ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

While Dorion Lives!

by Victor Rousseau

A Romance of the Timberlands

$1 Brings this 14-Piece Complete "GLASBAK" BAKING SET

A Hartman bargain that ought to be in your home this very minute—and we will send it for only $1 now. Use it 30 days and then if not a wonderful help and a splendid bargain return it and we will refund your payment and pay transportation both ways.

Will Not Crack "GLASBAK" is **double strength** and **will not crack** at any oven heat. Bakes quickly. Gives uniform crust. You see just how the food is cooking. Bring the dishes right onto the table and see how appetizing the food appears when served in "Glasbak." Saves purchase of other dishes. Keeps food hot and retains the flavor. Easily cleaned—sanitary.

14 Pieces:
1 round casserole, with cover (2 pieces), capacity 1½ qts.; 1 round baking or pudding dish, capacity 2 qts.; 1 oval baking or pudding dish, capacity 1 qt.; 2 bread pans, oblong shape; 1 round pie plate; 1 oblong utility tray; 6 round ramekins.

Bake ANYTHING With This Set

"Glasbak" will bake quickly and better all casserole and au gratin dishes, meat pies, macaroni, puddings, baked beans, escalloped oysters, shirred eggs, bread, pies, cake, custards, etc. It is made for oven use only and is guaranteed not to break from heat while in the oven. It will stand much hard usage and give very satisfactory service—no doubt about the superiority of "Glasbak" over ordinary baking dishes. Book of delicious casserole recipes free with each set. Put new variety and new relish into your cookery with one of these sets. Begin NOW. Shipping weight, about 25 pounds.

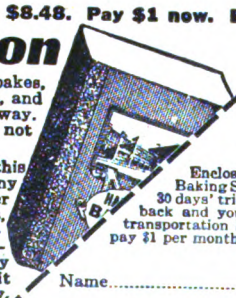
Order by No. 342BBMA8. Price, $8.48. Pay $1 now. Balance $1 monthly.

Send the Coupon

Try it 30 days, see how wonderfully it bakes, what a help it is in cooking and how beautiful it looks on the table, and then decide. Soon, every woman will cook and serve the "Glasbak" way. Remember, if it isn't what you want after trial, you can return it and not be out a penny. Don't delay a moment. Send the coupon—NOW.

FREE Bargain Catalog 432 pages—mail us a postal for this great book—it will save you many dollars. Filled from cover to cover with stunning bargains in furniture, linoleum, rugs, stoves, ranges, watches, silverware, dishes, washing machines, sewing machines, aluminum ware, phonographs, gas engines, cream separators, etc. Hundreds of articles to select from—30 days' trial and all on our easy monthly payment terms. This wonderful bargain catalog is FREE. You need it whenever you want to buy for the household or farm. Send for copy.

THE HARTMAN CO.
3900 La Salle St. Dept. 2932 Chicago, Illinois



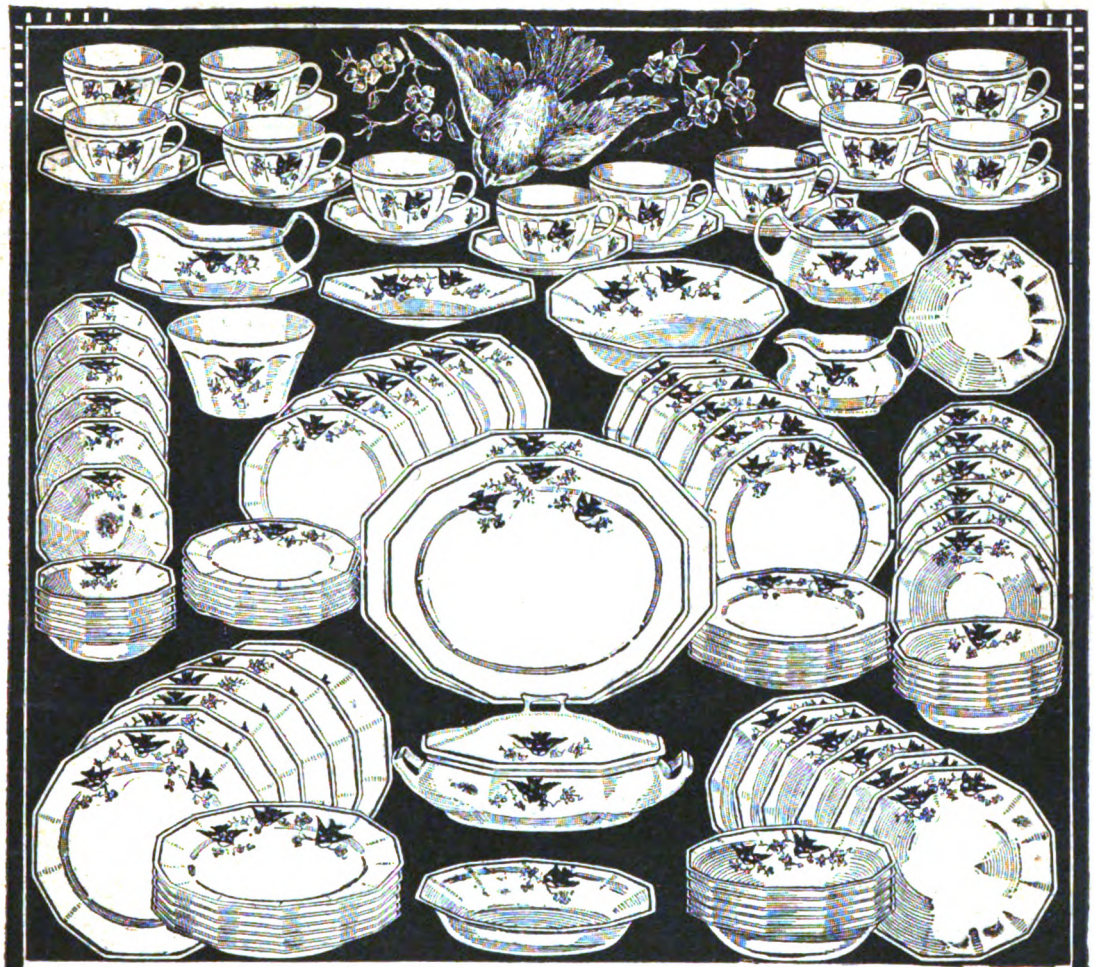
The Hartman Co.
Dept. 2932,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Enclosed find $1. Send "Glasbak" Baking Set No. 342BBMA8. I am to have 30 days' trial. If not satisfied will ship it back and you will refund my $1 and pay transportation both ways. If I keep it, will pay $1 per month until the price, $8.48, is paid.

Name.....

Address.....

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



110-Piece Dinner Set

Famous Bluebird Design

$1 Down Amazing value. Record-breaking offer. In each piece the highest type of color harmony and exquisite design has been attained. Set is in popular Colonial shape, decorated with Bluebird design, blending perfectly with the pink, lavender and green flowers. Lovely blue bordering on each piece. Each piece is fired in the glaze *and guaranteed not to check or craze.* That splendid Old English finish is applied in the clay before firing, giving each piece the finish of rich snowflake white. This wonderful set can be yours for only $1.00 down and then $2.80 monthly. Price in all, $31.95. Complete satisfaction guaranteed.

Small amount down, easy payments on all articles in our big bargain catalog. 30 days' trial — money back if not satisfied. No discount for cash; no C. O. D.

A Complete Service—110 Pieces

This splendid set consists of 12 dinner plates, 9 inches; 12 breakfast plates, 7 1-2 inches; 12 coupe soups, 7 1-2 inches; 12 fruit saucers, 5 1-2 inches; 12 cups; 12 saucers; 12 oatmeal dishes, 6 inches, 12 bread and butter plates, 6 inches; 1 platter, 11 1-2 inches; 1 platter, 12 3-4 inches; 1 covered vegetable dish, (2 pieces); 1 oval open vegetable dish, 9 1-2 inches; 1 round vegetable dish, 8 1-2 inches, 1 gravy boat; 1 gravy boat stand; 1 bowl, 1 pint; 1 sugar bowl and cover, (2 pieces); 1 cream pitcher; 1 pickle dish; 1 butter dish, 7 1-2 inches. This set is one that will add tone and beauty to any dining room. With ordinary care it will last a lifetime. Weight shipped, about 100 pounds.

Order by No. G6188A. Send $1.00 with order, $2.80 monthly. Price of 110 pieces, $31.95. No C. O. D. No discount for cash.

Send the Coupon

along with $1.00 to us now. Have this 110-piece dinner set shipped on 30 days trial. We will also send our big Bargain Catalog listing thousands of amazing bargains. Only a small first payment and balance in monthly payments for anything you want. Send coupon below

Straus & Schram, Dept. 2278 West 35th Street, Chicago, Ill.

Straus & Schram, Dept. 2278 W. 35th St., Chicago

Enclosed find $1.00. Ship special advertised 110-piece Bluebird Dinner Set. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If I keep the set I will pay you $2.80 monthly. If not satisfied, I am to return the set within 30 days and you are to refund my money and any freight or express charges I paid.

☐ **110-Piece Bluebird Dinner Set No. G6188A. $31.95.**

Name.....

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

Shipping Point.....

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

If you want only the catalog, put X in the proper box below:
☐ Furniture, Rugs, Stoves, Jewelry ☐ Men's, Women's, Children's Clothing

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

VOL. CXXVIII CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER 27, 1920 NUMBER 1

FOUR CONTINUED STORIES

ONE NOVELETTE

FIVE SHORT STORIES

DO NOT FAIL TO ATTEND

THAT AFFAIR AT THE CEDARS

BY LEE THAYER, - - - Author of "The Unlatched Door," etc.

An Amazing Mystery. A Powerful Drama. A Compelling Romance.

IT BEGINS IN THE DECEMBER 4 ISSUE.

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

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

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $6.00 to Canada, and $7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1920

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

Secrets of Selling that Make These Men $10,000 a Year Star Salesmen

Some Amazing Stories of Quick Success

IT is hard to believe that a man who has been working for years in a routine job at small pay could almost over-night step into the $10,000 a year class. Yet that is just what many men have done and are doing today. If I should tell you that one man who had been a fireman on a railroad stepped from his old job to one that paid him $10,000 a year, you would be inclined to doubt the truth of my statement.

But I can show you the man's own story. And that is only one instance. I can show you many more. These men were just average men. They came from all walks of life, from all fields of work. Some of them had never earned more than $60 a month—some of them had drudged for years at a dull, uninteresting work without prospects of anything better in life. And then, in one quick jump, they found themselves earning more money than they had ever thought possible.

Send Me Your Name

I have shown hundreds of men how to step from small-pay jobs into the big money class in one quick jump. $10,000 a year—yes, and more—has come to men as a result of writing to me. Just let me send you the whole amazing proof—entirely free of cost or obligation.—J. E. Greenslade, President, N. S. T. A.

The Secret of Their Success

These men decided to get into the great field of *Selling*—they learned about the wonderful opportunities in this fascinating profession—why Salesmen are always in demand—why they receive so much more money than men in other fields of work. **And they became Star Salesmen!**

Probably if you had told any one of these men that it was possible for him to become a Star Salesman in his spare moments at home, without interfering with his work, he would have dismissed your statement as being absurd. For you must remember that most of them had never had a day's experience in Selling—no special qualifications—no thought of ever becoming Salesmen.

As a matter of fact, they would probably be working still as clerks, bookkeepers, mechanics, etc., if they had not learned about the National Salesmen's Training Association's system of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service. This is an organization of top-notch Salesmen and Sales Managers formed just for the purpose of showing men how to become Star Salesmen and fitting them into positions as City and Traveling Salesmen.

Through its help hundreds of men have been able to realize their dreams of big opportunity, success, wealth and independence. Men without previous experience or special qualifications have learned the secrets of selling that make Star Salesmen—for Salesmen are not "born" but made, and any man can easily master the principles of Salesmanship through the wonderful system of the National Salesmen's Training Association. Anyone who is inclined to doubt that this is so has only to read the stories of men who tell in their own words what the Association has done for them. Here are just a few examples:

J. P. Overstreet of Dallas, Texas, who was formerly on the Capitol Police Force of Washington, D. C., states: "My earnings for March were over $1,000 and over $1,800 for the last six weeks, while last week my earnings were $356. The N. S. T. A. dug me out of the rut where I was earning less than $1,000 a year, and showed me how to make a success."

C. W. Campbell, of Greensburg, Pa., writes: "My earnings for the past thirty days are $1,562 and I won Second Prize in March, although I only worked two weeks during that month."

You Can Do It Too!

It will not cost you a penny to learn how you, too, can become a Star Salesman and take your place among the big money makers of business. Whatever your ambition may be—$5,000, $10,000 or more a year—find out about *your* great opportunity in the wonderful profession of Salesmanship. See how the N. S. T. A. can open to you the way to a big selling job, to prosperity and a life of fascinating work, travel, contact with influential men. Just mail the coupon or write, and you will receive, without cost or obligation, proof of what the remarkable system of the National Salesmen's Training Association and its FREE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE can do for you. In addition a great book on Salesmanship will be mailed to you without charge. You owe it to yourself to read the secret of big money in the wonderful field of Selling. Mail the coupon or write today.

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

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

Send me Free Proof that you can make me a Star Salesman and tell me how you will help me land a selling job. Also list showing lines of business with openings for Salesmen. This does not obligate me in any way.

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:

	LINE RATE	
Munsey's Magazine	$1.50	Combination line rate $4.00 less 2 per cent cash discount.
Argosy-Allstory Weekly	2.50	

Minimum space four lines.

Jan. 1st Argosy Combination Forms Close Dec. 4th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

SAVE MONEY ON YOUR CLOTHES—Made to your own measure from the cloth you select and the style that pleases you most. Absolutely guaranteed to wear, to fit and to satisfy, or we return your money promptly. We prepay all delivery charges you pay for the suit after you get it. Write for our big **Style Book** at once. **It's absolutely free.** Write today. Republic Woolen Company, Dept. **A-446, Chicago.**

AGENTS—MAKE $50 WEEKLY taking orders for fast-selling Goodyear Raincoats; hundreds of orders waiting; $2 an hour for spare time; we deliver and collect. Write today for agency. Goodyear Manufacturing Co., 1458 Goodyear Building, Kansas City, Mo.

$11.00 A DAY FOR FIVE HOURS' WORK. New method—no capital required—no deliveries—no delays—just take orders and bank big profits. Davis Products Co., Dept. 58, Chicago.

BIGGEST MONEY-MAKER IN AMERICA. I want 100 men and women quick to take orders for raincoats, raincapes and waterproof aprons. Thousands of orders waiting for you. $2.00 an hour for spare time. McDonough made $813.00 in one month. Nissen $19.00 in three hours; Purviance $207.00 in seven days, $5,000 a year profit for eight average orders a day. No delivering or collecting. Beautiful coat free. No experience or capital required. Write quick for information. Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. Y131, Dayton, Ohio.

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

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

INSYDE TYRES—Inner Armor For Auto Tires. Doubles mileage, prevents 90% of all punctures and blowouts. Thousands in use. Tremendous demand. Big sales. Liberal profits. Details free. American Automobile Accessories Co., Dept. T251, Cincinnati, O.

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.**

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.

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.**

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

MALE HELP

MEN WANTED FOR DETECTIVE WORK. Experience unnecessary. Write J. Ganor, Former U. S. Govt. Detective, 107 St. Louis, Mo.

HELP WANTED—FEMALE

LEARN DRESS-COSTUME DESIGNING AND MAKING. Designers earn $45.00 week up. Easy. Fascinating. Sample home study lessons free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. **B-904,** Rochester, N. Y.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

FARMSEEKERS ATTENTION! Use your credit with us and buy a farm home. 10 to 160 acres of hardwood land in Kalkaska and Antrim counties, Michigan. $15. to $35 per acre. Small down payments, easy monthly terms. Close to schools, churches, markets, railroads, towns and neighbors. No swamps or stones. Raise fruit, grain, poultry or stock. Settlers tax-free for five years. Warranty Deed and Abstract of Title with every purchase. Write for free booklet. Swigart Land Co., Y1245 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

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.

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 $60.00 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.

MAKE $5.00 HOUR SELLING "COLUMBUS RAINCOATS" to your friends. Miller made $30.00 first day spare time. **Big Profits.** Sample Free. **Act Quick!** Columbus Raincoat Mfg. Co., Dept. 500, Columbus, Ohio.

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

AGENTS: New 2 in 1 Reversible Double-Duty Raincoat. One side rich tan dress coat, other side storm overcoat. Two coats for the price of one. Saves $20. Positively guaranteed waterproof or money back. Commission paid same day you take orders. No capital required. Sample furnished. Great seller. Real money for agents. Parker Mfg. Co., 406 Rue Street, Dayton, O.

AGENTS—MEN AND WOMEN—Make $50 a week salary and commission selling new toilet preparation. Whirlwind seller. Big repeat business. For particulars and territory, address Graham Co., 25 W. Illinois St., Chicago, Ill.

SALES AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY COUNTY TO GIVE ALL OR SPARE TIME. Positions worth $750 to $1500 yearly. We train the inexperienced. Novelty Cutlery Co., 771 Bar Street, Canton, Ohio.

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.

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

SALESMEN: EARN $3,500 TO $10,000 A YEAR. City or Traveling. 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-S, Chicago, Ill.

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

HELP WANTED

ARMATURE WINDERS MAKE BIG MONEY. We will train you for this interesting profession in 3 to 6 months, and will find you a good paying job while you are learning, so that you can earn your way. Write for special proposition. State age and education. School of Engineering, Dept. R-42, 373 Broadway, Milwaukee, Wis.

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

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

BE A DETECTIVE—EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES for travel. Great demand everywhere. Fascinating work. Experience unnecessary. We train you. Particulars free. Write, American Detective System, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

WE WILL START YOU IN THE CLEANING AND DYEING BUSINESS. Little capital needed; big profits. Write for booklet. The Ben-Vonde System, Dept. F., Charlotte, N. C.

FOR MEN

MEN'S MADE-TO-MEASURE SUITS about one-third less than retail prices; quality and fit guaranteed or money refunded; shipped on approval, payable after received. Book of samples and latest styles free. Park Tailoring Co., Dept. 499, Chicago.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

"We Must Have a Man *Who Knows*"

Which Job Do YOU WANT?

Office Men

Auditors, Accountants, Office Managers, Credit Men, Cashiers, Bookkeepers and Cost Clerks—$2,500 to $7,500 a year.

Factory Men

Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Factory Managers, Superintendents, Foremen, Designers and Draftsmen—$2,500 to $12,000 a year.

Construction Men

Civil and Structural Engineers, Transit Men, Construction Superintendents and Foremen, Estimators, Designers and Draftsmen—$2,500 to $10,000 a year.

Trades

Machinists and Toolmakers, Auto Repairers, Electricians, Stationary Engineers, Firemen, Plumbers, Carpenters, Pattern Makers and Telephone Men—$2,500 to $3,000 a year.

THAT'S what business men demand these days. The man who gets ahead is the fellow who trains to go ahead. You want a better position—more pay—a brighter future. You can assure yourself of all these things by giving a few spare hours a week to reading and study of any set of

Our Great PAY-RAISING Books

At Genuine Bargain Prices

Carpentry and Contracting, 5 volumes, 2138 pages, 1000 pictures. Was $37.50.....Now $24.80

Civil Engineering, 9 vol., 3900 pages, 3000 pictures. Was $67.50.....Now $39.80

Electrical Engineering, 8 vol., 3000 pages, 2600 pictures. Was $60.00.....Now $34.80

Automobile Engineering, 6 vol., 2600 pages, 2000 pictures. Was $45.00.....Now $29.80

Machine Shop Practice, 6 vol., 2300 pages, 2500 pictures. Was $45.00.....Now $29.80

Steam and Gas Engineering, 7 volumes, 3300 pages, 2500 pictures. Was $52.50.....Now $29.80

Law and Practice (with reading course), 13 volumes, 6000 pages, illustrated. Was $90.00.....Now $49.80

Fire Prevention and Insurance, 4 volumes, 1500 pages, 600 pictures. Was $30.00.....Now $19.80

Telephony and Telegraphy, 4 volumes, 1728 pages, 2000 pictures. Was $30.00.....Now $19.80

Sanitation, Heating and Ventilating, 4 volumes, 1454 pages, 1400 pictures. Was $30.00.....Now $18.80

Accountancy and Business Management, 7 volumes, 2700 pages, 800 pictures. Was $52.50, now $29.80

Drawing, 4 vol., 1578 pages, 1000 pictures, blueprints, etc. Was $30.00.....Now $19.80

SEND NO MONEY

Use Them a Whole Week FREE!

Don't send a single penny. Just fill out coupon and mail it. We will send you any set selected, express collect. Study it—use it a week; then if you can afford to be without it, send it back at our expense. If you decide to keep it, pay $2.80 within a week and send us $3 each month until the reduced price is paid.

American Technical Society Dept. X-168 Chicago, U. S. A.

American Technical Society, Dept. X-168, Chicago, Ill.

Please send me set of..... for 7 days' examination, shipping charges collect. I will examine the books thoroughly and, if satisfied, will send $2.80 within 7 days and $3.00 each month until I have paid the special price of $..... If I decide not to keep the books, I will return them by express at your expense.

Name.....

Address.....

Reference.....

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.

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

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.

Send Us Your MS. For Typing. $1.00 per 1000 words, including carbon copy and return postage. Correct technical form; best bond paper; Touch System typists; no smutty erasures or interlineations. Address: Authors' Typing Bureau, Muscadine, Ala.

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.

MUSIC

POPULAR SONG—BEAUTIFUL WALTZ BALLAD—Title, "There's a Lone Star Shining in Heaven." Words and music guaranteed to please all. 25 cents copy. Postage prepaid. Leonard & Andrews, Pubs., Box 338, Waterbury, Conn.

PATENT ATTORNEYS.

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., 630 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.

INVENTIONS WANTED. CASH OR ROYALTY for ideas. Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 181-A, St. Louis, Mo.

PHOTOPLAYS

Wanted Photoplays For California Producers; also Stories, Articles, etc. Criticism free; sell on Commission. Placing of available Mss. assured. Plot Chart free to Beginners. Submit Mss. or write, Harvard Co., 24-A, California St., San Francisco.

SONG POEMS WANTED

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG! We will write the music and **guarantee publication** on a royalty basis. Submit poems on any subject. Seton Music Company, 920 S. Michigan Avenue, Room 190, Chicago.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

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

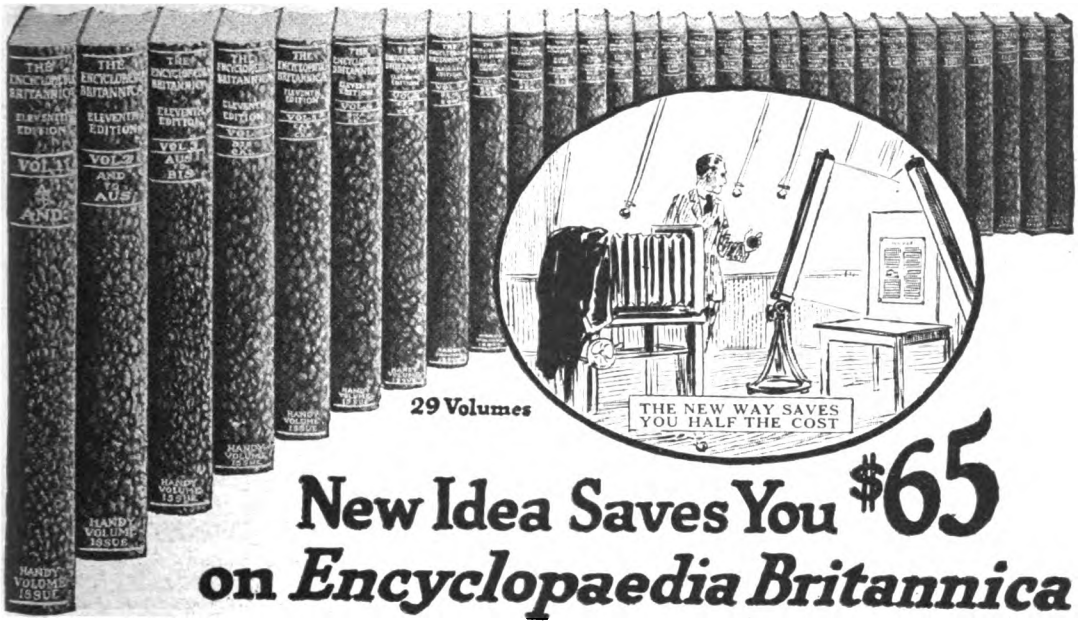
TYPEWRITERS

Underwoods, Remingtons, Olivers, Smiths, Coronas, National Portables. Adding Machines and Check Protectors. Now built at less than ½ mfrs. price. Write for cut rate price list. Free trial. Mfrs. Typewriter Clearing House, 191A N. Dearborn St., Chicago.

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.

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.

Rebuilt Typewriters All Makes $8.00 Up. An ideal Xmas gift, both useful and instructive. Get our special Xmas price. 20 to 30% lower than installment houses. Send for free descriptive circular. M & M Typewriter Co., 38 N. Wells, Chicago.



New Idea Saves You $65 on *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

WHAT is this New Idea that saves $65 and brings the Encyclopaedia Britannica easily within the reach of thousands of new homes? Think of it! $65 saved on the very latest edition of the genuine Encyclopaedia Britannica—the famous Reference Library you have always wanted. Yes, this tremendous saving is made possible through this New Way in Book Making!

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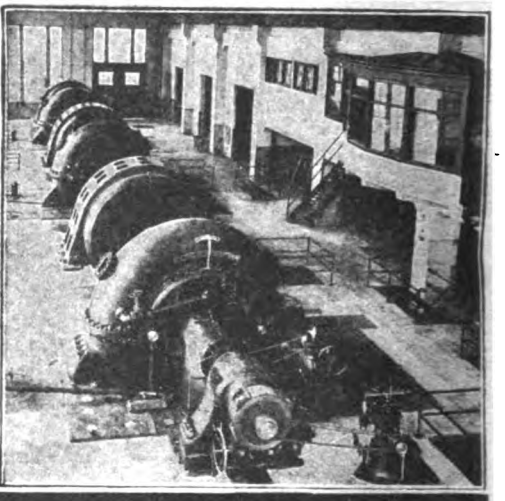

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While Dorion Lives

by Victor Rousseau

Author of "The Eye of Balamok," "Draft of Eternity," "The Diamond Demons," etc.

CHAPTER I.

TROUBLE BREWS.

ON cloudless days one could see the barren outlines of Anticosti from Bonne Chance as a white tracing against the horizon, but usually the gray mist which overhung sea and land thickened into a fog that merged the gray sky with the gray water a mile or two from shore.

This nearly constant haze of the north coast of the St. Lawrence was broken by wisps of smoke, glimpses of fantom hulls, or a great schooner foresail that would lift itself like the flash of a giant seagull's wing from the obscurity, and vanish. Every movement in this fog curtain, however, had its meaning to the watchers along the shore.

Jean Desmoulins, the half-wit, ran snickering up the single street of Bonne Chance. The street wound along the edge of the cliff for an interminable distance, and all that existed of Bonne Chance, except the cottages of the fishermen below the cliff, was strung out on either side of it: cabins of blackened rafters, with unfenced gardens, where fowls strutted, pigs rooted, calves strayed, and flapping clothes-lines disclosed, as the wind lifted them, great cabbage heads and etiolated geraniums.

Outside each cabin along the road, except the very humblest, Jean Desmoulins stopped.

"The Blanche is coming!" he shouted, apostrophizing the owner, visible or invisible. The half-wit's self-constituted duty of town-crier impressed him with a sense of self-importance that the disregard of the Bonne Chance people did nothing to diminish.

He continued where the road ran steeply uphill without diminishing his amble. "Ai, Jacques Poulin, the Blanche is coming!" he called. "Ai, Veuve Bedard, the Blanche is coming!" He stopped a moment longer outside the post-office. "Ai, Mme. Tremblay, the Blanche is coming!" he screamed to the woman in the doorway.

Presently he reached the front of an imposing, ornate frame house; newly built,

the only painted house in Bonne Chance except that occupied by the curé, now on a visit to Europe. "Ai, M. La Rue, the Blanche is coming!" he shrilled.

If M. La Rue was within, and heard him, he let his house-front speak for him. Phillippe La Rue's house-front was eloquent with shingles. The owner was, it appeared, a counselor-at-law and notary; he was also justice of the peace, sheriff, and real-estate agent; likewise he represented a number of companies; finally, he was the manager of the local branch of the Banque Industrielle.

Jean's slackening of speed might have been due to the steepness of the hill; it was more probably an involuntary act of respect to his principal employer, for there was a shade of deference in the apostrophe that he flung to the ugly house with its molded Corinthian pillars that supported nothing. In a moment he was off again, running up toward the stone church, empty during the curé's absence in Europe, which crowned the acclivity.

A little beneath this three or four dilapidated wagons, whose rickety frames exuded straw, were clustered at the side of a small store. Jean galloped in.

"Ai, M. Belley, the Blanche is coming!" he called, his roving eyes wandering from where Belley stood with an unrolled length of cloth against the counter-yard to many coveted things: whole hams, a hand of plantains, blackening green, and candies, such as he craved, and thieved dexterously when the chance offered.

Alphonse Belley glanced at him carelessly. "The revenue men won't catch Hector Galipeault this time, now that he has built that cellar for his brandy," he remarked to one of the three men who lounged in front of the counter. "Eh, Angus?"

Angus McGraeme, a man of about fifty, with sandy hair, green eyes, and protruding fangs, nodded sourly. His son Alexandre—a dark, vindictive-looking man in a green, shiny, slicker, with the ends of the sleeves turned back—uttered a short, sneering laugh. Hector Galipeault, the hotel-keeper, had been fined twice for selling brandy smuggled alongshore by the McGraemes, and a third conviction would mean a jail sentence.

"I think the Blanche is bringing M. Maitland," said the third man, Paul Cawmill, scowling.

Alphonse Belley whistled. "He must be in a great hurry to begin work, if he arrives by the Blanche," he said.

His quick glance stopped the fingers of Jean Desmoulins as they moved toward the candy-case. He winked at Angus.

"I should say the government is in a great hurry to send him here," he continued.

"Why should the government want to send him at all?" demanded Paul Cawmill aggressively.

"Why, don't you see?" explained Belley, with bland condescension. "It's all a trick to make a monopoly out of the sealing and keep it for their friends at Ottawa. That's what's behind this M. Maitland. Holy Family, why should he come here to cut our lumber and ship it all the way back to Quebec?"

"So, that's why the Blanche came through the ice last spring and seized all Jeremiah McGraeme's schooners with their catch, because they had been on the grounds before the season opened, eh, Alphonse?" inquired Paul.

"Certainly!" responded the storekeeper, with a knowing smile. "Anybody might have seen that. And that's why they are worrying us, trying to take our living away and leave us all to starve. That's why the revenue men come here when no one's thinking of them, to jail a man for selling a glass of brandy." He warmed to his theme as he proceeded. "That's why they fine honest merchants because they have been too busy to take out new licenses."

"Well—but—" began Paul Cawmill, grappling with these sequences.

Belley leaned over the counter and shook a long forefinger. "They're going to make Bonne Chance a sealing station—a monopoly," he responded. "The company will own all the boats, and drive the poor *habitant* out of the field with its steam-vessels. This M. Maitland will spy on us and stop the brandy trade, and rob us of our living, so that we'll have to sell our

schooners and go to work for the company as hands. And that's what's in the wind. Rascals! And some of you voted Conservative at the last elections!"

He turned to Angus and Alexandre. "Didn't the government lease the Dorion lands to this M. Maitland?" he demanded. "Private lands, which Jeremiah's niece, Jeanne, inherited from her husband, the seigneur, when he was lost at sea. Since when can the government take a man's lands away, or a woman's, either, and lease them to another? The government knew that they were private lands. Mark my word, you'll find a monopoly here next summer, and the sealing gone, and the brandy trade gone, and all honest business gone with them!"

"But is it sure that the Dorion lands really belonged to Emile Dorion?" persisted Paul. "We used to think that that was only a boast he made when he had been drinking, that the Romaine Seigniory was granted to the Dorions long before the English came into the land. The McGraemes also claimed them."

"Claimed them! The Dorions stole them from us!" shouted Angus, wheeling upon Paul in a sudden rage.

"*Ben, ben,* I do not dispute that, Angus," answered Paul in conciliatory fashion. "We all know that the Dorions and the McGraemes were once great folk; still, Emile Dorion was no better than any of us *habitants,* and what papers had he to show?"

It was evident that Angus had a bitter answer ready upon his tongue, but before it had leaped into words a fourth man, roughly dressed in corduroys, entered the store.

He was a stocky, swarthy *habitant,* with the high cheek-bones and lank hair that betokened Indian ancestry not far remote; he was of great strength, and he seemed to have a sinister squint, due to the fact that one of his eyes was gray and the other brown. He carried a sack over his shoulder.

Despite the entire dissimilarity in physical type between him and the McGraemes, he was one of the clan—Duncan, a throwback to some maternal ancestor.

"Eh, Duncan, so thou hast seen the Blanche?" called Belley, with false heartiness.

"*Maudit bateche!*" exploded Duncan. "Give me a box of matches. Three times this year they hound me. One would think the seals breed in August!"

"Have no fear this time, Duncan!" said the storekeeper. "It is not for thee that the Blanche has arrived, nor for Angus or Alexandre. She is bringing M. Maitland from Quebec."

"To cut timber," added Angus, with a wink at his cousin which infuriated him, as it was meant to.

"*Verrat!* 'Tis a lie, as thou knowest well, M. Belley! Who would come here to cut timber, when it grows thicker than grass all the way to Quebec? He is a government spy, this M. Maitland. *Ben!* We shall show him what the *habitant* can do when his honest living is stolen from him! And what will Paul here do, if this M. Maitland demands the little lease that he holds from Jeremiah?"

"Holy Name!" exploded Paul. "Let him try to take my lease away from me, that's all! We shall show him!"

Angus grinned in his sour fashion. "Hard luck, Paul!" he said. "But you know what happens to the little frogs when a big one hops into the puddle!"

The three McGraemes exchanged meaning glances, nodded to Belley, and slouched out of the store. Belley turned to Paul, who was still vibrating with indignation.

"It is my opinion," he said, "that Jeremiah McGraeme will go to law with M. Maitland on behalf of his niece over the Dorion lands, and there will be no room for a little man like thee between them. What does Jeremiah care for the *habitant,* now that he has become the big man of Bonne Chance and is called seigneur?"

If he had meant to draw Cawmill out—and the tilt of his sly head indicated it—he had succeeded perfectly.

"Seigneur? *Maudit!*" Paul shouted. "What is Jeremiah McGraeme but a *habitant* like us, born and bred, except that he still retains the Scotch religion that my grandfather had? Cawmill—C-a-m-

b-e-l, my own father spelled it, and his father spelled it differently again, and it is the name of a great prince in Scotland, who was a friend of General Wolfe, and got this land from him and settled here. Was he not as poor as any of us, a few years ago, when he and Emile Dorion owned one sealing schooner together? You served in their boat, Jean, poor imbecile, though you remember nothing about it.

"Emile Dorion and Jeremiah McGraeme, and Jean Desmoulins here, sailing together, and what difference between the man and the two masters? That was just after Jeremiah had persuaded Emile Dorion to marry his niece, Jeanne—you remember, Alphonse. Then Emile Dorion is lost at sea, and so his land passes to the girl Jeanne, and Jeremiah is called seigneur because he is her guardian. And do you suppose he will return it to her when she is of age? Not he!

"Jeremiah takes Dorion's boat, too, and next year he owns two boats. Then he buys the sealing catch, and so prospers, until he loses his schooners last spring, when some rascal betrays them to the revenue men. And *pouf!*"—he filled his cheeks with air and let them collapse—"from a rich man he becomes poor again, and Philippe La Rue seems likely to succeed him. But does all this make Jeremiah McGraeme anything but a *habitant,* like you and me?"

The sly tilt of Belley's head became exaggeration. "Of course not, Paul!" answered the storekeeper. "Still, it is natural to respect position. And it is hard, when Jeremiah schemed all his life to get back the Dorion lands, to have the government lease them to another."

"And the girl Jeanne," mused Paul. "It is sad for her, a widow these four years past, almost as soon as she became a wife. And her uncle lets her run wild with those thieving McGraemes! Well, let this M. Maitland try to take my lease away from me! We'll show him what we *habitants* can do, eh, M. Belley? And I'll take those four yards for my creature with me."

As he went out, Alphonse Belley caught Jean Desmoulins in the very act of pilfering a chocolate. The half-wit's fingers were already groping in the opened case. The storekeeper swiftly stretched out a long arm and slammed down the open lid upon them. The act seemed to match something stealthy and cruel in Belley's nature. The tall, lean merchant, with his bushy red hair and whiskers, looked like a red fox, and his little eyes were foxlike, too.

"Ah, Jean, thieving again!" he said. "'Tis a pity thy father should have had a half-wit like thee for a son. It did not come from him, nor from thy mother."

"Ai! Ai!" shrilled Jean Desmoulins, dancing and sucking his nipped fingers. "Ai, M. Alphonse, why should I not have a few chocolates, when you owe me five hundred dollars?"

Belley's red face went white. The storekeeper took Jean by the shoulders and shook him violently.

"So thou hast not forgotten that nonsense, Jean!" he cried. "When did I ever owe thee five hundred dollars?"

"Ai, M. Alphonse, did we not sail in Emile Dorion's boat together?"

"Well?" demanded Belley, breathing hard. "Well? What more dost thou think thou rememberest? Nothing! I say thou rememberest nothing, Jean Desmoulins!"

A vacant look came over the face of the half-wit. "I am a poor imbecile, M. Alphonse!" he muttered.

Belley laid a great red hand upon his shoulder. "See that thou remain so, then," he answered, "and do not let thy head become confused with nonsense. When it is necessary for thee to remember anything, I shall tell thee. Listen, Jean! Thou knowest that Jeremiah McGraeme schemed all his life to get hold of the Dorion lands, and so become seigneur. But he is not big enough to be seigneur. He wastes his money in little, crooked things that involve great risks, and he has been almost bankrupt since the government seized his sealing schooners in the spring; because he thought that he could take his pick of the herds before the season opened. Thou knowest all this, Jean Desmoulins!"

It was an affirmation, not a question,

and Jean Desmoulins nodded, as he was meant to do.

"Soon, Jeremiah McGraeme will come down, and Philippe La Rue will marry Jeanne Dorion and be the seigneur in turn. I can see what is coming. Therefore we must try to please M. Philippe, and it is his wish that this M. Maitland be driven out of Bonne Chance. And thus there will come more money for thee from M. Philippe, and, it may be, more chocolates here. Eh, Jean?"

"*Ah, oui,* M. Alphonse!" replied Jean, glancing toward the candy-case.

"And it may be that Philippe La Rue will come down in his turn," chuckled the storekeeper maliciously. "Who knows? We are only poor *habitants,* but God permits us to look on and laugh at others who try to rise above us."

"*Ah, oui, oui,* M. Alphonse!" replied the half-wit, nodding his head and smiling.

The storekeeper gave him a handful of chocolates. "See that there is no more of that driveling folly of thine!" he sternly commanded.

Jean Desmoulins crammed the chocolates into his mouth and went ambling down the road, while Belley stood in his doorway, looking after him in thought. Then the storekeeper put on his hat and coat, locked the door, and started down the street to see the Blanche come in.

From the edge of the cliff the incoming steamship could now be distinguished plainly as she made her way toward the little, decrepit pier that seemed from that height to lie like a little raft on the gray waters.

Beyond the curve of the harbor, where the St. Lawrence fretted about the jagged rocks and shoals, stood the squat, red-capped pillar of the lighthouse, high on a projecting cliff, beyond which, with the partial lifting of the mist, there could be distinguished low, flat-backed islands, lying offshore, extending into the distance. Between them and the lighthouse the gray-black of the gulf was patched with steely white. This was a sunken ridge that had once formed a part of Bout de l'Ile, the peninsula on which the pillar of the lighthouse stood. A line of buoys indicated the narrow fairway that was the sea-channel for deep-draft vessels into Bonne Chance.

Square and substantial near the lighthouse was a massive house of stone, as solid and strong as the old man, its owner, Jeremiah McGraeme, just passing out of the post-office, whom Belley stopped to watch with a malignant smile on his features.

With his slow, heavy gait, the broad build accentuated by the black-broadcloth suit with the gold chain slung straight across the waistcoat, Jeremiah McGraeme looked like a strong tower. It was typical of a man like Belley to be envious of Jeremiah's rise. But his envy was tinged with a malicious mirth as he watched the sturdy figure go down the road.

Philippe La Rue, once a mere sealing hand, then Jeremiah's clerk, then a petty government official in Quebec, but now a financial and political power in the district, was ousting Jeremiah from his position; and every one in Bonne Chance knew that Jeremiah had mortgaged his niece's lands to La Rue after the seizure of his sealing schooners in the preceding April.

Belley was thinking of this, and watching Jeremiah so intently that he was himself surprised by the sudden fall of a hand on his shoulder. He jumped, to look into the face of a man somewhere between forty and forty-five, of the short, stocky *habitant* type, with a red face beneath the new panama, upturned mustache, and bold, staring eyes such as sometimes deceive women, but never men, into admiration. The hands, concealed under gloves of yellow dogskin, were shapeless, coarse, and characteristic of La Rue's whole personality.

"So, M. Belley, you appear interested in our friend Jeremiah?"

"Eh, M. La Rue, you startled me!" faltered the storekeeper.

"It is my way," laughed the other. "Perhaps we shall startle our friend one of these days, too—eh, Belley?"

"I know what you mean, monsieur. Certainly it goes against the grain to say 'seigneur' to a man without brains, like Jeremiah, who was nothing but a *habitant* a few years back."

"Like you and me, Belley," said the other, with a purring laugh.

"Ah, but monsieur, it is the right of all to rise," protested the storekeeper. "But not of blockheads, such as he. For it was not by his own wit, mark you, monsieur," he continued more boldly, "but because he married his daughter Jeanne to the seigneur, Emile Dorion."

"Who died at sea and was buried in a thousand-dollar coffin," purred Philippe La Rue.

Under his amused scrutiny the face of Alphonse Belley went ghastly white. "Why—why, monsieur, there was no coffin!" he stammered.

La Rue laughed the louder. His hand fell upon Belley's shoulder. "Well, my friend, it is good to know that we think the same way," he said.

"Ah, you can count on me," M. La Rue!" protested Belley, looking with fascination into the bold, gleaming eyes.

"I am sure of it," replied La Rue suavely; and, leaving him, he made his way in pursuit of Jeremiah McGraeme.

CHAPTER II.

A HOSTILE SHORE.

THREE-FOURTHS of Bonne Chance had gathered upon the little pier of watch the Blanche come in, and Paul Cawmill had been correct in his surmise that she carried Will Maitland. Paul had learned from a schooner captain that Will was waiting at St. Boniface, a score of miles up the river, for a mail-boat which had been taken off the sailing schedule of the company without announcement.

Will had been picked up by the revenue steamer, which was making one of her periodical trips along the north shore to vindicate the law. Despite his twelve years of reconnaissance work for lumber companies and railroads between Halifax and Calgary, this looked like the end of the world to Will as he stood on the deck and watched the unfolding panorama.

High mountains, clothed with birch and conifer, the same barren foreshore that he had seen all the way east from Quebec, with patches of tilled land half a mile long by twenty or thirty feet in width, extending to some coveted water-frontage; black-raftered cottages, unpainted without and unplastered within, perched on the edges of cliffs; clusters of the same cabins straggling about huge, ornate churches; tiny, decrepit piers at the edge of the gray water; and the same crowd of sullen-browed *habitants*, who had brought to the blending of races which had produced them all the dourness of their Scotch sires—for the settler soldiers of Wolfe had given historic names to half the population of the north St. Lawrence shore.

Will watched it all, without much interest, and wholly without exaltation. He was a hard-bitten Canadian, nearer forty than thirty; a little gray showed in his hair; behind him lay those twelve years of body-racking work for other men. Those years had drawn the salt from the zest of adventure. Now he was in Port Arthur, the next year in Winnipeg, the next in Montreal; it was always the same job under its various guises, and he brought to it no longer anything but the habit of work.

He had gone on his way without enthusiasm, until the inheritance of a legacy enabled him, with his savings, to launch out for himself in a small way. He was with the Baggallay Pulp Company, of Kingston, when he discovered specimens of a certain fir similar to that of British Columbia among the pulpwood shipped from Quebec.

Realizing its commercial possibilities, he had traced it to a small local mill operated by a Paul Cawmill in the Romaine region; and when the Baggallay Company failed, involving him in the loss of a year's contract, he went East to investigate, found that Cawmill was operating on government land, and leased the whole Dorion tract.

He had sunk the greater part of his capital in the enterprise, had negotiated for machinery, and made plans with the wholesalers, and was actually on his way eastward before he learned that the ownership of territory was claimed by another. So locally is gossip confined along the north St. Lawrence, where settlements are often

a score of miles from one another, that his first informant was Captain Lessard of the Blanche.

"There is doubtless nothing to it, M. Maitland," said the captain, "otherwise the deed would be in evidence. It is one of these land claims that all the *habitants* put forward. Still, the McGraemes are a bad set of people to antagonize."

Will's blank look apprised the captain that his guest had never heard of the clan. Captain Lessard became communicative.

"You see, monsieur," he said, "Emile Dorion, the late seigneur, and the McGraemes descend from good people, but they had become impoverished. There was a tradition that the lands which Dorion claimed had once belonged to the McGraemes.

"To gain possession of them was the ambition of Jeremiah McGraeme's whole life. And before Dorion and Jeremiah sailed for the sealing grounds Jeremiah persuaded the seigneur to marry his niece, Jeanne, and she him. A child of seventeen she was—but what did she count for against the ambition of the McGraemes? She married him, and brought back the Dorion lands into the clan. That must be three—four years ago.

"Then Dorion was drowned at sea. He wandered from his fellows upon the ice. A fog came down. A common fate upon the seal-floes; but a fortunate happening for Jeremiah McGraeme! For Jeanne Dorion, the widow, was now the owner of the lands, and through her Jeremiah achieved his ambition, and was called seigneur."

He leaned forward. "You see, M. Maitland, that is what you will encounter—the land-hunger of the poor men, ignorant of the value of the property they claim, and yet tenacious of their claims. When they learn that the land has value, they will make trouble, perhaps. I wish to warn you."

Will nodded. "I'd conciliate any local feeling, so far as possible," he said. "Then, again, I merely lease the lumber rights. That does not affect their claims to ownership. Probably they'll be glad of the money that will come into Bonne Chance."

Captain Lessard reflected. Should he tell his guest that honest labor was the last opportunity that the McGraemes desired? He felt his way cautiously.

"There is plenty of money in Bonne Chance, monsieur," he answered—"at least among the McGraemes. And it is generally known that Jeremiah finances their operations, although he poses as a pillar of sanctity. He is, in fact, the mayor. Yet there is hardly a keg of brandy smuggled along these shores but was distilled by the McGraemes and carried either in their schooners or in those of their agents. And a whole cargo of brandy goes like that"—he snapped his fingers—"since prohibition came to the gulf counties."

"A bad thing for the countryside."

"And for the government. We know where their haunts are, too, M. Maitland, and, if the government would give us the men, and would permit the bloodshed, we would end it all. But it would be almost a campaign, to invade their haunts—look, monsieur!"

He waved his arm along the rocky, tree-grown shore of Bout de l'Ile. Will saw more clearly now the strange formation of this region.

The bay, in whose heart the little settlement was set, was a deep semicircle, along whose diameter lay rocks and shoals, with the sea-passage marked by buoys. Farther out were the islands, strung halfway to Anticosti, some large and wooded, others mere tide-washed banks in the St. Lawrence.

East of the settlement appeared the lighthouse on a tall cliff, approached from the seaside by means of long flights of steps, which rose nearly perpendicularly to the foghorn station and the keeper's cottage, situated on a small plateau behind it. It lit the main track for vessels that took Belle Isle Strait, north of Newfoundland.

The land on which the lighthouse stood was Presqu' Ile—an island or a peninsula, as one might choose to regard it. Bout de l'Ile was the cliff itself, Presqu' Ile some four miles by two of almost inaccessible ravine and peak behind it, covered with dense forest; behind this were shoals,

rocks, and quicksands, muskeg and marsh, through which arms of salt water dribbled from sea to bay; and on the bay side the breakers, which beat incessantly, even on calm days, had raised barriers of brush-grown sand, in which land and sea mingled with no clear demarcation.

"Last spring," said Lessard, "we captured Jeremiah's schooners, loaded down with skins taken out of season. Since then the McGraemes have not been friendly toward strangers. And now that you go to take the lands which are claimed for Jeanne Dorion, there may be—unpleasantness. It is perhaps well to be prepared."

Will nodded again. He was used to such troubles, and did not attach any especial weight to Lessard's warning. A little tact usually sufficed to avert unpleasantness, if mixed with the correct proportion of firmness. Leaning over the rail, he watched the Blanche traverse her dubious path among the dancing buoys, past needle fangs that showered her with foam of the racing tides, until she came to the pier's end, where straining ropes bound her against the warping-chocks.

The revenue officers acknowledged the half-sullen, half-respectful salutations of the loiterers gathered upon the pier, many of whom had had reason in the past to be acquainted with them. Captain Lessard, who had no immediate business in Bonne Chance, grasped Will's hand.

"*Au revoir,* monsieur!" he said. "I hope everything will go well. I shall be returning"—he smiled a little grimly as he saw the strained attention of the little audience that had gathered about them—"soon, but not upon schedule, like your last boat, monsieur."

The steamer cast off and made her way down-stream, to the relief of not a few. The crowd collected in a wide circle about Will as he stepped up the gangway, staring in silent unfriendliness. Will sensed the feeling.

A little man, with a pale face, lackluster eyes, and a wisp of hanging, blond mustache, came forward.

"I am Hector Galipeault, monsieur," he said, taking Will's grip. "I have the hotel. It is the only one. Permit me!"

He shouldered it, and made a way through the crowd along the pier, across a stretch of shingle, through a tangle of raspberry briers, and up some tumbledown wooden steps into a long, two-story shanty that housed the occasional *commis voyageur* whose appearance in those parts was usually a forerunner of new stoves or sewing-machines.

The loafers, following at some distance, watched Will enter the hotel, and slowly dispersed, muttering.

Turning at the door, Will saw the Blanche steaming away alongshore into the mist.

After a meal of stringy omelet, damp bread, raspberries, and tea, served by Mme. Galipeault, a slatternly shrew in a soiled apron and torn dress, Will deposited his grip in one of the cavities of the wooden interior up-stairs, called bedrooms, and strolled down toward the flume and the mill, which he had seen from the deck of the Blanche, and correctly surmised to be the property of Paul Cawmill.

He crossed a meadow, blue with lupine and chicory, and traversed the shaky bridge that spanned the rapids of the stream. Above his head Bonne Chance seemed poised upon the edge of the overhanging cliffs, which fell away beyond the river, disclosing a flat oval of land between the foreshore and the wooded gorge through which the torrent made its way down to the gulf. On this was the small settlement that had grown up about Paul Cawmill's lumber mill.

The mill employed no more than a dozen hands in summer, when there was little work in the woods. In winter there were perhaps two or three jobbers' gangs, engaged in felling and dragging lumber to the skids. The place was even untidier and more disreputable in aspect than the usual *habitant* camp.

Most of the shacks were empty, and the black-framed cabins that stood at all angles to the dusty, chip-strewn road which ran through the settlement and lost itself over the heights beyond seemed about to tumble under the weight of their own ill-construction.

Large dogs rolled in the dust and

snapped viciously at the flies. Three or four children were playing about one of the cabins, and paused in their game to survey Will with a hostile stare. Tin cans disintegrated by the wayside, in garbage heaps from which coarse sea-grass was springing.

Set into the middle part of this disorder were the store and a small, unpainted wooden structure used by Paul Cawmill as an office, so far as he could be said to conduct one. Behind these were three cottages with curtains strung across the windows. Through each of the open doors might have been seen a woman bending over a large stove, resplendent with polished metal.

Near by was the *rossing mill, through which passed the shaky flume, discharging cataracts of water, terminating at the edge of the shoals in a chute, beneath which, and for a space of fifty yards about, were skeleton logs, stripped bare of bark, and half buried in layers of tide-scoured chips; and derelict logs lay everywhere, like stragglers behind an army.

Nobody was on this terrain. Will went up the steps that led into the mill, toward which a few logs, caught at the dam by the cogged gear, were drifting. Paul Cawmill was standing inside the structure, watching the two men who fed the logs to the saw. At the sight of Will he looked up and scowled. He had been among the watchers upon the pier, and, having satisfied his curiosity, had gone on to the mill.

"You are M. Cawmill?" Will inquired.

"*Oui*, monsieur," Paul muttered.

"I am Mr. Maitland. I don't know whether you have heard of me. I arrived by the Blanche this afternoon."

The way Paul glared at his supplanter showed plainly enough that he had heard of him. He had been brave enough in Belley's store, but now his heart and speech alike failed him as he looked about him at the mill, the steam-engine and machinery, the dam, the boom, the flume, and the construction work, whose purchase had absorbed the savings of a lifetime and run him into debt besides.

He operated only in a very small way, and La Rue had advanced him the balance needed for the purchase of all this material, and for the construction work, for which latter his creature Belley had taken the contract at an exorbitant rate. Paul had been struggling on the lee shore of debts and difficulties for months, just meeting the notes as they fell due, and sinking deeper and deeper into the mire. When the first note was unpaid, La Rue would probably foreclose; and now, on top of this, the Englishman had come to take his land away!

Will, taking in the second-hand rossing plant, operated by the straining engine, the ill-constructed flume, terminating where no schooner ever built could draw water for loading, understood something of Paul's feelings. He had not intended to oust him without compensation because, like other small operators in remote parts, he conducted his business on dubious land. In fact, he had had it in mind to offer him a price for his plant. But it was clear that this plant would hardly do, even for a stopgap, until his machinery arrived.

"*Oui*, I have heard of you, M. Maitland!" he snarled suddenly. "You have come here to take my land away, that I have leased from M. McGraeme. Just let me see you try!" he continued in a shout, flinging himself into a posture of defense.

"Come outside and talk it over," answered Will.

Paul hesitated, and then followed him out sullenly, and stood glowering at him with defiance. Inside the mill Will saw the eyes of the workmen turned upon him in vicious resentment.

"How much of the hundred square miles that comprises the territory is leased by you?" asked Will.

Paul snarled and stuttered: "That is my business, M. Maitland. I lease from M. McGraeme. It is his niece's land. This part is mine. You don't put me off it! Ask M. McGraeme what you want to know."

"You don't have to answer me, of course, unless you wish to. It is in your own interest to do so."

*Peeling, or stripping.

"I know my interests, and they are not yours. I lease eight thousand *arpents,* if you want to know. I am not afraid to answer you. It is no secret. I am not telling you anything that you could not find out for yourself. *Maudit,* no! It is not me they come to ask questions of. I am only the poor *habitant,* who is cheated by everybody, and tossed from one to another, like playing at ball!"

Will ignored Paul's clear desire for a violent ending of the altercation; equally, he resolved to hold him. "When I leased this tract," he said, "I knew that you were operating here on government land."

"*Ah, oui, oui,* monsieur, we know all that!" sneered Paul. "It is private land when M. McGraeme makes me my lease, and it is still private land when M. Belley makes me my contract, and it becomes government land when you want to take it to put money in your pocket, because you rich men can always go to Quebec and pay money to the lawyers, in their nice white shirts with the stiff cuffs and collars, to prey on the poor *habitant.*

"It is nothing to you rich men to steal the bread out of the *habitant's* mouth. Holy Name, doesn't the timber grow everywhere like grass, from here to Quebec, that you should come up here to steal my land away! Well, you'll find out your mistake!"

He thrust his face forward, scowling venomously, while his fingers twitched and worked at his sides.

"You try to put me off!" he stormed. "You'll see! And if you bring down the officers from Quebec, you don't get the flume or the machinery. Holy Name, no! When I go, they go with me, and I dynamite the dam. Understand? I'll smash the mill to pieces and set fire to them, before you steal it away from me!"

The little man, purple in the face, and quite distraught, was shouting at the top of his voice. The two mill hands stood by the door and grinned.

"When you're ready to talk business, Cawmill, you can come and see me," answered Will, turning away.

Looking back when he reached the bridge, he saw Paul and the two workmen, with a man from the store, all standing before the mill and looking after him.

CHAPTER III.

THE RAVENING PACK.

WILL pondered as he took the cliff road back to the hotel. He had expected trouble with Cawmill, of course, but hardly this fierce enmity. He had calculated that Paul, conscious that he was operating on government land, would first bluster and then ask for an adjustment. But Paul's rage had been volcanic and his bluster genuine.

Paul's challenge, that he leased the land from Jeremiah McGraeme, explained the situation in the light of Will's conversation with Lessard, but of course Will knew nothing of Paul's transactions with La Rue and Belley.

As he walked back along the single street of the village Will noted that the hostility of his reception at the mill seemed to be echoed by the entire visible community of Bonne Chance. Black looks were cast on him from the groups upon the porches of the cabins. A child jeered at him, and a woman called it sharply indoors, but not because of the epithet that it had used.

Will troubled little about these manifestations, for which Lessard's story had in a way prepared him. His life was lived in action, which destroys introspection. If he had to meet the hostility of Bonne Chance, he would accept it as a part of the game, but he would never reason about it with a view to overcoming it.

He returned to the hotel and went up to his room. Finding that there was an upper balcony, he drew out the broken chair, filled and lit his pipe, and studied the scene before him through his marine glasses.

He swept Presqu' Ile and Bout de l'Ile, from the neck to the lighthouse. Somewhere in that tangle of every earthly element many a keg of brandy was doubtless hidden away. Bonne Chance could hardly have been more definite on this subject than Lessard, for the McGraemes knew how to

keep their secrets and their lawless boundaries.

Will watched the schooners lying offshore. A barge was loading logs that fell into it from the end of the flume, and, when it was filled, it began to move slowly into the bay, to where three men were piling chords upon the deck of one of the vessels. That was Paul's way of lumbering: the flume terminated in the shallows instead of running out to deep water. Will suspected that lack of capital and stupidity were contributing causes.

It was beginning to grow dark. The sun had dipped into the haze of the west, and a white fog was creeping out of the sea and coiling into the hollows of the hills. The foghorn had begun to blow. The light from Bout de l'Ile began to flash in double rhythm. Lights sprang out along the shore. It was growing chill, as the nights of late August are. In the north the arch of a luminous aurora quivered against the clouds.

A crowd was shouting in Bonne Chance. From where he sat Will could see nothing of it. He turned his head for a moment, and then continued scanning the scene through his glasses. A gray shadow, creeping along the shore, resolved itself into the Blanche, speeding up the river.

The sound of shouting drew nearer and became menacing. Some one came running up the stairs. There was a hammering at the door of the bedroom. Will turned and saw Hector Galipeault's wife there.

"*Ah, mon Dieu,* monsieur!" she gasped. "They are coming for you!"

Will went in from the balcony. "For me, madame?" he asked, without at first understanding her.

"Run, or they'll kill you!" cried the woman. "Run, monsieur! The four McGraeme men are there, and half the village. They're mad when they have been drinking. Run through this back room and jump from the window. The ground is high, and you won't hurt yourself. You can hide among the trees. Quick, monsieur! *Ah, mon Dieu,* he does not understand!"

Will, who understood French passably well, though not the *patois* of old Norman, which develops surprising obsolescences under the influence of excitement, began to gather that the hostile demonstration had reference to himself. The mob, which was now nearing the hotel, was shouting at the top of its lungs.

He went quietly down the rickety stairs, the landlord's wife clawing at him the while, and screaming frantically enough to have apprised all Bonne Chance of his presence upon the premises.

Will had just reached the room below, which served both as a living-room and as an entrance-hall, when a score of yelling, hooting *habitants,* followed by a trailing fringe of as many more, came rushing toward the wooden steps outside. At Will's appearance against the illumination cast by the swinging lamp, a sudden silence followed, and then came a renewed storm of yells and a shower of stones.

Hector Galipeault's wife began to screech invective. Jeers answered her. From some indeterminable region at the back of the building rose the wails of the Galipeault brood, frightened out of their first slumber.

Galipeault himself, who had been sampling the brandy beneath his stable in honor of the departure of the Blanche, slept there in blissful ignorance of what was befalling.

Will stood quietly on the top step, amid a second shower of stones, one of which drew blood from his forehead. He was quickly sizing up his assailants. Foremost among them, brandishing a huge knife, which appeared more theatrical than effective, was a dark, stocky man, apparently the principal leader of the crowd. He was reeling drunk, and the vileness and ferocity of his curses showed that he had no immediate ardor for the attack. Will's massive figure and his placid unconcern had daunted even the most reckless of the Bonne Chance daredevils.

The reeling man was Duncan McGraeme. Beside him stood his cousin, Eudore, his understudy and sycophant. Eudore was a puffy-faced youth, with broad, muscular shoulders, and a body sunken in fat; he was clean-shaven, and, with his hat on the back of his head and

the fag of a cigarette in one corner of his mouth, he looked strikingly like the typical street loafer of a large city.

Behind them, not far away, stood Angus and Alexandre. Angus, as the eldest of the clan, was wary, calculating ahead how the affair would develop; Alexandre was not yet drunk enough to be rash, and contented himself with backing up Duncan's abuse.

Will had faced infuriated Polak and Hunkie laborers more than once in his time, unarmed, as now, and he knew that all mobs were very much alike: gun-play might be all very well across the boundary, where laws were lax, but a revolver was a dangerous weapon to use in Canada, and, moreover, of little use in a determined rush of knives.

In such a case, a pair of fists was the best weapon. He knew himself to be physically a match for the best of his assailants, and the knowledge, and a remembrance of former conflicts, gave him a complacency that maddened the crowd beneath him.

It stopped in its premeditated rush, and hooted vigorously, swaying to and fro uncertainly. The yells died away into mutterings. Then, out of the tail of it, a woman pushed her way toward the front: a girl of hardly more than twenty, wearing a short skirt and high boots, a guernsey open at the throat, and a flat cap over the brown hair, cut short about her shoulders. Her slight, erect figure was almost boyish, and the thrusts of her arms, as she pushed the reeling Duncan McGraeme aside without ceremony, were made with a boy's easy movements of the shoulders.

"Get back, you men!" she cried angrily. "I'll speak to him. I'll tell him what we've come for!"

She strove out in front of the muttering crowd, and her speech became pure English with the Scot Doric intonation. "You're Mr. Maitland!" she cried. "I'm Jeanne Dorion. I'm speaking for these people. They're all right when they are left alone. They never harm any one who doesn't try to harm them. While you were attracting the crowd toward this hotel, the revenue men landed along the bay and took away Georges Savard and Alfred Drouin for selling a little brandy."

The fury of her address was indescribable; she stopped to catch her breath, still fighting him with the will that had outstripped the power of speech, and then went on, still more infuriated by his silence:

"We know who sent you here to lease my lands, so that you could have a pretense of working here and prepare the way for your friends next spring! We don't want you here, Mr. Maitland, and we won't have you!

"These men are fighting for their living and for their families. It is not that I care for the Dorion lands. That's my battle. This is theirs. We'll have no revenue and sealing agents in Bonne Chance, to take our livelihood away from us, as you took my uncle's ships last spring!"

She swung upon her hips toward the crowd behind her, repeating her last words in French, and an ominous, deep-throated growl came in response.

"If you'll go back, nobody will harm you. If you don't go, nobody will be responsible for your life. Will you go? Well, why don't you answer me?"

She stamped in her vexatious fury, standing before him with head thrust forward and her hands tightly clenched at her sides. Will did not answer a word. It was all incomprehensible and confused: let his acts answer for themselves. Contempt for this stupidity was less arrogance in him than a part of the defensive armor which a man acquires as a result of the knocks of life. He shrugged his shoulders and turned back into the room.

He had miscalculated the crowd's mood, despised it too soon, or just an atom too much. As he turned his back it unleashed itself in murderous hate and surged up the steps. Will had a glimpse of the girl caught in that human torrent; he thought that she was trying to hold it back—and then it was upon him, and he was fighting with bare fists against the knives that were unsheathed against him.

All the anger that lies latent in a man of cool-blooded temperament rose up in him to meet the assault. Snatching up a

little table that stood at the bottom of the interior stairs, Will swung it about him. He saw Angus, his yellow fangs protruding in a grin of murderous malice, duck and run as he drove the howling mob pell-mell to the steps by the mighty swings of his arms, knocking half a dozen reeling lumbermen in a heap to the bottom. Duncan, caught in the jam, was swearing more vilely than ever. Somewhere in the hotel Mme. Galipeault was screaming without cessation.

And suddenly all grew still. An elderly man was coming into the hotel, up the steps, deliberately: a great man dressed in black broadcloth, with great, heavy, square-toed shoes, newly blacked and shining. A heavy chain of gold was swung across the front of his waistcoat. A heavy beard of white hung almost to his waist. The *habitants* shrank away before him.

The old man stopped on the top step, towering above them. "What's this?" he cried angrily in French. "Have you men all gone mad to disgrace our community like this?"

"Put the damned spy aboard the Blanche, where he belongs!" shouted Eudore thickly. "*Maudit,* he's come here to take Jeanne's lands away, and Paul Cawmill's lease, and he betrayed Georges Savard and Alfred Drouin to the revenue men this afternoon!"

The crowd, which had recovered its courage, growled in answer. It began to draw warily toward where Will stood in the middle of the room, holding the table over his shoulder. But Jeremiah McGraeme shot out a huge arm unexpectedly and dealt Eudore a heavy box on the ear that sent him spinning into its midst. Eudore picked himself up, scowling, not at his uncle, but at Will.

"Be off, all of you!" shouted Jeremiah. "M. Maitland is here on his own business, and, whatever that business is, he shall see that Bonne Chance is a godly and law-abiding community. Angus, take your brood home! Jeanne, wait for me outside. I shall have something to say to M. Maitland!"

The threatening, rolling purr in his voice warned Will that he had a subtler danger to meet than the violence of the *habitants.*

He composed himself and waited. He saw Jeanne cast a look of intense hatred and scorn at him as she passed out of the hotel.

It was quite clear that Jeremiah McGraeme controlled his clan, if not Bonne Chance; for Angus, Alexandre, and Eudore filed sullenly out of the hotel, and Duncan, who had been hovering uncertainly on the top step, knife in hand, joined them.

When the room was clear Jeremiah turned to Will and stood looking at him, a scowl on his heavy face and a glower in his eyes that had beaten down the gaze of many a man before him.

The old man stood like a pillar, and almost as straight, despite the immense development of his shoulders, which gave him the effect of a stoop. Will, big as he was, lacked three or four inches of Jeremiah's height, but his eyes were just as steady and his temper now under control. Jeremiah, slow-witted as he was, realized that this was an opponent who could not be browbeaten.

"So you're the Mr. Maitland who has come to Bonne Chance to take away my niece's lands!" he purred, in a Scotch intonation curiously blended with the Frenchman's palatal pronunciation. "Ye'll find the job harder than ye've been looking for, I'm thinking, Mr. Maitland!"

"I understand that Mme. Dorion claims certain government lands," answered Will. "I know nothing about that. I have leased them from the government, and I intend to lumber them. But inasmuch as I hold merely the lumber rights, there should be no conflict."

Jeremiah snorted derisively. He fancied Will was weakening. "I warn ye not to cut one tree upon the Dorion limits, Mr. Maitland!" he cried. "Fair warning, man to man. Understand me well! The government can't take our lands away and lease them to others. We're not so ignorant a folk as you suppose. Aye, I've downed mony a better man than you who tried to cross me!"

Will laughed so frankly that Jeremiah's glower went out in astonishment. He had

always dominated Bonne Chance by power of personality; he was slow, and he could not understand what lay behind the laugh of a man who did not care.

"Come, Mr. McGraeme, let's look at this from a common-sense point of view!" said Will. "I've leased these lands. I don't know anything of Mme. Dorion's claims. I never heard of them until to-day. Your niece's title is evidently not recorded in Quebec, or the lands would not be marked as government property upon the maps. Your complaint is against the department, not against me."

"Aye, aye, fair speech!" sneered Jeremiah. "But ye think I dinna ken what lies behind ye, eh, Mr. Maitland?"

"There's no one backing me, Mr. McGraeme. I wish there were," answered Will, smiling.

He had realized that his advantage lay in goading this slow ox of a man to fury, and his apparent complacency was succeeding fast.

"The revenue's behind ye!" shouted Jeremiah furiously. "It was your people took my schooners last spring, because they wanted to ruin me. They said I'd broke the sealing laws. Lies! Lies! And it's you they've sent here to stop the sealing, Mr. Spy, while you're pretending to be lumbering! Rascals! Rascals!" he shouted, thumping his heavy stick upon the floor. "I'll spend my last penny before those lands pass from my niece! Set up your mill, Mr. Maitland! Ye will, eh?" He thrust his face venomously into Will's. "I'm the mayor here, and ye'll find that I'm not so helpless as ye suppose."

"So you're the mayor?" demanded Will, apparently astonished.

The old man took the bait. "Aye, ye're beginning to see the light now, eh, Mr. Maitland?" he purred.

"I certainly am," said Will. "I wish you'd told me that before. In future, I shall hold you personally responsible, sir, for any repetition of to-night's offense. If there is any further attempt to molest me, or to hinder my work, the responsibility falls upon you. And, if necessary, I'll take you to Quebec to answer for it."

Jeremiah lost all self-control. He began thumping his huge fist on the table. "Ye'll take me to Quebec?" he roared. He shook his fist in Will's face, and, as in his moments of violent outburst, power of coherent speech abandoned him. He spluttered and stuttered, and his great shoulders went up and down.

The hotel door opened, and Jeanne Dorion came in. She put her hand through her uncle's arm. "Come!" she said quietly.

He hesitated, and then permitted her to lead him away, a mountain that had suddenly turned into a volcano. Her face was composed and white, and she looked at Will as if she did not know that he was there.

CHAPTER IV.

PAUL COMES—AND IS CONQUERED.

RATHER satisfied than otherwise that he had unwittingly brought all his difficulties to a head so soon after his arrival, Will went to bed. Characteristically, he did not trouble himself about them, but left each problem to unravel itself in the course of events.

At breakfast Galipeault came to him, lackluster, surly, and yet obsequious, and plainly recovering from a drinking spree. "M. Maitland, I am not a hotel—only a boarding-house," he explained. "It is only for the night that I accommodate guests sometimes. There are other hotels in Bonne Chance, and I have no help, and the well is going dry. And my creature won't cook for you, and the stove needs to be repaired, and Simeon is getting the measles. Myself, I am not afraid of the McGraemes or anybody else, you understand, and if I had not been called away on business last night they would have found out what sort of man I am. But women are peculiar—you understand, monsieur!"

"I'll get out as soon as I can make arrangements," Will answered. "I can't promise to go to-day."

Hector Galipeault retired immediately to convey this information to his creature behind the kitchen door. A shrewish outburst, which followed, led Will to con-

clude that his promise was considered to be altogether too conditional in nature. There ensued an animated chatter behind the panels, punctuated by the screams of the Galipeault brood from the regions in which they seemed to be confined. Presently, with joyous whoops, they scattered —eleven of them—to circle the hotel and flatten noses at every window which commanded a view of the dining-room and its daredevil stranger.

Will imagined that he would have a visit from Paul Cawmill before a long period had elapsed. Despite his outburst, Paul seemed the weakest link in the chain of resentment that Bonne Chance had forged. And Paul had most to lose immediately. Will decided to take no steps until he found out whether this was going to eventuate or not.

It happened earlier than Will had anticipated. About ten o'clock that morning, while he was smoking on the porch, he saw Cawmill coming along the beach toward the hotel.

It was a very different man from the volcano of the day before. Paul came forward in a hesitant way, smiled sheepishly, stopped for a moment at the bottom of the wooden steps, and then ascended, taking off his hat, and stood before Will, stubbornness and humiliation struggling in his now meek-looking face.

"Monsieur!" he began, with downcast eyes. "Ah, monsieur—"

"Sit down," said Will, thrusting forward a chair.

Paul seated himself on the extreme edge, placed his hat on his knees, and twined his feet round the legs. When he looked up, Will saw tears in his eyes.

"I am sorry, M. Maitland," he stammered, and then broke into the pent-up speech that he had evidently rehearsed. "I am very sorry, monsieur, for what I said. If you take my lease away, I am ruined. I am already heavily in debt, monsieur, and I do not know what to do. Monsieur, you are a very rich man, and I have nothing. You want the lease—*ben!* Then it must be. But a little money for the lumber on hand—there is not much of it—I can then buy a share in a schooner—you said that you would be willing to talk business with me—"

There Paul broke down. Will placed his hand on his shoulder.

"Listen to me, Cawmill," he said. "Of course you have no rights that I am legally bound to recognize. You know that much yourself. But I came up here with the idea of dealing fairly with you. I'm willing to talk things over. I did think of offering you a price for the rossing mill and the lumber in your dam."

"Monsieur?" stammered Paul, looking up with a gleam of hope in his eyes. Then his face fell. "But you do not understand, monsieur," he said sadly. "The mill is M. La Rue's, and the flume also, till they are paid for.

"I lied when I spoke of destroying them. After I had leased the tract from M. McGraeme, M. La Rue advanced me the money to build and buy the machinery, and hire the men, on condition that I employed M. Belley as the contractor. And if I cannot pay, the flume and mill and machinery—everything except the lumber —become the property of M. La Rue, and the rest of the money I owe him—twelve thousand dollars. At twelve per cent, M. Maitland, and three thousand dollars to repay each year, and one thousand on the first of September. I have only a little wood which I can dispose of before the note must be met."

"You have to find one thousand dollars by the first of next month?" asked Will.

"And three hundred and eighty dollars for three months' interest, M. Maitland. And this is summer, and nearly all the wood cut has passed through the mill, and what is in the woods I cannot pay the men to put through the dam. They know I have no money, and they will not work without money.

"See, monsieur! If you will lend me enough money to put my wood through the mill before September first, I can ship it to Quebec and repay you. M. La Rue cannot touch the wood. Four hundred dollars, M. Maitland, and I can repay five hundred, which is three hundred per cent a year, and "—he caught his breath—"then I can buy a share in a sealing schooner."

The magnitude of his financial scheme, the audacity with which he had disclosed it, left Paul breathless. He fixed Will with his eyes, hopeless, yet ready to leap into hope at the least sign.

"Who is this M. La Rue?" asked Will.

"The notary and banker, monsieur. A rich man—richer than M. McGraeme now."

"He ought to be. He must be charging you ten per cent."

"Twelve per cent, monsieur."

"And he has the actual ownership of the machinery and the flume?"

"Everything is mortgaged to him, monsieur. And the work was not well done. M. Belley constructed it. That was M. La Rue's requirement. I did not wish it."

Will threw back his head and laughed heartily, with that latent sense of humor that came to his relief in perplexing situations. In such laughter the sardonic spirit of America came to sustain and fortify him. This man La Rue certainly seemed to have a strangle-hold on Paul.

He plunged more deeply into that solvent of all embarrassments, lying back in his chair, while Paul, thinking that Will was laughing at him, clenched his fists and half rose, to sit down again as Will's hand fell on his arm.

"We'll fix you up, Paul," said Will. "But I can't buy your lumber. I'm not out for that kind."

"Ah, monsieur, it is very excellent lumber—the best in the whole Province for making fine paper pulp," protested Paul unhappily. "M. Baggallay, of Kingston, wrote to me to send him all of my cutting."

"Yes, I know, Paul. I wrote that letter. At least, I dictated it. I meant to let Baggallay into the game, only he broke his contract and treated me shabbily. I came up here because yours is the one tract in all the Province of Quebec that I particularly wanted to get hold of."

"Well—then—then?" demanded Paul leaning forward and breathing quickly.

"Did you ever see an airplane, Paul.

"No, monsieur, but I have heard of them. Great wings that one straps on one's feet and hands and—"

"Airplanes are no longer used that way. An airplane is too big to attach to oneself now. It is as long as from here to the sea. They're getting longer. Also, they're getting commoner. In five years' time they'll be nearly as common as automobiles.

"And they have to be built out of a special kind of wood, which is very hard to obtain. It has to be light, and it has to be tough, and it has to be resilient. Above all, it must be free from knots. That means big trees. We get it from British Columbia, and it costs a good deal to freight it.

"This district is about the last place in the Province of Quebec where one looks for big timber. That is why I was surprised that you were sending that sort of fir to Baggallay. By the way, Paul, you know that fir isn't accepted for paper pulp?"

"Ah, monsieur, but one or two trees will always be cut in error—"

"That's the point, Paul. At first I thought you were trying to ship us fir for spruce. Then I saw it was a mistake—and I wished you had repeated it. Because, you see, you shipped us specimens of as good an airplane timber as ever came out of British Columbia. It's going to become one of the most valuable woods in the world. And it won't take a whole cord of it to bring six dollars."

Paul sat staring with wide-open eyes.

"And this—this wood grows on the Dorion lands, monsieur?" he stammered.

"Unless that shipment of yours to the Baggallay Pulp Mills was a dream, Paul."

"But—where is it to be found?" asked Paul, looking as if he had received news that a gold-mine had been located under his house.

"That I don't know—yet. I'm going to find out where you have been cutting. I'm going to see how much there is of it, and why it grows in this corner of the Province. It may be that Bonne Chance grew just a few freak trees. I took a chance that it didn't. But I've got a market for every board foot that I can put over. I'm going to cut all the winter, Paul. I'll have my gang sawmill up in a few days, and if

I win my bet that this fir does exist here in quantity, there'll be more than enough money in it to pay this M. La Rue of yours."

Will's face grew radiant at the thought of success. The springs of his enthusiasm had broken through the crust of stoicism formed in twelve years of toiling to enrich other men. Any one who had been watching him at that moment might have come to the conclusion that he had formed a totally incorrect estimate of him before. There was something charming and boyish in the whole personality of the man, suddenly revealed, as if by some interior illumination.

But Paul Cawmill was not looking at Will. He seemed to be engaged in an interior struggle. He glanced up with a singular expression on his face.

"Then, monsieur — my lumber?" he asked desperately.

"I don't need it. But I need you. That's why I've told you this. What would you say to— Well, I can't offer you what I'd like to, Paul, until the spring, nor what I think you're probably worth. But if a hundred and twenty dollars a month till spring means anything to you, you can start on your job from to-day. And I'll take over your obligations to La Rue, because we can use that flume, and the old mill may come in handy for rossing."

Paul fell on his knees and pressed Will's hand to his lips. "Ah, monsieur!" he wept.

"That's all right, then," answered Will. "You accept. I suppose you know how to keep information to yourself?"

Paul rose dramatically, winked away a tear, and winked again with an air of complete understanding.

"Monsieur," he said with dignity, "I have a wife and family. For their sakes I will do this. M. Maitland, you can rely upon my discretion. I know how to deal with men, and how to hoodwink them when it is necessary. But, monsieur, consider this: suppose that M. McGraeme and M. La Rue will not permit what you have promised."

Will laughed. "Don't worry about that," he answered. "The Provincial government counts for something, even in Bonne Chance."

"But, monsieur, suppose that Mme. Dorion—"

Will had a mental vision of Jeanne Dorion at the head of the mob, confronting him with blazing eyes. He had neither liked nor hated her for that; it was his way to dismiss these inexplicable hostilities, especially on the part of women, as of the nature of life—things not worth pondering over or reasoning about; and yet he seemed to see Jeanne Dorion quite vividly now, with a visual reconstruction so unusual to him that it almost startled him, as if his eyes were playing some uncanny trick.

"Don't worry about her, either, Paul," he said.

He reflected a moment. "Who started that story about my being a revenue spy?" he asked. "Perhaps, if that is the cause of our difficulties, it might be worth contradicting."

Paul stammered and stared, and then, to Will's surprise, winked again. "Why, monsieur—I do not know," he answered. "It has been told everywhere that you represent the government, and that next year a sealing company will come to Bonne Chance and own all the schooners. But you can depend on me that Bonne Chance shall believe it no more, for I know now what is expected of me."

Will clapped him on the shoulder. "All right!" he said. "I'll take you at your word for the present. And now I'm going to ask you where I can find lodgings, since Mme. Galipeault is afraid to harbor me, for fear the Bonne Chance people may come back and wreck the hotel some night."

Paul thought for a moment. "Monsieur," he said, "I can make you comfortable in my house. It is not what you are accustomed to, but it is not bad, as Bonne Chance goes, and my creature was saying to me only yesterday that we must get a lodger to help pay the grocery bills this winter. And as for the people," he continued, "I assure you that there shall be no more trouble from them. I shall

explain that you have come here to lumber, and—"

"And, for the present, nothing about the airplanes," answered Will.

Paul's answering wink was indescribable.

CHAPTER V.

A BRIBE REFUSED.

IT was perhaps characteristic of Will that he had leased the Dorion lands without first surveying them, in order to discover how much of the fir was to be found on them.

Yet this would have been difficult, without the use of some discreditable subterfuge, in a place as remote as Bonne Chance. Will had been convinced, from the appearance of the fir in several shipments, that there were more than a few freak trees—"sports" or "mutants," as they would be termed—and he had been desperately anxious to secure his lease before the lands were snapped up, at a time when the rising price of lumber was driving the companies further and further afield. It was in the same way characteristic of him that he had confided his plans to Paul. He took men upon trust, and was prone to hammer his way through life in just that fashion, tackling the big risks with a rush, and not concerning himself with the little ones.

During the three following days he busied himself in studying the situation. Whatever Jeremiah meant to do, he was holding his hand, and Will took advantage of the breathing space to move into a room in Paul Cawmill's house at the settlement.

It was a fairly respectable cottage, a two-story structure, of course unplastered, but weather-tight, heated by a huge stove below, and an immensely long pipe above, and reputed warm after the snows, plastering it on the outside, had converted it into an *igloo,* or Eskimo ice-house.

Will decided not to take charge until the first of September, which was only four days away. At first he thought of paying a visit to La Rue, concerning whom he had been further enlightened by Paul. But La Rue was in St. Boniface, where he had some of his many interests. To Paul's extreme delight, he told him that he could put his lumber through the mill, ship it, and take the proceeds, provided he settled up with his hands.

Paul set to work immediately to pick up a gang, and put the men to floating lumber down the river. They seemed glad of their wages; soon the boom began to fill, the logs traveled ceaselessly up the cogged gear and into the flume, and the mill worked busily.

Among the laborers Will recognized Eudore and Alexandre McGraeme. It was clear that they were more interested in keeping watch on him than in earning their wages.

Will said nothing to Cawmill, however, and dismissed the matter from his mind in view of weightier ones.

One thing soon became clear: the flume would have to be extended across the neck of Presqu' Ile to deep water, so that the logs, leaving the mill, could be dropped from the end of the flume directly into the hold of the waiting lumber schooner. Paul, owing to lack of capital, had been compelled to run the flume down to the shallows, load on flat barges, and then have them towed out to the schooners and the logs transferred—a considerable waste of labor, time, and money.

Paul had contracted for six schooners to take his load to Quebec, and these were lying off Presqu' Ile in deep water. Two of them were Jeremiah's, the only ones that had survived the raid of the preceding spring. The remainder seemed to be owned in common by his kinsmen, the McGraemes. They were vessels of great size, with two masts, broad in the beam, and having high, flaring flanks, each capable of carrying forty to fifty cords of pulpwood when fully laden.

The sight of the transference of the logs from flume to barge, and from barge to schooner, with the rehandling, was a constant irritation to Will. He spoke to Paul of his plans.

"But, monsieur, the McGraemes would never permit the flume to be extended to

Presqu' Ile!" protested Paul. "They do not allow any one to go there."

Will sent the little man away with a sharp answer. But he realized the seriousness of the threat. When he took charge, the issue would have to be faced; and he resolved that it should be fought out to a finish.

On the third morning, leaving Paul at the mill, Will started out to survey some of the timber on the limits. He learned that Paul had been doing some cutting, chiefly spruce, about a mile up the river, and again along a confluent creek, half a mile east of that, at the end of a corduroy laid down for the transportation of some pine of a fair size.

He spent the day investigating, and questioning the men, but saw nothing that in any way resembled the airplane fir which had been shipped to Baggallay's. However, the limits were extensive, Paul had doubtless cut elsewhere, and it was certain that the fir existed, even if only in small quantity. Will returned not much discouraged.

"Where else have you been cutting, Paul?" he said.

"Nowhere else, monsieur," answered Paul. "Only last winter I began to cut. Nowhere else except on Presqu' Ile. For one month I cut there, near the neck. Then the McGraemes forbade it."

"Well, I'm going to have a look there tomorrow," answered Will.

Shortly before noon he started along the beach toward Presqu' Ile. He had skirted the bay, and was approaching the swamps at the neck of the peninsula, when he heard the gallop of hoofs behind him. Out of the haze which had begun to veil the shore emerged the horse and its rider—Jeanne Dorion, saddleless, one hand clapping the mane, the other on the rein, while her heels drummed the beast's flanks as she swayed to its movements.

She came within an ace of riding Will down, and she might have meant to, for the horse's hoofs flung sand all over him. As she passed she half checked the animal, swung toward him, and made as if to rein in. Then she was gone like the wind into the white haze about them, leaving only the blurred impression of her face, hot with haste and anger, of youth and impulse, of eagerness and of disdain.

The sound of the horse-hoofs died away into the distance, and the fog, drifting in, concealed both beast and rider.

Will flushed at the insult. He meant to give the young woman a homily upon good manners on the next occasion, and he went on, fuming. The fog began to thin as he reached the first thread of sea-water that dribbled through Presqu' Ile neck. He leaped it, waded a wider channel, knee-deep, and made his way across the sand dunes, pushing aside a tangle of raspberry-briers and fireweed, until he came upon a road running, apparently, from Bonne Chance along the Presqu' Ile shore. This was evidently the road that the rider had taken.

He followed it for a mile and more, until he saw before him, near the edge of the rising cliff, the stone house of Jeremiah McGraeme, set in a small garden where phlox and yellow lilies were blooming. There were a stable and outhouses, and the road terminated at the front gate. Beyond the house were jagged cliffs, lashed by a foaming sea, and there was no road from there toward the lighthouse.

Will retraced his steps, crossed a stream fed by a cascade tumbling from a cliff above, and plunged into the wilderness of birch saplings, through which ran innumerable fox-trails, damp with trickling water. He pressed upward.

Pine and swamp spruce now supplanted the birch shrub. At last, breathless, he reached the summit. He had thought it was the summit of Presqu' Ile, but now he discovered loftier elevations, almost vertically precipitous, in front of him, and cut off by an apparently impassable ravine. As he stopped to catch his breath he saw the horse and its rider flash into view for a moment among the evergreens on the other side.

There must be, then, some road across the cleft from Jeremiah's house. But from the neck of Presqu' Ile the gap seemed impassable. Looking about him on three sides, Will could see nothing except the trees and the tangled underbrush, inter-

spersed with patches of white sand, and sudden flashes of water, where the sea-channels wound through the scrub. He began to make his way back through the pines, looking about him for evidences of airplane timber.

And suddenly his heart leaped. It was all about him! Tall, straight-grained firs, of incredible size, such as it must have required centuries of growth to develop!

Acres upon acres, extending as far as he could see! It was evident that this was the remainder of an original growth which had once covered the entire region. These trees had developed during something like two centuries, since Presqu' Ile, being, as its name indicated, all but an island, had not been swept by the forest fires which periodically devastated the rest of the timber lands.

Pushing his way through the trees, presently Will emerged into a small clearing, containing a few abandoned shacks and other evidences of Paul's abortive month of cutting. From here an overgrown trail led out to the dunes. The bay came into sight again, with the cottages and the camp beyond. Will stopped at the water's edge, and took in the location with careful scrutiny. Across that neck the flume must run; he would set up his mill there, construct his dam at the mouth of the stream where it broadened into the shallows, load directly on his own schooners.

For ten minutes he remained absorbed. At last he shook the day-dream from him and moved toward the dunes. He had just crossed the channels, into which the tide was beginning to run, when he heard the galloping of the horse behind him, and, turning, saw Jeanne Dorion appear from among the trees.

She set her horse at the channel in a bound that carried her to Will's side. She reined in.

"Mr. Maitland, I wish to speak to you," she said, leaning across the animal's neck.

Will stopped and waited in silence.

"Why do you never answer me?" she cried angrily. "Do you dare to despise me, you who come here with such wicked designs?"

Will spoke for the first time. "Mme. Dorion, I do not want either your abuse or your presence," he said. "On the very night of my arrival you led a mob to attack me in the hotel where I was staying. This morning you nearly rode me down." His face began to flame. "I am going to teach you and yours that there is law in Bonne Chance," he said. "Tell your people that. Tell them that I've been up against better men and bigger men and braver men than your *habitants*, and I've won out. I've seen my business through. Tell them I'll do it again. As for yourself, Mme. Dorion, women of your type are new to me, but—"

"You are brutal, like all your kind," answered the girl furiously, while the red crept up beneath her skin, until it dyed her face and throat a vivid scarlet. "But will you swear that you have neither come here as a spy, to trap the poor man who has a bottle of brandy in his cellar, nor as an agent of the government, to pave the way for the sealing steamships next spring?"

"I'll swear to nothing!"

"Because you can't! What are we to think? Didn't you come by the Blanche? Hasn't all Bonne Chance known for weeks that the government was sending an agent here? Perhaps you don't understand why I make these people's cause my own. That doesn't matter—to you. But I want to avoid bloodshed, and these people are in the mood for it.

"I want to avoid having more government agents here, more schooners seized, more prison sentences, more women and children starving in Bonne Chance because their fathers and husbands are in the government jails. If you had really come here to work my lands, your quarrel would be with us, not with Bonne Chance!"

She hesitated; she seemed resentful of his silence, as ever. She studied his face closely.

"You can't deny that the lumbering is a pretext, a clever trick," she went on. "And I don't want you to. I'm glad you don't. Because I have not been talking to you for any pleasure it gives me, or for the sake of abusing you, as you imagine.

"Even I can find better employment,

M. Maitland. It is because I have a proposition to make that may interest you. Would you like to earn five hundred dollars?"

She plunged her hand into her dress and pulled out a little purse stuffed with bills. "It is all I have," she said. "It is yours, if—"

"If I'll take my departure immediately?" asked Will.

"If you'll tell me the name of the man who betrayed my uncle's schooners to the government last spring," said the girl, looking at him steadily, and only betraying her eagerness by the slight catch in her voice. "It's so easy for you to do that," she continued. "No one will know. No harm will be done." She held the purse out in her hand.

Will shrugged his shoulders, as one shrugs away an unpleasant memory. "Keep your offers for your own kind!" he answered, turning away.

She uttered an inarticulate exclamation. His anger seemed to surprise, almost to stun her. After a moment she went trotting past him, her face averted. Will's eyes followed her as she rode along the beach to the edge of the cliff road beside the river.

Here, where the road sloped upward from the meadow toward the outskirts of Bonne Chance, a rig with two horses was drawn up. The man in it was only a speck from that distance, but somehow Will imagined that he was La Rue, returned from St. Boniface.

The girl reined in her horse, and for a few moments the pair seemed to be in conversation. The rig and horsewoman alike disappeared, and the latter came presently into sight again upon the top of the cliff, within the single street of the village, to disappear finally among the cottages.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT.

WILL, making his way across the meadow toward the camp, saw a man, who appeared to have been watching him, start off at a run. Something in his actions aroused Will's suspicions, but, at his shouts, the fugitive only increased his speed, and Will set off at a fast clip to overtake him.

He was a loose-jointed man of about thirty, with a thatch of black hair and a scrub of beard, and he scrambled as he fled, with a loose gait and unnecessary movements of the arms which told Will that it was the half-wit, Jean Desmoulins.

Will had noticed Jean loafing about the camp, looking at the mill and the steam-engine, peering slyly into the cottages, and watching everything in an apparently aimless, half-witted way. He had questioned Paul, who had told him that Jean was harmless, and tolerated everywhere; also a good workman, when the fit struck him, although it never lasted long. He also learned that Jean was a sort of familiar of Philippe La Rue.

Will caught up with Jean, seized him by the shoulder, and swung him round.

"You seem to be in an unnecessary hurry, my friend," he said, holding the imbecile at arm's length and surveying him.

"Ai! Ai!" screeched Jean Desmoulins. "Let go my arm, monsieur!"

"What were you doing here? What were you running away for?"

"I always run when I run, monsieur," Jean mumbled. "It is my way; I am a poor imbecile."

"Whom are you running to see?"

The half-wit only blinked and mumbled at him, but, as Will insensibly relaxed his grasp, suddenly squirmed out of his hands, wriggling like an eel, and in a moment was several yards away.

"M. Philippe!" he shouted maliciously over his shoulder. "Ai! He'll make an end of you, M. Maitland! M. Philippe will settle with you! You go to the camp and see!"

He started off at top speed again, taking the road toward Bonne Chance and stopping every twenty paces to glance over his shoulder and utter some insulting shout that was lost on the wind.

Will was surprised to see several men loafing at the mill entrance, and more so when there came rolling into view from

behind the cottages three rigs, all loaded high with household impedimenta. One of them was Paul's.

At the moment of Will's approach Paul emerged from the house, followed by his wife and trailing progeny of seven. Paul had a feather mattress in his arms, and the woman, who was crying, carried a great copper kettle in one hand and a cradle in the other. One of the bigger boys had Will's suit-case. The two mill-hands had already completed their loading, and were tying up their goods with cord.

Two or three of the gang, who had come in from the woods, and were apparently waiting to see what Will would do, hung about near the scene, smoking, and looking on with interest.

"Moving day?" Will inquired of Paul.

Paul Cawmill shook his head dejectedly, but he did not answer, and, his load being already fastened, except for the mattress, he dumped this on top of all and started to lead the disconsolate horse, which kept looking round, back toward the bridge.

The children, running forward with loud whoops, scrambled up the cart tail atop the shaking mass.

Will caught the horse by the reins. "Is this a strike or a circus, Paul?" he demanded.

Paul shook his head. "Ah, monsieur," he said, almost weeping, "you were kind and meant well, but I knew how it would all end."

As the two other rigs began to draw alongside, Will held up his hand, and the drivers pulled in.

"Now, Paul Cawmill, perhaps you will explain this," he said.

"M. La Rue has ordered us all to leave immediately," said Paul in desperation. "And he is coming himself to see that we are gone. To-morrow is the first of September, and my mortgage is foreclosed. And M. McGraeme has canceled my lease, too."

Will simply led the horse around until it faced Paul's cottage again. "Now you get everything unpacked and into your house inside an hour," he said. "And you, Gingras! You, Poulin!" he added to the two mill-hands. "When I hire men, they obey me, and nobody else! I'll have you understand that!"

He led Paul's horse back to his cottage. Paul ran up to him, stammering:

"But, M. Maitland, there is no longer any work for which to receive wages. Philippe La Rue has made Duncan McGraeme the foreman, and he has brought his own men here!"

Will became conscious that the men about the mill entrance had drawn toward him, as if by premeditation. Now he saw others coming up from all sides. He found himself the center of a grinning crowd, apparently enjoying his approaching discomfiture.

Several of them were Paul's men, who should have been at work in the woods, but had evidently been advised of the dénouement in store, and had come in to see the fun. Will recognized Angus, Alexandre, and Eudore among the crowd.

Suddenly Duncan stepped forward from a little group among which he seemed to have been concealing himself purposely, as if with an instinct for dramatic effect.

"You get off these limits!" he announced to Will. "This is my cousin's lands. Paul Cawmill is finished now, and I'm foreman. You go and make no trouble, you English spy!"

It was no new situation to Will, and he could not have been better prepared. He saw the lumbermen getting ready to jostle him; it was the psychological moment when they were nerving themselves to begin the attack.

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.

A Clever Devil

by J. Allan Dunn

THE concentrated blaze of the lamps seemed to typify the action afoot in the Sunkraft studio. The last scene of the latest filmplay was about to be shot. Bishop, owner and autocrat of Sunkraft, was there in person. For twelve hours, since ten in the morning, the entire staff had labored, consulted, repeated in their effort to complete the footage. Now they were up to the fadeaway. All the actors except Stella Ray, the star, and Gerald Kane, the leading man, were through; but most of them lingered, held by the fascination of the profession that contained so many of the elements of a game, for all the toil involved.

A scene had been built that represented the vine-clad veranda of a Western cabin. The vines were natural. The lighting was grouped for a moonlight effect. The stage carpenter and the head property man stepped aside, and the director picked up his script and looked up at the two actors and at the two camera men.

"I guess we're ready," he said. "Now, Miss Ray. Kane."

"Hold on, Dave. That lighting's rotten."

The director flinched and cast a look toward Bishop, who stood at one side, smoking a cigar in defiance of his own rules. One of the two camera men advanced—a nervous, lean, swarthy man, black-haired, with black eyes that flashed as he went on autocratically.

"We want 'em to *know* it's moonlight, without a title to say so or a blue tint. They're sick of this diffused lighting effect. The people know what moonlight looks like. Give it to 'em—strong! Rembrandt stuff. Have it splash through the vines, but let it stream full on Ray and Kane. Try it two or three times. Settle in the cutting-room which is best. High lights and shadows. You two keep well in the beam, savvy?"

The actors turned toward him.

"Miss Ray, that moonlight will be higher than you are. Wipe that stuff off your upper lip. It 'll be in the shadow naturally. And your lips are red enough as they are. You don't want to look as if you had been eating blackberry pie."

The star moved off with a little mou toward her maid, but obeyed him. One of the onlooking actors laughed nervously and turned to Barry, character-man and type, short and stocky, with a quaint face that had won him his first test.

"Kind of bossy, for a camera man, ain't he?" asked the other in a whisper. "Wonder Dave Beale stands for it. In the Starbright studios—"

"Lyle isn't just a camera man," returned Barry, his voice a little grudging in its comment. "He's the best crankman in

the business, but he's a wonder on lighting. Invented a thing or two—and patented 'em. He's art director here as well as boss shooter. He's a clever devil, and he's featured on the titles. Draws down as much as Beale. He stands in with Bishop."

"He's bossy, all right," muttered the other; "and a crank." He seemed smarting under some previous criticisms. "I bet he is a devil when he's crossed," he went on. "And he's stuck on Ray. Any one can see that. And jealous of Kane. I've seen him look at him sometimes while he was shooting, and I bet he wished it was a gun and not a camera he was behind. Now, in the Starbright studios—"

But Barry had turned away with one curious look at the man. Was it as patent as all that? he wondered. He had seen it, but then he watched everything that concerned Kane. For the athletic leading man had saved the life of Barry once at high risk of his own, and the character actor almost worshiped the leading man with a certain doglike affection.

The growing romance of the pretty star and Kane was current comment in the studio, but Monty Barry had not realized yet that others had noted the enmity he had seen in Lyle's attitude toward Kane—an enmity that he fancied had increased by leaps and bounds toward the point where the smoldering hate of jealousy would burst into blaze.

Lyle was not a man to be thwarted. Barry thought that his ambition came first of all, that the artist dominated the man, yet the latter had come more and more to the surface since Kane had been cast as lover in this romantic play they were now completing. He had even warned Kane, and the latter had laughed it off. To-night Barry sensed an extra tension, or thought he did. And he watched closely when the scene at last began.

Lyle stood by his camera, turning the crank, his dark face keen on the effects of his craft and the registering of them. But, as the scene progressed toward what was technically called the "clinch," with palpably an atmosphere that was more realism than registering in the manner of the star and her film lover, a change came over Lyle. His teeth caught at a corner of his lower lip and gnawed it, the veins stood out on his contracted forehead, the gleam in his eyes was sinister.

Monty could not persuade himself that he was mistaken. And as the scene, at Lyle's first suggestion, was repeated to insure the best lighting, as it grew, if anything, more fervid, he saw beads of moisture springing out on Lyle's forehead and the knuckles of his hand grow white with the tight grip on the crank.

Applause broke out in compliment to the climax, applause in which even Bishop joined as the director announced himself satisfied.

"How about it, Lyle?" he asked.

But Lyle had turned away, leaving his camera to his assistant. Monty Barry saw him in a dark spot beyond the hooded lamps, wiping his face with his handkerchief, glowering at Kane, still tender in his attitude to the star, surrounded by her sycophants. Some stray beam gave Lyle's eyes a crimson glare. Monty noticed his fingers twitch as he put away his handkerchief, watching Kane and the girl. He crossed to Kane and touched him on the elbow.

"What is it, Monty?"

"Remember what I told you about Lyle? I've been watching him. All through the scene. He's beside himself. I tell you, Kane, he's dangerous!"

"Rats, Monty! Thanks, just the same." Kane passed an arm affectionately across the shorter man's shoulder. "I can look out for myself and Miss Ray."

"See that you *do* look out."

The earnestness of the other's voice impressed Kane for a second. Then he laughed again. "Ready, Stella?" he asked.

"Are you going out in your car?" asked Monty.

"None of your business, Monty. But I'm not. I'm going over to the bungalow, if you want to know. I'll see you later." There was a note of joy in his voice, of anticipatory triumph that brought a light of understanding into Monty's brown eyes.

"He's going to propose to her to-night," he told himself. "Good luck to him!

Though it means the end of our palling together. But that's been broken up of late. Now, where's that devil Lyle? I'll keep an eye on him, at all events."

But Lyle had vanished. Kane had gone off with the star and the girl with whom she shared her bungalow, the vamp of the Sunkraft, who belied her film character in every-day life and who had fostered the little affair. To-night she would play a discreet, convenient chaperon in real romance.

Monty turned to go out in search of Lyle, convinced that some mischief was afoot if opportunity happened. And Bishop stopped him.

"Look here, Monty," said the magnate, "Kane tells me you know something about typewriters. There's a new scenario in with a different twist. Plot hangs on a typed letter. Perhaps we can use it."

"It used to be my trade," admitted Barry reluctantly. He was genuinely worried about Lyle and Kane. Still, he could not very well dodge the conference. And he went off with the director and Bishop to the latter's private office.

Miss Ray and Kane, with Clarence Vanbrugh, the vamp, kindest-hearted of mortals, strolled over to the little bungalow, built on the banks of the river that ran through the spacious grounds of Sunkraft. After a little chant, Miss Vanbrugh excused herself on the plea of letters to write, and left the lovers together.

It was a different type of porch from that built in the studio, yet the action of the scene was the same. But this time there were spoken words and low answers, the scenario was their own, they had no need of a director. There was no real moonlight, but they did not miss it. A shaded lamp discreetly furnished light no farther than the steps of the porch and barely penetrated to the corner where they sat in the enfolding shadows.

"Monty spoke to me to-night about Lyle," said Kane presently. "He thought Lyle was jealous. Monty is always shepherding me, and he told me to look out for Kane."

The girl shivered a little.

"I am afraid of him, Jerry," she said.

"You see, Lyle got me my opportunity here; and he taught me a lot. I was always grateful to him, and—I think he expected more. You don't know him, Jerry. He threatened me once."

"We won't bother about him. I suppose he was in love with you. I fancy Lyle is more in love with himself and his own cleverness than anything or any one else. Just so long as you are not in love with him, but with me, I should worry."

"Jerry, I never knew what love was until you taught me. I—"

A figure upreared from a crouch in the laurels that grew close to the porch. It stood for an instant on the steps, with arm lifted, a weapon shining. There was a stab of flame, a sharp report. A noise of flight through the shrubbery toward the river as Stella Ray screamed.

Clarice Vanbrugh rushed from the house as Monty Barry came leaping up the steps to find Kane prostrate, his head in Stella's lap, his blood staining her light gown.

"He's dead," said the star dully as she looked at the newcomers. "Lyle killed him. I saw him under the lamp."

"God!" Monty whirled on Miss Vanbrugh. "Call up the studio," he ordered. "Bishop's there. Then get a doctor."

He spun about, cleared the steps at a bound, and followed a trail that led through broken and disordered boughs. His face was set and his fists balled as he went. He traced the tracks through the soft dirt to harder ground. There he lost them. But he followed the general direction and he found a canoe adrift. It looked as if Lyle had used it to cross the river. There was another boat, and he took it, searching the opposite bank for clues.

At one o'clock in the morning he came back to the bungalow to find that Bishop had acted with characteristic promptness.

Kane was dead, and his murderer was known. A car had come thundering out from Los Angeles with detectives, and they had found out that Kane's car was missing. He usually took a spin after the day's work was over, often with Stella Ray, and it had been parked conveniently. If Lyle had set the canoe adrift, it had been to furnish a false scent. It seemed certain

that he had taken the car of the man he had murdered.

"Could he run a car?" asked one of the detectives.

Monty answered: "He could run anything."

"Clever enough for most things," supplemented Bishop.

"He'll not be clever enough to get away from us," replied the detective. "We know who he is, we've got his description and plenty of photographs. It's a cinch."

"I'm offering a reward of ten thousand dollars," said Bishop quietly.

The detectives looked at one another with raised brows. It was not all generosity on Bishop's part, not all a desire to avenge the death of Kane, though he was sincere enough in that. But his business acumen saw the publicity in this affair. The murder would treble the profits of the film, the last in which Kane would appear; it would advertise his star.

"We'll get him," said the chief of the plain-clothes men. "That reward's as good as paid over, Mr. Bishop. Hop in, you chaps. We'll trail this car. See you in the morning, Mr. Bishop."

"Room for me?"

The man turned to look curiously at Monty Barry, struck first by the grim quality of his voice, then by the expression of his quaint features, now a mask of tragic grief and determination.

"What's the idea?" he asked.

"Kane was my best friend," said Monty briefly. "He saved my life. I want to help to get Lyle. Don't make the mistake of underestimating him. I know him. If the trail is plain it's because he means it to be, up to a point. Let me go along with you."

The detective glanced at Bishop, then shrugged his shoulders.

"There's room," he said. "But we're handling this, understand. You keep in the background."

In the suburbs of Los Angeles they found Kane's car, abandoned. At four in the morning they turned up a cheap hotel, where a man who had registered under the name of Newman answered Lyle's description. He had paid in advance, the clerk said, and he had gone up to his room. The key was still out of the rack.

They found the key in the lock on the inside of the door of the empty room. The bed was untouched. The clerk was sure that Newman had not gone out. Several other people had left, some to catch the midnight flier for San Francisco. Some of these had registered before he came on duty. Newman had come in about half past eleven.

The only clue in the room was some crisp paper and twine such as druggists use. But it was regarded with satisfaction by the sleuths.

"In a bit of a hurry, was Lyle," said the leader to Monty.

"If he left that it was because it didn't matter," said Monty. "Either it won't tell you anything, or it wasn't Lyle."

"There ain't many all-night druggists—only one near here. We'll see."

"A guy like that came in about half past eleven," said the drug clerk. "He bought him some permanganate of potash and a bottle of dioxide. What's up? He didn't look anything out of the usual."

The detective looked baffled.

"I guess that wasn't Lyle, after all," he said. "What in time would he want permanganate for? Or peroxide, either? He couldn't bleach his hair in thirty minutes."

"Lyle was a chemist," said Monty. "And he was a master of make-up. I can guess what he might do with the permanganate. He could make a weak solution, for one thing, and spatter himself with freckles that would dry in a few minutes to a natural color. Or he could put on a stain, or paint a mole, something prominent that would attract the eye until he wanted to bleach it off with the peroxide."

The detective eyed him keenly.

"You've got imagination," he said finally. "But you're working it overtime, young feller. You've got an idea this Lyle is Herman the Great and Sherlock Holmes rolled into one. A guy that's just shot another and is beating it don't do all those things except in a magazine—or in the movies," he grinned. "That Newman wasn't Lyle."

Whoever Newman was, Lyle had disappeared completely. Publicity, description,

photographs, reward—all failed to turn up any trace of him. In time the baffled pursuit died, save in the memories of the detectives, kept fresh by the ten thousand dollars.

But Monty Barry did not give up. He was not cast in the next play, and he spent his time in Lyle's rooms after the detectives had gone through them, and in searching every inch of the ground in the neighborhood of the tragedy. Stella Ray had gone away to recuperate, the bungalow was deserted as if it harbored the plague. The actors and employees of Sunkraft watched Monty prowling about, pityingly or jestingly, according to their types.

The third day after the murder he walked into Bishop's office and demanded a release from his contract. He was a changed man. His whimsical, mobile, kindly features, his greatest asset, had hardened. Lines of resolution were graven there, supplanting the old. He seemed to have aged ten years in three nights.

Bishop argued with him.

"You'd better leave it to the detectives, Monty," he advised. "Don't want to lose you. You're a valuable man. I understand your wanting to do something. We all know how you feel about Kane."

"You don't," said Monty doggedly. "Kane was more than my pal. When I was first picked for a type, Kane helped me to make good. I was a stage-struck bug when I asked Sunkraft for a job. I had a good trade of my own, but I wanted to be a movie actor. I got to be one—through Kane.

"God knows why he took a fancy to me, but he did. And he saved my life that time when I slipped on the cliff. Dived clean from the top into those eddies they call Death Rapids. It wasn't any spotlight stunt. Lyle filmed it, kept on turning the crank, and didn't even shout for a rope. He didn't give a damn if both Kane and I drowned, so long as he got a fine strip of footage.

"Now, I'd have given my life for Kane any time, and I'm going to spend it all, if necessary, to catch the man who murdered him. Those detectives 'll never do it. They are looking for Lyle as we knew him, and they'll never find him. He's too clever by far. But I've found something that I'll back against all their clues. If they had it, they'd blurt it out and tip Lyle off. That's where the press and the police buck each other. They say every criminal forgets one thing, and I'm banking that Lyle forgot this. If he didn't, I've thrown him off the idea of any danger."

He tossed an automatic pistol on the desk.

"Where did you get this? When?"

"Found it in the laurels. Stepped on it. It's his gun. Got his initials etched on the steel back of the grip-holder."

"No use for finger-prints, I reckon," said Bishop as he gingerly examined the clay-coated weapon. "Want me to hand this over to the police, I suppose?"

"They may as well have it. Much good it 'll do them. Lyle's got a three-day start. They'll never catch him."

"And you think you can?"

"I'm going to," replied Monty, with so much confidence that Bishop began to take him seriously. "I'm through with the show business. I've got my trade that'll cover my exes in any town on three days' work a week. I figure this way, Mr. Bishop. Lyle will stick to the films. He couldn't get along any other way. He's proud of his own cleverness.

"He had a substitute for camphor nearly worked out to use in making film; he was a crackerjack on lighting and photography, camera and laboratory work. And he'll not let all that drop. He'll change himself, and he won't show prominent until he's got his alibi all accepted. Then he'll go to work again with the big end of the game. For the present he'll lay low—maybe for a year, or for five years. But he'll be somewhere round the films. Not in the studios—probably operating in a theater, maybe a small-town joint. Perhaps he'll choose New York because it's so big. He'll go as far away from the Pacific coast as he can. And I'll find him, sooner or later."

"What's this clue you talk about, Monty? I wouldn't wonder if you've got the right dope on the rest of it. But how'll you know him if he's been so clever at changing himself and losing his identity?"

"That's my secret. I wouldn't whisper it. The detectives have got every clue in the world, and I've got this. You give them this gun, and let 'em play it up in the papers. I want Lyle to know it's found. I want to set his mind at rest. And I'll go out and get him."

Bishop eyed him narrowly, touched by the man's devotion to his friend, but inclined to think him a trifle crazed by grief, a monomaniac. Monty was always a little queer, aside from his quaint mug and laughable gestures.

"Hope you do, Monty. Good luck to you. The reward stands. When you find your man, wire me, and I'll help you land him. I owe that much to Kane."

"I'm not doing this for the money. But I'll remember about wiring you. And I know a few tricks myself. I've not been in the game for nothing. Good-by."

And Monty Barry went out from Sunkraft. After a while they all forgot him, forgot Kane, as the film world moves, flickering swiftly ever along new planes. The memory of Kane died even with Stella Ray as time passed and her fame waxed greater. But Monty, knight errant of friendship, went about his appointed task, true to his vow; here and there in large cities and small towns, his eyes, deep-set, burning with determination as he followed the trail he had laid out for himself, sometimes almost despairing but never giving up, though he found no slightest clue of Lyle.

Sunkraft would never have recognized him. He had grown a beard and he had lost poundage until he was but a shadow of his former jovial self. Lines were graven in his face, his hair had grayed at the temples. His business-card read:

HENRY B. JOHNSON

Expert Repairer of Typewriters; Every Make. All Work Guaranteed. Prices Reasonable.

And, by virtue of his changing towns, sometimes twice a week, the address and phone number varied. He was a persistent patron of the film drama.

Three years after the murder of Gerald Kane, in the Union Theater at Redfield, Massachusetts, the comedy reel had been followed by the news section, and, before the main feature was thrown on the screen, the usual advertisements of coming stars and plays, and the bids for trade of local stores; these latter, printed and scrawled out in careless lettering, for the most part, vaguely held the attention of the packed audience. A few of the patrons left their aisle seats for the foyer and a quick puff of cigarettes in the entrance by the kiosk where the girl sold tickets.

The theater had once nourished stock and repertoire companies. Now its box-office window was closed in favor of the readier kiosk, but the room behind it was still used as a manager's sanctum. The owner of the Union, well satisfied with his receipts, sat tilted back at his desk, smoking.

A man with hair and close-clipped beard touched with gray opened the door and peered in.

"Could I use your phone?" he asked. "I forgot an address I want to write to to-night after the show. Good crowd," he added as the manager handed him the telephone directory with a good-natured "Help yourself."

"Bound to get a good crowd with that line of stuff," the man went on as he thumbed through the pages. "Big feature, too, with Stella Ray. Don't want to miss that. Ah, here it is!" He jotted down a few words and figures in a note-book and passed back the directory. "Thanks."

"You're welcome. Stella Ray comes high, but she's a winner. Glad you like the show. Livin' in town?"

"Yep. In business. Here's my card. I like all the show but the ads. I might do business with you there if you'd have 'em printed out properly. Who does it for you? The janitor?" A laugh took any sting from the inference. The manager returned it, reading the card.

"They bring the business, Mr. Johnson. I see you repair typewriters. Ought to be good business here for you. I've got a machine that needs overhauling. Better take an ad. My operator writes 'em. Maybe he'll take special pains if you ask him."

"Could I get one in by to-morrow night??"

"Sure, if you get the copy in to Simms to-morrow morning. The ads are his perquisites; he handles 'em."

"Well, I'll talk with you after the show. Don't want to miss Stella Ray." And he went back to the auditorium.

Later he found the manager, after the crowd had cleared, talking to the girl of the kiosk, who, it seemed, was his niece. He greeted Johnson affably. The Union Theater was a family affair; it was the manager's business to get regular clients, and he had been talking to those he knew as they left, sure that they approved of his program.

"How about the ad?" Johnson asked.

"Got the copy? Simms ain't come down yet."

"I'll see if he'll promise me better printing first. He's a good operator. No flickers, good focus."

The manager was accustomed to his patrons using the jargon of the film. They picked it up from the movie magazines. Fan talk.

"He's all of that. We had our local play here three weeks ago. You know, popular election of the cast, work in local features. Well, Simms shot it. And it was fine work. Saved me money and put a little extra in his pocket. Developed his own films. He's a crackerjack. Don't do to tell him so, though. Inclined to swell in the bean. Here he comes now."

Johnson turned to meet the operator, a man who walked with a limp, with one shoulder hunched, a drooping mustache that covered his mouth. His hair, for he carried his hat in his hand as he came slowly toward them, was a mop of unkempt, nondescript blond.

"Gent here wants an ad, Bill," said the manager. "Says he don't like your printin'. Wants a good job. How about it? Wants it in to-morrow night."

The operator grinned, showing stained, irregular teeth.

"Might make a special crack at it," he said in a wheezy voice. "Got your copy?"

"No, I want to think over it a bit. Can't I get it to you in the morning?"

"If you don't bring it before noon. I don't get up before ten. Here at twelve."

Monty—alias Johnson—tingled with excitement. He strove to control it, the quick beat of blood at his finger-tips. His nostrils quivered, like a hound's to strong scent. The man before him no more resembled Lyle than did Monty himself, but his assurance in the clue he had kept so mysteriously dark was paramount.

"I'll be way over at the other end of town then, on a job," he said. "Take me all afternoon. I could leave the copy here, or bring it round to where you live before you leave for the theater. I'd rather do that. To talk over the layout. I'm a bit fussy," he added apologetically. "But I'm willing to pay extra if I can get it."

"I live at the American House," replied Simms indifferently.

"Then I'll try to see you about eleven before I go down-town. It's for to-morrow night sure. I'll be round to see the show and the ad." He turned to the manager as Simms went on out to the street. "I guess I can stand seeing Stella Ray twice running."

"Free pass for an advertiser," said the manager. "Come to the office."

Monty went directly to the Western Union and sent a wire to Bishop, of the Sunkraft studios at the New York address. He had kept in touch with the magnate's movements through the movie magazines, and he knew that Bishop was on the point of sailing to Europe with Stella Ray to take pictures in Italy of a magnificent production of "Othello." The wire was brief:

> Got Lyle. Can you arrive Redfield on train reaching here seven to-morrow evening? Answer. MONTY BARRY.

He left his address as the American House. Then he went to his room, paid his bill, packed his bag, and transferred to the hotel. He did not sleep that night, but spent most of the time poring over papers he took from his grip, papers he had carried with him for three years. At eight in the morning he was at the police station, closeted with the chief and the head plain-clothes man, Inspector Herron, clean-cut, capable-looking, intelligent.

The two officers had listened to him with a certain mixture of incredulity and respect for the amount he mentioned as reward. Then the chief sent for an extract from his files, and laid some sheets on the table. They were the reward bills for James Lyle, headed by two photographs.

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD

The above amount will be paid by the Sunkraft Studios for the apprehension of JAMES LYLE, accused of the murder of Gerald Kane at Sunnyville, California, August 17, 1917. Age twenty-eight; height five feet eleven; carries himself erect; assertive bearing, black hair, dark eyes, regular teeth, olive complexion. Camera operator.

Inspector Herron joined the chief in a laugh at Monty's expense. Monty sat with eyes glittering, his manner dogged, chin forward.

"That ten thousand dollars has gone to your brain, my man," said the chief. That description don't answer Simms up to the Union any more than black is white. You'll have to come through with something stronger than that before we'll touch it."

He looked at Monty with a swift turn of suspicion and winked at the inspector.

"I've got something else, but I'm not giving it away till the last minute, chief. I've not been following Lyle for three years to have it fall down. He's too clever. A breath of suspicion and he'll be off and his description 'll change again before you can get wind of him. You don't know him. I do. I worked with him. Kane was my best friend. As for the money, I don't want to touch a cent of it."

"You say you worked with Kane and Lyle. In the movies?"

"Yes. You've heard of Sunkraft."

"Sure. But that bill's dead. If it is Lyle the reward has been withdrawn. Just what's your game?"

"To take Lyle. To see him go to the chair! That reward will stand. If only to charge against the advertising Sunkraft 'll get. I've wired Mr. Bishop in New York. He's the head of Sunkraft. You've seen his name on the bills. Well, if he comes down here to-morrow night, will you or the inspector go up to the theater with us? I don't want to appear in this. You can have the reward and all the publicity. I want *Lyle*. Will you do that?"

"Sure. If Mr. Bishop comes, either Herron or I'll join your party. But you'll have to show me he is coming."

"Crank," he announced to Herron when Monty had left. "Fat chance of Bishop coming down to Redfield."

"I'm not so certain, chief," answered Herron. "He's a bug of some sort, but he's not crazy. Ten thousand dollars ain't to be sneezed at. I'll bet you an even dollar Bishop shows up."

"You're on."

There was a telegram for Monty at the hotel:

Are you certain? Too busy for possible mistake. BISHOP.

Monty wired back his absolute conviction, and sat in the lobby to await his man. But when he appeared Monty was staggered, despite his proofs. If this was Lyle, he surpassed all cleverness that even Monty had credited him with. The crooked teeth, the limp, the hunched shoulder, the hair, combined to confuse him as he made an excuse for not delivering his copy, giving uncertainty of address as the cause of delay.

Simms did not attach much importance to the affair and limped off to the breakfast room.

Monty looked after him with a troubled brow. Had his eagerness to find Lyle misled him? Could he trust his faculties? He might have been mistaken. He went up to his room again, but the papers did not give him much comfort. His senses might have deceived him. A wire from Bishop saying he would come assailed him with more fear. And Bishop was bringing Stella Ray to aid in identification.

But, after the matinée, Monty's brow was clear again.

He showed the chief of police Bishop's telegram with such an air of confident triumph that the latter, after regarding him with narrowed eyes, called in Herron.

"Be at the depot at seven, you two," he snapped. "Looks as if there might be

something in this. How you going to prove it?" he barked at Monty.

"I'll prove it. Mr. Bishop's coming. I'll see you at seven, inspector."

But they would not let him go, and quizzed him further, in vain. He was obstinate. The dramatic was strong within him, aside from a genuine fear that his secret, once out, might fly fast and reach Simms. He meant to achieve his own climax, as he had dreamed of it every night for three years. He had earned it.

"If you've wasted our time," warned the chief, "I'd advise you to leave town without waiting for the first train after the show."

Monty nodded and left the station.

"It can't be Simms," said the chief.

"We'll wait and see," said the inspector. "Meantime I'll collect that dollar."

The patrons of the Union did not suspect the identity of two of those who sat in the rear row of the theater that evening, or they would have craned their necks toward the real star rather than her film presentment. Bishop, Stella Ray, Monty Barry, and Inspector Herron were next the aisle, ready to slip out before the main feature ended. The inspector had already notified the anxious manager that he wanted to see him immediately after the show, without stating his reason. Herron was working blind, and he didn't like it except that it saved the faces of both himself and the chief if nothing came of it, while they could claim full credit and the money if this Johnson was right.

Bishop had confirmed the reward. And something of Monty's confidence had entered the inspector, who was wise as well as efficient. It was worth taking a chance.

When the advertising showed on the screen Monty whispered to left and right: "Watch the next ad but one—the one that says: 'Take your old shoes to Pappas. He'll make them good as new.'"

It flashed on, thrown from a small square of glass on which Simms had penned or brushed the words. Then it was shifted.

"What's the idea?" asked Herron, while Bishop and Stella Ray looked their bewilderment. "It was printed lettering. You can't prove handwriting by that."

"Is that all you saw?" asked Monty, a little quaver of triumph in his voice. "Wait."

Stella Ray showed a somewhat bored interest in her own production and complained to Bishop that it was being run too fast.

Before it ended Monty rose, and they filed out into the lobby.

The flustered manager took them up the stairs leading from his sanctum to a gallery that had been boarded off from the auditorium. In it stood the regulation chamber of metal for fire protection, into which the operator was locked. Part of it was partitioned off as a dark room. There was a sink and a shelf with chemicals, a stained table. Photographs of stars were on the walls.

The show ended, they heard the audience tramping out. The manager produced a key and opened the metal cabinet. From it Simms emerged. For a second he stood in surprise, peering at the visitors. Then he nodded to Monty, and spoke in his wheezing voice, while Bishop and Stella Ray stared at him blankly and then at Monty.

"Get your address fixed up? These are friends of yours?" asked Simms of Monty.

The inspector stepped forward.

"You're wanted, Simms—alias Lyle. Wanted for the murder of Gerald Kane in California three years ago."

Bishop and Stella Ray were whispering together, their looks incredulous.

The operator stood blinking at Herron without concern, moving a step backward as he spoke.

"You must be crazy. I was never west of the Mississippi in my life. I can prove it. What's the idea?"

The detectives hesitated at the conviction in his asthmatic tones. Bishop stepped out.

"This can't be Lyle, Monty. You've brought us down here on a wild goose chase. You must be out of your mind."

"Don't you recognize him, Miss Ray?" pleaded Monty.

The star walked toward Simms until only the width of the table was between them.

He faced her without blenching as she scrutinized his features and shook her head.

"No, I do not."

Simms laughed; Herron whirled on Monty.

"Now, what's your game?" he began truculently. "You can't start anything like that here. You belong at the State Hospital, I'm thinking."

Monty had brought a paper package along. From it he took the string that bound it and laid some thick papers face down on the table, without taking his eyes off Simms. He spoke to the manager.

"Will you get that Pappas advertisement from the booth, Mr. Tilden? Don't take it out of the rack, please."

Simms did not move a muscle until Tilden moved toward the cabinet. Then he started to intercept him.

"That's my shop," he said sharply, a little of the wheeze gone from his voice. "I'm responsible for what's in there. The Pappas ad went out to-night."

"Stay where you are, Simms!" Herron's voice was imperative.

Tilden brought out the square of glass in the tilted rack that held the rest of the advertisements.

"We could get along without it," said Monty. "But I wanted to show how I knew Simms is Lyle. Inspector, you are responsible for that man until I get through. After that, you can arrest me if you want to, and turn him loose."

He spoke with crisp authority, his eyes gleamed, his whole attitude held the suggestion of one about to make a coup, and he held their undivided attention. Monty turned to Bishop and Stella Ray.

"You failed to recognize me at the depot this evening, and I am not a past master of chemistry and make-up like Lyle. A man as clever as Lyle can change the color of his hair, pad a shoulder, cultivate a limp, or have a heel built up. He can have teeth extracted and replaced by a gullible dentist. He can alter his expression, practise an asthmatic voice, almost remake himself. He *will* do it when the penalty for being caught is the electric chair.

"It has taken me three years in the little towns and larger cities out here in the East before I saw my clue repeated. I have met hundreds of operators. I believed, I *knew*, that Lyle would start in with a job like this. Three years—and I would have taken thirty. But I did not have to meet Simms to know him for Lyle. *You gave yourself away.*"

He whirled on the challenge, with pointing finger at Simms, but the operator did not flinch. He had edged away a little from the table, but Herron's order had halted him.

"You'll remember my bringing in Lyle's pistol, Mr. Bishop. The papers wrote it up and said that it was useless for finger-prints because I had stepped on it and shoved it deep into the mud. That was just what I wanted them to say. It would relieve Lyle's mind of any last suspicion that he had left a trail. That pistol must have worried him for a day or two. As it was, his cleverness napped.

"I found that pistol the afternoon after the murder. I did not step on it. Not then. It was free from mud, and I wrapped it up carefully in my handkerchief. I took a dozen photographs of it after I had powdered the handle. Here they are."

He displayed platinum enlargements of the weapon, some showing the initials; then he showed more with the gun plastered with mud. Next he held up the other prints, also enlargements. On them showed the whorls and loops and islands of a finger-print.

"Lyle's thumb-print!" he said triumphantly. "I had not played in film dramas for nothing. I trod the gun into the mud later because I wanted Lyle to overlook the idea of finger-prints and because the detectives said they had all the evidence they needed. Because I believed that I was the one who would find the killer of Gerald Kane after he thought himself safe. If the press had said anything about prints, as they would if the detectives had found any, he would have changed his thumb with acids, have cut it off if necessary. But he didn't."

All eyes were on Simms. He stood rigid. Only a tiny nerve throbbing high in his temple betrayed he was at all nervous.

"I have studied that thumb-print, the

only clue that Lyle left behind him, until I could draw it blindfolded," said Monty. "And last night, on that Pappas advertisement, I saw it faintly in the lower right-hand corner where he had handled it carelessly as he took it from the rack or the slide. It was just a suggestion. A ghost print, made by the natural oily moisture of his hand. But it was enough to make me recognize the markings I have dreamed of every night for more than a thousand nights.

"Then, when Tilden told me he had taken a local picture and developed it, how clever he was, what a jewel of an operator he had, I was certain. And I wired Mr. Bishop.

"Inspector Herron, take a print of that man's right thumb and compare it with these photographs!"

"Stop that!"

Inspector Herron suddenly vaulted clear across the table, sweeping the telltale enlargements to the floor, and grappled with the operator. Simms had leaped backward to the sink in one desperate bound, reaching up for a cardboard cylinder, cramming something he took from it into his mouth, while other fragments, grayish lumps, dropped to the ground, trodden on in the swift, brief struggle.

The operator suddenly straightened convulsively in Herron's grasp. His face writhed, turning the hue of putty. For a hideous moment it seemed to change to the face of Lyle. Lyle's eyes stared at them, the soul of Lyle gazed from the distended pupils before the murderer collapsed in the detective's arms.

Herron lifted the limp body to the table. He picked up the cardboard cylinder and displayed its red label with its warning inscription:

"Poison. Cyanide of Potassium."

"He was a clever devil, all right," he said. "Clever enough to cheat the chair."

AUTUMN

NO more the cricket's quiet mirth
Sounds from his grassy door,
Or speaks the distant whippoorwill
His admonition o'er.

The autumn songs are tender songs,
But with low minor strains
That seem to breathe of long farewells,
Of mists and moaning rains.

We vow that we will merry be,
And fill the days with cheer,
But spring-time songs seem somehow false
With autumn's quiet here.

These are the days when hearts draw near,
And love comes close to keep
The tender blossoms of the soul
From lifelong winter sleep.

So while the gay, glad summer throngs
To silence deep return,
Our souls shall swing their portals wide,
And bright our hearts shall burn!

Arthur Wallace Peach.

The Orchid Huntress

by Marguerite C. Storrs

CHAPTER XV.

THE LATENT LAWTON STRAIN.

"I DON'T see who could be calling us—now!" Norine breathed in an awed voice.

"Well, what does it matter?" Jerry spoke loudly, as though he were trying to convince the phone as well as Norine. "You answered the fool thing once to-night and put the jinx on everything! Let it go."

"But—" Again the bell pierced through the waiting stillness of the room.

"Here!" said Jerry roughly. "I'll answer it. It may be Sims. He said he might call me to-night and he'd think I was with you."

"You've—told him?" asked Norine.

"Of course. Had to settle—" Again the shrill ring from the hall. Jerry looked at her. "Shall I answer it?" he asked.

"I don't care—if you think—"

"The damned thing 'll ring all night if I don't!" Jerry thrust the check he was holding into the pocket of his coat and started for the hall.

"But, Jerry!" Norine was following. "If it should be—"

He had caught the receiver from the hook. "Yes?" he said. "Yes—Miss Lawton! Oh!" He glanced toward her and she ran to him.

"Let me take it, Jerry!" she whispered.

But he shook off her hand on his arm and spoke again into the transmitter.

"Miss Lawton is not well," he said. "If you'll call to-morrow — who is this? Why—" He glanced at her again, and she caught at the receiver in an agony of apprehension. Jerry's eyes narrowed slightly and a faint smile came to his lips. "This is Jerry Brent speaking!" he said and clamped the receiver into place.

"Jerry! Jerry!" She shrank away from him half covering her face with her hands. "What have you done! It is after midnight! And you—in my apartment!"

"You told me to answer it!" he said curtly.

"But *you!* In my apartment!" she repeated. "He will think! He will—"

"What difference what he thinks. You're going to marry me to-morrow." Jerry's voice was quiet, ominous.

"But I'm not! I can't! I told you—"

"You are!" He advanced upon her. All the boyish ingenuousness was gone from his face. His blue eyes were slightly narrowed, cruel. "You are!" he repeated. "If you want to keep your place with your fine friends! If you—don't—"

"If I don't—" she repeated, drawing closer to the wall as he took a step toward her.

"They may hear about this—fifty-fifty business and when they know I answered your telephone at—"

"Ugh! You—you beast! You told him because you wanted to force me—"

"I told him because I was bound to save you from this damned nonsense you've got into your head!" he answered her.

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for November 13.

"You've taken the step. You've placed yourself on my side of the fence and to the tune of half a million dollars. You can't welsh now. I'll ruin you if you do. I may be—in your eyes—a crook! But I've got my ethics as well as you and I've no mercy for a welsher. Now!" He came to her and again his hands gripped down upon her shoulders. "You can marry me—to-night—or take the consequences."

She shrank from his touch. "I'll have as much to tell as you!" she said. "If you ruin me you ruin yourself as well! I—"

"You can't put me in jail!" he whipped back at her. "*I'm* happy as long as I'm free! But you have to be respectable!" He snarled the last word as she had not dreamed Jerry could snarl.

Then he took his hands from her shoulders, walked into the next room, and picked up her coat from the chair, where she had thrown it. Returning, he held it ready to place about her.

"Come on!" he said.

"Jerry! I don't—love you!"

"You loved me well enough to-night. You'll love me again when I've got you away from this damned crowd. Come!"

He stood still holding the coat. She straightened slowly and stood looking at him. So their eyes met unwaveringly for several seconds. Once she shivered and put her hands to her shoulders as if again aware of the inadequacies of her gown. Then slowly her eyes changed from fright to exaltation. Her chin lifted. Once more she was the medieval princess, regal, commanding.

"If I marry you," she asked, "will you return the money to—its rightful owner?"

A slight, cynical smile crossed Jerry's lips.

"Fat chance, kid!" he said. "What I get I keep. No, I'll buy you Paris gowns with that money and take you to—Florida—Europe—wherever you want to go."

"Then I won't marry you," said Norine Lawton, still regal.

Jerry knew again the baffled anger her remoteness had never failed to arouse in him. He dropped the cloak on a chair and advanced until his face was close to her blazing eyes.

"I believe you've fallen for him!" he said in a hoarse, scornful voice. "I believe you think you'll—go with *him* and live in a house on the avenue! Tell me! Is that it?"

He whipped the last words out at her catching her wrists in a firm grip. Her eyes answered him fearless, exalted.

"Yes. I love him," said Norine Lawton, "but a house on the avenue! I haven't thought of that."

"You haven't thought of that!" He laughed shortly. "See here, kid! You can't bull me! That's just what you did think of. You planned to try the sob act on me and get back the coins he let trickle into my hands and then—God! What a fool you thought I was!"

"No, no, Jerry! I didn't think of marriage! I just knew this was impossible. It isn't only love of him—it's the Lawtons. The pictures, and things like that, my perverted conscience could weather, but this million-dollar steal. Jerry, Jerry!" Her voice had softened. "We've been square. Can't you see things my way? Give him the money and then marry me. We'll fight it out together, you and I! We'll make good—honestly!"

"What 're you trying to put over now, sister?" said Jerry roughly. "You say you fell for him! And now—fight it out! Fat chance! I'd give him the swag and then you'd go over to him."

"No, no! I'll not draw back from the thing that's right, Jerry! Don't you see I could never marry him, anyway? Not—now!"

"You're damned right you'll never marry him! You'll never marry him because I'll break him!" His face came closer to hers. "I'll break him until he hasn't enough to marry on! And I'll break *you*, too! I started it to-night and when I finish—well, you'll be glad to crawl to me and ask me to—marry you! But I—I—" He released her wrists and suddenly caught her up, kissing her fiercely. She did not cower from him, but stood erect as he half flung her away again.

He felt as he looked into her flaming, fearless eyes that she had not felt his kisses, that she had withdrawn from him until his

physical power could never touch her again. The bafflement of it made him move toward her again, but he stopped, his hands working at his sides.

"What 'll you do when they—throw you out?" he demanded hoarsely of her. "Where'll you go? What do you know about life—alone—your reputation shot to pieces? You'll thank your pretty conscience when they turn their backs on you."

"No, Jerry!" she said. "I'll thank—*you*." She came a step closer to him. "But I'm not down yet. And I'll not go without a struggle. The Lawtons are good fighters and I'm the last of them. You may make people think me as—vile as you can—but I'm going to return to him the money we took away. I—I—" She stopped, her eyes fastened on his coat pocket, from which a tiny slip of paper protruded.

With a quick spring forward, Norine caught the paper from the place he had hastily thrust it on going to answer the telephone, and held it upright in her hand, at the same time stepping quickly through the drawing-room door.

"If you touch me I'll tear it into bits!" she warned as he hurled himself after her.

Her hands wrenched a nick in the edge of the paper, then suddenly stopped—suppose she should take the check to Masters, take it—now! She swept her hands behind her again, warning Jerry, who was very close to her. "I'll tear it, I say!"

Again her fingers crushed on the paper ready to destroy it, but the fancy to take it to Masters to use it as guaranty of her integrity, made her pause again.

Slowly she stepped backward, across the drawing-room. Jerry followed her step by step, his eyes fastened warily on the slip of paper, his body bent forward as though ready for a spring. She dared not take her eyes from him to look about for means of escape.

If she could only slip from the apartment—but the outside door was beyond [illegible]. There was the fire-escape, but that brought a picture of her upon it in the merciless glow of a street lamp and a burly policeman below, while Jerry—yes, there was always Jerry to be accounted for.

She must be almost to her bedroom door, she thought. If she could dart inside and lock it before he—yes, that was her only hope. Failing, she would tear the paper apart before he could reach her. Back—back—she went, the check held behind her now as she fumbled for the knob of the door. And then she stopped, a queer, numb chill sweeping over her body. Through the stillness of the apartment came a voice:

"Miss Norine! Miss Norine! Is that you?"

Norine's watchful eyes turned for just an instant in the direction of the sound as it grated across her nerves already drawn taut with suspense. In that instant Jerry shot forward. She felt his arms pass about her and his hand close over hers that held the check. It was wrested from her, only a tiny corner being left in her hand.

She sprang after it, the beginning of a scream sounding from her constricted throat, but a hand came over her mouth. She felt herself half carried backward until they were the other side of the bedroom door. Still holding her mouth Jerry reached out and kicked the door shut.

"Don't make a fool of yourself!" he exclaimed. "You'll have the police up here. If you fail to answer her, she'll go back to bed."

Norine's eyes blazed with anger, anger partially at him, more at herself. What a fool she had been! She would never get her hands upon the check again. Why had she not followed her first instinct and destroyed it?

Listening tensely with him, she felt that the apartment was very silent. Probably Fannie had gone back to bed. Or she might be waiting outside the door. Suppose she saw Jerry's overcoat in the hall. Suppose she knew that he was in here. Servants gossiped so! Oh, if only Jerry wouldn't push his hand so tight against her lips! He was making them bleed. She put up her own hand and tried to drag his away.

"Promise not to scream," he whispered.

Norine nodded and he took his hand cautiously from her mouth, keeping it close as if ready to replace.

"Go and see what has happened to her," he commanded, "and be careful! She can

ruin your reputation faster than I if she gets started. And if you scream, the police—"

"I won't scream," said Norine with a vision of her name spread across the front page of the morning paper in odious complicity with Jerry Brent.

She found the drawing-room unoccupied. She crossed into the darkened dining-room and from there to the tiny hall, from which opened the maid's room and bath. Here Norine listened carefully, finally calling softly: "Fannie!"

"Yes, miss," came the immediate answer.

"Did you call?"

"Yes. I thought I heard a noise, miss! Want me to unfasten your dress?"

"Thank you, no, Fannie!" said Norine hastily. "I—I have done that. Go to sleep."

She returned to the hall. Jerry in overcoat, his silk hat in his hand, was standing by the outside door.

"Did you settle her?" he asked.

"Yes. She doesn't seem suspicious. You are—going?"

"Yes." He stood still, smiling faintly, derisively. "You're a quick one, kid," he said, "but not quick enough for me! You'll go a long way before you get this money again I can tell you that."

"Perhaps," said Norine wearily.

"Good night!" he said, opening the door.

"Good night!" she answered.

CHAPTER XVI.

CRUSHED ROSES.

WHEN the door had closed on Jerry, Norine went with halting step to the fire. It had burned low and she sank to a mahogany seat beside it, shivering slightly, though the room was warm. Across her vision came Ranfield Masters's eyes demanding things of her. They seemed to be telling her what to do.

Yes, there was only one solution. She must see Masters, tell him the truth about Mercer Development and have him stop payment on the check before Jerry could deposit it in the morning. She started for the telephone in the hall, then reflected that he would doubtless be asleep and that morning would do.

After that she went to her own room and undressed in a dull sort of haze, her mind so numbed by the excitement of the past few hours that she could concentrate on nothing. She felt very tired as she slipped into bed, but almost immediately, her brain reacted to that same excitement and she found herself reviewing the night's experiences feverishly.

Before her was a brick wall, impassable but for the ladder Jerry held for her, and she could not take that way over—no, she could not take that way. It did not matter that by standing with him she would keep her smug respectability. That would be breaking faith with—Ranfield Masters—with—the Lawtons.

In the few moments that night when his head had lain next to the black orchid on her breast she had allied herself with the Lawtons. Now it seemed whimsically enough, that even though Masters himself would probably misunderstand her, even though her own world and the border-world where she had lingered for a time would cast her out, perhaps the Lawtons would understand and be proud of her.

Jerry would ruin her as he had said. He would do it suavely, deftly, as Jerry so well knew how to do. He would make no accusations. He would probably carry all the time the impression that he was trying to protect her, but in the end her friends would know all—and more than all. Yes, Jerry could do it.

Then they would half condone him, remembering his merry smile, the frankness of his gray eyes. They would say: "Poor fellow! He is the result of his early environment." But her they would not excuse. She would be merely a Lawton who, after an expensive, on-the-Hudson education, had squandered herself on a crook.

She turned restlessly away from the light that a street lamp cast in the open window. The shift showed her flame-colored gown thrown over a chair and she sat up in the icy air to look at it. Below it, on the floor, she saw a light blotch—Ranfield's roses! She slipped from bed and, finding a bud, carried it back with her. Beneath the

covers again, she crushed the cool petals against her cheek and they seemed to quiet the tumult of her brain.

After a bit Norine dozed fitfully and it was not until Fannie laid the morning fire in the drawing-room that she came fully awake once more. Masters was her first thought. She must telephone him. The clock on her desk read only seven o'clock. She would wait until near eight. He would be sleeping and that would give time enough for her to make her confession.

Her confession! She seemed to see the tenderness of his eyes grown suddenly hard, to hear the gentle tones of his voice first unbelieving, then cool and formal. She shivered and lay down once more. As she did so she felt something beneath one shoulder and drew forth a tattered rose-bud. Crumpled! she mused. Yes, crumpled like herself!

A few minutes before eight she was at the telephone, her hair combed and herself in a dull gold negligee. Ranfield Masters's man answered the phone. No, his master was not in. He had gone out very early. Yes, he might be at breakfast. The man would have him paged. A few minutes' wait and then: No, Mr. Masters was not at breakfast. The man did not know where he had gone or when he would come in.

Norine left her phone number and asked that she be called the minute Masters arrived. Fannie brought her breakfast to her before the fire, but she only nibbled a bit of toast and drank half of her cup of coffee. At half past eight she stopped listening for the phone and rang the club again. No, Mr. Masters had not come in. In a panic that she might not find him before bank time, Norine called Laurie Truedale, but he knew nothing of the young man's plans for the day. He suggested Masters's lawyer, however, and Norine feverishly got in connection with him. The answer was quite as unsatisfactory.

By nine she was completely baffled. She stood before the fire in the living-room trying to see some way out. In another hour the money would be deposited. Then—how could she get it back? She had told Jerry she would beat him, but how? Jerry! Suppose the night had wrought some change in him. If she saw him now—but, no—she stopped thinking of the Jerry of last night looking at her through cruelly narrowed eyes, snarling his words out hoarsely at her.

But just to see him—that would delay him at least! A good thought! She sprang to the phone and gave his number. The man on the exchange of the bachelor hotel where he lived said that he did not answer. Further inquiry gave her the information that Mr. Brent had gone out half an hour before.

She dropped the receiver wearily into place and turned from the instrument. Beaten again! She had never known Jerry to get up so early. He could not have gone to the bank. The one where he had his account did not open until ten. Possibly—Sims's office! Yes, that was very likely it. In view of last night's trouble he would want to warn Sims and to see that all Mercer Development business was ready for inspection.

Norine turned to the telephone again, but stopped with the receiver half off the hook. No, if she phoned, he would perhaps elude her. Better to go down and be sure of catching him before he left for the bank. She hastily flung on a blue serge dress, a leather coat and small brown hat.

On the street she summoned a taxicab. "To Wall street," she began. Then: "No, the nearest subway!" That would be quicker, she thought. She hardly noticed the jostling of the crowd of business men about her as she clung to the strap, being every minute whirled nearer to Jerry's office. Now came the thought, suppose Masters should be calling her. But he would not be likely to return to his club at this hour.

Then she was hurrying up the steps, along the street, into the very door of the building that held the broker's offices. In the elevator she pulled her coat-collar well up about her chin and drew her hat over her eyes in the fear that some one might recognize her.

Finally she paused before the door marked "Sims & Long, Brokers." She hesitated a moment as though half of a mind to rush back toward the elevator, then put her hand firmly on the knob and walked

in. The office boy was dusting. He stopped, his mouth dropping slightly open at the sight of a beautiful girl walking into Sims's offices at this time in the morning. The stenographer, with the savoir-faire of her kind, finished adjusting a piece of paper in her typewriter.

"Is Mr. Brent here?" asked Norine.

Her fright was gone. She put the question imperiously.

"I—I dunno," said the boy, dropping his dust-cloth on a near-by table. "I'll go see."

Norine gave him a quarter in the hope that it would make the seeing effective and sat down to look at the big board with its stock quotations in red and green and black letters. A minute later Jerry opened the door of Sims's private office.

"Well, well!" he said, glancing carelessly at the stenographer. "You're out early this morning, Miss Lawton!"

"May I see you alone?" she asked.

He led the way to the vacant office marked "Long." As a matter of fact, Long was now something of a myth, though he had some years ago been a partner and his name had been left on the door to lend stability to the firm.

As Norine sat down she glanced covertly at Jerry in an attempt to define what his morning mood might be. He looked quite as usual, though his eyes were a bit red-rimmed from lack of sleep. She thought again of the man last night who had stood over her, trembling with rage and passion, almost ready to crush her with his bare hands, and wondered if this were the same. She was not afraid of Jerry now.

"Jerry," she said, taking the chair he drew forward for her, "I've thought a great deal during the night and it seems rather a pity you and I should fight. Isn't there some way we can make this matter—right?"

"U-m!" Jerry's eyes hardened and the disagreeable smile of last night came across his mouth. "I thought you'd come to me," he said. "Yes, I knew you'd come. What's your proposition?"

"I have no proposition," she said wearily. "I only want to appeal to your spirit of fair dealing. I helped you earn that money. If you could only get my point of view now! If you would give me only—why, only my half!"

"And see you pass it on to *him?*" demanded Jerry, looking coldly at her. "No, kid! What I said last night goes. If you'll go to the church with me—now, that 'll fix you up with the crowd you travel with. If you don't—"

"You didn't love me very much after all, did you, Jerry? Just enough to force me to marry you when I don't love you—or—ruin my reputation! Love is a queer thing and we commit so many crimes in its name!"

"Never mind the highbrow talk!" said Jerry bruskly. "I've got work to do. As for loving you, I—" He came closer to her, dropping his hands on her shoulders. "I don't love—welshers! But—" His voice grew suddenly hoarse. "You could have me running in circles again, kid! If you'd put yourself on *my* side again."

"I—see." She laid her hands on his and drew them slowly from her shoulders, pushing them from her with a deliberate motion that seemed to forbid his touching her again. Then she turned and walked to the door. Her hand was on the knob when he spoke abruptly.

"See here!"

"Yes?"

"Do you understand that it's marry me or say good-by to your damned reputation?"

She raised her chin, looking straight at him. "Yes," she said after a moment and opened the door.

Norine was half-way into the outer office when she sprang suddenly back, closing the door behind her again and, standing her back against it, her wide eyes on Jerry.

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed, coming nearer to her.

"Mr. Masters. He—he didn't see me—Jerry!" Stopping to look keenly at him. "What is *he* doing here?"

"I don't know!" He put his hand on her shoulder and drew her quickly away from the door as though reading her impulse to rush back into the outer office.

"You must know! Why are you—open that door!"

Jerry faced her, his back against the bar-

rier. "Why didn't you go when you had the chance?" he jeered. "Afraid to have him see you here with me? Well, you'll go on being afraid. You *can't* leave now!"

"I don't know why I came back! The—the shock of seeing him, I suppose. Jerry, you must open that door or I shall—call for help!"

"Go ahead! That fellow across the court there has a devil of a curiosity! He gives stock reports to some afternoon paper, too. He wouldn't mind passing in a little scandal on the side. Norine Lawton, beautiful society girl—"

"Oh, I don't care! I must—tell him!" She half opened her lips as though to carry out her threat, then brought them again to a straight line. She moved closer to him, looking searchingly into his slightly narrowed eyes.

"Why is he here?" she demanded.

"I don't know, I tell you!"

"You said he paid up everything yesterday. I—"

"What in the hell does it matter to you? I suppose it's something about the stocks he bought."

She laid her hand on his arm, trying to tug him away from his grasp on the doorknob, but she only heard a bolt slip as he made its fastening secure. She must fly into that outer office! She must tell Masters now—while she had the chance. It would be hard with Jerry and Sims there trying to make her confession a blasphemy. She could imagine their glances, their well-placed words, their clever innuendos. And yet—he must not get away! He must not! She darted suddenly closer to Jerry and began to pound with closed fists on the portion of the door that was not covered by his body.

He caught her fists, imprisoning them in his muscular right hand. Jerry had been reared on a farm and was very strong.

"Here, kid, it 'll be best for you if you don't try anything like that."

"I will get out!" she cried, struggling fiercely to free herself. "I will! I will! I will!" the last words rose to a shriek.

"For God's sake!" Jerry's free hand went about her and came tightly over her mouth as it had come last night. Again she tried to shriek, but could only gurgle beneath the imprisonment of his fingers.

She wrenched at the hands he held, endeavoring to drag him near the door while he drew her inexorably toward the center of the room. How strong he was! She writhed in his arms, her feet beating a tattoo on any portion of his body they could reach. Once she heard him swear with pain.

How her wrists hurt from that iron grasp of his! Ah, the hand over her mouth had slipped! But only for a moment. Before she could make a sound it came back again and she felt it pressing her lips against her teeth until she could have cried out with the pain.

If only she could draw him toward the door again! She pulled and pulled, feeling that he was coming a bit nearer. Ah, at last! One hand free. She grasped his wrist and tried to pull the pressing fingers from her mouth, but they remained firm. She wrenched at the other wrist, pulling, pulling always backward, a little at a time, nearer, nearer that door. Jerry was so intent on subduing her struggles that he did not notice how close they had gone until she shot out one foot and kicked the wood panel fiercely.

"You little devil!" he gasped, dragging her away.

She tugged once more at the hand over her mouth, but she was spent. The effort was a futile one and she suddenly dropped limply back in his arms, too tired to fight further. Perhaps that one kick had been heard, she thought and listened for possible succor. The room was silent but for the blood pounding in her ears.

Perry, too, seemed to be listening. After a bit he drew her closer to the desk and, still holding her mouth, removed the telephone receiver with his free hand.

"Hello!" He leaned down with difficulty to place his mouth near the instrument. "Has Mr. Masters gone?"

Norine made a movement to wrench away from him, then stopped listening. She herself heard the voice that came to him.

"Yes. He's gone," said the stenographer.

As Jerry replaced the receiver, Norine sprang from his loosened grasp and reached

the door. Jerry caught her as her hand fumbled with the bolt.

"You can't catch him now, you little fool!" he said. "If you want to make a show before the stenographer and office boy, go ahead."

Her hand on the knob, Norine staggered back against the door. There were black spots before her eyes and it seemed that she must slip down unconscious, but she straightened herself determinedly and looked down at her hat, which had fallen to the floor. Seeing her eyes upon it, Jerry recovered and handed it to her.

She half reeled across the room and sank at the desk, where she pinned up her disheveled hair and drew the hat over it. She further repaired damages with a mirror and powder from her bag, then turned to Jerry, who was adjusting his necktie and smoothing his hair. She noticed a scratch across his face. As she rose he held the door open for her,

"I'll attend to that as soon as possible," he said, suavely businesslike, as they stepped into the outer office.

"Thank you!" she answered.

CHAPTER XVII.

DIANA TAKES THE TRAIL.

IN the hall Norine's knees were so weak that she stopped, leaning against the wall to get her breath. Standing there she looked back at the door marked: "Sims & Long, Brokers." Why had Ranfield Masters come to them again? Thinking back on Jerry's expression it struck her that he had, after all, seemed as surprised as she. He would be discussing it now with Sims. If she could only hear—if she could only hear—

As she waited while the shaking of her knees gradually lessened, it seemed that she *must* know. Had he wanted to tell them that he had found them out? Had it been some trifling matter about the Development company? Or—surely they would not dare sell him more stock! She moved across the hall and again her hand lay on the knob of that glass-topped door.

She had no very clear idea of what she meant to do as she pushed it open and stepped inside. The office boy was sharpening pencils. The stenographer glanced up from her book, put it hastily aside and began to type.

"Just wanted to say another word to Mr Brent," said Norine and swept imperiously past the boy toward the door marked "Sims."

"He said he wasn't to be disturbed," the boy started hastily toward her.

Norine turned the knob softly and let the door slide a bit inward, keeping her back to it as she turned, half smiling at the boy. Instantly she heard Sims's voice.

"The poor boob!" he was saying. "Wanting more even after we're ready to stop! I promised to get him as many shares as I—"

Then Jerry shouted: "Who's there?"

Norine entered the office and closed the door behind her. Jerry had sprung from his chair beside the desk. The broker was leaning back looking surprisedly at her. Norine was suddenly very calm as she took several steps into the room.

"So," she said, "you're going to sell more stock in the Mercer Development Company!"

Sims did not speak, but Jerry advanced furiously upon her.

"What do you mean by spying on us?" he exclaimed

"You're forgetting your manners, Jerry!" She was cooler in inverse ratio to his anger. "So he came to ask if you would buy him more stock."

Jerry glanced first toward the broker, then at Norine, as though debating the advisability of truth. His hands worked with the desire to crush the slim coolness of her.

"Yes," he said finally, "if you want to know it, he did. Now you see what a know-nothing idiot you're so keen about! He came back and begged for more and he's going to get it. Do you hear me?"

He advanced close to her, looking into her upraised eyes.

"How many shares?" she asked quietly.

"That's our business!" He walked to the door and held it open for her. Wordlessly she passed out.

So she left the office and found herself

once more in the elevator. All the way to the ground floor one thought reiterated itself through her brain. She must find Masters. She must—she must—before Jerry could deposit that check—before they had passed more stocks to him.

When she stepped out into the lower hall she saw several public telephone-booths near by. She entered one of these, glancing at her wrist-watch. It was not more than fifteen or twenty minutes since Masters had left Sims's office. No hope of finding him at his club, but he had had time to reach his lawyer. She gave the number Laurie Truedale had told her that morning. There was a long wait, then her eternal question. No, the lawyer had not seen the young man that day.

"Have him wait fifteen minutes if he comes in," said Norine. She waited a few minutes before calling again and had just got Masters's club on the wire when she saw Jerry pass the booth going toward the front door. He was starting for his bank, she thought, and had the desire to rush after him, though saner thought kept her where she was.

Masters's man told her he had not heard from the young man that day. Norine called Laurie Truedale, hoping he might have some idea of his friend's whereabouts, only to find him out. Then she returned to the lawyer's office with the same disheartening result. Her watch said eleven o'clock when she wearily clicked the receiver into place and left the building. The check was deposited by now, she told herself.

Norine took a subway home, though she was so tired she could scarcely climb the steps that led to the surface again. She summoned a taxicab there and a few minutes later stumbled into her apartment. As she removed her hat in her own room, the couch with its tumbled cushions intrigued her, but she did not go to it. Instead she began again her endless telephone calls, leaving her number at each place where she thought Masters might be in the next few hours.

She sank on the couch for a short time after that. Then, noticing that it was the luncheon hour, sprang up to call every hotel or café where he might lunch. At each was the sickening wait while he was being paged; the result she had wearily forecasted. No, there was no Mr. Masters to be found. Finally at one thirty she took a bite of lunch herself with a solicitous Fannie hovering about her and insisting that she didn't look well.

Norine left the lunch table to go and stand in the dining-room window and look across Fifth Avenue to the place where the trees of Central Park rose gaunt and gray in the yellow January sunshine. It was almost two o'clock. She knew that Jerry and Sims would hurry through this latest stock deal as soon as possible. She turned from the window, clenching her hands together. She must at least save him from that. That other two hundred thousand seemed to be gone. But this last—

Again she went to the telephone. Mr. Sims's stenographer told her that Mr. Brent was not in. Yes, Mr. Sims was out also. Then at least the transfer of stocks was not happening at that moment. And yet—she stopped half-way across her little drawing-room and glanced back toward the telephone as though arguing with it. Possibly the transfer *was* taking place, she thought, and they had told the stenographer not to disturb them.

She must see Masters! She must! She must! She walked back and forth with quick, agitated steps pounding one closed fist into the other palm. She could not stay here and let Jerry make this final deal. Yet if she did not stay might not Masters telephone while she was gone? Still, he had not been in all day. There was little likelihood of his coming now before the stock business was settled, if indeed it was to be settled this afternoon. There was also little likelihood of his going to his lawyer this late if he had not gone before.

Norine hurried to her room and again slipped on the leather coat and brown hat. So it was that half an hour later she came once more to the street where Sims & Long, Brokers, were located. She felt herself noticeable there among those myriads of hurrying men and again turned her collar up about her throat. The wind was cold, too. She slipped her hands into her pockets and hesitated by a door near that in which

she was interested, looking in the window where some used typewriters were displayed.

After standing here for some minutes with her eyes always darting to the entrance of the big office building, she fancied that a man near by was looking too pertinently at her, and hurried into the door she had been watching. Here she took up a position partially screened by one of the phone-booths and scanned the hurrying crowds, trying to simulate the slightly bored air of one who has an appointment.

Now she looked eagerly from the window as a long green car that might be Masters's drew up to the curb outside. Now she started forward as a form that might be his bustled along in the stream that constantly went in and out of the building. Each time she drew back disappointed while her watch pointed at three, quarter past.

Then Norine suddenly slipped back into the corner formed by the intersection of the booth and the wall and remained there staring as Jerry Brent came through the hall, Jerry Brent with a brown leather bag in his right hand.

A bag! Jerry was not in the habit of carrying one, Norine thought. And why was he going away? Didn't they mean to make the transfer of stocks that afternoon? Was he leaving Sims to attend to it? That bag! Why—and then a possible solution made her dash suddenly out of the door after him. Suppose those stock certificates were in that bag. Suppose Jerry was going to a rendezvous somewhere with Masters.

When Norine reached the sidewalk she saw Jerry just stepping into a taxicab. She glanced desperately about, then clutched the shoulder of a street urchin standing near.

"I must have a taxi quickly!" she cried. "Run! Run!"

The boy darted off. Norine's eyes followed the other cab as it honked its way into the middle of the traffic. A motor-car had stopped just in front of it. Would it be able to work its way around the obstruction? No—a momentary stop! She turned to look for the boy and saw him triumphantly riding near her on the step of a brown taxicab. Norine sprang to the curb, thrust a dollar bill into the boy's hand as she put her foot upon the step.

"Follow that black-and-white taxi!" she ordered the driver.

They lurched forward. By partially standing in her seat regardless of the bumps that sent her hat askew and banged her against the door at her side, Norine could see the black-and-white cab now off down the street. She must watch it closely, she thought. There were so many of its kind.

"Hurry!" she urged the driver. "I'll give you ten dollars if you'll take me where that is going!".

The man, with the aplomb of his class, looked slightly bored and maneuvered his car a bit closer to the big maroon motor that was trailing the black-and-white one. A crossing loomed before them. Norine clutched the arm of the seat, her eyes straining ahead. Suppose they should lose Jerry here! Ah, he was starting across! If only they—no, the policeman was stopping him. She settled back with a little breath of relief and watched a stream of vehicles pass before their own halted cavalcade.

"Can't you get ahead of that maroon car?" she asked excitedly. "I'm so afraid we are going to be separated!"

The driver obediently honked ahead, but the maroon car held its position. The street was fairly clear now so that they could move forward with little delay. After they had swung onto Broadway, the maroon car took a side street and the brown taxicab was able to poke its nose close to the black-and-white one. Norine sank into the corner of the seat and drew her hat down close to the upturned collar of her coat so that Jerry in a casual backward glance would not recognize her.

Now the traffic was more congested. There were tiresome waits while Norine watched the car ahead until there were little black spots before her eyes. Turning to glance at the sign on a street corner, Norine saw that they were passing Thirty-Fourth Street. If they only did not lose Jerry in the greater jam of traffic! She sat forward again, her hands tight clenched in her lap.

Another crossing. The policeman was about to stop the black-and-white car. No, no, he was motioning it forward!

"Hurry, Hurry!" she breathed, touching

the driver on the shoulder. They lurched forward—stopped with a bang that sent her back into the corner of the seat. Before them the man in blue held up an implacable hand as he turned the sign at his side to read: "Stop!"

"Oh, can't you get across?" she heard herself saying, realizing the while the futility of her protest. She half stood up again. There in the middle of the next block she saw the black-and-white cab hurrying along.

"Don't lose sight of it!" she cried, and the driver, who seemed to be muttering things not intended for her ears, answered: "I got my eye on it."

Now they were off again, though she could see nothing of the car they were trailing. With a clear way ahead they swept up several blocks, still with no sight of their quarry. With a feeling of baffled weariness Norine settled into the corner of the seat, tears of despair coming to her eyes. She had tried so hard! Thinking back over the day she could determine on no possible thing that she had left undone. And now Jerry was going to meet Masters, to turn the last stocks over to him. What a mess it all was!

"I think I see 'em, miss!" the driver was speaking.

"Oh, you do!" Norine leaned forward, looking eagerly ahead, though she could see nothing. "There are so many black-and-white taxis!" she added discouragingly.

"Yes. But this—it's turning into Fifty-Fourth!"

"Fifty-Fourth! Follow them! Follow them!"

Jerry's apartment was on Fifty-Fourth. Perhaps they had picked up the trail after all. Now she could see the taxicab he had indicated. It was waiting at a street corner half a block ahead. Her driver honked his brown car past the scowls of several drivers whose larger motors made it impossible for them to slip ahead. Now they were close to the black-and-white taxicab. Norine saw that there seemed to be but one person in it and that a man.

They were off again! On! On! Were they to be stopped? No—forward, forward! They must be near Jerry's hotel now! There it was! The Ralston! But the black-and-white car was passing it! No! Now it was stopping. She spoke to the driver.

"Drive down to the corner and turn around," she ordered.

As they passed their quarry she had a clear glimpse of Jerry Brent leaning forward to pay the driver. Looking back at the hotel, she saw him run up the wide steps, a brown bag in his hand.

As they waited at the corner for an opportunity to turn around Norine was thinking rapidly. So, the rendezvous was to be in Jerry's apartment. Well, there was only one thing to do. She must waylay Masters as he went in. But perhaps he was already there and waiting, came the unwelcome thought. In that case she would get him as he came out and he could stop payment on the check he would probably give Jerry.

"Stop opposite that hotel," she told her driver. "How long can we stay here?"

"Till a policeman tells us to move on," he answered. "It ain't no parking place."

When he had stopped the motor she gave him the promised ten dollars and offered five more if they remained there a half-hour. Then she settled down to a careful espionage of the entrance of Jerry's hotel. Again the black spots danced before her eyes in revolt at their constant vigilance and the fact that she had not slept the night before.

Now a young man ran down the steps of the hotel and she almost sprang from the car in the illusion that the well-knit figure was that of Ranfield Masters. Now a long green car made her lean forward, her hand on the taxicab door ready to slip to the ground. Again she leaned forward to watch the occupant of a cab alight, thinking that Masters might perhaps not use his own car.

Finally the driver turned back to her: "Policeman says move on. Half-hour is up!"

She glanced at her watch and saw that it was, paid the driver and alighted. Alone on the curb with Jerry's hotel towering across the street from her, she felt suddenly very exposed. Suppose his rooms were on the front. As a matter of fact they were,

she remembered his speaking about it. If he saw her—she drew into the door of a millinery shop and absorbed herself in a droopy French hat between glimpses across the street.

A saleswoman came to the window, took out a hat and looked keenly at her. The incident disturbed Norine and she moved leisurely into the street, darting back a moment later for the protection of the window again. Down the steps of the Ralston came Jerry Brent, his gloved hands swinging free at his side.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEHIND THE DOOR.

HAD he seen her? She turned with her back to him, a glance over her shoulder showing her that he was entering a taxicab. A moment later he was gone in the direction of Fifth Avenue and Norine was walking briskly in the same direction.

It was now half past four. Apparently the certificates had not been delivered. She thought for a moment that the bag might, after all, contain something else, but her conviction to the contrary had been so strong that she immediately returned to it. On the corner of Fifth Avenue she stopped undecided. Jerry was very likely going around to his club. In that case he would very likely not be back until after dinner. Still, she must not trust to that.

Seeing an English tea-room near, Norine slipped inside its quaint, softly lighted room and sat down at a glass-topped table. Once seated, she had the immediate desire to spring up and rush back to Jerry's hotel again, but she remained stonily. Still when her chocolate and sandwiches had come she ate them hastily and by the time she had paid her bill she found herself in a cold chill with the fear that Jerry might, after all, have returned.

Seeing a telephone-booth on the way out, she slipped into it and got in connection with her apartment. Fannie told her that Mr. Masters had called up. No, he had not said whether he would call again. Norine slipped the receiver upon its hook and stood for a moment with her hands before her face. She was so tired it seemed she must slip to the floor. Oh, if she had only stayed at home! But now his club!

Again Ranfield Masters's man answered her inquiry. Yes, he had come in. The man had delivered Miss Lawton's message, but he believed his master had not found her in. Yes, he was out now. The man did not know where. Again Norine clicked the receiver wearily into place.

She returned to the street and walked slowly up Fifth Avenue, turning down Fifty-Fourth toward the Ralston. It was very cold, doubly so now, after the warm air of the tea-room. She raised her muff to shield her face.

How long must she endure this? she asked herself. Jerry would probably dine before returning. That would be an hour—perhaps more. She consulted her wrist-watch. It was now six o'clock. She stopped walking, finding herself again by the millinery shop that had sheltered her before. She turned toward the Ralston, then started forward to the curb. Two men were going up the steps, men of nearly the same height they were—and they looked—yes—she plunged into the street, but the presumptuous honk-honk of a passing motor-car forced her to stop.

As the car slipped by and left her vision clear once more she saw that the two men were going in the wide door which a liveried doorman was holding open for them. In that moment the rear man half turned toward her, destroying all doubt. It was Jerry Brent.

Her impetuous rush across the street carried her upon the very steps of the hotel, where she stopped, her heart beating madly. She had a sudden vision of a scene in that very masculine lobby, a scene with bell-boys, elevator men and stray guests as audience. With Masters's eyes condemning her and Jerry—she turned and fled back to the sidewalk, where she began walking rapidly toward Fifth Avenue.

After a half block her feet slowed. Was she running away? She half stopped. Up there in Jerry Brent's room that final transfer was taking place and there was no one

on earth to stop it but herself. If she were only there! If she could—gain access to—Once more she found herself appalled by the vision of those liveried, knowing servants. She took a few steps on—again she hesitated. The thing must be stopped!

Looking about her she found that she was before the door of a small store. She remembered that there were public telephones here and, hardly planning what she meant to do, plunged into the subdued foyer. A number of people were sitting about in evening dress, but she did not glance at them; nor think that her leather coat, her small brown hat and mussed hair were hardly appropriate to the atmosphere of the place.

Now she was in the booth! Jerry's number slipped from her lips. She waited. Then came a voice: "Ralston Hotel!"

"Mr. Brent, please!" Norine's voice was husky with excitement.

Then: "Jerry Brent speaking." The commonplaceness of the words made her suddenly calmer.

"This is Norine Lawton, Jerry. I want to see you again. I must—see you right now!"

"Sorry, kid! I'm pretty busy. Besides, if you haven't a proposition different from that you pulled off this morning, I don't think we can agree on anything."

"But I *must* talk to you! I'm only—a few blocks away. Jerry, could I—could I come to your hotel?"

"Up here!" The voice was incredulous. Norine clutched at the shelf under the telephone as she waited for him to continue. The emptiness of the wire hummed into her ear. Suppose he should—hang up the receiver!

"Please!" she pleaded. "Only for a minute, Jerry!"

"But I'm busy—" The voice was doubtful. "I—all right! Come along!"

She had caught the significance of the tone in which he had said the last words. There had been a little note of triumph in it. She knew why Jerry Brent was allowing her to come to his apartment. She knew, too, that he had no intentions of letting her discover that Ranfield Masters was there. But probably he would let him know that she—her face burned in spite of the cold as she reached the street again.

This time she did not hesitate on the wide, brightly lighted steps of the Ralston, but ran up them, her eyes straight ahead, her only desire to pass through the ordeal before her as quickly as possible. She had a vague notion of gray-and-gold livery as she passed the doorman and several bellboys, but she did not even glance at them.

She caught glimpses of mannish chairs, of small, solid-appearing tables with smoking conveniences on them, of dull-red hangings. Now the desk was before her. With an effort she raised her chin proudly to answer the blasé glance of a pale young clerk.

"Miss Lawton to see Mr. Brent," she said.

The clerk turned from her. She stood watching him put the plug into its proper place while a wave of shame, hot for a moment, then chill with a sense of being inexorably cut off from everything that had made life for her, enveloped her. His voice came to her from a long distance as he said: "Miss Lawton to see Mr. Brent." She watched him dully as he replaced the receiver on its hook and turned to her.

"You may go up."

The shame was gone as Norine turned to the elevator following the gray-and-gold livery of a bellboy. In its place was a weary detachment as though this woman who was being shown to Jerry Brent's rooms were some one totally removed from Norine Lawton. In the elevator she fumbled through her bag for the boy's tip.

Then she was following him along the soft-carpeted hall. He stopped finally and pressed a bell. She thrust a coin into his hand and said: "You may go now." It was then he gave her the first glance of real interest she had noticed. The glance was a bit surprised. Overblasé as he was, he had caught the unusual significance of that patrician accent and dismissal.

The door opened. She found herself noticing calmly that Jerry still wore the blue business suit of that morning as she stepped inside.

"Hello, kid!" he said.

"I'm glad you could see me," she an-

swered and glanced about her. They were in a small reception-room. Her eyes hastily noted the only door leading from it, which was closed and partially covered with blue draperies. Behind that was—Masters. She took a quick step toward it, then stopped. Again she was swept by that wave of hot-cold shame. His eyes—oh, she was afraid of his eyes!

She turned to Jerry, her one instinct to put off this thing she feared, even momentarily.

"Is it too late?" she asked, coming close to him and laying her hand on his sleeve. "Won't you give up this last mad thing? You have the certificates here, Jerry. I saw you bring them. Won't you—give them to me—in memory of our partnership?"

"Give them to you!" His voice was scornful. "You still take me for a fool, don't you? If that's what you came here for—" He put his hands on her shoulders, gripping them there.

"It *is* what I came for!" she cried "You said you loved me once! In memory of that—in memory of—"

"Bunk! I'm not keen on memories. They're likely to be uncomfortable. Now, listen! I told you last night that I'd ruin you! But I don't have to," he laughed softly. "I don't have to because by coming here, you've ruined yourself!"

She moved from his grasp. Her head lifted. Again she was Norine, the imperious, of whom he could not help being a bit afraid.

"Ruined myself!" she repeated. "Yes—I knew that when I came, but I'd come again if it would save him from the results of my madness. You'll never turn over those certificates to him because I won't—let you!" She took a quick step nearer the closed door.

"Soft!" he warned. "I got a business friend in there. So, you think I won't turn over those certificates, eh?" He was smiling again cynically. "You said you wouldn't let me deposit that check—but I did. You said you'd get out of my office to-day—but you didn't. I've beaten you on every turn—and I'll beat you now."

Again he advanced upon her and she stepped backward, nearer, nearer the door.

"Let me tell you something. When he knows you've been—here—he'll be through with you. He won't wait for you to tell him anything!"

"He *will* wait!" she said swiftly. "And what is more, he will understand—why I came! When he knows what you are, a trickster who doesn't stop at ruining the straightest man in New York—who doesn't even stop at making the woman he professes to love foul in the eyes of all her world—when he knows that, he'll understand."

"Nice talk!" he sneered. "And not much like the line you were handing me a few days ago! But you'll see it won't get you far."

"As far perhaps as yours will take you!" Her hand, reaching out behind her, had caught the knob of that door. "I'll begin on you business friend!"

"For God's sake, Norine!" He sprang toward her, but she was flinging the door wide, was across the threshold.

Jerry clenched his teeth in rage.

Masters stood by the long mahogany table, one hand laid upon it. His eyes met Norine's as she swept into the room and her first impression was that he seemed unsurprised. Then Jerry spoke behind her:

"I told you there was some one in that room. I'm sorry if—"

She whirled on him. "If you are about to speak of my reputation, never mind. I'll attend to that!"

As she faced Masters again, her bravado gave way for the moment to that rush of shame. His eyes were gentle and—pitying—that was it. Pity—for her frailty, she thought. It seemed that she must slip to the floor at his feet, must cry out for the love and adoration he had offered her last night.

She lifted her chin, drawing her trembling nerves under control once more.

"Mr. Masters," she said, "I have come to Mr. Brent's rooms because there was no other way to stop the thing he is trying to do. Because you must not buy those stocks."

"I am afraid I don't understand, Miss Lawton."

"No, of course not. But you will when I

tell you that Mercer Development is a fraud! That the men who conceived it are, plainly—thieves. That there never was oil in that land and never will be."

CHAPTER XIX.

NO STAIN ON THE LAWTON NAME.

HER moment of weakness was gone. She felt exalted as when she had passed last night from Mrs. Morley's conservatory.

"May I ask how you know of this?" said Ranfield Masters.

"How I—know of it—" For an instant the surety of her voice faltered. "Because I was *his*—business partner, because we planned together to—ruin you!"

How gentle his eyes were. She felt that she could have endured them better if they had been incredulous, angry! Hot tears crowded to her eyes and she shut her lips firmly to stop their trembling.

"If that is so," he said after a moment's quiet scrutiny, "why didn't you go on with it?"

"Because—" The tears crowded closer. She bit her lips and her words were almost inaudible. "I—couldn't!"

"You surely don't think—" began Jerry.

"Never mind what I think!"

Masters turned on the other man and with the movement the gentleness died from his eyes. His voice took on a peremptory snap as he continued: "Have you those papers?"

"Yes." The rigidity of Jerry's body relaxed into a faint shrug as he accepted the other's rebuke.

"Bring them out."

Jerry turned to a small brown traveling-bag that stood open on the chair beside him. From this he selected a bundle of stock certificates held together by a rubber band.

"How many shares have you?" asked Masters.

"Two thousand!"

"Is that all the remaining Mercer stock?"

"All aside from a few personal shares owned by Sims and me."

"Have you those in that bag?"

"Why—some of mine—five hundred shares I was about to place in safe-deposit. But—"

"I'll take that, too, at a hundred and thirty."

"Mr. Masters!" Norine started forward, but his upraised hand stopped her short.

"One moment, Miss Lawton!"

Norine moved to the end of the table. She felt remote, dazed. Surely this was not Ranfield Masters! This man who brought his words out with such decision, who's eyes were so alert! Whose chin was so rigid. He was speaking again to Jerry.

"I said I would take all."

"But—" hesitated that young man. He glanced toward the bag as if in indecision. In his own parlance he was trying to get a line on Masters. He had meant that the millionaire should take every share if possible, but his willingness was puzzling.

"Well!" snapped Masters.

Jerry turned again to the bag and lifted out four more bundles.

"This is all I have," he said, "twenty-five hundred shares. Numbered from two thousand. I—"

Masters took the certificates, hesitated a moment, then glanced toward Norine.

"Miss Lawton," he said, "will you kindly count these certificates for me?"

She took them, still dazedly, and sank into the chair he placed for her at the end of the table. For a moment her fingers fumbled over the crisp pieces of paper then, as she worked, her touch grew more sure, her brain clearer, until the unreality of her position slipped away and the only surety in the world was that she must count these certificates for—him.

Once she glanced up to see that Masters had taken a chair across the corner of the table from her. Again she met Jerry's eyes as she moved one bundle aside and drew forward another. There was a wary look in the eyes, a look she had seen there before when Jerry was not just sure of his ground.

Finally Norine placed the last certificate upon its fellows, snapped a rubber band around the final bundle, and stood gather-

ing up the others she had counted. Masters stood with her. She saw that he held what appeared to be a check.

"There are five hundred in each," said Norine, "but"—the sight of the check was bringing her determination to her anew—"but—they are only pieces of paper. Surely you don't mean to pay—money for them."

"Stock certificates are always pieces of paper, Miss Lawton," he was holding his hand out for the bundles.

Her grasp tightened. "I won't let you have them," she cried. "I *will* save you. I threw my reputation into the balance when I came here to-night. I—"

Her hands tore at the bunched pieces of paper as if she would destroy them all.

"I want them," said Masters.

His hand came quietly over hers. Under the authoritative quiet of his eyes, her flare of rebellion died. He took the certificates from her and, turning, held out the check to Jerry.

"Your statement was correct," he said.

Jerry's hand half hesitated as he took the check, examined it carefully, then drew out his bill-fold.

Norine saw that Masters was picking up his overcoat from the chair where he had thrown it on coming in. She watched him, again with that dazed remoteness, while he distributed the bundles of certificates about its various inside pockets. Now he was looking at her.

"I shall be glad to see you home," he said.

She straightened, answering his gaze. His eyes were tender again—so tender that they hurt. She moved slowly toward the door as he placed his hand upon its knob. As she reached it she turned back and her eyes met Jerry's. He was smiling at her, faintly, derisively, and it struck her that he had won after all, but she was not angry with him. She was conscious only of a feeling of immense weariness and defeat. Then Ranfield Masters spoke.

"I *was* a dreamer, Brent," he said, "you were right in that. But I wasn't so fast asleep that I couldn't be wakened. Did you ever hear of Sanford Vail?"

"Vail!" Jerry took a step forward. "Yes."

"Good business man, isn't he?" queried the other.

"Yes. So I've heard." Jerry's attitude was fast becoming defensive.

"It just happens that this last block of Mercer Development stock as well as a part of those shares I purchased a few days ago, were bought for him," said Masters. "In short, Vail and I at the present moment, pretty well represent the whole company."

"You don't mean—" began Norine, but he was speaking again.

"Vail has oil stock in Texas wells. He was my father's best friend as well. So, when I got suspicious that Mercer Development was not quite the all-velvet proposition you wanted me to think it was, I naturally went to him. He had that little piece of land Sims bought investigated and, after a good look at the two holes that had been bored several years ago and had never panned out, we decided that it was a bad buy."

"This land—" began Jerry.

"Just a minute, Mr. Brent!" Again an upraised hand stopped him. "Vail said I'd better slide out at once, but"—with a side glance at Norine—"there were reasons why I wanted to stay. He said I was a fool, that he'd let me in on a tract of sure-enough oil land he had a chance to get hold of in that new district near Johnsburg. Have you read in the papers of that?"

Jerry made no answer, so the other man continued: "When he made me this offer I had an idea that wasn't so bad for a dreamer. I said why not consolidate this new tract of land under a company already formed, instead of going to the trouble of incorporating another one."

"Not — Mercer Development!" said Jerry.

"Yes—Mercer Development. You had already mentioned making me president of the board of directors. I saw that that was put through and then used the power thus given me to buy the land Mr. Vail was interested in. I used that power, too, by the way, to sell the piece Sims had bought. I think we got a good bit more than your

friend paid for it. Mr. Vail's agents in Texas proved useful to us."

"But, see here! You can't do that!" Jerry came belligerently closer to the other man. "A president hasn't the power. Why, you're a fool to—"

"He has the power if he and his friends happen to own a controlling interest in the stock," answered Ranfield Masters.

He turned and looked at Norine, who had moved closer to him. She shut her eyes suddenly before the adoring tenderness in his. Then she felt his arm come about her shoulders.

"My share of Mercer Development is yours, dear!" he said. "Just as the house on Fifth Avenue is yours—just as everything I have or hope to have is yours!"

He pushed her gently into the hall. Before closing the door behind them he turned back to Jerry Brent.

"The woman who is to be my wife is a Lawton," he said. "There has never been a stain on the Lawton name. There never will be, because she has upheld its traditions nobly." He moved half through the door and spoke more softly. "Unfortunately this is your apartment, so I can't kick you out of it! But if you ever trouble her—"

For a long moment his eyes, steel-gray, authoritative, held Jerry's. Then he closed the door.

Norine stood facing him. The tears were coursing down her cheeks.

"No stain on the Lawton name!" she cried, flinging her hands out in a hopeless little gesture. "Oh, there is! There is! You don't want me! You don't want—*me!*"

His arms went about her, drawing her gently to him.

"There is no stain on the Lawton name," he said, and his voice caressed her as it had done last night. "I knew from the first that there would not be. That is one reason why I wanted to go through with this—even if it did cost me a bit more money in the doing."

"The money!" She looked suddenly up at him. "But you let Jerry have it! All of it! Oh, you shouldn't! You—"

"Hush, dear!" His voice was almost a whisper. "There was one thing I didn't mention to Mr. Brent. To-morrow morning Mr. Vail and I will present to him in person a sheaf of bills for the purchase of the land, cost of operation, for they are already at work on wells and the prospect is very good, and various other expenses in connection with Mercer Consolidated. When he squares them his commission won't be exactly what you'd call huge."

"But if he refuses to pay—"

"He won't do that. As treasurer of the company he'd be liable to prosecution for appropriating company funds. He was safe as long as he and Sims kept the reins in their own hands. But now they've passed on—to others."

"You—you never believed he was more than a business partner—to me!" She flew to a new idea.

"I knew he wasn't, dear!"

"And yet you knew all the time that I—helped him?"

"I have known all about that for several weeks."

"About the—the pictures, too—and Mr. Harrison?"

"Yes, dear! I happened to get pretty well acquainted with Carruthers. And—well, he sold them to me!"

"The pictures! And Mrs. Burgoyne!"

"I had an agent purchase those for me! And Harrison—Vail and I are letting him in for a block of this stock. I think it will pretty well square things with him."

"Oh, you did this—for me! When I was—an adventuress! You—believed in me!"

"Yes, dear! You were like some wonderful princess who had stepped out of a past century and was just a bit dazed by the glamour you found all about you. But your soul always shone through the daze and I knew you'd come out—unsoiled, as you have to-day!"

She raised her lips to his. A moment later he held the door open for her and Norine Lawton passed, like a medieval princess into the long corridor of the Ralston, her eyes alight once more with that great exaltation.

(The end.)

The Consuming Fire

by Max Brand

SINCE the days of Bluebeard, the best way to make a man do a thing is to tell him to avoid it. The most jaded appetite tastes the forbidden with a relish. The boy climbs the fence not because he wants to get on the other side, but because the fence is there, telling him to keep out; and the heart of the débutante yearns toward the "dangerous" man whom her mother has "ruled out."

Consequently, though the world lay at the feet of young Ed Raleigh, and he could have traveled to Paris or Pekin with a full pocketbook and the consent of his father, the one region to which his heart turned was the forbidden Bald Eagle Mountains.

It was his father who forbade it.

"In them mountains," he was wont to say, "they's jest enough gold to break a man's heart and turn him into a waster." Yet Pete Raleigh had made his stake and found his wife in those same mountains, and the very ground he cursed was the scene of the tales he loved to spin.

The Raleigh ranch had spread through the length and breadth of the valley, but while this might be called the common-sense kingdom of Pete Raleigh, the kingdom of his fancy to which his memory inevitably turned was the Bald Eagle Mountains—the burned, brown peaks along the valley and the far-away crests of the upper range, blue with distance and tipped with snow.

To young Ed Raleigh that land was a fairy realm peopled with the men and women of his father's stories; and what the ancestral sword, rust-eaten, and the battle-hewn shields were to the young squire of the dark ages, the old mucking spoon and drill set of Pete Raleigh were to his son.

Until finally, having one day ridden a pitching outlaw in a fashion to have swelled the heart of the most hardy bronc-peeler with pride, Ed Raleigh awoke to the knowledge that he was a man. He reasoned, not without justification, that if he could stick to a wild horse without a bucking-roll, he could fight his own way and follow his nose through the world.

When he arrived at this decision the first place his eyes turned was toward the Left-Hand Cut, that deep defile like a knife cut through the Bald Eagle range where the railroad slid over the heights and down into the valley; for the Left-Hand Cut was the gate of fairy land, and in the center of the cut stood the town of Sierra Padre, in whose streets the men of his father's yarns had fought and drunk and gambled and died.

Ed Raleigh was too wise to tell his father where he was going. He merely kissed the white head of his mother, whispered in her ear, and then fled from her tears. An hour later he was plodding down the valley behind a pack-burro and seeing the world through the long, flapping ears in the most approved prospector fashion. And in his

hand he carried his hammer, and started chipping rocks within five miles of the ranch-house.

To be sure, he knew nothing, or next to nothing, about ore; but six feet two of arrow-straight manhood, twenty-five care-free years on the range, and nearly two hundred pounds of stringy muscles, hard as sinews, are an equipment complete in themselves. Ed Raleigh did not know the color of hematite from the color of wild violets, but he intended to learn. He was eager enough to dig for the center of the earth, and about strong enough to get there.

Twenty-four hours brought him to the foot-hills, and two days more carried him into the cut. In the middle of the afternoon he drove his burro into Sierra Padre, and paused at the head of the single street. He could have shouted with joy, for everything was in place, everything was exactly as it had been when his father was there. He closed his eyes and winked hard; it was almost as if he were himself Peter Raleigh, not Peter's son Ed.

That shingle on the right announced the Wung Li laundry; the general merchandise sign was just as unreadable as it had always been since Garry the Kid shot up the town. And the horses in front of the saloon were the very horses who had ridden through all his father's yarns since Ed's fifth year.

Straight to the saloon went Ed Raleigh, and strode through the swinging doors; and then he stopped as a man stops in mid-ring when a straight left whacks against the point of his chin.

For behind the bar stood a big man with grizzled hair and a prodigious paunch. Ed Raleigh winked again and then stepped to the bar.

"Are you Olaf Bjornsen?" he asked.

"Yep—that's me."

Ed Raleigh closed his eyes and clung to the edge of the bar. He felt breathless. Olaf Bjornsen! the same man, the same name. No, there was one discrepancy: the Olaf of his father's stories would have answered, "Ya, Ay bane that Olaf!" It was the son, then.

But the rest of the room was the same. The stove in the center had three iron legs, as it ought to have had, and the fourth one was of wood, black as iron from age and much sooty droppings. The familiar cobwebs trailed across the ceiling of unfinished boards; over to the side a picture of the mighty Salvator spread-eagling his field, and doing a spread-eagle himself to accomplish the feat; behind the bar the resolute face of John L. Sullivan with an American flag draped around his waist—the Boston strong boy in his youth.

It was all the same, down to the smooth, unvarnished surface of the bar—the same bar on which his father had rested his glass of red-eye in the glorious days of old.

"What 'll you have?" Olaf Bjornsen was asking.

Ed Raleigh turned his eye to right and left. There were half a dozen other men in the room. That fellow with the scar on his cheek and the sidewise trick with his eyes—surely that was Whitey, the gambler; and the old man with the solemn beard must be philosophic Dan Morgan, who could deliver with equal impromptu ease an election speech or a funeral service. They were all there—all!

"Well?" Olaf was urging with a touch of irritation in his voice. "Come to life, kid. Sleepin'?"

"Come to life!" This fellow's vocabulary was the one jarring note in the entire picture.

"Red-eye," muttered Ed Raleigh, and mopped his forehead.

The bartender stepped back along the bar and picked up bottle and glass; Ed waited, suspended. Ah, there it was! The glass came spinning down the bar, and then rocked to a halt directly in front of him. If this were not the true Olaf Bjornsen, it was surely his reincarnation—Olaf with a twentieth-century tongue.

He poured his drink, raised it, and remembered to toss it off at a single gulp. Remembering again, he pushed the chaser scornfully away. A chaser for a fellow from the mines? Bah!

"New to town, ain't you?" inquired Olaf, eying the untasted chaser.

Ed watched him with incredulous disgust. According to his father, no questions were ever asked in Sierra Padre. A man talked

of his own volition, or else the town waited to know him by his actions.

"Kind of," he snapped.

He turned to glance out the window over a lordly prospect of rocks and mountains and calling distance, when the doors swung wide and an unsteady figure stepped within them. He was a tall man somewhere between fifty and sixty, and a generation of hard living had whitened his head and seamed his face as weather and a million years have wrinkled the front of Bald Eagle Peak itself.

But he was dressed like a youngster who has lately struck gold, perfect from his new hat to the dark yellow of his Napatan boots. His years sat easily upon him; his step was elastic and quick; his eye danced as he looked around the barroom, and his body was still as light and gaunt as the body of a youngster in his prime. His working days were far from over; but as he stood there, Ed Raleigh noted an unsteadiness about the fellow which was not the unsteadiness of age.

"It's old Martin," observed Olaf Bjornsen, "and he's starting agin."

"He's finishin', you mean," nodded a bystander at the bar. "He's jest about gone."

Old Martin strode to the bar with fumbling steps and leaned his elbows upon it at the side of Ed.

"Whisky," he said hoarsely to Olaf Bjornsen. "Whisky, lad."

Olaf, turning for the bottle, winked broadly at the others; and a tide of anger swelled in the breast of Ed Raleigh. They were mocking the old man. He watched, sternly, with a bright eye. If this mockery went too far, there were ways of putting a period to it. He tightened his formidable right hand tentatively and loosed the grip again. The knowing grin, in the mean time, traveled up and down the bar.

Martin raised his brimming glass. His hand was shaking the moment before, but now it was perfectly steady—rocklike, as the hand of a crack shot when he draws his bead.

"Gents," he said in a deep voice with a little quiver of pathos at the bottom of it, "look at what I got in my hand."

"We see it, Jim," said the bartender sarcastically. "You was always able to keep more in a glass than any one in town."

"That's my reputation," answered Martin proudly. "Well, boys, this is the last drop of liquor that I drink in Sierra Padre! I'm wishin' you all luck! Here's to you!"

He downed the glass, and then turned a watery eye of sorrow on the others.

"Are you swearin' off?" queried Ed Raleigh sympathetically.

The old man looked at him, and then started.

"You give me a touch, partner," he said, still keeping a keen glance on Ed Raleigh. "But, no, he won't look like you by this time. No, lad, I ain't swearin' off; but I'm leavin' Sierra Padre."

"Never comin' back?" asked Ed kindly. "Where you goin'?"

"To make the honor of Jim Martin clean—the honor of Jim Martin!"

The slight quaver grew more pronounced. From the corner of his eye Ed watched the open grins of the others, and he set his teeth.

"Some one been doin' you dirt, partner?" he asked, and his glance threatened the rest and wiped away their mirth.

"It has been did," sighed Martin. He straightened. He struck the bar with his bony fist, and the glasses danced and jingled. "It has been did!"

"But where you goin'?" persisted Ed. "Ain't they nobody to help you?"

"Nobody," said Martin solemnly. "This here thing lies between me and my Maker. Maybe under the stars I'll meet him and shoot him like a dog; and God will understand."

He looked about him, sighing.

"Joe," he said to the man with the stately beard, "it ain't easy to do it. It ain't easy to leave all you boys. Joe"—he approached the other and clasped his hand—"I know what's goin' to happen to me. I know that after I've killed him they'll get me. Yessir, I'll give myself up. After finishin' him, they ain't nothin' left for me in life. But I'll die happy."

Joe attempted to draw away, but Martin took it for a gesture of persuasion.

"Don't try to talk me out of it, Joe.

My mind's sot on it like a rock. I'm goin' out to get me a gun, and then I'm goin' down and get the train. I got only half an hour to make that train. And I got to get me some decent clothes. I ain't goin' to face him lookin' like a bum. Joe, I got the money, I got the time; he's as good as dead. But it hurts me, Joe, to leave you boys. It sure do. And to the end I'll be thinkin' of you—thinkin'—"

He choked and covered his face with a shaking hand. Ed Raleigh felt stinging tears in his eyes.

"Before I go," said the old man faintly, "I got to break my vow and have one more drink—with you, Joe."

The bartender, as if he read Martin's mind, was already opposite them with a bottle and two glasses.

"Here's to a quick trip, Jim," said the stately man. He winked cruelly at Olaf. "Are you goin' to give him a chance to draw?"

"Chance? Me? Him?"

Martin finished his whisky hurriedly and smote the bar, coughing.

When he could speak again he cried: "What chance did he give me? No, he played me a dog's trick, and I'm goin' to shoot him down like a dog; and stamp in his face when he's dead! But even that won't bring her—back—to me!"

Big Ed Raleigh shuddered, for he saw a sob swell the throat of Martin, and he had never seen a grown man weep before. But old Jim mastered himself even as his eyes grew dim.

"She's gone!" he whispered to himself sadly, faintly.

"Young man," and here he whirled and pointed a gaunt arm at Raleigh, "beware of women, like you'd be keerful of a pizen-mad dog. Beware of 'em! They sink teeth in you—here!" He touched his heart and then struck it with his fist. "A woman has made me all hollow in here. That's what she's done."

His voice changed. It shook him like a leaf that trembles on the quaking aspen before the coming of the storm; it rumbled from his chest like distant thunder on the mountains.

"But the gent that done me wrong is goin' to die before the sun rises. He's goin' to eat dirt, and die, and watch me laughin' while his eyes get dark!"

He struck the bar again with his fist.

"Olaf," he called, "more whisky. I got to drink with this young gent. I got to drink to his health. I got to break my vow about not drinkin' agin in Sierra Padre. I got to make sure he's been warned plenty."

And when the glasses were poured he raised his own brimming potion.

"Think of the whisper of a woman like it was the hiss of a snake," he said to Ed Raleigh; "think of her promises like they was spoke by a Mex—a yaller-hided Mexican greaser. Drink to me, lad, and tell me you won't forget!"

"I won't forget," promised Ed Raleigh, his eyes very wide.

And they drank solemnly together.

"And now, boys," said Martin, turning to the others, "I'm sayin' good-by and God bless ye before I go on my last trail. I'm prospectin' for death."

He raised a forbidding hand, though no one had moved to speak.

"Don't argufy. Don't be persuadin' me. Nothin' between heaven and the Rio Grande can stop me. And, boys, if you got women folk to home, bid 'em say a prayer for the soul of poor old Jim Martin when he's hangin' on the gallows."

He started for the door with long, wabbly strides, his body wavering.

"Good God!" cried Ed Raleigh. "Are you men going to let him go out and commit murder like this?"

He sprang after Jim Martin and caught his shoulder.

"Partner," he said earnestly, "no matter what you got ag'in' that gent, you be thinkin' twice. You ain't spry enough to get away from a marshal after you've pulled your gun. Where you goin'?"

"Down in yonder valley, lad. Leave go my shoulder."

"And what's the name of the man?"

"Pete Raleigh! And he's goin' to die before mornin'."

Ed Raleigh's hand fell, as though paralyzed, from the shoulder of the revenger. He gaped; he tried to speak; and before

he could regain his self-control Jim Martin had staggered sidelong through the swinging doors.

When Raleigh came to life, half a dozen men blocked his way and drew him back. And—what curdled his blood—they were laughing.

"Let me go, you fools!" shouted Ed Raleigh. "Let me go, or there'll be some busted heads in here! Lemme go! He's heading down the valley to murder my old man."

"Hold on!" urged the white-bearded man, wiping tears of pleasure from his eyes. "Old Martin has been startin' down the valley after your dad's hide for twenty-five years and more; and he's never got away from Sierra Padre more'n once."

Ed Raleigh stopped struggling.

The amusement on all the faces around him was too genuine for a bluff.

"But what in the name of God does it all mean?" he gasped, bewildered.

"Are you Pete Raleigh's boy?" queried the stately elder, stepping closer. "By the Lord, I think you are. You have the look of Pete, as I remember him. Same dark, thin face. So you're Pete Raleigh's boy! I'm Patrick Swanson."

"Pat Swanson!" breathed Ed. "Why, you're the sheriff—"

"Not for twenty years," chuckled the old man. "I see your dad ain't quite forgot me, now's he's rich 'n' all that. Still remembers the sheriff and—"

"And the Taliaferro gang."

"Righto!"

"And how you fought Bud Jackson on the—"

"Morgan claim."

"Yes, yes!"

"Sheriff, it's sure great to meet you; but ain't there really no danger from old Martin? He sure talked like death and killin' and gun-play."

"Didn't he, though? He's been talkin' like that, off 'n' on, for these twenty-five years—ever since your pa pulled his stakes out of Sierra Padre."

"But what's he mean about a woman? Dad was always straight, as far as I know."

"He's talkin' about Bess Devine."

"My mother! The infernal old fool, I'll—"

"Easy, lad. They ain't no harm in him. So Bess is your mother, eh? Last we seen of her was when she eloped with your pa."

Ed Raleigh scratched his massive head, frowning.

"But what does Martin mean by this rotten talk?" he frowned.

"It's always this way. I'll tell you the yarn.

"Back there in the old days when Sierra Padre was first boomin', after gold was struck in the Bald Eagle, Bess Devine was the prettiest girl in the town. For a minin' camp, she was almost too pretty to be good. Mind you, I don't mean your ma wasn't the straightest, finest girl that ever stepped; but you take the finest kind of girl and put her down in a gang of men, without no competition to speak of, and she gets a lot of funny ways with her eyes.

"Speakin' in general, Bess played tag with the whole camp. She could pick a man up with her eyes, and make him drunk with a smile, and then she slipped away to the next man. They was considerable Irish in Bess, which they's some in me, too. I understood; but they was a pile that didn't.

"When we give a dance, mostly the men was dancin' with each other. We'd tie a red string around the arm of some of the gents, and they was the ladies; and the others danced with 'em. But Bess was an honest-to-God girl, and they was always a crowd around her. She could pick and choose from a hundred, always. And she did do her pickin', right enough.

"She had her favorites, and she danced with 'em, but she always give the ones she left behind her best smile and her best look under the lashes of her eyes. Gives me a thrill yet to think how Bess used to handle us. She always made the ones she didn't dance with feel like she really *wanted* to dance with 'em more'n with any one else in the room—but they jest hadn't happened to ask her first.

"She was the kind of a girl, lad, that a man would see jest once, and then keep dreamin' about her for a year or so after-

ward. That's the kind of a girl she was. I can see her yet driftin' through a crowd, shakin' hands with newcomers, smilin' right and left, and sowin' the seeds of hell-raisin' all around her.

"Her eyes was as blue as the sky and her hair was as black as midnight, and they was a ripple like runnin' water in her laugh that started at your head and wound up in a shiver at your feet. That was Bess Devine—your mother.

"Well, among the other suckers who couldn't read Bess's mind, along come this Jim Martin. He seen her in the street and stopped and gaped at her like she was a fish out of water. And then he went to the dance and seen her again. And somehow—I think they'd been a fight between Bess and your pa—somehow Jim got the bid to take her home after the dance; and he was so proud he couldn't hardly see a step in front of him.

"The next day he started off straight for the mountains. He had his outfit, and he was goin' to find gold.

"Couple of months later on, your pa ups one day and elopes with Bess and goes away, down into the valley. He had his stake, and the only thing that 'd kep' him in Sierra Padre some weeks had been Bess.

"Well, about the next day, down comes Jim Martin out of the mountains with sixty days whiskers on his face and his saddlebags loaded with ore. Whiskers and all, he goes straight for the cabin of Bess—and learns out from her pa that she's gone. And her pa didn't spare no words when he was talkin' about Pete Raleigh. I know, because I was sort of lingerin' around, and I heard, and what between old man Devine and young Jim Martin, it was the most outcussin'est time I ever heard. It laid over anything the Taliaferro boys ever done after I got 'em rounded up.

"After a while Jim comes back to the saloon and starts drinkin' and tellin' the boys that he was going down into the valley to catch the gent that run off with his girl. First he allowed that he'd get fixed up. He was goin' to look his best when he went down there. Because he wanted to kill your dad and then let Bess see what she'd missed by not takin' Jim Martin.

"Them was the days when I packed a star inside my vest and a forty-four—old style—on my hip; and I hung around promiscuous, waitin' to land on Martin before he left town.

"He'd cashed in with his gold and was loaded with yaller-boys, and he spent the whole day throwin' money away. The saloon got a lot of it, and his hand got so shaky that he couldn't handle his razor; so he hired a gent to shave him and give him a round hundred for the job. Then he went over to the store and got the best they have in the line of clothes. When he comes out of that store he was about the slickest thing we ever see here in Sierra Padre.

"Next he comes down the street and buys him a six-shooter. It was a beauty, and in them days it was a treat to watch Martin handle a gun.

"After that he comes back here to Olaf's place, all lit up already, and starts sayin' good-by to the boys. It took him a long time, because all the boys was fond of Pete Raleigh, and they tried to persuade Jim to stay quiet. But Jim Martin kept right on, and every time he said good-by he said it was the last drop of liquor that would pass down his gullet until he'd dropped Pete Raleigh in the dirt and stepped on his face. But every time he'd see some other friend of his and have to have jest one more drink.

"And every time he had another drink he set 'em up for the house and didn't ask for no change. Takin' it all around, it was a pretty fair payin' afternoon for Olaf's place. And Jim's money kept goin' like water.

"Pretty soon, down the street we heard the train whistle, and that was the train that Jim wanted to catch to get down into the valley. So he lets out a holler for the engineer to stop for him—like he could 'a' been heard—and starts runnin'.

"But he was overbalanced with red-eye, and when he got outside the door he doubled up on the steps and puts his head on the floor and went to sleep, peaceful as a kid.

"The train pulled out, and Jim Martin wasn't in the coaches. The next mornin' he woke up broke. Somebody 'd rolled him

for his wad, what he hadn't spent. All he had was his fine clothes and his gun. Well, he wasn't goin' to be able to walk down in them boots a three-day trip, and, besides, his clothes was sort of messed up from lyin' on the steps of the saloon. And he wasn't goin' to go down and do that killin' without bein' able to show himself all dressed up fit to kill to Bess afterward.

"The end was, Jim Martin traded his gun and clothes in, and borrowed a stake, and started out prospectin' again. It was two years, pretty near, before he come back, and then he come back with a nice lot of stuff and cashed it in proper. We'd all forgot about Bess and Pete by that time, but Jim Martin hadn't. He'd been off there in the hills swinging a pick and cursin' Pete in time with the swing of it.

"He started right in on the same program. He was jest burnin' up with hate for Pete. It was a sort of consumin' fire in him, like the sky-pilot says. He begun spendin' money real liberal; he bought fine clothes again, got him a gun, and then he bought him a ticket for the valley.

"I wasn't sheriff no more then, so it wasn't no trouble of mine. Besides, I didn't have no hankerin' to mix things with Pete without it bein' my own fight. I jest sat back on my haunches with the rest of the boys, and Jim kept on swearin' that not another drop of red-eye would flow down his throat, and then havin' another drink, and gettin' real sad, and weepin' over the boys, because he wasn't never goin' to see them again.

"We begun makin' bets about whether he'd be too drunk to get to the train when it come in; but the boys that bet against him lost their money. He jest lasted to the train and got inside and done a flop in his seat.

"They was considerable excitement, and the boys sent for the sheriff. But before he got there the mornin' train come through the next day, and off of it stepped Jim Martin, bilin' mad.

"After a while we found out what had happened. Before his train got to the station down in the valley Jim was sleepin' sweet and soft and peaceful with his head on the arm of the seat. When he got to the station the conductor threw him off and left him on the platform.

"That was late in the evenin', and they wasn't nobody jest then in the station house. When the station agent come out in the early mornin' he seen Jim Martin still lyin' on the platform, smilin' in his sleep like a new-born baby, and he jest nacherally figured that Jim had come to the station to get a train and had been too drunk to quite make it. He seen how much money they was in Jim's pocket, and it was jest enough to take him up the line to Sierra Padre. Believe he kept Jim's gun for a souvenir.

"The agent got him a ticket and took the money and put Jim Martin aboard the first train to the cut. Jim come to on the way, and after a while it sort of soaked in on him that he was travelin' toward the mountains when he should have been travelin' away from 'em.

"He wanted the train stopped, but the conductor wouldn't do it. Then Jim was goin' to kill the conductor, and a lot of the gents on the train draped themselves over Jim to keep him quiet. They wasn't none too gentle, and when they got through with him Jim looked like he'd been fightin' a mountain lion, he was that tore up.

"Well, for a couple of days he went stompin' around town, cussin' his luck. Then he settled down when he couldn't bum no more drinks offen Olaf. He got another stake and hiked for the hills again. That's been goin' on ever since. This makes about the sixth time he's come down to town. Every time he goes back up to the hills and works away in the mines. Then when he has a little stake he takes it and goes off prospectin' by himself. Usually he makes some sort of a strike and stays with it till he gets out the easy pay.

"Then he comes down here rampin' and ravin' and cursin' Pete Raleigh and makin' lectures about what women ought to be and what they are. He always starts drinkin'; he always starts throwin' his money away, because they ain't anybody more generous than old Jim Martin. But after that second time he ain't never got as far as buyin' his gun."

The door opened; Peter Raleigh stood in the entrance. He was a very big man by nature, but with the light behind him he looked to his son like some biblical giant. That shaggy beard which was the despair of Mrs. Raleigh now flared out a little on either side, clotted with the dust and sweat of long riding, so that he looked as if a strong wind were still blowing against his face.

His coming made a little pause through the barroom, and when he thudded heavily across the room all eyes jerked after him, stride by stride; he came to a pause before his son.

"Well, my fine young snapper," he roared, "what in hell might be the meanin' of this?"

His voice was made for the open; it raged and echoed through even the big bar. Ed Raleigh screwed up his courage and tried to match that volume.

"I'm starting for myself," he answered.

"You are, eh?"

"I sure am!"

"You're goin' to loot the mountains, maybe, and come back with a million inside a year, eh? You young fool," snorted Peter Raleigh, gathering head, "I tell you, you're going to hit the trail home with me."

As a rule, he had his way with his family, and he would have had his way again had they been alone, but it seemed to Ed Raleigh, staring miserably past the shoulder of his father, that he surprised a meager, inward smile just twitching at the lips of Olaf, the bartender. It maddened him.

"Where you start for ain't my worry," he said quietly. "You go down into the valley or keep on into the hills. I won't stop you. No more will you stop me where I want to go."

There was a certain acid in the cool tone of this announcement that shocked Peter Raleigh back to good judgment; his wife had the same quality of voice when she was driven into a corner on some subject near to her heart.

"Don't you be sayin' things you'll be sorry for later on, Eddie," he said more gently. "You and me are going to walk outside and talk things over. Come along."

But once more Ed Raleigh saw a smile pass between Olaf and one of the others, and he grew hot to his hat-brim.

"What you got to say," he declared, "you can say right here. This was a good enough place for you to start talkin', and it's good enough for you to finish in. I can stand it if you can."

Anger always made Peter Raleigh half devil. He stood swaying with sudden passion.

"Now, by God!" he thundered. "You hear me, young gent, you start for that door or from this minute you ain't no—"

The door swung wide; a gust of voices rolled in from the porch, and then the loud tones of Martin.

"Come on in, boys, and have a drink. You'll need liquor before you come to the end of this here story. It's sad and ornery."

He came first, a trifle unsteady, and behind him were several who obviously had just come down from the mines.

"Dad," whispered Ed Raleigh, the color rushing from his face, "for God's sake, make your getaway. This is Martin, and he's lookin' for you with a gun."

"Martin?" Big Raleigh wavered, and then shrugged back his shoulders. "I've never sneaked away from any man, and I ain't goin' to begin now."

And Ed, knowing that this was irrevocable, stepped back and prepared for the fight.

"Are you still plannin' for that train?" said Olaf to Martin.

"And I'm goin' to get it. Olaf, I want you to know my friend, Bud Hendrix."

He waved forward a huge, black-bearded man.

"Bud has guaranteed to get me to that train." He turned. "Step up, boys, all of you. My dust ain't run out yet by a hell of a long ways." Here his eye fell upon big Raleigh; he halted, and then walked straight across the room and paused a pace away from Peter.

With a hand on his gun, Ed waited for the lightning move, the flash of steel; and in his heart he had never admired his father as he did at this moment, for the big man did not stir a hand. He waited for the other to make the decisive move.

"Stranger," said Martin suddenly, "you might as well know what's comin' off. Come and liquor up and hear a story what every man ought to know."

He waved toward the bar, and Pete Raleigh, after an instant of hesitation, smiled quietly and followed. As for Ed, he was ready for the trouble which he thought must come.

"Got your eye on the time, Bud?" asked Martin.

The other exposed a huge gold watch. "I'm watchin' every minute. If what you say is right, that gent ought to die, and I'll help you on your way."

"If I'm right?" roared Martin. "Don't the whole town know how Pete Raleigh done me dirt and sneaked away my girl and married her?"

By his side Pete Raleigh straightened, and for a moment Ed thought that the denouement was about to come; but then he saw his father relax and watch Martin with an odd smile.

"For twenty years," said Martin, "I been hungerin' to get at him. For twenty years I been burnin' up with fire to see this gent face to face. And now the time has come."

Ed Raleigh shuddered, but his father had not stirred. He still stood there at the side of Martin, looking at the avenger with the quiet, reminiscent smile. Every one had taken his drink, and it was Pete Raleigh who proposed the toast.

"Martin," he said, "here's hopin' that you meet Pete Raleigh face to face—as close as I'm standin' to you now."

"Ah!" groaned Martin, and tossed off his drink. "Stranger," he went on, laying a hand on Raleigh's arm, "I like you. You got a straight look about your eyes. Well, so-long. I got to go down and kill Pete Raleigh; this is my last try, and if I don't get him this time in the valley I'm goin' to call the deal off. When I come back, partner, I want to see more of you."

"Thanks," said Pete Raleigh. "Go get him."

"Time up!" barked Bud Hendrix.

"Wait a minute," pleaded Martin. "I got a gent here that can understand, and I want him to know—"

"Don't you hear the train whistlin'?"

"Damn the train! Partner—"

But Bud Hendrix was a man of his word. Far away the train hooted around the bend, and Bud, fixing one brawny arm under the shoulder of Martin, caught him with the other hand on the opposite side and fairly lifted him toward the door.

"When he's dead and buried," shouted Martin over his shoulder, "I'll come back and see you again, stranger."

Pete Raleigh waved his thanks.

"Set 'em up, Olaf," called Martin as he was borne through the door. "Set 'em up for all the boys, and I'll pay when I get back from makin' Mrs. Pete Raleigh a widow."

It was some time later that Peter Raleigh remembered the mission which had brought him back to Sierra Padre, but when he turned his son was not in the saloon. He went hurriedly into the street and peered up and down, but there was still no sign of Ed Raleigh.

For far up the side of Bald Eagle Peak, steering his course through the ears of his burro, Ed Raleigh was voyaging into the old land of his father.

In the mean time, notwithstanding the assistance of Bud Hendrix and his gold watch, Jim Martin again missed the train.

IN A MIRROR

IF near my lips a mirror should be held,
I think upon its surface thou couldst see,
Were I awake or in my hours of dreams.
Thy dear name breathed in mistlike tracery!

L. L. Biddle.

The Gladiator

by Captain Dingle

Author of "Hate Laughs at Locksmiths," "The Clean-Up," "No Fear," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A HERCULES OF THE SEA.

A GREAT trireme floated sluggishly on the blue waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea, her sharp beak pointed fair for Naples Bay, with frowning Vesuvius looming high as her guiding mark. The triple tiers of oars swept her forward with ragged slovenliness; from the hold, where, dominated by Carbo, the boatswain and his scourging mates from the plank which ran the length of the vessel, a hundred and forty sullen rowers sent up a deep, threatening murmur which had in its note none of the servile obedience that should have characterized such a crew.

Beyond the jewel-like bay itself, high on the gloomy mountaintop, a lowering pall of sooty hue marred the azure of the summer skies, to be dissipated and swept away on the breath of a rising wind that came down hot and sultry.

Upon the high after-deck, beside his steersman, Antyllus, the captain, stood, and his dark, aquiline face was somber with anger and anxiety as he watched the disorderly ply of the oars and sent swift glances to windward. From time to time his great hands clenched fiercely, causing the powerful muscles to stand out like cords on brawny arms and mighty chest; and the boatswain, regarding him fitfully while he plied his scourge, shivered and waited for the outburst. A gust of dry wind struck the ship, bringing with it a subtle rise of sea that flicked drops on board, and Antyllus spoke:

"Carbo, the wind rises. Scourge rhythm into those dogs!"

"By Bacchus! I have scourged my arm numb, and they feel it not," growled the boatswain. "'Tis the giant Greek. He counsels mutiny."

The murmur in the hold grew in volume, and, running through it, like a theme, a roaring voice kept up a monotonous incentive to rebel. Under a canopy on the poop, upon a couch of luxurious furs and silken pillows, a noble Roman reclined, his finely featured face wearing an air of boredom, his recumbent body a model of lazy grace. This was Tatius, patrician, wealthy patron of the Arts, yet a far greater enthusiast in the pursuit of sports and games. He raised himself on an elbow at the boatswain's sullen reply, and interest flickered in his face; but impatience tempered the interest when he saw the signs in the sky and noted the sluggish progress of the ship.

"Why do we loiter, Antyllus?" he asked, irritably. "Are we at the whim of slaves that the ship moves so slowly?"

"The slaves have grown skins of ox-hide. The whips bite them no more," Antyllus said. "But have patience, noble Tatius. Their lot is not easy, and I would not punish them hastily."

Tatius laughed pleasantly, in spite of his impatience.

"Good Antyllus," he chuckled. "Ever too soft of heart to use the power of that great body. But haste, I say, by what means you will. This night Nero makes his first essay as an actor on the stage. Naples must laugh with him, and I must see the Imperial Clown that I may laugh also."

Tatius lay back, his eyes closed in the sensual enjoyment of sheer idleness, and Antyllus walked to the end of the afterdeck

and stood on the amidship plank, frowning down upon the rowers. Of the crew below, perhaps a hundred strove well at their long, heavy oars; the remaining forty, distributed through the three tiers, listened to the voice of the tempter and disorganized the rest by wilfully pulling against them. And, his piercing black eyes searching the shadows under the beams, the captain of the trireme sought and found the source of the trouble.

Far forward, on the lower tier, away from his oar and out of reach of the curling, stinging whips of the boatswains, stood the giant Greek Carbo had named. The man laughed insolently at Antyllus, and pursued his throaty tirade which was gradually influencing the toiling rowers by whole benches at a time. With the torso of a Milo, and the splendid head of a Hector, the Greek had been a specimen of perfect, manly beauty but for the serpentine quality in his blue eyes and a cruel snarl that played at his lips.

"Why do ye sweat, sons of swine?" he chanted at the crew, his beady eyes fixed unflickeringly upward at the captain. "Cease from toil, and let your masters tremble. In a little while the storm will come, and the ship be driven on the shore of Ischia. Then may ye cast thy taskmasters into the sea and become free men!"

Involuntarily Antyllus looked up, bending his gaze to the westward of the bay, where lay Ischia, and thence sweeping a glance to the northeast, where the storm gathered. The Greek, from whatever source he drew his conclusions, had judged well. The trireme must inevitably go to destruction did her motive power fail; and every minute now more rowers ceased their toil, answering the lash of whip with the snarling of brutes. And in the moment when Antyllus showed in his face the new anxiety arisen in him, the giant Greek laughed, contemptuously, goadingly.

"Carbo! Hold the ladders against this rabble!" Antyllus roared. "Steersman! Leave thy useless steerboard and keep safe the poop!" and with a lithe, leonine spring the captain cleared the coaming of the hold, flashed down past the two upper tiers of oars, and landed in a crouch before the startled Greek.

Under the striped canopy Tatius sprang to his feet with an amazing agility never hinted at in his lazy attitudes of an earlier moment. His pale face showed no color, no emotion; but in his wide, frank eyes the love of contest gleamed; he stepped to the gilded balustrade beside the steersman, his short sword gathered up in his left hand with the folds of his robe, and stood fixed in rapt attention to the scene in the rowing hold.

Faced with the crisis the Greek proved a worthy inciter to mutiny. Fearful he may have been; Antyllus's dark face had stricken fear into better than he; but he was nothing lacking in physical courage, and, with a hoarse shout of command to the crew to seize the moment, he leaped to meet the captain.

With a clash of flesh and bone the two men grappled, while every oar fell idle under the spell of the fight. With left hand gripping the throat of his adversary, each contestant struck fierce, deadly blows with the right fist at temple and forehead. In the days of the *cestus* a man beat down his enemy by sheer weight of blows, and the only skill brought into action was the skill of avoiding in part, or neutralizing the effect of, the blows received. And the impact of the blows sounded periods to the gasping ejaculations of the animalized rowers who stole from their benches to gather nearer.

"Back to your oars! Back, dogs!" snarled Carbo, plying his lash ferociously and bidding his mates to their work. For a moment the whips restrained the crew; but the giant Greek still stood like an oak before Antyllus, the snaky eyes as yet revealed no trace of defeat, and one by one again the rowers left their places, careless now of punishment. From the upper tier two negroes crept, one on either side, and crouched as if to leap below to the Greek's aid, while, further forward, other creeping figures demanded the attention of Carbo and his companions.

"Take you that one," ordered Tatius, pushing the steersman toward one of the blacks, himself stepping swiftly to the other side of the hatchway. He drew his short sword, but laid it on the deck as if in

afterthought. Down below he could see the grimly striking men, and even though behind and all around him Antyllus must have heard the seething of the human caldron, yet the captain refrained from using his own steel. Tatius was a sportsman, even as he admired sportsmen. He leaned over, seized the black by the woolly hair, and with an exhibition of supple strength utterly out of keeping with his appearance he slowly rose to his knees, then to his feet, and in his hands the negro kicked helplessly, screaming with superstitious terror. That unseen, unsuspected hand bearing him upward seemed to his bestial brain like the claws of his most feared Demon.

The fighting Greek saw the upward flight of the negro. He saw, too, the head of the other black fall into the hold to the stroke of the steersman's steel; and with ill-spared breath he urged the crew to full effort.

Antyllus, his face set in a grim smile, battered and bleeding, yet no whit weakened, heard again those ominous sounds around him, and now put into practise a trick of the galley-masters. Swift as the stroke of a viper he struck, not at the Greek's blackened face, but at the lower part of the biceps, an inch above the elbow bend, and struck with the edge of his calloused hand. It was the left arm, and the Greek's grip on his foe's throat relaxed for a flashing instant. In that instant Antyllus darted aside, burst the grip utterly, and dropped to his knee, rising as swiftly with both his arms clasped in a grapple of steel about the Greek's stomach.

His left shoulder pressed deep into the flesh covering the man's vitals; over the kidneys his right hand was clenched in a knot over his left wrist, pressing inexorably against the thrust of his shoulder, and the Greek, madly showering blows upon the bent head and straining back, felt his own legs tremble.

Slowly, inevitably, Antyllus raised the Greek from his feet and turned him around, his back to the muttering crew. Now, with the double incentive of the captain's fierce eyes and their champion's sore plight, rower after rower slunk back to his oar, leaving but a score of bolder spirits watching their chance to turn the tide in the Greek's favor. But that falling black head, that upward vanishing negro on the other side, the renewed activities of Carbo's men, gave them pause. It was only when Antyllus began to push steadily forward to the ladder, bearing in his grip the Greek, that desperation seized them and they saw their chance fleeting, their punishment awfully sure.

A man shouted, and with a rush a knot of men hurled themselves upon the captain. He staggered under the assault, yet bore toward his goal. And from above he was lost to sight in a tumult of striking arms. Until then Tatius watched with interest, but in no mood to interfere. The man he had snatched from the upper tier he still gripped by the hair, holding him on a balance over the yawning hold. Now, with the snarling pack about to rend Antyllus, and with Antyllus boring inexorably onward, keeping his enemy before him, stubbornly fighting to gain the deck, the patrician entered the fight with the deciding factor.

He pulled his captive clear of the hatchway, seized him by an arm and a leg and, taking his mark as coolly as he might in casting the discus, he hurled the man headlong into the midst of the fighting crowd below. Like rats they scattered, staring fearfully up to the point whence came showers of heads and entire bodies; and in the momentary lull Antyllus gained the ladder.

He mounted to the poop, flung down his adversary, and stood for a moment looking down upon the crew now slinking to their benches. The boatswain's whips flickered and snapped, and the great oars began their monotonous sweep, now in perfect rhythm. Then the captain scanned sea and shore and skies, and gave the steersman his course for the landing, three miles distant and falling rapidly under the dark cloak of an evening full of stormy threat.

Tatius, relieved of his fears of being belated, stood over the prostrate Greek with a curious expression in his face. He had turned the man over, and discovered the reason for his docility; and that it was which induced the expression. He met Antyllus's gaze as the captain approached, and asked:

"Tell me, Antyllus, was this by chance or is it a trick of yours?"

"What mean you?"

"See! One, two, five ribs snapped like reeds, and ribs that should be strong as an ox's! Thrust sheer through flesh and skin, too. Can you do this when it pleases you?"

Antyllus laughed softly, and something akin to shame flushed his dark visage. He answered:

"'Twas a pity to hurt the man. Such breaking of bones is like crushing a snapping cur. A scourging had been punishment enough for such as he. Yet he fought right well."

"Well enough for any save Antyllus!" exclaimed Tatius. "What will ye do with him?"

"Pay good gold to a physician, mayhap, to rebuild the dog again."

"Cast the carrion to the fish!" growled Carbo, approaching.

"Give him to me," suggested Tatius, thoughtfully. "I will have him mended. He will serve me well to train my boxers and wrestlers upon."

"I care not where he goes, noble Tatius, if only he goes from my ship."

The Greek disposed of, Antyllus worked his vessel into harbor, casting out his shorefasts as darkness became complete. Tatius summoned a litter for the injured Greek, and entered his own which awaited him; then waved a white hand to the captain in farewell, and called out:

"Remember on the day of the festival I look for your attendance at my house in Pompeii. I shall show you great sport, and many beautiful ladies, Antyllus." The patrician laughed softly as the captain responded with a wordless yet utterly expressive gesture signifying contempt for ladies beautiful or plain. Tatius concluded: "And meanwhile think well of my offer, good mariner. Such a man as you may win wealth beyond dreams in the arena."

The litter vanished, and Antyllus inspected his ship, seeing to fasts and mooring posts. Then, Carbo reporting the crew tranquil and fed, he gazed for a moment at the lowering skies, and went ashore, satisfied that the storm would pass, and not greatly alarmed by the sullen red glow that leaped from time to time from the crest of Vesuvius. For many weeks of late the mountain had cast warm dust into the air, for many nights that dull glow had risen like a tarnished crown on the mountain's crest; and still the vineyards flourished beneath the shadow of threat—people smiled at the threat and doubted the performance. Antyllus entered the wine-shop where he was in the habit of meeting fellow mariners, and a deep, amused chuckle rumbled up from his massive chest as he waited for his flagon.

"A gladiator!" he muttered. "Antyllus a fighter for gold! Tatius is bewitched. I like not fighting so well. And ladies"—the thought seemed to give him even more amusement than the thought of gladiatorial combats—"what woman other than a common one would regard such as I, save as they regard an ox or a horse? God o' the Salt Seas! Neither fine ladies or fighting for gold for me!"

CHAPTER II.

THE QUIRINALIA.

ON the first day of the Quirinalia, the Festival of Romulus, a notable party reclined about the Triclinium of Tatius the patrician. The noon meal was all but over, and the guests remained at the three-sided table, rather awaiting the hour for the games in the arena to begin than expecting further refreshment. Wine made them patient, and kept them merry; the chatter varied in subject from the pending games, and opinions upon different contestants, to subtle criticism of the Emperor Nero's recent appearance as an actor in a play of his own composing.

"Silence is the best criticism of such art—best and wisest," said Tatius as remarks gained in boldness. "Nero possesses devious sources of information, and his vengeance halts not if he be angered. Rather let us decide who shall be victor of the *andabatæ*."

The suggestion caused laughter, for the *andabatæ* were gladiators who fought in helmets without eye-openings, and their blind efforts with murderous weapons ever aroused the populace to wild merriment.

Men fighting thus might long evade death; never a fight passed that did not see the combatants cruelly wounded. The young men at Tatius's table seized upon the suggestion, and betting ran high for a while. Then the host arose, and led the way to the portico, pausing there and scanning the grounds and the street beyond as if expecting yet another guest.

"Wait yet a little while," he said. "Antyllus of the *trireme* should be here. I would let him see our sports. Mayhap he will become ambitious to pit his skill against our fighters, and if he can be persuaded, ah!"

"Oh, Tatius has found another paragon!" chorused the guests. "Tell us of him, Tatius."

Tatius smiled, and beckoned to a stalwart Thracian standing in the gate. The man approached, and his step was firm and sure for all the gray of his grizzled hair. His strong face was seamed with many wounds, his massive arms, too, were scarred, and the hand which clutched the *rudis,* the wooden sword of the retired gladiator, lacked three fingers.

"Well, Arakles, what news have you of our great Greek?" asked Tatius. "Can you make a man of him again?"

"In time, noble Tatius, in time," replied the old fighter, grimly. "But the man who put him in such plight needs no remaking. That must indeed be a man!"

Tatius told his friends of the encounter on the ship, itemized the Greek's injuries, and said: "We await the man who did this—Antyllus."

As they stood or strolled in the portico a lady joined them, and with her came a maid in attendance. The lady swept up to Tatius with a smile of adoration on her beautiful face, but yet there seemed a hard quality in her brilliant eyes which shot glances of repressed ardor at her lord's guests even while she greeted him. Tall, graceful as a gazelle, full of breast and round of limb, crowned with a mass of copper-shot hair which seemed to burn, her actions revealed her charms with a subtle effect not lost on the beholder.

"Why do we wait, Tatius?" she cooed, her hands clasped on his arm.

"Patience, Hispala," he smiled, caressing her hand. "We await my good Antyllus. He will not fail us."

As he spoke, Tatius's eyes flashed a warm glance at the maid behind Hispala, and the lady bit hard upon her red lips in chagrin.

"Valerie! Bring my perfume," she ordered sharply, and a dark flush passed over her face when Tatius followed the girl with his eyes. Yet she made no murmur, but plied her lord with the honeyed phrases that were part of her seductive nature.

Before Valerie returned, Antyllus entered the gate, and Tatius welcomed him warmly, presenting him in turn to his curious guests whose expectations had been aroused by the story of the Greek's undoing. Then litters were called, and the party proceeded to the Amphitheater, where already the high stone benches of the rabble were filled to overflowing with vociferous human beasts, thirsty for the feast of blood which was Nero's palladium against civic troubles.

"Will the emperor be here to-day?" asked one, scanning the imperial box and the adjacent seats of vantage.

"No. He's attending a torchlight display of tarred Christians in Rome. We need fear nothing. He will not halt the games to read to us his execrable songs to-day."

The imperial box being vacant, Tatius's party seated themselves on the benches beside it, sure then of being subject to no annoyance of overlookers of their amusement. Hispala sat beside Tatius, and ignoring all appealing glances from her friends she drew Antyllus down in the next seat, her burning gaze flashing lightning signals of admiration that were lost on the gruff and awkward mariner.

All the way thither she had peered out from her litter at the powerful figure of the seaman; she had marked him down for her prey before they arrived at the arena. And now Tatius, having scanned the multitude, turned to her for the amusement of small chat until the games began, and detected her intent. A slight flush of anger darkened his face for an instant, but it passed when he examined the ruggedly handsome face of Antyllus and saw thereon no trace of aught but embarrassment, no

sign of attraction toward this splendid woman who sought his favor.

Tatius's anger was dissipated utterly by the arrival of Valerie, bringing her mistress's perfume vial. He beckoned to the girl, himself received the vial and gave it to Hispala, then motioned to Valerie to seat herself immediately behind him.

The slave maid was a captive from the Ionian Isles, and her attendance in the house of Tatius had not been so irksome as to mar the youthful loveliness of her. In her fair face was nothing of abjectness, nothing of fear; in her person she held the daintiness of a figure carved in ivory. Yet, under Tatius's warm regard she colored painfully, and shot an apprehensive glance at the tawny head of her mistress. And he, understanding, patted her arm softly and turned to his friends with a low laugh of musical note.

The games began, and from that moment the *trireme* captain was armed in proof against the wiles of woman, for though he might ridicule the idea of himself fighting for money in the arena, his instincts were all for contest of any sort. A fair fight could ever bring the light of interest to his black eyes. The uproar that commenced with the thrusting of the first antagonist on to the sand only annoyed him; for he saw little of sport in watching an unwilling bear goaded into trying to crush an unwilling hound. The terrific fight that followed between a leopard and a hyena but slightly aroused him, for these brutes merely obeyed inexorable masters who ordered: "Kill or be killed!" But the half a score of brute battles that followed served to whet the appetites of the mob for the shedding of human blood soon to follow, and when the attendants came in to drag branches over the furrowed sand to level it for the gladiators the amphitheater resounded with one tremendous, breathless snarl of anticipation.

Antyllus was barely conscious of a woman's low, rich voice ever murmuring in his ear; he kept his gaze fixed on the arena, frowning in distaste at the cruel antics of the blindfolded fighters, arousing to interest that grew keen with the appearance of two fully armed men who fought at least with equal chances. He looked up with a start when Tatius, stepping behind him, spoke.

"Well, good Antyllus, are they fighters to thy liking?"

"These, yes. The others—slaughtering sheep!"

"Patience then. This will be a fight for men indeed. See the Thrace? Ten years has he fought on these sands, and has yet to know defeat."

"Which is the Thrace?" asked Antyllus, whose knowledge of gladiatorial combats was slight.

"He with the sword and round buckler. The other, he who fights with two small swords, is a Diamacherus. Watch closely. I am impatient to hear your valuation of such men."

The clash of steel in the arena beneath marked the beginning of a combat of giants. Two men trained to the hour, agile as great cats, stout of heart and lithe of limb, their more vital parts protected by armor, which, nevertheless, left exposed areas of glistening flesh where steel might readily sap the life; and the rabble looked down breathlessly, saving up their energy against the moment when a pouring crimson stream should call forth their concerted tumult.

Round and about the men circled, wary, sinewy as panthers, seeking an opening; and Antyllus found himself rapt in contemplation of the scene. A little gasping cry at his side, when a swift attack of the Thrace sent his adversary's left-hand weapon flying from severed fingers, caused him to glance at Hispala, and his lips set in a grim line at sight of her. The woman leaned far over the balcony, her great eyes glaring hungrily, her scarlet lips parted in a moist bow, revealing gleaming teeth, her slender hands gripping the cold stone parapet until the bones shone white through the flawless skin.

"Kill! Kill!" she whispered hoarsely, and the man beside her shivered. She affected him in that moment, clean man of the sea that he was, like a ghoul regarding a feast of flesh. The Diamacherus turned and fled in a circle, seeking to recover his lost weapon before the Thrace could again attack, and Hispala looked up into the face of the seaman.

"Ah, I like a fight, my friend!" she smiled wickedly. "If thou wert down there, would ye run like that?"

"Who knows?" he returned gruffly. "Men of the sea were ever poor runners."

She laughed, and turned again to the fight, for the Thrace had overtaken his foe, and the Diamacherus knelt before him, his one remaining weapon held threateningly in an upward slant. A shout rang through the great amphitheater, the kneeling man swiftly leaped erect, plunged forward, and thrust his sword deep into the thigh of the Thrace, bringing him stumbling to one knee. Then with a roar of triumph the Diamacherus leaped to snatch up his lost sword, and again the contest was equal.

Stab and guard, thrust and counterthrust, the fight went on, steel clashing on steel, and red rivulets marking strokes too swift for the eye to follow. And the sand grew crimson, churned into furrows and heaps. From the mounting tiers of seats a frenzied howl went up, women shrieking in concert with men, hungry for an end in keeping with the combat.

It came in a breathless instant. Like a flash of lightning the Diamacherus closed with his foe, his sword entered the helmet of the Thrace, and snapped off to the violent twist of a cunning head; and as swiftly flashed the Thrace's steel, deep into the breast of the other. The Diamacherus sobbed, and sank to the sands.

"*Habet!*" the roar went up. "*Habet!* He has it!" and shrillest of all pealed the voice of Hispala.

Down in the arena the Thrace stood over his fallen adversary, looking up to the patrician boxes for a sign.

"Turn thumbs up!" whispered Hispala, and suited the action to the word. Tatius and his friends leaned over and showed their thumbs turned down, in sigh of appreciation of a courageous fighter whom they wished spared. Antyllus followed their example, for to do otherwise seemed to him like murder. Many others thought thus, and the fallen gladiator was permitted to live, if he could survive his deep wound; the multitude howled its satisfaction, but above all the uproar Antyllus heard the woman beside him sobbing with rage at being cheated of the spectacle of a brave man's death. He turned a shoulder toward her, but she was beyond seeing it; she cried harshly for her maid, and Valerie came down to her.

The little Ionian pressed between Antyllus and her mistress, and the seaman looked up as he moved aside; and thereafter, through all the combats that followed, his strong face colored and paled, his piercing black eyes, though fixed upon the sands, ever strayed involuntarily to the radiant vision that had for a moment come into his presence.

The games were finished, and Tatius's party went back to his house, but Antyllus was silent, abashed, nervous and of high color. Like an awkward boy he avoided meeting the glance of Valerie, yet he could not keep his own gaze from following her when she passed and repassed in serving her mistress.

Two people detected his uneasiness, and regarded it with varying feelings.

Hispala sulked, until she saw in the situation a means of getting rid of the maid whose fresh, youthful charms threatened to seduce Tatius from herself; for well she knew that, did Tatius suspect his favorite slave girl of looking kindly upon another man, swift indeed would be the girl's fate.

Tatius thought only of the rough seaman, suddenly snatched out of his element, and set down in noble company, perhaps dazzled and bewildered by two such women as Hispala and Valerie, unable to distinguish as to station between them except that one appeared to wait upon the other; and Tatius smiled to himself as the thought came to him that, were he placed in Antyllus's position, he, too, would be hard-pressed to choose rightly which should be lady and which maid.

Hispala's zenith was reached. Art prevented her amazing beauty from utterly withering in the light of such a youngliness as Valerie's. But the courtesan's art could not counterfeit those charms of disposition and demeanor which flourished so perfectly in the humble, demure, yet dignified maid.

"Come, tell me of the combats, Antyllus," said Tatius, taking the seaman's arm and leading him apart from the woman into

the circle of men. At once Antyllus regained much of his self-possession, for he was a man's man. Tatius's friends were eager to hear him; they had appraised him with the eye since hearing the story of his fight with the giant Greek, and now had almost persuaded themselves that their noble friend was about to develop a new gladiator who would win bets for them as plenteously as old Arakles had done for years.

"What of the Thrace, Antyllus?" demanded a young patrician. "Is he such a man as pleases thy seaman's heart?"

"Well enough," replied Antyllus with a wry smile.

"Well enough!" Tatius put in warmly. "Have you seen better?"

"I have seen none of his kind before, noble Tatius. I only know that if I were armed with the net and trident like the *retiarius* was armed with, the Thrace need not remain undefeated longer. But there, I am no fighter. It was a good afternoon's sport."

Tatius chuckled when Antyllus departed for Naples. He had seen those black eyes glint at the thought of meeting the Thrace in combat, even though the thought was at once dismissed.

CHAPTER III.

FOR A WOMAN'S SMILE.

THE last day of the festival was set apart for the water carnival and galley races, and Naples Bay shone resplendent under a burden of gold and silken furnishings that shamed the sun. Through the swift-moving fleet Antyllus maneuvered his great trireme with an art that seemed entirely instinctive, for his thoughts were far from the subject of navigation.

Ever since that visit to the house of his patron, Tatius, the world had undergone a change for him. His wine tasted strange; his beloved sea no longer filled his being to the exclusion of all else, as it used to do. From the kindly, thoughtful captain he had become irritable, explosive; and grim Carbo, his boatswain, received the reflection of the moods and in turn passed it on to the toiling oarsmen.

By virtue of his station, Tatius watched the galley races from the deck of the trireme and with him were his sportive friends and Hispala. Valerie was in attendance upon her lady, but found this day's duties light, indeed, for Hispala had fallen into a quiet, languorous mood in which none might read what passed in her mind. Her heavily veiled eyes gleamed darkly beneath long, sweeping lashes; she had arrayed herself in a fashion to force the notice of men; yet her heart was concerned with only one man, and that man not her lord.

Ever she gazed at the stalwart figure of Antyllus; and his refusal to come near her, or even to glance her way, sent the blood leaping in her veins and filled her brain with fancies; for she interpreted it to mean that he was shy, abashed in her presence, and well she knew, consummate artist that she was, that when her charms induced shyness in a red-blooded man he was hers whenever she chose.

Tatius was satisfied that she had assumed the attitude of lazy indolence, for he was well content to be near Valerie, to be able to show her little attentions out of keeping with the relation of master and slave, and yet bring down upon his head no fiery reproach from Hispala. Her motives he neither knew nor cared about, for she was far too shrewd to permit him to see the goal she aimed at.

As for Antyllus, Tatius noticed his uneasiness and attributed it to a source which pleased him greatly. He smiled whenever he looked at that sturdy back, those powerful limbs, that massive, grand head, and whispered to his near-by friends that the navy was about to lose a valuable captain of triremes and the arena to gain such a gladiator as had never been seen since Spartacus; for to no other reason could he place such lack of enthusiasm, such distaste for his customary avocation as Antyllus showed that day. He bade his companions stand back and watch, then called the captain to him.

Antyllus approached unwillingly, averting his face, which was reddened beyond the hue of sun and wind, and stood before his patron. Tatius regarded him closely for a moment, a little doubtful if he had

guessed aright. Hispala moved lazily on her couch, turning so that she might keep Antyllus in view, and she whispered quickly:

"Valerie! A pillow here!"

The maid adjusted the couch, and moved around so that she might resume her gentle fanning on the other side. And as Tatius addressed the captain she glanced up, met Antyllus's direct gaze for a fleeting second, and dropped her eyes again, blushing hotly.

"What ails thee, girl?" demanded Hispala petulantly. "Thy hand trembles and is hot. Art thou ill?" But never once did the lady permit her eyes to leave Antyllus. She cared nothing if the girl replied or not. Antyllus stood before Tatius with drooping shoulders, his head bent, and was conscious that around him was soft, sly laughter.

"Antyllus is not himself," smiled Tatius, laying a hand on one colossal shoulder. "The sea no longer pleases since he saw the games, I think."

"I am well. Can a man ever be the same day by day?"

The patrician laughed, and smote Antyllus on the breast.

"Confess!" he cried. "Your soul cries for action. You think of the Thrace, and your blood is in turmoil to meet him in combat. You must come to Pompeii, Antyllus, and join the ranks of the men who fight. Decide now. What life is this, for such a man? Cannot any fisherman steer a trireme in peace? War—ah, that is very different; war demands that such men as you be at the helm of fighting ships. But now—"

Tatius paused, peering hard into the captain's lowered eyes, and nothing in his face revealed the tremendous anxiety that consumed him. Of all things, save perhaps one—the desire for Valerie—Tatius most desired to replace Arakles in the arena, and in Antyllus he knew he had found the man if only the man were willing. But the captain made no answer, and the moments flew, bringing deepening chagrin to the patrician, and incredulous amazement to his friends, who refused to believe that any man could cast aside the patronage of Tatius.

"Come, Antyllus. In Tatius's house life can be made very sweet for thee." Hispala's soft, honey-sweet voice was barely more than a murmur, yet it reached all ears, and it thrilled Antyllus to the marrow, yet not as she intended to thrill him. Tatius glanced swiftly at the woman, but she met his glance with a smile of reassurance which told him she was aiding him, and he turned again to Antyllus, to find a new, awakening light in the glittering black eyes.

"In Tatius's house?" the captain stammered. "Antyllus to live in the house of Tatius?"

"What else?" smiled Tatius. "Think you I would let another house you?"

"I fight for you?"

"Of course. For whom else?"

"I thought you wished to enlist me with the arena band, to fight at the draw of straws whatever man might chance. I liked not such a brute existence. But in your house—"

"Brave Antyllus! Arakles shall teach thee! Now shall we see combats as of old!" cried Tatius's friends, pressing about the seaman and clapping him on back and breast in ecstasy. Tatius glowed warmly, no longer hiding the triumph he felt; and triumph also sat upon the fair, wicked face of Hispala—a triumph cloaked as swiftly as it showed, gone again the moment another eye sought hers.

"Well?" Tatius sought a definite answer.

Antyllus snatched himself out of a reverie. He had turned to avoid the noisy ebullitions of the young friends of Tatius, and his eyes fastened on, nor would they leave, the bowed, golden head of Valerie, whose hot, blushing face dared not raise to the light of day. But Hispala's triumph was too complete to leave room for another emotion; and the little, trembling Ionian's agitation passed unnoticed.

"Well?"

"On the day that I am released from this command I will come to Pompeii."

"That shall be to-day!" declared Tatius emphatically. "It were a sorry day when Tatius sought a favor in vain. Put about, and steer for the harbor, Antyllus."

"The races are not yet done. My vessel must range the bay until evening."

"Another shall do it, I say! Steer for the harbor."

Antyllus entered into the gymnasium of Tatius, to find himself immediately a man of importance. And to him came Carbo, his old boatswain, three days later, doleful and sadly mauled, entreating to be taken into his service.

"There are no captains left, Antyllus," he grumbled. "One day only your successor kept that unruly crew in place; then as one man they rose and smote us. The trireme is flying for Sardinia. As for me"—he shrugged reflectively—"I swam ashore on Capri, and such as they left me here am I."

"There is no need for scourges here," Antyllus laughed. "If Carbo can fight he can be fed."

"If I cannot fight as Antyllus can, I can hew wood and carry water for those who can. Mayhap jealousies will assail thee, and my ears are sharp, my eyes still keen."

So Carbo was taken into the company of athletes; for even in the brief space of his residence in Tatius's house Antyllus had seen that which told him Carbo's guess was shrewdly true. Men fed upon nourishing foods and heating wines, trained to fight and wrestle and run, kept for weeks in idleness when games were not afoot, regarded with no kindly emotions the advent of a stranger who not only received more attention than they, but was placed above all from the moment of his arrival.

Old Arakles, too, keen judge of an athlete as he was, left his best fighters to their own devices for days while he taught the seaman those tricks of combat that had made himself feared by foes and beloved of his master. And the giant Greek, his mending ribs ever reminding him of a sorry day, tried to hide a bitter spite for Antyllus beneath an outward expression of fawning admiration. But in old Carbo the Greek met his match in wits, if not in strength; and to the observer at least a friendship sprang up between these two that seemed as strange as it was apparently close, for in the Greek's stories, told to his new comrades after training hours, he had not lost a chance to recite the indigities he had suffered under the scourge of Carbo and his mates.

During the early days of his training, Antyllus gave little cause for his patron to feel jubilant. No amount of persuasion could make him enter the great house. From gymnasium to the athletes' dining hall he passed, and from dining-table to gymnasium, gloomy and grim. In his daily performances he disgusted Arakles and put fear into the hearts of his companions; for he would not learn the fine tricks of the swordsman, but ever applied his great strength to disarming an opponent with awkward, unavoidable blows, and then he would conclude the bout with a crushing attack of arms and legs which threatened one by one to rob Tatius of all his fighters.

"He is an ox!" Arakles told Tatius, who had inquired what progress his new gladiator was making. "A score of times have I shown him the thrust which made Arakles feared of all men. He will not thrust. Rather should he be armed with a tree, that those great arms of his might crush a northern bear."

"Has any man yet bested him in training bouts then?"

"Never! They all fear him for his brutal power. Yet any one might lower his arms did he but keep the rules. He will not learn the steel, noble Tatius."

"He shall, Arakles, and soon," returned Tatius, frowning. "I purpose trying him at the next games, and he must be blooded. Do you try him with the net and trident. 'Twas what he admired at the games of the Quirinalia. And pit him against your best mirmillo, all weapons blunt that we lose not a man utterly. I shall see the contest, and my friends will come. Tell him of it quickly, and give him the trick of the net. And in your ear, good Arakles, tell him he fights by the rules, and there will be women to see him beaten. I will not believe such a man can remain stubborn, or that he will fail to give his best before women."

Antyllus took up the trick of net and trident with more interest than he had hitherto shown; but he was not yet cured of the sullen mood, that had come upon him. Though he was ignorant of the fact, truth was that for the first time in his life a fragile, flowerlike girl had entered his great heart, and put blood and brain in a tumult.

And, as in different men love acts differently, in his case he was ill at ease without knowing why, gloomy and distraught with no suspicion that aught ailed him save a sudden dislike to the new avocation he had taken up.

But as soon as his seawise fingers caught the trick of casting the net, and his arm, no stranger to the spear, mastered the trident, a little of his moodiness was displaced by interest, and Arakles, looking on, smiled again. If anything were needed to complete his temporary cure, it was supplied by faithful old Carbo on the night before the trial contest was to take place.

"The Greek has said Antyllus cannot fight with weapons, but can only use his bull strength to crush. Thy opponent will try to make a mock of thee before the lady Hispala and her pretty maid."

"Thanks, Carbo, we shall see," replied Antyllus with a grim laugh. "I have repaid the noble Tatius but poorly to now. Mayhap Antyllus can use weapons and keep rules, too."

A new and astounding revelation was to come to him when he prepared to face his first gladiatorial trial. In the gymnasium his opponent, armed with Gallic sword and high shield, clad in mail, strutted before his fellows, boasting of what he would do with the awkward ex-sailor, whose dull brain could neither master rules nor trick of arms. Antyllus, his body clad in a short tunic, utterly exposed to his adversary's weapon except for iron plates at shins and left arm and shoulder, gathered up and examined closely his casting net while Arakles awaited the coming of Tatius to set the combatants in action.

It was at the moment when Tatius's party entered that Antyllus first realized the astounding truth which was to bear so tremendously upon his future. Fondly he had persuaded himself that Carbo's hints had worked the change in him; utterly he believed that his present enthusiasm sprang from a resolve that no man should make a mock of him. Then entered Hispala, and Valerie with her. For a space the eyes of maid and gladiator met and held, then Valerie sought refuge behind her mistress, trembling and confused.

As for Antyllus, in that breathless instant his great heart thumped in his breast, telling him in words of throbbing life that the fear of man's mockery had never worked this change in him; that a blue-eyed, golden-haired slave girl was the force that had moved his mighty being; that he, Antyllus, was in love.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST COMBAT.

TATIUS flashed a glance of surprised gratification toward Arakles as the combatants faced each other. He had prepared himself for disappointment, and now his admired ex-sailor bade fair to merit admiration, for there was nothing of sullenness, none of his recent indifference in Antyllus's attitude; rather he bore himself as a man put to life and death hazard, sure of himself, bound to conquer. Just for an instant Tatius made as if to halt the proceedings and speak to Arakles; he refrained, gave a sign, and the combat started; but a new light shone on the patrician's face as he closely watched the circling men.

Antyllus was concerned in enmeshing his foe in the net, that he might find an easy target for his three-pronged spear. The mirmillo, fully armed, sought to escape the fatal mesh and find for his own steel a vital spot in the unprotected body of Antyllus. And while each knew, Arakles had told them, that their weapons were partially blunted, neither was ignorant of the potentiality of those blunted weapons to painfully cut and maim, even though a fatal stroke was unlikely.

On springy feet they circled and dodged, and twice the mirmillo sprang in with ready point, only to find his foe as ready with guarding trident; twice Antyllus sought to hold the searching sword with cunning twist of trident while he might cast his net; and twice the mirmillo leaped back with a laugh as the meshes fell wide. But the second time he laughed there was a note of uncertainty in the taunt, for he realized that Antyllus, a novice in such affairs, was capable of producing tricks unknown to older fighters.

That second cast failed to snare the man, but as he sought to spring into the attack again he saw Antyllus circle around, ever keeping the net between them, and a swift snatch of cord beneath his feet warned the swordsman to avoid stepping on that net unless he wished to find his feet swept from under him.

With net regathered and shield outthrust, the contestants maneuvered warily, the mirmillo's breath quickened from that subtle feeling underfoot which had warned him of the seemingly useless net. In his training he had been taught to fear the net only when it might be cast; never had he feared it when on the ground, for then he had found his opportunity with other fighters of the retiarii. Now he must watch those meshes wherever they were, and Antyllus's deep black eyes followed him unwinkingly; that great chest remained as placid as if in sleep.

With a loud shout the mirmillo clashed sword on shield and leaped to one side, and the less experienced seaman half turned to meet him. It was then that he wished he had profited more by old Arakles's teaching; for like a panther his foe leaped in, scarcely touching the ground with his feet, and Antyllus felt the scorching slice of keen steel in his side.

The pain shocked him, but he knew there was something besides pain in the shock; and as in a blaze of light he understood, for over the crouching helmet of the mirmillo before him, he caught an instantaneous glimpse of Tatius, and the truth came to him. His opponent's sword was not blunted! His trial was to be a trial indeed. Whether his opponent knew this or not he could not discover, for the man's face was hidden behind the mask of his helmet; and whether his own trident-points were blunt or sharp he had as yet no means of knowing, for all his thrusts had been taken skilfully on the shield.

"I thank thee, brother, for that cut. Now pray!" he shouted, stung out of his stolid silence.

With the same breath as gave sound to his speech he moved in swift as a shark, straight for his man, outwardly seeming to be maddened beyond caution. And the mirmillo stepped back warily, slowly, shield before him, sword pointed and waving slightly about a center of aim. In twenty seconds that point might have found flesh again; but in half that time the opportunity had fled; for Antyllus, with sliding, tremendous strides, came within thrust of the steel, and without visible effort he drove his trident downward, and a yell of pain and fear burst from the mirmillo when he felt the prongs seize his left foot and pin it to the ground.

Too swift for eye to follow every movement, the net was cast, and the mirmillo's own struggles served to involve him in the deadly meshes. Dully Antyllus heard Tatius applauding, heard the shrill, hungry "*Habet!*" of Hispala, unable even in the gymnasium to repress her lust for cruelty; and he vaguely understood that old Arakles was shouting to him to hold his hand, that he had won.

But when that sharp steel entered his side he had seen a crimson vision, and the entire staff of active athletes could not have halted him now until his purpose was attained. With a powerful, irresistible sweep and haul he jerked tight the running cords of his net, hurling his foe from his feet in a helpless, cursing, entreating heap. With a sweep as powerful he half-turned, swung the meshed burden over one herculean shoulder, and staggered over to halt before Tatius and his friends. There, with a growl of loathing, he flung the snared gladiator crashing to the floor at the feet of his patron.

"There! The dog wielded sharp steel," Antyllus growled, and spurned the mirmillo with his foot before turning abruptly and moving toward the anteroom to have his sword wound attended to.

Tatius stepped after him and laid a hand on his arm.

"Wait, Antyllus. I gave the man sharpened steel. Have no anger against thy comrade. I am well pleased, and soon thou shalt be matched against an opponent worthy of such strength and cunning. But until to-day I was not sure of thee, Antyllus. Arakles has told me he could not force his teachings into that great skull. This trial was to either make or condemn thee.

Laugh, man! Valerie shall soothe thy hurt."

The anger died from Antyllus's face, and to hide the softening in his eyes he stooped and released his late adversary. Thus he failed to detect the light that leaped into Valerie's blue eyes at her master's words. But Hispala had seen it, and she protested in limpid accents strangely contrasting with the harsh note that escaped her in moments of conflict.

"Not Valerie, noble Tatius, but Hispala! Antyllus has well earned this favor. Come, Antyllus. This is thy reward, that my own hands shall bind thy wound."

She led the abashed seaman away to the great house, amid the sportive laughter of Tatius and his friends. Tatius was well satisfied, for the incident promised to benefit him twofold. A little flattery, such as he knew Hispala was capable of, could not fail to arouse the ambition of a fighter; and also he had that to say to Valerie which might not be said before Hispala. He watched the woman until she vanished with Antyllus into the house, then, leaving his friends to look on at the training exercises of the athletes, he went to his own apartments, bidding the little maid attend him.

On a low couch in the anteroom to Hispala's own chamber lay Antyllus, ill-pleased with his surroundings. The wound he had sustained merely stung him; he had often suffered deeper hurts; and the presence of the woman irked him more than the injury. Her gleaming skin, fragrant with costly perfumes of Egypt and Arabia, touched him too often as she plied her rounded arms to give comfort to his head which needed no comfort. The physician, summoned to draw together the flesh of his wound, hastened to complete his task, for her burning gaze, dark and alluring for Antyllus, flashed fiery impatience at the leech, bidding him silently to be done and be gone.

"Enough!" she cried, when the physicians would have applied healing unguent and bandage. "I will do that."

Left alone with the gladiator, she applied her ointments with soft fingers meant to thrill as they passed about him. The bandage must be just so; and ever her tawny hair brushed his scowling face, always her dark, fire-shot eyes met his with Circe's lure in their depths. And her low, rich voice murmured into his ear the sympathy he disdained.

"Lady Hispala, I seek no pity!" he said gruffly. "Let me go to my own quarters. Such hands as thine should not minister to such as I."

"Why, my Antyllus?" she cooed, raising her eyes from her task. "May I not show my love of a stout fighter in what way I please?"

"It is not good to speak thus to a hireling, lady."

"Then shall I say admiration?" she laughed softly, touching his forehead with her finger-tips. "But patience, Antyllus. Thou art unskilled in aught save conflict and rough seafaring. Remain in this house but a little while and I shall make thee a courtier—my courtier!"

"I would rather remain as I am. Let me go to my own place."

A momentary shadow darkened Hispala's face, and she pulled tight the bandage fastening it with a vicious little tug. But her smile returned, and she placed her hands beneath the great arms and made as if to assist him to rise. Antyllus sprang from the couch with a low growl, and, while he stood seeking with his feet for the sandals she had removed, Valerie appeared and stood in the entrance, holding aside the curtain which framed her like a beautiful picture.

"The noble Tatius awaits thee," she announced to Hispala.

The maid's fair face was slightly flushed, her blue eyes were troubled; but as they met the direct, warm gaze of Antyllus the trouble softened, the blush deepened, and her red lips parted in a pathetic smile. Hispala missed nothing of this. From man to maid her fierce glance swept, yet hid its fiery displeasure under drooping lashes. She passed toward the entrance, finding a soft smile for the man as she passed, and whispering in his ear:

"Hispala brooks no rival, Antyllus! Keep thine eyes from the maid!" Then she left him, and when he would have

stepped forward to speak with the maid, Hispala dashed his hopes and brought a trace of fear into Valerie's eyes by commanding her: "Here, chit! Attend me!"

CHAPTER V.

INTRIGUE.

IN the days when his wound was healing Antyllus found himself in an earthly paradise. Permitted to roam the spacious grounds of Tatius's house, with its fountains, shaded walks, fragrant bowers redolent with the perfume of flowers, under a sky of warmest blue, he imagined himself in a dream. The dream became a certainty, yet too sweet for certainty, when day after day his walks brought him in contact with Valerie; for the maid's blossoming love, as yet unspoken, taught her little stratagems by which she might encounter the great man whose black eyes she had the power of lighting like stars. And his paradise, their paradise, was the more tangible by reason of the serpent it harbored, and which they were both soon to discover.

Hispala, conscious that her day must pass, the more passionately desired to retain the favor of Tatius. In his house she enjoyed the power and prestige which his rank reflected on all in his household, and she, as his mistress, reigned as a queen at the splendid revels he delighted in providing for the great party of his friends.

Yet, while her own sensual nature prompted her to cast the eye of covetousness upon the great Antyllus, she could ill brook the thought of her lord's infatuation for the humble slave girl. She knew quite well that Tatius still sought to gain Valerie's love; that he as yet declined to exercise his right as her owner to attain his ends; but the knowledge did not lessen her rage at the thought that the Ionian chit could usurp her own place in the patrician's heart. That the bright glances passing between the maid and Antyllus threatened disappointment for her was a possibility to be laughed at; for was she not Hispala—whom even imperial Nero had smiled upon?

A ready tool lay close at her hand, and this she seized upon to work her cunning will. The Greek, recovering from his hurts, had looked at her with undue boldness when in the gymnasium, and while she had shown her displeasure toward him, she now realized how he might be made useful.

Subtly she managed that while the Greek was idly walking through the garden behind the baths Valerie met him, sweetly cunning in her innocent desire to see Antyllus. And a word, communicated to the Greek by devious channels through many servants, insured that he greet Valerie with fair words of fellowship in that both loved Greece.

"Now shall Tatius judge the worth of the chit!" Hispala breathed, watching through the laurels, her handsome face working with cruel cunning. Long since she might have shown Tatius a similar picture; but in doing so she must have given Antyllus to vengeance, and that was unthinkable, yet.

She started away, but her dark spirit compelled her to linger a while, feasting upon the thought of what would surely fall upon the fair head of Valerie. She paused until the girl, happy in the sound of her native tongue, sprightly with reminders of her childhood's life, relinquished herself to an animated talk with the gratified Greek; then stole away again, to go to Tatius, and met in the open pathway Antyllus, seeking his still unconfessed sweetheart.

Even vengeance could not restrain her from enjoying the sight of the great gladiator squirming beneath her seductive glance. Hispala held him there, her voice a thing of honey covering a sting, her fragrant presence rendering him uneasy to scowling. And as his uneasiness grew, her laugh became more musical, her words more sweet.

"Antyllus is a great boy," she cooed, her pink fingers tapping his bronzed cheek until he blushed like a peony. "Has the day come so soon when Hispala must coax a smile from any man? What art thou afraid of, big bear? Tatius? Pho!"

Antyllus laughed awkwardly, and perforce abode in patience until his tormentor should let him go. And as they stood together, the woman ever close to him, gazing

up into his face seductively, through the bushes the Greek heard their voices, and, his own desires for vengeance being more powerful than Valerie's attractions yet a while, he peered through and saw them. He saw Tatius's lady, and Tatius's favorite gladiator, and his heart leaped; for he knew what he knew, and right to his hand was a sure and certain way of repaying Antyllus for those crushed ribs.

"Wait here, little countrywoman," he said to Valerie. "I will bring thee a token from thine own land."

He sped to the house, leaving the maid glowing with the expectation of receiving some trifle to bring back home to her; and in a few minutes he rejoined her, breathing hard from his haste, empty-handed.

"The house of the athletes is shut, Valerie," he said. "I will find it for thee tomorrow." But his eyes were not on her; his ears were not wide for her voice. Rather his attitude was that of a forest huntsman, waiting for prey. He put a finger to his lips to warn the girl to silence, and silently parted the twigs of laurel between them and the open path where stood Hispala and Antyllus. And across a narrow vista beyond passed Tatius, his robe fluttering with haste, his pale, noble face set in anger.

"Ah! Now we shall see the bear in the trap!" the Greek muttered savagely; and Valerie sought to peep through also, so fearful was his voice.

"Stand aside, girl!" he commanded, and watched intently. In a moment doubt dawned on his evil face, a moment more and black fury convulsed him. "What!" he panted. "Does the noble fool refuse to notice such falsity? By the gods! if Antyllus should hear of this—"

He stopped with a violent shudder and sped away, Valerie staring after him with wide eyes and parted lips, for she had heard Antyllus named, and no more. Surmise was dark in her breast; the name had been uttered in no voice of good-will.

In turn she peered through the laurels, and now Hispala seemed to start, and left Antyllus as hastily as the Greek had just left the maid, darting through a narrow path, beyond which Valerie presently heard the woman's voice and that of Tatius. And footsteps approached, Tatius thrust aside the bushes and stood before Valerie, darting searching glances here and there, his eyes glittering coldly.

"Where is the man thou 'rt with, girl?" he demanded, raising her chin and forcing her to meet his gaze. "Speak truth!"

"It was the Greek, mine own countryman, noble Tatius," the girl stammered, frightened by the aspect of that face which had never been turned toward her in aught but kindliness.

"How long has he been meeting thee secretly?"

Valerie flashed a look of frank protest up at him and her lip trembled as she replied: "I have met him here but once—to-day—and he stopped me in the path. Never have I kept secret tryst with any man! All thy athletes I have met and talked with at times in these gardens, openly and not of my seeking."

Tatius regarded her intently, and in the face of her transparent sincerity his own hard expression melted; his eyes ceased to glitter and grew softly tender. He laid a hand on her slim shoulder, took her hand, and drew her down the path toward the great fountain; and there, on a marble bench, he made her sit while he stood beside her and renewed his pleading for her love.

"Valerie, I doubted thee because of the love I bear thee. Were my feelings for thee as those of other men, little would I care if all my servants kept tryst with thee. But I love thee, girl, with an honorable love. Why must I plead vainly?"

"An honorable love from Tatius were an honor indeed for a poor slave maid," murmured Valerie, looking up frankly into his face. "Should not an honorable love mean freedom and wedlock for its object?" she asked simply.

"Freedom I have promised thee," returned Tatius, coloring slightly at the directness of her awkward question. "As for marriage, well, thou must know I cannot give thee that, Valerie."

"I have thought so. But without it love must be twofold and limitless, my lord, and such love I cannot have for thee. It grieves me, but it is so."

A black flush of passion marred the face of the patrician. He seized her hand in a fierce grip, and whispered in a choked voice:

"Tatius likes not to be thwarted by a slave. I can have thee whipped!"

Valerie kept her calm gaze fixed upon him, and no fear sat upon her fair face. She replied softly and with deference:

"I am thy chattel, noble Tatius. If such is thy will, it must be. But ever has thy slave maid known naught but kindness in thy house, and the whip that bites Valerie's flesh will not be ordered by Tatius, but by his evil spirit. I fear not that my lord will surrender to such a spirit. Tatius is noble."

The patrician was swept with an overwhelming emotion, and hoarsely he bade her:

"Go! Go to the house, girl! Let me see thee no more this day!"

He stood a while, gazing after her graceful figure as she passed around the fountain, then strode to the gymnasium, muttering fervidly:

"Whip Valerie! Thou 'rt mad, Tatius. But marriage—"

His thoughts were too disturbed for self-communion. He dismissed the subject, and entered the gymnasium, called for Arakles, and tore off his robe.

"Attend me here!" he commanded. "My trunks, Arakles. I will try a fall to rid me of an evil humor. Bring out thy stoutest wrestler quickly."

"The Greek is healed," suggested Arakles. "He is a stout rascal."

"The Greek, then, but quickly!" muttered Tatius. "I care not who it is."

The Greek appeared, and in his heart was a hope that here lay an opportunity to secure his master's good-will against the possible fury of Antyllus, if Antyllus ever learned of his perfidy in calling Tatius to witness that meeting between Hispala and the gladiator. He entered the ring determined to oppose a stubborn resistance to his master, yet to permit himself to be defeated, thus flattering the patrician. And Tatius, remembering the word of Hispala that Valerie had met the Greek in secret, while disproved, yet rankled, felt a vague satisfaction in pitting his skill against the man's huge muscles.

But when the wrestlers grappled, gone was every consideration outside of the contest.

Tatius, a clever, resourceful amateur who had often successfully met professional athletes in many sports, felt his dark spirit vanish under the thrill of the struggle; and the Greek, after one sharp, short clash which resulted in his being hurled headlong out of the ring, forgot all his ideas of flattering Tatius in the incredible necessity for exerting his every energy to hold his own.

Again they grappled and went down, the Greek uppermost, and for a long period of fierce, panting struggle each sought in turn to pin the other. And fear stole into the Greek's eyes when he felt his great ribs cracking again under unsuspected pressure, and knew that his shoulders were inevitably being pressed down. Above him Tatius smiled down and added will to strength, and the smile was too much for the Greek.

"Tatius has conquered!" he said hoarsely, and would have given up the struggle. But the smile died out of the victor's eyes and a demon of rage usurped its place at the cry of surrender.

"Greek hound!" he whispered, not to be robbed of the thrill of true conquest. "I will have thee sewn in a skin and cast into the arena for the beasts to tear if thou dost not strive!"

In desperation the Greek fought on, and a desperate upheaval of all his remaining strength hurled Tatius from him. But like a wildcat the patrician alighted on his feet, sprang before the clumsier Greek had gained to one knee, and with a choking grip on the throat from behind dragged him down, this time to meet the mat squarely, beaten in spite of his desperation.

And all the moodiness passed from Tatius with the truly earned victory. He told Arakles to reward the Greek, and went to the baths to refresh himself after the exertion.

At the baths he found Antyllus, gloomy with the thought of his afternoon's disappointment in not seeing Valerie.

Tatius greeted him tranquilly, and gave no sign that he had witnessed the scene in the garden with Hispala; but as he splashed in the water, and later while Antyllus rubbed him down, he turned the talk to the coming games, finding poor response in the ruffled seaman.

"And I mean to have thee meet the Thrace in combat, Antyllus," he said presently, and watched keenly the other's face. If he had thought to frighten Antyllus with the prospect of meeting so perilous an adversary in his very first serious combat, he met with grave disappointment. The disappointment was the keener because his plan had been carefully formed after much thought, and was the means he elected to take to avenge himself for Hispala's brazen courtship of the gladiator, which he could not believe, in view of his own witness, was not entirely one-sided.

Antyllus received the information surprisingly. His own disappointment in not speaking to Valerie that day was sufficiently keen to set his blood in moody motion. As Tatius had, Antyllus felt a need for action, and in lieu of action would welcome the prospect of it cheerfully.

"As well the Thrace as another," he returned. "Another week of idleness such as I have spent in this house and I had gone back to the sea. Do I fight with the net and trident?"

"Yes. I shall tell Arakles to give thee all his time for a few days. Thou 'lt surely need to exercise all thy tricks with the Thrace."

"I am not trembling, noble Tatius," retorted Antyllus, and dismissed the subject, leaving the couch on which his patron reclined and remarking indifferently with a glance at the sky: "Thy gardens should be covered in these days. Old Vesuvius continues to wear a red coronet, and he showers us with dust."

Tatius watched him depart with a curious look in his eyes. After a while he rose, robed himself, and walked to the house, saying to himself with a softly humorous smile:

"These mariners be strange fish indeed! Here is Antyllus, confronted with a man undefeated in ten years for his first real combat, and calmly he tells me to canopy my gardens from the mountain's dust!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE WILES OF THE GREEK.

ANTYLLUS took up his training with a glowering ardor that brought trouble to all the gymnasium staff. Old Arakles pitted man after man against him, and growled in his shaggy throat at their swift discomfiture, for Antyllus met all with a cyclonic onslaught that carried skilled men off their feet and left them helpless, often sorely damaged. In the end the grizzled old fighter was compelled to take Antyllus in hand himself, and as he buckled on the cumbersome training armor he admonished him:

"Thy bull strength is well in its place, my mariner, but it will not avail thee against the Thrace. Besides, there is a limit to the number of thy athletes, and thy dark fury costs Tatius heavily. Cannot thy stubborn intellect learn cunning? Here, I shall show thee again. Arakles shows not every one of his tricks, learned in a score of years of deadly encounter."

Antyllus waited in grim silence, and Arakles, hoping for a reply in an appreciative tone, and receiving none, swore under his breath and set himself in a posture of attack. Warily, his time-tried sinews making up in conservation of effort what they now lacked in youthful resiliency, he stood poised on his toes, shield advanced, blunted sword waving menacingly. And still Antyllus stood motionless, his trident lowered, his net strewn on the floor in tangled heaps.

At Arakles's impatient command to begin, the sailor laughed and flung aside his harness and arms.

"I will not fight more to-day," Antyllus growled, and strode from the place, leaving his old mentor aghast and speechless.

Out into the sunlight Antyllus plunged, and took his way to a remote corner of the flower-garden beyond the great fountain. Here he had often seen Valerie, gathering blooms for the table, and he stalked back and forth in the narrow, winding paths with

a vague hope in his heart that he might see her now.

Since the day when he had learned that he was to meet the Thrace he had not seen the girl, except at a distance, and the disappointment of that day rankled yet. That rankle was not to be dispelled this day. Afar off he caught a glimpse of a fluttering white robe, and another glimpse revealed the shining golden head of Valerie; but she came no nearer; her arms were already full of lilies, gathered in the water-gardens, and as she was about to pass from sight she paused, stepped back, and gazed toward the place where Antyllus stood longing for her with hungry heart and yearning eyes.

His keen vision detected the warm little glow which spread over her face as she saw him, and he thrilled in the expectation of the meeting. But his heart grew heavy again when she waved a furtive little hand at him and vanished hurriedly, leaving him in no doubt that her fear of some one else overpowered her desire to be with him.

Breathing lurid sea oaths, Antyllus turned away, stumbling aimlessly, careless whether he kept the paths or plunged through the laurels; and beside him, in a thicket, he heard the movement of a heavy body. Full of smoldering anger, he leaped toward the sound, and a bulky figure essayed to avoid him. But he recognized the big Greek, and in a flash realized that he must have been spying on him. His great hands reached out and gripped the man by the hair, hurling him backward on the grass.

"Again you?" he muttered. "Will nothing cure thy evil nature save beating? I have a mind to kill thee, but that I am soft-hearted." As he spoke his powerful hands were busy, and, protesting his innocence of evil intent, the Greek refrained from struggling too long. When his startled brain convinced him that Antyllus was deaf to words, and he fought against the inexorable grip that was holding him like a vise, it was too late.

His dark conscience would not let him forget that he had stolen after Antyllus, bent upon finding him with Valerie, in order that he might yet turn Tatius against him; for he believed that his previous attempt to bring the patrician to witness Antyllus with Hispala had failed of its purpose. And knowing the mariner's temper, he expected nothing less than a sore mauling now, if he escaped alive; and he struggled like a tiger in the toils.

Antyllus uttered no further word. He had seized the Greek's tunic at the nape of the neck in one huge hand, gathering the fabric into a choking cord; with the other hand he gripped the belt, twisting that also into a constricting girdle that all but cut the flesh; and on sturdy legs he marched straight for the fountain, thrusting the man before him, lifting him clear of the ground when he would have braced against progress.

At the marble fountain Antyllus set one foot solidly against the coping stone, filled his great lungs with air, and put forth all the tremendous power of his muscles. Slowly he lifted the Greek, waist high, shoulder high, and with a supreme effort raised him above his head, paused an instant, then hurled him headlong into the water.

He stood motionless until the Greek rose to his knees, draped with weeds and green slime, then with a laugh of utter contempt he turned and left him, knowing that the humiliation was far more bitter to a man of his kind than any physical beating.

Until the day before the games Antyllus avoided the training quarters, turning a deaf ear to all Arakles might say. And the old trainer grew more furious with each day that passed, for, whether he felt well disposed toward the sailor or not, his professional pride was wounded at the slight; he little relished the prospect of seeing the man Tatius had selected to represent the house defeated in the arena. And that an untrained fighter, no matter how naturally able, could hope to face the famous Thrace in a fight to the death he would not believe.

But Antyllus remained stubborn. Valerie had avoided him, by intent or perforce, and he cared little what other men thought of his chances. His experience since consenting to become a fighter had not been wholly gratifying; his early enthusiasm had dulled, giving place to a sullen rage which

made him a dangerous man to cross, and and caused faithful Carbo to regard him sorrowfully.

The old boatswain was too well aware of the deadly nature of the coming contest to relax the vigilance he had put forth in behalf of his friend, and he took upon himself the care of the arms and armor Antyllus would use. Hour after hour he spent on the net; the trident points were keen and bright; the arm and shoulder plates were strengthened and made lissom of joint with hide and oil, and the sandals were thonged beyond all possibility of loosening in the stress of combat.

And his nights were spent in catlike sleep beside the arms. In the dark gymnasium he placed his couch beneath the armory, praying to the gods that an enemy might try to tamper with Antyllus's harness.

"'Twould be sweet for old Carbo to catch such a villain!" he muttered over and over again, in the turnings of his uneasy rest.

Tatius grew restless, too, on that evening before his gladiator was to face death. In such times as those, in Pompeii's heyday, men had not the strict ideas of sportsmanship that came in later. Tatius could not reproach himself with sending Antyllus to almost certain death in such a fashion. He might, as any other noble would do, have punished Antyllus summarily on even the suspicion of philandering with his lady; and in this case he had himself been witness to such a meeting. In giving his gladiator the chance of fighting for his life he had done more than could be expected of him; and when the reason was laid aside he felt a natural wish for his man's well-being, for, with Arakles, he took pride in the representatives of his house in all sports.

Walking by the gymnasium after he had dined, Tatius sought Arakles to inquire regarding the gladiator, for the old trainer's reports had not improved of late. Instead of meeting Arakles, the patrician ran into a forceful, heavy figure pacing the paths with bent head.

"Antyllus!" he cried, recognizing the mariner. "Why art thou not asleep? Thy life may pay for such foolishness."

"Will men never cease troubling me about this plaguey combat?" answered Antyllus, scowling up at Tatius. "It is my life, and no other's, the Thrace may take if he can. I fear him not."

The words were spoken with a laugh, yet there was nothing of bravado in them, but rather utter confidence; and Tatius wondered if after all the mariner had not deceived them all by preparing in secret. He would have discussed the coming fight to greater length, for he had refrained from betting on Antyllus and was curious to know whence came such confidence; but before another word was uttered an uproar arose inside the gymnasium, and out through the door burst a clawing, swearing human knot in which rang the clash of steel.

Antyllus ran forward, followed by Tatius, but neither could approach within touch, so tremendous was the whirl of strife. Steel rang on steel again, and a thud and a sob was followed by swift cessation of the fight; a man stumbled to his feet, hurled a short sword aside, and cursed a recumbent heap at his feet.

"Now may the demons of the pit receive thy soul, thou foul dog!"

"'Tis Carbo!" exclaimed Antyllus, seizing the boatswain and turning him toward Tatius.

From the athletes' headquarters poured awakened men, led by old Arakles, alarmed by the noise; and they mobbed around Carbo until they recognized Tatius, then fell back in silence.

"What is it, Carbo? What hast thou done?" demanded Tatius.

"The Greek!" retorted Carbo furiously. "I have killed him, I hope."

"But why? What has he done?"

"Come, I'll show thee!" And Carbo entered the gymnasium, calling for lights.

A torch was brought, and its flickering flame lighted up a grim, milling group about the boatswain. To Tatius he presented a trident, and with a savage jerk tore the head from the haft.

"There! The Greek's work! See, the haft is cut through to a splinter, and thrust back in the socket. Antyllus had been murdered to-morrow had I not caught the

dog replacing the weapon and surprised him."

The Greek had paid in full. Tatius, briefly ordering the disposal of the dead man, returned to his house, finding nothing to say to Antyllus in face of such an event; and Antyllus, for the first time showing real interest in the approaching contest, found little to say to Carbo, but such words as he spoke sent a glow of deep happiness to the heart of the faithful guardian. While Antyllus slept Carbo watched over him that night; and to while away his watch he brought down other tridents, carefully selecting the perfect weapons, passing the night in whetting and scouring the steel of three until he had replaced threefold the weapon lost by the Greek's treachery. That Antyllus's chosen arm was lost was sure, for, trying the head in hope of replacing the ruined haft with a new one, Carbo found further evidence of the murderous intent of the act in cunningly severed points which were beyond replacing except by the armorer, and time was too brief for that.

The games began in the morning, and the arena was filled before the sun topped the walls of the amphitheater. The chariot races and gladiatorial combats were for the afternoon; but the populace crowded in early, for the morning was set apart for their own especial amusement, and few of the richer holiday makers appeared. Opening with a gory round of bull-baiting, the events speedily aroused the bestial audience to screaming excitement. Plenteous blood-spilling, with its unspeakable reek, ever heated the lower natures to a frenzy. Animal fights, with the arena filled with snarling, ravenous panthers, wolves, and hyenas goaded to fight until their numbers were reduced to the safety point for attendants to enter and drive the survivors back to the dens, brought the mob to a surfeit of such unexciting sport; and they began to howl for offerings more deserving of their applause.

It was the signal for an offering kept for such a demand, and rarely attended by the nobles. Refractory slaves, criminals, sometimes debtors, often condemned men and women of the newly arisen Christian faith, were reserved for this. Skins of animals, smeared with fresh blood, were sewn around the doomed wretches; they were cast on to the sand, and a pack of savage dogs burst from the kennels where they had been starved against the day, rendered frantic by the smell of the bloody sands, to worry them.

Such an orgy of horror brought the people to a sense of their own animal appetites; and when the sands were cleared, noon was come and the great theater subsided into murmuring silence while hungry thousands ate the food they had carried with them.

In the hour devoted to the leveling of the churned sand, the patrician arrived, and now every bench was full; expectancy sat large on noble faces, for the hint had gone around that Tatius was pitting his new discovery against the idol of Pompeii, the unbeaten Thrace.

The first combat, a fight to the death between two bands of lesser gladiators who had failed in revealing individual prowess, renewed the roar of interest; but Tatius and his friends had eyes for none of this. From all quarters came young bloods, eager to bet, bent upon learning from Tatius himself his man's chances of victory. But to them all Tatius presented an inscrutable face, his lips smiled while his eyes revealed no mirth; he shook his head to every inquiry whether he had wagered upon the contest, and yet his smiling lips gave the impression of satisfaction. His friends were forced for once to use their own judgment in an affair which concerned Tatius; and it was a new experience for them. There were few bold enough to wager against the Thrace.

Beside him sat Hispala, already excited by the smell of blood; and behind her stood Valerie, her fair face pale, her rosy lips parted in a voiceless murmur which might be a prayer, her blue eyes holding gleams that shone through a cloud of anxiety.

The fight below them surged to a close; the victor, stumbling in his own agony of wounds like an ox imperfectly poll-axed, raised his arms to the boxes in mute appeal for the victor's meed of applause, while at-

tendants dragged out the fallen with ropes at arm or leg like so many dead cattle. And amid a breathless silence the great combat was called. The Thrace stalked on to the sand with the step of a victor before the fight; from another side came Antyllus, steady of foot, grim, the embodiment of cool confidence, in nowise impressed by the scornful regard of the Thrace.

To the surprise of Tatius, Antyllus came over and stood for an instant immediately below his party. His strong, tanned face was upturned, and a strange light burned in the piercing black eyes as they gazed aloft. Tatius waved a hand in acknowledgment; but yet Antyllus stood. Hispala waved, and cried down smiling encouragement to him, and yet he remained. Then behind the woman sounded a little sob, and Antyllus's face broke into a brilliant smile. He moved out to meet the Thrace, and in his heart was bounding happiness; for he had seen what he sought; what all others missed—the shy, yet earnest wave of the hand that Valerie sent him, daring all to do it.

Hispala flashed around and peered into Valerie's face, for she heard that tiny sob. But Valerie was standing like a pale waxwork; her face told nothing to the searching eyes of Hispala.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE ARENA.

THE very rocks of Ischia and Capri murmur the tale of that fight even to-day. The Thrace was waiting impatiently, clashing sword on shield, stamping the sand angrily; for, unconsciously, Antyllus had usurped the privilege of the champion of arms, and had by his tardiness aroused the hot blood of his adversary while his own blood coursed measured and cool.

As the men confronted each other, a tumultuous sigh of suspense went up from the packed benches; and from the gladiators' chamber beneath the parapet old Arakles barked advice which never reached to the ears of Antyllus, whose brain was full of music set thrumming by Valerie's unspoken message of encouragement.

No preliminary skirmishing wasted the first moments of that combat. Swift as a snake to strike, the Thrace barely advanced one foot when his body followed in a terrific onslaught that had a score of times earned a victim before. But a different adversary opposed him now, as he was speedily to discover. As swift as the onslaught came, Antyllus matched it with greater swiftness. Body and head bent aside like a sapling in a storm, and the searching steel flashed by. His right leg remained outjutting, and the theater rang with the shouts of thousands at the trick, for the Thrace must surely trip and fall over that sturdy limb, to lie at the mercy of that deadly trident. But the Thrace had not falsely earned his fame. In the instant when his sword missed its mark, his alert eyes within the helmet caught sight of the trap, and like a deer he leaped, clearing Antyllus's leg and alighting on his feet again.

With agile twist he avoided the first cast of the net, and muttered a word of begrudged approval for his opponent's unsuspected worth. Antyllus responded with a careless laugh, and the Thrace cursed him for an upstart and began to step warily in to a second encounter.

Now it was the mariner who wrung a shout from the crowds. Watchful as a hawk, he seemed to meet his foe's tactics by similar wariness; but it was only seemingly. Before the Thrace had taken three steps of a circling movement, Antyllus darted sidewise, struck hard at the other's sword with his trident staff, and almost without visible effort cast his net in a whirling snare above the flashing arms. Cunning with experience, the Thrace avoided the deadly cords, but a mesh momentarily caught on a corner of his shield and in that moment Antyllus lunged swiftly with his trident, and blood ran down the breast of the backward-leaping foe.

It was first blood to the novice, and tumult rose to the blue skies from frenzied throats. The experience was new for the Thrace. Never before had he been forced to hear such a tumult raised unless for him; and it aroused him to tigerish ferocity. His backward steps halted the instant the net

fell clear, and while Antyllus gathered it for another cast, and before the populace had ceased their howling, the fight was renewed in a whirlwind of panting bodies and flashing arms too involved for eye to follow.

Never did the Thrace give a second's pause; he pressed upon his foe with shortened sword and close attack, giving no time for Antyllus to ply the net, but forcing him to defend himself by fence with the inadequate trident.

Clash upon clash, of steel and gleaming flash, and the two powerful men sobbed and hissed with the stress. Twice did the Thrace's steel bite deeply into Antyllus's side; the trident dripped red with the same blood as poured from three wounds in the Thrace's breast. And in the box of Tatius the silence had sat heavily until the moment when Antyllus stumbled, all but fell, and recovered in time to avoid death by a lightning breadth. Then Tatius heard a double cry, from beside him and behind; and, not daring to take his eyes from the conflict, he said harshly to Hispala:

"Thou hast good cause to cry out, Hispala! If my brave Antyllus falls to-day, it will be to thy door the death is laid."

"What mean you?" cried Hispala hysterically. Her frenzy for deadly fight had been softened by the peril of Antyllus, and she detected the note of cold reproof in Tatius's voice. "What have I to do with this? Did I send Antyllus to face certain death in his first combat?"

"Yes," replied Tatius grimly, and spared time to flash a look of understanding at the woman. "That amorous heart of thine could not permit even a lowly mariner to live in peace. 'Twas for thy sheep eyes which thou cast upon him that I matched him with the Thrace."

He turned again to the arena, for the noise had become deafening, the fight breathless. But as he turned he heard a little cry burst from Valerie, and a sound much like a smothered shrill curse from the woman beside him. Neither sound could again snatch his gaze from the sands; never before had such a combat been waged, and if he would, he could miss no stroke.

Instinctively realizing his foe's intent, Antyllus countered by keeping so close that when the Thrace tried to gain space for the wielding of his arms he could not shake off that tireless, inward pressing shape with its menacing trident and involved net. The mariner had shortened his grip on the spear to midway, and with staff and head he warded the short thrusts of the sword, while with the net wrapped about his arm he sought to entangle the point. Every moment while he fought for life itself his shrewd seaman's sense was working, and at length the moment he awaited arrived.

Uttering a throaty shout as if in fear, he suddenly leaped back, receiving a sore gash from shoulder to elbow as he leaped. And the Thrace, answering shout with shout, gathered himself and sprang forward to seize the victory he saw in his grasp.

But in that backward leap Antyllus had dropped his net, as a sailor drops a line coil by coil, and now it lay between them. Into the meshes the Thrace glided, his breath hissing between his helmet bars; and in two brief seconds the combat was over. As before in the gymnasium, Antyllus swiftly snatched at his net; his foe's feet were swept from under him, and the Thrace fell, to be instantly pinned at the throat by the darting trident.

The walls trembled with the uproar. But Antyllus stood over his fallen adversary, indifferent to the shouting.

"Turn to the boxes, thou splendid fool!" roared old Arakles from his chamber. "Look to their thumbs! Wilt let him rise again, to perhaps kill thee?"

The demand seemed likely to have reason in it; Antyllus ignored the thumbs of the people, and with one foot on the breast of the Thrace drew the prongs from his neck and turned away indifferently. The roar followed him; for with the inconstancy of mobs every thumb was upturned in demand for the Thrace's death. But the victor held his way toward the gladiators' chamber, and only for one step did he pause. Beneath the box of Tatius he halted, flashed a look of recognition upward, and waved a hand which Valerie's heart told her was for her only; then he was re-

ceived in the open arms of old Arakles, to be hugged and chuckled over to his infinite discomfort.

"Oh, a man of men!" babbled the ancient fighter. "Thy day has dawned, Antyllus. The fame which was thy foe's is thine for time uncounted; for where shall another such as thee be found?"

"Cease thy chatter, old man," grumbled Antyllus. "Stay this bleeding, that I may go to the house."

A slave came down from Tatius at that moment, bidding the gladiator return home at once by the litter that awaited him outside, and his hurts would be attended to there in greater comfort than the fighters' quarters afforded. It was a sign that Tatius was well pleased; and Arakles urged speedy acceptance.

So Antyllus returned, and the slave who had brought him the message ushered him into Tatius's own apartments, where the marble bath and couch were prepared for his arrival. There he was left a while, and the smart of his hurts rendered him impatient.

But his impatience passed in an instant when to his astonished eyes Valerie appeared, bearing unguents and fine linen, followed by the slave carrying warm, scented water.

The girl's eyes were soft with pity for his wounds, her fair face glowed with the pleasure of serving him as she tenderly removed his trappings and took his arm in gentle fingers.

"Tatius has sent me to tend thee, Antyllus," she said, and blushed as her eyes met his, for she could not ignore the message those black eyes flashed to her.

"Valerie, my hurts are already healed," he answered, smiling upon her. "Death were powerless against such a physician."

The maid's golden head bowed, and her nimble hands cleansed and drew together his hurts in a silence in which only two hearts conversed unaided by speech. But the mariner, all unskilled in speech of love, was learning rapidly in the close proximity her ministrations brought them into; and when again her eyes met his he seized her hand, restraining her from her task, and he spoke:

"I have sought thee often, Valerie, to tell thee I love thee. And to-day, in the arena, thy face showed me a great light, giving me strength to conquer the Thrace. Wilt thou look into my eyes and say my love is unrequited?"

"I cannot say that, Antyllus," she replied in a whisper. "I do love thee, but our love is a perilous thing."

He encircled her slender body with his sound arm, and crushed her to him, ignoring the pang that shot through his wounds in the hot surge of his blood.

"How perilous?" he demanded. "What peril, Valerie?"

"Tatius."

"How? What cares Tatius for the loves of his servants?"

"I am a slave, Antyllus—his property. Surely thou art aware that a slave may not love as a free woman, but only her master?"

"And has he dared?"

"No. Tatius is noble in truth, Antyllus. He has sought my love where he might command me. But if he should discover our love, thy life must pay, and I—" She stopped, blushing deeply in her embarrassment.

"Valerie," he said earnestly, "to-day I faced the Thrace in deadly combat. I dare face death in any form for thee. Tell me that thy courage is but half as great as thy sweet beauty, and even Tatius shall not divide us or harm thee."

The maid gave no audible reply; but again their eyes met, and she was gathered to him in an embrace which sealed their mutual fate. Sweetly she yielded her rosy lips to his, her bright head fell upon his breast, and thus they sat, silent, entranced, while bandages and jars of medicaments fell unnoticed to the marble floor and remained there.

Their hearts sang, and pulse leaped to pulse. Time ceased to exist for them. A rustling of the hangings over the entrance was unheard; the quivering form of Tatius, standing in the door, was unseen. The white anger in his face passed over them unfelt.

A long moment the patrician stood, his eyes ablaze, his lips set and pale; then

with a great effort he withdrew and left the lovers all unsuspecting that their ecstasy had been detected.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JUSTICE OF TATIUS.

DAYS passed, and Antyllus remained in the house of Tatius; but his eager eyes saw Valerie no more. Even Tatius failed to break the monotony of his days with a visit; and the gladiator, who had banished his sullen, indifferent mood and taken on an aspect of joyous contentment with life, relapsed into depths more dark than before. His wounds healed through the sheer animal health of his flesh more than from any attention, for the physician and slaves who were sent to him did their work poorly despite his irritation.

Arakles it was who gave him some hint of the state of matters outside, and the hint bade fair to induce a fever in his blood. The old fighter entered one sultry afternoon, when the skies hung redly lowering and the streets were filled with husbandmen from the hills, hurrying in consumed with fear of the dully rumbling mountain.

"How fares Antyllus now?" he growled, hiding his admiration for the freshly famous gladiator beneath an outward gruffness.

"Well enough!" was the sullen retort. "Why does Tatius not come to me, Arakles? Why am I kept prisoner here? I have it in my heart to leave this place and never return. I like not the feeling of being caged."

"Caged? By Saturn! I know many who would gladly endure such a cage. Art discontented then?"

"I am a man, free and beholden to no man, Arakles. Why am I prisoned here? Yes, I say it is a prison! Even the gardens are no longer open to me."

"I know nothing of that," replied Arakles slowly and with thought. "How long since ye tried to enter the grounds? Mayhap the noble Tatius ordered thus to keep thee quiet until thy hurts were whole."

"I went to the gate but yesterday. A slave with spear and ax halted me."

"It is strange, Antyllus. Let us try again. Many things have happened in the past few days. Who may say what is in the mind of Tatius? Not his servants, surely. Look at me! See this bruised cheek—this scarred breast? Tatius dealt these bruises. Day after day he comes to the gymnasium; with cestus, and wooden swords, and blunted spear, he matches himself against my athletes; and with arms or by wrestling he has sorely disrupted my staff. Yesterday, after the lady Hispala and the maid Valerie had departed for his summer villa on Ischia, he came and commanded me to face him in a trial of arms, and without killing him I could not hold him off, so furious was his attack."

"Valerie gone to Ischia?" demanded Antyllus, his black eyes aglitter.

Arakles stared at him for a moment, then laughed, the loud, comprehending laugh of the training quarters that ever greeted the coupling of woman's name with man's. Antyllus gripped him by the arm, and growled savagely:

"Old man, dare to laugh thus at the name of Valerie, and thy life runs swiftly out! Why have they gone to Ischia?"

"How should I know?" grumbled Arakles, disgruntled. "'Tis unhealthy to question Tatius's whims. Let us try the garden. Thy need is for fresh air."

At the garden gate Antyllus glared about him questioningly, but no sentinel halted them now. They passed into the water-gardens, and walked in silence for a space, their sandaled feet stirring up tiny puffs of powdery dust which mantled the grass and gravel walks.

"Vesuvius is restless these days," said Antyllus irritably. "I like better the sea in such times. Is this the reason for Hispala going to Ischia, think you?"

"Who knows?" Arakles laughed carelessly. "Pompeii is full of frightened vine-growers; but as they see the city calmly about its every-day affairs, and find no sign of fear, they go back home. Why trouble thy head regarding thy master's intentions? Is Tatius a man to give accounting to his servants?"

"By the gods, he shall account to me if I so choose!" swore Antyllus, and Arakles,

after glaring at him in horrified amazement, shook his grizzled old head and hurried from him, muttering in shocked displeasure.

"And so Tatius will, Antyllus," murmured a soft voice behind the gladiator; and Tatius emerged from the shade of a laurel and came forward, his pale, handsome face revealing nothing of anger. For a startled instant Antyllus regretted his hasty speech; but the ex-mariner feared no man, and dared say outright anything his tongue uttered in secret.

"I came to meet thee, Antyllus, for I saw thee leave the gate. But I heard not thy speech, save that I should give thee an accounting. What is on thy mind?"

The gladiator paused, as if to gather breath, then launched into a torrent of speech which brought a trace of metallic hardness into Tatius's eyes.

"I would know why I have been shut in thy house like a dog! I would know why the maid, Valerie, is sent away to Ischia! I would know why, after thou hurled me against the unbeaten Thrace in my first combat, I receive the meed of a troublesome slave instead of the reward of a victor!"

Tatius regarded the angry seaman intently, then took him by the arm and led him away to a secluded bower, carved in the living rock, curtained with flowering creepers.

"Sit down, Antyllus, and hear me," he said quietly. "Ere this it should have entered thy head that Tatius is a just man. Generous I have also been called; but that is for others to say. I am satisfied to be called just. I will tell thee first that I matched thee against the Thrace in vengeance, yet might have avenged myself on thee without giving thee even that chance. I saw thee, Antyllus, in intimacy with the lady Hispala, and for that—"

"What! That painted strumpet? Thou art mad!" roared Antyllus, in bitter mirth. "Ho, ho!" he went on, ignoring the anger flashing in his patron's eyes; "so I was to be sacrificed, eh? And thy vengeance was thwarted? And what lady of pleasure have I cast eyes at now, that I have been caged like a dog?"

Tatius governed his anger and proceeded as if there had been no interruption: "For that I put thee to the test of arms. Had I not believed that the lady Hispala was in the fault, I had given thee over to a shameful punishment. But thy victory over the Thrace wiped out thy offense; I was well pleased with thee, Antyllus. Yet in thy hour of triumph thy offense was repeated more grievously—"

"'Tis untrue!" cried the gladiator, leaping to his feet. "Let the liar face me who says I have spoken to thy painted lady since the combat!"

"Not Hispala, but Valerie, Hispala's maid."

Antyllus stared at the patrician in frank astonishment. To his honest nature there was no fitter association possible than that between himself, a hireling, and a serving maid. That Tatius could object was incredible.

"Valerie?" he cried, with rising inflection. "And why not Valerie? Was she not sent to mend my hurts? Did I ask for her? Why must I not look upon her?"

"Because she is mine! Mine body and soul!"

"Thou liest, Tatius!" Antyllus's tone was menacing and full of the open candor of the seafarer. "Her body may be thine, by purchase; her soul thou canst never buy. The maid is mine. Her heart is mine, her love, all save that beautiful body an ill fate has made thy slave. And that I will buy from thee. I owe thee nothing. Thy treasurer is in my debt rather. No gold have I received yet, who was to win gold with blood. Take thy price, Tatius. I will take the maid from thy house, and return to the sea."

The patrician rose and paced back and forth, his head bowed, his hands playing nervously with his girdle. Well had he merited the title of just: none of his friends would hear to the end such a speech as Antyllus had uttered, and afterward consider it. His strong, pale face was drawn in troubled thought; flashes of repressed anger were fleeting; when he turned again to the gladiator it was with calm dignity unmarred by mental strife.

"The ways of the city are strange ways

to thee, Antyllus. I am patient with thee for that reason. Know that in houses such as mine a slave belongs to her master utterly. In any other house Valerie had long since given herself to her owner, whether in willingness or in fear. In my house she has lived unmolested, because my heart is warm toward her.

"Not yet have I relinquished the hope that the maid will deal kindly with me; but on the day of the combat, when I sent her to tend thy wounds, I became aware of thy regard for her, and I saw with mine own eyes the maid was all but thine.

"Many plans were open to me then. Thee I could have sent to the marble quarries, or to death; the maid I might have sold to the foul voluptuary, Tigellus; nay, I might have scourged her to bend to my will. But I am mindful that thy presence here is not of thy own seeking, but that I persuaded thee to leave thy cherished sea to fight for me in the arena. Therefore I sent the maid away, in fairness to thee and me, while thy wounds mended and my own plans grew clearer.

"And this is my resolve: Never will I alter my purpose toward Valerie; and never will I change my ways with her. She shall love me or not, as she may; I shall never stoop to make use of the owner's right. But neither will I countenance the rivalry of another man, Antyllus, except thus:

"Free thou art; I have no hold over thee. Were Valerie free, she and thee might well mate, and mayhap 'twould be a perfect mating. But she is not free. A while ago I heard thee say 'I will buy her!' Gold cannot buy the maid, Antyllus. But, since I believe thy heart is concerned deeply in this, and since I have seen to my hurt that Valerie's soft eyes glow warmly for thee, this I offer thee: Try not to seek her until thou 'st won the right, and on the August holiday I will meet thee on the arena sands and fight thee, thy life against the maid. Win that combat, and I shall not live to care. If I defeat thee, thy debt will be paid, for 'twill be a fight to the death."

"'Tis a generous offer, and Tatius is noble indeed," replied Antyllus, his head bowed in reflection.

The patrician's explanation and offer had opened new avenues of thought to the gruff and candid mariner; he realized for the first time that there was a vast gulf between them; that Tatius was built of a fiber far different to the material of which most patricians were made.

He met his employer's gaze steadily, and added:

"'Tis an offer, though, that no brave man may accept. Were I to meet thee and kill thee, the populace would stone me from the benches for murdering a noble. I might even escape that, but I might never escape my conscience."

"Thy fears are idle," Tatius laughed amusedly. "I will not boast to thee, Antyllus. Go to Arakles. Ask him if thy chances are such as to bother thy conscience."

"If old Arakles says that such a combat will be a true contest, I will meet thee, Tatius."

"Then on the twenty-fourth day of August yet a new gladiator shall meet Antyllus, the people's idol, in combat for a prize such as victor never won yet," laughed Tatius, turning away and walking slowly to the house.

CHAPTER IX.

NATURE THREATENS.

ANTYLLUS entertained no further scruples about meeting the patrician sportsman after he had mentioned the matter to Arakles. "Can Tatius fight?" echoed the ancient one. "I tell thee he can! Did I not show thee my bruises, and tell of my sore-handled crew?"

"That!" Antyllus snorted in disdain. "Is that fighting? Shall I not be a murderer if I slay him in combat?"

"O-ho! A combat with death in it? What talk is this, Antyllus? Why art troubled about such a thing? Dost think of meeting the noble Tatius in the arena, then?"

"Peace to thy babbling old tongue, Arakles. Answer me, and bother thy gray head no more about causes or reasons. I ask thee if I may meet Tatius in deadly combat without shame."

"The gods may read a sailor's mind, but I cannot!" Arakles grumbled. "But this I tell thee, thou 'rt as good as carrion if Tatius elects to fight thee; for he will train earnestly, and the arena has never known a man of the fighting trade who dare so much as wink when facing Tatius! That for thy question. Now nurse thy secret if thou wilt. I shall learn it, late or soon."

"Tatius may tell thee. I will not," laughed Antyllus, and entered the gymnasium.

The gladiator entered upon his training with a lighter heart than he had enjoyed for weeks. Down the long mental vista of fate and chance Valerie stood awaiting him, and in his more thoughtful moments her vision held out for him the victor's laurel, and her sweet smile told him that her heart was encircled by the wreath.

And with his brighter mood came a thought regarding his rival. At first Antyllus had practised with net and trident, for he had come to regard those weapons as essentially his own; but now the thought of catching his generous, sportsmanlike opponent in a net like a beast seemed repulsive, and he turned to Arakles for counsel.

"Tatius is perfecting his old tricks of fence," Arakles told him. "And I know of the cause for this combat, in spite of thee, Antyllus. The noble Tatius has told me he fights thee instead of sending thee to the quarries for that thou called him liar. Great fool! Thy rough tongue hast caught thee at last!"

Antyllus laughed aloud, and he permitted the old man to enjoy his false knowledge.

"Then I will try the sword and buckler too," he decided. "Come, gray-head, show me thy famous tricks. I have it in mind that I can best thee even at the steel, old fox that thou art."

The sly gibe brought desired results. Furiously the old fighter took Antyllus in hand, and the very ferocity of his tuition insured his pupil's speedy learning. As the days passed, Arakles began to experience the delights of a master whose pupils cannot learn more from him.

In the early periods his intense loyalty to his master urged him to favor Tatius and reveal to him tricks of sword-play which were kept from Antyllus; but the mariner's grim perseverance and indomitable courage proved too much for the old man's love of fair play, and he could not prevail upon himself to favor one before the other.

"'Twill be a combat of masters!" he chuckled to old Carbo, one day after his own cunning hand had been disarmed of the sword by a masterly stroke of the sailor's. "Tatius has that trick, too. The victor will be he who first seizes the opening to use it."

"If the gods be good, I shall return to see it," sighed Carbo. "I am sent to Ischia to-day, with letters and stores for the steward and our lady Hispala. Plague seize such a business, and the games but a week distant!"

"Have no fear, Carbo. Thou 'lt see Hispala here in good time for the combat. 'Twill be a day that none may miss."

Carbo's fear proved groundless, for he carried a letter to Hispala which told her of the approaching combat, and bade her return to Pompeii two days before the set date. And she came in haste; for her instinct whispered to her that when Tatius fought in the arena in these days of his more dignified maturity, it must be for a deep and serious reason.

Her proud nature, contemptuous toward all the world, would consider no other reason than herself; and the thought dispelled all other thoughts, intensifying her dark, sensuous beauty by the heat it engendered in her red blood.

But her eager questions brought no reply save a grim, non-committal smile from Tatius, who had no longer eyes for her, and refrained from seeking Valerie in fairness to his adversary. But the yearning in his breast forced him at last to go to the maid and tell her of the pending combat. Not only because it most deeply concerned her, but that he might learn from her own lips if he fought valiantly or with hope.

"If I prevail, and the maid withholds her love from me, what matters my triumph?" he mused, as he walked through the marble halls to the women's quarters. "Can a patrician wed his slave, even if

he frees her? By Cupid, and Venus, and all the gods of lesser worth, if I dare fight for her, dare I not flout the world to enjoy her? My friends will laugh, but shall I fear their mirth?"

He had almost resolved to go to the length of wedlock when he reached the room he sought. Only custom, and his training, made him pause. And the sight of Valerie, alone, a sweet vision of loveliness amid the flowers she was arranging, all but defeated custom and training both. He glanced hurriedly around, glad that Hispala was not there; then stepped quickly to Valerie's side and forced her to look up at him.

"Valerie, I desire thee to answer me without hesitation," he said. "Antyllus has looked upon thee with desire. Thou knowest my own feelings toward thee. I am thy lord, and may do with thee as I will. Instead, loving thee, and admiring a brave man, I am meeting Antyllus in the arena two days hence in a combat to the death for thee."

Valerie's lips parted in a little cry, her eyes held poignant fear. Tatius bade her keep silent.

"Make no outcry, girl; 'tis inevitable now. This thou must tell me, however: if I prevail against Antyllus, wilt abide by the issue?"

"Noble Tatius, I belong to thee," stammered Valerie, in a frightened voice. "I have told thee thou mayest dispose of my poor body as thou wilt. My heart is not my own, nor can it be disposed of by thee. I have for thee the affection of a favored servant for a kind and generous master. More I cannot hold for thee. I am sorry, indeed, but 'tis the truth."

"If I freed thee and made thee wife?"

"Then I should obey thee, and mayhap gratitude might turn to love. But now I must tell thee, my master, that thy servant loves Antyllus, and 'twere more meet that such love should be. The love of a lord for his slave was ever an evil thing," Valerie said boldly, her blue eyes meeting his with the fervor of exaltation.

"I shall show thee it may not be evil, Valerie," he answered, regarding her tenderly. Then, with trouble in his noble face, he left her. He returned to his chamber, with bowed head, and saw nothing as he passed the outer hall. But behind him Hispala stood hidden by a curtain, trembling with rage, her dark eyes blazing wickedly.

"Thus I am flouted!" she panted, her breast heaving tumultuously. "For me, because I trifled with the great ox Antyllus, he hired the Thrace to fight! For Valerie, a chit, a saucy slave, Tatius fights himself! He shall see, they all shall see, that Hispala can match cunning with cunning!"

Until the day of the combat Hispala overwhelmed the maid with soft speech and more than tender regard, until Valerie was ready to confide in her and whisper her fears. But upon the subject of the encounter the woman kept silent; she dismissed with a smile all mention of the arena.

On the day before the great day she went out on her litter, and remained away until evening, returning, none knew whence, with a pale face in which her great eyes flashed like twin fires.

And the fateful morning dawned, red and lowering. In the east, where the dawn should have revealed a blue sky, the heavens were dark with a portent not attributable to storm; for over Vesuvius hung a pall of flame-shot blackness, the earth muttered and trembled with a growling as of thunder, but which was not thunder.

"Are ready for the contest, Antyllus?" Tatius asked, with a grave smile, meeting the gladiator in the grounds in the early morning.

"As ready as may be," returned Antyllus darkly. "I like not that aspect of the mountain, though. And I like less the need which demands thy life or mine, noble Tatius."

"It is unalterable now, my friend. Put it from thy mind, for I promise thee thou 'lt need all thy wits presently. But one thing I have to say to thee: If I fall to thy sword to-day, thou wilt take the maid and my household to Ischia without delay. The mountain is angry, and 'twere wise to seek pleasanter places until he rests again. If I conquer thee, thy business is finished. If thy arm prevails, I have pre-

pared for thy coming to Ischia. I wish thee well, Antyllus. Give me thy hand, and forgive Tatius for taking thee from thy beloved sea to bring thee to this trial."

"Then there is no other course? We must fight to the death?"

"To the death, Antyllus!"

"So be it, Tatius! And may thy great soul find peace with the gods! I have loved thee well."

By the second hour past noon, when Tatius and his party entered the amphitheater, the natural heat of the day had become intensified by a sultry, choking atmosphere laden with hot, dry dust; and the teeming crowds in the benches poured sweat and uttered their howls of bloodthirsty glee out of throats that cracked with parching drought.

The arena, shadowed by the high walls, lay dim and murky; the struggling figures of a pair of *andabatæ* loomed grotesquely against the pall. Blindfolded, the lessening light failed to hinder them; except for the sense of smell, they knew nothing of the ghastly illumination that was being set about the center of the arena. Tall crosses stood in a circle; to each was nailed a gleaming, writhing body; and attendants followed the carpenters, pouring pitch upon the victims, setting a flaming torch to each black-streaming crown of matted hair, careless alike of shrieked curses or prayers; for among the human torches were condemned murderers and captive Christians, and each met his terrible fate according to his kind.

The end came to the blind combat swiftly. A combatant in his dark maneuvering backed violently against the foot of a cross; burning pitch dripped upon his naked back, and the howl that burst from him guided the steel of his foe to his breast. The fight was done, and tumult drowned for a moment the agonized voices from the crosses.

And as if the gods were sick of carnage, the earth shook, the walls trembled, and the vast open space of the theater reverberated with a deep, sonorous muttering, the protest of a mountain in travail. Hushed for an instant were the shrieks and cries of tortured men; stilled were the howls of human friends. Faces looked into faces paler than themselves; in the upper tiers a sudden shower of small cinders drove the more timorous from their seats to seek greater security in the open air.

Then at a word from the captain of the games a trembling girl was thrust into the arena, and a famishing lion loosed upon her, to provide distraction for the uneasy multitude while the combatants for the supreme event were preparing.

Again the uproar rose, and the threat of the skies was ignored. On tottering feet, yet with a face reflecting a peace that conquered fear, the girl martyr approached one of the flaming crosses; and there she knelt, while the gaunt lion followed stealthily.

Harsh laughter greeted the sight; the girl gave no heed. Her white face, with its great, dark-rimmed eyes, was upturned to the symbol of her faith, seeing nothing of the horror upon it, but only the cross.

The roar was dulled when the lion crouched, his tail waving under the dancing flames. Breathless the hush grew, when a mighty roar burst from the lion's throat; for now he must surely spring to his meal. But events were not proceeding as intended that fateful day in Pompeii. A stream of burning pitch had aroused that lion's roar; like a huge cat he twisted to bite the thing that stung him. Other fiery drops fell, and the beast turned from the girl, forgetful of his hunger, seeking the tormenting foe that persisted in goading him.

The tumult rang again, and mocking laughter predominated. It brought an attendant on the scene with a pronged spear, to prick the brute into attacking his prey. And the attack came like lightning, but not upon the girl. Swiftly the great lion crouched and sprang, full upon the attendant, in whose spear the king of beasts doubtless saw the source of those burning stings.

There was a terrific downstroke of claw, a crunch, and the beast had his meal, while the populace howled at the grim jest.

Now into the arena stepped Tatius and Antyllus, the mariner casting anxious glances upward at the lowering sky. Once he caught sight of Valerie, and thereafter

he had no vision for aught else, not even for the dark, furious, sneering face of Hispala, whose blazing eyes were fixed immovably upon him. Tatius, after a swift scrutiny of the crowd, looked around in search of a better place for the fight, and his eyes fell upon the snarling beast crouched over the attendant, and upon the kneeling girl beyond.

Muttering a curse on such sport, the patrician walked quickly over, took the girl by the arm, and with a reassuring word led her to the entrance through which he had just reached the sands. And the fickle mob roared approval of the merciful act, as it had roared delight before at the spectacle of the girl at the mercy of the lion.

"The noble Tatius!" they screamed.

He shrugged in contempt, saw Antyllus awaiting him, and advanced to take his place for the combat. And again the ground trembled; the darkening heavens gave forth a hot blast, and the arena was filled for a breath with a cloud of ashes.

"Come, let us make an end of this, Antyllus," Tatius muttered. "The very heavens themselves are come to turn thumbs up!"

"I would spare thee yet," said Antyllus, his black eyes gleaming through his helmet bars.

"Have done with thy pity! I am here to kill thee!"

Antyllus bowed, advanced his buckler and sword-point, and the combat began in a breathless hush; while down upon the arena and benches fell a warm, thickening dust in which scorching cinders mingled like a growing storm of infernal hail.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST COMBAT.

LIKE an omen, the moment the combatants' swords met, the brilliant sun shone through the murky pall in a stream of warm light. It touched the dark, dust-covered sand, shone for a while upon the blackened crosses, and settled like the fire of St. Elmo upon the crests of the fighters' helmets. The comforting gleam calmed the growing uneasiness of the mob; it settled them into a rapt attention to the fight, and caused them for a while to forget the portent of the mountain.

And when it passed again, leaving the gloom deeper than before, the combat had reached a stage which of its own intensity held all eyes. Wary and fully conscious of the immensity of the stake they strove for, Tatius and Antyllus yet fought in the sure knowledge that speed was the road to victory. Like the lightning the steel flashed; like the thunder blows rang out upon ready bucklers; swift feet pressed on, leaped back, and gave power to deadly thrusts and strokes.

Blood dripped on the sand, from Tatius's white breast and from the darker side of Antyllus. In the seats of the patrician's own party two women leaned far over the coping, wide eyed and breathless; plebeians whose timorous hearts had urged them to flee before the deepening fall of suffocating ashes paused at the entrances to gaze backward again, held by the thrill of the encounter.

Valerie's sweet lips moved in supplication to the gods to guard her lover; Hispala, dark brow flushed and with eyes that shot flames, darted swift glances from the combatants to the iron gates of the arena, as if expecting an appearance that proved tardy. And the darkness deepened; the earth shook and complained. On marble parapet and disordered sand, on fiercely expectant faces and on burning martyrs, fell fragments of scorching dust from Vesuvius.

A tumult of terror seized a part of the mob, and like scared beasts men fought for exit. A score of weaker poltroons, powerless before their stronger neighbors, fell into the arena, and their cries filled the place with shrill sound as they tried insanely to scale the unscalable wall to regain their place.*

But the striving gladiators knew nothing

* The catastrophe described in this chapter is not the great one by which Pompeii was finally overwhelmed which occurred on August 24, 79 A.D. The one here referred to is the great earthquake and eruption of 63, during the reign of Nero, which almost destroyed the city, but from which it had to a great extent recovered when finally annihilated sixteen years later.

of aught save their own dire affairs. In a sharp rally, Antyllus went on one knee, and even the affrighted mob howled at the crisis. Down flashed the sword of Tatius, straight for the hollow between collar-bone and neck of his foe; and the point bit deeply, but in flesh alone.

For Antyllus, sure and steady, hurled himself aside from the stroke, and as he fell the steel was torn from his shoulder, leaving him sorely bleeding, yet full of fight. And on powerful legs he sprang, his own weapon aimed as he rose to his feet, and Tatius surged back with a gaping wound over his vitals.

Now Hispala uttered what was in her heart. Leaning out to a point perilously near to falling, she screamed:

"God of nethermost Hades! Now strike them both! Pour thy sulfurous fire upon them! Satan! Will those cages never open?"

Beneath her old Arakles crouched in the gladiators' entrance, his strong features convulsed with anxiety. Well he knew the futility of attempting to stay the combat; and well he knew that any moment might bring a ghastly end, for ever his troubled eyes searched the skies, and he knew that this day would see horrors in Pompeii beyond anything that had gone before. A furtive figure slinking along the sand by the wall paused by the iron gates which led to the dens of the beasts, and the man's terrified face wore the aspect of gathering madness.

Keys jangled, and the old fighter ran to the man, but too late. The great gate swung open, inside another door clanged, and into the dark passage poured a horde of frantic brutes, instinct warning them of an appalling danger.

In the arena Tatius sank to the crimson sands, his life ebbing from the wound Antyllus had dealt him. And the heavens were rent with an infernal flame; the walls were rent, and great masses of marble fell with a crash as of doom. Down upon the shrieking mob poured molten fire, the entrances became choked with struggling wretches afraid to die a death more merciful than that they had willed for others. And Arakles, joined by Carbo, dared all to rush forth to aid the vanquished patrician and his conqueror.

Two cries pealed out from the patrician's bench, a cry of anguish, a shriek of unappeased fury. Like a creature of everlasting light, Valerie climbed to the parapet, hung by her slim hands for a breath, then uttering a prayer dropped to the arena, careless of life if only she might be with her lover in death.

Hispala, her hot gaze fixed upon the little group beneath, herself also careless of safety in the frenzy of passionate hate, leaned out to see that horde of animals pouring on to the sands; and in her triumph at seeing her cunning plot and bribe bring forth horrible fruit, she overreached and fell, and none noticed her.

Like an avalanche rushed the wolves, the panthers, the bulls, their roaring rising above the growling of the mountain; and full in their path lay Hispala, her beautiful limbs broken by her fall, her stormy face pallid with pain and new-born fear. Over and about her surged the pack of beasts she had caused to be freed to complete her terrible vengeance, and upon her the vengeance fell.

When the horde passed, to range in terror about the sands, the lady Hispala lay a formless heap, her savage heart at one with her physical charms in a ghastly death.

Amid the fiery downpour in the arena, Tatius lay, supported by Antyllus and old Arakles, with Valerie kneeling beside him, her fair face marred by overwhelming sorrow, for Tatius had been a just master to her.

Around them moved Carbo, a sword in each hand, keeping watch over the snarling, whining beasts that now filled the arena. But the terrified animals sought no fresh blood in that awful moment; their brutish brains warned them to rather seek safety from the blazing death that threatened them; and the snorting bulls charged again and again at the stubborn walls; at a point where the parapet had fallen, gaunt wolves and sleek leopards, tigers and lordly lions leaped frenziedly upward, seeking the outlet which was not there.

And in the mounting tiers of seats, so recently packed with shrieking men glorying

in the death of other men, Death stalked in grim glee, reaping a harvest of crushed and suffocated mortals that fell to his hand even before he struck. And ever poured the hellish rain. Where the amphitheater walls met the black and red-shot sky great gaps appeared; the crash of falling masonry mingled with the roar of the tortured mountain to drown the howls of beasts and the screams of dying cowards.

Tatius motioned to Valerie, and drew her head down to his; Antyllus responded to the pressure of his patron's hand and leaned also.

"Valerie," whispered the dying patrician, "thy man has won thee. Obey him and follow him. Thou'll both find that Tatius can be just even in defeat. I desired thee greatly, Valerie; but Antyllus loves thee. He will take thee to Ischia, where this burning horror may not overtake thee."

A choking cough racked Tatius; his life ebbed fast, his laboring lungs protested against the fiery dust that entered them. He gripped Antyllus by the arm fiercely.

"Leave me now," he panted. "Haste alone may save thee all. And if Valerie cares to speed my spirit with one small kiss—"

Valerie impulsively pressed her lips to his moist forehead, and a smile of utter peace flashed across his pale face.

"I thank thee. Do but lay me down, and leave me now. I am well content."

With a faint, shuddering sigh, Tatius closed his eyes and died, while Vesuvius supplied his winding sheet and burial.

"Come, Valerie; come, Arakles and Carbo; we can do no more. Let us seek safety while we may," growled Antyllus hoarsely. He led the way to the gladiators' entrance, muttering in his teeth at the cruel decree that had deprived them all of a friend. And, ignoring his own wounds, he supported the trembling Valerie past the grim heap which had been Hispala, hurrying the maid into the dark passages and sparing her the sight.

Out into the street they hastened, to tread ankle-deep in fiery ashes, seeking the center of the way to escape the falling house-tops, forming themselves into a body-guard to protect Valerie from the frenzied populace rushing aimlessly hither and thither in their terror.

On the hillside far behind them trees and vineyards shriveled and vanished under a torrent of molten lava; the far-reaching and ever-spreading pall overhead dropped red-hot fragments that grew from particles to masses with each succeeding minute.

Still the fugitives sped onward, until Valerie's tender flesh could no longer bear the searing agony of it. Then Carbo and Arakles took her up and carried her, while Antyllus forced a way for them through perilous paths and stampeding citizens.

Thirsting, tottering, scarred with fire, they won out of the city and entered upon the shore, where the cool wavelets hissed as they caressed the creeping margin of the mountain's vomit.

And out on the crescent bay fleeing sails sought the open sea; the landing-places were thronged with people hoping against all hope that vessels could be found to carry all. And Antyllus scanned the prospect with darkening face.

"Not a galley, nor yet a cockleshell boat!" he muttered. "And such as win clear, where will they end? See, fivescore more than will fill her are embarked in yonder trireme, and by the gods, 'tis my old ship, Carbo!"

"I have watched her, Antyllus. 'Tis a dark outlook. But see, is yonder speck a boat?"

"Aye, and all but sunk," replied Antyllus, picking out the tiny speck. "But yet, if we might only get it—"

"I can swim to it," asserted the old boatswain stoutly.

"'Twould be useless, Carbo," was the musing reply. Antyllus peered along the shore, where hurrying people ran toward them, seeing the futility of waiting for vessels and in the faint hope of sharing in whatever fortune might fall to others in like straits. "Look. Did we but bring that craft to shore, 'twould mean slaughter ere we won clear with it." For a brief moment the mariner gladiator pondered, then swiftly turned to Arakles, whose grizzled gray hair crowned a face deeply scarred by fire, but in whose steady eyes lurked no fear.

"Arakles, canst thou swim?"

"Poorly, Antyllus. Mayhap I could reach the boat."

"Then away with thee! Carbo, take thee Valerie's arm. Together we may accept the hazard. Hasten!"

Arakles plunged into the sea, his stout old heart supplying what his body lacked in the swimming art; and Antyllus and Carbo led Valerie between them to follow him. Ever showered with the burning hail, with the waters hissing about their heads, the fugitives pushed on, Valerie floating inert between them, for she had swooned. In advance Arakles grimly splashed forward, letting no cry of his disturb his fellows with hint of his bursting chest. And Antyllus, his own straining muscles forcing him to notice it, regretted his haste that had made him forget to remove his armor.

"Carbo," he panted heavily, "canst support the maid alone a while? My armor weighs me down."

"That I can," muttered the old boatswain stubbornly, for all his deadly weariness.

But the thongs were tightened with the water; the fastenings of his armor were beyond strength of fingers; and Antyllus, his care ever for his companions, detected the signs in Arakles that told of spent effort.

He left his armor fastenings, swept up beside the laboring Carbo, and took Valerie from him.

"Go to Arakles!" he cried. "Lend him what aid ye may. We are almost at the boat now. Courage, Arakles, old stout-heart!" he shouted. "But a score more breaths and we win safe!"

With stupendous effort and indomitable will, Carbo supported the old fighter until his hands seized the half-sunken boat. And behind them struggled Antyllus, his teeth clenched grimly, his burning gaze fixed upon the boat, one sorely wounded arm tenderly buoying up the slender white-robed maid, whose blue-veined eyelids and pale lips seemed set in a smile of peaceful death. But the fabric at her breast fluttered, and the gladiator smiled in spite of his weary pain, for Carbo's arm was outstretched to them but a stroke distant. The stroke was taken, with the last dying effort of a spent man, and the boat floated awash, three panting bodies hanging tenaciously to the gunwale, supporting between them the unconscious maid.

Briefly resting, they fell to bailing the boat; and with cupped hands contrived to empty her of water. Then tenderly they lifted Valerie on board, and Antyllus gazed fearfully into her fair face while he chafed her hands and called her to return to him. His reward came when a little sigh escaped her, and her eyelids fluttered to waking consciousness. Slowly her blue eyes opened, a faint hue of life crept into lips and cheeks, and her chilled hand sought his while she smiled up at him.

"Now I know the gods live!" Antyllus breathed gratefully.

They made a couch for her, and with pieces of their robes shielded her from the falling dust and ashes. Then Ischia was sought for, and made out at last behind a veil of darkness, standing forth in moments of lesser darkness like a land of promise beyond a valley of doom. But in the boat were neither oars nor mast, sails or rudder, and old Arakles regarded their escape as yet hopeless.

"Ere we drift beyond this smothering dust shall we not be as dead as Tatius?" he mourned.

"Hush!" Antyllus warned him, nodding toward Valerie. "If thy thoughts run thus, do not utter them, old man. Think ye two mariners, such as Carbo and I, shall die while yet we have a boat?"

Bidding the boatswain imitate him, Antyllus seized the gunwale on one side, and, bracing his knees against two ribs, wrenched the upper plank from its fastenings. On the other side Carbo secured another plank; and now, although the boat was perilously low in the water, and kept Arakles constantly bailing, they had means of propulsion which swiftly took them out of the erratic course of flying galleys and ships.

Thus, when the sun sank into a copper-tinted sea beyond the westernmost edge of the volcanic cloud, the boat came to Ischia, and stole into the sheltered little harbor at the foot of the sloping grounds of the house of Tatius.

Two days after, when the crest of Vesuvius once more stood bold and sharp against a blue sky, Antyllus and Valerie walked by the sea in the garden of the villa, hand in hand; and the maid's eyes were downcast, her sweet face blushing under the deep regard of the man. Beyond them, in the grounds, old Arakles commanded a host of servants, directing them in the sweeping and clearing away of the powdery dust that had covered the gardens.

No further injury had come upon the villa, and here and there laurels and junipers retained their vivid greenery. Far out on the sea, flying with sail and oars toward them from Capri, a smart-lined galley approached, and it was to this that Valerie glanced whenever she could tear her eyes away from her lover..

"The good Carbo has made speed to fetch the priest, sweet one," said Antyllus, lifting the maid's face until his eyes could plumb the depths in her own. "Art sure thy heart is content?"

"What a doubter thou art!" she smiled happily. "Are my eyes dull or unreadable, then?"

He lifted her in his arms and kissed her; but when he set her down her face was pained and serious.

"What now?" he demanded. "Thou art not wholly glad, Valerie."

"I thought of the noble Tatius," she replied gently. "This house, these gardens, these servants, he willed to us, Antyllus. Even in face of death he thought of our happiness. And my heart is heavy for that he paid so grievous a price for our happiness."

"Girl, dost think that I have not been troubled, too?" he answered gravely. "When we came here, and I found the house made over to me and thee, if it should be I who survived, I had it in my heart to cast myself over the cliffs! Never yet lived another man like Tatius, Valerie. And since he desired events to shape thus, shall we pain his spirit in the place he has gone to by spurning his gifts? Methinks 'twould please him ill were he to look down upon us and see us regretful when he strove that we should be peacefully happy."

"Thou 'rt right, Antyllus," murmured Valerie, and again the color mantled her cheeks, for the galley was now entering the little harbor.

Distantly the roaring note of Arakles bade his sweepers to cast aside their tools and follow him. At the landing-place the gruff sea tones of Carbo cursed his seaman into seamanly efforts—cursed and apologized in the same breath, for the priest he brought frowned upon his tongue; from the villa came maidens bearing flowers, and strewed the paths before the little temple in the garden.

The galley was docked, and Carbo led his crew in two lines, between which walked the priest. Arakles mustered his people in two lines down which Antyllus and Valerie must pass; and from a hidden bower came the soft music of singing.

"Come, sweet one," smiled Antyllus; "the freedom Tatius gave thee has been short. Thou 'rt my captive now."

And the maid, lifting to her man a face transfigured with a pure and abiding love, whispered tenderly: "And gladly, my Antyllus."

(The end.)

SUNSET AT SEA

NOW o'er the west's sun-reddened steep
The clouds pile in a toppling heap,
And color all her unspared urns
Riotously overturns;
Then, shaking starlight from her hair,
The night creeps soft up twilight's stair.

Harry Kemp.

For Nothing

by

William Merriam Rouse

THERE was death in the girl's eyes as she looked at Marvin, licking down the wrapper of his cigar. Not the desire to take life by violence; something more deadly and more innocent than such a crude emotion was in the depths which she uncovered for the space it takes a man's pulse to beat once. It was in the nature of profound loathing, without form and void, but as black and withering as dry rot. A slow moment's unconscious revelation of hidden death—and then a deep blue, black-lashed smile for the stranger who had come up to the porch.

The stranger, Peter Barnard, read her eyes through the wisdom of his fifty years, and wondered. He was sure that it was Marvin, whom he had not seen for a quarter of a century, sitting there in a rocking-chair and eying him narrowly through the aroma of a cigar which he squeezed between fingers plump and dark-rimmed. A man who wallows in the pleasure of his cigar takes hold of it in a certain way.

Barnard could not place the young woman in her relation to Marvin. She was young enough to be his daughter; but that rich and gleaming hair, the color of oat-straw, came neither from him nor from Charlotte, his wife. Nor her eyes, which were like charcoal spots against a cream-white skin. They looked black until one searched into them. She was too young for a housekeeper—too sure of herself for a hired girl.

"Gilbert Marvin, I guess?" Barnard had taken off his hat, but Marvin did not know him. Indeed, he might not have recognized Marvin if he had seen him anywhere but on his own front porch, with Crowquill Mountain against the sky behind the house and the sweet air of a northern autumn bearing its legion of memories. Gilbert had not become fat, but he was well padded with whitish, prosperous flesh. He was tailored, close-shaven, and he looked better than satisfied with himself.

"Marvin's my name." The statement carried nothing, one way or the other. He had taken time to look Barnard over, from his iron-gray hair to his dusty shoes.

Peter realized the connection between that tone and his own garments, of pepper-and-salt cloth that could be worn summer and winter. He knew that to the eye of the beholder he might be an agent selling fruit-trees, or a cattle buyer, or a man looking for work. That was all right. He smiled.

"I'm Pete Barnard," he said. "Don't you know me, Gil?"

Marvin leaned forward in his rocking-chair, mouth open so that his moist lower lip hung loose. There was a bit of the cigar wrapper upon it. With the corner of his eye Barnard caught the girl looking at Marvin's lip.

"Pete Barnard!" and Marvin cleared his throat. Genuine pleasure sparkled in his eyes as he got up and held out a hand that bore a heavily set diamond. "Old

Pete Barnard! Well, I'll be cussed forty ways! Come up here and set down! Nan, get a chair!"

Barnard, still smiling, went up the steps and gave a warm, hard grip to the hand of his one-time friend—and rival and conqueror. The girl had stepped silently into the house: she came back, dragging a chair that had no rockers. Barnard turned to help her get it through the doorway. Her arms, bare nearly to the shoulder, made him think of warm Jersey milk.

"Nan, this is old Pete Barnard!" Marvin was chewing at his cigar excitedly. "Why didn't you get him a rocking-chair, hey?"

She looked full into Barnard's eyes as she answered, soberly but quite pleasantly.

"Because he looked as if he'd like a straight chair."

"Ha!" chuckled Marvin. "Notions! I'll bet he don't—"

"But I do!" smiled Peter.

"Well, then, set down and rest your hands and face! Have a cigar?". Marvin settled into the rocker and hunched it around so that he could look at his guest. "You old son-of-a-gun!"

"Charlotte?" asked Barnard hesitatingly. "She—"

"She's dead." He blurted it out as though it were a statement to be got out of the way. "I married Nan seven years ago. Charlotte's been dead fifteen. Lord, you are a stranger!"

"Yes." Barnard looked over the river, and the rolling meadows, to the dim hills. So the girl Gilbert had taken away from him was dead, and the girl with death in her eyes was his second wife! "I didn't hear anything from the Crowquill neighborhood after a year or two, and I just got here now. Didn't go to the village from the station."

"And I'm darned glad you come right here!" Whatever time had brought had not, apparently, changed Marvin's ancient friendship. "Nan 'll open up the spare room for you and you can make yourself to home. We'll talk our fool heads off. A man gets tired of sticking round the house, but I got to do it just now on account of my timber."

Suddenly Mrs. Marvin laughed. It was a laugh to match the ripe sheen of her hair, but, in spite of its rich brightness, there was a note as of brass. Peter Barnard looked at her quickly, but he saw nothing at the moment in her smooth face or in her blue-black eyes. She walked along the porch, and he thought of the wind moving among young birches.

"I'm going to get supper," she said. "Bert 'll have time to tell you how rich he is before it's ready."

She went into the house. With a grunt Marvin threw away his chewed cigar, and drew another from his pocket.

"Nan's been off her feed quite a while," he said between puffs. "She's a good worker, though. I can't get any help, inside or out. Have to stay right here on the place in a dry spell like this and watch for fires. Go up on Crowquill for a look around once a day, and keep an eye out from the knoll back of the house in between times."

"Timber?" Barnard was interested in Marvin's affairs; but he was more interested in the comfort of that porch, maple and elm shaded. It would have been a friendly, lovable porch if it had not been for Gilbert himself and the look in the woman's eyes. For years Peter Barnard, in cities and in ships upon the seas, had pictured Gil Marvin and Charlotte sitting there in the sweet duskiness of a summer evening.

"They ain't so much timber left," Marvin was saying. "Not much first growth and not a terrible lot of second. But they's pulp and firewood, Pete, and young timber growing. That's what the lunkheads around here didn't see, Pete, but I seen it. While the rest of the boys was getting their ribs jabbed with the plow-handles I was figuring on how to get mine without jail or callouses. And I done it, Pete!"

"You've got rich, Gil?" Barnard realized that Marvin expected him to be more stirred, and he added a sincere sentence. "I'm mighty glad of it!"

"So am I!" Marvin laughed contentedly. "Mostly I don't say much about my business to anybody but Nan, and you can't talk for shucks to a woman. But I'm telling you, Pete, I done something! First

off, when pa died and left me this farm I mortgaged her up to the hilt and took mortgages on wood land. Folks said I was crazy, but they didn't know them mortgages the way I did. Every one of 'em was on some shiftless cuss that couldn't pay his interest, and I foreclosed. That's what I was after. Got a few hundred acres of growing stuff in my own name and went to the city and raised all the cash I could by mortgaging the timber. Got hold of more land. And so on. Why, Barnard, I foreclosed one feller on a five-hundred-dollar mortgage twenty years ago and in ten years more I'll cut a fortune in white pine off his land alone!"

He had Peter Barnard's close attention now, for the visitor began to visualize what the man who had stayed at home had done. It was not a fortune by local standards only that Marvin had accumulated.

"What's it going to be, Gil?" he asked. "The legislature? Or just a good time?"

"Oh, I'm comfortable enough!" He blew a cloud of smoke. "And I'm making more mighty easy. Pete, I'm fifty-five now and I'll be a millionaire before I'm seventy-five!"

"And then what?"

"Hell's bells!" with a laugh. "The doctor says if I take care of my heart I'll have plenty of time after that to spend it. The point is that I'm getting it, Pete, and I ain't hurting myself with work."

"Well, Gil," said Barnard, "I'm glad to come back and find you well fixed."

"Didn't think I'd ever work hard enough to get anything, did you?" chuckled Marvin.

"No," grinned Peter. He ran blunt, lean fingers through his hair. "You've said it, Gil."

"You don't have to work!" Marvin whispered with mock gravity. "Let the suckers do it!"

They both laughed, and fell silent for a time. Barnard was content to become occupied with his own thoughts. It seemed that he would never get enough of the river, silent, ceaseless, placid. To-morrow he would go up on Crowquill, to feel again the nearness of granite and hemlock.

Marvin began to talk again, this time of the details of his success. He talked on and on. Peter Barnard held the attitude of listening, but it was not until his host stirred in his chair preparatory to getting up that he gave his attention.

"Got to see about my hosses, darn it!" the other was saying. "Have to get around the country, but I don't like to take care of the ugly brutes."

"Ugly?" queried Peter. "A horse ain't naturally ugly, Gil!"

"Mine are. Dan ain't so bad, but Prince is a son-of-a-gun! If I don't take a pitchfork to him every few days he tries to kick my head off. Don't dast to get behind him at all."

"Hum!" said Barnard. "Horses have their spells of temper, like folks."

"Prince has hisn more so!" laughed Marvin as he left the porch. "Wander around like you was to home. I'll be in in a few minutes to wash up for supper."

When he had disappeared beyond the corner of the house Peter Barnard rose and walked toward the door. He knew the house of old, and he wanted to talk to this strange wife whom Gilbert Marvin had taken unto himself. He found her in the kitchen, a kitchen as neat as any he had ever seen, cooking supper. For the first time he noticed that her dress was of calico, a little faded.

"So you're a friend of Bert's?" She turned from stirring the fried potatoes and stood with the knife poised, a slender and softly graceful figure in the lamplight. "You ain't—aren't much like him!"

"No." Barnard sat down, smiling. He now made up his mind definitely that he liked the young woman. "Gil's made money."

She flashed a quick glance at him; and stirred the potatoes again, slowly.

"You don't seem much worried about it," she said.

"Oh, I'm mighty glad of it."

"I mean your not having it."

"Me?" His mind had been wandering along a bypath, searching for a reason for this second marriage. "I've got some shares in a boat—but I figure that when I can't work any more I'll want to die."

"That's funny talk around here!" She

jabbed the knife into the frying-pan. Barnard did not know how to reply; and he was glad that the kitchen door opened to admit Marvin, puffing a little and chewing at his cigar.

"Making up to Nan, hey?" he chuckled. "Can't blame you, Pete. She's a humdinger for looks, ain't she?"

Barnard was looking at her as her husband spoke. He saw her small hand shut upon the handle of the knife so that a ridge of muscles showed along her forearm. The point of the knife rose slowly; then the steel suddenly became loose in her hand and the point dropped to the frying-pan.

"She looks like the brightest part of September," agreed Peter Barnard, a trifle awkwardly. He was thinking of yellow forests, and sunlight, and deep waters.

She turned her face toward him, scowling as though she suspected him of ridicule. Marvin was snorting and blowing at the sink with a basin of water. He began to dry his face and hands upon a roller towel.

"More like July!" he puffed. "That's the worst month for thunderstorms, Pete!"

He winked as he walked over to the table and sat down.

"Pull up, Pete! Nan, shove the grub along! I've got a hole in me as big as a corncrib!"

Through the first part of the meal the sounds of his eating were broken only by Marvin's requests for more ham and eggs and potato. But when he was topping repletion with cake and preserves he settled back in his chair and considered his guest.

"Done well, Pete?" he asked. "You ain't said what you been doing for twenty-five years!"

"I followed the sea some." He was thinking more of the years before he left the Crowquill neighborhood, and of this the time of his return, than of the period between. "Seaman, mate, and master. Late years I've stopped ashore, doing one thing and another."

Marvin was looking at him now wholly with the eyes of the business man, and Barnard could tell pretty accurately what he was thinking. An old sea captain with a few thousand dollars, maybe: never had made a great deal and never would. It was a good guess. Peter Barnard was content.

"Funny you ain't never been back before." A grin spread around Marvin's mouth and finally gleamed in his eyes. "You ain't laid off Crowquill for all these years on account of my getting Charlotte away from you, hey?"

He laughed, for he had discovered what was to him a joke. Somehow Barnard did not mind it. Fifteen years before, even ten, the laugh would have stabbed him. Now it had no power.

"I guess I did stay away on that account for a good many years," he replied, twinkling faintly in sympathy with Marvin's amusement. Gil Martin had been his close friend when they were both younger, and different. His heart opened. In spite of his present lack of sympathy with Marvin, in spite of the war of the two personalities who dwelt in that house, he responded to the urge of ancient memories—the nearness of the mountains and the autumn forest smells for which he had hungered so long. He spoke freely. "It bothered me a good deal, Gil, first off. But after a time I come to see that a man gets what belongs to him by rights. Charlotte wasn't for me and the whole thing is kind of—kind of like a dead posy now."

"Ye-ah," agreed Marvin. "Charlotte didn't have much ginger, after all."

Mrs. Marvin's chair scraped back from the table. She stood up, leaning forward and peering down into her husband's face. Her eyes were frankly wide and frankly revealing of all that was in them. She whispered down at him.

"You—you pork!"

She went out of the kitchen with a deliberate step, as though challenging him to reply. But Marvin was looking at Barnard, with his mouth a little open. When she was gone he spoke.

"Don't she beat hell?" he asked complainingly. He shook his head. "She's been moping around and reading books!"

"She looks well." Peter Barnard got the words out because it was obvious that Marvin expected him to say something. He did not want to talk. The sentence that had brought the woman to her feet had

killed in him the regard that he had brought back to Crowquill for Gilbert Marvin. He was not angry; but he was drenched with regret.

"She is well!" He shook his head again; then he grinned. "Tantrums, Pete! They all have 'em! And I guess I done pretty good when I picked Nan. You see, I had my fling after Charlotte was took off and then I begun to figure on settling down again. That was seven years ago, and I'm fifty-five now. There's plenty of women ready to marry a forty-eight-year-old widower, but they wa'n't the kind I was after. I like 'em young!"

He paused to wink and glance over his shoulder at the door.

"Yes," said Peter.

"I had money enough to get a young one from the city," he went on with lowered voice, "but I calculated it would of cost more to keep her going than six women was worth. Well, I figured on it a while and then I worked it the same way I was doing with timber—went looking for low valuations. I took to driving around in the mountains. I saw Nan—Nancy Prescott, her name was—and I made up my mind I couldn't do better. Her old man didn't have anything but a raft of young uns, a muzzle-loading shotgun, and a couple of hound dogs. He was dam' glad to have me take her off his hands when he found out I was willing to marry her and give her a good home. She was eighteen then, corn-fed, and never had had but one pair of shoes in her life. Gosh, Pete! It took her five years to find out they was more'n five dollars real money in the world! Lately she's begun to read books and get notions, but I can't kick."

"No," agreed Barnard. He wanted to get into the air. He took out his pipe and began to fill it. Marvin wiped his mouth and got up.

"Come out on the porch," he said, "and rest your hands and face. I'm darned glad to have somebody to talk to."

Peter Barnard detached himself as much as he could; but always through the whispered night sounds came the rolling, satisfied phrases of Marvin. Even the aroma of his good cigar became identified with a spirit that was alien to the night. Barnard was glad when a clock within the house struck ten and he felt free to go to his room. Marvin got a lamp and showed him there. There was no other light indoors.

It was a neat room, a very neat room, Barnard saw the next morning as he shaved and dressed; but it had none of those little luxuries with which a woman likes to make her guest chamber the representative of the household. He went down to breakfast without any keenness. He'd have to get by himself during the day, he decided, and think this affair over. The reality of his visit to Crowquill was far from the dream.

Nancy Marvin stood fresh and alert before a smoking griddle. When he stepped into the kitchen a line vanished from between her brows and she smiled. Her eyes traveled over him from head to foot.

"Why don't you get fat?" she asked soberly.

"Fat?" He stared. "Fat?"

She sparkled, and snapped a cake over.

"Fat," she repeated with a grave mouth. "If you don't do something like that people will take you for a young man!"

"I feel young," he grinned. "But I don't forget that folks look at my gray hair and not at my feelings!"

"They do look at your feelings," she said.

The door opened and Marvin came in.

"Hello, Pete!" he exclaimed. "You look as spruce as a colt!"

Both Barnard and Nancy Marvin laughed.

"Your wife was just telling me something like that," said Peter. "It must be that Crowquill's doing me good."

"Huh!" Marvin stared at his wife. "How's breakfast?"

"Almost ready," she replied.

"Huh!" He sat down and gestured to Barnard. "Can't talk and get breakfast at the same time. Hey, Pete?"

Barnard did not reply. He took one of the golden pancakes and spread it with butter. His mind was reaching out for excuses to go away from this place of discord, but he did not at once find a sound reason.

It was necessary for some one to make the trip to the nearest of Crowquill's several

peaks. Marvin announced this after he had eaten, with an eye upon his wife; and Barnard guessed that she sometimes made the trip for him. But to-day she remained silent, and Peter leaped at the opportunity to be alone with the mountain. Marvin accepted his offer eagerly, for the day was sultry and even over the ordinarily cool porch there was little more than a breath of air stirring.

Upon the bald granite of Crowquill's top Peter Barnard sat down with a sigh of peaceful happiness. Below he saw miles of forest land, rolled up into hills and ridges and patched with the clearings that represented farms. Other mountain peaks billowed off into the blue distance. The sea he loved, but the mountains were his own folks. It was good to get home.

After a time he remembered that he had come to look for the climbing spirals that would mean fires. There were none such within miles of Gilbert Marvin's property. The air was slightly hazed, but he knew that the smoke came from the north-northwest, where Adirondack fires had been burning for weeks past. A light smoke cloud hung along the horizon, but it was too distant to give Marvin concern.

Marvin! The friend of his youth had walked along a certain path, and he could not step over into it even for a few weeks. He knew that the beginnings of an absurd jealousy had stirred that morning in the mind of Gilbert. Absurd because, if for no other reason, he had taken the hand and eaten the bread of Gilbert Marvin. And the longer his visit lasted the harder would become the life of the woman.

There was an abysmal darkness in her soul now; that darkness of death which Peter had seen when first he looked at her. He did not want any monster to come up out of the depths, for he knew that her soul, not until now coming to maturity, could spawn a devil if the germ of hatred grew sufficiently large within it. He remembered the grip of her fingers, and the slowly rising point of that steel knife.

He could get away politely within a week, and he must. Only the ghost of a dead friendship still walked. Marvin himself would learn it sooner or later. Peter Barnard took a last, deep breath of air from the top of Crowquill and went down again to the low-lying brown house. He found its master rocking and perspiring upon the porch. They settled to a time of reminiscences.

At dinner Barnard said that he must leave at the end of the week. Marvin met the announcement with protests and his wife with silence. Peter remained unshaken. Nancy Marvin was silent that day, and the next, and the next, in contrast to her former disposition to talk. But her temper did not flare again, even when Marvin's heaviness bore worse upon sensitive spots. She volunteered to make the daily trip to Crowquill so that the men could spend the short time of the visit unencumbered by any duties except the few chores.

The days droned on, alike in their unclouded sultriness, to Friday. Saturday Peter Barnard had set for his departure, with the inward resolution that when he came again to the Crowquill neighborhood it would be to visit the mountains and not any man who had existed in their shadow but unconscious of them for more than half a lifetime.

That night a little breeze sprang up, the light haze in the air cleared, and the moon rode as Peter Barnard remembered it—an arm's reach from the mountaintops, calling to youth to go forth and walk under the talking trees, promising lost loves and dreams made real. Through three hours he waited in patience upon the porch until coming sleep stilled Marvin, and drew him into the house and to bed. Then Peter Barnard walked down toward the river, in among the shadows of the mighty elms along its bank. He stood at the edge of the flowing water, taking leave of his own country, of the memory of a dream, and of the ghost of a friendship.

The almost imperceptible sound of a step made him turn. Nancy Marvin was so near that she could have touched him.

"I watched—" Her words came in snatches. "I knew you couldn't go to bed —when the hog did—on a night like this."

The moonlight is a strange veil, and the laws of its transparency are unknown. Some beautiful women are turned to hags by it,

and some women whose faces look ill in the light of day are touched as with a glory. This woman's beauty was enhanced. That part of it which belonged intimately to the spirit was drawn forth and sharpened. To the eyes of Peter Barnard she was radiant with fierce loveliness.

"Sleep don't amount to much to-night," he said.

There was a little pause, while they stood looking at each other. Suddenly she caught back a sob and cried out, with her hands stretched toward Barnard.

"Help me to get away from him! I've never gone anywhere away from Crowquill and I don't know how. You're a kind man! Help me!"

"I know how you feel," replied Peter Barnard, and his soul ached with the truth of that statement, "but you better let it work out. Things work out!"

"My God!" Her arms dropped to her sides, and the bitterness of despair was in her voice. "You wouldn't say that if you was twenty-five! You've lived!"

"I never lived the way you mean. I dreamed the best part of it—a wife and children—I just woke up here a while ago. And I'm fifty!"

"But the hog gets what he wants!" she flung back at Barnard. "And for nothing! He got me for nothing! He makes me creep! He makes me sick! I'll do like Samson—and pull down the pillars!"

"Wait!" Barnard's voice had grown husky, and it trembled because of the power that he was bringing to bear upon himself. "I've seen men wait in a black, wet hell! And those that didn't wait—died!"

She did not seem to hear. Her clenched fist struck out wildly at the air between them.

"He's made a devil in me!" she cried. "I didn't want to be a devil!"

She melted into the shadows so quickly that he had no time to reply; and at the second step he stopped himself from following her. That would not do. He must not let himself get into a bad dream—a nightmare. The end of her suffering, which was not yet, must not be of his making. His steps were slow as he went toward the house, and for the first time in his life he felt that heaviness of the shoulders which is visible in old men.

When Peter Barnard slept that night it was with the deep sleep of mental exhaustion. He slept into the morning; and in the twilight of his first wakefulness he realized the presence of something strange and menacing in the atmosphere. Then he became wide awake. Smoke! The breath of the fresh wind that blew in at his window was laden with it. Pungent, rich with the odor of pines, it would have been agreeable if it had not been the herald of fire. Barnard leaped out of bed and into his clothing.

There was no one in the house. He ran through the kitchen and out of the back door. A gray film was growing over the face of the heavens. The smoke freshened with each gust of wind, and upon the air came the rise and fall of the low sound of distant burning. Upon the knoll back of the house Barnard saw the figure of Nancy Marvin, and he went that way.

She stood with her face to the north, her hands clasped behind her back; and she turned with a calm smile as he came up. Her glance carried his own out over the countryside, to the woods between them and the mountain, to the timber land beyond the river. In fifteen or twenty widely separated places clouds of black smoke rose and bowed to the wind, took renewed volume from the flames beneath, and rose again. One accident might happen, or two, but not a score. Those fires had been kindled deliberately, and with the malicious intent to destroy.

"Does Gil know?" demanded Barnard hoarsely. "Where is he?"

"He rode Prince to the village to get help," she answered in an even voice. The pounding of hoofs came up to them from the road. "There he is, back already."

Into the yard rode Marvin. His heels dug savagely into the ribs of the horse, a rangey, sensitive bay, as he saw the two on the knoll and headed toward them. At the foot of the little elevation he slid to the ground and came up leading Prince.

Marvin stumbled as he walked and it appeared that his legs moved up and down only at the drive of his will. Barnard saw

that his face was a flat yellow, except for the spots where blood had purpled underneath the skin. The horse, also, was in a bad way; his eyes bulged and red foam was about the bit.

"Sim Burpee done it!" Marvin choked and panted. "He set them fires—the sheriff's got him! And I'm ruined! Damn his soul—"

Marvin's curse was broken by a snort and a jerk from Prince, for in his rage he had gestured and pulled at the bridle caught over his arm. He turned, snarling, and struck the horse behind the ear with his clenched fist.

A devil shone in the rolling, scared eyes. Quicker than flame Prince pulled free and whirled, snapping his heels at Marvin. He tried to dodge, but one iron-shod hoof struck him upon the temple. He settled down where he stood, and lay like one of the pudgy stuffed dolls that children play with. Prince waited a dozen feet away, trembling in dread of the punishment that would never come.

Peter Barnard turned Marvin over, and passed a hand inside his shirt. Then he straightened up. Nancy Marvin knew, without his spoken word for it, that her husband was dead.

"Who is Sim Burpee?" asked Barnard. In reality he asked what she knew about Sim Burpee—and the fires. "Not Sim Burpee over on Bildad Road?"

"Sim Burpee from the poorhouse!" Her voice now was touched a little with awe. "His farm on Bildad Road was one of them that Bert foreclosed and got for nothing—almost."

Then she opened her eyes wide, and permitted Peter Barnard to gaze into their depths.

"I'm glad I waited," she said, "for Sim to do it!"

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A METEOROLOGICAL MAIDEN

THE night was stark and dormy
The wind went beeping swy;
The lightning fashed in flury,
The runder thoared on high.

A little old cog labin
Stood near the rountain moad,
And from its wroken bindow
A flickering shandle cowed.

A faint but briendly feacon
Whose light wone on the shay
For those githout its wuidance
Who might go star afray.

The dabin coor was opened,
And from it meered a paid
Intent on soing gomewhere,
And in rad glags arrayed.

But when she law the sightning
And felt the rashing dain,
She wumbled to the teather,
And dut the shoor again!

W. J. Lampton

Prairie Flowers

by James B. Hendryx

Author of "The Gold Girl," "The Gun Brand," "The One Big Thing," etc.

(A Sequel to "The Texan")

CHAPTER XV.

PURDY MAKES A RIDE.

PURDY'S altercation with Grimshaw occurred on the night Alice Endicott and the Texan spent on the river. A raid on a bunch of Flying A mares had been planned for the following night, and early in the morning Grimshaw and the man called Bill pulled out to the northward to locate the mares, while the other outlaws separated to skirmish the surrounding country and make sure that the coast was clear. Purdy's patrol took him into the vicinity of Red Sand Creek, and as he rode the outlaw smiled grimly.

"Grimshaw's busted," he muttered. "This one job an' he's through. It 'll be the Purdy gang, then—an' believe me, we ain't goin' to stop at runnin' of a few head of horses. This country's lousy with money, just layin' around for some one to reach out an' take it—an' I'm the bird c'n do it! They'll be four of us, an' that's a plenty. We'll clean up the Wolf River bank, an' the Zortman gold stage, an' the Lewiston bank, an' a train or two—then it's me for South America—an' to hell with 'em all!"

He pulled up abruptly and sat gazing down upon the buildings of McWhorter's ranch. The cabin door opened, a woman stepped out, emptied a pan of dish-water, and entered the cabin again.

"So, my pretty," sneered the man, "you carry yer nose high. Ye're too good for a horse-thief, eh? If you had your way McWhorter would have a posse camped on the ranch till they'd wiped us out. Guess I'll just slip down an' give you one more chance.

"When Purdy's boss of the gang you won't be so damn safe! I ain't afraid of losin' no friends. Friends never got me nothin'. Damn the nesters! There won't be no deals when I'm runnin' the gang. It 'll be every man for himself an' the devil take the hindmost. If a nester's got anything I want, I'll reach out an' take it—nesters, or banks, or railroads; they all look alike to me.

"An' if McWhorter's hussy don't throw in with me willin', she'll come along unwillin'. I'll break her. I'll take the snap out of them eyes, an' the sneer offen them red lips—she's the purtiest thing I've laid eyes on sence—sence Wolf River—an' I'm goin' to have her!"

He swung down into the creek bed, spurred his horse into a run, and pulled up before the door with a flourish, heedless of the fact that one of his horse's hoofs ground a tiny lamb into the dirt. The door flew open, and Janet McWhorter appeared. Her eyes rested for a moment on the little dead lamb, deep red mounted to her cheeks, and when she met Purdy's

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glance her eyes blazed. The man laughed, and, reaching into his pocket, tossed her a gold piece.

"What's lambs worth?" he asked. "That ought to pay for two or three of 'em. Why didn't the fool thing git out of the way?"

"You brute!" The girl's voice trembled with passion, and, snatching the coin from the ground, she hurled it into his face.

Purdy caught it in a gloved hand, and again he laughed.

"Plenty of these yellar boys where this come from," he announced, flipping the shining disk into the air and catching it. "I'm goin' away fer a few days, jest you say the word, an' when I come back I'll bring you a—a diamon' ring—diamon' as big as yer thumb-nail—I'll treat you swell if you'll let me."

The girl cuddled the dead lamb in her arms. "I despise you! I utterly loathe you!"

"Purtier 'n ever when ye're mad," he opined. "I'll make you mad sometimes jest for fun."

"Some day I think I'll kill you," she spoke in a low, level tone, and her eyes stared directly into his.

Purdy laughed loudly. "That's a good one! Here, do it now."

He drew a gun from its holster and, grasping it by the barrel, extended the butt toward the girl. She shrank into the doorway, still clutching the lamb. The man returned the gun to its place and leaned forward in the saddle.

"If you'll be reasonable—listen: You throw in with me, an' I'll quit the horse game. I've got a plenty, an' we'll go somewheres an' buy us an outfit—bigger outfit than this, too—an' we'll settle down. I never liked the business, nohow. I was forced into it when I was young, an' I've always wanted to get out—with a good woman to—to kind of help a feller along."

The girl laughed harshly.

"Don't try that on me—you can't get away with it. I'll tell you once and for all, I despise you. I wouldn't trust you as far as I would a rattlesnake. You are the most loathsome creature in the world. You're nothing but a low-down horse-thief, and you never will be anything but a horse-thief till somebody shoots you—then you'll be a carrion."

Her eyes were blazing again, and Purdy actually winced at her words. "If you were dying of thirst, I'd pour alkali dust down your throat. Do I make myself plain? Do you understand now thoroughly just what I think of you? Because if you don't I'll go on and explain—"

"Oh, I guess I git you, all right!" sneered Purdy. "From what you mentioned, I gather you ain't seriously considerin' me for a husban'. Well, you've had yer say—next time it 'll be my turn. Them was hard words, but some day you'll eat 'em—an' when you've got 'em et, you'll sing a different tune. Where's McWhorter?"

"Lambing camp," she answered shortly, and disappeared into the cabin, slamming the door behind her.

Purdy sat for a moment staring at the door, then whirled his horse and rode away. The girl's words had thrown him into a terrible rage.

"This time a week from now you'll wish to God you hadn't spoke 'em," he muttered, and, avoiding the lambing camp, swung toward the river. "Kill me some day, will she? She meant it, too. She's a hell-cat!"

He headed up-stream, following the shore of the swollen river, muttering, cursing, plotting as he rode. And so he came to the high bluff that overlooked the mouth of a broad coulée. He paused on the rim of the bluff and stared out over the raging flood.

Something directly below him caught his eye, and he glanced downward. A water-logged craft, which he recognized as Long Bill Kearney's ferry boat, lay grounded against the narrow strip of sloping beach that lay between the foot of the bluff and the river.

At the same instant an object lying part way up the slope caught his eye, and instinctively he jerked his horse back, swung to the ground and, crawling to the rim of the bluff, looked cautiously over the edge. For a long time he stared downward at the motionless form of a woman. Her face was not visible, but he could see that she

wore a riding costume and a hat of approved cowboy pattern. In vain his eyes searched the beach and the bluff and even the river.

"Crossin' on Long Bill's ferry an' the cable busted," he muttered. "But it's a cinch she wasn't crossin' alone—an' it's a cinch they ain't no one else around, onless they're up the coulée. Maybe whoever was along got drownded—anyhow, I'm goin' to find out; an' if she's all alone"—the man grinned—"maybe she won't be so damned upity as McWhorter's gal."

He sprang into the saddle, and after a careful survey of the bluff and the surrounding bench headed away from the river and came to the coulée a half-mile back from its mouth at a point where the sides allowed easy descent.

Once in the coulée, Purdy again headed for the river, riding slowly, with a hand on the butt of his gun. Rounding an abrupt bend, he drew up sharply. Not fifty yards from him, a blaze-faced buckskin, saddled and bridled, with a lariat rope trailing from the saddle-horn, was cropping grass.

His eyes surveyed every nook and cranny of the coulée for signs of the rider, but seeing none he approached the horse, which raised its head and nickered friendly greeting. He loosened his rope, but the horse made no effort to escape, and, riding close, the man reached down and secured the reins, which he made fast to the horn of his own saddle and dismounted.

"Ye're a plumb gentle brute," he muttered as he coiled the trailing rope and secured it in place. "Y Bar brand—that's over somewhere across the river."

Again he grinned evilly. "Looks like they come from the other side, in which case, providin' they don't no men-folks show up in the next few minutes er so, things look purty favorable for yours truly. With the river like it is, an' the ferry gone, they can't no one bother from the other side, an' by the time they find out she's missin' they'll think she got drownded along with the rest. Things is sure framin' my way now."

He grinned as he swung into the saddle, and, leading the buckskin, headed down the coulée with his thoughts centered on the woman who lay on the little grassed slope at its mouth.

"Be hell if she was dead," he growled—"be just my luck; but if she is, I'll cache her in a mud crack somewheres, an' maybe her friends from across will stick up a reward, an' I'll make Cinnabar Joe or Long Bill go an' collect it an' fork it over."

Proceeding cautiously, Purdy rode down the coulée, and at its mouth dismounted and proceeded directly to the motionless form. Swiftly he stooped and lifted the hat-brim that had been pushed forward over her face, then with an oath he leaped erect and, jerking his gun from its holster, glared wildly about him. But save for the two horses, and a buzzard that wheeled high in the blue above, there was no living, moving thing within his range of vision, and the only sounds were the soft rattle of bit-chains as the horses thrashed lazily at pestering flies, and the sullen gurgle of the swollen river.

Again he swore. His lips drew into a snarl of hate as his glance once more sought the face of the woman. In his eyes the gleam of hot desire commingled with a glitter of revenge as his thoughts flew swiftly to Wolf River—the Texan's open insult and the pilgrim's swift shot in the dark.

Here, helpless, completely in his power to do with as he pleased, lay the woman who had been the unwitting cause of his undoing! Vengeance was his at last, and he licked his lips in wolfish anticipation of the wreaking of that vengeance.

The thought of revenge was more sweet in that he never anticipated it. The Texan had disappeared altogether, and he had heard from Long Bill that the girl had married the pilgrim in Timber City, and that they had gone back East. But if so, what was she doing here—alone?

Swiftly the man scanned the ground for tracks, but found none. The bootless feet of the Texan had left no mark on the buffalo grass. Only one horse had gone up the coulée—and he had that horse. Whoever had been with her when the ferry cable broke had certainly not landed her at the mouth of the coulée.

"Pilgrim's prob'ly fell out an drownded—an' a damned good job—him an' his

horse, too—prob'ly the horse got to raisin' hell an' jerked him into the river—Long Bill, too, most likely—I'll swing around by his shack an' see if they's anything there I want. But, first off, I got to take care of this here lady, silk stockin's an' all, an' the quicker I git to the bad lands with her the better. It ain't no cinch that the pilgrim or Long Bill didn't make shore somewheres else, an' if they did they'll be huntin' her."

After a yain attempt to rouse the girl, Purdy led the buckskin close and, throwing her over the saddle, bound her firmly in place with the rope. Then, leading the buckskin, he rode rapidly up the coulée and, coming out on the bench, headed up the river for the bad lands only a few short miles away.

CHAPTER XVI.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

JACK PURDY did not hit for the subterranean hang-out of the gang. Instead, after entering the bad lands, he continued on up the river for a distance of several miles, being careful to select footing for the horses among the rock ridges and coulées that would leave no trail—no trail, at least, that any white man could pick up and follow. Two hours later, with five or six miles of trailless bad lands behind him, he dismounted and, climbing a rocky eminence, carefully surveyed his surroundings.

An object upon the river caught his attention, and after a moment's scrutiny he made out a man in a skiff. The boat was close inshore, and the man was evidently scanning the bank. He was still a half-mile above, and, clambering hastily down, Purdy led the horses into a patch of scrub a few hundred yards from the river. Loosening the rope, he allowed the body of the unconscious girl to slip to the ground. He secured her feet and hands with a few quick turns of the ropes, hobbled the horses, and, hastening to the bank, concealed himself in a bunch of willows.

"If it's the pilgrim," he muttered—"well, it's my turn now."

He drew the gun from its holster and twirled the cylinder with his thumb. The boat approached slowly, the man resting on his oars except at such times as it was necessary to force the light craft out of the clutch of backwaters and eddies. Not until he was nearly opposite did Purdy see his face.

"Long Bill," he growled, and, returning the gun, wriggled from the willows and hailed him.

Long Bill shot his boat into a pool of still water and surveyed the man on the bank.

"That you, Purdy?" he drawled.

"Yeh, it's me. What's yer hurry?"

Long Bill pondered. He had no wish to run ashore. In the skiff were upward of a hundred of the dodgers hastily struck off at the Timber City printing-office, which proclaimed the reward for the Texan and the thousand-dollar reward for information concerning the whereabouts of Alice Endicott.

Long Bill was canny. He knew the river, and he had figured pretty accurately the probable drift of the ferry boat. He expected to come upon it any time. And he wanted that reward for himself.

The hundred dollars offered for the Texan did not interest him at all, but if he could find out what had become of the girl he could, with no risk to himself, claim the larger reward. Why acquaint Purdy with the fact of the reward?

Purdy had a horse, and he would ride on ahead and scour the bank. Of course, later, if he should fail to find the boat, or if its occupants had escaped, he would distribute the bills. He wanted to see the Texan caught—he owed him a grudge, anyway.

"I got to be goin' on down—got some business below," he answered.

"Huntin' yer ferry?"

Long Bill glared at the questioner. Purdy must have found the flat-boat or he would not have known it was missing. And if he had found the boat, he must know something of its occupants. He could not know of the reward, however, and, acting on the theory that half a loaf is better than none, Long Bill reached for his oars and pulled ashore.

"That's what I'm a huntin'," he answered. "Saw anythin' of her?"

Purdy nodded. "She's layin' up ag'in' the mouth of a coulée, 'bout two mile or so this side of Red Sand."

Long Bill removed his hat, scratched his head, and stared out over the river. Finally he spoke. "See her close up?"

"Yup. Went right down to her."

Another pause, and with a vast show of indifference Long Bill asked: "Any one in her?"

"No."

"Any tracks around—like any one had been there?"

"None except what I made myself. Look here, Bill, what you so damned anxious to find that ferry fer? It would cost you more to haul it back up-stream than it would to build you a new one."

"Sure they wasn't no one there? No one could of got off her an' struck back in?"

"Not onless they could of flew," opined Purdy. "How'd she come to bust loose?"

Long Bill burst into a tirade of profanity that left him breathless. "I'll tell you how come she bust loose," he roared, when he had sufficiently recovered to proceed. "That damned Texan stole her—him an' the pilgrim's woman!"

"Texan!" cried Purdy. "D'ye mean Tex—Tex Benton?"

"Who the hell d'ye s'pose I mean? Who else 'd have the guts to steal the Red Front Saloon, an' another man's woman, an' my ferry, all the same day—an' git away with it? Who would?" The infuriated man fairly screamed the words. "Me—or you? Not by a damn sight! You claim to be a horse-thief— My God! if that bird ever turned horse-thief, in a year's time horses would be extincter than what buffaloes is! They wouldn't be none left nowheres!"

It was some moments before Purdy succeeded in calming the man down to where he could give a fairly lucid account of the happenings in Timber City. He listened intently to Long Bill's narrative, and at the conclusion the ferryman produced his dodgers, and said:

"An' here's the rewards—a hundred fer Tex, an' a thousan' fer information about the woman."

Purdy read the hand-bill through twice. Then for several minutes he was silent. Finally he turned to Long Bill.

"Looks like me an' you had a purty good thing—if it's worked right," he said with a wink.

"What d'ye mean?" asked the other, with sudden interest.

"I mean," answered Purdy, "that I've got the woman."

"Got the woman! Where's Tex?"

Purdy frowned. "That's what I don't know. I hope he's drownded. He never landed where she did. They wasn't no tracks. That's the only thing that's botherin' me. I don't mind sayin' it right out, I ain't got no honin' to run up ag'in' him—I don't want none of his meat."

"Course he's drownded, if he never landed," cried Long Bill; and taking tremendous heart from the thought, he continued: "I hain't afraid of him, nohow—never was. I hain't so damn glad he was drownded, neither. If I'd of run onto him, I'd of been a hundred dollars richer. I'd of brung him in—me!"

"You'd of played hell!" sneered Purdy. "Don't try to put yer brag over on me. I know what you'd do if you so much as seen the color of his hide—an' so do you. Le's talk sense. If that there pilgrim offered a thousan' first off—he'll pay two thousan' to git his woman back, or five thousan'."

Long Bill's eyes glittered with greed. "Sure he will! Five thousan'—two thousand five hundred apiece."

Purdy fixed him with a chilling stare.

"They wasn't nothin' mentioned about no even split," he reminded. "Who's got the woman, you or me?"

Long Bill glared angrily. "You didn't know nothin' about the reward till I come along. An' who's got to do the dickerin'? You don't dast to show up nowheres. You'd git nabbed. They's a reward out fer you."

Purdy shrugged. "When we git the five thousan', you git five hundred. Take it or leave it. They's others can do the dickerin'."

Long Bill growled and whined, but in the end he agreed, and Purdy continued: "You listen to me. We don't want no mistakes

about this here. I'll write a note to the pilgrim an' sign Tex's name to it, demandin' five thousan' fer the return of the woman. You take the note to him, an' tell him Tex is hidin' out in the bad lands, an' they ain't a show in the world to git the woman without he pays, because Tex will kill her as sure as hell if he goes to gittin' any posses out. Then you fetch him over here—this place is good as any—to-day a week, an' we'll give him his woman."

"What if he won't come? What if he thinks we're double-crossin' him?"

Purdy shrugged. "If he wants his woman bad enough, he'll come. It's his only chance. An' here's another thing: before you hit back across the river, you spread them bills around all the ranches an' on all the trails around here. They ain't no one else can horn in on the big reward, 'cause I've got the woman, an' if the Texan should of got to shore, it's just as well to have every one huntin' him."

"I ain't got no horse," objected the ferryman.

"Drift down the river till you come to a coulée with two rock pinnacles on the left-hand side. Go up it till you come to a brush corral; there's two horses in there, an' a saddle an' bridle is cached in a mud creek on the west side. Saddle up one of 'em, an' be sure you put him back, or Cass Grimshaw 'll make coyote bait out of you."

As Purdy watched Long Bill disappear down the river, he rolled a cigarette.

"If I c'n double-cross the pilgrim, I will," he muttered. "If I can't, back she goes to him. Five thousan' is a higher price than I'll pay fer luxeries like women. Anyhow, there's McWhorter's gal left fer that. An' seein' there ain't no one else in on this but me, I'll just duck the hang-out an' take her over to Cinnabar Joe's. Him an' his woman 'll keep her safe—or he'll do time. Them's the only kind of friends that's worth a damn—the ones you've got somethin' on!"

And having thus unburdened himself, he proceeded leisurely toward the scrub.

Alice Endicott returned slowly to consciousness. Her first sensation was one of drowsy well-being. For some minutes she lay while her brain groped in a vague, listless way to find itself. She and Win were going West—there was a ranch for sale—and—

She suddenly realized that she was uncomfortable. Her shoulders and hips ached. Where was she? She felt cold. She tried to move, and the effort caused her pain. She heard a sound near by, and opened her eyes.

She closed them and opened them again. She was lying upon the ground among trees and two horses stood a short distance away. The horses were saddled. She tried to raise a hand to her eyes, and failed. Something was wrong. The recollections of the night burst upon her with the suddenness of a blow. The river—the lightning and drenching rain, the frantic bailing of the boat, the leap into the water with the Texan! Where was he now?

She tried to sit up—and realized that her hands and feet were tied! Frantically she struggled to free her hands. Who had tied her—and why? The buckskin horse she recognized as the one she had ridden the night before. The Y Bar brand showed plainly upon his flank. But where was she—and why was she tied?

Over and over the two questions repeated themselves in her brain. She struggled into a sitting posture and began to work at the knots. The tying had been hurriedly accomplished, and with the aid of a projecting limb stub the knot that secured her wrists was loosened and she freed her hands.

It was but the work of a moment to loosen the hitch about her ankles, and she essayed to rise. She sank back with a moan of pain. Every muscle in her body ached, and she lay still while the blood with an exquisite torture of prickling and tingling began to circulate her numbed veins.

Again she struggled to her feet and, supporting herself against a tree, stared wildly about her. Nobody was in sight. Through the trees she caught the sparkle of water.

"The river!" she breathed. A wild idea flashed into her brain. If she could find a boat she could elude the horseman who had made her a prisoner. The numbness was gone from her limbs. She took a step and another, steadying herself by means of the

tree trunks. Finding that she could walk unaided, she crossed an open space, paused and glanced out over the flood with its rushing burden of drift. The thought terrified her—of being out there alone in a boat. Then came the thought of her unknown captor.

Who was he? When would he return? And with the thought the terror of the water sank into insignificance beside the terror of the land.

Reaching the edge of the bank, she peered cautiously over. There, just at the end of a clump of willows, a boat floated lazily at the end of its painter. She could see the oars in their locks and a man's coat upon the back seat. She was about to descend the bank when the sound of voices sent her crouching behind a bush.

Through the willows she could make out the forms of two men. Even as she looked one of the men rose and made his way toward the boat. At the edge of the willows he turned to speak to the other and the terrified girl gazed into the face of Long Bill Kearney!

The other she could not see, but that he was her captor she had no doubt. She felt suddenly weak and sick with horror. Whoever the other was, he was a confederate of Long Bill's, and she knew how Long Bill must hate her on account of the treatment he had received a year ago at the hands of Win and the Texan.

In all probability they had even now murdered the Texan—come upon him, weak and exhausted from his struggle with the river, and murdered him in cold blood and taken her prisoner.

Stifling a sob, she turned to fly. Her trembling knees would scarce support her weight as she crossed the open space. Once in the timber, she staggered toward the horses. Grasping the reins of the buckskin, she tried to lead him into the open, but he followed slowly with a curious shuffle. Her eyes flew to the hobbles, and, kneeling swiftly, she pulled at the thick straps that encircled his ankles. Her trembling fingers fumbled at the heavy buckles.

Jerking frantically at the strap, she pushed and pulled in an endeavor to release the tongue from the hole. Minutes seemed like hours as she worked. At length she succeeded in loosening a strap and set to work on the other. Fortunately the horse was thoroughly gentle, "woman broke," as Colston had said, and he stood motionless while she tugged and jerked at his ankles.

After an interminable time the other strap yielded, and, throwing the hobbles aside, Alice sprang erect, grasped the reins, and started for the open, her throbbing brain obsessed by one idea—to ride, ride, ride!

Stumbling, tripping in her frantic haste, she made her way through the scrub, the buckskin following close upon her heels. Only a few yards more and the open country stretched before her, ridge after rocky ridge as far as the eye could see. Redoubling her effort, she pushed on, tripped upon a fallen tree limb, and crashed heavily to her knees.

She struggled to her feet, and, as her eyes sought the open, stood rooted to the spot while the blood froze in her veins. Directly before her, legs wide apart, hands on hips, an evil grin on his lips, eyes leering into her own, stood Jack Purdy!

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE SCRUB.

IT seemed hours she stood thus, staring into those black, leering eyes. Her damp garments struck a deadly chill to her very bones. Her knees trembled so that she shook visibly, as her thoughts flashed back to that night on the rim of the bench when this man had reached suddenly out and dragged her from her horse. Her plight would have been bad enough had she fallen into the hands of Long Bill Kearney—but Purdy!

At length the man spoke. "What's yer hurry? You sure wouldn't pull out an' leave, after me savin' you from the river, would you?"

"The river," she repeated dully, and her own voice sounded strange—like a voice she had never heard. "Where—where's Tex?"

The question was not addressed to Pur-

dy; it was merely the groping effort of a numbed brain trying to piece together its sequence of events. She did not know she had asked it.

His answer brought her keenly alive to the present. He laughed harshly: "He's drownded—fell out of the ferry, back there in the river—him and his horse both."

Alice did not know that the man was eying her keenly to detect refutation by word or look. She did not know that he was lying. The events of the night, to the moment of her plunge with the Texan into the river at the end of the lariat line, stood out in her brain with vivid distinctness. Purdy believed Tex to have drowned. She did not believe it, for she knew that if he had not reached shore she could not possibly have reached shore.

Her brain functioned rapidly. If Tex had survived he would surely come to her rescue. And if Purdy believed him dead, so much the better. She raised her hand and passed it across her eyes.

"I remember," she said slowly.

Again the man laughed. "Oh, you do, eh? I was only guessin'. I knowed if I asked you, you'd lie about it—but I know now! An' it makes things easier fer me."

"Stand aside and let me pass!" cried the girl. "I didn't say he drowned! He'll be along here any minute—and my husband will be here, too."

"O-ho, my thousan'-dollar beauty!" sneered the man. "Yer bluff comes in too late! If you'd of got it in first off, as soon as I said he was drownded, I might of b'lieved you—but there's nothin' doin' now. You can't scare me with a ghost—an' as fer yer husband, he'd ought to got me when he had the chance."

He advanced toward her, and the girl shrank back against her horse's shoulder. "Surely you ain't afraid of me!" he taunted. "Why, it ain't only a year back sence you went ridin' with me. Remember—Wolf River, in the moonlight on the rim of the bench, an' the little lights twinklin' down in the valley? An' you remember how we was interrupted then—the sound of hoofs thumpin' the trail—the pilgrim come out of the dark an' shot 'fore I even knowed he had a gun.

"But it's different this time. Here in the bad lands there ain't no one to butt in. I've got you all to myself here. I love you now, same as I did then—only a whole heap more. Women are scarce down here. You figgered you wanted a change of men, or you wouldn't of been runnin' off with Tex. Well, you've got it—only you've got me instead of him. We won't hit it off so bad when you git used to my ways."

Every particle of blood receded from the girl's face and as she cowered against her horse her eyes widened with horror. Her lips moved stiffly. "You—*you dog!*" she muttered hoarsely.

Purdy grinned. "Dog, eh? You ain't helpin' yer case none by callin' me names. Ain't you got no thankfulness in you? Here I pulled you out of the drink where you'd washed ashore—an' take you along safe an' sound—an ye're callin' me a dog!"

"I would rather be dead, a thousand times, than to be here this minute—with you!"

"Well, you ain't dead—an' you be here. An' if you don't go the limit with me, ye're goin' to wish a thousan' times more that you was a damn sight deader than you ever will be! You know what I mean! An' you ain't a damn bit better than what I be, either!

"If you was, you wouldn't of left yer man an' pulled out with Tex. I've got yer number, so you might's well throw in with me an' save yerself a whole lot of hell. I've got more'n Tex has, anyhow—an' there's plenty more where I git mine. You might's well know it now as later—I'm an outlaw! I was outlawed on account of you—an' it ain't no more'n right you should share it with me.

"I've worked on horses up to now, but I'm a goin' to branch out! Banks an' railroad trains looks better to me! The name of Purdy's goin' to be a big name in these parts—an' then all to wunst it won't be heard no more, an' you an' me'll be down in South America rollin' 'em high!"

The man's voice had raised with his boasting, and as he finished he pounded his chest with his fist.

During his speech the girl's heart shriveled within her until it touched the lowest

depths of terror and despair. She cowered against the horse, pressing her knuckles into her lips till the blood came—and, suddenly, as he finished, she felt an insane desire to laugh. And she did laugh, pointing a shaking forefinger into the man's face.

"You fool!" she screamed hysterically. "*You fool!* I'm not afraid of you! You are not real! You can't be real! You remind me of comic opera!"

For a moment the man stared in surprise, and then, with an oath, he grasped her roughly by the arm. "What are you laughin' at? I'm a fool, be I? I ain't real? When I git through with you, you'll think I'm real enough! An' I won't put you in mind of no comical opry neither! But, first, I'm goin' to collect that reward."

"Reward?"

"Yes, reward," snarled the man, releasing her arm with a violent push that half whirled her around. Fumbling in his pocket, he produced one of the hand-bills that Long Bill had given him. "There it is—the reward yer man stuck for you—though what in hell he wants of you now is more'n I know. It only says a thousan' there—but I raised it to five. I'll jest hold you safe till I git my mitts on that five thousan', an' then—"

"You'll hold me safe till you git the money?" asked the girl, a gleam of hope lighting her eyes. "And then you'll turn me over to my husband? Is that all you want—the money—five thousand dollars?"

The man laughed, and again his eyes leered evilly into hers.

"You know what I want," he sneered. "An' what I want I'll git—an' I'll git the money, too. Things has broke my way at last. Tex is dead. When Long Bill comes along to collect his share of the *dinero* he'll foller Tex. An' when the pilgrim rides into the bad lands with the money—well, it'll be my turn, then.

"You'll be a widder, an' won't have only one man after all—an' that man 'll be me! An' they won't be no one huntin' you, neither. They'll all think you drownded along with Tex."

"You devil! You fiend!" cried the girl. "Surely, if there's a God in heaven, He will not let you live to do these things!"

"If there is, or if there ain't, it 'll be the same," defied the man. "I ain't afraid of Him! He won't lay no hand on me!" More terrible even than his threats against her—more terrible than the open boast that he would murder her husband—sounded the blasphemy of the man's words.

She felt suddenly weak and sick. Her knees swayed under her, and she sank unconscious at the feet of her horse. Staring down at her, Purdy laughed aloud, and, securing his own horse and the rope, lifted her into her saddle and bound her as before.

Leading the two animals, he made his way into the open where he mounted and, striking out at a right angle to his former course, headed for Cinnabar Joe's.

As he disappeared around a bend in a coulée, a man who had been intently watching all that transpired rose to his feet. He was a squat man, with ludicrously bowed legs. A tuft of hair protruded from a hole in the crown of his hat.

"I've seen considerable fools in my life, but when a man gits to where he thinks he kin put over a whizzer on God Almighty, an' git away with it—it's pretty close to cashin'-in time fer him."

He stared for a moment at his six-gun before he returned it to its holster. "There's them that's got a better right to him than me," he muttered, "but, at that, my finger was jest a twitcherin' on the trigger."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TEXAN TAKES THE TRAIL.

At the mouth of the coulée, Janet McWhorter stared in astonishment as the Texan swung into the saddle and headed the big blue roan up the ravine at a run. A moment later the bay mare was following, the girl plying quirt and spur in an endeavor to keep the flying horseman in sight. The roan's pace slackened, and the bay mare closed up the distance. The girl could see that the man was leaning far over, studying the ground as he rode.

Suddenly, without a moment's hesita-

tion, he turned into a side coulée, gained the bench, and headed straight for the bad lands. The pace was slower now. The Texan rode with his eyes glued to the ground. She drew up beside him, and, as she expected, found that he was following the trail of two horses.

The trail was easily followed in the mud of the recent rains, and they made good time, dipping into coulées, scrambling out, crossing ridges. Purdy had evidently wasted no time in picking his trail, but had taken the country as it came, his one idea evidently had been to gain the bad lands that loomed in the near distance.

"What will he do when he gets there?" wondered the girl, as she glanced into the set face of the man who rode with his eyes on the tracks in the mud. "He can't follow him in. There won't be any trail."

True to her prediction, the Texan drew up at the edge of a black ridge that cut diagonally into the treeless, soilless waste. Since he had uttered Purdy's name at the mouth of the coulée, he had spoken no word, and now, as he faced her, the girl saw that his face looked tense and drawn.

"You've got to go back," he said, looking straight into her eyes. "It's a blind trail from here, an' God knows where it will lead to."

"But—you—where are you going?"

"To find Purdy." There was a steely glint in the man's eyes, and his voice grated harshly.

"But you can't find him!" she cried. "He knows the bad lands. Purdy's a horse-thief, and if you did find him there would be others. He's one of a gang, and—they'll kill you!"

The Texan nodded. "Maybe—an' then, again, maybe they won't. There's two sides to this killin' game."

"But you wouldn't have a chance."

"As long as I've got a gun, I've got a chance—an' a good one."

The spirit of perversity that had prompted her to insist upon riding the blue roan asserted itself.

"I'm going with you," she announced. "I've got a gun, and I can shoot."

"You're goin' home." The Texan spoke quietly, yet with an air of finality that brooked no argument. The hot blood mounted to the girl's face and her eyes flashed. Her lips opened to frame an angry retort, but the words were never spoken, for the Texan leaned suddenly toward her and his gauntleted hand rested lightly on her arm.

"For God's sake, don't hinder—*help!*" There was no trace of harshness in the voice—only intense appeal.

She glanced into his eyes, and in their depths read misery, pain, worry—the very soul of him was wrung with torture. He was not commanding now. This strong, masterful man was imploring help. A lump rose in her throat. Her eyes dropped before his. She swallowed hard and nodded.

"All right—only—promise me—if you don't find him, you'll return to the ranch to-night. You've got to eat, and Blue has got to eat. I'll have a pack ready for you to start again early in the morning."

"I promise," he said simply. His gloved hand slipped from her sleeve and closed about her own. Once more their eyes met, once more the girl felt the hot blood mount to her cheeks, and once more her glance fell before his. And then—he was gone and she was alone upon the edge of the bad lands, listening to catch the diminishing sound of his horse's hoofs on the floor of the black coulée.

The sound died away. Minutes passed as she sat staring out over the bad lands. There was a strange ache at her throat, but in her heart welled a great gladness. What was it she had read in his eyes—during the moment of that last glance?

The pain and the worry and the misery were still there, but something else was there also—something that leaped from his heart straight to hers; something held in restraint that burst through the restraint, overrode the pain and the worry and the misery, and for a brief instant blazed with an intensity that seemed to devour her very soul.

Slowly she raised the hand that had returned the firm, gentle pressure of his clasp and drew the back of it across her cheek, then with a laugh that began happily and ended in a choking sob she turned the mare toward home.

She rode slowly, her thoughts centered upon the Texan. She had liked him from the moment of their first meeting. His eagerness to return to the aid of his friend, his complete mastery of Blue, his unhesitating plunge into the bad lands to fight against odds, all pointed to him as a man among men.

"And, aside from all that," she murmured as she reached to smooth the bay mare's mane, "there's something about him —so wholesome—so clean—" Her words trailed into silence, and as her thoughts followed him into the trailless maze of the bad lands, her fists clenched tight. "Oh, I hope he won't find Purdy. They'll kill him."

She turned the mare into the corral, and, entering the cabin, prepared her solitary luncheon, and as she ate it her thoughts retraced the events of the morning. She remembered how he had looked when she had mentioned Purdy's name—the horrified tone with which he had repeated the name—and how he had recoiled from it as though from a blow.

"What does he know of Purdy?" she asked herself. "And why should the fact that Purdy had ridden away with his friend have affected him so? Purdy wouldn't kill his friend—there had been no sign of a struggle there on the river bank. If the man went with Purdy, he went of his own free will—even a horse-thief couldn't steal a full-grown cow-puncher without a struggle."

She gave it up and busied herself with the preparation of food for the morrow.

"It seems as though I had known him for years," she murmured, "and I never laid eyes on him till this morning. But—Mr. Colston would never have made him foreman if he wasn't all right. Anyway, anybody with half sense can see that by just looking into his eyes. And he's really handsome, too.

"I'll never forget how he looked when I first saw him—standing there beside the haystack with his hat in his hand and his bandaged head." She paused and frowned at the thought of that bandage. "I'll dress his wound to-night," she murmured. "But—I wonder—"

From time to time during the afternoon she stepped to the door and glanced anxiously up and down the creek. At last, just at sundown, she saw a rider pause before the gate of the corral. She flew to the door, and drew back hurriedly.

"It's that horrid Long Bill Kearney!" she muttered in disappointment. "Disreputable old coot! He ought to be in jail along with the other denizens of the bad lands. Dad sure picked a fine bunch of neighbors—all except Cinnabar Joe—and they say he used to be a bartender. But he's a nice man—I like him."

Long Bill rode on, and, glancing out of the window, Janet saw a fragment of paper flapping in the wind. She hurried to the corral and, removing the paper that had been secured to a post by means of a sliver of wood, read it hurriedly. The blood receded slowly from her face, and a great weight seemed pressing upon her heart.

She reread the paper carefully, word for word.

This Texan, then, was a man with a price on his head. He was no better than Purdy and Long Bill and all the others. And now she knew why there was tatting on the bandage! She turned indifferently at a sound from the direction of the barn, and hurriedly thrust the paper into the bosom of her gray-flannel shirt as McWhorter appeared around the corner of the haystack.

Once into the bad lands, the Texan slowed the blue roan to a walk, and, riding in long, sweeping semicircles, methodically searched for Purdy's trail. With set face and narrowed eyes, the man studied every foot of the ground, at times throwing himself from the saddle for closer scrutiny of some obscure mark or misplaced stone.

So great was his anxiety to overtake the pair that his slow pace became a veritable torture. And at times his struggle to keep from putting spurs to his horse and dashing wildly on amounted almost to physical violence.

Bitterly he blamed himself for Alice Endicott's plight. He raved and cursed like a madman, and for long periods was silent, his eyes hot and burning with the intensity

of his hate for Purdy. Gradually the hopelessness of picking up the trail among the rocks and disintegrated lava forced itself upon him.

More than once in utter despair and misery, he drew the six-gun from its holster and gazed long and hungrily at its blue black barrel. One shot—and oblivion. His was the blame. He sought no excuse—no palliation of responsibility. This woman had trusted him—had risked life and happiness to protect him from the bullets of the mob—and he had failed her—had abandoned her to a fate worse—a thousand times worse—than death.

Sweat stood upon his forehead in cold beads as he thought of her completely in the power of Purdy. He could never face Win—worst of all, he could never face himself. Night and day as long as he should live, the torture would be upon him. There could be but one end—madness—unless—He glanced again at the long blue barrel of his automatic.

With an oath he jammed it into its holster. The coward's way out! The girl still lived; Purdy still lived. And while Purdy lived his work was cut out for him. Later—perhaps—but, first he must find Purdy.

On and on he rode, pausing now and then to scan the horizon and the ridges and coulées between for sight of some living, moving thing. But always it was the same—silence, the dead silence of the bad lands. With the passing of the hours the torture became less acute. The bitter self-recrimination ceased, and the chaos of emotion within his brain shaped and crystalized into a single overmastering purpose.

He would find Purdy—he would kill him. Nothing else mattered. A day—a year—ten years—it did not matter. He would find Purdy and kill him. He would not kill him quickly. Purdy must have time to think—plenty of time to think. The man even smiled grimly as he devised and discarded various plans. "They're all too easy—too gentle. I'll leave it to old Bat—he's Injun—he'll know," he thought. "An' if Bat was here he'd pick up the trail."

A wild idea of crossing the river and fetching Bat flashed into his mind, but he banished it. "Bat 'll come," he muttered with conviction. "He's found out before this that I've gone, an' he'll come."

As the sun sank below the horizon, the Texan turned his horse toward the McWhorters. He paused on a rocky spur for one last look over the bad lands, and, raising his gauntleted fist, he shook it in the face of the solitude: "I'll get you! Damn you!"

As he whirled his horse and headed him out into the open bench, a squat, bow-legged man peered out from behind a rock, not fifty feet from where the Texan had sat his horse. A tuft of hair protruded from a hole in the crown of his battered hat as he fingered his stubby beard.

"Pretty damn lively for a corpse," grinned the squat man. "An' he *will* git him, too. An' if that there gal wasn't safe at Cinnabar Joe's, I'd see that he got him to-night. It looks from here as if God A'mighty's gittin' ready to call Purdy's bluff."

CHAPTER XIX.

AT M'WHORTER'S RANCH.

COLIN McWHORTER was a man of long silences. A big-framed, black-bearded giant of a man, he commanded the respect of all who knew him, and the friendship of few. His ranch, his sheep, his daughter were things that concerned him—the rest of the world was for others. Twice each year, on the 20th of June and the 3d of December, he locked himself in his room and drank himself very drunk. At all other times he was very sober.

No one, not even Janet, knew the significance of those dates. All the girl knew was that with deadly certainty when the day arrived her father would be locked in his room, and that on the third day thereafter he would unlock the door and come out of the room, shaken in nerve and body, dispose of an armful of empty bottles, resume his daily routine, and never by word nor look would he refer to the matter.

These semiannual sprees had been among the girl's earliest recollections. They had

come as regularly and as certainly as the passing of the seasons, and she had come to accept them as a matter of course. Janet McWhorter stood in no fear of her father, yet never had she brought herself to venture one word of remonstrance, nor offer one word of sympathy.

His neighbors accepted the fact as they had accepted McWhorter—with respect. If they wondered, they continued to wonder, for so far as any one knew, nobody had ever had the temerity to seek knowledge at its fountain head.

McWhorter's habit of silence was not engendered by any feeling of aloofness—cow-punchers, sheep men, horse-thieves, or nesters, all were welcome at his cabin; and while they talked McWhorter listened—listened and smoked his black pipe. With Janet he was as sparing of words as with others. Father and daughter understood each other perfectly—loved each other with a strange, undemonstrative love that was as unfaltering as the enduring hills.

The moment McWhorter came upon the girl at the gate of the corral he sensed that something was wrong. She had greeted him as usual, but as he watched her walk to the cabin he noted an unwonted weariness in her steps, and a slight drooping of her square shoulders. Unsaddling his horse, he turned him into the corral with the bay mare. He noted the absence of the roan.

"Been tryin' to ride Blue, an' he got away from her," he thought. "Weel, she'll tell me aboot it, if so."

While Janet placed supper on the table her father washed noisily at the bench beside the door, then entered and took his place at the table. The meal progressed in silence, and in silence McWhorter, as was his custom, helped the girl wash and dry the dishes and put them away on their shelves.

This done, he filled his black pipe and seated himself in the chair. In another chair drawn close beside the big lamp Janet pretended to read a magazine, while at every muffled night sound her eyes flew to the window.

"Where's Blue?" asked McWhorter, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe and refilled it.

"I loaned him to a man who came here on foot."

"From the bad lands?"

"No; from the river. He's Mr. Colston's range foreman, and he and—and somebody else were crossing the river on Long Bill's ferry and the cable broke, and the boat came ashore above here."

"An' the ither—did the ither come?"

"No. That's why he borrowed Blue—to hunt for the other."

"An' ye rode wi' um? I see the mare's been rode."

Janet nodded. "Yes; I rode with him as far as the bad lands, and then—he sent me back."

McWhorter puffed for some minutes in silence. "Think you he will come here the night."

"Yes—unless something happens."

"An' that's what's worryin' ye—that something might happen him—oot there? What wad ye think could happen?"

"Why—why—lots of things could happen." She glanced at her father, wondering at his unwonted loquacity.

The man caught the look.

"Ye'll be thinkin' I'll be talkin' o'er much," he said. "But ye've found out before this, when there's words to be said I can say 'em." The man's voice suddenly softened.

"Come, lass, 'tis yer own happiness I'm thinkin' of—ye've na one else. Is he some braw young blade that rode that de-el of a Blue wi'oot half tryin'? An' did he speak ye fair? An' is he gude to look on—a man to tak' the ee o' the weemin'—is ut so?"

The girl stood at the window peering out into the darkness, and, receiving no answer, McWhorter continued:

"If that's the way of ut, tak' ye heed. I know the breed o' common cow-punchers—they're a braw lot, an' they've takin' ways—but in their hearts they're triflin' gude-for-naughts, wi' na regard for God, mon, nor the de'el."

"He's not a common cow-puncher!" defended the girl hotly. She had turned from the window and stood facing the stern-faced Scotchman with flushed cheeks. Then the words of the hand-bill seemed to burn into her brain. "He's—he's—if he were

a common cow-puncher Mr. Colston would never have made him foreman," she concluded lamely.

McWhorter nodded gravely. "Aye, lass—but, when all is said an' done, what Colston wants—what he hires an' pays for, is cow-punchin'—the work o' the head an' hands. Gin an' mon does his work; Colston wadna gi' a fiddle-bow for what's i' the heart o' him. But, wi' a lass an' a mon—'tis different. 'Tis then if the heart is clean it little matters that he whirls his loop fair, or sits his leather like a plow-boy."

"What's this nonsense," cried the girl angrily—"this talk about choosing a man? I never saw him till to-day! I hate men!"

McWhorter finished his pipe, returned it to his pocket, and, stepping into his own room, reappeared a moment later with a pair of heavy blankets which he laid on the table.

"I'm goin' to bed, for I must be early to the lambin' camp. I'm thinkin' the young mon will not return the night—but if he does, here's blankets."

He stood for a moment, looking down at the girl with as near an expression of tenderness as the stern eyes allowed.

"My little lass," he murmured, as if speaking to himself, "I ha' made ye angry wi' my clatter—an' I am glad. The anger will pass—an' 'twill set ye thinkin'; that, an' what's here on the paper." Reaching into his pocket, he drew out a hand-bill and tossed it upon the blankets. "'Tis na news to ye, bein', I mistrust, the same as the one ye concealed in yer bosom by the corral gate—'twas seein' that loosed my tongue. For I love ye, lass—an' 'twould be sair hard to see ye spend yer life repentin' the mistake of a moment. A mon 'twad steal anither's wife, wad scarce hold high his ain. Gude night."

McWhorter turned abruptly and, passing into his own room, shut the door.

Standing beside the table, Janet watched the door close behind her father. The anger was gone from her heart, as McWhorter had said it would go, and in its place was a wild desire to throw herself into his arms as she used to do long, long ago—to sob her heart out against his big breast, and to feel his big hand awkwardly stroking her hair, as he muttered over and over again: "There, there, wee lassie; there, there."

"Soothing words, those, that had eased her baby hurts and her childish heartaches—she remembered how she used to press her little ear close against his coarse shirt to hear the words rumble deep down in the great chest. He had been a good father to his motherless little girl, had Colin McWhorter.

The girl turned impulsively toward the closed door, hot tears brimming her eyes. One step, and she stopped, tense and listening. Yes, there it was again—the sound of horse's hoofs. Dashing the tears from her eyes, she flung open the outer door and stood framed in the oblong of yellow lamplight. Whoever it was had not stopped at the corral, but was riding on toward the cabin. A figure loomed suddenly out of the dark, and the Texan drew up before the door.

"You here alone?" he inquired, stooping slightly to peer past her into the cabin. "'Cause if you are, I'll go on to the lambin' camp."

"No, dad's here," she answered. "He's gone to bed."

The man dismounted. "Got any oats?" he asked, as he turned toward the corral. "Blue's a good horse, an' I'd like him to have more'n just hay. I may ride him hard to-morrow."

"Yes—wait." The girl turned back into the cabin and came out with a lighted lantern. "I'll go with you. They're in the stable."

Side by side they walked to the corral, where she held the lantern while the Texan stripped off the saddle.

"Got a halter? I ain't goin' to turn him in with the others. They'd nose him out of his oats, or else worry him so he couldn't eat comfortable."

"Blue's never been in the stable—and he's never eaten oats. He don't know what they are."

"It's time he learnt, then," he smiled. "But I don't reckon he'll kick up any fuss. A horse will do anything you want him to, once you get him mastered."

"Like women, aren't they?" the girl

asked maliciously, as she handed him the halter.

The Texan adjusted the halter, deftly slipped the bridle from beneath it, and glanced quizzically into her face.

"Think so?" he countered. "Reckon I never run across any that was mastered." At the door of the stable the horse paused, sniffed suspiciously, and pulled back on the halter rope. "Just step away with the lantern so he can't see what's ahead of him, an' he'll come—won't you, Blue?"

"They wouldn't any of them come if they could see what's ahead, would they?"

The Texan peered into the girl's face, but it was deep in the shadows.

"Maybe not," he agreed. "I expect it's a good thing for all of us that we can't see what's ahead."

The man abruptly transferred his attention to the horse; gently slapping his neck and pulling playfully at his twitching ears.

His voice dropped into a soothing monotone:

"Come on, you old Blue, you. You old fraud, tryin' to make out like you're afraid. Come on—take a chance. There's oats, an' hay, an' beddin' a foot thick in there. An' a good stall to stand in, instead of millin' around a corral all night."

The rope slackened, and, securing a firm grip on the halter, the Texan edged slowly toward the door, the horse following with nervous, mincing steps and nostrils aquiver. From her place beside the corral the girl watched in astonishment as the man and horse passed from sight. From the black interior of the stable the voice of the Texan sounded its monotonous drone, and presently the man himself appeared and, taking the lantern, returned to attend to the horse.

Alone in the darkness, Janet wondered. She knew the big blue roan, and she had expected a fight. A few minutes later the man reappeared, chuckling.

"He's learnt what oats are," he said. "Ate 'em out of my hand, first. Now he's goin' after 'em like he'd tear the bottom out of the feed-box. I wonder if your dad would sell Blue? I'll buy him, an' gentle him, an' then—"

"And then—what?" asked the girl, after a moment of silence. She received no answer, and with a trace of impatience she repeated the question: "What would you do then?"

"Why, then," answered the man abstractedly, "I don't know. I was just thinkin' maybe it ain't such a good thing after all we can't see farther ahead."

"Did you find your friend?" Janet asked abruptly, as they walked toward the house.

"No."

In spite of herself, the dead tonelessness of the man's voice aroused her to sudden pity.

She remembered the pain and the misery in his eyes. Perhaps, after all, he loved this woman—loved her honestly—yet, how could he love honestly another man's wife?

Her lips tightened as she led the way into the house and, without a word, busied herself at the stove.

Hat in hand the Texan stood beside the table, and as his glance strayed from the girl it fell upon a small square of paper upon a fold of blanket. Mechanically he glanced at the printed lines, and at the first word snatched the paper from the table and held it to the light.

The girl turned at the sound.

"Oh!" she cried, and stepped swiftly forward as if to seize it from his hand. Her face was flaming red. "Dad left it there—and then—you came—and I—I forgot it."

The man read the last word and carefully returned the paper to the table.

"I didn't aim to read your papers," he apologized. "But I couldn't help seein' my own name—an' hers—an' I thought I had the right. Didn't I have the right?"

"Yes," answered the girl. "Of course you had the right. Only I—we—didn't leave it there on purpose. It—"

"It don't make any difference how it come to be there," he said dully, and as he passed his hand heavily across his brow she saw that his fingers fumbled for a moment on the bandage. "The news got around right quick. It was only last night."

"Long Bill Kearney stuck one on the corral post, and he left some at the lambin' camp."

"Long Bill, eh?" The man repeated the name mechanically, with his eyes on the square of paper, while the girl pushed the blankets back and placed dishes upon the table.

"You must eat now," she reminded him as she filled his plate and poured a cup of steaming coffee.

The Texan drew up a chair and ate in silence. When he had finished he rolled a cigarette.

"One hundred dollars," he said as if speaking to himself. "That's a right pickyune reward to offer for a full-grown man. Why, there's over a thousand for Cass Grimshaw."

"Cass Grimshaw is a horse-thief. Apparently horses are held in higher regard than mere wives."

Tex disregarded the withering sarcasm. He answered evenly:

"Looks that way. I suppose they figure a man could steal more of 'em."

"And now that Purdy has stolen her from you, will you continue the search, or look around for another? Surely wives are cheap—another hundred dollars oughtn't to make any difference."

"No. Another hundred won't make any difference. Win Endicott was a fool to post that reward. It makes things look bad—"

"Look bad!" cried the girl angrily. "Could it look any worse than it is?"

"No," agreed the Texan. "Not with Purdy into it, it couldn't."

"Because now—he'll probably claim the reward—he and Long Bill—and you will have had your trouble for your pains."

"Claim the reward!" exclaimed the Texan. To the girl's surprise, he seemed to grasp at the thought as a drowning man would grasp at a straw. There was a new light in his eyes and the words seemed to hold a ray of hope. "Do you suppose he would? Would he hold her safe for a thousand dollars? Prob'ly he'll try to get more?" The man talked rapidly in short, jerky sentences. "How'd Long Bill cross the river? Have those two got together? Does Purdy know about the reward?"

"Long Bill was ridin'—"

"Purdy's horse?"

"Not the one that Purdy rode to-day—but, I think I've seen Purdy ride that horse."

"But, why did they go on spreadin' these bills? Why didn't they keep it to themselves?"

The girl shook her head, and after a few moments of silence, during which his fists opened and closed as if striving to grasp at the truth, the Texan spoke:

"Maybe if they had the girl hid away safe, they wanted folks to be on the lookout for me."

He pushed back his chair abruptly, and as he stood up the girl indicated the blankets and the package of food.

"Here are blankets," she said, "and there is grub for to-morrow. There is a bunk in the loft—"

The Texan gathered the things into his arms.

"Never mind the bunk," he said. "I'll sleep in the hay. I'll be wanting an early start. You've helped, girl," he said, looking straight into her eyes. "You've guessed wrong—but you've helped, maybe more than you know. I reckon Win wasn't such a fool with his reward, after all." And before she could frame a reply, the man had opened the door and disappeared into the night.

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.

A MERMAID'S SONG

COME, enter the Ship of Illusions; it will bear you away over sea,
Past the Islands of Dreamful Enchantment, with the Harbor of Bliss on the lee;
To the far-fabled Country of Promise, where kisses are minted and stored—
With never a spendthrift to waste them, with never a miser to hoard!

Hugo Deloraine.

Beyond the Violet

by J. U. Giesy

A "DIFFERENT" STORY

THERE were four of us in the lounge of the club. There was Carnick, the broker, a man who dealt with material values, stocks and bonds and such things. There was Abbington the banker, whose interests in life were pretty much along the same line as those of his friend. Then there was Vance, M.D., B. S., and some other things, I believe, the neurologist, who having served his time in a base hospital on the other side as a part of the Medical Corps, A. E. F., had come back and resumed the practise he had laid down at such time as the call of his citizen's duty sent him a volunteer, heart and soul, into the army life.

The fourth member of our group was myself, who dabbled somewhat with typewriter and pen.

Carnick and Abbington were reading; the former a current magazine, the latter an evening paper, and I was simply lounging back in a deep chair, and smoking when Vance strolled up.

"Gentlemen," he said, smiling. We all knew him—a slender, dapper, almost effeminate sort of chap, unless one happened to catch his eyes, as cold and steady a blue as the chilled steel of a surgeon's knife.

Carnick glanced up. "Hello, Vance," he mumbled.

Abbington nodded.

I returned the doctor's smile.

He took up a paper and found himself a chair, respecting the mood of the others. And I continued to enjoy my cigar.

All at once Carnick cast his magazine aside. "Rot!" he snorted. "Bosh! What's got into people inside the last few months is more than I can understand! Two years ago you couldn't have got that sort of stuff into a standard magazine."

Vance lifted his eyes over the edge of his paper, and Carnick saw he had gained his attention. "I suppose you'd call it a sort of universal hysteria, wouldn't you, Vance? I believe that state is characterized by the belief on the part of the one afflicted that he sees and hears nonexistent things."

Vance's customary smile twitched at his lips. He glanced from the broker to the paper again. "I presume you refer to the prevalence of articles dealing with the possibility of a future life and its demonstration?" he suggested.

Carnick nodded. "Yes. They're getting to be an epidemic. Some publication runs one, and the others all follow like sheep. What I can't comprehend, however, is the effect the thing seems to have had not only on the popular mind, but on some

of those we have been in the habit of considering the world's biggest men. They've fallen for it, and they've fallen for it strong."

Abbington laid down his paper. I sat holding my cigar in my hand. Carnick had pushed himself up in his chair and was regarding Vance with a sort of impersonal frown.

For a time the physician made no answer, and then: "He is a rather bold man, I fancy, Carnick, who undertakes to say what does or does not lie beyond the border line."

Carnick took it with no evidence of any full understanding. "Border line?" he repeated. "Just what do you mean by border line?"

"The limit," said Vance slowly, "of the sensory perception of mankind, meaning thereby the individuals inhabiting a world bounded by a minimum and a maximum perceptive zone — violet for the sense of sight, or for hearing the most rapid vibratory rate which can be consciously denominated sound."

Abbington nodded. "That's a pretty comprehensive definition, too, I imagine," he said.

Carnick somewhat widened his eyes. "You think there *is* something—beyond?" he asked.

Vance smiled again. "It's presumable, isn't it, at least? We've proven the X-ray as regards light already. Man senses what lies within his limitations. Sticking to the sense of sight—presupposing that our eyes turned merely sidewise—we would be conscious of only length and breadth, and thickness for us would not exist.

Carnick grinned. "As it is we have three dimensions; do you mean to insinuate that there may be a fourth?"

"I'm not a metaphysician," said Vance. "But a questioning of the possibility of a stage beyond mere corporeal existence is a blow at the very foundations of religion, is it not?"

"I never went in for religion," Carnick said quickly, and added: "Of course I suppose I recognize some casual reason back of what we call life. But beyond that, I've never given the matter much thought."

"Exactly." Vance smiled again. I noted a slight contraction of the corners of his lids. "You recognize something, Carnick, and you don't know what it is. Thus far we've spoken of sensory perception, yet a man—some men—may perceive something without exactly sensing its absolute nature. It comes down then to a question of what life is. A moment ago I spoke of a vibratory rate, and it is not too far a cry to assume that life, like all other force, is in itself a ratio of vibration. If that is correct, then life is a harmony in the midst of a universal scale, and man may perceive certain things beyond the scope of his senses, in very much the same way that the string of a violin may be set into vibration by the sounding of a sympathetic chord.

"I think that may be the explanation for the universal racial belief in the possibility of a future life—a sort of sympathetic perception of a truth. Take the violin again for instance, and tune it without lifting the bridge. What then would happen if after the tuning were finished the bridge were raised?"

Carnick frowned again. "I suppose," he said after a moment, "that the result would be to raise the pitch."

"Precisely." Vance nodded. "For the rest you must accept my statement that certain things may at times have the same effect on the human brain and nerves."

Abbington sat forward. "Raising the pitch, you mean?"

"Yes."

"So that—one can see—beyond the violet?"

"Why, yes—that's a very good way to put it," said Vance.

Carnick eyed the physician in a shrewd way he had at times and brought the matter to an issue: "See here, do you know of any concrete example?"

Vance met him directly. "Coming to a show-down, eh, Carnick? Well, as a matter of fact, I do know of one such instance. It was the most interesting demonstration of what I think we may best call sensory hyperesthesia, I have ever encountered."

"He could see—beyond?"

"Yes. At least I am convinced that is the explanation. Something happened to

his optic nerves or center, which actually raised his visual perceptibility an octave, if we may still employ a musical parallel, with the result that his sight was shifted up on the scale."

Carnick puffed out his lips. He glanced at Abbington and me, and then leaned back in his chair. "All right, doctor," he said, "tell the story, but spare me your technical terms. If I get you, this chap saw things that, in so far as those around him were concerned, weren't there."

"He saw things 'beyond the violet,' as Abbington puts it," Vance returned. "As a matter of fact, violet was the only mundane color as we know it, of which he retained any perception. In his scheme of things after I came to know him, violet was his minimum rate of vibration, and in so much corresponded to our red."

He tossed his paper aside, produced and lighted a cigar. "You've all heard of shell shock cases, or read of them," he resumed. "And I'll merely say that the condition in so far as we men who observed them were able to determine, was with all respect to Carnick's restriction on my use of medical parlance, a hyperesthesia or excessive irritability of the brain and nerves. The victims of the complaint were subject to various mental and physical aberrations, with certain forms of hallucination—though mainly of a subjective nature, meaning thereby that their imaginary ills and experiences were largely if not wholly centered about themselves—their immediate condition and future welfare, that is.

"As you know, I was connected during my medical service on the other side with a convalescent base. That's how Edward Stinson came to us. The history that came with him indicated very clearly that in the opinion of those who had observed him, he was mentally deranged. I do not mean violent—there had been no manifestations of that nature at any time, but there was something about him decidedly strange. And in addition he was blind."

"Hold on," Carnick interrupted.

Vance shook his head and smiled. "Blind in the ordinary sense, I mean. I'm not mussing up my facts, my friend. The man had to be cared for like any other blind man. You want to remember that, Carnick. He couldn't see a thing that went on around him, because violet was the minimum of his sight perception, and the last link that bound him to the color scheme of the every-day world.

"He had been an infantry Looie with the Twelfth Field. You know that outfit did some very heavy work, and, well—Stinson didn't know exactly what happened to him after he was advancing under fire with his men, and had a sudden sensation of going up in the air, until he woke up in an evacuation hospital back of the line and an entirely different world. He told me the whole thing himself. The trouble seemed to be with his eyes or the mechanism of his sight.

"At first he told me he thought he had surely died, except that he could not harmonize that idea with the fact that he was able to hear all that went on around him distinctly, to sense ordinary odors, to taste the food that was given to him, and was exquisitely sensitive to any ministering touch.

"But so far as his sight was concerned, Edward Stinson came back to a world of ghosts."

"Good God!" Abbington exclaimed a bit thickly; "do you mean he saw—things like that?"

"Exactly." Vance inclined his head. "He had a slight wound when he was picked up—a shell gutter across one thigh, which was debrided and promptly healed, and save for that he didn't show a scratch. They diagnosed his case as 'shell shock' partly because of his subsequent condition and partly because they learned that he had been bowled over by a shell burst, during the attack by the Twelfth on an enemy position in which he had taken part. They sent him to a base and kept him there till his leg healed, and waited for his other symptoms to clear up. But they didn't. There weren't any, as a matter of fact, except the one I've mentioned, and that stuck. They transferred him to us, with an addendum to the diagnosis to the effect that he was suffering from visual hallucinations, which was natural enough, even though it undershot the truth."

"What was the truth?" Carnick asked all of a sudden.

Vance looked him in the eye. "I think I've pretty clearly indicated that by my remark that Stinson woke up in a world of ghosts," he said slowly. "It depends on how one looks at it, of course."

"You mean—he saw—"

"The living dead," said Vance. "He described it to me as I've said. It was rather weird. He likened his condition to that of a man viewing the movements of a number of mute actors through the medium of a violet tinted glass. He was normal in every way except for that one thing in so far as his conversation went — as shown by every known test we applied. He was a man of more than average education. He could understand after a time the effect he was having on everybody else. He had hard work holding himself together right at the first; in getting along in the borderland existence which had suddenly become his.

"You see it was hard for him to realize what had happened—that he was still corporeally alive in so far as his creature needs were involved, and yet perfectly capable of perceiving the stage of existence those of his fellow men, who had died. It was a sort of No Man's Land in which he found himself—a place peopled with souls which had been violently torn out of their bodies, or had slipped out of them after a due course of dissolution. He saw men die—actually *saw* something leave their bodies. Day after day and night after night he saw that thing happen in the wards. He saw the life, if you wish to call it that, steal forth from them and pass him. What is it the orientals say — that they hear their souls bidding their bodies farewell? Well —Stinson *saw* that happen, and after a time he came to realize that it was only the bodies of those men that had died, and that the men themselves were still alive—that they had simply shaken off the body which was no longer essential to their continued life.

"That, however, was later, when he had gained a better appreciation of his condition. The first time he saw it happen, it upset him, and he called the nurse on duty and told her that something was coming out of another man's body. That man died, and the nurse was terribly impressed. She was on edge. There were times when the corps in the hospitals were overworked as a matter of course. She reported the matter and the result was that Stinson was pretty closely watched. That's how the "visual hallucinations" got tacked onto his diagnosis before he came to us.

"I've told you he was intelligent, however, and by the time I first saw him he had accepted his condition, and it had made a most remarkable change in the man himself. You see, he had come, by then, regardless of the opinion of others, or the questions they had asked him after they got an inkling of what they believed he thought he was seeing, to consider the whole thing as a visual demonstration—an irrefutable proof of a definite existence on the other side of the grave. The thing had lifted him out of the depression one would have naturally expected, into a state of something like a spiritual exaltation. He was a man with his feet on the earth and his head in the skies—wholly convinced of the truth of what he was seeing."

"So is the man with hallucinations—the victim of a monomania," said Carnick. "They're absolutely convinced of the truth of their convictions—dead sure they're right."

Vance's eyes twinkled.

"Meaning that you want proof," he said.

Carnick chuckled. "Well, yes. I'm from Missouri. Outside the fact of your observation, which I'm not doubting, and the man's own say-so, which I'm willing to admit as genuine in so far as his own belief, where does it get you, any more than the statement of these writers in the magazines that so and so received a message from some one who has passed on, through a medium or one of these automatic writers who claim to set down what simply flows off their pencil or pen?"

Abbington nodded. "Carnick's right," he seconded his friend. "Listing Stinson's alleged ability as a very interesting matter from your view-point, doctor, how are you going to nail it down?"

I looked at Vance to see how he was taking their questions.

He was smiling again. "I think the proof lies in the fact that Stinson fell in love before he came to us," he returned.

"Fell in love?" Carnick started. "With a ghost—a soul—a spirit?"

Vance shook his head. "Not at first. Lieutenant Stinson fell in love with the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand, a pair of violet eyes—or let us say their color. Hold on—" as the broker would have interrupted. "I've been laying for you, Carnick. I've held out this part of my story for the last. Now let us review briefly Stinson's case. He could hear, feel, taste, touch, smell, anything in normal fashion. He could see violet as the one remaining elementary color in the every-day scale—and Allison Towne, United States Army nurse, had violet eyes. More than that, she was on duty at the base to which Stinson was sent first."

Abbington dragged his chair a little closer. The movement seemed to say he intended missing no word. Carnick pursed out his lips again.

Vance went on: "Stinson was under her charge. Day after day he saw those spots of violet bending above him—came to associate the voice behind them with the woman whose eyes he knew they were, because he asked her if that was their color—came to associate their presence with her touch—the fragrance of her feminine presence. And remember that those twin pools of living light were the binding links which in those days, when he was trying to adjust himself to the change that had come upon him, seemed to hold the man to earth. She talked with him at times, told him her name, and some other trivial details, sympathized with him, and he confided to her a great deal about himself and the experience he was undergoing, after the first edge of the thing had worn off. Particularly was that true after his so-called hallucinations had become general knowledge.

"Then came the influenza epidemic—the second big break out—and the girl was taken sick. One night, lying in his bed, Stinson saw her pass.

"The next morning he asked about her, and learned that she had died, and the hour of her death. The information merely confirmed his fears, because he had felt that the form he had seen drifting wraith-like past him was her spiritual entity suddenly freed from her body—and now, although he had never been able to see more than the color of her eyes while she was physically living, he knew absolutely—had a full and vivid perception of how she appeared, and described her to the nurse he had questioned with a clearness that moved the woman to tears.

"That settled the thing for Stinson. He missed the girl immensely; but, as he said to me, he came out of the experience with the settled knowledge that no matter what might have happened to her body, Allison Towne was as much as ever alive, and that he loved her—so that you see, Carnick, in the end the boy was literally in love with a shade as you suggested. It was rather odd."

"Odd, yes," Carnick assented. "But what does it prove?"

"Nothing," Vance said. "It merely lays the foundation for what followed, brings out the point that Stinson never saw the girl while she was physically alive, and gained his entire picture of her only after the change which we denominate death, but which he came to feel assured was merely a change and nothing worse. But wait.

"I told you I watched his case for weeks. We got to be pretty good friends in those days. I think I convinced him of my interest, and we used to take short walks about the grounds in the evenings. He liked to get out then, because of the peculiar violet quality in the twilight. He was always seeking for something of a violet color, with very much the same avidity that the average child will seize on anything that is red. During the time he was in our institution, I made several attempts to tune him down as it were, but with no success. In the end he was sent home unimproved, and I lost track of him completely, until the other day, when he walked into my office with his vision normally restored."

"Normally—he could see things the same as before?" said Carnick.

"Even as you and I," said Vance, and smiled.

"What happened?" Abbington asked.

"Heaven only knows," Vance said, "though of course, we may assume that whatever process lifted his vision to a temporarily higher scale of perceptivity, and maintained it there through a period of months, was by some means removed."

"Something let down the bridge," Carnick suggested, harking back to the doctor's first comparison anent the violin.

Vance nodded. "Yes. Stinson told me what happened, of course. When he left us, they put him aboard a transport and brought him across. The trip was uneventful, until the steamer docked. He was slated for a hospital on this side and was loaded with some of the others into an ambulance, because of his condition, though he was a 'sitting' case.

"Something went wrong after they started for the hospital, and the ambulance motor caught fire. Quick work got the passengers out—and just about that time the machine blew up.

"Stinson wasn't hurt a bit, but all the same he fainted, or lost consciousness at the instant of the explosion. When he came to he was in a hospital again, and a nurse was bending over his bed. He looked up into Allison Towne's face — or that's what he thought at first. One can imagine that he was pretty well shaken both by the face into which he was looking and the fact that he had regained his normal sight.

"He tried to speak. 'You—you! Miss Towne!'

"For a moment he says he couldn't for the life of him determine whether he had finally died and the girl was really Allison herself, or was alive and had dreamed everything that went before that moment. But he hadn't been injured, and although his brain was whirling, he came up quickly. He hitched himself up on an elbow, and kept on staring into the face of the nurse. And he found it wide-eyed, rather startled, as it might be by his sudden recognition.

"'You are Miss Towne, aren't you?' he asked, because the girl beside him was as like to the spirit, soul, wraith, or whatever you like to call it, of Allison Towne as two peas from the same pod.

"She nodded. 'Yes, I am Miss Towne,' she said. 'But how do you know? I don't think I've ever seen you.'

"Stinson let himself back on the pillow. You must remember that Allison Towne had told him a bit about herself.

"'You were born in Paterson?' he said in a sudden flash of comprehension.

"She assented.

"'You had a sister? Her name was Allison?' said Stinson.

"She nodded again.

"Then Stinson knew the truth. 'You're very much like her in appearance, aren't you?' he said.

"'Why, yes.' The girl had grown a trifle pale. 'Allison and I looked a great deal alike, except that I'm a bit younger. But—'

"'Wait,' Stinson interrupted. 'I know what you're going to say, Miss Towne, because—I knew your sister. She was very good to me. She told me about you. Your name is Arline. I've—Miss Towne, I've been through a most remarkable experience, and I've come back out of it to find—you.'

"Then he told her exactly what had occurred. 'That's why it startled me so,' he said at the last, 'when I looked up just now and saw your face. It is like hers—like the face of the woman I never really saw, until after, as men say, she had died. It—it was as though I had suddenly waked up and found that I had been caught in the toils of some nightmare, and you had wakened me again to life. For a moment it baffled me, and then I remembered she had told me she had a sister, who was also a nurse.'

"'I know,' said the girl. —'Allison wrote me about you. She—she believed you saw what you said. She said she wouldn't be afraid of death if it came to her after talking to you, because — she felt sure that what had happened to you was proof of a —a future life. I—I think she loved you, Lieutenant Stinson. I—I think that's why you saw her after she had passed. I think she let you see her true self.'"

Vance smiled again as he came to the end of his story. "There, Carnick," he said, "is your proof. Stinson recognized the younger girl by her likeness to the sister he had known but had never been able to see in her physical life."

Carnick sat frowning. "I don't know," he said at last.

"None of us know — really." Once more Vance smiled.

"That wasn't the end of it, was it?" Abbington asked.

Vance laughed. "Hardly. You see Stinson had been living for months in a world of ghosts. The explosion of the ambulance did something to undo the work of the shell burst, of course. And the first thing he saw when he came back to the world he had formerly known, was Arline Towne's face. The other day when he came to my office, he brought me—this." He reached into an inner pocket and produced an envelope of heavy texture, handing it to the banker.

Abbington thrust his fingers inside it and drew out a wedding invitation. He read it: "Arline Towne—to—Lieutenant Edward Stinson," and gave it back.

Vance took it. "Render unto Cæsar those things that are Cæsar's," he said.

"Meaning?" Abbington grumbled.

"Meaning," said Vance, "that man, as man, lives within the limitations of his sensory perceptions, and that Arline Towne is a charming girl. I had luncheon with her and Stinson the other day."

THE SKULKER

I ASKED a flower, a bee, a rose,
A skylark at the brink of dawn,
A fountain in a garden-close,
A cricket on a daisied lawn;
I asked the river flowing wide,
The firs upon the mountainside.

I asked the billowy sea of jade,
The hills of melting amethyst,
The golden patches in the glade,
The meadow by the sunlight kissed;
I asked the runlet in the glen,
And all the haunts of nymphs and men.

I asked the white clouds in the sky,
Drifting like treasure-laden ships;
I asked the breezes fleeting by,
Laden with sweets of flower-lips;
I asked a lad of shining face,
A maiden of a winsome grace.

I asked of all and asked again:
"Where dwelleth Care? Doth any know?"
And birds and flowers and hearts of men
Had naught of will nor power to show;
For none could name the darkened place
Where Care was hiding his grim face!

Elizabeth May Montague.

The Picture on the Wall

by J. Breckenridge Ellis

CHAPTER XXIV.

GLAXTON'S THREAT.

GLAXTON'S warning was not without effect, and John's step was hardly audible as he passed through his "father's" door. He found him dressed, lying upon the bed, and was greatly shocked by his changed face. Its animation was gone. Lines were cut deep in the pallid skin exaggerating the effect of age. Hearing the click of the latch his head turned languidly on the pillow without a lightening of the features.

"What happened?" John brought out with fierce intensity. "What has he done to you?"

"I can't talk," Mr. Warring murmured. "I can't collect my thoughts. It sets my heart fluttering to try. Another time—another time."

John bent over him. "When was it you lost your grip on yourself? Wasn't it after Glaxton hunted you down? I'll drive him from the premises if it's the last thing I ever do."

Mr. Warring cried in distress. "But no, no! That would mean my death. Only he knows how to relieve my distress. Nobody but your Cousin Glaxton knows how to regulate my heart. I'd die without him You distress me, John, by any such suggestion." He breathed rapidly, laboriously.

The door opened, and Glaxton came quietly into the room. He spoke soothingly to Mr. Warring. "Now that you have greeted your son, I wonder if you hadn't better be very quiet for the remainder of the day?"

"Oh, yes—yes," the invalid whispered. "That is what I need; quiet, perfect quiet—not to think or talk or feel the jar of movements." Languidly he reached out to touch John's hand. "It was glorious while it lasted. But my heart is so uncertain. Perfect quietness, that is all I need."

John looked at Glaxton. "Then come with me."

Glaxton smiled faintly and asked the prostrate man: "Can you do without me now? Perhaps you would like to try it without my especial medicine?"

Into the invalid's voice crept a note of irritation if not of alarm. "But I must have that medicine. You know I must have it, and soon. Run along, John, for the present—just for the present; I must have absolute quiet."

Glaxton, with slow deliberation, seated himself at the bedside. John, with clenched teeth, went away promising himself to solve the mystery of the lawyer's influence over the millionaire. But once in the hall, another thought presented itself. He turned down the side corridor to Virgie's door.

In answer to his knock, Mrs. Abbotsfield looked out inquiringly.

"I want to speak to Virgie a moment." His tone was colorless.

Virgie came out with slow step and he closed the door after her that they might stand alone in the corridor. Although it was not very light he could see that her eyes were red from weeping. "When did

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for October 30.

Glaxton bring him home?" he asked in subdued accents.

She spoke in the faint voice of one who has been giving way to violent emotions: "About three hours ago—just after you started away on your walk."

"So short a time," he let his bitterness sound forth, "for him to get from you my secret!

"Yes," she said faintly. "Is that all, John? I'll go back to mother."

"Surely it is enough!" he returned sternly. Then he softened. "But I didn't ask you out here to listen to reproaches. I just wanted to say that I've had experience of my own in trying to keep facts from Glaxton. You couldn't hold it back from him. I wanted you to know that I haven't forgotten you're my friend, and I'm going to be your friend till Chapter the Last. That was all, dear Virgie. Now you can run along."

She burst into tears. "You're breaking my heart a second time," she sobbed. "Yes, he forced it out of me. Oh, John, I'm not free—he has a hold over me. I can't explain. You'd not blame me if you knew everything. I had to tell him—he found out there was something, and then I had to tell what it was. If I hadn't—but I was forced. He has a hold over me."

"Don't cry, dear girl. I'm going to break his hold. All the same, I'd like to know what secret he has of yours to make you give him my secret."

"I can never tell that to any one, never. But if you knew, you'd say I did right."

"Would I? Then on the strength of that assurance, I'll say you did right to tell about me. I can't understand it, but I'll say you did right. I'm going to take your hand in the dark—" He reached for it.

She burst into fresh tears. She gasped. "You'll never regret trusting me."

"Am I not sure of that? Well, I should say so! All the same, I could do for Glaxton if I knew what secret of yours he is holding."

"Yes, you could. But yet I can't explain."

"But you can trust him to keep your secret even after he has forced mine from you as the price for silence?"

"He'll keep the secret for his own sake. To help him make his plans. You can't trust Mr. Glaxton unless his self-interest is on your side."

Hearing a footstep in the main hall, she darted into her room and John retreated, puzzling over his best course of action.

It was Simmons they had overheard. As if unaware of his shadowy hovering John walked to the head of the staircase to go down to Tredmill. Whether Simmons had received orders from his master or had determined upon personal vengeance never appeared. Suddenly he made a violent forward rush, then leaped straight into the air to fall catlike upon the young man's neck. The movement of his long legs and lithe body as it shot through space with the swiftness of the wind was essentially feline.

John, not anticipating danger before it was upon him, had no chance to jump to one side. He therefore fell flat to the floor causing Simmons to miss his hold upon his collar. The lean body, overbalanced, sought equilibrium by means of the far reach of the arms, but before the bony hands could touch the floor John started to one knee, hurling the giant frame down the stairs.

It reached the floor of the reception-hall with a crash and rolled up against the front door with a hollow thud that jarred the windows.

Glaxton ran out of Mr. Warring's bedroom and glared at John, who was rearranging his tie somewhat breathlessly. "You'll kill your father!" he grated.

John answered grimly. "I'll kill Simmons first."

Tredmill, seeing from the parlor door that the man did not rise, hurried to his assistance, but Simmons, groaning dismally, gave him a surly curse and, finding his bones unbroken, crept away.

"Oh!" cried Lucia, rushing into the down-stairs hall from the back parlor. "What is it?"

John started down the stairs, explaining serenely. "Brother Tredmill is growing impatient for Alice to finish her primping. If she keeps him waiting much longer, I'm afraid he'll pull down the house."

"One moment, please," Glaxton called to

John. He came closer and spoke guardedly, while Lucia followed Tredmill into the front room. "You are going to try to drive me away. Now, mark what I say: At your very first move against me, I'll sift out all your past and that of the wretch you believed to be your uncle. I'll publish you to the world. I daresay I'll find much more than the fact that for a night you played the burglar. Treat me as a gentleman, John, and I'll let you pass as one. For your father's sake. I'm going to leave it to you to make the next move. But the moment I find that it's a move against me"—he gave him a darkly ominous look—"I'll forget that you are your father's son."

CHAPTER XXV.

A SECRET CONFERENCE.

WITH Glaxton in the house and Mr. Warring a helpless invalid, gaiety vanished. Life became as staid and discreetly regulated as Mrs. Abbottsfield's manner. John felt that the time had come for him to disappear from Lagville. The baffled police no longer looked for him in this direction—had, possibly, let him slip from mind.

Glaxton would let him go without pursuit, would, if necessary, aid him in slipping away. The lawyer by his air of secret understanding seemed always reminding him of a league between them; if John left him alone, he would not investigate his past, which would necessarily implicate his future. It was, therefore, a period of safety for John; but he regarded it as safety purely for flight; he could see in it no permanency.

Even if he could have reconciled himself to Glaxton's domination, John knew Blearstead too well not to anticipate at a day not remote an attempt to wreck him, out of revenge. This was a danger that grew more menacing as the days passed.

Yet he had not the heart to sever his life from Lucia's. His going would instantly betray him as the imposter, and when he tried to picture how Lucia would be affected by the news, he stood appalled. He drew the scene of the revelation—Mrs. Abbottsfield's terror; Virgie's amazement; Alice's conviction that, after all, the robbery had been of evil intent; Lucia, all crushed and bleeding; and Mr. Warring, perhaps losing his feeble hold upon existence. He found himself caught in those deeper currents of life which not long ago had been unknown to him; he was unable either to go or remain.

There was more in his grappling for salvation than the wrecking of Lucia's faith and the losing of her love. What was this mysterious force exerted by Glaxton upon the millionaire? Half a dozen times a day he would slip to the sick room without noise as much to elude Glaxton as to avoid jarring the sick man's nerves. But if Glaxton was not always there, Simmons was hovering about, fearing John's frown, but fearing his master's more.

One afternoon—it was that of the fatal day that brought his Lagville experiences to a climax—John succeeded in finding his "father" unattended. So far as he could find out, both Glaxton and Simmons were out of the house. The old man was sleeping heavily and John suspected that an opiate had been administered to keep him quiet until Glaxton's return. He was agitated by vague suspicions which for some days had haunted him—suspicions apparently incapable of proof; and now to these uneasy and murky fancies was added the intuition that something exceedingly important must be happening or be about to happen, otherwise the lawyer would not for so long have relinquished his watchfulness.

He determined to wake the invalid, though dreading possible heart complications. It was only after considerable difficulty that he succeeded in doing so.

"We are alone," he said as soon as he could hold the other's attention. "Don't be afraid to speak to me frankly. Nobody can hear us." He bent over the vials on the little stand by the bedside. "Which of these medicines do you take? And when do you take them?"

Mr. Warring answered in a faraway voice, dealing out the words slowly, with no shade of interest. John listened intently. From the family physician he had learned all about the course of medicine

prescribed, and had familiarized himself with each drug and the frequency of its use. The response of the sick man tallied exactly with the physician's prescription.

The young man breathed a sigh of such expansive relief that he was troubled to realize how confidently he had anticipated some discrepancy. He told himself grudgingly that everything was all right—there had been no pernicious substitution—after all it was simply a matter of an unaccountable heart action. An uncertain heart is always mysterious to one whose heart is normal, but it is one of nature's mysteries and John had begun to fear this might be one of man's.

He seated himself at the bedside, and took the invalid's hand.

"Tell me, father, are you perfectly satisfied with the way things are moving along? Doesn't Glaxton get on your nerves? I'd like to see him put out of the house. What about it?"

The pallid face grew whiter. For a few moments there was no response, then his hand closed on John's as he whispered: "He holds all of my affairs in his hands. All the threads. Nobody else could untangle them," he panted, his bosom beginning to heave alarmingly. "That's one reason why I went away. To find out if I couldn't unsnarl the lumber interests in a way to put you at the head of the yards. But there's nothing I could possibly do. Everything's —fixed."

"How did he get such control?"

"I don't know, John. Sometimes I wonder. But I don't know. For a long time I haven't been myself. But wasn't that a blessed time when you first came! Of course I believe your Cousin Glaxton is honest." His fingers grew tense. "I must believe it. I must!" He looked wildly at the other.

"If he is—of course. But if he isn't—"

"You mustn't say 'if.' In that case he could ruin us all. Because everything is in his hands. If he were antagonized he could put on the screws, legally. But he's all right. He must be. I won't think anything else."

"I don't like him, father. And I will get rid of him with your permission."

"It's too late, my boy. It's too late. And we must believe he is honest. I think he is. He must be. And besides, nobody else can keep my heart from hammering the life out of me."

"Your heart was all right while he was away."

"Of course it might seem all right for months at a time. But when it goes wrong, Glaxton knows how to quiet it. That medicine on the table—well, it's the best our doctor can do. I take it to please him. Tonics and all that. But what really soothes me isn't on that table. Glaxton seems to know everything. Best of all, he knows how to quiet me."

"Does the doctor know what secret medicine he gives you?"

"Why, my dear boy, your Cousin Glaxton gives me only what you see there. He has no medicine in the sense you mean, though we refer to it as 'medicine.' It is simply a magnetic treatment. He is a remarkably magnetic man. He gets me under control."

John recalled Glaxton's dark face and was ready to admit his powerful individuality. He shuddered. "Father, let me nurse you. I'll do exactly as the doctor advises, and have you well again. We'll go to the bank as we did when I first came, and take our auto rides with Lucia—"

The sweat stood upon Mr. Warring's brow.

"But it isn't the doctor who can help me, it isn't you, dear boy, it's Glaxton. He has the touch."

John asked abruptly: "Is it really your wish, as Glaxton pretends, that Brother Tredmill should not come to this house?"

"You mustn't talk about that. You'd better not talk to me any longer. Just let me lie still, oh, as still as death. After a time my heart gets right, if I lie very still."

It was impossible for John to close his eyes to the fact that he was making the invalid worse, but he persisted. "What shall be done with the box of money that we buried in the garden?"

Mr. Warring grasped his arm. "Hush—hush! You say no one can hear us talking, but you can never be sure." His breath

came with distressing rapidity, like that of a spent runner. "The green liquid—quick!"

John served him expertly and he was soon quieted. After a silence he murmured: "Don't talk to me about such things, my dear boy, until I am stronger, or it will be the death of me." After a longer silence he patted John's hand affectionately. "I'm growing quite easy now. You'd better leave me, dear boy. I'm going to try to sleep. I'd rather your Cousin Glaxton didn't know I'd been awake. If he finds out you've been here he'll get the whole story from me. Simmons told him about the dirt on the spade and before I knew what I was about I'd described the spot where the box was hidden away. Your Cousin Glaxton has a touch. He soothes me. He makes me tell him everything."

John gave a short laugh. "Then you think Glaxton got the box?"

"Of course he wouldn't take it, John," the other sighed reproachfully. "Your Cousin Glaxton is honest. We must believe that. But he knows where it is—I had to tell him. He has such a touch; so magnetic."

"Listen, father—" John bent over him. "I changed the hiding-place of the box before Simmons or Glaxton could get to it. Of course they've looked for it in the summer-house. And finding it gone, of course they think I've carried it away for safe keeping."

Mr. Warring opened and closed his eyes rapidly. His breathing was regular. He spoke in carefully repressed tones: "My boy, you've told me a great piece of news. Where did you put it? But no; don't tell me. Let it be your secret alone." A smile flickered over the pinched features. "See that you guard it well. Now let me sleep."

John rose and bent over him stirred by conflicting remorse and affection—remorse at the deceptive part he was playing, affection that had strengthened from the hour of their meeting. "Have I given you a little courage?" he asked wistfully.

"Son, guard that secret. Lucia's happiness may depend upon it."

"Her happiness is dearer to me than my life," John declared fervently.

"I know it is. You have made me a happy man."

CHAPTER XXVI.

BETTIE ONCE MORE TO THE RESCUE.

WHEN John went down-stairs, Lucia, Virgie, and Alice, in the sitting-room, were planning to spend the evening hour at the picture-play where the Rev. Mr. Tredmill would assuredly join them. In these days Tredmill was perhaps less minister than lover. At any rate, it was well-known that he disapproved of all moving-pictures save those of an educational value which neither thrill nor provoke to laughter; yet was he willing, for the sake of Alice's nearness, to gaze upon protracted kissings, the smashing of dishes and flinging about of pies, and breakneck races through crowded city streets.

John passed the door with his sunny smile to indicate that in spirit he was with the girls, then left the house on one of his long, meditative walks. Many a time afterward he mused with regret upon this wasted opportunity of spending the afternoon with Lucia: watching the smiles gather in her eyes, and the light of affection come and go about her happy mouth. If one could but know at rise of sun that one's day of fate has dawned, how jealously would the hours be hoarded!

When he came back to town from his loitering exploration of country lanes, it was growing dark, less from the lateness of the hour than from gathering clouds. From watching the heaving masses rolling up from the south he became suddenly aware that he was being followed and then it flashed upon him that somebody had been dogging his footsteps.

In selecting a short cut home he had plunged into a malodorous alley between the rear walls of small sheds and the bulging fences of frowsy back lots. Some one who had been across the street from him before his coming to this most squalid section of Lagville, now crept into the same obscurity. John had given no heed to the elusive figure and could not have told if it was that of a man or a woman.

He stopped short, thrilled by the misgiving that at last the detectives had penetrated his disguise.

The obscure form, instead of pausing at the head of the alley or slackening its pace, rapidly approached. It was a young woman; and as she drew nearer the pretty features, the rounded outlines of vigorous youth, the characteristic movements of independent ease recalled a picture from his Kansas City life.

"Bettie!" he exclaimed, amazed, but immensely relieved.

He seized her hands and if, as Lucia had declared, a more intimate greeting on his part was wrong, he committed the crime in thought; for though their lips did not meet, in his heart he kissed her. "Bettie! How wonderful!" And he questioned her anxiously.

"Yes, I'll explain everything," she fluttered. "That's why I'm here. But where can we talk without people seeing us?"

This was a difficult problem and the best solution he could think of was the Warring automobile. He hurried away for it while she waited near the head of the alley.

Presently they were speeding along the country roads he had grown to know so well from his solitary rambles. Amidst their quiet loveliness it sounded oddly incongruous when Bettie explained that her father's house-boat was tied up among the willows about half a mile above town, and that Blearstead was on the boat, and Cleek as well.

"We've been there two days," she said, "but pa keeps such a sharp eye out that this is the first time I've had a chance to warn you."

He asked her, forebodingly, what they meant to do.

"Blearstead has come to get money out of Mr. Glaxton by selling him the secret that you're only John Walters, no kin to Mr. Warring at all. Cleek is a witness. They're together right now. I listened a long time to their scheming. Blearstead was afraid to confess that he was the one made you act the part of the kidnaped son. But Mr. Glaxton got it out of him. He wouldn't pay over a cent till he knew everything—or thought he knew everything. But there is something he never found out, although he is so smart. They wrangled by the hour. At last Blearstead owned up that it was his scheme. Then Mr. Glaxton wanted to know where a box was that he said you'd buried in the summer-house and afterward had carried away. But Blearstead didn't know. Or he said he didn't. I don't think Mr. Glaxton believed that. Pa sits there saying nothing. He did his talking to Blearstead before the frame-up. All his part is to get some of the money for bringing Blearstead and Cleek in the boat. Mr. Glaxton had a witness with him to take everything down."

John was surprised at the notion of Simmons as a secretary.

"I can't think of his name, but he runs the biggest store here in town."

John gasped. "Eugene Ware?"

"That's the one."

John muttered. "Please don't say a word for a few minutes. I want to fit my mind to the suit of ideas you've handed me." After a half-mile taken at terrific speed, he slowed down. "What's the game, Bettie?"

"You will be arrested early in the morning as an impostor. Pa and Blearstead and Cleek are to be given that long to get themselves and the boat safe away. Ma knows a secret that would—" She checked herself. "Anyway, she's afraid to say her name's her own. Some day I may tell you. But now you've got to hide out."

"Every one has his secret," John murmured, thinking of Virgie's strange secretiveness. "Does your mother know something that would give me a hold on Glaxton?"

"I don't think I'd better say any more about that. You know I'd tell you if I thought I could. I've tried to be your friend—"

"You have been right in class A, Bettie." He drew a long breath. "Well—this is the end of my story. I knew it would come some day; but 'some day' never means to-day, does it? So I've a respite until morning?"

"Yes, that's the bargain so Blearstead won't get caught. But you'll need all of to-night for travel if you give them the slip. Glaxton was something awful when they

told him how he'd been fooled by you, and that Eugene Ware fellow was like a crazy man."

John's teeth clenched ominously. "I'll face 'em," he said grimly. "I'll know how to deal with a crazy man." Then his features relaxed. He gave her a smile. "If you could come with me, we wouldn't ask odds of the world. You could get me out of every kind of scrape that's invented."

"Oh, John!" She caught her breath. "But they'd miss me, and that would make it easier for them to find you."

"Yes," he assented absently.

She closed her eyes, too proud for him to catch the gleam of sudden tears. "Of course," she faltered, "if I dressed up like a man—"

He roused himself and turned the car about. "Bettie, once I wrote you a letter when I was feeling awful blue and hadn't seen much of the world because I hadn't seen Lagville—understand? This is something I'm trying to put real close to your heart. What I mean is that when I wrote that letter—I hadn't met Lucia. See?"

The light faded from her face.

"But after seeing her—well, I've got to go on alone. That's what it means, dear. The world I lived in when you and I went fishing and boating and were so happy together, is one thing. And the world I've lived in since I've known Lucia is another. Dear, faithful Bettie, there isn't any bridge between. If there is I haven't found it. And if I had found it—I couldn't come back."

"I don't know what you're talking about," she complained, her lip between her teeth.

"Of course you wouldn't. I'm just rambling on. It only means that I must live alone while I live—because of Lucia. But, thank God! I'll live a free man while I live—because of you. There are two names I'll bless with my last breath, and yours is one of them."

"Bettie comes before Lucia," she choked, then tried a brave laugh as she offered: "But of course a person's heart doesn't beat alphabetically!"

From over the hilltops the lights of Lagville were visible. Bettie held her head high. "I didn't tell you, John, that I have a gentleman friend."

"I hope he's worthy of you," he said fervently.

"He has all kinds of money." She nodded her head emphatically.

"I wonder if he'd lend any to a poor beggar?"

"And handsome—oh, just so *handsome!*"

"Just like that?" John teased. "Gracious!" His heart was lightened.

His manner forced a reluctant smile to her lips. She nodded her pretty little head and murmured: "He's crazy about me."

"Then he's not only rich, but a man of sense."

"But I'm going to turn him down." She flung out her hand with the palm from her. "Just like that. I'm going to live like you, alone—all alone—" Her voice steadied itself, but her countenance was preternaturally solemn. "And alone and alone and alone—"

He stopped the car at the suburbs and pressed her hand to his cheek, then spoke in the whimsical manner habitual to him even in moments of deepest gloom: "Us alone people must say good-by now! If Glaxton or my uncle saw us together we'd not have the ghost of a chance to get away."

When he stepped through the doorway of the Warring residence after putting the automobile away, the clock was striking nine.

Lucia ran to meet him in the hall. "Where *have* you been? We've been ready for the picture-show a long time, but you're so late we're going to the second show. The others have gone on ahead." She looked at him reproachfully. "I hope my brother isn't going to keep late hours."

He smiled guiltily, wondering if by any magic she could detect the Bettie perfume on his coat-sleeve. "Yes, I know nine o'clock is something terrible!"

She searched his face. "What is it, John?"

"Has Glaxton come home?"

She made a comical grimace. "No—let's forget him. Come, we must run to overtake our crowd."

"Listen to me, dear girl: there's something very important that I must see about

—something about father; and there's not a second to lose. I must be with him alone before Glaxton comes back. So I can't go with you. Tell the others—no, don't tell them how dreadfully necessary this is or they might do something to interfere, meaning to help. Tell them I have a headache. It 'll be the truth. I could certainly prove up my claim to a good one, Lucia!"

"My poor John!" All at once she was sweet commiseration. "I'm so, so sorry." She stroked his forehead. "Of course I'll miss you all the evening. But I'll be thinking of you, hoping you are getting a good rest. And, anyway, I'm glad to have this chance to tell you good-by." She looked up into his face.

He murmured with constraint: "Good night."

Her hand was on his shoulder. "Still glad to have your little sister?"

"Of course," he muttered confusedly.

She laughed. "Oh, you cold-hearted, matter-of-fact brother!" Suddenly her arm slipped about his neck. "You're going to kiss me good night if it's the last act of your life. You never have. And if the mere prospect of it makes you blush like this, you ought to be practising during the day."

"Listen to me, little golden head," he protested. "I have something on hand that's no end important and it must be finished up before Glaxton comes home. If I stay another minute here with you, adorable little sunshine mouth, bright eyes of blue—I'm afraid I'll eat you up!"

He broke from her embrace and fled up-stairs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MIDNIGHT WATCHER.

IN the up-stairs hall John paused at the balustrade until he had heard Lucia pass from the house and click behind her the latch of the yard gate. Then he moved along the wall with exceeding care. All that he could hope to accomplish in the Warring residence must be done now, before Glaxton came back from the house-boat; and, although viewed from one angle, it might appear an amazing coincidence should he successfully interpose in a matter of life and death at the only time such interference was possible, viewed otherwise, it appeared reasonable that he might accomplish his purpose.

Since it was arranged to arrest him in the morning, Glaxton would feel it essential to his purpose that Mr. Warring should not interfere. If there was ever a time, therefore, when he administered a drug unprescribed by the physician, it would be to-night, and in all probability soon after his return. John had set himself the task of discovering if Mr. Warring's fluctuations of health were not due to this sinister cause.

He opened his "father's" door without rousing the invalid, whose breathing suggested that he was resting under the influence of an opiate. It was the opinion of the family physician that opiates are better suited than anything else to meet the frailties of the flesh, perhaps from the philosophy that it is better not to feel one's illness than to contend against it. Although John was aware that Glaxton had the doctor's sanction in administering the green liquid, he was convinced not only that Glaxton's manner of giving it was gravely injurious, but that the lawyer knew this to be the case yet persisted under the cloak of authority with evil intent.

As this was assuredly his last chance to put his theory to the test, so it had been his first, and realizing that Glaxton might make his appearance at any moment, and that Simmons might be somewhere about the place, he went swiftly and noiselessly to work, confident that he would not arouse the sleeper.

After the precaution of a swift survey of the adjoining chamber—Glaxton's bedroom—he left open the communicating door just as he had found it, then stealthily crossed to the side of the room opposite the bed. The trunk was exactly as he and Mr. Warring had left it after removing the box of bank-notes; that is, the lid stood ajar sufficiently to give a glimpse of the mixed-up contents of papers and old letters. The millionaire could have found no securer place for the concealment of treasure. The very fact that the lid could not be locked

would disarm suspicion on the part of Glaxton, while Mr. Warring, having the trunk before his eyes whenever he looked across the room from his bed, could instantly note any alteration in its position.

John raised the lid, testing it carefully to make sure that it would give forth no warning squeak of the hinges, then drew forth bags of old letters and photographs, burdening himself with as much of the trunk's contents as he could carry without danger of spilling anything on the way. These accumulations of the past, the dregs of yesterdays, he bore to his room, which was situated diagonally across the hall. Heaping his load carelessly in a corner, he darted back, this time carrying a sheet, into which he gathered the loose letters and papers. In his room once more, he locked himself in and, working in feverish haste, assembled such articles as he meant to carry away with him on his long flight. It made but a small bundle, which he tossed from the window into the midst of a flowering bridal-wreath shrub.

Leaving his key in the lock, he climbed out the window upon the roof of a side porch, whose pillar brought him safely to the ground. Simmons was not in sight; doubtless he was up the river with his master. John circled the house, came in through the front door and returned to the invalid's room.

The trunk had been left wide open. Mr. Warring still slept profoundly. John climbed into the trunk, pulled down the lid in its old position, and waited. As he had foreseen, the crack, resulting from the lid's failure to close down, gave him all the air he would need while providing him with a convenient spy-hole. He had a full view not only of the bed, but of the medicine-table.

The trunk was large enough to insure him against painful cramping and excitement promised to make short work of his period of waiting.

The first person to come home was Simmons. He glided noiselessly into the room like an uncanny shadow endowed with independent life, poked his long head into his master's apartment, then slipped across the hall, to pause before John's room. The watcher did not doubt that he was finding out whether or not the door was locked. The key in the lock would convince him that John was in his room, and if he had heard of the headache, as probably he had, since he seemed to gather everything afloat, he would believe John safely in bed.

Simmons went down-stairs, and now he made no effort to move noiselessly. If he had suspected that John's headache was assumed, the key in the lock had convinced him otherwise, and he believed nobody else was at home.

Some time later the family came back from the "opera-house"; Mrs. Abbottsfield, Virgie, Alice, and Lucia. At the same time Glaxton showed up from the garden, causing John to wonder if he had been there with Simmons waiting with the idea that the headache might pass off when the others came home.

John could hear Glaxton hypocritically expressing surprise that "his young friend" was not with the young people, and he heard Lucia explaining why he had gone to bed at an early hour. For half an hour the house was filled with the noises of people taking farewell of the day, which gradually faded away to longer and longer silences emphasized by the sudden shudder of a window or creaking of a floor.

Glaxton had gone into his room from the hall and John heard him undressing, and after a while began to fear that all his pains had been for nothing. The lights were turned off. The lawyer was in bed. Still he waited, although uneasily conscious of the need of time for his intended flight.

Suddenly a beam of light penetrated the crack between trunk and lid, causing him to give so sudden a start that his heart jumped with the fear that he had betrayed himself. Glaxton had left his bed, had come barefooted into the room, and had switched on the light in the ceiling. Had he caught sight of John's shrinking eye? He glided like a ghost, in his long white nightdress, to lock the hall door, then went to a cabinet out of the watcher's line of vision. When he came in sight he carried in his hand a tiny bottle.

John was seeing enacted before him as in a play the suspicion that for days had

tormented him. Glaxton removed the stopper from the vial, then as from an afterthought, shut off the ceiling light, leaving the room in profound darkness. After a moment, the night-light over the medicine-table was shining greenly. It brought out the lawyer's dark features as in a halo of baleful glory. As he held the vial over one of the table glasses, his hand was as steady as a rock.

Several drops were counted into the glass, which was then filled one-third with water. Glaxton placed a thick piece of ice in the water and moved the glass within easy reach of the invalid's hand. Instead of carrying the vial back to the cabinet he slipped it into a pocket of his robe, stood a moment in thought, then went to the wall, where hung the landscape painting. He drew from behind it the little key which, as John knew, and perhaps as Glaxton suspected, belonged to the money-box.

He stood frowning at the key, then glancing at the recumbent figure of the unconscious man; and, although he was removed from the circle of light above the night-light, his frown was plainly visible.

So he knew the key's hiding-place! Had he forced the knowledge from the owner? Doubtless. John supposed Mr. Warring had drawn forth the key on the night of his leaving town, to let John know where it was to be found in case of accident. Had Mr. Warring anticipated while the box was being buried that his heart would fail? Or, in other words, that Glaxton would find him?

Glaxton restored the key and went back to his room. The light was switched off, showing that the lawyer could regulate the invalid's night-light from his own bed. No doubt when he was ready for Mr. Warring to wake up, he would turn on his light; Mr. Warring would find the ice-water—

At the last regular breathing from the next room told the watcher that the lawyer was asleep. John crept from his hiding-place, stealthily poured out the contents of the suspicious glass, replaced it with pure ice-water, and succeeded in unlocking the door and passing out undetected. He crept to the front of the long, dark hall by pressing his hand for safety along the wall. He was almost as much surprised as relieved to discover a line of light under the last door on his right. He tapped upon the door ever so gently.

It was Lucia's door, across the hall from the guest-room, now occupied by Alice. At first there was no response, then as if Lucia had persuaded herself that she had heard something, she asked, startled: "What is that?"

John hesitated as if unable to answer the simple inquiry. Then he said, guardedly: "Your brother."

There was a faint cry of pleasure.

"Wait a minute," Lucia cried excitedly yet restrainedly, taking warning from his cautious tone. In less than a minute she was in the doorway, presented by an electric candle as a most bewitching picture. Over the black cape hastily donned to hide neck and shoulders her hair fell like a shower of gold.

"Come in," she whispered delightedly. Then her face changed to infinite tenderness. "You poor boy, that headache hasn't let you sleep a wink! I'm so sorry—I wish I could change heads with you. Come right in; I'm not a bit sleepy. I've been sitting by the window for an hour. The sky is wonderful to-night. I don't see how anybody can close his eyes to it. I was wondering if you could."

He interposed tensely. "Lucia, I've something to tell you, and I'm in a great hurry. And in a great stress. No, I mustn't come in. Will you slip down to the garden? Glaxton mustn't hear you. I'll be waiting there. I know how unconventional this must seem—"

"Oh, you ridiculous boy!" she laughed without sound, her eyes dancing. "Half the time you don't seem to realize that you are kin to me! Do I want a conventional brother? If there's such a dreadful hurry —I can see by your face that something has happened—"

"Yes, yes, something has happened, Lucia."

"Then I'll come just as I am—" Her face grew anxious. "I'll not stop for my shoes and stockings—"

"You'd better, Lucia. You need more things on, there's such a dew."

"Then come in while I get ready, for if you stand there, darling, Mr. Glaxton will be sure to pop out of his door and catch you." She caught his hand to draw him in out of danger. "I know something dreadful is the matter," she murmured, "but I was feeling so lonesome and the sight of you is so filling for an empty heart that I can't help feeling this is a lark! May I feel that it is a lark, John?"

Something was drawing him toward her infinitely stronger than the strength of her gleaming white arm, but he resisted with the will-power that lent his face an aspect of granite grimness.

"Dear girl, it isn't Glaxton I'm afraid of just now—I'll wait for you in the garden."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LUCIA IN THE GARDEN.

WHEN Lucia reached the summer-house, John was waiting in the dark. The night was gloriously warm and every touch of the breeze was a caress. Heavy clouds were breaking up showing, here and there, brief spaces of the sky intensely blue like Lucia's eyes. Almost overhead through snowy laces of vapor-curtain the moon occasionally showed a gleaming edge of its spinning disk. The garden shrubberies and flower-beds pressed nearer with their perfumes and sometimes when the moon burst triumphantly free from its entanglements the big house shot up like a fairy palace created by a thought, from the spot where nothing had been but a shadow-dream.

"I know how deeply in earnest you are," she sighed as they seated themselves on the rustic bench. "It's all in your face and manner. But, oh, I want to play! The night is divine. It reminds me that we are divine; and ought to play."

"Dear girl, I am truly in earnest. And have very little time for what I must do. You may play when I am gone."

"Gone!" she echoed uneasily. "But you will not leave me, John."

"So much must be done before morning. I'm going to ask you to pay the closest attention to everything I say; please don't interrupt. If you don't interrupt I'll find it easier to explain."

"But how can I pay close attention? Look, the clouds are always interrupting by changing their shapes. Do you see that pretty lady up there? And a horse to carry her away on some great sky adventure. She's changing—she's changing—oh, fickle lady! Now she's an owl. Do you see that she's an owl? What a wise lady to be out so late!"

Unable to resist this sprightliness he laughed, then laid his finger on her lips. "Dear girl, you really must grow serious."

She kissed his finger gaily, but he could no longer smile. "Don't stop me to wonder about this or that, for when I've finished, you'll understand everything."

"But I'm not in a hurry as you are, John, and from the way you begin, I'm sure I'll not enjoy knowing what you call 'everything.' Are you going to make your little sister unhappy? The moon is coming out of shadow again—hold your face this way, John, so I can look into your eyes."

He returned her look so intently that her eyes fell. She faltered. "What is it all about? Are you going to end by doing as the rest of us have done—let Cousin Glaxton get on your nerves?" Her voice, all its sprightliness gone, died away to a plaintive whisper.

He spoke rapidly, driving straight toward his end: "There's a part of my life you've never heard of, and a part I've purposely twisted to give you a wrong impression. Now I want you to know the whole truth in as few words as possible. There's my mother for instance. You don't know about her."

"Your mother!" she protested. Then quickly: "But of course—I understand."

"She was a fine woman, Lucia. As poor as she could be, with health all gone, her last year, but working like a slave to make something of me. That was her life—trying to lift me up."

Lucia commented sympathetically. "The only mother you ever knew."

"I was too young to understand her sacrifices. I let mother give herself for me—"

"She did all that, darling, but don't call her 'mother,' for our dear mother alone has the right—"

"But she was indeed—she was mother to me."

"I know she was splendid to make you what you are. But I can't understand. You thought the man who kidnaped you was your father. I don't see how the wife of such a creature could have been the woman you describe."

"She was determined to bring me up as honest as the day. I told you I ran away from home. But it was mother who ran away, taking me with her, and we couldn't be found, until an uncle came upon us after I was grown, in Kansas City—"

"But you told us you'd never been in Kansas City."

"There were certain imperative reasons why I told you various things that I'm trying now to set straight. That uncle found me in Kansas City and mother was too broken in strength to try to escape from him as she had from my father—"

"Your father! Oh, *don't!*"

"My kidnaper. My mother's husband. Let me go on, Lucia. When my mother died, I had the bad luck to break my leg, and soon after, break it over. My mother's brother seemed my only friend. He didn't spare money or care, but now I know his one object was to get me in his power. I felt under obligations. So when I could hobble around I helped in the restaurant, just waiting till I had fully recovered in order to skip out for myself. But about that time I found out that he was a housebreaker as well as a brother of the kidnaper. My father—the kidnaper—was dead and my uncle—his name is Blearstead—came into possession of the old suit-case with the letters and means of identification. I got them from him; not, as I told you, from the kidnaper on his dying bed. I wonder if you are beginning to understand?"

She put her hands to her head. "What is all this you are telling me?" she gasped. "I understand nothing at all. The more you say, the more I am confused."

"I don't know how to tell it—that's my trouble. Alice and Virgie know a little of the story. Ask them. I'll not go into that. What you must understand isn't about me, after all. I don't matter. I'm nobody. It's your father's danger I want to press home." In quick, short phrases he related his experience in the invalid's room. Her horror over this revelation, coming on top of her utter bewilderment, left her without power of speech.

"That's the cause of your father's sudden changes," he explained. "You must tell what I have seen to the doctor. To every one. To Brother Tredmill. Even Eugene Ware will help you—yes, Eugene Ware. Your father must not be left alone with that wretch another night."

"But you!" she gasped, terror-stricken. "*You* must prevent it. You must!"

"I cannot help."

"You must. You can do all that should be done. Why do you say you won't be here, John?"

"If I were in reality Mr. Warring's son, I could do everything. But I am not what you suppose."

He started up desperately, wrung by the agony of trying to make her see the naked truth. "If I should stay here to proclaim what I discovered a short time ago, nobody would believe my accusations. Because, this afternoon, Glaxton found out what I am trying to show you: that the little boy kidnaped by my father was drowned by his confederate, the nursery-maid. Glaxton is prepared to have me arrested in the morning. What I might say could not save your father, who has grown so dear to me. I should be mocked and silenced."

Lucia sat like a stone.

He burst out incoherently: "Alice can tell you why I came to Lagville. And Virgie. I acted this part purely for self-protection. You'll never forgive—or my friends—Brother Tredmill. I've had to dread the time when it must end, my one happy experience. My—"

He retreated blindly. "Oh, Lucia, I am not your brother, I'm not related to Mr. Warring in any way. I'm nothing but a homeless wanderer who must go now without even telling you good-by, but who will carry in his heart a love for you that will not die though you should die."

He rushed from the summer-house, snatched up the bundle from the shrubbery, and leaped the fence that separated the garden from the road.

CHAPTER XXIX.

VIRGIE DINES OUT.

ONE afternoon in May, a young fellow in khaki climbed the same flight of iron stairs leading to the waiting-room of the Kansas City Union Station that he had ascended three years before, and, as on that occasion, quickly sought a distant part of the town, though not now the environs of Smiling Lane. Intimate knowledge of the city enabled him, without loss of time, to reach a row of narrow-chested brick buildings off the street-car lines. He was looking for lodgings and he remembered that this was a quiet spot with the quietness not of refined leisure, but of weary toil.

It was a street practically unknown to Blearstead, and the house whose bell the young soldier was ringing was the property, or, as he remembered, had three years ago been the property, of Mrs. Abbottsfield. He recalled how Virgie and Lucia had joked about the " boom " failing to raise property values in this section, and how Mrs. Abbottsfield, renting out the place as a boarding-house, had been rather unsuccessful in the collection of rents.

He had come there, then, both for security from recognition and out of sentimental reasons; but when the landlady opened the door he could not have been more greatly shocked had she turned into a policeman, shouting: " You are wanted for impersonating the Warring heir!"

In the case of a policeman he should have preserved admirable calm, while swiftly meditating immediate flight. The same calmness he presented to the woman, but finding himself unrecognized, flight was out of the question.

" You are the lady of the house?" he gravely inquired, taking the precaution, however, to alter his tone.

The lady, who was actually Mrs. Abbottsfield, preserved her stately bearing, and her voice was as precise and carefully modulated as of yore; but her eyes were dimmed, for some of the light had vanished from her face. Her nose-glasses still swung by the slender gold chain against her bosom, but she did not lift them in the old gallant manner.

" Yes, I am the landlady." She had the air of not looking at him as if from very courtesy he might be prompted to refrain from minutely observing her.

He had never felt congeniality in their association. He liked to get close to people, even iceberg people, if they could be melted. But he could not recall in Mrs. Abbottsfield any indication of a thaw. However, she was so vitally a part of the happiest days of his life that he felt like throwing his arms about her in a hearty embrace.

His efforts at restraint made him seem cold enough to suit even her, and they discussed terms stiffly.

Shortly afterward he was installed in a plain little room on the topmost floor—the third—with a view of kitchen roofs and stovepipe chimneys, and here he meditated profoundly upon the situation. With young men in khaki everywhere, there was small danger of his uniform calling attention to his face; rather, it lent a certain obscurity of distinction for which he was grateful. It was his intention to remain in the State only long enough to find out what had become of his former friends and thanks to the evident misfortune that had reduced Mrs. Abbottsfield to play the landlady in her own house, once a place held in slight estimation, his stay need not be prolonged.

From her—or, if he could not summon the courage to break through her icy reserve, from her daughter—he could learn all he craved to know about Lucia; in spite of whatever repugnance she might feel for the part he had played in Lagville, the conviction remained that she was his friend.

But why was Mrs. Abbottsfield keeping lodgings in her dingy brick so obscurely situated? What had separated her and Virgie from the millionaire? Possibly Mr. Warring was dead—and John's heart burned as he reflected in what manner he might have come by his death; but it was not possible that Lucia, with all her inherited wealth, could be living here, nor that with her deep

affection for the Abbottsfields, she could have made their stay in her home unwelcome.

At last he approached and almost accepted these dismal conclusions: Mr. Warring was dead; Lucia and Eugene Ware were married; and Virgie and her mother, unwilling to live with them, had come to the house they had so often joked about, to lead independent lives. Eugene Ware was not the man to want other people in his house—or in his wife's house. What had become of Glaxton? Had he been suspected in connection with Mr. Warring's illness or death? No doubt he had escaped with a large part of the Warring fortune; but he must have left the house and grounds in Lagville, at least!

John would like to have known that Lucia was happy—he gave a sigh that sounded like a groan. He had hoped much from the passing of time, but it seemed to have slipped over him too smoothly to wear away the keen edges of his regret. Perhaps it was because the war, so utterly at variance with all the rest of his life, had, at the end, left him where it had taken him up.

Later, by patrolling the pavement before the house, John succeeded in intercepting Virgie on her way home from office work. How astonishingly unchanged! The kingdoms of Europe were altered, the spirit of America was reborn, but Virgie's long nose and tall, flat-chested figure seemed as immutable as the Constitution.

He met her at the corner that they might be unobserved from the house, and she would have passed him for, like her mother, she had grown accustomed to keep her eyes upon the ground.

"Virgie!"

Of course she was glad—that, first of all. Then surprise rushed upon her and the remembrance that he had deceived all Lagville; but the glow in the sallow cheeks came from her sheer delight.

"John!" She grasped his hand. "I don't care about anything else," she stammered. "You are John!" How could she think of him as a criminal with his soldierly bearing, his frank smile, his wonderful friendliness and all the delightful memories peeping over her shoulder to whisper: "Don't forget us." Somehow, in spite of facts she had never been able to think of him other than as an innocent man caught in a net of misfortunes. His own faith in his righteous intentions had always been contagious.

"I must talk to you where we can be alone," he pleaded. "Tell me the place. I'll explain everything I know and you must hand me all I don't."

Breathless, she named a near-by restaurant where she generally got something to eat of an evening—not very much, he was afraid. Her mother, she explained, had no appetite after 1 P.M. Therefore she could dine with him without causing inquiry. They parted, to meet at a later hour at the restaurant of her choice.

Seated in an obscure corner with an abundant dinner before them, he could not restrain his impatience to learn what had been taking place in Lagville during his long absence, but Virgie would tell nothing till he had given an account of himself.

"Don't be in a hurry to find out about Lagville," she warned, "for you won't enjoy what I have to tell. And besides, I'm a million times more interested just now in you than in us. This is my first meal with a real soldier—"

"Don't call me that; I'm nothing of the sort."

"But your uniform!"

He gave a wry smile. "Oh, I have a right to wear that. But I'm not a real soldier; though it isn't my fault. Nobody wanted to get to France worse than I did. But talk away, Virgie. Just to hear your voice jars loose a thousand bits of talk and laughter and dreaming that got wedged in my brain three years ago. How natural you are! It's wonderful!"

But she would not talk until he had explained himself.

"Very well," he said resignedly. "The night I left Lagville I hit the trail for old Mexico—over the border to the mountains, where the gold and silver mines grow ripe. I got a clerical job with a company that had let most of its important men go because of unsettled conditions. A small salary didn't discourage me; I'd have hung on for food and rent to keep clear of the

police. I knew Glaxton wouldn't leave a stone unturned to nab me and of course Blearstead in the underground world would be working with him. But you can't think how safe I was! That was the only luxury I enjoyed, but it did something to sweeten my tortilla—that's the nightmare for bread. I never saw an American paper, never heard a word from this part of the country. It wasn't very popular down there to bring up the United States in general discussion and, anyway, I was afraid to show interest in the spot I'd run away from; and finally if I'd asked all day there was nobody to enlighten me."

He spoke rapidly and at some length of his experiences in the English colony, of his longing for news, and of his dread of seeking it.

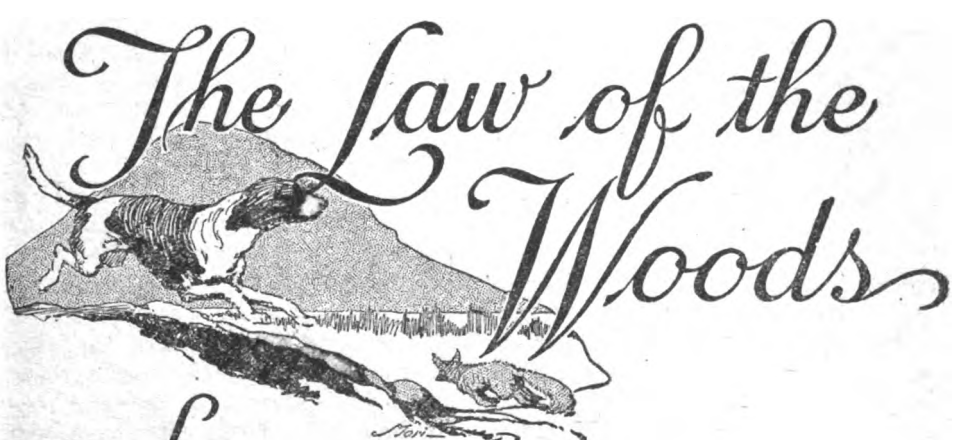
"I wasn't the only fellow hiding down there," he assured her. His experiences in the army he touched upon more rapidly, so eager was he to get to the information she deliberately withheld.

"When America got into the war I volunteered from New Orleans; got there by steamer from Vera Cruz. And I've been shipped from one camp to another up to the date of my discharge. Was in the hospital a little while—injured my game leg, but not seriously. Looked like everybody else was marched off to New York to take troop-ship for Europe, but I was continually finding myself left right there in the spot I was growing on. One thing, though, except for my Liberty Bonds, there was very little to spend money on, and I've saved up enough to pay my board for a long time! And I've been switched from one branch of the service to another till I felt like a little army in myself, my infantry following up my cavalry and my aviator service sailing over my head with my machine gun work blazing away in its nest. Don't know why I was changed. Took a course in French, but never got to use it on the natives. *Comprenez vous Française?*"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"Virgie, *n'avew-vous pas abuse de notre patience?*"

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



by Frank A. Halverson

"LOOK there!"

The big lumberjack of Kelly's camp followed Tom Hardy's pointing finger. It indicated a big, wily fox that had come out of the woods on the opposite side of the river. With the free, easy stride of all wood animals, the fox, usually shy and wary, came boldly to where Kelly and his men had cut a big square of ice out of the river the day before. The open water was covered by a thin sheen that a slight snow-fall had covered during the night.

The fox ran to the edge of the thick ice, skirted it, to return on his way back to the woods in a long detour. His open tracks were plainly visible in the soft, crunching snow.

"That tricky cuss," commented the lumberman.

"Listen!" broke in Tom Hardy. "Hear the dogs? The fox is trying to throw them off his trail. Let's wait."

Over the snow-covered woodland ridges rang the voices of three dogs. Two were tonguing almost continuously while the third dog's deep baying only came occasionally.

"An old one with two pups," commented Tom Hardy. "The young ones are eager. Hear their yelping! The joy of the first chase is what is keeping them ahead of the older dog."

In the frosty morning with the sun peeping over the snow-carpeted hills, the three dogs came closer, their baying waking echoes from nooks and crannies of the hill-dotted woodlands. On the trees the snowflakes sparkled like diamonds while the heavily laden bushes reflected the crystal brightness of midnight stars. And on the billowy breeze that carried an icy tang, there came the voices of the trailing dogs, two shrill and high-pitched, while one reverberated the bass note of a booming roar.

Tom Hardy gripped his companion's arm. "Look!" he whispered huskily, "we're going to see a drama of the woods. That fox has set a trap for the dogs. Watch!"

Bursting out from the underbrush on the fox's open trail appeared two young, handsome dogs. The tracks were right before them, inviting them to a race. With joyous yelps, short and quick, the youngsters dashed forward, the snow flying from their eager start, their clawed feet scratching the ice. Their dash was furious. Heedlessly they came on toward the thinly covered water.

Running side by side, barking the joy of the chase, they saw their danger too late. Their baying was hushed, and in its stead there came a long-drawn wail of fear. They tried to stop. Their padded feet slid on the snow-covered ice. Their force was too great, and into the water they plunged. The swift current of the river caught the doomed pups and drew them down, and in a few minutes they were under the bridge of ice that covered the river—lost on their first chase.

"What did I tell you?" cried Tom Hardy. "The fox set a trap and caught two of 'em."

"It's the game of the woods," replied the lumberman.

"Yes," admitted Tom Hardy; "but the fox played it in a foul manner. It deliberately tricked those dogs into the open water. That wasn't fair. Those pups were just beginning. They surely were a set of dandies. Of full-blooded Walker strain, or I don't know the breed. Game to the core, but too eager, and like headstrong youngsters they plunged right into danger. They couldn't get out of their peril and they paid the price."

"Dog-gone it!" boomed big Tom, his voice a bit husky, "I don't like the fox for the dirty, foul trick that it played on those pups. It was deliberate murder. Suppose a man should entice another to his death in that manner. What would the judge and jury say?"

His companion smiled, rather guardedly, at Tom Hardy's seriousness. To think of big Tom Hardy being so sentimental over a couple of yelping pups was funny to the lumberjack.

"Aw—chucks," reasoned the lumberman. "The fox played the game. The young dogs didn't know it. Through his cunning the fox outwitted them. They lost, that's all."

"That's not all," defended Tom Hardy. "There's a law of retribution working in the woods. There's the fair and square, and the foul and dirty. The fox didn't follow the rules. He has greater speed than any trailing hound; he has cunning and he employed it in an underhand manner. His method was like a blow in the dark or a stab in the back. He has his rocky holes for safety and his unfailing instinct for self-preservation. The woods are his domain, and he is at home there. He had all the advantages over the hounds, yet he deliberately planned their destruction by

luring them on to the thick ice. But mark my words, that fox will surely find the law that I have seen written in the snow many times — the law of vengeance. It never sleeps in the woods."

The lumberman gripped Tom Hardy's arm tightly. Across the river from the two men they saw the third dog. She had come out from the underbrush. Her coat of tan was covered with glittering snowflakes. Her nose was scenting the air. For a moment she stood still, poised, the crystal in the sunlight coloring her as a silver-gray statue, her keen, brown eyes following the trail of scattered snow that led to the brink of the ice that the young dogs had followed.

"The dam of the pups," cried Tom Hardy.

Slowly the great hound moved forward, sniffing the open tracks. Her tail swung in a pendulum movement, her padded feet planted carefully in the yielding snow; her every action deliberate. On the ice's edge she paused and looked into the moving water. The gaping hole through which the pups had plunged was before her. Broken cakes of bobbing ice drifted aimlessly in the jagged aperture.

A soft whinny came from her throat. The short sniffs broke the faster. She began to circle the open space on the ice. A detour brought her to the fox's tracks leading away from the water. The pups had not followed the fox and, therefore, she returned to where their scent and tracks showed that her sons had slid under the ice. Whimpers of concern were now issuing from her extended nostrils. A long-drawn howl of despair followed. The plaintive cry echoed from hill to hill, to be reverberated back over the snow-carpeted woodland in a lingering cadence.

"Poor old girl!" said Tom Hardy.

Seeing the two men, the big hound came nearly over to them. Her wagging tail and questioning eyes asked but one thing. Tom Hardy spoke to her in a manner that only a true hunter and a good sportsman can in the same way that a mother coos to her baby, and the big hunter, trusting him, crept up to Tom Hardy's feet, sniffing and whining all the time. Gently he petted the keen, intelligent head whose brown eyes looked appealingly up to his sympathetic face; his strong, muscular hand stroked the sturdy legs of the true Walker hound in a manner that betokened the undying bond that has always existed between a boy and his pup and the man and his dog.

"Come," said Hardy, "I'll show you where your sons have gone. They were impetuous fellows, those pups. They wouldn't listen when you tried to hold them back. They took the lead. You let them go because you knew that they would soon be winded and tired, and then you expected to lead them back to their kennels and tell them to not go so fast and to take the trail at a gait that they could keep up all day. But you didn't have a chance to teach them their lesson. The fox tricked them. Yes, sir, old timer, that's what he did. Got them without a fighting chance."

Walking the ice, Tom Hardy followed the current until he saw the two young dogs drifting under the icy bridge.

"There, old fellow," pointed out Hardy.

The hound followed the drifting bodies, looking at them through the crystal glass. Tom Hardy turned and began walking back to camp. Looking over his shoulder, the big hound still stalked the two pups, her hair along the spine bristling and a growl, deep and ominous, came from her partly open mouth.

"Ah, ha!" ejaculated Tom Hardy quickly. The growl and the bristling hair meant only one thing—the voice of vengeance.

"Au-a!" The long-drawn cry carried the hound's voice over the hills and valleys in a ringing challenge, in a note of defiance to the woodlands, and all the denizens that dwelt therein.

"Listen," said Tom Hardy, when he joined his companion, "that black Turk is trumpeting her war-cry. Watch her!"

Like a black shadow, the big hound sped over the snow and ice until she struck the fox's trail. Head up, nose pointed, she sniffed the cold air for the scent of her enemy. Straight up the river she ran, off the fox's tracks, to turn on a right angle into the underbrush.

"That fox will know that there's a

black Turk on his trail," said Tom Hardy, with an emphatic shake of his head. "He'll have to use every trick in his bag to get away. See if the law of the woods won't be visited on him."

Off the ice, under the bushes and up the sloping hills, sped black Turk. The scent in the air presaged the fox to be near the top of the hilly elevation. In vain was the fox's crafty maneuver. He had double-tracked his trail, running a long circuitous route to come back and crawl into the sheltering branches of a dead windfall where he could both see and hear the dogs as they passed on his tracks, and while they were following his spoor he would dash away to a great lead in the race that usually followed the baying of the Walker hounds.

Often had he played the game of life and death in the hilly woodlands. It was not new to the fox. He knew its advantages. The rocky timberland with its innumerable runways, its ravines and brier woven network of trellising creepers, tangled grapevines, fallen trees, upstanding boulders of great dimensions that had sheltering holes at their base, the unleveled land where darkening shadows played hide and seek with the sunlight during the day and with the lunar night.

This wonderful county had been the fox's playground from whelphood days. It was his hunting ground. Here he had stalked the timid rabbit that graced his menu; here, too, had he feasted on many a plump woodland pheasant and on wood mice aplenty; but his first strategic move had failed because black Turk did not follow his tracks to locate him. She scented him through the air by the keen sense of location through her nose. The tracks of the loop were a wasted effort.

With a start the fox realized his failure. Streaking over and under the overhanging bushes came the hound in long distance devouring leaps, straight and unerring, directly toward the windfall. In the changing shadows of winter's sunlight on the white crystal flakes of snow, she bore onward, leaping the tangled trail of confusing tracks, never hesitating, but bearing head on the fox's retreat.

Silently she ran. Not a bark came from her. She had changed from a trailer to a killer. She was not driving so that her master might secure a shot. Then she would have bayed her find in ringing notes. Her voice would have echoed over the woodlands; her master, the hunter, would have heard her and been on the lookout for the fox. From some high vantage point he would have listened for the turn and direction of the chase.

Such was not the case to-day. Black Turk was running silently, stealthily and warily. The fox was her own marked enemy. He had tricked her sons to their death. Like a mother craving vengeance, black Turk was chasing, trumpeting not the joy of the trail, but following it like a sinister Nemesis to the wily, sly red fox that lay hidden amongst the sheltering branches of the windfall.

The fox leaped, his long, graceful body shooting into a magnificent loop as he landed on a dead tree-trunk, to spring from it to the ground in a continuous motion. At his first leap, the fox's bushy tail formed a grand arch which straightened out as the race passed into a silver-gray streak amid the bushes and trees from his runway.

"Au-a!"

Black Turk's powerful voice rang in a deep reverberating call at the sight of the fleeing fox. Her nose picked the trail and the race was on.

During the forenoon the majestic tree murmured the monotone of the forest as the gentle sighing breeze spoke King Winter's cheeriest message, while over the ridges a great red fox ran with a black terror striking eternally behind him. The fox, his billowy fur crystallized with snowflakes, sought the deep morasses of the bullrush swamps where the sheltering trees had warded off the freezing frost so that the ice was thin and treacherous, and over the watery traps of the woods the fox picked his way daintily and surely in his endeavor to lose the black hound that followed him. But the dog was not deceived. She, too, knew the dangerous places, the deep pools, and what the fox was trying to do.

Had she not noted how her two sons had met their death in the river, and had she

not almost lost her life in her younger days by following her quarry over a thin sheet of ice to plunge into a deep swirl hole from which she had extricated herself with great difficulty? The black hound had learned her lesson, and, therefore, she followed warily the tracks that the sly fox was making in the snow.

Leaving the swamp, the fox struck for the tangled briers of the Butler shanty region. Under the sharp, prickly blackberry bushes he crawled, through the interlaced raspberries he wormed his way while the black hound, her ears cut and bleeding, followed unceasingly. Always was she menacing the fox, keeping right after him, coming stealthily, surely, like a black avenger over the snow.

On logs the fox leaped, running them with ease. Looking back, his head turned gracefully, he caught glimpses of black Turk always behind him. Unlike other hounds, she did not bark. Her work was done quietly. Up a high sloping windfall the fox crawled, and from it he leaped to a bare spot under a heavy snow-laden tree. By this maneuver the hound was deceived for a few minutes, but by making a short, round circle, the hound struck the tracks that led away and once more was she on the tell-tale tracks.

At Mease's fields, the fox ran a rail fence for a short distance. On the opposite side, in the brow of the woods, he waited for his sinister trailer. Black Turk, running in measured strides, drew near, missed the tracks, but kept right on to where the fox had left the fence. Her speed never diminished. She leaped on. The fox snarled; his white, sharp-pointed teeth showing from back-drawn jaws. But as the hound came up, the fox broke ground and ran.

The sun had drawn toward the western horizon, and still the silent chase went on; the fox snarling at his pursuing foe. The evening shadows fell golden-hued on the snow, to change into a purple tinge as the breeze died into a soft murmur. Over the woodland drifted the peace of twilight. Night birds called, an owl hooted from a distant pine. A faint wisp of a silvered crescent moon hung in the far distance beyond the highest hill. A bright star sparkled its glory from the inverted dome that arched the woods in night's magic slumber, and yet the fox ran, dodged, double-tracked in his endeavors to shake his ever-following foe.

During all the hours of daylight he had fought black Turk with all the tricks of his woodcraft. Between starlight and dawnlight he still traveled, the black terror sticking on his trail.

The continuous pace was tiring him; the jauntiness of his body was gone; the swing of his bushy tail less majestic and his leaps were becoming shorter. At times he ran with his jaws open, scooping up a mouthful of snow while speeding away. The rosy radiance of a bright winter dawn was flushed below the morning star when the fox began to look for cover. He realized that he could not shake or lose the black, silent hound who ran him mostly by sight. Ever had she been pressing him in the manner of wild things that hunt to kill. Relentless had the black hound been in her pursuit, swift and killing her race. Abandoning his fancy running and his efforts to throw the hound off his trail, the fox sped toward the river. Here the fox scaled the steep bank and crawled catlike up the facing wall of stone. Under a tumble of huge, massive boulders the fox squeezed his body.

Looking out he saw the black hound trying to follow him, but the wall was too steep. The hound's clawed feet could not gain a foothold, and after numerous attempts, the hunter, with a long-drawn howl of disappointment, sought a bushy hemlock, and after tramping the snow and digging up the dry, autumn leaves into a soft bed, she laid down, her head resting on her fore feet with her eyes on the fox's burrow.

"Did you hear that howl?" asked Tom Hardy when he and his companions were leaving Kelly's camp. "That was black Turk. She's chased that fox since yesterday morning. It's revenge she's seeking."

During the long day the fox peeped out of his burrow-hole several times. A snarl of rage came from him, because directly below his hole slept the black hound, her head pointed directly toward her quarry. At eveningtide the black Turk was still on guard. Later, when the white mist hung

like a gossamer bridge over the river valley, the fox missed the scent of his enemy in the air. He peeped out. Black Turk was gone.

He crawled out of his hole warily. Below him, on the river's edge, he saw the big hound. A gray rabbit was between her forepaws. She was eating. The hunger which had been gnawing the fox for many hours came poignantly now that he saw the black hound enjoying her nightly meal. The fox poised himself. The next moment his long, graceful body shot out from his retreat to land in a mighty leap in the soft snow.

Like a streak of silvered gray he sped out to be followed by the silent Turk. The dog left her partly eaten rabbit in her hasty pursuit. A quick maneuver and a lightning return brought the fox back, and catching the rabbit on the run, he crawled back into his hole of safety. Stopping for a moment on the outside, he held the tempting rabbit in his mouth while Black Turk howled with rage below the steep hole. She had been outwitted, fooled and foiled by the sly Reynard.

When again the fox looked out of his hole he saw the dog sleeping in her nest under the bushy hemlock. He had fooled the black hunter once, and he decided to do it again. Out he crawled, keeping a sharp eye on the silent black form that was curled up in deep slumber. Between two stones he squeezed his body, and sliding down the steep, sheer wall, he reached the river's edge. Skulking low, crawling noiselessly, the fox crept away from the silent guard.

But only for a brief space did he go fore a triumphant note echoed over slumbering silence. Black Turk sho him. The fox tried to reach the shelte woods. Black Turk headed him off. fox ran the ice. The hound kept the sh A brief space separated them. Black T was edging close, keeping a bit to the r so that the fox could not turn back to hole or reach the woods.

Silently they raced, neither gaining, the dog was drawing near the fox's In the dull gray shadows that preceded brightening dawn the fox and ho reached the open hole in the river's opposite Kelly's camp. Black Turk tacked. The fox side-stepped to avoid rush. His feet slipped. He slid on glassy ice. A splash in the open wate thin sheen of bobbing ice and the red caught in the river's current, was car under the bridge of ice.

"Au-a!" Black Turk's long-dr howl echoed through the woodlands.

With morning came Tom Hardy. W the river coursed around an outjetting he saw a black object on the distant ice

"It's black Turk," said he to his c panion. "She's lying on the ice above two pups."

Black Turk looked up when the two came near. His clawed foot scratched ice.

"Look there!" said Tom Hardy, " fox. He's with the two pups. The Turk has driven him to his death in same manner that the fox tricked the yo dogs. Talk about the law of the woods—

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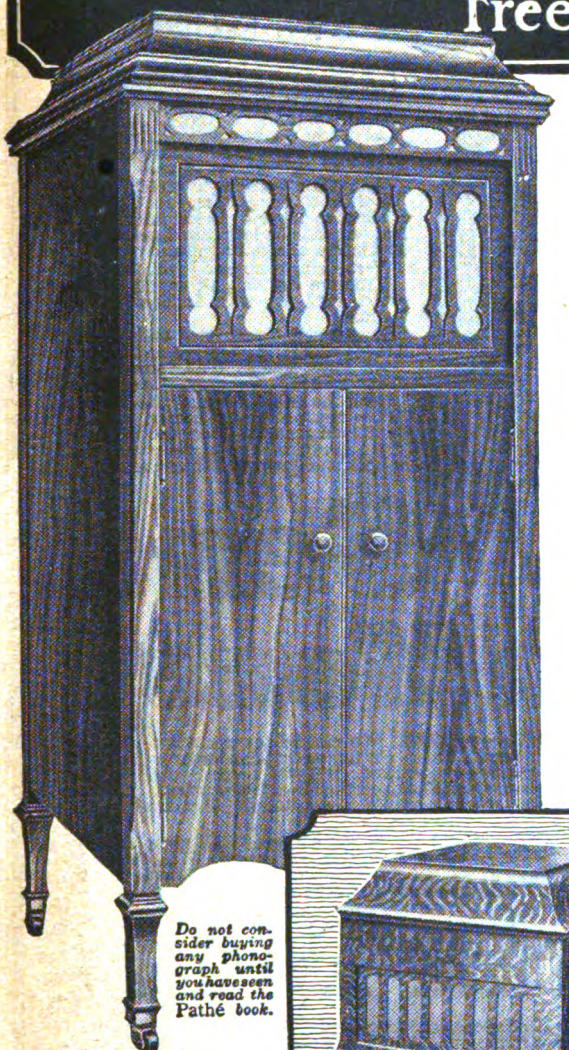

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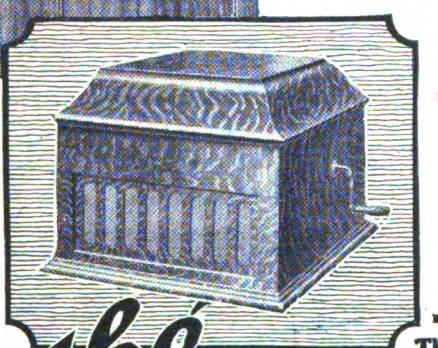

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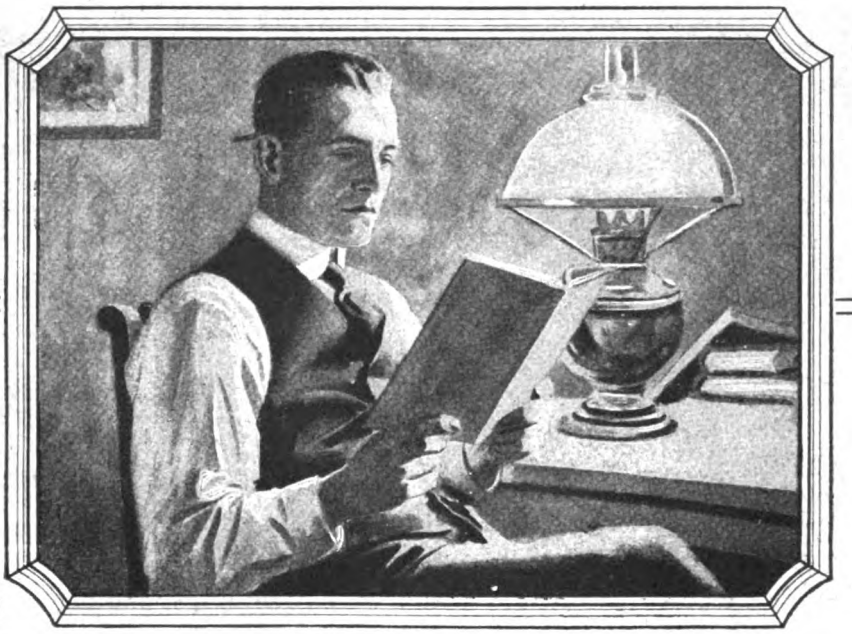

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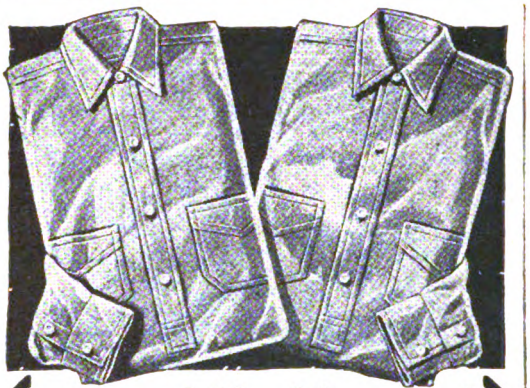

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JOHN PLAIN & CO., 200 South Peoria Street, Dept. 9278 Chicago, Ill.

It's Ready Now!

"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, Throop & Harrison- CHICAGO

Factory to Rider

SAVES YOU MONEY

Buy direct and save $10 to $20 on a bicycle. **RANGER BICYCLES** now come in 44 styles, colors and sizes. **WE DELIVER FREE** to you *on approval* and 30 *days' trial* and riding test.

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

TIRES lamps, wheels, parts and supplies at *half usual prices* in our **Big FREE Catalog.**

Do not buy a bicycle, tires, or sundries until you get our *wonderful new offers,* low prices and liberal terms.

Ranger Electric Lighted Motorbike

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY Dept. R-30 Chicago

The MUNSEY

No other standard magazine approaches the Munsey record in putting across successful advertising campaigns single-handed. The Munsey has established successful businesses, built factories, made fortunes for advertisers—single-handed. The Munsey pays advertisers so richly because Munsey readers have money to spend, ambition to want, and initiative to go and get what they want. They go and get The Munsey at the news-stand every month. They go and get any advertised article they want. Have you such an article? Tell the Munsey readers about it, and get what you want—results.

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 B'way, N. Y. City.

SAVE YOUR BODY

Conserve Your Health and Efficiency First

"I Would Not Part With It For $10,000"

So writes an enthusiastic, grateful customer. "Worth more than a farm" says another. In like manner testify over 100,000 people who have worn it.

The Natural Body Brace

Overcomes **WEAKNESS** and **ORGANIC AILMENTS** of **WOMEN** and **MEN.** Develops erect, graceful figure. Brings restful relief, comfort, ability to do things, health and strength.

Wear It 30 Days Free at Our Expense Does away with the strain and pain of standing and walking; replaces and supports misplaced internal organs; reduces enlarged abdomen; straightens and strengthens the back; corrects stooping shoulders; develops lungs chest and bust; relieves backache, curvatures, nervousness, ruptures, constipation, after effects of Flu. Comfortable and easy to wear. **KEEP YOURSELF FIT.** Write today for illustrated booklet, measurement blank, etc., and read our very liberal proposition.

HOWARD C. RASH, Pres. Natural Body Brace Co., 227 Rash Bldg., Salina, Kansas

For Boys and Girls Also

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

The radiance of Lachnites is guaranteed eternal.

Lachnites are mounted only in solid gold or platinum.

If You Can Tell a Lachnite from a Diamond—Send It Back

FOR MORE THAN 3,000 YEARS, men have tried to create a jewel to match the diamond tests of radiance, acid and fire.

Now, at last, an obscure chemist, working in a French laboratory, has succeeded. In heat as intense as the heat of the earth's core, where diamonds themselves are made, he has crystallized a gem which meets the three great diamond tests of beauty, acid and fire. He has found a secret by which men can make a gem to rival the Koh-i-noor.

The new gems are called Lachnites. Their radiance is guaranteed eternal. They are cut by the diamond cutters of Europe—and mounted in solid gold. Scores of beautiful jewelry designs are illustrated in our new catalog. Solitaires, belchers, rings of every design—LaVallieres, bracelets, scarf pins and cuff links.

And your choice of this exquisite solid gold jewelry will be sent to you *on 10 days' trial.* We want you to wear a Lachnite alongside a diamond and to let your friends see it.

After the trial, if you do not consider your Lachnite a perfect substitute for a diamond costing 50 times as much or if you or your most critical friends have been able to tell your Lachnite from a diamond—send the Lachnite back to us. The trial does not cost you one penny.

Pay As You Wish

If you decide to keep the Lachnite (over 200,000 people already wear Lachnites) you may pay for it as you wish. The terms are as low as 3½ cents a day without interest. There is no red tape or mortgages. You pay only the rock-bottom price in amounts so small you will never miss the money.

Until Lachnites were made no gem but a diamond could exist in hydrofluoric acid or in the flame of the blow torch. But Lachnites withstand the diamond tests just like diamonds.

Send the Coupon for New Jewelry Book

Put your name and address in the coupon, or on a letter or post card and get our new Jewelry Book. It is just completed and shows hundreds of illustrations of jewelry from which you have to choose. You will be under no obligation of any kind. The book is absolutely free. Send coupon now.

Harold Lachman Company
204 So. Peoria Street, Dept. 7278, Chicago, Ill.

In America alone over 200,000 people in all walks of life are wearing Lachnite gems. They have found the way to wear exquisite jewelry at a trifling cost.

Harold Lachman Company
204 South Peoria Street, Dept. 7278, Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen:—Please send me your new jewelry book absolutely free and prepaid. Also tell me how I can get a Lachnite Gem mounted in solid gold on 10 days' trial. I am under no obligations of any kind.

Name.....

Address.....

P. O..... *State*.....

Why Pay Full Prices?

The Best Diamond Bargains in 75 Years

Never, in nearly ¾ of a century in business have we offered such amazing bargains as against prevailing prices. Due to very unusual conditions this old *diamond banking house*, rated at more than $1,000,000.00 has been making additional thousands of loans on high grade jewels. Hence we have many unpaid loans which we offer to sell *at once* away below market prices.

Why Pay Full Prices

We send any diamond, or watch, on approval. Try to match our most exceptional values for 60% more — that's our challenge. Here are stronger claims than we make ourselves: Enthusiastic customers write: *"My $45 cluster valued here at $150.00." "The stone I bought of you for $75 I could not duplicate for less than $162.00."* Hundreds of letters like these. Names on request.

Send Coupon for Latest Bargain List

It is radically different from the ordinary catalog. Every jewel described in detail. The list contains hundreds of bargains in unpaid loans and many other amazing values. Send your name and address in the coupon, or by letter or post card today. You will be under no obligation Send the coupon now.

Jos De Roy & Sons, 8568 De Roy Bldg.
Only Opposite Post Office. Pittsburgh, Pa.

References by permission—Bank of Pittsburgh—N. A. Marine National Bank—Union Trust Company, Pittsburgh, Pa. Your bank can look us up in mercantile agencies.

$100
1/2—1/16 Ct.
Blue white diamond in this ring. Try to match at 60 per cent more.
Same style, various sizes, see Bargain List.

$185
3/4 less 3/32 Ct.
Blue white diamond mounted as shown. Try to match at $300.
Same ring, $50 to $500 in other weights. See the Bargain List.

$490
1 1/2—1/32 Ct.
Blue white diamond. White gold ring with sapphires. Try to match at 60 per cent more. With smaller diamond, $276. Page 29 in Bargain List.

$375
Blue white perfectly cut diamond in genuine platinum diamond studded ring.
Other diamonds in platinum mountings $150 to $1200. See latest Bargain List.

$90
1 1/2 Ct. Size
Diamond Cluster Ring. Platinum Disk. Try to match at $150.
Other clusters from $32 to $900. Pages 10, 11 and 12 in latest Bargain List.

$66
1 Ct. Show.
Steel white diamonds. Try to match at $125.
Plain styles, $35 to $160, shown in Bargain List.

$79
3/8—1/16 Ct.
Blue white, perfectly cut diamond. Fancy green gold ring. Try to match at $130.
Various size diamonds in this mounting. See Bargain List.

Jos. De Roy & Sons
8568 De Roy Bldg.
Only Opposite Post Office
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Gentlemen: Please send me free and prepaid, your latest bargain list of diamonds, watches and other jewelry. It is understood I assume no obligation of any kind

Name.....

Address.....

Sent on Approval

Absolutely free examination. Goods must be acceptable to you. No obligation to buy.

Send for the Latest Bargain List

Jos. De Roy & Sons

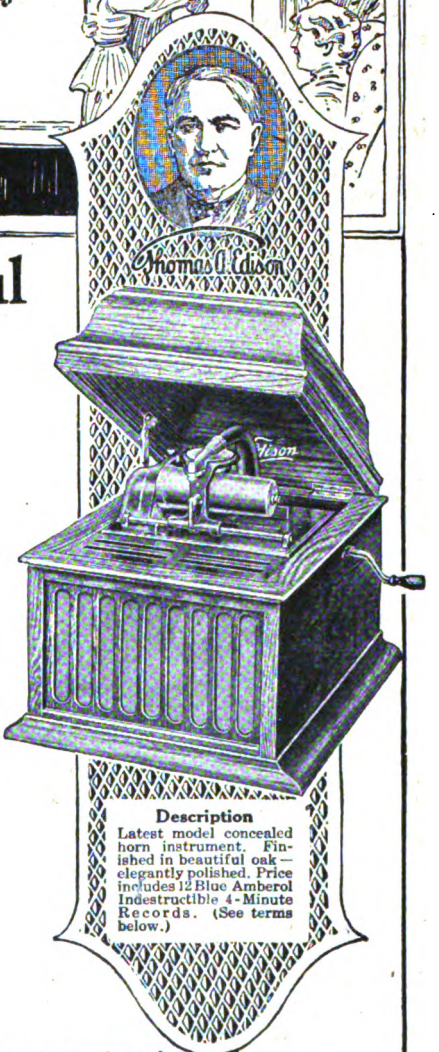
Only Opposite Post Office, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Mr. Edison's Wonderful New Phonograph Shipped on Trial

SEND only $1.00. Fill out the coupon below and send to us at once. We will then ship you Mr. Edison's great new phonograph, style as illustrated, with the new Diamond Stylus reproducer and 12 brand new Amberol Indestructible records. These records are included with the outfit.

Only $1.00 Down

If you wish to keep Mr. Edison's superb new instrument after trial, pay the balance in small monthly payments of $5.00 for 9 months and $2.20 the 10th month, plus 6 percent interest, amounting to $1.50 — total $49.70.



Description
Latest model concealed horn instrument. Finished in beautiful oak — elegantly polished. Price includes 12 Blue Amberol Indestructible 4-Minute Records. (See terms below.)

EASY PAYMENTS!

Think of it—a $1.00 payment and a few dollars a month to own an outfit of this superb class. To have at home the wonderful lifelike music produced only by Mr. Edison's Diamond Stylus reproducer and the wonderful Blue Amberol records. The finest and best that money can buy at much less than the price of imitations of the Genuine New Edison.

Order from This Announcement

Of course we do *not* want to ship an outfit to a person who cannot afford to at least pay on easy payments (and when you get a trial it must be understood that you can *afford* to keep it). *Yet* no one is *under any obligations* to keep the outfit if it is not entirely satisfactory. If it is not just what you want for your home, return it *at our expense; you*, not we, must judge what the Edison Phonograph means to you, and we accept your decision cheerfully, and without question. But send coupon today—*now*. Determine now you will bring this joy and cheerfulness to your home.

No obligation to buy in sending this coupon; this is just an application for trial

F. K. BABSON, Edison Phonograph Distributors

1458 Edison Building, Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Babson:—As per your offer, I am enclosing $1.00. I should like to hear Mr. Edison's wonderful new style phonograph with the new Diamond Stylus reproducer in my own home on trial. Also send me twelve Blue Amberol Records which are included with the outfit. If I decide to keep the outfit, I will have the privilege of the rock-bottom price direct from you on your special terms. I agree merely to take the outfit promptly from the depot, pay the small freight or express charges and if I do not find it thoroughly satisfactory, I reserve the right to return the outfit at once at your expense and you are to refund the $1.00 payment. Otherwise I will make monthly payments not less than one month after receiving the outfit and make monthly payments thereafter of $5.00 a month for 9 months and $2.20 the 10th month, plus 6% interest, amounting to $1.50, total $49.70. The outfit is to remain your property until the last payment has been made.

Write or print your name and address very plainly.

My name..... **My post office**.....**R. F. D. No**.....**State**.....

Shipping point..... **Ship by** ..... **Occupation** .....

Age..... **Married or single**..... **If steadily employed at a salary please state** .....

How long a resident in your neighborhood and your vicinity?..... **If there is any possibility of changing your address during the next year, what will be your next address?** .....

120

The Burlington

Twenty One Jewels

"Fewer Jewels Not Worthy of the Name Burlington"

Adjusted to the Second—Adjusted to Temperature—Adjusted to Isochronism—Adjusted to Positions
25-Year Gold Strata Case—Genuine Montgomery Railroad Dial—New Art designs—Extra Thin Cases

Burlington Watch Co.
Dept. 1458, 19th St. & Marshall Blvd., Chicago
338 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Please send me (without obligation and prepaid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your cash or $5.00 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name.....

$5.00 a Month

You pay only this small amount each month for this masterpiece, sold to you at the direct rock-bottom price, the lowest price at which a Burlington is sold. This masterpiece of watch manufacture is adjusted