

ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

The Picture *on the Wall*

by J. Breckenridge Ellis



A Strong Man's Fight to Master Fate

"We are advertised by our loving friends"



Douglas R. Hornberger.
Morganza, Penna.

Mellin's Food
for the Baby

I'll Teach You Piano In Quarter Usual Time

To persons who have not previously heard of my method, this may seem a pretty bold statement. But I will gladly convince you of its accuracy by referring you to any number of my graduates in any part of the world.

There isn't a State in the Union that doesn't contain a score or more skilled players of the piano or organ who obtained their *entire* training from me *by mail*. I have far more students than were ever before taught by one man. Investigate by writing for my 64-page free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ."



My way of teaching piano or organ is *entirely different* from all others. Out of every four hours of study, one hour is spent *entirely away from the keyboard*—learning something about Harmony and The Laws of Music. This is an awful shock to most teachers of the "old school," who still think that learning piano is solely a problem of "finger gymnastics." When you *do* go to the keyboard, you accomplish *twice as much*, because you *understand what you are doing*. Within four lessons I enable you to play an interesting piece not only in the original key, but in all other keys as well.

I make use of every possible scientific help—many of which are *entirely unknown* to the average teacher. My patented invention, the **COLOROTONE**, sweeps away playing difficulties that have troubled students for generations. By its use, Transposition—usually a "nightmare" to students—becomes easy and fascinating. With my fifth lesson I introduce another important and exclusive invention, **QUINN-DEX**. Quinn-Dex is a simple, hand-operated moving picture device, which enables you to see, right before your eyes, every movement of my hands at the keyboard. *You actually see the fingers move*. Instead of having to reproduce your teacher's finger movements from **MEMORY**—which cannot be always accurate—you have the correct models before you during every minute of practice. The **COLOROTONE** and **QUINN-DEX** save you months and years of wasted effort. They can be obtained *only from me*, and there is nothing else, anywhere, even remotely like them.



DR. QUINN AT HIS PIANO

From the Famous Sketch by Schneider, Exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition.

Men and women who have failed by all other methods have quickly and easily attained success when studying with me. In all *essential* ways you are in closer touch with me than if you were studying by the oral method—yet my lessons cost you only 48 cents each—and they include all the many recent developments in scientific teaching. For the student of moderate means, this method of studying is *far superior* to all others; and even for the wealthiest student, there is nothing *better* at any price. You may be certain that your progress is at all times in accord with the best musical thought of the present day, and this makes all the difference in the world.

My Course is endorsed by distinguished musicians, who would not recommend any Course but the best. It is for beginners or experienced players, old or young. You advance as rapidly or as slowly as you wish. All necessary music is supplied without extra charge. A diploma is granted. Write today, without cost or obligation, for 64-page free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ."



— — — **FREE BOOK COUPON** — — —

QUINN CONSERVATORY, Studio AB-10
598 Columbia Road, Boston, 25, Mass.

Please send me, without cost or obligation, your free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ," and full particulars of your Course and special reduced Tuition offer.

Name

Address

.....

Marcus Lucius Quinn Conservatory of Music
Studio AB-10, 598 Columbia Road, BOSTON, 25, MASS.

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CXXVII

CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER 30, 1920

NUMBER 1

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FIVE CONTINUED STORIES

- The Picture on the Wall J. Breckenridge Ellis . . . 1
A Six-Part Story — Part One
- The Mysterious Quest Frederick R. Bechdolt . . . 24
A Five-Part Story — Part Two
- What Was That? Katharine Haviland Taylor . . . 62
A Six-Part Story — Part Four
- Sleeping Acres Brayton Norton 88
A Six-Part Story — Part Six
- The Night Horseman Max Brand 119
A Seven-Part Story — Part Seven

ONE NOVELETTE

- The Devil's Teapot Chauncey C. Hotchkiss . . . 48

FIVE SHORT STORIES

- The Red Battle William Merriam Rouse . . . 17
- Fifty Fifty Artemus Calloway 40
- Love in St. Louis Marc Edmund Jones 79
- The Ape-Woman John Charles Beecham . . . 109
- Grapes of Eshcol Rothvin Wallace 138

Tex Benton is
Again in the Saddle!
The Sequel to
"The Texan"

PRAIRIE FLOWERS

BY JAMES B. HENDRYX
Author of "The Gold Girl," "The Gun Brand," etc.

BEGINS NEXT WEEK

Long Expected!
Anxiously Awaited!
Worth Both the
Waiting and Anxiety

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 230 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

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An Amazingly Easy Way to Earn \$10,000 a Year

Let Me Show You How FREE

TO the average man the \$10,000 a year job is only a dream. Yet today there are a surprising number of men earning five figure salaries who were merely dreaming of them a short while ago. The secret of their success should prove a startling revelation to every ambitious man who has ever aspired to get into the \$10,000-a-year class.

There is nothing "different" about the man whose salary runs into five figures. He is made of the same stuff as you and I. For example, take J. P. Overstreet, of Dallas, Texas. A few short years ago he was a police officer earning less than \$1,000 a year. Today his earnings are in excess of \$1,000 a month—more than \$12,000 a year. C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa., was formerly a railroad employe on a small salary—last month his earnings were \$1,562.

Why Don't YOU Get Into The Selling Field?

Read These Amazing Stories of Success

Harold \$324 in Two Weeks
I had never earned more than \$50 a month. Last week I cleared \$300 and this week \$218. You have done wonder. I am now selling many of the largest firms in the U. S. I took your course two years ago. Was earning \$15 a week working. Am now earning \$300 a week. You showed me my position. Our Sales Manager is a graduate of yours. —J. L. DeLoach, 1622 S. Crawford Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Sam \$1,562 in Thirty Days
My earnings for the past thirty days are \$1,562.00 and I won Second Prize in March although I only worked two weeks during that month. —C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa.

Sam \$1,000 in Six Weeks
My earnings for March were over \$1,000 and over \$1,300 for the last six weeks, while last week my earnings were \$200.00. I travel eleven months out of the year, working 5 days each week. The N. S. T. A. did me out of a rat where I was earning less than \$2,000 a year and showed me how to make a fortune. —J. P. Overstreet, Dallas, Texas.

Mr. Overstreet, Mr. Campbell, and the others whose letters you see on this page are all successful salesmen. They have stepped into the \$10,000-a-year class—and they never sold goods before! It is hard to believe that such big success could come so quickly and easily. Yet it was all amazingly simple! Ask them the secret of their sudden success. They will tell you they owe it to the National Salesmen's Training Association. This is an organization of top-notch salesmen and sales managers formed expressly for the purpose of training men to sell and helping them to good selling positions. It has taken hundreds of men from all walks of life and made them Master Sales-

men—it has lifted them out of the rut and shown them the way to magnificent earnings, to fascinating careers and big selling positions.

We Train You And Help You Land A Job

What these men have done, you can do! In your spare time at home you can easily master the secrets of selling that make Star Salesmen. Whatever your experience has been—whatever you may be doing now—whether or not you think you can sell—just answer this question: Are you ambitious to earn \$10,000 a year? Then send me your name quick! I will prove to you without cost or obligation that you can easily become a Star Salesman. I will show you how the Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service of the N. S. T. A. will help you to wonderful success in selling.

Free Book on Salesmanship

Just mail the coupon or write for our great illustrated Book, "A Knight of the Grip," which we will send you Free. Let us prove to you that regardless of what you are doing now you can quickly become a Star Salesman. Let us show you how you too, can step into the ranks of the big money makers of business. See how easily you can learn this fascinating, big pay profession at home in your spare time. Learn what we have done for others and what we stand ready to do for you. Don't put it off until tomorrow—write us today. Mail the coupon at once.

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 2-R, Monadnock Bldg., Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 2-R, Monadnock Bldg., Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.

Please send me, without any obligation on my part, your free book "A Knight of the Grip" and full information about the N. S. T. A. system of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service. Also a list showing lines of business with openings for salesmen.

Name
Street
City State



Classified Advertising

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

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines:

Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	Combination line rate \$4.00 less 2 per cent cash discount.
THE ARGOSY COMBINATION		
The Argosy	2.50	
All-Story Weekly		
Minimum space four lines.		

Dec. 4th Argosy Combination Forms Close Nov. 6th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

FACTORY DISTRIBUTORS CALLING ON THE AUTO TRADE to handle a penetrating graphite spring lubricant and rust remover. Goes thru springs without spreading them apart. In a few minutes. Makes a car ride easier immediately, stops squeaks, and will not collect dust. Coats each spring leaf with a graphite deposit, and forever prevents them from rusting. It removes any rusty nut or bolt that cannot be turned with a wrench in a few minutes. A demonstration is a sure sale. We want high class distributors who can finance themselves and carry their own accounts. Capital required less than \$500. Profits exceedingly large. Fastest selling auto accessory put up in tin cans today. Sample sent upon receipt of one dollar to cover packing and carrying charges. Particulars free. J. Edward Strater Co., 2064 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

SALESMEN: EARN \$3,500 TO \$10,000 A YEAR. City or Travelling. Experience unnecessary. Quickly qualify through our amazing System. Free Employment Service to Members. Send for Salesmanship book, list of lines and full particulars. Nat. Salesmen's Tr. Ass'n, Dept. 133-E, Chicago, Ill.

Agents: \$50 a week taking orders for guaranteed hosiery for men, women and children. Must wear 12 months or replaced free. All styles and finest line of silk hose. Write for sample outfit. Thomas Mfg. Co., Class 207, Dayton, Ohio.

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

AGENTS—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.

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

WE HAVE AN EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY for Salesmen and District Managers for the sale of paint and cement. The American Oil & Paint Co., Dept. A, 5511 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

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

AGENTS—With experience, to sell our famous \$29.00 and \$35.50 made-to-measure suits and overcoats; big money-maker. Big selling outfits furnished free. Midland Tailors, Dept. 1, 318 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

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.

We Want a Reputable Sales Representative in every town and country district where we now have no dealer distribution, to sell U. S. Player Music Rolls and U. S. Phonographs in their spare time. A high grade business offering good profits. United States Music Co., 2934 W. Lake St., Chicago, Ill.

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

SALESMEN WANTED

Salesman: If you think in terms of \$6000 yearly, write me. Established, nationally advertised line for retail stores. Splendid commission contract. Liberal weekly advance to producers. Geo. R. Williams, Mgr., 1920 Euclid Ave., Dept. X-12, Cleveland, O.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

GOOD LAND ON CREDIT. In Michigan's best hardwood counties. Big money in grain, stock, poultry, fruit. 10 to 160 acres. Only \$15 to \$35 per acre. Good towns, schools, churches. No swamps or stones. Small down payments; easy monthly terms. Your credit is good. Big booklet free. Swigart Land Co., Y1245 First National Bank Building, Chicago, Ill.

TYPEWRITERS

RE-MANUFACTURED TYPEWRITERS at reduced prices. Shipped for 5 days' trial. Write for our Catalog No. 20 and save money. Beran Typewriter Co., 58 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

Typewriters Slightly Used, \$10.00 up. All well known standard makes with modern improvements. Remingtons, Underwoods, L. C. Smiths, etc., wholesale and retail. Write for Catalogue. A. International Typewriter Exchange, 177 N. State St., Chicago.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

\$15.00 FOR A MADE-TO-MEASURE TWO-PIECE SUIT, the biggest bargain offer ever made by any tailoring house. We are out to beat high tailoring prices. Save 50% on your next suit. You can easily earn \$80.00 cash weekly in your spare time by taking orders for our celebrated made-to-measure clothes. Write us today for our beautiful cloth samples and wonderful offer—sent free postage prepaid. Act quick. The Progress Tailoring Co., Dept. 804, Chicago, Ill.

RAINCOAT AGENTS. I'll pay you \$12 daily taking orders for Reversible Raincoats. Two coats in one. One side rich, tan dress coat, other side storm overcoat. Something brand new. Not sold in stores. Also other styles. Dozens of fabrics for men, women, children. Popular prices. Newest styles. Guaranteed waterproof or money back. We manufacture and make to measure. Shortage of raincoats and high cost of overcoats make sales easy. Elaborate outfit and sample coat to workers. Parker Mfg. Co., 506 Rue Street, Dayton, 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 Street, Chicago.

AGENTS: SELL NEVERFAIL IRON RUST AND STAIN REMOVER. Huge profits. Big line. Sample. Write today. Sanford-Seal Co., Inc., Dept. A, Newark, N. Y.

SALESMEN WANTED to solicit orders for our high grade Lubricating Oil, Greases, Paints and Roof Cement. Excellent opportunity for the right party. Previous experience unnecessary. Address at once The Lennox Oil and Paint Company, Dept. "E," Cleveland, Ohio.

BIGGEST MONEY-MAKER IN AMERICA. I want 100 men and women quick to take orders for raincoats, rainapes and waterproof aprons. Thousands of orders waiting for you. \$2.00 an hour for spare time. McDonough made \$813.00 in one month. Nielsen \$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.

SALESMEN—Side or Main Line—to sell low priced 6,000 mile guaranteed tires—80x3½ non-skid sells for \$13.95, other sizes in proportion. Good money-making proposition for live wires. Master Tire Co., 1414 So. Michigan, Chicago.

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

INSIDE TYRES—Inner Armer 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.

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

HELP WANTED

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.

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

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Excellent opportunities for travel. Great demand everywhere. Fascinating work. Experience unnecessary. We train you. Particulars free. Write. American Detective System, 1968 Broadway, New York.

MEN—AGE 17 TO 45. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 320, St. Louis, Mo.

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. 206, 186 East 79th Street, New York.

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.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

Send No Money

Free Trial - Easy Terms

SELECT the Pathé Phonograph you like best; select any 10 Pathé Records; send your name and address; *send no money whatever.* When you get the complete outfit, *play it for 10 days.* Make every test you can think of. Compare it with the best phonograph you ever heard. If you are not convinced that Pathé is the very best Phonograph in the World, in every way, send it back at our expense and the trial will have cost you absolutely nothing. *That's the offer in our new Pathé Book.*

Pay Nothing Until After Trial

If you decide to buy, pay the rock bottom cash price in extremely small monthly amounts. We charge no interest. You make no deposit, you risk nothing. Send for the Free Book now.

Many Exclusive Features make Pathé the Standard of the World

1. Pathé Phonographs play ALL makes of records with unequalled sweetness.
2. On Pathé Phonographs an everlasting sapphire ball is used in place of the sharp steel needle. Pathé draws music from the record gently—it does not gouge it out.
3. No needles to change.
4. Pathé Records are scratch proof. Children may play them with perfect safety.
5. Pathé Records may be played thousands of times. Other records lose quality with each playing.
6. The Pathé Library of Records contains 75,000 selections, *by far* the largest in the world.
7. Pathé makes records in many foreign countries.
8. The Pathé recording preserves 60% more overtones; the quality that gives music a natural, living tone.

Pathé Phonographs are supreme the world over. In the great International Expositions, Pathé has consistently won the very Highest Grand Prizes. Yet Pathé costs no more than the ordinary phonograph.

Send the Coupon for Free Book

A beautiful illustrated book, prepared at great expense, will be mailed to you without cost or obligation. It tells how to get the Pathé on free trial without a penny down. Send coupon for free book now.

The Standard Phonograph Co.
202 S. Peoria St., Dept. 9277 Chicago

The Standard Phonograph Co.
202 South Peoria St., Dept. 9277 Chicago

Please send me the new Pathé Book *free.* I assume no obligations of any kind.

Name.....

Address.....

Do not consider buying any phonograph until you have seen and read the Pathé book.

Pathé
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.



Pathé Phonographs Play All Records

ANY STYLE PANTS NOW \$3.48



Send 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**

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

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

\$3.48 Buys \$8.00 Pants
Send us your name—TODAY.



2 for \$5.25

Send No Money!

Two wonderful \$4.00 shirts for only \$5.25. Save at least \$2.75. Everybody wearing these semi-dress Gray Flannel Shirts for business, work and sport.

Cadillac Broadcloth Flannel Shirts
Two \$4.00 Shirts for Only \$5.25

Made of fine quality Cadillac Broadcloth Gray Flannel. Special Winter weight. One large pocket, faced sleeves and matched pearl buttons. Cut Extra Full. Coat Front Style. Double-Stitched thru-out. Soft turn-down collar with satin faced neckband. Thoroughly Shrunken. Try to match these shirts in any store at \$4.00. Yet we offer you two for only \$5.25.

Send No Money Write today. Shirts will be sent at once, transportation prepaid. Pay only \$2.25 on arrival—no more. Money back at once if not more than pleased with the wonderful value. Be sure to give neck-band size.

Desk F S 2410
BERNARD-HEWITT & CO. 900 W. Van Buren St. CHICAGO



30 Days Free Trial

freight prepaid on any "RANGER" bicycle. Write at once for our big catalog and special offers. Take your choice from 44 styles, colors and sizes in the famous "RANGER" line. You cannot afford to buy without getting our latest propositions and **Factory-to-Rider** prices.

Easy Payments if desired, at a small advance over our regular **Factory-to-Rider** cash prices.

Boys, be a "Rider Agent" and make big money taking orders for bicycles and supplies. equipment, sundries and everything in the bicycle line at **half** usual prices. Write today. A post card will do.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY
Dept. F-30 Chicago

Ranger Electric Lighted Motorbike

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC. are wanted for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss. or write Literary Bureau, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

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.

WRITE A SONG POEM—LOVE, MOTHER, HOME, COMIC or any subject. I compose music and guarantee publication. Send words today. Edward Trent, 653 Reaper Block, Chicago.

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.

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PATENTS PROCURED—TRADE MARKS REGISTERED—A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly furnished without charge. Booklet of information and form for disclosing idea free on request. Richard B. Owen, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 2278 J. Woolworth Bldg., New York.

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. 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., 620 F, 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.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

150 GENUINE FOREIGN STAMPS—Mexican War Issues, Venezuela, Salvador and India Service, Guatemala, China, etc., only 10c. Finest Approval Sheets 50c to 60c. Agents wanted. Big 72-p. lists free. We buy stamps. Established 25 years. Huseman Stamp Co., Dept. 81, St. Louis, Mo.

It's Ready Now!

"Big City" Styles



"Big City" Styles

Here's the new "Big City" Style Book—the only Book of its kind in America—showing large assortment of actual Cloth Samples and all the latest styles in Men's Made-to-Measure Clothes together with a complete assortment of Shirts, Ties, Hats, Shoes, Collars, Sox, Sweaters, Jerseys, etc., etc. This Book shows you how to get everything you wear direct from the manufacturer at inside wholesale prices. If you want to dress well and save money, get a copy of this Book—TODAY. Yours FREE for the asking. Address Dep't. B-13.

WRIGHT & COMPANY
Congress, Third & E. Harrison—CHICAGO

How I Improved My Memory In One Evening

The Amazing Experience of Victor Jones

"Of course I place you! Mr. Addison Sims of Seattle.

"If I remember correctly—and I do remember correctly—Mr. Burroughs, the lumberman, introduced me to you at the luncheon of the Seattle Rotary Club three years ago in May. This is a pleasure indeed! I haven't laid eyes on you since that day. How is the grain business? And how did that amalgamation work out?"

The assurance of the speaker—in the crowded corridor of the hotel McAlpin—compelled me to turn and look at him, though I must say it is not my usual habit to "listen in" even in a hotel lobby.

"He is David M. Roth, the most famous memory expert in the United States," said my friend Kennedy, answering my question before I could get it out. "He will show you a lot more wonderful things than that, before the evening is over."

And he did.

As we went into the banquet room the toastmaster was introducing a long line of guests to Mr. Roth. I got in line and when it came my turn, Mr. Roth asked, "What are your initials, Mr. Jones, and your business connection and telephone number?" Why he asked this I learned later, when he picked out from the crowd the 60 men he had met two hours before and called each by name without a mistake. What is more, he named each man's business and telephone number, for good measure.

I won't tell you all the other amazing things this man did except to tell how he called back, without a minute's hesitation, long lists of numbers, bank clearings, prices, lot numbers, parcel post rates and anything else the guests had given him in rapid order.

.....

When I met Mr. Roth again—which you may be sure I did the first chance I got—he rather bowled me over by saying, in his quiet, modest way:

"There is nothing miraculous about my remembering anything I want to remember, whether it be names, faces, figures, facts or something I have read in a magazine.

"You can do this just as easily as I do. Anyone with an average mind can learn quickly to do exactly the same things which seem so miraculous when I do them.

"My own memory," continued Mr. Roth, "was originally very faulty. Yes it was—a really poor memory. On meeting a man I would lose his name in thirty seconds, while now there are probably 10,000 men and women in the United States, many of whom I have met but once, whose names I can tell instantly on meeting them."

"That is all right for you, Mr. Roth," I interrupted, "you have given years to it. But how about me?"

"Mr. Jones," he replied, "I can teach you the secret of a good memory in one evening. This is not a guess, because I have done it with thousands of pupils. In the first of seven simple lessons which I have prepared for home study, I show you the basic principle of my whole system and you will find it—not hard work as you might fear—but

just like playing a fascinating game. I will prove it to you."

He didn't have to prove it. His Course did; I got it the very next day from his publishers, the Independent Corporation.

When I tackled the first lesson, I suppose I was the most surprised man in forty-eight states to find that I had learned—in about one hour—how to remember a list of one hundred words so that I could call them off forward and back without a single mistake.

That first lesson stuck. And so did the other six.

Read this letter from Terence J. McManus, of the firm of Olcott, Bonyng, McManus & Ernst, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 170 Broadway, and one of the most famous trial lawyers in New York:

"May I take occasion to state that I regard your service in giving this system to the world as a public benefaction. The wonderful simplicity of the method, and the ease with which its principles may be acquired, especially appeal to me. I may add that I already had occasion to test the effectiveness of the first two lessons in the preparation for trial of an important action in which I am about to engage."

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NUMBER 1

The Picture on the Wall by J. Breckenridge Ellis

CHAPTER I.

THE PLOTTERS.

BLEARSTEAD'S EATING HOUSE in Smiling Lane—one of the poorest and obscurest corners of the hilly city—had a reputation as malodorous as the neighborhood. It choked up the entrance to an alley, squat and swollen in size, with projecting props like an immense beetle that had tried to crawl down the narrow passage of moldy bricks and greasy boarding to the open space, but had got caught and couldn't stretch a leg.

By midnight, the habitués of the restaurant, men of rather extensive notoriety and women of slender character, had for the most part gambled, smoked and drank their last cent and were ready to flit away to goodness knows what foul nests till day-break; and by one in the morning Blearstead had turned the last fuddled wretch out of doors and bade his only servitor close up for the night.

One night in early March, just as the clock struck one, a stockily built man with the face of a bulldog—small eyes, heavy jaws, square nose—came by appointment to hear the proprietor's latest scheme of a

quick cut to fortune. He was Harve Cleek, a pugilist of local renown. Of these two, Blearstead was the leader, and as young John passed to and fro at his duties of clearing the various small tables it was Blearstead who, with an air of authority, opened up the new project. Drawing from his pocket a newspaper he opened it wide, marking with a crooked finger the place where a "Sunday feature story" was built around a heavily smeared photograph, like a sea of print surrounding a desert island.

"Read that!" Blearstead commanded with suppressed excitement, his tall, powerfully built frame bent over the shiny table-top, his shock of white hair quivering as in a breeze, his sunken, overcolored face writhing its nose and lips in nervous spasms that sleep alone could subdue.

With one of his most emphatic oaths, Cleek repudiated the idea of his reading the illustrated article. "I ain't come to pursoo liter'toor. If you got any inside dope on cracking a house or lifting a fat leather, my name's Cleek; but if you ain't, it's Fade Away."

These expressions did not appear singular to Blearstead, but he was irritated by opposition and his voice became a growl:

"Just look at the picture, will you? I ain't asking you to use no brains. Just look at it good, then I'll tell you what to say."

All the lights had been turned out except the gas-jet in the corner of their retreat, and one other across the room above the partition door through which John was bearing, with graceful ease, stacks of dishes preposterously high. Cleek held the paper under the wavering flame of the corner light, stared hard at the likeness of a man of about thirty-three, then wrinkled his snub-nose inquiringly. "I have saw it; now tell me what to say."

Blearstead slyly pointed toward his assistant just then coming in from the other room empty-handed, followed by a grotesquely exaggerated shadow. The young man was softly whistling, his eyes looked far away.

Cleek slowly nodded his bullet-head.

"Do you get me?" the other insisted.

"It's easy," Cleek affirmed, "though the guy in the picture must have been caught and took considerable older in life."

"Of course," Blearstead showed triumph, "seeing as John ain't but about twenty-one and this here was took before he was born. Now, this piece is all wrote about what happened twenty year ago," he added, keeping the sidewise movements of his nose, and the workings of his mouth steadily going, "and deals with a couple—the picture is the male of it—in the millionaire class. They lived in California same as me only they wasn't so well knowed, for I'd been in the pen a time or two and my picture's everywhere, without me having to pay to get 'em on the front page."

"Well, go ahead, Old Vanity," Cleek said with surly good nature.

"I got acquainted with their nurse-maid and her and I fixed it up to kidnap the year-old baby; they was just the one kid, a boy. So we done; and things was as smooth as the sleeve-lining of a gent's overcoat. I wrote several letters to the father, and he wrote to me—we was the regular little letter-writers—and back and forth we come till all was set for him to leave me my pile at a certain spot. But right there is where the cops butted in—you know how they are always messing up a fellow's plans,

if they get a chance. There was nothing to do but skip for our lives. What become of the nurse-maid I never knowed, but here's me, talking to you."

"Having named no names—" Cleek hinted.

"I'll name them names when you're safe in with me on this."

"What become of the kid?"

"When I see we was never to get a cent out of the kid on account of the cops making it so hot for us, I'd have left him on his pa's door-step only I'd have got nabbed. I'm as kind-hearted a man as ever lived, but I proves my kindness on myself first. We fed the baby and kept him under cover till that nurse-maid got the panic in her blood. She drowned him in the river, then told me afterward. She knowed I'd never 'a' stood for it."

Cleek grinned hideously. "Good thing you lost that soft heart of yourn. You wouldn't be no 'count in our business if you was like you was."

"She told me it was soon over—a toss over the cliff, a splash, and a weight to keep the body from washing up on the beach."

"That must have been a devil of a woman." Cleek still smiled.

"Well—what would you have done in her place?"

Cleek started up, shoving the table to one side and his smile changed to a heavy-browed scowl. "What did you tell me for?" he rasped.

During the three years of their intimacy, Blearstead had found him far from scrupulous. That he should at this critical juncture show disgust for crime roused intense indignation.

"Hold on there!" Blearstead's was the sternness of the master. "You and me are a little too thick to fall out. Sit down; I've told the worst there is. Get yourself ready and I'll soon show you where you come in."

"I ain't a-riding."

"You think you ain't, but that's just because you're going so fast. This piece tells all about the abduction—hashing it up, you know, for readers of the present generation. It seems that my man has left California—is living in this State in a one-

horse village on the river off main travel. He is still hoping his son 'll turn up some day, or at least, that's what the reporter says. His wife's dead, but his other child, a daughter, is living with him, and he still has that million or something like. He's not much past fifty, but he's lost his health complete, and looks like an old man."

"That picture of him looks like he wouldn't break early."

"Yes, but losing the kid done the trick. Cleek, if I'm any judge of life and art, this here picture looks enough like my nevvie to be him if he was older. See?"

Cleek's beetling scowl had gradually relaxed into a still more hideous grimace. It brought his features oddly up to the focus of his short, square nose as if he were suddenly all pug. Shooting a stealthy glance out of the corner of his eye toward John Walters, he nodded. "I get you."

Blearstead gave his nose a mighty tweak and by the aid of his upper lip caused it to describe a complete circle. He whispered hoarsely: "I've got an old grip with all the identification things in it needed to prove the case: the baby-clothes with the initials, the shoes, the baby spoon what the maid sneaked away with him, but best of all the old man's letters to me all about my terms. Of course my name was different then, but them letters tell the whole story. He's bound to recognize his own handwriting. I don't need nothing but the kid hisself. See?"

"I ain't wall-eyed, am I?" retorted Cleek. "Call John and have it out with him right now."

Blearstead cast a brooding look toward the erect, busy young man whose face showed no care, and whose whistling, soft but merry, indicated a joyous nature. Though his clothes were heavy and coarse there was an indefinable difference between him and the two conspirators which both felt and resented. That he should always keep himself scrupulously neat was a matter to them of no concern. He liked to be clean—well, that was all right. But the intangible something of the spirit that they could not name and realized that they had not, brought the look of somber brooding to the uncle's gaunt eyes. He muttered:

"You've got to be kinder cautious the way you handle him. But we got to handle him, of course." Then he called the young fellow from his tasks. "Here, John, we've got something up our sleeves. Listen at us."

CHAPTER II.

THE PLOT.

JOHN WALTERS promptly responded to Blearstead's summons, traversing the long, smoke-browned chamber, skillfully slipping between the little tables from which the long-used cloths had not been removed. As he drew near the corner gas-jet, he noted the effect of its merciless glare on the two men projected sharply against the mellow obscurity; the huge head of his uncle with its unkempt thatch of white hair, and the brick-red face of the pugilist had never appeared more sinister. But they were factors too intimate in his daily life to call for more than an appraising glance—a recent misadventure of his own was sufficient to engage all his faculties, now that work no longer claimed his hands.

Over his delicately featured face passed an expression of swift resolution. He was a slender youth and not tall, of nervous organism, quick in all his ways, sharp and instantaneous in tones and forms of speech as if body and mind were kept wound up to highest tension. His uncle, a muscular giant nearly seven feet in height, could have overpowered him without question and he knew himself to be no match for the bully Cleek, yet he faced them with a countenance void of fear.

"Look here," he began with his customary abruptness, "I've made up my mind never to go out with you fellows again"—he met his uncle's glare determinedly—"and I won't have you telling me your schemes of robbing houses and all that. I let myself in once for your kind of work and it's going to last me a lifetime. See? My mother raised me to be always on the square and after this I intend to stay on the square. Yes, sir, if you throw me out on the street, I'm ready to go on my own, anyhow. You might as well—"

"Oh, come off," Cleek interposed tolerantly. "Shut off your works, boy, and take a recess with us. It's a mighty safe bet that we don't want you to go with us again on breaking a house. Lord! what did you do last night? You gets into a bedroom where a lady is taking her repose. She looks at you modest and reproachful, and, 'Excuse me, mum,' says you. 'Let me beg of you to make no noise, as you are perfectly safe,' says you. Then you asks her to let you take away from the table a book of poems as a souvenir, which you done. And as soon as you left that bedroom, the lady lets out a yell like a Comanche. Your uncle and me nearly broke our necks getting away. Maybe you call that square, nearly putting us both in the pen. Nothing ain't any squarer to a man than the mind he has. If you've got a square mind you see things square, that's all."

In describing John's recent adventure as a house-breaker, Cleek kept close to the newspaper accounts as based on the statement of the lady in the bedroom which, in the main, was accurate enough. Dreadfully overwrought by her experience, the young lady had no doubt colored her story. At any rate, John Walters had struck the reporters as a rich mine of romantic possibilities. No one, of course, knew his name, but no name was desired. "The Polite Burglar" was better for a headline than any name.

"We're wasting time," Blearstead growled.

"One good thing, John," Cleek persisted. "You got all the limelight. The whole city's on the search for 'The Polite Burglar' with a volyume of poems in his pocket."

"Of course," Blearstead interposed, "we don't need argue that my nevv'y's a fool. It goes without saying. But this kidnaping scheme sure ought to suit him down to the ground. And he owes it to me—since he's so proud of talking about being 'square'—to make some return for all the money I've spent on him, yes, and on his ma before she died, though she was my own sister. Sister Ann never raised him right. She coddled his body and filled his

brain with such thin-shelled ideas that they're all time breaking and getting messed up in his basket. She even give him the microbe of wanting to be educated. If she hadn't died, I guess he'd be swimming over his head in books by now."

John Walters, waiting patiently for what was coming, listened with birdlike glancings of his eyes, unruffled and unafraid.

"But his ma—the only sister I ever had—died, and about that time—Cleek, you remember it—John falls off the roof and breaks his leg in two or three places. And what did I do?"

"You sure took care of me," John declared emphatically.

His patron-uncle growled: "That's what I done. And a long time before he could walk about, me feeding and clothing him, pouring out my money like water."

He addressed himself solely to Cleek, as if his nephew were a lay-figure. "Was that all? Not on your life. What does he do but break that leg over just when he was some account, me with the doctor's bill. But it's O. K. now. Yet can I point my finger to any special act of his and show it to you and say: 'That's his gratitude'?"

John protested. "I've worked steady in your restaurant." He had always loathed the duties of Blearstead's Eating House, and looked upon himself as a model of gratitude.

"Yes, and was paid to do it," the other snapped.

"I went with you on that house-breaking job."

"You had to go. We'd 'a' skinned you if you'd held back."

"No money could have paid me to go, nor threats either just by themselves. I was fool enough to think I owed it to you to do as you asked."

"And a mess you made of it!"

Cleek interposed. "Everything he's picked up in the way of schooling will come in awful handy in this new deal we're passing him. Oh, boy!"

Blearstead nodded and slapped the open newspaper. "Here's the point: you're to go to this man and pass yourself off as his son that was stole from his house when he lived in California twenty year ago. You'd

have did this sooner, but I never knowed what had become of the man till I see this newspaper. There was some time I lay under cover and when I begun to look about, the earth seemed to have swallowed up my man.

"I'll give you more identification-tags than half a dozen kidnaped babies would need in the parcel post. You're to live with him and be his son, see? And as he's a millionaire, you'll be kind to me and Cleek. Doctors say he ain't long for this world, and when he passes in his checks you and his daughter will come into the grazing. There's me and Cleek once more. It's an easy job and suited to your ideas of taking things smooth. As the real son was drowned as a baby, nobody's going to bob up to get in your way. You'll be doing the old man a real kindness and if the girl is single, I reckon she'll be glad to have a good-looking brother to go about with 'er. Talk about being square. That's the squarest thing on earth to get rich off of a bundle of old letters. All you need for success is a nerve and a smile."

"If I was the right age," Cleek sighed, "the next train would see me carrying the old grip with my baby-clothes. I mightn't look as much like the millionaire did back yonder, but how does he know what his kid looks like by now? Here's me hieing out to that little town on the river. This is me talking: 'Daddy, I'm your long-lost heir-apparent, come to share your last crust. Here's my proofs in this suit-case.'" Cleek flung open his arms as if to embrace a dream-figure. "'Daddy, don't you remember that mole on my left bosom?'—say, Blearstead, was the kid marked? That might make trouble."

"Nothing was said about no birth-marks," impatiently. "Well, nevvv, there's your deal, laid out on the table for you. Go and live in your palace. You're a rich man's son and your name is John Lyle Warring."

With no word escaping his grimly set lips, the young man looked from one to the other with his piercing gray eyes.

Cleek said: "As you've been 'John' all your life, all you have to get used to is to come when 'Lyle Warring' is called."

Though amazed at what he had heard, John was not surprised at his uncle's audacity, for he and Cleek would hold back from no wild scheme. But the proposition was so different from the one he had dreaded, it sounded so impossibly romantic, that he did not know what answer to make. He had not the slightest intention of yielding to the plot, but how to refuse and escape the violence of their wrath called for hard thinking. For a time an uneasy silence prevailed while a black storm gathered on Blearstead's brow and Cleek's clenched fists brought out the great muscles on his bared arms. Then John braced himself for the unequal contest.

But there came a diversion. Resounding blows made the front door jump in its sockets while stern demands were heard that it be opened in the name of the law. Instantly Blearstead's face lost its look of ferocity inspired by his nephew's opposition.

"They're after you, John," he whispered, rising to his towering height. "You do as Cleek says." Then he raised his voice in a roar: "All right, I'm coming."

From the alley a voice responded: "No use to try any of your tricks, Blearstead, we've got the joint surrounded on all sides."

"All right, I'm coming," he cried as before, his heavy tread jarring the dishes in the racks as he traversed the length of the apartment.

In the mean time, remarkably agile of movement, Cleek had stripped from half a dozen tables their dingy covers to cast them with artistic carelessness into the darkest corner of the room. Under the heap which looked like drifted snow stained by the dust of windy days, John flattened himself upon the floor as limp and motionless as if he were but another linen rag.

CHAPTER III.

CONCEALMENT.

WHEN Blearstead opened the door there was a pause, then a rush from the alley and three policemen with an officer burst into the room as if anticipating opposition. They stopped short at sight,

of the peaceful interior. While his men busily searched under tables and behind stacked-up chairs, the lieutenant observed genially: "Blearstead, I'm not after you and Cleek this time, though there's not a doubt you're both back of the young scamp we've come to arrest. Where's John Walters?"

Blearstead spread his arms wide. "Search me, if you think I've got 'im in my pockets."

"We ain't saw him," Cleek observed, "since closing-up time. Then we told him to hide out as Blearstead and me had business to talk over. What's the little devil been up to this time?"

The officer knew the house-breakers too well to pay the slightest heed to their words, and the house-breakers spared themselves the effort of seeming indignant over the invasion. Two patrolmen darted into the next room on a tour of inspection—only one room opened into the dining-room, since the rear was used as a kitchen—while the other opened the back door to waiting comrades. Almost at once footsteps were trampling about overhead; the bedrooms were being inspected.

In the mean time the lieutenant, seated comfortably at a table with Blearstead and Cleek, explained himself cheerfully: "I'm just keeping an eye on you fellows till they bring down the boy. There were certain marks about that burglary on Troost Avenue last night that made us as morally certain it was your work as if you'd autographed it—but, of course, nothing moral can ever lay hold of you. No proofs; that's our weakness. But one of my men remembered your waiter and that made me remember, too. The boy has always seemed straight, but of course he can't go on living with you and keep straight. We fancy he is the 'Polite Burglar.' John is very polite, and politeness is awful rare among Americans these days, particularly American burglars. It seems a pretty warm trail, though I hate to think it of John; he had a good mother. If he's innocent, nobody will be gladder. All we want is to show him to the lady he frightened half to death, and if she can't identify him we'll take up some other clue."

"I wish I could help you, I do, indeed," Cleek declared.

"All we want is to borrow John Walters for a little while. Now, look here, fellows, that's not an unreasonable request. You know you've got off easy half a dozen times and I think you ought to show your appreciation. You've broken into a dozen houses that I'm morally certain of, only, as I said, nothing moral can get you. By rights you ought to do time the rest of your lives. Yet here you are as free as air and all we ask is John."

"I ain't saying but you're a decent officer," Cleek agreed, finding that Blearstead maintained a sullen silence. "Of course you get paid to be legal while me and Blearstead has to find our own board and clothes. You know we'd give up Johnny to you if we had him," he grinned, "as innocent a babe as was ever weaned. But what you could do with him gets my goat unless you're thinking of starting a nursery."

"We won't do a thing to disturb him, Cleek. We'll feed him on a bottle and keep him tender till we can show him to Miss Alice Klade."

"Miss who?" growled Blearstead, whose sense of humor was rudimentary.

The officer smiled. "Haven't you read about the polite burglar?"

Cleek turned to Blearstead. "When John went away didn't he say he wouldn't blow in till morning?"

"I never set up for him," Blearstead affirmed. "When he goes out after closing time, he knows he can't get back into the house till I'm up in the morning."

"Oh, don't worry about that," the officer murmured. "We'll stay with you till he does blow in if it's this time next week. We'll take our hot meals with you, the best you've got, and you can charge 'em up to past favors. Of course it would make it easier for you and more comfortable all around if the boy 'd give himself up at once. We're bound to get him, and the longer he holds out the more guilty he's proving himself. He lived in town years before you fellows came and we never had a mark against him. As a newsboy and messenger-boy and driver of an express-

wagon he made more friends than you've made enemies. He and his mother were known all around here and he couldn't any more hide from the law than an elephant could hide among the grass-blades on a front lawn. He's circulated everywhere. He's big with notoriety; and before you took him in hand, he was all right; full of pranks, yes; but no meanness. And if he's as nice a chap as when his mother died, he'll not object to meet Miss Klade face to face."

"I don't know," Cleek observed. "He's awful bashful with ladies."

The officer shrugged his shoulder and a dull silence settled upon them to be broken presently by the return of the police—the house had been searched in vain.

Cleek then rose. "Officer, if you've no objection, I'll go home to my pole to roost."

"Certainly. Good night, Cleek. You'll not mind if I detail one of my men to see that you reach the coop in safety?"

Cleek grinned. "It will be an honor." When he was gone, Blearstead got up to go to bed, responding to the officer's banter only by surly glances. He strode into the adjoining room whence soon came the sound of wheels on the bare floor, explained when he reappeared, pushing an immense laundry-basket on a truck.

No particular attention was paid him as he trundled the basket to the obscure corner where the soiled linen lay heaped. Bending low he gathered up John Walters's slight and supple form in its white swathings and with no perceptible effort deposited him in the bottom of the basket coiled in a limp semicircle. The truck was then pushed back into the next room and filled to the brim with cloths and napkins so loosely arranged that they permitted the fugitive plenty of air.

As this was John's first adventure of the sort, he trembled with apprehension every time the heavy tread of a policeman drew near his place of concealment. Hearing his uncle ascend to his room, he knew himself to be indeed alone with the enemy, and felt poignant regret that these men, formerly his friends, must now be classed as foes. As he crouched in the basket, afraid to sleep lest heavy breathing lead to his capture, he

reviewed his life to discover the point at which it had changed for the worse.

At school he had been thrown with people of stations sufficiently diverse to learn pretty accurately to measure his mother's limitations. She had been a kind and ambitious woman, bent upon raising him to the heights she was unfitted to tread, and only their grim poverty and her failing health had checked his advancement. When his uncle came evilly into their lives his mother's strength had weakened swiftly to the end. She seemed to fear her giant brother who, however, showed them nothing but kindness. After her death, John thought it providential to have a relative of means ready to give him a home. Only gradually did the knowledge come that most of Blearstead's income was independent of his restaurant. Perhaps he was not so shocked by the discovery as he should have been. Down in the slums, though one be "square," he rubs elbows so constantly with crooked lives, that their nearness blunts his sensitiveness to right and wrong.

John had at last been driven into a corner, but the expedition with Blearstead and Cleek to break into the Troost Avenue house had seemed to him an adventure unrelated to morality. Had he held back at the cost of a beating, the robbery would still have taken place, and in going he added nothing to the wrong-doing. All he had taken, and that after asking permission, was a book of poems with Alice Klade's name on the flyleaf. Yet the whole city—thus he thought of his Nemesis—was hunting him down! It would be madness ever to show himself again on the streets—the name of John Walters must be cast aside forever.

Toward morning the air grew cold, and John shivered under his coverings. The policemen in the next room were keeping up the fire, but had closed the partition door. He could move in the basket without fear of detection, but with no other outlet than the dining-room and the stairway leading to the upper corridor, the small room offered no means of escape. He wondered how long he must remain in his cramped position and what bold scheme his uncle had formed. How could Blearstead

and Cleek have communicated details of a plot looking toward his freedom while the lieutenant sat with them at table? Tones of their voices, stealthy looks, hidden twitches of the hands and feet must have carried on a curious conversation while the officer was intent on other matters.

He knew when the early gray dawn began to show its cheerless presence at the skylight—this inner room had no windows. He heard his uncle's feet treading heavily overhead, then coming down the stairs. He crossed the room as if knowing nothing of the basket, and jerked open the dining-room door. John heard him asking the watchmen if his nephew had turned up. Now he was opening the street-shutters, and pushing the tables creakingly here and there. His harsh voice was talking over the telephone. John knew he was talking to Cleek. What could he say to Cleek in the presence of the police? The partition door was slammed shut and only subdued murmurs were to be heard from the end of the dining-room where the rusty coal-stove glowed in its litter of ashes.

The cold increased; the light had not only the fixed glare, but the touch of snow. From across the narrow alley came sullen sounds from the big tenement waking in its customary bad humor to go unwillingly about its sordid tasks. Already voices were quarreling, screaming, cursing. Vendors' carts rattled past the rear of the restaurant.

But the police made no move to depart. They would wait—wait all day. Had Blearstead exhausted his inventive genius in getting John into the basket? Did he expect his nephew to steal up-stairs and seek liberty down the back passage? But the back door would certainly be guarded. To remain or to attempt flight seemed equally dangerous.

CHAPTER IV.

FLIGHT.

PRESENTLY a wagon rattled up before the front entrance and John wondered vaguely if the police had sent for an ambulance—and if it had come for him. It seemed more likely that Cleek had in

this manner responded to Blearstead's orders over the telephone; so, the policemen surely would have understood the scheme.

The partition door opened. Blearstead tramped into the room, and began pushing the truck before him, all the time keeping up a grumbling conversation with the policemen, lowering his raucous voice as he reached the door, subduing it still more as he made his way across the front end of the dining-room to the street door. John felt the truck's little rollers bumped over the sill to the pavement, then heard his uncle's gruff command:

"Here, you! Catch holt and give me a lift."

He felt himself swung up into the wagon, which at once rattled away over the cobblestones, jolting him so violently that at first he was hardly aware of the keen, fresh wind. Of course the driver was in the plot; any ordinary laundryman must have expressed astonishment at the basket's weight. But evidently the young man was not expected to jump out and flee since the wagon maintained high speed. After various mad turnings the wagon was stopped so abruptly that he was flung against the side of his wicker cage.

"All O. K.," sounded the voice of Cleek.

The basket was lifted down and carried away, first over bare ground where boots gritted on ashes and cinders, then across a carpetless floor. A door creaked open. Wooden steps were descended and at the bottom Cleek bade the fugitive "Come out of there."

John emerged stiff and sore, but with the alert self-possession with which he was wont to face his rather difficult world. He stood in a cellar—a square, dingy cave with unequal earthen floor, walls of mangy disintegrating stones, a ceiling of blackened rafters meshy with the spiderwebs of other years. Bits of boards and boxes overflowing with rags and old papers were scattered about, with a pyramid of coal in a corner and a small grated window hidden by empty barrels perched upon the coal. Sufficient light peeped around the barricade and through loosened staves to cast the chamber into a brooding half-tone wherein all

things were discerned, but nothing clearly. Cleek said by way of explanation: "The Smiler"—and John, who knew every nook of this section of the city, understood that he was in one of the underground apartments of the Smiling Lane Tenement, just across the alley from his uncle's restaurant. His long drive had been for the benefit of the police. The driver, as if his part had been thoroughly rehearsed, fastened the laundry-basket to his back and without a word stamped up the steps and vanished.

"You're safe here," Cleek said with gruff friendliness, "but if you poke your nose through a crack you'll get yourself nabbed. The gang's sure hot on your trail and big headlines in this morning's paper give a mighty good description of you and your duds. As 'The Polite Burglar' you're as famous as a movie star and since they've found out who the Polite Burglar is, you'll never be able to show your mug in this town or claim your name anywhere else. You're dead. The only show I see for you, old fellow, is to fall for your uncle's scheme and be resurrected as the Warring heir. Go to that little river town, about a hundred mile from here, but so hid up in fields and woods that a fellow might stumble over it before he knew it was there. Pass yourself off as John Lyle Warring and you're safe for life with a million dollars to line your nest with."

John perched on a box of waste-paper and crossed his legs and pursed his mouth. "I've been thinking it over, Harve. Last night was long enough for a year's thinking. But I don't know—the idea of fooling the old gent and swiping the dough I've got no right to, makes me sick."

"Well, I don't think you can stay here without a doctor, either. There's nothing in that talk." Cleek moved toward the dusty stairway. "The only one who had a right to the dough is drowned, not counting the girl, and of course she'll get her share. The old man thinking he's got back his long-lost son will make his last days his best days. But maybe you think you ain't got the spirit to carry the thing off."

John laughed shortly. "Oh, I could do it all right; why, it's a cinch."

"Well, you'll either do it or get done;

that's another cinch. I didn't get to talk to Bleary long enough to get all his details; he'll have to come and put you wise to them. My advice is to have your mind made up to fall for his scheme when he does come. You know Bleary's an Injun when you cross him. If you ain't going to do as he says, better not wait here. You know you ain't in prison, but free to come and go as you see fit." With this Cleek climbed aloft and banged the cellar door behind him.

John was given a long time to think this over, but although he had already viewed the matter from every angle in his uncomfortable night-quarters, he was sorry when the sound of his uncle's footsteps advised him that the period of reflection must end. It was mid-afternoon when Blearstead came down from the deserted room, a basket in one hand, in the other a large bundle.

"I can't stay but about five minutes," the giant said, opening the basket on an improvised table as he spoke. The hungry tenant of the cellar was treated to a sight of hot savory dishes. "Fall to," Blearstead ordered not without a human sympathy in his gruffness. "I'll say what I've got to say while you're filling."

John eagerly availed himself of the opportunity. His appetite was prodigious and while satisfying it he was saved from announcing the decision that would determine all his future. He had not yet definitely made up his mind, yet, despite the sinister danger hanging over his head, and although moral scruples require a purer air for full development than can be found in the "bad lands," he could not see himself leagued with his uncle and Harve Cleek in the conspiracy. To impose upon the credulity of a helpless old man for dishonest gain struck him as abominable and the more time he had for reflection the more glaringly opposed to all his instincts it appeared. So he ate and said nothing.

"I guess it's fixed that you're to go to Lagville, and that your name's John Lyle Warring—what? Lord! We're getting mighty fine names nowadays. I've already expressed a suit-case to Lagville addressed to you under an assumed name—here it is on this slip of paper. Just tell 'em at the office that you're this name and take the

suit-case off to the woods somewhere and put on the clothes you'll find in it. But it's got more than duds. You'll find your baby-clothes and your baby-spoon and all them letters Mr. Warring wrote me about you when you was kidnaped—see? Here's the company's receipt for the suit-case." He handed over the yellow form.

"I know you wouldn't betray your poor mother's only brother, but if you do, you're a dead man—them's Cleek's words, not mine. I've knowed Cleek three year and he is certainly a man of his word. In that suit-case waiting for you yonder at Lagville you're going to find a change of clothes that the son of a railroad president might be proud to wear, all in the latest colors, from shoes to derby." There was a convulsive writhing of his features and for a moment it appeared as if his nose might never get back in place.

"But in this bundle you'll find something to put on right now. I wouldn't give three cents for your chances out of the pen if you leave this hole in your own duds. And when you take off your things, bury 'em careful under the coal so they won't know you've got a new skin. When you get to Lagville, you'll have to give old man Warring some account of your life and you want to give it full and free, but not so full and free as ever to get balled up when you have to go over it a second time. See? So while you're waiting for dark, better be getting your history on the brain. I don't care what you tell 'im, just so's I'm left out. You've got some tall explaining to do. They'll want to know how you come by the letters and things. And they'll ask where the man that did the kidnaping and the house-maid—her name as knowed to them was Lizzie White—is."

John suggested: "Suppose that house-maid should show up after I'm established?" He found a definite enjoyment in picturing himself in the house of luxury; of course it was a purely imaginary and impossible picture.

"That ain't likely. But you can attend to all that. You're a scholar and can handle it out of books such as I couldn't. It had not occurred to Blearstead that the other meant to refuse and John thought

grimly of the terrific struggle that must ensue should he drop hesitating words.

While he ate steadily, his uncle continued: "This is the last you'll see of me for quite a spell. When it's dark and the coast is clear, Cleek will give you a sign. Then you'll pull your freight. You can't get out of town by any of the trains, everything's being watched. Even the bridge is set for you. Famous man, you are! The Polite Burglar. Now listen: Tacky Hode will be waiting to take you down-river in a skiff and after that, John Lyle Warring is your name. Here's money to take a train into Lagville and after that, of course, your daddy 'll furnish your pin-money. If they nab you before you get to the river, of course the Warring scheme is all off and you'll be sent up like any other house-breaker. But if Tacky Hode once gets you safe in his boat, it's my money on you as the son of a millionaire.

"Now I must be back to my joint. You won't have to think of me and Cleek when you're setting in your pa's parlor and taking little sister out autoing. Put us out of your mind—it 'll make your manners freer and easier. Forget we're living. We're used to ingratitude and ain't asking no flowers. When the time's ripe we'll bring ourselves to your remembrance and help you bear your burdens."

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPE.

ALL that afternoon the wind blew from the south, and by evening even in the cellar under the old Smiling Lane Tenement one could catch a breath of spring. It thrilled John, renewing his ambition to work up out of the reek and muck of the "bad lands." He had kept himself singularly free from the contagion of evil. There was only the burglary on Troost Avenue against him and much as he regretted it from prudential considerations, knowing himself to be no thief, it failed to oppress him with a sense of guilt.

The scent of spring did more than strengthen the old resolves to break away from his uncle's influence at whatever cost.

It carried his mind to Bettie Hode, the daughter of the man who was to row him across the river. Their mothers had been intimate friends, and he and Bettie had known and liked each other since he could first remember. There was no prettier girl, he thought; there was none more dependable; and now the intangible something in the wind that pushed through the barred window and made the empty barrels quiver, brought the soul-stirring dream of love. Surely he had loved her for a year without knowing it. He would tell her so; and as there might not be an opportunity at the riverside, he would write her a letter.

Searching among the old papers in one of the waste-boxes, a new idea occurred to him, suggested by finding a pencil-addressed envelope postmarked "New York Mar. 4." The year had not left its impression. This was the second day of March. He would put his note in this envelope and instruct Bettie, if occasion arose, to show it as proof that the fugitive had gone East. In the mean time, of course, he would go West—perhaps to Colorado Springs—anywhere but New York. Thus the note would not only throw the police off his trail, but put Bettie on the trail of his affections. No answer was needed; he believed he knew her heart. Some day he would send for her—

He erased from the envelope the address and substituted Bettie's. Then he set himself to the composition of his letter, using the pencil always carried for the checking off of orders at the restaurant. He enjoyed the fleeting moments, finding zest in self-expression while the springtide gently stirred his locks, suggesting flowering fields.

The note finished, he changed to the rough workman's garb provided by Blearstead, a dreamy look in his handsome dark eyes. From the city he would flee—yes, to Colorado Springs, since he had never been there. Under an assumed name, not "John Lyle Warring," certainly, he would start a new life, the life his mother had hoped for him. In Lagville there would no doubt be a great mystery over the unclaimed suitcase, while a revelation of its contents would revive wide discussion of the kidnaping. It would fill the papers. The millionaire would see the infant gar-

ments of his little one and the letters he had written hoping to recover him twenty years ago. It would be a great shock. Would it inspire him with hope or despair? Blearstead would know his nephew had broken from his net, but what could he do, with that clue in Bettie's hands to direct suspicions toward the Atlantic Coast? "Maybe I'm a big grape," John muttered with a grin, "but sure thing the world's big enough to swallow me!"

It was almost midnight before Cleek's cautious feet tiptoed to the head of the cellar stairs and his voice whispered the order to come up. In the darkness he grasped the young man's arm to draw his ear close to his pursed lips: "There's a cop just outside. On every side outside; see? You've got to make it over the roofs. Don't wait on me, your game's solitaire. I'm going to see if you hid your other clothes good enough. This is luck to you." He crept down the stairs, leaving the other standing in the bare room disagreeably surprised. So safe had he felt all day that the mention of the police had grated on his nerves.

Had the cat been crouching all day at the mouth of the cage? The windows were tacked over with soot-stained newspapers, but the moonlight hung there like ghost-lights hinting the way to the corridor. Noiselessly he glided up three pairs of narrow, greasy stairs and reached the trap that opened out upon the roof. Through the aperture he crawled to the flat deck where, in the breathless heat of mid-summer, men, women, and children were wont to stretch arms spread out skyward, waiting for the little space of freshness that came just before dawn.

From the deck the roof slanted sharply downward on all sides. Head-foremost he eased himself to a rotting cornice to peer over. The moon was old, bringing out walls and fire-escapes, roofs, and chimneys with that relentless particularity so distasteful to youth. Even the shadows were robbed of glamour; in the alley between the tenement and Blearstead's Eating-House every irregular-shaped shadow was legible and in two of them John could read a policeman.

Creeping around to the opposite side he

found the eaves projecting over the roof of the next building. It would be a far drop and the thud of his landing upon the slate might well evoke dangerous echoes, but the chance must be taken. Grasping the open-faced gutter till his body had stiffened to its length in air, he let go, then crouched behind a chimney at sound of a piercing whistle from the street. He felt himself upheld, a dark figure in a world of glaring light while behind every ridge and angle eyes seemed watching. Feet ran over the cobblestones. Violently a door slammed.

Quick as had been the impulse to double up behind the chimney came the thought that to linger there was madness. He ran. The roof was steep and he forgot—he was always forgetting—that his feet were not so sure as before the double breaking of his leg. He slipped. He went rolling to the eaves, barely catching himself from being dashed to destruction. The sweat was streaming from his face as he pulled himself along a transverse iron rod back to the ridge-pole. Over the ridge he drew himself, then slid down against the rush of warm wind that carried away his hat in a sudden gust.

On this side the roof brought up squarely against the wall of a higher tenement, a wide-mouthed gutter marking the juncture. A few feet above the water-course, a shuttered dormer window jutted toward him. The shutter gave way in his frantic grasp, opening outward with a shrill creak. He swung himself into a foul-aired room, the wind rushing after him. A few dark figures from among those packed close on vile mattresses raised on unsteady elbows, and curses mingled with snores. The moon glared through the opening, searching out with pitiless curiosity the rags and litter, drawing the eye now to a bloated hairy face, now to a mere glimpse of purplish lips and a nose in a frame of disordered tresses. A young man lay groaning in drunken slumber while the muddy boot of another sleeper sprawled across his neck. John stooped to remove the heavy foot, then picked his way to the corridor, and though his clothes were mean and he wore a hunted air he looked no closer akin to the sleepers than

if they had been the mud in the course of his crossing.

The corridor led him to the step and he took two at a time, sensible of teeming life in every room he passed, but on the way he met only a drunken man dizzily swaying on the landing of the second flight, and in the street-hallway a sobbing child with a bucket of water too heavy for it to carry.

"I'll take that for you, little man," he said cheerily, and the lad darted up, leading the way, his sobs subsiding with no other token of gratitude. Coming back, he found the drunkard still trying to ascend. "Hard luck, old top," John said, taking his flabby arm. "Let me help you on the way."

After all, not much time was lost and he had a warm feeling that something had been gained by the delay. Soon he was running along the street, the balmy wind thrilling in his bared hair. As he rounded the first corner a shout arose, but he was not sure if it were meant for him. Later, after diving through a maze of crisscrossed alleyways, he came out under the steady radiance of an arc-light on a cross-street in which he was the only sign of life, and when this was traversed he felt that his old life with all its dangers and sordidness was left behind. An exquisite sense of peace pervaded his senses and he took great breaths as if an intolerable weariness had been shaken off, leaving him rested for any hard enterprise.

Pursuing his way light-heartedly he met no policeman, heard no alarm. The lonely lights of deserted streets swung higher and higher as he approached the river till they seemed set in the sky among the stars. A high bluff, around which extensive leveling was in progress, afforded the risky means of a short cut, and he slid and scrambled down the furrowed red surface carrying dust and stones with him. He had reached the "Bottoms." Behind him the red and gray faces of gnarled cliffs jutted out from the mainland in huge fantastic shapes like hideous caricatures of human faces buried chin downward. They blotted out all of the city except those lights in the sky and, here and there, narrow, unpaved roads cut by the grinding of heavily loaded wagons.

He was walking across a wide plain which

stretched level as a sanded floor from the bluffs to the dark river. An occasional intrepid cottonwood-tree with ancient river-drift in its branches looked like a bent old man with tousled locks. Though they were out of his course and stood far apart he hunted the protection of these trees, for the nakedness of the river-beach brought back the impression that he was being watched. An infolding of the higher ground held curiously fashioned house-boats, some stranded near the base of the cliff where the last flood had carried them, others at the water's edge. Of these, only one was awake. From it shone a slender, steady beam. It was the house-boat where Bettie lived; thither Blearstead had directed him for the means of crossing the river, but the light was a warning to keep away. He stopped in dismayed surprise. The signal could mean only that the police had possession of the boat, and were awaiting his coming.

CHAPTER VI.

BETTIE TO THE RESCUE.

TACKY HODE'S house-boat consisted of an old wooden street-car set far back on a narrow deck which stood only a few feet above the water. Tacky, among other things, was a fisherman, and as the Blearstead Eating-House was supplied with fish through him, John saw him constantly, liking him less the oftener he saw him.

But because he was a ruffian, capable of any crime to the taste of Blearstead and Cleek, his intimates, John held him a match for any policeman. The house-boat might be swarming with officers of the law, but the signal-light burning under their very noses was Hode's answer to the voice of authority. Nor did John suspect for a moment that his uncle or Cleek or Hode would play him false. If not honor, then self-interest was the cohesive force that bound the thieves together.

From the protection of a cottonwood-tree his keen eyes caught the movement of a slight figure on the sand-waste. It was drawing nearer. Looking swiftly about for better shelter, he found only an upturned

skiff, one side painted silver in the moonlight, and threw himself down beside it, seeking absorption in its miserly scarf of shade. The figure advanced rapidly and suddenly it seemed to him that the delicious, warm wind was running toward him on the bare feet of a girl. He scrambled up to greet Hode's daughter.

"You've got to hurry!" she panted, lifting both arms to brush back her hair. "Come ahead!"

As he kept pace with her flying feet she explained that her father had received word from Blearstead of his coming, but somehow the police had either heard it also, or had suspected it, knowing of their friendship. Half an hour ago two officers had descended upon the house-boat. They were there now, waiting for the fugitive to fling himself into their toils. Hode was practically a prisoner. The skiff, of course, was there, safely padlocked, with the key in a blue pocket.

The news had a peculiar effect upon the young man. It was like opening the door of a warm room to admit a piercing blast. It was not that the presence of policemen in the house-boat terrified him; he was not terrified; his face did not lose color. But there came over him a sickening sense of helplessness, a feeling that wherever he might flee the law would be in wait to drag him to prison. They had known of the scheme to have him rowed across the river by the fisherman, or had guessed it. They would find him in Colorado Springs. What was the use?

"But we are up to their tricks," Bettie grinned, brushing back her hair which the wind continually whipped about her dark face. She had always stirred him by her independent air, her resourcefulness, and to-night her confidence deepened his admiration. And how pretty! After a rigorous winter which had persisted until the morning of this very day, the air was rushing in the high tide of spring—and it seemed all Bettie's doing—as if there couldn't have been a real spring if there hadn't been Bettie.

"Where are we going?" he wanted to know.

"I'll get you across—don't you fret!"

"I'll hate to leave you, Bettie." He added in surprise: "I never knew what it's going to be like, leaving you! We've been such friends since we were kids wading in the river, your mother and mine so chummy and all. But I don't know how to say it—it's sort of written here: stick this letter in your dress and read it some time."

She took it with a sidelong look, but said nothing, only brushed at her hair.

Now they were under the bridge. It swung up there in the sky with its twinkling lights like a crown of black velvet incrustated with stars. The immense piers, milk-white in the moonlight, dwarfed them, and the skiff, tied to a hook in the breakwater, seemed a child's tiny paper boat.

"Climb in," Bettie said imperiously. "I'm barefooted on purpose for this job." Her dress was scant and short, her limbs sturdy as befitted those of a river-girl accustomed to aid with the nets and lines. As she pushed off there was instinctive grace in the flexible movements of her gleaming arms, bared to the shoulders. They were bronzed and generously modeled, the satiny skin slipping easily over the muscles. Beneath her throat where the blouse gaped low, the moonlight found a match for its snowy softness and lingered there lovingly.

"So you're not coming back," she said with mournful cadence, then caught up the oars with sudden energy while the moon, glancing over her feet, turned the water that trickled down her limbs to showers of pearls. "But if you did, I guess you'd go again. It's been that way all my life. As soon as I make friends, the river rises and carries us away to another place. We can't take hold of anything. But every time we came back here we found you waiting till you got to seem to me something like the bridge and the shore—always there, whatever floods come. Funny how I feel about you, John." She gave a short rueful laugh.

"The way I feel about you is all in that letter," he said, feeling his throat tighten from the unconscious pathos in her words. "I know how you hate to read, but you won't mind reading that. It's all written down."

"All right, I'll study it out. Pa and ma are just like driftwood that gets itself lodged

for a while in the bend of the river, then gets washed away to nowhere, and me with 'em. You can just think of me a-floating down, just a-floating down to nowhere."

"I'll not think of you in any such way. You and I are going to get lodged together some day for keeps. It's all in that letter. I'm not saying anything under the circumstances, but it's written down."

"Where you going to? Maybe some time we'll float there and tie up."

Then he told her Blearstead's scheme of having him impersonate the boy kidnaped as an infant from the home of the millionaire. How his uncle would have raged to hear the secret bared in all its details! But John and Bettie had always told each other everything in perfect trust—she knew even about the burglary on Troost Avenue. As he talked she rowed steadily while both kept keen watch up and down the stream. He felt that no moments were so sweet as those spent in baring his heart to Bettie; it had always been so—and what could that mean except that which he had written in the letter?

"Of course," he concluded, "if I decide to fall for the plot, I'll never come back. Because I'll never be myself again. John Walters will simply vanish from the earth. But that other character, that John Lyle Warring, *he'll* come and find you and carry you away with him."

She asked breathlessly: "And are you going to do it?"

He laughed perplexedly. "If you'd asked me that half an hour ago I'd have said: 'Not on your life; I'm bound for Colorado Springs.' But I don't know how it is—I don't think it's from losing my nerve or getting stage-fright—somehow finding that the cops had chased me to your father's house-boat, yes, worse than that, had got there ahead of me—looks like there's no spot on earth safe for Johnny Walters. And I want to be safe to land some kind of decent life, don't you know?"

"Poor John!" Tears showed in her eyes, tears just for him; they were beautiful.

"Yes—just like that. It seems horribly mean to impose on the old man as his long-lost son. But, look here, Bet: suppose he never caught on to the trick, never

learned any different; see? One thing certain, if I do fall for the drama, I'm going to be just as good a son to the governor as I know how to act the part. And I guess," he added with sudden softness, "I had pretty good practise with my mammy."

As they swept along with the current she gave him a long, tender look. He had always been different from anybody else in her world; like a glimpse of a foreign country she found him, and his present prospects—of course he would escape to Lagville—seemed immense, gorgeous beyond dreams. Delicate shades of morality caused her no uneasiness; to the more obvious virtues she clung instinctively, but in the present case morality seemed not involved. It was simply a matter of dropping one's old self like an outworn garment, and assuming a new self, finer, richer, above all, safe.

"My land!" sighed Bettie, thrusting in the oars deep to swing the skiff to the opposite shore and bracing her feet for the struggle, "if I knew some way or other to stop being myself!"

"I wouldn't have you anybody else for a million dollars," cried her companion, "and I ain't flush, either."

"Yes, but what I want is to stop being Bettie Hode. Reckon you don't know of any kidnaped girl that there's a lamp in the window waiting for, do you?"

"I don't know any girl anywhere that's half as pretty and good and game as you are, Bettie, with your dear old laugh and your—but it's all written down. You can read about it. As for me, I haven't made up my mind, but I'm afraid I'm going to be driven to the rich man's door. And I hate it. It worries me blind. Because I haven't had enough of being myself. I never did get tired of just being John Walters."

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE DOOR.

TWO days later John rang the Warring door-bell and waited—he was kept waiting a long time—on the threshold of his adventure.

A dozen times since his parting from Bettie had come the resolve to give over the enterprise; but the papers had been so full of him, even to his picture, which happily lacked resemblance, that when he came to write his name in the register of an inland hotel, John Walters was cast aside and "John Lyle Warring" took his place in the world. For good or ill, he was now John Lyle Warring, and in spite of scruples and hazards he was resolved to act the part well.

Standing on the broad stone-pillared porch he justified himself that he might play the part with freer mind. Only long enough to throw the police effectively off the scent would he wear the mantle of wealth and station as shield against the storm—as soon as it was safe he would disappear, taking nothing with him but his freedom. Should he be accepted as the son indeed, doubtless the latter disillusion would leave sore hearts, but after all no terrible misfortune would ensue, such, for instance, as a term in the penitentiary. That prospect of State's prison turned his face squarely to the great adventure.

"I've got a pretty good home," he reflected with a grin, appraising the massive house with its turrets, its spacious windows, its generous balconies, and its surroundings of well-kept lawns and deep garden. For a sleepy little river-town, the place was imposing, the house a mansion. There was nothing like it in sight, though it stood midway up the street of Lagville's most pretentious residences.

It was four in the afternoon. About two hours earlier he had stepped empty-handed from the train. There had been no difficulty at the express-office in obtaining possession of the suit-case and three-quarters of a mile up-stream a deserted cattle-shed had afforded a retired dressing-room. Quickly he had been transformed from the slouching laborer to a flashily dressed young man of leisure, for the suit supplied by Blearstead and embodying his ideals of a real gentleman, suggested a confidence man, or at best a connoisseur of the race-tracks.

John's serene self-possession bore a strong family resemblance to impudence, though in reality not closely akin, and went well

with the gayly striped breeches and flaming tie. After final touches had been deftly given by means of pocket-comb and tiny mirror in the side of its case—accessories of adornment he was never without—he had done up the baby-clothes and old letters in a small parcel, then sunk the suit-case with its laborer's clothes. On his return to Lagville the very express-agent had failed to recognize the man in overalls who had come to town presumably hunting a job.

When at last the door opened, he felt that his "job" was to be definitely given him.

"Well?" inquired a cool, drawling voice, and he was confronted by a young woman of about his age whom at first sight he found, more than anything else, pronouncedly ugly.

He thought ruefully. "Little sister!" Gallantly he raised his white-and-green hat, smiled the smile that made friends even of ticket-agents, and inclined from the waist. "Could I see Mr. Warring on a matter of business?"

"No," came the response without an instant's decision. "Mr. Warring is not able to attend to any business and Mr. Glaxton is away to be gone a month."

Finding she was about to close the door he spoke rapidly: "I'm sorry not to get to see Mr. Glaxton, too"—wondering who Mr. Glaxton was—"but I couldn't stay a month for that pleasure. Really my business is very important and pressing; you can't think how pressing it is! I must see Mr. Warring without delay, for his sake as well as for my own."

She shrugged at the waste of time. "The more important your business is, the less likely are you to see Mr. Warring." Again the door was about to close in his face. But his geniality had not been without effect upon her cool, inelastic nature, for she paused to murmur vaguely: "When Mr. Glaxton comes—"

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.

He was swift to take advantage of her hesitation. "But you'll surely take up a line for me to Mr. Warring?" From his pocket he fished pencil and paper, looking for all the world as if about to record a gambling-bet. Yet, despite his sporting clothes and confident bearing, there was something about his expression that pleased her; it was his manner of suggesting that he had not observed that she was ugly.

Her nose was too long not to catch any eye turned her way, while her mouth, unfortunately small, a mere round hole, left a wide expanse of sallow cheek spaces. She was stooped over, yet even so, towered, being so much taller than other women. But John manifested nothing but alert interest, ready for instantaneous friendship.

"I'll take it up-stairs, though it won't be any use," she observed, showing a little more of the whites of her eyes. "If they think best they can hand it to him, which they won't, I'm afraid."

"Things seem badly balled up," he observed cheerfully, "with Mr. Glaxton away for a month and the rest of 'em sitting as committee on the old gentleman's actions."

She looked at him with something like an awakening of life in her eyes, and her voice came with less listlessness. "Maybe things are mixed up, some."

"Seems so to a stranger. Well, this message will put a little yeast in the mixture and start something." And he wrote:

"Information concerning John Lyle Warring."

He could not resist handing her the message in such fashion as to force the words upon her notice, but she showed neither surprise nor animation. "Well, I'll take it up to them." And she bore the slip of paper away, leaving him shut out on the porch.

"No, that can't be little sister," he reflected. "Strange house! But maybe this is the way millionaires do it!"

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE THE
CHARMING SEA NOVELETTE

A Larry MacGregor Story

LATITUDES OF MADNESS

BY MAGDA LEIGH

The Red Battle



by William Merriam Rouse

EVEN the sight of Tunk Ferguson's two hundred pounds of solid meat made the skin of the doctor of philosophy crawl with repugnance. Tunk had hairy ears, and a thatch of hair showed when his shirt was open at the neck. His blue jaw was a granite cliff. In Brick Church, and for miles around, people called him a fine, strapping man; but to the doctor he was a monster. For it might be, if his desire conquered, that some day he would be permitted to lay his thick hands upon the white delicacy of Claire Ouimette.

Their first clash came just before Dr. Gregory Braisted, holder of three degrees and an authority on post-Kantian metaphysics, quite abandoned himself in the matter of Claire Ouimette. Of course, by that time he knew sub-consciously that he was chained to the chariot wheels of the girl, but he had not admitted it to himself. Ferguson hastened this self-recognition, just as he had hastened the whole affair.

They were sitting on the grass in the apple orchard back of Lamey's farmhouse, where Braisted had been led in a fateful day of desire to get away from cities. It was quite understood by Braisted that Tunk wished him in the depths of the Miltonic hell, while he, with more scientific hatred, would have given the big countryman over to atomic disintegration if he had had the power.

"*Alors*," said Claire, finishing a legend of the country which she invariably called *beau Canada*, "he died, but he was very happy. For he was a brave man and he had the heart of a lion."

"A live dog is better than a dead lion," quoth Braisted rather absently, for at the moment he was concerned with adoring her mass of night-black hair against a background of faintly pink apple blossoms.

"Haw!" laughed Ferguson. "That's a good one, perfessor!"

Braisted shuddered. The girl raised a hand in protest, a hand sensitive and unspoiled by its daily labor of waiting on table and washing dishes in the Lamey household.

"Ah, *monsieur*!" she cried. "You do not mean that!"

Braisted smiled at her seriousness. He had never seen a woman of his own world who could make a gesture more finished than could this French-Canadian girl of humble antecedents, who was at present old Tom Lamey's hired help.

"Why not?" he teased. "Tunk will bear me out! Wouldn't you rather be a live dog than a dead lion, Tunk?"

Dr. Braisted's tone tinged the question with a fine fringe of insult. There was an element of intention in it, for Ferguson's reiterated "perfessor" was not by any means deferential. Because he was not a doctor of medicine Brick Church refused

to yield Braisted his title, and Tunk had somehow divined that "professor" was to him as salt to a raw wound.

"I'm a live lion, and don't you ferget it!" exclaimed Ferguson, his face growing dark.

"You refuse to recognize the dilemma!" laughed Braisted, knowing quite well that Ferguson would not understand him and by that failure would be still more angered. "You can't take it by the horns and twist it that way!"

The brain of Tunk Ferguson labored to little purpose, but his hands found something to do. He and Lamey had been pitching quoits with horseshoes that afternoon and the shoes lay ringed about a stake that was within reach of his hand. He took up one of them.

"I can twist this here!" he said, a trifle thickly. His shoulders hunched themselves. His hands bent the iron until it snapped. He tossed the pieces away.

A little gasp came from the girl. Braisted shrugged, and met the reddened eyes of the other man steadily enough. He himself was an athlete in a decent way, as he would have put it, and he looked as little like the pale and spectacled scholar of tradition as he did like Tunk. But his strength was puny compared to the brawn of the big man.

"Tunk!" cried Claire Ouimette hastily. "You have spoil' a good horseshoe. What you do after supper when Monsieur Lamey wants to play?"

"Shucks!" Tunk sprang up as though his two hundred-weight were nothing. "I can find another out to the barn!"

He moved away mightily among the trees, sweeping out with an arm now and then to push aside some low hanging branch. Braisted felt himself back with Neolithic man, watching the happy disappearance of one of the terrors of the forest.

"You have made him mad," said Claire. "He will now sit in the barn and hate you until supper-time."

"And I," replied Braisted, "shall be quite content to have him stay in the barn—and hate me."

"*Mon Dieu!*" She did not, by any

means, take it so lightly. "Perhaps, *mon-sieur le professeur*, he will punch you in the nose!"

"Bah!" Dr. Braisted was angry, not so much at Tunk as that the girl should take the so-called "best man" in the township seriously. "He would not dare to."

"Dare? Last winter three men came up from Palmersville to lick Monsieur Tunk. Those three, they were carried home in the bottom of a sleigh."

"What?" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to say that he killed—"

"Ah, no! They were just busted up, *monsieur*."

Braisted laughed. She was a delight forever. But he must get what he thought was a worship of brute strength out of her mind.

"That has nothing to do with me," he said. "Undoubtedly Ferguson is a fighter. But what of it? He has the mental development of a bulldog—"

"But I have respect for *bouledogues*, *monsieur!*"

This time the doctor lost his temper.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "That a girl of your natural fineness should admire this big animal. It is absurd. As absurd as—"

He let the sentence remain unfinished, and turned toward the house.

"*Monsieur!*"

He halted and faced her again. She looked up at him, steadily and with a smile trembling toward birth upon her lips. In her eyes was that same *come-to-me* light which built the Hanging Gardens and lost the battle of Actium. He recognized it—and sat down again upon the grass.

"*Bien!* I will read your thoughts. Monsieur Tunk is *drôle*. It is *drôle* also that you should talk to the *servante* to Monsieur et Madame Lamee, and who knows only a little that she learned in the convent. *Voilà!* I have read them."

Neither then nor afterward did Dr. Braisted know exactly what emotional processes took place within him. Certainly inhibitions were overcome temporarily and a flood of words was released. He found himself holding the hand of Claire Ouimette and asking her to be his wife.

"I love you!" he finished, huskily. "Claire, I have never felt toward any one as I feel toward you! I want to marry you."

All lightness had gone from her manner. She withdrew her hand slowly.

"I can not tell you—now," she said, and almost before Braisted realized that she was leaving him she had gone.

It was equally incredible that he had plunged into something that he had intended to think over carefully, and that she had left him without an answer. He got up, dazedly, and walked toward the house. With a feeling of unreality that amounted to dizziness he climbed up to his room and shut and locked the door.

He must be mad. Yet he knew that he was not. He had argued this thing with himself many times during the month that he had been up here at the top of New York state, trying to work upon his interpretation of the Hegelian metaphysics. Why, he had been told by the gray-beards that he gave promise of becoming a system-maker, and he was only thirty-eight. And he had just proposed marriage to a girl who was fully fifteen years younger than himself, and a servant in a country farm-house. Madness!

The most supreme sanity! Had he not looked into the living depths of her eyes and seen there for himself that same mysterious affinity that makes certain atoms leap to each other to form the molecule? How *chic* she contrived to be, even washing dishes in a gown of faded gingham! It was not only by contrast with the solid, red-cheeked, giggling girls of Brick Church. He had discounted that. He knew women whose voices were not so well inflected, after years of cultivation, as hers. But more powerful than any other factor was the voice of his emotions, which said that for him she was the quintessence of desirable femininity.

After all the thing that troubled him most was—he must admit it—his jealousy. How she could find anything even of passing interest in the monolithic Tunk, whom she lashed hither and yon at her will, was utterly beyond the comprehension of Gregory Braisted. The more he thought of it the more he marveled as he paced up and

down in the litter of things he had brought with him—cases of books, collapsible bathtub, wardrobe trunks. By an effort of will he calmed himself; he washed and went down to supper at least outwardly the dignified young doctor of philosophy in whom the gray-beards hoped to find a system-maker.

Ferguson, the only other boarder, faced him at table. Tunk had but lately finished a winter's work in the woods and from now until the haying season he would rest. Braisted hated his white teeth, his light brown, unwinking eyes. Not the man himself as a man, for he had not raised him to the level of hatred. But it was difficult to talk to old Tom Lamey and his wife, still flustered at the honor of having in their house a man who owned so many books, with that two hundred pounds of antagonistic virility opposite. Worst of all, it was served by Claire who, to-night, silent and a little pale, brushed the sleeve of Tunk's flannel shirt as she set down the tea and the steaming johnny-cake.

Gregory Braisted knew that he must give her a little time after supper in which to do her work. He wanted to kill that time somehow, and thus it came about that he walked alone in the long, cool twilight down the dusty road that ran past the dozen houses of Brick Church, and gave Tunk Ferguson an opportunity for which he had probably been waiting these last few days. He came up behind Braisted with the foot-fall of a giant cat, but the doctor heard him and turned sharply. Ferguson stopped. They faced each other.

"Say!" Tunk's whole face darkened, but no feature of it changed. "Sometimes when I get real mad I'm afraid of myself."

"Indeed," remarked Braisted, after a little pause. "This really enraged Ferguson, as he had hoped it would. The big man's voice dropped to a hissing whisper:

"You look a-here, perfessor! You let her alone or I'll take you apart and spit on the pieces! You hear me?"

For the first time Dr. Braisted realized that Ferguson might actually make an attack upon him. Heretofore he had not considered the possibility of such a thing.

He did not experience fear, in the ordinary sense, but he was apprehensive. Tunk to him was no more than a moving, talking, eating entity to which he bore no ethical relation—except, perhaps, jealousy. Tunk was a bull, placid or mad as the case might be. To the doctor flight would not have been cowardice any more than fighting would have been bravery just then. Tunk Ferguson was merely an impersonal danger.

"Bah!" he said, thinking aloud rather than making a reply to Ferguson's threat. "You are probably evolved just far enough psychologically to be susceptible to inhibitions aroused by intellectual concepts—"

He paused there. His reasoning had flashed to him a possible solution of this unpleasantness. The words he had just spoken had momentarily balked Ferguson who, of course, had not understood them. For all the big man knew the doctor might be casting the most serious reflections upon his ancestry. Braisted knew this, and he also knew that he had given his enemy just the little halt, the little instant of hesitancy, which might permit the delivery of a mental knockout. He drew himself up, frowned, and leveled a dramatically abrupt finger at Ferguson's eyes.

"Think of yourself in a cell in prison!"

This sentence was hurled at Tunk Ferguson. He opened his mouth—and closed it again. Into the light brown, unwinking eyes crept the hint of a shadow. To the doctor his emotional processes were readable. At the direct and forceful command he had involuntarily created the picture in his mind. Once there it held his attention. The connection between the assault he had been about to commit and the picture was obvious.

Dr. Braisted held his finger leveled and continued to look him steadily in the eye. Tunk's muscles relaxed, his eyes shifted, and then the whole two hundred pounds of him quailed. He backed away, turned, and finally took himself toward Brick Church with an attempt at a swagger. The doctor of philosophy was victorious.

Nevertheless a small, insistent voice within him questioned the permanence of that victory. It asked him how he would

deal with a recurrence of the same thing, and whether the same method of treatment might be expected to maintain a fixed standard of efficacy.

It was moonlight, but by no means late, when Dr. Braisted returned to the Lamey home. The apple orchard was a place of fantom beauty, a heaven of fragrant clouds. The yellow moon kissed them. He could have read large print in the full light, it seemed. It was a night for lovers—madness—and he saw a form which instinct told him was that of Claire Ouimette under the trees. He went to her.

"*Le bon Dieu* makes the world very beautiful to-night, *monsieur le professeur*," she said as he drew near.

"It is a proper setting for you," he replied, and he tried to take her in his arms.

As a shadow moves, so she moved away from him; not in flight, but in a denial more firm than words could have been.

"Claire!" he cried. "You don't mean that you—you won't marry me!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" she whispered. "What shall I say to him?"

"Claire!" His voice grew sharp. "What do you mean?"

"Ah, *monsieur!* I know what I mean, but I can not say it. I—"

"Bah!" The doctor forgot himself. "I think you are fascinated by the magnetism of that animal, Ferguson! I must save you—"

"You think too much with your head, *monsieur le professeur!* You must learn to think with your heart!"

He laughed, and stepped a little nearer to her, knowing as he did so in the back of his mind that he, called philosopher, was bound by two chains, of iron and of gold. Desire and jealousy held him, and he no longer set his will against the bondage.

"*Mais oui, mon ange!*" he said. "Of course, I think with my head. The heart is not to be trusted for thinking."

"*Alors!*" she cried, suddenly throwing up her head. "Monsieur Tunk, he thinks with his heart only."

That sentence slapped Braisted with an icy hand. He was furious.

"Heart?" he sneered. "If you call a few primitive emotions a heart, yes!"

"The heart, it is sure! The head doubts, *monsieur*."

"The head knows. I—"

"You"—she interrupted—"you ask me to marry with your heart, and your head is angry. Is it not so?"

"So you think me less of a man than this hulking animal? You would think better of me, I suppose, if I were to beat him with my fists. Bah! I made him slink off to-night by a few words. The head, *mademoiselle*."

"*Dieu Seigneur!*" she murmured. "You understand nothing at all, *monsieur*. It is not what is done so much as how it is done. The good Mother Superior at the convent—"

"Nonsense!" cried Braisted. "If I do fight this beast of the fields it will be—a *red battle!*"

All at once her body stiffened and she raised a warning hand.

"He comes!" she whispered.

Braisted followed her gaze and saw the form of Tunk Ferguson, a dark lump moving in the moonlight. He had seen or heard them, or both, and like the bull moose, he moved straight through the night toward his rival. He was unhindered by the conventions of the *genus homo*.

So thought Dr. Gregory Braisted in the instant after he perceived Ferguson. Half an hour earlier he would have flashed the light of his keen brain over such a situation to find the handle by which it could be taken hold of; now he did not attempt to detach himself. A tide was rising within him.

"Claire," he said, in a very low voice, "you have not yet answered me—my question."

"No," she replied. "Monsieur Tunk comes!"

"Either he or I will go quickly enough if you answer me."

"Me—I can make him go by a word—to him." Her tone spoke indecision, almost a question.

"You mean—"

"I mean that, without answering you, I can tell him to go to bed—and he will go—and there will be no—fight."

The words came from her lips as softly

as the petals of apple blossoms fall, as though they did not want to go out into still night. Braisted wondered, and then in a flash of understanding he caught their import. She was offering to send Tunk away for him, to protect him from whatever intent Tunk might have.

"No, by Heaven!" growled the doctor, thickly. "Let him come."

Ferguson stood before them, lowering. He was all of six feet tall, and his heaviness was principally in the chest and shoulders. In the moonlight, and in contrast to the slenderness of the girl, he seemed a Goliath. His fists were clenched and his arms curved a little at the elbows. His head jutted forward. All the force of his pent hatred and smarting humiliation focused and played upon the doctor.

"Say, perfessor!" he rumbled. "Didn't I tell you something, hey?"

"Ah, Monsieur Tunk," spoke Claire, lightly. "You are *fâché*—angry?"

"You bet I'm mad!" he flung at her, although in a different voice. "Most likely I'll take this here school teacher and tie him up in a knot!"

Although Dr. Braisted was mainly conscious of himself at this moment, yet he understood that Claire Ouimette was repenting, or half repenting, of the situation that she had permitted to come about. For she took a step forward, as though to place herself upon the straight line between him and Ferguson, and she spoke with a little hint of a quaver underlying her words.

"Tunk," she said. "You are not polite! Not at all!"

"I don't calc'late to be." He laughed raucously. "Before this city feller come along I figgered you might be my girl! That's what! He's been strutting around and spreading out his tail feathers for a month now, and I'm durned good and sick of it."

Undoubtedly the girl could have shaped the affair to the desire of her slender hands in the beginning. This was no longer true. There had been a change, perhaps brought about by that undertone of indecision in her voice. Certainly Tunk Ferguson had got his head now. She tried to stay his mounting self-confidence.

"You, she cooed, with a silver laugh. "Who tol' you, Monsieur Tunk, that I was to be your—your girl?"

"That's all right!" His voice neared a bellow. "You jest get out of the way and leave him to me!"

She stepped back, and her face turned toward Braisted. Had she changed her mind again he wondered? He had not changed his since he forbade her to interfere. That which he was within himself had stirred and stretched and broken the intellectual crust. His soul stood forth, naked and fierce.

Afraid? In one way he was afraid, but that feeling was swallowed up in a greater—the desire to be at the throat of the other male. Not blindly, but efficiently. A weapon would have felt good to his hand. In ten minutes he had dropped ten thousand years.

He stood so still that Ferguson, looking at him, misunderstood and laughed. He laughed out of the depths of his power, insultingly, and his big frame lost its look of being ready to launch itself forward.

"Shucks!" he said to Claire. "I ain't going to get myself put in jail, maybe, fer a perfessor. Come along into the house, and we'll set in the parlor."

Dr. Braisted had measured the distance between himself and Ferguson. He had been standing poised. Now he advanced his left foot and covered half of that distance; then he stepped in with his right and put the weight of his body behind a blow to the short ribs. Almost simultaneously his left rose in an uppercut to the jaw. Very quick work. Thud-smack! And he was back out of reach of Tunk Ferguson with the consciousness that he had kept his head in spite of his red rage.

But his blows had been no more effective than slaps upon the face of a cliff.

A little grunt at the body jolt, a little shake of the head at the crack on the jaw. Tunk looked at him stupidly for fully five seconds after the blows had been struck. Meantime the doctor saw sidewise that Claire Ouimette was pressed back against the trunk of an apple tree. The moonlight caught a spot of silver above her clasped hands. It was the crucifix upon her rosary.

Tunk Ferguson, finally, put back his head and laughed. He laughed the contempt of the mammoth for the futile little creature that hid in thickets and stung it with ineffectual darts.

"I guess I got to muss you up some," he said.

He made a sudden lunge and grasped—the air. The doctor drummed upon him desperately, viciously, above the kidneys, and was out of reach by the time the big fellow had turned. This time he had at least succeeded in making Ferguson snarl with anger, but he was no more satisfied with that than was the giant. He had to hold himself back from a dash straight at that heavy face.

It was Tunk who, unintentionally, broke what promised to be a deadlock of speed and skill against strength. He was hampered by his coat and, with supreme contempt for his adversary, he began to peel it off. Dr. Braisted leaped into the air and lashed out right and left at his mouth. He rejoiced at the bite of teeth against his knuckles, for he knew that he had cut through flesh to reach them. Almost to his undoing he rejoiced, for Ferguson got an arm free and caught him by the shoulder.

There was a moment through which the doctor was shaken so that the heavens and the earth seemed to crash together. Blindly he kicked and wrenched, and blind luck aided him. He found himself reeling backward over the grass, free. One hot shoulder was bare to the moonlight. Coat and shirt had parted in the grip of Tunk.

He slid out of what remained of his coat. Ferguson was after him in earnest now. That was good. Too slow for the lust of battle that leaped like flame within him were the hit and run tactics of his reason. Blood he wanted, and the feel of shrinking flesh.

The doctor of philosophy yelped like a dog at a fox hole and sprang for Tunk's throat.

What mattered to him the blows that rocked his body, that pulped his face, that beat blood into his eyes? He was filled with the glory of that remembered instant when he had crushed Tunk's lips, and he

panted with a great thirst for more of that triumph. In these swift seconds he was living for a single end—to get at the seat of life in Tunk Ferguson.

He clung, and bored in, and when the thrust of a mighty arm flattened him against the earth he rose again as though the earth had hurled him back to the attack. Ferguson tried to crush him in a bearlike hug. And that, of all things Tunk could have done, best served his purpose. What did he care if his back broke in that giant grip? He was able to drive his head forward because of it, and to set his teeth into the neck of Ferguson where the jugular throbbed and beat. He bit in, and tasted a hot salt fluid that was not from his own veins.

A yell pierced even his obsessed brain. His hold was broken and he was flung away—flung clear by the arms that a moment since had tried to hold him in a death clasp. Ferguson bore backward, with both huge hands pressed to his neck.

"Good God!" he shrieked. "He's a devil!"

Again Braisted leaped at him, with his gaze seeing only those covering hands. But Tunk Ferguson turned and fled, and as he went his voice, stricken with sudden panic, implored aid from the murmuring night.

"Take him off!" he yelled. The shadows swallowed him, but the cry came back, faintly. "Take him off!"

At the instant of victory there was only the sense of loss in Dr. Gregory Braisted. The vanquished had escaped. Then he felt himself as conqueror. The world was under his feet. He lifted his sodden face and

his torn and bleeding fists to the yellow moon. From deep within his being came a sound, half growl, half roar. It was the sound of the dark places of the forest, of a million years of battle, of the upward swing of life to victory.

His own voice brought him back to the perfumed orchard. His arms dropped. He turned, staggering a little. Claire Oumette still stood where he had last seen her, leaning against the apple tree with the moon striking brightness from the silver crucifix. He was himself again, but not the same self that had first seen her there. The soul he had owned had crashed somewhere in the cosmos and come, molten hot, through a new birth to another life.

Despite the mist that was in his eyes he saw her lips move. A whispered word came to him.

"You've won!"

"What?" He spat blood and a tooth upon the grass. "Tell me that!"

"Me!" so faintly that he barely heard it.

"Why?" he growled. "Because I licked him?"

"Ah, no!" She moved and stood erect, her clasped hands held out a little toward the doctor. "Because you fought—now you are of *les enfants de bon Dieu*—you are *human*!"

"I'm going to marry you!" He braced himself to keep from falling. "To-morrow!"

"*Mais oui!*" she cried, with the sound of delicately smitten harpstrings in her voice. "Yes! For I love thee!"

His knees gave way beneath him, but it was not against his will that he knelt to kiss the hands that held the crucifix.

WHEN I WAS A MINNOW

LIKE the poets who write to their ladyloves, odes

Proclaiming that, eons ago

They two were once apes, or ruler and slave,

They have loved through the ages—you know!

Far, far down the years, do I see you, my dear,

And myself—you can see if you look

Our relations to-day are the same as when I

Was a minnow and you were a hook!

Mary Carolyn Davies.

The Mysterious Quest

by Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "Whose Gold?" etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

WILLIAM JASPRO, a San Francisco lawyer, hired Mr. Dolan, a seafaring man without a ship, to take a Mr. Langton and his daughter and a cargo of valuable but mysterious boxes from a lonesome house on the city marshes and get them aboard Captain Wilson's ship, the *Dora*. Dolan had succeeded in getting the girl and her father out of the house and into a wagon, when he was set upon by two men. He knocked out one of his assailants and eluded the other in time to leap over the tailgate of the wagon.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

I DO not know the name of the town. I think it must be San Leandro where I learned how fear can stop a man's heart. The horses had done all they could for us; they were in no shape to travel further through the clogging mud of those low country roads when we entered the village. I bade the driver set us down at the railway station and leave us to work out our own salvation as best we could.

When we entered the lighted, empty waiting-room I saw how hard a way my companions were in; Langton was shaking with a chill until his teeth fairly rattled in his head; the girl just managed to drag herself to one of the benches and sank down beside her father with a sigh of utter weariness. I was, of course, accustomed to hard weather and, although I steamed like a wet horse, my blood was running warm enough. But when it came to looks I must have been a worse sight than either of them. Mud was caking me from head to foot and my face was streaked with dried blood from a cut over my eye. I looked them over and I realized that, unless I wanted a sick girl

and a dead man on my hands, the best thing I could do would be to find some decent shelter and hot food.

Some one was making a mighty banging of tin cans on the further end of the platform and I went out there to make inquiries. Two Portuguese farm-hands were unloading milk tins from a wagon, and in answer to my question they pointed to a blaze of light almost directly across the wide street. The girl brightened a little when I told her the news and straightway began to brush some of the dried mud from her skirts and tucked away some strands of disordered hair. Then she smiled bravely into my eyes.

The hotel was one of those French pensions—half inn and half roadhouse—which used to be found in every village around San Francisco Bay. The landlord, a burly, ruddy-faced fellow with heavy-lidded eyes, met us in the dingy little parlor. He did not even shrug his shoulders when he saw us nor give us as much as a second glance. With that beautiful composure which only the men from southern Europe are capable of he took us in as if travelers were in the habit of staggering into his hostelry with blood and exhaustion smeared on their faces

This story began in the *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* for October 23.

and furtiveness written in their eyes. He bowed, called his wife and took his own departure, leaving us to her care.

She was a comfortably buxom woman, hard-handed with great, knotted, bare fore-arms and a shadow of a mustache, but teeth as white as snow and a smile that was enough to make a man kiss her on one of her red cheeks. She fairly cooed over Langton's daughter, and was out of the room, to return in a few seconds with steaming coffee and buttered toast. That coffee put heart into all three of us and we sat there in the dingy little parlor on garishly upholstered chairs, surrounded by walls adorned with colored prints of zouave soldiers going into action, Napoleon on horseback, and the Eiffel Tower, sipping the hot fluid. I asked our hostess whether we could get rooms. Inside of the half-hour we were up-stairs, and I was enjoying the soft, cool caress of spotless linen sheets.

I had taken the opportunity to look at a time-card in the railway-station and had learned that there was a southbound train at precisely ten minutes after two that afternoon. I left orders with our hostess to give me a call at half after one. The next thing I knew some one was rapping on the door. The rain had ceased some time during the morning; the sun was out and everything was dazzling when I looked through the window. I saw a two-horse open carriage coming down the roadway from the north when I went out to knock at the doors of my companions. Then I went back to my room to wait, thought better of it, and started down-stairs.

Here I must digress a little to describe the geography of that battered little road-house and its surroundings. The stairs came down into a narrow hallway which opened at one end into the dingy parlor where we had had coffee on our arrival, and ran the length of the building to a rear door. Several other doors opened from this passageway, one of them into the kitchen just beside the back entrance. Behind the house was a yard, where fowls were enjoying the span of life which preceded their metamorphosis into chicken *en casserole*; beyond several outbuildings was a low stable. A cypress hedge enclosed the yard and there

was a narrow gate opening into a lane. Beyond were other houses and the town. In front of the inn the roadway came down from the north; across it, the station stood between us and the railway-tracks.

When I reached the bottom of the stair and was about to step into the narrow hallway I noticed that the door opening into the parlor was wide open, as well as the front door which gave entrance from the street. Through the latter I saw the vehicle which I had noticed coming down the road from the north halted before the inn; the driver was holding the reins and two men were talking quietly in the rear seat. I stopped to draw back a little out of their view and heard our landlady saying: "There is notheeng wrong?" A man's voice answered. "Oh, no. Nothing at all. They're friends of mine. Just tell me their rooms and I'll step up and have a word with them."

She told him and he thanked her and I retreated up the flight of stairs, where I stood in a dense shadow. He said something more—and I saw her coming down the hall. A door closed; I judged it was the one that led into the kitchen. I heard Miss Langton's voice up-stairs. I think it was that that saved the situation.

For, instead of going back to his companions in the carriage, the man whom I had overheard talking in the parlor, stepped into the narrow hallway—to listen, I suppose, to what she was saying. I was on my way down-stairs as soon as I heard him. He gained the foot of the flight and found me standing a step or two above him. By good fortune he had closed the parlor door.

"If you say a word," I whispered, "I'll pull the trigger." I leveled the automatic revolver which I had kept myself instead of giving it to the policeman in William Jaspro's office on the previous evening, so that its muzzle was level with his one good eye. He made a curious sound, half choke, half gasp, and stood as if he had been frozen to the floor.

I once heard a whaler say: "It ain't success makes turning a trick interesting. For when things go smooth, it's just one, two, three and yuh're done. But when something happens—when there's some one sees

you or some one hollers—that's what starts things that's fine to listen to when it's all over with."

I had reached precisely this stage in the present venture. Now that things weren't going "one, two, three," it is interesting—to describe when it is done and over.

I did not have time to think. I had to do things as they came to me. It was a matter of seconds and a very few seconds at that. And a matter of luck. "March," I bade him between my teeth and pointed down the hall toward the back door. I followed at his heels with the revolver's muzzle against the small of his back. I kept my coat shoved forward with my left hand the better to conceal it, and we two went straight of the door, into the little yard, across the bare enclosure as far as the cow-shed, where I made him turn in.

"I intend to kill you if you make a sound," I warned him again. "Go into that stall." There was an upright of thick timber beside the rear of the stall. A cow regarded us in mild consternation from the adjacent pen. I found a couple of halters and bound the man with the bad eye to the upright, bound him hand and foot and did it with a quickness which had come to me in my years at sea. After which I stuffed his mouth with a wad of hay and then tied my handkerchief over his face to keep the gag secure and left the place.

The landlady met me in the hallway. "A gentleman—" she began.

"I'm going out to have a talk with them," I answered on the spur of inspiration.

She turned and went back into the kitchen.

I made the stairs at a bound. Miss Langton was just emerging from her father's room and he was leaning on her arm. In a few words I told them what had happened. We came down into the passageway; the coast was clear. We slipped from the building as silently as thieves.

No one stopped us as we left the yard by the back gate. We went—how slowly I cannot tell you; Langton's lameness made me fairly grind my teeth with impatience—up the lane, and I took them around another block before I dared to turn toward

the main street. The train was in at the depot. It had been there for two or three minutes. We crossed the street and I saw the open carriage standing in front of the roadhouse; the men were still sitting as I had first noticed them. It seemed an age before we gained the railroad-tracks and boarded the rear coach. I fairly panted for the train to move. It did not stir.

CHAPTER VIII.

TROUBLED TRAVELERS.

THE depot building stood between us and the inn. I sat there in my cushioned seat staring at its yellow walls, wondering what was going on beyond them. It seemed as if an eternity went by. At last the conductor sung out his long-drawn—"A-a-abo-o-oard." And even then we did not move.

As if to make up for his tardiness the engineer started his locomotive with a jerk which fairly wrenched my back. Compainingly the wheels revolved; we passed the station and I saw the vehicle still standing before the roadhouse. One of its passengers was climbing down into the street. And that was my last glimpse of the place, for some trees shut it out a moment later. I speculated feverishly concerning what would be going on within the inn; when would they find the man with the spoiled eye?

There were few people in the coach. I had my seat behind my two companions. Once past the girl turned and looked around at me. Dark circles of weariness were below her eyes; but the eyes themselves were resolute and now that resolution vanished for the moment before a glance of thankfulness. Thankfulness to me. Her lips moved, but I did not catch the words. I did not need to; I read them in her expression. She was telling me her gratitude, and I felt my cheeks go warmer as I muttered some sort of acknowledgment.

After that she resumed her attention to her father, and I saw her head going closer to his; her hair was brushing his cheek. He raised a waxen hand and stroked the tresses gently. During the four hours of

that ride I watched them sitting thus and it came to me that theirs was a great affection. I was to learn the depths of that love and the causes for its warmth, the circumstances which made them cling so closely to each other, in good time.

Now and again I thought of my own position and my relation to this affair. Up to the last hour I had acted as any man must act toward a young woman in distress. But since I had held that revolver on the man with the spoiled eye the whole situation, as far as I was concerned, had changed. I had sense enough to realize that no one would be going about as he did trying to apprehend fugitives unless he had some manner of legal authority, and my knowledge of cities was great enough to make me sure the authority which he possessed came from a star. Evidently he had the law behind him. Which made me a fugitive from that same law. I was now in as bad a case as these two whom I had chosen to help; the three of us were in the same boat from this time on. And as I thought upon it, I did not waste any regrets over the matter; for one thing, I was young and owned my share of the recklessness which a fellow has in his twenties, and for another—there was the gratitude which the girl had bestowed upon me in that brief look, to make me satisfied at least in part.

After all, the law means next to nothing to most of us when we come to shaping our own conduct; its significance is great only when we apply it to what other men do. As for ourselves, we always regulate our actions by a more primitive code than any written statutes and only ask ourselves whether we have done that which leaves no sting of conscience after it. That was how I felt this afternoon. I made sure in my own mind if I had the thing to do over again I would follow the same course. As for the future, why then I confess my satisfaction oozed away. Things were badly mixed and before I was done with this adventure, it was a reasonable certainty that I was going to face some music to which it would not be pleasant to dance. One cannot aid fugitives in getting themselves and ten boxes of very precious loot out of the country when a troop of legally author-

ized men is after them without having a pretty definite assurance he is going to be called to account in the end.

All of which naturally set me to wondering about the stuff in those boxes and who really owned it; who were its rightful claimants. How had this badly frightened, sick man come into its possession? What, in Heaven's name, was it anyhow? And above all, where was Langton heading when he got aboard the schooner? I had a plenty for my thoughts to feed upon while the train roared southward on that sunshiny afternoon.

The sun was slanting westward when we came through the upper reaches of the Santa Clara Valley and down long before we left the train at Castroville. Two or three country jehus were calling for customers at the edge of the depot platform and I chose an honest-looking young fellow with an open rig. "Is there," I asked him, "a place where we can get a bite to eat before we go on?" He pointed out a typical regulation railroad hotel across the street; and I bade him await us outside while we were served.

The little hamlet of Castroville was about a mile away. We stopped there briefly while I went into the general store and purchased a lantern with enough oil to fill it. The proprietor was a burly fellow, and while he was waiting on me I happened to notice a sizeable metal star pinned to his vest. Evidently he was the township constable. I had that guilty feeling which every man knows who has ever had occasion to dread the long hand of the law. "Now," I told our driver, "take us over to Moss Landing." He looked around at me. "What place?" he asked. There was, I suggested, a wharf; he said there was, but did we want to go there? He placed an emphasis on the last word which made me pretty certain that the place must be deserted and that suited me all the better. I answered that we did.

It was a lonely road across wide, flat lands where the wind sighed coming from the bay, bringing with it the scent of salt water which was grateful to my nostrils, and a chill which made my two companions huddle the closer together. Occasionally

we would pass a row of tall gum-trees whose leaves were rustling mournfully, and now and then we saw the light of some farmhouse while dogs barked at us in the distance. The air grew cooler, the tang of salt in the wind became more evident; we rumbled out along a wooden bridge and I heard the lapping of water underneath us; now the stink of the long mud-flats overweighed the salt smells. At last our driver halted his horses.

"Here you are," said he. I helped the others out and paid him and, when he had driven away, I lighted the lantern. We were indeed standing at the landmark end of a long, dilapidated wharf. As far as the town is concerned it might have been engulfed in some tidal catastrophe—or never have been at all—for all the signs of life that showed. I presume the inhabitants had gone to bed already, although it was not much more than eight o'clock. Far ahead of us at the further end of the wharf I could just make out some sort of a low building, and as that promised shelter we set out for it. It proved to be a shed used for storing such cargoes as were landed in this place, and we got within its lee, which was pleasant after enduring the cold touch of that sea breeze during our long ride. Here we waited a good three hours.

I was the first to sight the schooner's lights. And she was well in before she showed them, too. I stepped out to the very end of the structure and waved my lantern. Almost at once the pleasant rattle of ropes and blocks proclaimed that a boat was being lowered. The thud of oars in the rowlocks followed presently. "They're coming," I announced. "I felt a soft hand on my arm and the girl's voice was in my ear. 'I heard a wagon up the road there,' she whispered. 'It's just now stopped.' And then a horse stamped on the planking at the landward end of the wharf.

"Keep the lantern," I told her, "and when the boat comes, do you two get on board. Call to me when you've done it."

It was the Castroville constable. I recognized his voice as soon as I came within ear-shot and if I had not known it I would have been sure of him anyway. "You just stay here," he was telling some one.

"They're where you said all right. I'll get 'em." And I perceived that our honest young driver had been too honest for my purposes; he had betrayed us to the seeking law.

No doubt the message of my doings at San Leandro had come across the wires and the whole country was up after us. While I waited for him to come on I smelled the reeking tidal mud below me. The sound of the thumping oars grew plainer. I prayed that the boat might be prompt and that there might be no delay in taking on her passengers. Now I saw the bulk of the approaching man in the gray night, and a moment later he caught sight of me.

"You, there," he called. "Stand where you are!" I wondered whether he was bearing a weapon to enforce that order and, wondering, obeyed. For that suited my purpose. The oars were growing louder; the boat was near the wharf. The constable of Castroville stepped up out of the night and gripped me by the arm. The sound of the oars had ceased. I heard voices drifting landward with the night breeze. My two companions were being taken on board.

"Where's the others?" he demanded gruffly.

I sparred for time. I knew how slow that man Langton would move when it came to descending the ladder which led to the waterside.

"What others d'ye mean?" I countered.

"That 'll do now," he rebuked me. "You know who." I think he heard them then for the first time, for he drew a little away from me, as if to listen the better, leaning slightly forward as he did so. I pulled back with all my force and then as he resisted the movement, lunged forward suddenly. Our bodies came sharply together. I seized him by the shoulders with my two hands, and tripped him with one foot. He almost somersaulted with the violence of the assault and I managed to give him a good hard thrust to make assurance doubly sure.

In this I quite outdid my own expectations for the push, catching him already off his balance, sent him out over the stringer at the edge of the dock and I heard him

land in the mud below me with a mighty splash. I waited no longer, but turned on my heel and ran for dear life.

CHAPTER IX.

A RIVULET OF BLOOD.

WHEN I reached the end of the wharf I could see the boat below me with the lantern between the thwarts. The faces of the two passengers showed dimly in the sick, yellow rays, and the two men at the oars were looking up at me. As I began climbing down the ladder which led to the water, my back to the yawl, I heard a muttered oath, the swish of an oar-blade in the brine, the rattle of a row-lock. I glanced over my shoulder, and a good six feet separated me from the gunwale. The voices of the sailors came to me across that interval; one was growling like a dog and the other was remonstrating with him. Miss Langton cried out. Then, before I could give the order which was on the tip of my tongue, the little craft came drifting back. I lost no time in dropping into the stern-sheets.

"Give way," I ordered the seamen, and while they were pulling out I caught the noise of feet on the planking. The constable of Castroville was begging his companion to throw him a line and be quick about it. The schooner's lights showed dead ahead. "What," I demanded, "d'ye mean, you men, pulling away without me?" There was no answer for a moment, only the thump, thump of the oars in the row-locks. "My mistake, sir," the nearer of the pair said in a silken tenor. "Orders was to look out for trouble and you came running—"

I let it go at that, but I could not help wondering why Captain Wilson or his second mate had not come along in charge of the yawl on so important an errand. The sailor who had not answered was still muttering under his breath; I caught an oath and bade him hold his noise. When we were aboard the schooner a few minutes later I got a better look at the pair of them. The one who had made the apology and taken upon himself the blame was a rangy

fellow, with a dead-white face all spotted by freckles and little tight curls of rope-colored hair. His eyes had that peculiarly disagreeable redness around the rims that certain red-headed men's lids have. The other was a thick-set, swarthy fellow, with a cynical droop to his lip ends and a perpetual scowl. He smelled of jails.

While they were still taking on the yawl under orders of the cheerful, ruddy-faced second mate I convoyed my companions to the cabin. Captain Wilson was awaiting us and greeted us warmly enough, although I took it as strange that he had not seen fit to step up on deck to meet his passengers. His black eyes went swiftly over us, resting briefly on the girl with a look of sympathy, on her father with wonderment, but half concealed, and lingering on me a little longer. I saw the flicker of a smile at the corners of his mouth as he scanned my mud-plastered garments, it deepened a little as his glance traveled to the cut over my eye, which was still unbandaged and was bleeding afresh from the wrestling match with Castroville's constable. The schooner was under way. I felt her heeling over as she came about and I heard the gurgle of water along her side. I drew a deep breath of relief, for it seemed to me in that moment that our troubles were over; at least, the sea was my own element and I understood the ways of her men and ships.

Captain Wilson was for calling the cabin-boy; the cook had hot coffee ready, he was telling his passengers, and they must be ready for it by this time. But Miss Langton had dropped on a locker beside her father and was so obviously done out that he took her word for it and showed the pair their staterooms. When they had retired he ordered a bite to eat and sat down facing me with the table between us. "Those boxes," he cursed them, "are in his stateroom," he jerked his thumb toward Langton's door. I had clean forgotten our mysterious cargo for the time being and I remembered that the sick man himself had not so much as mentioned it. Evidently this fact had also impressed the skipper. "Guess he's glad to be aboard, boxes or no boxes." He shrugged his shoulders as if per-

haps he thought Langton might have another guess coming.

"He's pretty near all in," I told him, "and when it comes to that, we all are." I started to say something of our adventures, but the bold-eyed captain raised his hand. "None of my business," he interrupted me. "I got troubles enough to handle my end of this affair." He cursed the boxes again. "This morning Jaspro boarded us from the launch and give me my orders. Just off the lightship we were. He was about as limp as a wet dish-rag. I dropped him aboard that launch and we lost no time in clearing out. This is bad business! Whatever is in those cursed lead packages is more than I know. But it's precious. And there it lays, a fortune, in that after-stateroom, and every man on the crew talking about it from the time those lousy dock-scourings stowed it away. Fact! I came on the whole fore-castle holding a session over it an hour after we'd left the lightship; making their reckonings, they were. Most of 'em argues that it's gold, and they were figuring, according to the weight of those boxes, at two hundred and fifty dollars to the pound. Two of 'em had been at Nome—I'll take my oath on it they were run out of the camp for thieves—and they were doing the talking. Well, I put a stop to that right off the reel and sent 'em about their business. Since then I've stuck around the cabin leaving Grey on deck.

"I'd like to know," he swore again, "where Jaspro managed to find the crimp that shipped that crew for him. Six of 'em, and rotten jailbirds every one." He drank some coffee, slammed the mug down on the table. "I'm getting this off my mind," he explained. "Grey's not much more than a kid; come from a Pacific Mail liner and is new to this fore-and-after business. And Jaspro speaks well of you. I've got to depend on some one. Looks like you're the man."

"D'ye think—" I began.

He waved me aside with an impatient gesture.

"Don't think anything," he said. "We're bound for Honduras—make what you please of that." I did instantan—~~that~~ was the haven of fleeing men, of those who

sought freedom from extradition. I had suspected it, but now I felt a little sick. "But that's none of our business—we're here to follow owner's orders. And that brings me back to the crew. They smell Honduras and—well, here's your dock-rat's way of looking at it—stolen gold and five sturdy lads in the fore-castle. 'Why not dig our own fists into them boxes ourselves, lads?' That's their talk, you can lay to that."

We finished our coffee in silence and I lighted my pipe. It was beginning to look as if I had jumped from the frying-pan into the fire; but for all of that I was thankful that I was at sea. I had dealt with sailormen before. Mutiny was an old story with me. However, I knew this skipper right now for a man of parts; he was not one to take false alarm; and if he had found it necessary to hide close to those boxes of unknown treasure I could bank on it for a surety that there was likely to be blood flying some time soon. I thought of the girl in the stateroom and, knowing the ugliness of such situations as the skipper anticipated, I was more worried than I had been heretofore. I think Captain Wilson saw it in my face. "Aye," he muttered, "there's that girl. I wish—" His wishes concerned William Jaspro and the ten leaden boxes, and they dealt with our employer and our cargo in a manner which it is just as well not to set down for polite reading. Some moments later I happened to remember the incident that took place when I was boarding the yawl and I recounted it to him.

"One of those fellows was trying to get away without me and I don't like his excuse now that I come to think of it. He was too ready with it."

"Like as not you're right," he assented. "One hand less in the cabin is one hand less to deal with in case of—" He paused.

"Mutiny," I finished for him, and he shrugged his wide, straight shoulders again.

"I suppose we may as well turn in now." He glanced at his watch. "After midnight. If you'll—" He did not finish, for he happened to be looking at my face and what he saw in my eyes must have impressed him, for he stopped. As for me I was not looking at him at all.

I had been glancing about the cabin. It was lined with the staterooms, two opening off directly aft, and two on either side. Forward a door led into a sort of alley which led past the engine-room and the galley on one side of it and on the other the quarters of the engineer and cook, to the forecastle.

My eyes, wandering about the place, had reached the door and they happened to rove downward. There was no coaming at the bottom of that door and the crack was fairly wide between it and the floor. I saw what I first took to be a little rivulet of water oozing slowly under the portal from the passageway, leaking into the cabin. But as I continued looking it struck me as being too dark for water. At first I could not make myself realize what I was beginning to suspect; and then the suspicion strengthened until realization was forced upon me.

It was a rivulet of blood.

CHAPTER X.

THROUGH THE MANHOLE.

CAPTAIN WILSON watched my eyes, and although I felt his look upon me I could not avert my gaze from that sluggish rivulet of crimson which crawled upon the deck gleaming under the lamp-light. Then I knew he had followed the direction of my look. He sat for a moment in silence before we both rose. I started to say something, but he shook his head and gestured for me to remain mute. Thus we went softly to the door and I flung it open.

I was expecting anything, ready for any one and so was he. We stood there crouching, prepared to fight for our lives. And what we saw was a patch of sticky blood that ran with the ship's swaying, this way, then that, and ran more sluggishly to every fresh inclination of the deck. There was no living being in the alley which led forward between the engine-room and the amidships quarters; there was no dead. The door of the amidships quarters opened while we were standing there and the engineer emerged into the passageway. His little

scalp-tight cap was pushed back on his head showing a mop of blond hair, his face, with the light from the cabin fairly upon it, was cheerful, unconcerned; he was whistling. Slowly his face changed as he read the concern upon our own, the whistling stopped and he looked down. "Easy, Larson," the skipper raised a warning hand. "Quiet's the word. Bad business here." The young fellow nodded and stepped toward us, still staring at the darkening patch upon the boards. "Never heard a sound, sir," he whispered. "I stepped into the steerage there to have a cigarette. Why, sir, I'd take my oath nobody's been by this hour back." His eyes met ours fairly and he shuddered. "It ain't natural," he muttered.

While he had been talking I had caught through the noises of the engine-room which was hard by and the natural sounds of the ship, the intermittent growling of voices from the forecastle. The skipper was chewing his black mustache; his eyes were two slits as they met mine. I pointed to the forecastle. He nodded. "Do you stand by here, Larson," he said quietly, and we crept forward. But when Captain Wilson flung open the door we found two men seated on upended buckets, playing seven-up. A putty-faced pair, with signs of drink and lines of evil marked upon their features. And their eyes were shifting from the instant of our entrance. The skipper went to the bunks; I saw the forms of two other hands and I'd have sworn they were asleep. He made no sign of any kind. "All right," he told me unconcernedly, "we'll be on our way."

Within the alley he merely shook his head. And we went aft, with a word in passing to Larson to keep his ears and eyes open for trouble; we hurried through the cabin and up on deck. The swarthy, thick-set fellow who had kept his silence during his fellow boat-puller's explanations off the Moss Landing wharf was at the wheel.

"Where's Mr. Grey?" Captain Wilson demanded. By the light of the binnacle I could see him scowling. "Up forward some-ers a few minutes back, sir," he answered. "That's the last I seen of him."

"And Lewis?" The skipper's voice was

sharp. The helmsman pointed and I saw a figure standing near the main rigging; I recognized it as the lathy form of the boatman who had been so ready with his apologies. Captain Wilson kept his eyes upon the sailor's face and after a long, steady stare: "Do you go forward, Mr. Dolan, and take a look. Tell that sea lawyer there to take the wheel and we'll have a word with this fellow in the cabin." He scowled at the helmsman, who shifted his quid and spat to leeward.

Forward there was nothing to report on; no sign of body, blood, or any disorder that I could see. I bade the fellow Lewis go aft and take the wheel and joined Captain Wilson in the cabin. He was sitting on a locker leaning back against the bulkhead and his eyes, half closed in their scrutiny, were on the face of the erstwhile helmsman, who stood before him sturdily enough with his cap in his two hands.

"Now, Ross," the skipper said curtly, "out with it. What did you see?" The man turned his cap over twice, swallowed and threw his head back. "Nothing, sir." He growled the answer defiantly.

"I've a hell of a notion," Captain Wilson relieved his mind with a passing oath, "to clap you in irons right now." The man shut his teeth tightly, but remained mute. "Have you been below?" the skipper thundered.

"Not since I come on watch," the other answered steadily.

"Lewis been below?" the captain went on.

"Can't say, sir." The seaman shook his head doggedly. "I been keepin' me eyes on the—"

"Get out on deck," Wilson interrupted. "And, mind you, I'm half in the notion of ironing you this minute. If you've a liking to keep the handcuffs off of ye, don't leave me hear of your saying a word of what's gone on between us. Get now." The man turned and departed in silence and when he was out of earshot:

"Mebbe he's telling the truth," I suggested.

"Mebbe," the skipper nodded sullenly, "and mebbe not. I tell you, Mr. Dolan, it's that man Lewis I'm afraid of most.

But now—the question is, where's Grey—or Grey's body rather? Poor devil! I liked that lad."

We made the search that night and nothing came of it. We combed down the forward parts of the schooner without result. And when morning dawned we were beginning to assure ourselves that the man Ross had lied; they had murdered the mate and thrown his body overboard. "I could iron the whole pack of 'em and chances are it's the wisest thing for all I know," the captain said. "But something tells me to say nothing. Them dock-rats up forward are bound to spill it. I never saw the sailor yet who could stand a waiting game."

And so we did. The sea was running high and the breeze continued fresh. The schooner was rolling a good bit and we saw nothing of our passengers during these next few days. I was engrossed in this mystery and watching every moment for some sign that would give me an inkling whom to fall upon. For, fall upon some one I knew we must and that right soon—unless we wanted them to do the attacking. That crew were slinking to and fro, on watch and off, like men who have seen ghosts; their faces—tallow faces most of them at the best—were leaden with ugly fear; their eyes were furtive; not one of them—save the fellow Ross—but would pass the back of his hand over his mouth like a boy caught stealing from the pantry whenever I came upon him; and if I happened on him suddenly, not one but would jump at my approach as if he had been struck. With it all there was a dirty something in their eyes like the coming of bad weather in the sky.

The crew of six moved about like men who were seeing ghosts and itching to do more bloody work because of the very presence of the specters that were riding them. That was the way they seemed to me, and when I spoke to the captain about it he smiled grimly. "The swine," he characterized them. "They have got to get it off their chests somehow. Keep your eyes open and we'll get 'em dead to rights yet."

We ran straight down the coast and kept our auxiliary power at work to help the wind, putting the miles behind us as fast

as we could. And then one morning Miss Langton appeared in the cabin, with her father leaning on her for support. It was a pitiful sight to see the girl holding up the weakened frame of the sick man against the lurchings of the schooner. She ~~smiled~~ when her eyes met mine and greeted Captain Wilson with a pretty apology for her *mal de mer*, which he took gruffly enough. I could see that he did not fancy his two passengers at all. He held them responsible for the whole affair; and that was not so far wrong either, for it was that mysterious stuff in those boxes which had started the march of tragedy on the Dora.

If I resented the captain's brusqueness with the girl she sensed his hostility at once. Before she had been in the cabin half an hour she knew that there was something in the wind. We were at breakfast and I saw her large eyes going from the captain to me and from me to the captain as if she were trying to read the nature of the new development in our faces. After the meal she took her father to the deck and they sat there for an hour or more, when the freshness of the air became too much for him and she packed him off below. When he was in his stateroom she returned to the cabin and found me smoking. I started to put up my pipe, but she begged me to keep it alight. "My father always used to smoke one," she said, "before he came back." I wanted to ask some questions, but naturally forbore. In a moment she had turned to question me. "There's nothing wrong is there?"

Now, Captain Wilson had shown plainly enough his desire to keep the thing quiet and I felt the necessity of secrecy. I could only shake my head and answer: "Nothing." It did not satisfy her, however, and I could see that she was troubled at what she knew for my deceit. Shortly afterward she retired to her own room and I did not see her again until late in the evening, when she found me in the cabin.

Ever since the murder of the second mate and our discovery of the blood patch in the passageway, the demeanor of the crew had been growing worse from day to day. And I had kept increasing the sharpness of my own surveillance during all this time in con-

sequence. This evening I was sitting as usual on the starboard locker with the door open that led into the alley. While I was all but out of sight myself, I could see up forward, clear to the door of the fore-castle bulkhead, whenever I pleased. "Will it be long," Miss Langton asked, "before we arrive?" I assured her it would only be a matter of a short time. I asked for her father. "I think he is improving just a little," she told me and I saw her brows cloud. "If only I could be sure of what you told me this morning—that there was no further trouble." What she was going on to say I do not know, for just then a sound out in the passageway made me lean forward. I saw the door in the fore-castle bulkhead open and a head was thrust out. One of the tallow-faced seamen was peering into the alleyway. The door closed. A moment later, while I was still leaning forward, there came from behind that closed door, a heavy clanking sound—the sound of metal striking metal, as if some one had let an iron weight fall. And I knew what it meant.

There was a manhole in the fore-castle leading into the hold. As I recognized that noise for the fall of the cover, it flashed upon me that we had made only a cursory search of the hold on the night of the murder; I had never been satisfied with it myself. I rose and asked Miss Langton to excuse me; and then as I was about to leave the cabin I stopped and came back to her.

"Captain Wilson," I said, "is asleep in his stateroom. If I do not return in a few moments will you call him and tell him I've gone into the hold?" She nodded, but I saw the fear in her eyes.

I slipped out of the cabin and into the engine-room. Larson was evidently having a smoke in the steerage, for he was not there. I went to the manhole and listened for any sounds below; hearing none I lifted the iron trap. It was all dark below; no sign of life. I lowered myself into the hold, and managed to let the manhole cover back into place behind me. I had hardly done this before a scraping sound came from up forward; a flood of light entered the dark hold; voices came

and the words made me certain that I was about to learn the secret of where the murderers had stowed the body of the mate.

CHAPTER XI.

DOLAN IN THE DEATH DEN.

THE hold was divided amidships and I was standing with my back against the bulkhead in black darkness. My legs were outspread, my feet wide apart on the ballast. The Dora had been a pleasure craft before William Jaspro got hold of her for this cruise and her former owners had weighted her down with pig-lead; the chunks of smooth metal made poor footing and I was bracing my shoulders against the planks behind me, steadying myself against the vessel's pitch. Before me the flood of light poured down from the forecastle manhole, spreading until it rested in an irregular circle on the heaped lead. In this cone-shaped area of brightness, which was as distinct and as sharply divided from the surrounding darkness as if it were composed of a different element instead of the self same air, dust motes were zigzagging slowly hither and thither; and into that radiant space the voices came.

At first there was a confused jumble; three or four men muttering in undertones; that cleared away and one spoke alone. I recognized a husky asthmatic catch which came at the end of every other word as belonging to one of the tallow-faced pair who had been playing seven-up on that tragic evening when Captain Wilson and I had burst into the forecastle right after discovering the patch of blood.

"I tell ye," he wheezed, "I won't lay a hand on it. That's me."

"And I tell youse"—the speaker gulped, and fear's sharp excitement made his words come shrill, but I knew him for the other card player just the same—"youse 'll bloody well bear a hand along with the rest of us or I'll mash—" A third voice interrupted him and I could hear an accompanying growl along with this fellow's remonstrance which told me that there must be four of them up there at least. "Stow that guff, you two. The both of ye was plenty

quick to croak him." The speaker swore in a ghastly monotone. "Ye're scared of 'em, now he's nawthin' but a stiff, and youse at each other like a pair o' drunken wops. D'ye want the hull ship's comp'ny down on us?"

Silence followed and that which but a moment before made my spine tingle as if the hairs were rising from their roots. "Whisht, Whitey!" It was unmistakably a summons and as unmistakably was directed into the nether shadows which were enwrapping me. The one who had called thus stealthily swore and: "What's come over the man? He said—" There was more of it, but I was not listening to the words; I had other things to hearken for and they meant life or death.

Whitey was the name by which the lathy sailor Lewis went by among his mates; I had heard them call him thus a dozen times. Captain Wilson had always feared him above the others and so had I. If there was organized conspiracy reaching throughout the whole forecastle crew, he would be the brains behind it. Quite evidently I was down here then in his company. More than that, the fellow must have been here before me; when I had heard the manhole cover go back into place up forward a few minutes ago, it was after his descent; and he would have seen my entrance. He knew where I was standing to an inch—and of his whereabouts I had no idea at all.

This was a fine game of hide-and-seek that I had jumped into—with the seeker having all the knowledge, myself in utter ignorance, and death for him who was tagged, one-two-three and out! I listened for some little sound, the stir of feet, or a man's breathing; and all that I could hear, besides that cursed voice at the manhole, was the talking of the water along the schooner's side. I began to shift my body, drawing it away from the bulkhead ever so little so that there might be no scraping of my clothing against the planking to betray the movement; inch by inch I changed my position. And always I listened.

I lifted one foot and set it down again very carefully; raised the other, and as I was holding it thus, I caught a little clink of metal. One of the pigs of lead had been

disturbed. As nearly as I could judge that sound was just about ahead of me, and not more than six or eight feet away—perhaps it was less. I set down the foot and crouched, staring before me until my eyeballs fairly ached. It seemed as if there was something there. At first I had a hard time making myself believe it, but gradually it came over me that it was not my imagination working, but my eyes telling me the truth. A grayish-black shadow was lying so close to the heaped ballast that it merged with the latter. My friend, Mr. Lewis, was crouching where he had dropped when I lowered myself almost upon him. Or was that Lewis? I thought of the dead man.

Had I only had the sense to bring my pistol with me I could have solved the problem. But I was weaponless; I had not so much as a jack-knife in my pocket at the time. And, if I leaped barehanded and landed on the dead man, the living enemy would be on top of me before I could recover myself. No chance of his having neglected to go armed, I could be sure of that. So I stared the harder and it seemed to me that the shape might be stirring now. Ever so little if at all, but—yes, that was movement.

I crouched a little lower to make the spring and—I saved my life by doing it. For, as I gathered myself thus together, there came a leaping blur; I heard a man's breath sobbing forth and something fanned my scalp. I heard a vicious thud against the planking. The sleeve of my assailant brushed my cheek as the blade thumped into the wood where my own chest had been less than a second before.

It had come so unexpectedly that it left me, for the instant, dull. And while I hesitated I heard him panting as he tugged to free the knife. By the mercy of good fortune he had put all his strength behind that blow and now he pulled in vain. I closed with him and, closing, gripped his wrist.

What he had been striving to do, I helped him by my tug upon his arm. The knife came forth with a jerk and the schooner rolled at the same moment. What with her movement and this sudden freeing of the

blade we both went down upon the ballast in a squirming, cursing heap. And all the time I clung to that right wrist of his as they say a drowning man clings to a plank. If I had died then I believe they would have had to pry my fingers loose from the lean and sinewed forearm and I am as positive they would have had to use similar methods to loose his fingers from the wooden hilt.

I remember strange things about that fight in the darkness of the hold: the pressure of the leaden pigs on my back; the hoarse breathing of the man Lewis against my ear; the gurgle of water lapping against the schooner's side; the shaft of lamp-light falling from the forecastle, the jumble of muttered voices above; and once a rat ran right across my face; I can hear the creature's startled squeak to this day and feel the cold, hurried touch of his little feet. But when it comes to what I did at first and what the lean seaman did there on top of me, it is a different matter; I can call to mind no details; only a vague blur of tugging and twisting, of stabbing pains from the leaden pigs that were gouging into my back, and of constantly changing effort on the part of both of us, effort that shifted and took new form as bits of glass do in one of those kaleidoscopes they used to have when I was a boy.

I took fleeting thought of those four men at the manhole striving to pierce the wall of the gloom which enwrapped it on every side. I had a mental picture of their ugly faces ringed around the aperture, their eyes wide with horror at this untoward interruption of their gruesome task, the disposal of the murdered man's body. How soon would that horror give way to the light of determination? If they had not been superstitious curs, all four of them, I would have had them down on top of me before this.

And then that phase of the struggle passed and my mind began to work more coherently. I fought to get out from under him, and at every twist I made, he squirmed to combat me. At the same time I kept my grip on that right wrist. But gradually the advantage began to pass to him; the force of our bodies was being poured into the fight and now perspiration oozed over

us. His forearm became as slimy as a fish. It twisted between my enclosing fingers, this way, then that; my hand slid down closer to his. I knew there could be but one end to that. And I did not purpose waiting that consummation. Before he could make the sudden wrench which would slide the hand free, I changed my tactics.

Putting all my strength into an upward movement of my body, I felt his go counter to the heaving which I was making. Then abruptly I sank backward, pulling him toward me. He came against me with a thump. His face struck mine. And I slid my right arm around his neck. In that same instant I managed to get a scissors hold on him with my legs and I believe I would have fairly broken him in two if he had not gone limp with the pain of it. I was out from under him and on my feet at once.

Nor was I any too quick. As I sprang up I saw a form in mid air within that cone-shaped area of brightness under the manhole. One of our audience had gathered courage. He was on his feet and facing toward me already; I could see the murder in his eyes, the blade of the knife in his hand. I stooped, picked up one of the pigs of lead and hurled it at him; then followed with another. The second struck him fairly between his ugly eyes and he went forward in a sprawling heap.

Lewis was coming toward me as I whirled about; I barely got sight of the gray blur which his form made in the darkness and the faint glimmer of his upraised knife-blade. I bent to pick up another leaden pig and at the moment the schooner gave a nasty lurch. I went pitching toward him, falling on my face, but as I fell I threw the chunk of lead.

It struck home and he halted for an instant; and in the time I managed to roll to one side. When he sprang he did not find me beneath him, but came head-foremost on the heaped ballast. I had another of those handy little leaden pigs in my fingers, and when he struck at me, I returned the blow. I felt the burning sear of the blade against my ribs and I knew my own blow had gone short. I gathered my limbs

in under me to rise, but he was upon me now and I saw the knife-blade clearly hovering over me.

I say I saw those things plainly. Aye, and I saw his face, all twisted with malignant lines that squirmed among his ugly features, as he was in the very act of delivering the blow. It did not come upon me then why I was able to see those things, for action was taking place too swiftly; but later—only a moment or two afterward—I realized that the flood of light which was pouring over the two of us was from the uplifted manhole cover in the engine-room, and the voices which were coming down upon us were those of the men who watched us in this instant while death was poised above my heart.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ABRUPT MIRACLE.

THERE followed a flashing moment whose beginning saw the situation which I have tried to describe, but its end witnessed an entire reversal of our positions. The change began the instant Lewis was making his first movement to drive his sheath-knife hilt deep between my ribs. He was drawing back his upflung arm and his lank torso to place his body's weight behind the blow; his pale eyes dilated, gathering light which the widened pupils shot forth again; his nostrils spread, drawing in a mighty breath; his whole bony face has twisted with deep wrinkles of hateful concentration. And in the radiance which poured down from the open manhole, little beads of sweat glistened under his kinked hair. The movement went on to its very climax and then, while his back was bending rearward like a bow and his arm was stretched rigid completing that tense curve, it ceased. It was as if he had been petrified by some abrupt miracle.

His face changed. The blazing hate went out from his eyes, blanketed by a shadow, and even as the knife hovered uncertainly, a hundred squirming lines of fear replaced the wrinkles of deadly concentration. Before I fairly realized that Captain Wilson was dropping through the manhole, the

weight upon my body had grown less and, whipping a swift glance over his shoulder, Lewis leaped aside. Death passed me so closely I had felt his cold breath on my cheek.

The skipper alighted right on top of me. As we scrambled to get our feet beneath us, the intervening darkness swallowed the seaman's lean form; before we had fairly risen, it disgorged him again into the lighted area beneath the forecastle manhole. The fellow whom I had struck down with the leaden pig was at the moment staggering uncertainly toward us; the blood from the blow that had left him impotent up to now was streaming down over his features, filming them in a thin red mask. When his companion burst out of the gloom the man turned and leaped toward the opening to the deck above. But Lewis thrust him aside with a straight arm buffet and sprang like a lank monkey upward through the aperture. The sailor all but fell. Recovering his balance, he uttered a yell so filled with utter terror that it took me aback like a blow between the eyes and I stood there watching him as he turned and made for the safety from which he had been so unceremoniously hurled. Two or three pairs of hands shot down through the opening and dragged him up. I heard their voices upraised in a babel of conflicting curses and accusations.

The skipper and I lost no time in getting up into the engine-room; I had a glimpse of Miss Langton in the alleyway; her eyes met mine, as they had done on the train that afternoon when we left San Leandro, and I thought that there was a fleck of leaping color in either cheek. The cook was standing before her, with his back toward her, his face toward the forecastle. He was a little man, round-eyed like a bird, as mild a steward as ever served a meal on shipboard, and when I saw that he was holding a huge bread-knife in his hand I was near to laughing. Even in that tense moment the incongruousness of the man with the weapon struck me. Larson was in the engine-room. "I got a bell for half-speed while you were below, sir," he said quietly, "shall I mind it?"

"Who's at the wheel?" the skipper de-

manded. I told him that I had left Ross as helmsman an hour or so back. And I remembered now that I had not seen that ill-favored seaman among our enemies. "Stand by out there with cooky," Captain Wilson bade Larson, "and sing out if they try to rush ye. Mr. Dolan, do you come on deck with me."

We passed Miss Langton at the doorway opening into the cabin. I do believe that the captain never saw her at all, for he brushed right by her. I managed to give her a word of thankfulness, however, and bade her get back where she might be more safe. Also, I took the time to snatch my revolver from my stateroom and caught up with Wilson at the head of the companion stairs. Sure enough, here was Ross at the wheel; in the light of the binnacle his face showed, scowling as ever, the lips drooping at the corners as is the way with those who have looked too long on the wrong side of life.

"Ye gave a slow bell?" the skipper was saying. I looked into the night; it had come on thick, although there was no wind and the sea was calm; one could not see the schooner's length. "Logs!" The helmsman spat to leeward as was always his way when he began to speak. "Thick as the hair on a dog's back." Captain Wilson said nothing until he had turned the marine telegraph to the signal which had been disregarded. "Now," he turned on the sailor, "how about this mess up for'ard? What d'ye know?"

"Nawthing." The man answered quietly as he had answered very much the same question once before, but this time he went on: "I kep' away from 'em while they was doin' their talkin' an' I told 'em to leave me alone. I'm here, shipped as a foremast hand and," he spat again, "I ain't got the fancy to be hung, sir. Nor neither do I want to get a knife in me back."

I understood his position, and so did Captain Wilson. Just a poor devil of a common sailor, bedeviled by harpies when he was ashore, robbed by every bartender he came in contact with, preyed on by every crimp in every port along the seven seas. Nothing but hard weather and hard words for him when he was at sea. I do not doubt

but it must have been a sore temptation to shove his fists into that fancied gold in the boxes we were carrying. And I am very sure he had smelled his good share of jail air before this time. It came to me that he was walking in a tight place and he knew it; also that he was doing the best he could.

"Just now," the captain told him quietly, "ye're the only sailor aboard this ship." He jerked his thumb forward. "Mutineers." The man said nothing, but gave the wheel a turn. "Ye'll berth aft for the present," Wilson went on, "and lend a hand with us when trouble comes."

"If I don't have a lookout, sir, I'm bound to jam her nose into a bundle o' them logs," Ross growled. I could make them out now myself, all about us, "as thick as the hair on a dog's back," as the man had truly said. It was in the days of the big cigar-shaped log rafts—when they used to tow them so frequently from Puget Sound to San Diego—and one of them, as often happened, had broken in two in a recent gale, to drift down into these waters which we were traversing, leaving every billow as a deadly ambush where the currents took them. I looked at the skipper and he nodded.

"I'll stay up here and keep an eye on the fo'c'stl' scuttle. Do ye get below and hold the gangway."

"If ye don't mind me givin' ye a word, sir," Ross broke in and he was not sullen now as he had been. I presume it was a relief for the poor devil to find a side at last in this mixed-up affair, even if that faction was likely to be the losing one. "They're li'ble to make the break between decks. I've heard enough to make me bet on that."

"Very good," the captain told him and made a gesture to me to get below. "Send Durkee up here. I can use him for lookout anyhow." Durkee was our bird-eyed cook. I gave him the order when I came between decks and took up my vigil in the alleyway alone on his departure.

An hour went by. Miss Langton and her father had come into the cabin and were sitting side by side at the table; I could see them watching me whenever I turned my head, and more than once I thought that

the girl was reassuring the sick man with talk of what I had done during our eventful journey from the pink house on the marsh to Moss Landing. Once the door in the fore-castle bulkhead opened very slowly and a frowsy head showed in the aperture, but jerked back out of sight with a precipitancy which would have been ludicrous on a less grave occasion, when the furtive eyes lit on me standing there with my pistol in my hand.

This waiting business was wearisome. I was beginning to wish with all my heart that that ugly quartet would make a rush and so bring matters to an issue, but there was no further sign of their presence; I could not even hear the mutter of their voices behind the bulkhead any more. Captain Wilson came down into the cabin. Larson took my place in the passageway while I went back in obedience to the skipper's beckoning.

"All quiet," I informed him and he told me that none of the mutineers had so much as poked his head out of the fore-castle scuttle. He was about to go on when Langton's voice cut in on our conference. Save to bid one or the other of us good morning or to pass some other brief civility, it was the first time the fugitive had addressed either Captain Wilson or myself since coming on board the *Dora*. I noticed that a certain tremulousness such as belongs to those very weak from sickness had almost departed from his speech and that his eyes owned a healthier brightness than they had back in the pink house. With these first faint signs presaging the return of strength, there had come to him a sort of fierce eagerness, as if now that life were more worth the living, he was bent on holding to it at any cost.

"Captain," he said, and laid his thin hand on the skipper's sleeve, "if you'll bring us through safe"—he paused while he withdrew the hand and pointed to his stateroom—"there's nearly half a million back there. I give you my word now that you're to have—"

Captain Wilson stiffened from the crown of his blue cap to the toes of his polished shoes and his face was stony, his eyes cold, as he interrupted that offer. Very quietly

he spoke and somehow that made his words cut the deeper to my way of thinking.

"I don't know what's in those boxes that you've got back there, and it's none of my business why you're taking passage on this schooner to Honduras. My business is to put you and that cargo ashore where I have been told. And, sir, when I have done that you have my word for it, I'm through with your stuff, whatever it may be." He turned to me and began outlining his plans. Miss Langton rose; her eyes flashed briefly, then grew tender as she helped her father to his feet, and the two of them left the cabin.

"My idee," the skipper was saying, "is this. Stand by and wait. They're bound to row up for'ard there about what to do next. When they make the first break, between decks or on top, we'll be ready for 'em and make it so infernal hot for 'em that the whole pack will turn against the man that made their plan. You keep watch here below and I'll do the same on deck. Sing out when you have to have help; I'll do the same."

With that he left me.

I stood there for a moment while impulse was seizing hold of me and, when it had got its grip, I went to the door of the after-stateroom. To my knock Miss Langton came. "I only wanted to say," I told her, "that Captain Wilson is a worried man; the ship—your safety and that of all

on board—you understand. I'm sure he has no more doubt than I have about—" I hesitated at the word and she named it for me.

"My father's honesty, you mean?" she interrupted softly. "Thank you. I am sure of what you say about yourself." I flushed, I think, for I know I felt the blood coming to my cheeks. It was, indeed, just what I wanted to say, for I spoke from impulse. I could not bear to leave her in that stateroom with the skipper's hard words. And yet, I was dead sure that I had lied in making that apology; I was certain that the captain had meant it all; and moreover, I was sharing his distrust of Langton. I did not understand at the time the motive which had prompted me. I saw the girl's eyes looking into mine as she came out into the cabin and closed the door of the stateroom behind her.

"If I can be of any help—" she said. It occurred to me that she could be of great service by simply biding here and, in case of movement on the upper deck, letting me know what transpired there beyond my sight. I told her this and took my station in the alley; and now, as Larson resumed his place in the engine-room, there came a stirring beyond the fore-castle bulkhead; low voices sounded. I beckoned the engineer forth as the sounds grew a little louder. It was clear that the mutineers were preparing to make their next movement.

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.

WHEN YOU CAME

AS if a bubbling, silvery stream
Went gaily flowing
Through desert sands, I felt the grace
That love gives to a dreary place
When you came, wooing.

As if a little dewy flower
Sprung into blowing
On barren earth, my heart became
A garden, where a rose of flame
Is softly glowing.

Stella E. Saxton.



Fifty Fifty

by Artemus Calloway

AN' you ain't never heard about the time I busted Eddie in the mouth? Say, you ain't never heard much o' nothin', have you?

Sure funny you ain't never heard about that. I thought everybody knowed Eddie Grogan. An' if you'd 'a' knowed him in the last four years you'd 'a' noticed them gold teeth he's wearin' 'round, an' sooner o' later you'd 'a' heard how he come to get them shiners in place o' the ivories he usta sport.

It's a kinda unusual story. I has to admit that. You see me'n Eddie's been kinda partners for the past eight o' ten years, an' we've sure had *some* experiences together. Part o' the time it's been kinda hard sleddin' for *me*, but most generally Eddie, he manages to get along fairly well.

Little more than four years ago me an' Eddie landed in Mobile, Alabama. We was both dead broke. Usually me, little Joe Drake, is the only one o' the partnership that gets to where he ain't got the price o' a cup o' coffee an' a coupla sinkers, but this time Eddie ain't no better off neither.

I ain't gonna try to tell you how much down an' out I really feels when we hits that Alabama town, 'cause there ain't no words in the English language that'd suit the occasion. Eddie, he might 'a' had all the coin they is for the effect it had on him. That guy wa'n't worryin' about

nothin'. We'd rode in a day-coach, comin' a good ways an' I looked pretty bum. But not so Eddie. Somehow o' other the crease never seems to get outa his clothes, an' if he was to ride on a cattle train from New York to Frisco, he'd get off lookin' like he'd been spendin' the last three days primpin'.

Says I to Eddie, the first thing after we hit the ground, "when, where an' how do we eat?"

Eddie looked at me kinda pitying-like. He didn't say nothin' for a little bit. Then: "Allus thinkin' about eatin'!" he comes back. "Don't you never get your mind on nothin' higher than eatin'?"

I'm right back at him. "You bet I do! Right now I've got my mind on the price o' the eats, an' that's about as high as anything I knows of."

Eddie looks disgusted. "I don't know what you'd do if it wasn't for me," he said. "Where'd you be to-day if it wasn't for my brain—my imagination; my—"

Right there I stopped him. "I'd be holdin' down a job somewhere with three good square meals a day in it. That's what I'd be doin'. An' you'd be—"

Eddie allus was the high-minded one, an' he can't bear a argument; comin' from the other fellow. He checked me with a single wave of his hand.

"That'll be about all. We've got our

grips. Maybe we can stand some roomin' house off for a day o' two with 'em. By that time we'll be on our feet."

He seemed thoughtful for a minute. I noticed that Eddie was lookin' at me kinda funny outa his eyes, an' I commenced to fidget around.

"Cut out that shufflin' your feet, an' gimme your cuff-buttons," he said, kinda shortlike.

"What I'm gonna give you my cuff-buttons for, you big stiff?" I wanted to know. "You sure got your nerve."

Eddie looked at me kinda hard. "So we can eat, nut! We can get about three dollars for 'em. Come across."

"But why don't you soak your own buttons? They're better'n mine, an' will bring more."

Eddie fixes me with a stare. I noticed that he sort o' worked his fingers like they was longin' to get hold o' somethin'. "You know I gotta keep up appearances," he puts in. "Bein' the *brains* o' this outfit, it's necessary that I look the part."

There bein' no argument to this that I can think of, I hands over my buttons. Eddie bein' the treasurer, I never knowed how much he got on 'em. Not long after this little transaction, Eddie got outside o' a ninety-cent steak. Ninety-cent steaks was bigger them days than they are now. Then besides that he had hot rolls, coffee, shrimp salad, piece o' pie an' half a cantaloupe. I contented myself with a ham an' egg sandwich, cup o' coffee an' coupla sinkers. Eddie said we'd have to economise, which was why *he* ordered my eats. I agreed that *I* was economisin'.

Little bit later we got located in a roomin' house that was run by a guy that looked like his job was to keep people out in place o' gettin' 'em to stop there. But he didn't phase Eddie none. That's where Eddie's part comes in. He's the diplomatic guy o' our partnership. When we first got in the joint, that guy that runs it was gonna ask for the room rent in advance. I seen that in his eye. But he didn't know what he was goin' up against when he struck Eddie. When Eddie got through spoutin' to that guy, I really believe the stiff thought he'd already been paid.

We got the best room in the house, but I'm tellin' you now that ain't sayin' much, except that I'd hate to see a worse one. But anyway, this room had a coupla beds in it, an' that's better'n stayin' in the street, if you ask me.

Eddie walks aroun', poundin' both the beds to see which is the best one. Then he told me the other one was mine. He made two o' three remarks about how lucky I was to have him along to look after me, an' made a few sarcastic remarks about what I'd do if it wasn't for him.

Then he told me to stay there, an' he'd go out an' see how bus'ness was lookin'. I spent most o' the time he was gone thinkin' over what a good pal Eddie was an' how square he always treated me, always bein' careful to see that I got mine.

In about three hours Eddie come back, an' as soon as I seen him I know'd he'd struck somethin' big. He didn't waste no time in puttin' me hep. He'd run across a old gink that'd been makin' the hick towns with a picture outfit an' slides, some o' them genuine an' some fakes, givin' a lecture on the wilds o' South America.

Don't ask me how Eddie got onto this old duck so quick. I can't tell you. I can't tell you how Eddie does *nothin'*. He says it's brains an' that I wouldn't understand, so what's the use o' explainin'. I guess he's right.

This old guy that Eddie'd met, it seemed was quittin' the lecture bus'ness. Why? Don't ask me; I don't know.

"He only wants two hundred dollars for the outfit," is what Eddie says. "Fifty down an' we can pay the rest later."

"Yeah! Fifty down!" I comes back at him. "Where'n the Sam Hill do we get the *fifty down*?"

Eddie looked at me in that pitying kind o' way he pulls sometimes. "We can get twenty-five dollars on that watch o' yours, an' ten at least on your ring. That'll only leave fifteen dollars more to raise, an' I gotta plan for that."

"You could get the entire fifty on your own watch," I shot at him.

Eddie glared at me for a minute. Then he pulled the usual stuff. "Somebody in this outfit's gotta look decent, an' as I'm

the only one what can, I'm the one what will."

I know'd from past experiences what was gonna happen when Eddie first mentioned my watch, 'cause Eddie is a guy that allus looks out for his partner. He ain't gonna let me spoil no big plan that he thinks up just because I ain't got as big a brain as him. Of course, as I just said, I saw where Eddie was right and handed over my watch an' ring. He said he'd hock 'em when the proper time come.

Then, Eddie let loose the big idea as to how we was gonna get the rest o' the fifty dollars. I'm to go to work!

Yeah! Eddie's thought the matter out all right, an' had it all planned for me to go to work an' get that additional fifteen bucks we needed to get the lecturin' outfit.

"You stay here," was Eddie's next remark. "I'm gonna go get you a job."

Yeah! Eddie always was the obliging one! He wouldn't even put me to the trouble o' gettin' a job for myself. He was gonna get it for me.

After Eddie'd left I put in a good deal o' time wonderin' what kinda job this is that he was gonna steer me onto.

In about a hour Eddie got back. "I got you the job all right," he spouted. "You gonna go to work to-morrow mornin'."

Eddie's a close-mouthed guy sometimes. He wouldn't tell me nothin' about what it was that I was gonna do, but I suspicioned that it was somethin' like real work when he told me to hit the hay early that night, 'cause I had a hard day ahead o' me.

I don't think I'm much more'n good asleep when Eddie tumbled me out on the floor. He was kinda peeved 'cause I'd been so hard to wake up. He said a lot about gratitude an' all that an' made me feel kinda bad that I'd caused him so much trouble.

"We gotta hustle!" Eddie busted in on my apologies. "'Cause you go to work early." Eddie give me time to swallow a cup o' coffee, a egg an' some sinkers. Then gettin' a good grip on my arm, he led the way down to'rds the dock on the river.

On the way down Eddie busted the good

news to me about how lucky I was to get this particular job he'd landed for me.

"Men is scarce," Eddie said. "An' they's a schooner down here loadin' with lumber for Panama. You're gonna help load her. You'll get three dollars a day, which is good money."

Me loadin' lumber on a schooner! Eddie wasn't expectin' nothin' o' the kind, so I jerks loose an' starts back up the street, but Eddie had me by the collar before I'd got more'n a few feet.

Eddie's a big husky guy, compared to me, an' he shook me like a cat shakin' a mouse. "Are you gonna act sensible?" he wanted to know, "or do I have to beat you up?" Considerin' all the trouble that Eddie'd gone to on my account, I decided to act sensible, so we continued down to'rds the dock.

They was a big, tough lookin' guy down there bossin' the gang that I was to be one of, an' I didn't like him from the first. Eddie, the handsome black-haired, well-put-up stiff, stood around an' watched me carry that heavy pine lumber on my shoulder for a while. Then he walked back up town.

That boss guy musta got a letter that mornin' tellin' him that somebody was gonna try an' deadbeat, an' suspicioned me as the party referred to, 'cause he kept after me from the minute I started to work. I hate to think o' some o' the things that guy said to me an' about me, much less try to tell 'em. I *couldn't* tell all o' them things, 'cause I can't talk like that bird did. He musta took language lessons under Cap'n Kidd. I know that guy Simon Legree that started the Civil War didn't know as much about makin' a guy work as the boss o' that loadin' gang did.

Eddie strolled down there about three o'clock in the afternoon to see how I was gettin' along. He looked mighty nice an' cool, an' I had to admit that Eddie looked like a man o' brains an' bus'ness ability. Me, I'm about ready to drop, I'm so tired! The perspiration was runnin' down the sides o' my face like rivers, an' a lot o' it had got in my eyes an' wasn't makin' 'em feel good a bit.

I ain't never knowed yet what it was that kept me from givin' the undertaker guy a job right then, unless it was that Eddie didn't come real near me. Of course, I appreciated all Eddie'd done for me an' all that, but I wasn't exactly myself right then, account o' bein' so tired. Eddie finally left.

About four o'clock I decided that somebody'd fastened the sun up there in one place an' that night wa'n't never gonna come no more. Eddie argues that the sun don't move, but I knows better. It followed me everywhere I went that day.

Well, quittin' time finally come along, an' I somehow got back to the room, though I had a job doin' it. I was so sore that I could hardly make a step, an' I just wanted to drop right down on the dock an' stay there, but somehow I thought that might not be fair to Eddie leavin' him up there in the room by hisself. When I got in the room I found Eddie there leanin' back in a chair, smokin' a cigarette.

"I'm off'n that job," I told him. "I ain't gonna go back down there no more."

Eddie didn't say nothin'. That is, just at first he didn't. He set an' looked at me a while without speakin'. Then he walked over an' collared me.

"You ain't goin' back down there no more, eh?" he gritted out, slammin' a big fist in my face. I didn't lose no time in tellin' Eddie that I'd changed my mind an' was goin' back.

Eddie told me that I'd oughta be ashamed o' myself for even thinkin' o' quittin' that good job he'd got for me, an' wanted to know where I'd get anybody else to look out for me like he done. Not bein' able to answer this question I didn't say nothin'.

I didn't feel like goin' out to get nothin' to eat that night. I was sore all over. Eddie said I was a dickens o' a lot o' trouble, but he reckon'd he'd bring my supper to me. I thanked him, an' told him I was mighty hungry. Eddie got on me again about always bein' complainin' about somethin' an' wanted to know if I'd heard him complainin' an' grumblin' since I'd come in. I had to admit that I hadn't, an' Eddie said that I'd oughta take a example

from him. He said that he had all the real work to do, an' I done more growlin' in a hour than he did in his lifetime. I told Eddie how sorry I was that I was so inconsiderate, an' he went out.

I was beginnin' to think that maybe a street car or somethin' had run over Eddie before I seen him again, but after about two hours an' a half he come in. He brought me two egg sandwiches tied up in a piece o' paper.

"You gotta eat hearty when you doin' hard work," he said.

Don't ask me how I got out'n that bed an' back on that dock next mornin'. Ask Eddie. He's the one that got me out. That day was worse than the one before. The slave-driver musta got a second letter about me, 'cause he kept after me twice as much as the day before. I got through the day somehow, but I was about ready to drop. That night the boss stopped me as I was startin' away, an' after tellin' me how generally low down an' no account I thinks I am, says that he don't want me to come back down there no more. "You're fired, you brainless bunch o' nothin'," was about as mild as anything he said, but he needn't 'a' said no more as far as I was concerned; just the words that I was fired was the sweetest music I ever heard.

I started stumblin' off an' the boss called me back an' handed me six dollars, an' I'll tell you them six dollars sure was earned.

Eddie swore that I'd deliberately got fired when I broke the glad news to him. For a while I thought he was gonna brain me with a chair. I never felt so small before in my life as I was when Eddie got to tellin' me how dirty I was for layin' down on him like he said I had.

"You got a streak o' yellow in you bigger'n a mule," he yelled at me. "You're the nearest nothin' I ever saw in my life."

I was feelin' pretty small about this time. It didn't look exactly right, gettin' fired from a job that Eddie'd gone to so much trouble gettin' for me.

Then Eddie called on me for the six dollars. I hesitated a little, bein' as I ain't got no more coin except this, an' Eddie picked up the chair again. Seein'

they ain't no use in arguin', I turned over the six dollars to him.

"Now, simp," said Eddie. "I'm savin' your watch an' ring to hock to get part o' the price o' the picture outfit. We simply gotta get in some kind o' business again. We had hard luck the last time we thought we had a sure thing, which is the reason we got here with no coin, so we gotta get on our feet again. This lecture outfit is a sure winner an' we gotta have it. This six dollars goes to'rds buyin' that outfit, but we gotta live till we get goin' in the lecture bus'ness, an' we done eat up your cuff-buttons an' most o' your safety razor. I got your razor outa your pocket last night."

My safety razor gone! It was a peach, too. I bought it about three years before. It was one o' them nifty outfits, gold an' all that. Cost me twenty-five good old iron men.

"Who told you to get things outa my pocket?" I wanted to know.

Eddie looked hurt. "Now you go again! Don't you know that I got the burden o' this outfit on my shoulders? Don't you know that nobody else in the world 'd look after you like I do? Then to ask *me* a question like that!"

I felt real mean for havin' said what I had to Eddie, knowin' all the time that nobody else 'd take the trouble with me that he does, an' I tells him so. Eddie said he'd try to forget it, but that it hurt to have me act suspicious like that.

Then Eddie decided to talk some more. "You still got your gold-handled penknife an' match-box an' cigarette-case. We can get enough on them to eat on for a day o' so, if *you* don't be a hog an' want everything they is to eat. We gotta get up nine more dollars, an' your things wouldn't bring that much, so we work it out the way I says. I been out to a park close by here to-day, an' I think I can get you a job out there to-morrow mornin'. We're goin' out there an' see. I felt the guy out a little to-day, as I thought you'd be low down enough to lay down on that good job I gotcha down there on the dock."

Eddie stopped an' looked at me for maybe a minute without sayin' nothin'. Then

he goes on. "You don't never do nothin' but lay down on me, Joe. You oughta be ashamed o' yourself, after the way I look after you. Who'd get you a job like I done? Who'd take your old things out an' hock 'em so's you can eat, like I do? Sometimes I feel like stranglin' you, you unappreciative cuss, you!"

I don't know nothin' to say an' I don't say it. I can't blame Eddie for feelin' like he does. He's right, I don't know nobody else that 'd take my razor outa my pocket an' soak it, without troublin' me a bit. Eddie 'd done me a lot o' little favors like that since I'd know'd him, an' I remember'd an' appreciated 'em all.

After a little while Eddie started his mouth again. "I'm goin' out an' soak them things, now. Might as well get it over with."

I give my watch an' ring a fond farewell, an' Eddie left. I had plenty o' time while he's gone to think over what a real sure 'nough friend Eddie's been to me, an' felt real mean about how I've treated him sometimes, but I decided that Eddie'd know I didn't mean it, an' not feel mad at me about it.

After a while Eddie got back with the coin he got on my things he'd been kind enough to hock. "You oughta be mighty glad you got me to look after you," Eddie said as he stood in the middle o' the room, jugglin' two silver dollars in his hand.

After supper Eddie said he had to practise on his lecture some. The old guy what owned the picture outfit had give him some dope to peel an' Eddie started in to practicin'. I wouldn't say that Eddie ain't some speeler when he gets wound up, an' it don't take him long to get that way.

I was lyin' there on the bed listenin' to him, an' enjoyin' his speech, 'cause it sounded real interestin'. Pretty soon I almost decided that Eddie musta been to South America, even though I knowed he ain't. But he sure could put that stuff across. An' he kept gettin' better an' louder all the time.

Eddie'd wave his arms an' walk aroun', an' stamp his feet, an' when he got to a real interestin' part he'd yell out like one o' these here soap-box orators. He was

just gettin' goin' good when the door opened an' the crook that run the joint jumped in.

That guy talked to Eddie like I ain't never heard nobody talk to nobody before. He told him that he ain't runnin' no roomin' house for crazy folks, blasted fools nor auctioneers, an' that if he heard any more noise up there he was comin' up there an' throw us both out on our necks. Eddie tried to open his mouth, but couldn't. After shootin' out a few more mouths full o' wisdom, our friend walked out, stoppin' at the door to glare at us some more, an' then he shuffled away.

Eddie still stuck to not sayin' much for a while after the roomin'-house guy left, an' I noticed he didn't look like he was keen to lecture no more right then. After a little while he commenced to look natural, an' then he turns in to ball me out.

"You had no bus'ness layin' there interruptin' me, an' kickin' the wall with your feet," he tells me.

I swore that I hadn't interrupted him, nor kicked the wall, nor done nothin' but just listen. "You're a liar," snorted Eddie. "That's what brought that gink up here an' made me almost get in trouble for knockin' him down."

I started to say that I don't remember nobody bein' knocked down, but Eddie didn't let me finish. "Shut up! I don't know what you're goin' to say, an' I don't care, but I know it's somethin' foolish, an' I ain't gonna stand for no foolishness from nobody."

I felt too tired to say nothin' nohow, an' anyway it ain't no use to argue with Eddie, so I kept quiet.

Next mornin' we went out to the park. It's a right pretty place, right close to the river. I found out that this was a amusement park run for colored folks by a white man. He was the one that Eddie'd seen the day before.

Eddie explained to the guy that run the place that I ain't much on brains, but that I'm a hound for work. The guy looked me over and acted like he believed part o' what Eddie told him, but not all. Finally he said he didn't think he could use me, an' I got busy wonderin' what Eddie'd do

to me when we got back to the room, 'cause I know'd it was all my fault or the guy'd a give me a job. But the fellow wasn't through yet; he had a idea.

"Ever go up in a balloon?" he shot at me.

Eddie didn't gimme no chance to tell the guy that I ain't never been up in no balloon. To hear Eddie tell it, I'm the geezer that invented goin' up in balloons!

I didn't get exactly all the park man said, 'cause I was too busy thinkin', but it seemed, from what I gathered, that the people that visited that park liked balloon ascension mighty well. The guy that 'd been goin' up got his leg broke when he fell in a tree o' somethin' the day before, an' another fellow had promised to be there the next day, but this guy wanted somebody to go up that afternoon. The park man said he'd give five dollars for me to go up at four o'clock.

Before I had a chance to get away, Eddie got hold o' my arm an' argued somethin' fierce with the guy. Eddie held out for fifteen dollars an' the park man for five. Eddie know'd the crowd would be mighty disappointed if they didn't have no balloon ascension, an' the other guy know'd it too. Finally they compromised on ten dollars, to be paid to Eddie as soon as me an' the balloon left the ground.

I didn't get no chance to get away. I tried mighty hard, but Eddie kept a close watch on me. That's the worst day I ever had in my life. I couldn't think o' nothin' much but that fellow that got his leg broke the day before.

It seems like to me that that was the shortest day I ever saw in my life. Seemed to me like four o'clock come before one o'clock generally does. An' there was that big old balloon out there tuggin' at the ropes.

They was a big crowd in the park, an' all was ready for the grand ascension. They got me up a suit o' the other fellow's tights, an' I couldn't help but wonder if these was the same ones he had on when he got his leg broke. Then I felt sure these tights must be unlucky. I called for some different tights, but nobody didn't pay no attention to me.

I know'd that other fellow must be a pretty good-sized gink if them tights fit him, an' as I only weighed about ninety-five pounds when I'm fat, an' had lost considerable flesh durin' my experience on the dock, them tights didn't exactly fit me none; but Eddie said that didn't make no difference.

I tried to argue with Eddie just a little right at the last, but he shut me up. "Just think o' all I'm doin' for you, you selfish bunch o' nothin'!" he told me. "Who else'd get you this kind o' job like I did?" he wanted to know.

After Eddie put the matter to me like this, an' I remembered how hard he'd argued with the park guy about the amount to be paid for me goin' up, I saw where I'd done him wrong.

"You don't find a friend like me every day," Eddie told me. I felt mighty sorry o' the way I'd acted when Eddie reminded me o' this, an' I know'd he was right, 'cause I've had several people claim to be my friend, but never none like Eddie.

Somehow they got me fixed up with the thing that I was to use comin' down—parachute, they calls it. By this time the park guy was gettin' suspicious that I didn't know nothin' much about balloons, so he tells me when an' how to cut loose.

Just before leavin' time, Eddie asked me if I had anything anywhere besides what I had in our room, an' when I told him no, he looked kinda sad like, but he didn't look near as sad as I felt. I don't think I'd ever appreciated Eddie as much as I did just before I left that park.

Then everything was ready an' they turned the balloon loose, an' me an' it started up. We was goin' pretty smooth, an' I was beginnin' to think *maybe* everything is comin' out all right, an' then I looked down. Right then I changed my mind! I know'd right then that Eddie wa'n't gonna have no partner in that lecture bus'ness!

The park guy had explained to me, as I said before, all about cuttin' loose, an' when that time arrived I done as he said. Then I thought all was over sure. I dropped straight down for I don't know

how far, an' I know'd they wa'n't gonna be nothin' left o' me when I hit the ground.

Then the parachute opened up, and I come down slower an' more easy like. I was kinda driftin' down, thinkin', *maybe*, I was gonna come out alive, when I happened to look down. I was right over the river!

Well, I landed right out in the middle o' Mobile River, an' I know'd the time had come when if somethin' didn't commence happenin' quick an' fast, Joe Drake was in a bad fix an' a long ways from home.

Somehow I didn't get tangled up in the parachute, but I wa'n't in much better shape than if I had. That broken-legged guy's tights, which was about nine sizes too big for me, didn't help matters out none when they got full o' water. An' besides, I can't swim!

When I woke up I thought sure I was in heaven. I was in a little room on a nice, white bed, an' a man with a fierce-lookin' mustache was standin' there with a little black bag in his hand. I gathered from what he said that a fisherman had come to my rescue in his boat, an' that after roffin' me over a barrel for a while my life 'd been saved. Eddie hadn't lost no time in gettin' there. I noticed him special.

Finally the guy with the whiskers, he was the doctor, left the room, an' me an' Eddie was left alone.

"Get the ten dollars from the park guy?" I wanted to know.

"Yeah." Eddie didn't seem to be in no talkative mood.

"Then we can get the picture outfit," I told him.

Eddie didn't say nothin'. I know'd then somethin' was wrong. They's *gotta* be somethin' wrong when Eddie don't talk. "What's the trouble?" I asked him.

"Well," said Eddie, "soon as you left the ground the guy paid me the ten dollars as agreed." Eddie hesitated a little.

"Go on," I encouraged him.

"Then I saw that you was comin' down in the river. You know, Joe, I know'd that you can't swim. Several people was standin' around me watchin' you, an' I said to a sporty-lookin' gink standin' there,

here's where I lose a partner. The fellow wanted to know why, an' I told him you was gonna be drown'd."

Eddie looked all around as if he was thinkin' about somethin' unpleasant. Then he went on again. "That fellow looked at me kinda sharp like, an' said they wa'n't a chance o' you drownin'. I told him that they wa'n't no chance for you not to, an' he said he'd bet good money that you didn't. Of course Joe, as I said before I

know'd you couldn't swim, an' I took him. An'—"

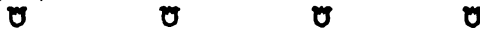
"How much did you lose?" I broke in.

Eddie looked at me kinda queer. I didn't understand that look just then.

"I lost every cent we had, Joe. You dirty hound, you throw'd me down again!"

I was still kinda weak an' all that, but somehow I got up off'n that bed.

Well, that's the time I busted Eddie in the mouth.



MONEY IN THE FAMILY

WE loved each other with a love
It seemed that nothing could dis sever—
No power below, no power above—
Ah, we were sure 'twould last forever!
And so it did—that is, until
Aunt Lizzie died and left her money
Among us four; that wretched will
Brought more of gall by far than honey!

To Jim she gave her house and lot—
'Twas mean, for Jim was rich already,
And one thing certain, I was not;
The same was true of Bess and Freddie,
But then Fred got a lot of stock—
In confidence, he worked Aunt Lizzie;
While Bessie—well, I hate to knock,
But certain folks are awful busy!

I hope, I'm sure, that Bessie's mine
Will pan out well, though Harry Bloomers—
But, no, I simply must decline
To circulate unpleasant rumors.
And Fred—well, Fred was always "near";
So if it's true his stock is rotten,
I needn't stay awake with fear—
A little cash is all I've gotten.

Jim's stuck up now as he can be;
A while ago I chanced to meet him,
But do you think he bowed? Not he!
Of course I didn't stop and greet him,
The same with Fred and Bessie, too—
Oh, yes, I know what preachers tell us;
Still, everybody knows it's true
I am the only one not jealous!

William Wallace Whitelock.

The Devil's Teapot

by Chauncey C. Hotchkiss

An illustration showing a large teapot on the left, with flames and smoke rising from its spout. To the right of the teapot, two men are engaged in a physical struggle. One man is wearing a dark suit, and the other is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark trousers. They are standing on a circular platform or base.

SHERIFF WHIPPLE was perturbed. His long face with its stubble of gray beard showed anxiety as he sat in his office reading a letter. For, if the substance of the letter was true, there was trouble in store, and he had little liking for it. He laid down the communication and gripped the end of his half-smoked cigar with hard, thin lips. Presently his meditations were broken by the advent of a deputy.

"There's a bird in the entry what wants to see you, Tom," was the announcement.

"Who is he?" asked Whipple.

"Didn't give no name. Reckon he's a tenderfoot what wants pertection from the populace. Looks like he needs a nuss. He's enough to drive the boys wild."

"Pull him in," said the sheriff. The deputy went out grinning; a moment later the stranger stepped into the barren office.

Certainly, from the view-point of a Texas cattle town, he was out of place. In its short existence the little narrow-gage railroad had brought many queer characters to Cohalsie, but none quite like him.

He was a young man, well proportioned, and appeared to be hardly out of his teens. If his fresh, boyish face and close yellow mustache had not marked him as an alien in that land of leather complexions and sun-faded hair his costume would have done so. He was dressed in a light suit of checks which fitted him perfectly; a thin gold chain stretched across his well-developed chest, and his stiffly starched collar was

encircled by a gay necktie in which was a horsey pin, and his low-crowned straw hat had a fancy band.

He would not have appeared incongruous in an Eastern summer resort or a college town, but he was decidedly and aggressively foreign to Cohalsie. It was not to be wondered at that a crowd of gleeful cowboys had hurled remarks at him as he went along the plank sidewalk.

Sheriff Whipple swung around in his chair and looked quizzically at his visitor, and there was scant respect shown in his quick nod and the abrupt: "Wall, young feller, what have you to offer?"

Without at once replying, the stranger timidly seated himself on the edge of the hard bench running along one side of the room and gazed at his surroundings; then he moistened his lips with his tongue, cleared his voice and answered the sheriff, who was growing impatient.

"I haven't anything to offer, sir. I came to see you about the murder of Judge Wallace."

There was a decided air of timidity in the reply, but it was lost on Sheriff Whipple; instantly his mind reverted to the letter he had been reading.

"I—I thought you could do something," continued the young fellow. "I wrote to you about it."

The sheriff bent a hard eye on his visitor. "So you're the chap! Your name happens to be Rose, don't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"You follow up your letter mighty sudden, young feller!"

"Yes, sir. I thought I had better see you. I wrote from San Antonio, but I'm from New York, really."

"I judge as much," snapped the older man, with a contemptuous glance at the figure on the bench. "What do you do fer a livin', son?"

"I'm a doctor, sir."

"*You* a doctor!" exclaimed the sheriff, decidedly surprised; but to that official the respect generally given to those of the healing art did not extend to the party who sat twirling his hat with nervous fingers. "Horse or man? What do you know about the Wallace case, anyhow?" continued Whipple.

"Not much, sir," was the respectful return. "I do know that five years ago Judge Wallace sent Bill Crystal to prison and that Crystal swore he'd get the judge some day. He served his term, sir, as perhaps you are aware." The sheriff nodded. "Then he killed Judge Wallace," concluded the young man.

"How do you know he did?"

"Because he was seen going into Judge Wallace's house in Austin, and coming out again, just before the murder was discovered. He was indicted. I happen to know that he afterward appeared in San Antonio, where he bragged about what he had done, and from there he rode across country to his gang's headquarters. He must be there now—and it is within your bailiwick."

"So 'tis, son—so 'tis. Do you know Bill Crystal? You speak like you was sartin of him, young feller."

"I am certain of him; there is no mistaking his flat nose and nicked ear. I saw him in the warden's office the day he was freed. I happened to be there visiting the prison."

Sheriff Whipple spat out the stump of his cigar and compressed his lips. The case was not unfamiliar to him; the murder of the wealthy jurist was well known to his office, but not until he had received the letter from his present visitor had he connected the crime with a member of the Crystal Gang, which for more than a year

had apparently been behaving. And he was not at all anxious to stir up trouble with the cutlaws in question.

"Jest whar do you come in on this?" he asked severely.

"I—I'm a friend of the Wallace family, sir," was the hesitating answer.

Whipple laughed a hard, mirthless laugh and crossed his booted legs. "An' so you reckoned I'd march into the Devil's Teapot an' nachully yank out Bill Crystal—supposin' he's thar—which I don't believe! Do you savvy anything about the Crystal gang, son?"

"Not much, sir."

"Wall, jest allow me to make you some wise, Dr. Rose. Them fellers consists of thutty or forty o' the most desprit lot o' humans—with their wimmen an' kids—as was ever on God's footstool. An' they're well organized. They got a hide-out in the wild lands twenty-five mile west o' here, in a mixed-up mess o' blind cañons, an' I don't know no law-abidin' citizen what wants to go thar a second time. I know I don't. The place is like your wrist leadin' to your hand an' the cañons runs off from it like your fingers. They farms in some o' them an' herds stolen cattle in others, but they beds down in one by Cottonthread Falls, a dinky stream what leaps into it from the prairie. In the fust place, the trail to it is blind; in the second, the inside gate is defended by a gatlin' gun, an' it would take a hull regiment to find an' force the den. Them villains have been livin' off the country, stealin' an' murderin', since the days o' Sam Houston. Some have been caught and hanged, some have been shot, an' some, like Bill, have been put in prison, but they keeps on flourishin'."

"Now, sir, about a year ago they sends for me under guarantee o' safety. I goes. I was took blindfold into the Teapot—which they calls the settlement on account of a bilin' hot spring what's there. I saw the chief, Seth Crystal. He is an old, old man, an' failin', an' we comes to an agreement afore they turns me loose on the prairie. An' that agreement was that he would curb in his gang if I would keep away from the place an' let it alone.

"Did he keep his word? He did; an'

now you come here an' say you believe his son Bill has cut loose an' done some murderin'. Wall, perhaps he has, but you don't know it—an' you only guess he's with the gang. Son, let me say that if I should go nigh the Devil's Teapot, what's guarded like a camp, I might best settle my affairs fust; they'd say I'd broke truce, an' nachully pick me off. An' the same with my men. See?"

The visitor seemed impressed. "It seems that the Crystals are very much like the Doones of Bagworthy. If—"

"I don't know nothin' about the Doones," interrupted the officer, "an' can't just place Bagworthy; but if they're more bloody minded than the Crystals they're goin' some. I'd admire to hang every man in the gang yonder, son, but I'm tied down unless you can bring me somethin' better 'n beliefs."

"You mean it must first be determined that Bill Crystal is there?"

"You've hit it, doc; but it can't be found out by no open show. I don't know who can do it; it's a case for De Saxe of San Francisco, or Burns of New York, or some o' them scientific detectives I read about, but never seen. All I can say is that if I was sure—sure, mind you—that he was thar, I'd consider the truce broke an' have him out if I had to call on the governor for all the militia in Texas. But jest beliefs don't go."

"You couldn't possibly send one of your men?"

"I won't order no man to certain death on a chance, young feller. They know all my boys like they know themselves. I don't savvy a soul that can find out."

For a moment the visitor made no reply; then he cleared his voice.

"I'll go, sir."

The words were quietly spoken. Sheriff Whipple stared at the man. "You!"

"Yes, sir. I'll find out; I've got to find out, since you can't."

The officer felt insulted.

"What in the devil do ye mean?" he broke out, with a scowl. "Do you think you can mosey in here an' play hoss with me, young feller? You've got another think a comin'! Didn't you hear what I

been tellin'? What could a rosebud like you do in the Teapot? You couldn't even git thar; it ain't no place for wheels, you couldn't foot it, an' I don't believe you could ride a hoss ten miles without bein' cinched to the saddle. Don't you know you're castin' reflections on my office?"

"I meant to."

The former air of timidity had left the young man and his words seemed slightly aggressive. Sheriff Whipple's disgust turned to sudden anger at the more than implied insult. He rose in his wrath.

"Do ye mean that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hell! Git out o' my office afore I bite ye in two, ye whipper-snapper!" he thundered, and striding to the stranger he laid a heavy hand on his shoulder.

And then he was astonished. Before he knew how it had happened he found his wrist in a viselike grip, and his arm twisted until it was helpless. The stranger was on his feet and his hitherto mild blue eyes were snapping.

"I allow no man to lay hands on me, sir," he said, in a voice which, though still smooth, had a new and vibrant ring. "I came to you on business, and I expected to be treated as a gentleman."

As he spoke he dropped the sheriff's arm.

Whipple, his face white from pain, stared at the other, his anger turned to mighty respect.

"I stands corrected, doc," he said, rubbing the injured limb. "Whar did you git that trick?"

"From my Japanese valet, if you can profit by the information. And now, if you will forego biting me in two, perhaps you will listen to what I was about to say."

"Who in hell are you, anyway?" demanded the sheriff, decidedly impressed by the altered manner of his visitor.

"You mentioned my name a few moments ago," was the return. "It is Walter De Saxe, and I am from San Francisco."

Sheriff Whipple dropped weakly into his chair.

"De Saxe o' San Francisco! De Saxe, the man-hunter! Great thunder!" he exclaimed. "An' I took you to be a milk-

fed tenderfoot! Then you ain't no doctor!"

The detective smiled dryly. "Yes, I am half a one—having studied medicine; and I am thirty-six years old, sheriff. Now, if you are willing, we will get down to brass tacks about Bill Crystal. I'm on that case to a finish. I was feeling my way with you."

Whipple was no fool. He knew when he was beaten, though to be bested by a man with the reputation of De Saxe of San Francisco was no disgrace. But he looked crestfallen as he surrendered.

"You've got the rights of it with me, sir," he returned. "I got nothin' to say 'cept that if Bill Crystal did for Judge Wallace 'tain't likely he'd go to the Teapot an' coop himself up."

"It is that very unlikeliness which convinces me he is still there," was the quiet reply. "And I am going in after him."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"You'll never git out alive!"

"That is as it may be. It partly depends on you—and Cottonthread Falls."

Whipple looked incredulous.

"Listen, sheriff," went on De Saxe, drawing a chair close to the officer and speaking in an undertone. "You don't know that I had laid certain plans before I came to you; you don't know that, in another character, I have ridden around the region of the Teapot. I am aware that the place is inaccessible excepting through the gate, and I could not glimpse more than the steam from the boiling spring, and that only from where Cottonthread leaps into the cañon. But I'm going in at the main gate, and I think I'll be welcomed; however, I may be obliged to get out by way of the falls, and that is where you come into the game. I will want your help."

The sheriff's eyes were round. "How?" he asked.

"This way. To-morrow night you will be at the head of Cottonthread Falls with sufficient help and an extra horse. You will let down a long lariat through the water—the stream will carry it. You will stay there two or three days and fish for me with that line. When you feel me tug three

times you will know I have made fast, and will pull me up. Is that plain?"

Whipple gave a low whistle. "Plain enough if you can stand the force of the water fallin' three hundred foot."

"I figure that the thin stream will have practically turned to spray by the time it strikes the bottom of the cañon," was the reply. "Didn't you say that Seth Crystal was failing?"

"He's more 'n jest failin'," answered Whipple. "He's got some heart disease what he called *angora pickmiss*, or somethin' like that. He's quite an eddicated chap, for his lights."

De Saxe smiled. "You mean he has *angina pectoris*—"

"That's it! He told me the pain spells was hell."

"I'm glad to know it," said the detective. "It gives me a cue."

"Glad I have given you somethin'," returned Whipple. "How are you goin' to git in?"

"Through my wits, sheriff. I hope they will think me the unmitigated damn fool that you did. It is all I wish."

The officer's face fell, then he laughed. "It's a great scheme," he said; "but supposin' they tumble to you? You won't have no gun! What'll you do?"

De Saxe hesitated a moment, then he smiled. "I will have a cool head and amyl nitrite," was the cryptic reply.

"Amyl Nitrite!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Who's she?"

The detective laughed as he jumped to his feet and looked at his watch. "Train goes in ten minutes, Whipple. I'm off to San Antonio. Can I depend on you for to-morrow night?"

"Mr. De Saxe," returned the officer, "by sundown to-morrow night I'll be at the head o' Cottonthread with three men an' five hosses, an' we'll stay thar three days. There won't be a single second that line is out o' hand, an' the minute you gives the signal we'll jerk you to the top in a jiffy. All I got to say is that you've got a heap more nerve than I have."

Ten minutes later the officer sat alone nursing his still aching arm. "Amyl Nitrite!" he murmured. "Wonder if he's

got a woman tacked to this business. He's a fool if he has; that's all!"

DE SAXE'S ACCOUNT.

Before I had been in Whipple's office twenty minutes I knew that the man would be unable to help me save in the crudest way; and after sizing him up I determined that though it would not be a wise policy to ignore him, I would not trust his judgment in anything, while allowing him to think he was an essential factor in my enterprise.

And that was not to be numbers against numbers; I anticipated no rough-and-tumble action—no shooting affray; that would be hopeless. From start to finish I depended upon finesse; if finesse failed all would fail.

I had pretended to tell the officer my plans, but in reality I had none that were definite; I could have none; my actions were to be controlled by circumstances, and the only move I had fixed upon was to approach the main entrance of the outlaws' den in the same character of innocent ass I had used on the sheriff.

When early the following morning I left San Antonio for the forty-mile ride to the Devil's Teapot I was apparently a tenderfoot hunter; everything from my sombrero to my spurred boots being as absolutely fresh and new as its owner appeared to be. My rifle was fit for ladies' target practise only, and my single revolver, in a bright leather hanger, was scarcely more than a toy. My saddle was new, as were my gaily embroidered gauntlets, and the gaudy handkerchief around my neck in imitation of cowboy style, was as fresh as if just laundered. Altogether, I was a sight, for that part of the world, and it could only have been by Heaven's grace that a man such as I appeared to be could get far from home without being killed offhand.

But my sheet-anchor lay in my pocket. It was a flat medicine-case filled after considerable thought as to its contents, and these were settled upon through the light given by the sheriff regarding the physical condition of the outlaw chief, Seth Crystal. With him lay my best and perhaps only chance of success.

It had drawn well into the afternoon when I approached the spot where I expected the drama to open. It was a perfect Texas September day, with gulf clouds, like great wads of cotton, drifting across the sky. The country had changed from rolling prairie to roughness and then to a wildness that was portentous, and when at last I saw the gaping mouth of the main cañon I knew the first act was on.

I was then riding easily along the grassy bottom of a deep swale, and scattered here and there were round, white boulders about the size of a man's head, in the half gloom of the place looking so like human skulls that I was startled. The sight of them made me fully realize what I had undertaken, but it was then too late to retreat, even were I so minded, for as I caught a full view of the massive entrance I knew I was myself seen.

Two men who were apparently lounging near the towering mass of rock, at once vaulted into their saddles, whipped out their rifles, and stood facing me like vidette troopers. That they were on guard I knew then as well as I did later.

I was now in for it. Pretending not to have noticed them I ambled along with the unconcern of an idiot until one of them gave a shout and raised his rifle. I stopped then, and a moment later both men joined me, coming on at racing speed, their animals sliding as they drew rein.

"Hello," I began. "Can you gentlemen tell me where I am? I fancy I'm lost."

"We can tell ye damn soon whar ye ain't," said the larger of the two. "Ye ain't whar ye belongs. What yer doin' here?"

"I've been hunting," I replied innocently, looking from one to the other.

"Huntin' what?"

"I thought I could get some big game," I returned, "but I haven't seen anything except cows. I guess I've lost my way. I don't know where I am."

Both men grinned. "Sonny, yer forty mile from the nearest nursery. How did ye get so fur? Who be ye, anyhow?"

"My name is John Rose, sir. I came from New York."

"Good Gawd! Alone?"

"Of course," I returned, "but that don't help me any. Can either of you gentlemen tell me where I can put up for the night? I'm awfully tired."

"Ye can ride back a spell an' bed down most anywheres, if ye ain't afeered a stray steer'll bite ye," replied the big man. "Aside o' bein' a mighty hunter, what be yer when yer to home?"

"I'm a physician, sir."

That is the one profession which everywhere commands respect, and I had counted on the fact. The two grinning faces sobered and the men looked at each other as if struck by the same idea.

After a moment of silence during which I was keenly regarded, the big man spoke to his companion:

"Snake, I wants to chew yer ear a minnit. Doc, you stays right whar ye be till we tells yer to move."

"Yes, sir."

The two withdrew a few rods and I heard the rumble of their voices as they talked but could not catch a word. Presently they returned, and the big man, who seemed to be the dominant character, ranged his horse close to mine.

"Seein' as how yer be a sort o' human maverick," he said, "we allows ye can bed down with us. We ain't doin' you no favor, but we wants a doctor for our old man. He's plumb sick."

"All right, sir," I rejoined, concealing my elation. "I would be happy to—"

"Damn yer happiness, doc! We ain't aimin' to put yer in a bed o' flowers; ye are to go whether ye be happy or mis'able. Let's see that thar shootin' thing."

Not waiting for me to pass over my rifle he jerked it from its case with one hand and with the other snatched my revolver from its holster at my hip. With a contemptuous glance at the rifle he took it by its muzzle and with a swing hurled it among the rocks a hundred feet away, the little revolver following.

"Don't put up no kick, doc," he growled. "A chap as desprit lookin' as you might lose his head an' scratch the scenery with them weepsons. Anything in yer pockets?"

"Only a white handkerchief, some money

and my medicine case," I returned, producing them. "Gentlemen, I'm not used to this treatment. I don't like it."

"To hell with yer likes, doc!" interrupted the spokesman. "Put them things in yer pocket agin, an' behave. We won't hurt ye none. But we be some shy about showin' our abode so yer will jest pass over that banner around yer neck. I'm goin' to blindfold yer. Savvy? Git a move on. If I unties that flag I'm liable to choke yer some."

I meekly handed over the gay handkerchief and was scientifically blindfolded; when that was done my horse was taken by the bridle and led on. I congratulated myself. Thus far not a cog had slipped; my plan had worked to perfection; if getting out was to be as easy as getting in, I would have no trouble.

Presently, by the sound of the clanking of hoofs on solid stone, I knew I had entered the mouth of the main gate, and by the same sound I became aware that but one of the guard was with me, as only the tread of two horses echoed from the rocky walls. How far we went before we were challenged I cannot say, but the challenge was answered by a low-spoken word and we were allowed to proceed. I know that the ground remained level before it went sharply downward, but never did we climb. After a time my horse was stopped and my guide, the big fellow, placed his mouth so close to my ear that I felt his hot breath.

"Say, doc; ever hear o' the Devil's Teapot?"

"No," I returned, lying with glibness.

"Well, that's whar we beds down. Seein' it's you, I'll pour a few facts into yer, an' as many warnin's. If yer wants to git out alive from that same Teapot ye heeds 'em."

"Yes, sir," I faltered.

"Well, doc, we glories in the name o' outlaws. Savvy? The populace o' the Teapot don't court no high sassiety, an' they shies at strangers like a steer at a red umbrell. Now, when I casts off yer eye hobbles yer don't want to see too much, an' yer don't want to ask a damned question about what yer do see. Our old man

is some consid'able sick an' I'm takin' chances on his bein' glad to meet up with yer. That's all. If yer heeds them warnin's you'll be paid han'some afore yer turned loose; if yer don't heed 'em yer can take it from me that yer hide will be too full o' holes to be wuth tannin'. Now we'll perceed."

I made no answer. My horse was led forward - a dozen paces, then suddenly wheeled around as many times, or until I had not the slightest idea as to what point of the compass I was being headed. But it made no difference; I was bound for the Devil's Teapot. That was enough.

After a ride of perhaps a mile, and with many sharp and bewildering turns, my horse was again stopped and the handkerchief switched from my eyes. I looked around, blinking; but not because the light was strong; it might have been broad day still on the prairie, but here it was already evening. For I was in a cañon of living rock, one stupendous wall bending over the bottom as if to fall, while snugged beneath the shelter of the projecting cliff was a row of low, adobe houses of which the one we had stopped before was the last and the largest.

Flowing along the center of the cañon's bottom was a small stream of clear water and on either side of it stretched a grassy plain broken only by the trail and the masses of detritus which in past ages had fallen from above. From just ahead there drifted a cloud of vapor and I at once surmised that it came from the boiling spring which had given the place its name. Little did I dream of the part it was to play within the next few hours. The opposite scarp of the cañon was a sheer wall nearly a thousand feet high. From somewhere through the hush came the musical sound of water falling like a soft rain.

Being trained to rapid observation I took in these things with a sweep of my eye, but further study of the surroundings was broken by my captor who ordered me to dismount, leave my horse to wander, and follow him. Without further words he smote the door of the house with a kick.

It was opened by a young Mexican girl—a girl so beautiful in figure and face that

I looked at her in open admiration, though I well knew the transient nature of her attractions. Without a word she stepped back to let us pass, and I found myself in a large, low room closely shuttered, and to my surprise, elegantly furnished.

By the side of a superbly carved table in the center sat two men, one with his back toward me, the other swathed in brilliant blankets, reclining in a Morris chair. A fire was on the hearth and a large gilt lamp burned on the table. The air of the apartment was hot and close.

While in Sheriff Whipple's office I had referred to the Doones of Bagworthy, a reference he had not understood, but it recurred to me as I saw the invalid; for if *Sir Ensor Doone* was not in the chair it was his double. I did not have to be informed that I was in the presence of the outlaw chief, Seth Crystal.

He was a very old man, but of distinguished appearance; a man whose fine face and once giant figure would have graced any walk in life. His white beard reached to his waist, his long white hair trailed over his shoulders, and his black eyes, like a hawk's, flashed through his ragged white eyebrows.

And like a wounded hawk he looked, as with one clawlike hand he clutched his long beard, the other gripping the arm of his chair with a nervous tension that turned his knuckles white. He did not move as we entered, but the man with his back toward the door swung around quickly and as his evil eye met mine I knew that my quest was already ended.

He was Bill Crystal.

I would have known him anywhere, his nicked ear and flattened nose, the result of a fight, identifying him past doubt. He was of about my own height and build, but there, thank God, the resemblance ceased. For his face was the face of a devil, even in repose. He was my senior by at least ten years, though he looked to be twice that, passion and dissipation having set their seals on him along with those of brutality and gross ignorance.

"Who in hell have ye here, Wolf?" he demanded, getting to his feet and coming toward us.

"A calf pill-twister," answered my guide. "He got lost from his herd an' strayed to the gate where me an' Snake was on trick. When I found he was a sure-enough doc I roped him fer the chief."

"Yer always take cussed big chances," said the other, walking up and thrusting his eyes close to mine. "What's yer name?" he demanded, his whisky-laden breath bathing my face.

"Dr. Rose, sir."

"Rose, hey! Yer look like yer just blossomed; yer looks like the sweet-scented flower yer ain't! Whar be yer thorns?"

"He had a coupla o' squirt-guns," interposed Wolf. "I chucked 'em for fear he might lose his temper an' hurt himself. I reckoned the chief would be glad to meet up with him."

"Yer a fool!" was the scowling reply. "It'll be on yer head if yer throwed the wrong steer." He turned again to me, a puzzled look on his repulsive face. "Whar have I seen yer before?"

If I were given to quaking, I would have quaked then. I have found that hunted men have good memories, as a rule, though they are lacking in judgment, and for an instant I feared he had penetrated my disguise. For he had seen me—he had even spoken to me in the warden's office—and if at this juncture he remembered me I was a lost man; but evidently he did not.

I kept a straight face. "I don't think you ever saw me, sir," I said.

"Ye be a real he-d-d-ctor?"

"I am a physician, sir."

"Hain't feathered out much, hev yer?" he remarked with a grin that showed his yellow teeth. "Got yer pizens with yer? Let's see 'em."

I handed him my medicine case; he opened it and looked at the orderly array inside.

"What's that for?" he demanded, taking up a hypodermic needle.

"For the subcutaneous administration of narcotics," I replied.

"The devil yer say! An' what be these damned things?" As he spoke he lifted a pearl, or tube, of amyl nitrite, with his foul thumb nail.

"That is the most volatile substance

known," I answered, with a sudden inspiration. "It is the most efficient anti-spasmodic in the world of therapeutics. It is a positive panacea in angina pectoris, and a specific in various manifestations of hyperstasis, especially cardiac."

In his dense ignorance he did not know I was trying to impress him with my knowledge. He looked at the amber-colored liquid in the sealed tube.

"Know a whole heap, don't ye?" he scoffed. "If ye'll talk United States perhaps I can foller yer. What sickness is the stuff good for?"

"Any tonic spasm. Fits, heart pains—"

"Fits! Now ye're talkin'! Wall, I reckon it's safe to let yer handle the old man," he said, returning the case. "Wolf keep an eye on him."

"I'm goin' back to post, Bill," announced my late guide.

"Nix; ye only reckon yer be. I'm goin' myself. I wants to look around. What do yer think? Pink came in from San Antone this mornin' an' informs me that they've put that feller De Saxe on my trail." He laughed. "He's got to move some quick to meet up with me!"

"Hell!" rejoined Wolf. "What's he like? Ever see him?"

"Yaas—once—fer a second. He ain't no runt like some of 'em. Yer can send Pink down to jine me; I'll relieve Snake."

He spoke like one having authority. Picking up his cartridge belt and hangers from where he had thrown them on a chair, he was about to leave the room when he noticed the Mexican girl who had stood looking at him with a mingling of passion and worship in her fine eyes.

"Be yer still here?" he exclaimed, with an oath. "Git back to whar yer belongs." With that he strode out, the girl gliding after him with peculiar grace. Beyond the door I heard a blow followed by a woman's scream and could only guess what it meant.

Not a word had the old man spoken since I entered. Wolf now went up to him. "Dad, I did what I thought was correct. Yer wanted a doc an' here he is; it's likely he kin stop that pain." He spoke with a sort of rough tenderness of which his brother was incapable.

"You did well, Wolf," said the sick man, raising his eyes.

The other turned to me. "Fix him up, doc. Yer bed's right down here by him; I'll see that yer gets a bite later. If yer steps out don't go fur from the house; the boys might pot ye fer an escaped loon afore I can make 'em wise. So long."

He lounged out, his great shoulders seeing-sawing as he walked, and I was alone with the chief of the Crystal Gang. I stepped up to him.

"Are you in pain, sir?" I asked.

"Curse it, yes!" he returned in a feeble voice which contrasted with his fierce eyes. "It is a constant, damnable, grinding pain. What can a youth—a baby like you, do? You had better have been a priest."

I paid no attention to the insult; but was rather impressed by his tone and language, which were superior to what I had expected. "Where is the pain, sir?"

I thought he would indicate his heart, but he did not; instead, he laid his hand gently on his right side.

"Here. It will not let me sleep; it is taking the strength from me; I can't stand it. I want to be about. The boys are getting wild again and my son Bill has—"

He stopped as if he had suddenly remembered something, and I was on the edge of inquiring about the murderer, when Wolf's warning came to me.

What mattered further information regarding Bill Crystal? I knew he was in the Devil's Teapot, and that was enough.

I looked around the room. As I have said, it was remarkably well furnished, probably with the loot of many years. At one end was an elegant couch covered with Navajo blankets, and above it, against the adobe wall, which was here and there draped with heavy tapestry, hung a massive crucifix which at some time must have belonged in a church. The floor was covered with a thick rug, and over the open fire was an ornate ormolu clock. As I glanced at it it struck the hour of six in a deep, musical tone. There was nothing in sight which would serve me as a weapon, a fact I regretted.

"I must get you to bed, Mr. Crystal," I said, "I wish to make an examination."

"Can a child like you stop this pain?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, my line of action clear before me. And it was simple enough. I would give the old man such a dose of morphine as would insure his absolute unconsciousness for many hours, and in the morning I would ask to be set free. I certainly hoped I would not have to face Bill Crystal again. He was the only one I really feared, for his recollection of when and where he had seen me might come to him in a flash.

I had no difficulty in persuading the venerable outlaw to go to the couch; and when I laid him down and opened his clothing it took no trained eye to determine that he would soon cash in his account.

The exquisitely tender tumor pushing up from his liver made me suspicious even before I took his temperature, which was abnormally high. His pulse was feeble and rapid, and these symptoms, together with the cachexia showing on his face, an appearance always connected with malignant disease, made me absolutely certain of the nature of his trouble. His extreme emaciation and the flabbiness of his skin confirmed me in my diagnosis; he was a doomed man, but it was not his heart that was killing him.

By the time I had come to this conclusion something like respect for me had taken the place of contempt. As I opened my case, and laid it on the table and prepared the hypodermic needle, he asked: "Do you find much the matter with me, doctor?"

"Yes," I replied, "in my opinion you have carcinoma of the liver."

"Carcinoma! A new term to me! What is it?"

"Cancer, sir." It was useless to deceive him.

The old man started up as if electrified. "Cancer! Then I'm going to die!"

I nodded.

"God Almighty!" he screamed, falling back. "I can't die yet! I can't die without a priest—I'll go straight to hell!"

Whatever fortitude he had once possessed took complete leave of him, and the innate cowardice of his nature leaped to the surface. He yelled, he cursed, he wept, he

called upon the Virgin and a dozen saints, groveling before the crucifix.

Though I knew him to be an old villain who had caused many a death, it was pitiful to see him writhing in mental agony; I felt sorry for him. No one seemed to notice the noise he made; no one came in.

"My God, doctor!" he finally groaned, "Can't you do something?"

"I am going to relieve you at once, sir," I replied, and catching his thin arm before he could resist, I sent a needleful of morphine into it. I don't think he felt the prick. Presently he ceased his ranting and spoke more quietly.

"I must confess," he moaned.

"Yes," I replied eagerly. "It will probably ease you!"

"Then listen. You are a gentleman; you must hear me. Can I be sent to hell for my son?"

"I think not," I returned, hoping the drug would soon work, for I did not wish more of a scene.

"But he takes his nature from me, and God knows I have been a bad man. I was made so years ago by the working of an unjust law—no matter how. It set me against the world, but now I wish to make amends. I have tried to curb my boys, but now Bill no longer fears me—and he has gone too far." He hesitated, then: "I am easier; the pain is better," he murmured drowsily.

The drug was taking effect; he looked up, already half asleep.

"He is going—away—to leave me. You must—I'll tell you—to-morrow." His words trailed off into a whisper, the fire and fear died from his eyes and he sank into a sleep—a sleep which I knew would become so profound that a cannon would not wake him.

Hardly had he settled when a hag of a half-breed came in bringing my supper in a basket. She did not speak a word as she set out the generous meal, but acted like one frightened. As silently as she came in she went out.

Considering everything, I was easy in mind. After eating I went to the door and opened it. There was no one near that I could see, but down the cañon were a num-

ber of slatternly women lounging in front of the houses, and some half-naked children were dabbling in the brook. It seemed quiet and peaceful, but I knew that violence and death lurked everywhere.

While it was now well past sunset the cañon was hardly darker than when I entered it, for a half-grown moon in a violet sky hung directly above the narrow earth fissure, making the surroundings visible though the shadows were intense. I stepped out for a breath of air. No one appeared to notice me, and I continued on over the turf to where the Teapot was sending up its volume of steam.

As I approached it the turf ceased and hard earth, like baked mud, took its place. A moment later I was looking into the natural curiosity which seemed to spring from beneath the towering cliff.

It had better have been called Hell's Hole than the Devil's Teapot. I had thought of it as a small geyser of clear, hot water, but it was mud—thick, black mud that blubbed up in smooth masses which burst like sobs, sending out clouds of steam which drifted down the cañon. In the uncertain moonlight it was a hideous pool which in some violent eruption had spewed its contents over half an acre of ground, its repulsive surface heaving but slightly save where the center rose in dome-like volumes.

On one side a wall of mud-caked rocks, fallen from above, dammed it from spreading down the cañon, but where I stood the ground was barren, save for some small boulders, and it shook under my stamp. I drew back.

"Better not go too close, doc!" said a voice. I whirled around and saw the man called Snake, who had come up to me unheard. "I war jest makin' rounds when I sees yer," he added. "Thought I would mosey up an' warn yer." He spoke very gently.

"That thar hell juice looks solid, but it ain't," he continued. "Watch this!" He picked up a small boulder and tossed it to a very little beyond where I was standing; it went through the surface crust with a dull "blob," the semiliquid mud gradually filling the orifice.

"A female kid tumbled in thar two year ago," he went on. "She's thar now, I reckon. We couldn't git her, nor we can't git no bottom to the hell's quicksand. Better mosey back to the old man, doc. I wouldn't let Bill or Wolf catch me out, if I was you."

His warning was doubtless well meant. I turned away and as I did so my eye caught sight of what I knew to be Cottonthread Falls. It lay almost directly opposite the spring and not far from the house I had left, a thin, snow-white line of falling water which had leaped from the shelving cliff above, and spread like a veil of wind-blown lace. Very little whole water reached the bottom; it was a mere shower bath which struck the rocks at its foot, giving rise to the brook.

As I had conjectured, its long descent had turned the slight stream to spray which had a lovely effect in the moonlight. I wondered if Whipple was above, and the line already hanging; if so, the latter was hidden by the gust of mist. I walked away with a lingering look at the feathery fall.

On reaching the house I bade good night to Snake and went in, closing the door. It was then eight o'clock; Seth Crystal was sleeping heavily and there was no sound save the man's deep breathing. The fire had died black. I sat down and must have dozed off, but became broad awake as I heard the click of the latch; glancing up I saw the Mexican girl standing in the doorway. Her eyes were like stars as she looked quickly around the room, then she laid a finger on her beautiful lips and crept toward me.

"Him sleep?" she whispered.

"Yes."

"No wake?"

"Not until to-morrow. You need not whisper."

"Good!" she said, raising her voice. "You see?" She pointed to her bare neck, and then I noticed a red welt that curled around her lovely throat in a livid line.

"What's that?" I asked. She drew herself up, throwing out her young bosom. "Beel Crystal," she fairly hissed from between her white teeth. "He struck me with quirt—with whip—me, Patricia Le-

moine! I loved him. It was for one kiss I begged; I got this; it is for this I am here."

I thought of the glorious being wanting a kiss of Bill Crystal, but forgot the incongruity of it as she went on: "*Señor*, you ver' smart, but you no fool Patricia! You are one law man—what you call poliss—sheriff man. I know! You want Beel; you come for him. Yes?"

Had she drawn a pistol on me I would not have been more startled, and the girl must have noticed it for she hastily continued: "No fear. I no tell 'bout you; I tell 'bout Beel. You catch quick before he go."

"When does he go?" I said, coming to myself.

"One, two day. He 'fraid of law man; he go to Mexico; he no take me. I beg—I pray—I kiss. Then I get the whip. Ah! He forget I have the Spanish blood! He pay for that lash—he pay for leave me! I hate heem!"

She certainly looked the embodiment of hate as she stood there; and it was fairly plain that she wished to make me the instrument of her vengeance, but I was not there as a summary officer to kill him. I recognized the treachery of her nature, however, and beyond that I also recognized the necessity of getting from the cañon at once. Whipple must be notified, and by watching near the gate we could catch the villain when he came out.

If the sheriff had kept faith with me, and I had no doubt of it, the lariat was even now dangling in the spray of the Cottonthread. As soon as the place was quiet I would sneak out, find the line, fasten it around me and be pulled to safety. It seemed very simple. The old outlaw would be dead to the world for hours to come, and the Mexican would not interfere.

My decision came like an inspiration, and with a sense of relief, for, to tell the truth, I was afraid of Bill Crystal and did not care to meet him again until we were on more equal terms. I turned to the girl, who was watching me with the intensity of a cat.

"Patricia, would you like to leave this place?" I asked.

She clasped her hands to her breast and

a glorious light shone in her eyes. "Ah, *Dios!*" she exclaimed, but went no further; for the door opened and Bill Crystal strode in. At that instant the cathedral bell of the clock struck ten.

Thinking he was at the gate and would probably remain there until near midnight, I was dumfounded at his sudden appearance. He was fully armed. He paid no attention to me, for his eye first lit on the Mexican standing with clasped hands, her own eyes great with sudden fear. With one stride he went up to her.

"You here?" he shouted, coupling the exclamation with a vile name; and with that he struck her in the face with his fist, the blow knocking her clear to the wall, from which she rebounded and fell to the floor.

Had I a gun I would have shot him then, but being weaponless I did not even protest at his cowardly act.

"Damn her!" he said, setting his rifle in a corner and throwing off his heavy belt with its revolvers. "What was she tellin' yer?"

"She didn't have time to tell me anything, sir," I returned, remembering my character. "She only just came in."

He gave a grunt, stepped to the bed and glanced at his sleeping father. "Did good fer the old man, didn't ye? Ye sure be a reg'lar he-doc!" Then he turned to the unconscious girl. "Fix her up so I can drag her out o' this. I warned her."

I stooped over the fallen woman. She was breathing stentoriously, indicating brain shock, but she looked as if dead. I was troubled, though not so much on her account as on my own, for I saw my cake turned to dough; the outlaw's disarming himself indicated that he meant to make a protracted stay—perhaps he would remain all night.

"She ain't dead, is she?" he asked, throwing himself unconcernedly into the Morris chair.

"No, sir," I answered, stepping to the table on which lay my open medicine-case. "I think I can bring her around."

I took out my linen handkerchief and was about to place my hand on a bottle of camphor when the man suddenly leaned

forward and stared at me as I stood in the strong light from the lamp. "By Gawd!" he exclaimed. "I knowed I had seen yer afore! Hell! I got it! It was in the office o' the coop I left. Yer be—"

He did not finish the sentence. At the moment he began to speak I saw by his face that he had penetrated my disguise. My brain worked like lightning, and instead of touching the camphor I swept three pearls of nitrite of amyl into my handkerchief. The climax had come.

Crushing the fragile glasses with a quick grasp I leaped on the man and jammed the linen over his nose and mouth, forcing him back into the chair from which he had half risen.

The drug in question, the name of which had puzzled Whipple and the uses of which had floored Crystal, is well known to every physician and is not a pleasant plaything. I had deliberately placed it in my case thinking it might be of use in relieving the sick chief whom I had been told was suffering from heart disease. I had joked with Whipple about it, but had never seriously looked upon it as a means of defense, though now it was the only one I possessed.

Amyl nitrite is a powerful and certain antispasmodic, and administered to one in health it gives rise to what are apparently terrible symptoms. A few inhalations from a crushed pearl, as the containers are called, produces both instant relief from pain and an overpowering bewilderment, though the subject does not lose consciousness for a moment. The head seems to swell like a balloon, only to collapse and swell again; the ears roar madly, the sight is confused, and the uninitiated victim thinks he is about to die. These symptoms pass rapidly, and there is never real danger, the patient recovering in some ten minutes. In this instance all I could hope for was to render the outlaw helpless long enough to get a fair start, for if I was to escape it must be at once.

My sudden action had taken Crystal by surprise, but his strength made it impossible to force on him a full dose of the drug. He probably inhaled deeply but once, as he struggled like a madman, finally throwing me off and springing to his feet. But even

at that he had enough to make his unsteady for a moment, and as I marked his condition I ran for the door, tore it open and went flying for the falls.

I was not two rods on my way before I knew Crystal was after me. He was swearing terribly; each instant I expected a shot, but none came, and he did not even yell.

Never will I forget that run. My legs seemed to drag as they do in a dream, but even as I sped on I knew it was now impossible to gain the falls and adjust the lariat, if it were there, before my pursuer reached me. Long ere I could carry out my project he would be upon me and I would have but a small chance with him among the slippery rocks. With this in mind I swerved in my flight and made for the natural wall which dammed the Teapot; between that, the steam and the heavy shadow of the cliff, for the moon had drawn to the south, I might elude him.

But I was soon aware that the attempt to hide would be useless, for the man was hardly fifty feet from me as I reached the hard ground in front of the pool. I knew I could never gain the wall. In my desperation I halted and faced him; however, I did not throw up my hands in surrender.

For instantly I saw that he was still unarmed, he probably having been too dazed by the drug and too eager to reach me to realize the fact.

As I stopped so did he, now feeling sure of me, and his eyes were blazing. That he had fully recovered through air and violent exercise was plain enough.

"Curse yer soul!" he snapped out, "I knows yer—I got yer to rights at last! Yer be that sneak, De Saxe!"

"I am," I returned, "and I came to see if you were here."

As I spoke I saw him inch nearer and nearer, his body crouched, then with a quick movement he threw his hand to his hip for the gun that was not there. For a second he seemed staggered, his hands gripping and ungripping, but only for a second. Without another word he made a rush at me.

Knowing what was coming I was ready for him. It was not for nothing that I had been mauled and twisted in the lessons given me by my Japanese valet. I had

been taught to wrestle in Japanese fashion, and now a wrestling match must terminate matters between Bill Crystal and me. I easily avoided his first onset, but he doubled in a flash and the following moment we were in close embrace, I with the under hold, his hideous face close to mine.

We were fairly matched as to weight and height, for the outlaw was no giant like his brother Wolf. He might have been able to strike a harder blow than I, but I did not think he had either my training or endurance. And he was years older; gross dissipation had sapped him, and the dose of amyl nitrite, though he had taken little, was not the best prelude to a struggle. If I once could throw him I knew how to retain my seat on his body, and barring interference I would go far toward choking him.

Together we tottered over the bare ground, but try as I would I could not trip him; the man kept his feet like a cat, a trick I also possessed, and neither struck a blow for fear of the consequences of losing grip. Like tigers we fought, and we fought in silence save for the oaths Crystal ripped out and the blasts of breath coming from both.

I knew this state of things could not long endure and was wondering what the end would be when I saw that he was trying to force me backward and into the black pool close behind me. The knowledge of his intention struck me with horror and at the same time I heard a distant shout. If I were to live I must do something before help for him arrived, and with the despair of a dying man I suddenly changed my tactics and essayed a move in which I had been but half taught by my valet. I could never have played it successfully had Crystal been on guard against it.

Dropping the under hold with which I had tackled him I doubled my body and grasped Crystal beneath the right thigh and threw my hand over his shoulder as far down his back as I could reach, gathering a bunch of his shirt in a firm grip. Then I heaved backward. As he bent to my weight I felt that I had him and with a mighty strain I lifted his feet from the ground and threw him over my right shoulder, breaking his hold on me. The act had

strained every muscle in me and the violent effort brought me to my hands and knees.

But I never leaped on his prostrate body, as I had figured on doing. Even as I went to the ground I heard a dull splash and my skin was stung by blobs of scalding mud; the steam swayed away for a moment, and then I saw.

He had been thrown into the Devil's Teapot and I had fallen so close to its edge that I lacked but little of being engulfed with him.

He did not disappear at once in this worse than quicksand. His face was toward me and as he saw me and realized his hopeless state his eyes bulged and he let out a scream—a cry the like of which I never care to hear again and shall never forget; it echoed down the cañon as a shot would have done.

Still on my hands and knees I was transfixed by the horror on his mud-plastered face, but I did not see it for long. With a mighty flounder which only forced him lower and sent the hot mud flying he tried to reach firm ground, but the semifluid mass gradually sucked him under, the scald bit into him and paralyzed him and he slowly disappeared, his wild eyes turned on me to the last. A moment later the damnable pool showed its old surface.

I am not easily shaken, but I was shaken then. How long I might have remained staring at the spot I cannot tell, but I was brought to a full sense of my position by hearing a nearer shout from down the cañon. I got up heavily and with limbs of lead went across the level to the foot of the falls. As I clambered up the pile of wet rocks I heard a series of shouts followed

by a shot, and along the brook came running a number of men, but it was plain that I was not seen.

Like a blind maniac I plunged into the spray and felt for the lariat which should be there. Good God! What if Whipple had not kept faith? What if the line had not been carried over the edge? I was becoming wild at not finding it, living moments of exquisite agony, when it struck me in the face as it swayed to the force of the falling water. Unthinkingly I let out a cry of relief which perhaps was heard, I don't know; but in an instant I had the line secured around me and just remember giving the signal.

But I do not remember being hauled up. They say I spoke to them when I was lifted over the top, but the first thing I became conscious of was that I was lying on the grass of the prairie with Whipple and three men standing around, and in my mouth was a strong taste of whisky.

There is but little to add to this story. The sheriff, goaded into final action, within a week made a strong raid on the outlaws' den, and the conquest, in which I had no part, was an easy matter. For he had taken the hint of the method of my escape and lowered ten men at the point of the falls, at the same time menacing the main gate. Attacked in front and by the rear, the bandits became panic-stricken and were captured or killed to the last man, Wolf Crystal being among the latter. Seth Crystal was found dead in his bed, having lingered to the day of the defeat, but what became of the Mexican girl I never learned. I am afraid that Bill Crystal's blow caused her death.

(The end.)



THE EXILE

BEYOND the threshold of your heart
Your word may bid me go,
And you may close the door and think
That love is ended so.

But I shall bear some dreams with me
Years shall not take away,
That shall be mine and only mine
Forever and a day!

Arthur Wallace Peach.

What Was That?

by Katharine Haviland Taylor

Author of "Yellow Soap," etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

A PARTY of Greenwich villagers had rented a bungalow near the scene of the killing of Rudolph Loucks, whose murderer had never been found.

But Loucks's ghost had been seen and blood appeared upon the walls and the stairs of the bungalow. Noises assailed the new occupants and, following the visit of Frank Lethridge, whose pistol had been used to kill Loucks, two of the girls at the bungalow, Nan and April, saw the ghost.

Then April made a double discovery, a wooden box beneath the river-bottom and a locket belonging to Lethridge containing the portrait of a woman. Next, Gloria Vernon appeared on the scene and made love to Gustave, whom one of the girls at the bungalow loved. Tension ran high when Frank Lethridge's body was found in shallow water opposite the house.

Suspicion fastened on Gustave, who had been heard to threaten Lethridge. April Barry sent for her fiancé, who arrived in time to see the Beasley boy dragging a bear-trap, to which was attached a human hand.

At a second investigation of the detectives, Gloria accused April of the Lethridge murder.

CHAPTER XIII.

"FAR CROW Y PEEK THEM."

"WHERE?" asked one of the men, taking out a pencil.

"They were sitting in a boat," she said. "Miss Barry was at his feet and his arms were around her. I was surprised to see it, for I knew that Mr. Lethridge had been paying attention to Miss Hoyle, but—knowing these artistic people—" She lifted her shoulders after that. "Little rules of conventional society are not always observed; and I thought there had been a change of heart. I was not greatly surprised, because"—she paused—"one expects anything of people who live together as this crowd have done this summer."

I saw Gustave grow white at that.

Jane's lips curled, and Billy was growing so angry that I was afraid he would put another murder on the books.

"Who had the punt on Sunday afternoon?" I asked.

She changed color, but she brazened it out.

"I can't say," she replied.

"I can," said Laurence. "Gustave had it. I know, for I wanted to go out myself—"

"It was your day to swab our boats," said Gustave. "Of course you wanted to go."

Some one said "That will do," and I went on with: "I had the Laurel, the tippiest canoe on the place. Send for Nathan. He'll tell you what I was in." And Nathan was sent for.

He backed up my statement, and I had the satisfaction of telling Miss Vernon to go try the position she described with so much real feeling and understanding, in the boat I paddled that day.

"Gustave," I said, "you know I was alone."

Gustave did not answer, for Gloria had moved over to him, laid her hand on his arm, and made him look into her eyes.

"Was she?" asked our breakfast guest.

"I don't know," said Gustave.

"Did you see her? Now think."

"Yes," he answered hesitatingly; and then sharply: "Yes, I did."

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for October 9.

"Where?"

"At the bend in the creek, the bend where the cows come down to drink."

"Was she alone then? You must know."

"She was alone," said Gustave, after a deep breath.

"Yes, she was alone then," broke in Gloria. "I saw her before I met Mr. Gerome. I stood watching from behind those sumac bushes that grow along Gus Dirks's pasture land; and I saw them together. She let him out, and he said 'Five o'clock?' and she said 'Yes, five.' Then she paddled off. I suppose she fooled around on the stream until then."

I was never so astounded. It sounded so real as she told it.

"She came home," said Nan. "I know, because I told her that Judge Harkins had called on her; she was home by four, I know."

"Frank Lethridge left me at six," said Jane. "We were driving in his car, and I didn't let him take me down here."

"Why not?" asked one of our questioners sharply.

Jane changed color. Then she looked at Nathan appealingly.

"Why," she stammered, "I wanted to walk down the hill alone; it was pleasant, and, unkind as it sounds now, I was a little tired of Frank Lethridge. You see, we had been together all afternoon."

"Where is his car?" one of the men, who wore plain clothes and a star, asked.

"I don't know," several people replied.

"What make was it?"

"Callidac," answered Gustave. "1917."

"You were alone with him?"

She nodded.

"About what did you talk?"

"Why, I don't know," she said evasively. "Everything — nothing important — the weather, pictures, town gossip, reconstruction in France. I can't remember it all; there was nothing I should remember particularly."

"There wasn't?" asked one of the men who questioned. "Are you sure there wasn't?"

"Yes," she answered, her cheeks beginning to burn.

"Why did he kiss you good-by?" asked one of the men who had hitherto been silent.

Gustave moved quickly and looked outraged.

Jane turned the color of a fair-to-morrow sunset, and every one was surprised. One could not imagine it, and Jane, usually frank to the point of brutality and ashamed of nothing she did, had said he was as stiff as a poker and had never even held her hand.

"Perhaps he wanted to," she responded pertly. "I hope that isn't inconceivable."

"This is outrageous!" said Gustave, glaring in her direction. "And disgusting!"

If the time hadn't been so solemn I would have smiled!

"You should know just how disgusting it is," she responded, looking at him for a fleeting second. That stopped further comment from his direction.

"I heard the judge warn him to keep his hands off o' something," said Nathan. "I was settin' up the crick a ways, a talkin' to Miss Barry. She set there with me after she let Mr. Lethridge off into Gus Dirks's pasture. Then Miss Barry she came over and squatted on a log with me. I was settin' there a fish—*meditatin'*," he corrected hurriedly, with an anxious look toward the law—"and she comes over and squats like I says."

"Then she paddles off to the bungalow like Miss Nan says, fetching there at something to three, I reckon, if the sun was right, and it don't usually fail to tell the truth about the time of day."

"Now I"—old Nathan leaned over and picked up a trap—"I know Miss Aprile Barry didn't do it. And I know more. You can take it or leave it, but here's what I know, and it's truth." And he told his story of the affair, which included a theory about Frank Lethridge's wits, and a steel trap that had been washed down from the hillside.

"He, Frank Lethridge," said Nathan, "wasn't hisself. Don't his sparkin' that gal prove it?" Every one smiled a little—that is, every one but Jane, who looked indignant.

"Him, that set out to be a woman-hater from time on," went on Nathan—"him a gettin' gay, when it was high time for him to consider embalmin' fluids and undertakers? He wasn't no chicken. Why, him and me we went to the same school, and I'm kicking close to seventy if I calculate correct.

"It's this way: he notioned there was somethin' in the bottom of the crick, and he figured it would look odd if he poked alone, and so he up and asked this maid to go with him. Ain't that possible?"

We admitted it.

"He got bit with that air bug. Mebbe there *was* somethin' at the bottom of the crick. Mebbe the *judge* knows what it is. Mebbe it gets shipped here in coffins, and mebbe it would look funny fer to haul it to the judge's in daylight; and so mebbe our undertaker, Mr. Hatch C. Grim, hauls it out here in the dead o' night. Mebbe he sinks it in a box—I ain't sayin' he is, understand; I jest say *mebbe*.

"Mebbe the judge he comes out the road past Dirks's place—you might happen to ask Gus about that—and mebbe he fools around the river bank; and mebbe him and that there feller that chawfers fer him, mebbe they haul in a box and take it off to town underneath a pile of vegetables, which they allows they comes out past Gus Dirks's place to buy. Now, why do they up and pass Gus's? He sells good vegetables. Gus he asks me that many a time. I says 'Don't ask me; but mebbe—'"

"That 'll do," shouts one of the men; and then: "*My God, Terry! I believe we're getting it.*"

"But the murder," said the man who had been addressed as Terry. "Why do you think this has a great deal to do with that?"

"It's like this," said Nathan. "That there Frank Lethridge, he notioned I done the whisky hidin', and he was all fer trap-pin' me. Wasn't that true?"

Jane nodded, amazement in her face.

"He explains to this here girl that that whisky is *down* harm in town, and that he's going to catch the moonshiner who's makin' or shippin' it in here. Ain't that true?"

Jane nodded.

"So he appeals to her adventure and romance like, and she goes a pokin' with him. And now's the funny part: The judge he gets wind of it and gets nervous. We all know the judge and his little habits. He begins to warn Frank Lethridge. Likely he says: 'These here are dangerous characters you're handlin', Frank. Better let 'em lay!' I heerd him say 'Keep your hands off!' But Frank, he won't.

"A trap is washed down from the hills by the spring rains; it drifts till it ketches. Frank Lethridge, spyin' this, or feelin' this with his paddle, leans over, can't reach it, can't wait fer a pole—thinkin' it's the hasp of a box or a handle—and dives. He's caught—you seen his hands. Gents, that there's the story. You can take 'er or leave 'er, but that's the truth!"

"Terry, I believe it," said one of the men in a low voice.

It was a peach of a tale—but I did not believe it.

Gloria looked stunned for a moment, and then recovered. And I realized when she did it that if she deliberately made war, one would have a hard adversary to face. She caught her breath on a sob, moved toward me, and held out her hands.

"Can you," she whispered, "forgive me? I had to speak—you see, I thought—" Her hands dropped to her sides with a dramatic but really beautiful gesture, and her head sunk forward.

"It's turned out all right," I answered. "So we won't worry."

"You are so good, so generous," she said; "but I know you haven't forgiven me, and I cannot blame you. And then she turned away.

"Nothing to forgive," said one of the men from town. "All evidence is requested." He turned a look toward me that was none too kind.

I saw that Gloria had done her trick, and done it well. The sympathy of the outsiders, at least, was with her. She had done a soft-pedaled appeal, to which I had responded in the key of common sense. And common sense does not usually get applause from the world gallery. If I had bleated "You are forgiven!" after a fifteen-pound-pressure sob, and held out my arms—if I

had done that, I would have gotten a soft look from the town detective; but I failed. She was a great actress; I am not.

Just after that dramatic moment Gus Dirks appeared. He stood in the doorway twirling his hat and blinking, quite as if he faced a strong sunlight, instead of backing it. Before he spoke I placed him. He had, quite evidently, been a carrot in some previous existence; for his hair was sandy, his skin that red-yellow tint that so often goes with the strawberry-blond make-up; and freckles of a brown-red tone added to his relationship with a part of the vegetable kingdom.

"Well, what is it?" asked one of the town officers, at the same moment that Nathan said "Howdy, Gus!"

"It's this way," he announced, positively whirling his hat—"it's this way: I ain't had a thing to do with that there murder. My wife, she kin testeefy that I was sleepin' in the orchard all Sunday afternoon; but Frank Lethridge's automobile, it's a settin' by the spring house. It's a settin' there, and—"

"All right," broke in the man called Terry. "It's settin'— What else?"

"Well, this here was found in it. My wife, she found it. She had jest took a pail of skim milk down to the hawgs, and she come on this here automobile sudden. Well, she—"

"What did she find?" prompted some one.

"This here," said Gus Dirks, blinking more rapidly than ever, and holding out a small slip of paper.

One of the men read it and frowned.

"What is it?" asked Gustave.

"I'll ask you all to write," said the man called Terry. "Pencils and paper, if you please."

Then we all gathered around the table, and, at Terry's dictation, wrote, three times—first, as he said the words, then slowly, then fast. What he made us write was:

Far crow y peek them.

It sounded idiotic.

After we had done this, the men moved around, looked at our papers, and went off to stand by a window with these and the

note that Gus, who was still twirling his hat, had brought.

"Not here," said one.

"No," admitted another grudgingly, and as if he were disappointed. He held my paper.

"I'm inclined to believe—" we heard; and then the voices thinned to whispers, but we judged that Nathan's story was accredited, for they went off after that with a warning to Gus.

"Keep what you have read and seen to yourself," said one of the men as he picked up his hat.

His words were not what kept Gus silent. But his look was.

"Yes, sir," answered Gus. "I ain't a aimin' to say nothin'! I ain't. I kin keep a secret. I ain't one to talk. Now, my wife, she—" And he went on at length, disclosing several confidences made to him by several indiscreet folk. Then, after another assurance, that he would be as silent as the tomb, he disappeared.

Old Nathan stayed with us a few moments, and before he left the fat gentleman named Terry returned.

"Nathan," he said, "have you any writing of the judge's?"

"I hev a check," answered Nathan. "Did a little work on his ruff, barn ruff, last week. He gimme the pay this way, on his check. I ain't so much fer 'em, but he said 'twas the same as money, and I knowed he wasn't aimin' to do me. Here 'tis."

He pulled it out. I saw it. Judge Harkins's name was printed on the affair. It was made out to Nathan, and it was for seven dollars and eighty-nine cents, which sounded like Nathan's reckoning, and did not surprise me; his bills were always amazing in their little exactnesses. But when I saw the writing I was surprised. The writing was not the writing that was on the *London News*; it was not the writing that Midgette said she knew belonged to the judge; and yet—it was on his check.

I wondered whether the check was false, and if so, how Nathan had gotten it. I knew that he had worked for the judge the week before, for he had told me he was starting out to the judge's one morn-

ing when we met as I went for the milk. If that was the judge's writing, why was Midgette lying? What was her game? Who was shielding whom? And if Frank Lethridge had met his death through a hunt for an illicit whisky dealer, and a bear-trap, why was the falsifying going on? The whole affair was confusing and—more confusion was arising constantly.

After Terry left, Nathan pocketed his check and went toward his woods. Then Gloria and Gustave disappeared, and Jane, Nan, Laurence, Billy, and I settled down to speculate and wonder.

"What do you think was in that note Gus Dirks found?" I asked.

"I'll tell you what I think," said Billy. He picked up a pencil and wrote a sentence below that which had made our copy. We looked.

"I believe you're right," said Nan.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEATH CARD.

"**F** KEEP away from the creek," Billy had scrawled. "Same letters that are in 'Far crow y peek them,'" he explained; "and it backs Nathan's theory. For—if they'd wanted to murder him, whoever did it would have invited him to be present at a little informal murder—say, from three to four, or Sunday, at the creek."

"Oh, don't!" begged Laurence, as he put out a hand toward Nan and looked back of him nervously.

"That's all right," I said, "but isn't it possible that some one else knew of some one's intentions, and was warning him?"

"Well," admitted Billy, with an almost rheumatically creaking change of view-point, "that *might* be so. I hadn't thought of that."

I saw that he was irritated because he had to reconstruct his ideas and make room for a new one.

"Oh," I went on, "Nathan's story sounded well, but I don't—know—I think there is a good deal more to this than we imagine, and I am sure that this affair and the murder of Loucks are related."

"Why are you sure?" asked Billy.

I couldn't explain, because it was—that sureness of mine—almost all a feeling, backed by flimsy little bits of evidence; I felt that Nathan had something on the old judge and that this something was more than a small indiscretion that might hurt him socially; I felt that it was large, and that Nathan took an almost fiendish pleasure in following the judge around and in pounding when he *was* around, so that the judge should be aware of him.

In Nathan I sensed the reserve that comes from being, for long years, the vase that holds the ashes of a tragedy—close guards and protects these from the eyes of the mob. It seemed to me that his slow speech came from more than a quieting existence in the woods; I thought it had grown from caution. When I explained my suspicions I was laughed into silence.

"You attribute too much intelligence to him," said Jane. "Why, the old fellow can hardly write. He always gets some one or other to address the plates he sends his nephew in New York. They tease him down at the post-office about his changing script. I was down there getting an immediate off one day when he parcel-posted some, and I heard them. They told him his hand showed that he was maturing."

"No," Billy added, "his silences aren't the fruit of thought. They're the fruit of its lack. People always suppose that the silent are the thoughtful. It isn't always so."

I was downed, but I did not agree with them. "All right," I had to content myself with saying, "but—you wait!"

"We will!" said Jane, and then I got up and went off to hunt Nathan, first frankly telling Billy that I did not need an escort.

I found Nathan puttering about the dock, nailing down boards that had been loose for weeks.

"What made you say I was Frank Lethridge?" I asked, without preface. "You know I wasn't."

"She had it fixed you *was*," replied Nathan, after he had taken at least nine pounds of nails from his mouth. "There wasn't no combatin' *that* and makin' it

sound reasonable. I figured it would set her back some if I j'ined her lie and went her one better. And—it done the trick."

"I see," I said, and again I thought that our crowd was making a big mistake about Nathan's intelligence—or lack of it, as they thought.

"No'm," he went on, after he had pounded in a few nails and planed down a board he had put over a crack that was dangerously wide—"no'm; she had it fixed that you *was* with Frank Lethridge. If I had o' come out with it that you was with me, why, one of them towners, he'd 'a' thought, 'She's been nice to that old bumpkin; guess he don't like to see her hung.' So I done a pretty lie. It sounded better—I tell yuh, there ain't nothing that hasn't a use in this world. Gawd, He up and put lies in, so you and me could use 'em when it's right and proper and moral to up and do it."

And after this he again relapsed into his customary silence, and I couldn't get another thing but "yasseem" and "no'm" out of him.

I went back to the crowd, who were all talking loudly. Gustave had returned, and for two days he spent a good deal of time with us, tried to be decently polite, considerate, and human. But—he snapped now and again, and I knew what made it. He was trying at that point to cut loose from Gloria, and no man who is giving up whisky, smoking, or a woman is an angel. Disgusting as the whole affair was, I did pity him and tried to be nice to him, which greatly disgusted Billy.

But—he was to be pitied. He was simply insane about Gloria Vernon. When she was near—when even her name was spoken—his face changed and grew none too pleasant to look on. It was as if some one had pulled the curtain away from his worst desires and left them bared. I don't see, looking back, why I say "as if," for Gloria had done just that. When you saw them together you looked away. I know that he tried to cut loose at that point, but she took to visiting us often, although Nan and I left the room when she came, and—with her touch, poor Gustave was lost.

So, after a few days in which he was pretty regularly at home, he took to wandering again, to haunting the Beasley farm, to sullen acknowledgments of our greetings.

Laurence, of course, made poems about it; Nan sharpened his pencils, and said they were wonderful.

In those hectic days, I do not think it was remarkable that Billy and I forgot the notes that we made the morning before I was summoned, to be accused of murder by Gloria Vernon. It was Laurence who brought the whole affair back. He wanted some lines he had written on a note-book Billy had given him at the same time he supplied a pencil.

"I did give you that, didn't I?" asked Billy, beginning to look gray, and I am sure I did, too; for I remembered what he had so carefully written out about Gustave and his threats to avenge any one who hurt Jane.

"Yes," agreed Laurence irritably, "and I started a verse in it. And—it's gone! Where is it? I am weary of mysteries. It was a red-covered book, wasn't it, Watts?"

"Where did you put it?" I asked.

"On the window-sill," Laurence answered. "I suppose those officers took it. No, they didn't. I didn't put it there until they left. But some one *did*"—his tone grew triumphant—"for the screen is broken at that corner! Some one saw me writing it, and means to steal it!"

"That Beasley boy is the only one around here who would do that," said Gustave, with the first attempt at humor he'd made for weeks. "Better chase him up, unless it's driven him to suicide."

Laurence successfully damned this little attempt at levity. He responded: "I am not the one in this party who visits the Beasley farm at all hours." And then he found a new slip of paper and began to write.

I went over to the window and found that the screen had been tampered with. "Now we've done it!" I said to Billy, who had slunk up behind me.

"I was a fool!" he acknowledged. "Who do you suppose—"

But I couldn't supply the answer to that any more than I could to a hundred other

questions that kept continually buzzing within our heads.

"Yes," I agreed, "you were." And of course he was mad; many men call themselves fools, but no man accepts that appellation from any one else without protest.

"Maybe," he said, "but who started listing things, anyway? Didn't you suggest getting things down so that we could remember 'em without counting on our fingers? I tell you, April, I may have been unwise, but you—"

"You'd make a lovely husband!"

"I really do regret losing it," said Laurence. "I am so afraid—"

"Oh, hell!" said Billy, and he went out, slamming the door after him.

I sat down and tried to play canfield. This didn't go well, and Midgette demanded attention.

"Tell my fortune, April," she whimpered. "It 'll—it 'll divert me. How can you be so calm after these happenings—Oh, a red ace means love, doesn't it? Followed by a jack—what?"

"You will fall in love with a light-haired gentleman who is ten years your senior. And—" But then I stopped. "Wait a minute," I said, and I redealt.

Now, as I said before, I am a grounded person. I do not float around on clouds, and however I came to be an artist I do not know; for I pay my bills, believe in marriage, families, the fact that love can last, and I adore an honest, foamy, two-story home with a real kitchen stove on which you can cook something more nourishing than fudge. I do not believe in ouija boards, nor omens; but—when I turned up the ace of spades, which I read as death, and this was followed by a dark-haired man and a low club, the number of which means a weapon used against some one, and when I saw a murder to come, I was a little rattled. One was quite enough, I thought; we had plenty of suspects, and no clues with any of them.

"I feel so much better," said Midgette after I'd finished the greatest lot of stupid drivel about light-haired men, letters, jealousy, money, and a happy marriage. "You really cheered me up, April, and I think it's cheered you, too."

I smiled and said it had, but—in spite of all my reason, and in spite of the fact that I knew I was acting like a hysterical school-girl—I saw the card that meant death, followed by a card that meant a weapon, and a third that meant murder.

"Midgette," I said, "work your ouija for me. Ask 'What weapon?'"

Probably because we all *felt* the creek continually, and because the horror that had come through it was impressed so deeply in our minds, the little affair on wheels spelled "Water."

"Water!" said Midgette. "How silly!"

"Yes," I answered, with relief, "isn't it?"

But—it wasn't.

CHAPTER XV.

"PUT IT HERE, BOYS."

IF the evidence had been less generally spread, one of us would certainly have been hung. But as it was, there were black marks against us all, including the judge, and the chorus of suspects saved the day. A week after the horrible affair things at the bungalow were running about as usual—at least on the surface—and none of us regarded as guilty. Old Nathan's theory was accepted, and the coroner's verdict was "Death caused by accident." But not one of our group really believed this.

A bit of evidence which made Nathan's surmise stronger and generally believed by the town people was the finding of a big case of whisky among low-water growth, well up-stream. What made this evidence weak to me was—finding the Echo puddling around there and trying to sink a bunch of sticks, which he had tied together with a rope, saying as he tried to do this: "Put it here, boys; it 'll seem more likely."

I sat in my canoe, watching the affair, and reasoning about it. I decided that in the queer, mirror slant his malady had taken, he echoed not only that which he had heard recently, but also, perhaps, long before; the "long before" brought to the surface of his poor, clouded mind by association of scene. I knew that he always insisted in sitting on the one same chair

of our bungalow porch, because he sat in that one chair the first time he came. First action evidently made his pattern, and the scenes which backed it kept it fresh for him.

I was, therefore, absolutely sure that he had seen some one sinking that box, which was well filled with bottles of three star; and I was certain that the words he said had been said by one of the sinkers.

"Hello, Hiram!" I called to him that day.

He looked up at me dully, and stopped speaking aloud, but I saw that his lips still formed the words which were a part of his game. And, after a fleeting regard of me, he again began to try to sink his sticks.

I turned my canoe, headed it toward home, and went to hunt up Billy. I found him on the back porch reading a letter from his aunt, who had heard that he was with us and that there was no chaperon. She had evidently been upset by it and had done her best to pass some of her upset on to her nephew.

"It is disgusting," he admitted, looking at the letter he held. I realized that he was probably quoting, and I did not feel any especial warming toward the quoted.

I sat down on the steps before I replied: "You needn't stay." This of course enraged him, since it was the truth and undeniable.

"To leave you here at the mercy of this crowd?" he spluttered. "Why—"

I interrupted with: "You're not responsible." And this proved to be another truth that did not please him.

"You promised you'd consider me seriously after this was cleared up," he said sulkily, as he poked holes in the dirt path at his feet with a short stick; he sat on the lowest step.

"It's not cleared up."

"Why not?"

"I don't know why not. But—you don't believe Nathan's story any more than I do. You know it."

"It might be true. I don't know why I do doubt it."

"I don't know why I doubt it, either," I agreed, "but I do. In fact, I know that isn't the truth!" And after that I told

Billy about Beasley's boy. He was interested.

"Let's go back up there," he suggested.

I nodded and stood up, but just at that moment Jane appeared in the doorway, the new Jane, who was a quiet soul with less vivacity and a dull, weary look in her eyes.

"The judge is here," she announced, "asking especially for you, April. He is always babbling about your being a Fra Angelico angel come to life and dressed on Fifth Avenue.

I looked down at my rags and laughed. Jane did too, but Billy did not.

"You always look stunning," he said, with a cool glance toward Jane.

"You do put them on well," Jane offered, in semiapology, and after that we went in. Nan was at the sink—it was her potato-paring week—and she was slashing viciously.

"I don't know why I'm doing this," she remarked, "for there isn't any fire, and won't be. It is Gustave's wood-carrying week, and Laurence has done it every day—"

"Not yesterday or the day before," said Billy, and I let Nan know how I felt about that with a direct glance. Billy is frightfully overworked and imposed upon, and I resented it.

"Well, almost every day," she amended, "and I told him he shouldn't to-day. If Gustave doesn't come home, we'll simply eat raw meat, that's all. I've made a beef loaf, and it will take the large oven. When Gustave appears, perhaps he'll be sorry."

But he wasn't, because he stayed out for dinner. We were the sorry ones!

We found the judge in the living-room, listening to one of Laurence's poems. He looked nervous and ill at ease, and he kept studying the many sheets that Laurence held, with visible apprehension.

"Ah, Miss April," said the judge pompously, as he arose. "And how did you leave the cloisters to-day?"

"Cells," I corrected.

"Old fool!" said Billy. I was frightfully afraid he would be heard, so I talked as fast as I could, and was unusually pleasant to the judge. I asked about his wife,

and he said she was attending a temperance convention in New York State. Then he began to do some hinting, and he did it well. In recalling it afterward Billy and I could not anchor one thing he had said against Nathan, but—we knew—in some way—all he felt against him.

It made Billy furious. "That old rustic?" asked Billy. "That old rustic, a deep-dyed villain? Oh, nonsense, judge!"

The judge spluttered. "I—I can't explain," he wheezed, "but I—" and then he covered his eyes with his hands and breathed heavily. Billy looked at me and shook his head. I sneered at that doubled-up old man and thought of what whisky, taken as he took it, had done to him, and I pitied his wife; but I hadn't seen her at that time.

After a little time the judge stood up. "Going to stay here?" he asked of Billy. Billy said he was afraid so. "Well," said the judge, "you—you take care of Miss Barry." *

"You needn't prompt me to do that," Billy responded.

"If things happen," the judge went on, "I mean any excitement—Nathan getting sick—he has a valvular heart defect, he's going off some day, might go off any day—" he stopped speaking, looked back of him, and then his eyes, which I thought looked crafty, became anxious. "If he gets sick and calls for her, go along. Don't let any one else be suspected."

"I don't think any one else in *this* crowd will be," responded Billy, with unpleasant emphasis. "I hear that suspicion is centering in a different place." The judge turned white, and then, as Nathan's hammering began, sank to a chair. "Water!" he gasped, and Jane hurried off to get it. When he could speak he said, "Don't—don't let her—" and then stopped, his glazed, protruding eyes fixed on me. At that moment Nathan, in his silent way, appeared, seemingly from nowhere.

"Seen yer automobile, jedge," he announced from the doorway, "and thought I'd step around. That there ruff you spoke to me about a while back, I'll come in Monday or Tuesday an' fix her. It's them seams that is leakin'."

"I know you're a busy man, Nathan," said the judge.

"Jest wanted you to know I wasn't goin' to *fergit* yuh," said Nathan, peering over his glasses.

"I—I didn't think you would—" stammered the judge.

"I'll say I'll be in Monday morning," said Nathan, as he withdrew.

The judge stood up, and began to make his ponderous, mid-Victorian adieux. Jane and I followed him to the porch, for we were worried about his attack of gasps, and the unsteady way he moved gave us further anxiety.

We found Nathan had lingered outside, having suddenly decided to mend a rocking chair that had been broken for a month. This he had turned upside down, and he had already driven some tacks in the wavering rung. I was glad to find he had not gone; Nathan always cheered me. There is something wholesome and cleanly constructive about carpentry. I love the smell of wood, especially when, shaved by the plane, it grows yellow, and widely scatters its grained, streaked and freshly odorous curls.

"That cheered me," I said to the judge, "when things were at their worst. Nathan never seemed upset, and his tapping hammer told me that work and people must go on sanely working, whatever happens."

"Quite so," said the judge. "And poor Frank has no one to blame but himself"—Nathan righted the chair with a bang—"he shouldn't have gone poking. I—I warned him. People of that sort are dangerous to deal with—" He drew a long breath, and then suddenly said, "but dangerous people are always discovered, and punished. That is—eventually—"

"Yes," put in Nathan, "they air. That's what I says, jedge. I says, 'Who ever done it—if it wasn't that there bear trap—he'll get his come-uppance.' I says, 'Likely t'other murderer will be fixed, too. Likely the whole thing 'll come out!' I says, 'There is some things around here that ain't right,'—I've been a-feelin' that fer these many years—and time *and* agin I says, 'The Lord'll see to it in *His* time, and all will be righted.'"

The judge nodded, and with the assistance of his chauffeur, got into his car. As he disappeared Nathan's hammer tapped vigorously, almost belligerently, certainly with triumphant energy.

I stopped to speak to him, but had to leave him quickly for a pasty-faced young man with two girls drove up in a chummy roadster, and they wanted their tea.

I got the tea, and then reminded Jane with some fridity that it was her afternoon to serve. I decided I would take my pencil and pad to a spot on the hill, from which one can see a valley, a bit of creek, the bungalow and rolling fields. I thought that sketching would settle me. Of course, Billy tagged along.

The day was divine, and the woods were spicy and cool. Pine trees made the green above us almost black in its deepest shades, and their needles made the path a perilous but fascinating thing to travel. The soft feel under foot—the slip, and the absolute silence that they gave to walking was delightful.

A chipmunk ran across our path, chattering his disapproval of us; deep in the undergrowth a bird sang, and then, afterward, came quiet, all the more glorious from contrast. The smells, the fresh earth and growing-green tang in the breeze, the silence, had its effect on me. I felt let-down, and as if some fight-wound spring within my soul had loosened with a snap.

"Here we are," I said, as we stepped into a little clearing and began to make our way toward a high rock which was shaded by pine trees. "You can see for miles from that place. I meant to visit it a lot, because my perspective is faulty, and I knew drawing from it would help me, but—I haven't. None of us have done what we expected to here."

"Wish this was a desert island," said Billy. I smiled at him. I have never yet had a man even faintly in love with me who didn't want to be shipwrecked with me, alone, on some uninhabited island. And, I have had other girls tell me that that wish is as much a part of man as his Adam's apple. It always amuses me, because I never met one man, no matter how adoring, who didn't want to go off with the

boys occasionally, and sometimes more often.

"You'd have to do the cooking," I said. "I'm tired of it."

"No sandwiches," said Billy, as I settled. I agreed, hard!

"Look here, April—" said Billy, after I had taken two sights and had put in a fence and a barn roof.

"Gustave or the judge did it."

"Gustave?" I echoed, as I let my pencil drop and turned to him.

"Yes, Gustave—Gustave has been my bet right along. Nathan heard him say to Jane, 'Don't think that fellow will marry you. Why, in this jay burg they think a model's the perfect synonym for wickedness. He may try to make some other arrangement, but not that.'"

"Pretty crude," I said.

"Yes, but some sense to it, too. You know when people hear that a girl parades around in her birthday suit—"

"Never mind about that," I broke in irritably, "I know how you and the rest of your stodgy set feel, but what makes you think he wasn't just warning her in a friendly way?"

"Well," said Billy, as he lit a cigarette, "he was engaged to her, and that was before Gloria made her entrance. He may have turned to Gloria at first, out of jealousy."

"Hum, I don't know—" I answered doubtfully.

"I only say he *may* have. Then he threatened, you know how many times, to kill any one who hurt her. He must have been worried."

"He was perplexed; we all were. We knew Frank Lethridge was a woman-hater, and that Jane evidently wasn't much attracted, and yet—she would go off with him by the day."

"Do you believe he told her that about hunting the suds?"

"Yes," I answered. "She can't lie. At least, you know it when she does. Her eyes won't stay on the level. They waver. There is something more I want to talk to you about. If you could ignore paint and remember me, I might tell you," said Billy. His eyes teased me, and I wanted

to be aloof, but—I couldn't. For curiosity and skirts have been mine since the beginning of things. I put up my pencil, laid aside my tablet and moved closer to Billy. He sat, absolutely coolly forgetful of me—or so it seemed then—staring off across the hills.

"Go on Billy," I said, putting my hand on his arm. He turned quickly.

"In the first place, I love you," he said, "and then—"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GHOST AGAIN.

"THEN," he said, his face changing, "I want to protect you. That old beast—trying to flirt by calling you a Fra Angelico angel—saying things that make me want to kill him—"

"Don't!" I begged. "Don't ever say that."

"But I will! I *would* if he—if he ever—"

"This whole affair has gotten on your nerves," I said. "You're simply absurd, Billy."

I patted his arm a little, thinking it might calm him, but it didn't. He turned, put his arms around me, drew me close, and so that my head, lying against his shoulder, was just below him. Then he deliberately bent to kiss me, again and again, in spite of my struggles and protests. "I love you," he whispered, his voice roughened, and unsteady. "I love you. I *love* you! And—you love me, April. You do—oh, my *darling!*"

"I hate you," I said loudly, but I might as well have spoken of the weather, for Billy only muttered, "*Sweetheart!*" I was angry, but not only with Billy; I was angry with myself because I found that I really enjoyed having Billy—act that way. And—I had always planned to be a famous artist. Unfortunately, I can not do two things at one time, and so I thought Billy would not be done—at least by me. Before that afternoon I had always been able to decide coldly that Billy P. Watts could not be in my scheme of things; but—with that afternoon, my suffering began. I still

realized that it would be Art or Billy, and I still betted on Art, but—it hurt to bet. Billy had made it hurt by acting—that way.

"I hope you are satisfied," I managed to say with some degree of hauteur, as I sat erect and free of his arm.

"Oh, not *half!*" he answered, after a deep, catchily drawn breath.

Then I told him what I thought of him, growing more angry as I heard what I did think of him. It was terrible. "I shall never trust you again," I said, toward the close.

"But April," said Billy, in a very subdued, hurt way. "You know, dear, you must know, that you don't hate me. You—you sorta returned the compliment while I was kissing you—once or twice. You sorta—"

I stood up. It was true, but I didn't think Billy would mention my kissing him, even to me. I explained that I was awfully absent-minded, and that if I did I probably hadn't meant to, and—but I got no further, for Billy, who was standing, too, tilted my chin, and laughed down at me.

"Leather goods and William P. Watts don't fit in with your schemes for life, do they?" he asked. I said decidedly not. "And so—" he went on, "you are fighting something that belongs to you quite as much as does your adorable, little turned-up nose, and your little rose-bud mouth—" He stopped speaking and his eyes grew serious. "Dearest, I wish you'd be absent-minded again," he whispered. "Oh, *April!*"

But I began to feel the ache that was to trouble me so much after that, and so I was cruel.

"Really, Billy," I said, "this whole thing bores me. I came up here to sketch, you promised to tell me of your suspicions, and instead—" I shrugged my shoulders. "First," I continued, "you insult a perfectly well-meaning old man, and then—"

"Well-meaning old man?" he shouted. "Well-meaning? If you weren't so absolute sweet and innocent you'd see that whisky-soaked old devil's attitude. I—" Billy's voice failed, he was growing apo-

plectic. "If he were younger—" he finished, "I'd—I don't know what I *wouldn't* do! As it is—if he fools around here much more I'll fill him up with bird-shot! I'll fix anybody who bothers you. You may not know it, but you *do* belong to me, *understand?*"

With these words he took hold of my shoulders and turned me, until I faced him. For various reasons I avoided his eyes, and—looking past him, into the woods, I saw a face—fairly close to us, this face, and peering through low-grown bushes. For some reason I did not then sense, and do not understand now, I did not cry out or tell Billy what I saw.

Again I said, "You bore me!" and this time sharply and nervously. And then, Billy's hands falling away, I gathered up my pencils and pad and I whispered, "If you say another word about this now, I'll never forgive you!" But—that did not work.

"Don't tell me you champion that old idiot!" shouted Billy. "Don't tell me you don't see through him! I'll tell you, April, Nathan has something on him. I know it!"

"Hush!" I entreated.

"I won't!" Billy sung out. "If he's made an impression on you, enlisted your sympathies, you might as well know that Nathan has the goods on him—"

But he stopped then, for I ran down the path and Billy followed. "The judge is connected with this," he said when he caught up to me, "and he's trying to avert suspicion. He's planting it here, that's why he warns *you* about being caught in the clues. Old Nathan—"

I turned to him, and spoke sharply.

"Billy P. Watts, you are the biggest fool that ever lived. When I do marry, I will choose a man with some discretion, and one whom I can respect. Some one heard every word we said—some one I've seen before—I can't think where—"

"What do you mean?" asked Billy. I told him.

"Back of us up there?" he asked, stupidly. I nodded.

"Suppose he heard it all?"

"How could he help it?" I replied.

"You shouted, for one thing, that you'd love to fill the judge with bird-shot, and that you longed to decrease the population. You howled threats!"

"Oh, dammit!" said Billy. I slipped, and he put his hand under my arm.

"Suppose they think you're guilty?" I asked, my heart almost stopping with the thought.

"I wasn't here," answered Billy.

"But suppose," I said, and I don't know what made me, "something *else* happens?"

"Something else? My Heavens, April, aren't you satisfied?"

"Absolutely—" I answered, "but—" and then, very quickly I said: "I know where I saw him."

"Where?"

"Up the creek, the day of the murder or suicide—I passed him. He was sitting just where I wanted to poke—you see, I'd felt the box—and I didn't dare. I had to go on. I went on, you know, saw Gloria and Gustave, and then came back and he had gone."

"Would you know him again?"

"I think so."

"You *know* this was the man?"

I answered very certainly, for I was certain, entirely certain. "Yes," I replied, "it was he."

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Billy.

"If," I said, after some moments that were full of uncomfortable reflection, "Old Nathan is interrupting the judge to keep him quiet, isn't old Nathan probably the guilty one?"

"Just why would a man of the judge's standing bother to shield an old woodsman?" Billy asked. "Be intimidated by him, and—if he were aware of a crime he committed, keep quiet about it? No, Nathan has something on the judge. For reasons best known to himself, probably because of cleverly put threats of the judge's, he is not revealing what he knows; but, when the judge troubles you, and Nathan hears the judge hint against him, why then he takes what he knows up for defense, and reminds the judge that he is there. Isn't that the best solution?"

I nodded.

"Nathan likes and means to protect

you. He knows the judge and men like him; for the judge, most intimate friend of this notorious Rudolph Loucks, was, perhaps, in his day, another one—he concealed his little affairs more cleverly, no doubt; but there were probably enough to hang him if they had been unearthed. Nathan was Rudolph Loucks's caretaker. Perhaps he has one of the judge's indiscretions stored up from that time. Perhaps"—Billy paused as he threw down a cigarette and stamped out the fire—"he has a later and more serious offense of the judge's in mind. The judge was here the day that Frank Lethridge was killed or—committed suicide. The judge was warning him 'about investments.' Well, I've investigated. They hadn't one made together. From various reasons I am sure of this."

"Perhaps they were in one name?" I suggested.

"No, I think not," Billy replied. "Frank Lethridge played safe. He had seen too many losses to do otherwise. The judge is a plunger. They say he's lost two sizeable fortunes through reckless buying"—I recalled my doubt at the time he boasted of his successful investments—"just now he's fooling with silver and an oil project—Texas oil. The thing hasn't even been drilled yet."

"Don't tell me that men of those opposite beliefs would go together on anything. I've been sitting in the club a lot in town, listening and pumping. Those two chaps were direct opposites. No one seems to have thought it queer that they would do business together, but—I do, and I don't believe it. And tell me, if you please, why would a customer of the First National Bank go to the Conewango Valley Bank cashier with investments? It seems the judge had a row with Frank Lethridge's bank ten years ago, and walked out with his account, swearing never to return. Likely, isn't it, that he and Frank Lethridge would join forces?"

"I asked about Lethridge's affairs. His money was in farm mortgages, water stock, street railways, municipal bonds, good safe and sane little banks; he owned an ice company in Oklahoma, a hotel in Southern

Kansas. All of them paid well, but not spectacularly. Now the judge always expects to make heavily, and plays to do so. That means risk. Why, their playing together is rot!" /

"Nathan said the judge warned him against whisky," I put in, "because he wanted his hiding-place undisturbed; that that was really it."

"Another lie. It is shipped in here in Hatch Grim's caskets, but it comes out of those and goes into the judge's cellar direct. Hatch Grim owns a piece of wood land out past the Beasley farm. He's cutting it for firewood. This is stored in his cellars down-town. The judge goes in and says: 'Might send us up some of your pine knots, Grim. My wife likes the open fire.'

"Well, Grim sends it up—in baskets. Pine knots go in 'em, and underneath—something else—well, the judge's chauffeur unloads it. I met him dead drunk the other night. He bumbled about firewood. I asked where it was sold, went into Hatch Grim's, slipped him twenty-five, asked him for firewood, said I wanted to *look* at it, and I was shown the cellar. In that romantic spot, backed by coffins of every description, one drinks. I met two worthy gentlemen down there who were so far gone that they couldn't stand. One of them was snoring loudly, lying on what is known in the undertaking world as a 'cooling board,' and the other was gracing a side-opening casket and sobbing about 'death being among us on every hand.'

"The undertaker's assistant mixes the drinks—rather shoves you a bottle—you go sit on a coffin and sling it in. And it was the rottenest stuff! Combination of hair tonic and liquid fire. I fanned my tongue all the way home. But—to get down to the tacks, it *isn't* hauled out of town; it comes right from the undertaker's cellar to the judge's cellar. Maybe Frank Lethridge *thought* there was some buried out here, but why did the judge warn him? And—about what?"

I said I gave it up. It was too baffling.

"The judge comes out past Gus Dirks's farm," went on Billy. "He rides out there regularly—to get vegetables. Perhaps he does, but why does he pass Gus's place?"

Gus has the best and cheapest vegetables in this part of the country. Why are the tracks of his motor around the river so often? Why did I find a pole there one morning near that car's wheels? Why do I hear Nathan say: 'Ain't you a worryin' around here a *little mite too often*, jedge?' And then hear the judge reply: '*I intend to fish in this creek!*' Use his best oratorical voice in that simple response, and then—see him go white and quail, mutter about getting into town, turn, and *slink* off? Why did Nathan go off chuckling?"

"I give up!" I said.

"I wish you'd come off with me," said Billy, his voice growing tender. "I'm worried; I'll admit I am. *I don't like you to be here!*"

"It is not fair to leave them now," I answered. "Nan is completely engrossed with Laurence, Gustave is half insane, Jane is alone and morbid, Midgette hysterical. I think I should stay and do what little I can; I promised to. We all did, Billy; we made a solemn vow."

"But I wish you could see it differently," Billy added.

We came out of the hill woods and stepped on the level. Jane came running toward us crying. "The ghost on the hillside—" she gasped. "I saw it, and so did others. I wish I were dead, I do, I do!"

Billy ran ahead to the spot where you could see the far hillside, and here I joined him, after giving a little comfort to Jane—or trying to. "Some one is playing a joke," said Billy; but his color had changed, rather faded. I did not answer, because in times like those my mouth grows dry and speech grows difficult. Together we watched the figure slip into the woods. It slid over the ground, slowly slid over the ground, and then—disappeared into the black of the woods which backed that rolling, peaceful-looking field.

"We mustn't tell Midgette," gasped Jane. "She'd have a fit, and I think she will stick it out if nothing new disturbs her—but this—"

I nodded.

"And she'd take all the furniture with her," went on Jane, after a breath so deep

that it was almost a sob. "I know her. And then where would we be? I haven't enough to go back to New York, and besides—I don't want to go—beaten. We told everyone, you know."

I kept my eyes on the field as she talked. And, although there was nothing to see there at that time, it was hard to look away.

"I'm going up there, dear," said Billy, and was off.

"You forgot our vows," said Jane piously after Billy hurried off.

"I wouldn't say much about that," I replied before I reflected. Jane didn't answer. "And," I continued, in a hurry, "'dear' means nothing when Billy says it. He calls every one that."

"I know," agreed Jane. "I heard him call the girl who brings the milk, dear, the other morning. I was only joking." I felt myself grow red and then white; I have never been so enraged! And I knew then for a certainty that Billy didn't matter, but I meant to pay him back, and make him just as uncomfortable as I possibly could for that piece of wicked treachery. But, even though his presence and safety were nothing to me, I was glad, a half-hour later, to see him come up the steps of the bungalow porch and to hear his voice.

He told Midgette that there was a caterpillar sitting on her lap; did this just for fun, so I judged that nothing was greatly amiss. Later in the evening he approached me and I conquered my loathing long enough to ask him what he'd found.

"First," he said, "will you please tell me what I've done? Is this great coolness just the natural reaction from that mass of garbage which masqueraded as a dinner, or have I put my good number eleven in it again?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean," I replied.

"You know very well," said Billy, "that you're peeved. I don't know what I've done, but it's easy enough to see that I've *done* it."

"Oh, you're mistaken," I answered, as women do when they are really put out. "I'm not a bit annoyed. Perhaps I'm a little tired and would like to be alone."

"You're a spiteful little cat!" said Billy. And then I asked what he'd found on the hillside.

"Was it red paint?" I asked, quoting from the notes that had been stolen.

"No," said Billy, "it was not." His face changed, and he frowned. "Damn it all, April," he went on quickly, "it was blood, and it was warm!" I nodded. For I supposed that was what he would find. His acknowledging it made me a little sick; made me feel crawly and cold; but, I'd half expected it, even from the material, money-grubbing Billy. I started toward the lights from the living-room window.

"April," called Billy.

"What?" I asked, not turning my head.

"Don't go in—there's going to be a ripping moon."

"She'll have to rip without me," I answered.

"There is something the matter."

Again I said: "I don't know what you mean," and then I went inside. Midgette and Jane were playing slap-jack. They scratched each other's fingers doing it, acted like children, and pretended to be much amused by their idiotic pursuit. They were really giggling at Laurence, who was reading aloud a half-blown poem to Nan. She sat on the edge of a chair, hands clasped, and her face in the grip of a tenthward expression, burbling: "Perfect!" or "Too lovely. Oh, Laurence! Divine!"

I wasn't feeling particularly good-humored, but even I smiled. Then I forgot Laurence and Nan, and asked a perfectly natural question. I wondered why I had never seen the girl who delivered the milk—when they didn't forget to deliver it—and I asked what she looked like.

"Curly hair," said Midgette.

"And the most adorable laugh," put in Jane.

"Cunning little feet," added Midgette.

"And a lisp," Jane said. I got up from the chair in which I'd flung myself and said I thought I'd go to bed. I hate girls who lisp. The idea of this one lisping enraged me.

"Better get up and see her," said Midgette. "She's worth it!"

"Nothing's worth getting up for," I an-

swered. "I've never seen a morning-glory, and never intend to. Even a sunrise never tempted me. As for milkmaids—" I stopped expressively, and then I went upstairs. As I mounted the last steps I heard laughter from below. I suppose they thought I was jealous. Well, of course I wasn't, that was absurd; but I suppose the afternoon and seeing that horrible thing had upset me, for I did wish I was dead!

I reflected a good deal about my funeral as I slipped out of my clothes, and about just how I would look, and I grew so sorry for myself that I almost cried. But after I staged Billy against my death I felt better. I had him turn with utter loathing from his infatuation for the country maid; I saw him kiss my pallid lips; I really heard him say: "*Too late!*" After which I imagined him covering his eyes with his hands. I did get up early the next morning, because I hadn't slept well, and for no other reason.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE FOG.

"MY Heavens!" said Billy, pretending to faint as I came down the stairs. I ignored him, because I felt frightfully groggy, irritable, and abused.

"The milk hasn't come," said Jane with a smile. Midgette giggled. I ignored this also. Billy followed me to the living-room, and deliberately opened himself to a rebuff by saying: "Why, I had to get my affections all tangled around the human ice-house!"

"You might as well untangle them," I answered.

He said: "I wish I could!" And then Nan called us to breakfast. It was a frightful meal, and to see Gustave accept it without a murmur was really sad. The only thing he said was: "Is this coffee or tea?" And when Nan told him, quite sharply, he murmured: "Thank you, I hope I didn't offend; I only wondered."

Then I heard a noise at the kitchen door, and decided I wanted a drink, so I followed Billy, who had immediately jumped up to

admit the milk. And he did kiss her, and she did lisp; I think she was six or seven.

"Crazy about that youngster," he said, as I passed. "She is a cunning kiddy. April, don't you—" But I didn't hear the rest, for I had slipped out of the door and had hurried down to the landing. Here I got into the Jean-Marie and paddled off into the fog. Tears of mortification and—something else—smarted beneath my eyelids. I hated Jane and Midgette for stringing me as they had, and Billy for making me miserable—for being able to make me miserable.

The fog got into my throat and made me cough, and the great white sheet frightened and awed me. But I could not go back and face that jeering mob, and Billy's jubilant tenderness, for I knew that Jane and Midgette would tell the tale. I suppose I would have enjoyed it if it had happened to any one else; but, as it was, the relief I had felt terrified me and made me want solitude.

I went a little way up-stream and then rested my paddle, and in the middle of the creek, on that cold, white-shrouded morning, I thought of the things a girl does think of, who balances a career and marriage. The two can go together for few people, I am convinced of that. The people who embrace both—the women, I mean—have to be very strong, splendid, and altogether super-women, or they neglect a husband or a career.

And I had wanted to paint; to grow as famous as Forman Stockwell, or Montgomery Post; to have my things on the best covers, and associated with covering the best. I had dreamed of a real studio in Paris—not the sort I had had there, in a fifth-rate pension, with a dingy proprietress ever banging at my door to remind me of the unpaid rent! I'd wanted a two-storied hall in which I could hang rare tapestries, and the finest bits of color—something like Iris Stocky's place. Oh, I'd dreamed it—every inch—and I was to make it for myself and then stand before it.

But, against that curtain of fog, I saw Billy and life in his town, which is fifty-some miles from New York. I saw the buttons that I would be morally respon-

sible for; the orders to the grocer, which would embrace carrots, fly-paper, onions, and potatoes, and other things, with which one does not associate art. But, somehow, Billy and that small girl overshadowed the other, and I suddenly found myself crying—crying hard, as women who don't cry easily do when things that matter happen.

But suddenly I forgot Billy; I forgot the thing that had troubled and then made me most divinely happy, for through the fog I heard voices, and one of these was Gloria Vernon's.

Perhaps they were not as close as they seemed; I could not tell, for the fog took strange liberties with sounds, carrying them boldly and far in its white folds, or dimming them. Any one who has fished on a river in the early morning will know what I mean; how you may, for a minute, hear the creak of an oar-lock which seems about ten feet away, and then have it fade, and when it again reappears, hear it as it is, fifty or sixty feet up or down-stream. I raised my head and sat tensely held as I heard a mutter in a man's low-pitched voice. Then I heard the swirl of water, and Gloria Vernon's voice.

"If," she said shrilly, "yuh think you'll plant it on *him*, you're left!"

He muttered something which I took to be a warning from her response which was:

"My God, *they* aren't up. Come down to brass ones, Zip. I tell you not to fix it on him. Understand?"

"Why not?" This voice was heavy, and it carried a sneer.

"Because I say not. And I'm working with yuh. *See?*"

"No," the heavy voice replied. "I don't, my girl."

"Well, by God, you'd better!" said Gloria of the erstwhile liquid voice. "Look here, Harry—" Her voice sank; I couldn't get what she said. His had sunk, too, and I could only catch tones. I longed to move closer to them, and didn't dare. And I loved the fog that I had, up to the moment of their voices, feared. "Nathan—" I heard her say shrilly, and then, after a moment; "but he won't be livin' so much more anyway, so why not? I tell you he's about ready to kick off."

"But Sing Sing—" said the man after what I judged to be a protest.

"Why not let it rest?" said the voice I knew to be Gloria Vernon's. "No one's going to kick. Five, six months, and then—"

"Suppose," I heard after moments of muttering, "they find one—"

"It was a trap"—her voice responded—"they can't say—"

Again there were mutters, and then the man forgot caution. "By God, Vera," he said, "*if I thought you was—*"

"You shut up, you—" But I can't go on with her characterization. I am used to free speech; to the careless "God," and the matter of course "damn"; but this was simply vile, that's all. I wondered how in the world she could store all that filth up without its running over and into her every-day talk. It almost made me sick.

After she finished that, and he made some muttered apologies, they whispered some more and only forgot caution once or twice. The sun was rising, and I began to be hysterically afraid that I would be discovered, and that all I had heard would amount to nothing. I knew I ran grave danger, and that, if they found me, getting away would not be easy; but that was not what worried me—my canoe was swift, and I can paddle; I judged that they were in Nathan's punt—what worried me was letting them get wind of being watched.

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.

I wanted them to remain unaware that some one had been sitting almost on top of them that morning of the heavy mist; that some one had heard not all, but enough to matter greatly. I wanted to get them alive and on the job; this man, whoever he was, and Gloria, or, as he called her, Vera.

"Where'd yuh plant 'em?" I heard next. Gloria's voice.

"Up"—voice faded for several words—"until Wednesday. Then"—again a fade of meaning, and only the blurred tone—"and by God, if he don't keep it still he'll land in hell!"

Gloria laughed.

"You say he did last Tuesday?" she asked.

His voice faded. It rose on: "The writing was a woman's, and you see—"

"Don't I?" she responded. "I know that old—my God, he'll jump for it. Can you see"—a lull in which I could not hear—"and after he opens it—" Then they both laughed. After that came her voice again. She almost shouted: "They all deserve it! We'll teach 'em! We who suffer—we—" It slipped into a mumble.

"I warn yuh, Vera," said the man's voice, and then—I heard a sound across the water. My heart absolutely stopped as some one's paddle dipped, and rose to dip again. Some one was coming toward me in a rowboat, for I heard the creak of oarlocks that needed oil.

FAIRIES

DO you believe in fairies?

I do.

A fairy came to me one night,
It's true.

A wondrous fairy, with a wand of gold,
Just touched my heart—so sad and cold—
Filled it with sunshine,

Warm and bright—like spring.

See—now upon my hand—

A fairy ring!

Margaret G. Hays.



Love in St. Louis.

by Marc Edmund Jones

JERRY first noticed the girl talking to one of the salesmen, and it struck him somehow that she was young and obviously inexperienced to be purchasing Texas oil stocks.

Then he mopped his brow. There was something bright and cool about her, serving to drive home to him the realization of just how hot it was. His sleeves were up, his coat and collar off; but such detail of attempted comfort meant little at the end of the torrid afternoon.

"Gosh blast St. Louis," he muttered; then added, without pretense of originality, "it sure's no place to stay in the summer-time."

Yet the girl looked cool. To have a further glimpse of her he rose and sauntered toward the water-cooler.

She was a slim little thing. Her skirt was white, of duck, and her shoes, white also, were satin. On top of all concealing the most of a wealth of black hair, was a huge flopping hat, the color of which was rather staggering. It was frankly, undeniably red—a flaming, shrieking red.

Perhaps it was because she was so small that the hat seemed becoming rather than out of place. A tall girl could not have worn it, nor a stout one. Jerry Marsh himself had learned to shun bright things. He knew they made him roly-poly. Yet his

weight was not so terribly much—for his height.

To discover the color of her eyes he strolled over to the window where the stenographer perspired at her typewriter. Poor Belle! She had been the first to succumb to the heat. Her resignation was in and this, her last day, was super-tropical by way of a send-off.

"Well, Jerry, old rhinoceros," she said, "will you think of me to-morrow on my way to Wisconsin? Will you envy me when I'm paddling about in the cool waters of Pelican Lake? Will you wish you could see me when you think of me in my new Kellerman—"

"Go to Czecho-Slovakia!" he told her.

"Now, now—" Belle pulled at her clothes in places where they clung to her. Escaping all this, she could afford to be cheerful.

He did not hear, but assumed an elaborately natural manner as he turned to face the diminutive owner of the big red hat. To his chagrin the girl had changed her position. Her business was finished, presumably. She extended her hand to the man who talked to her, then started for the door. If he had been at his desk he might have exchanged glances with her as she passed him. At the least he would have learned the color of her eyes. And the

whole episode, to a man who never once missed the Ziegfeld Follies, was poignantly disappointing. Beauty, beauty adorned and topped with red, had invaded the offices of Capren & Dolcott, Investment Brokers. He—Jerry Marsh—had failed to make the most of his opportunity.

He returned to his work but looked thoughtfully at the clock before tackling the pile of papers before him. Twenty to five! Could he accomplish anything in twenty minutes? Was it worth while to bring the functions of his brain down to the point of business detail for that tiny bit of an afternoon? Suddenly he sat up, then rose, and whistling softly, began to put his work away.

"A shame," he murmured, after a moment. "Sell oil stocks to a—to a girl like that! Course Texas's got the oil—two big brand new fields, but it's a gamble, and—a nice little girl like that—"

All at once he realized that Capren, of the firm, stood over him. In the little man's hands was a *fresh* sheaf of letters.

"These are yours, Marsh!" the broker explained.

Capren was the partner Jerry liked, for he lacked the sarcastic bluntness of old Dolcott and—a big difference to the young esthete—did not chew tobacco in public. But Stanley Dolcott knew oil and the oil fields and the whole Southwest and was, in fact, the firm. Capren remained in St. Louis, directing the sales force, handling missionary work among prospective investors.

"They can hold over until to-morrow," the little man went on, "that is, most of them. The Detroit office wants a summary of Wellston dividends and here are several inquiries about stocks of which we have no record—you may have to go through the various—"

"I gotcha, chief!"

Jerry took the papers, heading off further explanations. With a show of industry he began to go through them. Cautiously he watched his superior return to the inner office. Then with a quick movement, which piled all his work into an indiscriminate mess, he swept the contents of the top of his desk into an open drawer.

Locking it, he put on his collar and tie with extra perspiration and his coat with sticky haste.

"I'm off, Belle," he told the stenographer. "The blessings of an anchorite upon you, and"—charitably—"here's hoping when you come back and look for a job you'll get it somewhere else."

"I hope you're fired," she responded, but he was out of the door.

In the tiled corridors of the Boatmen's Bank Building, where Capren & Dolcott occupied half an upper floor, there was the suggestion of coolness, but it was not appreciable. Out on Broadway, after purchasing a *Star*, he stopped in sudden indecision.

It was perhaps the first day of the season in which the summer heat had made him as admittedly uncomfortable. The idea of the long ride to Webster Groves seemed appalling. Somehow he felt that the little suburb where he rented his room, generally the coolest of all those about St. Louis, would itself be hot this particular evening. Even if cool he would find nothing to do but go to the movies—the same cramped air-dome with the same dawdling music, the same love-sickening month-old features and laughless comedies, the same faces with the same whispered conversations to be heard on every side—a dreary prospect indeed.

Then the walk or ride to the Union Station to take a suburban train was not worth the comfort of the short run by steam. He knew the Manchester cars would be packed as usual, with the usual crowds for Mera-mec. The University cars were entirely too congested to warrant the pleasure of the trip through Clayton. He made up his mind to remain down-town for supper—to do anything rather than go home before he had to.

Down Broadway, from Olive, on the other side of the street in the block between Locust and St. Charles, was a new *cafeteria*. For several weeks its huge electric sign had flagged his attention, and piqued his curiosity to a certain degree. He decided to try it.

It was in the basement with an entrance lavish in marble and an attractive canopy.

He wondered he had not yet been drawn across the street for lunch. Down the steps there was a brightness and newness about everything. The room was wide and deep. By some miracle of ventilation the place was almost cool so that with the call of appetite he forgot the heat.

At five o'clock there could be no crowd, but the food was on the steam tables and a number of the girls, immaculately white, were ready to wait upon him. He supported his tray through the devious processes of loading his selections, procuring a check, and finding a table near a fan. He arranged his meal before him, allowing its fragrance to intrigue his nostrils, settled into his chair, and glanced up. Then he started—eyes wide at what he saw before him.

There was no mistaking that bright red hat, nor the lithe slender form of the girl beneath it. The enticing marble entrance, diagonally across from the Boatmen's Bank, had caught her as well as himself. This—this was his chance to study her, to pass judgment upon the quality and nature of her charm.

Without waiting for second thought he reloaded his tray. He walked over by and close to her and observed that she was nearly through. He kept on until he could take a table, gracefully; close enough to see the color of her eyes at last, far enough so that she would not suspect his motive.

Blue! Blue, they were, but dark and very delicately tinted. And shaded by long sweeping lashes which were very perfect. He sighed.

Then suddenly he realized he was not eating; that she had almost completed her meal. A daring thought obtruded itself within his consciousness. He had nothing to do this evening. She seemed to be alone. He did not dare speak to her, but—

He ate his filet mignon in four gluttonous bites and took half of his coffee to wash it down. She was still nibbling her salad daintily. He tackled his potatoes and as they were dry, he consumed the rest of the coffee and the whole of his glass of water. Then he decided that he had plenty of time. The pie he enjoyed.

Still she sat at her place quietly. If she

noticed him she gave him no indication. To him it seemed that her thoughts were far divorced from her surroundings.

Finally she rose. He followed and kept her in sight, cautiously. When she took the Olive-Delmar car he smiled, entering just after her. When she selected from force of habit the side of the car away from the heater he found a place back on the platform bench where he could smoke and watch her.

Was she going to Delmar Garden? She might be going merely to change cars, to take the line for Creve Cœur Lake. There he might find a chance to meet her, or to scrape an acquaintance in some way. Then his face fell. Perhaps she was only going home. After all the mere fact that she had eaten down-town meant nothing. She would hardly go to a public amusement resort alone, even this early in the evening.

From his seat it was hard to see her. He could catch a glimpse now and then of her white slippers and he was able to study the contour of her neck, to catch the olive of her skin as the low ruddy sun struck through the window of the car occasionally. He felt himself becoming fascinated, and yet—what a fool he was! What chance was there of meeting her? Nevertheless he felt a thrill shoot through him as the car took the turn at Taylor and as her little hand slipped over the edge of the seat for support. What a fool!

At King's Highway she alighted. He followed her off, sure that she would see and recognize him, yet unwilling to abandon the chase. For just a moment her eyes did rest upon his face, a glance soft and not without consciousness of the presumably eligible young man close by her, but it was the briefest instant and there was no recognition.

As she walked toward Forest Park it was easy to keep at a distance. For fear she would turn into some of the private residence places he dared not remain too far, but she led the way direct to the public park.

This was ground familiar to him. The upper end, demolished and torn up to create a site for the World's Fair years be-

fore, was not longer a friendly spot. But here were paths and trees reminiscent of his childhood. Here was the inconsequential River Des Perés. There was the little bit of meadow where he had fought it out with his bitterest boyhood enemy. He wondered if she had been here before, if St. Louis could be her home, if the park meant anything more to her than auto ways and big old forest giants and grass green and little different from that of any other park in any other city.

If there were memories for the girl she did not pause. Cutting directly into the grounds from King's Highway at Lindell, she swung back towards the east gradually, as though accustomed to the route, emerging again at the other lower corner. Then, to his surprise, she boarded an outbound Market car, too quickly for him to take it also.

For an instant he was baffled. Then he smiled, for there was another car immediately behind. He found a seat on the box by the motorman and watched so he could catch her when she got off. He blessed the fact that this line carried traffic to Forest Park Highlands. Because of that the cars were close together. He had not lost her yet.

Was she going to an amusement resort after all? Was she going to the Highlands? He felt an adventurous exultation. If she did he surely would meet her.

And if he met her he would put himself upon his best behavior. He would show her that he was a regular fellow since he felt her to be a regular girl. And—he smiled, happy at this—he would keep her from taking a foolish chance, from investing in wild-cat oil schemes. Many of the companies were legitimate and all right, but she might make a mistake. That he would prevent.

Sure enough she alighted at the main entrance. He hurried from his car, following her leisurely. He noticed that it was dusk, that the huge electric arcs were illuminating the space in front of the gate, but it was easy to keep her in sight because of the hat, red and gloriously bright still in the artificial light.

With disconcerting abruptness, however,

she stopped. As she did so she turned and waited. He realized all at once that she was looking straight at him. Her glance, resting frankly upon his face, disturbed him. Distinctly uncomfortable, he began to realize again how hot and sticky it was.

As he drew abreast of her he looked away with assumed nonchalance. But he was not to pass. A little hand, imperious in its movement, shot out and touched his coat, checking him.

"You know"—her voice was soft, with the modulation of the South—"you know, I don't know you at all, really."

"Well—" In his amazement he found himself tongue-tied. "What the—" he started, but he knew profanity would never do. "I—"

She giggled, turned, and hurried away.

Sheepishly, he scuffed his shoe in the sand of the street-car terminal, ruining his shine. She—she did not want to be followed. He slipped on his coat and put his hat upon his head. It was no cooler with the approach of night, but she might have been distressed to find a coatless, hatless and perspiring man upon her trail when she had seemed so cool herself. Then—

But suddenly, instead of pursuing his reflections, he straightened. He would not give up that easily. She—glorious thought—had spoken to him. She had laughed. She had not been displeased at all, so near as he could see. He—he was a fool to be put off that easily. So he hurried to the entrance, paid his admission, and rushed in. Though he had lost sight of her, he was unworried.

Yes, she wore the reddest, quite the most vermilion hat in all the State of Missouri. It was not that it was offensively red, he told himself rushing here and there seeking a glimpse of it.

On the scenic railway he found her. He distinguished the flapping brims of her straw as the car in which she sat, gripping the sides, flashed around the topmost curve. He jostled and elbowed his way through the crush to a vantage point in time to watch the train arrive. Then, to his chagrin, he saw her keep her seat and pay for a second ride.

Before he could wake to action she was whisked away. He bought a ticket, bursting through upon the platform. He worked his way to the front, so as not to lose her upon her arrival. But as before she paid for another ride and though he tried to secure a seat himself there were too many awaiting their turn and he was maneuvered back by a stout German family from South St. Louis. Again she was whipped away.

Would she want the thrill of the dips another time? She did. Profiting by his previous experience he made certain he would not be pushed aside, but sprang into the seat behind her before the car stopped. Following him others crowded forward; the places were all taken and they slipped away.

At last he was close to her. He joyed in the thought that he could reach out and touch her if he wished. He rejoiced to think that as they shot downward for each of the sudden drops she must experience the same tuggings at the stomach as he, and he felt a sense of affinity in the fact that they were compelled to grasp the same side of the same car as they swung around the stiff sharp curves. But—he did nothing.

The ride over, she paid again. He followed her example. Taciturn mechanics occupying the two half seats were replaced by giggling flappers. One lost her hat. Both yelled and screamed and chewed gum in spite of the steepest dip. Then the end was reached once more. Once more she reached within her beaded bag for the fare. Once more he followed suit.

Finally the crowd thinned out. They were taken up with the seats beside them empty. It was a momentary lull in business for this particular concession. At the top she looked around as if to see that he was there. Before he recovered from the thrill of that the drops and turns caught him breathless and unprepared. He grunted, gasping for air. There was the rush of wind as they speeded through the upper scenic tunnel, another series of curves and grades, and then a sudden grinding and crashing sound as the car was caught by some obstruction in the lower covered

portion of the ride and was brought abruptly to a stop in the darkness.

A hand reached back, searching excitedly until it caught his sleeve.

"Please"—he knew the voice now, would have known it anywhere—"climb over the seat and sit with me. I'm—I'm afraid."

He obeyed with alacrity. She said nothing:

"I—I—" It seemed incumbent upon him to make the conversation, if any were to be made. "I should think you would hesitate at—at appealing to a stranger."

"Oh, you're not a stranger."

"Not a—"

"Why, no! You might call yourself a bloodhound, an anemic one, or a clinging aroma, or a shadow—except that you're too big to be a shadow for little me—"

"You mean—"

"As if I didn't know you were behind me all the time. Bah!" He felt the momentary flick of her hand, as if a gesture was lost in the blackness of the tunnel. "I saw you following me in the park."

"No!"

"Yes!" Now he caught the banter in her tones. "And I watched you in the cafeteria and I think you eat too fast."

"But—but—listen—"

"It's the only thing you do do fast, however, I should say."

"W—what do you mean?"

"You had a filet mignon on your tray. I—I nearly got one and I saw it as you passed. And you had potatoes, a whole lot of them, and two pieces of pie. And I saw you take that piece of steak and eat it in four bites—I counted them—and the potatoes—" She sighed. "No wonder you're fat!"

"Good grief!" He flushed and was glad she could not see his face. "Fat?"

"Well, you've got me fearfully crowded in this little seat, I'll say that."

He tried to move over but it was no use. She laughed.

"Anyhow it was too rich food for this kind of weather, you know that; and you— you simply bolted it."

"W—what did you mean when you said it was the only thing I do fast?"

"How many times have I gone around this thing?"

"W-what's that got to do—"

"Now you're proving it."

"Proving—"

"That eating's the only swift thing you do."

For a moment he contemplated the situation. Then he beamed, for all that his expression was not to be seen.

"You—you meant for me to take a ride also, so we could—"

"Isn't it better than following me around and worrying me?"

"Yes, but do you generally—"

"No, I never scrape acquaintances."

"Uh—but I'm a stranger."

"Stranger? Never. You work for Capren & Dolcott."

"Oh! You saw me—you saw me this afternoon?"

"Very much. You were the hottest looking thing about the place. Any one who'll eat tenderloin and potatoes and heavy pastry in July in St. Louis—"

There was a sudden fitful gleam of light ahead, several employes of the concession appearing suddenly with lanterns and various implements. Silhouetted against the faint gleam were two couples in front, heads together in full advantage of the darkness. These were joy-seekers with no time to be alarmed. The damage was of little account. A new attendant, some thirty or forty feet further down the track, had pulled his lever too vigorously. The long board, first of a series of brakes arranged to apply pressure against the sides of the cars as they passed, had caught and held them firmly. The system of block signals had halted the train behind at the top of the previous incline.

"Shall we go round again?" he asked.

"Hardly!"

They climbed out of the car, emerging in the glare of the arcs, but the ever-efficient brim of her hat hid all but her mouth and chin.

"You mean you're afraid now—"

"Indeed I am not." First indignant, she smiled, and her teeth were very lovely. "They won't have another accident this year, perhaps. And—" Suddenly she tilted

her head back to look up at him. "What further reason have I for patronizing this place?"

For an instant he watched the play of mischief in her eyes, then he slipped a hand beneath her arm in proprietary manner. "You still think I am—am slow?"

"Very! You know we—girls, I mean—can't very well introduce ourselves to men, even though they look all right. And I—I liked you when I saw you in the office this afternoon—and when I realized you were following me I walked on into the park instead of going home and I walked slow—and then I came here and I even spoke to you and then I rode around and around that coaster until—but what's a person to do when she's alone?"

"You live in St. Louis?"

"Yes, but I've just started to, and I don't know any one yet."

"What's—what's your name?"

"There you go," she protested, drawing away. "Why do you want to spoil it all? I said I liked you and, well, I'm violating a lot of conventions—but—"

"Excuse me," he pleaded, "please! I won't be inquisitive."

She slipped to his side again. Suddenly he felt welling up within him an impulse of tenderness toward this girl. He remembered that he had promised himself to protect her from foolish investments; now he realized she should be protected from other ill-considered things.

"You know," he began, seriously, "you're taking awful chances scraping acquaintances with men you know nothing about."

"Well"—laughing—"if it will ease your mind I'll confess that I never did it before and I doubt—I doubt I'll ever do it again. Men"—maliciously—"men seem to be too hesitating and cautious."

"That's only the right kind of man."

"I wouldn't encourage any other sort."

"But you didn't know that I would—"

"I know a lot about you, Mr. Jerry Marsh. I—I asked this afternoon. In fact—" but she checked herself, suddenly.

"W-what were you going to say?"

"Nothing. Suppose you take me somewhere to eat."

"I thought you said I ate too much."

"You—you need instruction, and I want to talk."

He noticed the easy swing of her walk, the cool freedom of her movements. There was a sort of breezy independence about her, revealed in her voice and in the absence of any self-consciousness. Yet she was feminine and distinctly girlish.

At the table she whipped off her hat and seemed a different person, much more youthful than he had pictured. In a moment his attitude changed, subconsciously. She was no longer the girl he had followed, with a casual curiosity, a detached interest in pretty features and dainty figure, but some one he knew, if ever so slightly; some one he wished to continue to know, to see, to touch, to—he sighed—to love.

"Tell me about yourself," she directed.

"Well, I work for Capren & Dolcott," he began.

"I know that," she reminded him. "But just what do you do? How important a person are you in the office there?"

"I'm Mr. Capren's—" He stopped with sudden sense of shame.

Jerry Marsh had worked for the firm seven years. Certain routine tasks were given him, matters which any office girl could handle. Technically he was the old man's assistant, but when it came to explain his actual duties to the girl across from him—he could not tell the truth and watch her growing interest fade from her face.

Strangely enough it was the first time in his life Jerry Marsh had summoned sufficient energy to take stock of himself in just this manner. No, he could not tell the truth. Once realized, he could not face it.

"I'm old Capren's right hand man," he went on, lying cheerfully, now that the necessity seemed clear to him. "I handle all the office routine, in fact, am office manager; and then I have to dictate most of the correspondence, take a hand in sales, try to keep up the morale of the force, occasionally hire new salesmen or discharge those who can not make a showing worthy of the firm of Capren & Dolcott—" He tugged at his collar. It was

not easy to bear her gaze. "There's some talk," he added, as though to conclude the subject, "there's some talk of making me a partner. Then it will be Capren, Dolcott & Marsh."

She smiled. He was unable to tell whether she was impressed or not.

"I think it is perfectly wonderful," she remarked, after a time. "I'd like to be something big in business like that."

Then she changed the subject. He ate what she ordered for him. Finally she put on her hat, reluctantly, and it was as though she became a stranger again because its brim hid her eyes and their softness and somehow changed her. And as she spoke there seemed to be a difference in her voice.

"I cannot let you take me home," she explained, "but—"

"I can see you again?"

"Y—yes!" In her hesitation it seemed again as if there were something she left unsaid.

"How?"

"Well"—she put her head back and there was amusement in her expression—"to-morrow at the office if you'll let me go now, alone, and will promise not to follow—"

He nodded.

Was it right to lie to her, to give her a false impression of his worth? He felt ashamed as he made his way out to Webster Groves. During the night he slept fitfully, dreaming of her. With morning he rose early and was at the office ahead of the office boy.

Was it her influence? He caught himself digging into the detail of his work with a new-born zest. So busy was he that he failed to notice the commotion attending the arrival of the new stenographer. Not until the girl was at the machine did he turn. Then—

It was she! The girl in the red hat, without it now, was Belle's successor.

And he—he had fallen in love with her. Too—the tragedy of it—he had explained how essential he was to Capren & Dolcott, how important about the office, and—less than half an hour she would know him to be a liar.

"Jerry!" It was O'Connell, the sales manager. "This is Miss King, Miss Evelyn King—Mr. Jerry Marsh."

"Hello, Jerry," she grinned.

He went back to his desk. For a moment he rested elbows on it pondering. What could he do? How should he face the situation? Was it possible for him to remain, to see her face day after day and read there her disillusionment when she knew his real position in the office? He shook his head.

After a moment an inspiration came to him. He would not stay. The only thing to do was to go. But he would leave, at least, in a blaze of glory. Without waiting for the considering second thought he burst into the office of his superior.

"See here, Mr. Capren," he began, leaning over the older man pugnaciously, "I've come in to tell you something. I'm dying of dry rot in this office and I'm tired of it. I—I'm a good-natured individual, but where am I getting? Will you tell me that?"

The little man in the chair looked up with undisguised astonishment.

"I'm a rattling good man," Jerry went on. To his own surprise. He was managing to whip himself into a very considerable state of indignation. "Another month of this would finish me. What do I get to do? What responsibility do you give me? What chance have I got? Unless—unless you agree to double my salary at once—at once, Mr. Capren—I'm going to walk right out of your office and go somewhere where my ability will be appreciated."

For a full three minutes Capren looked at him. Then he rose. He stepped around to his side, studying him. Finally he put a hand on his shoulder.

"My boy!" he exclaimed, "we've been growing, but we thought you were taking no interest—" He wiped his glasses. "Ah—I'll double your salary beginning next week and if you make good I'll raise you again the same amount in six months. Now start right in and show me what you can do."

With a sense of utter incredulity Jerry staggered back to his desk. He—he had

secured the raise in salary but—how on earth was he going to earn it? Here was the same old work on his desk. There was no change in his relationship to the others. The girl would still find out that he had been lying to her—

He must do something, something tangible, and at once. He was sorry, now, that Capren had not accepted his resignation.

The voice of O'Connell broke in upon him in altercation with one of the salesmen across the office. An idea flashed to him. He had failed in placing his resignation. He would get himself discharged. He hurried over, breaking in upon the argument.

"You've got the wrong idea, O'Connell," he told the sales manager. "You've got a lot of pepleless fellows trying to peddle this oil stock and what do they know about it? Nothing! I've kept my mouth shut, but I'm getting tired of seeing you all fritter away your time and even though it's not my work directly I'm as interested in the sales end of Capren & Dolcott as you are. If you'd put a little dynamite into your men and let them put a little into the prospects you'd sell four times as many shares in half the time."

O'Connell's jaw dropped in sheer amazement. "You—you mean to tell me you think you know anything about selling oil shares—"

"I'd outsell your whole crew with one hand, and that shut."

"Ever—ever hear of old Myron Kinley?"

"Sure! Every one in St. Louis knows him."

"Think you can sell him? We can't."

"Of course. All you've got to—"

"Here!" Suddenly red, O'Connell grasped the salesman's portfolio, handing it to Jerry. "Suppose you run out right now and try it. Bring back forty or fifty thousand before lunch. See if you can give me an appetite."

With a queer sinking sensation, with sudden realization of his empty bragging, Jerry took the prospectus. At his desk he got his hat, listlessly. Then he squared his shoulders. He had let himself in for

this. He would make the attempt. He felt, somehow, that the girl was looking at him. He hurried out without a glance at her.

A month later, perhaps six weeks, they ate dinner together. It was the same little place out by Forest Park.

"My Jerry," she murmured. "Who—who would have thought he was such a good salesman and business executive altogether?"

"Why"—he gulped—"I told you—"

"I knew you were lying." In her sudden confession her eyes sought his. There was pride in their depths. "When they

sent for me to take Miss Lammey's place I had a long talk with Mr. O'Connell and he told me about you—that you were getting more and more useless to them, and—and—" She laughed. "Mr. Capren arranged for me to break in as a stenographer, but really to learn your work and take your place when they had discharged you. But—as I looked at you that day I liked you, and—"

He had nothing to say.

"Jerry!" She stretched both little hands, with slender, delicate white fingers, straight across the table to him. "You've made good, boy!"

THE SINGING WIND

I

TO-DAY the singing wind blows straight
From o'er pacific seas;
It wafts a boat with precious freight,
This wonder-laden breeze—
A shallop whose white wings enfold
Dim dreams of argonauts and gold!

II

To-day the singing wind floats by
In blue and gold and green,
Turquoise of California sky,
The poppy's yellow sheen,
The redwood's tinge, hope's hue divine,
That decks these natal groves of mine!

III

To-day the singing wind is fraught
With scent of inner shrines,
The incense of a fair love-thought
That round heaven's lattice twines—
Oh, singing wind, my soul you stir
With perfumed memories of Her!

IV

She, whom to know was raptured bliss,
To lose was sorrow sore—
Oh, mother mine, I feel thy kiss,
I feel thine arms once more!
See, singing wind, how thy blest art
Has waked the lute-strings of my heart!

Clarence Urmey.

Sleeping Acres

by Brayton Norton

CHAPTER XXV.

HANDICAPS TO DEFENSE.

"IT'S a serious proposition, Mr. Sackett," said Terry soberly. "I wish you would wait until I had a chance to send a cable to Mr. Masters before you decide."

"Masters has nothing whatever to do with it. This is a matter between myself and the ranch."

"Still," argued Terry, "what harm would it do to communicate with him? I don't believe he knows a thing about it. I think Carston made all that up. They are making Masters the goat again, and I think this time that I can show even him."

Sackett shook his head decidedly.

"I don't think you could show Masters anything," he responded. "As you say, I guess he is blind. But I am not blind. I can see the game easily enough. It was crudely done, and I hate a bungler. Carston is a fool, and he shows it. Klune would have seen it, too, if he had been here. That is where he made a mistake. No, I won't accept his offer," he concluded flatly. "We'll see now how they do business."

Terry looked uneasily at the floor for a moment. Then he said:

"Then send Ruth away until things are settled."

Sackett turned quickly.

"What has she to do with it?" he asked.

"A lot, maybe," answered Terry. "You can't tell what will happen. The ranch outfit are not at all particular what they

do to get a man out. It may be they will use the easiest way."

"What is that?" asked Uncle Billy quickly.

"The Mexicans," answered Terry with conviction.

Sackett laughed outright.

Uncle Billy's face was grave. "You may be right at that," he said.

"Nonsense!" Sackett exclaimed.

"That's foolish. I'll admit the thieves are getting bolder every day, but that is no sign they would go so far as to try to run a man off his own property."

"You don't know the Mexicans," Terry replied quickly. "They will do anything right now for a little money. It wouldn't take very much, either. They've been fighting each other and looting so long that they are getting in the habit of it."

"Do you mean they would cross the border in defiance of all international law and attack me on my own property?"

"What do those breeds know about international law? You are practically alone out here. Didn't Carston point out the possibility of trouble with them? Klune knows it, too. Why wouldn't it be the easiest way out of it for him to send crazy José Vigas across the border with a little San Miguel money and the promise of more? Why, they'd raid you just for the loot. If they were paid besides, there isn't anything they wouldn't do if they thought they could get away with it."

Sackett shook his head again.

"Mr. Klune wouldn't take that chance merely to acquire a small bit of property," he answered.

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Ruth entered the room unnoticed and paused in the doorway as Terry exclaimed:

"What chance would Klune be taking in dealing with a crazy man? José doesn't even know his own name! Who would believe him if he said Klune sent him over there? Who would even know he went over at all? Why, Klune wouldn't be taking even a fighting chance!"

"Then it ought to appeal to him."

The two men started at the sound of Ruth's voice.

"Why, darling, you shouldn't be here," began Sackett, but Ruth interrupted:

"I am tired of being treated like a child, father," she said. "I know you are worried about something, and I want to help. What is it?"

Sackett related his conversation with Terry while the latter watched Ruth's dark eyes light up at the mention of danger. He had seen very little of her during the past few days, and he was surprised that she should speak thus after championing Klune's cause so vigorously the night they went up the cañon.

When Sackett had finished speaking, Ruth put her arm through his and looked up into his face.

"There is no use whatever of talking of sending me away, because I absolutely refuse to stir a step unless you go. If there is any danger I want to be in it."

Sackett smiled and stroked the girl's hair softly.

"Sweetheart," he said, "if I really thought there was any immediate danger, I would ship you out if we had to bind you hand and foot."

"But you wouldn't go yourself, would you, daddy?"

Sackett shook his head.

"No," he said gravely, "I would do what any other poor man would do under the circumstances—stay and fight for his own."

Ruth kissed him on the cheek. Then she turned proudly to Terry.

"I knew my dad was no coward," she said.

"I guess it's my Scotch temper," Sackett admitted. "I don't want to admit I'm beat, and the injustice of the thing makes

me mad all over. I'm going to send Klune my answer to-night. When he is ready, I am. It is his move."

Terry put out his hand impulsively.

"I told you a long time ago," he said, "that if the time came when you needed any help, you could count on me until the show-down."

Sackett gripped his hand.

"I don't anticipate the trouble you predict," he said; "but if it comes we will try and do our best, and I have known all along that I could count on you."

Ruth looked at Terry with eyes he felt were searching his soul. Then her face lighted in a smile which warmed his heart.

"I know, too, that we can count on you," she said. Before Terry could frame a suitable reply she was gone.

Terry stood looking after her with shining eyes. Then he was recalled sharply to himself by Sackett's voice.

"Acting upon your assumption that Klune will incite the Mexicans to acts of violence," he said, "what would you think it best to do?"

"One of the first things to do is to get something to fight with. You haven't a gun about that I've seen, or anything to shoot in it. One of us had better go to town and get some rifles and ammunition."

"How many guns would you want?" asked Sackett.

Terry considered for a moment.

"They are working four men shifts on the well now. The reservoir force work only in the daytime, so we couldn't count on them. The trouble, if it comes, will come at night. We can count on Benson, your brother, and you and I with one shift, eight in all. Get any good, high-powered rifle and about five hundred rounds of ammunition. It would be a good idea, too, to get the guns before you let Klune know your answer."

"Maybe you're right," answered Sackett. "Though I can't think it. However, it will do no harm to be ready. Billy, will you drive over right away and see what you can get in the way of guns?"

Sackett hurried off to the oil well and Uncle Billy started for town at once. Terry, left to his own resources, wandered

up the gulch. The patches of sage and cactus would afford abundance of cover almost to the house. By keeping on the northern side until they reached the well, the Mexicans would have ample protection until they were close to the dwelling.

When Terry arrived at the oil well he found things in a state of great excitement.

"We'll know pretty quick, now, whether we are going to have a real oil well or just a make-believe," declared Sackett excitedly. "Mr. Johnson seems to think the prospect looks excellent."

"Have you storage enough to hold it," Terry asked the driller.

The oil man laughed. "Maybe we have too much," he answered. "Then again, maybe we haven't enough. I've seen them start big and peter right out. Then again I've seen them get better right along."

He looked down at the big tanks lying below in the gulch.

"If it was me doing it," he observed, turning to Sackett, "I'd either move the tanks or those buildings. You might get flooded out."

Sackett hurried away with the drillers and Terry stood looking down the gulch to the level space where Sawyer had built his ranch-house and barns. It was a regular trap. If there was only some way out into Mocking-bird Cañon without going up around the gulch it wouldn't really be so bad.

He looked again at the sloping sides of the gulch as they narrowed in the direction of the house. There must be some way out for water at least. In the winter time the wash from Rattlesnake Gulch would have flooded Sawyer out. Then he remembered the big drain-pipe into which he had seen Nero chase the squirrel.

As he drew near the house Ruth came out to meet him.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

When Terry explained she walked with him to the storm drain and watched him drop to his knees and look into the three-foot pipe.

"Where does that go?" she asked.

Terry grinned.

"I don't know," he answered. "I'm going in and find out."

Dropping his coat on the ground by Ruth's side, he crawled into the big pipe. "I'll be back in a minute and tell you where it leads," he called.

Creeping along over the caked mud and dry sticks that covered the bottom of the pipe, he glimpsed a round patch of light ahead of him, and as he approached it cautiously, he saw that the pipe extended out over a small ravine which evidently led into Mocking Bird Cañon. He wondered just where it entered the cañon, and was on the point of dropping out of the mouth of the pipe to the dry leaves below, when he heard the sound of the snapping of twigs in the tube behind him.

Then he heard Ruth call:

"Wait for me, I'm pretty near through."

He laughed as he sprang to the ground and held out his arms to catch her as she jumped. Ruth smiled and waved him aside, and in another minute she was sitting beside him on the slope of a small ravine.

"It's a regular secret passage," Ruth exclaimed.

"It is just what I was looking for."

"Why?"

When Terry had finished explaining the possible necessity of finding another way out, Ruth asked suddenly:

"Do you really think Mr. Klune would do that?"

"Yes," Terry answered bluntly. "I think he would. I haven't changed my opinion of Klune in the least."

"I have," said Ruth in a low voice, "and I think he would too. But don't let father know it," she added quickly, "for if he thought I believed the way you do, he might think you were right. Then he'd pack me up and send me away somewhere."

For some time they talked of Terry's plans for defense, then Ruth exclaimed as she looked at her watch: "Why, it is 'way past lunch time now. I had no idea it was so late."

The trail down the ravine brought them into Mocking Bird Cañon, and Terry's face grew more cheerful as he noticed the well-traveled road which led down the cañon in the direction of the coast. As they walked to the house an auto-horn honked

behind them, and Ruth's uncle slowed down and took them into the car.

"Well, of all the fool red-tape a man ever heard of," he burst out, "they sure have it in this town of Masters."

Terry, remembering his errand, asked quickly: "What is the matter? Couldn't you get the guns?"

Uncle Billy shook his head angrily. "It seems you can't get anything in the way of firearms in the town without having a permit from the chief of police. When I went to get one he asked me a hundred and one questions about what I wanted so many rifles for, and ended up by telling me he would let me know in a few days."

"That means we do not get the rifles in Masters, for the chief of police belongs to the ranch just the same as the sheriff. The only thing to do now will be to go out among the ranchers and try to buy or borrow what we can. In the mean time I am going to wire to Myron to send out some from Los Banos.

"Did you see Carston or Klune?" added Terry as they were nearing the house.

"Saw Carston, but not Klune. When I told him that my brother intended to decline his offer he intimated very politely that Henry was a fool and would be sorry."

When they arrived at the house there was no one about. Looking up the hill they saw a number of people standing at the foot of the oil derrick. Turning their steps in the direction of the gulch they met Mrs. Benson coming to meet them.

"They've struck it," she exclaimed breathlessly. "The driller says it is getting better every minute."

As they neared the oil well they saw Sackett waving his hat in great excitement.

"It's a gusher!" he called out.

Terry hurried on. "Can I take your car, Mr. Sackett?" he asked. "I'm going to try to get those guns."

Sackett seemed scarcely to hear him. "Certainly," he said; "but come and see this well first." Then catching sight of his brother, he asked: "What was the matter, Billy? Was the city all out of firearms?"

William Sackett drew his brother aside and began explaining his failure to purchase the guns and ammunition. Terry,

barely glancing at the crowd about the oil derrick, hurried away to the house. At the sound of running feet behind him he stopped and turned around to find Ruth by his side.

"I'm going with you," she said. "I'll run ahead and get some lunch ready to take along."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ATTACK.

"ANOTHER false alarm!" Sackett exclaimed, throwing himself into a chair on the porch and looking out into the darkness. "Benson reported a Mexican skulking about the little ravine leading from the outlet of the drain, but when I arrived on the scene I saw nothing. Terry has us roused up to such a pitch of nervous expectancy that we see dark faces peering from behind every tree. My men are all armed. My old windmill tank has been converted into a veritable fighting turret. My auto has been despoiled of lights, and I am robbed of my rest each night to hear only the rustle of a coyote in the mesquite.

"But nothing whatever has happened," he went on in a tone of some disappointment. "My oil well continues to flow evenly, and has nearly filled my largest reservoir. My Herefords graze quietly in the upper pasture, and even the Mexicans have of late failed to pay their nightly visits to my bean fields. I have had absolutely no warning that everything is not exactly as it should be."

Terry shifted his feet uneasily.

"You won't get any warning, either," he said. "When a rattlesnake rattles, he strikes. Better be ready than sorry you were not. We have done all we could. Every man on the place has some kind of a weapon. They all know what to expect and what to do. The rifles from Los Banos ought to be here to-morrow, and I shouldn't be surprised if Myron Masters came with them."

"How is your friend making out?" asked Sackett.

"He's as happy as a man could be," an-

swered Terry. "He has had a raise already, and he likes the work fine. Says he never knew how well he could get along without his father's name before. He's returned him his allowance, too." Terry stopped suddenly. "Listen," he said. "What was that?"

A light flashed in the darkness above the oil well and the echo of a rifle shot reverberated in the gulch.

"Only the night-shift having target-practise," commented Sackett.

Two jets of flame spurted from the hillside followed by a sharper report as two guns spoke in unison. Ruth ran out of the house and joined her father, while Benson and his wife appeared in the doorway.

"What is it, father?"

Sackett was about to reply when three shots followed in quick succession.

Terry rose quickly and hurried inside.

"Put out the lights, Mrs. Benson," he said. "Better be on the safe side."

"It is nothing, sweetheart," answered Sackett. "Merely the oil men shooting at shadows."

"There must be lots of shadows," commented Uncle Billy skeptically, as the firing became brisker.

Terry returned with a couple of rifles, one of which he handed to Benson.

"Benson and I are going up into the tank," he said. "I left your rifles inside the door. There's a shotgun right beside them."

Ruth watched him march off in the darkness with Benson, her eyes shining with admiration.

Sackett marshaled the women inside as the firing continued.

"There is no danger whatever," he said, leading Ruth within the door of the ranch-house, "but until we know definitely what is the trouble, it is better that you both remain within."

Throwing the rays of his flash-light upon the guns in the corner, he picked up a rifle and examined it carefully while Ruth held the light. The firing, which had been increasing perceptibly during the last few moments, died away suddenly. Sackett paused and listened.

"I guess the flurry is over," he said.

"They've either killed that coyote or driven him into Mexico."

A prolonged silence lent truth to his words. Then the sound of men's voices was heard without. Sackett grasped his gun and turned quickly to the door.

"Who is there?" he called.

"Johnson, from the well," a voice replied. "We've got a man here that's been shot in the shoulder."

Sackett opened the door and admitted the drillers and Uncle Billy. The three drillers carried their companion to a small couch and placed him upon it. Then the foreman of the night-shift explained:

"They picked Tom off the first thing without any warning. Before we fired a shot, they were all around us, and some of them could shoot, too. We didn't have any chance up there. It was too dark to see, so I shut off the pump and the boys and me sneaked down into the cañon and beat it along the ridge before we got cut off."

"The confounded thieves are after my cattle, I suppose!" exclaimed Sackett.

Johnson shook his head slowly.

"Twas a funny thing, Mr. Sackett," he said. "They didn't seem to be paying any attention to them at all. They were on the other side of the gulch from the pasture, keeping close in the mesquite. They opened on us first, and when we began to shoot they kept sneaking right on through the brush like a bunch of wolves."

While Ruth and Mrs. Benson worked over the wounded man, the drillers followed Sackett to the porch.

"I don't want to alarm the women, men," began Sackett, "but this may be a very serious affair. Perhaps we will need all the help you can give before morning. If you stay by me I will see that you are properly rewarded."

"All I want is to put a bullet through that Mex that busted Tom's shoulder," growled one of the men.

"I ain't even that particular," said Andy Pierce. "Any greaser will do for me."

A bright ray of light flashed from the tower and swept the sides of the gulch, and two shots sounded simultaneously from the tank.

Sackett pointed to the tank-house.

"Take these men up there with Benson and Terry, Johnson. Billy, you stay here with me."

Again the patches of sage-brush and cactus were lit up by the rays of the search-light, and Sackett saw a number of dark figures wriggling to cover. The oil men were already on their way to the tower when the two rifles sounded again from the tank.

"Johnson was right. They are coming down this way," Billy Sackett observed. "They are making for the house and barn. Would you ever have thought Klune had the nerve to do this?"

Sackett shook his head.

"Take the other side of the house," he commanded. "We haven't time now to talk. Don't let any one get near the porch. Shoot first. Find out afterward. If it is any of our men they'll call out."

His brother hurried away, and Sackett watched the search-light play over the gulch while the firing increased. A twig snapped in the darkness. Sackett raised his rifle.

"Benson," a voice called. "A stray bullet nicked me in the neck. Just a scratch, but it's bleeding badly, and I want to get some bandages to take up into the tank."

"How are things up there?"

"Fine. That light was a great idea. It rattles them. Before they have a chance to locate it, we can pick them off. They're dropping back now. They know we are prepared. The chances are they'll just drive your cattle with them and call it a day."

Benson went into the house and Sackett noted that the tower had ceased firing. Then the light swung slowly about and focused upon the line of trees which shadowed the barn. Sackett whirled and fired pointblank at the figure of a man running low in the direction of the house. Then the tower blazed forth, and a desultory firing began from the brush on the north side of the house. Sackett fired again at a moving bush and a bullet whined over his head in reply. They were shooting at his flash.

He stepped behind the trunk of a eucalyptus and crouched low, firing rapidly at the moving figures who sought cover from the light in the thicket of dry mustard. A sharp pain stung his forehead. The perspiration oozed slowly over his brow. He wiped it impatiently away with his coat-sleeve and reloaded his rifle.

Within the tower Terry crouched with Benson and the two oil men and fired rapidly into the mesquite.

"They're getting close," he muttered. "Shoot fast. The moon will be up any minute. That will give us all the best of it. Watch that clump of willows close by the house. I'm going to pick it out with the light."

The guns spoke together as the light flashed and two Mexicans retreated quickly to the mustard field. One lay where he fell.

"Five down for me!" one of the drillers exclaimed.

"Just my luck to miss that last one, and now I've got to reload." Andy Pierce rose to his feet, staggered and turned half round. "Give 'em hell!" he gasped, and fell at Terry's feet.

After assisting Mrs. Benson to dress the wounded man's shoulder, Ruth huddled by the window and peered out into the night where tiny jets of flame flashed in the darkness. Somewhere out there her father and Terry were fighting. She was only a spectator.

In a flash of light she saw Sackett kneeling behind a tree shooting at the moving shadows creeping nearer the house. Then came darkness. Ruth rose hurriedly and stumbled across the floor. Groping about in a dark corner her hand touched the shotgun. She grasped it tight, and softly opening the door, went out upon the porch.

It was a clumsy weapon, very unlike the pretty little double-barrel her father had given her on her eighteenth birthday. She broke the gun carefully and found it was already loaded.

Sackett shifted his position nervously and waited for the next light-flash. His brain was on fire with the joy of battle. In the darkness men waited to drive him from his own. They would find him ready,

A stray shot splintered the wood of the house behind him. He grasped his gun tighter and prayed for the light. When it came, he leaned forward from the protecting tree trunk in his eagerness and fired at a figure advancing from the brush. But he did not see a Mexican emerge from a big geranium close by and take careful aim at his exposed body. He only heard the roar of a shotgun in his ears and the hail of buck-shot on the dry leaves, as darkness settled down again about him.

Ruth leaned against the vines of the porch and nursed her bruised shoulder.

"I killed him," she said again and again to herself. "I saw him fall."

"I'm going down there and help Sackett. They are getting too close." Terry started at once for the ladder. "Keep the brush hot," he called as he disappeared. "Don't play the light too long."

When Terry joined Sackett by the porch he heard the sound of Uncle Billy's rifle from the rear of the house. The Mexicans were close about on all sides. The search-light flashed, and he caught a glimpse of Sackett's face. Then he remembered that he had wondered if the man would fight.

Firing rapidly into the brush, they held the invaders at bay. The bullets riddled the house and shattered the glass of the windows. Where was Ruth—Terry wondered as the bullets whined about him? Had a stray shot found its mark upon the body of the woman he loved? With murder in his heart he fought on, cursing Klune from the depths of his soul, and praying for a chance to meet him face to face.

The moon peeped timidly over the ridge and mingled her pale beams with the rays of the search-light. From the protecting shadows the defenders fired with redoubled fury at the moving targets which scurried toward the cañon.

"Why don't they stay and fight?" cried Benson, looking after the retreating Mexicans as they fled up the ravine in the direction of the oil well.

"Watch out for snipers," cautioned Terry to Sackett. "It isn't any too light yet. Don't give them a chance to get near the house."

Benson knelt by the side of Andy Pierce

and examined the wounded man carefully. Then he heard a muttered exclamation from one of the men at the loopholes.

"What's the matter?" he cried, jumping to his feet.

For answer the man pointed up the hill where the dry grass was blazing about the derrick.

"They've fired the stubble," the driller cried, "and hell will be cool alongside of the blaze there 'll be if she ever reaches that reservoir."

Terry grasped Sackett by the arm.

"Start the women through the drain," he said. "I'm going to help the boys out of the tank with Andy."

Sackett rushed for the porch while Terry sped away to the tower.

The fire reached the cleared space about the engine-house, burning fiercely over the oil-soaked ground.

Terry ran up the ladder, calling to the men above him:

"Everybody take to the drain. Hurry!"

Wrenching a loose shutter from its hinges he threw it from the window and picked the injured driller up in his arms.

"Get down on the ladder, Benson," he said. "I'll hand him to you."

"It's right under the fuel-tank now," Benson cried as he dropped to the ladder. "We haven't a chance."

Within the house the exodus proceeded rapidly and in good order. Mrs. Benson and Ruth were already in the drain when the fuel-tank exploded and drenched the hillside with burning oil. The flames mounted higher on the derrick and the blazing flood surged through the chaparral toward the great storage reservoir.

"Help Sackett get them through, Benson; I'm going to free the horses and let them out before they get too scared to move."

Terry ran low for the stables while Benson and the drillers hurried to the house. The heat burned his eyes and bit into his flesh as he drove the frightened animals from the danger. When he reached the drain, he saw Sackett standing by the entrance, grasping his rifle. His hair was disheveled; his face caked with blood. As he caught sight of Terry he cried:

"Thank God, boy, you're here at last. We haven't a minute to lose. In with you."

"Everybody safe?"

Sackett nodded.

"Hurry."

"You first."

There was no time for argument. Sackett plunged at once into the pipe. As he disappeared in the opening, Terry was hurled to the ground by unseen force. The earth trembled beneath his feet. There was the sound of cracking wood and breaking glass. The roar of a thousand cannon firing in salvos.

Stunned for the moment by the concussion, blinded by the red glare, with burning eyeballs and aching ears, he crept on his hands and knees to the tunnel and pulled himself within. Crawling over the rough sticks that choked the pipe, he dragged his tired body toward the bloodshot eye which blinked faintly ahead.

His lungs smarted. His limbs were numb. A cooler rush of air fanned his hot face and the eye gleamed brighter. He reached the end of the drain at last, and rested for a moment upon its edge before climbing down the ladder.

In the light of the burning oil Terry recognized Benson bending over something which lay on the ground. Near by a white-faced man was propped against a tree. That must be Andy. Dimly he made out the outlines of a woman. His heart beat faster. It was only Mrs. Benson.

Where were Ruth and Sackett? Where were the drillers and Uncle Billy? He threw his leg weakly over the small rock-ledge which protected the drain, caught the rung of the ladder and lowered himself to the ground. Benson hurried to his side. He was shouting something, but Terry could not hear his voice.

"Ruth's gone," Benson shrieked in his ear.

Terry struggled to his feet and turned again to the ladder.

Benson caught his arm.

"She was the first one through," he shouted. "When my wife got here she had vanished. The rest of them are looking for her now."

Terry's benumbed senses revived sharply at Benson's words. His hand tightened on his rifle and he turned without a word and walked down the gulch. When he reached the cañon he stopped and looked about him at the network of ravines which laced the valley.

Which way had she gone? Any one of the trails would lead to the Mexican border. Up which had they taken her? As he hesitated, he heard a low whine, and a dog rubbed softly against his leg. He felt a wet muzzle touch his hand.

Turning his eyes to the ground he saw Ruth's bloodhound looking up into his face. He stooped quickly and took the head of the dog in his hands, speaking softly while he stroked the long ear. Then he thrust him away and cried sharply:

"Find her, Nero."

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN DIRE PERIL.

A RAY of light from a smoke-clouded moon peered timidly through a cobwebbed pane and rested for a moment upon the white face of a girl lying upon a rough-board floor. She stirred uneasily, then opened her eyes and sat up. All about her was blackness, broken only by the silvery path of light. Where was she?

Ruth Sackett rubbed her hand slowly over her forehead and fought her way back to consciousness. In the darkness ahead a tiny light glowed fitfully, and to her nostrils came the odor of burning tobacco. For some time she sat looking about her, trying to remember. Then the events of the evening came back to her.

The Mexicans had attacked her father's house and fired his oil well. She had escaped through the drain-pipe to the ravine. She remembered climbing down the ladder and waiting in the gulch for Mrs. Benson. Her mind at this point became confused, and she strove hard to overcome the feeling of weariness which was stealing over her. Then she remembered the hands reaching out from the darkness, the blanket thrown over her head before she could cry out,

the rough stones of the gulch bruising her feet as she was half-dragged, half-carried over them, the horses waiting in the cañon, and the long ride up the hill.

The boards began to creak and she saw the glowing light moving slowly toward her. For a moment it remained stationary, then a key turned in the lock and a door opened. Silhouetted against the pale moonlight was the figure of a man, slouching in the doorway, looking out into the night. Then the door closed softly and again the key sounded in the lock.

The boards creaked as the silent figure retraced his steps. A black cloud passed over the moon and plunged the room into darkness brightened only by the glow of a cigarette.

A match flared and she saw the man leaning against the wall. He bent low over his cigarette, his face almost covered by a large cap which fitted closely down over his ears. How had this man known of her presence in the ravine? He had evidently been waiting for her before Mrs. Benson arrived. Was Mrs. Benson a prisoner, too? Who was the silent figure and what purpose could he have in making her a captive?

Terry had said that the Mexicans would do anything for money. While she considered, she walked slowly about, watching the glow of the cigarette. Her captor had shown no disposition to harm her as yet; perhaps he would explain. She resolved to find out all she could.

"Do you speak English?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Will you tell me why you brought me here?"

"No."

"If it is money you want, my father will pay you more than any one else. If you will let me go I will see that you are well paid and come to no harm."

The man with the cigarette did not immediately reply. Then he said slowly:

"Your father is a poor man. He has nothing left. It is all burned. You are worth a thousand pesos to me. But your father does not have so much money."

Ruth clutched eagerly at the straw.

"My father is a rich man. He is not poor, as you think, and if you return me

to him he will pay you more than a thousand pesos."

The Mexican made no sign that he had heard for some time, then he asked:

"How much more?"

Ruth noted the note of avarice which had crept into the man's voice.

"If you will let me go at once," she said, "my father will pay you five thousand pesos and I promise that you will not be harmed."

Again there was a long silence. Then the Mexican began to speak.

"Señor Sackett does not have so much money. One thousand cash is better than five promised."

Ruth considered his words gravely. If she was to make him see the value of returning her to her father, she would have to convince him that Sackett was able to live up to his end of the bargain. There was only one way she could do that. She would be forced to tell him the truth.

Drawing nearer, she said:

"Listen, and I will tell you something which will show you how foolish you are to sell me for a thousand pesos when you could get five. You think Mr. Sackett is a poor man. You are right. But that is not my father's name." She walked closer to the glowing cigarette. "What would you say if I told you my father was James Masters, the owner of the San Miguel Ranch?"

She heard the Mexican repeat the name slowly again and again. Then he laughed softly to himself.

"No, it is not so. You do not speak the truth. You are only the daughter of Señor Sackett. Your father is a poor man. You try only to fool me into letting you go." Again he chuckled to himself. "A thousand pesos is best," he said.

The girl argued desperately, but the Mexican refused to believe. At length she thought of the locket she wore about her neck. It contained her father's picture. Upon it was engraved her name.

"I will show you that I am speaking the truth," she said, "if you bring a light. Then you will see how foolish you are to lose four thousand pesos."

She listened eagerly for the Mexican to

display any signs of interest. Then she heard his feet scrape on the floor and the rough boards snapped as he walked across the room.

She pulled the locket from her neck and thrust it into his hand.

"Look!" she said. "There is my father's picture and my name."

A match flared up in the Mexican's hand and the light fell upon the face of the miniature.

The brown hand which held the locket trembled while the man stared down into the face of James Masters. Then he turned it over and read the inscription:

CENITH MASTERS

FROM

FATHER.

The Mexican raised his head at last, and in the light of the half-burned match Cenith caught sight of his face beneath the crumpled vizor of his big cap. His skin was mottled; his eyes glowed from the depths of their dark-shadowed sockets, and his thin, gray lips were twisted in a wolfish smile.

The girl shuddered and drew back. It was the face of the man she had seen at the oil well; the man who had tried to kill her brother and sworn an oath of vengeance upon her family name—José Vidas.

The match burned dead, and the evil countenance was blotted out by the darkness.

José sucked in his breath sharply and began to mutter in his own tongue. Mindful of the look in the crazy man's eye, Cenith backed to the wall and felt her way swiftly along the rough boards to the door. Her fingers fumbled with the knob, but the door was locked. She felt herself shoved roughly aside as she strove to open it.

Then José began to speak.

"Everything I remember now. I have been sick and I forget. But the face of James Masters makes me well again. The blessed Virgin is kind to make me remember."

He began to walk up and down, muttering unintelligible words and chuckling to himself.

"Listen, *señorita*," he said presently in a low voice, "and I will tell you why I thank the Virgin for bringing me to you tonight."

He came close to her side. She could hear his rapid breathing while he spoke in a voice vibrant with emotion:

"When you were a little girl like my Reinita who is dead, I was a rich man with much land which my father gave to me, and many cattle. In a big white *hacienda* I lived with Dolores, who played the guitar, and I was happy with my wife and baby. All the time I say: Some day Reinita will be a great lady and be married to a rich gentleman from Old Spain. And my wife laugh, for she is very proud of our daughter.

"Then one day a gringo lawyer come from the San Miguel, and he say my father never own the land he gave to me, and he offer me only a little money for everything to sell to Señor Masters. And when I say 'No,' he say 'You are a fool, José; what *el señor* wants he takes. Better you take the money now.' But I refuse, and he laugh and go away."

He ceased speaking for a moment, and Cenith Masters heard him gasping for breath. Then he went on:

"By and by my cattle they die; I do not know what is the matter. Somebody shoot all the time, and my fields burn like the house of your father. Soon I have no money, and I borrow from a rich gringo, who say he is my friend. All the time I have much trouble.

"My wife is sick, and for many nights I do not sleep. Men steal my cattle and burn my grain. I have nothing to pay the rich gringo when he come quick one day and say he want his money. I say 'Pretty soon I will pay,' and the man go away and say nothing.

"Then the sheriff he come and say Señor Masters is going to take my land. I do not understand. I am mad. I fight, and the sheriff he take me away to the jail."

Again he paused, and the sobs choked his voice as he continued:

"A long time I am in jail. When I get out I find my wife she is dead and my little Reinita live at the house of my friend,

Lopez. Then I am sick and for many days I do not remember. When I am well again my friend say: 'José, Señor Masters has taken everything; you are poor man now.' For a long time I do not understand. Then I go away to Pico and am sick again.

"One night in my sleep Dolores she come to me and she say: 'José, Señor Masters he drive you out and kill me. Why you not make him sorry?' I am very sick, but I say to the Virgin, if she let me live I make Señor Masters sorry he kill my wife and take my land.

"When I get well I look long time for *el señor*, but people say he is away. Everybody say I am crazy, because I talk all the time so much, and one day some men come and take me to Los Banos and I am locked up. Then I stop the talk, and by and by they say 'José has forgot,' and they let me go."

He drew nearer to the girl and continued:

"When Reinita grow up to be big girl like you, she tell me one day she know Señor Masters's son. Then I am glad, and I tell Reinita how *el señor* kill her mother and steal my land. And I say: 'But for *el señor* you would be a great lady.' Reinita she hate, too, and for long time she try to help me make old man sorry. But every time something happen. By and by, Reinita she love Señor Myron, and then—everything is spoil, and"—he caught his breath sharply—"she die."

He sobbed brokenly for a moment; then he went on, his voice trembling with emotion:

"As I look down at the face of my little girl as she is dead, I see Señor Myron. Behind him, Dolores she stand and point to Señor Masters's son, and she say: 'José, you have lie to the blessed Virgin. Your soul will burn in hell.' And when I try to speak, I am very sick, and I forget."

He grasped Cenith roughly by the arm and his hot breath scorched her pallid cheek.

"To-night I remember, and I will not forget. To-morrow James Masters will be sorry, and Dolores will smile."

Cenith wrenched her arm from his grasp and ran from him.

"You are crazy, José," she said. "Men have lied to you. If the San Miguel stole your lands, my father knew nothing of it. If you let me go I will see that he gives you back your lands, if what you say is true."

José interrupted her with a snarl.

"You are the crazy one," he said. "*El señor* has but one thing to pay me for Dolores and Reinita. I cannot pay the Virgin in lands or pesos. I am an old man. Soon I will die. Then I will burn in hell because I lie to the blessed Virgin."

He was becoming wilder each moment. Cenith shrank away from him and retreated into the darkness. Then she stopped and listened intently. Faintly to her straining ears came the long-drawn-out cry of a bloodhound.

Help was coming at last. Nero had picked up her trail and was leading her father and Terry to the rescue. Would they arrive in time? Could she succeed in turning the Mexican from his thoughts of revenge until help reached her. She resolved to try.

"Listen, José," she cried. "If you harm me, my father will find you and the white men will hang you to a tree—"

José interrupted harshly.

"I do not care for Señor Masters and all the white men in California. *El señor* has taken my blood. He must pay in blood. When he finds you dead, I shall leave my knife to show it was José Vigas who made him sorry. If the gringos find me, I do not care. I am old man, and soon—"

He stopped suddenly, and Cenith could hear him catch his breath.

The baying of the hound grew louder, and the Mexican turned his head and listened. Then he turned quickly and went out into the night, softly closing and locking the door that held Cenith prisoner in the house.

Cenith traversed the room, rapidly searching along the wall for another door, but her effort was in vain. José had figured well in bringing her to the little cabin with its one exit and the narrow pane of glass which served as its only window. In the darkness she collided with a table. She

ran her fingers over it. Perhaps there was a weapon of some kind.

In the center of the table she discovered a small lamp, and as she felt about for matches she heard the scratching of claws on the door, and the whining of a dog.

"Good old Nero," she called.

The whining changed quickly to a muffled growl. There was the noise of scuffling for a moment. Then the voice of the dog was stilled. A moment later the door opened, and some one entered the room and walked about with creaking footsteps. Cenith crept into a dark corner and listened.

She heard the Mexican run against the table and when the moon ray fell again across the floor she saw him creeping nearer, his dark eyes shining, his hands extended. In the darkness of the corner she narrowly escaped his outstretched arms, and he came so close she could hear his labored breathing. Then the stillness was unbroken by a single sound.

The boards ceased to creak. José might be standing by her side with his knife poised to strike into her heart. She drew her breath softly and shrank closer to the wall.

Where were her father and Terry? What had become of the dog? Had he returned to guide them on, or had José killed him as he meant to kill her? The silence racked her nerves. She wanted to cry out. Anything was better than this—to be stabbed in the dark.

A low knock sounded on the door, and Cenith jumped nervously.

"José."

The Mexican mumbled a low reply, and the girl started to find the voice so near. A hand fumbled with the latch and again the voice called:

"Open the door."

The Mexican cursed softly, but made no move to comply with the order, and the hand without shook the door violently. For a moment there was silence. Then a bright ray of light flashed in the pale darkness about the window and fell upon the rough boards of the floor. Slowly it moved about the room while the girl watched it with fearful eyes.

She huddled closer into the corner and looked bravely into the glowing bulb as it flashed upon her. José uttered a snarl of triumph as he saw the figure of his victim almost within his reach.

The next moment he stood before her in the full rays of the light. He was close by the table. In his hand he carried a long knife which flashed as he raised his arm and crouched lower.

Cenith stared into the venomous face, like the bird charmed by the beady eyes of a rattler. Slowly the gray lips drew away from José's white teeth. A quick spring and the upthrust of a knife—and his debt to the Virgin would be paid.

The sharp report of a gun broke the stillness and José turned half round with a quick, convulsive movement. The hand which held the knife reached out before him and feebly searched the air. A second shot flashed from the window and the Mexican crumpled slowly to the floor. In the white glare of the light Cenith saw a thick, dark stream crawl from the sprawling figure and spread like a black shadow. The knife which fell from José's hand stuck in the soft pine boards and quivered for a moment like the brown hand which strove to grasp it. Then both grew still.

"Open the door."

The light suddenly disappeared from the window and Cenith remained motionless, staring at the stark body that lay upon the floor.

The door shook violently. Again the voice called out demanding admittance. The girl rallied bravely. It was a white man at least. Her knees seemed utterly incapable of supporting the weight of her body. Surely it was not her voice that called:

"Who is it?"

She made a wide detour and narrowly escaped falling upon something which slipped beneath her feet. Then a voice answered from without.

"Klune."

Cenith stopped and hesitated with her hand on the knob. Then she cast a frightened glance over her shoulder at the thing lying upon the floor by the table. In the pale moon-beams she stared with widen-

ing eyes at the shapeless mass. Then she unlocked the door and threw it open.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"I WILL NEVER GIVE YOU UP."

KLUNE strode forward, covering the girl with the flashlight.

"Did he hurt you?" he asked quickly.

Cenith Master's shook her head. Klune shot a quick glance at her white face. Then he swept the floor with his light. Taking her arm gently in his, he led her to a chair by the table. Cenith drew her skirts closer about her as they passed the sprawling figure of the Mexican.

The floor about the table was mottled with dark, irregular blotches which showed black in the rays of the white light.

"Not there," she gasped, as Klune placed a chair near the silent figure. He led her quickly around the table and helped her to a seat.

"Rest here a minute," he said. "Take a grip on yourself. You've had a terrible experience. But you are all right now."

Cenith watched his light sweep the floor on the other side of the table. He was kneeling by José. The Mexican's eyes were still open and his blood-smeared lips were frozen in a hideous smile. She shut her eyes and rested her head in her hands. Still she could see José glaring at her in the darkness.

Klune rose at last and lit the small oil lamp upon the table. Then he dropped into a chair and wiped his hands carefully with his handkerchief.

"One Mexican less in the world," he announced.

Cenith Masters roused herself at his words.

"Is he dead?" she asked dully.

"Absolutely," replied Klune, displaying no emotion. "Got him with my first shot."

Cenith leaned wearily against the table and tried to think. José Vigas had tried to murder her. Klune had saved her.

She should be grateful. Why wasn't she grateful? She had not always hated Klune. Why did she hate him now?

"Have you seen my father?" she asked. Klune nodded pleasantly.

"Yes," he said. "Only a few minutes ago. He's just below with the others. They're watching the border. I was lucky enough to think of this cabin."

He looked at the girl's white face and darkly shadowed eyes and slipping his hand in his pocket, produced a flask.

"Drink a little of that," he said, loosening the stopper and passing it over. "It will give you strength. When you are ready, I'll take you to your father."

Cenith took the flask. Her hand touched Klune's and she paused suddenly, her fingers clasped about the leathered bottle. Then she looked into Klune's eyes.

Why was the square-jawed man across the table looking at her like that? She set the bottle down without touching its contents. The liquor would only go to her head. She wanted to try to think.

"I'll be all right in a minute," she said faintly. "I am very weak, I guess."

Klune urged her to drink, but she shook her head. Drawing back into the shadows she watched his face. Klune's eyes were burning into hers. He had looked like that when she had last seen him. Had he forgotten that meeting? No, Klune was not the kind to forget anything. That was the night when he had caught her in his arms and cried: "I'm going to get you if it costs me everything."

"How did you know I was here?" she asked.

Klune smiled.

"I didn't," he replied, meeting her eyes fairly. "It was just a chance. I took it. I knew of the location of the cabin. It is well concealed. Also I know something of the Mexicans."

"How did you know José would be here?"

Klune shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't."

"Why did you call his name before you flashed your light then?"

Again Klune smiled.

"I told you I knew something of the Mexicans," he said, "and José Vigas was just about the only one who would be crazy enough to get by with a thing like this."

"How did you know I was gone?"

"A ranger reported the fire at once. I jumped in my car and went immediately to Mocking Bird Cañon. There I heard everything. It looked like a Mexican trick. No white man would do it. I told your father. He agreed and I took him with me in the car up Aliso Cañon to the border. The others had gone on ahead. We met some of them at the foot of the hill."

Cenith listened carefully to this explanation. If Klune had seen James Masters as he had said, he would have recognized his employer. From Klune's manner she was satisfied that this was not so. There was no doubt in her mind now that Klune was lying.

Klune evidently read what was passing through her mind.

"You suspect my motives," he said evenly. "You resent my finding you here. I can best assure you of my good faith by making good on what I started out to do. When I hand you over into your father's hands, you will believe that I am acting on the square. I suggest that we start at once. Have you a coat? It is nearly dawn and it is getting cold."

Cenith Masters made no attempt to rise. She decided at once that she was safer where she was than with Klune.

"I will stay here," she announced. "They will find me before long. It will be daylight soon."

Klune walked slowly around the table and stood in front of her, looking down into her face.

"This is no time for half measures," he said. "You are not yourself. It is cold here and the shock you have undergone has unnerved you. I can't allow you to run the risk of pneumonia by staying here. Come."

Cenith shook her head.

"No," she said quietly, "I will not go. I will run the risk of pneumonia. It is less than the other."

Klune grasped her by the arm.

"Come," he said. "We have no time to waste."

Cenith shuddered at the pressure of Klune's fingers on her arm. She grasped the table with her free arm.

"If you take me with you, it will be only by force," she told him.

Klune retained his grip on her arm and leaned over her.

"Then it will be by force," he said in a low voice, "for I am going to take you."

"You are no better than José," flashed the girl, striving to shake off his restraining hand.

"Possibly not. But I'm going to take you just the same."

Cenith thought if she could only delay him long enough, her father or Terry might come to her assistance. But how could she do this?

She thought suddenly of her name. Would Klune persist in taking her away if he knew she was the daughter of his employer? While she struggled with her problem, Klune spoke abruptly:

"Listen," he said. "I'm going to give you only a few minutes more. I'm tired of this foolishness. We had best understand each other. I told you once I would never give you up. It will be easier for us both if you come quietly."

Cenith reached her decision.

"Would it make any difference to you," she said slowly, "to know that you are planning the abduction of some one else beside Ruth Sackett?"

Klune shook his head.

"No," he said, "a name is nothing. You are the girl I want. That's enough. What you call yourself does not matter."

"Not even if I called myself Cenith Masters?"

She felt his fingers tighten on her arm.

"You seem to be thinking a lot about Cenith Masters," he observed with a smile.

"You are right. I am thinking more about her than any one else on earth, for that is who I am."

Klune laughed.

"Come," he said. "You are getting too confidential. You'll have me telling you my real name next."

Cenith pointed with her free hand to the body of José.

"You'll find the proof there," she said. "José would not believe until I showed him my locket. It has my father's picture and my name. He kept it."

Klune's expression changed swiftly. So that was why the Mexican had tried to commit murder.

He released her arm and strode over to the body. In the yellow rays of the light Cenith saw him bend over it and carefully search the pockets in vain. Then he glimpsed a tiny thread of gold circling a black blot on the floor. Jerking the locket loose from the clenched fingers of the Mexican he carried it to the light. He bent over the picture for several moments, studying it intently. Then he read the inscription.

"Where did you get this?"

"My father gave it to me."

Klune dropped into a chair by the table and buried himself in silent contemplation of the golden disk. His face was expressionless.

"And you thought this would make a difference," he said at last, "even if it was true?"

"Yes, Ruth Sackett and Cenith Masters are two very different persons."

Klune shook his head slowly.

"No," he said. "You are wrong. Both are you."

His glowing eyes traveled swiftly over Cenith's face, as the girl went on sparring for time.

"There is a difference in the risk involved. Have you figured the consequences of abducting the daughter of James Masters?"

Klune did not immediately reply, but sat staring at the lamp.

"Yes," he said at last. "I have. I will be in a much better position to deal with James Masters from the Mexican side. Whether I marry you or not, will depend entirely upon circumstances. Your father will understand."

The cords of his neck tightened about his throat. His jaw set hard. He leaned forward in his chair, the locket clenched tightly in his hand. His eyes flashed through narrowed lids as he went on in a low voice:

"James Masters thought he could put one over on me. He was clever, but he's played out his string. Before I get through with him I'll make him wish he'd stayed

off the San Miguel. Yes, and by Heaven, I'll—"

Klune's sentence was never finished. A heavy missile struck the lamp and swept it from the table. There was the sound of breaking glass. A woman shrieked. The room was plunged into darkness.

Klune leaped to his feet and sprang away from the table. His hand flashed to his pocket. The soles of his shoes touched a black spot on the floor; a spot which slid with his feet as they shot from under him. Grasping his automatic he fell heavily. His elbow struck the rough boards and the gun flew from his hand. Rebounding to his feet he sprang to meet the dark figure rushing upon him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FIGHT TO A FINISH.

WITH murder gripping his heart, Terry sprang at Klune. It would be man to man in the darkness; no rules, no gong, no referee. A fight to the finish.

Klune leaned low to the side and shot out his foot. Terry veered and struck blindly at the crouching figure. They clinched, staggered and rolled to the floor.

Like the bulldog, fighting in the only way he knows, Klune's fingers worked swiftly to Terry's throat, oblivious to all else. Terry's sturdy legs were wrapped about his. His strong arms were locked about Klune's shoulder, pressing down upon his neck. What did that matter? Klune's hands were almost at the other's throat. He worked blindly on, crushing the smaller body close to his.

He could feel the other man's muscles already relaxing from the strain. It would all be over in a minute. José would have company. He would have the girl.

He shook away a feeble hold on his wrist. Then he felt the body beneath him squirm and wriggle like a snake. The muscles tightened with a jerk. Klune's head snapped forward. His shoulder was twisted half from its socket. He could feel it grit. His body was leaving the floor. His feet fanned the air. The man under him was

rising. He was powerless to stop him. With a crash his head hit the floor while the other man shook himself free, sprang to his feet and stood over him.

For a moment Klune lay stunned, breathing heavily.

In the faint light of the approaching dawn Cenith watched the struggle. Even in the semidarkness, she had recognized Terry. Now he lay grappling with Klune upon the floor. He was fighting for her. All the blood in her body surged swiftly through her veins as she watched the combat, leaning over the table tensely.

Klune leaped again to his feet, snarling. The identity of his unknown opponent flashed over him. Terry had always meddled. Now he stood between him and all his cherished plans. He struck savagely at the advancing figure.

Klune's fist struck Terry a glancing blow on the mouth, causing his head to rock sharply. He replied with an uppercut to Klune's jaw, barely grazing his target. It was too dark to see clearly. There was too much guess-work, Terry figured. Klune would have the better chance in the poor light with his superior reach and weight. Those things must be considered. The stake involved rendered caution imperative. Terry resumed the defensive and backed warily away.

Klune continued his bull-like rushes, striking blindly with all his force and seeking to grapple. Terry protected his face and body, crouching low and jabbing at Klune when he came within reach. Klune clinched, repeatedly and sought to crush the lighter body beneath him as they fell to the floor.

Cenith crept silently from the table and followed the sound of the conflict. If she could only see, she might help Terry. She looked in the direction of the door, which stood ajar. Running across the room, she threw it open and a faint light brightened the doorway. She turned again to the struggling men rolling about upon the floor. What could she do to help?

Klune's breath was coming in gasps. He realized sharply that his wind was not as good as it had been. His life during the past few years had given him poor prepara-

tion for such a struggle. He was up against not only skill but youth as well. It was a bad combination.

He figured that the advantage which had been his in the darkness, was slipping away from him in the brightening light which entered through the wide-opened door. He thought suddenly of his gun. Where had he lost it?

They fought their way to the door, sometimes standing and exchanging blows in the semi-darkness, more often rolling over each other on the floor. Terry caught sight of the girl over Klune's shoulder.

"Go!" he cried.

Cenith shook her head and tried to smile. If Klune was successful it would only be when Terry was dead. If Terry died, she wanted to die, too. Why had she never understood before how much his life meant to her?

She heard the sound of labored breathing. Perhaps Klune was strangling him now. She bent nearer the threshing figures and saw Klune fasten his fingers in Terry's hair and bite at his hand. Was there no way she could help?

Suddenly she thought of Klune's revolver. She ran to the table. That Klune did not have the automatic, she felt sure, else he would have used it before this. She walked slowly about searching for the missing weapon. At length her foot touched something close to José's body. She reached down and picked up the gun. She knew nothing of an automatic. If she tried to shoot at Klune, she might hit Terry. Holding the weapon tightly in her hand, she walked again to the door. If Klune was successful she would kill him.

Klune's strength was failing fast. Terry's body punches were sapping his vitality. The manager realized his condition was becoming desperate. His face was mashed and bleeding. His body was bruised, his muscles cramped and sore. One eye was swelled shut. A nausea overpowered him and left him gagging with weakness. His gun was all that would save him, so he determined to sacrifice everything to gain possession of it.

With extreme caution he edged slowly in the direction of the table. Beneath the

avalanche of blows, he groped blindly on the floor with his hands and feet.

Cenith could see the two men plainly as the dawn advanced. Terry stood poised evenly, his body inclining slightly forward. His fists flashed to Klune's face and body with bewildering rapidity. With mechanical precision he beat Klune to his knees. Klune wobbled visibly. His head rolled from side to side. His blood-stained mouth was open and he gasped for breath. Casting quick glances at the floor, he strove vainly to protect his face from Terry's merciless fists.

Klune rallied as he neared the Mexican's body. It was here that he had lost his gun. He attacked wildly, seeking a chance to pick it up. Terry blocked his blows easily. He did not fear Klune now. It was getting light enough to see. All he had to do was to wait for his chance.

It came sooner than he anticipated. Klune swung at his head with all his strength. Terry ducked. Klune was carried off his balance from the force of his own blow. Cenith saw Terry's arm shoot upward. She heard the crack of a breaking bone. Klune's jaw snapped. His head jerked backward. He staggered and put up his hands, tottered drunkenly for a moment with rolling eyes. Then he crumpled to his knees and rolled backward to the floor.

Terry stood over him, alert and expectant, every muscle tense. It was not the first time Klune had feigned insensibility to gain his wind. It was an old trick. Never taking his eyes from his prostrate enemy, Terry stood waiting.

Klune opened his eyes slowly and lay still. He could gain nothing by a renewal of the attack at present. Rest was what he needed. Then he would find his gun. His bloodshot eyes searched the floor. It was light enough to see plainly now. He lay on his side, close by José. He could make out the shadow of the body. His eyes opened wider while he gasped for breath.

What was that sticking in the floor beyond reach of the outstretched hand of the Mexican? His own hand stole cautiously from the folds of his coat and

merged with the shadow of the body. His fingers crept silently on. Then his bloody lips parted in a smile as he clutched the hilt of José's knife.

He heard Terry commanding him roughly to get up. Sharp pains shot through his jaw. But again he smiled. A knife was almost as good as a gun.

Again he worked his arm softly into the shadow of the corpse. In a moment, if he lay still, the fool kid would bend over him. Then he would strike. Hugging the dagger to his breast, he waited.

Cenith watched Terry draw near the silent figure as he lay stretched at full length beside José. Stooping down, she looked into Klune's face. Had Terry killed him? Klune was smiling. She leaned closer. José, too, was smiling. That meant nothing. But Klune was not dead. Terry was about to bend over him when she saw something flash in Klune's hand. Clenching José's knife in his fingers, Klune opened his eyes.

"Knife!" she shrieked, pointing at Klune.

Terry jumped backward. Klune rolled over swiftly and leaped to his feet. With a snarl he raised the dagger and sprang forward. Instead of retreating Terry hurled his body at Klune with a suddenness which caused him to hesitate for the merest fraction of a second. Then he felt the wrist which held the knife encircled by viselike fingers. For a moment they swayed and lurched about the body of the dead Mexican, fighting for the dagger. Then Klune was borne heavily downward with the knife bent upward beneath his body. His grasp loosened as he hit the floor. His muscles relaxed. His body quivered with a convulsive shudder and lay still.

Springing clear of the prostrate form, Terry looked down into the blackening pools which spread rapidly across the floor from beneath Klune's coat. One arm was outstretched, the nerveless fingers of the hand spread out upon the floor. The other arm was bent under him.

Rolling him over quickly, Terry knelt over him. Buried deep in Klune's side was the hilt of José's knife. He pulled the knife out slowly, striving to check the flow

of blood which followed it with a rude bandage cut from Klune's shirt. Then he rose to his feet and in the gray light of dawn, faced the girl.

His clothes were torn and flapped grotesquely about his body. His hair hung raggedly over his eyes. His face was smeared with blood. His mouth was open. His chest heaved.

But Cenith Masters noticed none of these things. She saw only the smile that showed through the blood and perspiration. The light in his eyes was reflected in hers. She came silently to meet him and walked into his outstretched arms.

He held her close. Neither spoke. Both were content to rest in the realization of the sweet fruits of victory. Terry drew away at last and looked down into Cenith's eyes which were raised to his.

"Ruth," he panted, "I love you." He hesitated for a moment and drew her closer. His voice trembled. "Will you let me fight for you always?"

Cenith Masters read the message.

"Yes, Terry," she answered softly. "Always you will fight—just for me."

And she kissed his blood-stained lips.

The world came back to them at last. Terry released the girl with reluctance.

"It is too good to be true," he said. Then he glanced at Klune. "I've got to have another look at him. He's in bad shape."

Kneeling by his side, Cenith looked into the white face of her father's manager.

"I thought he was dead," she said.

"No, he's not dead," Terry answered slowly. "He may live. But the dagger went almost to the hilt. I'm afraid it punctured his lung. He can't be moved now. We'd better get a doctor."

Leaving the victims of the early morning tragedy lying where they had fallen, Cenith and Terry went forth into the sparkling freshness which precedes the dawn.

Cenith filled her lungs with the crisp air of the foot-hills, turned slowly, and looked back. The long night of horror had come to an end at last. Ruth Sackett had gone into the cabin a helpless girl. Cenith Masters emerged a woman.

Terry stopped abruptly.

"This way," he said, guiding her around a sagging clump of sage which fringed the path.

Cenith, busied with her thoughts, did not notice the roughness of the unbroken brush through which they walked and when they again arrived in the trail Terry drew a deep sigh of relief. What need was there for the girl to see the stark figure of her pet lying in the path with glazing eyes and severed throat? Nero had done his work well, "faithful even unto death." Some day she should know. Not now.

There was much that they could have talked about as they descended the hill. But into the minds of both there came but a single thought and each was happy in the possession of the great secret.

"Do you know," began Terry at last, "I don't believe I would have had the nerve to say anything if it hadn't have been that things happened as they did."

"What do you mean?" asked Cenith with surprise.

"Well," Terry continued awkwardly, "I knew your father was a big man and probably had a lot of money and all that. And I haven't anything, you might say, but the clothes on my back, and they're pretty badly torn at that. But you see when he got burned out and lost all his buildings and his cattle and crops, I figured it kind of evened things up a little. And so I thought it wouldn't be so bad for me to say things to you." He paused and concluded lamely: "Oh, you understand."

"I see," Cenith laughed. "You only wanted to help my father."

Terry shook his head violently.

"It's nothing like that. Only I didn't think I had the right to say anything until I—"

"You have the best right in the world," she interrupted him softly. "The only one which really counts."

As they talked on, Cenith's happiness was clouded by the sinister shadow of doubt. It was Ruth Sackett that Terry loved. Would he love Cenith Masters? She had despised the name she had assumed at first. Now she hated to give it up. She would not tell Terry as yet. Or better still, she would leave the task to her father.

Onward they went, hand in hand, into the new day which for them was to have no end.

CHAPTER XXX.

WAKING UP THE ACRES.

JAMES MASTERS stood with Cenith and Terry on the mesa road and gazed down into the blazing ruins of what had once been the Sackett homestead. In the cañon below the neighboring ranchers, augmented by a force of men from Masters, were plowing fire-brakes in the brush.

The wounded drillers had been taken to town. Benson, assisted by his wife, was conducting a refreshment stand for the fire fighters. Men were coming on the afternoon train from Pico to cap the well and extinguish the burning oil. An ambulance waited at the foot of the hill on the Mexican side for Klune, and a doctor had been dispatched to the cabin.

Everything had been explained and re-explained and still Terry realized that Sackett was entirely ignorant of the greatest news of all. He wondered as to the proper course of procedure to be taken by a young man in making a girl's father acquainted with the fact that he meant to marry his daughter. The more he considered the matter, the more confused he became. He decided swiftly to have it over.

"Mr. Sackett," he began. "I have something very important to tell you."

Masters turned about and Cenith drew near to lend encouragement. Her heart beat almost as wildly as Terry's. What would her father say? She hoped he would be pleased. But if he wasn't it would make no difference as far as her plans were concerned. She would marry Terry anyway.

"Yes," said Masters, "I'm listening. What is it?"

He had learned that what Terry had to say was worth listening to.

Terry's carefully rehearsed speech sped away as he looked into the face of Cenith's father.

"I'm going to marry your daughter, Ruth," he blurted out. Then, feeling that his words were perhaps too abrupt, he hurried

on without giving Masters a chance to reply.

"I wouldn't have said anything about it for a while until I got some kind of a stake. But now that you are up against it, maybe you'll let me help. I love your daughter and she loves me. I think I can make her happy."

Terry stopped for breath. Why did Sackett stand there like that? Why didn't he say something?

James Masters looked down into the two eager young faces raised to his. Some day it would come, he had always told himself. Some one would come to him asking for his heart's blood, and he would have to give it. It was the way of the world. He had known it. Why wasn't he ready?

He gazed into his wife's face shining up at him through the dark brown eyes of his daughter. Then he looked at the boy. Terry had nothing, and everything. He loved the girl, not as Cenith Masters, but as Ruth Sackett. He supposed her father to be a poor man. He wanted to help. Of the young man he knew little; at the same time, much. He was a man. He could take his oath on that. He loved Cenith for herself alone. It was enough.

James Masters placed his arm slowly about Cenith's waist and drew her to him.

"God bless you, sweetheart," he said brokenly. "I have lived to make you happy." He turned to Terry and thrust out his hand.

"From now on it will be your turn, son. God bless you both."

He rubbed his hand over his eyes and turned away.

A number of ranchers climbed the hill as two autos came down the mesa road. Terry recognized Carston and the sheriff as they climbed from one of the cars, closely followed by a well-dressed stranger who descended from the other.

The sheriff stepped forward, swelling with importance. Placing his hand on Master's shoulder, he said:

"Henry Sackett, I have a warrant for your arrest on the charge of manslaughter."

Masters took the warrant and read it slowly. Then a slow smile spread over his serious face.

"There must be some mistake," he said. "I know no one by the name of Sackett." Terry's eyes widened with astonishment and he looked wonderingly at Cenith.

Carston stepped forward promptly, exuding perfume.

"It makes little difference what you call yourself," he drawled. "The warrant can be changed. We'll make it John Doe."

"No," said Masters sharply, looking full into Carston's eyes. "Make it James Masters."

Carston stood staring while another auto flashed over the hill-crest and drew to a halt. From it tumbled a man and a woman.

Myron Masters forced his way with difficulty through the crowd of ranchers and stopped suddenly as his eye fell upon his father and Cenith.

"Dad," he cried, shoving the gaping sheriff aside and grasping his father's hand. "What are you doing here?"

While Myron embraced his sister, Masters turned again to Carston.

"If you require further proof of my identity, Mr. O'Leary can enlighten you."

The stranger stepped forward at once and confronted the bewildered lawyer.

"I'm Michael O'Leary of San Francisco," he said. "Senior counsel for the San Miguel Rancho. The gentleman who just spoke is the owner, Mr. James Masters." He whirled about on the sheriff. "Let me see that warrant," he commanded.

The sheriff handed him the paper and as he read it, O'Leary's face darkened in a scowl. Then he turned to Carston.

"An American citizen charged with the murder of a Mexican," he boomed. His eye lighted with anger as he surveyed the burning fields below. "Do you think you could even get a jury?"

Carston sought to explain, but Masters checked him at once.

"There may not be much I can do to you, Carston," he said slowly, advancing upon the lawyer, "though you can rest assured I will do everything I can. However, if I can do no more than disbar you, I am going to give myself the pleasure of knocking you down."

Carston strove wildly to defend himself, but a blow from Masters's fist felled him to the earth.

The ranchers crowded closer and looked at each other with amazement clearly written on their sun-burned faces.

"Well, I'll be damned," said one. "It's the old devil himself, and he fought like a man."

Carston struggled to his feet, and speaking a few words to the sheriff, led him to the car.

Myron brought his wife over and introduced her to his father and Cenith. While they talked, Terry stood by, striving to realize what had come to pass.

James Masters noted the dark looks upon the faces of the men who had drawn aloof at the mention of his name. Turning quickly to the assembled ranchers, he said:

"Men, I would like to say only a few words. Prompted by this young man here," he began, indicating Terry, "I came to my ranch to see for myself how things were being run, accompanied by a private detective whom you have known as my brother. Through Sackett's eyes I learned many things it would have been impossible for James Masters to see. I am fully awake now to the opportunities as well as the responsibilities which lie before me. From now on I shall undertake the management of the ranch myself, fully alive to the mammoth possibilities it holds for development. I promise you one and all a square deal. You have not had it under the old régime."

Taking Terry and Myron by the hands he led them forward.

"In this great work," he continued, "I will be assisted by my son, Myron, and by my prospective son-in-law, Terry."

The ranchers cheered.

Terry backed away in confusion and sought Cenith's side.

"I don't understand at all," he said weakly. "What does it all mean?"

Cenith crowded close behind her father's back and whispered:

"It means Ruth Sackett loves you, Cenith Masters is going to marry you, and that never again will you lose your Indian princess."

(The end.)

CONFESSIONS OF A GENIUS

[T pleases me a lot to read great men's biographies;
It helps me much to rise above life's little miseries,
For in the list of greatness I find everywhere a touch
Of all those little foibles that have got me in their clutch.

There's Shakespeare—Will was idle and a roisterer, at first.
Some people—those who knew him well—considered him accursed;
And yet to-day his glory great all persons love to sing—
I suffer, too, from idleness and giddy roistering.

And Raleigh! . What a flirt was he! A bold adventurer!
He cast his optics on the queen, and made soft eyes at her;
A gay and gladsome figure in the pleasures of the day—
I cannot help but note that I am also built that way.

Napoleon, they say, was vain. He loved to awe the crowd
By putting on as much of side as Gallic laws allowed;
And yet he won a wondrous fame, and endless stores of pelf—
I, too, say those who know me best, am stuck upon myself.

Columbus men thought crazy. All the wisest men of Spain
Unhesitatingly remarked they thought him quite insane;
And yet no one denies to-day his laurels fair and true—
It pleases me to note that some assert I'm crazy, too.

Sam Johnson was hot-tempered, and his manners they were bad,
Though Boswell tries to intimate they were the best he had.
Well, as for me, my temper's vile, and as for manners—well,
What polish I may seem to have is but an empty shell.

And Goldsmith could not pay his bills, and had an ugly face;
He led his creditors, they say, a really awful chase.
How pleasant for a homely man like me on greatness set
To think that I, like him, am over head and heels in debt!

Ah, yes, 'tis most encouraging to read biography,
And note how much these famous folks at times resembled me;
I'll go my way uncaring what the raving critic says,
Assured that I've the symptoms same as all these geniuses!

Carlyle Smith.

The Ape-Woman



John Charles Beecham

JORAM says it couldn't have happened. But then, Joram doesn't know. Joram is a scientist, with several letters back of his name. The evolution of the species is his forte. He has written a great many valuable treatises on the subject, which have won him no end of commendation from people who know about those things. He has a worldwide reputation which makes him a desirable booking for Chatauqua lectures and a speaker at functions where serious-minded folks like himself gather.

In short, Joram is the law and the prophets, with the Constitution of the United States rolled in, on all matters pertaining to our simian ancestors and their degenerate collateral branch, the great apes of to-day.

I don't like to dispute Joram. I am not a D. Sc., or even a B. Sc. I hold no membership in a royal society. Frankly, I have no pretensions to learning whatsoever. I am a rubber grower, down in Borneo, who sells his product to the Sarawak branch of a big automobile tire house, and who is too busy on his little plantation to keep track of what is going on in the scientific world. Knowing Joram's reputation, and knowing a little, too, of his great erudition, his tireless persistence in search of fact, and his insistence that everything shall be doubly and trebly proved before it is believed, I have all the respect in the world for his opinion. Only, I insist, he doesn't know. He wasn't there to see. I was.

I wrote Joram because we went to the same university—roomed together, in fact. Odd, isn't it, how two chaps will spend four years under the same roof, eat at the same table, sleep in the same bed, study the same books, and never really learn each other's true nature? Joram was a quiet, serious-minded chap, more interested in the anatomy of a frog than the caprices of that most complex organism of God's creation, a blithe maid. I—well, I enjoyed my college days. But somehow, though I thought him somewhat of a prig, Joram and I became attached to each other, although at times a queer sort of feeling came over me that he had me classified and catalogued like one of the confounded turtles or snakes that he insisted on cluttering up the room with. One night he brought me what he called a treat, a pickled asp, an asp bottled in alcohol. I had spent the evening with a few good fellows, and I nearly had the tremens.

I waited nearly four months for Joram's answer to my letter, the mails being devilish slow to America, on account of the war. This was late in 1914, when the Em-den was in the height of her nefarious career, and the air was fairly crackling with wireless warnings of raiders abroad. So I waited all of thirteen weeks for Joram's letter to arrive, and when it did come, and I had read it, I swore like a Cairo camel-driver and vowed that Joram was the

damnedest fool in the five hemispheres, not excepting William Hohenzollern.

But I've come to my senses now and I realize that the story I told him and the conclusions I drew were probably too fantastic for a man of science to believe without further proof than my unsupported word. So I hold no grudge against Joram. At the same time, I insist that what I told him is true. I feel that a record should be kept of it. Perhaps some one will some time produce a similar case, and scientific theory will undergo another modification.

II.

As I said, I grow rubber. Our plantation is on the Simujan River, pretty well up toward the highlands. Ten years ago, when the rubber tire business began to jump into prominence and the future of the automobile was assured, I converted my little property into cash, took a steamer for Manila, and began looking around for a suitable location for a rubber-grove. But the Philippines did not appeal to me and when chance sent Claybourne King, an Englishman and a prince among men, across my path on the same mission bent, we two signed articles of agreement and, together, bucked the world since.

I want to introduce Claybourne, because he has a part in this story, a big part. He was English of the English, fire and tinder within, cold as Alaska without, a quiet sort of fellow that saved words for occasions and used them then as sparingly as an old league pitcher uses his curves. From his appearance you'd judge him to be the laziest mortal north of the equator, but when action was required, wow, how he made things hum! I was having a little trouble with a Tagalog boat crew in Mindanao—dirty thieves they are—when he came to the rescue and freed me from the pirates in less time than it takes to tell it. From that meeting our partnership developed and my admiration for him began.

Claybourne had gone to India to make his fortune. There are tin gods there, as every one knows, and their names are not Siva or Buddha. You have to "sir" and

"my lord" them, or they step on you. If you're not in officialdom and have very little money, you are, comparatively speaking, a fly. They step heavily on flies. Claybourne was too much of a democrat to be a cringer, and he did the only sensible thing, he got out. But his money was gone.

After that he drifted into Burmah, looked after an ivory concession for a spell, and eventually drifted down to Singapore. There he mixed in trade, got together a few hard-earned dollars, and began to turn his mind toward rubber. He was in Mindanao to close a deal with a Chinese trader when chance threw us together.

Mind you, I didn't get all the story at one time. It was a full year or more before I pieced his Oriental wanderings together, gathering the tale from a word here and there, mostly at night when we chatted over our pipes, and the crickets and the mosquitoes buzzed like a sawmill without.

As an unmarried man, I know little about the family relation, except what I recall of my own boyhood. I think I realize the content and happiness that exists in a home where a man and a woman are ideally mated and have like tastes and aspirations. Yet I doubt if ever man and woman could be more to each other than we two became, isolated from the world and living next to nature in the deep, dank jungle silences where death lurks in varied guises in every clump of cane and thorny creeper and low-hanging branch. Claybourne was more than a wife to me. That is why I miss him so keenly.

He was a strange soul, even when he was merry. An atavistic soul, I might call him. Often I've seen him stand in the shelter of a tapang squid, watching the gibbons as they somersaulted from limb to limb, singing their confounded "wah-wah" chorus that sounds so much like a college yell. There would be a curious look in his eyes, as though he envied the monkeys their freedom in the treetops, and more than half understood their language.

He was fond of the forest. That is what attracted him to rubber, he once told me. There was no pleasure he enjoyed more than a tramp among the gloomy avenues of trees, and the denser the jungle, the better

he liked it. I had hard work keeping his feet on the ground when the going became rough an account of cane and creepers, or venomous plant-licees. He would take to the tree-tops like a Poonan at the slightest excuse, swinging over obstructions as lightly as though he were half-monkey himself. Once I laughingly told him he was. I shall never forget the strange glitter in his eyes, or the subtle intensity of his quiet reply:

"Perhaps I am, Benjamin."

But these were not the only things in which he differed from the average man. Living in that country, far from civilization and supplies, with tambangans the only means of transportation to the seaboard, we naturally had to live largely on what the country produced. Game, particularly duck, formed a large share of my diet. But Claybourne had a holy horror of flesh. He was a vegetarian, pure and simple. When fruit and vegetables were unobtainable, and rice ran low, he contented himself with boiled palm-shoots and edible roots.

He had a passionate prejudice against killing, particularly the killing of members of the monkey tribe. But this prejudice did not extend to the carnivores. In fact he enjoyed killing tigers. Enjoy is really too mild a term. There was an eternal feud on between him and the whole cat tribe. If a leopard or a tiger appeared in the neighborhood he did not rest until he had tracked the creature to its lair and exterminated it. Nothing else interested him at these times. He lived in a state of nervous tension, unable to eat or sleep, hunting down the big cats with a grim ferocity that sometimes made me shudder. I often wondered what there was in his ancestry that made him so hate the feline breed.

Another eccentricity, was his love of solitude. It was most marked after dusk. Missing him one night, I stole into the forest after him, for he had left his rifle behind. I found him in a tall waringin-tree, swinging like an ape. When I called to him, to my horror he dropped twenty feet to the ground. I ran toward him and found him looking at me like a man in a trance.

"Claybourne," I asked, "what in Tophet are you trying to do, turn monkey?"

He stared at me vacantly, like a man just awakened from a deep sleep. Then he began to tremble, and to wilt. He staggered a few steps, and would have fallen if I had not caught him. I carried him into the house. He called for a glass of brandy, although he was not a drinking man.

"Benjamin," he said to me earnestly, "keep these doors locked hereafter at night and hide the key. If you should ever find me trying to leave the house, strike me over the head with your rifle if necessary and tie me in bed. If you don't, you'll lose a partner."

He tried to smile, but it was a sickly smile. I wondered what he meant by that reference to losing a partner. But I didn't ask him to explain. He was an enigmatic sort of chap, and rarely condescended to make explanations.

We never referred to the incident again. At the same time, it started me thinking. I was half doubtful whether he was sane. I had heard of the curious effects of hydrophobia, and he was always playing with monkeys. He might have been bitten. I wondered if I was going to have a raving maniac on my hands. But he applied himself to business with such exactitude, ceasing his ramblings in the woods, that I was gradually weaned from my suspicions.

He was an irresistible chap when he chose to be. This is another reason, I presume, why he twined himself so closely into my affections. He had seen a good share of the world before landing in Borneo, and the anecdotes he told of service with the colors in Africa, of pearl-hunting on the Amazon, and prospecting for gold at Nome, were an unending source of entertainment. Moreover, he enjoyed music, and as I am a tolerable performer on two or three stringed instruments, this enabled me to make a contribution to the jollity.

"Capital!" he would say with that imitable drawl of his, as I concluded a selection. Then he clapped his hands sedately, with the awkward, stiffish movement of an infant learning to "pat-a-cake."

This leads me to remark of his most outstanding physical peculiarity, his abnormally long arms. The normal man's arms extend half-way between his knees and

thigh. A man five feet eight inches in height, as Claybourne was, should have a reach of about two feet eight inches. Claybourne's reach, however, was two feet eleven and a half inches. I measured it on one occasion, following a sparring match in which he decidedly secured the best of it, although I had twenty pounds the advantage in weight. He had an enormous muscular development in his shoulders and chest. He attributed this to the fact that his father was a miner and that he had been born and brought up in the mining trade, wielding a pick from the day he was old enough to lift one.

It was not long after this match, in the second year of our residence on the Simujan, that the incident which was to have such a tragic sequence for Claybourne occurred. We were on a trip of inspection about the plantation one morning when one of our hill Dyak boys came running to us with the announcement that a tiger was in the vicinity and had killed a muntjac. Claybourne was instantly all excitement. He headed his horse for the house, for we had gone out without rifles. I, perforce, followed. The chance of a little sport appealed to me and I was not at all loth to join him in a tiger hunt. I am an indifferent shot, but Claybourne never misses, consequently I felt perfectly safe in his company.

We trailed the tiger all day, plunging constantly more deeply into the jungle. It was a wise old cat we were following, and although the trail was so hot at times that we saw the tops of the cane stirring ahead of us as he passed between, we were unable to corner him. The chase gradually edged toward a big grove of durian trees about five miles from camp. It was nearing sundown and it occurred to me that it was time we were hieing for home when one of the Dyak boys on our flank came rushing toward us.

"Tiger stalking mias, tuan," he exclaimed excitedly. "Hurry, tuan!"

The next moment my blood ran cold at the most horrible, humanlike scream I have ever heard well from an animal throat. It was like the cry of a woman in mortal terror, and the agony it expressed made the

sweat stand on my forehead. I stood paralyzed in my tracks.

Claybourne leaped past me into the *alang-alang* grasses. I caught a glimpse of his face as he swept by. It was gray under the tan, the cold gray of absolute bloodlessness. But there was a light of fury in his eyes that baffles description. It was as though his corporeal self was at that moment merely a tenement for a thing of flame that lived but to destroy. He had dropped his rifle, but he was carrying a *padang*, one of those wicked, heavy blades the Dyaks use in cutting cane. The grasses closed around him and he was gone, like a wisp of smoke.

Instinct, I think, the herd instinct in man to cling to his fellow, sent me stumbling in his wake. My brain was awlirl and the only distinct recollection I have of the next few moments is that I was absolutely confident that something extraordinary was to take place.

I plunged through the *alang-alang* into a little clearing, with the Dyak at my heels. Thirty feet ahead of us lay the body of a magnificent specimen of the great Bornean ape, the orang-utan, or mias. It was a female, and her back was ripped clean across, in spite of the powerful protection of the thick, tough hide. Her muzzle, dug into the leaf-mold, was smeared with blood, and her head was shifted grotesquely. It was plain to be seen that her neck had been broken. She had been attacked from behind and stricken down without warning, or she would have been an equal match for the big tiger that rested on her prostrate form, snarling and spitting, with its tail roving restlessly from side to side.

At the foot of a durian-tree on the opposite side of the tawny striped terror, a half-grown mias crouched on all fours. It was shivering with fright and too stupefied to make the spring into the tree that would save it from the killer.

Half-way between us and the tiger was Claybourne. He was stepping warily, nimbly as a practised woodsman walking logs, and he balanced the heavy *padang* in his right hand as lightly and gracefully as though it were a conductor's baton.

"Claybourne!" I strove to cry, but the

name stuck in my throat. He was between me and the tiger, I could not shoot without hitting him. I tried again to speak, but my tongue was dry as leather from the kiln, and my larynx paralyzed.

The tiger was getting restless. It was displeased at the interruption. I saw its eyes rove restlessly from the little creature huddled at the foot of the tree to the khaki-clad human approaching it so boldly. It snarled a menacing note, and as the man advanced, crouched slowly, gathering for the spring.

Never has a tiger looked bigger to me than that monarch of the jungle. I swear it was as big as a cow. The terrific power undulating in its fur-clad muscles, rippling underneath the stripes as they contracted for the leap, was enough to appall the stoutest heart.

Claybourne did not waver. He advanced leisurely, taking each step with a smooth and frictionless movement that scarce seemed motion at all. But when the great cat's back was arched in full readiness for the spring, he leaped first.

The *padang* executed a half-circle. A gleam of sunlight, drifting through a break in the liana, fell upon it, converting it into a sheet of flame. I caught a glimpse of Claybourne's face as he dodged the tiger's spring. It was illumined by the same gleam, and it shone like an avenging angel's. The *padang* cleaved the air with a whistling sound and caught the tiger directly back of the occiput, nearly severing its head from its body.

"The *tuan* has killed the tiger," Kepu, our Dyak, gasped in awe and amazement. His eyes were nearly bursting from their sockets. He crept forward and touched the slain beast's coat as though to verify the sight his eyes had witnessed, and then knelt and kissed Claybourne's foot. It was his manner of expressing the reverence and admiration he felt. Claybourne, who had been standing in a sort of trance since it was all over, recovered at that and pushed Kepu aside with a flash of annoyance.

It was no time for me to express my feelings. Much as I admired my partner's courage, other considerations prevented me from congratulating him. There are times

when courage ceases to be such, and becomes plain foolhardiness. This was one of them.

"I suppose you'll want the skin?" I finally observed. The sun was low, and I knew we would have our hands full removing the hide from the carcass before darkness fell. It would have been futile to leave the remains and return the next day, for the jackals and wild pigs are pretty good scavengers in those parts.

He shuddered. "Let it go," he replied harshly. "I don't care to see it again."

He walked around the brute, being careful not to touch it. In fact, he shrank from contact as though it were contamination. Then he crossed over to the durian-tree, where the motherless mias whelp was whimpering its terror. Keeping just out of reach of the little creature's claws he began talking to it in a soothing tone. It was a curious jargon, much the same perversion of language as a young mother uses in fondling her infant first-born. Presently the little brute began to quiet. It was not so much Claybourne's words that reassured it, I guess, as the tone of his voice.

There was a fallen durian near by. Claybourne picked it up with the quiet grace that was an indistinguishable part of him and held it toward the mias. The rich, rank fruity odor titillated the little rascal's nostrils. Hunger gradually overcame fear and it reached for the fruit and began to eat.

I was not idle meanwhile. A tiger-skin is a tiger-skin, and no more plentiful in Borneo than in Manistee, Michigan. If Claybourne did not want it, his partner most decidedly did.

I had about finished skinning the beast and Claybourne had fed the mias enough durian to give any human being dyspepsia when he strolled toward me.

"Benjamin," he announced, "I think I shall adopt this little motherless creature."

"You'll what?" I gasped. He had spoken with such deadly seriousness that I did not quite understand him.

"Take the cub home with me and keep it for a while," he returned quietly.

"You mean you'll keep it as a pet," I observed with relief. "That puts a differ-

ent complexion on the matter. From the way you first spoke I thought you had the notion it was an orphan in need of a father's care. I don't mind pets around the house, but damned if I want them as members of the family."

He did not answer, but smiled vaguely, an irritating sort of smile that seemed to say he took flights to a world where I could never follow him. He was prone to such smiles. They were deucedly trying at times, but I generally kept my temper under control.

Kepu and I bundled up the tiger-skin—Claybourne refused to touch it—and I instructed Kepu to carry it to the cabin. Then we tackled the job of trussing up the mias cub. In spite of its immaturity it put up a lusty fight, and we had all we could do to lash it, hands and feet, to a heavy bamboo cane which we swung between us over our shoulders. I took the van on the home trail. Enroute the little devil managed to extricate one of its feet from the rattans and ripped away the seat of my trousers before Claybourne discovered that it was loose.

I was in no pleasant frame of mind, therefore, when we reached our shelter. Khaki trousers are not readily replaced on the upper waters of the Simujan. Besides this, the brute's sharp claws had taken away a considerable section of epidermis. I had to eat my meals standing for several days.

"Now that you've got your mias, what are you going to do with him?" I asked, rather sarcastically I am afraid, for I had little sympathy with pet apes.

He stared into the fire dreamily.

"Let me correct you," he replied in that soft, British-gentleman's voice of his. "It is not a 'him,' but a 'her.' It is a female *mias chappin*, not more than six years old, I am sure. A remarkably bright little creature. Did you notice how quickly it responded when it perceived that my intentions were pacific?"

"I noticed how quickly it managed to ruin a pair of perfectly good pants," I retorted. "If the lady belongs to the female sex I want her to occupy the same relative position all womankind occupies with me—a good, safe distance."

"Of course we shall have to keep her in a cage at first," Claybourne vouchsafed.

"First, last, and all the time," I amended. "I take no further chances."

He smiled a bit at that.

"Do you know, Benjamin," he continued seriously, "I have a theory that the gulf which separates man and the higher forms of the brute creation is not so very wide after all. Take a dog, for instance. The capacity for affection latent in that animal is positively amazing. Its capacity for sacrifice and unselfish service surpasses the highest form that twenty centuries of the Christian era have been able to produce in man. I had a dog once that I am willing to swear could think. His ability to anticipate my wishes was uncanny. He knew when I was going and where I was going and what I wanted before I knew it myself. When I was in a blue funk, he lay down quietly beside me, watching and sympathizing. When I was happy he capered about like a colt in a June pasture.

"I have watched the monkeys some since we've come here, particularly the gibbons and the big apes. The gibbons are clever little rascals and cunning thieves. But the apes show traces of the higher virtues, the things that give man his ascendancy over the brute creation."

He paused reflectively.

"I shall try an experiment," he announced. "After winning this little creature's confidence, I shall endeavor to rear her as any human child is reared. I shall do what I can to give her an education. Of course, we cannot expect too much. Reading and writing would be quite beyond her mental capacity. But who knows what we may be able to do?"

I shrugged my shoulders. Claybourne was my equal partner, he could do as he saw fit, provided it did not interfere with the plantation. Such was our agreement. But I had little patience with the experiment.

III.

I SHALL not devote much of this narrative to the years that followed, prior to the tragedy that took Claybourne from me. Contrary to my partner's oft-expressed

fears, his mias did not sicken and die in captivity. Naturalists have often commented on this propensity of the king of the ape creation when placed under restraint, but our mias possessed a tenacity of life equalled by few of its kind. It had frequent spells of fever when it curled up like a ball in a corner of its cage and refused all nourishment, but quinin and castor-oil in liberal doses cured it of these. It fought like any human child against the administration of medicine. Its cries when forced to take it were pitiful to hear.

It was nearly a year before Claybourne took it out of its cage and permitted it to romp about the premises with a chain about one of its legs. Finding that it was not disposed to run away, he finally removed the chain. Prior to this, however, he had driven every other orang-utan from the vicinity, well aware that his pet would speedily leave him should it hear the call of its own kind.

He took extraordinary care of the creature's training. "Education" was the term he used, as though it were a human being. In fact, he treated it exactly as though it were human. He had the patience of a true trainer of wild animals, and the sympathy and understanding of a woman. I have seen him spend hours at a wash-bowl, trying to teach the mias to bathe its hands and face. Being English, Claybourne had an Englishman's reverence for cleanliness, and he surely did his utmost to cultivate like habits in the ape.

The mias—Josephine was its name, a bit of Claybourne's whimsicality—was a remarkably imitative creature, like most monkeys, and learned with amazing rapidity. I remember Claybourne's rapture when it first voluntarily, and without his setting the example, laved its hands and features before a meal. When shortly thereafter he purposely approached our dinner-table without the customary ablutions and the ape set up a shrill chatter of protest, he was so overcome with happiness that his customary reserve wholly broke down.

"You'll observe, Benjamin," he cried ecstatically, "Josephine has actually developed a sense of cleanliness. She knows it's not good taste to eat before bathing."

I did not answer. Habit is strong upon animals; a horse will walk back to its stable after learning the road. I had no desire to provoke an argument, and consequently permitted Claybourne to indulge his fancies.

From that time forth the ape became more and more of a nuisance. It interfered most seriously with the business of running the plantation. Claybourne developed a passion for it, and spent all his leisure teaching it new tricks. There were oftentimes periods of several days during which he absented himself entirely from the groves. This doubled my share of the work, and naturally made me less cordial when we were together. Finding me inclined to curt speech and moroseness, he devoted himself more assiduously to his pet.

It was his theory that the mental state of an adult mias corresponded ethically to that of a child four or five years of age. Since the ape brain is of coarser texture and is less susceptible of development than the human, greater patience must be exercised in developing a concept in an ape than in a child, he contended. He believed in Froebelian methods.

"Capture their interest and teach them to play and to use their fingers intelligently," he asserted. "When you've done that and laid a solid foundation, the intellectual and ethical development will ultimately follow."

In pursuance of this theory he strove sedulously to teach the ape to distinguish colors, to recognize and fashion geometrical patterns, and to do many of the clever things with blocks and tinted paper that four and five year olds do in the kindergartens. Each new accomplishment he claimed as a triumph and a further vindication of his theory. I had my doubts, although I was willing to concede that Claybourne was a good animal-trainer.

The orang was a vegetarian, of course. It drank goat's milk and used butter, these being the only animal foods we gave it. It developed the childlike precocity of robbing the larder when no one was near, and relished particularly licking the butter-dish until it was empty. Claybourne thrashed it once for this offense, whereupon it whimpered and cried as a child would.

I never laid hands on the brute. Frankly, I detested it, although I endeavored for policy's sake to give Claybourne no inkling of my feelings. Yet he must have known it. To see him neglect his business and waste his time with such a creature was in itself an irritation, but what irked me far more was that his fondness for it forced me daily into an almost human intimacy with it. He had it sit with us at meals. It roosted in a rocker between us when we smoked our pipes in the evening and it interrupted our conversation with peevish, guttural utterings, like a spoiled child clamoring for attention. Claybourne had infinite patience with it, but I was tempted many times to shoot the brute. Would that I had!

I am sure that it perceived my hatred and disgust, and reciprocated cordially. It continually pestered me with sly tricks. Oh, it had cunning, the vicious little beast, dissimulating before its master, for it well knew on which side its bread was buttered.

So we lived for years, the ape constantly gaining in strength, knowledge, and general cussedness, and Claybourne becoming more and more infatuated with his pet. Then, one day, I discovered with a shock of surprise that the cub we had picked up in the durian grove had become a full-grown mias.

It happened in this wise. Things had been going rather badly on the plantation for a spell, due to a hurricane that had flattened out a considerable section of one of our groves, high water in the Simujan, which delayed operations, and the churlish disposition of part of our crew of Dyaks. Claybourne had been spending most of his time with the ape and had not kept in touch with the progress of affairs. Feeling it necessary to apprise him of the situation, I called him into conference one evening.

As soon as he realized that matters were not running with their accustomed smoothness, he plunged loyally and with characteristic energy into the task of straightening out the tangles. The ape endeavored several times to distract his attention, and when he finally rebuked it sharply, crawled into a corner and sulked. We were working by the dim light of a kerosene lamp over a mass of papers, heads close to-

gether, when Claybourne chanced to glance at the ape.

"By Jove, Benjamin, I believe Josephine is jealous of you!" he exclaimed.

I looked up. The mias' face was positively demoniac. Its eyes were bloodshot and spitting fire, there was a lather of foam about its mouth, and its yellow teeth clamped together with a suggestive grinding noise. It glared at me with the most perfect exhibition of hate, human hate, that I have ever seen on a brute countenance. Its huge paws gripped the hair on its breast, as though it sought to restrain itself by main force from leaping upon me and rending me. I recoiled and my face must have changed color, for Claybourne, who was looking at me, laughed harshly and said:

"Here, we've got to stop this nonsense!"

Rising, he stepped toward the brute and began chiding it. He was not abusive, on the contrary, he was absurdly mild. He reasoned with the creature as though it were actually a human being, repeating over and over again that we had work together that we must finish and that its claim on his attention would be satisfied presently. Frankly, the man's talk sickened me. In the mean time the ape sat perfectly quiet, looking at him with great, round, expressionless eyes, although there was a gleam of human intelligence in them.

Presently a tear formed in the corner of one of the great round eyes and rolled down. Another followed. Then they gathered and fell more quickly, a tropic torrent of tears, a grief beyond expression. The ape hid its face as a woman would, its breasts heaved, and it went through every manifestation of a passionate human grief, only the emotion was more intense, more unrestrained, and more horrible than I have ever witnessed in any human being.

The cold sweat formed on my forehead and I had a taste like ashes in my mouth. My fingers trembled so that I could not hold a pen. There is nothing so terrible as a brute aping the most sacred of human emotions. One cannot resist the thought and the dreadful fear that the Hindoos may be right in asserting their abominable doctrine of metempsychosis.

I turned sick, as I say, at what I saw, but the horror I felt was tempered with amazement when I saw Claybourne's countenance. The man's face was a picture of unholy joy. He reveled, aye, gloated in the hapless creature's misery. I thought he had gone mad. In a flash, it seemed, all that had puzzled me in his conduct, all the curious contradictions and idiosyncrasies that made him so different from other men, became explicable in the light of madness. But he deceived me the next moment.

"You'll witness what education has done, Benjamin," he began, in the cold, low tones of the scientist to whom nothing is sacred. "I have used every psychologic device for nearly two years to stimulate Josephine's emotional development. To-day, you see, she feels. The reaction is perfect, wholly feminine, and identical with the human. We have gone far—I never dreamed we would go as far as this."

I gathered my papers. I was in no mood to continue a talk on business that night. Neither was Claybourne. As I passed through the door I saw a gleam of fiendish delight and triumph flash in the ape's eyes. It almost caused me to turn back, for I feared to leave Claybourne alone with the creature. But a glance at his entranced features was sufficient to send me away. Hours later, for I could not sleep, I heard his patient monotone and the orang-utan's guttural responses. I wished myself back in the States, anywhere, in fact, except in that madhouse on the Simujan.

That night really marked the beginning of the end. It was a week later, to a day, that the end came.

Claybourne slept most of the next day, for he had been up the greater part of the night. When I returned from the plantation the following evening about the supper hour I tried to resume our discussion, but found him indisposed. The man was infatuated, positively infatuated, with the great, ugly brute that he was trying to humanize. The remarkable feature of it was that the ape was equally mad about him. It grimaced with anger and showed its teeth when I so much as addressed him, and snarled and hissed if I endeavored to prolong a conversation. It seemed to feel

that Claybourne was its very own, and that I was an interloper. I tell you it gave me an uncomfortable feeling to sit at dinner with these two, the huge ape, ugly as a fiend from hell, and viciously intelligent, and the mad Claybourne, outwardly the perfect pattern of an English gentleman, and inwardly a man bereft of all reason and judgment.

The next six days were repetitions of this one. That no friction developed was largely due to the fact that I left the two severely alone. I had no desire for a physical encounter with the ape. The orang-utan of Borneo is one of the most powerful creatures in the animal creation. Among the ape tribe it ranks second to the gorilla in strength, and I have seen specimens that would be more than a match for the average gorilla, making up in ferocity and swiftness of attack what they lacked in strength. The tiger respects the orang-utan and rarely attacks one unless it is very hungry or sees a chance to surprise and kill the mias before the latter has a chance to defend itself.

Claybourne's mias had grown to one of the largest specimens of *mias chappin* that I have ever seen. It was four feet six inches from head to heel. But these figures give an inadequate idea of its great strength and power, for the mias is comparatively short-statured. One can gain a better idea of the formidable nature of this creature by comparing its spread of arms, seven feet eleven inches, with those of the average man, only five feet seven and one-half inches. Its right arm was three feet three and three-quarter inches in length. Its enormous paw was ten and three-quarter inches long as compared with seven and one-half inches, the average length of a hand among men. I am confident that it could have knocked out my brains with a single sweep of its powerful right arm.

I retired early the night of the tragedy. The day had been full of vexations, and infinite patience had been required to get any service at all from our surly Dyaks. The weather was exceedingly hot, some of the coast humidity having penetrated up to the highlands, owing to the excessive rains.

I slept fitfully. My room adjoined Claybourne's and was separated from the latter's by a stout partition of bamboos.

About midnight, while I was dozing fitfully, I was disturbed by a peculiar rustling sound, as though a heavy body were being dragged over the floor. I listened keenly for several seconds, but hearing no more, resigned myself to sleep again. Such noises were not uncommon, for Claybourne and the ape were stirring at all hours. The ape slept in a tall durian-tree just outside our cabin, but had the entry of the house whenever it desired. The door was rarely latched, for the big mias was more alert than any watchdog could have been, and never failed to give us notice of intruders.

I had just about passed into the land of dreams when an agonizing shriek rent the midnight air. Then came a dull thud, as of a heavy body dropping. A groan, and then silence, utter silence.

"Claybourne?" I quavered. The cry was little more than a whisper. I cleared my throat and called again, louder this time:

"Claybourne?"

There was no answer. I shouted a third time, leaping out of bed at the same instant and hurriedly donning trousers and overshoes. There was not a sound from the adjoining room.

I caught up my rifle, glanced to see that it was loaded, and flung open my door. Claybourne's was open, too. I sprang inside. His garments were laid in orderly fashion upon a chair, but the bed coverings were torn from the bed and lay on the floor as though he had been dragged from there.

A horrible foreboding gripped me. Without pausing for a light, for it was bright moonlight, I ran out of the cabin and leaped down into the clearing. About a hundred feet from the house was a tall waringin-tree. I raced toward it.

A low, menacing growl sent me back. Leaning over Claybourne's apparently lifeless body, was the great ape. Lifting him, she crushed him to her breast. Her face was distorted by the agony of grief. But when I took a step forward she showed her teeth so fiercely that I recoiled.

To this day, I do not know whether I am a murderer. For the rage that was in me overcoming all restraint, I lifted my rifle to my shoulder and sent a ball through her brain. She shuddered and collapsed, still clinging to Claybourne. A few convulsions, and she was still.

Kepu, our Dyak, came running up. It was all we could do to unwind those powerful arms from Claybourne's motionless form. He was still breathing. But I knew he could not live. Both legs were broken and a sharp bamboo stake, set under the waringin to mark a boundary, had penetrated his lungs.

He recovered consciousness after we had brought him into the house. I was with him those few minutes.

"Don't—blame—Josephine," he gasped between struggles for breath. "All my fault—should have—known better—can't arouse—woman—creature like her—without consequences. Please be good to her—my sake."

He coughed twice, and died.

The next day Kepu told me certain things. He took me to the waringin and showed me a fresh mias nest, made of boughs and creepers, about thirty feet above ground. It was directly above the spot where I found Claybourne.

"*Tuan* make bad magic," he told me soberly. "Swing in tree, just like mias, help mias cut boughs for nest. Mias fondle him, as *bini* does her man, and he laugh and pat her cheek."

These, briefly, are the facts I submitted to Joram. Joram declares it all bosh. Claybourne was monkey-mad, he asserts, and lived so much with his mias that the thought of her obsessed him at night and drove him to the trees in a sort of sleep-walking trance to swing like an ape. Thus he fell and met his death.

But there is Kepu's testimony. There are Claybourne's dying words. There is the evidence of the things I saw and heard during all those years, and particularly during that last nightmare week.

As I said, Joram doesn't know. He wasn't there. I was. Let the world judge between us which is right.

The Night Horseman

by Max Brand

Author of "Clang," "Traffik," "Children of the Night," etc.

A Sequel to "The Untamed"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DISCOVERY OF LIFE.

THIS is the letter which Swinnerton Loughburne received over the signature of Dr. Randall Byrne. It was such a strange letter that between paragraphs Swinnerton Loughburne paced up and down his Gramercy Park studio and stared, baffled, at the heights of the Metropolitan Tower.

DEAR SWINNERTON:

I'll be with you in good old Manhattan about as soon as you get this letter. I'm sending this ahead because I want you to do me a favor. If I have to go back to those bare, blank rooms of mine with the smell of chemicals drifting in from the laboratory, I'll—get drunk. That's all!

Here Swinnerton Loughburne lowered the letter to his knees and grasped his head in both hands. Next he turned to the end of the letter and made sure that the signature was "Randall Byrne." He stared again at the handwriting. It was not the usual script of the young doctor. It was bolder, freer, and twice as large as usual; there was a total lack of regard for the amount of stationery consumed.

Shaking his head in bewilderment, Swinnerton Loughburne read on:

What I want you to do, is to stir about and find me a new apartment. Mind you, I don't

want the loft of some infernal Arcade building in the Sixties. Get me a place somewhere between Thirtieth and Fifty-Eighth. Two bedrooms. I want a place to put some of the boys when they drop around my way. And at least one servant's room. Also at least one large room where I can stir about and wave my arms without hitting the chandelier. Are you with me?

Here Swinnerton Loughburne seized his head between both hands again and groaned: "Dementia! Plain and simple dementia! And at his age, poor boy!"

He continued:

Find an interior decorator. Not one of these fuzzy-haired women-in-pants, but a he-man who knows what a he-man needs. Tell him I want that place furnished regardless of expense. I want some deep chairs that will hit me under the knees. I want some pictures on the wall—but *nothing out of the eighteenth century*—no impressionistic landscapes—no girls dolled up in fluffy stuff. I want some pictures I can enjoy, even if my maiden aunt can't. There you are. Tell him to go ahead on those lines.

In a word, Swinnerton, old top, I want to live. For about thirty years I've *thought*, and now I know that there's nothing in it. All the thinking in the world won't make one more blade of grass grow; put one extra pound on the ribs of a long-horn; and in a word, thinking is the bunk, pure and simple!

At this point Swinnerton Loughburne staggered to the window, threw it open, and leaned out into the cold night. After a

This story began in the *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* for September 18.

time he had strength enough to return to his chair and read through the rest of the epistle without interruption.

You wonder how I've reached the new view-point? Simply by seeing some concentrated life here at the Cumberland ranch. My theories are blasted and knocked in the head—praise God!—and I've brushed a million cobwebs out of my brain. Chemistry? Rot! There's another sort of chemistry that works on the inside of a man. That's what I want to study. There are three great preliminary essentials to the study:

First—How to box with a man.

Second—How to talk with a girl.

Third—How to drink old wine.

Try the three, Swinnerton; they aren't half bad. At first they may give you a sore jaw, an aching heart, and a spinning head, but in the end they teach you how to keep your feet and *fight!*

This is how my eyes were opened.

When I came out to this ranch it was hard for me to ride a horse. So I've been studying how it should be done. Among other things, you should keep your toes turned in, you know. And there are many other things to learn.

When I had mastered them one by one I went out the other day and asked to have a horse saddled. It was done, and a lantern-jawed cow-puncher brought out a piebald gelding with long ears and sleepy eyes. Not a lovely beast, but a mild one. So I went into the saddle according to theory—with some slight hesitation here and there, planted my feet in the stirrups, and told the lantern-jawed fellow to turn loose the head of the piebald. This was done. I shook the reins. The horse did not move. I called to the brute by name. One ear wagged back to listen to me.

I kicked the beast in the ribs. Unfortunately I had forgotten that long spurs were on my heels. The horse was instantly aware of that fact, however. He leaped into a full gallop. A very jolty process. Then he stopped—but I kept on going. A fence was in the way, so I was halted. Afterward the lantern-jawed man picked me up and offered to carry me back to the house or at least get a wheelbarrow for me. I refused with some dignity. I remarked that I preferred walking, really, and so I started out across the hills and away from the house. My head was sore; so were my shoulders where I hit the fence; I began to think of the joy of facing that horse again, armed with a club.

It was evening—after supper, you see—and the light of the moon was already brighter than the sunlight. And by the time I had crossed the first range of hills, it was quite dark. As I walked I brooded upon many things. There were enough to disturb me.

There was old Joe Cumberland, at death's door and beyond the reach of my knowledge; and he had been taken away from death by the wild man, Dan Barry. There was the girl with the bright hair—Kate Cumberland. In education, nothing; in brain, nothing; in experience, nothing; and yet I was attracted. But she was not attracted in the least until along came the wild man again, and then she fell into his arms—actually fought for him! Why? I could not tell. My name and the things I have done and even my money, meant nothing to her. But when he came it was only a glance, a word, a smile, and she was in his arms. I felt like Caligula. I wished the world had only one neck, and I an ax. But why should I have felt depressed because of failures in the eyes of these silly yokels? Not one of them could read the simplest chemical formula!

All very absurd, you will agree, and you may get some inkling as to my state of mind while I walked over those same dark hills. I seemed a part of that darkness. I looked up to the stars. They were merely like the pages of a book. I named them off-hand, one after the other, and thought of their characteristics, their distances, their composition, and meditated on the marvels the spectrum has made known to us. But no sooner did such a train of thoughts start in my brain, than I again recurred to the girl, Kate Cumberland, and all I was aware of was a pain at heart—something like homesickness. Very strange.

She and the man are together constantly. The other day I was in Joseph Cumberland's room and we heard whistling outside. The face of the old man lighted. "They are together again," he said. "How do you guess at that?" I asked. "By the sound of his whistling," he answered. "For he whistles as if he expected an answer—as if he were talking with some one." And by the Lord, the old man was right. It would never have occurred to me!

Now as I started down the farther slope of a hill a whistling sound ran upon me through the wind, and looking back I saw a horseman galloping with great swiftness along the line of the crest, very plainly outlined by the sky, and by something of smoothness in the running of the horse I knew that it was Barry and his black stallion. But the whistling—the music! Dear God, man, have you read of the pipes of Pan? That night I heard them and it made a riot in my heart.

He was gone, suddenly, and the whistling went out like a light, but something had happened inside me—the first beginning of this process of internal change. The ground no longer seemed so dark. There were earth smells—very friendly—I heard some little creature chirruping contentedly to itself.

Something hummed—a grasshopper, perhaps. And then I looked up to the stars. There was not a name I could think of—I forgot them all, and for the first time I was contented to look at them and wonder at their beauty without an attempt at analysis or labeling.

If I say that I went back to the ranch-house with my feet on the ground and my heart up there among the stars, will you understand?

I found the girl sewing in front of the fire in the living-room. Simply looked up to me with a smile, and a certain dimness about the eyes—well, my breath stopped.

"Kate," said I, "I am going away to-morrow morning!"

"And leave dad?" said she.

"To tell you the truth," I answered, "there is nothing I can do for him. There has never been anything I could do for him."

"I am sorry," said she, and lifted up her eyes to me.

Now, I had begun by being stiff with her, but the ringing of that whistling—pipes of Pan, you know—was in my ears. I took a chair beside her. Something overflowed in my heart. For the first time in whole days I could look on her beauty without pain.

"Do you know why I'm going?" I asked.

She waited.

"Because," said I, and smiled right into her face, "I love you, Kate, most infernally; and I know perfectly well that I will get never the devil a bit of good out of it."

She peered at me. "You aren't jesting?" says she. "No, you're serious. I'm very sorry, Dr. Byrne."

"And I," I answered, "am glad. I wouldn't change it for the world. For once in my life—to-night—I've forgotten myself. No, I won't go away and nurse a broken heart, but I'll think of you as a man should think of something bright and above him. You'll keep my heart warm, Kate till I'm a very old man. Because of you, I'll be able to love some other girl—and a fine one, by the Lord!"

Something in the nature of an outburst, eh? But it was the music which had done it. All the time it rang and echoed through my ears. My words were only an echo of it. I was in tune with the universe. I was living for the first time. The girl dropped her sewing—tossed it aside. She came over to me and took my hands in a way that would have warmed even the icicles of your heart, Swinnerton.

"Doctor," says she, "I know that you are going to be very happy."

"Happiness," said I, "is a trick, like riding a horse. And I think that I've learned the trick. I've caught it from you and from Barry."

At that, she let go my hands and stepped back. The very devil is in these women,

Swinnerton. You never can place them for a minute at a time.

"I am trying to learn myself," she said, and there was a shadow of wistfulness in her eyes.

In another moment I should have made a complete fool of myself, but I remembered in time and got out of the room. To-morrow I start back for the old world, but I warn you beforehand, my dear fellow, that I'm bringing something of the new world with me.

What has it all brought to me? I am sad one day and gay the next. But at least I know that thinking is not life and now I'm ready to fight.

RANDALL BYRNE

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PIEBALD.

THE morning of the doctor's departure witnessed quite a ceremony at the Cumberland ranch, for old Joe Cumberland insisted that he be brought down from his room to his old place in the living-room. When he attempted to rise from his bed, however, he found that he could not stand; and big Buck Daniels lifted the old man like a child and carried him down the stairs. Once ensconced on the sofa in the living-room Joe Cumberland beckoned his daughter close to him, and whispered with a smile as she leaned over: "Here's what comes of pretendin', Kate. I been pretendin' to be too sick to walk, and now I *can't* walk; and if I'd pretend to be well, I'd be ridin' Satan right now!"

He looked about him.

"Where's Dan?" he asked.

"Upstairs, getting ready for the trip."

"Trip?"

"He's riding with Dr. Byrne to town and he'll bring back Dr. Byrne's horse."

The old man grew instantly anxious.

"They's a lot of things can happen on a long trip like that, Kate."

"But we have to try him," she said.

"We can keep him here at the ranch all the time. And if he really cares, dad, he'll come back."

"And you let him go of your own free will?" asked Joe Cumberland, wonderingly.

"I asked him to go," she answered quietly, but some of the color left her face.

"Of course it's going to come out all right," nodded her father.

"I asked him when he'd be back, and he said he would be here by dark to-night."

The old man sighed with relief.

"He don't never slip up on promises," he said. "But, oh, lass, I'll be glad when he's back again! Buck, how'd you and Dan come along together?"

"We don't come," answered Buck gloomily. "I tried to shake hands with him yesterday and call it quits. But he wouldn't touch me. He jest leaned back and smiled at me and hated me with his eyes, that way he has. He don't even look at me except when he has to, and when he does I feel like some one was sneaking up behind me with a knife ready. And he ain't said ten words to me since I come back." He paused and considered Kate with the same dark, lowering glance. "To-morrow I leave."

"You'll think better of that," nodded Joe Cumberland. "Here's the doctor now."

He came in with Dan Barry behind him. A changed man was the doctor. He was a good two inches taller because he stood so much more erect, and there was a little spring in his step which gave aspiration and spirit to his carriage. He bade them good-by one by one, and by Joe Cumberland he sat down for an instant and wished him luck. The old ranchman drew the other down closer.

"They's no luck for me," he whispered, "but don't tell none of 'em. I'm about to take a longer trip than you'll ride to-day. But first I'll see 'em settled down here—Dan quiet and both of 'em happy. S'long, doc—thanks for takin' care of me. But this here is something that can't be beat no way. Too many years 'll break the back of any man, doc. Luck to ye!"

"If you'll step to the door," said the doctor, smiling upon the rest, "you'll have some fun to watch. I'm going to ride on the piebald."

"Him that throwed you yesterday?" grinned Buck Daniels.

"The same," said the doctor. "I think I can come to a gentleman's understanding with him. A gentleman from the piebald's point of view is one who is never unintentionally rude. He may change his mind this

morning—or he may break my back. One of the two is sure to happen."

In front of the house Dan Barry already sat on Satan with Black Bart sitting near by, watching the face of his master. And beside them the lantern-jawed cow-puncher held the bridle of the piebald mustang. Never in the world was there a lazier appearing beast. His lower lip hung pendulous, a full inch and a half below the upper. His eyes were rolled so that hardly more than the whites showed. He seemed to stand asleep, dreaming of some Nirvana for equine souls. And the only sign of life were the long ears, which wobbled occasionally back and forth.

When the doctor mounted, the piebald limited all signs of interest to opening one eye.

The doctor clucked. The piebald switched his tail. Satan, at a word from Dan Barry, moved gracefully into a soft trot away from the house. The doctor slapped his mount on the neck. An ear flicked back and forth. The doctor stretched out both legs, and then he dug both spurs deep into the flanks of the mustang.

It was a perfectly successful maneuver. The back of the piebald changed from an ugly humped line to a decidedly sharp parabola and the horse left the ground with all four feet. He hit it again, almost in the identical hoof-marks, and with all legs stiff. The doctor sagged drunkenly in the saddle, and his head first swung far back, and then snapped over so that the chin banged against his chest. Nevertheless, he clung to the saddle with both hands, and stayed in his seat. The piebald swung his head around sufficiently to make sure of the surprising fact, and then he commenced to buck in earnest.

It was a lovely exhibition. He bucked with his head up and his head between his knees. He bucked in a circle and in a straight line and then mixed both styles for variety. He made little spurts at full speed, leaped into the air, and came down stiff-legged at the end of the run, his head between his braced forefeet, and then he whirled as if on a peg and darted back the other way. He bucked crisscross, jumping from side to side, and he interspersed this

with samples of all his other kinds of bucking thrown in.

That the doctor stuck on the saddle was a miracle beyond belief. Of course he pulled leather shamelessly throughout the contest, but riding straight up is a good deal of a myth. Fancy riding is reserved for circus men. The mountain-desert is a place where men stick close to utility and let style go hang.

And the doctor stuck in the saddle. He had set his teeth, and he was a seasick greenish white. His hat was ajog over one ear—his shirt tails flew out behind. And still he remained to battle. Aye, for he ceased the passive clinging to the saddle. He gathered up the long quirt which had hitherto dangled idly from his wrist, and at the very moment when the piebald had let out another notch in his feats, the doctor, holding on desperately with one hand, with the other brandished the quirt around his head and brought it down with a crack along the flanks of the piebald.

The effect was little short of a miracle. The mustang snorted and leaped once into the air, but he forgot to come down stiff-legged, and then instantly he broke into a little, soft dog trot, and followed humbly in the trail of the black stallion. The laughter and cheers from the house were the sweetest of music in the ears of Dr. Randall Byrne; the most sounding sentences of praise from the lips of the most learned of professors, after this, would be most shabby of anticlimaxes.

He waved his arm back to a group standing in front of the house—Buck Daniels, Kate, the lantern-jawed cowboy, and Wung Lu waving his kitchen apron. In another moment he was beside the rider of the stallion, and the man was whistling one of those melodies which defied repetition. It simply ran on and on smoothly, sweeping through transition after transition, soaring and falling in the most effortless manner. Now it paused, now it began again. It was never loud, but it carried like the music of a bird on wing, blown by the wind. There was about it also something which escaped from the personal. He began to forget that it was a man who whistled, and such a man! He began to look about to

the hills and the sky and the rocks—for these, it might be said, were set to music; they, too, had the sweep of line and the broken rhythms, the sense of spaciousness, the far horizons.

That day was a climax of the unusual weather. For a long time the sky had been periodically blanketed with black mists, but to-day the wind had freshened and it tore the mists into a thousand mighty fragments. There was never blue sky in sight—only, far up, a diminishing and lighter gray to testify that above it the yellow sun might be shining; but all the lower heavens were asweep with vast cloud masses, irregular, huge, hurling across the sky. They hung so low that one could follow the speed of their motion and almost gage it by miles per hour. And in the distance they seemed to brush the tops of the hills.

Seeing this, the doctor remembered what he had heard of rain in this region. It would come, they said, in sheets and masses—literal waterfalls. Dry arroyos suddenly filled and became swift torrents, rolling big boulders down their courses. There were tales of men fording rivers who were suddenly overwhelmed by terrific walls of water which rushed down from the higher mountains in masses four and eight feet high. In coming they made a thundering among the hills and they plucked up full-grown trees like twigs thrust into wet mud. Indeed, that was the sort of rain one would expect in such a country, so whipped and naked of life. Even the reviving rainfall was sent in the form of a scourge; and that which should make the grass grow might tear it up by the roots.

That was a time of change and of portent, and a day well fitted to the mood of Randall Byrne. He, also, had altered, and there was about to break upon him the rain of life, and whether it would destroy him or make him live, and richly, he could not guess. But he was naked to the skies of chance—naked as this landscape.

Far past the midday they reached the streets of Elkhead and stopped at the hotel. As the doctor swung down from his saddle, cramped and sore from the long ride, thunder rattled over the distant hills and a patter of rain splashed in the dust and

sent up a pungent odor to his nostrils. It was like the voice of the earth proclaiming its thirst. And a blast of wind leaped down the street and lifted the brim of Barry's hat and set the bandanna at his throat fluttering. He looked away into the teeth of the wind and smiled.

There was something so curious about him at the instant that Randall Byrne wanted to ask him into the hotel—wanted to have him kneel to kneel for a long talk. But he remembered an old poem—the seashells need the waves of the sea—the bird will not sing in the cage. And the yellow light in the eyes of Barry, phosphorescent, almost—a thing that might be nearly seen by night—that, surely, would not shine under any roof. It was the wind which made him smile. These things he understood, without fear.

So he said good-by, and the rider waved carelessly and took the reins of the piebald and turned the stallion back. He noted the catlike grace of the horse in moving, as if his muscles were steel springs; and he noted also that the long ride had scarcely stained the glossy hide with sweat—while the piebald reeked with the labor. Randall Byrne drew thoughtfully back onto the porch of the hotel and followed the rider with his eyes. In a moment a great cloud of dust poured down the street, covered the rider, and when it was gone he had passed around a corner and out of the life of the doctor.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CHALLENGE.

ALL this time Black Bart had trotted contentedly ahead of Satan, never having to glance back, but apparently knowing the intended direction; save that when Dan Barry turned to the road leading out of the little town, the wolf-dog had turned in an opposite direction. The rider turned in the saddle and sent a sharp whistle toward the animal, but he was answered by a short howl of woe that made him check Satan and swing around. Black Bart stood in the center of the street facing in the opposite direction, and he looked back over his shoulder toward his master.

There was apparently a perfect understanding between them, and the master first glanced up and made sure of the position of the sun and the length of time he might allow for the trip home, before he decided to follow the whim of the wolf-dog. Then he turned to Satan and cantered, with the piebald trailing, back toward Black Bart. At this the wolf-dog began to trot down the street, turned the next corner, and drew up at the door of a rambling building above which hung a dirty, cracked sign, "Gilead Saloon," and underneath in smaller letters was painted the legend: "Here's where you get it!"

Black Bart strolled up to the swinging doors of the emporium and then turned to look back at his master; clearly he wished Dan to enter the place. But the rider shook his head, and would certainly have ridden on, had not, at that moment, the rain, which had hitherto fallen only in rattling bursts, now burst over the roofs of the town with a loud roaring as of wind through a forest. It was possible that the shower might soon pass over, so Dan rode under the long shelter which stretched in front of the saloon, dismounted, and entered behind Black Bart.

It was occupied by a scattering of people, for the busy time of the day had not yet commenced and Pale Annie was merely idling behind the bar—working at half-speed, as it were. To this group Black Bart paid not the slightest heed, but glided smoothly down the center of the long room until he approached the tables at the end, where, in a corner, sat a squat, thick-chested man, and opposite him the most cadaverously lean fellow that Whistling Dan had ever seen. Before these two Black Bart paused and then cast a glance over his shoulder toward the master; Whistling Dan frowned in wonder; he knew neither of the pair.

But Black Bart apparently did. He slouched a pace closer, crouched, and bared his fangs with a tremendous snarl. At this the lean man left his chair and sprang back to a distance. Terror convulsed his face; but his eyes glittered with a fascinated interest and he glanced first at his companion and then at the great wolf-dog, as if he were

making a comparison between them. It was the broad-shouldered man who first spoke.

"Partner," he said in a thick voice, in which the articulation was almost lost, "maybe you better take your dog out before he gets hurt. He don't like me, and I don't like him none too much."

"Bart!" called Dan Barry.

But Black Bart gave no heed. There had been a slight flexing of his muscles as he crouched, and now he leaped—a black bolt of fighting weight—squarely in the face of the giant. He was met and checked midway in his spring. For the two long arms darted out, two great hands fastened in the throat of the beast, and Black Bart fell back upon the floor, with Mac Strann following, his grip never broken by the fall.

A scurry of many feet running toward the scene; a shouting of twenty voices around him; but all that Whistling Dan saw were the fangs of Bart as they gnashed fruitlessly at the wrists of Mac Strann, and then the great red tongue lolling out and the eyes bulging from their sockets—all he heard was the snarling of the wolf and the peculiar whine of rage which came from the throat of the man-beast fighting the wolf. Then he acted. His hands darted between the thick forearms of Mac Strann—his elbows jerked out and snapped the grip; next he dragged Black Bart away from the stranger.

The wolf was instantly on his feet and lunging again, but a sharp "Heel!" from Dan checked him mid-leap. He came to a shuddering halt behind the legs of his master. Whistling Dan slipped a little closer.

"I should have knowed you before," he said in a voice which carried only to the ears of Strann. "You're the brother of Jerry Strann. And they's a reason why Bart hates you!"

The thick upper lip of Strann lifted as he spoke.

"Him or you—you and your wolf together or one by one—it don't make no difference to me. I've come for you, Barry!"

The other straightened a little, and his eyes traveled slowly up and down the form of Strann.

"I been hungering to meet a man like you," he said. "Hungerin', partner North of town they's the old McDuffy place all in ruins and nobody even near it. I'll be there in an hour, m'friend."

"I'll be waiting for you there," nodded Mac Strann, and so saying he turned back to his table as if he had been interrupted by nothing more than a casual greeting.

Still, Dan Barry remained a moment with his eyes on the face of Mac Strann. And when he turned and walked with his light, soundless step down the length of the silent barroom, the wolf-dog slunk at his heels, ever and anon swinging his head over his shoulder and glancing back at the giant at the end of the room. As the door closed on man and dog, the saloon broke once more into murmur, and then into an excited clamoring.

Pale Annie stepped from behind the bar and leaned upon the table beside Mac Strann. Even while leaning in this manner the bartender was as tall as the average man. He waved back the others with a gesture of his tremendous arm. Then he reached out and took the hand of Mac Strann in his clammy fingers.

"My friend," said the ex-undertaker in his careful manner, "I seen a man once California a husky two-year-old, which nobody said could be done—and I've seen some other things—but I've never seen anything to touch the way you handled Black Bart. D'you know anything about that dog?"

Mac Strann shook his ponderous head, and his dull eyes considered Pale Annie with an expression of almost living curiosity.

"Black Bart has a record behind him that an old-time gunman would have heard with envy. There are dead men in the record of that dog, sir!"

All this he had spoken in a comparatively loud voice, but now, noting that the others had heeded his gesture and had made back toward the bar to drink on the strength of that strange fight between man and beast, the bartender approached his lips close to the ear of the giant. He said in a rapid murmur:

"I watched you talking with Dan Barry, and I saw Barry's face when he went out. You and he are to meet somewhere again to-day. My friend, don't throw yourself away."

Here Mac Strann stared down at his mighty hand—a significant answer; but Pale Annie went on swiftly:

"Yes, you're strong, but strength won't save you from Dan Barry. We know him here in Elkhead. Do you know that if he had pulled his gun and shot you down right here where you sit, that he could have walked out of this room without a hand raised to stop him? Yes, sir! And why? Because we know his record; and I'd rather go against a wolf with my bare hands—as you did—than stand up against Dan Barry with guns."

"I could tell you how he fought Jim Silent's gang, one to six. I could tell you a lot of other things. My friend, I *will* tell you about 'em if you'll listen."

But Mac Strann considered the speaker with his dull eyes.

"I never was much on talkin'," he observed mildly. "I don't understand talkin' very well."

Pale Annie started to speak again, but he checked himself, stared earnestly at Mac Strann, and then hurried back behind his bar. His face was even graver than usual; but business was business with Pale Annie—and all men have to die in their time! Haw-Haw Langley took the place which Pale Annie had left vacant opposite Mac Strann.

He cast a frightened glance upward, where the rain poured steadily on the roof of the building; then his eyes fluttered back until they rested on the face of his companion. He had to moisten his thin lips before he could speak, and even then it was a convulsive effort, like a man swallowing too large a morsel.

"Well?" said Haw-Haw. "Is it fixed?"

"It's fixed," said Mac Strann. "Maybe you'd get the hosses, Haw-Haw. If you're comin' with me?"

A dark shadow swept over the face of Haw-Haw Langley.

"You're going to beat it?" he sneered. "After you come all this way you're going

to run away from Barry? And him ~~not~~ half your size?"

"I'm going out to meet him," answered Mac Strann.

Haw-Haw Langley started up as if he feared Mac Strann would change his mind if there were any delay. His long fingers twisted together, as if to bring the blood into circulation about the purple knuckles.

"I'll have the hosses right around to the front," he said. "By the time you got our slicker on, Mac, I'll have 'em around in front!"

And he stalked swiftly from the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE STORM.

WHEN they rode out of the town the wet sand squashed under the feet of their horses and splashed up on their riding boots and their slickers. It even spotted their faces here and there, and a light-brown spray darted out to right and left of the falling hoofs. For all the streets of Elkhead were running shallow rivers, with dark, swift currents, and when they left the little town the landscape was shut out by the falling torrents. It made a strange and shifting panorama, for the rain varied in its density now and again, and as it changed hills which had been quite blotted out leaped close upon them, like living things, and they sprang back again into the mist.

So heavy was that tropical fall of water that the horses were bothered by the beating of the big drops, and shook their heads and stamped fretfully under the ceaseless bombardment. Indeed, when one stretched out his hand the drops stung him as if with lashes of tiny whips. There was no wind, no thunder, no flash of lightning, only the tremendous downpour which bleaded earth and sky in a drab, swift river.

The air was filled with parallel lines, as in some pencil drawings—not like ordinary rain, but as if the sky had changed into a vast watering-spout and was sending down a continuous flood from a myriad holes.

It was hard to look up through the terrific downpour, for it blinded one and

whipped the face and made one breathless, but now and again a puff of the rare wind would lift the sodden brim of the sombrero and then one caught a glimpse of the low-hanging clouds, with the nearest whiffs of black mist dragging across the top of a hill.

Without noticeable currents of wind, that mass of clouds was shifting slowly, with a sort of rolling motion, across the sky. And the weight of the rain forced the two to bend their heads and stare down to where the face of the earth was alive with the gliding, brown waters, whose surface was threshed into a continual foam. To speak to each other through the uproar, they had to cup their hands about their lips and shout.

Then again the rainfall around them fell away to a drizzling mist and the beating of the downpour sounded far away, and they were surrounded by distant walls of noise. So they came to the McDuffy place.

It was a helpless ruin, long abandoned. Not an iota of the roof remained. The sheds for the horses had dropped to the earth; but the walls of the house still remained standing, in part, with the empty windows looking out with a mocking promise of the shelter which was not within. Upon this hollow shack the rain beat with redoubled fury, and even before they could make out the place through the blankets of rain, they heard the hollow drumming. For there were times, oddly enough, when any sound would carry a great distance through the crashing of the rain.

A wind now sprung up and at once veered the rain from its perpendicular fall. It slashed them in the face under the drooping brims of their sombreros, so they drew into the shelter of the highest part of the standing wall. Still some of the rain struck them, but the major part of it was shunted over their heads. Moreover, the wall acted as a sort of sounding-board, catching up every odd noise from the storm-beaten plain beyond. They could speak to each other now without effort.

"D'you think," asked Haw-Haw Langley, pressing his reeking horse a little closer to Mac Strann, "that he'll come out after us in a rain like this?"

But simple-minded Mac Strann lifted his head and peered through the thick curtains of rain.

"D'you think," he parried, "that Jerry could maybe look through all this and see what I'm doin' to-day?"

It made Haw-Haw Langley grin, but peering more closely and observing that there was no mockery in the face of the giant, he wiped out his grin with a scrubbing motion of his wet hand and peered closely into the face of his companion.

"They ain't any doubt of it," he said reassuringly. "He'll know what you do, Mac. What was it that Pale Annie said to you?"

"Wanted me not to meet Barry. Said that Barry had once cleaned up a gang of six."

"And here we are only two."

"You ain't to fight!" warned Mac Strann sharply. "It 'll be man to man, Haw-Haw."

"But he might not notice that," cried Haw-Haw, and he caressed his scrawny neck as though he already felt fingers closing about his windpipe. "Him bein' used to fight crowds, Mac. Did you think of that?"

"I never asked you to come," responded Mac Strann.

"Mac," cried Haw-Haw in a sudden alarm, "s'pose you wasn't to win. S'pose you wasn't able to keep him away from me?"

The numb lips of Mac Strann sprawled in an ugly smile, but he made no other answer.

"You don't think you'll lose," hurried on Haw-Haw, "but neither did them six that Pale Annie was tellin' about, most like. But they did! They lost; but if you lose what 'll happen to me?"

"They ain't no call for you to stay here," said Mac Strann with utter indifference.

Haw-Haw answered quickly: "I wouldn't go—I wouldn't miss it for nothin'. Ain't I come all this way to see it—I mean to help? Would I fall down on you now, Mac? No, I wouldn't!"

And, twisting those bony fingers together, he burst once more into that rattling, unhuman laughter which all the Three B's

knew so well and dreaded as the dying dread the sight of the circling buzzard above.

"Stop laughin'!" cried Mac Strann with sudden anger. "Damn you, stop laughin'!"

The other peered upon Mac Strann with incredulous delight, his broad mouth gaping to that thirsted grin of enjoyment.

"You ain't gettin' nervous, Mac?" he queried, and thrust his face closer to make sure. "You ain't bothered, Mac? You ain't doubtin' how this 'll turn out?" There was no answer and so he replied to himself: "I know what done it you. I seen it myself. It was that yaller light in his eyes, Mac. My God, it come up there out of nothin' and it wasn't a light that ought to come in no man's eyes! It was like I'd woke up at night with a cold weight on my chest and found two snakes' eyes glitterin' close to my face. Makes me shivery-like, jest to think of it now. D'you notice that, Mac?"

"I'm tired of talkin'," said Mac Strann hoarsely, "damned tired!"

And so saying he swung his great head slowly around and glared at Haw-Haw. The latter shrank away with an undulatory motion in his saddle. And when the head of Mac Strann turned away again the broad mouth began gibbering: "It's gettin' him like it done me. He's scared, scared, scared—even Mac Strann!"

He broke off, for Mac Strann had jerked up his head and said in a strangely muffled voice: "What was that?"

The bullet-head of Haw-Haw Langley leaned to one side, and his glittering eyes rolled up while he listened.

"Nothin'!" he said. "I don't hear nothin'!"

"Listen again!" cried Mac Strann in that same cautious voice, as of one whispering in the night in the house of the enemy. "It's like a voice in the wind. It comes down the wind. D'ye hear now—now—now?"

It was, indeed, the faintest of faint sounds when Haw-Haw caught it. It was, in the roar of the rain, as indistinct as some distant light on the horizon which may come either from a rising star or from the win-

dow of a house. But it had a peculiar quality of its own, even as the house-light would be tinged with yellow when the stars are cold and white. A small and distant sound, and yet it cut through the crashing of the storm more and more clearly; some one rode through the rain whistling.

"It's him!" gasped Haw-Haw Langley. "My God A'mighty, Mac, he's whistlin'! It ain't possible!"

He reined his horse closer to the wall, listening with mouth agape.

He shrilled suddenly: "What if he should hit us both, seein' us together? They ain't no heart in a feller that can whistle in a storm like this!"

But Mac Strann had lowered his head, bulldog like, and now he listened and thrust out his blunt jaw farther and farther and returned no answer.

"God gimme the grit to stick it out," begged Haw-Haw Langley in an agony of desire. "God lemme see how it comes out. God lemme watch 'em fight. One of 'em is goin' to die—may be two of 'em—nothin' like it has ever been seen!"

The rain shifted, and the heart of the storm rolled far away. For the moment they could look far out across the shadow-swept hills, and out of the heart of the desolate landscape the whistling ran thrilling upon them. It was so loud and close that of one accord the two listeners jerked their heads about and stared at each other, and then turned their eyes as hastily away, as though terrified by what they had seen—each in the face of the other. It was no idle tune which they heard whistled. This was a rising, soaring paean of delight. It rang down upon the wind—cut into their faces like the drops of the rain; it branded itself like freezing cold into their foreheads.

And then, upon the crest of the nearest hill, Haw-Haw Langley saw a dim figure through the mist, a man on a horse and something else running in front; and they came swiftly.

"It's the wolf that's runnin' us down!" screamed Haw-Haw Langley. "Oh, God A'mighty, even if we was to want to run, the wolf would come and pull us down. Mac, will you save me? Will you keep the wolf away?"

He clung to the arm of his companion, but the other brushed him back with a violence which almost unseated Haw-Haw.

"Keep off'n me," growled Mac Strann, "because when you touch me, it feels like somethin' dead was next to my skin. Keep off'n me!"

Haw-Haw dragged himself back into the saddle with effort, for it was slippery with rain. His face convulsed with something black as hate.

"It ain't long you'll do the orderin' and be so free with your hands. He's comin'—soon! Mac, I'd like to stay—I'd like to see the finish—" He stopped, his buzzard eyes glittering against the face of the giant.

The rain blotted out the figure of the coming horseman, and at the same instant the whistling leaped close upon them. It was as if the whistling man had disappeared at the place where the rain swallowed his form, and had taken body again at their very side. Mac Strann shrank back against the wall, bracing his shoulders, and gripped the butts of his guns. But Haw-Haw Langley cast a frightened glance on either side; his head making birdlike, pecking motions, and then he leaned over the pommel of his saddle with a wail of despair and spurred off into the rain.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ARROYO.

HE disappeared, instantly, in that shivering curtain of grayness. Mac Strann sat by the ruined house alone.

Now, in a time of danger a child will give courage to the strong man. There is a wonderful communion between any two in time of crisis; and when Haw-Haw Langley disappeared through the rain it was to Mac Strann as it was to Patroclus when Apollo struck the base of his neck and his armor of proof fell from him. Not only was there a singular sense of nakedness, but it seemed to him also that the roaring of the rain became a hostile voice of threatening at the same instant.

He had never in his life feared any living thing. But now there was a certain hollow-ness in the region of his stomach, and his

heart fluttered like a bird in the air, with appalling lightness. And he wished to be far away.

With a clear heaven above him—aye, that would be different, but God had arranged this day and had set the earth like a stage in readiness for a death. And that was why the rain lashed the earth so fiercely. He looked down. After his death the water would still continue to beat that muddy water to foam. Aye, in that very place all would be as it was at this moment. He would be gone, but the sky and the senseless earth would remain unchanged. A sudden yearning seized him for the cabin among the mountains, with the singing of the coffee-pot over the fire—the good, warm, yellow fire that smoked between the rocks. And the skins he had left leaning against the walls of the cabin to dry—he remembered them all in one glance of memory.

Why was he here, then, when he should have been so far away, making his roof snug against this torrent of rain? Now, there would be no rain, surely, in those kindly mountains. Their tall peaks would shut out the storm clouds. Only this plain, these low hills, were the place of hell!

He swung the head of his horse to one side, drove deep the spurs and, leaning his head to the volleying of the rain, he raced in a direction opposite to that in which Haw-Haw Langley had disappeared, in a direction that led as straight as the line of a flying bird toward that cabin in the mountains.

Now and then the forefeet of his great horse smashed into a pool and sent a muddy shower of rain flying up. It cracked against his slicker; it beat like hands against his face. Everything was striving—all the elements of wind and rain—to hold him back.

Yet flight brought a blessed sense of relief and of safety. He eased the pace of his horse to a moderate gallop, and no longer driving blindly through the hills, he made out, by peering into the blast of rain, some of the pools which lay in his path, and swung aside to avoid them.

The rain lightened again about him; he caught a view of the kindly, sheltering

hills on all sides; but as he urged his horse on toward them a shrill flight of whistling fell upon his ears from behind. He drew his horse at once to a halt and listened with his heart knocking at his teeth.

It was impossible, manifestly, that the fellow could have followed his track through the rain. For that matter, if the wolf-fiend could follow traces over a plain awash with water, why might they not as well follow the tracks of Haw-Haw Langley? There was no good reason.

The whistling? Well, the whistler was far away in the heart of the storm, and the sound was merely blown against the wind by a chance echo. Yet he remained holding his rein taut, and listening with all his might.

It came again, suddenly as before, sharp, and keen as a shaft of light in the blackest heart of night, and Mac Strann leaned over the pommel of his saddle with a groan, and drove the spurs home. At the same instant the rain shut in over the hills again; a fresher wind sprang up and drove the downpour into his face. Also its roar shut out the possibility of any sound reaching him from behind.

He was the worse for that. As long as the whistling might reach him he could tell how near the pursuer rode; but in this common roar of the rain the man might be at any distance behind him—on his very heels, indeed. Aye, Dan Barry might rush upon him from behind. He had seen that black stallion and he would never forget—those graceful, agile lines, that generous breast, wide for infinite wind and the great heart. If the stallion were exerted, it could overtake his own mount as if he were standing still. Not on good footing, perhaps, but in this mucky ground the weight of his horse was terribly against him. He drove the spurs home again; he looked back again and again, piercing the driving mist of rain with starting eyes. He was safe still; the destroyer was not in sight; yet he might be riding close behind that wall of rain.

His horse came to a sudden halt, sliding on all four feet and driving up a rush of dirty water before him; even then he had stopped barely in time, for his forefeet were

buried to the knees in water. Before Mac Strann lay a wide arroyo. In ordinary weather it was dry as all the desert around, but now it had cupped the water from miles around and ran bank full, a roaring torrent. On its surface the rain beat with a continual crashing, like axes falling on brittle glass; and the downpour was now so fearful that Mac Strann, for all his peering, could not look to the other side.

He judged the current to see if he might swim his horse across. But even while he stared the stump of a cottonwood went whirling down the stream, struck a rock, perhaps, on the bottom, flung its entire bulk out of the water with the impact, and then floundered back into the stream again and whirled instantly out of sight in the sheeted rain.

No horse in the world could live through such a current. But the arroyo might turn. He swung his horse and spurred desperately along the bank, keeping his eye upon the bank. No, the stream cut back in a sharp curve and headed him farther and farther in the direction of the pursuer. He brought the mighty horse to another sliding halt and swung about in the opposite direction, for surely there must lie the point of escape. Desperately he rode, for the detour had cost him priceless time, yet it might be made up. Aye, the stream sloped sharply into the direction in which he wished to ride. For a distance he could not judge, since seconds were longer than minutes to Mac Strann now.

And then—the edge of the stream curved back again. He thought it must be a short twist in the line of the arroyo, but following it a little further he came to realize the truth. The arroyo described a wide curve, and a sharp one, and to ride down its banks on either side was merely to throw himself into the arms of Whistling Dan.

Once he struck his fleshy forehead, and then turned with gritting teeth and galloped back for the point at which he had first arrived. To his maddened brain it occurred that the current of the arroyo might by this time have somewhat abated. He might now make his way across it. So he halted once more on the bank at the point where the stream doubled back on its course and

once more, in an agony, studied the force of the current. It seemed so placid at the first glance that he was on the verge of spurring the horse into the wide, brown stream, but even as he loosened the reins a gap opened in the middle of the water, widened, whirling at the brim, and drew swiftly into a fierce vortex with a black, deep bottom. Mac Strann tightened his reins again, and then turned his horse, and waited.

Back the veriest coward against the wall and he becomes formidable, and Mac-Strann was one who had never feared before either man or beast or the powers of the storm. Even now he dreaded no reality, but there dwelt in his mind the memory of how Dan Barry had glared at him in the Gilead Saloon, and how a flicker of yellow light had glowed in the man's eyes—a strange and phosphorescent glimmer that might be seen in the darkness of night. When he turned the head of his horse away from the arroyo, he waited as one waits for the coming of a ghost. There was the same chill tingling in his blood.

Now the blanket of rain lifted and shook away to comparative clearness—lifted, and for the first time he could look far away across the plains. Nothing but gray, rain-washed desert met his eyes, and then the whistling broke once more upon him at the crest of a thrilling run. Mac Strann strained his eyes through the mist of the storm and then he saw, vaguely as a phantom, the form of a horseman rushing swiftly into the very teeth of the wind. The whistle wavered, ended, and in its place the long yell of a wolf cut the air. Mac Strann brandished a ponderous fist in defiance that was half hysterical. Man or beast alone he would meet—but a wolf-man—he whirled the horse again and urged him heedlessly into the water.

The whirlpool no longer opened before him—it had passed on down the arroyo and left in its wake a comparative calm. So that when the horse took the water he made good progress for some distance, until Mac Strann could see, clearly, the farther bank of the stream. In his joy he shouted to his horse, and swung himself clear from his saddle to lighten the burden. At the same time they encountered a heavier

current and it struck them down like a blow from above until the water closed over their heads.

It was only for a moment, however; then they emerged, the horse with courageously pricking ears and snorting nostrils just above the flood. Mac Strann swung clear, gripping the horn of the saddle with one hand while with the other he hastily divested himself of all superfluous weight. His slicker went first, ripped away from throat and shoulders and whipped off his body by one tug of the current. Next he fumbled at his belt and tossed this also, guns and all, away.

Striking out with his legs and his free arm to aid the progress, they now forged ahead with noticeable speed. The current, to be sure, was carrying them farther down the stream, but they were now almost to the center of the arroyo, and though the water boiled furiously over the back of the horse, they forged steadily closer and closer to the safe shore.

It was chance that defeated Mac Strann. It came shooting down the river, and he saw it only an instant too late—a log whipping through the surface of the stream as though impelled by a living force. And with arrowy straightness it lunged at them. Mac Strann heaved himself high—he screamed at the horse as though the poor brute could understand his warning, and then the tree-trunk was upon them. Fair and square it struck the head of the horse with a thud audible even through the rushing of the stream. The horse went down like lead, and Mac Strann was dragged down beneath the surface.

He came up fighting grimly and hopelessly for life. For he was in the very center of the stream, now, and the current swept him relentlessly down. There seemed to be hands in the middle of the arroyo, and when he strove to battle his way to the edge of the water the current tangled at his legs and pulled him back. Yet even then he did not fear. It was death, he knew, but at least it was death fighting against a force of nature rather than destruction at the hands of some weird and unhuman agency. His arms began to grow numb. He raised his head to

pick out the nearest point on the shore and make his last struggle for life.

What he saw was a black head cutting the water just above him, and beside the horse, one hand upon the beast's mane, swam a man. At the same instant a hand fastened on his collar and he was drawn slowly against the force of the river.

In the stunning surprise of the first moment he could make no effort to save himself, and as a result, all three were washed hopelessly down the current, but a shrill warning from his rescuer set him fighting again with all the power of his great limbs. After that they forged steadily toward the shore. The black horse swam with amazing strength, and breaking the force of the current for the men, they soon passed from the full grip of the torrent and forged into the smoother shallows at the side of the stream. In a moment firm land was beneath the feet of Mac Strann, and he turned his dull eyes of amazement upon Dan Barry. The latter stood beside the panting black horse. He had not even thrown off his slicker in the fording of the stream—there had been no time for even that small delay if he wished to save Strann. And now he was throwing back the folds of the garment to leave free play for his arms. He panted from the fierce effort of the fording, but his head was high, a singular smile lingered about the corners of his mouth, and in his eyes Mac Strann saw the gleam of yellow, a signal of unfathomable danger.

From his holsters Barry drew two revolvers. One he retained; the other he tossed toward Mac Strann, and the latter caught it automatically.

"Now," said the soft voice of Barry, "we're equally armed. Down, Bart!—for the wolf-dog was slinking with ominous intent toward the giant—and there's the dog you shot. If you drop me, you can send your next shot into Bart. If I drop you, the teeth of Bart will be in your throat. Make your own terms; fight in the way you want; knives, if you like 'em better than guns, or"—and here the yellow flamed terribly in Barry's eyes—"bare hand to hand!"

The grim truth sank slowly home in the

dull mind of Mac Strann. The man had saved him from the water to kill him on dry land.

"Barry," he said slowly, "it was your bullet that brung down Jerry; but you've paid me back here. They's nothin' left on earth worth fightin' for. There's your gun."

And he threw the revolver into the mud at Barry's feet, turned on his heel, and lumbered off into the rain. There was no voice of answer behind him, except a shrill whine of rage from Black Bart and then a sharp command: "Down!" from the master. As the blanket of rain shut over him, Mac Strann looked back. There stood the strange man with the wolf crouched at his feet, and the teeth of Bart were bared, and the hum of his horrible snarling carried to Strann through the beat of the rain. Mac Strann turned again, and plodded slowly through the storm.

And Dan Barry? Twice men had stood before him, armed, and twice he had failed to kill. Wonder rose in him; wonder and a great fear. Was he losing the desert, and was the desert losing him? Were the chains of humanity falling about him to drag him down to a tamed and sordid life? A sudden hatred for all men, Mac Strann, Daniels, Kate, and even poor Joe Cumberland, welled hot in the breast of Whistling Dan. The strength of men could not conquer him; but how could their very weakness disarm him? He leaped again on the back of Satan, and rode furiously back into the storm.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE FALLING OF NIGHT.

IT had been hard to gage the falling of night on this day, and even the careful eyes of the watchers on the Cumberland Ranch could not tell when the grayness of the sky was being darkened by the coming of the evening. All day there had been swift alternations of light and shadow, comparatively speaking, as the clouds grew thin or thick before the wind. But at length, indubitably, the night was there. Little by little the sky was overcast, and

even the lines of the falling rain were no longer visible. Before the gloom of the darkness had fully settled over the earth, moreover, there came a change in the wind, and the watchers at the rain-beaten windows of the ranch-house saw the clouds roll apart and split into fragments that were driven from the face of the sky; and from the clean washed face of heaven the stars shone down bright and serene. And still Dan Barry had not come.

After the tumult of that long day the sudden silence of that windless night had more ill omen in it than thunder and lightning. In the living-room the three did not speak.

Now that the storm was gone they had allowed the fire to fall away until the hearth showed merely fragmentary dances of flame and a wide bed of dull red coals growing dimmer from moment to moment. Wung Lu had brought in a lamp—a large lamp with a circular wick that cast a bright, white light—but Kate had turned down the wick, and now it made only a brief circle of yellow in one corner of the room. The main illumination came from the fireplace and struck on the faces of Kate and Buck Daniels, while Joe Cumberland, on the couch at the end of the room, was only plainly visible when there was an extraordinarily high leap of the dying flames; but usually his face was merely a glimmering hint in the darkness—his face and the long hands which were folded upon his breast. Often when the flames leaped there was a crackling of the embers and the last of the log, and then the two nearer the fire would start and flash a glance, of one accord, toward the prostrate figure that lay upon the couch.

That silence had lasted so long that when at length the dull voice of Joe Cumberland broke in, there was a ring of a most prophetic solemnity about it.

"He ain't come," said the old man. "Dan ain't here."

The others exchanged glances, but the eyes of Kate dropped sadly and fastened again upon the hearth.

Buck Daniels cleared his throat like an orator.

"Nobody but a fool," he said, "would

have started out of Elkhead in a storm like this."

"Weather makes no difference to Dan," said Joe Cumberland.

"But he'd think of his hoss—"

"Weather makes no difference to Satan," answered the faint, oracular voice of Joe Cumberland. "Kate!"

"Yes?"

"Is he comin'?"

She did not answer. Instead, she got up slowly from her place by the fire and took another chair, far away in the gloom, where hardly a glimmer of light reached her, and there she let her head rest, as if exhausted, against the back of the seat.

"He promised," said Buck Daniels, striving desperately to keep his voice cheerful, "and he never busts his promises."

"Aye," said the old man, "he promised to be back—but he ain't here."

"If he started after the storm," said Buck Daniels.

"He didn't start after the storm," announced the oracle. "He was out in it."

"What was that?" cried Buck Daniels sharply.

"The wind," said Kate, "for it's rising. It will be a cold night, to-night."

"And he ain't here," said the old man monotonously.

"Ain't there things that might hold him up?" asked Buck, with a touch of irritation.

"Aye," said the old rancher, "they's things that 'll hold him up. They's things that 'll turn a dog wild, too, and the taste of blood is one of 'em!"

The silence fell again.

There was an old clock standing against the wall. It was one of those tall, wooden frames in which, behind the glass, the heavy, polished disk of the pendulum alternated slowly back and forth with wearisome precision. And with every stroke of the seconds there was a faint, metallic clangor in the clock—a falter like that which comes in the voice of a very old man. And the sound of this clock took possession of every silence until it seemed like the voice of a doomsman counting off the seconds. Aye, every one in the room, again and again, took up the tale of those sec-

onds and would count them slowly—fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two, fifty-three—and on and on, waiting for the next speech, or for the next popping of the wood upon the hearth, or for the next wail of the wind that would break upon the deadly expectancy of that count. And while they counted each looked straight before him with wide and widening eyes.

Into one of these pauses the voice of Buck Daniels broke at length; and it was a cheerless and lonely voice in that large room, in the dull darkness, and the duller lights.

"D'you remember Shorty Martin, Kate?"

"I remember him."

He turned in his chair and hitched it a little closer to her until he could make out her face, dimly, among the shadows. The flames jumped on the hearth, and he saw a picture that knocked at his heart.

"The little bow-legged feller, I mean."

"Yes, I remember him very well."

Once more the flames sputtered and he saw how she looked wistfully before her and above. She had never seemed so lovely to Buck Daniels. She was pale, indeed, but there was no ugly pinching of her face, and if there were shadows beneath her eyes, they only served to make her eyes seem marvelously large and bright. She was pallid, and the firelight stained her skin with touches of tropic gold, and cast a halo of the golden hair about her face. She seemed like one of those statues wrought in ivory and in gold in the glory and the rich days of Athens—some goddess who has heard the tidings of the coming fall, the change of the old order, and sits passive on her throne waiting the doom from which there is no escape. Something of this filtered through to the sad heart of Buck Daniels. He, too, had no hope—nay, he had not even her small hope, but somehow he was able to pity her and cherish the picture of her in that gloomy place. It seemed to Buck Daniels that he would give ten years from the best of his life to see her smile as he had once seen her in those old, bright days. He went on with his tale.

"You would have busted laughin' if you'd seen him at the Circle Y Bar round-

up the way I seen him. Shorty ain't so bad with a rope. He's always talkin' about what he can do and how he can daub a rope on anything that's got horns. He ain't so bad, but then he ain't so good, either. Specially, he ain't so good at ridin'—you know what bowed legs he's got, Kate?"

"I remember, Buck."

She was looking at him, at last, and he talked eagerly to turn that look into a smile.

"Well, they was the three of us got after one two-year-old—a bull and a bad 'un. Shorty was on one side and me and Cuttle was on the other side. Shorty daubed his rope and made a fair catch, but when his hoss set back the rope busted plumb in two. Now, Shorty, he had an idea that he could ease the work of his hoss a whole pile if he laid holt on the rope whenever his hoss set down to flop a cow. So Shorty he had holt on this rope and was pulling back hard when the rope busted, and Shorty, he spilled backwards out'n that saddle like he'd been kicked out.

"Whilst he was lyin' there, the bull, that had took a header when the rope busted, come up on his feet agin, and I'll tell a man he was r'arin' mad! He seen Shorty lyin' on the ground, and he took a run for Shorty. Me and Cuttle was laughin' so hard we couldn't barely swing our ropes, but I made a throw and managed to get that bull around both horns. So my Betty sits down and braces herself for the tug.

"In the mean time little Shorty, he sits up and lays a hand to his head, and same time he sees that bull come t'arin' for him. Up he jumps. And jest then the bull come to the end of the line and *wonk!*—down he goes, head over heels, and hits the sand with a bang that must of jostled his liver some, I'll be sayin'!

"Well, Shorty, he seen that bull fly up into the air, and he lets out a yell like the world was comin' to an end, and starts runnin'. If he'd run straight back the other way the bull couldn't of run a step, because I had him fast with my rope, but Shorty seen me, and he come t'arin' for my hoss to get behind him.

"That bull was like a cat gettin' to his

feet, and he sights Shorty t'arin' and lights out after him. There they went lickety-split. That bull was puffin' on the seat of Shorty's trousers and tossin' his horns and jest missin' Shorty by inches; and Shorty had his mouth so wide open hollerin' that you could have throwed a side of beef down his throat; and his eyes was bulgin' out. Them bow legs of his was stretchin' ten yards at a clip, most like, and the boys says they could hear him hollerin' a mile away.

"But that bull, stretch himself all he could, couldn't gain an inch on Shorty; and Shorty couldn't gain an inch on the bull, till the bull come to the other end of the forty-foot rope, and then, *whang!* up goes the heels of the bull and down goes his head, and his heels comes over—*wonk!* and hits Shorty right square on the head. Been an ordinary feller, and he wouldn't of lived to talk about it afterward, but seein' it was Shorty, he jest goes up in the air and lands about ten yards away, and rolls over and hits his feet without once gettin' off his stride—and then he *did* start runnin', and he didn't stop runnin' nor hollerin' till he got plumb back to the house!"

Buck Daniels sat back in his chair and guffawed at the memory. In the excitement of the tale he had quite forgotten Kate, but when he remembered her she sat with her head craned a little to one side, her hand raised for silence, and a smile, indeed, upon her lips, but never a glance for Buck Daniels. However, he comprehended at once.

"Is it him?" he whispered. "D'you hear him?"

"Hush!" commanded two voices; and then he saw that old Joe Cumberland also was listening.

"No," said the girl suddenly; "it was only the wind."

As if in answer, a far, faint whistling broke upon them. She drew her hands slowly toward her breast, as if, indeed, she drew the sound in with them.

"He's coming!" she cried. "Oh, dad, listen! Don't you hear?"

"I do," answered the rancher, "but what I'm hearin' don't warm my blood

none. Kate, if you're wise you'll get up and go to your room and don't pay no heed to anything you might be hearin' to-night."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE JOURNEY INTO NIGHT.

THERE was no doubting the meaning of Joe Cumberland. It grew upon them with amazing swiftness, as if the black stallion were racing upon the house at a swift gallop, and the whistling rose and rang and soared in a wild outburst. Give the eagle the throat of the lark, and after he has struck down his prey in the center of the sky and sent the ragged feathers and the slain body falling down to earth, what would be the song of the eagle rising again and dwindling out of sight in the heart of the sky? What terrible pæan would he send whistling down to the dull earth far below? And such was the music that came before the coming of Dan Barry.

It did not cease, as usual, at a distance, but it came closer and closer, and it swelled around them. Buck Daniels had risen from his chair and stolen to a corner of the room where not a solitary shaft of light could possibly reach him; and Kate Cumberland slipped farther into the depths of the big chair.

So that, in their utter silence, in spite of the whistling that blew in upon them, they could hear the dull ticking of the tall clock, and by a wretched freak of fate the ticking fell exactly in with the soaring rhythm of the whistle, and each had a part in the deadliness of the other.

Very near upon them the music ceased abruptly. A footfall swept down the hall, a weight struck the door and cast it wide, and Black Bart glided into the room. He cast not a glance on either side. He turned his head neither to right nor to left. But he held straight on until he came to Kate Cumberland, and there he stood before her. She leaned forward.

"Bart!" she said softly and stretched out her hands to him.

A deep snarl stopped the gesture, and

at the flash of the long fangs she sank into the chair. Old Joe Cumberland, with fearful labor, dragged himself to a sitting position upon the couch, and sitting up in this fashion the light fell fully upon his white face and his white hair and his white beard, so that he made a ghostly picture.

Then an outer door slammed and a light step, at an almost running pace, speeded down the hall, the door was swung wide again, and Dan was before them. He seemed to bring with him the keen, fresh air of the light, and at the opening of the door the flame in the lamp jumped in its chimney, shook, and fell slowly back to its original dimness; but by that glow of light they saw that the sombrero upon Dan's head was a shapeless mass—his bandanna had been torn away, leaving his throat bare—his slicker was a mass of rents and at the neck had been crumpled and torn in a thousand places as though strong teeth had worried it to a rag.

Spots of mud were everywhere on his boots, even on his sombrero with its sagging brim, and on one side of his face there was a darker stain. He had ceased his whistling, indeed, but now he stood at the door and hummed as he gazed about the room.

Straight to Kate Cumberland he walked, took her hands, and raised her from the chair.

He said, and there was a fiber and ring in his voice that made them catch their breaths:

"There's something outside that I'm following to-night. I don't know what it is. It is the taste of the wind and the feel of the air and the smell of the ground. And I've got to be ridin'. I'm saying goodbye for a bit, Kate."

"Dan," she cried, "what's happened? What's on your face?"

"The mark of the night," he answered. "I don't know what else. Will you come with me, Kate?"

"For how long? Where are you going, Dan?"

"I don't know where or how long. All I know is I've got to be going. Come to the window. Take the air on your face. You'll understand!"

He drew her after him and cast up the window.

"Do you feel it in the wind?" he called to her, turning with a transfigured face. "Do you hear it?"

She could not speak, but stood with her face lifted, trembling.

"Look at me!" he commanded, and turned her roughly toward him. There he stood leaning close to her, and the yellow light flickered and waned and burned again in his eyes.

He had held her hands while he stared. Now he dropped them with an exclamation. "You're blank," he said angrily. "You've seen nothing and heard nothing." He turned on his heel. "Bart!" he called, and walked from the room, and then they heard the padding of his soft step down the hall and on the porch, and then—silence.

Black Bart slunk to the door and into the hall, but instantly he was back and peering into the gloom of the silent place like an evil-eyed specter.

A sharp whistle rang from outside, and Black Bart started. Still he glided on until he stood before Kate; then turned and stalked slowly toward the door, looking back after her. She did not move, and with a snarl the wolf-dog whirled again and trotted back to her. This time he caught a fold of her skirt in his teeth and pulled on it. And under the pressure she made a step.

"Kate!" called Joe Cumberland. "Are you mad, girl, to dream of goin' out in a night like this?"

"I'm not going!" she answered hurriedly. "I'm afraid—and I won't leave you, dad!"

She had stopped as she spoke, but Black Bart, snarling terribly, threw his weight back, and dragged her a step forward.

"Buck," cried old Joe Cumberland, and he dragged himself up and stood tottering—"shoot the damned wolf—for God's sake—for my sake!"

Still the wolf-dog drew the girl in that snarling progress toward the door.

"Kate!" cried her father, and the agony in his voice made it young and sent it ringing through the room. "Will you go out

to wander between heaven and hell—on a night like this?"

"I'm not going," she answered. "I won't leave you—but oh—dad—"

He opened his lips for a fresh appeal, but the chorus of the wild geese swept in upon the wind, blown loud and clear and jangling as distant bells out of tune. And Kate Cumberland buried her face in her hands and stumbled blindly out of the room and down the hall—and then they heard the wild neighing of a horse outside.

"Buck!" commanded Joe Cumberland. "He's stealin' my girl—my Kate—go out; call up the boys; tell 'em to stop Dan from saddlin' a horse for Kate—"

"Wait and listen!" cut in Buck Daniels. "D'you hear that?"

On the wet ground outside they heard a patter of galloping hoofs, and then a wild whistling, sweet and keen and high, came ringing back to them. It diminished rapidly with the distance.

"He's carryin' her off on Satan!" groaned Joe Cumberland, staggering as he tried to step forward. "Buck, call out the boys. Even Satan can't beat my hosses when he's carryin' double—call 'em out. If you bring her back—"

His voice choked and he stumbled and would have fallen to his knees had not Buck Daniels sprang forward and caught him and carried him back to the couch.

"What's happened there ain't no man can stop," said Buck hoarsely. "God's work or devil's work—I dunno—but I know there ain't no place for a man between Dan and Kate!"

"Turn up the lights," commanded Joe Cumberland sharply. "Got to see; I got to think. D'you hear?"

Buck Daniels ran to the big lamp and turned up the wick. At once a clear light flooded every nook of the big room and showed all its emptiness.

"Can't you make the lamp work?" asked the old ranchman angrily. "Ain't they any oil in it? Why, Buck, they ain't enough light for me to see your face, hardly. But I'll do without the light. Buck, how far will they go? Kate's a good girl! She won't leave, lad!"

"She won't," agreed Buck Daniels.

"Jest gone with Dan for a bit of a canter."

"The devil was come back in his eyes," muttered the old man. "God knows where he's headin' for! Buck, I brought him offen the range and made him a part of my house. I took him into my heart; and now he's gone again and taken everything that I love along with him. Buck, why did he go?"

"He'll come back," said the big cow-puncher softly.

"It's gettin' darker and darker," said Joe Cumberland, "and they's a kind of ringing in my ears. Talk louder. I don't hear you none too well."

"I said they was comin' back," said Buck Daniels.

Something like a light showed on the face of Joe Cumberland.

"Aye, lad," he said eagerly, "I can hear Dan's whistlin', comin' back—nearer and nearer. Most like he was jest playin' a joke on me, eh, Buck?"

"Most like," said Buck brokenly.

"Aye, there it's ringin' at the door of the house! Was that a footstep on the hall?"

"It was," said Buck. "They's comin' down the hall!"

But far, far away he barely heard the whistling of Dan Barry dying among the hills.

"You let the lamp go out," said Joe Cumberland, "and now I can't see nothing. Are they in the room?"

"They're here," said Buck Daniels—"comin' toward you now."

"Dan!" cried the old man, shading his eyes and peering anxiously. "No, I can't see a thing! Can you find me, lad?"

And Buck Daniels, softening his voice as much as he could, answered: "I can find you."

"Then gimme your hand."

Buck Daniels slipped his own large hand into the cold fingers of the dying cattleman. An expression of surpassing joy lay on the face of Joe Cumberland.

"Whistlin' Dan, my Dan," he murmured faintly, "I'm kind of sleepy; but before I go to sleep to-night I got to tell you that I forgive you for your joke—pretendin' to

take Kate away. They's nothin' but sleep worth while—and goin' to sleep, holdin' your hand, lad—"

Buck Daniels dropped upon his knees and stared into the wide, dead eyes. Through the open window a sound of whistling blew to him. It was a sweet, faint

music, and being so light it seemed like a chorus of singing voices among the mountains, for it was as pure and as sharp as the starlight.

Buck Daniels lifted his head to listen, but the sound faded and the murmur of the night wind came between.

(The end.)



THREE times, now, Hadassah had seen him in the square; and she wondered who he was, what he was, whence he came.

A little, bent, shrunken old man he was, with a mane of iron gray hair that curled over his collar, and a face like weather-worn parchment. But the children always played about him, and a small waif of a street dog came up and licked his shoes and wagged a friendly tail, and Hadassah was strangely impressed.

"What a picture," she thought. "Oh, if I only could paint it!"

From where she sat on a park bench she could visualize, with her artist's eyes, the "values" of such a picture. But had her brush the skill to catch those illusive tones, to feel the atmosphere, to portray the lights and shadows in browns and grays and the moribund greens of autumn? Oh, if she could!

Hadassah moved down the cement walk to a bench directly opposite the old man.

They were in Washington Square—that

throbbing oasis in the heart of the great city, where history and lives and careers have been made; where life is just a little bit different than it is anywhere else; where the earnest worker, whose very existence is Bohemia, sets the stage for the rich dilettante in art and real pleasure; where merge the ways of the very poor and the very wealthy and the creators of those quiet enjoyments that one finds in galleries and on book-shelves.

Washington Square in autumn! It was a wonderful season, then, when the century-old trees were in changing garb and there was a little bite to the air, and the westering sun, peeking through a purple cloud, made poppy-splashes of color against the ancient buildings of gray stone and red brick. And there was the withered old man, like the autumn, he seemed, with the small group of ragged, soiled Italian children about him, and the waif of a dog sniffing at him in friendly confidence and wagging an invitation to better acquaintanceship.

"If only I could paint it!" breathed Hadassah again.

The old man took a bag of candy from his pocket and passed it among his tatterdemalion admirers.

"Me, one for other hand," asked a black-haired, brown-eyed mite.

"That's a good American spirit," laughed the old man; and Hadassah saw that he took a chocolate from the bag and placed it in the grimy fist of the urchin.

"Me a good American," replied the boy eagerly. "Mya fadder, he comea from Italy, but he good American, too."

"My fadder, brudder, botha good American," interposed a little girl anxiously, holding out both hands expectantly for the old man's candy.

Hadassah smiled as the good Samaritan responded to the hint, then threw a piece of candy to the dog; and the old man caught that smile and returned it, and Hadassah, seized by an impulse that she could not resist, got up from her bench and walked across the pathway.

"Ah!" he welcomed. "I see you are interested in the children. It is good for one's soul to be interested in little children—eh?"

"Y-yes," hesitated Hadassah. She didn't dare tell him that she was more interested in him than in the children.

"Will you sit down?"

She accepted the simple invitation—mechanically, it seemed to her, for she was in somewhat of a daze. Why should she be so attracted to this strange old man? What was the reason for the impulse that had drawn her to him? Was there a latent affinity of feeling that she could not then comprehend? She took a chocolate from his proffered bag, now nearly depleted.

"I was thinking," she blurted forth naively, "what a wonderful, glorious picture you would make—you and the children and the little dog and the autumn tints and the sun just where it is. I—"

"You paint, then?"

She caught a quick flash of interest in the faded blue eyes by her side; she noted, irrelevantly, that the suit of clothes he wore was a trifle shabby, and that he had trimmed a threadbare fringe from his cuffs.

"Paint?" The large, brown eyes of Hadassah took on a wistful, longing look. "Oh, yes," she added with a trace of bitterness, "I paint—or try to paint."

"Try to paint?" The old man's voice was very soft and soothing and comforting. "Then, if you really try to paint, surely you must paint. It is the law of life that one must do well what one tries hard enough to do."

"Do you think so?"

"It is a matter of love," he answered softly.

"Oh, I have love. Why, Jimmy is—"

"Hush, my child! I do not mean necessarily the love of the sexes. Sometimes, if the love be right, that, too, is important. But the love of art, the love of work, the love of duty, the love for the achievement of one noble thing that encompasses all else, that compels, that drives one to accomplishment. Have you such a love?"

"You—you speak like a philosopher," murmured Hadassah; and she felt thrilled by the speech of the old man and abashed by the intensity of his mild scrutiny.

"Have you such a love?" he repeated.

"I—I don't know."

The old man tossed the remainder of his candy to the children and they went off about their play, now that the pretty lady had displaced them in his attention, and they had exhausted his store of sweets. Only the little waif of a dog remained at his feet, looking up with kindly eyes and occasionally wagging a limp tail.

"If you don't know, my girl," he responded with brutal candor, "then you should not attempt to paint. Art is born as a child is born to a worthy parent. It must be wanted, and it must be nursed and nurtured. It must be loved."

"I know," she confessed, "that, from the first time I saw you in the park, a week ago, I have wished that I might be able to paint you."

"You have wished to paint me?"

"More than anything, it seems, that I have ever wished."

The old man smiled.

"Why?"

"I don't know. I have just been obsessed with the thought that you repre-

sented the subject of a great painting; but I—oh, I haven't the skill. I am a foolish girl."

"One is never foolish for aiming to do something that he believes to be great," answered the old man. "Behind every great painting, behind every achievement, is the impulse to do, the determination to succeed; and if all who have accomplished the great things of life had handicapped themselves by the thought that they were foolish to aspire—well, where would be all our fine paintings, our masterpieces of literature, our marvelous inventions?"

"That is true," admitted the girl.

"What do you do?" he demanded abruptly.

"Oh, I do an occasional magazine illustration, an advertisement, a design for a gown; but I want to paint—to paint great things!"

"Are you successful?"

The girl shook her head sadly.

"It is very hard. Oh, yes, I eke out a meagre living; but—"

"Where do you live?"

Hadassah jerked her head to the south.

"Just across the square, there."

She indicated a short row of flat, gray old buildings, set back in small, iron-walled yards. One time, in the long ago, they had sheltered the rich and mighty of the nascent city; but for many years, now, they had been the shabby dream-palaces of the grave and gay who plied pen and palette.

"What is your name?"

"Hadassah."

"Hadassah? Ah, what a quaint, ancient name. It is very pretty. It seems to fit you, too, my girl."

"It means, you know, the myrtle; it is Jewish and—"

"But you are not?"

"Oh, no."

"What is your other name?"

"It isn't so romantic, so I just sign myself Hadassah."

"But your other name is—"

"Jones," she laughed. "And when I tell you that my dear father, now dead, was a policeman on the East Side, you will wonder, perhaps, that I ever aspired to paint."

"But no," he answered gravely. "From the earth springs the stalwart oak and the mighty pile of granite. You say your father is dead; and your mother?"

"She, too."

"And you are alone, then, and you are striving very hard, and it is difficult?"

The girl nodded her head.

"And you would like me as a model for that great painting you wish to do?"

"Oh, yes—very, very much," she cried eagerly.

"And you would love that painting so much that you would work very, very hard, and you wouldn't mind besetting difficulties?"

"Indeed I would, sir."

"Ah!" The old man vented a comfortable, happy sigh. He sat off and looked at her, and the faded blue eyes of him took on a superhuman radiance, and his withered face was illumined with a beautiful light. "Ah!" he breathed. "You are the Madonna—the Madonna! Just there, as you look now, with the sunlight in your face and on your hair, and the look of wistful happiness in your eyes! You are a picture, too, girl; and—well, you shall paint me, if you wish."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" she cried.

"But you, too, are a painter. You could not—you must be—"

"You are the painter," he interrupted. "You are going to do a great painting. Understand?"

"Who are you?" she asked abruptly. She looked down on his trimmed cuffs and his shiny knees and well-worn shoes, and marveled at such a kindly philosopher with the soul of a poet. Why, already, she was absorbing inspiration from him—beginning to sense that kind of love that he had described. "Will you not tell me your name?" she repeated, as he hesitated.

"Call me Melampus," he replied.

"Melampus? Mr. Melampus?"

The old man laughed heartily, as though he had propounded a fine jest.

"No, no," he enjoined; "just Melampus. If you will look up your classical mythology, you will find that Melampus was the fabled soothsayer who understood the cries of birds."

"But that is not your name," she protested.

"But it is enough; and it is an older name even than Hadassah. When shall we begin work?"

"To-morrow, if that will suit you, sir."

"Why not to-day? To-day is the time to begin anything that is worth while; to-day, when the inspiration fills you, when you have the inherent urge of hope and faith and desire."

"To-day, then, it shall be," she cried. "And oh, here comes Jimmy. He will be so pleased when we tell him."

"Jimmy?" The old man gave her one of those queer inscrutable looks that she had noted. "Who is Jimmy?"

"My *fiancé*. He is struggling, too, just as I am. But Jimmy writes, you know. And one day he is going to put over something big—or I shall, maybe—and then we are going to be married. Oh, Jimmy has a great future, I am sure."

Jimmy came up, and she introduced them—her *fiancé* and old Melampus, as he wished to be called; and while he pretended to occupy himself with the little dog that clung to his heels, the old man heard Jimmy ask: "Who's the old nut?" but Melampus did not let on.

"I am going to paint him," Hadassah explained jubilantly.

"Well, here's good luck to the work of art," replied Jimmy flippantly. "When do you start?"

"This afternoon."

"Oh, make it to-morrow, Had," protested Jimmy. "We're in luck. I just got twenty-five dollars for a story, and I want you to come along to dinner, and then we'll do a theater—eh?"

Hadassah looked from the old man into the eager eyes of her lover.

"Which do you prefer?" asked the one who called himself Melampus.

"Oh, I want to start that picture!" And there was the earnestness in her voice that rang of sure desire.

"Then let us to the picture, my girl."

The soft old voice of him held a note of pleasure, and his blue eyes glowed with happiness.

"But Had—"

Jimmy paused at a gesture from the old man.

"Young man," he said gravely, "when opportunity knocks at your door, don't allow your best friend to drive him off the stoop."

"What do you mean, old-timer?" Jimmy demanded.

"Nothing," replied Melampus gently. "But remember, my boy: 'As the twig is bent, so the tree inclines.'"

"Poor old nut!" muttered Jimmy into the pained ear of Hadassah.

"We are going to begin that picture," she said firmly.

"You decided wisely," the old man told her later, in his quiet, enigmatic way. "For who knows but that you might have lost your great chance?"

"How, sir?"

"How can I say? But do you not know that it is the wise vintner who plucks his grapes before he presses his wine?"

Hadassah laughed.

"Getting down to the language of the streets," she said, "you mean 'business before pleasure.' Don't you?"

"That always is the part of wisdom."

In the days that followed, Hadassah labored long and earnestly over the portrait of her kindly Melampus, who proved the best and most accommodating of models. He sat for her on the park bench and fed candies to the Italian urchins, while she made rough sketches of the figures and the autumnal background; he gave hours upon hours of his time posing in her studio, while, slowly, she worked out the intricate details of this great central character of the painting that now fired her imaginative soul with dreams beyond her mortal ken; he drank tea with her and fed her his quaint philosophy of love and work, while Jimmy chafed and fumed about the "old nut" that was keeping his girl from him and the pleasures that he enjoyed; and all the while old Melampus remained the calm, clear-visioned enigma that she had found out there in the square.

"You, Hadassah, of Jewish name," he said one day, "may be likened to the ancient Israelites who went into the land of Judea and brought forth the Grapes of

Eshcol, fruit of such rare kind as their tribe never before had seen; for you have gone into the city's byway and gathered in an old man, and you have been kind to him, and your reward may be great, indeed. Ah, who can tell?"

"My reward shall be if I can lay on this canvas the things that I think and feel," she answered.

"Nobly, nobly spoken, my little Madonna," sighed old Melampus, he who likened himself to the soothsayer who knew the language of the birds in the wilderness.

"You bewilder me," she confessed. "Your philosophy is so fine for others—so helpful, and yet—and yet, you seem not to have been—" She hesitated.

"Successful, you were going to say?" He laughed, in his soft, easy manner. "Is it not one form of success if one can successfully help others? Perhaps, too, I may be helping myself. Who can tell?"

"You won't," she flashed. "You won't even tell me where you live, or what you do."

"Were I to do so," he smiled, "I might lose your interest by gratifying your curiosity. Illusion, my dear, illusion! It carpets the cobble stones of life with velvet."

It was no small task that Hadassah had set for herself—the painting of this picture into which the soul of her, was being poured; for the tones bothered her, and the light center seemed just to elude the fine touch that she desired.

One day, just as the gray of eventide was flooding the square, Hadassah, sore in spirit, laid aside her brushes and went off for an early dinner with Jimmy. Melampus, the old model, was tired, and begged leave to recline for a short while on her couch.

"Of course you may," she agreed readily. "And oh, if only the spirit of your philosophy could take fairy form, and touch our picture with a magic wand. I want, so much, to succeed; but there's something wrong—something that I can't just grasp, yet I know the fault is there."

"The discovery of a fault is its first, best remedy," said the old man simply.

And Hadassah went out and left him lying on the couch in the studio. When she

returned, he was gone, but she looked at the picture—and behold! Had the good fairy touched her work with that magic wand? Or had a satisfying dinner bolstered her jaded nerves and cleared her vision? It must be that. Why, of course it was.

"Look, Jimmy!" she cried. "There's just the effect I wanted. Do you see it—just that shadow here, just that light above, and the tones blended as I had dreamed they should be?"

"I'll say it's some picture, Had," agreed Jimmy critically.

Then, a few days later, the miracle was repeated. There was a small defect in the atmosphere that she didn't seem able to grasp; but when she returned from the delicatessen around the corner with a bag of food for luncheon, why, the fault had vanished.

"Surely," she said to Melampus, "I am a victim of strange hallucinations. But tell me; do I now see clearly? Is the picture really good, or does my vision deceive me?"

"The picture is so good," he answered, "that I would suggest that you hang it in the Henderson Galleries."

"The Henderson Galleries!"

Hadassah laughed.

"Dear old friend," she said, "you don't know what you are saying. The Henderson Galleries are for the masters, only. Sometimes, perhaps, by the payment of a fee, an unknown, such as I, might gain admittance. But I have neither money nor influence, you see."

"I do not look through a glass darkly," smiled the old man; "and perhaps I see some things that others may not behold. My girl, you have painted a great picture. I say so. I know. I have seen, and I know. It is not that I have the vanity of the model. Oh, no. But you remember what I told you of the love of work, the devotion to duty, the faith that overcomes all barriers? Ah, you have learned. You have achieved. I say it, and I know."

"Your words are very sweet," she said softly, and the great, brown eyes of her were brimming with unshed tears—tears of joy in his simple, earnest praise for her ac-

complishment. "And dear friend, you almost convince me."

"Almost?" He laughed, in his soft, pleasing manner. Then: "You will let me take the picture to—well, to a friend, to try something?"

"Let you? Why, of course. For is the picture not as much yours as mine? Did you not inspire it? Did you not give me the courage to paint it?"

"No, no," he protested. "You are the master. "You had the vision—the feeling. It is yours. It may make you famous. Who knows?"

And the old man went away that afternoon with the canvas under his arm, chuckling, mumbling in his throat: "Who knows?"

Then a week passed, and no word came to Hadassah from Melampus, who had departed with her cherished picture. Nor could she find him, for she knew not where he lived, nor even the name of him, other than Melampus, who understood the language of the birds.

"Guess the old boy double-crossed you," was the conclusion of Jimmy. "If we look through the pawn-shops we'll probably find he pledged it for a couple of dollars."

"He did not! He did not!" she cried in protest. "He is good and righteous. And he is ill, I am sure. Oh, I know he would not steal the picture!"

But Jimmy merely grunted incredulously, and said that, anyway, he would take a look about the pawn-shops.

So, nearly another week elapsed, until, one morning, there came to Hadassah in the mail a heavy, square envelope, bearing a strange crest, wrought in gold. Within was an engraved card, which requested the honor of her company at the opening of an exhibition of paintings by Bonhomme, at the Henderson Galleries.

She, the obscure Hadassah, invited to the Henderson Galleries, to attend an opening for the great Bonhomme! She could not believe it. She read the card over and over again, to make sure. But yes, it was hers. It was addressed to her, very, very plainly. There could be no mistake. But who had done this? Who had paid her this signal honor?

She would go, of course; but what should she wear for such a glimpse into the fairyland of art? She couldn't dress, of course, like the great society ladies who would be there, to lavish thousands upon thousands of dollars upon the works of the great Bonhomme. Ah, but she could not miss this treat that had been afforded her. She would just creep in, quietly, silently, and look on for awhile; and she would come back to her shabby little studio in the square and dream her dreams, and go on, perhaps, with an occasional illustration or advertisement, whenever she should be so fortunate as to get a contract.

Came the night of nights, and little Hadassah, her big eyes agape, crept timorously up the vast stone steps that give one entrance to that high citadel of art known as the Henderson Galleries. She was late, purposely, so that she might attract the least attention; and maybe, if there had been error in sending her that card, she could glimpse the whole glorious pageant before they would ask her to depart.

She gave her card of invitation to the attendant at the door and glided, half dazedly, across the thick carpet, into a kaleidoscope of glittering gems and gorgeous gowns and great paintings—into a room filled with fair ladies and smart men and flowers and subtle perfumes. And she stopped suddenly, then, and looked ahead, and blinked and rubbed her eyes.

What was that, hung just ahead of her, occupying the most important position in the great Bonhomme exhibit? Could it be her picture—her inspired painting of the little old man and the Italian urchins and the street dog and the old square, with the autumn light falling on it?

Why, it was! It was! Surely, that was her picture. Or was it another of those hallucinations, such as she had suffered twice while she was painting it?

Amid the haze that hung about her, she heard her name spoken.

"Hadassah," said a voice. And it was a voice she knew—the soft, patient voice of him whom she had known as Melampus.

Around her surged a strangely brilliant sea of faces, and from among them started one that she knew—a withered, wrinkled,

kindly face, with mild blue eyes that laughed into hers. And then Melampus stood beside her, holding her hand, and she noticed that he had changed his old, shabby suit, and wore real evening clothes, like all the elegant men in the company.

"That the girl, Bonhomme?" cried a hearty voice, and a man clapped her old friend, Melampus, familiarly on the back. "Come on here, now, and let's have a look at both of you. We want to see if you're as good an artist as she is."

Hadassah felt herself being swept forward until she stood just beneath her picture, with Melampus by her side, and she became dimly conscious that Melampus and Bonhomme, the great, were the same, and that her poor picture was a portrait of the master. And she looked again, and saw herself looking down from another canvas—herself, standing at her easel, done by the magic brush of the only Bonhomme, and the picture was called "The Painter."

"Bravo! Great work!" cried the man who had slapped her Melampus on the back. "I'll bid five thousand for Bonnie's portrait."

"Double it!" shouted another of the on-lookers.

So the bidding began, and, ere it ended, Hadassah's picture had been run up to the staggering sum of twenty-one thousand dollars.

"The Grapes of Eshcol—eh, Hadassah?" Bonhomme chuckled to her later, when all the excitement had subsided. "And you will forgive me—eh? I wanted an earnest model, a sincere model, for the working out of a great idea—and I found you. Now, when you go back to Jimmy, remind him of what I said about certain elements of labor—eh, Hadassah?"

"Love and determination and faith," she repeated with glowing eyes. "And faith, oh, faith is great and good! I shall tell him, master."

WHIM OF THE SEA

THE sea lay trembling like a soul afraid,
A great, gaunt bird careened and wheeled in air;
Into the sun I watched a far ship fade,
Then I, too, like the sea, was trembling there!

A fortnight winged away, and then at last,
Adrift in lonely ways that seamen shun—
The splintered, slime-wrapt remnant of a mast!
They sought, alas, but found no trace of One!

Another day beside the sea I strayed;
I walked forlorn and kissed a lock of hair.
Then on the sand the sun a shadow made—
The same gaunt specter-bird was hov'ring there!

So gray and grim this phantom looked to me—
My hands, atremble, dropped the wisp of hair,
And as a wind-gust gave it to the sea,
The bird soared near and croaked at my despair.

I went and sat where I had dreamed with One.
Pink sea-shells drifted shoreward with the swell;
One, bleached, I chose, as I had often done,
And lo! *her name* was carved upon the shell!

George Warburton Lewis.



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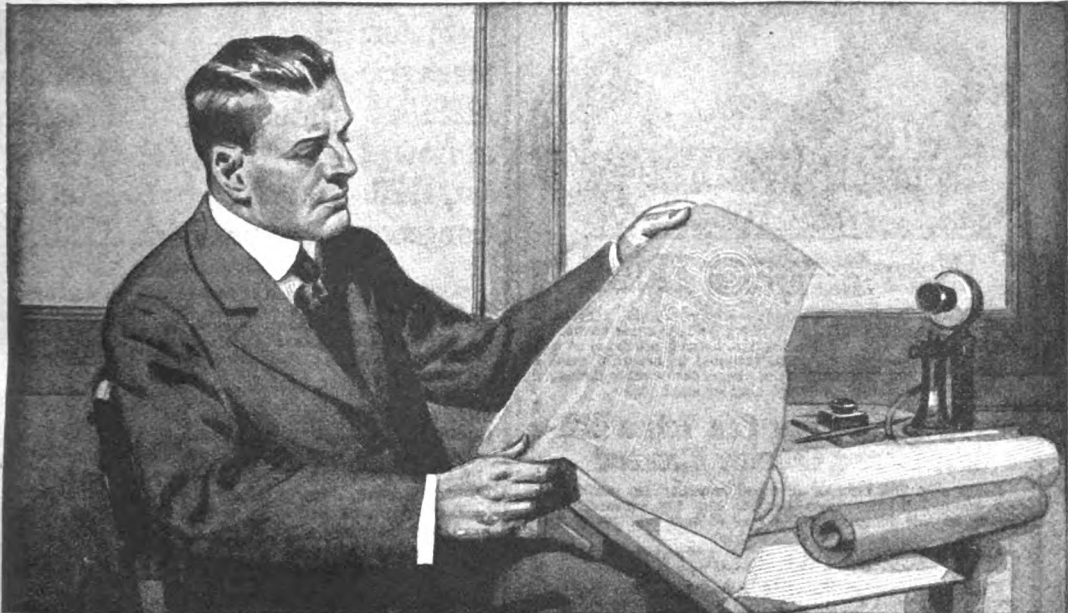
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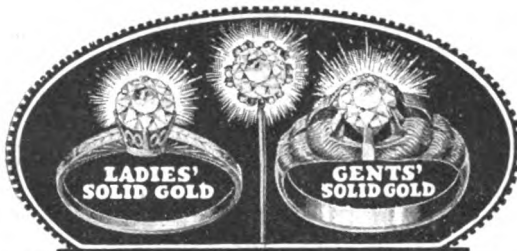
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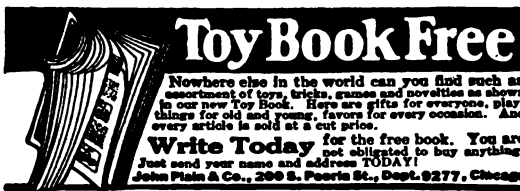
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NOTE—This statement is to be made in duplicate, both copies to be delivered by the publisher to the Postmaster, who will send one copy to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General (Division of Classification), Washington, D. C., and retain the other in the files of the Post-Office.

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Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared WM. T. DEWART, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publishers of THE ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24th, 1912, embodied in section 443. Postal Laws and Regulations. To wit:

That the names and addresses of the Publisher, Editor, Managing Editor, and Business Manager are:

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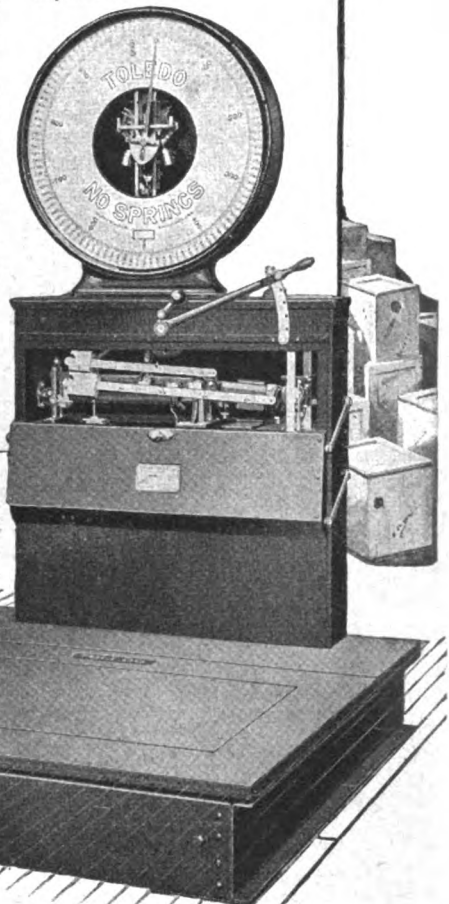
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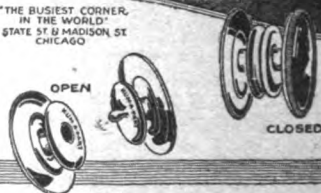


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