by the little star that backs my safety. It made me say: "Oh, Nan, I don't—*know*—"

"My dear," she persuaded, "why not? Get a crowd if you like. Safety in numbers. Say we take Laurence O'Leary—he has to move soon. Probably Jane Hoyle would go; said she wanted to rest for a while this season; I would—you *must*—this infant"—she waved at Midgette—"would be with us—and perhaps Gustave Gerome, that is, if Jane goes."

Midgette looked doubtful. "Look here," she said, "I've got to tell you something else that keeps that place from being rented. I don't care whether you believe it or not, but Rudolph Loucks has been seen more than once—Rudolph, Senior, I mean—lying on that hillside just as he lay after he was shot, and one skeptic started to go up to the spot, and the ghost slid away from him into a wood of fir trees that edges the field."

"Stuff!" Nan and I howled in chorus.

Midgette did not join our laughter.

"Enjoy yourselves," she said easily; "my best friends have seen it."

"Well, they won't any more," said Nan.

"People don't avoid the place in the daytime, do they?"

"No," replied Midgette.

"And there's good boating?"

"Oh, yes. It's awfully pretty—willows, little bridges, a mill about a mile down stream. Cows standing at the water's edge to drink."

"You," Nan said to Midgette, with an understanding smile, "have said that your chief ambition in this world is to do something that would jar your home town; here's your chance; crowd of young people, unchaperoned, living together for the summer in a bungalow. It'll be about as tame as a bed-room farce, but it will advertise in wonderfully dark tones!

"And for you, April"—Nan turned to me—"a whole summer for painting, without any push for money; wonderful opportunity—unless you feel that Billy would object?"

That rather decided me. Billy is an admirer of mine, who irritates me, and nothing so enrages me as to have people think he influences me, or that I care for him.

"You should know," I replied, "that Billy doesn't swing my ballot. Whatever I decide is my own deciding."

Nan only smiled. "Horrify him, wouldn't it? This mixed affair for the season?"

I admitted it would.

"Well, then, I suppose that counts you out," she said.

I felt myself grow pink, and I heard myself say, "If you get the crowd to agree, I'm with you. It is an opportunity, I can see that—" and I turned to make the tea, for the water was boiling.

And that's the way it all started. Simple, wasn't it? And so was the launching of that bomb. It slid in place so gently that the water hardly rippled, and, as I said, the memory of that and that blustery day in March, are clamped together in my mind—quite naturally!

CHAPTER II.

PRINTED IN RED.

BILLY was horrified. I met him while I was out hunting a meat-grinder and some individual tea-pots.

"You mean to say," he demanded, "that Gustave Gerome and that ass, Laurence O'Leary, are to go with your crowd?"

I nodded.

"Nice to have O'Leary reading free verse aloud before breakfast," he said, through set teeth. "I suppose he will. Never met him when he didn't read aloud something he wrote. Who started this? I call it disgusting!"

"Oh, we all thought it a good idea," I replied. I didn't want to blame Nan. Billy doesn't like her.

"Why you won't marry me—" he said, with a baffled shake of his head.

"Is a great mystery," I admitted. He grew pink.

"You can be a spiteful little cuss," he said. "You know perfectly well what I meant. I didn't mean that I was a drawing card. I only meant I'd die for you, and that's something, isn't it—dear? And that I have enough money to make you entirely comfortable, and that I'd give my life to make you happy, and—"

"I know," I replied. "There are the very tea-pots I want! *Sweet, ducky* things—"

"Oh, damn!" said Billy. In that mood he assisted me to make my purchases, and in that mood he left me.

"If you want me," he said, as I fitted my key in my lock an hour later, "wire me." I smiled a little. I was awfully mean at that time, I know it now. Billy put his hand over mine, held it closely, and made me look up at him. "Some day," he asserted, "you'll know how cruel you have been. And you'll be sorry. I love you, April, and the sort of stuff I offer you no woman should laugh at, for—it's the best I can give, you know."

I was enough softened by that to say I was sorry I couldn't take it, but softening didn't help Billy. It only made him hopeful, and a little masterful.

"My *soul,* how I care!" he declared after he had kissed me, and stood looking down at me. I was angry, and when I looked up and saw the man who has the studio on the next floor, I was more so. I always borrow paint from him when I run out of it. He believes in mutual consent, but said he would marry me if I was narrow enough to prefer it. I said I'd consider it. He buys very good paints, and I have never seen the necessity of facing issues unless one is forced to. I thought that probably by the time he realized that my heart wouldn't warm for him, I would find another lender. But Billy spoiled it.

"He loaned me paints!" I said angrily.

"Damn him!" said Billy.

"And you had no right to do that!"

"I know," he agreed, miserably.

"And I hope you won't bother me this summer," I went on. "I am going to work hard. I don't want to be troubled."

"You won't be," said Billy. "I'm through." And then he turned and left. And although I didn't like him then, something did ache inside. I went in, and cried a little. I tried to imagine it was because the fountain of free paint was clogged, but it wasn't. It was really Billy's saying he was through.

After I'd had my dinner, I got out the tea-pots, and decided that they were worth all I'd paid for them. I was counting the vast sums we would make, when Midgette came in and told me about how she was going to use her dad's last check.

"Wicker furniture," she said, "on those broad porches—won't it be *sweet,* April?" Then she went on to explain how she had told her father that she'd have a darling surprise for him if he'd only finance it.

"He may not quite understand Laurence and Gustave being with us," she went on, speculatively. "He's been an elder in the church for years, and that is sort of narrowing, isn't it? I think too much religion always makes people believe the worst. Where'd you get the fudge; can I have some? And then his business hasn't made for soul growth—"

"It would be frightful if he cut your allowance, wouldn't it?" I asked.

"I've been thinking of it," she admitted, and none too happily. "But of course I'll see it through. I promised Nan I would, and I *do* want to show those people what life *can* be, and as she says, my opportunity is here. But speculating about things and doing them is so *different.*"

I agreed.

"Well, no doubt it will be entirely pleasant," she said, as she stood up. "I don't see why it shouldn't be, and it is a pretty spot, although the mosquitoes are thick and terribly active. I think June is a little *early*—"

I saw she regretted the whole affair, but I didn't think she'd be able to get out of it, for Nan has a powerful will. When Midgette left I wrote nine notes to Billy,

all of which I tore up. At the moment there was nothing to say to Billy P. Watts, who'd made a fortune in the rise of leather. I hadn't reached the point where I realized what I wanted to say. *That* came later.

It came when every one began to scream "*What-was-that?*" it came when we all began to spend so much time in town, and Midgette threatened to go home to her father; it came when we had to stick it out, and needed some one to stick with us. Then and then only I began to realize that there is something real and something very cheering about a man who honestly deserves to be called "Billy," and who will let you call him that—or anything—whenever you need him.

The place had not been opened, and the air was stale. The caretaker, old Nathan Greenleaf, unlocked it for us, and his matter-of-fact manner and rustic look as reassuring.

"Don't you be skairt if there's noises," he said, "water's high from that there last rain, and she's carryin' driftwood. That bumps the landing in the night. But don't you young ladies be skairt."

Nan, taking the burden of the crowd on her shoulders, went out to inspect the kitchen, humming a little tune on her way. When she had unbolted the heavy shutters out there and light flooded the place, she stopped singing. I hurried out to her and found her staring at something on the wall. She gulped a little as I drew near, and pointed. I looked, and saw the print of some one's fingers on the woodwork, and these were marked in red, fresh red, which smelled as only one thing smells.

"You know," she said, "*it is.*"

"Yes," I agreed, "but some one cut his or her hand while they were cleaning here. It's nothing to be excited about—" I tried to believe it. Then I took a frightfully gray rag which swung from a pipe below the sink, moistened it, and wiped off the stain. "The others mustn't know," I said; "Midgette's nervous now. There's no use of starting this with hysterical notions."

"No," Nan agreed, but she stood staring at the spot until I shook her, scolded her, and warned her against spoiling everything before anything had started. And then Gerome appeared at the door, his palette already over his thumb. "It's simply ripping," he announced. "Most wonderful bits for work. Nan, I love you!"

She managed to laugh at him, and then she sobered, for from below us came the sound of breaking glass, and after it deadly, awful silence.

"*What-was-that?*" screamed Midgette, her words tangling in their hurry. And that started them. Every one said those words, rather screamed them, and when they didn't, they thought them.

Laurence went down cellar, from which one could walk into the boat-house; this was under the porch, which was high and overhung the creek. "A dog," he announced when he returned, "jumped through a window, I suppose. Darn the beast." But later he singled me out for confidence, as had Nan. I was not grateful for this mark of trust in either case.

All the others had turned in; I was cleaning paint brushes and he was locking up. "There was a dog," he said slowly, as he picked off some hardened tallow which had dripped down the side of his candle, "but — the mongrel wasn't scratched. Hadn't a spot of blood on him—but—" He paused.

"Go on!" I said. I was nervous.

"There were finger prints by the door, in — in blood." Laurence coughed. "Couldn't quite understand," he went on. "But I washed 'em off. Didn't want Midgette to have hysterics. I went down to see Greenleaf just before dinner. I told him to keep an eye out. He said he would. No doubt there's some perfectly logical explanation," he ended.

"No doubt," I said, looking around behind me and wishing that the candlelight I'd once thought so picturesque could be replaced by ninety horse-power mazda stuff. Then we heard a bumping, that sort of muffled bumping which only something floating on water can make.

"Driftwood," said Laurence, nervously.

"Certainly," I replied.

He picked at his candle for a few minutes more with absolute absorption, fussed with it until I was ready to scream, so—when something was flung against the hard

wood of the door, and fell to boom on the hollow floor of the porch, it was no wonder that I did scream.

"Shut up!" said Laurence, who with that sudden noise had abandoned his candle researches. "Shut up! Can't you see you've got to be calm? My God, April, *what was that?*" Laurence took down a lantern, lit it, and opened the door. There was no one in sight, but a brick lay a foot or so from the door on the porch floor.

"What *was* that?" called Midgette from the stairs. At least she put a different accent on it, for which I was grateful.

"Dropped one of the bags," Laurence answered, and we heard soft scuffles, the closing of doors above and quiet. "It gets me," whispered Laurence, picking up the offending brick, and studying it. "But I guess"—he peered into the dark with his words—"I won't investigate to-night. Don't want to leave you alone. But to-morrow," he said, as he carefully closed and locked the door, "we'll track this thing to earth."

With a good-night I turned toward the stairs. My knees shook a little and I took hold of the bannisters. My room was three steps higher than any of the others and at the end of a passage. The railing felt a little sticky. I was not surprised when I gained my room to find that my palm was sticky with blood. I didn't bother Laurence about it. There was no use of doing so, but I lay wakeful for a long time—shivering a good deal in that pitchy dark which the close-set trees made—and I thought of Billy.

CHAPTER III.

COMPLICATIONS.

OUR little party consisted of myself—April Barry—illustrator; Laurence O'Leary, who does free verse; Gustave Gerome, who did the backgrounds for those tableaux Grant Philip's posed; Jane Hoyle, who dances and poses; Nan Severance, who corrects proof and longs to write; and Midgette, who tries to do everything and does nothing. There had been a light rain in the night; the sun shone in that thin, golden way it sometimes does in the early morning, and every cobweb on the grass glittered with thousands of tiny, flashing drops of wet.

I met Laurence O'Leary on the porch. He had been sent out to get kindling, but had forgotten his errand, because the rising mists of the creek had sent him into a free verse. I was dispatched to speed the muse and hustle the fuel. Gustave Gerome at that moment stuck his head out of the door, and simply yelled, "If I don't get some breakfast I'll wither, and some one else will die!"

"Food!" said Laurence, scornfully, after Gustave had withdrawn. "God, what a carnal thought for the start of this bright, jewel day!"

With the poetry look still in his eyes, he bent over to pick up the wood. "Chill mist is dead," he muttered, "and naked day stands forth, alone, ungirt, for rains or sun to clothe; chill mist is gone and—damn!" he ended, for he dropped a big fire log on his foot.

We managed to get breakfast after two hours' fussing with the stove, but everything smelled of smoke, and every one was so busy wiping their eyes and blowing their noses, when the food did appear, that they hardly had time to eat.

"We get a gas stove to-day!" said Gustave, his chin set, and a very unpleasantly masculine give-me-my-coffee-damn-quick look around his mouth.

"But there isn't any gas," said Midgette, with a soft look toward him.

"Well, what if there isn't?" demanded Gustave, turning on her with rage. "Do you have to start the day by saying so? If I thought I had to go through this again, I couldn't paint to-day." Then he lit up a little stubby pipe, and stood shaking the match and staring at the table. "Might as well tell you girls," he remarked coldly, "that my inner man wants *food*, the real stuff, after I leave the land of dreams. That coffee—" He tried to characterize it, failed, and did a fair imitation of a seltzer bottle. Then he said: "*My God!*" and stamped out the room, slamming the door so hard after him that the whole place rocked.

"To think," said Midgette, "that I was

beginning to feel that I loved him!" She, too, stared at the table, but with a different look and then she said, rather whispered: "Did you see him eat that fried egg? Done only on one side?"

Jane Hoyle, who has more sense than all of the rest of us put together, smiled, and answered, "Well, you know, Midge, men have to eat!"

Nan washed the dishes, I wiped them, the rest did the up-stairs work. Midgette was entirely herself after she had fussed around up-stairs, and came down singing. She joined me on the porch, where I was sweeping away the leaves that had blown down during the night's rain.

"*Sweet* place!" she said, sitting on the railing and looking down into the water that twinkled in black and green diamond-shaped shadows below.

I caught her laziness, let my broom rest for a moment, and gazed up into the deep green of a fir tree that grew right up through one corner of the porch. It was a dear place; even after the unpleasant frights of the afternoon before, I loved it. The porch ran way out over the creek, and half of it was unroofed except for the huge trees that spread above it. These filtered the sunlight, and let splotches of it waver and dance on the gray, rough, board floor. The walls of the house were shingled, and the sloping, low roof made me think of the thatched homes of the peasant folk of France.

The whole place was a tribute to some one's understanding of the woods. It looked as if it grew there and belonged among the thick-set trees, the moist smelling fern growth, and the free-wandering creek. It was one of those long houses, built with single-room thickness, so that each room had its windows on the creek, and those on the other side looked into the woods. The next hill to this rose a little back of the wooded one, and we saw it fully only when we rounded the bend of the private lane, which took us to the main road. But—from the porch of the bungalow you could see the spot where Rudolph Loucks had lain and bled to death in the snow of that wild, cold night.

"Look between those two little birches, April," said Midgette. "Just over those was where Rudolph Loucks lay. I wish some one could solve that mystery if, for nothing else, for his son's sake. He was an attractive boy. I—I can't imagine his speaking as Gustave did this morning!"

When she left me I sat down on the steps that led down to the boats and their landing, half of which was free of the porch and uncovered. The quiet, and the little tapping sound that the water made against the landing, turned me lazy, made my eyes half close, and my muscles sag. I sat there for perhaps ten minutes, and then I was aroused by the approach of old Nathan, who had a fishing pole in one hand and a string of fish in the other.

He came up, sat down below me, and beamed at me through thick-lensed, yellow-tinted glasses. Tobacco juice had assisted him to carry out his color scheme, and his white beard was tinted at the corners of his mouth into a perfect ochre. Altogether, Nathan Greenleaf looked like the human echo of a meerschaum pipe. I thought he would make a splendid cover for *The Country Gentlewoman*, and then and there decided I would make him pose some time when I felt in the temper for it.

I spoke to him about a stove and discovered where I could get a kerosene affair that would do very well. He told me the name of the local paper, in which we wanted to advertise our venture; and he it was who named the place for us: "The Hidden Treasure."

"Splendid!" said I, clapping my hands; for it was out of the way, out of sight, hidden by trees and hills and—we hoped to make it a jewel of a place and a real treasure. That afternoon we bought tea, our stove, some cups and saucers from the ten-cent store, advertised "The Hidden Treasure" in the Glenridge *Chronicle*, and we all felt that we were headed in the right direction.

Before Nathan Greenleaf left me I pumped him about what could have made the brick fall against our door; fall was a gentle way of putting it; it had been flung.

"I dunno," he said, "any number of things, mebbe."

"Well, what?" I questioned.

"Well, mebbe 'The Echo,' that's Beasley's boy that's not altogether." I judged he meant that he was not responsible.

"Yuh see," old Nathan went on, "he's like this; he ain't altogether. No'm, you couldn't say he's right, although he ain't dangerous. But—it's like this—"

Old Nathan's conversation was a combination of pauses, full stops, and spits. "Round these parts he's called 'The Echo,' because he up and does 'most everything he's saw. Likely he seen Hez Riggs poundin' on that there door, flingin' bricks at it, like he done when he took a notion that Rudolph Loucks, him that was murdered, had his wife, Judy Riggs, in that there house with him. Judy was settin' on the attic stringin' apples fer to dry. But Hez, he was one of them red-headed fellers that go off like one of them dollar alarm clocks, any time, and they ain't no stoppin' 'em. He'd saw Rudolph make a pretty smile at Judy, and when he finds Judy ain't around right underfoot, he notions a lot that ain't so, and he says he'd be gosh tarnationed if he wasn't goin' to up and lam Rudolph so he wouldn't fergit it fer all time. And so he brung bricks along with him, and nicked the door some. Take notice there, above the door knob?" I did. "Well, that there dent," went on Nathan, "Hez, he nicked it."

What I thought was a real idea came to settle on me. "Look here," I said. "didn't any one ever suspect this Hez Riggs?"

"No'm," Nathan replied.

"Why not—"

"Well—" he began to drawl.

"Look here," I said once again, "isn't it logical that this Hez person would harbor a grudge against Rudolph Loucks? Isn't it possible that he brooded over Rudolph Loucks's look at his wife, imagined a great deal that wasn't so about it—worked himself into a fury, began to hate Rudolph Loucks, began to plan revenge, and ended by killing him? It's logical, now, isn't it?"

Nathan considered it at length. "Yassum. I reckon it *sounds* reasonable. But yuh see, Hez Riggs, he happened to be dead hisself afore this here murder happened." Then he stood up, stretched, remarked that he must be "walkin' on," and I saw him disappear toward the woods. He left me divided between laughter and anger.

"The man's a fool!" I said at lunch, as I told the story.

"No," said Gustave, who had quite recovered temper by that time, "he's not. You were; you didn't wait for him to talk his language, which is slow. Do you know that that old fellow's photographs of wild birds, and all sorts of woods life, are shown in the best magazines?"

"They are," Gustave declared as he got up to get an extra plate. Nan had set the table, and she was already deep in the first chapter of the Great American Novel, so that there was much to be desired in the way of spoons, forks and plates.

"He has a nephew," Gustave went on, after he again settled, "who has had some education and who lives in New York. To him, old Nathan ships these plates, and he finishes them and sells them. He gets all the credit, but it is the old fellow who does the trick. He showed me some this morning. I was sketching around there and fell over the place. The old chap was splendidly hospitable. Says he'll do carpentry for us if we need it." We all at once decided we needed his services.

"I'll send him up this afternoon," said Gustave, but we refused that, since we were going to town. On the way we encountered the most amazing, horrible, and haunting smell.

Midgette turned white.

"I wonder what father will think of all this," she said, "how he will feel!" and then I understood what it was.

"You do," said Nan, holding her nose. "There is a lot in Laurence I didn't appreciate."

"Nonsense," I said sharply. "Laurence is all right, but not worth much serious consideration!"

Nan flashed an angry look at me, and I began to see what we were up against, and I knew it would make complications that would not help our affairs to run any too smoothly. I could see it, people going off and shirking work to walk together in the woods; people being annoyed when any one beside two people dared to inhabit the

large living-room; stolen kisses, lovers' quarrels, excitement, happiness, and despair! For—I know Nan and I know Laurence. They are both what is called temperamental, for the lack of a better word. And I knew that all the heights would respond with bitter depths, and I could feel the quality of discontent that would follow, and force the going off of one of them. We needed all our capital.

"This is a business proposition," I said coldly. "We all agreed to ignore sex, and to keep both feet on the ground and to share work."

Then Jane started a reckoning about the stove, and how we were to share up on its expense, and peace was regained. But I was not comfortable; I foresaw complications. And they came. Heavens, how they came! Every one got on edge, every one grew cross, and the things which happened would have been hard enough to bear calmly if we had been calm at the start; and—since we weren't—well, it was no wonder there were feuds, and that every one suspected every one else, and tried to trip him or her, instead of giving a helping hand.

But the horror did boom the tea business. My soul, how it did. Every day swarms of people would motor out, come to sit on our porch, order tea, drink it carelessly, nibble just a bit of cake or cracker, and then, looking down at the creek, ask, and almost always in a whisper, *"Where is the spot where they found the body?"*

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRAITH.

A MONTH went by, and its passing took us into early July. For the most part that month was calm. True, Nan and Jane had a disagreement about whether Gustave or Larry worked harder; one of them, at the very moment of the scrap, hiding in the attic so he wouldn't have to carry in wood for the evening's fire, the other having gone to town to send a telegram because it was his turn to wash out the boats. But that little cloud passed quickly, and that month I can look back on with some pleasure.

People had begun to come out to have tea with us, and we were all feeling exceedingly bucked up—to be frank, not far from cocky. Nan went around with the self-satisfied expression of the individual who has made a good buy; Laurence wrote verses, many of which embodied such sentiments as "Her little heart is warm and true and wise!" I agreed about the last; however, Larry had not meant it in the slang sense, but as a compliment.

We were pretty happy during that month. No one really did much, for our afternoons were almost all taken up by teaing those who came to be tea-ed, and the mornings sort of went—without anyone's knowing where they had gone. The place really made you lazy. Gustave had started a picture, started it seriously, but Jane, who was posing for him, was badly attacked by wood ticks, and said she wouldn't go on unless she could wear a slicker and rubber boots. Of course that ruined the whole thing, for the picture was to be called "Sleeping Eve," and she had to be dressed like one.

She and Gustave simply screamed at each other and for two days didn't speak.

"Eve," he bawled, "in a fish skin coat! What did yuh let me start it for, if you were going lame and intended to back out! My God, these women!"

"Go and sit on a log!" she returned, in a shrill soprano. "Go and sit on a log for hours in one position, on rough bark, with things eating you—not one inch of me unbitten! I shall carry the marks to my grave!"

Then he added the final straw by saying she was too skinny, anyway, and he asked Nan if she wouldn't volunteer, but she refused. "You need have no feeling," he explained. "It is all for Art—Art alone."

Gustave took to sketching backgrounds again, and Jane devoted herself to desultory dressmaking. Yes, that really was a half decent month. The oil stove made work easier, and we'd have a fair breakfast, finish drinking coffee on the porch, perhaps, dawdle through the work, and then go down to the boats and slip off down stream until something in the middle began to say: "It must be almost time for

dinner." The afternoons were well filled with people who came out to boat and to have tea, and then in the evening we'd settle around the big fireplace, and discuss everything on earth, a lot that wasn't, settle nothing, and always witness or take part in at least one fight.

Nan and Laurence were wandering off together a little too often, even then; but I trusted Nan to keep Laurence good-tempered even if she did fall out with him.

In the middle of July we had four or five days of straight downpour, and those were a little trying. It was during these that Midgette found the old magazines, and, among them, that copy of the London *News* from which the note to Rudolph Loucks had been torn. How it came there, I don't know, but she unearthed it in a little side attic.

"Magazines," she said, coming down the stairs with a bundle of them under her arm. "I know the contents of the *Chronicle* by heart, and I was desperate. I think we can learn lots about the styles of 1902, and there is a paper-bound copy of 'Two Weeks.'"

A fire was blazing high, for it was cold, and we all drew near, looked at the pictures, laughed a good deal at the sleeves and hats of the period, and then Midgette held up the *News*, and commanded attention by her. "Here is the judge's writing again. I know it. He took it upon himself to write me, remonstrating against my leaving home and father."

"Well, if the smell that comes with the south breeze is any sample," said Gustave, "I'll say you were justified!"

"Father didn't mind, then," said Midgette stiffly. She did not like allusions to her home, because her father had entirely cut her allowance and had said he would have nothing whatever to do with her, or with checks made to her, until she got through with us and our enterprise.

"What's on it?" asked Nan, leaning forward.

"Me d," answered Midgette; "the rest's torn."

"'Some day,'" said Gustave, feeling really too awfully clever, "'I'll get you some day.' Plain as your face."

"Whose face?" asked Jane.

"Not yours," he answered in a fatuous tone—they'd made up again—and with a look that would have heated my studio in New York for the entire winter. "The note that was found said, 'I'll get you so,' didn't it? And then it was torn," Gustave continued. Midgette nodded.

"And this says 'me d' and then again it is torn," went on Gustave, "and so, I conjecture that the whole thing was that sentence. 'I'll get you some day.' Nice sort of a line to send a friend, wasn't it? You know, I'd like to solve that, and just why and how that banker—what's his name—"

"Frank Lethridge," supplied Midgette.

"—was connected with it."

"He wasn't," said Midgette. "He was ill at the time. Had pneumonia, and wasn't expected to live."

"Clever dodge," Larry said. "Probably fixed the nurses, even the doctor—"

"You're wrong there," Midgette broke in. "You see, we know our nurses in this town, and one of the oldest and most respectable had the case, with another we knew somewhat. She couldn't lie. I know her. And our doctor wouldn't have shielded any one who was guilty, for he had a pretty narrow escape himself. He was one of the suspects. He was out here attending Nathan Greenleaf that night; Nathan had an attack of pleurisy. Lots of people were sick that year. The weather was frightful, warm and cold, extremes in each. You know how sick it makes people. It was rumored that the doctor had inside information of someone's injury through Rudolph, and had been unable to stand it. He was a large-souled, kind old chap, who mothered lots of people, and took their troubles to heart quite as if they were his own."

"It was Frank Lethridge's pistol?" asked Jane.

"Yes," Midgette answered, "it was."

"Who had been in his house?" asked Nan.

"The doctor had been, of course," Midgette replied, "but so had the minister who takes the London *News*, and Judge Harkins."

"Where was Rudolph Loucks's son?" I asked.

"He was at the Opera House. 'The Red Mill,' remember it? Played here that night."

"I give up," said Gustave. "Say—how did the judge explain this writing exhibition?"

"He didn't have to very hard; he was in New York. He offered the most casual explanation," Midgette said, as she inspected the torn sheet and the age-dulled writing. "He said that it read: 'I'll get you some dry' and that it applied to champagne. Said he wanted to tell a friend so without his own wife hearing his confidence, or understanding it, if she read it. Mrs. Harkins was president of the local temperance society, but the judge drank like a fish—"

"And the judge knew wines," went on Midgette. "His selections were always safe. People knew it, and did get him to buy for them. That part sounded half reasonable."

"Smooth old guy," Laurence contributed, and he got up to go out on the porch. It was cold, and, of course, he caught one, for he had been sitting on top of the fire doing a verse about: "Vast, wide open spaces, and the wild, free wind." So—when we heard sneezes down cellar a week later we naturally blamed him, although he said he had been in the bath-tub at the time, enjoying a hot soak, and composing a poem. And the reason that we doubted that was that Nan said she had spent two hours in the tub before she knew that Laurence had.

"You liar!" he said, when she airily announced where she had spent the afternoon.

She grew red, then white, looked at him appealingly, and then tried to be casual. She laughed rather stiffly, and after it said: "Just as you say!" We were divided in opinion; some of us thinking she wanted to shield him, some of us believing she had been in the tub and that he was lying; some of us giving it up. And it happened to be the day that we all wanted to be accounted for, which was unfortunate.

That day, if I recall, was the twentieth of July, and a fair, cloudless one. It was the day that Frank Lethridge first appeared at our boards, and surprised us all by talking to Jane for a half hour. He was reputed to be a woman-hater, and if one could judge by Midgette's amazed look, his reputation was a stiff one.

It wasn't a very good day, which was strange; for, as I said, it was a gorgeous one, and at five o'clock no one was around except Jane and Frank Lethridge, who was laughing loudly at something she was telling him of her studio experiences.

Suddenly they heard noises from the kitchen, and Jane was a little upset. "Some one must have dropped something," she said, with a look over her shoulder, "but I didn't think any one was around; I wonder—"

Together they got up and went toward the kitchen, and here, on the wall was written:

F. don't do it.
R.

"What do you think—" whispered Jane, and then they heard the sneezes. Six of them, one after the other, from the direction of the cellar.

"Stay here," Frank Lethridge ordered. "I'll go down," and he disappeared. She thought she heard voices, but she was not sure, and when he reappeared, he said: "No one," and helped her wash the writing from the wall.

Then, after Nan returned, from whence Jane did not know, he left, and Nan said she had been in the tub all afternoon, and Laurence had told Gustave that he had been in the tub, had made a poem there, after which he had fallen asleep. He got it out to read, and Gustave said: "Why didn't you fall asleep first?" That remark made quite a chill in the atmosphere.

Laurence sneezed all evening, which added to the unrest. Jane swore she could recognize sneezes, and that those that had come from the cellar were his; and to that, Nan said, "I know who scribbled the message. It was Gustave. Told me he'd shoot Lethridge if he bothered around here courting you; that he had grown sort of used to having you 'round—didn't you, Gustave?"

"Didn't I what?" he asked, lowering his paper.

"Didn't you say you'd shoot Frank Lethridge if he cut in on Jane?"

"Well," he retorted, after an irritated frown, "what if I did?"

Every one remembered his saying that in the happenings of the next month, although Frank Lethridge was not shot. And Gustave, being badly frightened, went around explaining why he'd said it, which made it all the worse. Too much explaining always does that; I know, for I've done it myself!

Nan told me in confidence that she had been in town buying real food. Midgette was doing the cooking that week, and I understood. "Sneaked off," she admitted. "I knew if I didn't, Midgette would offer to go, too, and then she would be hurt if I ate. And I had to or starve. As for Laurence, I know he was in the tub, for there was a rim around it, and sand in the bottom."

"My heavens!" I gasped, after a giggle or two.

"The flat-boat stuck this morning, and he had to wade," she explained. "He said his stockings were full of sand afterward. It *was* a sandy spot!"

"You there, too!" I asked in mock amazement.

"And he doesn't lie," she went on, without noticing my joke, but I thought her reasons were rather strongly asserted. It seemed to me she was trying to convince herself as well as me. "And why should he do that?" she ended.

"I think some one is trying to have a good time," I responded. "Trying to get us all nervous by using Rudolph Loucks's initials to sign messages. Don't tell me that anything like that really does happen, for I don't believe it. If that man has reached another stage of consciousness, I don't think he'll want to come back to the place where he made so much trouble!"

"It doesn't seem as if he would," Nan responded, but her tone was doubtful.

"And as for that business on the hillside," I said, "that is rot! No one ever saw that." Nan and I had been standing on the porch on that spot from which, if you looked over silver birches, you could see where Rudolph Loucks had bled to death. Something had made us turn to look at that place as I spoke.

I don't know who saw it first, Nan or I, but I do know that suddenly we were clinging to each other, shaking and gasping, and looking with eyes that were glazed with horror, I know, toward a wavering white form against a hillside of green.

This story will be continued in next week's issue of the ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY, the consolidated title under which both magazines will appear hereafter as one.

The Octopus

by Captain Dingle

ON the steep-to side of the island of La Vache, in the blue Caribbean, a sloop of fifteen tons lay at anchor, her sails bunched along boom and bowsprit just as they had fallen on her arrival. Time enough to furl them when the boat came back.

Just offshore, backing and pulling to keep position, the sloop's rowboat waited, apparently for somebody. A single oarsman handled her, and his strong, tanned face was fixed frowningly on the shore. In the west the failing light slipped over the horizon in chase of the flying sun.

"Hurry up, old scout, hurry up!" the oarsman muttered. He tugged savagely at his oars and kept the boat off from a sharp point of rock; then filled and lighted a corncob pipe.

The boat seemed overbig for the sloop. But then it was intended to carry all the gear necessary for the working of two deep-sea divers, and the work called for stoutness, wide beam, and general roominess. Aboard the sloop no large crew was in evidence; but there was one head above the tumbled mainsail on the boom, turned shoreward, with the face alight, even in the gathering dusk, alight with eagerness and hope. It was an old, old face—prematurely old; lined with a great care.

Lights in the cabin hatch indicated the presence of others on board, and there were, in fact, six more men besides the skipper; but supper kept them below. No matter of meals could keep Henry Bascomb, the owner of that old, old face, under hatches until that boat returned.

The man in the rowboat suddenly sent the craft inshore and brought her alongside a forbidding black ledge of rock. A man had appeared there.

"Come on, Buck, get a wiggle on," he growled. "You bin long enuf to eat the hull island, an' supper's bin ready more'n an hour aboard th' sloop."

Behind the ledge of rock on which Buck stood the island rose in somber shadow, seemingly inaccessible to any but goats and land crabs. The boatman shuddered involuntarily as the little waves slapped between boat and rocks in the darkness. Still Buck made no move to embark.

"Come on, can't yuh? What's bitin' yuh now?"

Buck spoke to some one unseen, flinging the words over his shoulder, then stepped down to the boat. Out on the shadowy sloop a prematurely old man darted out from behind the mainsail and took up a position at the rail, trembling with impatience.

"Whyn't y' talk English, Buck?" demanded the oarsman sulkily. He rowed with savage strength.

"Because, my dear Daniel, the man I spoke to only understands Spanish," smiled the other. His smile drifted into a chuckle which drove Dan frantic with curiosity.

"Fer God's sake, open up!" he growled.

"I waited long enuf fer you, didn't I? What d'ye find out?"

"Sh! I want to talk to you alone, Dan, but later, when the old fool's gone to by-byes. For the present"—he raised his suave voice until every word was audible on the sloop—"I have to report that we are anchored almost over the spot where Mr. Bascom's vessel sank. It's within possible diving depth, I believe, and if the stuff is still there we'll get it, no fear."

The boat swept alongside, and the two men sprang on board. Straight to the little cabin they went, following the smell of Haitian coffee; and, pale of face, rubbing his lean hands nervously, the old, old man trotted in their wake, scarcely daring to trust his tongue to speak, but too eager to remain dumb.

"Oh, you'll get it for me, I'm sure," he cried, beaming around the table. "I know you two good fellows will get it for me if anybody can." About the table sat the entire crew of the sloop except the cook, who hovered in the doorway of the little cubby-hole called a galley. The skipper of the sloop, Fred Raikes, regarded the old man with something like sympathy; the crew seemed rather to ignore the old chap, fastening their attention upon Buck, obviously one of the strong spirits of the party. The old man babbled on:

"It's a shame to have to expect you men to do this on such terms, I know; but when my schooner sank she took with her every penny I owned. There's the price of my plantation, the fruit of forty years' hard work, in gold in the cabin, gentlemen, and I know you'll help me recover it. I'm an old man—old, old, too old to start again—and there's my boy, helpless since the wreck robbed him of both legs, broken in pulling his old dad clear. I wish I could guarantee you men full and generous wages for the work; I can only pay on results, as you understand. But you'll not have cause to complain of your reward if"—the old chap's eyes glistened suspiciously—"if you help me place my boy beyond the reach of want. Bless you, boys!"

"The old gentleman was quite dramatic, eh, Dan?" chuckled Buck later on deck. The two divers sat on the bitts, smoking each a poor cigar from the scanty stock of Mr. Bascom. Dan was silent, and Buck seemed in no hurry to broach the more vital subject which had brought them up there when all the rest of the hands had turned in.

"What d'ye want to tell me?" asked Dan at length. "Want me up here to listen to yer idees about the old skeezics?"

Buck laughed, and pitched his pungent cigar stump into the sea.

"Not quite," he laughed gently. "How much do you figure on getting out of this job, Dan?"

Dan felt rather than saw the keen gaze of the other. It pierced the gloom of night and seemed to burn into his flesh. He shuddered slightly, as he had shuddered earlier in the evening beside that black ledge of rock.

"I don't figger nothing," he replied shortly. "Slack times wi' me, an' if I get wages an' grub out of it I'm satisfied. If I only git grub I'm satisfied, too. I ain't no crab."

"Oh, you'll get wages all right, Dan. The stuff's here. Buck paused a moment, then abruptly jerked out: "How would a one-third share fit you?"

Dan turned a pair of deep-set, brooding black eyes full on his companion, and stared fixedly at him for a full minute before replying. Not quite so fastidious of taste as Buck, his cigar satisfied him, and he puffed thick gouts of smoke from his lips; the fierce glow of the tip was reflected redly in his eyes.

"That'd be fine, Buck," he said presently. "I dunno as you could find anything that 'd fit my case better. Allus figgerin', o' course, that it was honest come by."

Buck laughed gently, and slapped his mate heartily on the back, never noticing the slight gesture of aversion his action induced.

"Never worry about the honesty, old fellow," he chuckled. "You don't want to say that what old Buck would do ain't honest, do you? Sure you don't. It's honest for a man to get the full fruits of his labor, ain't it? What's kept you and me poor as church rats? Hey, tell me that, will you?" The man's voice grew in in-

tensity, but never rose in volume. He seized Dan by the shirt sleeve and set his face nearer. "Listen, and don't chip in till I'm through.

"Old Bascom's so darned old he needn't worry if he never finds his cash. If he don't find it, he'll peg out before we get him home, anyhow, won't he? And if we hadn't agreed to come down here on speculation, he'd have lost it, anyway, wouldn't he? Sure he would, says you, and it's truth.

"Who's going to get it for him, hey? Me and you, of course. Nobody else can get it. We're the divers, ain't we? And I tell you there's no reason why we should turn it over to him, Dan. There's enough cash down under us to make you and me and the other chap rich for life, see, and—"

"What other chap?" growled Dan. He had sat silent while the other chattered on, giving no sign of interest or distaste for the subject. Buck misunderstood him.

"That's the stuff, Dan!" he chuckled, repeating the comradely slap on the back. "Why a third party? says you. I'll tell you, old chap. The third party was talking to me to-night while you waited for me. He's a resident here; sort of leader of a gang of roughnecks who live here because other places are too hot for them. He's half Spanish, half black himself, but that don't prevent him wanting to get out o' here. And he showed me how Bascom's gold can be got, with our help, without letting anybody aboard here know we found it, see? It's this way:

"Back of the sheer cliff, where I landed, there's a hole, sort of cavern, only it's more like a tunnel; it runs down to a black pothole with an underwater opening clear to the sea. In hurricane times it's a blower, and nobody ever goes down there for fear of all sorts of ungodly things—giant squids, man-size crabs, and such foolery. But Veyas, that's our colored chummy, he don't put any stock in such nonsense, not he. He's been down there. And a diver could walk right into that hole from outside, and pile up all the stuff taken from the wreck, Danny boy! We could report to old Bascom that the stuff wasn't there, after a long search, couldn't we? Sure we could, you and me, Danny. And then we'll come back later on, pick up our shares, and—"

"Find Mister colored Veyas mizzled wit' the lot, hey?" Dan got up suddenly, laughing harshly, and refused to meet Buck's eye. "You want me to double-cross the old gentleman, an' rob his crippled boy, to put a fortune in the pockets of a greasy half-breed, hey? You allus cracks on yer a gentleman, Buck, but—"

Buck leaped to his feet, and under the peeping stars his face was convulsed with fury; but he recovered his control, assumed a suave smile, and again laid a hand on Dan's broad shoulder.

"Tut, tut, old chap!" he laughed softly. "No need to fly up in the air like this. Do you believe for a minute I was serious? Don't be so silly, Danny boy! Of course I was fooling. Just sounding you, old chap, though I thought I knew you well enough to make that unnecessary. I'm glad to know you take it this way, Danny. It was only my anxiety on old Bascom's account that urged me to sound you thoroughly. Now I know we shall work together, without fear of suspicion creeping in between us. Forget what I said, and consider it a joke grown old. Come down and have a Santa Cruz nightcap and we'll turn in."

In the early morning, before even the cook was about, Buck pulled ashore alone and met Veyas. The half-breed scowled at his visitor in a manner which might have strengthened Dan's suspicion regarding him. Buck answered the unspoken question in Spanish.

"No go, Veyas. The locoed donkey has eaten the weed of honesty. It must be as you suggested. Show me the hole, quickly; I have to get aboard."

Veyas led the way past a thicket of wild bananas growing in the lee of the rock, and dropped to hands and knees, Buck following closely. Into a yawning hole such as a bear might make for a den they crawled, and along a narrow passage worn smooth by the vomiting of a thousand hurricane waves. It was as black as night inside, until Buck judged they had reached nearly sea level; then a faint green glow

ahead prepared him for what came immediately. They emerged upon a narrow ledge running around a pool of glassy water; and deep down below, on one side, was clearly to be seen an outlet to the sea.

Buck shivered.

"Lord! Veyas, this place is devilish!" he cried. "It makes a chap imagine all sorts of things. No wonder your rascals are scared to come down here."

The half-breed shrugged and showed his yellow teeth in a snarl.

"Enough that you see how it can be used," he grunted. "Get your comrade inside, and the octopus will take care of him. I am the octopus, and shall make no mistake."

Buck shuddered violently. The place was cold, the gleam of the sea was cold, the eyes of Veyas were cold as diamonds. Deep down in the white sandy floor of the pool a swirl of cloudy water eddied in the entrance, and the diver gripped the half-breed's wrist fiercely.

"Look! You said there were no cuttle-fish! You said—"

"It is an eddy from the tide," gritted Veyas, drawing Buck away. "Go to your sloop, Señor Buck, and let us quickly begin work. I am tired of this place and the brutes who name me chief."

Buck cast a last look into the green, cold depths, and followed the other out into the gray light of dawn. He reached the sloop and entered the cabin as the cook started to prepare the morning coffee.

Dan's silence, even more marked than usual with him, might have cast a damper over old Bascom's breakfast but for the almost boisterous optimism of Buck. The two divers presented such a marked contrast that inevitably the old man found himself leaning upon Buck's every word, as if in him alone rested all chance of recovering that treasure. As the boat put off to commence operations, after the sloop's anchorage had been shifted nearer the cliff, Mr. Bascom leaned over the low rail in an ecstasy of hope, and responded to Buck's airy hand-wave joyfully.

As the helmets were put on, and before the front glasses were screwed in, Buck fired repeated volleys of loud joviality at his silent mate. But Dan remained silent, almost morose, and impatiently snatched his helmet glass from the attendant and started to place it himself. He was lowered over the side, and his pump started, without a word coming from him other than curt agreement on signals with his lineman. Skipper Raikes handled Buck himself, and when Dan's grotesque headpiece had disappeared beneath the sea he nodded to Buck and remarked with a grimace:

"Dan's sore this mornin', Buck. Better not get foul o' his lines, lad."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of old Dan," laughed Buck loudly. "He was a bit under the weather last night, and I guess it's a sort of mental hangover he's got. He's all right once he's under water."

The two divers were soon groping for a hold along the smooth hull of the wreck. Inside the cliff, above the cavern pool, Veyas crouched with black brows, his brooding gaze fixed upon the small opening down in the depths. A line and a machete lay beside him: the tentacles and the riving beak of the octopus.

Dan first found an entrance to the wreck's interior, and in a few minutes he and Buck had clambered over the sloping deck, down through the broken hatchway, and into the cabin where lay the built-in strong-box Mr. Bascom had directed them to. The divers, long associated, had developed skill in the deaf-mute language, and by this they conversed when necessary.

Now, as they stood before the opened strong-box, and a mass of tight rolls of gold coin lay exposed, Buck placed his front glass close to Dan's and peered intently into his eyes. Dan met the stare stolidly, and asked, by signs, what they were to send the stuff up in. Buck searched around a while, in reality only to conceal the contempt which persisted in rising into his face, then signaled back:

"I'll go up and tell Raikes to send down a sack."

He left Dan there, in intimate contact with sufficient hard, red gold to gratify every fancy of a dozen men of his habit of life. Few men, Buck told himself, could

resist the spell. On his return with the sack he had no doubt he would find Dan entirely willing to listen more sympathetically to his proposition of the previous night. He wanted his mate in the plot with him, because then there was a chance, between them, of beating Veyas out of his share; but if Dan was stubborn, well—

Outside Buck sent up no request for sacks; he simply signaled the skipper for slate and pencil, and reported that they had found the cabin, but débris prevented them getting to the strong-box immediately. On his own account he added that there were signs of some previous visitor having attempted the wreck, but he might be mistaken. He would report more fully later.

Then, having allowed Dan plenty of time to consider the ultimate ownership of all that wealth, he clambered back on board and again placed his helmet glass against Dan's. For perhaps a full minute their eyes met and held their gaze, and Buck smiled knowingly, for in Dan's grim face was the light of excitement. Like a shrewd general, Buck signed with swift fingers:

"Raikes has to get a canvas sack sewn, Dan. Won't take long. Come on up with me; I'll show you the hole in the cliff I told you about. It's right alongside us, and it looks to be a wonder. I caught sight of it as I came aboard just now."

They stood within the cavern presently, deep down on the sandy floor; and above them crouched Veyas. Buck closely regarded his mate, for now, or never, would the lust for gold and the realization of the ease with which it was to be secured influence Dan to join him and the half-breed Veyas.

Dan moved about the cavern, plodding up the inward slope to where the rock offered a rough ascent to water level if needed; and to the limit of his ability he raised his head and gazed into the vaulted dome of the submarine chamber. Veyas drew back involuntarily as the great copper helmet with that big round single glass eye in front was turned full upon him. That he was invisible to the diver did not occur to him. He only waited for Buck to step out of the way, and for Dan to climb nearer the surface, so that he might drop a coil of his rope about his shoulders and begin the enactment of the rôle of octopus.

He swore fervidly when Buck gently pulled Dan back by his line, and the two divers stood face to face, their fingers snapping and signaling swiftly. Buck was pressing his suggestion again, with finality, right there where Dan could not miss seeing how easy it was to be; and, in ignorance, Veyas watched intently, only concerned in the delay on his own side.

In a moment he saw Buck shake a fist in Dan's face, and reach for his ax; Dan started to walk out through the opening, gesturing backward with both hands as if casting aside some foul influence. Quick as the dart of a fish Buck seized hold of Dan's air pipe, turned it about his wrist, and signaled frantically upward to Veyas. With the keen understanding of long consideration, the half-breed snatched up his rope with a heavy piece of rock tied to the end, and flung it into the water. Buck grabbed it, cast a turn about Dan's body, keeping the air pipe compressed, and then hurried out to the outside sea-bed, leaving Veyas to complete the murder.

An eager old man watched from the sloop's deck, and rubbed his thin hands in anticipation when he saw Buck helped into the boat. His anxiety scarcely permitted him to wait until the diver came on board: he fumed with irritation when there seemed to be some delay with the gear; his nerves were on the point of snapping when at last Buck's helmet was removed, his voice was heard, and the boat began slowly to draw near the sloop, the pump and line men carefully paying out all the slack of Dan's lines and gazing into the sea with awe-stricken faces. Dan did not come up, and there was a sense of disaster pervading all hands as they came on board and waited for Buck to speak.

"Dan's gone. Octopus got him!" was Buck's terse report. He stumbled to a seat on the hatch, and permitted the helpers to remove his cumbersome dress and leaded boots; then, with a gloomy look at Bascom, reported on his side of the business.

"Dunno whether your stuff's still there

or not, guv'ner. Lot of dunnage collected about the wreck. I'll know within an hour next time I go down, though. You'll know to-night, unless the octopus gets me," he concluded with a harsh laugh which sent shivers down the spines of his hearers.

It was a subdued crew who attended the pump and lines for Buck that afternoon. Raikes watched the bubbles rising from the submerged diver, and once, when the tiny messengers ran off, away from the wreck, and suddenly ceased rising at the sheer face of the cliff, the skipper's face grew thoughtful and he stole a sharp glance at Mr. Bascom.

"You'd think Buck 'd stay away from there, wouldn't ye?" he suggested, meeting the old fellow's eye.

The idea seemed to strike Bascom now for the first time. His grave old features took on a greater gravity.

"By Jove, cap'n, that's so!" he muttered. "When we saw the bubbles disappear under the cliff this morning I said to the cook the divers were venturing where the wreck could not possibly be. D'you think Buck has any notion of avenging poor Dan on the devil fish that took him?"

"I dunno, Mr. Bascom. Shouldn't charge Buck with no such eagerness on a mate's account, I shouldn't. Dan might do it, but not Buck, I fancy. But look. Watch them bubbles."

The line men answered Buck's signals and gradually took in loose line and pipe, and the air bubbles left a trail from cliff to wreck and continued rising perpendicularly for several minutes. Then they trailed away to the cliff again, to pause for a shorter time and return.

Raikes suddenly seized the signal line and jerked a sharp demand to know what Buck was doing.

The answer came up on the slate, and it was shown to Bascom.

"He's a good fellow, that's a fact," the old gentleman remarked after reading. "It takes a real man to risk his own life for a mate even after his mate is dead. I do hope Buck will be able to bring up poor Dan's body. It's terrible to think of him being left down in that dismal hole."

Raikes stared at him in wonder. Not one word about his lost gold, the gold which meant all for his crippled boy; only a fervent hope that Buck's endeavor, as outlined in that rather more than suspicious slate-message, might succeed.

The skipper curtly directed the attendants to watch their work closely, then bade Bascom follow him into the boat which rode idly to the painter since the pumps had been taken on board the sloop. Fred Raikes was a keener observer than many gave him credit for being. He did not believe that Bascom really placed the recovery of his money secondary to Buck's strange quest after vengeance upon the devil fish any more than he believed the scrawled message sent up which announced Buck's conviction that the gold was nonexistent, but that he would stay down and try to get Dan's body free from the lurking place of the squid.

"You'll feel better for a change of scene, Mr. Bascom," the skipper said as he sculled ashore. "You're all worked up now what with Dan goin' that way, and the uncertainty about your cash. Let's browse around ashore a bit. I got a notion I'd like to see what's back o' that big cliff."

Immediately after leaving the shore they plunged into dense jungle which seemed to hold nothing in the shape of an outlet to the sea except by the narrow path they had traversed. They tore through the bunch of wild bananas, yet missed the cavern entrance through which Buck had been conducted. But the strange growths, the rank primeval nature of the ferns and deep black leaf mold, attracted the old gentleman to a point where he could forget for the moment troubles, anxieties, fears and all.

Raikes let him browse among the lush jungle, snatching here a ripe banana, there a wild lemon, grateful as a thirst-quencher, and again a wild mango too luscious for its fibrous pulp to do other than disappoint. And all the while the skipper sought along the cliff the base for something which instinct told him must be there.

Swiftly the proof came, and Bascom started up in alarm to see a queer smile flash in the skipper's wise eyes. From somewhere near at hand pealed a muffled scream. It sounded as if it might emanate

from a buried tomb, startlingly near underfoot; and like an echo it was answered by a chorused yell from the men on the sloop.

"D'you suppose poor Buck's gone, too?" stammered Bascom, white with alarm.

"We'll go see," retorted Raikes, taking a heavy pistol from his pocket and plunging into the midst of the banana clump. Bascom followed with a hand trembling on the leader's sleeve, and together they tumbled into the dark, cold tunnel of the cavern.

Again the close air was filled with a shriek, and sweat trickled down the faces of both men in spite of the chill of the place. Raikes cast caution to the winds and hurled himself bodily downward. Bascom tumbled after him, coming to a stop at the restraint of his companion's hand on the edge of the dark green pool, and before their eyes could adjust themselves to the uncertain light that ghastly shriek rang out again, this time to be slowly choked into a bubbling gurgle in which the last syllables of a frenzied prayer to a heathen deity could be heard.

Neither Raikes nor old Bascom uttered a word. Speech was out of the question in view of the cold, deathly drama being enacted before their horrified eyes. Neither gave heed to the heap of rolled packages of gold coin which threatened to trip their feet as they crouched over the brink. But both saw, and recognized by certain new patches on the old diving suit, the body of Dan, lying half in, half out of the water; and a rope tightly bound about the body, compressing in its turns the vital air tube, gave proof of some of the truth which enabled them to watch the ghastly scene below without feeling a tremor of pity.

On the white sand floor of the cavern lay a confused mass of living things. In the clear moments between swirls of eddying sand, forms could be seen; and first they made out Buck, his signal line tight about his right wrist and leading out through the opening taut as an iron bar.

In the front of his diving dress a long knife-blade was imbedded, and the reddened sea told that the stroke had not stopped short of the heart.

Round the haft of the murderous knife the black fingers of Veyas were clenched; but the black face upturned in its own dying throes held nothing of hate, nothing of murderous frenzy, but only a vast terror, a bared-teeth fear of the great resistless thing that had gripped him in the moment of his triumphant treachery. Around a spur of rock three thick-cupped arms were twined; one such arm waved searchingly about the body of Buck as if seeking to complete a conquest already overdone; four writhing, snaky tentacles were wrapped about neck, breast, legs, and arms of the black, and a pair of stony eyes and a great parrot beak drew nearer with the cessation of human struggles.

Bascom was crying, the tears of a nervous, overwrought old man; and Raikes, who saw all that had transpired as clearly as if he had followed it step by step, urged him out into the fresh air. The skipper had seen the man-made turns about the body of Dan, and the cunning twist of rope which prevented the attendants above from hauling the body up.

He had seen the meaning of those mysterious trails of bubbles from wreck to cliff while Buck worked alone; and now he saw when, the treasure secure, the black villain had thought to deal with his guilty partner as he had dealt with honest Dan; he had seen how Justice, in the loathsome shape of the great octopus, had not been the less efficient because of its loathsomeness.

Finally he saw old Bascom's cripple boy placed beyond want, and, to his eternal credit, that pleased him as much as the knowledge that he and his crew had not worked for nothing.

"Come along, old matey," he said, helping Bascom down to the boat. "We'll soon have the money snug on board, and we won't stop a minute longer. Just forget what ye've seen, and think o' what ye can do now for that boy o' yourn."

But somehow the old, old face could not light up as it should have done. Somehow, the jubilation of the crew, which swiftly banished the horror of the lost divers from their minds in the light of red gold all but in hand, seemed out of place and not at all the most natural thing in the world, which, of course, it really was.

Black and White

by J.U. Giesy *and* Junius B. Smith

Author of "Stars of Evil," "The Black Butterfly," "Solomon's Decision," etc.

(A SEMI DUAL STORY)

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

GORDON GLACE, of the detective firm of Glace & Brice was sitting in his office when he received a call on the private wire connecting him with the tower on top of the building where lived his friend the Persian mystic, Semi Dual. Going up at once, Glace was amazed to learn that Dual's life was threatened by agents of the Black Brotherhood, an association designed to bring discontent and anarchy into the world, elevate evil and out of the chaos achieve power for themselves. Literally the representatives of the spirit of evil—the devil—on earth.

The first attempt was made by Lotis Popoff, a daughter of Michael Popoff, a member of the band and a so-called "Red," who had killed himself in attempting to escape capture in Dual's last encounter with the brotherhood ("House of the Hundred Lights," *All-Story*, May 22, to June 12, 1920). But Dual disarmed and subjugated her, finally hypnotizing her, and sending for Connie, Glace's wife, to take care of the unconscious girl. For as he explained to Brice she herself was not wholly evil yet. She was under the influence of the powers of evil and had been molded to their desires, but as yet had committed no overt act and could be saved.

Later while Glace and his partner were sitting in their office they became aware of a presence, a floating something in the air; but just then Dual came in, and as it attacked him he exerted his mental force against it and it burst. It was as he explained, a psychic bomb. An emanation sent from the brain of the leader of the Brotherhood, like wireless power is sent through the ether, to search him out and read his mind.

While of course Dual, by his powers of divination, *et cetera*, knew what his enemies were plotting, it was equally necessary to have some material proof of their criminal intent. And this the three set themselves to find.

CHAPTER VII.

MATERIAL MEANS.

AS it happened, the thing was ridiculously simple, at least right at first. Personally I finished the night on the couch. As a matter of fact, I slept little, but I rested, lying back and studying the figure of Semi Dual as he worked.

For he slept not at all that night, nor took any relaxation from his labors, save that he had Henri bring in a pitcher filled with a certain decoction of pure fruit juices, of which we each drank a glass.

Thereafter he turned to his desk and plunged into a series of astrological computations based, as he had indicated before Bryce left, on Lotis Popoff's birth, and I stretched myself out watching him.

Once more he had turned off all light save that in his bronze Venus. The radiance of her golden apple made a shadow out of his body, his shoulders, his bent head and face. Sitting so in his robes, it seemed to my wearied senses that time had rolled back and he might be a magician alone in his study, indeed—pouring, unmindful of the hour, into the mysteries of life—a magician whose magic was white.

I felt it all vaguely, without actually thinking it out. In the end and toward morning I slept.

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for October 2.

I woke to find Semi moving and started up. The cool of the early day was in the chamber and its light. He had opened the windows and they let in the coo of strutting doves on the tower, and the faint perfume of the dew wet garden.

"I—I guess I went to sleep," I said rather inanely.

He smiled, crossed to the wall beyond me and pressed a button. A panel slid back and a table slid in. It was set. On it were two plates, a basket of fruit, a pitcher of milk, some rolls, a tray of little flat cakes, a silver pot of coffee and cups. I recognized Henri's handiwork.

"Come," Dual invited. "A new day calls us with its light."

"You didn't sleep?" I questioned, after Henri had come in himself with towels and a silver basin and I had laved my hands and face.

"Nay," said my friend. "There were certain things to be run out."

I glanced toward the ceiling. "Everything is all right?"

"For the present," he told me, selecting a bit of fruit and pouring a glass of milk. "Equally for the present the danger to her is greater than to myself."

I took a roll and broke it open.

"You mean Otto?" I suggested.

"Otto," he said, "has in a figurative way mislaid the tool he sought to use."

His answer contained all the mild sarcasm he sometimes employed.

I nodded. I could myself appreciate the truth of what he said. "And—"

"He is hardly one to accept the present situation, since he can scarcely fail to regard her as a source of danger to himself while in my hands."

I put down my cup of coffee and stared.

"You don't mean he may try to—do something to her after failing to accomplish anything against you?" I questioned, recalling as I did so the way in which his enemy's thought form had been dissipated once it encountered Semi's auric wave.

He dried his fingers on a napkin.

"Her danger is chiefly of a psychic quality," he replied. "I must be instantly on my guard against some such move. The man, having gained control of her by a process of thought obsession, will scarcely hesitate to treat her as masters have always been wont to treat their slaves."

"Destroy her by—in his own fashion, if he is able?" I stammered, considerably shocked at the suggestion and all it involved.

"Ah, yes, if he is able," said Semi Dual. "Which in this case, my friend, means, if unopposed. Now I shall leave you. Before going to your office, you will want to see your wife."

He disappeared up the stairs and presently Connie came down and drank a cup of coffee and ate some cakes and fruit. She had little enough to relate. Lotis had lain throughout the night as I last had seen her. But if she had no news of the girl herself, let it be not understood that she did not talk.

She was fired more deeply by what had transpired the night before and her being called into the situation than I had ever seen her in her life.

"Imagine it, Gordon," she cried. "She came to kill him and he keeps her here to save her. It—it isn't human. It's more than that. There's something in a way divine about it. It's the—the sort of thing you ought to expect of a priest."

"Well, anyway, you be careful," I told her. "I've got to go. I want to see Bryce. He's declared war on this Otto the Devil, as he calls him, and I want a hand in the work."

She rose and stood close beside me.

"You be careful," she cautioned. "I'm safe enough here." She glanced about the sunlighted room. "Doesn't it seem strange that such things can happen?—things we've read about, but never dreamed were the truth. Be careful of yourself."

Just the same, I fancied Connie was having less trouble in accepting the situation at its full value, than I, as I left the roof and went down to find Bryce.

He was in his private room, puffing at his inevitable black cigar, when I came in, and he opened up at once.

"No matter what happened upstairs last night, there wasn't nothin' magical about th' way they slipped that girl onto

the roof. I been busy, old son, while you was takin' your beauty sleep. I had a chin with th' elevator starter this mornin' an' say—I fell onto th' whole thing at once. I described this Popoff girl an' he knew her, says she's been workin' here in th' buildin'; an' I asked him where an' he gave me th' number of a room on th' tenth floor.

"I went up an' had a look. Like I thought, that room is th' last one at the rear end of th' hall, with its door slam up against th' end window an' th' fire escape. It's got 'George Pitkin, Analytical Chemist,' painted on it. So I went down an' asked th' buildin' office how long George had been analyzin' things around here, an' they said he moved in about the tenth of th' month. Then I asked 'em what sort of a looker George was, an' they said he was sort of stout and heavy, with dark hair an' brown eyes, a mole by one wing of his nose, an' a voice that sort of squeaked. Well, that was all right. I've seen th' guy myself goin' up an' down on th' cage. I reckon we know what him an' th' girl was analyzin' all right, if anybody should ask."

I nodded. Plainly enough Pitkin and the girl had made use of a very commonplace means of accomplishing their purpose. From the room the man had rented it had been extremely simple to feel out the lay of the land and plan each step. I had even stumbled upon Lotis, making a sort of final survey, the afternoon past, myself. I said as much.

Jim rolled his cigar across his mouth. "Yep, an' if things had gone as they expected, she'd have just gone up an' knifed Dual an' walked out without attractin' any attention, an' there wouldn't have been a thing to show who it was that done it. An' today she'd have been back here as per usual, workin' for George. Darned old scheme—an' likely to get by just because it was, an' not half as foolish as it looks. George is a tenant all right an' who's goin' to suspect th' girl that works for George."

"Yes," I said, "and the beauty of the thing was that even if they did suspect her, Pitkin could say he didn't know a thing about what she was up to and who could prove that he didn't, unless she squealed. And there is another advantage, too, as you may have noticed. By using material means and what you call an old scheme, if the girl was convicted, she would be convicted in a purely material way, and the chances are there would be nothing about the whole affair to connect her with our friend Otto."

Jim grinned. "Sort of slick, ain't it? Otto sort of uses his agents as a screen. He's foxy, but do you know what I got planned?"

I shook my head and Jim continued: "The way it looks to me, there's a lot about this girl that might be learned. You remember Popoff's joint an' how we never got hep to the fact that he had a daughter, even though we had an agent in his house. Well, now, where was she along there toward the last?"

"I don't know," I said, helping Bryce to make his point.

"But I've a notion we won't have to go very far to find some one who does." He removed his cigar and eyed it, turning it in his fingers. "There's that fellow in the jail."

My interest quickened. "You mean Barney McDowd?" I said quickly.

Jim nodded. "Yes. Wasn't he the guy who helped to bump off Cahill and Popoff's right hand man in that colored light stunt? Maybe he's got some inside information."

"If he'll spill it."

Jim shrugged. "Well—anyway, it's a chance."

"When are you going down there?" I asked.

"Any time you are?" he retorted.

I got up. "Then come along."

"How about the girl herself?" he inquired after we had reached the street and were moving along it.

I told him what Semi Dual had said.

He chewed on his cigar for a time before he made any comment.

"Bump her off with a psychological bomb-shell?" he asked at last.

"Something of the sort as I understood him," I admitted.

Bryce paused. He frowned. He stood there on the street and after a moment he

jerked his hand out in a sort of comprehensive gesture.

"Lookit—lookit," he grumbled. "Look at th' houses, th' people, th' street cars—th' whole damned works. Take a good look at it, m' son, an' then look me in th' face an' tell me they ain't th' same they have been every day we've seen 'em—an' then on top of that, tell me this sort of thing can happen—maybe I'll believe you."

"Well," I said, "you saw that thought form last night yourself—you saw it first."

"I know it," he rejoined gruffly. "An' th' trouble is that this mornin' I don't know whether I did, or I'd eaten somethin' that didn't agree with me, an' it was nothin' but a liver spot—somethin' th' matter with my eyes. That's th' hell of it, Glace. That sort of stuff don't match up with the times. It's out of place."

I might have laughed, but I didn't. I knew how the whole thing must have affected Bryce—the more as his investigations of the morning were beginning to put a far more natural and commonplace valuation on the visit of Lotis Popoff to the roof the night before, from his view-point at least. And even as the thoughts came to me, I sensed within it a certain subtle, almost diabolical truth.

So I stood there with him, like any two modern men, discussing some mutual topic of interest rather than one involving what, if Semi Dual were right in his convictions, embraced an actual and seemingly deadly peril to the race, and I put my thought into words:

"Don't you see that just because it doesn't appear to match, even to you who know the man we're working under as one who never speaks of such things without knowledge, that it must certainly impress others the same way, and that these men or devils or whatever they are can easily perceive an additional blind for their work in that very fact?"

"Eh?" Jim stared. His frown deepened. "An' that's the devil of it, I guess," he said at last. "Dual is sure taking a pretty long chance if this Otto party can put over anything like that."

"He says the greater danger is to the girl," I reminded.

"So far as her life is concerned. That's what he means," Jim answered without any hesitation. "Nice deal though if this Otto guy should some way manage to croak her an' leave Semi holdin' her dead body there on the roof."

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed.

Actually Jim had startled me by voicing something I hadn't considered myself.

And he went on: "After listenin' to his story and ours, about the best he'd get would be a foolish house for life, and we'd be tarred with the same brush. Th' day's over when any jury that thinks it knows straight up is goin' to stand for this Devil on Earth stuff. It's a coupla hundred years more or less since that went out of date."

Well, he was right, and I knew it, and I took a rather deep breath. I could imagine about how our defense would appear in a modern court.

"Just the same," he said after he saw his words had sunk in, "I ain't sayin' I don't believe it. There's somethin' I don't know what tells me Dual's right. I don't know much about th' soul stuff, but I'm beginnin' to feel as he is that there's a bunch of wise guys tryin' to stir up a pretty fair imitation of hell in the world these days—an' if you ask me what for, I'm goin' to answer: For what they aim to get out of it themselves.

"Their dictatorship of the proletariat simply means that th' wise guy takes what he wants an' holds it as long as he can find a bunch of fools to help him with th' job. Bein' a dictator requires brains, an' that's what the proletariat hasn't got—an' without 'em th' proletariat is nothin' but a mob.

"Lookin' at it that way, I guess we can see why they wanted to get Semi. You know he called himself Abdul the Persian when he went out to bust up their hop smokin' party—"

"And told the truth. He is Abdul and a Persian really as I've told you."

Jim nodded. "Sure. I know it, but that's where they got the dope this Lotis kid pulled last night, just the same. An' they know you and me was mixed up in the matter of Cahill's death and Popoff's

tryin' to jump through a window an' cuttin' his jugular on a piece of busted glass."

"Admitting all of it," I pointed out, "they don't seem to be trying to bother us."

Jim's smile was sardonic. "They don't need to. They know what we'd be unless he was behind us. They've figured that all out or I'm a harness bull an' never was anything else."

There was no denying that he took the police standpoint in things. Abstruse theorizing never served to hold his interest for long, but give him a motive for a definite crime and he would work till he dropped. In the present instance, however, it certainly looked to me as though he had a pretty comprehensive understanding of the case, since in each of the instances he mentioned, Semi had been mainly responsible for the laying of agents, of what was coming to look more and more like organized Evil, by the heels.

"I've an idea you've hit it," I agreed.

"Hit it," he repeated. "You're dead right I've hit it. Now let's go chin a bit with Barney McDowd an' see what he says. An' see here—when it comes to handlin' crooks, I know more than you do. When we get to him, you let me handle this."

I nodded, and we took a car.

CHAPTER VIII.

BARNEY M'DOWD.

WE found McDowd in a cell of the State's prison, at the end of something more than an hour's ride. He had been sent there, after a trial, for his part in the murder of Judge Cahill, which had resulted in a sentence of twenty years. He knew us and we knew him by sight. He was a red-headed, greenish-eyed fellow of medium height, an electrician, a radical by inclination and the coaching of Popoff, his former associate and employer, and as he caught sight of us, he leered.

Jim came directly to the point.

"Hello, Barney," he said gruffly. "What do you know about George Pitkin?"

I saw the prisoner's eyes shift the barest trifle. And then he grinned in Jim's face. "What's it to you?" he sneered.

"Well, I understood he was a pretty good friend of yours," said Bryce.

"Friend?" McDowd exploded and caught himself and thrust out a jaw studded with a reddish stubble. "Say, whatin'ell are you gettin' at? Th' trouble with you birds is that no matter what you say to a guy he's generally safe in bettin' that you've lied."

Jim nodded. "Well, all right, if he ain't a friend of yours he ain't and that's all right. Th' real reason for our comin' up here today was because he's managed to get a friend of his into trouble, an' we thought maybe you wouldn't stall on tryin' to help *her* out. But if you don't feel like talkin', why I guess Mike's girl will have to get out th' best way she can by herself. Come along, Glace." He turned away.

There was no denying that my partner's former experience as an inspector of police stood him in good stead in such an instance as this. As I swung about to follow him in what was to all appearances his determination to accept the prisoner's attitude as final, McDowd spoke shortly. "Wait."

We turned back. If I was any judge, the man we again faced was in the grip of warring emotions.

"What sort of trouble is Lotis in?" he asked.

And there it was. Literally the use of the girl's first name seemed to have been shaken out of McDowd, and with it proof of his knowledge of her. And—if knowledge of a danger to her could surprise him into inadvertent speech, that seemed in itself proof of something else. Plainly then Jim had scored.

But he gave no sign that he recognized the fact. He shrugged. "Oh, he's mixed her up in an attempted murder."

McDowd started slightly. For a time he stared at Bryce in silence and then he wet his lips with his tongue before he said, a little thickly: "Go on—d'ye mean they've grabbed 'em?"

"They've got th' girl," said Bryce, as it became increasingly clear that if McDowd could be made to talk, it would be

through what was momentarily becoming more plainly an indication of his interest in Lotis Popoff herself.

"Pitkin went clear?"

"Yes."

"He left her to sweat."

"Well," said Jim slowly, "I don't suppose he thought it was any use in sticking around till somebody shut th' gate."

"It'd be like him—" Barney began, and broke off, turning his eyes from Jim to me and back. "What do you want to know?" he asked at last.

"We want to know all you can tell us about this kid."

"Why?"

"Mainly," said Jim, "because we got a notion she was used in a bungled job, an' if we can get th' dope, it may come in handy for th' ones tryin' to help her."

Barney eyed him. "You mean somebody's come to the front for her?" he questioned.

"Yes."

"Why? By God, Bryce, if I thought you were double crossin'—" McDowd clenched his hands and left the sentence unfinished.

Jim waited for an appreciable time before he answered. "I give you my word there's somebody tryin' to help her, McDowd, an' we're workin' with him. Now you can take it or leave it."

"I'll take it," McDowd decided with a sound not unlike the gasp of one who plunges into an icy bath. "Whad'ye want to know?"

"First," said Jim, "where was th' girl when we pulled th' raid on Mike's house?"

McDowd appeared to weigh the question, inspect it for concealed traps. He mentioned the name of a famous finishing school for women, at last. I felt he was telling the truth. Plainly Popoff had taken steps to assure his child a first-class education.

"How long have you known her?" Jim asked.

"Since Christmas. I met her when she was home for th' holidays."

"Did she know the sort of place Mike was runnin'?"

"No, I don't think she did. Of course, she knew about th' light-cure stuff, but that ain't what you mean I guess."

"Nope." Jim shook his head. "It isn't. Who was Popoff's backer?"

"His backer?" Barney scowled. "Why as far as I know he backed himself. He had jack aplenty."

"Mean he was rich," said Bryce. "I thought he was a communist."

Barney scowled. "He was. I asked him about that once an' he told me all he had was for th' cause except enough to take care of Lotis while she lived."

"Well," Jim persisted, "anyway he must have had some associates."

McDowd's eyes narrowed to ugly slits. "Keep off it," he rasped in a tone of quick suspicion. "I ain't goin' to turn up anybody what was workin' for th' Cause."

And Bryce retorted as quickly: "Oh, yes, you are. You're going to turn up Pitkin."

McDowd scowled again. "If I do, he can blame himself for it, for gettin' her into trouble. What I can't understand is how she come to be hooked up with him at all. She didn't use to have any use for him with that squeaky voice of his an' that wart alongside his nose."

Bryce grinned. "We got his description, Barney."

"Damned bright, ain't you?" Barney leered. Thus far he had done little better than answer questions, but now he seemed to determine on a more loquacious course. "You scragged me an' I can't deny it, but you didn't catch George, an' he was as deep in th' thing as I was. He helped me make that gas we used on old Cahill right there in Mike's house."

"An' he tried to shine up to Lotis, did he?" said Jim once more without betraying his interest in the information gained.

Barney nodded. "Yes, damn him, he did, an' now he gets her into trouble an' sloughs her to save his dirty skin."

Bryce had given the flick to keep the man talking and now he changed the subject. "Did Mike own that house, if he was rich?"

"Nope." McDowd shook his head. "It was leased."

"Did Miss Popoff come home after her father's death?"

"I don't know, an' I reckon you know why I don't," said Barney. "What I can't make out is how she come to be here now. What sort of a blow-off was they into?"

Bryce told him. "They tried to croak the man who helped us run down Mike and your bunch after Cahill's death."

Barney's eyes widened with understanding and narrowed again with the quickness of a striking snake. "They what! See here—I thought you said you was tryin' to help her. By God, Bryce—"

I took a hand. "See here, McDowd, my partner told you the truth and I give you my word that what you've said will be used only for Lotis Popoff's good."

He took a deep breath. He stood there and considered. "I don't make it. I don't make it," he said at last. "You say they tried to get this side kick of yours, an'—"

"He doesn't want to make her any trouble, and he's told us to find out how the thing was pulled."

"After she tried to get him?" he grumbled. "You tryin' to feed me that sort of stuff."

"You don't understand," I began and he cut me short:

"I understand enough. You come up here an' ask me to spill what I know to help th' girl, an' you roll me for a dirty snitch. Well, you didn't get much, an' anybody else will get a damned sight less. Now that's all—that's all."

"Popoff have any other children?" said Jim.

"No, damn you, he didn't," Barney told him.

Bryce nodded and turned away. I followed him outside. Then, as we waited for a car to carry us back to the city, he began checking things off.

"Popoff was a communist and he was rich; get that, Glace? He was educatin' his daughter as a lady. Pitkin helped make that phosgene gas they used in murderin' Cahill, so I reckon he's an analytical chemist all right. McDowd was sweet on the girl. I thought about that comin' out here, an' I guess I called the turn from th' results. Lotis was Mike's only child, and it looks like he was pretty fond of her. Most likely she was of him, especially as it seems he didn't let her get hep to all he was up to. Now where does that get us?"

"Probably," said I, "to the point where Otto the Devil found her and managed to persuade her that Semi Dual was a man to whom she owed a debt of hate."

"Good eye," my partner declared. "You're right, m' son, dead right. Also—now glaum onto this: There was more than a speakin' acquaintance between Otto an' Mike. Well, when you consider what Mike had in mind an' what he handed th' judge, he wasn't such a slouch of a devil himself. An' if him an' Otto was associates say, it ain't such a far cry from Mike's takin' off to Otto's hookin' onto the daughter—an' that leads right up to the rest."

"Not only Mike, but George as well," I said as we entered the car and took a seat. "Otto must have known George or have met him since, if we are right in thinking they took that room for the purpose of making last night's attempt."

I broke off as I recalled the words of Lotis the night before that her friends were waiting for her down-stairs. I began to wonder if she had not told the literal truth; if indeed Pitkin at least had not been waiting for her to come back and report the success of her mission.

"What's the matter?" Bryce asked.

I told him and he pursed his lips, pouting out his stubby brown mustache. "Huh!" he grunted. "Th' question would be what he did after that. It looks to me as if we ought to try an' get a line on George. What we're needin' right now is some sort of way to connect Otto up with this business first an' last."

"Exactly," I agreed.

Suddenly Jim chuckled. "Th' trouble is we don't know who th' fellow is or where to find him."

"Well," I said, "you've faced that sort of thing before when you were with the police."

He gave me a glance. "Correct, m' son. An' we've laid more'n one smart guy by

th' heels. Just th' same, seein' that we're actin' as Semi's outside men in this business, I reckon we'd better see him an' see what he says before we go any further. I'm sort of feelin' our responsibility in this. He's sort of leavin' it up to us while he works with th' girl himself, an' before we try to twist th' devil's tail, it won't do no harm to be sure we've got asbestos gloves."

"All right, we'll go up and see him," I assented, nothing loath to do so, since such an action would give me the opportunity of satisfying myself of Connie's safety.

It was between twelve and one when we reached the heart of the city and Jim suggested lunch.

I yielded, and we found a café where we could feel assured of speedy service, ate our meal practically in silence and came out again a little after one o'clock.

And suddenly, I knew not why, I felt an urge of haste. I turned toward the Urania at a rate that tasked Jim's shorter legs to keep the pace. It seemed to me that my mind was centered wholly on reaching the Urania with what speed I could, and getting up to the roof. It was as though some one there was calling me—calling—and that some one was Connie—my wife.

I charged into the building entrance and actually ran down the foyer to catch an up-going cage. Jim panted at my heels. He eyed me oddly as the car started up the shaft, drew a kerchief and mopped a perspiring face. But he said nothing and I offered no explanation while it mounted or after we had left it and I led the way two steps at a time up the bronze-and-marble stairs.

The garden lay flooded with sunlight as we reached the top. It was quiet. The parapets about it kept off the higher breeze. Its vegetation nodded in the warmth of the afternoon. Save for the trickle of water from a little fountain, there was no sound. The place was quiet—as quiet as death. The thought gripped me sharply as we started up the path to the tower and found its door open and passed inside.

And the tower was quiet. There was no sound within it, no evidence of life. At another time it would not have struck me as peculiar—the place was always quiet—with the quiet of tranquillity, but now—

I crossed to the door of the inner chamber and opened it without knocking—a thing I had never before done in my life.

It was empty—unchanged—but also unoccupied.

I turned and glanced at Jim.

His face was puzzled. He was panting a little.

Without a word, I swung about and started for the narrow flight of steps that led to the topmost room of the tower. I began mounting with Jim behind me. Half way up, I paused abruptly.

Before me a human figure was crouching on the stairs.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE GRIP OF ERLIK.

IT was Henri. At the sound of our approach, he turned toward us a face pallid in the half-dusk of the stairway.

"*Messieurs,*" he gasped, reverting under the stress of emotion to his native tongue.

"Henri," I demanded, "what are you doing here? What's wrong up there?" Instinctively or subconsciously or in some such way I knew that his presence was due to something going on above us in that room to which Lotis Popoff had been carried—was in some way mixed up with her.

"*Mon Dieu—le Diable.* I do not know," he stammered. "*Madame — monsieur's* wife, called the Master. Her tone it was affrighted. The Master went up, and since there has been nothing. I do not know why I came here. Ordinarily I would not do so. But the other woman. I—"

"Get out of the way," I cried, and shoved him aside rather more roughly than I should have done no doubt. Only then I could think of nothing save Connie—and the girl—the tool of a modern evil worker, about whom even Henri seemed to have sensed something not normal. I ran on upstairs.

I came out into the upper room. It was quiet—filled with a subdued golden light through the curtains Dual and Henri had hung. At first there wasn't a sound. I

glanced about and I stiffened—a deadly coldness seized me and froze me, left me breathless and staring at the form of Semi Dual seated by the side of Lotis Popoff's couch.

Dead—they were both dead. That was my first, startled thought. Or at least in neither man nor woman was there any sign of life. Dual sat there, his hands on the arm of the chair his body was occupying—his eyes open, fixed—his skin pallid. Strain my own eyes as I would, I could see no sign that he breathed.

And Lotis lay before him, surely as pale as death, her flesh waxen, the fingers of one hand bloodless as the filtered sunlight struck it and showed it dull, robbed of any rosy glow of life within it, its fingers flexed in the barest extent, as though already they were growing stiff with the rigor succeeding dissolution, as it lay there on the coverlet beside her motionless body. And her lips were bloodless, too—the lips of a seeming corpse. Her hair was all about her head and shoulders—against the opaque whiteness of her skin it was like trailing bands of crape.

So much I saw in that first numbing instant after my coming. But I saw no sign of my wife. My heart throbbed dully, its beating labored.

"Gordon—thank God!"

It was a sibilant, shaken whisper, but it broke the spell. I whirled toward the sound. And I saw Connie, crouched in a corner, her eyes wide with what seemed a mortal horror, crouching down—cowering back and away from those silent figures.

By a sheer effort of will, I made my way to her, lifted her up and slipped my arm about her.

"What devil's work is this?" I asked.

"S-s-s-h!" she said still in a whisper. "I knew there was something the matter and I called him and he came up and became like—that."

I knew she referred to Dual and Lotis. I became aware that Jim had followed me and was standing beside me. We three stood there and watched. I say watched, because there seems no other word, and yet there was nothing at all to watch really. There was nothing. There wasn't even a breath of air—and the subdued light strained by curtains to a sort of golden effulgence in the room—that and the two figures—the woman's and the man's.

I found myself recalling what had transpired the night before, down-stairs in Dual's inner room, how he had sat there before me, staring, staring, with his whole being seemingly concentrated—focused in an inflexible opposition against something. And by degrees I became convinced now that some similar cause lay behind the scene we three were watching—that once more and to even a greater extent he was fighting in a way we knew nothing about; that for the time being his every force was gathered for the struggle, the forces of his body, almost of his life itself, brought into abeyance, diverted from their usual channels, gathered up and concentrated for the purpose of grappling with, combating some unseen and to us intangible thing. So sure of it did I become after a time that it led me to voice a suggestion.

"Think," I whispered hoarsely—"think—that he's going to win."

Bryce turned his eyes toward me. "My God—" he began.

Connie freed herself from my arm. She sank down on her knees. I saw her lips move. I knew she was praying.

I bent my own thought on the thing I had suggested. And I'll swear that for an instant it was as though it struck against some opposing thing. I actually felt it—without sensing what it was—something that resisted, beat back, and yielded. It was as though my very thought pierced it—like the yielding of a substance when a knife blade pressed against it, sinks in. And in that instant I knew the thrill of triumph. A flush of warmth suffused me. I glanced at the form of Lotis Popoff and found a change within it. Some of the deathly pallor had left her face and throat and even as I looked, the coverings above her moved. She breathed!

Something like a frenzy of triumph came upon me. Again and again I stabbed with my thought at the unknown thing with which it had come in contact. Without knowing I was going to do it, I cried out hoarsely: "Curse you, get back to the

Hell where you belong!" The sound of my own words stayed me, and I became aware that I was gasping.

Dual moved. He opened his eyes. Slowly he rose and turned toward us and stretched out his hands. "My friends," he said, and smiled with a wonderful light in his strong-featured visage; "my friends."

"Semi—in God's name!" I exclaimed and started forward.

"Aye," he said, "in God's name, which no force of Evil may oppose," turned and spoke to the girl on the cot. "Lotis, Daughter of the One God, open your eyes."

She obeyed him. She lay staring at him.

He spoke again to her. "Thou art safe, child, yet have ye been close unto death. Hence sleep no more by my bidding, nor save as the needs of thy body prompt thee."

A quiver shook her. "Erlik, who sits like a spider, devouring the souls of mankind, called me. I—heard the voice of my own soul bidding me good-by," she faltered faintly.

"Not Erlik, but Otto, sought to slay thee," said Semi Dual.

"Otto th' devil," I heard Bryce mumble.

"I was so frightened," Connie faltered. "She kept getting whiter and whiter, and cold. I called Mr. Dual, and he came up and sat down, and I—I thought he had died. And I thought of you, and—"

"I heard you," I whispered. "I came as quickly as I could."

"Otto," said Lotis in almost explosive fashion. She sat up on the couch, swinging two little pink arched feet over the edge and clutching the coverings about her. She frowned. "He is my teacher." She glanced about her, and suddenly she asked a question. "What is this place?"

"A room in my house," Semi told her.

She eyed him. "Why do you keep me?"

"That ye may know the truth."

"I may not leave you?"

"Nay, not yet. Here is one who will remain with thee." He beckoned to Connie, and she went toward him. "Know her as your friend, Lotis. Speak with her."

The girl regarded Connie, but gave no other sign that she comprehended, and after a moment she sighed and let herself down again on the cot.

"You are not unwilling?" Semi questioned my wife.

"No—not now," she said, setting her lips in a line of resolution.

"Then for a little," he said and moved toward the head of the stairs. "Come, my friends," he addressed Bryce and myself.

We followed. I was positive he would explain once we were back down-stairs.

Henri had vanished, but Dual rang for him once we had entered the inner chamber, instructed him to bring in a pitcher of the fruit juices such as we had drunk the night before, and when the man reappeared and served us he drained his glass.

"Your thoughts helped me in this, my friends," he said. "Your added thought and a woman's prayer, which is thought at its best."

"But—good God, Dual—" I began.

"Wait," he stayed me. "An explanation is due you, and an explanation you shall have. Our antagonist is crafty. As well as myself, he is aware of the truth that all force is one. In that lay Lotis Popoff's deadly peril. Life, like all other manifestations, is naught but a form of force. Last night you saw me bring her life forces into abeyance to my will. In so doing I lowered their rate of vibration, brought about a form of partial catalepsy that rendered her for the time impotent for either good or ill. Last night also you saw me meet the mental force our opponent sent against me, and you saw it fail. Wherefore, since he failed so to overcome me, this legionary of evil tried another course. And in seeming, at least, he worked with me rather than against me, if so by that he might defeat me still.

"After you left this morning, Gordon, I cautioned your wife to watch Michael Popoff's daughter closely." He glanced at the clock in the corner. "An hour ago she called me, and I went up-stairs. I found Lotis no longer breathing, with no sign of life about her, cold. And I sensed in the atmosphere of the room a deadly force. I understood at once. What I had begun my antagonist was merely seeking to finish. Rather than opposing, he had added his to my already operative force.

"I had rendered the girl unconscious,

chained her hand and foot, robbed her of volition, yet without disturbing to any dangerous degree the purely organic operations of her life. Seizing upon her condition, he had set himself to deepening it into one of suspended animation, from which she could not be aroused, and from which she would eventually sink into actual death. You yourselves heard her say she heard Erlik calling—the voice of her soul bidding farewell to her body. There was a time, my friends, when such was near to the truth, before I succeeded in beating back the driving momentum of his evil intent, which was dragging farther and farther down the force of her actual life."

"Holy smoke," Bryce exploded before I found any comment to make on his latest sample of the craft of the as yet unknown man we were fighting, not only as it would seem now for a woman's soul, but actually for her life. "An' that was happenin' when we butted in?"

Dual inclined his head slowly. "Yes. My will was locked with his so that I knew not the moment of your coming, yet felt the added force of your mental demand for my success."

"You mean the man's intelligence was actually present in the room?" I questioned as he paused.

"His intelligent force, say rather," Dual replied. "It is this way, Gordon—he has made himself master of Lotis's subconscious self. She is thereby sympathized toward him. He can call her, direct her by his thought force, no matter where she is. It was to that ability and the purpose to which he turned it that my will was opposed. I heard your whisper to your wife, telling her that you knew she desired your presence before you reached the tower."

I nodded. "I did," I said. "It spurred me all the way from the café where Bryce and I had lunched. As a matter of fact, though, we were coming up here anyway this afternoon. Perhaps that made it easier still for her telepathic wave to reach me."

"You were thinking of her—were in mentally sympathetic harmony with her," said Semi Dual. "You have learned something since I saw you?"

I told him of our visit to McDowd and about the room on the tenth floor. He leaned back in his chair while I spoke, and closed his eyes.

"Michael Popoff appears to have been a man of no small degree of knowledge," he remarked when I had finished, "as shown by a further study of his daughter's astrological figure on which, when your wife called me to her, I was engaged. Her chart would indicate that he gave her a name which mirrors much that has actually taken place in her life, and were it not for the more pressing need of the moment, a study of her destiny, as written in the chart itself, would prove interesting, indeed.

"Michael Popoff, as I have reason to believe from my former computations at the time he was involved in Judge Cahill's murder, was born in the sign of Pisces. Lotis Popoff herself was born in the early part of March, under the same sign, with Neptune as her governing planet while vibrating upon the higher octave of the planetary scale, which brings us to her name. Lotis, according to ancient mythology, was the daughter of Neptune, who fled from her lover Priapus, and was saved from union with him by being changed into a lotus blossom—which has for a long, long time been held as the symbol of the opening or developing soul."

"Huh?" Jim erupted quickly.

And Dual smiled slightly and went on: "Ah, yes, my friends, it is rather strange at times how all things, all laws, all seemingly trivial incidents, happenings, blend and come together and in the last equation knit themselves into one. Even as there is light and darkness, good and evil, so in the occult teachings there are two schools.

"Both take the lotus as the symbol of the soul. But, as in the one, Lotis became a flower to escape union with Priapus, who pursued her, and continued on alone, so the one school believes in the denial of sex, the inversion of the mind, its development through introspection, its opening one may say alone.

"And the other, following out the divine law which clearly indicates the quality of creation, by its very manifestation of opposites on all planes of existence from the

mineral up to and into the realms of spirit, tunes itself to the recognition that only through the acceptance of the creative principle, the recognition of like and unlike and the satisfaction of complementary forces, can a true and eternal balance be reached and the highest stage of attainment gained. The one, my friends, as it were, denies—the other faces and overcomes.

"And now let us study Lotis herself for a moment in so far as we may, from her signs. Women of her birth are apt to be possessed of a physique and personality attractive to men. Being honest themselves, they are prone to accept rather than prove honesty in others. Hence it is easy for them to be led astray by an evil mind. They are loyal in their affections, fit subjects for self-sacrifice for a loved one or a friend, or even if they are convinced of the justice of their object, for the sake of a cause or their race. They are both psychic and magnetic by nature, with minds naturally high and clean.

"They are strongly religious, broadly speaking, yet too prone to cling to one set dogma or creed, finding it hard to realize that all men, all creeds, are equal within their intent at least in the sight of God. Yet with all this, they are prone to become the prey of doubts and gloomy forebodings, through which they may suffer an untold agony of mind. These largely groundless fears are apt to drive them to suicide at times—or at times, worn out by grief and worry, they change and grow sullen, in which state they will say and do wholly absurd things.

"It is such as they who in their pernicious activity aimed at helping others, at straightening out the word, are actually led at times by their lack of proper balance to literally fly into the face of God, and delegate to themselves acts which can result in naught save misery to others as well as to themselves. And yet the solar fluids, the planetary currents, which surround the children of Pisces, are wonderful in their power, and once such a one has come to accept the truth that the All Knower is the All in All—to open the flower of the soul—the thousand-petaled lotus to the light of his beneficent direction—he will find himself filled with a life of the spirit, transcending anything of which he ever dreamed."

"Which means," said Bryce, nodding, "that this here Otto, knowing about as much as you do in his own line, wasn't slow in giving her th' wrong steer, making her think she'd lost her soul or was goin' to lose it, an' persuadin' her it was her duty to slip a knife between your ribs, when once you boil it down."

"Briefly put," assented Dual. "In my opinion, he doubtless used the grief of her father's loss, coupled with a not unnatural desire for vengeance, to make her appear as the instrument of vengeance in her own mind."

"An' havin' failed of that vengeance, he'd rather kill her than leave her in your hands? I reckon he thinks she might prove a boomerang if she comes to realize this here truth."

"More than one workman," said Semi Dual, "has found a tool turn against him in his hands."

"An' this here Pitkin?" Bryce grinned. He seemed very well satisfied with Semi's answer.

"May be held as an agent of our antagonist, at least."

"Then"—Jim fished for a cigar and found it and bit off the end in a decisive fashion—"I reckon I'll just go gunnin' for George. Chances are that if I can get on his heels, he'll lead us slam bang up against this Otto, whoever he is."

Although put in his own fashion, his conclusion to me seemed logical enough, and Semi's response surprised me.

"Nay," he said, as Jim struck a match to light his tobacco. "Make haste more slowly, my friend. It were better, I think, to wait."

"Wait?" Bryce held the match till it burned his fingers, regarding Dual meanwhile in a somewhat incredulous fashion. "What do you mean, wait?"

"Many a man ere this hath digged a pit and himself fallen therein."

"George?" Jim's tone was actually eager.

"George, Otto, or any other wrong-doer—any, my friends, who seeks to oppose the laws of Him who made them. All things

pass, all things have an end, my friends, save only life the essence, which is of and being of is part of God."

"I know," said Jim; "but see here. If this Otto an' Pitkin are a part of the mob that are trying to upset everything in the world, these here bolsheviks an' reds an' communists, they ought to be rounded up. We ought to think a little further than just this girl."

He broke off rather abruptly as he sensed where his tongue had led him, and his face took on a dusky red.

Dual, however, seemed to appreciate the fact that it was only his desire to safeguard law and order and what they stood for, as he answered:

"Take care lest you be led astray by the seeming of things, of popular fallacies and fancies, Mr. Bryce. The danger is not so much of the masses—for in the masses of any race or nation lies its strength. Bolshevism, communism, as thought of to-day, are largely words. The true bolshevist or radical is he who deliberately and for a selfish purpose, unmindful of the welfare of his fellow men or the suffering his action may entail upon them, brings about an overturning of the established safety of either national or racial law, or even the laws of life.

"It matters not if he be a pauper or a man of wealth. The capitalist who denies the well-being of his fellow man, or the laborer, be he citizen or alien, who seeks to profit in himself at the expense, the suffering, of others, or to bring about that suffering, either by the preaching of theories or by an actual fomenting of trouble which can result in no more than an unrest without advantage—be he who he may—is the true bolshevist—the materialist with no view-point beyond the material creed—an agent of Antichrist."

"And what of the girl herself?" I asked in the silence which followed.

"She shall come to know the truth."

"Through being here, and what you shall teach her?"

Dual put out a hand and took up one from the mass of papers that littered the top of the desk.

"Partly, I hope," he said. "But even more through a new element which my study of her chart has led me to believe will shortly enter the case."

"And that?" I questioned toward a fuller understanding.

"The element of love," he said, and laid the paper aside.

"You're waitin' for that?" Jim asked.

"Yes and no," Dual replied. "In addition to my study of Miss Popoff's chart, I have erected another dealing with the matter of the attempt on my own life. In neither her instance, nor my own, is the danger past. From such indications, I am led to the belief that even though thus far defeated, our antagonist is not ready to accept defeat. Hence I am led to counsel no more than a continued maintaining of our attitude of defense, while he gathers himself for a further endeavor."

"More stuff like he pulled to-day?" Bryce suggested.

Dual smiled slightly. "I do not know as yet, Mr. Bryce. Let Otto dig the pit himself in what manner he may choose."

CHAPTER X.

BESIEGED.

THAT practically ended the conversation. Nothing happened that night or the succeeding day. As Jim remarked in his irrepressible fashion, Otto was apparently taking a rest. Connie reported that Lotis had slept most of the night, when we had breakfast together, but that she had waked and spoken with her, though in a somewhat sullen fashion, before she came down-stairs.

"It's a horrible thing, Gordon, that any one can take a girl's life and wreck it as this black magician has apparently wrecked hers," she declared. "She's brooding this morning. I can see it. She's like a sullen child."

"She's bound to," I said. "She can't help but begin to realize her position."

"It isn't just that." Connie shook her head. "She sits there and turns her head to one side, like one who listens. It"—she laughed in a somewhat nervous fashion—"it sort of gets on my nerves."

"Listens?" I repeated. "Well maybe she does."

"You mean to—Otto?" my wife questioned, wide-eyed.

I nodded. "Dual thinks he's bound to try something else."

"It was terrible yesterday afternoon, before you came," she said. "I'll never forget it as long as I live."

But despite the atmosphere of calm that followed the thing she mentioned, I know that I passed the day which ensued in very much the mental condition of one under a suspended sentence. Bryce openly chafed, and though he didn't say so, I had a notion he was going down to the Central Station for a talk with his former teammate, Inspector Johnson, who had been very closely associated with us in the course of those investigations of Judge Cahill's murder, which had ended in Michael Popoff's death.

Nothing else happened during the afternoon. I closed the office at six and went up to the tower. And that evening, during an hour which Dual spent with Lotis, I talked in the garden with my wife.

Perhaps it would be as well to set down here parts of that conversation as throwing a light on Lotis herself.

"I—I don't know what to make of her," Connie said as we sat on a bench beside the little fountain, not far from the tower path. "She says and does the most peculiar things. See here"—she held up and shook out a mass of white cloth she had with her—"do you know what this is?"

"Well," I judged, "it looks like a small edition of one of Semi's own robes."

She nodded. "He gave the material to me this morning and asked me if I could make her a garment of it. He wants her to wear white, and I've been working on it while I sat there with her. What do you suppose she did?"

"I haven't the least idea," I confessed.

Connie shuddered. "She—all at once she asked me for a bit of the thread I was using, and I handed her the spool. She broke off a piece of thread and said something to it, and threw it down at my feet. And, Gordon, it was a snake—a little white snake with pink eyes; and when I jumped up and screamed, she laughed and reached down and took it up and wound it back on the spool.

"'Had I been minded to make it bite thee, thou wouldst have died the same as though it had been a serpent,' she said. 'How long till ye finish my shroud?' I told her it wasn't a shroud I was making, but a robe, and she laughed again; and I tell you I saw every bone in her body as clearly as though the flesh had dropped from them—so I—I just sat down again and told her to quit her tricks and give me my thread."

"Good girl," I said, and patted her on the shoulder. "It was the best thing you could have done, even if for a minute or two she had you hypnotized."

"Hypnotized?" Connie exclaimed.

"Exactly—a mental illusion. She made you see the thought form in her brain," I reassured her. "I've seen Dual do the same thing to a whole room full of people at once. So now you see that's explained."

Connie shook her head doubtfully. "But after that she asked me if I believed in Erlik the Spider, who devoured the souls of men and women when they died. And, of course, I told her I didn't believe any such dreadful thing. She didn't say anything for a while, and then: 'If you don't, it's because you've never bartered your soul for such powers as mine.' Gordon, isn't it awful to think she really believes she's done anything so awful?"

"Awful indeed. Did she say anything else?" I replied.

Connie nodded. "She asked me how long Mr. Dual was going to keep her, and I told her until she was safe, and she gave me a queer look and said: 'Safe from whom?' I told her Otto, and she was quiet again for a time. Then she gave me another strange look and said: 'Who is Otto?' But by then I knew she was bluffing, and I said: 'He's the man who tried to kill you yesterday afternoon.' 'Otto tried to kill me?' she said, and smiled in a most peculiar way. But I just nodded, and she shook her head. 'Oh, no,' she said; 'Otto is my teacher. He is a very wise man, who comes from the Seven Towers of Silence. He was my father's friend.'

"It was plain enough she didn't believe me, so I didn't argue with her. I told her the robe was far enough done to need a fitting, and I made her stand up and try it on. She did it without any objection, but she insisted on calling it a shroud, and said it was a little short for the purpose, and would I please let out the hem. The way she spoke, you'd think she expected to use it herself as soon as I got it done."

"She was anxious enough to live the other night, at all events," I remarked.

"I don't care," Connie said. "Right now she's got the thought of death in her mind. I tell you, Gordon, Otto is going to kill that girl if he can. I wish this night was over."

"Well, buck up," I said. "You've done wonderfully so far. I'll speak to Dual about it."

And I did. I took the matter up with him after Connie and I had watched the sun set and the twilight deepen into dusk across the garden and she had gone back with the finished robe to Lotis, and he had come down.

He heard me out without comment. "Your wife is intuitive, Gordon," he said then. "Women are like that—their life is more on the subconscious plane than those of men. Women's nature is embracive, revolves in a circle. Man drives directly at his point. Between them they create the mounting spiral, which is the movement of spiritual life."

"Eliminating the latter part of your remark, do you mean that this exponent of modern necromancy still menaces the girl's life?"

He appeared to consider before he answered. "Her mind is still less in sympathy with mine than with his—save for the effect of my more immediate personal presence, I could scarcely control her. Because of the thought he has planted within her brain, she is convinced that her soul is lost—that she is bound by no moral law, since in the definitely assured death of her soul the object of all moral law has ceased in her instance to exist. Or possibly it were better to say that is what she thinks she thinks.

"Once such a conviction has taken root in a mind, it is difficult indeed to persuade the person so obsessed of its untruth. She still resists me to my face. Your report of her conversation is of double interest since when I sought to question her this evening she replied that my efforts were useless in view of the fact that she was a disciple of the Seven Silences herself."

There it was again. I frowned. "What are the Seven Silences—the Seven Towers of Silence?" I asked.

For a time he made no answer, but presently:

"The parent seats of a misled and misleading cult," he said. "The source of perpetuation of sorcerers, necromancers, devil worshipers, if you like, since Erlik, Yam, the Devil, as one may name him, is no more than the impulse to evil in each human soul, which wages continual warfare with the impulses to good, and the men of the Seven Towers are men who have exalted the god of self."

"But," I exclaimed, "is there really some such society or order?"

He inclined his head. "Indeed yes—the so-called Black Brotherhood."

"And Otto is one of them?"

"Otto or Otho, as I am beginning to suspect, since Lotis's remark of this evening," Dual replied. "Perhaps we shall know more of him in time."

"And what of to-night?" I asked, recalling Connie's wish that it were over.

"Yesterday," he said, "I told you the danger to her was not finished. Otto or Otho, baffled, will, like evil in all ages, try again. He will desist only when convinced that not by such means as at present he is using can his object be attained. At the present moment, because he recognizes a danger to himself in her presence within the scope of my influence, he aims even more directly at her death than my own. I have cautioned your wife to watch her closely, yet without seeming directly to do so."

"But isn't there any way of combating the thing?" I exclaimed.

"There are times," he said, "when the passive form of resistance is most strong—since, unlike the active, it baffles even while it opposes, is and is not—is a thing existing

yet not recognized fully until it is found. It yields to opposing force in a certain measure, yet once the pressure of the force operative against it is removed or relaxed, it inevitably returns and seeming to be overcome is in reality not overthrown. It is such a resistance I am offering in this to the evil this man intends."

I nodded. "A baffling of his efforts—a meeting of them at every turn."

"Precisely. Thereby I force him to become the active agent—to expend his powers—thereby gaining the reactionary advantage of each fresh reverse upon him—since a reverse must under the law in each instance produce an effect commensurable with its nature, upon the causative mind."

"At that rate Otto ought to become more or less demoralized in time," I suggested.

Dual's eyes lighted briefly. "Wherein lies the danger to him."

I glanced at the clock in the corner. It was approaching midnight. Actually I had not realized that we had talked so long.

Dual followed the direction of my eyes.

He spoke again. "The powers of physical resistance are at the lowest ebb between twelve o'clock and one—they rise again after that for several hours, and sink again before dawn. Hence the death of so many critically ill of some physical malady within one of those periods of time."

My attention quickened. "Otto knows that as well as you do?"

"Save for the use to which he turns it, he is as well equipped as am I, with a knowledge of many things. Peace now. I would mount guard, not only with the ears of the body, but also with those of the mind."

He would mount guard. He had bidden me keep silent. A sense of oppression came upon me—a foreboding of some impending thing, heavy, seeming to weigh me down. I got up and moved across to the couch and sat upon it.

I heard the old clock ticking in the corner. Its ancient hands were creeping around to the time when the vital spark burned lowest. I suppose it was purely imagination, but all at once it seemed to me that again there were strange, invisible, intangible and yet in some way oddly sensible currents of force in the room.

I glanced at Dual. He sat in his chair, leaning back, motionless, his face impassive, simply waiting.

The clock ticked on. Its hands passed midnight—the longer began to slide down the hill of the hours. In an eery sort of way, I likened its movement to the sinking of a flame, lower and lower—and the stroke of the pendulum in its swaying arc was the beating of a heart. I became conscious of the beating of my own.

Dual stiffened—his attitude became that of one who listens. He rose and spoke to me a single word of direction:

"Come."

I started up. Into my ears, as I did so, there stabbed faintly, muffled by the intervening substance of the tower walls, the sound of a woman's scream.

CHAPTER XI.

ERROR—NOT SIN.

SEMI darted toward the foot of the stairs in the outer room. I followed. We pounded up, while once more that feminine cry for succor set the air aquiver with its plea, its hint of unknown, unclean things.

It was Connie. I knew it without knowing how I knew it, as I panted at Dual's heels—unless perhaps I felt in some unreasoning way that Lotis would not have screamed—that an outcry would have been out of harmony with her purpose, or that of the man who had gained the mastery of her, made her no more than the mental slave of his schemes.

We reached the room at the top of the stairs. It was lighted by a single shaded electric lamp. But even as I charged in I became conscious of a breath of air fanning through it—perceived rather than saw that one of the windows which so largely formed its walls had been opened, shoved back in its sliding grooves, giving ingress to the outer air of the night. And beyond that opened sash was nothing—nothing save the darkness pressed up against the wall of the tower, like a black flood forty feet deep

from the window to the garden—a sheer, unbroken drop.

But I knew it, realized it, in a sort of mental flash rather than by any conscious process of understanding at the time. For as we reached the topmost stair and crossed it, Connie screamed again. My eyes strained themselves to learn the true nature of her need, even while my ears were filled with the sound.

I saw her—locked in a struggle with Lotis, shaken, thrown this way and that, unbalanced, catching herself and saving herself from a fall by the barest margin, grappling the dark-haired girl with her hands. And I saw the eyes of Lotis Popoff wide and staring—I saw the dusky hair of her loosened and falling all about her. I saw the garment on which Connie had worked that evening in the garden, torn half away from her slender writhing body, till it bared the gleaming whiteness of her skin. I heard her mouthing, panting, in a strange dulled utterance. "Let go—loosen your hold on me, woman—Erlik is calling me—Erlik—I must go—to him."

And then she too cried out in a hoarse, unnatural fashion as Dual reached her, caught and held her by his greater strength, drew the tatters of her robe once more about her, and held them with one hand gripping them together, beneath her chin.

Connie freed, reeled back against me, gasping. Her sunny hair was fallen, the kimono she was wearing torn.

"You're not hurt?" I questioned as I held her.

She shook her head. "No. She must have thought I was asleep. She tried to throw herself out of the window. I—I kept quiet till she opened the—the sash, and then I jumped up and caught her. But she's strong. I—I thought I wouldn't be able to hold her till you came, even after I screamed."

"Well, you did," I said, and broke off as Dual began speaking. Thus far he had done no more than hold Lotis, looking steadily into the eyes she had kept fixed on him.

"Peace to thee, Lotis," he said now, however. "Once more have I intervened between thee and an unseemly doom."

"Erlik called me," she panted, breaking the silence which she had maintained since he had seized her. She broke off and sighed deeply like one arousing from slumber, and glanced around. "My soul has left me—I but sought to follow. Erlik holds it—will hold it till its life is drained."

"Not Erlik, but Erlik's agent, Otto," Dual returned. "Otto, who seeks to slay thy body, having filled thy mind with unclean dreams—who rules thy mind as his own."

"Nay," the girl said slowly, but she frowned like one who is puzzled.

Dual went on, and it was clear to me he had heard what Connie told me concerning Lotis's actions. "Say ye so? Yet when the other night ye came against me, did ye not boast that to thee there lay no barrier in locked doors?"

"Nor does there," she retorted. "Remove thy hand from my shoulder."

Dual released her. "And if so," he said, "why when ye sought but now to cast yourself to death from the window of my tower, did ye open the window not silently as ye proclaim ye canst, by thy individual powers, but otherwise, as any other uninformed man or woman, by the physical means of thy hands?"

For a moment she made no answer, and she frowned again. Her glance turned to the curtains she had drawn apart, to the window shot back in its sliding grooves. "I—I did so?" she faltered.

"Aye," said Semi Dual. "Thou didst so, Lotis, thou deceived one, because that for the time being thy thoughts were not thy own, because he who sought to drive thee to the destruction of thy body couldst not entirely control thee and at the same time permit thee to be ruler of thine own mind. Wherefore I say unto thee that thou heardst not the voice of Erlik, but of that other, whom once more I have defeated in his object, to the end that still are ye alive and thy soul is still thy own."

She stood there, wide-eyed, slender, before him, and after a time she put up a hand and drew her robe closer about her. "I—am—alive," she repeated slowly. "And my soul—"

"Thy soul is still with thee, and thy

spirit is within it, and both have yet need of thy body. I say unto thee, the Divine Trinity holds still unbroken in thee, Lotis."

"My—soul—is—still—mine?"

"Aye, and ye will keep it."

Again there was silence. I felt something grip me, hold me, so that I scarcely breathed. And across the face of the dark-haired girl there came a subtle change. I hardly know how to describe it. It was like a sunrise more than anything. There was a sudden softening, a lightening of all its lines. It had been a beautiful face from the first time I saw it, and yet now in some indefinable fashion it became more beautiful still—it was as though under the impulse of Semi's positive affirmation some inner element within her broke through, freed itself, and manifested its renewed life in a palpitant reflex that left her swaying there before him strangely humanized.

"I am—alive—and my soul is—my own?"

"Aye, Lotis."

"Thou hast beaten—him?"

The question was indefinite in its wording, and yet it seemed to me that she referred to Otto—the man Dual had named—the man who had sought to drive her to self-destruction, through his terrible domination of her mind. And taken so, it seemed also that in its very asking it gave earnest of the fact that for the first time Semi had succeeded in breaking through the barrier of resistance she had thus far presented to him, and awakening at least a question of Otto's full sincerity in her—that in so much he had advanced a sort of mental wedge—that might be driven farther and farther home with time.

I stood there and waited for his answer. I had read stories of the casting out of devils, and in that midnight hour as I watched the changes of expression writhe their way across the face of Lotis Popoff—watched her struggle within herself against the great desire Dual had voiced—and the strength of her dreadful obsession, it seemed to me that I was viewing some such thing—that the struggle so plainly going on in her bosom was like that in which the victim of demoniac possession had been said to writhe before freed of the fiend.

I say "seemed," because actually I knew it was no such thing—that in reality it was no more than the warfare of two opposing conceptions in her mind—just as I knew, actually knew, that there was no such thing as a personal devil—that good and evil were states of the mind—one of which could lift the soul of man upward toward its true and intended status, the other dwarf it, brutalize it, inhibit its growth, drag it down, even kill it utterly in the end.

But then the struggle seemed very real indeed, and into it Semi's words came again:

"His power over thee is ended, if so be ye wish it."

For a moment longer she stood before him, and then she threw up her arms, her fingers splayed out, their tips reaching, reaching. Her head tilted back. In her tattered garment, with her dark hair cascading about her shoulders, she made a very picture of the doomed. Her mouth opened. "Nay, nay, it is lost, lost. I have sinned the unpardonable sin! Do you understand me?" Her voice broke out of her throat in a strangled scream.

"Sin and error," said Semi Dual calmly, "are separate things. Error is the part of those who tread the path, if possible, to be avoided. Nowhere save in the intent itself of wrong-doing lies true sin. Lotis, was thy sin intentional or something placed by degrees upon thee?"

She sighed, some of the tenseness of posture went out of her. She answered simply: "I—knew not I had done it until it was accomplished."

"Then it is forgiven thee and as though it were not, since in thy suffering through it, it stands already atoned on the record of past things. Through error thy soul has been shaken. Through desire may it be reclaimed."

And suddenly, without any warning, I saw the knees of Michael Popoff's daughter bend. She sank down before him. She bent her head and stretched out her hands.

This story will be continued in next week's issue of the ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY, the consolidated title under which both magazines will appear hereafter as one.

Mrs. Seeley

by

Edwina Levin

MRS. SEELEY tried hard not to watch her obese dinner partner about the business of mastication, but he made such ceremony of it, accomplished it with such flagrant relish, that her eyes were drawn irresistibly from her own plate. Annoyed beyond measure she fell to studying the heavy jowls of the man who, twenty years ago, had been merely plump, that plumpness not appearing at all disagreeable on account of the huge frame it covered.

She had been more kindly dealt with by time. You would have guessed her twenty-eight perhaps and would have scoffed the notion that this lovely creature, slim as a sapling, hovered over the forty mark. Staring at the distasteful object who sat opposite her in their magnificent dining-room, where Oriental rugs, brown leather-covered walls and glistening silver service brought out more strikingly his coarseness even as it formed a setting for her exquisite beauty, she wondered that she had not foreseen this mountain of fat.

She lifted a frail hand to a perfectly coiffured hair, as if afraid that one of the night-black curls might break loose from its pin. The hand trailed absently across a delicately tinted cheek and down till it encircled for a moment her white throat which rose proudly above a green dinner-gown.

Mrs. Seeley affected green in its varying shades, as contrasting exquisitely with the rose tints of her complexion and bringing out the color of her eyes—those eyes which held all the lights of an emerald sea; and which now glittered like the tropic waters under a scorching sun.

A superficially analytical observer would have said that great fires burned within the frail body of Jane Seeley; and said observer would have been quite mistaken. Mrs. Seeley had one passion—herself. She had married John Seeley in response to this passion.

"Wine! Mahdesian," growled Mr. Seeley to the tall white-turbaned East Indian who stood on his master's right, proudly erect as some Eastern prince, silent, sphinx-like, his black orbs fixed on Mrs. Seeley, who never once lifted her eyes to him. "What are you doing, sir?"

"Thinking, master," returned the brown man, filling his master's glass without haste, seeming scarcely to disturb one fold of his flowing robe.

"Thinking of what?" roared John Seeley.

"Of the adder poison. I almost had the antidote which my great-grandmother told me when I was a small boy; but which I have forgotten."

"Almost!" shouted Seeley, pushing back his chair noisily and standing up, a tower of rage. "How dare you almost get it? What is it? You have it! I'm sure you know it, you black villain! You want money for the secret." He struck out furi-

ously, his pudgy fist landing on the East Indian's breast with so little force that it did not even sway the body of this tall, strong man.

"I am filled with confusion, O master," he pleaded; "but when you asked me for a drink it flew out of my mind like a bird from a cage; and now I cannot get it again."

"Bah!" Seeley sat down heavily, almost ready to cry. "I'll never get it," he muttered.

"Perhaps in your next incarnation, master," insinuated the East Indian.

"To thunder with my next incarnation!" shouted the big man.

"John, dear," broke in Mrs. Seeley in her sweet, gentle voice, "can't you leave off discussing your horrible poisons while we eat? Surely you have time enough in the laboratory—"

"I beg your pardon," he said sarcastically and fell silent while the maid who assisted Mahdesian with the service passed back and forth from dining-room to butler's pantry.

Seeley had always been more or less afraid of this delicate wife of his, and she had fostered that fear. She had never once referred to the fact that while she was of gentle birth he had but accumulated millions through his chain of drug-stores reaching from gulf to gulf and from coast to coast. But somehow she was constantly making him think of it.

She had not been born to wealth; but to the magnet which attracts it and which is greater than talent—beauty of a most remarkable order. The great drug magnate, and also famous chemist, had worshiped her and set her upon a pedestal from which she had never stepped. He had accepted her coldness as one of the attributes of a goddess and as such had given more and more of his time to the study of poisons and their antidotes, which had occupied him of late years.

Mrs. Seeley had gone about her pleasant way of life dipping into this thing and that, society, war work, theosophy, spiritism—whatever happened to present a new face for her pleasure. She had this very afternoon attended a spiritualistic meeting where matters occult had been discussed in mystifying length. She had become greatly interested of late in astral bodies, spirit manifestations, and "planes" of existence.

Looking at her husband she wondered if his spirit would be any more attractive than his physical body.

She tried to picture to herself what the spirit of such a gross body would look like. Perhaps the real John might be pleasing to the eye—meaning the astral eyes of course, since folk of the earth plane had by foolish fears made it impossible for spirits to appear, except to a few advanced souls.

Looking up suddenly, Mrs. Seeley caught one fleeting glimpse of Mahdesian's glittering black orbs, which were instantly veiled.

"Mahdesian," she said in a voice so sharp that her husband stared in surprise, "attend to your duties and stop staring! I would like some spinach."

"Pardon, mistress," returned the man in his low, rich voice which carried a suggestion of incense and blazing suns.

He served her in a manner obsequious enough, but which somehow always made her feel that he but pretended to be her inferior, as a grown-up pretends for the pleasure of a child, and she resented him bitterly.

There was something creepy and uncanny about this East Indian. His silence awed her and his glittering eyes which she so often caught fixed upon herself, frightened her. He reminded her of a snake always coiled ready to strike. As nearly as it was possible for her to hate, Mrs. Seeley hated Mahdesian—she loathed his presence, yet she could never ignore him in his stately silence.

She would catch herself studying him with a curious, repellent fascination; everything about him, in fact, offended her conventional temperament. Born of British parents, though brought up in America, she had all the Englishwoman's distastes for the *outré* or bizarre. She had at first, after finding that her husband would not let Mahdesian go, tried to reform his dress. But strife being contrary to her nature she had finally given the matter up, merely setting it in the ledger against her husband.

Mrs. Seeley felt aggrieved. Fate had not been kind to her in afflicting her with these

two—her husband and his servant who had saved his life years ago and with whom he would not part even at her request. It was the one point on which she and Seeley never agreed. Not that Jane Seeley ever actually disagreed with her husband, as she might have done over and over, he being erratic, excitable and given to stormy scenes; but she simply would not quarrel with any one. Again and again she had appeased him by sweetly taking the blame about some matter where she was in no wise at fault. These humiliating scenes, however, and the equally humiliating admissions on her part of fault where she felt only perfection within her beautiful body, mind, and heart, had not tended to increase her affection such as it was, for this man who so offended her esthetic nature.

The small scene which had just taken place between Seeley and the East Indian over some disgusting Eastern poison for which the two sought vainly to find an antidote, together with Mahdesian's stare, somehow appeared as the last drop in a cup already overful.

She simply could not go on with John. On the other hand, she had no grounds for divorce even if she had not been opposed to it in principle as she was opposed to everything that smacked of sensationalism. And of course the idea of earning her living was unthinkable. What then?

Why John must die, of course.

How, she did not know; but that would come. It would require careful consideration, because there must be no unlovely evidence to confront her and bring to pass the very thing she disliked and sought to avoid.

This adder poison about which John and Mahdesian constantly talked and thought; Mahdesian always trying to recollect something his great-grandmother had told him; John, trying to wrest the secret from a chemical source! A long line of alley cats brought in by Mahdesian had attested their failure.

She wondered what were the symptoms of death by this poison; if they were known to the medical profession, and if they left traces in the body?

After all, would she not be doing John a favor to help him on to another plane whereon he would be wiser and could go on with his studies, finally giving them to the world as Mahdesian had suggested, in another incarnation? Perhaps he might even be able to transmit the great secret to Mahdesian, who would still be on this plane—though not in her house—and he could in turn give it to the world. Of course the matter of such assistance on her part, if discovered, would be looked upon as murder; but she knew that there was no such thing as death; that the soul could not be killed. When men came to a better understanding of life and death there would cease to be any sensational and disagreeable trials before a jury. The matter would be looked upon in much the same light as the helping of a blind person across the street to where the sunlight was better.

There was no other man, of course. There couldn't be with Jane Seeley. Never could she be guilty of indiscretion of any sort. Besides, men annoyed her.

"John, dear," she said in her sweet, gentle way as they went into the library after dinner, where coffee and liquors would be served, "I've been thinking I'd like to study with you in the laboratory."

John Seeley looked up from a treatise on vegetable products, in surprise.

"I'm bored," she explained with a faint smile.

"Tired of religion?" he inquired.

"Tired of everything I know," she answered; "excepting, of course, my home and husband." She inspected the toe of a daintily beaded slipper and went on reflectively: "I thought, too, it might bring us closer together. We seem to have grown so far apart."

"Whose fault is it?" he snapped. "You never seem to want me to touch you or come near you."

"I know, dear," she answered sweetly. "It's all my fault, that's why I thought I ought to do something about it."

Her white lids covered the glittering green eyes and she registered a vow that this would be the last time that she would humble herself to appease this obese creature.

"I thought perhaps, as you find drugs and poisons and antidotes so interesting they might amuse me; and also give us something in common," she went on. "As it is, you sit and read evenings and we never have anything to talk about, my petty affairs being of no interest to you."

He looked at her searchingly; but on her lovely face was no sign of sarcasm. Finally he answered with the air of a man humoring a child and knowing full well that this was but another fad which would soon be replaced by a new one: "All right."

"When shall we begin?" she asked with a slight quickening of her heart.

"Whenever you're ready," he answered indifferently, his eyes returning to his book.

"To-morrow?" she questioned.

He nodded absently, already deep in the chapter on "Subtle Death."

II.

THE following day she appeared in her husband's laboratory, evidently much to his surprise.

"Had you forgotten, John, dear?" she asked in honeyed accents.

A grunt was all the answer he gave; but he handed her a bowl of puttylike stuff to knead. It smelled horrible. She loathed it, but, rolling up her sleeves, she began work, convinced that he had given her the most unpleasant task possible; yet determined to stick to the job until she learned where the subtle poison was, and until her chance came to carry some of it away.

Her green eyes darted about, searching row upon row of shelves whenever her husband's back was turned for a moment. As if her name had been called she turned suddenly to find the East Indian standing in the shadows of a distant corner, straight and sphinxlike. For a single instant the green eyes and the black ones clashed like swords crossed; then he bowed deeply, but she was sure she caught a smile of derision and triumph on the thin lips before the white turban inclined and hid his face from her.

"What are you doing there, Mahdesian?" she demanded.

"Making an experiment for the master," he returned. "It is the adder poison for which we seek an antidote. Wouldst thou like to see?"

"No," she answered sharply. "I care nothing about it; and you weren't making any experiment, because you were staring at me. Don't do it again, Mahdesian!"

"Yes, mistress," he replied respectfully but with that curious and subtle undercurrent of sarcasm. Then he crossed the wide room and placed a bottle of pale-green powder on a shelf near Mrs. Seeley. Her quick eyes caught the label she sought.

"Master," he said, as John Seeley came in from the dark room, "the test proved useless."

"Bah!" snapped Seeley, going on with his work.

All the rest of the morning Mrs. Seeley kneaded away at the smelly stuff with feverish anxiety. She grew hot and cold by turns; she felt nauseated and ready to drop. Finally her moment came. John went into the dark room, taking Mahdesian with him. Instantly her white hand snatched the bottle of green powder from its shelf and in an incredible time it once more rested in its place and she sat wearily upon a high-legged stool.

"John, dear," she said when her husband and Mahdesian returned to the main laboratory, "I'm tired. I've given up my fancy for scientific study. It's too smelly and gruesome."

She yawned daintily as though intensely bored, and rose to go. A faint smile curved her thin, scarlet lips at sight of the evident satisfaction on her husband's part to be rid of her. She did not again enter the laboratory.

III.

SOME two weeks later, sitting in the library over the after-dinner coffee and liquors, Seeley, sipping his wine, stopped suddenly to sniff it.

A quick chill grabbed the heart of the smiling, watching woman who, with daintily slippered feet extended to the fire, held a small china cup aloft in one hand, while in the other reposed her saucer.

"Smell this," commanded Seeley, passing his glass to her.

She obeyed.

"Notice anything?" he asked.

"No," she replied questioningly.

Again he sniffed the wine; again he tasted it. "Funny, I could swear that there's an odor to it."

"Wine has an odor," she smiled in her sweet way.

"This is different."

"You must imagine it," she returned. "I could smell nothing unusual."

Again John Seeley tasted the portion, then stood up suddenly. "No, by the gods! It's the adder poison!" He shouted the words at the top of his great lungs. "And I've been drinking it. Somebody has poisoned me!"

Mrs. Seeley, quivering with excitement, rose also.

"It's that damned Mahdesian," shouted her husband. "Mahdesian! Mahdesian!" He was tearing about like a great lion, knocking over chairs and small tables.

Mrs. Seely's green eyes flashed victoriously. She had expected to make it appear that her husband had committed suicide through his morbid brooding over the dreadful poisons and the antidotes of one which he could not find. This was much better. She would be rid of that dreadful Indian as well.

Mahdesian, hurrying in, ran to his master, who had already fallen to his knees. Mrs. Seeley also ran to him and flung herself beside her husband, who clung to a chair for support.

"You black devil!" roared the stricken man. "I wouldn't draw lots with you to see which of us—should go to—your great-grandmother for the secret, so you've sent me."

Mahdesian's black eyes went to his mistress's face.

"Oh, Mahdesian, go for a doctor!" she cried, wringing her hands in pretty distraction.

"No need—of doctor," rumbled Seeley, a curious rattle already in his throat.

"Master, no, I did not give it thee!" declared Mahdesian.

"Then drink," he commanded, pointing to the remainder of the wine in his glass.

Mahdesian crossed to the table with long, swinging strides, lifted the glass as if to obey, held it a second under his nostrils, with burning, accusing eyes upon Mrs. Seeley, who, kneeling beside her dying husband, had watched the East Indian anxiously.

"Drink—it—" muttered Seeley, his eyes glazing and his huge body slipping completely to the floor.

"*Roman, remember!*" Mahdesian spoke with sharp command, addressing the fallen man. Into the face of Mr. Seeley came a curious gleam of hate and fear and resignation, mingled. He closed his eyes. Then Mahdesian went on more gently: "It is finished and thou art free."

He set the glass down. His black eyes were covered by brown lids, his sphinxlike face giving no hint of the thoughts hidden behind it.

Mrs. Seeley, moaning, fighting to make a show of grief, calling to her husband to come back to her, as if she had always been the most devoted of wives, felt the deadly grip of this tall brown man's clawlike hands upon her life. He knew that she had murdered her husband. There could be no slightest doubt of it. She had meant to empty the glass, rinse it out, and call for help after all was over; but as usual John had make a scene and had gone out of life as he had lived in it—with noise and bluster and vulgar temper.

"Go, Mahdesian, go! Get a doctor; what are you standing there for?"

"There is no need for doctor, mistress," he returned. "I will call the coroner."

Without rising she lifted herself upon her knees; a lithe young tigress.

"Ah, then, you did give him the adder poison? You refused to drink it when he commanded; and now you say there is no use to get a doctor!"

Mahdesian made no answer; but his burning eyes swept her, seeming fairly to shrivel her soul as with unquenchable fires. A great shuddering took hold of her; something enfolded her in a clammy embrace. She struggled against it. Then the rich colors in the rug beneath her, the dark walls of the paneled library dissolved.

The blazing desert spread to south and east and west, away and away in unbroken desolation. The murmur of the Mediter-

ranean lipping the sands, was in her ears. A few seagulls sailed lazily inland under the shaking turquoise sky; while far to the south a caravan wended its long and tortuous way.

In the burning sands she knelt before a kingly figure etched against the vast dunness; and under her hand was a prostrate man, a fair young Roman soldier from whose breast protruded a jeweled dagger-handle. The man above her was her husband; the one lying on the desert sands, her lover; and she was pleading for her own life.

"Spare me!" she sobbed. "Let me go forth into the desert a wanderer and an outcast; but spare my life."

Above the murmur of the sea there came to her the hated voice of Mahdesian. "It were better that thou shouldst pay now than in the lives to come."

"No, no!" she heard her own voice saying: "I'll pay in the lives to come."

"Then go into the desert, but no love shall brighten thy life ever until the debt is paid. Arise!"

She stood up suddenly, blinking as if she had awakened from sleep.

"You devil! You mesmerized me!" She lifted her voice in a scream of terror for the first time in all her beautiful placid life.

"Mistress, mistress!" Mahdesian was saying to her soothingly. "You know not what you say." He led her to a chair and pressed her gently into it as one does a hysterical child.

IV.

Not daring to empty the glass of poisoned wine Mrs. Seeley had been compelled to let it stand for the coroner's inspection.

Upon Mrs. Seeley's testimony Mahdesian had been committed without bail. That he was innocent deterred her not at all. He impinged upon her light and must be removed. Had not life from all ages revolved itself upon the survival of the fittest? This man of the East who suspected her was a heathen—ignorant—unfit. As the East had ever been inferior to the West so now! And he must die that she might live.

Not that she would have deliberately put her crime upon Mahdesian, repulsive as he was to her; but he had been unfortunate enough to discover the truth about her; and self-preservation demanded that she place him in a position which would discredit wholly his evidence in case he undertook to tell what he knew.

Such, however, appeared not to be the intention of Mahdesian. He kept grimly silent all through the months of his incarceration.

Mrs. Seeley meanwhile put on deep mourning, which brought out her striking beauty to marvelous advantage and her friends flocked about her, deeply sympathetic. One evening just before the lights came on, with shadows lengthening, she sat in her rose and old ivory boudoir in pensive mood. A long, beautiful life spread itself before her alluringly, like a tropical landscape; and she would be free to wander at will, roam the wide world over, always in search of surcease for her beauty-loving soul; always moving on, when bored or restless. No one to consult but her own gipsy free will; money to gratify her every whim; and with nowhere a man to grow obese with time, or to mar her paradise with "scenes." She sighed in deep content.

Of course not a breath of suspicion attached to her—nor ever would. Were Mahdesian foolish enough to try to accuse her it would but go harder with him—a man of the East before a jury and a judge of the West. Besides, she was above suspicion.

The street lights came on, and the shadows behind her grew longer. Still she sat there reveling in the semidarkness. All at once she thought she *felt the presence of her husband in the room!* Somehow it chilled her. Not that she was conscious of any wrong done to him—on the contrary, had she not lifted him to a higher, broader life? It was of course the old, ignorant spirit within her which fought shy of ghosts. It annoyed her to feel that she had not risen above superstition that belonged to the East! Not to the intellectual West. And to prove to herself that she had overcome this last remnant of man's relation to the lower order of intelligence, she called out:

"Is this you, John?"

She waited a moment. There was no response and she spoke again:

"John, dear, are you here?"

Still no sound. Again she called. And again; but only silence answered her.

She could not, however, get the notion out of her mind that John had something to say to her; also as he had stepped out of earth life in angry mood, and the habit of years being heavy upon her, she felt an urge to pacify him, and make him see how perfectly all right everything was.

So the following day she bought a ouija board and, hurrying home, sat herself down alone in her boudoir where, with her fingers upon the little three-legged table, she called again and again to John in the spirit world. But John held stubbornly away. It worried her. Having once made up her mind to speak to him and assure herself that he was not vexed at her; that he appreciated the larger life to which she had helped him, she would not yield. Always she had been like that. Once determined upon a given course, she could not turn back or let go until it was accomplished.

After several days of concentration the little table seemed to move ever so slightly. She yielded her hands. It did move. The pointer went slowly but surely toward the letters upon the board.

"Are you here, John?" asked Mrs. Seeley.

The little table moved to the word "Yes."

"Are you happy, dear?"

Came the answer: "Yes."

"Are you glad I—" She paused, unable to finish the sentence. "Yes," the pointer indicated.

"Will you be glad when Mahdesian comes over to serve you?"

Once more she got the word "Yes."

And so, on and on she went, getting only such answers from the ouija as she desired.

Finally she put it up, entirely satisfied and comfortable in her mind that all was well with John; that she had not only done the best possible for herself, but also for him. That she was even serving him in letting Mahdesian go to him. It was really her duty, too, considering how much John dear had left to make her comfortable.

She told her experience with the ouija to her friends and they shook their heads pityingly in consideration of the deep affection which urged this intellectual woman to turn her attention to a toy in order that she might communicate with her loved husband.

V.

THE court-room was thronged with the friends of Mrs. Seeley as well as the morbid and curious who always attend murder trials. This case had attracted unusual attention; not only because of the wealth and position of the murdered man, but because of the popularity of Mrs. Seeley and also because of the strange man from the Orient who had administered the deadly poison for which the two men had sought unsuccessfully to find an antidote.

It was common gossip that not once had the East Indian expressed himself since his master's death. He had neither denied nor acknowledged his crime. Even his own lawyers had been unable to get any statement from him; and they came into court with the baffled expression of men who have made up their minds that defeat is inevitable.

Every seat in the court was occupied, the walls also being lined with those willing to stand during the long, hot hours of trial.

Owing to the fact that public opinion was fixed in the matter it became difficult to impanel a jury; and not until the third day were twelve men, tried and true, found who were willing to swear that they had formed no opinion, and were in no way prejudiced, racially or otherwise, against the East Indian.

Mrs. Seeley, pathetically beautiful in her widow's weeds, was the first witness called by the State. She testified clearly in her sweet, low voice which held a hidden sob, that her dear husband had, in dying, accused Mahdesian of giving him the famous adder poison; stating that Mahdesian had previously suggested that they draw lots to see which of them should go over to the next plane, there to find the dead great-grandmother of the man from the Orient and so learn the secret of the poison's antidote. Her husband had, however, been

attached to Mahdesian, she declared, and it seemed inconceivable that the man could have taken his master's life. Her voice broke, her chin quivered, and, pityingly, the State's attorney requested her to stand down.

The servants from the Seeley household being called one and all testified that Mr. Seeley frequently struck Mahdesian, who never resented it, and that he was forever storming in fury at the East Indian. The maid who had assisted Mahdesian in the dining-room on that day, when he had almost recollected the secret which his great-grandmother had imparted to him, declared that she had seen his black eyes glitter like a snake's upon that occasion when Mr. Seeley, jumping up from the table, had struck Mahdesian a violent blow on the breast, almost knocking him down. Mrs. Seeley, upon being recalled, painfully acknowledged the truth of the girl's statement. She had at the time, she testified, remonstrated with her husband who, though really a kind man, seemed to be in a continual rage toward Mahdesian and she had long felt that Mahdesian had some sort of hold over her husband which would not admit of his being discharged; that, hating the East Indian, John Seeley had been forced to endure the presence of the man.

The State clearly and definitely built up its line of prosecution, almost without objection on the part of the defendant's attorneys, so helpless were they in the face of the overwhelming evidence, coupled with the prisoner's stubborn silence. He had no friends, no single witness to testify for him, and he seemed bent upon going to his death without raising his voice in his own behalf.

The prosecution finally rested and the defense rose to make a long, rambling speech about the fundamental differences between the East and the West. He went back into the archives of the past, dug out ancient history, quoted poetry, and finally sat down in helpless surrender.

A buzz ran over the court as the attorney for the State rose for a final summing of the case. He waxed sarcastic and humorous over the learned gentleman's speech and by way of not being outdone, himself dipped into the past,

All through the brilliant speech the East Indian, sitting in the prisoner's dock, kept his burning eyes upon Mrs. Seeley. She tried to avoid his gaze. But those orbs drew her with a sort of hideous fascination.

Then all at once John came between her and the East Indian; his eyes were wild with hate. He was approaching her, commanding her to tell the truth, and set Mahdesian free.

"No, no!" she cried aloud. "I won't tell the truth! I hate him as I hate you."

Then suddenly the scene changed. She flung herself upon the sands with the blue sky, the scorching sun and the shaking desert spreading into mysterious dun-colored infinitude.

"Spare my wretched life," she sobbed. "Let me go forth into the desert a wanderer, an outcast; but spare my life."

Above the murmur of the sea there came to her the hated voice of Mahdesian: "It were better that thou shouldst pay now than in the lives to come. Arise, and pay!"

Those who saw Mrs. Seeley fling herself upon her knees, heard no sound from her or from the sphinxlike East Indian; they might have seen him slowly lift his slim, brown hand toward his white-turbaned head had they not been intent upon Mrs. Seeley who, rising suddenly, held out her hands toward the judge and cried: "I killed him! I killed him! I stole the adder poison from his laboratory. And I must pay. Here! Now! In this life. I am afraid of the after-time. He was so gross, so hateful I could not endure his touch. Mahdesian knew I did it; that's why I let him come to trial."

She put her hands to her face and sat down. The district attorney's brilliant speech had been rudely interrupted. A silence so great that it gave the impression of sound was upon the court, and only the sobs of the guilty woman beat against the window-panes.

The prosecuting attorney made a motion for the dismissal of the case; and Mahdesian, grim and silent, walked out into the street without having once lifted his voice in his own defense; while his mistress was led away to take his place in the cell.

Zero Love

by Maxwell Smith

Author of "Added Up," "Both Ends," "Four Kings," etc.

"YOU'RE crazy, dad," declared Ruzzie amiably. "Pay that bet and call it off. How—" he surveyed his parent extensively—"how in the name of glory do *you* ever expect to walk a hundred and fifty miles?"

Myron V. Gaskell snorted. He quivered through his successive chins and his sixty-nine-inch waistline.

"D'you think I was going to let that—that herring, Featherstone, get away with anything like that?" he queried disgustedly. "Why, he—"

"But, dad," the interruption came mildly, "can't you see how ridiculous it is? Any one weighing three hundred and—"

"That's what he said! That because I'm not an eel's skeleton like he is, I couldn't walk a hundred and fifty miles in ten years!" Myron V. became more choleric. "I'll show him!"

"Whereupon, you became brash and bet ten thousand dollars you could do it in—how long?"

"Eight weeks!—and, by St. Christopher, I'll do it! You watch Featherstone fatten some hospital treasury by ten thousand dollars."

"Uh-huh!" Ruzzie chortled at the mental picture of Myron V. Gaskell walking. Why, he hadn't taken a step more than was absolutely necessary in fifteen years.

"Think it funny?"—tartly.

"Some, dad—some! Honestly, when I was on my back "over there" with not more than a pint of blood left in my whole system, and eleven shrapnel wounds, I could have walked you to a standstill—and I couldn't lift a hand! Cool off, dad, and forget it."

The more than plump face lighted. Myron V. was proud of what his boy had done. Nevertheless—

"You must have felt very natural then, son," he asserted acidly; which was unkind, considering Ruzzie's D. S. C. "Because until the war stirred you up, you were the biggest loafer in seven States. What's more, if you think you can walk, I'll take you on, too, and wear you to-a—to a frazzle!"

"Impetuous dad!" murmured Ruzzie mournfully. "They'd lock me up for murder—charge me with walking you to death to get the Gaskell millions. No—let's both just *not* walk." His eyes closed again. "I hate walking—don't you?"

Without answering, Myron V. considered his son with cunning. The wager which Featherstone—a crony who was as insignificant in stature as Myron V. was otherwise—had provoked by referring to avoirdupois in chiding Gaskell about being late for a directors' meeting, had inspired a scheme which affected Ruzzie. He intended to make the setting for his walking demonstration perform another and more vital service. He reverted to the basis of his plot via an abrupt change of subject.

"Don't you like her?"—argumentatively.

Something of the rare animation that made him good to look upon came into Roy C.'s face. "What a foolish question. Who could help *liking* Oma!"

"Then," Myron V. popped on every cylinder, "why in hell don't you go after her?"

A sigh and Ruzzie turned wearily away. He had heard this so often.

"There's one reason, anyway, dad," he

returned patiently. "I don't know that Oma would enjoy being gone after. We're too good pals to spoil—"

The Gaskell heir smiled peacefully and ceased speaking when the door slammed. He had been afraid the governor was wound up for a longer harangue than usual. Dad was a good scout if only he wouldn't harp so on Oma Drake.

Resuming his nap, Ruzzie was really grateful to dad for having shut off so quickly. Not having been given the full details of the walking wager he did not know that Myron V. at that moment was following out his plans to shape his son's destiny in regard to Oma Drake as he, Myron V. Gaskell, desired.

A few days later Myron V. casually remarked that he had to do all the walking aboard his yacht; that was in the bond. "I sail to-day," he added. "Be good while I'm away."

From his big chair, Ruzzie looked out, puzzled.

"Featherstone going along to keep tabs?"

"Nope." Myron V. was frivolous; he wanted to entice Ruzzie into making the cruise without persuasion. He held up a watchlike contrivance. "This is to prove the mileage. It's one of these pedometer things that count your steps." He replaced it in the box and held it cautiously so it wouldn't register when he moved.

Ruzzie swung his feet off the long chair-rest and sat upright. George! what a scream it would be to watch dad parading round and round and up and down the Mary Alice! He wouldn't miss this show if it cost him the Gaskell fortune.

"D'you know, dad, a breath of sea air would do me worlds of good. Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I don't want any spectators—"

"Wait a minute till I throw together a bagful of clothes—" Other words trailed over Ruzzie's shoulder as he scurried from the room, but Myron V. was grinning too widely to heed them.

Boarding the Mary Alice within the hour, as the anchor was hoisted inboard to be snugged down on the forepeak, Ruzzie balked. Absorbed in the prospect of seeing dad walk, he had not bothered to ask who else would be in the party. A lively, trilling peal of laughter rising through the saloon skylight apprised him without delay of the identity of one member. His dad had him cooped up for eight weeks with Oma Drake!

Roy C. Gaskell scowled unbecomingly, but Myron V. was gazing innocently back at the city while the Mary Alice curtsied in the even swell and turned her classic forefoot toward the open sea.

II.

In limiting the party to Oma, her mother, Dick Lawrence, Mrs. Gaskell and Ruzzie, Myron V. had counted upon the prolonged propinquity to bring his son to love-making. To get even with dad for having roped him into such a situation, however, Ruzzie had chosen to loll away the gentle hours in rest.

On her part, Oma betrayed neither willingness nor unwillingness toward being converted into a Gaskell. She liked Ruzzie. So did her mother. She knew that he liked her—*liked*. Still, they never had leaned particularly together. Less so than ever during the cruise, because of his studied attitude of aloof laziness.

Consequently, being secretly a shade piqued, Oma had devoted herself to the only other man around, Dick Lawrence, whom Myron V. had included as a foil to prod the laggard swain. As did her host, she regretted that the foil had proved blunt. While Ruzzie almost ignored her, Dick, on the contrary, emphasized his feelings too much and frequently. She often wished Ruzzie would wake up and play a while.

To outward appearances, though, everybody was happy in the idyllic weather that attended the Mary Alice down the coast and through the Caribbean. Every one except Myron V. Each morning he opened his eyes to the grinding knowledge that he had to clock off a couple of miles before the sun got too hot. Throughout the heat of the day he was haunted by the thought that he had to do another mile or two in the evening. How he hated that pedom-

eter, yet how grimly proud of it he was as the total mounted on the dial.

In itself the everlasting tramp-tramp-tramping about the deck would have sufficed to ruin utterly his never even temper. Coupled with the fact of Ruzzie's complete apathy in respect to Oma Drake, it made him by far the maddest man on any ocean.

His guests would have been glad to tarry in Havana, much as they had enjoyed the five weeks of sailing, but Myron V. put to sea again after filling the bunkers. The pedometer showed that he was well on the home stretch, that with the time still at his disposal he could not lose, and he wanted to get it over. If they stayed in port he would be unable to resist the temptation to quit the Mary Alice and the nightmare of walking. So they steamed out to voyage for a week among the islands.

About to start for home they put into Havana for another day. Ruzzie stubbornly refused to join the shore party. Myron V. had been ragging him unmercifully; he elected to snatch a respite.

Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Drake and Dick Lawrence already were in the tender when Oma decided she would remain aboard. When her announcement soaked into Myron V.'s head he executed what for him was a remarkably spry descent of the accommodation ladder.

He wanted to get away before Oma changed her mind.

Dick Lawrence stood up in the boat, dismayed.

"Where's Oma?" It wouldn't be much of a day without her.

"She isn't coming." Myron V. gave an order and the motor turned. He grabbed Dick's coat-tail. "Where are *you* going?"—for Dick was climbing back to the ladder platform.

"I've got a headache," he discovered. "I don't believe I'll go ashore."

"Come on, Dick!" The owner of the Mary Alice was boisterous. "What you need is firm land underfoot to cure that headache."

By St. Christopher! if only they could be left alone, Oma and Ruzzie, with nobody but one another to talk to, nobody to butt in! Myron V. reached unalterable decision. They *would* be left alone if he had to sit on Dick Lawrence!

Certainly Dick struggled. He also was freighted with an idea. He didn't believe Ruzzie would count among those present. Therefore, for this day he would have Oma all to himself without Myron V. Gaskell to come nosing around as he had done several times when Dick was approaching a grand climax.

It is one thing to struggle and another to shake off an anchor scaling three hundred and fourteen pounds. Dick tried, but he could not regain the ladder whose few short steps led to the elysium created by Oma Drake. To succeed in that he would have to brain his host.

The sputtering of the motor recalled something to Ruzzie. He strolled to the rail and waited for the tender to come round under the yacht's counter. Dad had been frightfully peeved when half an hour ago Ruzzie had seen him last. He had just stopped walking. In his anger he might have forgotten the terms of his wager—that every step must be recorded on the Mary Alice.

Having been snoozing on the other side of the deck, with the amidship's house between him and the shoregoers, Ruzzie did not know that Oma had cleared the atmosphere.

"Did you leave your pedometer?" he hailed as the boat appeared.

"Dammit!" His father found the loathed instrument in his pocket and ordered the steersman to wheel back to the yacht.

"Come get it," he shouted, and Ruzzie started for the ladder. He felt an excusable glow at having saved dad!

At the corner of the deckhouse he ran into Oma. He had not noticed she wasn't in the motorboat.

"Oh!" He frowned.

"Oh!" She smiled.

"How did you come to pass up the party?"—accusingly.

"Didn't want to go," she shrugged.

A shout from his father took Ruzzie down the ladder.

"Handle that darned carefully," enjoined his parent, passing over the pedom-

eter. "Don't carry it like that—keep it flat so it won't register when you walk. Go right away and lay it down somewhere. If you keep it about you, that pedometer may run up ten or twelve yards before I come back!"

Ruzzie yawned. "Not a click will come out of it, dad. I'll see to that." He consulted the dial. "A hundred and forty-eight and a quarter miles. You win this in a walk all right."

Myron V. crushed Dick into his seat again. The boat chugged away as Ruzzie mounted to the deck.

He dropped into a chair beside Oma.

"Why didn't you go?" he repeated.

"I didn't want to," she replied again frankly.

A minute he stared into the unfathomable eyes. She held out her hand.

"Let me see the pedometer, please."

He passed it over. Sealing wax was splotched about the joint of the case and stamped with a ring.

"That's intended to get dad's goat," he explained. "So he can't cheat, you know, by opening the machine and tearing off fifty or seventy miles with one hand."

"What's this, Roy?"

The question brought his glance from her face. She was pointing with shapely finger at a pin which projected the fraction of an inch from the side of the pedometer. Her rose-tinted nail picked at it.

His thoughts still on the girl herself—it wasn't fair to throw him at her head and her at his—it took him a moment to sense what she was asking and doing. When he did observe he jumped in his chair.

"Don't—don't!" His hand went out anxiously. "*Don't* touch that, Oma."

"Why?" She suspended her finger over the pin. "What is it for?"

Before he could issue further warning she found out. Her nail pressed the pin. With a jerk the indicator on the pedometer dial snapped back, quivered—froze on zero!

"Good-by," groaned Ruzzie.

Oma gaped at the machine from which Myron V. Gaskell's treasured mileage had been so quickly obliterated. It slid from her hand and clattered to the deck.

"Now," she gasped—"now—what?"

It was a feeble grin that Ruzzie scraped up. In his mind's eye he could picture the irascible Myron V.!

"You said it, Oma. Now—*What!*"

He retrieved the pedometer.

Without a word they arose together and walked to the rail. The boat with the owner of the Mary Alice and his other guests was pulling up to a landing stage.

"Lord!" breathed Ruzzie. "Won't the old boy go crazy!"

"Can't we jiggle it back somehow?"

"Nope. Not unless we get inside it. We can't do that without breaking the seals." For lack of anything more expressive Ruzzie groaned again out loud.

It wouldn't be the loss of the $10,000 entailed in this disaster to the pedometer that would make Myron V. Gaskell mad. They knew that. The money was to go to charity whether he or Featherstone lost. It would be the fact that without the pedometer as proof, Myron V. would fail to make good, although in truth he had walked every step of the stipulated hundred and fifty miles. There was the rub.

They made a lugubrious pair leaning there on the rail, ruefully contemplating the case which enclosed the few wheels and springs that had snarled the web. In their absorption their heads drew close together.

Something warm touched his hand—the one that held the pedometer.

"Roy!" The little scream of dismay ended in a sigh of relief.

Oma was clasping the pedometer in both hands.

"You were dropping it," she reproached. "Dropping it into the ocean."

He wasn't sure that he understood. His expression showed as much. His brain was dwelling on that blooming spot on his cheek where her hair had brushed.

"However *could* we have got it back to where it was if you had let it fall?"

Her words brought him back to earth.

"What the—" He pulled himself together. "That is, what *can* we do about it, anyhow? We might as well feed it to the fishes."

"We could—" Oma was very thoughtful and tried to be serious—"we could get

it back—if we had time. We have eight days—no, nine."

Ruzzie turned his back to the rail and rested on his elbows. A limpness crept into his bones. He began to get her thought.

"Good Lord, Oma! You don't propose to—to—" He shuddered. What a frightsome proposition! He hadn't strength in his heart to complete the sentence, but Oma had.

"That's it. We—you and I have got to—" Her courage faltered, but he got her drift. He closed his eyes again and sometime later recovered.

Beneath the stern awning they went into executive session. The sun was sinking low when he surrendered. It was the only way out, of course—Oma said so. They couldn't let his dear old dad be made a laughing-stock by Featherstone.

Not long ago he would have characterized as idiotic his submission to her pleading and the fluttering that went with it; especially the fluttering. Now— Well—What of it?

III.

About ten o'clock at night the shore party returned. Everybody was happy except Dick Lawrence. He did his best to hide the gloom that had enwrapped him since Myron V. had frustrated his desire to remain on the yacht with Oma. Even a lazer like Ruzzie, he realized, might stir under the influence of the girl if the auspices were right. Deep down, Dick always had been afraid of Ruzzie stirring.

As for the presiding genius of the expedition, he was as buoyant as any one with a sixty-nine-inch waist-line can be. He was proud of having carried away so that Russie and Oma might be tête-à-tête.

Bounding with anticipation, yet dreading, he stepped on deck. He looked aft. That was where they most likely would be.

While he strained his eyesight for a glimpse of them, he got into collision.

The collider was Roy, who with hardly a grunt of recognition, resumed the headlong dash which his dad's bulk had interrupted.

"Drunk!" murmured Myron V. He was shaken. He never had seen Ruzzie with a drop too much.

"Gangway, please," said a voice, and Myron V. Gaskell jumped. Yes, he did. His son hurried past again, striding a good 120.

Myron V. Gaskell put his hands to his head. Dick Lawrence, also stunned by the phenomenon, came within his vision.

"Dick," he appealed, "did—did you see him?"

Lawrence nodded. Where was Oma? That bothered him.

It bothered his host, too. He could see only one explanation of Ruzzie's behavior—he'd gone crazy.

From the shelter of the smoke-stack he watched Ruzzie go up the other side of the deck; watched him come down this side. Silently he took in the spectacle as three more laps were completed. Every moment he expected to hear the shrieks of his wife and Oma's mother when they stumbled over the girl's body or learned that she had been thrown to the sharks.

The madman's father drew a full breath. A shout would summon the crew. There would be a battle, but half a dozen men ought to be able to overpower him. He opened his mouth to issue the call to quarters when—

Oma Drake's laugh rang out from aft on the starboard side. Myron V. gave thanks. Ruzzie hadn't murdered her! Still, he was crazy—no doubt about that.

Cautiously his father followed when next the walker hustled by. Dick Lawrence trailed along.

"Oh, yes, we quarreled dreadfully." Oma sounded somewhat hysterical. Myron V. stopped a pace from where she stood talking with her mother and Mrs. Gaskell.

"We quarreled because I told him he was lazy. So—so just to prove he isn't really—"

"Gangway!"

Had he not been constructed so that was impossible, Myron V. Gaskell would have folded up and collapsed. As it was he made his third jump. He stepped closer to hear Oma:

"—lazy we made a bet." Her laugh pitched high. She took a deeper breath

than her host had done a few minutes before, although she hadn't nearly as much room for it.

"And he"—she wound up with a rush—"*he* has to walk twice as far as I do. And he has to keep at it until I quit."

"Gangway!"

Gaskell senior saw Oma scratch another stroke on a pad. Heavens and earth! If they stayed to this bet of theirs they'd get to know each other. Quarreled! He marshaled his staggered senses. Ruzzie was about due on another round. He wouldn't have to yell for gangway—not any more.

"Folks"— Myron V. Gaskell spread his arms, beseeching—"get out of his way. Climb a mast, get on the bridge, into a lifeboat—anywhere if you want a grandstand seat, but keep out of his way. Here he is—*Look out!*"

He laid a shaky finger on the pad in Oma's hand.

"How—how long has he been at it?"

She smiled at him uneasily. "We've been walking several hours."

Another new sensation assailed Myron V. He was awe-stricken.

"How—far?" huskily.

She made a check with the pencil as Ruzzie reappeared.

"That's all, Roy, for to-night."

"One more for luck," he grinned and went.

Oma looked from the paper to Myron V. and answered his question:

"A hundred and seventy-six times around for Roy. Eighty-five times for me."

The owner of the Mary Alice knew how far it was around the deck. Hadn't he padded over that same course endlessly till his pedometer showed a hundred and forty-eight and a quarter miles? So that chair-warmer had walked—

"Eight miles," Oma translated precisely. She hid a smile from him. "And, Mr. Gaskell, you won't be angry because we've laid out a track on the deck? Painted a few marks to make it twenty-two laps to the mile?"

"You can paint the whole blistered ship green and orange if you like, my dear girl," exclaimed the owner, heartily, generously. "You can—"

"All right, dad. Thanks. But we won't go that far." Ruzzie was at his elbow. "Run away a while, dad—Oma and I have another point to settle on this bet."

The girl put her arm in his and they walked off.

Only Dick was glum. He gazed quizzically after Oma and Ruzzie. Dick suspected there was a reason for their unwonted activity. He wished he could hear what they were saying right then. This is part of what he missed:

"Past twelve miles already," Ruzzie jubilated.

Oma peeked at the pedometer he exhibited.

"Are you sure you got the story all straight?" he asked.

She nodded. "But," she pouted, holding out the tally sheet, "what's the use of all this silly bookkeeping? It's a nuisance."

"No, no. We have to make a bluff at keeping tabs. Remember that I have to double your trek. And," the idea made his face expand, "we'll appoint dad official scorekeeper!"

IV.

Not till the following morning, as the Mary Alice was getting under way, did her owner ask for his pedometer.

"Now, dad," Roy's opening words faltered, "you'll be mad as a hatter when I tell you, but—"

Myron V. Gaskell hitched forward in the chair.

"You don't mean to say anything happened to it? After I warned you?" His choler was rising.

His son hastened with reassurance. "It'll be all right—all right—You see, dad, it's just that you can't have the pedometer until we get to New York."

Unable to imagine any good reason for that, Myron V. glowered and waited.

"When you told me—told *us*"—Ruzzie divided the responsibility for the moral backing he thought that gave him—"told *us* to be careful of it, we did our best.

That's why "—he smiled engagingly— "that's why you can't have it now."

The gentleness of Myron V. Gaskell's spirit melted.

"What the blue peter are you raving about?" He remembered Oma was present and toned down a lot more speech.

Looking to her for support, Ruzzie made the plunge:

"We-l-l—we put the confounded thing in Oma's jewel safe and—and she's lost the key—haven't you, Oma?"

The girl plucked at Myron V.'s coat-sleeve and smiled innocently into his face. She evaded the lie direct.

"When we get home I can get a key," she told him sweetly. "Of course, you could have the engineer smash it open, but—the little safe is a keepsake and," she was splendidly appealing, "I'd hate to have it ruined."

"So you see it *will* be all right, dad," Ruzzie hastened to add. "The Mary Alice can make New York in six days. That'll leave two days of your eight weeks. We can have the safe opened and then run down the bay while you grind out that last couple of miles."

A faint smile returned to Myron V.'s countenance as he pondered. In his heart he was very tired of walking. Long ago he had begun to curse old Featherstone for having drawn him into such a fool performance. If he didn't have the pedometer he could quit. Go on strike—no pedometer, no walk.

And, as Ruzzie pointed out, they would reach port in time enough for him to finish the one hundred and fifty miles.

A motorboat chasing the Mary Alice out of the harbor, with a man standing up in it shouting, created a diversion. The yacht slowed and a cablegram was delivered to Myron V. Gaskell. He read it twice, then shrewdly regarded both his son and the girl. He could not but notice that they were watching him anxiously.

His eyes twinkled as he folded the cable and put it in his pocket. Settling more solidly in his chair, he took on a resigned expression. Ruzzie shuffled nervously.

"Oh, very well." Myron V. heard them sigh as he broke the spell. He patted Oma's hand. "Maybe the key will turn up before— What's that?" He studied his son with disapproval.

"Ha-ha," snickered Ruzzie again. He stuffed his tongue between his teeth to strangle the giggle. "What a joke you'll have on Featherstone!"

Oma threw herself into the breach. "I'm *so* glad that you've won," she gushed unnaturally, clapping her hands. "With such a teeny distance to go, you can't lose, can you?"

"Off again, Oma," Ruzzie cried abruptly and struck out along the deck.

"Say!" Dad beckoned him back. He had a proposition, the voicing of which amused him abnormally: "Why don't you and Oma walk this deal off together? I'll keep tabs."

The conspirators exchanged scary glances. It did seem queer that they walked turn about, didn't it? They hadn't thought of that and fished for a way out. They couldn't tell him that it was a case of conserving energy. That if they walked at the same time the zeroed pedometer would lose nourishment.

Ruzzie fidgeted.

"N-no. It is—er—part of the bargain—that we should walk alone. Oma thought—Oma thought, you see"— He floundered.

"Yes," interjected Oma, grasping the thread, "I thought that it would be harder for him to walk without company. You know—it's like—like putting him on bread and water—making him walk with no one to talk to—sort of solitary confinement effect, and all that."

"Ye-eh!" Ruzzie wagged his hands hysterically. "That's what—bread and water—you know, dad," and was off.

V.

DURING the ensuing twenty-four hours Ruzzie sweated, but not from walking. Searching for ways and means of jacking that pedometer back to 148.25 miles was what made him perspire.

Oma lent her brain to the effort, but even that did not at once bring a solution. Manifestly there was only one method to follow aside from walking. The con-

founded pedometer had to be joggled so that the pendulum would swing as it did when a person walked. How to do the joggling without being detected constituted the problem.

They tried Mrs. Gaskell's rocking chair, obtained on a pretext, for it was the only one aboard. Seated in it, one could make the pedometer register, but it required too conspicuous exertion. It amounted to gymnastics to move in a sharp enough arc to sway the pendulum. Besides, to get any real action on the dial, it was necessary to rock at breakneck speed; which was every bit as laborious as walking.

They considered fastening the pedometer to a piston or some other part of the yacht's engines. That would have worked, but they were fearful of their secret. If they did that it was sure to be noised about the Mary Alice within an hour. How could it fail to reach Myron V?

Again, they discussed retiring to their cabins and shaking out the miles. Ruzzie did try that. In half an hour he gave up. His arms were breaking. Anyhow, the continued absence of himself or Oma would have aroused attention.

So throughout the day they wore out their minds seeking an answer.

Every now and then, Myron V stopped beside them and gibed Ruzzie for having quit. Only Oma's tact prevented an outburst on the part of Gaskell, Jr.

What she couldn't understand, was that when she had soothed the troubled waters, Myron V. Gaskell very deliberately winked at her. Furthermore he grimaced broadly when Ruzzie turned his back. And he went away chortling while Oma sought to explain that it was she who had called a halt to the walking.

In the recesses of his cabin that night, Ruzzie laid the pedometer on a table and contemplated it malignantly. He swore frankly at the thing. He opened the porthole with the evil purpose of hurling it where no one ever would see its ghastly face again. Finally he put it down and, head on hands, glared at the dial that had scarcely moved from the twenty-seven and a fraction miles it had shown the night before.

Twenty-seven and a bit! A hundred and twenty-one miles to go and only seven days at the outside to do it. G-r-r-h-h! Ruzzie threw the cause-of-it-all into a corner and went to bed.

VI.

THIRTY-SIX more priceless hours had gone before the inspiration arrived. There was nothing spontaneous about it. It took twenty or thirty minutes literally to thump itself into Ruzzie's head.

He was sitting by the gymnasium skylight when the rattling sound bore in on him. At first it was annoying. Next it seemed to bear a message. Just as it stopped, he grabbed that message.

With a whoop, unmindful of his aching feet, he ran to where Oma sat pretending to read. Without waiting to explain, he clutched her hand and led the way at a gallop down the companion. Into the gymnasium he burst, to stop panting and pointing. His attitude was triumphant.

The punching bag! Ruzzie stepped over and batted it a few. Then he returned to her and without hesitation or self-consciousness possessed himself of her hands.

"We can hammer out yards and yards and miles and miles on that, Oma dear." He was proud of the idea. "We'll paste it to a standstill for one hundred and twenty-two miles."

So Ruzzie went at the task of punching miles. Oma too got into a gym suit to do her bit. He had to stand back and applaud the lissomeness of her figure in jumper and loose, flowing bloomers, as she took a few preliminary jabs at the bag. Funny he never had noticed how rapturously attractive she was until this pedometer affair brought them close in a conspiracy.

With the pedometer tucked inside the bag, at the top among the lacing where the bump wouldn't show or be in the way, he got down to business.

In a few minutes he had an audience. Attracted by the furious tattoo, Dick Lawrence stopped to peer through the skylight. Dick was awfully lonesome. Of late Oma hadn't had much time for him.

When the walking-match had stopped,

he had hoped to pry her away from Ruzzie. In the twenty-four hours just past, while she had been resting, her preoccupation had prevented her returning more than a distant monosyllable to his advances. Now, confound it all, she was off on a new streak of craziness that would shut him out some more.

Putting two and two together, Dick had decided aright that Myron V.'s pedometer was at the bottom of it. If only he could make sure—could reveal to Myron V. that somehow he was being gulled by the story that the pedometer was locked up. Dick wasn't vindictive, but he was willing to take any steps necessary to break up the new partnership.

The intensity of his black concentration caught the attention of Myron V. himself. He also looked down into the gymnasium. His grin made Dick's face darker.

"What d'ye think of that!" ejaculated dad in a whisper. "Pretty busy, isn't he?"

"Uh-huh!" grunted Dick.

"The joke's on him, all right," gurgled his host. "If he only"— He left the remark unfinished, but it made Dick swing round.

"On him?" he repeated sourly. To his reckoning the joke was far from being on Roy C. Gaskell as long as Oma Drake evinced such interest.

No enlightenment came from Myron V. "Sure," he said, and strolled forward again, wreathed in smiles, to where his wife and Mrs. Drake were.

Dick Lawrence looked back through the skylight. Ruzzie was blowing hard but still pounding. Oma moved forward.

"Let me take a turn, Roy." Her words reached the eavesdropper and he cursed softly. He saw Roy shake his head and between punches tap Oma playfully under the chin. He noted the beatific expression on Ruzzie. Heard this:

"I'm just warming up, dearie. We must have traveled—"

"S-s-h-h!" Oma put her fingers over his mouth. Dick drew out of sight as she looked upward. No need for him to linger longer. The key had been given him. He saw the game falling into his hands.

Pity was in the gaze he cast at Myron V. Gaskell. That person was sitting with the womenfolk, his head back at the moment and his deep laugh ringing. He seemed very happy and amused.

"Joke!" Dick spoke aloud in derision, although there was no one to hear him. He was sorry for Myron V.—the old boy was being fooled so simply. Leaning on the rail, as the Mary Alice did an easy ten and a half knots, he wondered how he could drop a wrench that would rout the bag-punchers.

VII.

KNOWING that the pedometer was adjusted to an average thirty-inch stride, it was simple enough to figure that if it were shaken 2,112 times a mile would be registered. At a fast clip, the punching bag could be kept going about 250 times a minute. It should take less than ten minutes therefore to score a mile—so Ruzzie figured.

Certainly it would be tiring, but not half as much so as walking. And, what was more important from Ruzzie's standpoint, it would not cripple him; his feet would remain the same size. He went at it with a will.

At the end of an hour's slashing work, continuous except for a few breathing spells during which Oma had tried her hand, he halted to see how the dial was moving. While Oma kept guard at the skylight to make sure he was not observed, he took the pedometer out of the bag.

The girl heard his remarks. Apprehensive at once, she noted his crestfallen air. Until now Ruzzie had been rather chesty over his scheme.

"What's wrong?" she asked quickly, her head through the skylight.

"Damn!" he answered with fervor. "The blessed contraption hasn't moved."

"Not so loud," she warned. "Are you sure?"

Her cry checked Ruzzie in the act of hurling the pedometer at the wall. She swung herself lithely through the skylight and landed beside him. He yielded up the pedometer when she seized his arm.

"It *has* moved, Roy."

His gesture bespoke exasperation.

"Moved! Yes, about a quarter mile when it should have gone five or six. I'm going to chuck the whole business and let dad have apoplexy if he pleases when he finds out."

Light came to Oma. She shook the pedometer slowly at her ear. She shook it faster. Shook it as fast as she could.

"I've got it," she cried. "Do you know why it didn't get along?"

Ruzzie growled something.

"Because," she spoke impressively—"because you were hitting it too rapidly. You didn't give the pendulum a chance to swing."

"By jinks!" Ruzzie brightened. "What a bonehead! Let's try again."

Eagerly he put the pedometer back inside the bag. In ten minutes of gentle punching with an even motion from side to side, it gained nearly half a mile. His spirits revived. "At, say, three miles an hour," he estimated, "a hundred and twenty miles means forty hours of walloping. Forty-four hours spread over the seven days we have left makes six hours a day." He sighed, jabbed the bag, then took Oma by the shoulders, holding her at arm's length. The intentness of his gaze was oddly disconcerting. She blushed, and her own eyes wavered before they held steady.

The luncheon bugle blew at what she counted an opportune moment. With a laugh, she whisked herself away. At the door she paused and shook a finger at him.

"Be careful, Roy. If exercise goes to your head like that you'd better quit."

"I should say not."

Her dancing eyes seemed to challenge him. He made a rush. She slipped into the companionway and ran.

Throughout the afternoon while Ruzzie and Oma pecked away at the bag, Dick Lawrence drifted around ever so often to comment. So did Myron V. Gaskell.

For a time, too, the motherly Mrs. Gaskell and the equally motherly but more volatile Mrs. Drake formed a gallery at the skylight. They at least had given up attempting to find the answer. It was enough for them that Roy and Oma were inclining toward each other. They gathered likewise from Myron V.'s continued merriment that there was something doing, but he wouldn't tell what.

Only Dick Lawrence remained crusty about the way things were going. He let a couple of days pass before launching what he expected to be a knockout. They were all at dinner when he inquired casually:

"How many miles did you make to-day, Ruz?"

A scrap of food went the wrong way in Ruzzie's neck. He was grateful to it. That gave him time to collect his wits. He glared at Dick and professed not to understand.

"Must have gone quite a distance," pursued his tormentor with a smile. "You've been slugging pretty steady all day. Huh?"

"I don't get you," responded Ruzzie with a snap. "Say, mother, you remember—"

He listened to Dick, who was training his artillery on Oma.

"How'd you get into the jewel box, Oma?" he was asking.

The abrupt attack took her off guard. She grew red and stammered. Her frightened glance jumped from her questioner to Ruzzie, to Ruzzie's dad. Myron V. was paying no attention to the talk but proceeding industriously with his dinner.

"That locket you're wearing," insisted Dick. "Didn't you say the other day that all your trinkets were in the box except a few rings?"

Oma regained some of her poise. "Did I?" Her eyes belied the smile. She looked again at Myron V. He gave no sign that he heard. "I must have *thought* it was," she added, "but, you see, Dick, I was *mistaken*. Yes."

He carried the situation to even more dangerous ground.

"That pedometer of yours, Mr. Gaskell—" His host turned to him.

Oma's teeth bit into her lip. She wanted to throw something at Dick Lawrence and scream. Ruzzie's head cocked to one side and he squinted viciously. He coughed a warning and started to change the subject. Dick held the floor:

"Did you ever think how easy it would be to run up the mileage merely by shaking it? For instance—"

An uproarious laugh from Ruzzie drowned him.

"See what he's getting at, dad? He's wondering whether old Featherstone might hedge on the bet—claiming that you faked the pedometer by shaking it instead of walking—that's your idea, *isn't* it, Dick?"

"No—not quite. I was thinking that if anything happened to—"

Oma headed him off. "But no one ever would suspect Mr. Gaskell of a trick like that."

Help came from an unexpected quarter. Myron V. glanced from one to the other. His keen eyes rested on Dick.

"No chance of his hedging, my boy," he declared blandly; "none at all."

"But," persisted Dick, "suppose something *did* happen to it after you had walked all these miles and—"

Myron V. laughed. His next words made Ruzzie and Oma squirm.

"Something *has* happened to it. I know that—isn't it—isn't it locked in Oma's safe where I can't get at it?" The conspirators breathed freely again. Their hearts warmed to him as Myron V. went on: "I see what you mean, now, Dick. You're thinking how rotten it would be if this packet didn't get into port before the time limit expires? If I didn't get the key to the box until too late?"

Up till now Dick Lawrence had considered Myron V. Gaskell a wide-awake citizen. He changed his opinion. Myron V. certainly was dense.

He tried again to press his point:

"Not that, exactly. I was thinking—"

"Don't you worry, Dick." Myron V. rose from the table. "There's lots of time. This is Tuesday—we'll be home Friday. Saturday noon I have to meet Featherstone — did I ever tell you about—"

Oma and Ruzzie mentally hugged him as he went on into a rambling story far removed from even a hint of pedometers. They prepared to resume punching. As he listened to Myron V.'s indeterminable yarn, Dick Lawrence wondered how in the name of goodness anybody could have so much money and be so thick-headed.

VIII.

It's fair enough to punch a bag in scattered moments as a pastime. To adopt it as a steady diet is different. Both Ruzzie and Oma were very willing to admit that after they had been at it for five days. They ached from the tips of their fingers to their heels. But they continued hammering doggedly. The growing total on the pedometer signaled them on.

Thursday evening it had reached a hundred and twenty-nine miles. They had nineteen miles to do before ten o'clock Friday morning when the Mary Alice would be rounding to her home anchorage.

Before retiring that night, Ruzzie put in at intervals three more hours at the bag. Oma also spelled for nearly an hour. Their pace had slowed, however, and that effort represented only eleven miles. Eight miles to go!

In the morning they were up early. The home port was three hours distant when, having breakfasted, they entered the gymnasium.

At nine o'clock they were within a mile of the goal. The yacht was steaming into the lower bay.

Ruzzie whistled cheerfully while he slugged. Oma sat on the floor, her back against the wall, resting after a terrible ten minutes. Her outraged muscles protested so she could hear them creak at every move.

"If ever I see a punching bag again," she proclaimed, "I'll faint."

"Whuff!" breathed Ruzzie heavily. "It's been a-a-a—"

"Don't hesitate to say it, Roy. I'm thinking it!"

"The old boy surely would have—"

"S-s-s-t-t-t!"

Obeying her call for silence he turned to see what had occasioned it. The "old boy" was in the doorway.

"Aren't you two ever going to stop?" inquired Myron V. pleasantly.

"Very soon," said Ruzzie thankfully. "We're nearly through — that is—er—

when I wind up in a few minutes the score will be even."

Myron V. Gaskell's waist moved as it did when he was mirthful. He pushed Ruzzie aside.

"I've been wondering, son, whether I could wallop that bag. I used to when—" His fist rose ponderously and the bag responded. "That isn't bad for a little fellow like myself, is it?" He rapped the bag again.

Ruzzie and Oma exchanged glances. There wasn't any danger of Myron V. speeding up enough to prevent the pedometer registering. They wished they had invited him to take part long ago. It would be funny anyhow to let him do the last mile himself. Some day they could tell him the story—when it was of age to guarantee that he would not blow up.

"Go to it, dad," urged Ruzzie. His own arms were paralyzed. Anything to save them further effort.

Dad did. His elephantine endeavor soon began to tell.

Dick Lawrence ambled in. He looked grouchily at Oma and Ruzzie sitting together on the floor.

"I used to do some stunts with the bag," rumbled Myron V. wheezily, "like this"— He managed to elbow it. "There was a stroke with a whirling effect, I remember. How did it go? Oh, yes. You hit it high up. Like this"— Straining on tiptoe, he chopped at the bag an inch or two from the top. There was no unusual result. "Didn't get it," he commented, and tried again. His hand came away sharply and he nursed his knuckles.

"What the devil!" He frowned at the bag and at Ruzzie. "Been stuffing that with bricks?"

Roy C. Gaskell jumped. Oma got up more gracefully. Good Lord! What if Myron V. became curious?

"You—you must have banged your hand on—on something, dad"—solicitously.

"Of course, I did"—irritably—"on the bricks you've got in there."

"Or," helped Dick Lawrence, "on a—pedometer."

There was real hate in the look Oma shot him. Not wholly under his breath, Ruzzie spoke crisply. So did his dad.

"What the—" Myron V. cut off his bark at Dick and stumped out.

Ruzzie advanced on his friend. "Say, you," he stated coldly, "one more break and we're going to quarrel."

Dick threw up his hands, laughing.

"How's it stand now, Ruz?"

"End of the line for you," snarled Ruzzie. "Get out—I'm busy!"

"Roy!" Oma put a restraining hand on his arm. He made to pull away. His goat was at large.

"I'll—I'll bust him. Hasn't he been trying to queer us for days? Hasn't—"

"He was only fooling," soothed Oma. "Weren't you, Dick?"

"Well, he quits fooling right this second or—"

"Go along, Dick," she appealed. "Roy and I have a—something to talk over."

Dick backed out decently. As far as Oma was concerned, he realized, the situation had developed beyond him.

"All right." He said it cheerily enough. "Let's put off the fight for a while, Ruz."

He departed humming, without looking at Oma.

Ruzzie laughed jerkily. "What did Dick want to be such a blighter for?" he queried petulantly.

"Just—kidding us, I suppose," she answered soberly; she was sorry about Dick. "He—suspected something, I guess."

"Umph!" Ruzzie reached up to get the pedometer out of the bag. "If he was any good he'd have sat in and helped us. Wouldn't even take a turn at the bag when we asked him. Gee, Oma, I darned near had hysteria when dad punched out that last few yards. And when he started on his stunts—" He hesitated, the pedometer in his hand, and looked round at her. "Did you ever see anything so foolish as dad with his 314-pound-perfect-69 figure becoming kittenish? When he rapped his knuckles I thought I'd—"

Ruzzie's eyes lighted on the pedometer.

"Holy mackerel!" he shouted. His features slumped and he stared and stared. His shoulders sagged. Even his ears seemed to wilt despairingly.

"What—what—" Oma tottered toward him.

"It—it—" An abysmal wail delayed Ruzzie's whisper: "It's *back to—zero!*"

"Zero!" Oma's tone rose dangerously. "You're joking!"

"Joking h—. Pardon, Oma, but there's only one way to say it—joking *hell!* Look!"

Fearfully she looked. "Your father must have done it when he punched the 'brick.'" she gasped. "What—what—"

The Mary Alice's siren screeched. The engines slowed—reversed—stopped. The anchor chain clattered.

Feverishly Oma voiced the last chance: "Can't we take it ashore and have it faked?"

Ruzzie shook his head impatiently. "You forget it's sealed—I guess—we'll have to drop it overboard!"

He barely got the pedometer into his pocket as his dad entered.

"The boat is waiting, Oma, to take you ashore to get that key," he briskly announced. Their apathetic attitude made him look sharply. Apparently it left him at a loss. "Go along with her, Roy," he added. "And hurry back."

"Ha-ha-ha!" Ruzzie giggled as he had that day when, leaving Havana he had conceived the fable about the pedometer in the jewel case. "Sure—sure, we'll hurry."

IX.

Myron V. Gaskell roved restlessly about the Mary Alice. Had he been pedometing he would have notched several miles.

His wife and Oma's mother wanted to land. He dissuaded them, although he gave no reason for staying longer on board.

Several times he sought to draw Dick Lawrence into talking about pedometers. Always Dick sidled away, to gloom by himself. He, too, wanted to go ashore, but despite his great disappointment, he desired first to see the end of the comedy when Ruzzie and Oma confessed.

Dusk was settling when at length they returned. Myron V. met them at the top of the ladder.

To Dick they appeared unnaturally cheerful under the circumstances. Their gaiety was forced. Nevertheless they carried an air of confidence.

"Well," boomed Gaskell, Senior, "did you get the key?"

"I've got it," replied Oma faintly. Her arm slipped inside Ruzzie's.

"Where's mother?" Roy's manner was businesslike. "And Mrs. Drake?"

"Somewhere aboard," returned dad. "Where's my pedometer?"

"It's—all right." A pause. "Now, dad—you see"— Ruzzie looked to Oma for help.

He got none except a thrilling pressure on his arm.

"You see, dad, Oma and I went ashore—"

Myron V. hid a smile.

"When we got ashore, we thought—that is, we—well, anyhow," he splurged on the information, "anyhow, dad, I want you to meet Mrs. Roy C. Gaskell, your daughter-in-law. And, and"— before his pleasurably astounded parent could get his bearings—"here's your damned pedometer!"

Mechanically, Myron V. took it. He never had dreamed that affairs would reach such a desirable conclusion so quickly. His broad face was joyous as he started a blessing.

"Look at it," interjected Ruzzie defiantly. "Look at the forsaken object. Your miles are all shot to blazes!"

Prepared for a spasm, although he depended on the garnering of Oma Drake into the Gaskell family to soften the blow, Ruzzie never expected dad to act as he did. Myron V. almost choked, but not with fury.

"How did it get back to zero again?" he managed to ask. "After you walking and punching your young lives away?"

His laughter aggrieved Ruzzie. He'd rather have been bawled out. He could stand that, for out of this pedometer catastrophe hadn't he come to a realization that Oma Drake Gaskell was the dearest girl in all the—

Another idea broke in on him: "Did you know what we were doing?"—belligerently.

Myron V. rocked afresh. "Know!" he jeered. "What sort of a question is that?"

Oma, too, was peeved. "Why didn't you stop us, then?" she demanded. "I'm sore from head to foot. I'll never get the kinks out of myself."

Her father-in-law showed penitence. "I did hate to see you wearing yourself out," he confessed, "but what could I do without letting Roy settle back into that chair and loaf?"

Ruzzie's arm sneaked around his wife.

"Come, dear, don't listen to his poor apologies. Let's go see our mothers." A step away he turned: "I'm glad it will cost you ten thousand dollars," he affirmed. "And that old Featherstone will kid you to a finish."

The sixty-nine-inch waist wabbled. "How so?"

"You can't show him one hundred and fifty miles, can you?"

Oma braced herself for the eruption. That ought to touch the old boy off. Ruzzie hoped so. But no!

"I don't have to show him," grinned Myron V. patiently.

It was Ruzzie who exploded. "You what?"

"The bet was called off at Havana," nodded his dad. "I cabled Featherstone that since I couldn't lose, I'd stand an equal amount if he'd give $20,000 instead of $10,000 to the Red Cross. 'Member the cable that came aboard as we sailed?—That was his answer—'O. K.'"

"Why didn't you tell us?"—angrily.

"I would, dear son and daughter—if you hadn't had the pedometer locked up!"

Smothering with disgust, Ruzzie walked wearily on with his bride.

"Let's leave the nasty old man by himself," he said. "And Oma—if he comes chasing around hinting about a kiss from the bride, there's not a thing stirring. Gee, dearie, I'm dead!"

(The end.)

A FAIR POLYGAMIST

RICH man, poor man, beggar-man, thief,
Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief—
I'll marry them all! Is it past belief?

Rich must my suitor be in love,
Or never may we go hand in glove!
Yet he must poverty's pinching know—
For lack of me must he live in wo!
A beggar, he humbly comes to sue
For this my heart; but 'tis vain to woo.
At last, despairing and desperate bold,
He breaks my locks, and he steals my gold!
An advocate, he must plead his cause
By placing love above all the laws!
A good physician, 'twill tax his art
To heal the wound of Cupid's dart.
A trafficker shrewd, he must convince
That his price is that of a merchant prince;
And his chieftainship must established be
O'er the rebel kingdom set up by me!

Rich man, poor man, beggar-man, thief,
Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief—
I'll marry them all! Is it past belief?

Arthur Powell.

Sleeping Acres*

by Brayton Norton

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

"TERRY," a penniless wanderer, rescuing Myron Masters at the masked revel of the Pico Ramblers from Ramon Garcias and Reinita Vegas, accepted a position as chauffeur to Masters, whose millionaire father owned the San Miguel Ranch.

When Masters, Sr., generally hated as a "land hog," declared that if his son's debts were not paid the next day he would be banished to the ranch, at Terry's suggestion he and Myron journeyed to the White Moon gambling-house, at Tia Mona, where Terry, beating Reinita and her father, José, at their own crooked game, won a stake sufficient to clear up all of Myron's obligations. Myron, however, becoming separated from his friend, lost it all while drunk, being rescued by Terry from a gang of Mexicans at a road-house.

Next day the two arrived by train at San Miguel, where Klune, the manager, put them up at an elaborate hotel. Here, thought Terry, was a prosperous town—certainly not the wilderness he had been led to expect. And it was borne in upon him that Klune was anything but interested in Myron's reformation. And at Terry's refusal of Klune's offer of a private job elsewhere, the latter spoke of an alternative: the warehouses—which Terry accepts, conscious of the fact that Klune means to make it so unpleasant for him that he will clear out and leave Myron at Klune's mercy.

CHAPTER X.

THE RABBIT HUNT.

"THE further we go the worse it gets," Myron burst out as he lounged on his bed at the hotel the Sunday following his arrival in the city which bore his father's name.

Terry looked up from the operation of doctoring his blistered fingers, and grinned.

"I wouldn't have gone much further piling grain sacks," he commented, "without giving my hands a chance to grow out again. Sunday come in just right for me."

"I'm sick of the name of Masters," Myron snarled. "It was bad enough in Pico, but it seems the nearer one gets to the San Miguel, the worse it is hated. And of course they blame dad for the whole business. I don't wonder he never comes to the ranch," he concluded.

"Do you suppose your father has any idea how unpopular he is with the ranchers?" Terry asked.

"I don't suppose he has," Myron admitted. "You see, dad doesn't have anything to do with the San Miguel. He's left it all to Klune as long as I can remember. As long as he gets his dividends, he doesn't worry much, I guess, about what the people think of him."

"Don't you suppose," began Terry, "that if some one told him how—"

Myron interrupted him with a laugh.

"You don't know the old gentleman," he said. "No one can ever get near enough to him to tell him anything. I've been writing to him all along—wrote to him this morning, though I don't suppose it will do any good. He doesn't believe anything he hears, and only about half of what he sees. Whenever you get my honorable dad, as Bennie used to call him, to do anything you've got to show him every foot of the way."

Terry said nothing, but he stored the words carefully away in his mind as Myron went on:

"Say, Klune's not a bad scout. He's sure made things easy for us. All I have

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to do is to sit in a swivel-chair about three hours a day and read the papers, and kid with the girls in the office. There's some pretty fair lookers among them, too, I'd say."

Terry wondered if the stenographers in the San Miguel offices had driven the thought of Reinita from Myron's head, but the young man settled the matter for him at once.

"There isn't one of them, though, that has the class of Reinita." Myron stopped to light a cigarette and became more confidential. "Do you know, Terry," he said, "Reinita would be all right if she didn't have such big ideas."

Terry was interested. He had never told Myron of his suspicions of the Mexican girl or the cause of the hatred of Mexican Joe for the family name. What difference would it make to Myron to know that Reinita's father had been robbed of his Spanish Grant lands by the San Miguel Ranch, and driven out with a sick wife and baby daughter? Myron was clearly infatuated with the girl, and, like his father, he would have to be "shown."

"What do you mean—she has big ideas?" Terry prompted.

Myron smiled.

"She's always saying that she was born to be a great lady," he said, "and would have been if her father hadn't had hard luck and lost all his property." He surveyed the coal of his cigarette reminiscently. "Yes, she's a mighty good scout," he affirmed, "when she keeps off of that marriage stuff."

Terry listened attentively while he drew Myron on.

"What do you mean?" he asked, watching the boy's face.

"The night before the Ramblers' masquerade she hinted pretty strong at our getting married," Myron explained, "but I stood her off. The next night she came back at me stronger than ever, and I had to let her down with a jolt."

Terry turned his attention to another blister, and waited for the young man to continue, but as he showed no signs of elucidating further, Terry asked:

"What did you tell her?"

Myron smiled.

"I told her where to head in, all right. I let her know on the way to Casa Blanca that the old gentleman would never consent to my marriage with a Mexican."

Terry weighed the significance of Myron's words. Reinita had ambitions to be a great lady, and would have been, doubtless, had James Masters not robbed her father of his lands. In Myron she had seen another chance to gratify her ambition, and when she stood on the threshold of achievement, the sinister figure of the ranch-owner bulked big across her path.

Terry pictured the effect of Myron's words upon the Mexican girl.

"Was she pretty sore?" he asked Myron after a moment.

Myron nodded and drew in a long breath.

"I'd say she was," he answered. "She tore loose on the old man and me together, just like it was our fault, and it was a long time before I could talk her out of it. Then she shut up quick and forgot all about it. She's never mentioned it since," he added.

Myron slid from the bed and stretched his arms above his head.

"What do you say we go out and see if we can get some rabbits?" he said. "Klune said he'd lend us some guns any time we wanted to go."

Terry agreed at once, and a few minutes later they set out for Meadow-Lark Cañon in the little car Klune had put at Myron's disposal.

A clear sky smiled overhead, and the stinging heat of the city was tempered by a freshening breeze which blew in from the sea. All about them were waving fields of sun-scorched grain, broken at rare intervals by flashes of pale green. As far as the eye could reach, not a single house or barn was visible.

Terry searched the landscape for signs of the deep green which betokened the presence of water, but all around him the ground panted, sun-baked and arid.

"Isn't there any water on the ranch?" he asked.

Myron shook his head.

"I don't think so," he answered. "I never heard of any."

Terry looked at him with astonishment.

"Why, how does your father farm all this without it?" he exclaimed.

Myron laughed outright.

"Dad doesn't worry about water or anything else," he explained. "I don't know much about the ranch, but I do know that the old gentleman doesn't farm an acre of the San Miguel. He rents the whole business out on shares, and lets the other fellows do the worrying."

"And all that grain I've been piling in those big warehouses is just your father's rent for the use of the land?" Terry asked.

"I suppose it is."

Arriving at the crest of a little hill Terry stopped the car and climbed out.

"This must be Meadow-Lark Cañon," he said. "They told us it was the first one we'd come to." He walked around a bend in the road, and in a few minutes reappeared. "There's a house on the side of the hill," he announced. "Let's go in and find out."

As they turned from the main thoroughfare into a dust-choked road which wound around the edge of the ravine, a flat-topped mesa overlooking the cañon, Terry suggested:

"We can leave the car at the ranch-house. You can hunt up on this side, and I'll cross over and take the other."

"If they want to know what our names are, I'm going to say I'm somebody else, for the chances are if that fellow is a tenant of the San Miguel he'll either refuse to let us park the car at all, or be nasty in some way, if he knows who I am."

As they drove up to the house a tall man with slightly grayed hair rose from his chair under the shade of a bushy cypress and came to meet them.

"Good evening," he drawled.

In response to Terry's question, he answered with emphasis:

"Sure, you can leave it here. It 'll be all right. I'll be around all the time. Benson's my name," he said, putting out his hand. "I'm always glad to meet strangers."

Myron introduced himself as Streeter. Then he caught sight of a girl sitting in a hammock beneath the trees, and seeing him glancing in that direction, Benson exclaimed:

"Come on over and sit down and rest a while. There isn't much use of going out for an hour yet."

Myron followed him with alacrity, and as Terry caught up with the party, he heard Benson introducing "Mr. Streeter" to his wife and daughter. Seated in a rustic chair under the spreading boughs of the cypress, Terry talked with Benson and his wife, while Myron monopolized Helen's society.

She was a pretty girl, with dark brown hair and Irish blue eyes. Terry judged her to be not over eighteen years of age. As she talked animatedly with Myron, her face lighted up with youthful enthusiasm and her cheery laugh punctuated the young man's chatter. Mrs. Benson was delicate-looking, with hair much grayer than her husband's, and eyes which told of weariness and suffering. She spoke but little, sitting most of the time with her hands folded in her lap, watching Benson's face as he talked with Terry.

The afternoon wore on, and Terry glanced at the rays of the sun as they slanted through the foliage, and suggested that they should be getting started. Myron seemed to have lost all interest in the proposed hunting trip, and he replied, without making any effort to rise:

"Go ahead if you want to. When you get on the other side I'll start, and we'll work up the cañon together."

Leaving the Winchester in the car for Myron, Terry picked up the double-barreled gun which Klune had given them for his use, and took his way down the hillside through the sage-brush and cactus which fringed the sides of the deep ravine. At the bottom of the gulch, he paused and listened.

It was a little too early, no doubt, for rabbits, but he might pick up a stray "cottontail" in the cactus patches on the south slope. He might just as well have taken Myron's repeater, he figured, for the chances were, young Masters would not move while he was gone.

He looked at the gun he held in his hand. It wasn't a bad one at that if it was clean. He broke it and held it up to the light.

Not bad at all, he thought, as his eye traversed the shining steel. He squinted into the other barrel.

A puzzled look came into his face, and he lowered the gun. After a moment he held it to the light again, looking through both barrels. Through the right barrel he saw a small patch of blue sky. Through the left only opaque blackness.

Leaning the gun against a rock, he cut a shoot from a scrub-willow, and rammed it down the muzzle until it stuck. He repeated the experiment from the other end of the barrel. Again his improvised ramrod stuck at the same place.

"That's queer," he thought, "somebody's been using it, and got something jammed in the left barrel and forgot to tell anybody about it."

It was a mighty good thing he hadn't loaded it without looking through. It would have made a nasty accident. He looked at the gun again and examined it carefully. It was a better weapon than he had at first thought, and nearly new, evidently. Funny, Klune wouldn't have a gun like that better cared for. One barrel was clean enough, but the other was probably all mucked up.

He twisted his handkerchief and placed it on the stick, and advanced it a few inches from the muzzle into the left barrel. The handkerchief came out almost clean. He tried it in the other barrel with the same result. Both sides had evidently been well cleaned. Then how did the gun get jammed? How could any man clean it like that and not notice it was plugged?

Terry gave it up and, striving to banish the incident from his mind, returned to Benson's. Myron's Winchester was still in the car. The chairs about the cypress-tree were empty. Terry looked inquiringly in the direction of the house. Benson was coming out the door.

"Come right in," he called. "We're going to have a bite to eat pretty soon. You're more than welcome.

"Your friend is out with Helen looking at the view or something," he explained. "Did you see anything to shoot at?"

Terry held up his empty hands with a smile, and followed his host into the house.

"Not even a blackbird," he replied.

"That's funny," said Benson. "There's usually plenty of rabbits down there. You see, the ranch don't allow any hunting on their land, and the game gets pretty thick at this time of year."

Terry was on the point of telling Benson that Klune had recommended the cañon as a good shooting-ground, but he checked himself as he thought of Mr. Streeter, and asked instead:

"I suppose you lease from the San Miguel?"

A frown passed over Benson's face. He led Terry into the little sitting-room, and waved him to a chair.

"Yes," he answered. "I do, worse luck. I'm like a lot of others. In too deep to get out."

"What kind of people are they to do business with?" Terry asked.

Benson leaned forward in his chair, and replied with intense earnestness:

"They're the worst bunch of thieves that ever lived outside of a penitentiary. I came here direct from Oklahoma, where I went broke prospecting for oil, and I've been leasing from the San Miguel for over five years, trying to get a stake big enough to get out with my live stock, implements, and enough to move on. If I could, I'd chuck it to-morrow. But I can't," he growled. "They've got my chattels sewed up tighter than a drum."

Terry said nothing. Benson, pleased with so good a listener, went on:

"You see, they never give the farmer a fighting chance. If a man is lucky enough to win, they raise the rent and drive him out, or break him the first bad year. And when they get their hooks into him, they keep him working for them until he's too old, chucks it, or kills himself."

"Do they farm any of the land themselves?" Terry wanted to know.

Benson shook his head.

"Not an acre that I know of," he answered. "What's more, they won't sell it, either, or rent it on anything except their iron-clad Carston leases. If they'd give a man a long-term lease and let him alone, he'd have a chance; for then he could develop his water, build decent buildings in-

stead of these old shacks, and plant crops it would pay him to grow. But what chance has anybody got on a year-to-year lease?" he asked.

"Who is Carston?" inquired Terry.

"Carston's the lawyer," said Benson. "Him and Klune work together like the fingers of one hand. Klune's the kind of a fellow that don't care any more about a man that gets in his way than I would for a rattlesnake. He knows he can get by with murder here, and Carston will get him out."

Terry looked about for Myron. Then he asked:

"What about the owner of the ranch; doesn't he ever come down and look things over?"

Benson laughed.

"Mighty few people around here have even seen him," he answered. "Jim Masters, I reckon, figures the climate of the San Miguel 'd be a little too warm for him. So he stays in Frisco most of the time and lets Klune and Carston do his dirty work, while he pockets the money. He only cleaned up about a million and a half on the San Miguel last year."

Terry was about to question Benson further when he heard Myron's voice outside, and hastily changed the subject.

It was late in the evening before young Streeter could be induced to leave, and the moon was just appearing over the ridge of the low brown hills when the two young men started back for the city.

For some time Terry drove in silence, waiting for his friend to speak. Then Myron observed:

"Say, this is some night."

Terry smiled grimly.

"I don't see anything about it that's different from usual," he said.

Myron snorted his disgust.

"You don't, eh?" he ejaculated. "Why, it's just about the finest night I ever saw in all my life."

Before the lights of Masters appeared upon the moon-lit horizon Myron was discoursing freely upon the hospitality of the Benson family in general, with now and then a timid reference to something Helen had said in particular. Terry spoke in monosyllables and, grinning to himself, drove the car into the garage.

Myron entered the Casa Rosa in high spirits, and Terry glowed as he noticed the great change which had come over Masters's son.

Then a cloud passed suddenly over Myron's face. He stopped abruptly and stared before him. Reinita rose from a chair in the lobby and came to meet him. Her lithe body was covered by a suit of close-fitting velvet of striped pattern which gave to the cloth the luster of fur. Her dark eyes searched Myron's face. She read, wavered, and came on.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NOTEBEARER.

FEW men ever surprised Bill Klune, yet Myron Masters succeeded where others failed. Apparently unconscious of the effect of his words upon the silent figure slouching in the big chair before him, Myron talked on. When he ceased speaking, the manager regarded him with unconcealed astonishment. Then he masked his emotions with his customary smile.

"So you want a real job, do you? One from which you can learn something," Klune repeated, his gray eyes roving over Myron's face. "Well, that's fine." His smile broadened. "How would you like mine?" he asked.

"You think I'm fooling," Myron said, laughing. "But I'm not. You see, when I came here I told you I wanted to do just as little as possible, and you gave me just the job I wanted. But now I've—well, I'm getting tired of doing nothing. I'd really rather work than loaf around all the time."

Klune recovered slowly from his surprise. Reaching into a compartment of his desk, he produced a bottle and a couple of glasses.

"Have a drink?" he suggested. "Maybe the heat has been too much for you."

Myron shook his head with a smile.

"No, thanks," he said. "I haven't had a drink for over a week."

Klune's composure suffered a sharp relapse. He paused with loosened fingers on the bottle of Scotch, while his eyes searched

Myron's. Then he asked, with keen emphasis:

"Who's the girl?"

Myron dodged Klune's eyes, and shifted about in his chair to secure a more comfortable position. Then he laughed, but even to him, his mirth sounded foolish.

"Guess again," he replied as quickly as he could.

Klune continued to smile, and Myron's embarrassment became more evident. Clearing his throat, he swallowed twice to relieve its dryness. Then he said:

"I just thought I'd cut the booze out for a while. It doesn't do me any particular good, especially in hot weather."

Klune realized that the advantage lay clearly with him. He made the most of it.

"I know," he said, "you thought that, but what I want to know is, who started you thinking?"

Myron strove in vain for a suitable rejoinder to Klune's question, and the manager continued:

"Come on, old man, let's have it," he said in a confidential tone. "You know I'm interested." He poured out a drink and gulped it down. "Now, then," he said, "I feel strong enough to heart it."

Myron laughed at Klune's face.

"There is a girl," he admitted, meeting Klune's eye at last. "A real one at that."

"Sure there is," said Klune. "Tell me about her."

Thus encouraged, Myron began at once the world-old story, to which Klune was an eager listener. When the young man's adjectives were somewhat depleted and his descriptive powers showed signs of reaching an anticlimax, Klune interrupted him:

"You've told me everything but her name," he observed.

"Helen Benson."

"Benson," repeated Klune, "the only family by that name I know are tenants of ours out in Meadow-Lark Cañon."

Myron nodded.

"That's her father," he explained.

Klune's fingers stroked the bottle of Scotch for a moment, then tightened.

"I see," he said.

Myron glanced at his watch and rose immediately.

"I must be going," he said. "I didn't know it was getting so late."

Klune went with him to the door, and as the boy went out the manager promised:

"I'll look around and see what I can do for you."

Myron went out into the reception-room in high spirits. Klune was a mighty good scout. He was glad he had told him.

Within his office, Klune was busy with the phone. "Please tell Mr. Carston to come to my office at once," he said. He was glad Myron had told him, too.

In the elevator, Myron met Klune's secretary.

"Working late to-night," Tom commented. "Lots of business?"

"Just waiting to see Klune," Myron rejoined. "By the way, you are just the fellow I wanted to see."

"What's on your mind?" Slade asked. "Let's go down into the bar and talk it over."

Myron led the secretary to an out-of-the-way recess of the Stag Saloon, and the two men sat down before a small table.

"A high-ball with some of that No. 6 for mine, Joe," said Slade as the waiter appeared.

"Ginger-ale," ordered Myron in a low voice.

Slade turned his straw-colored head, and his pale blue eyes watered.

"You meant to put 'high-ball' on the end of that, didn't you?" he faltered.

Myron denied the implied negligence, and came at once to the point.

"Say, Tom," he said, "will you do something for me?"

"Anything," answered Slade, "except believe you're on the water-wagon."

"It's easier than that," Myron laughed. "All I want you to do is to take Reinita to the barbecue over at Bolsa to-morrow night."

Slade paused in the act of carrying his glass to his lips.

"Wait a moment," he said. "I want to be sure I understood you before I drink this. Did you ask me to take Reinita Vegas to that Spanish barbecue?"

Myron assured him his hearing was not at fault. Slade gulped his high-ball.

"I'll do it, of course," he said, "but it I'm not getting too inquisitive, what's the idea?"

Myron strove to explain.

"It's this way," he said. "I've another date, and—"

The secretary's large mouth became even larger. He grinned comprehendingly.

"Enough said," he exclaimed. "I got you the first time. I'll relieve you of any further responsibility of the olive-skinned lady, and buy a drink besides. No? All right; then I'll have to skip along."

Beneath the spreading antlers of the mounted stag which hung in front of the saloon, Slade forgot his haste and watched Myron hurry away to the hotel. Then he stepped into the ranch offices and inquired of the girl at the telephone exchange:

"Find out if Mr. Klune is still in his office. If he is tell him I'll be right up."

When Myron arrived at his room at the Casa Rosa, he found Terry just emerging from the shower, after his day's work, and he stopped and surveyed the glistening white body of his friend with admiration.

"Say," he ejaculated, "I wish I had muscles like that."

Terry shook the water from his eyes, and grinned.

"Easy enough to get them," he answered. "Bucking two-hundred-pound sacks puts a fellow in pretty good training."

Myron's eye caught a flash of a small piece of green pinned to the white fabric of Terry's undershirt.

"What's that," he asked, "you're wearing next your heart?"

Terry passed the towel quickly over his freckles. When his face appeared it was a dull-red color.

"Oh, that!" he said. "That's just a little present I received before we left Pico."

Any curiosity Myron might have had regarding the specific nature of Terry's gift was swallowed up in the news he had for his friend.

"I struck Klune for another job," he announced. "Told him all about Helen, too."

Terry paused in his dressing.

"What did he say?"

"He stalled about the job. Thought I was kidding him. He seemed interested enough about Helen. He knew her father evidently, from the way he spoke."

While Myron changed his clothes he told Terry of his conversation with Slade.

"He didn't mind it a bit, either," he said. "In fact, he acted like he was pleased with the idea. Shouldn't wonder but what he falls for Reinita."

He looked over his neckties with great care, and finally selected one to suit his fancy.

"It would be all right with me if he did, too," he concluded.

When Myron had finished dressing he sat down at a small writing-desk and hastily penned a note. Then he glanced at Terry.

"I'm in a pretty big hurry," he said. "I wonder if you would mind delivering this for me."

Terry took the envelope and looked at the address.

"Sure," he answered. "I'll see that she gets it."

Myron took a farewell glance at himself in the mirror and started for the door.

"Much obliged," he said; then he called with a laugh as he went out:

"Don't sit up for me. I may be late."

Terry watched him hurry away with a crooked little smile playing about the corners of his mouth. He had done his best, he reflected, but it wasn't good enough. It took a woman to do it.

Was it luck that had brought them together? He wondered, and his eye fell upon the swastika. The ring had brought him luck. Would the Indian luck-sign lead him on to find his woman, or had its potent influence passed away? Taking Myron's letter in his hand, he went down into the street.

When Terry arrived at the little cottage where Reinita lived, he heard the sound of angry voices raised in altercation. A Mexican was arguing with the girl, but Terry could catch but little of the significance of the man's words. At the sound of his footfall upon the porch, the wrangling ceased abruptly.

Reinita came to the door, her face colored by an angry flush.

"A letter for you," Terry announced, and stood waiting.

The girl tore open the envelope and read the words while Terry flashed a quick glance over Reinita's shoulder and beheld the shriveled, pox-marked face of José Vegas scowling in the hallway.

Reinita raised her eyes at last to Myron's messenger.

"There is no answer," she said.

CHAPTER XII.

VOLCANIC FIRES.

THE annual barbecue at Bolsa was noteworthy in the mind of every Mexican for three separate and distinct reasons. It was a day of national patriotism, private settlements, and surprises of all kinds.

Held each year upon the 16th of September, the fiesta commemorated the anniversary of Mexican Independence, and the sluggish pulse of the people throbbed with a latent fervor of reviving patriotism. Upon this day, men who had bragged for three hundred and sixty-four days of the year of coming direct to the country from the vine-covered slopes of sunny Spain, forgot their ancient lineage and renounced their allegiance to the Spanish crown as they raised their voices in the popular cry: "*Viva Mexico.*" To-morrow they would be Spaniards again. This day they were all Mexicans.

But within the heart of every dark-skinned man, woman, and child who journeyed to Bolsa to participate in the joyous festival, the annual event held a significance which was far deeper than mere superficial patriotism, for Independence Day was also a day of settlement.

Popular belles, wooed throughout the year by impatient lovers, deferred answer to the momentous question with the words: "Wait until the 16th of September." Married women, perplexed by household cares and worried by domestic troubles incident to the raising of their rapidly increasing offspring, reserved decision upon the intricate problems which arose for settlement, pending the conference with their neighbors beneath the spreading live-oaks of the Bolsa Cañon.

Here long-standing grudges and smoldering fires of hate were fanned into the quick fire of revengeful settlement by the male element of the Mexican population, and the day was held a failure which did not produce its full quota of brawls.

When the first rays of the morning sun penetrated the thick shade of the sycamores which lined the sides of the Bolsa Cañon, preparations were well under way for the celebration of the long anticipated fiesta.

Roderigo Fuentes had been the presiding spirit at Independence Day barbecues at Bolsa since the day when his hair was as black as the men about him. Each year for the past ten barbecues at least, he would make a farewell speech to his guests and tearfully proclaim that the September suns of another year would find him in the land of his fathers.

But each successive fiesta found him still at his post beside the bull's-head; his gray fingers stiffer with rheumatism, his face more mummified, and his thin, gray hair frosted anew with the passing of the year. Carefully covering the sacked head with its jacket of claylike mud, the old man consigned the bull's-head to its fiery bed and wiped the mud from his shaking fingers.

"*Dios de mi Alma, Juan,*" he exclaimed in a quavering voice. "It is my last."

Juan Castillo's white teeth flashed.

"Always you say that," he retorted. "But it is not so. I will be old like you before I get a chance to cook the bull's head." He looked to the cleared space under the trees, and pointed with his finger.

"See," he said. "The guests are coming. They will be asking for you."

The old man's eye brightened as he beheld the flash of a gaily colored skirt. Forgetful of his years, he hobbled stiffly to greet the first arrivals.

"*Buenas dias, amigos,*" he called to the party which clustered about the dish-wheeled buckboard.

All roads led to Bolsa on the day of the barbecue, and by ten o'clock the surrounding countryside was well nigh emptied of its population. No invitations were issued. Every one who cared to bring his lunch and

picnic with his family or friends beneath the trees was welcome. The barbecued meat was free to all who asked for it. Only a voluntary contribution was taken up to defray the cost of the entertainment.

The program of the day had remained unchanged since the first barbecue. The morning was given over to field sports and athletic events of all kinds, in which young and old alike participated with all the enthusiasm of an old-fashioned Fourth of July celebration. In the afternoon the horse-races were held on the half-mile oval cleared from the thicket of willows which grew on the opposite side of the creek, and the International baseball game was held between the Mexicans and a picked team recruited from Masters and the ranchers of the San Miguel.

At all of these events the feeling and the betting ran high, but the real event of the day in the minds of the young people was the dance which began soon after the conclusion of the ball game and ended only with the complete exhaustion of the dancers and musicians.

When the shadows began to lengthen and the ball game ended with a victory in the twelfth inning for the dusky home nine, the Mexican heart beat high with satisfaction of the day and all that it had brought forth.

The events of the morning had been a distinct success. The barbecued beef was never better. The favorites had won the horse races. The gringo team had been beaten, and there had been fights and marriages at irregular intervals throughout the entire day, with the biggest event of all yet to be enjoyed. Every Mexican was satisfied, with one exception. The day as yet had brought little to José Vegas.

Many slates had been wiped clean at the barbecue; grudges repaid in full, accounts settled, but as the hour for the dance drew near, José looked in vain for the one he sought. All the day he had prowled through the crowd, his eyes shining with a hatred which had smoldered and glowed during the passing of many Septembers, cherishing a blood-lust which was still unsated. A white man had wronged him in the past. One of the blood must pay.

Scowling and mumbling to himself, he sought the parking space, and again examined the cars. His eyes roved to the hillside road, where the dust followed in clouds in the wake of a late arrival as he rolled down the hill. José watched the newcomer draw near the line of autos and park his car beneath the shade of a scraggly willow, and his thin lips distended in a mirthless smile. His clawlike fingers opened and closed spasmodically as he pulled his cap down closer on his head and watched Myron Masters assist Helen Benson from the machine.

Myron turned at once to the girl, and the Mexican passed unnoticed.

"I guess we're in time," he commented, looking in the direction of the open-air pavilion under the trees.

Helen laughed.

"You're always in time at a Mexican dance," she replied, "if you come any time within twelve hours from the time it starts."

José watched them go with hatred shining in his eyes. When they passed from view, he walked to the car and examined it intently.

The owner of a near-by motor sought his car, and rummaged beneath the front seat for the jug.

"Dancing is sure hot work," he announced to a friend who stood beside the running-board. "What's the matter, are you blind?" he exclaimed sharply. "Here's the jug right under your nose."

The other man made no answer, but continued to stare in the direction of Myron's car. Then he said in a low voice:

"Look at that Mex standing close up against that car. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts he don't own it, and I'll lay just about the same bet he's 'bugs,' too. Look at his eyes when he raises his head."

His friend paused, holding the jug in his hand while he looked closely at José.

"Shouldn't wonder if you're right at that," he answered. "He looks crazy enough. Maybe he's just had an overdose of cactus-juice. At any rate, it's none of our funeral. Let's wet up and get back to the dance."

When Myron and Helen reached the open-air platform they found the floor packed with dancers. While they stood re-

garding the whirling couples jostling and crowding each other about the floor, Myron looked in vain for Reinita. He was taking long chances in bringing Helen to the dance; he realized that. There was no telling what the Mexican girl would do if given the opportunity. He wondered if Slade would be able to keep her occupied sufficiently to keep her away from Helen. What would Reinita say if she found out he was masquerading under an assumed name? Helen's voice made him start.

"It looks pretty crowded, doesn't it?" she observed.

Myron clutched at the straw.

"Yes," he answered. "I am afraid it would not be very much use to try to dance there. Would you like to sit down for a while and see if the crowd thins out?"

A few minutes later they were seated in the shadows of a giant sycamore, watching the purple shades of twilight gray and deepen as darkness seized the cañon. It was almost too dark for Myron to see the girl's face as she said:

"I am afraid you will not find me very good company to-night. I am worried about father."

"I am sorry; I did not know he was sick."

Helen was silent for a moment, then she answered:

"He's not sick, he is just blue, that's all. You see, he received a letter to-day from the ranch lawyer, Mr. Carston. He threatens foreclosure on everything we have if we are not able to pay what we owe within thirty days."

There was a despairing note in the girl's voice, and Myron strove for words which would express his sympathy.

"I don't understand," he said. "I'm mighty sorry. Can't something be done? Maybe I can help him raise the money, or fix things up some way."

"There would be a chance," Helen replied, "if we were dealing with any one but Klune and Carston. But for some reason or other they have taken it into their heads to freeze father out. You see, he had bad luck last year with his crops, and when mother was so sick, they advanced him a lot of money, and took a mortgage on all his live stock and implements. He needed the money so badly at the time that he didn't pay much attention to the terms.

"Now, it seems, they can demand payment of the whole amount, with only thirty days' notice. If they would give him two months longer he would be able to pay them when he had sold his crops. But now I am afraid it is hopeless."

Myron sat for a moment in deep thought. Then he said:

"I know Klune fairly well. I'm going to have a talk with him. Maybe I can persuade him to be a decent kind of a sport and wait until fall."

Helen laughed mirthlessly.

"You don't know Klune," she rejoined. "When he sets his heart on anything he generally comes pretty near to getting it. I don't know what we have ever done to him, but he has evidently made up his mind to drive us out. He says he is only working for Masters, and he has to comply with his orders." She paused, and drew in her breath sharply. "No one but myself, I guess, will ever know how I hate that name of Masters," she added.

Myron sat very still, thankful that the darkness concealed his burning face.

Then he said in a low voice:

"I hate the name, too." He had meant to add: "That is why I took another," but the words stuck in his throat.

For a long time they sat talking earnestly in the darkness beneath the sycamore. Then Helen scrambled to her feet.

"Let's go and dance now," she suggested. "We did not come out here to worry, and it doesn't do any good, anyway."

Myron consented with some reluctance. He was foolish to have brought Helen, knowing that Reinita would be there. Foolish, too, to have hidden behind the name of Streeter. Yes, he was just naturally foolish.

An old-fashioned schottische was in progress when they reached the rough board platform, and the flare of the gas lamps threw the faces of the dancers in bold relief against the background of blackness among the trees. While his eyes wandered over the crowd, Myron caught sight of Terry's red head.

Straightway his waning spirits underwent

a sharp change. Terry could help. He had always helped. He always knew just what to do. Myron intercepted his friend's eye at last, and Terry hurried over.

"Been looking for you," he exclaimed with a grin. "Even went out and glanced over the machines, but I couldn't find the little car anywhere."

Myron was on the point of saying that Klune had given him another car while his old one was being overhauled, but instead he replied:

"I am driving one to-night from the garage while they are fixing mine up. I parked it under a little willow-tree."

At the first opportunity he drew Terry aside, and whispered:

"Have you seen Reinita?"

"Sure," Terry replied. "She's here, or was a minute ago when they were trying to get her to dance." He looked about. "There she is now. Just coming up the steps with Slade. He's getting pretty well 'stewed,'" he added.

Slade's moist eyes were searching the faces of the dancers, and he caught sight of Myron while he was gazing intently at Reinita. Then he whispered to the girl and led her through the crowd to join him. Myron returned to Helen's side, and watched them approach thoughtfully.

What would Reinita do? Did she know of his pseudonym? If she did, would she respect it or call him by his own name?

Terry sensed Myron's dilemma, and acted at once. Hastily presenting Reinita and Slade to Helen, he concluded with a cheery smile:

"And Myron, you both know."

Reinita inclined her head with a graceful gesture, and took a seat beside Helen on the bench, while Tom Slade leered down upon them with a slimy smile.

Terry's mind was working rapidly. The situation was one which might be productive of trouble any minute. He didn't like the look in Slade's watery eyes. The "crowd" upon the bench was too large, he reflected, and he halved it at once by asking Helen for a dance. As he whirled away with the girl, he saw Myron following with Reinita while the secretary stood looking after them.

Terry piloted Helen through the throng with one eye striving to follow Myron and Reinita. His preoccupation was apparent to his partner as she upbraided him for his suddenly developed silence.

"Can't talk and dance at the same time," he explained. "Never could. If I tried somebody would trip me up and walk all over us."

Reinita, too, was evidently suffering from the same complaint, for, although Myron was garrulous, the Mexican girl's dark eyes were elsewhere.

"I wonder why that girl you just introduced me to stares at me so," Helen was saying. "She looks through me like she was trying to see the other side."

Terry made some guarded reply as he thought: "That is exactly what she is trying to do."

When the dance came to an end, Myron endeavored to conduct his partner to a seat at a safe distance from Helen. Reinita objected at once.

"Take me to your new girl," she said with a smile. "I want to talk to her."

Myron's flesh grew prickly. He knew there was no use arguing with Reinita; so, with dire misgivings, he escorted her to a seat beside Helen Benson, and stood awkwardly in front of the two girls waiting for the blow to fall.

Tom Slade, observing Myron's predicament with a grin, stood by Terry's side, within easy hearing distance of Helen and Reinita as a youth to whom Helen had introduced Myron hurried into the circle.

"Been looking everywhere for you," he exclaimed, and before the astounded Myron could protest, the boy turned to the girl seated by Reinita and introduced:

"Miss Densmore, I would like to present my friend, Mr. Streeter."

Klune's secretary drew nearer at the sound of the name, his cutaway chin sagging with astonishment, his faded blue eyes fixed upon Reinita's face.

Myron bowed stiffly to the girl, and met Reinita's eyes fixed curiously upon him, while his tormentor continued:

"Miss Vegas, have you met Mr. Streeter?"

Terry glared at the stranger, and moved

closer to the group. Slade's bloated face creased in an ugly smile.

Reinita turned slightly and nodded brightly at Myron.

"I have met Mr. Streeter," she said.

The smile faded slowly from Slade's face, leaving it white and flabby, and Terry, with unfeigned enjoyment, watched him walk away and disappear in the darkness beyond the dance floor.

Myron stood staring stupidly at Reinita while he tried to collect his thoughts. Reinita had had it in her power to destroy all his hopes by the utterance of a single word, but she had remained silent. Why? Terry asked himself the same question, but not until he danced with Reinita did he receive the answer.

"Take me out where it is cool," Reinita said when they had finished dancing. "I would like to talk with you if you care to listen."

Terry led Reinita wonderingly to the trees and took a seat close beside her in the darkness. For some time neither spoke; then Reinita began:

"You are Myron's friend. I know, for you have already shown me. At Casa Blanca, at Tia Mona, and again at Masters."

Terry was about to reply when Reinita continued:

"I am his friend, too, though you will not believe it. It has not always been so, but it is true now." As Terry made no answer, she added:

"You do not believe?"

Terry shook his head in the darkness.

"No," he answered in the spirit of all frankness, "I do not. You'll have to show me."

Reinita answered quickly.

"That is what I want," she said, speaking with great deliberation, "just one more chance, and I will show even you who have cause to doubt me most."

She paused and waited for Terry to say something, but as he remained silent, she asked with sudden interest:

"How long has he known that girl?"

Terry hesitated before answering the question as he pondered upon Reinita's reason for asking it. Then he said:

"A matter of two weeks, possibly."

Reinita was silent for some time. Then she said slowly:

"And she has found out in two weeks what I learned only a few days ago." She leaned closer to Terry and her words came fast. "But what does she know about love?" she asked. "She is only a child. She can offer him only a child's love. He would not be satisfied with that. He will be a man soon, and he will need a woman's love. You will laugh when I say a love like mine, because you believe it is bad, but it is not.

"I was blind. I hated him only at first because his father robbed mine of his lands, and turned us out when I was only a baby. My mother died soon after, and my father brought me up to hate the name. And I did hate it. I hated him. I tried to ruin him, tried even to kill him. Now, when it is too late, I love him."

She laughed mirthlessly, and Terry waited silently for her to continue.

"But I am a Mexican," she said at last. "We should hate, not love, the white people who drove us from our lands." She leaned nearer, and Terry could feel her warm breath upon his cheek. "My father would kill me if he knew what I have told you," she said in a low voice. "He is mad with hate, and he has sworn an oath to be revenged upon the Masters blood. He is here to-night, somewhere in the darkness, crazed with tequilla. I saw him a while ago, and his eyes glared at me like those of a wild beast. Will you please take me home?" she asked. "I am afraid."

Terry paused in his mental analysis of the girl's words; then he replied:

"What about Slade? You came with him, didn't you?"

"He's too drunk now to drive," returned Reinita. "In another hour he'll be too drunk to walk. I came with him only because I wanted to see the other girl. If you do not want to leave the dance I will ask some one else. You do not believe in me, I know, but you will not bother me, like the others, with foolish love-making."

Terry rose at once. Reinita might only be playing him for some purpose, but she was without doubt sincere in her fear of

José. She was up against a pretty hard proposition, if what she said was true. That alone was enough to strike a responsive chord in Terry's heart.

"I'll ask Myron if he will let me take his car for a while," he said.

Reinita waited just beyond the circle of the lights from the platform while Terry conferred with Myron. Though Terry told him nothing of the nature of his interview with the girl, Myron acquiesced gladly, even eagerly to the plan, and guided Terry to the machine at once.

"She's a queer little old wreck," explained Myron, "but I guess she will get you home all right. Don't bother to come back," he added, "unless you want to, for we'll come back to town in one of the big buses or get a ride with some friends. We will be leaving pretty quick most likely, so just leave the car for me at the garage."

Terry found Reinita, and they drove in silence from the picnic-grounds. The motor labored perceptibly on the long hill which led up from the bottom-lands, and it was with a sigh of relief that Terry noted the little dip in the road just before it reached the summit.

"Here's where you have to roll, little car," he thought, and pressed his foot on the throttle to take a run for the hill. With the impetus of the down-hill grade, the light machine gained rapidly in speed. With his eyes fixed on the summit beyond, Terry forgot the chucks at the bottom of the swale.

With a sharp jolt the forward axle dropped into a dust hole. The steering-wheel rebounded with the jar and, failing to encounter the protecting lock-nut, slid from its post into Terry's hands. The car zigzagged wildly like a rudderless ship, as Terry applied the brakes. Then it writhed to the edge of the road and, crashing through the mesquite, plunged into the ravine.

Terry awoke to the consciousness that he was being counted out. The referee stood over him, monotonously chanting the numbers:

Seven: He had a little time left. It was best to take all he could, but he must not play it too close.

Eight: Where could that fellow have hit him to put him out like that? He must have massaged him with an electric riveter.

Nine: It was his last chance. He wouldn't have a look-in with a guy like that; but he'd be game, anyway.

He struggled to his feet, his head reeling. Then he sank dizzily to the ground. What was the idea of the bonfire? He tried to think. He hadn't been fighting: Oh, yes, there had been a picnic somewhere. But how did he get out here in the mesquite? Somebody had beat him up pretty bad. Then he remembered.

Struggling to his feet, he lurched in the direction of the blazing car, searching for Reinita. He called her name, but only his own voice came back to him. Crawling over the rocks and forcing his way through the underbrush, he worked his way down the ravine.

He must have been thrown from the car with the impact of its first fall. It had evidently turned over a number of times before it came to its final resting-place down there in the gully.

Had Reinita been as fortunate as he, or was she pinned beneath the blazing ruins in the gulch? As he asked himself the question, his eye caught the flash of a white rag fluttering from the chaparral. Blinded by the glare of the fire, he almost stumbled over the body of the girl as he pushed his way into the thicket.

Terry knelt by the limp figure and raised her hand. Then he silently gave thanks. Reinita's heart was still beating. As he gathered her tenderly in his arms and carried her down the ravine to the light of the dying fire, he was conscious of the fact that his fingers were wet and sticky.

CHAPTER XIII.

"VENGEANCE IS MINE!"

"JUST one more chance."

Reinita mumbled the words drowsily, and opened her dark eyes, looking questioningly at the red-headed boy who held her in his arms.

Terry forced a smile to his pale face,

and bathed the girl's head with gentle fingers.

"Sure," he said, striving to make his voice carry a cheerful tone. "You have all kinds of chances."

Reinita looked at him in silence; then she slowly shook her head.

"No," she replied quietly. "There will be no more chances for me. I am hurt inside; I cannot move my back. Will you tell me what happened? I cannot remember."

She listened, staring fixedly at Terry while he related the story of the accident; the glow from the burning coals rouging her cheeks and reflecting its fitful gleam in her darkly circled eyes.

"It was Myron's car," she whispered. "She might have been lying where I am now. But no, he might have been killed. One can never tell. He is not strong, like you. It is better as it is."

She closed her eyes, and leaned like a tired child against Terry's shoulder.

"Don't leave me," she said faintly. "I am afraid."

"But I must go for help," Terry argued with gentle emphasis. "We must move you where you will be more comfortable."

Her lips moved again, and he was obliged to bend over to catch the words:

"Stay with me. I am afraid of the darkness and José's eyes. He will kill me if you go."

Far away came the sound of an autohorn. Terry listened eagerly as it drew nearer. There would be no use shouting, for his voice would not carry above the noise of the motor. If the people in the car had seen the fire in the dry gulch, that alone would be sufficient reason at this season of the year to cause them to stop. That he reasoned rightly was evidenced a few seconds later when the motor halted and a voice cried out from the road:

"Put out that fire down there."

In response to Terry's cry for help a number of men climbed from the bus and hurried down into the ravine.

"What's the trouble?" a voice called from the darkness, and as the speaker's eye fell upon the wreckage of the car, he ejaculated: "Good Lord, Harry, look at that!"

"Anybody killed?" cried another, as he caught sight of Terry.

Terry shook his head.

"She's hurt pretty bad, I'm afraid," he said. "Will one of you fellows go for a doctor? I can't leave her."

One of the men started at once.

"Sure," he called. "I'll get one over at the barbecue. It's closer, and there are several of them there. I'll tell the bus-driver to send one out from Masters, too."

The others crowded nearer, and one asked:

"How did it happen?"

Terry explained. When he had finished speaking the men walked over and examined the smoldering ruins of the car.

"Queer kind of accident," muttered one. "I've been driving a long time, and I never knew anything like this to happen before. The steering wheels generally are set up better than that."

"Where's the wheel?" inquired another man suddenly.

Terry pointed up the ravine.

"Up there somewhere, I guess," he answered. "I must have taken it with me when I was thrown out of the car."

The rumor that a man and woman had been killed in an accident on the Bolsa grade spread rapidly among the picnickers, and with the arrival of the man despatched for the doctor a curious crowd at once set out from the dance, impelled by a morbid desire to view the victims of the disaster.

Myron's face paled when he heard the news.

"A man and a woman were killed a few minutes ago on the Bolsa hill," he told Helen. "You don't suppose it could have been Terry and Reinita?"

"There isn't one chance in a hundred that it was," answered Helen. "The grade was lined with cars, and some one just became careless or excited. That wasn't Terry."

"Just the same, I must find out:" Myron grasped Helen by the arm. "Come on," he said. "Let's get into one of those buses."

A long line of conveyances and pedestrians were soon hurrying up the hill, but

in the rush of traffic no one found time to notice the figure of a shrivel-faced little Mexican trudging along through the dust. José Vegas had heard the news that a man and woman had been killed in an auto accident, too.

Terry had repeated the story of the accident to a score or more of newcomers, and a late arrival had picked up the missing steering-wheel on his way down the hill, when a little man detached himself from the crowd, and, going over to the ruins of the car, examined it intently.

"Where did you get that car?" he asked.

"A friend of mine got it from the Central Garage this afternoon."

"What was his name?"

"Myron Masters."

The little man regarded Terry closely.

"Yes," he replied after a moment. "I know he did. I let him have it."

A murmur ran through the crowd at the man's words.

"Some way to send out a car," some one grumbled.

The little man turned quickly at the sound of the voice.

"I'll tell you, my friend," he exclaimed, "I drove that car nearly all day myself, and I looked it over mighty careful before I gave it to young Masters. I'm ready to swear it went out of my garage right."

Terry had no time to consider the significance of the man's words, for the doctor pushed his way through the crowd and knelt by the side of the girl. For some time he examined her silently. Then he shook his head.

"We must get her to town at once," he said. "She may never regain consciousness. I am afraid of concussion."

Reinita stirred and opened her eyes. She struggled in Terry's arms.

"Raise me up," she whispered.

With Terry supporting her, she searched the crowd with anxious eyes.

"Do you think he will come before I go?"

Terry's eyes filled at the despairing note in the girl's voice. He knew what was in her thoughts, but he purposely misread the words.

"If he does not find you here, he will come to you at the hospital in Masters," he said.

Reinita's drawn face twitched with pain as she stared out into the shadows. Then her dark eyes glowed with a light which was not reflected from any outward fire, and she held out her arms with a happy smile.

"Myron."

Only Terry caught the word as Reinita sank back into his arms.

Myron Masters knelt silently by Reinita, and Terry gave her over into his keeping.

Reinita put an arm feebly about Myron's neck and drew his head to hers. Her gray lips moved. Her shining eyes burned into his. Then the light faded slowly, and she sank back into his arms.

Myron raised the dark head and smoothed the soft hair from the white forehead, but Reinita did not stir. She must be sleeping.

The physician leaned over her and took one hand in his. Gently raising a drooping lid, he looked into her eyes. Then he rose.

"She is dead," he said.

José Vegas ran rapidly down the ravine; the red glow from the fire guiding him on. As he ran he mumbled to himself. It had been a great day, this 16th of September. He had waited long, but not in vain. His reward lay almost within his hands. He opened and closed them again. If only he could arrive in time to witness the payment of the debt in the stark figure of his enemy's son.

José reached the formless mass of twisted iron and surveyed the smoldering wreck of the car. His work had been well done. Nothing was left to tell the story. His secret lay buried in the charred fragments. He covered his white teeth with his thin lips. Others must not see his happiness. They would not understand. They would only call him a murderer.

He circled the crowd, his eyes darting swift, sidelong glances to the ground. Perhaps they had already removed the body. He crept into a group of closely bunched people who were speaking in low tones. The fire blazed up and caught sight of a dark object covered by a man's coat.

That was it. He was in time, after all. With feline tread he crept nearer the silent figure. He must not let the people know what it meant to him to view what lay beneath the coat. Grasping the covering with an eager hand, he bent his head to mask his smile of triumph. Then he uncovered the graying face and stood motionless.

He sank to his knees, staring. There was some mistake. This could not be Reinita. He passed his long, shaking fingers beneath the dark head and raised it tenderly, muttering brokenly to the girl in Spanish. Myriads of tiny lights flashed before his eyes, and far away he heard the wind sobbing through the chaparral.

His breath stuck in his throat. His gray head wagged to and fro. His eyeballs were hot and dry, and burned deeper and deeper into his head. He must look at the man before he went mad. The sight of the body of the young man would restore his reason.

He raised his eyes and struggled to his feet. Myron Masters took a step forward, and the Mexican's wild eyes fell upon him. José shrank away, staring. His lips moved convulsively. His hands crawled to his throat. With a soul-piercing scream his clawlike fingers covered his eyes. With white froth oozing from his lips, José Vegas crumpled to the ground and fell across the body of Reinita.

CHAPTER XIV.

KLUNE'S DOG.

"IS the old man dead?"

The physician shook his head as he bent over the unconscious figure of José.

"No," he replied. "The shock was too much for him. He may lose his reason, but I think he will recover. Was the girl any relation of his?"

"She was his daughter," said Terry.

Terry led Myron up the hill, where he found Helen waiting by the roadside. As he briefly explained the situation to the girl he whispered:

"Take him home with you. I'll come out and get him later. I am going to stay with the body until the ambulance comes. Better call up Klune and tell him Myron is all right, for he'll probably hear that it was his car that went over."

Helen agreed at once, and took Myron away while Terry again descended into the ravine.

When he arrived again in the gulch he learned that the Mexican was still unconscious, and, drawing apart from the others, Terry sat down to wait.

When the undertaker arrived a man who introduced himself as the coroner drew Terry aside and questioned him concerning the accident, taking his name and address, and stating that he would notify him when to appear at the inquest.

Terry helped the men carry Reinita's body up the hill, and when it was placed in the ambulance beside the unconscious figure of José, he quickly accepted the chauffeur's invitation to ride with him into Masters.

The auto-driver talked incessantly during the journey, but Terry paid little heed to his chatter.

"I reckon Joe Vegas 'll die, all right. What do you think?"

"I don't know."

"Funny the old devil took on the way he did," commented the man, in nowise disconcerted by Terry's taciturnity. "I never saw him fussed at nothing before. He must have cared an almighty lot to go off his nut that way."

He prated on, regardless of his listener's indifference, until they reached the door of the mortuary, where Terry left him and hurried inside.

In the office of the establishment he found a bald-headed man seated at a roll-top desk. Straightway Terry plunged into the arrangements for the funeral.

"I want the girl buried right," he said. "How much will it cost?"

The undertaker gave him a price after much figuring and a careful glance of appraisement of the boy's figure.

Terry was appalled at the amount, but he replied:

"All right. I'll pay what I can to-night, and give you some more to-morrow. Then

I'll square the rest of it at five dollars a week with interest. Is that all right?"

"How much do you figure to pay me now?"

Terry fumbled in his shirt and drew out a fifty-dollar note and handed it to the undertaker.

The man looked him over for a moment; then he said:

"You look all right. I'll take a chance on you and fix everything up right."

"Flowers and all?"

The man nodded, and Terry hurried out. It would be a long drive to Benson's, and nearer the coast it might be foggy. He had better go to the hotel and get Myron a coat. As he neared his room he saw a short, heavy-set man with a wiry gray mustache walking up and down the hall.

"Are you the young man who met with the accident this evening?" the man asked, coming nearer.

Terry nodded.

"I am," he said, "but I haven't time to talk about it now. I am on my way out on the mesa to bring in my friend."

"You'll have to take the time to talk to me, son," said his visitor, pulling aside his coat and exhibiting the shield of his office. "I'm the sheriff, and I have a warrant for your arrest for manslaughter."

Terry was overcome with amazement. He stared at the sheriff, but he could only repeat the words. There was no use talking with him anyway. A cop never would argue.

"All right," he said at last. "I'd like to telephone before I go."

"You can telephone from the jail, or rather, the warden will do it for you, maybe."

Best phone to Helen, Terry thought as he reached the jail, then she could use her own judgment about telling Myron tonight. He wrote out the message and handed it to his jailer when he locked him in the cell. The man took the note and the half-dollar and shoved them both in his pocket. The money he would keep, and if the warden saw fit to send the message in the morning, that was his affair. It was against the rules for him to accept a message from a prisoner.

Terry walked up and down the dimly lit cell, striving to concentrate his mind upon his predicament. The more he thought the more confused he became. Throwing himself on his cot, he gave it up, and overcome by exhaustion soon fell asleep.

He was awakened by a bright ray of sunshine falling across his face. Struggling to his feet, he walked to the barred window and looked out. Revived by the sharp morning air, his brain functioned more clearly. There was one thing about his arrest that he could not understand: At every turn of his reasoning he had come up abruptly to the same question:

Why should any one be interested in either him or Reinita to such an extent that they would swear to a warrant for his arrest before the girl's body was cold? José might, if he knew of such things, but he knew that José was still unconscious when he met the sheriff.

Somebody had tipped the official off. Some one too who knew where he roomed. There were only two people in Masters who knew that besides Myron: Klune and the warehouse foreman.

The charge itself was ridiculous. Terry did not fear it. His innocence could easily be proven at the inquest. It was purely an accident. A new thought assailed him. Was it an accident? He had heard the garage man say he had sent the car out in first-class shape. Steering wheels didn't come off like that. Why couldn't it have been a frame-up?

But who would be sufficiently interested in him to take such a chance? Then he remembered that if some one had tampered with the car, it was Myron and not him they expected to get.

With the thought of Myron came a sudden recollection of past events. Who above all others hated Myron Masters most? Who was the one that, by her own confession, had taught Reinita to hate the name of Masters and incited her to attempt murder on the person of the ranch-owner's son? Who skulked beneath the trees at the barbecue at Bolsa, crazed with tequilla so that his own daughter was afraid of him?

One name answered all questions. Why

had José taken the trouble to walk down into the ravine to see the body of a dead woman? The other people came from curiosity, and some perhaps with a desire to help. But José Vegas was not that kind. And why had the little Mexican been stricken unconscious when he looked into Myron's face?

The jailer entered with his breakfast, and Terry consumed the frugal meal in silence while he considered the matter from a new angle.

Klune had shown a desire upon first acquaintance to have him go elsewhere. He had refused. Then there was the back-breaking job in the hot warehouse. Still he had stayed. Then followed the incident of the plugged gun. Somebody was responsible for that. Some one wanted to get rid of him. Who was it?

He walked up and down, absorbed in deep thought. Then he was roused by the sound of voices in the corridor, and the jailer unlocked the door and admitted a visitor.

The newcomer was a big man, dressed with great care. Everything he wore became him. His round, clear eyes were a deep blue and his skin was smooth and pink. He exuded an air of prosperity and a recent acquaintance with the barber-shop as he drew near.

"I'm Mr. Carston," he drawled, speaking with a slightly English accent. "Mr. Klune thought it might be well if I stopped in to see if I could do anything for you. We only heard of your misfortune this morning."

Terry regarded him coldly. Carston had the appearance of a natural-born liar. Those big baby-blue eyes were too innocent. His voice was too smooth. Real men didn't talk like that.

"Have you anything to suggest? You're a lawyer, aren't you?"

Carston inclined his head at Terry's question and surveyed the shining surface of his shoes with great attention before he replied:

"Well, now, I hardly know what to say on such short notice. I only learned of the accident a few moments ago. It was on the Bolsa grade, was it not?"

Terry nodded, and waited for him to continue.

"That was most unfortunate," murmured Carston. "That territory lies within the domain of the county. Had it occurred in the city, you would not have been bothered, but those ignorant ranchers are simply fanatical upon the subject of fast or careless driving."

Terry answered him hotly.

"I was neither careless nor speeding," he said.

Carston smiled and exposed a row of even white teeth.

"We both know that," he replied. "But, you see, juries are so unreasonable. And your connections, too, are most embarrassing."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you see, you are known as a friend of Mr. Myron Masters, and the ranchers, who would most likely compose the jury, have a deep-seated dislike, I am told, for his father, the owner of the San Miguel ranch, due entirely of course to the prejudice of the working class against the moneyed interests."

"What would you advise me to do?" he asked, endeavoring to hurry Carston to his point.

Carston fixed his round, blue eyes upon him with childlike simplicity. Then he took out a gold cigarette case, extracted a cigarette with the tips of his fingers, and extended the case to Terry, who declined with a shake of his head.

"There is a way out of 'most everything," began the lawyer, lowering his voice. "My business, of course, is to find it for my clients. Mr. Klune has sent me to you, and in thinking the matter over hastily, I think I have arrived at a possible and very practical solution."

Terry listened while Carston went on:

"I am well acquainted with all the county officials, particularly the coroner. He is a very fair-minded man, and I do not think he would have any desire or inclination to cause an innocent young man like you to suffer for a pure accident. I think he would gladly use his influence, which as you know is considerable, to bring in a verdict of death due to accidental causes."

He paused and looked languidly into the sunlight. Then he came closer.

"That is of course providing you do what you can to make it easier for him."

"What would that be?"

"Simple enough," said Carston. "Just leave town for a while until the whole thing blows over. You would of course be assuming some risk in returning to the county at all, but I think you would be quite safe in coming back again within three or four months, for as a rule I find the public has a very short memory."

Carston's words sank deep into Terry's consciousness. Carston, working for Klune, was running a fine little bluff on a very small pair, and bluffing was a game that was two-handed.

"What do you think of my idea?" asked the lawyer, when his client exhibited no signs of becoming talkative.

"It is all right," Terry replied. "But it doesn't help me much, for my shoes are all worn through now from walking."

Carston caught his meaning at once.

"Mr. Klune, I feel sure, would be glad to assist you in buying a railway ticket," he said.

Terry smiled.

"Couldn't think of letting him," he replied. "Don't know Mr. Klune well enough to accept a favor like that. I couldn't think of doing what you suggest."

Carston looked at him intently.

"I do not understand," he said. "Really I do not."

"Well, you will if this case ever comes to trial," Terry rejoined, looking deep into Carston's blue eyes. "There will be lots of interesting things brought out that will attract attention even as far as Pico."

Carston polished his glasses reflectively with his silk handkerchief, and Terry concluded:

"They haven't a chance in the world to bind me over, Mr. Carston, but if anybody wants to press matters let them hop to it. I'll stand pat until the show-down."

Carston was busy attending to the crease in his trousers when Terry finished speaking. Then he rose at once.

"I must be going," he said. "Really, I must. Well, old man, we'll do our best. Don't worry; I think it can be arranged satisfactorily."

Talking as he went, the lawyer hurried to the door, which the waiting jailer unlocked, and disappeared from view down the corridor.

Terry walked to the window to rid himself of the clinging aroma of Carston's presence. A few minutes later the warden entered Terry's cell and led him away to the inquest. The coroner asked him a few simple questions, and in response to a juror's request Terry told the story of the accident. Five minutes later he again breathed the free air of the streets. Then he hurried to the hotel and wrote a long letter to James Masters.

CHAPTER XV.

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.

JAMES MASTERS was perplexed, and the novelty of the emotion caused him to pull his fingers savagely through his hair and scowl at the letters which lay before him. Taking up his big calabash, he jammed the bowl with perique and resumed the perusal of his correspondence amidst dense clouds of smoke. Glancing through a number of letters from his son, written from the ranch, he selected five and spread them on the desk before him. Then he read them again.

June 25, 1920.

DEAR FATHER:

Arrived here yesterday. This is the worst place ever. Nothing but heat in town, and only sagebrush and stubble on the ranch. Klune treated us great. He's a prince. I like him. Please send me a hundred dollars. I'm broke again. I haven't been gambling; that is, not much. Only penny ante. Your son,

MYRON.

June 29, 1920.

DEAR FATHER:

What can I do to get away from this Godforsaken hole? Everybody in town damns the name of Masters. I'm sick of it. I'll do anything you say. Go back to college, and promise to keep straight. Anything. Just let me come home. Answer by return mail. In haste,

MYRON.

The next two letters were longer, and Masters's eye lingered only on certain pas-

sages. He read a portion of a letter of July 30, and a grim smile appeared on his face.

I've changed about wanting to come home. This is a pretty fair kind of a place, after all. I like it a lot better. Never realized before what a big thing the San Miguel was. It sure would be a great ranch if it was developed, wouldn't it? Why couldn't it be?

The farmers say they haven't a chance with year-to-year leases. Why couldn't they have longer ones? They might develop water then and make the ranch pay a lot more. I'm really getting interested in farming. Never thought I would. Tell me what you think about the idea of longer leases. As ever,

MYRON.

P. S.—Met a very nice girl here. Her name is Helen Benson. Her father farms the Meadow-Lark Cañon.

Masters rummaged again through the pile of letters and selected one of the date of September 12.

I want to learn something about the San Miguel and how you run it. Klune won't tell me anything. He thinks I'm fooling, I guess, because I asked him for a new job. One where I could learn something and do something worth while. I'm tired of loafing. I want to work.

And so I wish you would come down here and look around for yourself. I am sure the ranchers wouldn't feel that way if you explained it to them. They seem to think it is all your fault. Then I'd like you to meet Helen. She is sure a fine girl.

Your loving son,

MYRON.

The last letter bore the date of September 17, and contained a detailed account of the accident on the Bolsa grade. Masters read it slowly and lingered particularly over the closing page.

Won't you please come down, dad, and look things over? Klune is putting over a raw deal on Benson for some reason or other, and it looks like he was going to make it stick and drive him off the ranch. Benson could pay up if they would just give him a chance. But they won't give him a chance. Carston says he must pay up right away.

Benson doesn't even know who I am. He thinks my name is Streeter, so of course he has no idea that I even know you. He is sure up against it, and he's the squarest shooter you ever saw, dad. Carston tells him he can't help it. Says he's only acting under orders from you, through Klune.

Please come, dad. Won't you? Just for a few days. You won't have to give up your trip. You could stay with Benson, and nobody around here would be the wiser, for they don't know you anyway. I could tell Benson you were just my father.

Don't throw me down, dad. Please come, just for my sake.

This story will be continued in next week's issue of the ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY, the consolidated title under which both magazines will appear hereafter as one.

PIECES OF EIGHT

PIECES of eight, pieces of eight;
Magnets like silvery moons,
How many men have you kept awake
Since the adventures of Hawkins and Drake,
More siren than gold doubloons?

Pieces of eight, pieces of eight,
England's best and its scum
Scented you out, their quest to break
The power of Spain but your selves the stake,
And a whistle for kingdom come.

Pieces of eight, pieces of eight,
Toast of the Skull and Bones
And privateer with a mark to make;
Plucked through many a garboard strake
As counters by Davy Jones!

Richard Butler Glaenzer.

Zindart—King of Gold Mountain

by Grace G. Bostwick

ZINDART was a wee bit of a woolly kidlet nibbling at the green growth with his tiny teeth in ludicrous imitation of his mother's movements, when she jerked suddenly to attention, her head high, her gray nose pointed in suspicion.

They were feeding, or rather, his mother had been feeding on the edge of a luxurious bit that lay like a green bowl set in the steep side of the great snow-hooded mountain which lifted its lofty head to the Alaska skies in that practically untraveled interior where white men are seldom seen. To the left and as far as eye could see, stretched other lofty, snow-crowned sisters in a majestic line of grandeur, while below, to the right, laid the little green-cupped valley and the vast river of waters which wound away in the distance like the gleaming folds of a monster serpent.

Zindart came closer to the woolly hide of his hitherto devoted mother, snuggling against her warmth, to give a shrill blat as she pushed him sharply away—so sharply in fact, that he lost his balance and rolled over and over like an animated ball of wool.

Surprised by the ignoring of his inalienable rights, and hurt by her apparent cruelty, he drew away in pained bewilderment. He saw her give a quick leap in the air, throw her head back and go down, crumpling together in a heap.

He waited for her impatiently, too young to realize that evil had befallen her, but she did not move. And then Zindart gingerly approached the prone figure of the splendid animal that had been so innocently engaged at her evening meal when the soft-nosed bullet found its deadly spot between her startled eyes.

It had been a good shot—a fairly famous shot to the trio of big game hunters camped down in the hollow by the river bed, who were now eagerly sighting their kill through their glasses—but this fact was altogether lost upon Zindart, the orphan. He nosed about his mother, at first crossly in payment for her unwonted neglect. Then fear entered his tiny heart for the stillness of the one usually so fondly active, and he nosed desperately, hoping against hope for response.

There was no slightest stir of the familiar form now fast stiffening into a dread immobility, and terror beset him. He blatted out his fright shrilly to the silence that had suddenly become a silence of horror. He ran frantically from her and as frantically back, panic-stricken, afraid to stay with this motionless thing that would not respond to his baby overtures—still more afraid to leave her.

At last, as darkness crept upon the mountain like a threatening shape, he settled down, worn-out with his grief, numbed with nameless terror and snuggled vainly to the now chilling mother who had succeeded in teaching but a few of the wise things that every kidlet should know ere it goes alone into the cruel world of the orphaned. Now and again as he trembled with the suffering that he could not understand, a half-stifled cry burst from him, not unlike that of a small child grieving uncomprehendingly for what it has lost.

No slightest hint of the finger of destiny in the death of the mother goat who had fallen at the hand of merciless man, to whom sport was the supreme god of the wilderness, could have penetrated the mind of tiny Zindart as he lay dozing uneasily in his grief. Nevertheless, that all-encompassing hand which is better understood perhaps in the wilderness of primitive forces than outside, had stretched forth, marking the spot.

Marking also, it may be said, something within the instinct of the orphaned kid, which, at the appointed time, should manifest to fulfill the ancient law of reaping what had been sown.

"Darned if I like the feel of it!" grumbled the lucky sportsman down in the valley as he folded his glasses and returned them to the handsome case that hung across his shoulder. "Killing is one thing. Leaving a bit of a motherless babe like that is another. I've a notion to go after it."

"That's right, Softy," gibed Cap Haven, who had held the rifle championship of his sporting club at home for a period of years. "Take a baby goat home to show the ladies!"

"I'd no business to shoot the beast anyhow. We've got all the meat we can use while we're here. The Indians are dead right about us fellows. We *are* brutes! No mistake about that!"

"What do you mean—brutes?" scoffed the captain.

"You know that a red man is never known to kill except for food or in self-defense. And not only that, but they pass by the females every time. No wonder they hate us!"

"What about sport?" The third member of the party spoke curiously. "If you put it that way how is a chap going to get the fun he came to this God-forsaken country for? We had all the meat we wanted the second day we struck camp."

"Darned if I know!" responded the first speaker ruefully. "All I know is I feel like a murderer. I may be a softy, but I can't help it and what's more I don't want to. I wouldn't do it again for love nor money. Talk about sport! I keep thinking I hear that little kid crying for his mother."

He shuddered involuntarily.

"Aw, what's eating you?" the captain was of the cheerful order. "You couldn't hear him way down here. You need a bracer—that's what you need. Here!"

Temporarily stilled, the pangs of conscience returned as the night progressed. The man rose and went to the dying camp fire, quietly replenishing the blaze with an eye to his sleeping comrades. He sat long over the warming glow that was comforting in the chilly hours of the darkness, musing on the consequences of his deed.

"I wouldn't have done it if I'd known. I didn't see the little duffer till after she fell. Now what in Sam Patch will a baby like that do to keep alive? Gee, I am a softy and no mistake!" he exclaimed, as he drew closer to the fire.

That night marked an epoch in the man's life. With the dawn of morning, he pulled his stakes, despite the disgusted scorn of his fellow-huntsmen, and left for the Coast, disregarding the fact that he had three weeks of his month's vacation yet to enjoy. Arriving at headquarters, he immediately started proceedings to rouse public sentiment in the matter of more adequate game provision to prevent the extermination of the practically unprotected big game of Alaska.

Destiny, reaching out her long arm, again made a mark against the future, unsmiling, grave and pitiless as sportsmen in the great Northwest are pitiless.

Zindart, the king of Gold Mountain, stood upon the outcropping boulder far up against the side of the ancient sentinel of the wilderness, huge of his kind, graceful almost past belief, with a bearing and tilt to his royal head which betokened his right to the title.

He was in very truth the king of his kind. His black and crumply horns were longer by several inches than those of his underlings. His wool was thicker and finer and seemed of a different fiber. His eyes were sharp and keen with a look of authority in their depths. No hunter in the valley escaped the sweeping reach of those gleaming orbs. His very movements were calculated, purposeful as are only those of the finer grade of beasts.

Zindart had, in some indefinable way, attained to royalty in the animal world from very force of inherent ability. Perhaps the pitiful suffering of his baby days when he had been forced to eke sustenance from the earth before his seeking lips had lost their craving for the warm mother breast, had roused alien forces in the growing instinct. However that may be, Zindart might almost have been called a super-beast, if such there are.

He had attained his kingship not without struggle. Twice had he fought. Once to the death, watched on either side by his cowed and fearful flock. So that now they followed unquestioning where he led, content in his protection. And he held his duty foremost as befits the royal head.

Zindart had left the scene of his early wretchedness, wandering to the mountains at the left many miles away. But something called him back. Some vague impulse of the blood that would not be stilled, led him to the spot of his first days where he had known such care as never since had been his portion.

He had traveled unerringly to the little bowl at the side of the mountain. He had sniffed about curiously. The weather-whitened bones of his mother still lay where they had fallen. But Zindart ignored them with the dignity of his kind.

The range of the flock extended over hundreds of miles—miles seldom covered by man, either white or red. There had been killings—the mysterious killings that came without warning out of the distance and left bleeding and lifeless forms in their wake. But these were infrequent, owing to the inaccessibility of Gold Mountain and the hardships of the trail, which was seldom attempted.

Zindart had mated royally as befits a king, with the very flower of the flock. He had sired many kidlets such as he had been when his mother was stricken down. But his mating had been lacking in that fervor of free and careless goatship. He had retained his kingly dignity throughout his wooing, which was not as other wooings. For Zindart took what he wanted without question or hindrance. There was a certain spirit of aloofness about all his actions which perhaps more than all else combined to hold his royalty.

There was no more sure-footed buck in the North than he. None who knew so well where to find the succulent growth which meant nourishment for his herd. None who guarded his own more zealously.

Came a time when red men, frantic for food, driven farther and farther afield by depredations of idle sportsmen who had practically wiped out the big game of the locality, penetrated the fastnesses of his territory. The Indian is not as the white man. His camping place may remain unseen for days. When he travels he moves not unlike the animal he seeks, and once his far-sighted vision beholds its prey, there is small chance of escape, at least for the average.

Zindart was feeding with his kind, but himself strayed a bit to the fore where he was apt to be found. He had seen nothing, heard nothing, when spat!—something struck the rock behind his body.

He turned instantly and leaped for cover, noting that the feeding animals were well within the shelter of the protecting rocks. The turf at his feet suddenly flew into his eyes. Fear he knew nothing of. But he sensed danger and dropped to the earth. It was while he was so crouched that he beheld a creeping form in the vegetation far below. He kept his keen eyes on that form till it disappeared. Then he hastened his flock far from the ways

of danger in the form of the red man's hunger.

Weir, the remorseful sportsman, had in the meantime formulated his plans with the utmost care. Never had he ceased to regret his action which had left a wee, defenseless thing to make its way in the world. Night after night he had heard its cry—a purely imaginary cry which nevertheless had instigated unremitting effort on behalf of the animal world.

Possessed perhaps by a certain poetic eloquence, fired by his awakened sense of justice for the brute beasts that roam the vast silences, he had at last succeeded in effecting a crude sort of espionage throughout the territory, thus furthering the laws so difficult to enforce. Inadequate as it was, covering as it did but a small portion of the enormous spaces, it had resulted in quite a marked diminution of wanton killing.

Weir himself, lured by the fascination of the country, had disposed of his outside interests and joined the sourdough fraternity. He rejoiced in a government appointment which led to the establishment of posts in the more inaccessible portions of the territory, and was engaged for the most part in expeditions concerning such posts. He had practically given up his life to the cause which he had espoused through his last "kill."

The fact that he was by nature a solitary man, lacking human ties of sufficient nearness to bind him to any particular locality, made his work particularly attractive. He had discovered that he was a natural-born son of the North. He loved the life. He had always been a big-hearted soul beneath his quiet ways, and looking back, he wondered at the thoughtlessness which had ruled the earlier years of his life.

He had become a brown and bearded man of great gentleness—a quality which seems to belong to pioneer life—hardy and strong from his open-air existence; a favorite wherever he chanced to roam. He was known from one end of the territory to the other, not only as a friend to man, both white and red, but as a friend to the four-footed as well. And he hugged that knowledge to his breast.

The sentiment that should have been expressed in the natural ties of human life had with him grown to a deep love of the wild creatures that have so few friends among mankind. Because of him, scores of game wardens were posted about in various localities, preventing infringement of the laws that had been passed by the authorities.

Weir was happy. He felt that he was doing a big work—a vital work. He was of some use in the world. In olden days he had cursed the futility of his existence which in fact had led him in his original hunting trip to the North. He had longed for new experience—perhaps hoping thus to find an outlet for the formless desires that beset him. He had found far more than he had hoped to find. And as he traveled about in his quiet way, love of his work coursed through him like a tide.

He thought of the many tiny animals that he had saved from a like experience to that which must have befallen the goat-kin of his past—and he rejoiced.

"What is this trip you are figuring on, Weir?" asked the old trader at the last post on the Yukon which Weir had made the week before, laying up for a rest before starting on his long expedition into the valley he remembered so well.

"It's one of the worst trails known," he replied, taking his pipe from his mouth. "I made it several years ago with a couple chaps from the States. I suppose the red brothers have made it often since then. I heard last year that they had been hard pressed for meat up in that section."

"Hard pressed is right," chuckled the old trader. "Why, down on the Nebesna where those little villages are located, they tell me that they have to go a distance of two and three hundred miles to find their winter's food. Bad business, that!"

"It has about stopped," explained Weir, describing the work in which he was engaged. "Of course, nothing can replace what has been destroyed, but a few years of care will see rapid repopulation of the animal world. Even now," he rapped his

pipe against his chair in preparation for the night's rest, "I fancy I can see a big difference."

Weir had a strange dream that night. He was back in the little camp that was his next destination, down in the grassy valley beside the monster serpent of a river. His sporting companions were both at hand. And yet things were not unchanged. They were older—his friends of those days—and graver, with a new seriousness about their eyes and mouths.

Again he was sweeping the mountain side with his glasses. Again he saw the mother goat standing out against the background of gray slate. Again he lifted his rifle to his shoulder. But just as he was about to fire, instead of the graceful figure of the animal, he seemed to see his own form standing on the edge of the bowl.

He had taken steady aim and almost without volition, his finger pulled the trigger.

Aghast at what he had done, he threw down his gun and with his glasses to his eyes, again searched the rim of the bowl. A figure laid prone on the rocky ledge—a figure that looked strangely familiar. A figure that seemed to move with difficulty as he watched.

He woke in a streaming sweat to a night of unusual thoughtfulness. For, during his years among the sourdoughs he had absorbed those superstitions which seem almost universally connected with the Alaskan's mental equipment.

With the dawn of morning, he rose and made his preparations to be off. It was a long trip—a hazardous trip from the standpoint of the average man, but to Weir with his years of experience, it was but a pleasure jaunt, which made of his next words a puzzle.

"If I don't come back, Potter," he told the old trader calmly, "will you see that these letters go back to the States for me, with whatever news you may chance to hear?"

"Why, that's a funny thing to say this time of year. No snow slides this season. And bears are done past their dangerous time."

Weir looked at the old fellow soberly, half tempted to tell him of his dream. Then he thought better of it.

"If I don't come back," he repeated, "will you do as I say?"

"Oh, sure, sure!" responded the old trader hastily. "I'll do whatever you say, but you'll come back all right!"

Zindart had been restless for several days. He had wandered about, first on this range, then on that. Again on the farther side of the mountain, trying to lay the uneasiness that possessed him. It was not the mating season, so there was no such natural reason for his evident disturbance.

He was no longer young. But the years had given him more power so that he stood like a patriarch of the flock, undisputed, silent, a leader of leaders. Never had a more perfect male specimen of the type of mountain goat been seen in the territory. His great figure towered head and shoulders above his underlings. His fame had spread among the Indians far and wide, for during the years he had covered a larger and larger area of territory.

He had come to be known as the King of Gold Mountain and there was not a red man that would have disturbed his reign. He was too old for meat, and, besides, he was too splendid a sire to be slaughtered for any reason whatever. Added to that was the natural fear of the red man for whatever seems to bear the charmed life—a life which for years had roamed in its kingly way about the range until he had become a part of it.

Zindart stood, his splendid body exposed to view, out upon a jutting ledge of rock where all could see, should any chance that way. He was not afraid. He was never afraid. He shook himself as he looked about, in sublime defiance of all that existed. He was magnificent. Only perhaps in the wilderness do animals arrive at this supreme perfection. This grandeur of dignity which is lacking in beasts of more inhabited regions.

A sharp sound stabbed the silence.

Zindart took in a mighty breath.

The crack of the rifle had disturbed him strangely. He had heard that sound be-

fore. It was associated vaguely with half forgotten wretchedness.

His muscles swelled and trembled as he stood. An odd exhilaration coursed through him. His restlessness vanished as he leaped like an arrow from his perch.

He found himself in the little green bowl of olden days. Its familiarity was long known, but as he started to cross to the edge where his mother had met her fate, Zindart lifted his head and snorted eagerly.

Even at that moment he remembered his flock. A few of their number, now grown to hundreds, young and old, had followed in his footsteps. He drove them back in his royal way—back out of danger—ere he bounded forward.

A man lay crouched on the ground at the edge of the ledge where he had apparently fallen. Blood was oozing from his body. His face was gray under the weathered brown. His gun, which had evidently been accidentally discharged, was half hidden beneath his body.

He lifted his eyes and beheld the King of Gold Mountain.

His hand dropped at the sight, to fall upon the whitened bones of Zindart's mother, shot down these many years ago.

Weir looked into the face of the noble animal, standing ready to charge, above him—looked searchingly, with an odd steadiness of gaze. It was a look of understanding—of fearlessness. Not a muscle of his body flinched.

There was an instant of silent conflict—concentrated, powerful mental effort on the part of the man.

The rage that had animated the great animal, cooled in the face of that fearlessness. He backed slowly away, shaking his head uncertainly from side to side. He stood as though puzzled for a moment, then turned and trotted back to his flock.

Weir raised himself painfully, stifling a groan as he bent down to examine his wound.

"I must make it to camp!" He rose, staggering, to his feet. "I've got to make it!" His tone was grim. "My work up here cannot end now—after that!" His white lips curved in a sudden smile as Zindart disappeared around the bend of the ledge. It was the smile of a man who had *made good.*

Again Destiny had reached across the years to draw the once careless sower within the circle of her law—only to find that the spirit of man at his best is supreme—one with the Creator of all law!

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THE EVERGREEN CROWN

BORNE on the current of Life's swift stream,
Once launched from the bosom of Time,
Each human bark, with a fitful gleam
Of joy and light, like an airy dream,
Quick passes beyond the mystic clime
Of the Morning's voice, Youth's silvery chime,
To the fierce Noontide, through the chilling dew
Which falls in the shades of the cypress and yew.

The cypress, the yew, Death's darkness endears
When Life with its burdens flows down
To sleep in the Sea of the Slumbering Years,
Where the Islands of Hope mark the Tides of Life's tears,
Earth decking, alike, with her evergreen crown
Young Joy's fair brow, or Misfortune's frown.
There, Life-dreams are garnered and live again,
Through the dark yew's roots, from the dust of men.

Robert Fulkerson Hoffman.

The Night Horseman

by Max Brand

Author of "Clung," "Trailin'," "Children of the Night," etc.

A Sequel to "The Untamed"

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

AT the solicitation of Kate Cumberland, Dr. Randall Byrne who was himself something of an invalid, had ridden out to her father's ranch where he found Joe Cumberland slowly wasting away.

Buck Daniels, the ranchman in love with Kate, explained to Byrne that the dying man, as well as his daughter, were waiting for the return of a man of mystery, who rode a black charger and was known as Whistling Dan.

The doctor ordered Buck to find Dan and bring him to the ranch. Then the silence of the house was rent by the honk of the wild geese as Byrne heard Buck ride into the night to find Dan.

Jerry Strann, the terror of Brownsville, had provoked a fight with Dan in O'Brien's saloon. Mac Strann, the giant brother of Jerry, had come to the hotel where the stricken man lay to take summary vengeance on his assailant.

Buck, in his search for Dan, had reached Brownsville and was questing for his man when he heard a strain of whistling. "It's him! It's him!" cried Buck.

Buck, failing by fair argument to induce Dan to return with him to the Cumberland ranch, resorted to a dangerous ruse. He struck Barry in the face with his bare hand and before the astounded victim could understand, Buck had mounted his horse and was gone. Barry, sensing what had happened, followed in close pursuit while Mac Strann marched into O'Brien's place bent on Barry's destruction.

CHAPTER XIX.

SUSPENSE.

HE found them as he had expected, the girl beside the couch, and the old man prone upon it, wrapped to the chin in a gaudy Navajo blanket. But to-night his eyes were closed, a most unusual thing, and Byrne could look more closely at the aged face. For on occasions when the eyes were wide, it was like looking into the throat of a searchlight to stare at the features—all was blurred. He discovered, now, wrinkled and purple-stained lids under the deep shadow of the brows—and the eyes were so sunken that there seemed to be no pupils there. Over the cheek-bones the skin was drawn so tightly that it shone, and the cheeks fell away into cadaverous hollows. But the lips, beneath the shag of gray beard, were tightly compressed. No, this was not sleep. It carried, as Byrne gazed, a connotation of swifter, fiercer thinking, than if the gaunt old man had stalked the floor and poured forth a tirade of words.

The girl came to meet the doctor. She said: "Will you use a narcotic?"

"Why?" asked Byrne. "He seems more quiet than usual."

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for September 18.

"Look more closely," she whispered.

And when he obeyed, he saw that the whole body of Joe Cumberland quivered like an aspen, continually. So the finger of the duelist trembles on the trigger of his gun before he receives the signal to fire—a suspense more terrible than the actual face of death.

"A narcotic?" she pleaded. "Something to give him just one moment of full relaxation?"

"I can't do it," said Byrne. "If his heart were a shade stronger, I should. But as it is, the only thing that sustains him is the force of his will-power. Do you want me to unnerve the very strength which keeps him alive?"

She shuddered.

"Do you mean that if he sleeps it will be—death?"

"I have told you before," said the doctor, "that there are phases of this case which I do not understand. I predict nothing with certainty. But I very much fear that if your father falls into a complete slumber he will never waken from it. Once let his brain cease functioning and I fear that the heart will follow suit."

They stood on the farther side of the room and spoke in the softest of whispers, but now the deep, calm voice of the old man broke in: "Doc, they ain't no use of worryin'. They ain't no use of medicine. All I need is quiet."

"Do you want to be alone?" asked the girl.

"No, not so long as you don't make no noise. I can 'most hear something, but your whisperin' shuts it off."

They obeyed him, with a glance at each other. And soon they caught the far-off beat of a horse in a rapid gallop.

"Is it that?" cried Kate, leaning forward and touching her father's hand. "Is that horse what you hear?"

"No, no!" he answered impatiently. "That ain't what I hear. It ain't no hoss that I hear!"

The hoof-beats grew louder—stopped before the house—steps sounded loud and rattling on the veranda—a door squeaked and slammed—and Buck Daniels stood before them. His hat was jammed down so far that his eyes were almost buried in the shadow of the brim; the bandanna at his throat was twisted so that the knot lay over his right shoulder; he carried a heavy quirt in a hand that trembled so that one long lash seemed alive, a thousand bits of foam had dried upon his vest and stained it; the rowels of his spurs were caked and enmeshed with horse-hair; dust covered his face and sweat furrowed it, and a keen scent of horse-sweat passed from him through the room. For a moment he stood at the door, bracing himself with legs spread wide apart, and stared wildly about—then he reeled drunkenly across the room and fell into a chair, sprawling at full length.

No one else moved. Joe Cumberland had turned his head; Kate stood with her hand at her throat; the doctor had placed his hand behind his head, and there it stayed.

"Gimme smoke—quick!" said Buck Daniels. "Run out of tobacco a thousan' years ago!"

Kate ran into the next room and returned instantly with papers and a fresh sack of tobacco. On these materials Buck seized frantically, but his big fingers were shaking in a palsy, and the papers tore, one after another, as soon as he started to roll his smoke. "God!" he cried, in a burst of childish desperation, and collapsed again in the chair.

But Kate Cumberland picked up the papers and tobacco which he had dashed to the floor and rolled a cigarette with deft fingers. She placed it between his lips and held the match by which he lighted it. Once, twice, and again, he drew great breaths of smoke into his lungs, and then he could open his eyes and look at them. They were not easy eyes to meet.

"You're hungry, Buck," she said. "I can see it at a glance. I'll have something for you in an instant."

He stopped her with a gesture.

"I done it!" said Buck Daniels. "He's comin'!"

The doctor flashed his glance upon Kate Cumberland, for when she heard the words she turned pale and her eyes and her lips framed a mute question; but Joe Cumberland drew in a long breath and smiled.

"I knowed it!" he said softly.

The wind whistled somewhere in the house and it brought Buck Daniels leaping to his feet and into the center of the room.

"He's here!" he yelled. "God help me, where'll I go now! He's here!"

He had drawn his revolver and stood staring desperately about him as if he sought for a refuge in the solid wall. Almost instantly he recovered himself, however, and dropped the gun back into the holster.

"No, not yet," he said, more to himself than the others. "It ain't possible, even for Dan."

Kate Cumberland rallied herself, though her face was still white. She stepped to Buck and took both his hands.

"You've been working yourself to death," she said gently. "Buck, you're hysterical. What have you to fear from Dan? Isn't he your friend? Hasn't he proved it a thousand times?"

Her words threw him into a fresh frenzy.

"If he gets me, it's blood on your head, Kate. It was for you I done it."

"No, no, Buck. For Dan's sake alone. Isn't that enough?"

"For *his* sake?" Buck threw back his head and laughed—a crazy laughter. "He could rot in hell for all of me. He could follow his wild geese around the world. Kate, it was for you!"

"Hush!" she pleaded. "Buck, dear!"

"Do I care who knows it? Not I! I got an hour—half an hour to live; and while I live the whole damned world can know I love you, Kate, from your spurs to the blue of your eyes. For your sake I brung him, and for your sake I'll fight him, damn him, in spite—"

The wind wailed again, far off, and Buck Daniels cowered back against the wall. He had drawn Kate with him, and he now kept her before him, toward the door.

He began to whisper, swiftly, with a horrible tremble in his voice: "Stand between me, Kate. Stand between me and him. Talk for me, Kate. Will you talk for me?" He drew himself up and caught a long, shuddering breath. "What have I been doin'? What have I been ravin' about?"

He looked about as if he saw the others for the first time.

"Sit here, Buck," said Kate, with perfect quiet. "Give me your hat. There's nothing to fear. Now tell us."

"A whole day and a whole night," he said, "I been riding with the fear of him behind me. Kate, I ain't myself, and if I been sayin' things—"

"No matter. Only tell me how you made him follow you."

Buck Daniels swept his knuckles across his forehead, as though to rub out a horrible memory.

"Kate," he said in a voice which was hardly more than a whisper, "why did he follow Jim Silent?"

The doctor slipped into a chair opposite Buck Daniels and watched him with unbelieving eyes. When he had last seen Buck the man had seemed an army in himself; but now a shivering, unmanned coward sat before him. Byrne glanced at Kate Cumberland for explanation of the mysterious change. She, also, was transformed with horror, and she stared at Buck Daniels as at one already among the dead.

"Buck, you didn't—*strike* him?"

Buck Daniels nodded jerkily.

"I'll try to tell you straight from the beginning. I found Dan in Brownsville. I begged him to come back with me, but he wouldn't stir. This was why: A gunman had come to the town lookin' for trouble, and when he run acrost Dan he found plenty of it. No, don't look like that, Kate; it was self-defense, pure and simple—they didn't even arrest Dan for it. But this dyin' man's brother, Mac Strann, come down from the hills and sat beside Jerry Strann waitin' for him to go west before he started out to clean up on Dan. Yesterday evenin' Jerry was near dead and everybody in Brownsville was waitin' to see what would happen, because Dan wouldn't budge till Mac Strann had had his chance to get back at him. So I sent a feller ahead to fix a relay of hosses to Elkhead, because I made up my mind I was going to make Dan Barry chase me out of that town. I walked into the saloon where Dan was sittin'—my God, Kate, think of him sittin' there doin' that with a hundred fellers

standin' about waitin' for him to kill or be killed! I went up to him. I picked a fight, and then I slapped him—in the face."

The sweat started on Daniels's forehead at the thought.

"But you're still alive," cried Kate Cumberland. "Had you handled his gun first?"

"No. As soon as I hit him I turned my back to him and took a couple of steps away from him."

"Oh, Buck, Buck!" she cried, her face lighting. "You knew he wouldn't shoot you in the back!"

"I didn't know nothin'. I couldn't even think—and my body was numb as a dead man's all below the hips. There I stood like I was chained to the floor—you know how it is in a nightmare when something chases you and you can't run? That was the way with me."

"Buck! And he was sitting behind you—while you stood there?"

"Aye, sitting there with my death sittin' on his trigger-finger. But I knowed that if I showed the white feather, if I let him see me shake, he'd be out of his chair and on top of me. No gun—he don't need nothin' but his hands—and what was in front of my eyes was a death like—like Jim Silent's!"

He squinted his eyes close and groaned. Once more he roused himself.

"But I couldn't move a foot without my knees buckin', so I takes out my makin's and rolls a cigarette. And while I was doin' it I was prayin' that my strength would come back to me before he come back to himself—and started!"

"It was surprise that held him, Buck. To think of you striking him—you who have saved his life and fought for him like a blood-brother. Oh, Buck, of all the men in the world you're the bravest and the noblest!"

"They ain't nothin' in that brand of talk," growled Buck, reddening. "Anyway, at last I started for the door. It wasn't farther away than from here to the wall. Outside was my hoss, and a chance for livin'. But that door was a thousand years away, and a thousand times while I walked toward it I felt Dan's gun click and bang behind me and felt the lead go tearin' through me. And I didn't dare to hurry, because I knew that might awake Dan up. So finally I got to the doors and just as they was swingin' to behind me, I heard a sort of a moan behind me—"

"From Dan!" whispered the white-faced girl. "I know—a sort of a stifled cry when he's angered! Oh, Buck.'

"My first step took me ten yards from that door," reminisced Buck Daniels, "and my next step landed me in the saddle, and I dug them spurs clean into the insides of Long Bess. She started like a watch-spring uncoilin', and as she spurts down the streets I leans clean over to her mane and looks back and there I seen Dan standin' in the door with his gun in his hand and the wind blowin' his hair. But he didn't shoot, because the next second I was swallowed up in the dark and couldn't see him no more."

"But it was no use!" cried the girl. "With Black Bart to trail you and with Satan to carry him, he overtook you—and then—"

"He didn't," said Buck Daniels. "I'd fixed things so's he couldn't get started with Satan for some time. And before he could have Satan on my trail I'd put a long stretch behind me because Long Bess was racin' every step. The lay of the land was with me. It was pretty level, and on level goin' Long Bess is almost as fast as Satan; but on rocky goin' Satan is like a goat—nothin' stops him! And I was ridin' Long Bess like to bust her heart, straight towards McCauley's. We wasn't more'n a mile away when I thought—the wind was behind me, you see—that I heard a sort of far-off whistling down the wind! My God!"

He could not go on for a moment, and Kate Cumberland sat with parted lips, twisting her fingers together and then tearing them apart once more.

"Well, that mile was the worst in my life. I thought maybe the man I'd sent on ahead hadn't been able to leave me a relay at McCauley's, and if he hadn't I knew I'd die somewhere in the hills beyond. And they looked as black as dead men, and all sort of grinnin' down at me.

"But when I got to McCauley's, there stood a hoss right in front of the house.

It didn't take me two seconds to make the saddle-change. And then I was off agin!"

A sigh of relief came from Byrne and Kate.

"That hoss was a beauty. Not long-legged like Bess, nor half so fast, but he was jest right for the hills. Climbed like a goat and didn't let up. Up and up we goes. The wind blows the clouds away when we gets to the top of the climb and I looks down into the valley all white in the moonlight. And across the valley I seen two little shadows slidin' smooth and steady. It was Dan and Satan and Black Bart!"

"Buck!"

"My heart, it stood plumb still! I gives my hoss the spurs and we went down the next slope. And I don't remember nothin' except that we got to the Circle K Bar after a million years, 'most, and when we got there the piebald flops on the ground—near dead. But I made the change and started off agin, and that next hoss was even better than the piebald—a sure goer! When he started I could tell by his gait what he was, and I looked up at the sky—"

He stopped, embarrassed.

"And thanked God, Buck?"

"Kate, I ain't ashamed if maybe I did. But since then I ain't seen or heard Dan, but all the time I rode I was expecting to hear his whistle behind me, close up."

All the life died from her face.

"No, Buck, if he'd 'a' followed all the way he would have caught you in spite of your relay. No, I understand what happened. After a while he remembered that Mac Strann was waiting for him back in Brownsville. And he left your trail to be taken up later and went back to Brownsville. You didn't see him follow you after you left the Circle X Bar?"

"No. I didn't dare look back. But somehow I knew he was comin'."

She shook her head.

"He won't come, Buck. He'll go back to meet Mac Strann—and then—" She ran to the chair of Buck swiftly and caught his hands: "What sort of a man is Mac Strann?"

Buck smiled strangely up into her face.

"Does it make any difference," he said, "to Dan?"

She went slowly back to her place.

"No," she admitted, "no difference."

"If you came by relays for twenty-four hours," said the doctor, numbering his points upon accurate finger-tips, "it is humanly impossible that this man could have followed you very closely. It will probably take him another day to arrive."

But here his glance fell upon old Joe Cumberland, and found the cattleman smiling faintly to himself.

Buck Daniels was considering the last remark seriously.

"No," he said, "it *ain't* possible. Besides, what Kate says may be true. She ought to know—she says he'll wait for Mac Strann. I didn't think of that; I thought I was savin' Dan from another—well, what a damn fool I been!"

He unknotted his bandanna and with it mopped his face to a semblance of cleanliness.

"It was the ridin' that done it," he explained, shame-faced. "You put a man on a hoss for a certain time, and after a while he gets so he can't think. He's sort of nutty. That was the way with me when I come in."

"Open the window on the veranda," said Joe Cumberland. "I want to feel the wind."

The doctor obeyed the instruction, and again he noted that same quiet, contented smile on the lips of the old man. For some reason it made him ill at ease to see it.

"He won't get here for eight or ten hours," went on Buck Daniels, easing himself into a more comfortable position, and raising his head a little higher. "Ten hours more, even if he does come. That'll give me a chance to rest up; right now I'm kind of shaky."

"A condition, you will observe, in which Mr. Barry will also be when he arrives," remarked the doctor.

"Shaky?" grinned Buck Daniels. "M'frien', you don't know that bird!" He sat up, clenching his fist. "And if Dan *does* come, he can't affo'd to press me too

far! I'll take so much, and then—" He struck his fist on the arm of the chair.

"Buck!" cried Kate Cumberland. "Are you mad? Have you lost your reason? Would you *face* him?"

Buck Daniels winced, but he then shook his head doggedly.

"He had his chance down in Brownsville," he said. "And he didn't take it. Why? Because my back was turned? Well, he could of got in front of me if he'd been terrible anxious. I've seen Dan in action; he's seen *me* in action! Maybe he's seen too much. They've been stranger things than that, in this world!" He hitched his belt so that the butt of his revolver came farther forward. But now Kate Cumberland advised: "Buck, you're tired out; you don't know what you're saying. Better go up to bed."

He flushed a ruddy bronze.

"D'you think I'm jest talkin' words, Kate, to hear myself talk?"

"Listen!" broke in Joe Cumberland, and raised a bony forefinger for silence.

And the doctor noted a great change in the old man. There was no longer a tremor in his body. There was only a calm and smiling expectation—a certainty. A tinge of color was in his withered face for the first time since Byrne had come to the ranch, and now the cattleman raised his finger with such an air of calm authority that at once every voice in the room was stilled.

"D'ye hear?"

They did not. They heard only the faint rushing of the air through the window. The flame danced in the chimney of the lamp and changed the faces in phantastic alteration. One and all, they turned and faced the window. Still there was not a sound audible, but the doctor felt as if the noise were approaching. He knew it as surely as if he could see some far-off object moving near and nearer. And he knew, as clearly, that the others in the room felt the same thing. He turned his glance from the window toward Kate Cumberland. Her face was upturned. There was about it a transparent pallor; the eyes were large and darkly ringed; the lips parted into the saddest and the most patient of smiles; and the slender fingers were interwoven and pressed against the base of her throat.

For the first time he saw how the fire that was so manifest in the old man had been consuming her, also. It left no mark of the coming of death upon her. But it had burned her pure and left her transparent as crystal. Pity swelled in the throat of Byrne as he realized the anguish of her long waiting. Fear mingled with his pity. He felt that something was coming which would seize on her as the wind seizes on the dead leaf.

He turned back toward the window. The wind ceased; not a sound. But silence has a greater voice than discord or music. It seemed to Byrne that he could tell how fast each heart was beating.

The old man had closed his eyes again. And yet the rigid forefinger remained raised, and the faint smile touched at the corners of his mouth. Buck Daniels sat lunging forward in his chair, his knees supporting his elbows, and scowled up at the window with a sort of sullen terror.

Then Byrne heard it—so small a voice that at first he thought it was only a part of the silence. It grew and grew—in a sudden burst it was clear to every ear—the honking of the wild geese!

CHAPTER XX.

THE COMING.

THEN a padding step, light, lighter than the sound of the softest thought. It was passing near; the faint breeze blew the sound to them. Each man felt as if some creature were stalking him, unseen. Next—it appeared by magic against the blue black of the night—the head of a great wolf, quite black, shaggy, with sharply pointed ears. And the eyes stared at them, green eyes with lights that swirled as the flame jumped in the throat of the lamp. For a long moment the horror lasted. Then the head, as it had come, disappeared, and the light, light footfall faded away.

Buck Daniels had risen, now. The sound of his whisper made them start.

"I'm going up—to my room—and lock the door—for God's sake—keep — him away!"

And so he stole soundlessly away, and then they heard the creaks which announced his progress up the stairs.

Not Buck Daniels alone. In the deadly silence Kate rose to her feet; and the old man, the invalid—he with the dead body and the living brain—rose from his couch and stood as erect as a soldier on parade.

Byrne caught the sound of another horse coming, far different even to his unpracticed ear from the beat of hoofs which announced the coming of Buck. The rhythm of their fall was slower, as if the stride of the animal were much longer. He pictured a mighty creature with a vast mane blown back against the chest of a giant rider.

There was a murmur from Kate: "Dan, my dear, my dear!"

Then he heard a padding footfall, hardly louder than the light, light step of the wolf. The knob of the door turned slowly, without a sound; it opened, and a man stepped in. He was not larger than the doctor; a slender fellow, almost dapper in his dress, with hardly a sign of travel about him, except that the brim of his sombrero was folded back from his face as if from continual pressure of wind. These things Randall Byrne noted vaguely; what he was sharply aware of were the eyes of the man. He had the feeling that he had seen them before; he remembered the yellow light that had swirled in the eyes of the wolf at the window.

The newcomer flashed a glance about the room, yet for all its speed it seemed to linger an instant on each face, and when it crossed the stare of Byrne the doctor shrank.

"Where is Buck?" asked the man. "I've come for him!"

As if in answer, the great, shaggy dog slipped through the entrance past his master and glided across the room. As he passed, Kate held out a hand to him. She called softly: "Bart!" but she was greeted with a silent baring of fangs; and she caught her hand back against her breast, with the tears springing in her eyes. On the other side of the room the black dog paused and looked back to his master, while Byrne realized with a shudder that the door before which it stood was the door through which Buck Daniels had disappeared. Straight to that door Barry stepped, and Byrne realized that the footfalls made no sound.

Before he reached the door, however, the girl started forward and sprang before him. With her outstretched arms she barred the way. Her skirt brushed almost in the face of the dog, and the beast shrank away not in fear, but crouching in readiness to leap. The sharp ears twitched back; a murderous snarl rolled up from between the wicked teeth. Yet she did not cast a single glance at him; she faced the greater danger.

She was saying: "Whatever Buck did, it wasn't done to hurt you, Dan; it was done for your own sake. And for dad's sake. You sha'n't pass here!"

From his position, the doctor could not see the face of Dan Barry, but he guessed at it through the expression of Kate. Such terror and horror were in her eyes as though she were facing a death's head inches away. Then he saw the slender hand of Barry rise and move toward the girl, slowly, trembling, as though one fierce impulse urged him to thrust her to one side and as though another held back his arm. The doctor could not watch the girl longer; fear and pity were wringing him as he lowered his glance to the floor.

Then he heard her cry: "Have you forgotten me, like Bart? Like, Bart, have you forgotten me, Dan?"

His hand fell to his side and he glided back from her; but now Byrne could see that the eyes of Barry were looking past the girl, as though he stared through the solid wood of the door and found his prey beyond it. The stranger slipped toward the door by which he had entered, with the great dog slinking at his heels. Kate Cumberland leaned heavily against the wall, her arm thrown across her face, but there was no consciousness of her in the face of Barry. Yet at the very door he paused and straightened; Byrne saw that he was staring toward Joe Cumberland; and the old man reached a bony hand out.

"Oh, lad," he said softly, "I been waitin' for you years an' years, seems like!"

Barry crossed the room as swiftly as a flying shadow.

"Sit down!" he commanded, and Byrne caught a faint ring in the voice, like the shiver of metal striking steel.

Joe Cumberland obeyed without a word, and then lay back at full length upon the couch—a palsy had seized on him, and the hand which rested on the shoulder of Dan Barry was shaking. By the couch came the tall dog, and crouched, staring up in the master's face; then the younger man turned his face toward Byrne and the girl. Those thin-cut nostrils expanded, the lips compressed, and Byrne dared not look into the flare of the eyes.

"Who done this?" asked Barry, and still the shiver of cold metal rang in his voice. "Who's done this?"

"Steady, lad," said Joe Cumberland faintly. "They ain't no call for fightin'. Steady, Dan, boy. An' don't leave me!"

Byrne caught a signal from Kate and followed her obediently from the room.

"Let them be alone," she said.

"Impossible!" protested the doctor. "Your father is lapsed into a most dangerous condition. The physical inertia which has held him for so long is now broken and I look for a dangerous mental and nervous collapse to accompany it. A sedative is now imperative!"

He laid his hand on the knob of the door to return, but the girl blocked his way.

"Don't go in," she commanded feebly. "I can't explain to you. All I can say is that dad was the one who found Dan Barry and there's something between them that none of us understand. But I know that he can help dad. I know dad is in no danger while Dan is with him."

"A pleasant superstition," nodded the doctor, "but medicine, my dear Miss Cumberland, does not take account of such things."

"Dr. Byrne," she said, rallying a failing strength for the argument, "I insist. Don't ask me to explain."

"In that case," he answered coldly, "I cannot assume responsibility for what may happen."

She made a gesture of surrender, weakly.

"Look back in on them now," she said. "If you don't find father quiet, you may go in to him."

Byrne obeyed, opening the door softly. He saw Joe Cumberland prone, of course, upon the couch. One hand lay as usual across his breast, but the other was at his side, clasped in the hands of Dan Barry. The old cattleman slept. Yes, there was no doubt that for the first time in many days he slumbered soundly. The lean, narrow chest rose and fell with deep, slow breaths; the eyes were closed, and there was no twitching of muscles to betray ragged nerves or a mind that dreamed fiercely while the body slept. Far over the sleeping man leaned the stranger, as if he were peering closely into the closed eyes of Joe Cumberland. There was a tenseness of watching and waiting in his attitude, like the runner on the mark, or like the burden-bearer lifting a great weight, and Byrne gathered, in some mysterious manner, the impression that Barry sent through his hands and into the body of Cumberland a continual stream of nervous strength—an electric thing. Nonsense, of course. And it was nonsense, also, to think that the huge dog which lay staring up into the face of the master understood all this affair much better than the practised mind of the physician. Yet the illusion held with Randall Byrne in spite of all his skepticism.

He was certain that he had made not the slightest sound in opening the door, but presently the head of the watcher turned slowly, and Byrne was looking into those same terrible yellow eyes. At the same instant the sick man moaned faintly. The doctor closed the door as softly as he had opened it and turned a drawn face upon Kate Cumberland.

"I don't understand; it isn't possible!" he whispered.

"No one understands," said the girl, and smiled mirthlessly. "Don't try to, Dr. Byrne. Go to bed, and sleep. If you can. Good night."

"But you," said Byrne, following her, "are almost as ill as your father. Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"You?" she asked, surprised. "No, nothing."

"But there's not the slightest color in your face. And you are trembling, Miss Cumberland!"

She did not seem to hear him.

"Will he stay?" she asked of herself. "Will he leave before the morning?"

"I shall see that he stays," said the doctor. "I will stay here outside the door and see that he does not leave, if you wish."

Once more she smiled in that baffling manner.

"Could you keep the wind from blowing, Dr. Byrne? If I thought that he could be kept—" She stopped. "He has forgotten us. He has forgotten all of us except dad. And if dad cannot keep him, nothing will keep him. It's useless for you to wait here. Good night again, Dr. Byrne."

He watched her up the stairs. By the dim light he saw her hand catching at the balustrade as if she were drawing herself up, step by step. When she reached the landing and turned half toward him, he saw that her head was fallen.

"Not a glance, not a thought for me," murmured the doctor. "But if the stranger *does* leave—" Instead of finishing the muttered sentences, he drew a chair back against the wall and sat down with folded hands to wait.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAC STRANN DECIDES TO KEEP THE LAW.

IT was hours later that night when Haw-Haw Langley and Mac Strann sat their horses on the hill to the south. Before them, on the nearest rise of ground, a clump of tall trees and the sharp triangle of a roof split the sky, while down toward the right spread a wide huddle of sheds and barns.

"That's where the trail ends," said Mac Strann, and started his horse down the slope. Langley urged his little mount hurriedly alongside the squat bulk of his companion. He looked like the skeleton reality, and Mac Strann the blunt, deformed shadow.

"You ain't going into the house lookin' for him, Mac?" he asked, and he lowered his voice to a sharp whisper in spite of the distance. "Maybe there's a pile of men in that house. It's got room for a whole army. You ain't going in there by yourself, Mac?"

"Haw-Haw," explained the big man quietly, "I ain't going after Barry. I'm going to make him come after me."

Haw-Haw considered this explanation for a dazed moment. It was far too mysterious for his comprehension.

"What you goin' to do?" he asked again.

"Would you know that black hoss agin if you seen him?" asked Mac Strann.

"In a thousand."

"That hoss has had a long ride; and Barry has put him in one of them barns, they ain't no doubt. Most like, the dog is with the hoss."

"It looks a considerable lot like a wolf," muttered Langley. "I wouldn't choose meetin' up with that dog in the dark. Besides, what good is it goin' to do you to find the dog?"

"If you hurt a man's dog," explained Mac Strann calmly, "you're hurting the man, ain't you? I'm going to hurt this man's dog; afterward the dog 'll bring the man to me. They ain't no doubt of that. I ain't goin' to kill the dog. I'm goin' to jest nick him so's he'll get well and then hit my trail."

"What sense is they in that?"

"If Barry comes to me, ain't he the one that's breakin' the law? If I kill him then, won't it be in self-defense? I ain't no law-breaker, Haw-Haw. It ain't any good bein' a law-breaker. Them lawyers can talk a man right into a grave. They'se worse nor poison. I'd rather be caught in a bear-trap a hundred miles from my shack than have a lawyer fasten onto my leg right in the middle of Brownsville. No, Haw-Haw, I ain't going to break any law. But I'm going to fix the wolf so's he'll know me; and when he gets well he'll hit my trail, and when he hits my trail he'll have Barry with him. And when Barry sees me, then"—he raised his arms above him in the dark—"then," breathed Mac Strann, "Jerry can start sleepin' sound for the first time!"

Langley wrapped his long arms about himself.

"An' I'll be there to watch. I'll be there

to see fair play, don't you never doubt it, Mac. Why didn't I never go with you before? Why, Jerry never done anything to touch this! But be careful, Mac. Don't make no slip up to-night. If they's trouble —I ain't a fighting man, Mac. I ain't no ways built for it."

"Shut your mouth," said Mac Strann bluntly. "I need quiet now."

For they were now close to the house. Mac Strann brought his horse to a jog trot and cast a semicircle skirting the house and bringing him behind the barns. Here he retreated to a little jutting point of land from behind which the house was invisible, and there dismounted.

Langley followed example reluctantly. He complained: "I ain't never heard before of a man leavin' his hoss behind him! It ain't right and it ain't policy."

His leader, however, paid no attention to this grumbling. He skirted back behind the barns, walking with a speed which extended even the long legs of Langley. Most of the stock was turned out in the corrals. Now and then a horse stamped, or a bull snorted from the fenced enclosures, but from the barns they heard not a sound. Now Mac Strann paused. They had reached the largest of the barns, a long, low structure.

"This here," said Mac Strann, "is where that hoss must be. They wouldn't run a hoss like that with others. They'd keep him in a big stall by himself. We'll try this one, Haw-Haw."

But Haw-Haw drew back at the door. The interior was black as the hollow of a throat as soon as Mac Strann rolled back the sliding door, and Haw-Haw imagined evil eyes glaring and twinkling at him along the edges of the darkness.

"The wolf!" he cautioned, grasping the shoulder of his companion. "You ain't goin' to walk onto that wolf, Mac?"

The latter struck down Haw-Haw's hand.

"A wolf makes a noise before it jumps," he whispered, "and that warnin' is all the light I need."

Now their eyes grew somewhat accustomed to the dark, and Haw-Haw could make out, vaguely, the posts of the stalls to his right. He could not tell whether or not some animal might be lying down between the posts, but Mac Strann, pausing at every stall, seemed to satisfy himself at a glance. Right down the length of the barn they passed until they reached a wall at the farther end.

"He ain't here," sighed Haw-Haw, with relief. "Mac, if I was you, I'd wait till they was light before I went huntin' that wolf."

"He ought to be here," growled Mac Strann, and lighted a match. The flame spurted in a blinding flash from the head of the match and then settled down into a steady yellow glow. By that brief glow Mac Strann looked up and down the wall. The match burned out against the calloused tips of his fingers.

"That wall," mused Strann, "ain't made out of the same timber as the side of the barn. That wall is whole years newer. Haw-Haw, that *ain't* the end of the barn. They's a holler space beyond it." He lighted another match and then cursed softly in delight. "Look!" he commanded.

At the farther side of the wall was the glitter of metal—the latch of a door opening in the wooden wall. Mac Strann set it ajar, and Haw-Haw peered in over the big man's shoulder. He saw first a vague and formless glimmer. Then he made out a black horse lying down in the center of a box stall. The animal plunged at once to its feet, and crowding as far as possible away against the wall, turned its head and stared at them with flashing eyes.

"It's him!" whispered Langley. "It's Barry's black. They ain't another hoss like him on the range. An' the wolf—thank God!—ain't with him."

But Mac Strann closed the door of the stall, frowning thoughtfully, and thought on the face of Strann was a convulsion of pain. He dropped the second match to his feet, where it ignited a wisp of straw that sent up a puff of light.

"Ah-h!" drawled Mac Strann. "The wolf ain't here, but we'll soon have him here. And the thing that brings him here will get rid of the black hoss."

"Are you goin' to steal the hoss?"

"Steal him? He couldn't carry me two

mile, a skinny hoss like that. But if Barry ever gets away agin on that hoss I ain't never goin' to catch him. That hoss has got to die."

Langley caught his breath with a harsh gurgle. For men of the mountain-desert sometimes fall very low indeed, but in his lowest moments it is easier for them to kill a man than a horse.

"Mac," Langley whispered, "has it got to be done? Ain't there any other way? I've seen that hoss. When the sun hits him it sets him on fire, he's that sleek. And his legs is like drawn-iron, they're that fine. And he's got a head that's finer than a man's head, Mac."

"I've seen him close enough," answered Mac Strann grimly. "An' I've follered him for a day and a half, damn near. S'pose Barry finds out I'm on his trail; s'pose he won't foller the wolf when the wolf tries to lead him to me. S'pose he gets on this hoss and cuts away. Can I foller the wind? This hoss has got to die!"

From the manger he threw out several armfuls of hay, wrenched down from behind the manger several light boards, and tossed them on the hay. He lighted a match and was approaching the small flame to the pile of inflammables when the other cried softly: "Hark, Mac!"

The big man instantly extinguished the match. For a moment they could distinguish nothing, but then they heard the sharp, high chorus of the wild geese flying north. Langley snickered apologetically.

"That was what I heard a minute ago," he said. "And it sounded like voices comin'."

A snarl of contempt from Mac Strann; then he scratched another match, and at once the flame licked up the side of the hay and cast a long arm up the wooden wall.

"Out of this quick!" commanded Mac Strann, and they started hastily down the barn toward the door. The fire behind them, after the puff of flame from the hay, had died away to a ghastly and irregular glow with the crackle of the slowly catching wood. It gave small light to guide them; only enough, indeed, to deceive the eye. The posts of the stalls grew into vast, shadowy images; the irregularities of the floor became high places and pits alternately. But when they were half-way to the door Langley saw a form too grim to be a shadow, blocking their path. It was merely a blacker shape among the shades, but he was aware of the two shining eyes, and stopped short in his tracks.

"The wolf!" he whispered to Mac Strann. "Mac, what 're we goin' to do?"

The other had no time to answer, for the shadow at the door of the barn now leaped toward them silently, without growl or yelp or snarl. As if to guide the battle, the kindling wood behind them now ignited and sent up a yellow burst of light. By it Langley saw the great beast clearly, and he leaped back behind the sheltering form of Mac Strann. As for Mac, he did not move or flinch from the attack. His revolver was in his hand, leveled, and following the swift course of Black Bart.

CHAPTER XXII.

PATIENCE.

THERE is one patience greater than the endurance of the cat at the hole of the mouse: the patience of the thinking man. Randall Byrne sat at his sentinel post with his hands folded and his grave eyes steadily fixed before him, and for hour after hour he did not move. Though the wind rose, now and again, and whistled through the upper chambers or mourned down the empty halls, Randall Byrne did not stir so much as an eyelash in observance.

Two things held him fascinated. One was the girl who had passed up yonder stairs so wearily without a single backward glance at him; the other was the silent battle which went on in the adjoining room. Now and then his imagination wandered away to secondary pictures. He would see Barry meeting Buck Daniels, at last, and striking him down as remorselessly as the hound strikes the hare; or he would see him riding back toward Elkhead, and catch a bright, sad vision of Kate Cumberland waving a careless adieu to him, and then hear her singing carelessly as she turned away. Such

pictures as these, however, came up but rarely in the mind of Byrne.

Mostly he thought of the stranger leaning over the body of old Joe Cumberland, reviving him, storing him with electric energy, paying back, as it were, some ancient debt. And he thought of the girl as she had turned at the landing-place of the stairs, her head fallen; and he thought of her lying in her bed, with her arm under the mass of bright hair, trying to sleep, very tired, but remorsely held awake by that same power which was bringing Joe Cumberland back from the verge of death.

It was all impossible. This thing could not be. It was really as bad as the yarn of the Frankenstein monster. But always he came back, like the desperate hare doubling on his course, upon the picture of Kate Cumberland there at the turning of the stairs, and that bent, bright head which confessed defeat. The man had forgotten her. It made Byrne open his eyes in incredulity even to imagine such a thing. The man had forgotten her! She was no more to him than some withered hag he might ride past on the road.

His ear, subconsciously attentive to everything around him, caught a faint sound from the next room. It was a regular noise. It had the rhythm of a quick footfall, but in its nature it was more like the sound of a heavily beating pulse. Randall Byrne sat up in his chair. A faint creaking attested that it was, indeed, a footfall traversing the room to and fro, steadily.

The stranger, then, no longer leaned over the couch of the old cattleman. He was walking up and down the floor with that softly padding step. Of what did he think as he walked? It carried Byrne automatically out into the darkest night, with a wind in his face, and the rhythm of a long striding horse carrying him on to a destination unknown.

Here he heard a soft scratching, repeated, at the door. When it came again he rose and opened the door—at once the tall, shaggy dog slipped through the opening and glided past him. It startled Byrne oddly to see the animal stealing away, as if Barry himself had been leaving. He called to the beast, but he was met by a silent baring of white fangs that stopped him in his tracks. The great dog was gone without a sound, and Byrne closed the door again without casting a look inside. He was stupidly, foolishly afraid to look within.

After that the silence had a more vital meaning. He was simply keyed to a high point of expectancy, and when the door was opened silently he sprang up as if in acknowledgment of an alarm and faced Barry. The latter closed the door behind him and glided after the big dog. He had almost crossed the big room when Byrne was able to speak.

"Mr. Barry!" he called.

The man hesitated.

"Mr. Barry," he repeated.

Dan turned. It was something like the act of the wolf the moment before; a swift movement—a flash of the defiant eyes.

"Mr. Barry, are you leaving us?"

"I'm going outside."

"Are you coming back?"

"I dunno."

A great joy swelled in the throat of Byrne. He felt like shouting in triumph; yet he remembered once more how the girl had gone up the stairs, wearily, with fallen head. He decided that he would do what he could to keep the stranger with them, and though Randall Byrne lived to be a hundred he would never do a finer thing than what he attempted then. He stepped across the room and stood before Barry, blocking the way.

"Sir," he said gravely, "if you go now, you will work a great sorrow in this house."

A glint of anger rose in the eyes of Barry.

"Joe Cumberland is sleepin' sound," he answered. "He'll be a pile rested when he wakes up. He don't need me no more."

"He's not the only one who needs you," said Byrne. "His daughter has been waiting impatiently for your coming, sir."

The sharp glance of Barry wavered away.

"I'd kind of like to stay," he murmured, "but I got to go."

A dull voice called from the next room.

"It's Joe Cumberland," said Byrne. "You see, he is not sleeping!"

The brow of Barry clouded, and he turned gloomily back.

"Maybe I better stay," he agreed.

Yet before he made a step Byrne heard a faraway honking of the wild geese. He whirled back.

"I got to go," he repeated.

And yet Byrne blocked the way. It required more courage to do that than to do anything he had ever attempted in his life.

"Sir," said Byrne huskily, "you must not go! Listen! Old Cumberland is calling to you again! Does that mean nothing? If you have some errand out in the night, let me go for you."

"Partner," said the soft voice of Barry, "stand aside. I got no time; I'm wanted!"

Every muscle of Randall Byrne's body was sent to repulse the stranger in any effort to pass through that door, and yet, mysteriously, against his will, he found himself standing to one side, and saw the other slip through the open door.

"Dan! Are ye there?" called a louder voice from the room beyond.

There was no help for it. He himself must go back and face Joe Cumberland. With a lie, no doubt. He would say that Dan had stepped out for a moment and would be back again. That might put Cumberland safely to sleep. In the morning, to be sure, he would find out the deception—but let every day bury its dead. Here was enough trouble for one night.

He lingered another instant with his hand on the door; then he cast it wide bravely enough and stepped in. Joe Cumberland was sitting up on the edge of his couch. There was color in the old man's face. It almost seemed, to the incredulous eyes of Byrne, that the face was filled out a trifle. Certainly the fire of the old cattleman's glance was less unearthly.

"Where's Dan?" he called. "Where'd he go?"

It was no longer the deep, controlled voice of the stoic; it was the almost whining complaint of vital weakness.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" parried Byrne. "Anything you need or wish?"

"Him!" answered the old man explosively. "Damn it, I need Dan! Where is he? He was here. I *felt* him here while I was sleepin'. *Where is he?*"

"He has stepped out for an instant," answered Byrne smoothly. "He will be back shortly."

"He—has—stepped—out?" echoed the old man slowly. Then he rose to the full of his gaunt height. His white hair, his triangle of beard, of pointed mustache gave him a detached, a medieval significance; a portrait by Van Dyck had stepped from its frame.

"Doc, you're lyin' to me! Where has he gone?"

A sudden, almost hysterical burst of emotion swept Dr. Byrne.

"Gone to heaven or hell!" he cried with startling violence. "Gone to follow the wind and the wild geese—God knows where!"

Like a period to his sentence, a gun barked outside, there was a howl of demoniac pain and rage, and then a scream that would tingle in the ear of Dr. Randall Byrne till his dying day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW MAC STRANN KEPT THE LAW.

WHEN the dog sprang, Mac Strann fired, and the wolf was jerked up in the midst of his leap by the tearing impact of the bullet. It was easy for Strann to dodge the beast, and the great black body hurtled past him and struck heavily on the floor of the barn. It missed Mac Strann, indeed, but it fell at the feet of Langley and a splash of blood flirted across his face. He was too terrified to shriek, but fell back against the wall of the barn, gasping. There he saw Black Bart struggle to regain his feet, vainly, for both of the animal's forelegs seemed paralyzed. Now the yellow light of the fire rose brightly, and by it Langley marked the terrible eyes and the lolling, slavering tongue of the great beast, and the fangs like ivory daggers. It could not regain its feet, but it thrust itself forward by convulsive efforts of the hind legs toward Mac Strann.

Langley stared for a single instant in white-faced fear, but when he realized that

Black Bart was helpless as a toothless old dog, the tall cow-puncher twisted his lean fingers with a silent joy. Once more Bart pushed himself toward Mac Strann, and then Haw-Haw Langley stepped forward, and, with all the force of his long leg, smashed his heavy riding-boot into the face of the dog. Black Bart toppled back against the base of the manger, struggled vainly to regain his poise, and it was then that he pointed his nose up, and wailed like a lost soul, wailed with the fury of impotent hate. Mac Strann caught Langley by the arm and dragged him back toward the door.

"I don't want to *kill* the dog," he repeated. "Get out of here. Barry 'll be comin' any minute."

He could have used no sharper spur to urge on the laggard. Langley raced out of the barn a full stride before Mac Strann. They hurried together to the little rise of ground behind which they had left their horses, and as they ran the scream which had curdled the blood of Randall Byrne rang through the night. In a thousand years he could never have guessed from what that yell issued; his nearest surmise would have been a score of men screaming in unison under the torture. But Mac Strann and Langley knew the sound well enough.

When they mounted their saddles they could look over the top of the little hill and observe everything easily without being seen; for the hilltop commanded a range of the corrals and a view of the fronts of the barns and sheds which opened upon the fenced enclosures. The largest and longest of these buildings was now plainly visible, for a long arm of fire reached above the roof on one side of the low shed and by this growing light the other barns, the glimmering-eyed horses and cattle of the corrals, the trees about the house, the house itself, were in turn visible, though vaguely, and at times, as the flame lapsed, all were lost in a flood of swift darkness. Once more that inhuman shriek echoed from hill to hill and from building to building. It was Satan in his box stall. The flames were eating through the partition, and the stallion was mad with fear.

Lights flashed, here and there, in the big ranch-house; and from the bunk-house on the farther side of the corrals rose a volley of curses and yells of dismay. The cattle began milling blindly, bellowing and stamping, and the horses ranged at a mad gallop back and forth across their corrals, wild-eyed with terror. It was like the tumult of a battle, and sharper than a trumpet a new sound cut through the din—it was a short, high whistle, twice repeated. An answer came from the burning barn—the long, strong neighing of the stallion.

"D'ye hear?" muttered Mac Strann. "It's the hoss talkin' to his master!"

"And there he comes, runnin' like a wind!"

The flame, picked up by the gale, tore for itself a wider breathing space through the roof and sent up an audibly roaring column of blinding red. By that light Mac Strann saw a lithe figure vault over the fence on the farther side of the corral and dart forward among the milling cattle.

Now, when cattle begin to mill it takes a brave man on a brave, well-trained horse to trust his chances in the midst of that ocean of tossing horns. But this man ventured it on foot. Mac Strann could follow him easily, for the man's hat was off, and the fire-light glittered on his black hair. That glimmering head darted here and there among the circling cattle. Now it was lost, swamped, to all appearances, under a score of trampling hooves. Again it reappeared on the further side. Mac Strann could see the runner in a comparatively open space, racing like a trained sprinter, and he headed straight toward a wall of tossing steers. They were long-horns, and one sway of those lowered heads could drive the hard, sharp point through and through the body of a man. Yet straight at this impassable wall the stranger rushed, like a warrior in his Berserker madness leaping naked upon a hedge of spears. At the verge of the danger the man sprang high into the air. Two leaps, from back to back among the herd, and he was across the thickest of danger, down once more on the ground, and dodging past the outskirts of the bellowing beasts. Over the nearer fence he vaulted and disappeared into the smoke which

vomited from the mouth of the burning barn.

"God A'mighty!" groaned Langley. "Can he get the hoss out?"

"It ain't possible," answered Mac Strann. "All hosses goes mad when they gets in a fire—even when they sees a fire. Look at them fools over yonder in the corral."

Indeed, in the horse-corral a score of frantic animals were attempting to leap the high rails in the direction of the burning barn. Their stamping and snorting came volleying up the hill to the watchers.

"All horses goes mad," concluded Mac Strann, "an' Barry 'll get tramped under the feet of his own hoss even if he gets to the stall—which he won't. Look there!"

Out of the rush of fire and smoke at the door of the barn Dan Barry stumbled, blindly, and fell back upon the ground. Langley began to twist his cold hands together in an ecstasy.

"The hoss is gone and the wolf is gone, and Barry is beat!" he chuckled to himself. "Mac, I wouldn't of missed this for a ten-days' ride. It's worth it. But see the gal and that new gent, Mac!"

For when the clamor arose outside the house, Buck Daniels had to run to the window. For many reasons he had not taken off his clothes this night, but had lain down on the bed and folded his hands behind his head to wait. With the first outcry he was at the window and there he saw the flames curling above the roof of the barn, and next, by that wild light, now Dan Barry raced through the dangerous corral, and then he heard the shrill neighing of Satan, and saw Dan disappear in the smoking door of the barn.

Fear drew Buck Daniels one way, but a fine impulse drew him another. He turned away from the window with a curse; he turned back to it with a curse, and then, muttering: "He went through hell for me; and him and me together, we'll go through hell again!" He ran from the room and thundered down the crazy stairs.

As he left the house he found Kate Cumberland, and they went on together, running without a word to each other. Only when he came beside her, she stopped short and flashed one glance at him. By that glance he knew that she understood why he was there, and that she accepted his sacrifice.

They hurried around the outer edge of the corrals, and as they approached the flaming barn from one side, the men from the bunk-house rushed up from the other. It was Buck Daniels who reached Dan as the latter stumbled back from the door of the barn, surrounded by a following cloud of smoke, and fell stumbling to the ground. And Buck raised him.

The girl was instantly beside them.

She had thrown on a white dressing-gown when she rose from bed. It was girded high across her breast, and over it showered her bright hair, flashing like liquid gold in growing light. She now received the semiconscious burden of Dan Barry, and Buck Daniels stepped forward, close to the smoke. He began to shout directions which the two watchers behind the hill could not hear, though they saw his long arms point and gesticulate and they could see his speaking lips. But wild confusion was on the crowd of cow-punchers. They ran here and there. One or two brought buckets of water and tossed the contents uselessly into the swirling, red-stained hell of smoke. But most of them ran here and there, accomplishing nothing.

"An' all this come from one little match, Mac," cried Haw-Haw ecstatically at the ear of Mac Strann. "All what we're seein'! Look at the gal, Mac! She's out of her wits! She's foolin' about Barry, doin' no good."

A gust of smoke and fire must have met Barry face to face when he entered the barn, for he seemed now as helpless as if he were under a strong narcotic influence. He leaned heavily back into the arms of the girl, his head rolling wildly from side to side. Then, clearer than before, dominating all the confusion of noise, and with a ringing, trumpet note of courage in it, the black stallion neighed again from his burning stall. It had a magic effect upon Barry. He stood up and tore himself from the arms of the girl. They saw her gesture and cry to the surrounding men for help, and a dozen hands were stretched out to keep

the madman from running again into the fire. They might better have attempted to hold a wild horse with their naked hands. He slipped and broke through their grips, and a second later had leaped into the inferno of smoke, running bent close to the ground, where the pure air was sure to be.

"The gal's sick! Look, Mac!"

And he began to laugh in that braying voice which had given him his nickname. Yet even in his laughter his eyes were brightly observant; not a single detail of misery or grief was lost upon him; he drank it in; he fed his famine-stricken soul upon it. Kate Cumberland had buried her face in her arms; Buck Daniels, attempting to rush in after Dan Barry, had been caught beneath the arms by Dr. Byrne and another was now borne struggling back.

From the very heart of the burning barn the sharp, single whistle burst and over the rolling smoke rose the answering neigh. A human voice could not have spoken more intelligibly: "I wait in trust!"

After that neigh and whistle, a quiet fell over the group at the barn door. There was nothing to do. There was not enough wind to blow the flames from this barn to one of the neighboring sheds; all they could do was to stand still and watch the progress of the conflagration.

The deep, thick voice of Mac Strann broke in:

"Start prayin', Haw-Haw, that the hoss don't kill Barry when he gets to him. Start prayin' that Barry is left for me to finish."

He must have meant his singular request more as a figure of speech than a real demand, but an hysteria was upon Langley. He stretched up his vast, gaunt arms to the dim spot of red in the central heavens above the fire, and Haw-Haw prayed for the first and last time in his life.

"O Lord, gimme this one favor. Bring Barry safe out of the barn. Bring him out even if you got to bring the damned hoss with him. Bring him out and save him for Mac Strann to meet. And, God A'mighty, let me be around somewheres when they meet!"

This strange exhibition Mac Strann watched with a glowering eye.

"But it ain't possible," he said positively. "I been in fires. Barry can't live through the fire; an' if he does, the hoss will finish him. It ain't possible for him to come out!"

From half the roof of the shed flames now poured, but presently a great shower of sparks rose at the farther end of the barn, and then Haw-Haw heard the sound of a beating and crashing.

"Hei!" he screamed. "Barry's reached the black hoss and the black hoss is beating him into the floor!"

"You fool!" answered Mac Strann calmly. "Barry has got a beam or something and he's smashing down the burning partition of the box stall. That's what he's doing; listen!"

High over the fire, once again rose the neighing of the black horse, a sound of unspeakable triumph.

"You're right. He's reached the hoss!"

He had hardly finished speaking when Mac Strann said: "Anyway, he'll never get out. This end wall of the barn is fallin' in."

Indeed, the outer wall of the barn, nearest the door, was wavering in a great section and slowly tottering in. Another moment or two it would crash to the floor and block the way of Dan Barry coming out with a flaming ruin. Next the watchers saw a struggle among the group which watched. Three men were struggling with Buck Daniels, but presently he wrenched his arms free, struck down two men before him with swinging blows of his fists, and leaped into the smoke.

"He's gone nutty, like a crazy hoss with the sight of the fire," said Mac Strann quietly.

"He ain't! He ain't!" cried Haw-Haw Langley, wild with excitement. "He's holdin' back the burnin' wall to keep the way clear, damn him!"

Indeed, the tottering wall, not having leaned to a great angle, was now pushed back by some power from the inside of the barn and kept erect. Though now and again it swayed in, as though the strength which held it was faltering under the strain.

Now the eyes of the watchers were called to the other end of the barn, but a tremendous crashing. The entire section of that

part of the roof fell in, and a shower of sparks leaped up into the heart of the sky.

"That's the end," said Mac Strann. "Haw-Haw, they wasn't any good in your prayer."

"I ain't a professional prayin' man, but I done my best. If—"

He was cut short by a cry from the watchers near the door of the barn, and then, through the vomited smoke and the fire, leaped the unsaddled body of Satan bearing on his back the crouched figure of Dan Barry, and in the arms of Barry, limp, his head hanging down loosely, was the body of the great black dog, Bart.

A fearful picture. The smoke swept following around the black stallion, and a great tongue of flame licked hungrily after the trio. But the stallion stood with head erect, and ears flattened, pawing the ground. With that cloud of destruction blowing him like the charger which the last survivor might ride through the ruin of the universe in the Twilight of the Gods.

At the same instant, another smoke-clad figure lunged from the door of the barn, his hands outstretched as though he felt and fumbled his way through utter darkness. It was Buck Daniels, and as he cleared the door the section of tottering wall which he had upheld to keep the way clearer for the three, wavered, sagged, and then sank in thunder to the floor, and the whole barn lay a flame-tossed mass of ruin.

The watchers had scattered before the plunge of Satan, but he came to a sliding halt, as if his rider had borne heavily back upon the reins. Barry slipped from the stallion's back with the wounded dog, and kneeled above the limp figure.

"It ain't the end," growled Mac Strann. "That hoss will go runnin' back into the fire. It ain't hoss nature to keep from goin' mad at the sight of a fire!"

In answer to him, the black stallion whirled, raised his head high, and, with flaunting mane and tail, neighed a ringing defiance at the rising flames. Then he turned back and nuzzled the shoulder of his master, who was working with swift hands over the body of Black Bart.

"Anyway," snarled Langley, "the damned wolf is dead."

"I dunno," said Mac Strann. "Maybe—maybe not. They's quite a pile that we dunno."

"If you want to get rid of the hoss now's the time for it, Mac. Get out your gun and pot the black. Before the crowd can get after us, we'll be miles away. They ain't a saddle hoss in sight. Well, if you don't want to do it, I will!" And he whipped out his gun.

But Mac Strann reached across and dragged the muzzle down.

"We done all we're goin' to do to-night. Seems like God's been listenin' pretty close around here!"

He turned his horse, and Langley reluctantly followed suit. Still, as they trotted slowly away from the burning barn, Langley kept his glance fixed behind him until a final roaring crash announced the end of the barn. Then he turned his face to his companion.

"Now what?" he demanded.

"We go to Elkhead and sit down and wait," answered Mac Strann. "If the dog gets well he'll bring Barry to us. Then all I've got to do is defend myself."

Langley twisted up his face and laughed, silently, to the red-stained sky.

This story will be continued in next week's issue of the ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY, the consolidated title under which both magazines will appear hereafter as one.

AT THE MOVIES

TWINKLE, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder who you are
Married to this week? And when
You'll be changing once again?

Mary Carolyn Davies

When Sing Lo Spilled the Beans

by Will A. Corey

THERE'S a well-grounded popular suspicion that a sailor has a girl in every port. And I personally know that many a railroad man has a girl at each end of the run. You see, I used to be a railroad man myself. What? Please don't get personal.

Now, Joe Turk was neither a sailor nor a railroader; Joe was a lumber-jack. But he liked the ladies, just the same. Joe had a girl in Rosedale, where he spent his winters—mostly in jail. And he had another sweetheart up at Pine Top Terminal, just across the shoulder of the mountain from one of the Sierra Lumber Company's camps, where he worked summers. He had a winter girl and a summer girl. Joe used to brag about it a good deal.

Joe met his Rosedale girl—that is, his winter girl—in jail. You see, it was this way: Joe used to spend every winter behind the bars. That was his regular hotel—American plan—o' winters. Regular as autumn came and the snows forced the camps in the mountains to shut down, Joe would go down to the valley town with his summer's pay in his pockets. Then, without any unnecessary delay, he'd gamble or drink it away—this was before July 1, 1919—get fighting drunk, clean up some place or other, and be gathered in by the cops.

It was agreed upon between the company, the court, and the town authorities that Joe, once in jail, should be kept in until he was needed when the lumbering began again the next spring. So they just salted him down until the thaws.

Now, the girl—Lottie Maloney was her name, fresh-complexioned, black-eyed, and pretty as the roses that bloomed in Rosedale—used to come to the jail with the Salvation Army of Sunday mornings. So she and big Joe Turk met that way. Joe got religion—Joe always got religion in jail in the winter, and lost it again the next summer—and fell in love with Lottie.

The first thing Lottie said to Joe one Sunday morning, after the visitors had held a little service in the jail, as she handed him a Testament, was:

"Don't you want to be a better man?"

"Well, my purty Irish rose," Joe says, looking admiringly down at her, "just between you an' me, I'm a purty good man as it is, if anybody should ask you. I'm a better man right now, stove up as I am, than any they got in Rosedale. Didn't I clean 'em all over at the Razzle-Dazzle the other night? Didn't I polish the house proper? That's w'y I'm here, sweetheart. If I hadn't 'a' been a right middlin' good man they wouldn't 'a' had me throwed in here. See?"

"But that wasn't what I meant," Lottie said, trying not to smile. "I meant, don't you want to be a better man morally, not physically."

"Oh!" said Joe, as the light dawned. "Mor'ly—a better man mor'ly. Well, mebbe so—what's in it? What's the idee?"

"You'll be happy here," Lottie said, as she straightened her hat with a daintily gloved hand, "and you'll go to heaven when you die."

"Now, look here, adorable one, I'm fairly comfortable right here now, or will be when this here swellin' goes down an' a few little bruises heals over. This here's th' middle o' November, an' I reckon I'm in till March or April. Now in all that time I don't have to swing a ax or rastle chokers. I don't have to cuss th' water-buck or eat Sing Lo's tough steak an' cold fried spuds, which the same is worse than county jail beans. I eat an' I don't have to be out in mean weather.

"I'm fair happy here, sweetheart. An' as for heaven—say, deary, if you'll just float in here every few days an' let me see your sweet face an' hear your angel voice, it 'll be all the heaven I'll need for a while anyway. Savvy? Will you do it?"

"I'll come every Sunday if you'll promise to read your Bible." Lottie Maloney's pleased smile showed that she was a woman as well as an evangelist.

Joe promised, of course, and it worked beautifully during that winter's sojourn in jail. Joe read and reread his Testament. Furthermore, he saw to it that the other boarders read and reread theirs also.

"Keep yer eyes on th' Scripter, thar, you blank son of a polecat!" Joe would threaten some derelict; "or I'll break yuh in little pieces. Yuh gotta tell me all 'bout Job's wives an' Solomon's biles."

And besides the Bible readings and the catechizing that followed, the attendance at the Sunday morning missionary services was always one hundred per cent.

If the love of pretty Lottie Maloney made heaven for Joe in jail during the week days, the Sundays when he saw her were seven times heaven. To receive some new piece of literature from her hands, and to see her smile and hear her praise his efforts in her gentle voice—what greater happiness could a poor devil want. And the way she would blush and smile and thank him for the poetry he'd written—yes, he got that bad he got to writing verse—made Joe wish it would stay winter all the time.

But all things come to an end, even winter months and county jail terms, and in the spring one day, when the warm sun had begun to send the torrents of melted snow down from the mountains, and Joe's poetry was growing stronger every day—one day a summons came from the turnkey. Joe was to go out. Work was beginning in the sawmills and logging camps, and the company needed him. So Joe left winter quarters.

He paid a visit to Lottie Maloney, delivered to her a whole bale of his poetry, and bade her good-by.

"An' you'll be a good man all summer, now, won't you?" she made him promise, blushing very prettily, and giving him her hand.

"I'll be two kinds of a good man, angel eyes," Joe readily covenanted—"mor'ly, an' the other kind."

"An' you'll read your Testament every day?" Lottie further itemized.

"Every day, little one," agreed Joe. "An' say, sweety, if I send a mule down th' mountain, will you send up a pack o' Bibles? If you will, I'll see that there's more study o' Scripter in our camp this summer than in all the rest o' Californy put together. Come fall I'll contract to show you the finest bunch o' Bible students you ever seen. Will you do it, honey?"

"I'll see the lieutenant about it," Lottie promised, with a pleased smile.

"Done," said Joe. "Now just watch my smoke!"

"An' you won't drink any intoxicants?" Miss Maloney went on.

"Drink which? Oh—booze. That's easy. There ain't none up there to drink; nothin' but common mountain water an' Sing Lo's sloppy coffee. Is coffee 'lowed?"

"Sure you can have your coffee," Lottie conceded. "And you won't use profane language?"

"Use who? Oh, you mean fer me not to cuss. N-no, not unless that d—unless that water-buck—no, dear heart, I won't swear, even at the water-buck, seein' it's you as asks me not to. But I'll fix him some other way. You don't know what you're askin', Miss 'Loney, you don't know that d—that water-buck."

"And you'll come back and see me some time?" she summed up very sweetly.

"Oh, I'll be back in the fall, all right," Joe promptly assured her. "I always do; that's my regular trick."

So Joe pried himself loose and ascended up unto the mountain, there to put in another summer felling trees, heaving logs, sawing lumber, and trying to eat Sing Lo's tough beefsteaks and be a Christian at the same time.

It was a man's job. That Joe Turk didn't keep all the promises he had made to Lottie Maloney is only another way of saying that he was human. No normal man could have made good on all those covenants—not in a lumber camp.

At this point enters another girl—Joe's summer girl, Selma Silverton, daughter of the station agent over at Pine Top Terminal, just across the shoulder of the mountain from the lumber camp. She was a blonde, active and graceful as a fawn, bright as a shaft of mountain sunshine, cheerful as a lark.

Joe saw Selma one Sunday, and at once fell in love with her, which was a way he had.

"Hello, brightness," he accosted this new girl one day, coming along by the little patch of green grass at the end of the station house. "Hello, bright eyes, is this Pine Top Terminal?"

"No," Selma said, "this is San Francisco. Why?"

"Oh, nothin'," Joe returned. "I was just wonderin'. Then they both laughed, and were straightway well acquainted.

In no time at all Joe was dreaming of this new charmer o' nights, and spending every Sunday over at Pine Top, helping Selma spade and hoe in the little postage stamp of a garden at the end of the station, and wandering with her over the near-by mountain slopes and up and down the cañons.

There was only one thing lacking; Joe kept hoping for some chance to rescue Selma from some band of cutthroat villains, or at least to grab her away from the very jaws of some savage animal. But he couldn't seem to hear of any villains—unless it was that blanked-blank water-buck, and he wouldn't do at all—and the savage animals seemed all to have been killed off. But there was one thing the lumber-jack *could* do; he could still write poetry! So the evenings in the bunk-house, that should have been given to reading the Testament received from his winter girl, Joe spent in inscribing love verses to his summer girl.

Long and toilsomely, lying in his bunk, he burned his midnight lantern over this gentle task; measuring and remeasuring his lines; adjusting length to proper length; chopping the rough structure into semblance of shape; sawing the ends to match; working long and late at his literary carpentering. Then, on Sundays, he would pack the week's finished product over the hog-back to show to Selma.

But writing poetry and courting the Pine Top stationmaster's daughter was only the bright side of life in the lumber camp. There was a dark, or perhaps I should say a yellow, side. It wasn't the daily toil, the noise of the whining sawmill, the heat of the midday sun, the dust, the sweat, the bruises. It wasn't these; it was Sing Lo, the Chinese cook.

Now Sing Lo—he was a tall, thin, opium-smelling bag o' bones with flapping trousers and rattan-slippered feet—was one of the worst Highbinders that ever swung a meat ax. The Chinaman had a drag with Mr. Hooper, the superintendent, which spoiled him. Also he had no sense of humor, which was equally inexcusable. There were mutterings of a coming cloudburst.

"Say, Sing," Billy Dunn remarked to the Chinaman one morning, "on the level, this here steak's tougher 'n a Villa bandit's idee o' justice. For the love o' Mike, where'd yuh find it?"

"You no likee, you—"

"Now, don't git sore, Sing," cut in Billy. "Listen to reason. For one thing, you

don't cut your meat right. You cut it with the grain, when you oughta cut it across, see? Then it wouldn't be so much like a rhino's left hind foot."

"I cutee meat thin, I fly him velly goo'. You no likee him, you no eatee." Sing Lo shoved a platter of fried potatoes on the long table, and turned toward the cook-house door. His dignity was highly offended by this questioning of his culinary art.

"Pass th' wheel beltin'," some one else called out, referring to the steak.

"No, the rubber tubing," was another man's comparison.

"I call it boiler plate," was still another's idea.

The men were still in a patient humor. Matters had not yet come to the point of violence.

"An' say, Sing Lo," began John Wheeler, the donkey doctor, as the Oriental returned from the cook-house, "can't we have somethin' besides fried spuds an' burnt biscuits in the mornin' once in a while? An' don't throw the spuds in whole, Sing; cut 'em thinner."

"Me catchum spud, me fly goo'," protested the Chink. "You t'ink loggee camp one fine hotel? Me fly spud goo'. Me no catchum time choppee him fine. You savvy?"

As the men hurried from an unsatisfactory breakfast to go to work they met Joe Turk just coming in. Joe had been writing poetry to Selma Silverton the night before, and had overslept.

"Say, Sing, ol' pal," he called out, hurrying to the table, "dish me up something hot, won't yuh? I—I hada work overtime las' night, an' I missed the boat this mornin'. Come, shake a leg!"

But the Chinaman, without a word, pointed solemnly to the little tin alarm-clock that he kept on a small wall bracket. He moved not a peg, nor said a word. He had done his part, and he wasn't required by the company rules to pamper late sleepers.

So insipid, sloppy, muddy coffee, cold, discouraged biscuits, and other leftovers were all Joe got.

He ate his belated breakfast, letting his eye wander now and then to the Chinaman, and thinking how good it would feel to break the cook's leathery neck and drop him down some bottomless cañon.

That night, after long hours of heavy, exhausting intellectual effort, Joe finished his literary masterpiece, which was a marriage proposal aimed at Selma Silverton, done in rime.

Not being able to wait until Sunday to carry this precious document over the mountain himself, Joe gave it to Sing Lo to take over. The Chinaman got his supplies at Pine Top, and went every day. Sing took it without a word, and delivered it faithfully. That was one thing to chalk up in Sing Lo's favor.

The next Sunday, as early as he dared, Joe sped over the mountain to Pine Top. He found the girl at the regular trysting-place. She looked as bewitching as ever.

"Did you git my letter, sunshine?"

"Yes, Joey," she twittered. "The Chink fetched it."

"An'—an'—are you goin' to tie up with me?"

"Well, not just to-day, Joey," she cautioned him. "I—I gotta think it over some. But I'll say this much, you're a regular bear of a pote. I think you got Shakespeare knocked clean off the perch. Say, Joey, was Mrs. Shake a pote writer, too?"

"I dunno, precious; why?"

"'Cause if I'm gonna be a pote's wife—tee hee!—I say, *if*, 'cause my head ain't made up yet, you know—but *if* I am, I gotta write a pome answer, see?"

"An' you ain' gonna say yes to-day?" Joe was plainly disappointed.

"No, not to-day; I gotta put it in a pome, an' that 'll take time. Say, Joey, what 'd you eat when you writ that poretry?"

"Why—why, nothing much, but Sing Lo's bull-meat an' spuds. W'at's that got to do with it, dearest?"

"Well," thought Selma, "I heard once that to write the best kind o' poretry—especially 'bout weddin's an' thataway—that you had to eat kind o' particular like; such as frogs' ears an' hummin'-birds' tails, an' things like that. Do you s'pose your Chinaman—"

"Sing Lo?" broke in the logger. "That Highbinder can't cook turnips right, let alone somethin' to start th' poretry a goin' inside a person. Besides, if he thought you wanted him to he wouldn't do it all the more."

"Then," concluded Selma, "I s'pose I'll have to eat ma's cookin', which I know ain't the best for poretry, but I'll do the best I can, an' maybe some day this week I'll have it wrote. Then I'll send it over by the Chink."

So, although Joe went back that afternoon without the answer he longed for, signed, sealed and delivered, he felt sure what it would be and he was accordingly very happy.

In the mean time the growing discontent in the camp over Sing Lo's culinary atrocities came to a head. Complaint was made to Mr. Hooper, but no relief came.

One morning the men took the law into their own hands, and there was a party. Without any preconcerted plan there was a rush for Sing Lo just as the Mongolian appeared at the door of the mess-room, carrying a dish piled high with fried sinew of bovine and hot gravy in one hand, and a platter filled with the food of Ireland in the other.

The meat and potatoes, hot grease and gravy, flew in various directions, and Sing Lo vanished into the cook-house. The mob followed him. The Chinaman retreated to the big range in the far end of the room, seized a meat cleaver from the chopping block there, and began swinging it as he excitedly warned the attackers back in mingled pidgin English and classic Chinese.

He was surrounded, and Big Joe seized him from behind. He was disarmed without bloodshed and securely bound. His haughtiness gone, and thoroughly scared, he began to beg piteously. Mr. Hooper was away at San Francisco, and the cook was helpless.

"Hang him!" shouted several men. Some one ran for a rope, while others seized and carried the cook outside. It certainly looked as if Sing Lo would soon be with his ancestors.

The rope was brought. It was properly noosed. A certain tree with a horizontal branch at the right height was designated. The noose was placed over Sing Lo's head, and, struggling and begging, he was carried toward the tree.

But Joe Turk had been doing some quick-fire thinking, and as the tree was reached he called a council of war.

"Say, fellers," Joe began to argue, "not that he don't deserve it good an' plenty, an' then some, but this here's murder, an' we gotta think of the mornin' after. Hadn't we better—"

"Aw!" put in Billy Dunn, breaking in through the ring of men around the Chinaman; "aw, just tell any fair-minded jury o' white men about that steak an' them pertatoes an' them flies, an' they'll 'quit us without a leavin' the box. You just tell 'em. If it don't bring tears to their eyes I'll eat my cabeza."

"But," objected Joe, "maybe them jurymen was never in a loggin' camp an' et after a Chink cook, an' you can't never tell. Now I got a scheme. Le's send him down the flume."

This idea caught the crowd's fancy. The hanging was given up, and preparations were at once begun to put Joe's plan into execution. A boat was made by nailing together three twenty-four-inch wagon planks, something like a feed trough, with the ends well closed.

Sing Lo, bound hand and foot, was placed in this improvised canoe with his back turned toward where he was going—wherever that might be. He was well lashed to the craft, so that little movement was possible, and as for escape, that was out of the question.

Then, with a line of willing pallbearers on either side, Sing Lo was picked up, boat and all, and the procession started toward the flume. For everybody, barring the Chinaman, it was a very happy funeral.

They had barely started, however, when Big Joe thought of something else.

"Set him down an' wait a minute," Joe ordered. Then the chief undertaker disappeared into the mess-room.

He was quickly back, carrying Sing Lo's little tin alarm-clock, a hammer and nails, a piece of board and a string.

Joe nailed the board across the top of

the boat right in front of the occupant, then with the string fastened the clock to the board.

"There!" Joe congratulated himself, when this job was done, "Sing 'll want to know what time it is when he strikes the foot o' the grade. Now he can't say we wasn't good to him an' thoughtful. Also, as he goes on his merry way, he'll think o' them times he wouldn't give us hot coffee when we was late to breakfast."

This gave Billy Dunn an idea, and the following notice was written, duly signed, and pinned to the Chinaman's back:

NOTIS.

This here Chink is a ondesirable cit. he's Deported. He aint wanted. he Dont Belong. He eats hop an he wont say his prayers. He cant cook our way an he aint no good nohow. (sIgned)

COMITTE ON FUNERAL ARANGEMENTS,
CAMP No. 2, SIERRA LUMBER Co.

The pallbearers again bent to their task, and the sad march was resumed. They reached the flume, which was a V-shaped structure built on trestlework. It carried several feet of water, and was used to float sawed timbers from the mill at the camp down to the company's yards at the foot of the mountain, some sixty-five miles distant.

The boat was put down beside the flume while the men rested. Sing Lo, saved from one horror only to face another, begged for his life. In a tragic mixture of chop-stick and English he promised all kinds of culinary reform. "Oh, velly goo', velly goo'," if they would only give him another chance.

But the edict had gone forth, and the ex-cook, with his boat and ticket of leave, was lifted over the side of the flume, and an instant later Sing was at the mercy of water and gravity. The plank boat dipped in the rushing flood, rolled dangerously for a moment, righted itself, and bumped against the sides of the flume. Then the current caught it and, followed by shouts of "So-long, Sing, ol' boy, good luck!" the Oriental was on his way.

The crowd watched him to where the column of water swept around a curve of the fir-clad mountain and was gone.

Just what tortures of mind the Chinese suffered in that trip to the valley will, of course, never be known. But the reader has plenty of room for imagination. In all that sixty-five miles of flume there were probably not over twenty consecutive straight feet. It was crooked as any Chinaman's life could possibly be.

As to degrees of dip it varied. In some places it was almost level, and Sing Lo no doubt had time to catch up on his breathing, and note what time it was by the little tin clock looking up at him and ticking industriously. At such places the voyager probably did not make over three or four miles an hour.

But at other places the flume was so steep that the water left the bottom in a veritable cataract, and as the cook struck these watery hurdles he must have attained a velocity of at least three or four miles a minute. At such places, no doubt, all those integumentary steaks and watery potatoes came up before him, one by one, to mock his agony.

The men up at the logging camp heard from Sing Lo at frequent intervals on his voyage. At every four or five miles along the flume's winding course there was a little shack where a "flume herder" lived. Every flume herder had a telephone, and had been notified from the camp to watch for the Chinaman.

Soon the phone at the camp began to bring such messages as: "Chink just passed here, goin' strong"; "Your cook has came, and he has went"; "Didn't see him comin', but seen him goin'"; "Slowed down opposite here a bit, but still on his way"; "Saw a yeller comet, but it didn't stop"; *et cetera.*

Finally the last flume herder, far down the mountain, reported in, and the committee knew that Sing Lo was near the end of the flume where it emptied into a little stream that was used by vegetable gardeners for irrigation purposes. For most of the committee this was the last of Sing Lo. But Joe Turk still had a guess coming.

This deportation of the cook was on Friday, and the following Sunday, as was his wont, Joe went over the mountain to see his heart of hearts; that is, his *summer* heart of hearts, Selma Silverton.

"Well, sugar plum," Joe began cheerily and confidently when he found the girl, "is the pome answer wrote?"

"Is it wrote!" Selma's eyes opened wide with surprise. "Don't you know it's writ? Didn't you git it? Didn't the Chink give it to you?"

"He never said a word," Joe assured her. "Did you give it to him?" Joe's blood began to run cold.

"Did I! Didn't I!" There were tears in Selma's voice. "Of course I did an—an' I s'pose he forgot it an'—an'—you never cared enough to ask him for it. That's how much you think of—of my poretry. Now you go right back over the hill an' git that pome piece offen the Chinaman.

"But—but, Selma, dearest," stammered Joe, "I—I can't. You see, Sing Lo's gone. He has went—vamosed. He don't bother us no more."

"Gone?" wailed Selma. "Where?"

"Down the flume," said Joe. "But, reely, dear heart, you mustn't blame him too much; Sing Lo didn't mean to do it. He didn't want at all to leave us. He went, as you might say, 'cause we was in a majority."

"An—boo-hoo!—my pome's gone down the flume with him," sobbed Selma. "An' —an' you didn't so much as search him before he went. You ought to have knew Sing Lo might have a pome in his clo'es. Oh, false man! I don't care so much about a losin' you, but I hate to lose that pome."

"But you ain't lost me," Joe hastened to remind her, with a bright smile. "An' you can write another pome—when you git rested up."

"I ain't goin' to write no other pome," sobbed Selma. "An' you can just have your pome letter back." The girl forthwith drew Joe's poetical marriage proposal from the bosom of her dress and made him take it.

The logger reached for it reluctantly and looked at it. He ran his eye over the painfully familiar lines:

Dear Selma, will you take me,
Your husband to be,
To love and cherish,
Till one of us perish,
And be laid under the sod,
So help you God?"
Yours forever,
JOE TURK.

The masterpiece had shrunk wofully in his own estimation. It had a sheepish, guilty look. It was a poor rag of a manuscript. It had been to market and had been rejected.

The sentimental logger, having, all unwittingly on his part, slighted both Selma's love and her literary efforts, was compelled to go sadly back across the hog-back, much perplexed and wishing now that he had let them hang Sing Lo instead of shooting him down the flume. For in that case the Chink's garments would have given up Selma's "pome." Joe wished he could go on a drunk. Life was a dreary proposition.

One afternoon the next week up the dusty mountain trail came the superintendent with a new bunch of cooks. They were women, four of them! One was a stout, efficient-looking, matronly soul. She had a healthy Irish look about her. She was evidently Sing Lo's head successor. The other three were her daughters and assistants. The whole camp sat up and took notice.

But Joe Turk, of all the camp, had most reason to take notice. For when he overheard Mr. Hooper remark, "It's Mrs. Maloney and her three girls," something stirred in the big lumber-jack's memory. Maloney? Maloney? Where had he heard that name before? He had not yet been near enough to the newcomers to recognize features.

And then, all of a sudden, the past winter in jail, and pretty Lottie Maloney, and the singing and all those tender memories popped into Joe's mind, and his heart did a shimmy dance. Lottie Maloney! Like Mahomet, she had come to the mountain to see her Joe. Sure thing!

Big Joe was all eyes for the pretty Lottie. For, sure enough, he soon recognized her, though for some reason she failed to look his way.

"Say," Joe called out to his nearest neighbors in the bunk-house that night, as he fumbled about, searching for something,

"did any of you pirates see anything of a Bible? Did any of you lift it? If you did, just return it, will yuh, an' save bloodshed. All right, Dempsey, but yuh didn't need to throw it at a feller. Now I gotta brush up on my Scripter. I been purty busy lately, an' neglected her." Joe put the Testament where it caught the light from his lantern, and began reading.

The next morning he appeared in the mess-room with the Testament still in his possession. He carried it as though defying the world to question his piety.

Standing a short moment by a window while chairs were being brought in, Joe whipped open his Testament to a certain place, verified his memory, then rolled his eyes up to the ceiling, moving his lips as though memorizing.

The chairs were placed, but the big fellow still waited as he mooned at the mess-room ceiling, repeating Scripture. Then, glancing toward Lottie Maloney, very pretty in a crisp shirtwaist and with a rose in her hair, and pretending he had not seen his own vacant chair, he sat down as a titter ran around the long table.

Joe placed his Testament, open, upon the table by his plate, and, as he drank his coffee and ate his breakfast, kept his side-long eyes upon the page, conning passages, only now and then stealing surreptitious glances at Lottie Maloney.

But all the logger's efforts to impress the girl seemed useless. Though he redoubled his biblical efforts she passed and repassed him with her chin in the air. Something was the matter.

But later that same forenoon, faking an excuse to leave his work to go to the mess-room, Joe met Lottie as she was placing a bouquet of flowers in a window seat.

"Hello, my wild Irish rose," he began, smiling and stepping forward as though he owned the world and a star, "don't you know me? I—"

"Yes," Lottie said in a voice that almost froze Joe's blood. "Yes, I know you—*now!* I thought I knew you last winter, but I didn't. But I know you now, and I know you're—you're a wicked liar!"

"Which?" Joe stammered.

"Not 'which,'" Lottie corrected him scornfully. "You're *all* of them, and then some. I—I—despise you."

"Why, love of my life," he floundered, "what—"

"Don't talk to me that way," Lottie commanded sternly, stamping her small foot on the mess-room floor.

"But—but—I don't savvy, I don't understand; I don't getcha. I can't seem to foller th' curves; I—"

"Maybe *this* will help you to understand," Miss Maloney said, coldly, as she drew a soiled and crumpled paper from the pocket of her apron and held it out.

Joe took the paper and read the following:

> Yes, Joe I'll marry you,
> And always be true;
> Look pleased when you scold,
> And never grow cold,
> Till you're laid under the sod,
> By the help of God.
>
> Your loving,
> SELMA SILVERTON.

"Now, don't ever, *ever* speak to me again." And Lottie Maloney turned and walked away.

"It's that damned Sing Lo," Joe muttered between his teeth. "He spilled the beans. Now if—I'd only a let 'em hang the Highbinder instead o' shootin' him down the flume! To think that the ongrateful, opium-eatin', slant-eyed heathing would hand me this when I saved his bacon!"

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DESTINY

AS hidden springs afar in woodlands deep
Find through rough paths their certain seaward way,
So—though the years are long, the journey far—
I know that Thou and I shall meet some day.

Arthur Wallace Peach

The Ghost Road*

by George Washington Ogden

Author of "The Bondboy," "The Holy Scare," "The Duke of Chimney Butte," etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

OLD FRIENDS BECOME NEW ENEMIES.

FEW remained over in Indian Springs that morning from the unfinished encampment, only such as had left grown children or capable persons in charge of their homes, with whom they had communicated by telephone and warned of the escape of Kindred's fool. Among these was General Treadmill, county judge, and a few from his remote border of the county.

An air of constraint was over Indian Springs itself, a strained silence lay upon its homes. Mothers kept their children within doors, men went abroad armed, or sat on their porches with guns in easy reach. The expectation of all was to hear of some revolting deed of violence wrought by the roaming wild creature before the day was done.

The news of Calvert's failure to return from the pursuit of Rex had gone through the town, as it had been spread in the country by Dan Grinnell's inquiries, guarded as he had thought he was making them. The general sentiment was sympathetic, especially among the women, for the young man's courageous attempt to overtake Kindred's fool when he believed a life to be in peril was undeniable argument that a bondholder might be human.

Susie Richardson heard nothing from Grinnell until late in the afternoon, when he called her from a distant farmhouse to say that no trace had been found of Calvert. The old man and his companions had explored the woods on horseback, and penetrated the swamps a considerable distance. But he had a marvelous thing to report, and that was the return home of Kindred's fool.

The creature was there when Kindred and his wife arrived after dark the evening before, none the worse for his escapade which had thrown the county into such a panic and brought a tragedy into Susie Richardson's life. Like a dog or any domestic creature, the poor idiot had the homing sense. It had guided him back to the bleak hearth of his childhood and his anxious mother's care.

Judge Richardson came home toward sundown, weary and depressed, his face full of trouble. Susie was at the gate to meet him when he dismounted, dusty from his long ride.

"Something terrible has happened to Mr. Calvert!" she told him. "I've been trying to get you by telephone all day."

"I've heard about it, Susie. I don't be-

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for September 11.

lieve there's any need of worrying over him yet. I think he'll find his way out, all right."

"But he's been gone since yesterday noon! Dan Grinnell and two or three others have been in the woods all day, and haven't found a trace of him. Rex has gone home, like a stray dog."

"I've heard all about it, Susie," he told her, placing a comforting hand on her shoulder, "I've had a talk with Bill Sawyer. It's my opinion that Tru Hunter's got a hand in it, but I don't believe they've harmed him—yet. The scoundrel's been too busy trying to injure me."

"You? Why, what in the world—"

"He was in Vinland yesterday, came home ahead of me—"

"This morning early—I saw him pass."

"He's been spreading the libel that I'm to get a big commission for making a settlement on the bonds."

"I didn't think he could be that low, mean as I know him to be!"

"Well, he is, Susie—just that low. And he's got old Treadmill poisoned to the heart against me, and no telling how many others. He's even spreading the lie that I'm holding the bonds as security for my commission."

Susie looked at him with the shock of this charge in her eyes, her face as white as if she had been told of death.

"Never mind it, Sue—it will fall to the ground—the people of this county know me too well to turn their backs on me before they hear my side of the story."

"Yes, but, father—"

"What is it, child?"

"We—I *have* got the bonds; everybody knows it!"

"You? The bonds! Why, what is this you tell me, child?"

"They'd planned to rob Mr. Calvert—kill him, if necessary, to get them—I made him give them to me at the dance before Judge Hunter and everybody. They'd have killed him to get them—Hunter and the others—killed him!"

"Well!" said Judge Richardson, the shock of this revelation, which seemed to give proof to his enemies' charges, striking him like a cold wind.

"They were going to kill him!" she repeated. "Dan Grinnell found out about it—he can tell you."

"I don't doubt it, not a word of it," her father assured her.

"Judge Hunter made his boast all around town he'd burn the bonds in the street. Mr. Calvert didn't want to give them to me—he said it would be cowardly of him to throw the responsibility and trouble on me—but I made him."

"You did right, Sue. He was our guest, the county's guest; we were responsible, still are responsible for his property and his personal safety. You did entirely right."

"I've got them here in the house," she told him. "I refused to give them to Judge Hunter when he came that night and tried to wheedle and bluff me out of them."

"You did what I'd have expected of you, Sue; what I'd have done myself. Let them spread their insidious lies—only the weak and vicious will believe them."

"Uncle Dan Grinnell thinks they've killed him," she went on sadly.

"Bill tells me Cass Oglethorpe was the last one to come back from the chase after Kindred's fool."

"Yes, he was."

"Well, let's not take the extreme view of it yet, ready as we know some of these blind fools would be to shoot Calvert down. I'll get a bite to eat, then telephone around to a few trustworthy men to join me and see what we can find out. Isn't that Tru Hunter coming yonder?"

"Yes—and General Treadmill and a lot more!"

The party of twenty or so men, with a trailing of as many boys, was turning into the street where the elm tree stood sentinel over the little brown house in which Judge Richardson had taken temporary lodgment.

Judge Hunter and General Treadmill walked in the lead, the veteran in civilian dress, his precious uniform laid away for the next grand occasion that might come in his uneventful life. The old man was talking earnestly with his companion.

Judge Richardson led his jaded, dusty horse down the fence a little way to clear

a space before the gate. Then he stood beside Susie, who came outside as if to sustain and defend him, waiting for them to draw near.

"Judge Richardson, we've come before you for an accounting of your stewardship to the people of this county," began General Treadmill, coming to a stand with great severity and dignity.

"If you'll turn to the records of the Federal court you'll find it, gentlemen," Judge Richardson replied.

"That is past and closed, no man questions you on that," General Treadmill returned. "What we want is an accounting for the past two days. It is charged against you that you have been seeking to betray this county into the hands and pockets of its enemies for a consideration, a monetary consideration, a traitor's price, sir! We demand to know the truth."

"If you have so far forgotten my years of pain and suffering, my sacrifices of personal interests to lie in jail among felons and thieves, murderers and blackguards, leveled before the laws of my country to equality with them in my zeal to uphold the traditions of this county, then, gentlemen, there is no answer to this slander I can give you that you would believe."

Judge Richardson spoke with dignified calmness, making a gesture of uselessness with his hands as he concluded.

"We don't question you on your past, Judge Richardson," spoke up a man in the crowd, "but we do want to know if you've been fixin' it up with the banks at Vinland to take up them old bonds for a rake-off from Calvert."

"If my reputation is no guarantee to you, gentlemen, my word wouldn't be," Judge Richardson replied.

"That ain't no answer," somebody declared.

"As my neighbors say, Judge Richardson, you haven't answered." This from General Treadmill.

"I've answered as far as I'm going to answer on this preposterous slander, sir!" Judge Richardson drew his slender form up defiantly, fire in his eyes.

"Much as I've trusted you, sir, long as you've had my unbounded confidence, I'll feel that you're convicted by your answer if you let it go at that," General Treadmill declared.

"That ain't no lie!" The denunciation went rumbling among them, a sharp word, a bitter curse, breaking here and there.

"They say you're goin' to rake down five thousand dollars commission—how about it?" shrilled a lanky young man, lifting his hand like a schoolboy to fix attention on himself. Judge Richardson ignored him, but Susie's face flamed with resentment as she swept the crowd with scornful eyes.

She stepped out a little from her father's side and shook her finger in Judge Hunter's face.

"You're behind this, you slanderer!" she cried.

"Susie!" her father cautioned, laying a restraining hand on her shoulder.

A darker cloud flitted over Judge Hunter's sullen countenance; he drew his brows down in a frown, moved his foot as if he would step out and reply, but he did not speak.

"Let him bring Mr. Calvert here to answer his lies—if he hasn't murdered him, as he threatened to do!" the girl went on.

"I'm not Mr. Calvert's keeper, Miss Susie," Hunter returned, with high indifference.

"You've shot him from the brush, you coward!" she charged, such a light of anger in her eyes that Judge Hunter drew back as from a blow.

"Why, Miss Susie!" he said, in foolish weakness of defense.

"Give us them bonds!" shouted one.

"We want them bonds—give us them bonds," the crowd demanded. "We want to burn them bonds—give 'em over to us—you've got 'em!"

General Treadmill lifted his hand for silence, facing his followers. Then he turned slowly to confront Judge Richardson again.

"We know you are acting as custodian of the bonds," he said, "whether to make certain of your commission, as has been charged, I do not say. But it is well known that the bonds are in this house, and we demand them!"

Judge Richardson stood a moment with hand on the gate, head slightly bent in his cogitative, scholarly pose. Then he turned to them, more of pity than scorn or anger in his face.

"Yes, the bonds are here, in our custody," he admitted.

Susie opened the gate, her face white and determined, and hurried toward the house.

"She's goin' to hide 'em!" said one.

"Stop her!" cried another.

Voices took it up; the crowd surged toward the gate. General Treadmill turned, spreading his arms.

"We'll get them, gentlemen—be calm," he counseled. Then, to Judge Richardson: "You can show yourself innocent of the charge that has been laid at your door, Judge Richardson, by giving the bonds over to us. That will clear you quicker than any amount of proof you can bring forward."

"That's right! You said it, general!" the crowd applauded.

"The bonds were not left in my care, but in Miss Richardson's—I knew nothing about it until I came home, not ten minutes ago," the judge told them. "I couldn't give them to you if I would; I don't know where they are."

"We'll find 'em—let us in, and we'll find 'em!" somebody suggested.

Judge Richardson went in, closing the little gate after him, then stood, half facing the clamoring crowd, waiting as if for the final rush which must overwhelm him. The crowd pressed against the fence; some stood with hands on it, preparing to leap over.

"If he won't give 'em peaceable, take 'em!" shouted a voice.

"Tear down the damn house if we have to!"

"We demand of you the Clearwater County railroad bonds, here in this house, in your hands," said General Treadmill, his voice unsteady with passion, as he leaned over the little gate, hand raised as if to strike down his colleague. "Will you surrender them to us—yes or no?"

Susie came to the door, turned deliberately, closed it behind her. Then she advanced along the porch, a rifle in her hands, and took up her post at the top of the steps. Judge Richardson faced the crowd, a kindly smile on his bearded face, a twinkling of triumph and admiration in his eyes.

"There is your answer, gentlemen," he said.

CHAPTER XX.

A SHOT IN THE WOODS.

JUDGE RICHARDSON had bargained to betray the people of Clearwater County was what many people said of him in Indian Springs that night. A few there were who stood resolutely for him against his slanderers, but their pleas for patience and a fair hearing fell on excited and intolerant ears.

Judge Richardson had been tried that afternoon, these said; he had been given the opportunity to prove his loyalty to the county against its enemy by giving up the bonds to be burned. He had not surrendered them; guiltily that girl of his had defended the house with a rifle, a look in her eye that made men feel the great and pressing need of a thick tree between themselves and that gun.

Little was said about the disappearance of the bondholder. When men spoke of it they winked and drew down derisive mouths. If Judge Hunter had done him harm, as Susie Richardson charged, it was all right, and not a thing for anybody to go meddling with, trying to find out more than might be healthy for him.

Judge Richardson had turned to the search for Calvert after a hasty supper, leaving Susie to guard the missing man's property. Dan Grinnell had not returned at sundown, when Judge Richardson set out on his baffling quest.

Susie kept her watch on the porch long after night had fallen, the rifle close by her hand. The bonds she carried with her in a little handbag slung over her shoulder by a cord. She feared the ruffians might assault the back of the house and gain entrance while she watched the front.

But it came over her, with a sorrow like

old age, that this was a fatuous watch. Calvert was dead; he would come no more to reward her for her fidelity to this trust. He was dead, his kiss still warm on her lips, his declaration of love still sounding in her ears like a sweet melody that uplifts the heart and makes it glad beyond all measure.

Children were romping and screaming, working off the excess spirits due to release from their confinement, the terror of Kindred's fool over them no more, now that he was safe again in his mother's care. People were coming to look back on the adventure of his escape as a kind of joke.

The town grew still at last, and the moonlight came creeping across the porch. Susie sat where it fell on her hair, a great bitterness in her heart against those blindly vengeful men who had robbed her of her romance and broken the golden circle of her dream.

Somebody was coming down the grass-grown street, no more noise under his feet than if he walked on air. Joe Tager, she made him out to be while yet a hundred yards distant, and coming with many backward glances, as if he feared he might be followed or watched. She had confidence that Joe was coming as a friend, and hope rose again in her heart like a flower beaten down by a storm as she went to the gate to meet him.

"I didn't know but you'd be in bed, Susie," said Joe, coming softly into the shadow of the elm.

"Have you heard anything, Joe?" she inquired anxiously.

"Well, not to speak of," said he.

"What have you heard, Joe?"

"Judge Richardson come back?"

"No. Has anybody—"

"I had to wait till them fellers went away from the barn," Joe explained, full of caution, spying around as if he distrusted the elm, speaking in low tone. "I ain't seen nothin' and I ain't heard nothin', but I found this as I was drivin' in this evenin'."

Joe opened his hand, moving it to catch a gleam of moonlight through the leaves, showing a gold cuff-link. Susie examined it, stepping out into the light.

"It's hisn," said Joe.

"I don't know," she said, her heart laboring to suffocation, fearing what was to come.

"I seen him wearin' them links the day he come over with me," Joe said, conclusively; "I had my eye on 'em right along. It's got a *C* on it—don't you notice?"

"Yes," she said, all a-tremble, her limbs weak, her cheeks cold. "Where did you find it, Joe?"

"About half way down the long hill this side of Kindred's."

Susie's heart sank again; the little uplifting hope fell.

"He must have lost it the night Kindred tried to kill him—he went over that road twice," she said.

"No, it was lost since the rain—it wasn't splashed. It was a layin' by the road, clean and bright like it 'd just been dropped. They must 'a' took—he must 'a' passed by there not long before."

"Do you think he's alive, Joe?"

"I ain't a sayin'," Joe replied, with his natural evasiveness.

"But if they intended to—to—kill him, they'd have done it right away, don't you think, Joe?"

She spoke so wistfully, with such a pathetic seeking for some little thread of hope, that a man might well have justified his act if he had lied. For hope itself is mainly a lie, feeding on the fire of lies. But Joe Tager had no poetry in him. He stood looking off down the road in his speculative way, as if he had weighty considerations of his own.

"Well, jist accordin'," said he.

"Maybe somebody else lost the cuff-link," she sighed, beginning to give it up.

"No, I think he done it when they took him acrost the road. He knew somebody 'd be lookin' for him, and he dropped that link in the road where it 'd be seen. He was a purty smart feller."

"Maybe that was it," she agreed, but with no new uprising of spirit. If they had taken him that way it must have been only to lead him into a more desolate and unfrequented part of the country to cover their crime.

"I hope you and Judge Richardson don't

hold no hard feelin's agin me for dumpin' him in the woods the day he come," said Joe.

"No; you thought you were doing the best thing, Joe."

"Mr. Calvert never held no grudge agin me for it—joked me about it and took it as good-natured as if I'd done him a favor. He was what I call a purty nice kind of a feller."

"So if I was you, Susie," Joe spoke up after a brief pause, "I'd tell Judge Richardson to watch out and be careful."

Instantly she was quivering with new anxiety. She touched Joe's arm, leaning over the gate to look closer into his face.

"Have they been making threats, Joe?"

"I ain't a-sayin', Susie, but if I was him I wouldn't turn my back to no brush for a while."

"It may be too late!" she said, in the anguish of despair.

"I thought maybe he might call up, and you could tell him," said Joe.

"He hasn't called up; I don't know where he is!"

Susie was almost frantic with this fresh dread. It seemed as if the slow-moving trouble of Clearwater County had come to a sudden head and was rushing to crush her. There was nobody to whom she could turn, not knowing friend from foe in this new outburst in the bitter feud of the bonds.

"Well, I guess I'll be goin'," Joe announced, after standing indecisively on one foot at a time for a few minutes.

"Was that a shot?" she cried, starting up.

"It sounded—"

"They're killing him—they're killing him!" She ran wildly out into the road.

"They've got a horse of mine!" said Joe, in lively concern, bounding off at this unmistakable report of firearms.

He ran down the street, heading in the direction of the hotel, leaving Susie alone in her heart-tearing suspense. She listened; no more shots sounded out of the woods. Perhaps it was only revelers, she thought, trying to still the surging of her h[illegible]

[illegible]t it was evil news for her she could only stand and wait, as the woman stands waiting and suffering, always, in the man-played tragedies of life.

CHAPTER XXI.

JUDGE HUNTER BRINGS NEWS.

JUDGE RICHARDSON came home soon after Joe Tager's departure. Susie ran down the road to meet him, her heart rising again out of the wreck of her last hope.

"They shot Rush Porterfield," announced the judge, replying to her breathless questioning, "but they meant it for me."

Susie never had seen him so bowed and broken under all his troubles. It seemed now that he could bear no more, that this charge of treason, this blow out of the dark aimed at his life, must send him to the grave.

Susie inquired after Porterfield's wounds, his wife being a distant relative of the Richardson family. He was shot in the shoulder, it seemed, hurt seriously but not fatally. That much the judge had waited to learn from the doctor's examination before hastening home to relieve his daughter's fears.

"Joe Tager told me you heard the shooting—I knew you'd be waiting. I'd have telephoned, but I didn't want to disturb your mother. She hasn't heard?"

"No; she's asleep at last."

"We'll let her rest till morning. It might be better if she didn't know at all that they were after me."

Susie unsaddled the tired horse and turned it into the little bluegrass pasture to graze. Her father was sitting on the porch step when she returned, head bowed in his hands, crushed under his load. She tried to comfort him as best she could.

Judge Richardson was not a man to give way long to overweight of trouble.

"I'll come clear of it in a little while, when they get out from under Tru Hunter's influence and stop to consider all I've borne for them," he said. "But I'm afraid they've made away with Calvert. It is my belief that we'll never see him again."

Susie told him of Joe Tager finding the cuff-link, pleading for her own little gleam of hope that they might be holding him prisoner for some purpose of their own. But her father did not share this thought.

"Some of them dropped that cuff-link after robbing him," he said.

"I thought they might have been taking him across to Rattlesnake Swamp," she ventured.

"There isn't much hope in it, but I'll get Grinnell and a few more to go with me in the morning and see if we can find any trace of him. If he never comes back it will be the blackest disgrace that ever fell on this community."

"There'll be so little chance of finding him in that horrible swamp," said Susie.

"I think I know every path through it; I've dodged deputies over there often enough, heaven knows! But a man could disappear in that place and never come to light. And the worst of it is, there's nobody we can rightly fasten suspicion on—the poor fellow went into the woods on his own generous impulse, urged by a humanitarian duty. Five hundred people saw him go."

"But Tru Hunter threatened to kill him," she insisted.

"Yes, but a threat against a man's life doesn't count as a crime in Clearwater County. Besides that, Hunter doesn't appear to have been here that day. Anyway, we'll try Rattlesnake Swamp in the morning. Some of these devilish young fellows may be hiding him over there."

Acting on this faint hope Judge Richardson left home at sunrise the next morning.

The day dragged out in prolonged torture to Susie Richardson while she waited for news. Her father had promised to telephone as soon as he pushed through the swamp. Susie waited till dusk was drawing on, and yet no word had come from him.

The relative with whom the Richardsons were staying in town had wheeled Susie's mother to the springs in her chair, it being the belief that the virtues of the waters were lost in a large measure unless they were drunk from the fount itself. Susie, alone at the house, waited on the porch near the door, inside of which the telephone hung in the little hall.

She had been trying to read the Bible, seeking for something that would give her a momentary comfort and courage. The book lay open on her knee; she sat leaning back in the rocking-chair, hands listlessly clasped, eyes closed wearily, their orbs hot from her long and sleepless watch, when the rush of galloping hoofs startled her.

Truman Hunter was coming down the street. In a moment he drew rein at the gate, and flung himself to the ground as if he had come under pressure of the most important event of his life.

"Miss Susie," he said, with all his accustomed formality and politeness, "I beg that you will pardon a visit from a man as unwelcome to your eyes as I must be after my misconduct and ungentlemanly behavior the last time you saw me."

She was standing at the top of the steps to receive him, or rather to receive his reason for coming there. Her pale face flushed a little, her eyes quickened as he spoke, making his apology in such generous vein.

"If you feel that way about it, Judge Hunter, I forgive you," she said, impulsively generous, glad for his own sake to hear him confess his fault.

"I hurried here, pantin' like a dog," he said, standing before her hat in hand, his black hair disordered, dust on his clothing as from a hard ride, "and you must excuse appearances."

"Don't speak of it, Mr. Hunter. Will you sit on the steps?" moving back, holding her skirts out of the way with a pretty gesture of invitation.

"No, I thank you kindly, Miss Susie, but I ain't got the time to stop but only just a minute," said he, in his usual form of employing useless words. "I come to tell you Mr. Calvert has been found."

"Found!" she cried, springing forward, hands clasped in eagerness. "Is he—is he—all right?"

"Well, no; not just exactly all right, Miss Susie."

He paused there, looking at the ground.

"Tell me, Mr. Hunter," she pleaded, cold in the apprehension of the worst.

"He's kind of porely, Miss Susie," Hunter looked up slowly as if he pitied her, "he's as bad off as any man I ever saw."

"What is it?"—she appealed, putting out her hand in supplication.

"The doctor says there's only one prescription in the land that will save his life, Miss Susie, *and you've got it.*"

Hunter looked at her defiantly as he thus uncovered his purpose, unmasking his pretense in those few hard, emphasized words.

"You scoundrel! You mean you'll murder him unless I give you the bonds!" she blazed out with anger.

"Murder is a cruel word, Miss Susie," said he.

"It's what you've set your heart to do!"

"He'll never live till midnight without them papers, Miss Susie," Hunter admitted, so unfeelingly determined, so cruelly hard, that no question of his earnestness could be admitted.

"You intend to kill him—there's no guarantee that you'll let him go even if I give you the bonds."

"Just my word, Miss Susie."

"The word of a wolf!"

"I've always redeemed it, Miss Susie; I always will." Hunter spoke with grim slowness, turning his face from her, the gloom of his dark intention over it like a shadow.

"You can't keep your word in one thing unless you break it in another. You threatened to kill him, now you say you'll let him live. How do I know which you mean to keep?"

She was watching every change of his features.

"I'll keep my word to you," said he, still looking away.

"I don't believe you know where he is," she charged. "It's a trick—you're trying to deceive me."

"I give you my most solemn word, Miss Susie."

He turned to face her as he spoke, and she could see truth in his eyes.

"I couldn't trust you, Mr. Hunter—you'd taunt him with my betrayal of his trust before you murdered him. Bring him here if you're honest, and I promise I'll give you the bonds the minute he comes into this yard safe and sound."

"I couldn't guarantee that it could be done—safe and sound, Miss Susie."

"Then you can't guarantee his life at all!" She ran down the steps with sudden impulse, putting out her hand in her imploring way. "Take me to him, let me see him alive and safe, and I'll give you the bonds!"

"I couldn't do that, Miss Susie." Hunter spoke with such sorrow in his slow voice that it seemed his heart was broken at refusing her request.

Susie was looking at the horse that Hunter had ridden up to the gate, and heard him abstractedly. She went a little nearer the gate, walking from him as if in distraction, wringing her hands, a low sound of moaning in her throat. But her eyes were fixed on the horse, standing with drooping head after its hard run, the reins thrown over the gate-post. She turned back to Hunter, as with a fresh appeal.

"You're deceiving me; he hasn't been found," she said.

"I am in the most dreadful earnest, Miss Susie."

"And he can't live till morning unless I give you the bonds, you say?"

"I said midnight, Miss Susie—morning is a long way off."

"I'll go with you," she said decisively; "I'll take the bonds with me. If he's alive and unharmed, I'll hand them to you the minute you turn him over to me. You'll not get them on any other consideration."

"I'm truly sorry, Miss Susie, but I couldn't—"

The telephone rang, its sharp note as dramatic as a cry in the night for help. Susie leaped to answer it, Hunter shifting nearer the steps, turning his sharp face to hear. Leaning, breath-held, he heard her say:

"I can't hear you—I can't hear you!" in panting, distracted tone. "Yes, now I hear. Never mind telling me—go to Kindred's quick, all of you—they've got him there!"

Hunter rushed up the steps and to the door, which she slammed in his face. With her shoulder set against it, Susie was

screaming into the telephone in broken, wild appeal:

"Kindred's, Marvel Kindred's—do you hear me? Quick, they're going to kill him!"

Hunter flung her back with the door, reaching to snatch the receiver out of her hand.

"Take it!" she said, offering the wire scornfully. "They're already on the way."

Hunter backed away, his dark face black as a storm in the shadow of his hat.

"You've signed his death-warrant," he said. "Nothing in the world can save him now!"

He sprang over the rail of the porch in his hurry to reach his horse, ran to the gate, mounted, and galloped away.

"And I let him go!" she moaned; "I let him go!"

At the moment she had recognized Kindred's horse, and coupled that discovery with Joe Tager's finding the cuff-link in the road near that scoundrel's place, Susie's thought had fixed frantically on some means of keeping Hunter with her until her father telephoned. The call had come while this thought was whirling in her mind, and in her eagerness to give the information she had betrayed to Hunter that she knew. If she had only closed the door and spoken calmly! But it was done, and Hunter was on his way to carry out his vengeful intention.

Where her father was, how far from Kindred's place, Susie did not know. It might be that he was near, but the chance was all against it. If he had crossed the swamp he would be miles away, with rough roads and night ahead of him, beyond all possibility of arriving in time. She should have held Hunter at the rifle's muzzle, like a thief.

A few moments she stood in this swirl of sickening regrets, the sound of Hunter's galloping horse dimming in her ears as he rode up the grassy street. Then she turned indoors, running in her eagerness to save the precious moments.

She slipped on her divided riding-skirt, swung the little bag, with its burden of old papers across her shoulder, and in five minutes was galloping after Hunter. The only weapon in the house was the light repeating rifle used for shooting wild turkeys in the swamps, the same gun she had introduced with such good effect before the mob. This she carried with her, a handful of loose cartridges in the pocket of her jacket.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRISONER.

SINCE the day Cass Oglethorpe and his companions had overtaken him in the chase after Rex and made him prisoner by force of numbers and arms, Calvert had been confined in Kindred's house, in a dungeon under the kitchen of that dismal dwelling.

This was a small excavation not above ten or twelve feet square, formerly used as a storage place for vegetables and fruit in winter. Its walls were of solid masonry, the floor of sandstone flags, its one aperture admitting light and air being the original vent-hole, about as big as the pipe of a kitchen stove. This was at the level of the ground. A trap-door let down into the cellar from the kitchen, but the stairs had long since rotted away.

They had thrown Calvert into this hole on the night following his capture, after keeping him sequestered in the woods all day. Kindred had given him a filthy corn-husk mattress and some quilts; from time to time scanty allowances of food had been handed down to him. Nobody had responded to his calls for help.

Overhead there was the sound of much coming and going; day and night somebody stood guard. Often he heard them discussing his case while they waited the arrival of Judge Hunter.

With the latter's arrival that morning there had ensued a great deal of cautious talk in a remote part of the big room from which the voices sounded far away, only a word intelligible now and then. To-night, however, this caution was not being observed. His guards, following their usual custom, had drawn a table over the trap-door and were playing cards above the

prisoner's head, with unrestrained laughter and banter. There were three of them, Cass Oglethorpe being one, as Calvert well knew by his voice. The others were older men, as their heavier tones discovered.

Calvert watched the last light fade out of his place of confinement, the little round hole in the wall grow dark as a blind eye. Overhead he heard Mrs. Kindred bring supper to the table that stood on the trap-door; heard her clear away the dishes presently, and the men resume their game. Nobody seemed to remember that the prisoner was a living man, with the clamorous needs of a young and healthy body. That noonday, also, they had neglected to pass down any food.

Calvert pondered this neglect, wondering whether it was merely due to carelessness and lack of feeling on his guards' part, or whether it might be because sentence had been passed on him, and, like a fowl, shut up for slaughter in the morning, his captors considered good provender wasted in a case where the benefit of it never would be enjoyed.

Determined at last to sound them on this, Calvert was about to ask them for something to eat when they began discussing him. They talked more openly and freely than he ever had heard them do before.

"It's about time for Tru to be comin' back," said one.

"He's ridin' Kindred's horse; he won't be able to make it very fast," another replied.

"Do you reckon he'll fetch them papers back with him?" the first speaker speculated.

"He'll bring 'em, all right," Oglethorpe declared, with all confidence in Hunter's cunning.

"Tru knew what he was doin', I reckon, holdin' off on goin' to her for them bonds right away, like us fellers wanted him to, playin' that feller's life ag'in' 'em. 'Starve her into it,' he says; 'hold back till she's squirmed through fire and give up hope. Then we'll git 'em.' That's what Tru said to me. He was right, I reckon, but it's hard on Susie Richardson, takin' charge of them papers for him like a trust of honor."

"She had a right to keep her hands off of it," said Oglethorpe, with surly shortness.

"I heard 'em say that Susie and the judge felt like they was responsible for him and all he brought here with him," put in one, not unsympathetically. "I tell you, men, I wouldn't like to face Judge Richardson in that door to-night!"

"Oh, hell!" said Oglethorpe, derisively.

"You can cuss if you want to, Cass, but I tell you Judge Richardson can clean out a houseful of wildcats, old as he is. There never was a man in this country since the James boys that could pull a gun as quick as the judge, or handle it faster when he had it out. If he was to open that door I'd slip through one of them cracks in the floor."

"It's your lead," Oglethorpe reminded somebody, with surly voice.

There followed some heavy playing with nothing said for a time. Then one of the older men spoke.

"I don't want to have any hand in Judge Hunter's game when he gets back. When he comes, I'm goin' to leave."

"I don't know but you're right," another agreed. "I'll go so far, but there's a place where I draw the line. If Hunter gits them damn bonds he ought to be satisfied to let the feller go."

"I'll stay to see him burn 'em if he does, but like you say, Van, I don't want to go any deeper. They ain't feelin' the same way about this thing over at Vinland as us folks are; they're willin' to talk compermise on them bonds with that man, they tell me."

"Well, a man 'd have to stand trial over there if he ever *was* tried, and you can bank on it that feller's got relations and friends back there where he come from that'll turn the earth over to reach anybody that had a hand in his—"

"Shut up your damn head!" Oglethorpe ordered, smiting the table with his fist.

"Gosh, Cass! You darn near jarred the lantern out," one of the others laughed, but with a restraint in which there was no mirth.

"I'll jar something else out if I hear any more talk about double-crossin' from

you fellers. Go on and play your cards, if you're goin' to play."

"I don't believe I care to play any more to-night, Cass," one replied.

"Me neither."

There followed the sound of chairs being pushed back. Somebody struck a match presently and the scent of tobacco smoke drew down into the cellar through the cracks.

Calvert forgot his hunger in fresh concern for his situation. This talk seemed to lay bare an understanding between his captors as to his final disposal. Holding his peril before Susie Richardson to force her to surrender the bonds, Hunter would come back and murder him in that hole without giving him a show for defense.

There was no possibility of escape; he had determined that in the first hour of his imprisonment. But once again he tried the stones in the wall around the little opening, in the hope that one might be loose. But no; he had not overlooked a crevice in the cement that an ant could crawl into in his past explorations. Even with the inestimable prize of life awaiting him outside, he must perish here, for bare hands could not make a breach in that wall of heavy stones.

Up to that hour he had not been greatly disturbed by the thought that they might kill him. The fact that they had not done so in the woods, but had brought him here as if in furtherance of some plan, which he had believed from the beginning to be none other than to get possession of the bonds, seemed assurance that they would set him free after subjecting him to a certain degree of humiliation. He had not believed that even Hunter would take his life under those conditions, with so many in the secret, some of whom would be almost certain to tell.

But it appeared now that in spite of Judge Richardson's protection, he was condemned to die. The thought came over him of making an appeal to the fairness and manhood of his two more liberal and humane guards before Hunter's return. They had not heard his side of it; all they knew of him was that he was the bondholder, and his presence in Clearwater County was proof sufficient to them that he had come to execute judgment and seize all there was in sight.

He had a wilder and more hopelessly desperate plan behind this, also—no less than that of making an effort to force his way out of that hole if they opened the trap-door to hear him speak. It was as desperate a scheme as a man ever conceived, but desperation is the fruit of despair. He told himself that if he was to die he wanted to die in the open, fighting like a man.

He collected the ends and fragments of rotted planks which had formed the stairs, heaping them beneath the trap-door, laying his mattress and bedding on top of these. This heap lifted him until he found he should be able to grasp the floor and make a struggle to lift himself out if the attention of his guards could be drawn off for a moment by some ruse which he trusted to the occasion to invent.

But not alone to luck and chance was he going to leave it. Among the rotting wood there was one piece of pitchy pine, knotted and tenacious as a bone, which had resisted decay. This stick, two feet or more, long, was a mere streak of hard pitch, coming to a splinter at one end, knobbed by a knot at the other, making a bludgeon ready to a man's hand. Calvert tried it under his foot, finding it strong enough to be relied upon.

"Hello up, there!" he hailed.

A scraping of feet as the men who sat on the trap-door shifted, a passing of words in a low tone, which he could not make out. Then Cass Oglethorpe growled down:

"What do you want?"

"Don't I get any supper?" Calvert asked, with a good feint of cheerful carelessness in his voice.

More talk between themselves, voices muffled, all but a word here and there lost to Calvert, straining his ears to hear. The table creaked, as if they leaned elbows on it to bring their heads together in this serious conference over his simple request.

"I missed out on dinner," Calvert reminded them, "and here you go hogging supper on me, too. Hand me down a bis-

cuit or something, and a cup of coffee, can't you?"

"We'll see about it," the man who had been addressed as Van said presently.

"All right, old sport; have a heart, and hurry," Calvert called up to him.

One left the table; the other two got up and moved it and the chairs from the trap-door. The man who was going to "see about it" was trailing a heavy step across the big kitchen. Now he knocked on a door, calling Mrs. Kindred. Presently Calvert heard her high, dry voice denying him.

"I ain't a goin' to do no more cookin' to-night," she said, "not even for my old man. When he comes home he'll have to do his own cookin'."

What the ambassador urged Calvert could not hear, but Mrs. Kindred was sharp with her reply.

"Let him starve, then!" she said.

Van returned to his companion at the trap-door.

"If you'll stir up the fire, Charley, I'll fry him some eggs and boil him some coffee," he proposed.

Calvert leaned his club against the wall. He didn't have it in his heart to hit a man like Van.

The two went about the preparations for the captive's supper, leaving Cass Oglethorpe alone on guard above the door. He pulled a chair over it and sat down, the smoke of his cigarette drawing down into Calvert's prison hole. The latter tossed a chunk against the trap-door, and called up in a friendly, careless way:

"Throw me down a cigarette, will you, kid?"

Oglethorpe did not reply. Calvert stood on his heap of bedding, club in hand.

"Come on, kid," he coaxed, "I haven't had a smoke for two days. Put yourself in my place for a little while; somebody blowin' smoke where you can smell it, and see how it goes."

This pleading banter seemed to move Oglethorpe. He got up, scraping the legs of the chair across the boards, opened the trap a little, trying to look into the blackness where Calvert stood.

"I'll give you a snort after I've chawed it if you'll open your mouth," he mocked. "Where are you at, you damn snake?"

"Over here in the corner, done up," Calvert replied, shrinking away from the opening, bending low. "You fellows have starved me till I'm so weak I can hardly stand."

Oglethorpe laughed, opened the door wider, his head in the opening to see, one hand holding the hinged trap, cigarette between the fingers, the other on the edge of the hole. He leaned a little farther, peering into the dark.

"Open up your mouth, you snake!" he directed, letting the trap back gently until it leaned on his chair. He stretched himself on his belly, to take his comfort in baiting his captive, the cigarette glowing in the dark opening as he drew a long inhalation.

Calvert straightened up, rising into the light that fell dimly into the cellar. Oglethorpe started to scramble to his feet as he realized his danger, hand thrown back to jerk out his pistol. The curse he was shaping died half uttered as Calvert struck, swinging the club with all the force he could put into the short blow.

The crack of it on Oglethorpe's head, the sound of his fall, the noise of Calvert drawing himself out of the cellar, drew the attention of the other guards from the prisoner's supper preparations. They turned to see Calvert half out of the dungeon, and rushed him as he scrambled to his feet.

Oglethorpe lay on the floor, limp and nerveless as a dead man. Calvert had not time to snatch the half-drawn weapon from his pocket before the others flung themselves upon him, shouting to each other to throw him down the hole.

Calvert had clung to his club when he scrambled out of the cellar, but they closed with him too quickly for a chance to use it again. He dropped it, grappled with the first to come, flinging free of him, leaping across the length of the open trap-door. He snatched a chair, swinging round to face them, all thought of arguing his way out through the sympathies of these men dismissed.

The two halted, not in humor to press

bare-handed upon a man who had shown himself so desperately capable. At the farther end of the great bare kitchen Mrs. Kindred stood before an open door.

"Kill him! kill him!" she screamed.

One of the men stooped to draw the revolver from Cass Oglethorpe's pocket. The other touched his arm, watching Calvert as he stood with chair drawn back over his shoulder to strike.

"Let the gun alone, Charley—here's Hunter," he said.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE NEW MENACE.

JUDGE HUNTER stood in the door. He held his pistol leveled at Calvert, who backed slowly away from the two men in front of him, stopping only when he came to the wall.

The two men crossed quickly at Hunter's nod and laid hold of Calvert's arms. He did not resist, as they seemed to expect from the vigor with which they made him fast.

"Do you want him back in there, Tru?" one asked Hunter.

"Stand him over there," Hunter replied, motioning them back into the room.

A little beyond the great, gaping, empty fireplace the men stopped, keeping Calvert between them, while Hunter bent to examine Oglethorpe's hurt. Presently he drew the young man's body from the trap, over the edge of which his head lay, and closed down the door. He then took Oglethorpe's pistol from his pocket and put it in his own.

At the farther end of the room Mrs. Kindred stood in front of the door from which she had come screaming her desire to have Calvert's life. She closed it now, as if anticipating Calvert's thought of making a dash that way, and stood with her back against the panels. But it had not crossed Calvert's mind to break in that direction for freedom. There was only one way to win out, and that was face to face with Hunter. If a man turned his back to flee from that coward, he would strike in a coward's way.

So he stood watching Hunter, standing behind the chair which he had carried with him, his hands gripping the back as if he supported himself on it in weariness after the effort of his escape from the cellar. The men beside him held his arms but loosely, their faces turned inquiringly to Hunter.

"Did you git what you went after, Tru?" asked one.

"How did you come to let him out of there?" Hunter demanded.

"I don't know how Cass come to do it," the man called Van admitted frankly. "Me and Charley was gittin' him some supper—we was over at the stove."

Hunter signaled Mrs. Kindred with a jerk of the head.

"Go to the door and listen; I guess I can trust you to keep your eyes open," he said. "If you hear anything, call me."

The woman went as directed, opening the door enough to let her thin face wedge through. Hunter took the lantern from a chair near the stove and stood it on the mantel-shelf.

"Tru, did you git what you went after?" one of the men inquired again.

Hunter turned, cursing his impatience. Cass Oglethorpe groaned, muttering some broken words. Hunter looked round at him over his shoulder.

"No, I didn't," he said. "Is that enough for you?"

"It's enough," said the man, decisively; "I'm done."

"And here, too," added the other.

Oglethorpe rolled over, struggling to his elbow, sat up, hands propped on the floor at his back, head hanging limply. He swayed weakly to and fro, as if he would collapse again.

"No, you're not through, not by a long shot!" Hunter told his two aids, eying them malevolently. "You'll see this thing through to a finish, you'll tote fair with me, I'm here to say!"

"Let him go, then," argued Van. "You didn't git what you went after, and that's the end of it, fur as I can see."

"It looks that way to me," Charley agreed. "He's a man, Tru—let him go."

"I'll let him go to hell!" Hunter swore, murder in his dark face.

"We'll stand together if there's any questionin' done," Van warned; "we'll tell the truth. You ain't a-goin' to drag us into—"

"Listen!" broke in Hunter, lifting his hand.

They turned their heads, leaning toward the door in their straining to hear.

"Who 're you expectin', Tru?" Charley inquired, fright creeping into his simple face.

Hunter did not answer. He went to the door where Mrs. Kindred was on duty, her face wedged into the crack as if it had closed on her and held her fast. They whispered a little; then Mrs. Kindred's voice broke out sharply.

"Not here in this house, I tell you! Take him out in the woods—you ain't a-goin' to muss up my place with it!" she said.

"If you want to make a break out of here," said Van, whispering to Calvert, "I'll stand between you and him till you can git to that door."

He let go of Calvert's arm, looking round to the door Mrs. Kindred had closed and stood with her back against. There his mouth fell open, his eyes stretched as if to burst.

"God A'mighty! It's loose!" he said.

Rex was standing in the door of the inner room, his hand before his eyes as if blinded by the light. A moment the two men beside Calvert stood looking at him; then they made for the outer door with terrified shouts of warning. Cass Oglethorpe, getting weakly to his knees, was lifted by the fear that struck him at the sight of Kindred's fool. He got to his feet and ran for the door, crying "Help, help!" in blubbering voice like a drowning man.

All in a moment it happened, the noise and confusion of flying bodies seeming to daze the poor idiot out of the little animal wit that he owned as he stood blinking in the door. He lowered himself to his hands, and came shambling into the room as his mother ran to meet him.

"Rex!" she cried, with the hard, unfeeling accent of a command to a beast, such as Calvert had heard before.

At the outer door the others huddled, waiting to see the outcome, ready to dash away into the dark. All save Hunter, who hurried forward, his ready weapon in his hand.

Calvert made a bound toward the door through which Rex had come, believing his chance lay in the confusion and fright. The uncouth creature rose nimbly to meet him, reached out a long arm and laid hold of him, in the half playful, yet wholly determined manner of a cat stopping a mouse that it has mauled and mouthed.

Mrs. Kindred tugged to pull her son away, calling him commandingly by name. He flung her off with impatient sweep of his free hand, throwing her against the wall. Hunter, in the security of his drawn pistol, interposed when she would have gone again to draw her monstrous offspring off.

"Let him alone!" he commanded, shouting loud in the exultant frenzy of the horrible thing he believed he was about to see.

"I'll not let Rex do it!" the woman screamed, throwing herself against Hunter's barring arm.

"Shut up, you catamount!" he cried, threatening her with the pistol.

She shrank back into the open door, face shielded in the crook of her arm, shoulders drawn up, to receive the expected blow.

"Stay there—let him alone!" Hunter warned.

"Rex, Rex!" she called coaxingly, as if the creature had the sense of a dog and could be cajoled. And then she stood, hand on the door-jamb for support, leaning forward with distended eyes, watching the scene across the room.

There Calvert stood, close to the wall where he had backed to save himself from an attack from the rear. His collar was gone, his shirt was torn, his clothing soiled, but his soldierly carriage, the high refinement of his very bearing, set him apart as the superior of those who had held him captive, as an oak stands proclaimed noble above a surrounding of upstart shrubs.

And Mrs. Kindred leaned, looking with dropped jaw at what she saw, no voice in her to call her uncouth son, no thought but

a dazed wonderment in her obfuscated brain.

Calvert was holding Rex by the great hairy hand, stroking his shoulder, speaking to the poor witless thing with such kindness as probably never had fallen on his ears before. Rex, standing before him, turned his head as he looked into this new friend's face, as if he strained to catch a far-away sound. There was no intention of violence in the creature's pose; only a dumb expression of struggling, puzzled curiosity.

Hunter looked round as if for something to goad the pacific fool to anger, and stir him to that fury which had made his name a terrible thing in the community. He kept his pistol raised, ready to defend himself, reached over to the stove for the short poker, leaned and prodded Rex in the back.

"Go after him!" he said.

"Let him alone, you devil!" Mrs. Kindred screamed furiously, springing upon Hunter, trying to wrench the poker out of his hand. "If Rex won't hurt him you're not goin' to, neither! You leave 'em alone—you git out of my house!"

Hunter lifted his pistol arm clear of her frantic clutching, freeing himself of her partly. Still she clung to his other hand, pulling down as if she would drag him to the floor.

"Run!" she screamed to Calvert, renewing her struggle to lay hold of Hunter's gun.

"I'll kill you if you move!" Hunter panted, throwing the woman aside.

"I'm not going to run from you, Hunter," Calvert replied, calm and unmoved.

At the outer door the frightened group stood ready to bolt if Rex should turn that way, yet held in horrified fascination by Hunter's diabolical seizure of this unlooked-for development to work his vengeance against the bondholder. Calvert glanced toward this door, standing wide open against the wall, calculating his chance of escape.

It was a chance not worth playing for, he believed. Rex was almost sure to overtake and drag him back, his shallow fury roused by the sight of something fleeing him, in his primitive, animal way. Best to face both him and Hunter, trusting to some fortuitous opening that would give him a chance at Hunter's gun.

Hunter prodded the idiot again with the poker, cursing him with mocking taunt of fear, as though the poor fool could understand. Rex turned, with a slow, portentous movement of his massive shoulders, his hand still resting in Calvert's like a great, trusting child.

"Tear his heart out!" Hunter urged, menacing Rex with the poker thrust toward his face.

"Rex!" the woman called sharply, hands lifted, her face blank of every emotion but paralyzing fear.

Rex withdrew his hand slowly from Calvert's, as if loath to give up this newfound comfort, this strange, subduing, gentle force that stilled the wild raging of his unreasoning breast. Slower yet he turned to face Hunter, as if some spark in him revealed the man's meaning, then he sprang as a cat springs on an unsuspecting bird.

Hunter leaped back, a shout of warning from the door joining a loud scream from the agonized woman. Hunter fired as he sprang out of the idiot's reach, and fired again as the creature charged on, insensible of the bullets, the flame of the discharge leaping into his face.

Rex fell on the chimney hearth at the fourth shot. Mrs. Kindred flung herself on her knees beside him, denouncing Hunter with curses, rocking to and fro in a wild frenzy of grief.

At the end of the mantel-shelf Hunter stood, pistol still poised as he had held it for the last shot, looking down on this poor trophy of his ambition to kill a man.

Calvert started across to offer such assistance as humanity pleaded in this crushing moment in the poor, half-savage mother's life. Hunter started with a jerk of his pistol arm at the sound of movement.

"Go out in the yard!" he ordered, motioning Calvert toward the door.

"I'm not going to turn my back to you!" Calvert said, refusing to move. "If you're going to do it, do it here."

"Go out in the yard!" Hunter repeated, his voice trembling in the choking heat of his murderous passion.

Calvert stood not more than three yards distant from Hunter, Mrs. Kindred, on her knees beside her dead son, between them.

She was moaning in low, piteous note, bending over the poor fool, stroking his face with her hand.

But Calvert did not move. He stood looking Hunter in the eyes, his muscles gathering for the desperate spring upon which he determined to stake his life.

Hunter moistened his lips with his tongue, lifting his pistol with a slow, stealthy movement as if he counted off the interval of life he had allotted the man before him.

"Then here, by Heaven!" he cried.

This story will be concluded in next week's issue of the ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY, the consolidated title under which both magazines will appear hereafter as one.

The Picture of Suspicion

by John Wilstach

AT twelve o'clock—Saturday noon—Jack Bartlett nodded condescendingly to a millionaire, as the latter passed out of the Ninth National Bank, after receiving some slips from the young man's hands.

Bartlett was not only on nodding acquaintance with wealth, he had also a speaking familiarity with it. To put it baldly, money was an old story to him, and one not very interesting. For, after all, it wasn't *his* money that he handled as paying-teller of the banking institution. Aside from a comparatively small salary that he received each week, the countless thousands of dollars he touched meant nothing to him.

So, at least, Bartlett said to himself as he prepared to leave the bank, early for him, but his work was all cleared up, and he had promised himself a full half-holiday.

He turned to the assistant teller, Norman Stone, a nervous individual.

"I'm leaving now, Norman," he said, "you can attend to making notations on any late deliveries from the clearing-house that may come through."

He changed his office coat for his street one, and sauntered out, as blithe and gay a young man as ever walked forth under a tremendously heavy bond from a security company.

Why shouldn't he be at ease with the world? He was honest, and his books were scrupulously up to the minute. This afternoon he was going out with his best chum over to the Jersey shore, and that evening Bartlett would call on the most charming girl in seven States.

As the old saying goes, there was nothing on his mind except his hair. Anyway, nothing worried him, to watch his step.

Even if it had, he would doubtless have gone ahead, with a clear conscience.

As he passed up Broadway toward Forty-Second Street, where he was to meet Dick Thomas, one of the young bank messengers, Peter Smith, stopped him.

"Will you do me a favor, Mr. Bartlett?" he asked.

"Certainly," the latter answered readily.

"Well, I've just received an invitation to go up to the double-header at the Polo Grounds. I'm all through work, but if I go back with this leather bag, which is empty, I'm afraid they'll find something more for me to do. I wonder if you'll take it up-town with you and I'll call for it to-morrow."

"As it happens I'm going to the hotel to change my clothes. I live at the Burtington," replied Bartlett, always glad to do a favor for any one. "Give it here. You can drop around any time to-morrow afternoon."

The messenger thanked him, and handed over the little leather satchel, then went merrily on his way.

At Forty-Second Street Dick Thomas was waiting. They shook hands heartily.

"What's the idea of the case, old man? Thought you were through work?"

"I am. Just taking this up to my room, to oblige one of the messengers. Have to change my suit."

Dick chuckled. "Since some one told you that you were the image of the Prince of Wales, the tailor has been reaping a small fortune, eh?"

"Oh, well, I can't help being handsome instead of wealthy," Jack kidded back.

Though a number of people had commented on his likeness to the heir to the British throne, and he undoubtedly was a fine specimen, a clean cut type of American youth, Jack's popularity was due in a great degree to the fact that he was entirely free from cheap conceit.

He did like to be well dressed, however; because it helped him in his business, and, as a wise man once said, habit is reason enough.

Dick was ready with a reply.

"You think the English will hire you to be the prince's understudy on his next trip, I suppose. Well, I'll take a picture of you this afternoon and you can show it to them when you apply for the job."

Bartlett now noticed his chum had a camera slung over his shoulder.

"When did you get that alarming-looking instrument of torture?" he inquired.

"I've kept the sad news from you until now. My passport has gone through O. K., and the firm is sending me to England on the steamer that leaves Monday morning."

"I knew the first thing a traveler does is to buy a camera," replied the bank-teller amusedly, "but you're not sailing to-day."

"No, but I thought I'd break it in on you! If the camera can stand for one of your poses, I know it won't be afraid of spouting whales or flying fish."

"Well, I'll give it a pose that 'll make the lens sit up and take notice," retorted Jack.

They had now reached the Burtington on Forty-Seventh Street.

"Come up to my rooms," said Bartlett, "while I put on an old suit that has been remodeled by a tailor on Sixth Avenue who says he can hand the high cost of wearing apparel an awful wallop."

They ascended to Jack's quarters, and there laid out on his bed was a check suit that looked as if a—er—check had just paid for it. From appearances it seemed quite as good as new. Jack threw the messenger's grip under the bed, and quickly changed into his new-old togs.

His friend looked on with mock admiration.

"I must snap that before the sun goes down," he chortled, "or your girl's collection will never be complete, and the world will miss a work of art."

Jack looked at himself in the glass. "That tailor is certainly a wonder. He has sure dipped this suit in the fountain of woolen youth."

"Wish I weren't sailing so soon; I'd have him fix up a few old ones of mine. Too late now. Got any drinking water, Jack?"

"Sure thing. Keep a bottle of Crystal Spring in the bathroom. Saves tips to the bell-boys when I'm thirsty."

"Trust you to twang that Crystal clear

chord, Jack," laughed Dick. "You're about the only chap I know who hasn't gone into mourning over the eighteenth amendment. Just for that I'm going to snap you this afternoon as you never were—pose you as drunk, hanging onto a lamp-post."

"Good, I'm game," laughed Jack. "Anything to oblige a departing friend. But come along or some one will have borrowed our canoe."

The two young men belonged to a little boat club on the Hudson and it wasn't more than twenty minutes before they were passing through Riverside Park bent on an afternoon's paddle up along the Jersey shore. Suddenly Dick spied a secluded nook and halted.

"Here's just the spot," he announced. "Now show what a good imagination you have, Jack. Try to feel as foolish as a drunken man the while you drape yourself around that lamp-post while I press the button. It 'll be a good laugh for every one of your friends, since they all know your bone-dry proclivities."

Bartlett was always entertained by a joke on himself—so he approached the lamp-post gingerly, and tried to do as requested.

"Embrace it! Embrace it!" yelled Dick, aiming his camera, "and get a silly expression on your face. Look as if she had accepted you! That's right. Twine yourself around the post—now flop your feet. Hold it. I feel coming over me the realization that a wonderful movie director was lost in me! Camera!"

Thereupon he snapped the picture of Jack Bartlett, the immaculate paying-teller, looking as if he had just seen a pink performing snake and the purple talking turtle that comes to those who are advancing into the last stages of alcoholic delirium.

"I'll develop it myself and mail you a print," Dick chuckled.

"I felt like a fool," remarked Jack, with a grin.

"Say, boy—you looked like a millionaire."

"How's that?"

"No one but a millionaire could *afford* these days to get into such a state as you appeared to be."

Jack wondered then just how he *had* looked. "Be sure and send me a print—you can develop one and mail it to me tomorrow."

Late that afternoon, tired from paddling for hours, the two young fellows put up their canoe, and after walking to Broadway, entered what the latest amendment had made of a corner saloon.

"Ginger-ale," said Jack.

"Make it two," Dick chimed in.

It is a question whether the bartender heard anything but Dick's remarks—or maybe was in the habit of being approached in this manner for stronger stimulant. Anyway, he set two glasses that looked like ginger-ale in front of them. They both took huge gulps.

"A ginger-ale high-ball," gasped Dick, with delight.

Jack set down his glass, almost empty. He was tingling a bit all over.

"I didn't ask for it," he said, in an annoyed tone of voice.

"None of my customers *ask* for it," growled the bartender, "but they're always glad to *get* it and *pay* for it."

The last hint was accepted. Jack put down a two-dollar bill, and received fifty cents in return.

"I'm glad I'm not thirsty," he said in a voice a little louder than normal, as they walked out.

And as luck would have it, he collided with Prescott Gladstone, the second vice-president of the Ninth National.

"Excuse me," stammered Bartlett.

"I don't know whether I will or not, after seeing you lurch out of such a place. I'm surprised you haven't the decency to do your drinking in secret."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jack indignantly. "I went in there to get a glass of ginger-ale and—"

Mr. Gladstone sneered as he turned on his heel.

"Don't forget, young man, that I can smell your breath."

Jack was stunned into silence, and stood silent, watching the bank official as he hurried off.

"What a rotten mischance!" he muttered. "If Gladstone reports that I will

sure get in wrong with the bonding company. You know they won't stand for an employee drinking."

"Tough luck," his friend agreed. "Where are you going now?"

"I have a date with Marjorie for dinner. I'll drop in some place and wash up first, then stroll over there. Shall I see you before you sail?"

"No, old man, but I'll be back in a few months—and will sure send you a copy of that snap-shot to-morrow or bring it over."

They shook hands heartily. "Hope you have a good trip," said Jack, and they parted.

As the latter made his way to his sweetheart's home on Seventy-First Street, he couldn't help thinking of the unfortunate incident of meeting the bank official, just after inadvertently drinking a high-ball.

No doubt he had firmly established in Gladstone's mind the impression that he was a confirmed toper. He could never explain away that odor on his breath.

Meanwhile the second vice-president had hurried to the nearest drug-store, and a telephone-booth, where he got the Bankers' Detective Protective Company on the wire.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Fellows," he said. "This is Gladstone, of the Ninth National, talking."

"Yes, Mr. Gladstone, there is nothing new to report. They are all still missing."

"Well, I think I have a clue. I just saw young Bartlett, our paying-teller, coming out of a saloon evidently under the influence of liquor. I smelt his breath, and it was a whisky one. Bad whisky, too," he added.

"The bonding company reports that all of your employees have been shadowed at one time or another, and that none of them are in the habit of drinking."

"You don't doubt my word, Mr. Fellows!" Gladstone roared over the line.

"Not at all," was the soothing answer. "We deem this very important and we shall put a couple of men on the case of young Bartlett at once. This is one of the biggest stories that have broken in ten years—I suppose the newspapers have it by now?"

"Couldn't keep it from them."

"That's too bad—I would much rather have this all kept quiet until we catch the criminals. The newspapers really warn them that the chase is in full cry."

"Well, it will doubtless be carried in their last editions to-day. Now, don't overlook this tip I have given you on Bartlett. He is undoubtedly a young hypocrite, and I know a liar; the natural inference is that an employee of trust who drinks is open to suspicion."

"Right you are, I'll put my two best men on the job. If Bartlett is implicated in any way be sure that we will have a line on it in short order."

Gladstone hung up and departed to his home feeling that he had nobly accomplished a real duty.

II.

ON his way home that night Bartlett heard a newsboy calling an extra—something about a big robbery. He bought one and almost staggered when he glimpsed the glaring head-lines across the front page.

NINTH NATIONAL ROBBED OF HUGE FORTUNE

Four Bank Messengers Have Disappeared

Detectives Hot on Trail

The police were notified late this afternoon by officials of the Ninth National Bank of this city, that four of their bank messengers had disappeared, and that thousands of dollars' worth of bonds and securities, totaling a large fortune, are likewise missing.

As the edition goes to press there has been no count made of the total amount stolen in apparently a monster inside job, that must have been directed by a master brain; but it is certain that in the history of metropolitan crime no robbery of such magnitude has ever been pulled off.

Both the police and detectives from the Bankers' Detective Protective Company, are working on the case, and trying to get some trace of the four missing bank messengers who have so mysteriously disappeared.

A substantial reward has been posted by the bank for the arrest and conviction of any of the culprits.

The article went on in detail, but Bartlett had read enough to give him a general outline of what had taken place.

He remembered, now, that none of the messengers had returned before noon, but had thought nothing of it at the time. On arriving at the Burtington he noticed a man leave the desk and follow him into the elevator. Bartlett got off at the fifth floor, and went to his room, the man still behind him. When he walked in the man followed—and there was another already in the room.

"What is the meaning of this?" Jack demanded.

"Better blow quiet, young fellow," said the man on the spot, "if you know what is best for you."

"I don't understand? What are you doing in my room?"

One of the men showed a badge of the detective bureau.

"Is that enough?" he asked dryly.

"It doesn't explain anything to me," retorted Jack.

"You got a little explaining to do yourself. What is this doing under your bed?"

He took from a chair the messengers' leather grip Bartlett had taken to the hotel that noon for young Smith as an accommodation.

"What are you doing with a bank messengers' grip? It is empty now—but why is it in *your* possession. We got a tip on you this afternoon, word that you were in the habit of going up against old John Barleycorn.

"Now, come on, my young friend, explain how this bag comes into your possession, and if you confess where the loot is, and make a clean breast of the whole thing, it will go easier with you."

Jack laughed very faintly. "You certainly don't connect me with the robbery of the Ninth National?"

"A drinking paying-teller—with evidence like this against him! You'll have a hard time talking your way out of it. Do you wish to start before you get to headquarters?"

"No," replied Jack, "I'll tell the truth to some one in authority."

"All right; the captain will sweat it out of you, don't fear. Come along; if you come quiet we won't put the bracelets on you."

"I'll come quiet enough," replied Jack. His brain was buzzing and he wondered if he could be in some kind of a trance. He remembered the fact that the four bank messengers having disappeared, his possession of the empty case would certainly look bad for him.

But could an innocent man be made to look guilty? He wondered!

One of the detectives jerked him by the arm. "No time to waste, the captain will be waiting for us."

Accompanied by the two detectives, one carrying the messengers' bag, Bartlett left the hotel, his brain struggling between bewilderment and the conviction that the simple facts of the case might need a lot of explaining to convince any one. He was getting used, by now, to having the appearance of things go against him.

Once in the street a taxicab was hailed by one of his captors. He sat in the middle of the seat, with a heavy-set detective on either side, and tried to comfort himself with the fact that he had done nothing wrong. His conscience was quite clear.

But things did *look*, under the circumstances, mighty peculiar. Well, he would tell the truth, no matter how fishy it sounded.

A short, bumpy ride, and they stopped at police headquarters. Bartlett's companions hustled him inside, and in two minutes he found himself in a large room, furnished only with a few chairs and a huge desk, behind which sat a police captain. Seated near him were two men he afterward found out were investigators from the security company.

He was told to take a seat, more as a command than an invitation.

"I'm Captain Benton," announced the officer. "Maybe you've heard of me? Well, it doesn't matter. Anyway, I stand no nonsense. I'll tell you how matters are, young fellow. This afternoon an official of your bank, which, as you know, was robbed of a huge haul to-day, called up the Bankers' Detective Protective Association and told 'em he had found you drinking. They sent a couple of men over to your room, and found under the bed a leather messengers' bag. Now, you have

some explaining to do—or rather *confessing* I should say. It will be better for you if you come clean, and turn State's evidence."

"But I'm perfectly innocent," blurted out Bartlett. "One of the messengers gave me that leather grip to hold for him because he didn't wish to return to the bank yesterday noon—I met him on the street—he wished to go to the ball game. He promised to call for it to-morrow."

The police captain laughed. "A likely story. Tell that to Sweeney."

Bartlett quavered on. "I never had a drink of hard stuff in my life until this afternoon—when I took one by mistake. I know you won't believe this—"

"I should say not; but I see you have your alibi ready." He turned to one of the men from the security company. "What do you say to this, Mr. Richmond?"

"Guess we had better hold him until Monday as a material witness. When a paying-teller of a bank drinks, why that alone is suspicious, and this messengers' grip needs a lot more explaining."

What was the use of saying any more, when he was so thoroughly disbelieved? So Bartlett said nothing as they led him away to a cell, like a common felon.

No one came to see him. None of his friends were aware of his plight as yet, and it would not have done him any good if they had been.

How he passed the time until Monday morning without going mad Bartlett never knew. Simple meals were served him, and he rolled and tossed at times on the little cot in the cell, in a vain effort to sleep.

It seemed as if weeks had passed, as the slow hours crawled by. So far as he could see he was in wrong all around with the bank, and with the law.

He had told nothing but the plain truth, but lies had worn a more plausible aspect—since appearances seemed so against him.

Any normal person, learning the facts would believe that he was a slave of John Barleycorn, and in all probability knew something about the bank robbery.

Monday morning the door of his cell was opened, and he was led into the room where he had been previously examined. Bartlett was pale and haggard, and merely wondered what new torture he must prepare to suffer.

Captain Benton beamed on him as he entered.

"You say you never took a drink in your life before yesterday—well, we have something pretty good to hand over to the newspapers. This is what you received in the morning mail: we took the liberty of opening the envelope."

He got up and pushed under Bartlett's nose the last thing in the world he expected to see, a photograph of himself, apparently dead-drunk, hanging onto a lamp-post. It was the picture that Dick Thomas had snapped Saturday afternoon.

"Suppose one of your drunken friends took that when you were in no condition to object. That's a fine state for a man to be in who never took a drink!" And the official laughed uproariously.

"This picture was taken Saturday—as a joke—by a friend of mine, Dick Thomas," said Bartlett, still sticking, though beaten, to the truth.

"Well, where is he?" demanded the captain.

"He sailed this morning for England," stammered Jack.

"A likely story, I must say. I don't see how you can prove this was taken Saturday—it was doubtless taken some time in the past while you were on a drunken debauch."

He turned to a police aid. "Turn this photograph over to the newspaper boys."

Bartlett cringed as he saw the policeman leave the room with the horrible photograph in his hand.

"You can go back to your cell—we don't need you any more as yet. We'll send in a copy of the papers when they come out."

As he was led back to his cell the young paying-teller knew that now, come what might, as regarded the robbery, he certainly looked ruined as a result of this photograph.

How could he ever prove that it was taken on Saturday as a joke?

And if he didn't prove it, his banking career was a thing of the past. No bonding company would pass, nor any bank employ,

as a paying-teller, a man who had a reputation of having a taste for whisky.

For hours Bartlett sat and brooded, until suddenly a newspaper was thrust into his cell.

There, on the first page, was his picture—the photograph of a tipsy paying-teller, hanging onto a lamp-post. Under it was the caption: "Self-Explanatory Photo of Suspect." In this way the newspaper got out of any possibility of being sued for slander.

The story in the paper told of his arrest, and the discovery in his room of the messengers' bag. Nothing had yet been discovered of the four missing messengers, and therefore he was being held as a material witness, to be used when they were captured. His explanations were, of course, also given.

Bartlett sank back on the cot, a prey to the gloomiest thoughts. One hour—nearly two—passed, and he didn't hear the door of the cell open and his name called, he was sunk in such a stupor.

A policeman shook him by the shoulder.

"The captain wants you; come along."

Jack staggered after the man—all he could think of was more torture.

Then he had the surprise of his life.

For there stood Dick Thomas, big as life. He rushed up to him feverishly.

"Didn't you take the steamer this morning?"

"I saw the first edition of the evening paper and as my steamer's sailing was canceled because of the harbor strike, I came right over here and told the captain the truth—just as you told it to him, and—"

"Yes?" gasped Bartlett.

"He won't believe it!" finished Dick.

Bartlett felt his sudden hopes drop to earth.

"You can't fool me," said Captain Benton, "I won't believe that photo was taken Saturday, and that it was all a joke. That's a little too thick for me to swallow."

"How can we prove it, Dick, I wonder, if he won't take your word for it?" groaned Jack.

"I don't know," replied Dick, "though they'd believe me in a court of law."

"Maybe," sneered Captain Benton.

Suddenly there was an interruption. The telephone rang, and the police officer answered it.

"Hello, yes," he muttered, then listened for a while. "Fine. What was the boy's name who did all the good work? All right; hold them at the station-house until they are examined, before being taken to the Tombs."

Captain Benton turned to Bartlett.

"I have just received news that the three criminal messengers have been captured, due to some brilliant work done by a fourth, a certain Peter Smith."

"That's the lad whose leather grip I was minding," almost yelled Bartlett.

"Well, as soon as that is established we will let you go, young man, but it looks as if you career were ruined, anyway. As it stands you have a reputation as an awful booze-hound."

Bartlett groaned.

"I know it. I am ruined, even if I will shortly be a free man."

A policeman entered.

"There is a man here who says he has some information about Mr. Bartlett," he announced.

"Bring him in," said Captain Benton.

Into the room marched a little man whom the paying-teller at first failed to recognize.

"Don't you remember me?" he asked, turning to Bartlett.

"I can't say that I do."

"Well, I saw that photograph of you in the paper and figured that I could back up your story that it was taken early Saturday afternoon as a joke when you were quite sober."

"How can you prove that for me?"

"Why, I'm the tailor that remodeled that suit—do you remember me now?"

"Yes, but what does that amount to, anyway?"

"Well, I delivered that suit to you about Saturday noon, and I recognized it in the photo."

"By what convincing means?" broke in Captain Benton.

The little tailor turned to him triumphantly.

"It is the first suit that I have remodeled

by the new method of making an old suit new—*turning it inside out*. In doing that, as you can easily see, the suit is the same as it was, except that the upper coat-pocket changes from the *left* to the *right* side."

Captain Benton picked up a newspaper that lay on his desk. Sure enough, the upper pocket on the coat *was* on the wrong side!

"Bartlett," he said, "there is a batch of reporters in the next room. I want you to go in there, with your friend and this tailor, and explain things for the next edition. In half an hour you'll be a free man. You'll come out with an unstained reputation, now, but I'd advise you in the future to avoid the appearance of evil."

"After this I won't even drink ginger-ale," replied Jack.

"Well, let's see the reporters—and whitewash the *picture of suspicion*," broke in Dick.

"That was a nice job I did to that suit," remarked the little tailor, as they passed into the reporters' room.

"When I get out of here," said Bartlett, joyfully, "I'll sign a contract with you for life."

A Perfect Plant

by Samuel G. Camp

THERE'S a lot of this supernatural stuff being talked these days, and off and on I've had quite a number of people ask me whether I think it is possible to communicate with the dead. Well, I tell 'em, seeing that Sir Oliver Lodge has made a study of the subject, probably he knows more about it than I do; but as for me, I have my doubts—considering that what with the sort of telephone service we're getting it ain't even possible to communicate with the living.

But getting right down to cases, I haven't got any opinion one way or the other about whether it is possible to communicate with those that have passed on—though I say "Sorry, but I'm broke myself," to one or more dead ones every day, if that means anything. You see, the low-down on me and this ouija stuff is this: I'm a mile off it. I refuse to have anything to do with it at all. How did I get that way? Because—it reminds me of something.

Whenever anybody starts pulling this occult dope on me, right off the bat I begin to think about a dame that called herself Madame Zelda, and how—but I'll let you in on the whole thing. It happened not so long ago, and the start was when Doug Young and I signed out with the J. G. Potts Repertoire Company. And as for our going into stock like that—well, if Doug had had his way we wouldn't have done it, and maybe it would have been just as well if we hadn't.

"You've got to show me," said Doug when I put the idea up to him. I'd happened to meet up with this J. G. Potts, and

he had told me that he was getting up this repertoire company to go on the road, and he said he'd seen Doug and me work, and if we wanted to have him he'd take us on—and I could take it straight from J. G. Potts that if we did sign out with him we'd be in on a winner. Well, there were reasons why it looked pretty good to me, and so I put it up to Doug. But Doug couldn't see it.

"You've got to show me," said Doug. "Where's the sense in our doing anything like that? Here we've been working our heads off in the two-a-day for three or four years, and now, just when we're beginning to make good and work up a name for ourselves, you want to chuck the whole business and sign out with a small-time road show that nobody ever heard of I'll say not. Not on your life!"

"You don't get the idea, Doug," I told him. "Of course there's something in what you say. But you're like a lot of other people; you don't look ahead far enough. If you'd look ahead you'd see that there ain't any future for us in vaudeville. There isn't any future for anybody in vaudeville. All you do is keep moving and you don't ever get anywhere. That's the point, Doug. It's up to us to give a thought to the future."

"Maybe so," said Doug. "But what I want to know is, what has this here J. G. Potts Repertoire chain-gang got to do with the future, yours and mine? How do you figure these J. G. Potts troupers in?"

"I'll tell you," said I. "Listen. I've been thinking this thing over and I've made up my mind to this: If we're ever going to get out of this two-a-day treadmill—if there's any future for us at all it's in musical comedy. That's where it is, in musical comedy. All right. Now get this: The one best bet for anybody that wants to get on in the dramatic profession is to join one of these stock companies. If you don't believe it you can ask Dave Belasco; he'll tell you the same thing. You get all kinds of experience, and—"

"And sometimes you eat," said Doug, "but mostly you don't. Why, I knew a fellow once that had about the worst case of indigestion you ever heard of. Well, he joined out with a bunch of these theatrical marathons, and—maybe you won't believe me, but it's the truth—in less than a week that case of indigestion had entirely disappeared, and it was a mighty bad one, too. He said he felt as if he had never had anything to eat in his life. It certainly did wonders for him. But as for me—"

"Leaving all that aside," said I, "I guess you don't need to worry. This bird J. G. Potts showed me his line of goods, and it's all live stuff. Plays that everybody out there in the sticks has heard about, but most of 'em have never had a chance to see. Plays like 'Bought and Done For,' and—well, stuff like that. Old stuff in the big towns, but still going good in the provinces. And he has picked up a pretty fair company, too. There's—"

Well, Doug and I had quite an argument, but I guess the rest of it doesn't matter much. Anyway, the upshot of it was, after a while Doug fell for it; though I wouldn't say that he was exactly what you'd call enthusiastic about it. You see, it was the training for musical comedy that this experience in stock was going to give us—that was what appealed to Doug, the same as it did to me.

The J. G. Potts Repertoire Company, including Doug and me, hit the road in the vicinity of October first. Our route took us up through Connecticut, Massachusetts, and over into Vermont; and no doubt the intention was to visit several other States, but I don't know which ones because the intention was not carried out. You can search me; it may have been the movies, or—well, anyway, whatever it was, the fact remains that you could put most all of the business done by the J. G. Potts Repertoire Company in your eye. Yes, sir, most all of it. And to make a long story short, after our last performance—that went both ways—in Unionville, Vermont, J. G. Potts assembled the ladies and gentlemen of the company and made a little speech.

He said that much as he regretted it, he was obliged to inform us that the evening's performance marked the end of a perfect repertoire company—J. G. Pott's, to be exact. Without going into any whys or wherefores, or fits, he said, he could see right now that the enterprise was not going

to be a success—and he believed in quitting while the quitting was good. We were now quite a long ways from home, and if we kept on going we would be a still longer ways from it, and under the circumstances it didn't look advisable. Probably we were able to grasp the idea without being led up to it and introduced by him.

However, he was glad to announce that, the way things were now, he was in a position to hand each and every member of the company what they had coming to 'em—a position that he doubted very much he would be in if we continued with the tour—and he proposed to do that little thing at once, here and now. And, wishing us all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, we were now at liberty to consider the J. G. Potts Repertoire Company merely a memory of the dead past, and govern ourselves accordingly.

That was what he said, or thereabouts, and all in all he was a pretty sensible guy, this J. G. Potts, and a square-shooter, too—because he thereupon made good on that paying-off thing. And so, of course, it might have been worse—a lot worse.

"Anyway," I said to Doug—it was the same night, a little later, and Doug and I were holding down a couple of chairs in the lobby of the Unionville House—"anyway, we've got our carfare back to the big town, and a little something on the side, and—"

"Yeh," Doug butted in, "and no doubt what with all this experience in stock we've had—you know, Sid, there ain't anything like experience in stock for anybody that wants to get on in the profession—no doubt after we get back it won't take us more than fifteen or twenty minutes to land a couple of leading parts in one of the big musical comedy hits of the day.

"Sure we will! I expect Sig Feld or some of those other birds will be around to call on us just the minute they hear we have hit town. I bet you they'll make life perfectly miserable for us. Why, these jazz comedy magnates will probably be dropping in on us in bunches at all times of the day and night. We won't have a moment to call our own. No doubt people will be able to hear 'em for blocks around—outbidding each other for our services. Considering our experience in stock, of course. Sure!"

"And now you just listen to me, Sydney," he went on. "After this, any time the future begins to ail you—keep it to yourself! I ain't interested."

Well, somehow I couldn't seem to think of any real good comeback just then, and so I was glad that there was an interruption.

One of the former members of the late J. G. Potts Repertoire Company was a vintage damsel by the name of Bessie Trotter. On the program Bessie appeared as May Harrison, and whenever Bessie appeared anywhere else you would be likely to notice her, because there was about two hundred pounds of Bessie, and when you get that many pounds together all in one person it makes quite a heap of person—especially if it happens to be a female person.

Yes, Bessie Trotter was certainly an eye-filler, and she didn't trot, she waddled. Mostly, too, Bessie was just in between losing her breath and getting it back again—never did seem to get it all back—and as for the rest, Bessie was one of these synthetic blondes and good-natured. Never saw Bessie when she wasn't good-natured, and she had considerable to contend against, at that. And, as I say, if Bessie ever saw forty-five again no doubt it would look familiar to her somehow, though of course she wouldn't admit it.

And just then along came Bessie. She heaved-to alongside—heaved is right—collapsed all over a chair, and started dabbing at her brow with a handkerchief about the size of a small postage stamp. This business with the handkerchief was Bessie's favorite exercise indoors and out; and she never seemed to get anywhere at it. She panted for a minute, and then she said between gasps:

"Listen, boys. I want to have a little talk with you—when I get my breath back."

"We're here to listen," said Doug.

"But just a suggestion," I put in. "Why not start now and do the best you can? I mean without waiting to get your breath back, Bessie. Of course I don't want to get

personal or anything, and I suppose we've got all the time there is, but—"

"I'll try," she wheezed. "Listen. What are you boys going to do? Beat it back to the big town?"

"Surest thing you know," said Doug.

"I suppose you realize," suggested Bessie, "that it's going to be kinda hard to find jobs—the season being pretty well along now, and all?"

"Not for us," said Doug. "No trouble at all! We're going to crash right into musical comedy."

"D' you mean that?" asked Bessie.

"Nix," said Doug. "And, what's more, you're right. Maybe we'll get booking and maybe we won't. Still, we've had a lot of experience in stock—lately—and you know it's a big help. You can ask Sid, here, or Dave Belasco, or anybody. They 'll tell you the same thing. But how about you? Back to the Bronx?"

"It depends," said Bessie. "Depends on you boys, I guess. Take a look at that."

From somewhere or other she fished out a small handbill that was considerably the worse for wear and handed it to Doug. Doug gave it the once-over and passed it along to me. It starts off like this:

TO-NIGHT!

MADAME ZELDA

Mind-Reader and Clairvoyant Extraordinary

And then it went on to state that positively for one night only this Madame Zelda would appear at the Town Hall in some little hick burg somewhere, and the date was quite some time ago.

"Interestin' if true," I observed.

"What's the idea?" asked Doug.

"Madame Zelda is me," announced Bessie.

"Then you must be out of practice," I said. "Because it strikes me that if you were a real extraordinary clairvoyant like this handbill says, you'd have known enough to lay away from the J. G. Potts Repertoire Company, deceased. Haven't been doing much of any clairvoyanting lately, have you?"

"No," said she. "Not for quite a while. But I'm still as good as I ever was, and honestly, boys, I was *good!* Though maybe I say it as shouldn't. But you see, I got sorta tired of it, and besides, I was all wore out. Y' know, boys, it's an awful strain on a person, bein' a clairvoyant, what with somebody all the time tryin' to expose you, and havin' to watch your step every minute for fear the next one you take you'll put your foot in it, and everything. And so—so I went outa business. I went onta the stage as a reg'lar actress.

"Of course, there ain't so much difference between actin' and the mind-readin' game, anyway; and there ain't nowheres near the worry connected with it. But lately, somehow I've sorta got to thinkin' about working back into the mystic stuff again. And seein' things have turned out the way they have, and not only that, but—"

"Listen, boys," she went on. "What with all the interest in the supernatural, and all that sorta stuff, that this here Sir Oliver Lodge guy—you've heard about him—and a lotta other big bugs has stirred up, believe me, boys, there never was a time like the present for takin' a little flyer in psychics! I'll say there never was! No, sir, the psychic stuff is going the greatest ever. Never was anythin' like it in the world! Ouija boards is sellin' like hot cakes, and the mediums and all such as them 're raking in the coin hand over fist, and all over everywhere people are falling for the game that a coupla years ago all they'd ever hand it was the razz. I know what I'm talkin' about, boys, because I've been watching it. And now listen. I'm going to make you a proposition."

Well, Bessie made us her proposition, and after considering Bessie's proposal by and large for quite a while, Doug and I accepted it. I guess there isn't any particular use of going into just what that proposition of Bessie's was, because future events will speak for themselves. Anyway, it looked to Doug and me as if a job in the bush was worth more than our chance of landing one in the big town, and so we changed our minds about beating it back to Manhattan. We'd see it through with Bessie.

Next morning I went to a local print shop and left an order for a lot of paper featur-

ing Madame Zelda, Mind-reader and Clairvoyant Extraordinary, some printed stationery, and so forth. As soon as the first of the stuff was off the press I got busy. Aiming south, I booked Madame Zelda for four or five little bush-league burgs, the first one not far from Unionville, and then I sort of laid off—waiting for developments.

No doubt Bessie was right—this was the greatest time ever for the psychic stuff. And no doubt Bessie was a grade-A mind-reader and clairvoyant, and all that. Still, before routing Bessie around the world, it seemed to Doug and me that it would be a good plan to see how the show was going to go. We thought we'd better start in sort of easy and then see.

Meantime, Bessie had taken over the job of teaching Doug her " system " of mind-reading. Of course Bessie had to have an assistant to pass among the audience to collect papers on which people asked Madame Zelda different sorts of foolish questions, and to ask Madame Zelda what was the date on the fifty-cent piece that the gentleman had in his left-hand pants' pocket, and so forth—the regular thing—and Bessie had picked Doug for the position of assistant. She said he looked the part more than I did—whatever the requirements are.

Bessie said she could teach Doug her system of mind-reading in just a couple of days, but she guessed wrong. She underestimated the amount of bone, I guess. Anyway, it was nearer five days than two before Doug was working real good and smooth—smooth enough to get by in public. As for me—well, I'll admit that I sort of liked my job as advance man and press-agent for Madame Zelda, Mind-reader and so forth.

You see, I'd always had a sneaking idea that I could make good at this sort of thing—and here was my chance. And if Bessie and Doug got by, if we put the thing over, I made up my mind that before long I'd show 'em something in the press-agenting line that would make 'em sit right up and take notice. If Bessie proved up—leave it to me! We'd make a million—if there was anything in publicity.

Well, I guess I'll have to hand it to her—Bessie. She was good! She was better than that—a wonder! You understand, I was among those present at the first few performances; and honestly, she put stuff over that if I hadn't known all the while it was the bunk, well, to say the least it would 'a' had me guessing—hard.

Yes, Bessie was certainly good. All of that! And as for Doug—Doug must have done pretty fairly well, too; because if he hadn't it would certainly have crabbed the game for Bessie, and you couldn't pick a flaw. So maybe Doug's got a little credit coming to him. It took Bessie's " system " some time to penetrate the ivory, but when it did finally seep through, Doug certainly had a strangle-hold on it. Well, Doug was like that; not so quick on the up-take, but when he once got a thing it was his for keeps.

So, all in all, they made a pretty strong combination, Bessie Trotter and Doug. And so it looked to me as if I could now go ahead and throw myself a little—as a press-agent, of course—at the first opportunity. But of course I didn't mean to *wait* for an opportunity; no regular publicity man would ever do that. No, indeed! I proposed to *make* an opportunity.

And the way things turned out, it was just as well I felt that way about it. You see, after satisfying myself that Bessie was all she claimed to be as a mind-reader and clairvoyant, I started out on the road again to see what I could do in the booking line. And it was only a few days when a letter came along from Doug saying that just now the clairvoyanting seemed to be very poor where he was, sometimes they were just about breaking even and every now and then they weren't, and I could take it from him that now was a first-rate time for me to make good on some of those threats I had made to him and Bessie—all about how I was going to show 'em something in the publicity-grabbing line that maybe they'd never seen before, and all this and that.

Well, come to think of it, maybe I had said something like that; but I'll tell the world these big publicity stunts require some preparation—time to dope 'em out and everything—and so far I'd been too busy to pay much attention to anything

outside my regular duties as booking-agent, bill-poster, and the like.

But now it seemed like it was up to me. Bessie Trotter had the goods, and it was up to me to put her over. One good story about Bessie in some newspaper—most any little old sheet would do, because if the story was good enough, leave it to the rest of 'em to lift it. Once I could get Bessie into print, what with all this supernatural furor that was going round, there wouldn't be a thing to it. Not a thing! Bessie and Doug and I would be right on that old road to riches.

It was up to me.

Well, Doug's letter reached me at a place called—we'll call it Eastbury. It was in Massachusetts. This place Eastbury is a small town about nine miles or so from quite a good-sized city, as cities go outside of the real centers of civilization like New York, Boston, and other places that you see mentioned in the box-scores.

We'll call the name of the place Springfield—because it wasn't. I got into Eastbury pretty late in the day, but before night I'd dated up Madame Zelda for one night only, and papered the town, too. Next morning I started for Springfield. So far it had been piker stuff, but this was a little more like the real thing—I knew Springfield was a pretty fair imitation of a regular town.

Of course, I didn't know whether I could get booking there for Madame Zelda, but I was going to try—try to break in somewhere for a week's stand. And if I could do that—yes, sir, speaking of that little publicity stunt, now was the time and Springfield was the place to pull it, whatever it was going to be. That's the way it shaped up to me.

On the way to Springfield I was thinking over Doug's letter, and sort of hazing round in the old brain for some sort of story to hang on Bessie Trotter; something that would land Bessie on the front page of Springfield's leading newspapers—and I wasn't getting much of anywhere at it, either—when a kid came along with the morning dailies.

I bought one. It was a Boston paper. The minute I glanced at it, a headline hit me right between the eyes—just like it was meant to do. And I hadn't read more than half the story when all of a sudden—I had it! The big idea!

Several days later, when Bessie Trotter and Doug Young blew into Springfield, I was there to meet' em. They came in from Eastbury Monday morning. They'd played Eastbury Saturday night; but Bessie thought a nice, quiet Sunday in Eastbury would do her good, and so Doug stayed there, too, to keep Bessie from getting lonesome. Soon as Doug and Bessie had got settled at the hotel we went into a sort of secret session, which we held up in Bessie's room.

I had already passed out a few hints that I had something pretty important to tell 'em, and so Doug asked:

"Well, Sidney, what's the big news?"

"Oh, nothing much," I stalled. "Only I guess right here and now is where I prove to you whether I'm some press-agent or not."

"Prove it!" said Doug.

"I'll do that little thing," said I. "Cast your eagle eye on that!"

I handed him a copy of that morning's Springfield *Recorder*, and showed him where to look. 'Most anybody would 'a' looked there anyhow—the fellow that wrote the headline had attended to that. I'd liked to have looked that bird up and told him how I felt about it—that I was certainly much obliged to him—but it wouldn't hardly do.

"What about it?" asked Doug, soon as he'd sized up what the story was about.

"Let Bessie in on it," I said, and Doug handed the paper to her.

That made two of 'em that were looking for information.

"What about it?" I said. "Nothing but this: That's it! I told you I was going to pull something, and believe me, I've done it. And while I ain't saying it's the greatest little publicity stunt ever conceived by the mind of man—I'll leave that to others—"

"Sid," said Doug, "d' you mean to say that this—this is something you framed up? That you're behind it?"

"That's what I mean to say," I told him.

"But where's the good?" asked Doug. "What's it amount to? How—"

"You don't see it?" I said. "Listen."

And I turned in and wised up Doug and Bessie to the whole thing—and what came next.

And—well, they had to admit that I'd certainly celebrated myself as a press-agent, so to say, but—they were worried. They agreed that if all went well it would surely mean a pot of money to us. Nothing less! Bessie'd get more advertising than a new breakfast food or something, and after that the coin would simply roll in. Couldn't help it. But—they were worried. 'Specially Bessie.

"I dunno," sighed Bessie, pretty doubtful. "I'll admit it's some little frame-up, Sid, and all that. But—well, somehow I got a sorta feelin'. Of course, I ain't no clairvoyant or nothing like that—leastways not a regular one—but—I got a sorta feelin' like there's somethin' wrong somewhere. Are you sure everything's all right, Sid? Because if there was a slip or something somewhere—good night! Curtains for us. Are you sure, Sid?"

"Right?" said I. "Everything's *dead* right! I've got the whole thing buttoned up tighter than a drum. There isn't a chance for anything to go wrong anywhere—I'll stake my oath on it. This Tinker woman is safer than a church. She wouldn't snitch on us for love or—no, not even for money. She was so much obliged to me for those fifty bucks I handed her she'll never get over it."

"And as for sister," I went on, "she's just as safe. Y' see, I took a lot of pains about picking the right parties. No crooks need apply—that was the idea, see? Because they 'd be liable to double-cross us somehow, or else maybe try to hold us up afterward. I got the idea from that Boston paper, like I told you. Well, a little while later I got into conversation with a native, a bird that lives in what seems to be a likely part of the town, considering the business in hand. I told him I was lookin' for scrub-women to work in one of the big buildings in the business section.

"He wised me to these Tinker ladies, and how they were fixed and all, addin' that they 'd only moved to town just lately—which of course made it all the better—and—well, there you are. The rest was easy. Everything's fixed, and not a chance for anything to go wrong anywhere. I've looked after every single little old detail—like a cat. Everything right? I'll say it is! I tell you, people, it's a perfect plant! A perfect plant!"

"A perfect plant, eh?" said Doug. "Well, here's hoping so, because if it ain't—farewell!"

"A perfect plant," sighed Bessie. "I hope so, too."

This, as I've said, was on Monday.

Wednesday morning it snowed in Springfield—a regular blizzard of small dodgers that read like this:

TO-NIGHT!

At Clark's Bijou!!

MADAME ZELDA

Mind-Reader and Clairvoyant Extraordinary Will Endeavor to Answer the Question Where is Little Minnie Tinker?

Do Not Miss This Great Demonstration of the Mystic Art of Clairvoyance?

Note: While Madame Zelda does not *guarantee* to reveal the whereabouts of the missing Tinker child, nevertheless, she is *confident* of success!!

Which wasn't so bad, I guess, considering I wrote it myself. By a lucky chance I had been able to book Bessie Trotter for a week's stand in Springfield. This man Clark had just opened up a new movie place, the Bijou, and there wasn't so much business coming his way but what he could use all of it and quite a lot more without straining himself at all. So it had been easy to mesmerize him into putting on Madame Zelda as an added attraction.

Well, that literature of mine certainly did the business. It was a straight case of packing 'em in at the Bijou that night. You understand, Springfield hadn't talked about much of anything except "The Tinker Case" since it had broken out in Monday morning's papers. Only a little while ago there had been a mysterious and sensational

child-abduction case in Boston—and now Springfield had one of its own.

Mrs. Evaline Tinker, a widow lady in very poor circumstances, who had recently moved to Springfield, had phoned the police, from a neighbor's house, late Sunday night, that her two-year-old child, a little girl named Minnie, was missing. Little Minnie Tinker was missing! Abducted! And so far all the police had done was to pull the usual business of being baffled, which, as everybody knows, is the best thing they do.

Of course, there was a lot of details and clues and theories, and so forth, the same as in every case of this kind; but I guess there isn't any use of going into all that. All we need to know is that little Minnie Tinker was certainly among those absent, and that the young city of Springfield was guessing its head off as to how little Minnie got that way, and where was little Minnie now—and that Madame Zelda, the Clairvoyant Extraordinary, wasn't sure, but she was *pretty* sure that she was going to solve the mystery of the whereabouts of little Minnie Tinker at Clark's Bijou theater that very night. That's the main point—about all we need to know.

And that was all that Springfield needed to know—we hung out the S. R. O. sign fifteen minutes after the doors opened. They mobbed the place. And when I say mobbed, I guess I'm using the right word.

Doug and Bessie were pretty nervous. Bessie hadn't ever got over that "sorta feelin'," and Bessie's feeling that way didn't tend to buck up Doug a whole lot—or me, either, for that matter. I didn't go around advertising the fact, but just the same I'd feel a good deal better when it was all over. Yes, sir, I certainly would. Though for the life of me I couldn't see where there was a chance for anything to go wrong. It was a perfect plant!

Bessie's act was sandwiched in between the one-reelers and the feature film, if you could speak of sandwiching Bessie in between anything, seeing there 'd be considerably more in-between than there was sandwich (in a manner of speaking.)

Bessie got quite a hand when she went on. Of course everybody is familiar in a general way with the kind of mind-reading act Bessie's was, and so I'll let the preliminaries go—except to say that Bessie seemed to be having even more trouble with her breathing than usual. I suppose it was the result of that feeling she had. But Bessie was game! It meant a lot to us if we pulled it off—and Bessie was going to see it through.

So, then, it's like this: Madame Zelda is fully occupying a chair at C—center-stage. She's blindfolded.

"Some one asks me where is little Minnie Tinker?" said she—you know, in that sort of high, little-girly voice they use.

If they hadn't already reached bottom quite a while ago, you could have heard N. Y., N. H. & H. common and preferred, keeping right on dropping.

Then Madame Zelda paused. Maybe it was for effect, and then again maybe it was on account of that bronchial trouble she was having. Or maybe it was a little of both. Anyway, the pause was effective. Yes, sir, Bessie surely had those people eating right out of her hand.

Then she went on. She seemed to see a street. A street in some city. Some strange city. She couldn't seem to get the name of the city. The street was narrow and dirty. The houses were old and run-down. There was a river—a bridge. At one end of the bridge there was a tenement house. Its number was—the number was seventeen! Now she knew the name of the street! It was River Street!

At the other end of the bridge stood a large building—a manufactory, or warehouse, or something. There was a name painted across the building. The name was—J.—B.—Harris. Or it might be—no, it was J. B. Harris. That was the name! And she thought—yes! Little Minnie Tinker would be found in the tenement house at number seventeen, River Street! There was a door ajar. It was on the third floor. And—

But that was all.

"Everything has left me," she said, tired and weak. "Please take off the handkerchief, Mr. Young."

That was Doug, of course.

"That place is right in this town," some-

body yelled, all excited up. "It's River Street right in this city, and the warehouse is Jim Harris's! It ain't three blocks from here!"

It wasn't much news to anybody present. 'Most anybody that had lived there for any length of time would 'a' recognized it easy enough. Why, I even recognized it myself!

"Let's go!" yelled somebody else.

People began getting up all over the place.

Doug walked down to the footlights and pulled the Statue of Liberty pose on 'em till they subdued a little. Then he made 'em a little speech—the best way to do was to have a committee, say of four or five, go to seventeen River Street at once, and then report back to the theater with whatever they might have to report, bearing in mind that Madame Zelda had done the best she could, but that she did not guarantee results.

In the meantime, Madame Zelda's performance, which was not yet finished, would go on.

Of course there was some confusion, but in the end it was settled Doug's way. And I guess that no more than fifteen or twenty other people went along to help out the committee. Not that the committee minded it, because for all they knew they might be going to stack up against a bunch of kidnapers, and if they did there would probably be some virtue in numbers. Everybody knows that these kidnapers are bad actors and are liable to have guns and everything.

Well, Doug and Bessie stalled along for a while, after the committee had left the theater. And then, pretty soon, the committee reported back.

And had they found little Minnie? They had!

What's more, they had little Minnie right with 'em! A tall man with gray hair, that seemed to have appointed himself chairman of the committee—I never heard what his name was—this gray-haired bird had little Minnie right in his arms, and he and the rest of the delegation paraded right down the center aisle till they fetched up against the orchestra and had to stop. Somebody yelled for three rousing cheers for Madame Zelda, and got 'em. Bessie Trotter, proud and happy, acknowledged the ovation handsomely.

Was it going big? I'll say it was!

Well, then this gray-haired citizen that was carrying little Minnie raised one hand for silence, and the crowd came across.

"Fellow citizens," he orated, "the mystery has been solved! Little Minnie Tinker has been found! And something else! I now call your attention to this small white object"—he held it up for inspection—"discovered in the pocket of little Minnie's dress. A small, white object, or business card reading as follows:

MR. SIDNEY RICE

Representing Madame Zelda,
Mind-Reader and Clairvoyant Extraordinary

"Fake! *Fake! FAKE!*"

They came for us. I don't suppose they'd have done much of anything to poor little Bessie Trotter, but Doug and I were young and strong and able to take it, and what they'd have done to us—but we didn't wait to see! We started drifting; and we took Bessie Trotter with us.

How we ever got every one of Bessie Trotter's two hundred pounds off the stage, into the wings and out of that theater—by way of the stage door, of course—how we ever did that and stayed ahead of the mob, that is something I don't know. Maybe they didn't think to try and head us off by the main entrance and got tangled up back stage looking for the exit. Whatever the reason was, we made our get-away—but it was certainly a terrible time for Bessie Trotter. For that matter, I don't think it was enjoyed by anybody.

But we got away, and so I guess we didn't have any kick coming. If they'd tagged us I'm pretty sure we'd have enjoyed it still less. Not far from Clark's Bijou, in the nick of time to save the life of Bessie Trotter, we caught a taxi. And next morning we woke up in a different town.

Bessie hadn't had much to say; she was

too out of breath. But Doug was pretty sarcastic.

"I suppose," said he, "if you cracked a safe or something, you'd leave your name and address pinned up somewhere where there couldn't anybody miss it. And then I suppose you'd wait there for 'em to come and take you. A perfect plant! *A perfect plant!*"

Well, I had already explained to him how it happened, I supposed, and outside of that I didn't have a word to say. No, sir, not a word. I just kept quiet. When I was introducing myself to Mrs. Evaline Tinker I handed her one of those cards of mine. She had little Minnie in her arms, and I guess she must have stuck the card in little Minnie's pocket, and it had stayed right there till—well, till it was found.

As for the rest of the kidnaping scheme, I guess there isn't any need of going into all that, except to say that little Minnie was being taken first-rate care of all the time by Mrs. Evaline Tinker's sister. Sister was an accomplice. I'll simply say this: It was a perfect plant—except for just one little thing. And you've got to show me—but never mind.

And before ringing off—on the morning following the disaster, Doug and Bessie and I found out that we had just about eight dollars to the three of us. And we were out of business. We had got the publicity—lots of it—but it was the wrong kind. If Madame Zelda expected to do any more clairvoyanting she'd have to make a long jump from Springfield—and just then Bessie wasn't feeling very athletic.

So we telephoned Clark, of Clark's Bijou, for our share of the proceeds for the three performances Bessie had given.

He answered:

"Come and get it!"

Somehow we didn't feel like doing that. And if Doug hadn't had a rich uncle in New York there's no knowing how things would have turned out. That rich uncle of Doug's has never met me, and so he doesn't know it—but, believe me, I'm a friend of his!

And now you know why I'm off the psychic stuff—for life.

AT THE COBBLER'S SHOP

FORTY shoes on the counter stand,
Waiting the cobbler's tireless hand;
Run-over heel and scuffed-out toe,
All in a patient, mannerly row;
Forty soldiers, tired and spent—
Yet twenty souls they represent.

See those pumps of lavender hue—
Vision the miss that danced them through;
Soggy old brogans, bulgy and broad,
Worn by some sturdy knight of the hod;
Sad little house-slippers over there—
Kind old grandmother, stooped with care.

Here's a belligerent, pompous shoe;
Here's dignified self-respect for you;
Here are children, little and big;
Here is a sloven—here is a prig—
Oh, if I were able, I think I'd choose
To be a cobbler, and sit and muse
On the personalities back of shoes!

Mella Russell McCallum

Guaranteed for Life

ONLY $1.00 DOWN

Send coupon with $1.00 for this Wonder Pure Aluminum Set. Extra heavy weight, 99.4 per cent pure aluminum. Absolutely guaranteed. Seamless, sanitary, easy to clean. Guaranteed for life. It will not flake, chip, peel or corrode—heats quickly and evenly and saves fuel. Shipped direct to you for 30 days trial on our special offer. The only way to appreciate this wonderful bargain is to see and use this set. Let us ship it to you right away. Only $1.00 down—then $2.50 per month—total price $21.45. Send the coupon NOW.

This Wonder Set consists of 1 6 quart tea kettle (2 pieces); 2 9-inch pie plates; 1 Combination cooker set (3 pieces), can be converted into a steamer or double cooker, sauce pan with cover, handled extra deep roaster or Dutch oven and covered baking dish; 1 1-quart sauce pan; 1 3-quart lipped sauce pan; 1 10-cup percolator; 1 cereal cooker or rice boiler, 1 1-2 quart capacity, (3 pieces). Shipping weight about 15 pounds. Order by No. A-134. Send for this set today.

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Thirty days free trial in your own kitchen. If satisfied pay balance at only $2.50 a month. If not, return to us and we will refund your $1.00 and freight charges both ways.

L. FISH FURNITURE CO.
Dept. 1457, Chicago, Ill.

Send Coupon

Don't miss out on this big bargain. Don't put off sending for this Wonder Set at this very low price. Make your kitchen work a pleasure. Send this coupon now—Today!

L. FISH FURNITURE CO. EST. 1856

L. FISH FURNITURE CO., Dept. 1457 Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed is $1.00. Send me your Wonder Aluminum Set No. A-134 on 30 days' free trial. If satisfied, I will pay the balance at $2.50 per month. If not, I will return the set to you and you will immediately refund my $1.00 and freight charges both ways.

No. A-134—$1.00 down, $2.50 per month. Complete price $21.45

Name.....

Address.....

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

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

Dont Send a Penny

These Len-Mort Work and Outdoor Shoes are such wonderful value that we will gladly send them to you at once, no money down. You will find them so well made and so stylish and such a big money saving bargain that you will surely keep them. No need to pay higher prices when you can buy direct from us. Why pay $6 and $7 for shoes not near so good?

Great Shoe Offer

This shoe is built to meet the demand of an outdoor city workers' shoe as well as for the modern farmer. Built on stylish lace Blucher last. Special tanning process makes the leather proof against the acid in milk, manure, soil, gasoline, etc. Made by a special process which leaves all the "life" in the leather and gives it wonderful wear-resisting quality.

Very flexible, soft and easy on the feet. They outwear three ordinary pairs of shoes. Double leather soles and heels. Dirt and water-proof tongue. Heavy chrome leather tops. Just slip them on and see if they are not the most comfortable, easiest shoes you ever wore.

Pay only **$3.98** for shoes on arrival. If after careful examination you don't find them all you expect, send them back and we will return your money. **Order No. AX18068.**

SEND your name and address; and be sure to state size you want? Send no money. Pay only $3.98 for shoes on arrival. We send them to you on approval. You are to be the judge of quality, style and value. Keep them only if satisfactory in every way. Be sure to give size wanted. Send now.

LEONARD-MORTON & CO. Dept. 7055 **CHICAGO**

$2.65 Fine Worsted Made to Order PANTS

We prepay express

Actual $6.50 Value

SEND NO MONEY Greatest bargain pants offer to prove that we give biggest values in clothes. Only $2.65. **Made-to-order, exactly to your measure.** Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. No money now—just post card and we will send measurement blank by which you get perfect fit. Swellest style. **We prepay express.** Hurry while low price lasts.

MAKE $2,500 A YEAR Coin money by our wonderful **sales plan.** And **get your own clothes FREE.** We will tell you about this if you write now. Nothing like it.

FREE Greatest **Style Book** ever shown giving all particulars about plan—152 wonderful wool samples—magnificent **fashion plates and—men took here**—the most stunning pictures of movie stars in the most tantalizing, daring poses. Printed in colors. Think of it, a post card brings all this. You can't beat it. Send today.

RELIABLE TAILORING CO.
361 S. Peoria Street **Chicago**

Send No Money

Here's a tire that will save you $10 to $30. It is **not** a second or a re-tread tire. These tires formerly sold for three times our price and were guaranteed for 6000 miles. It is a high quality tire built from fresh rubber and sound fabric and will give wonderful value. **Order now as the supply of these tires is limited — only one carload on hand.**

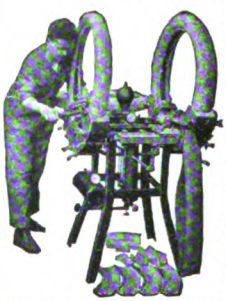
No. Tires for Sale	Size	Tire Prices	Tube Prices
114	30x3	$9.85	$2.35
130	30x3½	10.70	2.70
110	32x3½ s.s.	12.85	2.85
128	31x4	13.45	3.20
92	32x4	13.95	3.35
96	33x4 s.s.	14.65	3.60
150	34x4 s.s.	14.95	3.75
32	34x4½ s.s.	16.85	4.35
20	35x4½ s.s.	17.75	4.45
8	37x5 s.s.	18.75	5.45

SEND NO MONEY
SEE BEFORE YOU BUY

Tubes Guaranteed. Fresh stock—standard make. Just send us your name and address, stating the number and size of tires and tubes—you take no chance. We send them to you at our expense to be paid for only after you have examined them. If you are not absolutely satisfied, you can return them promptly. Orders filled and shipped same day as received, by express or parcel post. Examination allowed. You may deduct 5% if you send cash with order.

MOBILE TIRE COMPANY
2612 Washington Blvd. **Chicago, Ill.**

Make $10 to $30 per Day at VULCANIZING



with Anderson Steam Vulcanizers. Better tire repairing and retreading at one-tenth the usual cost. Big profits for thousands of owners.

We not only supply the Anderson Steam Vulcanizer and Anderson Retreader, but we teach you how to use them, and how to build up a successful business in your town, with little capital.

There are Anderson Schools of Vulcanizing in 33 states. There's probably one near you. Write and we will tell you all about it.

The course requires five to ten days and costs $35.00. If you buy an Anderson Vulcanizer the course does not cost you a cent and in addition we pay $5.00 per day expense money because we sell the work you do while teaching you.

Don't miss this opportunity. Write today.

ANDERSON STEAM VULCANIZER CO.
105 Williams Building, **Indianapolis, Ind., U. S. A.**

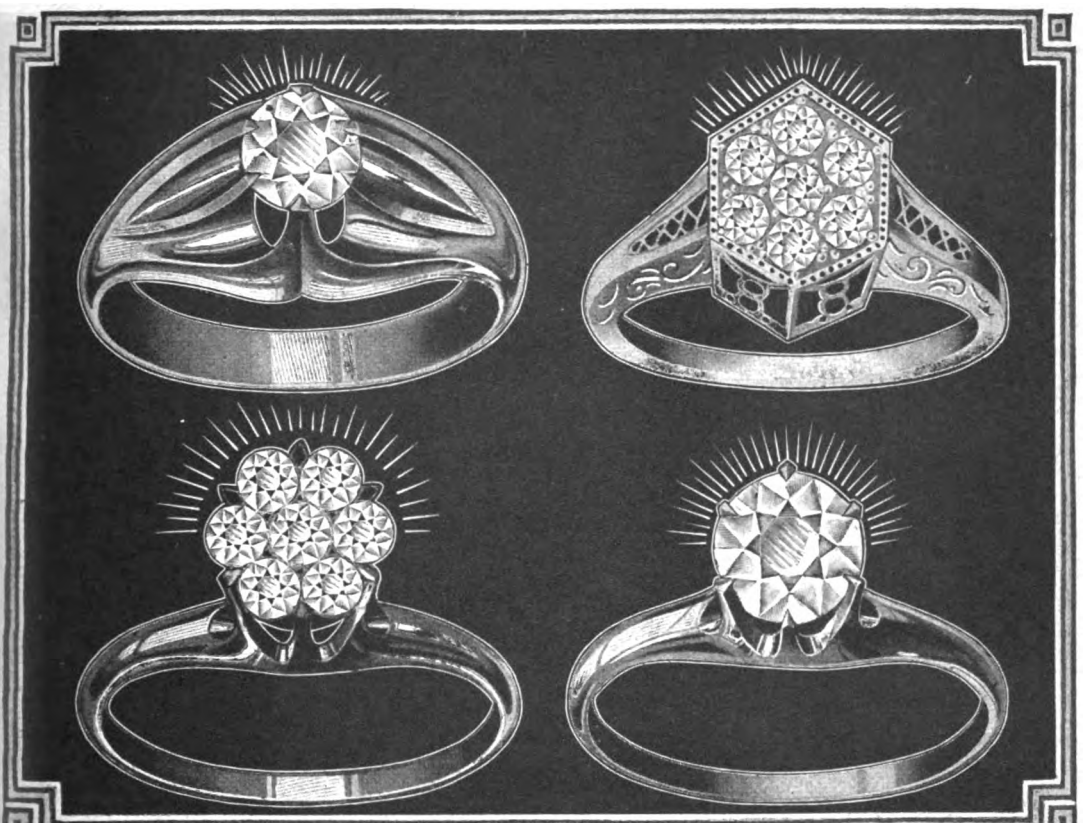
Send No Money

Snap this bargain up right now before it is too late. Only limited quantity. Amazing underwear bargain. Greatest offer ever made. **Two Guaranteed $4 Each, Wool Unionsuits $5.75.**

Save big money on your underwear. Send postcard or letter today—this very minute, for these 2 beautiful perfect fitting heavy weight gray elastic rib unionsuits. Full cut. Seams reinforced and overcast. **Send No Money**—pay only $5.75 on arrival, no more; we pay delivery charges.

We Guarantee to refund your money if you can match these 2 wonderful **wool** unionsuits for $8.00. Order this amazing bargain this minute before it is too late. Just give name, address and breast measure.

BERNARD-HEWITT & COMPANY
Dept. U249 **900 W. Van Buren St.** **Chicago, Ill.**



DIAMOND BARGAINS

Just Released from Pawn

EXCEPTIONAL lot of wonderful diamonds just released for sale. Priced for quick turn over at only a few dollars above the amounts loaned on them. Marvelous values no retailer can match at 40% more money. Goldman's 35 years of upright dealing and the word of Kansas City's biggest banks, back this offer of splendid Wesselton Diamonds at bargain prices.

Shipped on Approval—Send No Money

See for yourself how much cheaper you can buy a fine diamond out of pawn, direct from the brokers who loaned the money. Pledged stones always set in stylish new 14K gold mountings. Any diamond selected sent on approval without one cent down.

Free Bargain Bulletin Send Coupon Now

Send the coupon at once. Have the choice of our latest and greatest lot of Wonderful Diamond Bargains—list shows guaranteed loan values and prices to you only slightly higher. You get first choice if you act quick. Mail coupon today.

L. Goldman's Sons
Goldman Bldg., Dept. 1457, Kansas City, Mo.

L. Goldman's Sons, Goldman Building
Dept. 1457
Kansas City, Mo.

Please send me at once without any obligation to me, your catalog and latest Diamond Loan Bulletin.

Name.....

Address.....

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

These Are The Hours That Count

MOST of your time is mortgaged to work, meals and sleep. But the hours after supper are *yours*, and your whole future depends on how you spend them. You can fritter them away on profitless pleasure, or you can make those hours bring you position, money, power, *real success* in life.

Thousands of splendid, good-paying positions are waiting in every field of work for men *trained to fill them*. There's a big job waiting for *you*—in your present work or any line you choose. Get ready for it! You can do it without losing a minute from work, or a wink of sleep, without hurrying a single meal, and with plenty of time left for recreation. You can do it in one hour after supper each night, right at home, through the International Correspondence Schools.

Yes—You Can Win Success in an Hour a Day

Hundreds of thousands have proved it. The designer of the Packard "Twin-Six" and hundreds of other Engineers climbed to success through I. C. S. help. The builder of the great Equitable Building, and hundreds of Architects and Contractors won their way to the top through I. C. S. spare-time study. Many of this country's foremost Advertising and Sales Managers prepared for their present positions in spare hours under I. C. S. instruction.

For 30 years men in offices, stores, shops, factories, mines, railroads—in every line of technical and commercial work—have been winning promotion and increased salaries through the I. C. S. Over 130,000 men are getting ready *right now* in the I. C. S. way for the bigger jobs ahead.

Your Chance Is Here!

No matter where you live, the I. C. S. will come to *you*. No matter what your handicaps, or how small your means, we have a plan to meet your circumstances. No matter how limited your previous education, the simply written, wonderfully illustrated I. C. S. textbooks make it easy to learn. No matter what career you may choose, some one of the 280 I. C. S. Courses will surely suit your needs.

Make Your Start Now!

When everything has been made easy for you—when one hour a day spent with the I. C. S. in the quiet of your own home will bring you a bigger income, more comforts, more pleasures, all that success means—can you afford to let another single priceless hour of spare time go to waste? Make your start right now! This is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, put it up to us to prove how we can help you. Just mark and mail this coupon.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
BOX 2188-B SCRANTON, PA.

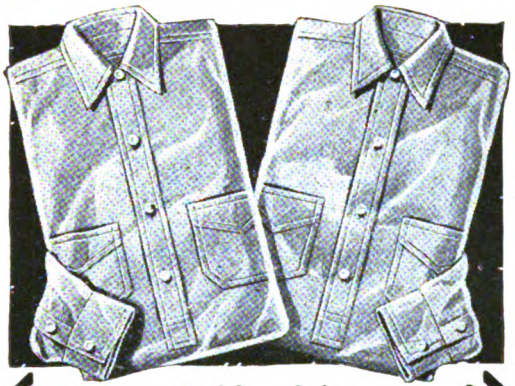
Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEER	☐ SALESMANSHIP
☐ Electric Lighting and Railways	☐ ADVERTISING
☐ Electric Wiring	☐ Window Trimmer
☐ Telegraph Engineer	☐ Show Card Writer
☐ Telephone Work	☐ Sign Painter
☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER	☐ Railroad Trainman
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ ILLUSTRATING
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Cartooning
☐ Toolmaker	☐ BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Private Secretary
☐ CIVIL ENGINEER	☐ BOOKKEEPER
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Stenographer and Typist
☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER	☐ Cert. Public Accountant
☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER	☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
☐ Marine Engineer	☐ Railway Accountant
☐ Ship Draftsman	☐ Commercial Law
☐ ARCHITECT	☐ GOOD ENGLISH
☐ Contractor and Builder	☐ Teacher
☐ Architectural Draftsman	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Concrete Builder	☐ CIVIL SERVICE
☐ Structural Engineer	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING	☐ AUTOMOBILE OPERATING
☐ Sheet Metal Worker	☐ Auto Repairing
☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.	☐ Navigation
☐ CHEMIST	☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ Mathematics	☐ Poultry Raising

☐ Spanish ☐ French ☐ Italian

Name_____
Present Occupation_____
Street and No._____
City_____ State_____

Canadians may send this coupon to International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Canada. 7-28-09



Send No Money!

Two highest quality, gray flannel shirts sent to you **without one penny in advance.** Save more than $3 on this amazing, direct-to-wearer offer! These splendid shirts just the thing for work, business or sport. **Only a limited stock at this profit-smashing sale price.** Send today.

Broadcloth Flannel Shirts
$8.00 Value—Two Only $4.68

Splendidly made of fine quality Supertex Broadcloth Gray Flannel. Firmly double-stitched throughout. Two large pockets with flaps. High grade buttons. Soft turn-down collar with fashioned points. You will be delighted with the fine durable material and dressy appearance. **Your money back if you are not convinced they are the greatest value offered anywhere.**

Not a Penny in advance. Just send your name, address and neck-band size for two of these wonderful Gray Flannel Shirts. Pay only $4.68 on arrival, our smashing low price during this Sale only. **Your satisfaction absolutely guaranteed. Be sure to state neckband size.** Write today.

DAVID STRONG COMPANY
DEPT. F S 710 "Same Management Since 1885" **CHICAGO**

SEND NO MONEY

If You Can Tell it from a GENUINE DIAMOND Send it back

To prove our blue-white MEXICAN DIAMOND closely resembles a genuine diamond with same DAZZLING RAINBOW FIRE, we will send a selected 1 carat gem in Ladies Tiffany Style Ring (Cat. price $4.98) for **Half Price to Introduce, $2.63,** or in Gents Heavy Tooth Belcher Ring (Cat. price $6.26) for $3.25. Our finest 12k Gold Filled mountings. GUARANTEED 20 YEARS. **SEND NO MONEY.** Just mail postcard or this ad. State Size. We will mail at once C. O. D. If not pleased return in 2 days for money back less handling charges. Write for **Free** Catalog. **Agents Wanted.**

MEXICAN DIAMOND IMPORTING CO. Dept. SS 2 Las Cruces, N. Mex.
(Exclusive controllers Mexican Diamonds)

Who Does the Buying for Your Family

?

There is someone in your family who has a big responsibility. Food to buy for the table; clothes for the children and grown-ups; new household utensils, linen, furniture, books and all the hundred and one little things for which the family income is spent.

In most families, one person does the bulk of the buying. And it is that person's job to see that the money is well spent—that you all get full value for every cent that goes out.

The success of a family depends on wise buying just as the success of a business does. Wise buying means intelligent buying. It is necessary to have knowledge of goods. The best way to get this knowledge is by reading advertisements. They tell you what is new and good.

Not only the person who does the buying, but every member of the family should read advertisements. It is the duty of all the others to help the one who does the buying by pointing out advertisements of new goods and giving all the information possible as to tastes and styles and values.

Advertisements are published for your benefit. Make use of them by reading them.

$25.00 FOR THIS
MADE TO YOUR MEASURE
ALL WOOL SUIT

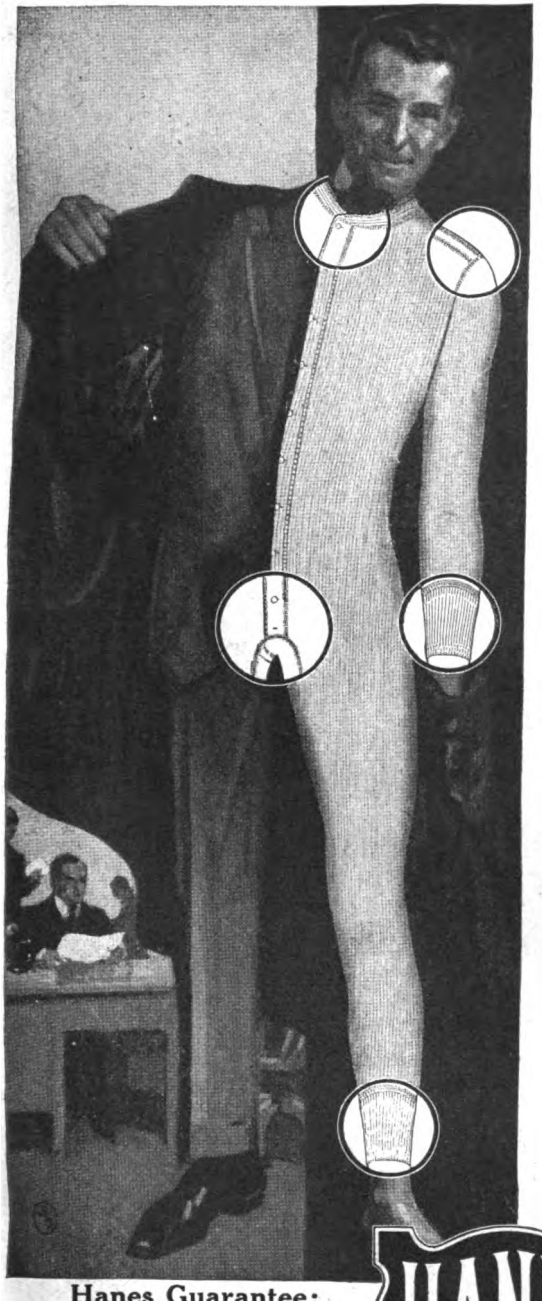
Every suit made to individual measure from the exact fabric you select and according to your exact specifications. We ship it on approval, delivery charges prepaid, for you to try on, to inspect and examine. Unless you are well pleased your trial order will not cost you a cent.

BIG CATALOG FREE

Send postal today for copy of our big new catalog and style book with 52 cloth samples of the very finest, high grade fabrics and the latest New York and Chicago styles. It shows how any member of your family can take your measures. We guarantee a perfect fit. By dealing direct with us, the manufacturers, you save the unnecessary expense and profit of agents and obtain the very highest grade tailoring at a saving of 25% to 40%. Write today for catalog and information.

The BELL Tailors

THE BELL TAILORS
ADAMS at GREEN STREET, Dept. 1158, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



Confidence in "Hanes" winter underwear can never be misplaced!

"HANES" underwear for men has been standard for years! Beyond any question it is the best value in actual quality, comfort and service ever sold at the price!

Behind every "Hanes" process, behind every thread and stitch, the "Hanes" guarantee looms up! This guarantee is your assurance of absolute satisfaction.

Examine "Hanes" critically. You never saw—or bought—such real and true underwear service.

"Hanes" is made in heavy and medium weight Union Suits and heavy weight Shirts and Drawers.

This year we present the new yellow label medium weight, silk faced Union Suit, made of full combed yarn particularly for indoor men.

Like "Hanes" heavy weight Union Suits the new medium weight suit has the extra gusset which adds so greatly to comfort across your thighs; tailored, snug-fitting collarette; closed crotch that stays closed; buttonholes that last the life of the garment; elastic knit, shape holding arm and leg cuffs. Shirts have the "Hanes" elastic knit collarette that will not gap; sateen vent; elastic knit cuffs. Drawers have a durable 3-button sateen waist band.

Hanes Union Suits for boys never have been equalled

They duplicate the men's Union Suits in all important features—with added cosy fleeciness. Made in sizes 20 to 34, covering ages from 2 to 16 years. Two to four year old sizes have drop seat. Four desirable colors.

Hanes Guarantee:

"We guarantee Hanes Underwear absolutely—every thread, stitch and button. We guarantee to return your money or give you a new garment if any seam breaks."

HANES

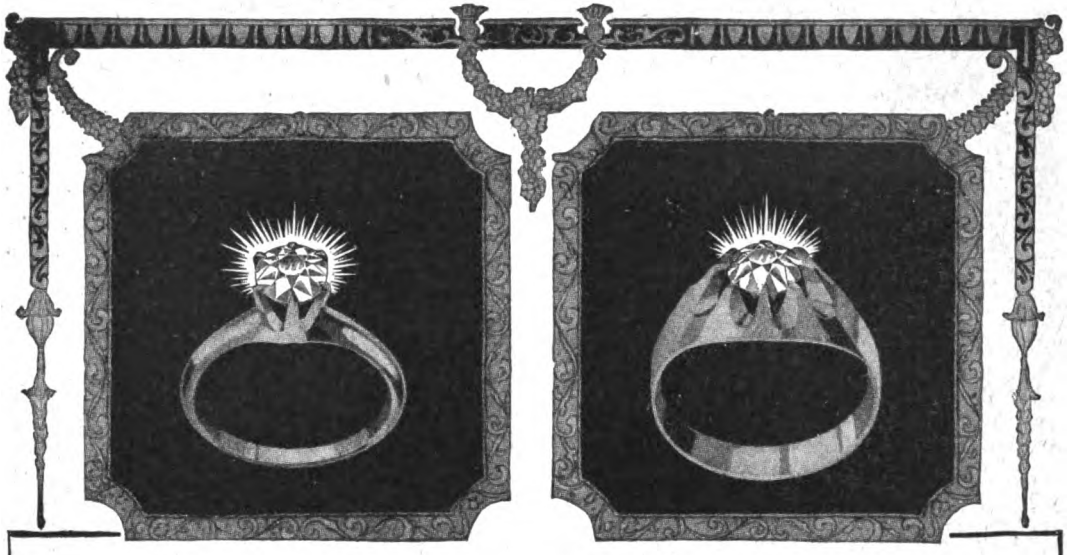
ELASTIC KNIT
UNDERWEAR

Inspect "Hanes" underwear at your dealers. Put it in strict comparison with any underwear near the price. If your dealer cannot supply you, write us immediately.

P. H. HANES KNITTING CO.
Winston-Salem, N. C.
New York Office: 366 Broadway

Warning to the trade: Any garment offered as "Hanes" is a substitute unless it bears the "Hanes" label.

Next Summer—You'll want to wear Hanes Nainsook Union Suits!



Send the Coupon

-we'll send you a Lachnite

No.7A1410
This solid gold solitaire is the most popular ladies' ring in the world. Beautifully finished, the essence of good taste. Setting is a flashing Lachnite Gem weighing about one carat.
Price..... $18.75
Deposit..... 4.75
Monthly.... 2.50

No.7A1504
This solid gold ring is shaped and finished by hand. No finer or more fashionable ring could be made. It is set with a brilliant Lachnite Gem weighing about 3-4 carat.
Price..... $18.75
Deposit..... 4.75
Monthly.... 2.50

SEND NO MONEY. Just send us your name and address and we will send you, prepaid, on 10 days' trial, a genuine Lachnite Gem mounted in a solid gold ring. These sparkling gems have the eternal fire of diamonds. Their brilliance and hardness are guaranteed forever. We want you to select one of the rings from this advertisement and wear it ten full days at our expense. ***Then, if you can tell it from a diamond, send it back.*** Over 150,000 people have accepted this offer—and have found a way to own exquisite jewelry at a trifling cost.

Pay As You Wish

When the ring comes just make the first small deposit ($4.75) with the postman. This is only a deposit. It is not a payment. The money is still yours. Put the ring on your finger and wear it everywhere for ten full days. Then if you decide to keep it, pay the balance at the rate of $2.50 a month without interest. But if, during the trial, you decide to send the Lachnite back, your deposit will be refunded instantly. You run no risk.

Send the Coupon!

Don't send us a penny. Just put your name and address in the coupon and tell us which ring you prefer. Be sure to send us your finger size. To get it cut a strip of paper that will just meet around the middle knuckle of your ring finger. Send the coupon now. You will be under no obligations to buy.

Harold Lachman Co. 12 No. Michigan Ave Dept. 2277 — CHICAGO

Harold Lachman Co.
12 North Michigan Avenue
Dept. 2277 **Chicago, Ill.**

Send me prepaid Ladies' / Men's Ring on 10 day's free trial. When it comes I will deposit $4.75 with the postman. After 10 days I will either return the ring or send you $2.50 a month until the balance has been paid. Total cost to me, $18.75. If I return the ring within 10 days you will refund me $4.75 immediately. **I enclose my finger size.**

Name.....

Address.....

Your Dealer now has

COLGATE'S "HANDY GRIP"

The New Thrift Shaving Package

THIS new way of packaging the already popular Colgate's Shaving Stick has several advantages which no other shaving soap gives you.

1 You get a year's supply—at least—all at once. No more being "out of soap" when you want to shave. And the "Thrift Package" costs less than three "Handy Grip" Shaving Sticks.

2 You get the economy of the "Handy Grip" Stick, which enables you to use every bit of your soap—and saves the purchase of a new metal box with each stick of soap. The Refills screw in as did the original stick.

3 You will probably get the habit of using the stick, which is the most economical form of shaving soap. We can tell you this *impartially* because we make Shaving Powder and Cream as well as Sticks.

4 It is more than likely that you will also form the habit of shaving with Colgate's. When you do, you will be once-for-all free from mussy "rubbing-in" with the fingers, as we have advertised since 1903. You will also learn the truth of the saying, "Lather with Colgate's and shave with Comfort."

COLGATE & CO. *Est. 1806* New York

Convenience-Economy

One "Handy Grip" complete

Two Refill Sticks to fit Grip

80¢

Shaving Comfort For a long time

Like putting a new bulb in a socket. Save the "Socket" of your Handy Grip—you don't need to buy a new one for every new stick. Screw in