

THE ALL-STORY



Gordon Grant

FEBRUARY

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NEW YORK AND LONDON



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Pepper Pot
Printanier
Tomato
Tomato-Okra
Vegetable
Vermicelli-Tomato

Look for the red-and-white label



THE ALL-STORY

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"CHILDREN OF ISLAM"

the tale of a romantic Scot on an adventurous wild-geese chase, and the new serial, which
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In the Munsey Magazines

	Line Rate	Special Combination Rate
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The Argosy	1.50	
Magazine	1.00	\$5.65

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Free sample goes with first letter. Something new. Every firm wants it. Orders from \$1 to \$100. Nice, pleasant business. Big demand everywhere. Write at once for free sample and particulars. Metallic Sales Co., 410 N. Clark St., Chicago.

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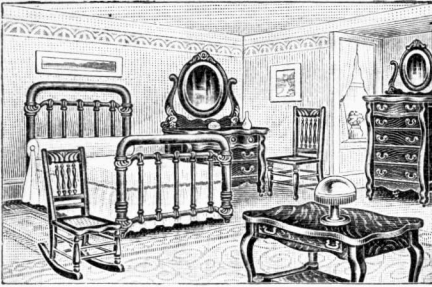
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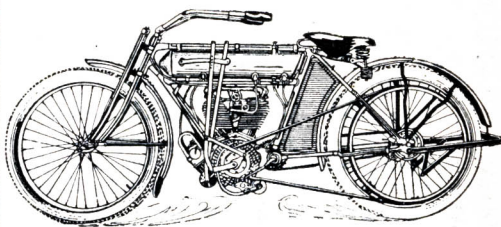
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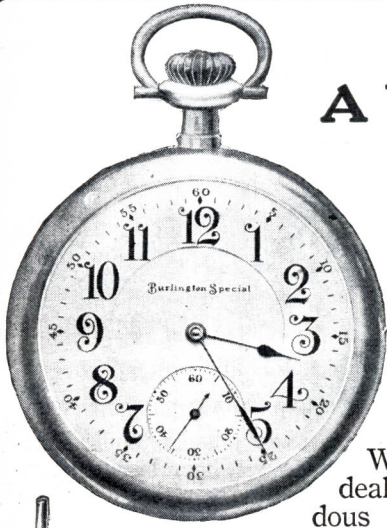
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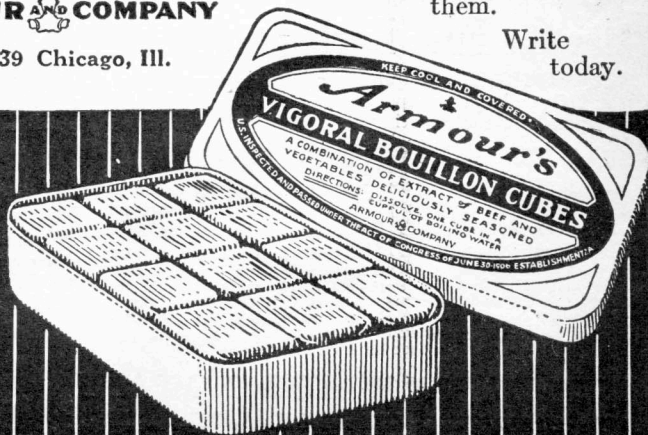
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THE ALL-STORY

VOL. XXII

FEBRUARY, 1912.

No. 2

Under the Moons of Mars



By
Norman Bean

RELATIVE to Captain Carter's strange story a few words, concerning this remarkable personality, are not out of place.

At the time of his demise, John Carter was a man of uncertain age and vast experience, honorable and abounding with true fellowship. He stood a good two inches over six feet, was broad of shoulder and narrow of hip, with the carriage of the trained fighting man. His features were regular and clear-cut, his eyes steel gray, reflecting a strong and loyal character. He was a Southerner of the highest type. He had enlisted at the outbreak of the War, fought through the four years and had been honorably discharged. Then for more than a decade he was gone from the sight of his fellows. When he returned he had changed, there was a kind of wistful longing and hopeless misery in his eyes, and he would sit for hours at night, staring up into the starlit heavens.

His death occurred upon a winter's night. He was discovered by the watchman of his little place on the Hudson, full length in the snow, his arms outstretched above his head toward the edge of the bluff. Death had come to him upon the spot where curious villagers had so often, on other nights, seen him standing rigid—his arms raised in supplication to the skies.

—Editor's Note.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

I AM a very old man; how old, I do not know. Possibly I am a hundred, possibly more; but I cannot tell, because I have never aged as other men, nor do I remember any childhood. So far as I can recollect, I have always been a man, a man of about thirty. I appear to-

day as I did forty years and more ago, and yet I feel that I cannot go on living forever; that some day I shall die the real death from which there is no return.

I do not know why I should fear death, I who have died twice and am still alive; yet I have the same horror of it as you who have never died, and it is because of this terror of death, I believe, that I am so convinced of my mortality.

I have never told this story, nor shall man see this manuscript until after I have passed over for eternity.

I know that the average mind will not believe what it cannot grasp, and I do not purpose being pilloried by the public, the pulpit, and the press, and held up as a liar, when I am but telling the simple truths which some day science will substantiate.

My name is John Carter.

At the close of the Civil War I found myself possessed of several hundred thousand dollars, Confederate, and a captain's commission in the cavalry arm of an army which no longer existed; the servant of a cause which had vanished.

Masterless, penniless, and with my only means of livelihood—fighting—gone, I determined to work my way to the Southwest and attempt to retrieve my fallen fortunes in a search for gold.

I spent nearly a year prospecting in company with another Confederate officer, Captain James K. Powell, of Richmond. We were extremely fortunate, as, late in the winter of 1865-1866, after many hardships and privations, we located the most remarkable gold-bearing quartz vein that our wildest dreams had ever pictured.

Our equipment being crude, we decided that one of us must return to civilization, purchase the necessary machinery, and return with a sufficient force of men properly to work the mine.

Powell was familiar with the country, as well as with the mechanical requirements of mining, and we determined that he should make the trip, while I held down our claim against its being jumped by some wandering prospector.

On March 3, 1866, Powell and I packed his provisions on two of our burros, and, bidding me good-by, he mounted his horse and started down the mountainside toward the valley, across which led the first stage of his journey.

The morning, like nearly all Arizona mornings, was clear and beautiful. I could see him and his little pack animals picking their way down toward the valley, and for hours I would catch occasional glimpses of them as they topped a "hog-back" or came out upon a level plateau.

My last sight of them was about three in the afternoon as they entered the shadows of the range on the opposite side of the valley.

Some half hour later I happened to glance casually across the valley, and was much surprised to note three little dots in about the same place I had last seen Powell and his two pack animals.

I am not given to needless worrying, but the more I tried to convince myself that all was well with Powell, and that the dots I had seen on his trail were antelope or wild horses, the less I was able to assure myself.

Since we had entered the territory we had not seen a hostile Indian, and we had, therefore, become careless and were wont to ridicule the stories of the great numbers of these vicious marauders that haunted the trails, taking their toll in lives and torture of every white party which fell into their merciless clutches.

Finally, however, I could no longer endure the suspense, and, arming myself with my two revolvers and a carbine, I strapped two belts of cartridges about me, and catching my horse, started down the trail.

I followed rapidly until, darkness shutting down, I was forced to await the rising of the moon, and given an opportunity to speculate on the question of the wisdom of my chase.

About nine o'clock the moon was sufficiently bright for me to proceed, and I had no difficulty in following the trail until, about midnight, I reached the water hole where Powell had expected to camp. I came upon the spot unexpectedly, finding it entirely deserted, with no signs of having been recently occupied.

I noted that the tracks of the pursuing horsemen, for such I was convinced they must be, continued after Powell with only a brief stop at the hole for water; and always at the same rate of speed as his.

I was positive now that the trailers were Apaches and that they wished to capture Powell alive for the fiendish pleasure of the torture, so I urged my horse onward, hoping against hope that I would catch up with the red rascals before they attacked him.

Further speculation was suddenly cut short by the faint report of two shots far ahead of me. I knew that Powell would need me now, if ever, and I spurred my horse to his utmost up the narrow trail.

I had forged ahead for perhaps a mile or more without hearing further sounds, when the trail suddenly debouched onto a small, open plateau near the summit of the pass.

I had passed through a narrow, over-

hanging gorge just before entering upon this table-land, and the sight which met my eyes filled me with consternation and dismay.

The little stretch of level land was white with Indian teepees, and there were probably half a thousand red warriors clustered round some object near the center of the camp. Their attention was so wholly riveted to this point of interest that they did not notice me.

I was, of course, positive that Powell was the center of attraction, and within an instant from the moment the scene broke upon my view, I had whipped out my revolvers and was charging down upon the entire army of warriors, shooting and whooping at the top of my lungs.

Single-handed, I could not have pursued better tactics, for the red men, convinced by sudden surprise that not less than a regiment of regulars was upon them, turned and fled in every direction for their bows, arrows, and rifles.

Under the clear rays of the Arizona moon lay Powell, his body fairly bristling with the hostile arrows of the braves.

He was already dead surely; yet I would have saved his body from mutilation at the hands of the Apaches as quickly as I would have saved the man himself from death.

Riding close to him I reached from the saddle, and grasping his cartridge-belt, drew him up across the withers of my mount.

To return by the way I had come would have been more hazardous than to continue across the plateau, so, putting spurs to my poor beast, I made a dash for the opening to the pass, which I could distinguish on the far side of the table-land.

The Indians had by this time discovered the puny numerical strength of the rescuing regiment, and I was being showered with imprecations, arrows, and rifle-balls.

The fact that it is difficult to aim anything but imprecations accurately by moonlight, that they were upset by the sudden and unexpected manner of my advent, and that I was a rather rapidly moving target saved me from the various deadly projectiles of the enemy, and permitted me to reach the shadows of the surrounding peaks before an orderly pursuit could be organized.

My horse was traveling practically unguided, as I knew that I had probably less

knowledge of the exact location of the trail to the pass than he, and thus it happened that he entered a defile which led to the summit of the range and not to the pass which I had hoped would carry me to the valley and to safety.

My first knowledge that I was on the wrong trail came when I heard the yells of the savages suddenly grow fainter and far to my left. I knew then that they had passed to the left of the jagged rock formation at the edge of the plateau, to the right of which my horse had borne me and the body of Powell.

I drew rein on a little level promontory overlooking the trail below and to my left, and saw my pursuers disappearing round the point of a neighboring peak.

I knew the Indians would soon discover that they were on the wrong trail, and that the search for me would be renewed in the right direction as soon as they located my tracks.

I pushed ahead, however, for perhaps a hundred yards, when a sharp turn to the right brought me to the mouth of a large cave. The opening was about four feet in height and three to four feet wide, and at this opening the trail ended.

It was now morning, and, with the customary lack of dawn—which is a startling characteristic of Arizona—it had become daylight almost without warning.

Dismounting, I laid Powell upon the ground; but the most painstaking examination failed to reveal the faintest spark of life. I forced water from my canteen between his cold lips, bathed his face and rubbed his hands, working over him continuously for the better part of an hour in the face of the fact that I knew him to be dead.

I was very fond of Powell; he was a thorough man in every respect; a polished gentleman; a stanch and true friend; and it was with deepest grief that I finally gave up.

Leaving the body where it lay on the ledge, I crept into the cave to reconnoiter.

I found a large chamber, possibly a hundred feet in diameter and thirty or forty feet in height; a smooth and well-worn floor, and many other evidences that the cave had at some remote period been inhabited. The back of the cave was so lost in dense shadow that I could not distinguish whether there were openings into other apartments or not.

As I was continuing my examination I commenced to feel a pleasant drowsiness creeping over me, which I attributed to the

fatigue of my long and strenuous ride and the reaction from the excitement of the fight and the pursuit.

I felt comparatively safe in my present location, as I knew that one man could defend the trail to the cave against an army.

I soon became so drowsy that I could scarcely resist the strong desire to throw myself on the floor of the cave for a few moments' rest, but I knew that this would never do, as it would mean certain death at the hands of my red friends, who might be upon me at any moment.

With an effort I started toward the opening of the cave, only to reel drunkenly against a side wall, and from there slip prone upon the floor.

CHAPTER II.

ACROSS THE VOID.

A SENSE of delicious dreaminess overcame me, my muscles relaxed, and I was on the point of giving away to my desire to sleep when the sound of approaching horses reached my ears.

I attempted to spring to my feet, but was horrified to discover that my muscles refused to respond to my will. I was now thoroughly awake, as though turned to stone.

It was then, for the first time, that I noticed a slight vapor filling the cave. It was extremely tenuous and only noticeable against the opening, which led to daylight. There also came to my nostrils a faintly pungent odor, and I could only assume that I had been overcome by some poisonous gas, but why I should retain my mental faculties and yet be unable to move I could not fathom.

I lay facing the opening of the cave, and I could see the short stretch of trail which lay between the cave and the turn of the cliff. The noise of the approaching horses had ceased, and I judged the Indians were creeping stealthily upon me along the little ledge which led to my living tomb.

I remember that I hoped they would make short work of me, as I did not particularly relish the thought of the innumerable things they might do to me if the spirit prompted them.

I had not long to wait before a stealthy sound appraised me of their nearness, and then a war-bonneted, paint-streaked face was thrust cautiously around the cliff, and savage eyes looked into mine.

The fellow, instead of approaching, merely stood and stared; his eyes bulged and his jaw dropped. And then another savage face appeared, and a third, and fourth, and fifth, craning their necks over the shoulders of their fellows whom they could not pass upon the narrow ledge. Each face was the picture of awe and fear.

Suddenly a low but distinct moaning sound issued from the recesses of the cave behind me, and as it reached the ears of the Indians they turned and fled in terror.

The sound which had frightened them was not repeated, but it had been sufficient as it was to start me speculating on the thing that lurked in the shadows at my back.

Fear is a relative term, and so I can only measure my feelings at that time by what I had experienced in previous positions of danger and by those I have passed through since; but I can say without shame that if the sensations I endured during the next few minutes were fear, then may Heaven help the coward, for cowardice is of a surety its own punishment.

To be held paralyzed, with one's back toward a horrible, unknown danger from which the ferocious Apache warriors turned in wild stampede!

Several times I thought I heard faint sounds behind me as of somebody moving cautiously, but eventually even these ceased, and I was left to the contemplation of my position. I could but vaguely conjecture the cause of my paralysis, and my only hope lay in that it might pass off as suddenly as it had fallen upon me.

Late in the afternoon my horse, which had been standing with dragging rein before the cave, started slowly down the trail, evidently in search of food and water, and I was left alone with my unknown companion and the dead body of my friend, which lay just within my range of vision upon the ledge where I had placed it in the early morning.

From then until possibly midnight all was silence, the silence of the dead.

Then suddenly the awful moan of the morning broke upon my startled ears, and there came again from the black shadows the sound of a moving thing and a faint rustling as of dead leaves. The shock to my already overstrained nervous system was terrible in the extreme, and with a superhuman effort I strove to break my awful bonds.

It was an effort of the mind, of the will, of the nerves; not muscular, for I could not

move even so much as my little finger, but none the less mighty for all that.

Something gave—there was a momentary feeling of nausea, a sharp click as of the snapping of a steel wire, and I stood with my back against the wall of the cave facing my unknown foe.

The moonlight flooded the cave—and there before me lay my own body as it had been lying all those hours, with the eyes staring toward the open ledge and the hands resting limply upon the ground.

I looked first at my lifeless clay there upon the floor of the cave, and then down at myself in utter bewilderment; for there I lay clothed, and yet here I stood, but naked as at the minute of my birth.

The transition had been so sudden and so unexpected that it left me for a moment forgetful of aught else than my strange metamorphosis.

My first thought was: Is this then death? Have I, indeed, passed over forever into that other life?

But I could not well believe this, as I could feel my heart pounding against my ribs from the exertion of my efforts to release myself from the anesthesia which had held me. My breath was coming in quick, short gasps; cold sweat stood out from every pore of my body, and the ancient experiment of pinching revealed the fact that I was anything other than a wraith.

Again was I suddenly recalled to my immediate surroundings by a repetition of the weird moan from the depths of the cave.

Naked and unarmed as I was, I had no desire to face the unseen thing which menaced me.

My revolvers were strapped to my lifeless body which, for some unfathomable reason, I could not bring myself to touch. My carbine was in its boot, strapped to my saddle, and as my horse had wandered off I was left without means of defense.

My only alternative seemed to lie in flight, and my decision was crystallized by a recurrence of the rustling sound from the thing which now seemed, in the darkness of the cave and to my distorted imagination, to be creeping stealthily upon me.

Unable longer to resist the temptation to escape this horrible place, I leaped quickly through the opening into the starlight of a clear Arizona night.

The crisp, fresh mountain air outside the cave acted as an immediate tonic, and I felt new life and new courage coursing through

me. Pausing upon the brink of the ledge, I upbraided myself for what now seemed to me wholly unwarranted apprehension.

I reasoned with myself that I had lain helpless for many hours within the cave, yet nothing had molested me; and my better judgment, when permitted the direction of clear and logical reasoning, convinced me that the noises I had heard must have resulted from purely natural and harmless causes; probably the conformation of the cave was such that a slight breeze had caused the sounds I heard.

I decided to investigate, but first I lifted my head to fill my lungs with the pure, invigorating night air of the mountains.

As I did so I saw stretching far below me the beautiful vista of rocky gorge and level, cactus-studded flat, wrought by the moonlight into a miracle of soft splendor.

Nothing is more inspiring than the beauties of an Arizona moonlit landscape; the silvered mountains in the distance, the strange lights and shadows upon "hog back" and *arroyo*.

As I stood thus, meditating, I turned my gaze from the landscape to the heavens where the myriad stars formed a gorgeous and fitting canopy for the wonders of the earthly scene.

My attention was quickly riveted by a large red star close to the distant horizon. As I gazed upon it I felt a spell of overpowering fascination.

It was Mars, the god of war; and for me, the fighting-man, it had always held the power of irresistible enchantment.

As I gazed at it on that far-gone night it seemed to call across the unthinkable void; to lure me to it; to draw me as the lodestone attracts a particle of iron.

My longing was beyond the power of opposition.

I closed my eyes, stretched out my arms toward the god of my vocation, and felt myself drawn with the suddenness of thought through the trackless immensity of space.

There was an instant of extreme cold and utter darkness, and then I opened my eyes upon a strange and weird landscape.

CHAPTER III.

ON A STRANGE PLANET.

I KNEW that I was on Mars; not once did I question either my sanity or my wakeful-

ness. I was not asleep, no need for pinching here; my inner consciousness told me as plainly that I was upon Mars as your conscious mind tells you that you are upon earth. You do not question the fact; neither did I.

I found myself lying prone upon a bed of yellowish, mosslike vegetation which stretched round me in all directions for interminable miles. I seemed to be lying in a deep circular basin, along the outer verge of which I could distinguish the irregularities of low hills.

It was midday, the sun was shining full upon me, and the heat of it was rather intense upon my body, yet no greater than would have been true under similar conditions on an Arizona desert.

Here and there were slight outcroppings of quartz-bearing rock which glistened in the sunlight; and a little to my left, perhaps a hundred yards, appeared a low, walled enclosure about four feet in height.

No water, and no other vegetation than the moss was in evidence; and as I was suffering slightly from thirst I determined to do a little exploring.

Springing to my feet, I received my first Martian surprise, for the effort, which on earth would have brought me standing upright, carried me into the Martian air to the height of about three yards. I alighted softly upon the ground, however, without appreciable shock or jar.

Now commenced a series of evolutions which even then seemed ludicrous in the extreme. I found that I must learn to walk all over again, as the muscular exertion which carried me easily and safely upon earth played strange antics with me upon Mars.

Instead of progressing in a sane and dignified manner, my attempts to walk resulted in a variety of hops which took me clear of the ground a couple of feet at each step and landed me sprawling upon my face or back at the end of each second or third hop.

My muscles, perfectly attuned and accustomed to the force of gravity on earth, played the mischief with me in attempting for the first time to cope with the lesser gravitation and lower air pressure on Mars.

I was determined, however, to explore the low structure, which was the only evidence of habitation in sight, and so I hit upon the unique plan of reverting to first principles in locomotion, creeping. I did fairly well at this, and in a few moments had

reached the low, encircling wall of the enclosure.

There appeared to be no door or windows upon the side nearest me; but, as the wall was but about four feet high, I cautiously gained my feet and peered over the top upon the strangest sight it had ever been given me to see.

The roof of the enclosure was of solid glass about four or five inches in thickness, and beneath this were several hundred large eggs, perfectly round and snowy white. They were nearly uniform in size, being about two and one-half feet in diameter.

Five or six had already hatched, and the grotesque caricatures which sat blinking in the sunlight were enough to cause me to doubt my sanity.

They seemed mostly head, with little, scrawny bodies, long necks and six legs, or, as I afterward learned, two legs and two arms, with an intermediary pair of limbs which could be used at will either as arms or legs.

Their eyes were set at the extreme sides of their heads, a trifle above the center, and protruded in such a manner that they could be directed either forward or back, and also independently of each other, thus permitting this queer animal to look in any direction, or in two directions at once, without the necessity of turning the head.

The ears, which were slightly above the eyes, and closer together, were small cup-shaped antennæ, protruding not more than an inch on these young specimens.

Their noses were but longitudinal slits in the center of their faces, midway between their mouths and ears.

There was no hair on their bodies, which were of a very light yellowish-green color. In the adults, as I was to learn quite soon, this color deepens to an olive green, and is darker in the male than in the female. Further, the heads of the adults are not so out of proportion to their bodies as is true of the young.

The iris of the eyes is blood-red, as in albinos, while the pupil is dark. The eyeball itself is very white, as are the teeth.

These latter add a most ferocious appearance to an otherwise fearsome and terrible countenance, as the lower tusks curve upward to sharp points, which end about where the eyes of earthly humans are located. The whiteness of the teeth is not that of ivory, but of the snowiest and most gleaming of china.

Against the dark background of their olive skins their tusks stand out in a most striking manner, making these weapons present a singularly formidable appearance.

Most of these details I noted later, for I was given but little time to speculate on the wonders of my new discovery.

I had seen that the eggs were in process of hatching, and as I stood watching the hideous little monsters break from their shells I failed to note the approach of a score of full-grown Martians from behind me.

Coming, as they did, over the soft and soundless moss, which covers practically the entire surface of Mars with the exception of the frozen areas at the poles and the scattered cultivated districts, they might have captured me easily, but their intentions were far more sinister.

It was the rattling of the accouterments of the foremost warrior which warned me.

On such a little thing my life hung that I often marvel that I escaped so easily. Had not the rifle of the leader of that rescue party swung from its fastenings beside his saddle in such a way as to strike against the butt of his great metal-shod spear, I should have been snuffed out without ever knowing that death was near me.

But the little sound caused me to turn, and there, upon me, not ten feet from my breast, was the point of that huge spear, a spear forty feet long, tipped with gleaming metal, and held low at the side of a mounted replica of the little fiends I had been watching.

But how puny and harmless they now looked beside this huge and terrific incarnation of hate, of vengeance and of death. The man himself, for such I may call him, was fully fifteen feet in height, and, on earth, would have weighed some four hundred pounds.

He sat his mount as we sit a horse, grasping the animal's barrel with his lower limbs, while the hands of his two right arms held his immense spear low at the side of his mount; his two left arms were outstretched laterally to help preserve his balance, the thing he rode having neither bridle nor reins of any description for guidance.

And his mount! How can earthly words describe it!

It towered ten feet at the shoulder, had four legs on either side, a broad, flat tail, larger at the tip than at the root, which it

held straight out behind while running; a gaping mouth, which split its head from its snout to its long, massive neck.

Like its master, it was entirely devoid of hair, but was of a dark slate color, and exceeding smooth and glossy. Its belly was white, and its legs shaded from the slate of its shoulders and hips to a vivid yellow at the feet.

The feet themselves were heavily padded and nailless, which fact had also contributed to the noiselessness of their approach, and, in common with a multiplicity of legs, is a characteristic feature of the fauna of Mars. The highest type of man and one other animal, the only animal existing on Mars, alone have well formed nails, and there are absolutely no hoofed animals in existence there.

Behind this first charging demon trailed nineteen others, similar in all respects, but, as I learned later, bearing individual characteristics peculiar to themselves, precisely as no two of us are identical, although we are all cast in a similar mold.

This picture, or rather materialized nightmare, which I have described at length, made but one terrible and swift impression on me as I turned to meet it.

Unarmed and naked as I was, the first law of nature manifested itself in the only possible solution of my immediate problem, and that was to get out of the vicinity of the point of the charging spear.

Consequently I gave a very earthly and at the same time superhuman leap to reach the top of the Martian incubator, for such I had determined it must be.

My effort was crowned with a success which appalled me no less than it seemed to surprise the Martian warriors, for it carried me fully thirty feet into the air and landed me a hundred feet from my pursuers, and on the opposite side of the enclosure.

I alighted upon the soft moss easily and without mishap, and turning saw my enemies lined up along the further wall.

Some were surveying me with expressions which I afterward discovered marked extreme astonishment, and the others were evidently satisfying themselves that I had not molested their young.

They were conversing together in low tones, and gesticulating and pointing toward me.

Their discovery that I had not harmed the little Martians and that I was unarmed

must have caused them to look upon me with less ferocity, but, as I was to learn later, the thing which weighed most in my favor was my exhibition of hurdling.

While the Martians are immense, their bones are very large and they are muscled only in proportion to the gravitation which they must overcome.

The result is that they are infinitely less agile and less powerful, in proportion to their weight, than an Earth man, and I doubt that, were one of them suddenly to be transplanted to Earth, he could lift his own weight from the ground; in fact I am sure that he could not do so.

My feat, then, was as marvelous upon Mars as it would have been upon Earth, and from desiring to annihilate me they suddenly looked upon me as a wonderful discovery, to be captured and exhibited among their fellows.

The respite my unexpected agility had given me permitted me to formulate plans for the immediate future, and to note more closely the appearance of the warriors, for I could not disassociate these people in my mind from those other warriors who, only the day before, had been pursuing me.

I noted that each was armed with several other weapons in addition to the huge spear which I have described.

The weapon which caused me to decide against an attempt at escape by flight was what was evidently a rifle of some description, and which, I felt, for some reason, they were peculiarly efficient in handling.

These rifles were of a white metal, stocked with wood, which I learned later was a very light and intensely hard growth much prized on Mars, and entirely unknown to us of Earth.

The metal of the barrel is an alloy composed principally of aluminum and steel, which they have learned to temper to a hardness far exceeding that of the steel with which we are familiar.

The weight of the rifle is comparatively little, and with the small caliber, explosive radium projectiles which they use, and the great length of the barrel, they are deadly in the extreme, and at ranges which would be unthinkable on Earth.

The theoretic effective radius of this weapon is three hundred miles, but the best they can do in actual service, when equipped with their wireless finders and sighters, is but a trifle over two hundred miles.

This was quite far enough to imbue me with great respect for the Martian firearm, and some telepathic force must have warned me against an attempt to escape in broad daylight from under the muzzles of twenty of these death-dealing machines.

The Martians, after conversing for a short time, turned and rode away in the direction from which they had come, leaving one of their number alone by the enclosure.

When they had covered perhaps two hundred yards, they halted, and turning their mounts toward us, sat watching the warrior by the enclosure.

He was the one whose spear had so nearly transfixed me, and was evidently the leader of the band, as I had noted that they seemed to have moved to their present position at his direction.

When his force had come to a halt he dismounted, threw down his spear and small arms, and came round the end of the incubator toward me, entirely unarmed and unclothed as I, except for the ornaments strapped upon his head, limbs and breast.

When he was within about fifty feet of me he unclasped an enormous metal armlet, and, holding it toward me in the open palm of his hand, addressed me in a clear, resonant voice, but in a language, it is needless to say, I could not understand.

He then stopped, as though waiting for my reply, pricking up his antennalike ears and cocking his strange-looking eyes still further toward me.

As the silence became painful, I concluded to hazard a little conversation on my own part, as I had guessed that he was making overtures of peace. The throwing down of his weapons, and the withdrawing of his troop before his advance toward me, would have signified a peaceful mission anywhere on Earth; so why not, then, on Mars?

Placing my hand over my heart, I bowed low to the Martian, and explained to him that, while I did not understand his language, his actions spoke for the peace and friendship that at the present moment were most dear to my heart.

Of course, I might have been a babbling brook, for all the intelligence my speech carried to him; but he understood the action with which I immediately followed my words.

Stretching my hand toward him, I advanced and took the armlet from his open

palm, clasping it about my arm above the elbow, smiled at him, and stood waiting. His wide mouth spread into an answering smile, and locking one of his intermediary arms in mine, we turned and walked back toward his mount.

At the same time he motioned his followers to advance. They started toward us on a wild run, but were checked by a signal from him. Evidently he feared that were I to be really frightened again, I might jump entirely out of the landscape.

He exchanged a few words with his men, motioned to me that I would ride behind one of them, and then mounted his own animal.

The fellow designated reached down two or three hands, and lifted me up behind him on the glossy back of his mount, where I hung on as best I could by the belts and straps which held the Martian's weapons and ornaments.

The entire cavalcade then turned and galloped away toward the range of hills in the distance.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE STRONGHOLD.

WE had gone perhaps ten miles when the ground began to rise very rapidly.

We were, as I was later to learn, nearing the edge of one of Mars's long dead seas, in the bottom of which my encounter with the Martians had taken place.

In a short time we gained the foot of the mountains, and after traversing a narrow gorge came to an open valley, at the far extremity of which was a low tableland upon which I beheld an enormous city.

Toward this we galloped, entering it by what appeared to be a ruined roadway leading out from the city, but only to the edge of the tableland, where it ended abruptly in a flight of broad steps.

Upon closer observation I saw, as we passed them, that the buildings were deserted, and while not greatly decayed had the appearance of not having been tenanted for years, possibly for ages.

Toward the center of the city was a large plaza, and upon this, and in the buildings immediately surrounding it, were camped some nine or ten hundred creatures of the same breed as my captors, for such I now considered them, despite the suave manner in which I had been trapped.

The women varied in appearance but little from the men, except that their tusks were much larger in proportion to their height, in some instances curving nearly to their high-set ears.

Their bodies were smaller and lighter in color, and their fingers and toes bore the rudiments of nails, which were entirely lacking among the males. The adult females ranged in height from ten to twelve feet.

The children were light in color, even lighter than the women, and all looked precisely alike to me, except that some were taller than others; older, I presumed.

I saw no signs of extreme age among them, nor was there any appreciable difference in their appearance from the age of maturity, about forty, until, at about the age of one thousand years, they go voluntarily upon their last strange pilgrimage down the river Iss, which leads no living Martian knows whither, and from whose bosom no Martian has ever returned, or would be allowed to live did he return after once embarking upon its cold, dark waters.

Only about one Martian in a thousand dies of sickness or disease, and possibly about twenty take the voluntary pilgrimage.

The other nine hundred and seventy-nine die violent deaths in duels, in hunting, in aviation, and in war; but perhaps by far the greatest death loss comes during the age of childhood, when vast numbers of the little Martians fall victims to the great white apes of Mars.

The average life expectancy of a Martian after the age of maturity is about three hundred years, but would be nearer the one thousand mark were it not for the various means leading to violent death.

Owing to the waning resources of the planet it evidently became necessary to counteract the increasing longevity which their remarkable skill in therapeutics and surgery produced, and so human life has come to be considered but lightly on Mars, as is evidenced by their dangerous sports and the almost continual warfare between the various communities.

As we neared the plaza, and my presence was discovered, we were immediately surrounded by hundreds of the creatures, who seemed anxious to pluck me from my seat behind my guard.

A word from the leader of the party stilled their clamor, and we proceeded at a

trot across the plaza to the entrance of as magnificent an edifice as mortal eye has ever rested upon.

The building was low, but covered an enormous area.

It was constructed of gleaming white marble inlaid with gold and brilliant stones which sparkled and scintillated in the sunlight. The main entrance was some hundred feet in width and projected from the building proper to form a huge canopy above the entrance hall. There was no stairway, but a gentle incline to the first floor of the building opened into an enormous chamber encircled by galleries.

On the floor of this chamber, which was dotted with highly carved wooden desks and chairs, were assembled about forty or fifty male Martians around the steps of a rostrum.

On the platform proper squatted an enormous warrior loaded with metal ornaments, gay-colored feathers, and beautifully wrought leather trappings ingeniously set with precious stones. From his shoulders depended a short cape of white fur, lined with brilliant scarlet silk.

What struck me as most remarkable about this assemblage and the hall in which they were congregated was the fact that the creatures were entirely out of proportion to the desks, chairs, and other furnishings, these being of a size adapted to human beings such as I, whereas the great bulks of the Martians could scarcely have squeezed into the chairs, nor was there room beneath the desks for their long legs.

Evidently, then, there were other denizens on Mars than the wild and grotesque creatures into whose hands I had fallen, but the evidences of extreme antiquity which showed all round me indicated that these buildings might have belonged to some long extinct and forgotten race in the dim antiquity of Mars.

Our party had halted at the entrance to the building, and at a sign from the leader I had been lowered to the ground.

Again locking his arm in mine, we had proceeded into the audience chamber. There were few formalities observed in approaching the Martian chieftain.

My captor merely strode up to the rostrum, the others making way for him as he advanced. The chieftain rose to his feet and uttered the name of my escort, who, in turn, halted and repeated the name of the ruler, followed by his title.

At the time this ceremony and the words they uttered meant nothing to me, but later I came to know that this was the customary greeting between green Martians.

Had the men been strangers, and therefore unable to exchange names, they would have silently exchanged ornaments, had their missions been peaceful; otherwise they would have exchanged shots, or have fought out their introduction with some other of their various weapons.

My captor, whose name was Tars Tarkas, was virtually the vice-chieftain of the community, and a man of great ability as a statesman and warrior. He evidently explained briefly the incidents connected with his expedition, including my capture, and when he had concluded the chieftain addressed me at some length.

I replied in our good old English tongue merely to convince him that neither of us could understand the other; but I noticed that when I smiled slightly on concluding he did likewise.

This fact, and the similar occurrence during my first talk with Tars Tarkas, convinced me that we had at least something in common; the ability to smile, therefore to laugh; denoting a sense of humor. But I was to learn that the Martian smile is merely perfunctory, and that the Martian laugh is a thing to cause strong men to blanch in horror.

The ideas of humor among the green men of Mars are widely at variance with our conception of incitants to merriment.

The death agonies of a fellow being are, to these strange creatures, provocative of the wildest hilarity, while their chief form of commonest amusement is to inflict death on their prisoners of war in various ingenious and horrible ways.

The assembled warriors and chieftains examined me closely, feeling my muscles and the texture of my skin. The principal chieftain then evidently signified a desire to see me perform, and, motioning me to follow, he started with Tars Tarkas for the open plaza.

Now, I had made no attempt to walk since my first signal failure, except while tightly grasping Tars Tarkas's arm, and so I now went skipping and flitting about among the desks and chairs like some monstrous grasshopper.

After bruising myself severely, much to the amusement of the Martians, I again had recourse to creeping, but this did not suit

them and I was roughly jerked to my feet by a towering fellow who had laughed most heartily at my misfortunes.

As he banged me down upon my feet his face was bent close to mine and I did the only thing a gentleman might do under the circumstances of brutality, boorishness and lack of consideration for a stranger's rights; I swung my fist squarely to his jaw and he went down like a felled ox.

As he sank to the floor I wheeled round with my back toward the nearest desk, expecting to be overwhelmed by the vengeance of his fellows, but determined to give them as good a battle as the unequal odds would permit before I gave up my life.

My fears were groundless, however, as the other Martians, at first struck dumb with wonderment, finally broke forth into wild peals of laughter and applause.

I did not recognize the applause as such, but later, when I had become acquainted with their customs, I learned that I had won what they seldom accord, a manifestation of approbation.

The fellow whom I had struck lay where he had fallen, nor did any of his mates approach him.

Tars Tarkas advanced toward me, holding out one of his arms, and we thus proceeded to the plaza without further mishap. I did not, of course, know the reason for which we had come to the open, but I was not long in being enlightened.

They first repeated the word "*sak*" a number of times, and then Tars Tarkas made several jumps, repeating the same word before each leap; then, turning to me, he said: "*Sak!*"

I saw what they were after, and gathering myself together, I "*sakked*" with such marvelous success that I cleared a good hundred and fifty feet; nor did I, this time, lose my equilibrium, but landed squarely upon my feet without falling. I then returned by easy jumps of twenty-five or thirty feet to the little group of warriors.

My exhibition had been witnessed by several hundred lesser Martians, and they immediately broke into demands for a repetition, which the chieftain then ordered me to make; but I was both hungry and thirsty, and determined on the spot that my only method of salvation was to demand the consideration from these creatures which they evidently would not voluntarily accord.

I therefore ignored the repeated commands to "*sak*," and each time they were made I motioned to my mouth and rubbed my stomach.

Tars Tarkas and the chief exchanged a few words, and the former, calling to a young female among the throng, gave her some instructions and motioned me to accompany her.

I grasped her proffered arm and together we crossed the plaza toward a large building on the far side.

My fair companion was about eight feet tall, having just arrived at maturity, but not yet to her full height.

She was of light olive green color, with a smooth, glossy hide. Her name, as I afterward learned, was Sola, and she belonged to the retinue of Tars Tarkas. She conducted me to a spacious chamber in one of the buildings fronting on the plaza, and which, from the litter of silks and furs upon the floor, I took to be the sleeping quarters of several of the natives.

The room was well lighted by a number of large windows and was beautifully decorated with mural paintings and mosaics, but over all hung that indefinable touch of the finger of antiquity which convinced me that the architects and builders of these wondrous creations had nothing in common with the crude half-brutes which now occupied them.

Sola motioned me to be seated upon a pile of silks near the center of the room, and, turning, made a peculiar hissing sound, as though signaling to some one in an adjoining room.

In response to her call, I obtained my first sight of a new Martian wonder.

It waddled in on its ten short legs, and squatted down before the girl like an obedient puppy.

It was about the size of a Shetland pony, but its head bore a slight resemblance to that of a frog, except that the jaws were equipped with three rows of long, sharp tusks.

CHAPTER V.

A MARTIAN WATCH-DOG.

SOLA stared into the brute's wicked-looking eyes, muttered a word or two of command, pointed to me, and left the chamber.

I could not but wonder what this ferocious looking monstrosity might do when left

alone in close proximity to such a relatively tender morsel of meat; but my fears were groundless, as the beast, after surveying me intently for a moment, crossed the room to the only exit which led to the street and lay down full length across the threshold.

This was my first experience with a Martian watch-dog, but it was destined not to be my last, for this fellow guarded me carefully during the time I remained a captive among these green men; twice saving my life, and never voluntarily being away from me a moment.

While Sola was away I took occasion to examine more minutely the room in which I found myself captive.

The mural paintings depicted scenes of rare and wonderful beauty; mountain, river, lake, ocean, meadow; trees and flowers; winding roadways, sun-kissed gardens; scenes which might have portrayed earthly views but for the different colorings of the vegetation.

The work had evidently been wrought by a master hand, so subtle the atmosphere, so perfect the technique; yet nowhere was there a representation of a living animal, either human or brute, by which I could guess at the likeness of these other and perhaps extinct denizens of Mars.

While I was allowing my fancy to run riot in wild conjecture on the possible explanation of the strange anomalies which I had so far met with on Mars, Sola returned bearing both food and drink. These she placed on the floor beside me, and seating herself a short ways off, regarded me intently.

The food consisted of about a pound of some solid substance of the consistency of cheese and almost tasteless, while the liquid was apparently milk from some animal.

It was not unpleasant to the taste, though slightly acid, and I learned in a short time to prize it very highly.

It came, as I later discovered, not from an animal, as there is only one animal on Mars and that one very rare indeed, but from a large plant which grows practically without water, but seems to distil its plentiful supply of milk from the products of the soil, the moisture of the air, and the rays of the sun. A single plant of this species will give eight or ten quarts per day.

After I had eaten I was greatly invigorated, but feeling the need of rest I stretched out upon the silks and was soon asleep. I

must have slept several hours, as it was dark when I awoke, and I was very cold.

I noticed that some one had thrown a fur over me, but it had become partially dislodged and in the darkness I could not see to replace it. Suddenly a hand reached out and pulled the fur over me, shortly afterward adding another to my covering.

I presumed that my watchful guardian was Sola, nor was I wrong. This girl alone, among all the green Martians with whom I came in contact, disclosed characteristics of sympathy, kindness and affection; her ministrations to my bodily wants were unfailing, and her solicitous care saved me from much suffering and many hardships.

As I was to learn, the Martian nights are extremely cold, and, as there is practically no twilight or dawn, the changes in temperature are sudden and most uncomfortable, as are the transitions from brilliant daylight to darkness.

The nights are either brilliantly illuminated or very dark, for if neither of Mars's two moons happen to be in the sky almost total darkness results, since the lack of atmosphere, or, rather, the very thin atmosphere fails to diffuse the starlight to any great extent; on the other hand, if both of the moons are in the heavens at night the surface of the ground is brightly illuminated.

Both of Mars's moons are vastly nearer her than is our moon to Earth; the nearer moon being but about five thousand miles distant, while the further is but little more than fourteen thousand miles away, against the nearly one-quarter million miles which separate us from our moon.

The nearer moon of Mars makes a complete revolution around the planet in a little over seven and one-half hours, so that she may be seen hurtling through the sky like some huge meteor two or three times each night, revealing all her phases during each transit of the heavens.

The further moon revolves about Mars in something over thirty and one-quarter hours, and, with her sister satellite, makes a nocturnal Martian scene one of splendid and weird grandeur.

After Sola had replenished my coverings I again slept, nor did I awaken until daylight.

The other occupants of the room, five in number, were all females, and they were still sleeping, piled high with a motley array of silks and furs.

Across the threshold lay stretched the sleepless guardian brute, just as I had last seen him on the preceding day; apparently he had not moved a muscle; his eyes were fairly glued upon me, and I fell to wondering just what might befall me should I endeavor to escape.

I have ever been prone to seek adventure, and to investigate and experiment where wiser men would have left well enough alone.

It, therefore, now occurred to me that the surest way of learning the exact attitude of this beast toward me would be to attempt to leave the room.

I felt fairly secure in my belief that I could escape him should he pursue me, once I was outside the building, for I had begun to take great pride in my ability as a jumper.

Furthermore, I could see from the shortness of his legs, that the brute himself was no jumper, and, probably, no runner.

Slowly and carefully, therefore, I gained my feet, only to see that my watcher did the same; cautiously I advanced toward him, finding that by moving with a shuffling gate I could retain my balance, as well as make reasonably rapid progress.

As I neared the brute, he backed warily away from me, and when I had reached the open, he moved to one side to let me pass. He then fell in behind me and followed about ten paces in my rear as I made my way along the deserted street.

Evidently his mission was to protect me only, I thought, but when we reached the edge of the city he suddenly sprang before me, uttering strange sounds and baring his ugly and ferocious tusks.

Thinking to have some amusement at his

expense, I rushed toward him, and when almost upon him, sprang into the air, alighting far beyond him and away from the city.

He wheeled instantly and charged me with the most appalling speed I had ever beheld.

I had thought his short legs a bar to swiftness, but had he been coursing with greyhounds, the latter would have appeared as though asleep on a door-mat.

As I was to learn, this is the fleetest animal on Mars, and owing to its intelligence, loyalty, and ferocity, is used in hunting, in war, and as the protector of the Martian man.

I quickly saw that I would have difficulty in escaping the fangs of the beast on a straightaway course, and so I met his charge by doubling in my tracks and leaping over him as he was almost upon me.

This maneuver gave me a considerable advantage and I was able to reach the city quite a bit ahead of him, and as he came tearing after me I jumped for a window about thirty feet from the ground in the face of one of the buildings overlooking the valley.

Grasping the sill, I pulled myself up to a sitting posture without looking into the building and gazed down at the baffled animal beneath me.

My exultation was short-lived.

Scarcely had I gained a secure seat upon the sill, than a huge hand grasped me by the neck from behind, and dragged me violently into the room.

I was thrown upon my back, and beheld standing over me a colossal apeline creature, white and hairless, except for an enormous shock of bristly hair upon its head.

(To be continued.)

ON HAIRS AND YEARS.

Anonymous.

MARK how the beaux, in fond amaze,
On Julia's wanton ringlets gaze,
Whose glossy meshes seem combined
To catch the hearts of all mankind.

Ah, false as fair those glittering snares!
Had Julia no more years than hairs,
No question, were the truth but told,
Julia would be some three years old.

MISS FRAPP

by

Martha M. Stanley



A MIDDLE-AGED woman, carrying a suit-case covered with labels, walked into the office of the Boswick Hotel and stood at the desk, waiting for a clerk.

She deposited the suit-case on the floor, twirled the register round, and ran her finger down the last column of names.

"Is any one here from the Orpheum Repertoire Company?"

No reply came from the much engrossed clerk. He was slowly placing letters in their respective pigeon-holes and alternating his close scrutiny of each missive by an occasional jerk of his head as he surveyed himself in the mirror opposite.

Miss Frapp, the character woman of the Orpheum Repertoire Company, waited. Again she asked the question.

The clerk turned as he might, had a clanging bunch of keys been laid on the desk by a "bell-hop" or a third-class boarder.

"Don't know."

"Has anybody registered here this morning?"

Miss Frapp was accustomed to fight for replies, and she did not flinch in this case.

Having finished assorting the letters, the clerk jerked his head a trifle from the collar and looked around.

"I say," began Miss Frapp, a trifle angrily, "has any one from the Orpheum Rep. Company registered here this morning?"

"Four people has come, but I never asked their business. You mean show people?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nope, everything here is on the level," said the clerk, pointing to the register. "The Housekeeper's Union is holding a convention in this town. Did you want rates?"

"Yes, what are they?"

Miss Frapp's pride in her art had long since been killed in her struggle to maintain herself and her only son. She had been a housekeeper once, a wife and mother, but she was comparatively unknown and alone, now. At the mention of the union, a long-lost sense of domesticity overwhelmed her and she claimed the occupation, joyfully, as her own.

"Ten dollars, American plan," replied the clerk. "Our regular rates is fifteen. We don't take show people."

"Why not?"

"They're too uncertain. They want their breakfast sent up after the dining-room is closed, or they come in too late, or set fire to the curtains, or talk too loud for our regular boarders, so we don't take 'em. Want to register?"

Miss Frapp waited.

"Ten dollars is the best you can do?"

"Lord, yes! A yellow-haired girl with big eyes and a veil like a mosquito bar came in here a half-hour ago and asked for rates. I told her to quit her kiddin'. She warn't no housekeeper, nor never would be. I guess she was one of the show people, all right. Awfully pretty, but tough. Gee, she was tough!"

"What did she do?"

"Didn't do nothing, just looked round and said: 'My, what a joint!' She couldn't fool me, though. I knew her for

one of them merry kickers the minute I set my eyes on her, so I sent her over to Morton's. They take anything over there. Say, madam, do you want to register or not?"

Miss Frapp looked about her.

"I guess not. The show people never bothered me about coming in late, or doing stunts any different from anybody else who works till most midnight every night of their life. No, I guess I'll move along."

"You won't find no housekeepers down at Morton's," ventured the clerk as Miss Frapp took up the case.

"I guess I'll manage to get along. I am used to actors. They don't bother me, and they know how to keep house as well as anybody else."

Miss Frapp's pride in the people of her own profession was rising to the point of indignation. She could not refrain from a parting shot.

"You don't look any too well fed yourself, young man. I'll bet a hat you don't eat here."

The clerk straightened up and tried to reply, but the woman had gone.

He moved over to the mirror, pulled down his waistcoat, adjusted his necktie, and assured himself, as he viewed his reflection, that the woman was absolutely incorrect.

"Holy cat!" he exclaimed. "Some old duffer has a tartar for a housekeeper!"

Miss Frapp stood on the sidewalk and looked up and down the street. At one end, across from a photographer's, whose studio she had graced many times in the past, she read in white letters on a black sign, "Morton's, board by the day or week."

She picked up the suit-case and trudged on alone. It was heavy, but it seemed the least of her burdens.

A heavier weight was tugging at her heart, that no matter where she went, the rest of the show people did not want her. Least of all, Elsie Elton, the ingénue, the girl with the yellow hair, the big eyes, and the veil like a mosquito bar.

There must be some reason why Elsie disliked her. It could not be the years between them. She figured feebly that it was because she had advised her on two occasions regarding a trifling indiscretion. In her inmost heart Miss Frapp liked Elsie Elton, but every time she essayed a spirit of friendliness, she had been repulsed.

As she entered the lobby of the Morton

House, Vanders, the leading man, was talking with the juvenile. They tipped their hats and smiled faintly. Even this was better than no welcome at all.

Disliked as she was by the entire company, she claimed the right to her position as one of the cast, if not one of their social number in private life. She was a good actress, convincing and powerful, and more than one newspaper had referred to her as the backbone of the play.

Comforting herself, that as a factor in the success of the company she was indispensable, she walked to the desk and registered in a large hand, that trembled a little in the writing: "Mary Frapp, New York."

The clerk motioned a boy and assigned her to a room. It was on the back and overlooked a yard filled with rubbish. It was cheerless, and she asked to be shown another.

"There ain't no more, except one just like it at the end of the hall," said the boy as he opened the window and shoved up the shade with a jerk that left it on an angle. "Anything else?"

"No—what time do you have dinner?"

"Six-thirty to eight."

The boy was gone, and Miss Frapp sat on the edge of the bed with a high headboard and a mattress that bunched itself into hard wads at irregular intervals. The spread was a basket pattern, and the pillows were stuffed with cotton wadding. The wall-paper was of pink roses in glaring splashes, patched behind the gas-jet with a yard strip of a bud pattern, same shade.

The drawers of the dresser or bureau responded rather jerkily in opening, and one loose handle fell with a ring onto the threadbare, cotton carpet. A wash-bowl, with a nicked edge, was endeavoring in its rotundity to maintain a pitcher of water that had been carelessly set in its concave lap.

Miss Frapp moved it to the center and surveyed the soap-dish behind it. The half-used cake was crusted in the ribbed edges, and a drinking-glass of rather cloudy appearance was rubbing close against it. A few hooks on the wall attracted Miss Frapp's attention, and she mechanically unstrapped the suit-case and shook out her kimono and night-clothes and hung them up.

She laid a few toilet articles upon the bureau, and back of a box of headache

wafers she placed the picture of a young man.

Any one glancing from one to the other, would have at once recognized the resemblance of mother and son.

The son was her one incentive to work, the one and only hope she had in life. She looked lovingly at the picture, then, noticing the time, hastily brushed her hair, pinned a fresh collar and jabot at her neck, and stepped out of her room to answer the first summons of the dinner-bell.

As she walked down the hall, a door was thrown open and a blaze of western sunlight streamed across the carpet. A yellow-haired girl bounced out, odorous with violet and freshly laundered lace.

"Hallo, Miss Frapp, how did you come to be here?"

Miss Frapp ignored the insolence in the tone and looked into the sunlit room, with its home-made, though artistic, draperies of baby-blue.

"What a pretty room, Elsie. I didn't know there was anything like it in this hotel. You ought to see mine."

"The clerk just sent the boy up to change me. I was over in seventeen. My, but it was a dump. This one is not so bad. It's only a week, anyhow."

Elsie locked the door and fluffed toward the stairway.

"I'll run on ahead, Miss Frapp. Mr. and Mrs. Lovering have asked Mr. Vanders and me to sit at their table."

"That's all right; run along, Elsie. I like Mr. and Mrs. Lovering."

"There's nothing wrong with Mr. Vanders, either," retorted Elsie saucily. "You never let a chance go by to give somebody a dig, whether you mention their name or not!"

"Elsie!"

"Don't 'Elsie' me! I ain't forgotten that you tried to keep your son from meeting me when we played New York. Didn't think I was good enough! I heard you tell Mr. Lovering he hadn't written you for 'most a month'—the fresh thing!"

Elsie turned and fled down the stairs.

For a moment Miss Frapp hesitated. True, it would be a month to-morrow since Hal had written her. She made allowances for him on the plea of its being his commencement week.

As she stood on the top stair, watching the sunset deepen into crimson, her sense of hunger left her. She was accustomed to

unkindness, but somehow Elsie's remark had cut her deeper than any other. It was humiliating enough for her alone to know that Hal was neglecting her, without the company becoming aware of it.

She followed Elsie slowly down the stairs. She must eat if she intended to work. After all, she could dine alone. She had done it for over five years. In fact, she had always done it on the road.

As she entered the dining-room she was given a seat alone near the door. Will Lovering, the juvenile man, passed her with a smile.

"Sorry there isn't another seat at our table, Miss Frapp. You always seem to dine alone. I would sit with you myself, only Mabel isn't very well these days. You understand."

He joined the others at his table, and Miss Frapp patted her hair, her jabot, and adjusted her belt with the satisfaction of having been noticed, and an appreciation of it that again awakened her appetite.

Mabel Lovering was facing motherhood. There seemed to be no place for her but in the company with her husband. Her parents were dead, so she had begged Will to let her travel with him.

Petulant, unreasonable, and hysterical, she had repulsed Miss Frapp's attentions on every side.

Persistent in her charity for Mabel Lovering's physical and mental condition, Miss Frapp continued to crochet and embroider between scenes and acts in her dressing-room, tiny bootees, sacks, caps, and scalloped shirts.

Laid away in a perfumed cretonne folding basket, easy to pack and to carry were the little contributions she wished to add to the wardrobe of the stage baby.

She liked Will Lovering. He reminded her of Hal, the son she had raised and educated alone, and who was so soon to graduate.

After the death of her husband she had taken Hal, a baby, to the theater, where she might be sure of his safety every moment. She had arranged to keep him awake until seven in the evening, so that he might fall asleep in her dressing-room and not annoy any one. Upon several occasions, when he was ill, she had been obliged to leave him with a property boy while she nervously played the scene of some careless, thoughtless girl.

Twice, when he was eight years of age,

he had played child's parts in the production with her, but he had never liked it, and she gave up the joy of educating and training him herself, and put him in school.

When money was scarce and work impossible to find, she had brought him to New York, deliberately lying about his age, as she had only money enough for one fare.

She had gone without proper food that he might eat, and had patched and turned many a garment for herself that new, warm, and stylish garments might be given to Hal.

Unknown to the management she had embroidered for sale in her dressing-room, and her so-called vacation was a feverish effort to earn money enough for still another year for Hal in school.

Then came the day when the agents demanded an up-to-date dress for their applicants. Appearance nearly, if not quite, balanced ability. She earned enough for a natty street suit and an afternoon gown, and appeared before the agents in all the girlish, fashionable attire they required.

And now, Hal was twenty. It was his last year in school, and remittances were coming to him regularly from his mother on the road. He complained that he was not cutting a dash with the other boys, and it was hard to keep his end up on seventy-five a month, but then he knew, of course, that she was doing the best she could.

As she read the letter, she blamed herself for her expenditures the previous season. With a mother's love, pride, and charity, she detected not a note of selfishness or discontent in his allusion to the other boys.

His letter, to her, rang with appreciation, and she grew to loathe the boys that had more than her son. To increase his allowance, she sought the cheapest hotels, and frequented basements and second-hand stores for her wardrobe. She cut the company and lived in the happy seclusion of sacrifice.

One Sunday night she asked to be excused from an automobile trip which the company declared was to be "Dutch" for everybody. The four or five dollars she would expend would buy something for Hal. Again she declined a luncheon, and upon two occasions refused to contribute toward a present for the leading lad.

These humiliating refusals won for her the appellation of "Stingy Frapp," or "Crusty Mary," but she did not heed them long. Some day she would show them a

son to be proud of, an educated man in the business world, who would lovingly refer to her as the dear "marms" that had stood by him and made him what he was.

Hal had always called her "marms" in the fashion of a chum or a sweetheart. Neither one had ever dreamed that age could creep over her and stamp anything but the charm of girlish motherhood upon her face.

The day of Hal's commencement she was playing in a small town in the State of Ohio. A letter was passed to her from him. She eagerly read it while waiting for her cue. It ran:

DEAR MARMS:

I seem to have a run of luck coming my way. To-morrow I am to graduate with honors, and the first of next month I am to be taken into the big leather house of Still & Brent. My salary is small to start, but they may send me out to Ramos, Texas, on their ranch there, when I learn all about hides and tanning and cattle generally.

But the best, marms, is yet to come.

Have I ever told you about Florrie Linden? She is the gayest, liveliest thing you ever saw. All the boys are crazy about her and all the girls talk about her, they are so jealous. She is a lark, marms, and I am sure you will like her.

You would have laughed yourself sick if you could have seen her dancing round the table and singing like an old woman, on our last ladies' night at the club. She is the sort to make me happy, and when I get a three months' start, I am going to marry her.

It isn't necessary after all this, I suppose, to tell you we are engaged. You have been a brick, marms, and I appreciate it, but Florrie is the sort to make a man work and make a success of life. A man would have to be a success to buy all the things she wants.

If I make good with Still & Brent, and marry Florrie and go to Texas, I shall be what is known as a self-made man, won't I?

My club dues are not paid yet. I will not have to bother you much longer for money. You will be home in a few weeks and I will be mighty glad. You can't meet Florrie any too soon to please me.

Your loving son,

HAL.

The other woman is not always the other sweetheart. She is, to the mother to whom the son has confided, the usurper. Sometimes she is the usurper for a moment only, until mother love and reasoning out of the natural law adjust her to her rightful place. Again, she is the usurper for life.

To Mary Frapp, this unknown girl was to step into the affections of her only son and stamp herself as his guide and inspiration. This girl who probably had never sacrificed a thing in her life, but who, at the end of Hal's career, would be given the credit for all of his success.

She knew from Hal's description of Florrie Linden that she was not a hoyden, a laughing, joyous, wild-flower sort of a girl. That kind of a girl never danced wildly round a table. They climbed trees and jumped brooks.

There was a wide difference between the outdoor nymph and the indoor eccentric dancer and mimic. The thought of one refreshed, the other choked her. She must see Florrie Linden herself.

Cut to the heart with the feeling that her work as a mother was over, she emerged from her dressing-room and stood waiting in the wings. Her face was stern and lined, and her mind on anything, everything but the part she was to play.

Elsie Elton passed her, made up for the doll dance, holding the arm of Mrs. Lovering.

"What's the matter, Mary Ann?" asked Elsie saucily. Miss Frapp turned angrily. Of a sudden she realized that Elsie was the living embodiment of the lewd, dancing, disrespectful thief called Florrie.

"Nothing that could interest anything like you!"

"You old cat!" screamed Mabel Lovering. "How dare you speak like that to Elsie! When you aren't butting in or playing the cheap skate, you are trying to insult somebody!"

Miss Frapp's cue came and she rushed on to the stage in her ugly character make-up and played the unfeeling woman as she had never played it before.

The season closed in two weeks, and Miss Frapp returned to a little room in New York. No one met her at the station. She took a car to one of the side streets, where the flowering pots had been taken away from the windows to make room for furnished-room signs. She engaged a small room, a divided back parlor, as having a little more tone and a better place for Hal to bring—the girl. She wrote a note and sent it to his lodging, and that evening, after dinner, he came.

Behind him fluffed a girl, clad in a white dress, tied about the knees with pink ribbon. She wore a lingerie hat and an

abundance of yellow puffs. Her hands were covered with rings, and from her floated a sickening, though rich perfume.

"Marms, this is Florrie—Miss Linden."

Hal kissed his mother and drew Florrie toward her.

"I've heard Hal speak of you very often," said Florrie weakly.

What a nonsensical remark! Miss Frapp could have choked her.

"There's nothing strange in that," she replied sarcastically. "A boy often speaks of his mother."

"Florrie wants to be a manicure," ventured Hal, after a painful silence, hoping the suggestion of work might offset her flippant appearance.

"Yes," assented Florrie. She was shaking a powder puff from the bag at her side.

"Nice business," said Miss Frapp quite coldly. "But you mustn't overwork."

"Oh, I mean to have special customers. I thought it might help Hal out, while he was getting a start."

"You will have plenty of special customers, all right."

Miss Frapp eyed the girl savagely. There was not too much lace, or ribbon, or puffs, perfume or powder; there was simply too much of the other woman. Had she been as demure as the Puritan Priscilla herself, and dressed accordingly, it would have been the same.

Miss Frapp was jealous. She could not realize that her son could have any other love than hers. He seemed different, and this flighty, fragrant, embarrassed girl had wrought the change.

After all, what justice was there in a law that should read, "to leave father and mother and cleave unto the wife."

Miss Frapp had chosen her son's playmates in youth, his toys, his clothing, his school, and now, in the greatest moment of his life, he had chosen for himself. The conversation was strained and Miss Frapp sighed with relief as the couple rose to go.

"I'll be back, marms, for a few minutes, after I've seen Florrie home."

There was a moment's silence, during which Miss Frapp stood looking at the pair like a Nemesis.

Florrie could not fathom the look nor the silence. It seemed that some one should speak or do something. With a funny little giggle, half fright, half hysteria, she rushed over to Miss Frapp and kissed her loudly on the cheek.

"Good-by," she cried laughingly, "I'm sleepy," and rushed out of the room.

Out into the street she ran, then turned and faced her lover.

"Hal, that woman doesn't like me."

"Nonsense, Florrie, she is tired out from the season's work."

"What did she mean by telling me not to overwork? I think she was sarcastic."

"No, she knew—"

"She didn't know anything, Hal. Why when I kissed her she pushed me away. The cat is jealous of me, that's what!"

"Florrie, dear, that is marms you are speaking of. She couldn't be jealous. She wants me to be happy."

"Yes, she does, like the dickens. She wants to pick out your happiness for you herself, though."

"You will understand her better when you see more of her, dear."

Hal argued against his better judgment.

"I'll never like anybody that doesn't like me, but I'll run my legs off for any one that is good to me."

Florrie's chin was high in the air.

"You will have to admit," she continued, "I was nice to her. It was all her fault. I put on my prettiest dress and—"

Florrie was sobbing as they neared her home.

"You were a dear, Florrie. I never saw you look so pretty. I think marms is tired out. She will come round all right when she knows you."

It was with no little bitterness he knocked at his mother's door. She was sitting by the window, dry-eyed and unrelenting.

"I was disappointed, marms."

Hal's voice was troubled, yet serious.

"So was I." Miss Frapp's voice was a condemnation. She rose and faced her son. "When do Still & Brent take you in?"

"Next week."

Miss Frapp drew a chair beside her.

"Sit down; tell me about it. I want to talk business."

"Marms," began the boy gently, "let's talk about her first."

"I refuse."

"But, marms, you must. I am going to marry her."

Miss Frapp winced a little. All her hopes for her son seemed to be swallowed up in that essence of frivolity which he had chosen for his wife.

"Are you going to bring a creature like that into the family?"

Hal was quick with his defense.

"Miss Linden is a good girl; she is jolly, that's all."

"Do good girls dress like that, act like that, dance round tables like a fool, and Heaven knows where else?"

"Every one was jolly that night, Florrie no more than the rest of us."

"Why do all the girls talk about her if she is all right? Don't tell me it is all jealousy. I am inclined to agree with the girls."

"Be careful, mother, I can't help how she impressed you, I know she is all right."

"How do you know it? She has respect for nothing nor no one. You, yourself, wrote me she was trying to imitate some poor old woman singing."

Miss Frapp smoothed a line in her forehead and turned her thinning hands palm upward.

"That was only a joke."

"What right has she to joke about the aged? Can't you see she lacks dignity and reverence? Who are these Lindens, anyway?"

"I don't know, mother. Florrie lives with her aunt."

Twice only in his life he had omitted to use her pet name, "marms." Miss Frapp noticed it. It was all because of the other woman.

"I'd stake my life, Haldon," she continued, "that she's a bad girl—thoroughly bad!"

"Mother!"

"If she were an actress," argued Miss Frapp, "obliged to dress showily like that to catch an agent's eye for a position for her daily bread, the people would brand her all right. But she isn't. She is supposed to be in private life. Believe me, Haldon, that girl's life is public enough!"

"I won't stand another word!"

Hal's boyish voice, usually so light and joyous, grew calm and steady. The tone changed to one Miss Frapp had never heard before. She raised her eyes and looked into the face of a man.

Her boy was gone. All the years of love and sacrifice, almost worship, came surging over her frozen heart in warm waves that threatened almost to melt it, but she forbade it.

"We will not say anything more about her. If, while you are getting your start

this summer, you feel that you can marry her in the fall, very well, but let me tell you, Haldon, I will never recognize her."

"I will be twenty-one in September, the age to act for myself. Good night." The door closed, and Miss Frapp sank upon her knees by the bed,

Why had he not chosen a girl she could have loved, instead of this brainless, uneducated, showy butterfly!

She resolved to write to the manager of the Orpheum that she would join them in summer stock. Perhaps she had been foolish in her decision; but, anyway, she would get away from the humiliation of seeing them together.

No one should ask her why he never called. She would keep at work, pretending there was one more year of school for him. She argued that he had no right to make those transitions in life without her advice.

In his youth she had scolded the barber for cutting his curls, although he was doing it at her request. She had waged war with the tailor who made his first long trousers, and when the heavier notes of his voice became noticeable she stubbornly treated him for a cold.

She would not allow time to change him. She would not let any one claim his love—least of all, another woman—and she, one who was wholly unfit for her boy.

Night after night she waited for his return to tell her of his mistake, but he never came. She joined the stock company late in the summer, hoping still that he would write her of his change of mind.

She wrote letters, as usual, to him, but never once alluded to his choice. They were unanswered.

The morning after his birthday she took up a New York paper and read the notice of his marriage. So he had chosen. From that time on she looked upon her twenty years of love and sacrifice as lost.

The management, encouraged by the success of the summer stock, had opened a permanent stock company in one of the small cities of Pennsylvania. The original company had been retained.

There had been a little son born to the Loverings, but Miss Frapp sternly set her face against their joy and refrained from congratulations. She had never forgiven Mabel for her unkind thrusts of the previous season. What had their grievances and sacrifices ever been compared to hers?

She had been featured once in the very town where to-day she was a nonentity. It was before their day. If some old-timer in the audience "gave her a hand" when she made her appearance it was because he recognized a success of the past.

She was nothing now. All her success and happiness seemed to be behind her, and the future loomed up before her like a lonely, rocky path whose edges were thick with thistles.

She held out a hope that Hal would write at Christmas, but not a line came, nor even the most trifling remembrance. He was as obdurate as she.

At last she wrote to Still & Brent to learn if he were ill. They replied that he was quite well, and had that week been sent to Texas to learn the business of the ranch in connection with their house.

As the letter fell to the floor Miss Frapp clasped and unclasped her hands, as if measuring the miles that were between her and her son. Farther and farther away he had been drawn, first by the girl, then by his business.

She admitted to herself that he had not only taken his wife with him, but in all probability she had willingly gone. There was in the thought, however, a certain sense of comfort, mingled with a sense of shame.

That night, for the first time during the winter, she spoke kindly to Elsie Elton.

"You haven't been very well these last few days, Elsie; what's the matter?"

The mother-tone trembled in every word, and Elsie responded to it.

"My throat is awful sore, and I feel sick all over."

Miss Frapp laid her hand on the smooth, flushed forehead.

"You have fever, my dear. Where are you living?"

"I'm over in the Carleton. It's awful cold in my room."

"I guess it's nothing but a hard cold," said Miss Frapp encouragingly. "Take it at the start, we can break it up. I'll go home with you after the performance, if you want me to."

"I wish you would."

Miss Frapp bristled and blustered with the joyful care of protection once again. She played her part with wonderful assurance and walked about the stage with the air of a woman with a mission. In her delight at being able to nurse the child of

some mother, though not her own, she braced herself to speak to Mabel Lovering.

"Elsie Elton is a sick girl, Mabel. Don't say anything about it, but I'm afraid it is tonsillitis or diphtheria. I am going home with her. You better be ready to go on in her part for the *matinée* to-morrow."

Mabel here drew herself up with affected dignity.

"Besides all your other accomplishments, you are trying to run the show. I guess if Mr. Maynard wants me to go on, he will tell me so himself."

She swept away, and into her dressing-room. As the door opened a faint odor of talcum and fresh milk, and that sweet, inexpressible zephyr that surrounds a little baby floated gently out.

Mabel often brought the baby to the theater, and he had become a favorite among the company. A property-boy had cleaned out a box, and half filled it with sawdust. Over this the leading lady had placed a tiny silk quilt, upon which many nights in the week there reposed the baby, who had been christened by no other name than "Props."

Miss Frapp had caught a glimpse of him as she passed the door; but, although Will would gladly have admitted her, she knew that Mabel would not, so she had tried to harden her heart against the innocent child.

To-night Mabel had insulted her once again, but she did not seem to feel it as before; for Elsie, the girl with yellow hair, big eyes, and a mosquito-bar veil, needed her, and, sweeter still, wanted her.

Holding her tightly by the arm, Miss Frapp guided Elsie Elton to her hotel. The fever was rapidly rising, and when they reached the girl's room she was sobbing with pain.

"I don't want a doctor, Miss Frapp," she wailed.

"No, no, dear; and you shall not have one, either. Sore throats are my specialty. No matter what it is, I am better than any doctor."

Miss Frapp knelt and unlaced the shoes and laid the girl's clothes over a chair.

"Get my best gown, Miss Frapp, in the lower drawer—the one with pink ribbons, and shake some perfume on it. Oh, my head, my head!"

Miss Frapp obeyed like a willing slave. She shook out the fluffy thing and placed it over the girl's head. The cool lawn refreshed the fevered body, and Elsie sank back and closed her eyes.

"Let me take down your hair." Miss Frapp lifted the girl on her arm and removed string after string of yellow puffs.

"I have to wear 'em," said Elsie feebly; "my hair's so thin. Can I have some water?"

"Sure."

Miss Frapp rang for the bell-boy.

"Bring some ice-water," she said; "then take this over to the drug-store, and hurry."

She wrote her own prescriptions and laid them in the boy's hand with a silver piece of speed value. She shook out the short, thin, golden hair and laid the puffs in a drawer.

All that night she sat beside the girl until the fever subsided and the headache ceased.

As Elsie lay sleeping, Miss Frapp covered the medicine-tumblers with writing-paper and rearranged the bureau drawers. There lay the yellow puffs, and numberless hairpins beside them. They were really not so foolish, after all. Elsie was too young to lose her hair like that.

She took up the bottle of perfume. "Wood violet." Maybe the odor reminded Elsie of flowers that grew near her own home. Perhaps perfume was a good thing, after all. It was not always used to attract attention. It might even have a mission in refreshing one's memory.

She wondered as she mechanically removed the cork where the Lindens lived, and if there might not be some flower there whose perfume was rich, almost sickening?

She laid her hand upon Elsie's forehead. It was quite cool. As she took up her wrist to feel her pulse, her glance fell upon five rings on the ridiculously small hand—a cluster of brilliants, a turquoise matrix, two pearls, and a pinky heart.

"Poor child!" said Miss Frapp, smiling; "she bought them all herself at the ten-cent store, I'll bet a hat!"

She had never noticed before how really pretty pink ribbon was. She lovingly lifted the bow and pulled out the loops.

It was nearing morning when Elsie awoke.

"Some water—quick! My throat is so dry."

"Yes, dear." Miss Frapp came quickly to the bed. "You're better, dear—lots better."

"I guess I am," sighed Elsie faintly. "My head doesn't ache at all now."

"It was nothing but a mild case of tonsillitis, Elsie, after all; but we have broken its

back. Mabel is going to play your part for you. I asked her."

"Mabel has been awfully nasty to you, Miss Frapp; and so have I, and I'm sorry."

"There, there, you go right to sleep again. I don't remember a thing about it."

"Just lie down beside me," said Elsie, "and maybe I will sleep better. You must be awful tired."

The woman obeyed the girl and laid her head upon the pillow.

It was ten o'clock when they wakened, and Miss Frapp spent a half-hour between ordering breakfast and blaming herself for her tardiness.

"Well—well, I must have been tired!"

She could not forgive herself for having indulged in so grievous a fault as sleeping while a patient was ill.

"I slept just as I used to a year ago," she kept saying. "Why, I felt as if I had found something that had been lost a long time."

"It was me, Miss Frapp. I've been so mean!"

Elsie reached up and kissed her on the cheek.

"Everybody thinks I'm such a fool," she said, "just because I love pretty things and like to dance and laugh, but, oh, I have thoughts inside sometimes that are so deep they almost hurt."

Miss Frapp laid her hand upon her cheek. The very spot had been kissed by just such a girl once before.

"I believe," she said, as her arms encircled Elsie, "that blondes are the sweetest, most affectionate girls in the world."

In three days Elsie returned to the company. Nothing could shake her faith in Miss Frapp or dampen her devotion to her.

The months passed slowly, week by week, day by day, each bringing its separate heartache.

Hal would never forgive her for the stand she had so foolishly taken against his wife. No apology she could offer would ever be accepted by him. His utter disregard of her letters proved this.

She reasoned that if Florrie were to die in that country that seemed so strange to her it would embitter Hal toward his mother more than ever. Her lonely heart craved and cried for her boy.

Partly because of the resemblance to Hal's choice and partly because of the girl herself, Miss Frapp's only moments of solace were in talking with Elsie Elton.

Toward the end of the season, in June, Miss Frapp met Will Lovering on the street.

"Mabel was taken very ill this morning. We have called Dr. Post twice. It seems to be ptomaine. You know these awful hotels. 'Props' annoys her, so I am going to bring him over to the theater to-night."

"Is there anything I can do, Will? You know I would go in a minute if I thought Mabel—"

"No, thank you just the same; but Dr. Post is doing all he can. For the first time in my life, Miss Frapp, I'm afraid."

He passed on, and more than once the character woman, the so-called "cat," stopped Dr. Post's buggy and asked how Mabel was.

That evening, as she went down the narrow hall of the stage entrance, the doorman spoke to her with something more than the usual "good evening."

"There's a letter in your box, ma'am."

Miss Frapp leaned against the table as she surveyed the lettered pigeonholes. With trembling fingers she took the missive and started unsteadily for her dressing-room.

As she read the familiar handwriting a feeling that perhaps Hal might ask her to discontinue her letters altogether overcame her, and the missive dropped at her feet. Perhaps Florrie had died. She prayed fervently that this might not be so.

Picking up the letter, she ran to her dressing-room and fumbled for the light. She locked the door, and then unlocked it, feeling that if it were anything worse than she had already borne she would have to call some one, probably Elsie.

Drawing the letter slowly out of the envelope, she sent one swift, silent prayer that he might be well.

"Dear Marms—"

Miss Frapp's head fell on the table, and she shook with sobs at sight of the much-loved name. Wiping her eyes, she continued to read:

We both think I ought to write to you. Florrie just whispered I must, and we are so thankful that she is going to get well, that we are going to bury all the hard feelings forever.

Last week we had a little boy come to us, and Florrie said to-day he looks just like me. I can't even joke about it; she has been so sick. For three days I was afraid, but yesterday the doctor said she was out of danger.

She has been such a brick and helped me

so. It never worried me about her family. She was all right always, and I knew it. She said, before the boy came, that you ought to be in a home of your own, where some one would love you and take care of you, and she wished you were with us. She would have met you more than half-way, if you had ever spoken of her in your letters.

I've had to stand by her, marms, although I know you think I did wrong. We think you ought to quit work. We not only want you, but we need you. Will you come?

It seems as if my heart would break until I hear Florrie laugh as she used to. The baby is a cunning scoundrel.

Your loving son,

HAL.

Miss Frapp grasped the edge of the make-up table, and breathed rapidly and loudly. "Why, such a thing isn't possible. It couldn't happen to Hal. He's nothing but a child himself."

She dabbed the cold cream on her face, and wiped it with a towel.

"What will they do with a baby?"

She reached for her grease-paint and wig. "Why, I am a grandmother!"

She was pacing the floor of her dressing-room, tightly holding her son's letter in her hand.

"It's that girl—that's what it is. No, she's all right. My son would not pick out a mother for his child that was not all right."

She was fighting to forget his past disregard of her feelings. Fighting to forget that her day on the stage was over, and that her days of dependence were drawing nearer. She swung her arms to and fro, crying hysterically:

"They need me, that's all. They don't want me; just like everybody else, they don't want me!"

Her swinging arm brushed the cretonne basket to the floor, and a little pair of cro-

cheted boots which she had made before the arrival of Props rolled out. Some one was knocking on her door.

Miss Frapp paused and cried in a voice pitched high with excitement:

"Come in."

It was Elsie Elton.

"Oh, Miss Frapp, something awful's just happened! The boy from the hotel came over and told Mr. Lovering that Mabel had just died!"

Miss Frapp held her hand to her heart and choked back a sob. A queer gurgling sensation as if her own heart were breaking.

It was quiet in the wings, and the voices on the stage were far away. Fortunately, she did not go on until the second act. In the dressing-room, down one flight, she heard the faint wail of Props. With the agility of youth, she ran down the stairs and listened at the door.

"I can't bear it, little Props. What are we going to do? Little man, it can't be true."

Will Lovering's sobs shook his frame and melted the heart of Miss Frapp until the tears streamed down upon her cheeks.

"Open the door, Will; it's Mary."

The key turned and, as the door opened, Miss Frapp reached for the baby. She threw one arm round the boy-father and laid his head upon her shoulder.

"My poor boy!" she sobbed. "My heart is breaking for you. Suppose it was my Hal, married to one of the sweetest girls that ever lived, with a baby only a week old, too?"

She looked out of the door and listened.

"Vander's scene is just over," she added. "It's your cue—go on. Heaven help you! I'll take care of Props for you until the show closes; then," she cried, squeezing the baby with an overflowing love, "I am going to pack my trunk and go to Texas."

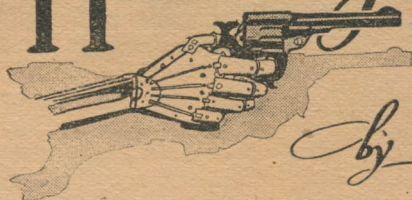
REVEALED.

By Theodosia Garrison.

THE wild bird summoned his mate;
Strange I should hear in the cry
The note I heard in your careful word
The night that you said good-by!

The wild mate answered and came;
Strange I should hear it so—
In voice of my own the selfsame tone
The night that I bade you go!

The Hand of Hate



William
Wallace
Cook

CHAPTER I.

THE BLACK-PAPER PACKAGE.

CONDON shouted at the top of his voice, but it was of no use. The big touring-car was going like sixty—almost like sixty miles an hour—and those aboard couldn't hear him.

He had been sitting under a tree at the roadside, snatching a half-hour's rest, when the machine jumped at him out of a cloud of dust and then flung on into another cloud. At first he had taken no interest in the car beyond that roused by its high rate of speed. He saw that the top was up, that its body was of a dusty blue color, and that the gas-lamp on his side of the bonnet was broken and twisted.

He might have had a passing glimpse of the passengers had he given his mind to it, but by the time his interest was aroused in the passengers the car was lost in the dust.

A door of the tonneau was swinging open. When the car was directly opposite Condon, something slid through the door and bounded from the running-board to the side of the road.

In a flash he was on his feet and shouting—to no avail. The rumble of the car died to silence, the dust-fog vanished, and the machine must have been a mile away, and still going. Condon stepped close to the lost package and looked down at it. It was about the size of a pasteboard shoe-box, was wrapped in black paper, and tied up with heavy twine.

Bending over, he took it in his hands. It was quite heavy, and one corner of the box had been broken by the fall in the road.

"This may be valuable," thought Condon. "I'll wait half an hour. By that time, those in the car may discover their loss and come back."

Returning to the shade of the tree he

sat down again and laid the package on the grass beside him. From his knapsack, which he had unstrapped from his shoulders, he took out his pipe and tobacco and fell to smoking.

His mind ran on the dangers of racing a motor-car through the country, even along a road as lonely and deserted as that one appeared to be. He had no patience with speed-maniacs.

Before a man is allowed to run a limited train over a railway line, properly protected and safeguarded, he must pass an examination and prove himself competent; but any man, woman, or child may take out a sixty-horse-power car and travel anywhere at any speed their fancy suggests.

The half-hour passed and the blue touring-car did not return. Hoping to find some clue to the owner of the lost package, Condon untied the string and removed the black-paper wrapper.

So far as he could discover, there was not a scratch of writing on the outside of the white pasteboard box. When he removed the cover for further investigation, he was startled by the object that lay under his eyes.

The box contained an iron hand, with some four inches of metal wrist. It was about the size of a man's hand and appeared, even to Condon's first cursory glance, to be a clever piece of mechanism.

Fingers and thumb were jointed cunningly, each phalanx being separate and distinct in itself. The hand was clenched in a hard and fast grip.

Condon removed the hand and put the box aside. As a mechanical contrivance it commanded his intense curiosity.

On the inner side and back of the wrist were two small projections, carrying flat, narrow holes. These, it seemed to him, were for straps that buckled in and held

the hand to the stump of an arm. Undoubtedly the contrivance belonged to some man whose right hand was missing.

Condon tried to open the metal fingers, but they were closed in the palm with the grip of a vise. Although he exerted all his strength he found it impossible to move the fingers a hair's breadth.

At length he took the wrist firmly between his knees with the intention of applying still further pressure; and then, presto! as if by magic, the iron digits flew open before he had a chance to use any more strength on them.

He was not slow in finding the cause. On the inner side of the wrist, above the hole pierced for the strap, was a small knob. This knob communicated with a spring, and the pressure of his knees had tripped the spring and thrown the fingers.

With the back of the hand in his left palm, he touched the knob with his right index finger. At once the hand clenched rigidly with the snap of a steel trap. Straightening the fingers again, he laid the hand carefully aside and made a further examination of the box.

There wasn't a name or a scrap of writing anywhere about it. Pencil or pen marks would have shown hardly at all on the black wrapping paper, but, nevertheless, Condon scrutinized it closely. He could find absolutely no clue to the hand's owner.

The hand itself was destitute of any mark, either of the manufacturer or of the one for whom it had been manufactured. The end of the wrist was screw-threaded for half an inch, which indicated that the hand was not complete, and that an attachment for the wrist was gone.

"Unless I can do something to return this queer object," Condon muttered, "it will have to go into my curio cabinet as a memento of a 'tramp' that, so far, has been barren of adventures of any sort."

He replaced the mechanical hand in its box, fingers and thumb outspread.

"That's the way it should be," he thought, noting how well the hand fitted the box in that condition, "and that must have been its position when it dropped from the car. The jar set off the spring and fingers closed."

After the wrapping paper had been neatly folded round the box, and the whole bound up with cord, Condon stepped into the road and looked in the direction in

which the automobile had disappeared. He could see nothing of it.

The car had come from the west and vanished toward the east. Four miles to the west was the little country town of Jonesville, where Condon had that day halted for his noon meal.

Clearly, the car had come through Jonesville. Condon was almost sure it did not belong in the town. Nowadays there is no hamlet so small or so provincial as not to have been successfully invaded by the automobile sales-agent, and the young man did not doubt but that there were motor-cars in Jonesville. This blue car, however, had borne the marks of a long journey.

Having plenty of time on his hands, Condon decided to return to Jonesville with the black-paper package and see if he could learn anything about its owner. There was a possibility that the car had halted in the town, or that some of the townspeople might know who was aboard when it passed through.

So far as Condon was concerned, the trouble he was taking was a pleasant diversion. Up to that moment, his walking tour had been rather monotonous. The spring weather had not been perfect, by any means, and he had not enjoyed himself as he usually did on his yearly jaunts.

Now, he was having a little adventure. A mild excitement had been aroused by the odd contents of the black-paper package, and by the queer way it had come into his possession. He would have considered himself recreant to the trust of high emprise had he turned his back on anything so wide of the commonplace.

Could he have torn the veil of the future, and have seen how that small adventure was to lead him into startling and tragic situations, very likely he would have dropped the black-paper package where he had found it and have proceeded along his untroubled way. But he could not know what lay ahead, and so blundered into a series of weird complications.

After filling his pipe afresh and thrusting his bag of tobacco into his pocket, he buckled the strap of his knapsack and secured it to his shoulders; then, gathering up his walking-stick and taking the mysterious package under his arm, he launched forth on the back-track to Jonesville.

It has already been stated that the road was a lonely one. Condon had finished his dinner and left the town at half past

twelve; by half past two his leisurely pace had brought him to that tree under which he had thrown himself for a brief period of rest; it was perhaps three o'clock when the blue car dashed by, and now it was nearly four as he began retracing his steps.

During all that time he had neither passed nor been passed by any one afoot or horseback, in wagon or carriage or automobile—save only the person or persons in that blue car with the broken lamp.

And yet the road was fairly good. It ran straight and across level ground, and bore evidence that there were times when it was well-traveled. There was a good deal of dust in it, which could only have been churned up by passing wheels or hoofs. It was a farmer's highway, and the farmers, the young man supposed, were busy with their spring work.

As he sauntered along, making no haste at all, he noted the broad marks of the automobile tires in the dust. A plain trail had been left by the blue car.

He fell to wondering what manner of man it could be who would help out a maimed arm with such a heavy piece of mechanism. It must have been trying to carry so weighty a makeshift on the stump of an arm. And what a clutch those metal fingers had! What sort of a trade could the owner of the iron hand follow that made so strong a grip a necessity?

Condon had little detective ability, and his mental questions brought him point-blank into a stone wall. At the very moment when he found his prying wits baffled, he became aware that the broad lines in the dust had left the middle of the highway. The car, at that particular point, had swerved to the roadside and had halted before a house.

A fence of palings—well-nigh a ruin of a fence—edged the front of a yard that was a tangle of riotous shrubbery. A gate, swinging by one hinge, hung half open among the palings.

Condon leaned against one of the gateposts and observed the tell-tale marks which proved that the car had stopped at the house; then, turning his eyes the other way, he tried to make out something of the dwelling and its surroundings.

Untrimmed trees and scraggly bushes, however, left him only an unsatisfactory view of weather-beaten brick and a single window. He fancied he saw some one vanish from the window.

Perhaps, after all, he reasoned, it would not be necessary for him to go to Jonesville in order to return the black-paper package to its owner. Those in the car had made a call at this brick house, and it was altogether likely that the people who lived in the house could take charge of the package and return it.

Condon was conscious of some disappointment that his adventure was to have so simple and so prosaic an ending. Nevertheless, he pushed his way through the broken gate and started along the gravelled walk.

The house gathered form and size as he approached it and the trees and shrubbery opened out for a better view.

It was a large, square house, of a style quite common during the period of the Civil War. Its roof was surmounted by a cupola.

He could see that some attempt had been made to clear up the place, get the upper hand of the weeds and to bring a measure of order out of the general neglect. Ascending to the front door, he caught the old-fashioned bell-pull and gave it a jerk.

A faint jingle was still sounding in the depths of the house when the door was flung open and a hard-eyed, determined looking man showed himself.

"Here agin, eh?" he snapped. "Step in, an' step peaceable."

There was nothing hospitable in his voice or manner. On the contrary, his bearing was distinctly hostile.

His words were not a request, but a command; and he enforced the command with a revolver, which he leveled at Condon as he spoke.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN WITH THE SIX-SHOOTER.

THERE is nothing more disconcerting to a man than to have the business end of a gun thrust unexpectedly into his face. The situation becomes more tense when the man behind the gun shows a ready willingness to use it.

A flinty blue eye gleamed across the sights of the weapon. It was a very large six-shooter and built along utilitarian lines. Decidedly, it had been constructed for use and not for ornamental purposes.

Condon gasped and caught his breath.

As soon as he could regain something of his self-possession, his eyes measured the man in front of him.

He was of medium height, wirily built. His face was like parchment, and the skin folded over its deep-set wrinkles. He had a ragged mustache, trimmed to grow downward past the corners of his mouth.

His lower jaw had snapped shut, and Condon could see the jaw-muscles flexing under the leathery skin.

He wore a shabby, blue flannel shirt, a leather belt and corduroy trousers whose bottoms were tucked in his boot-tops. The boots were long and narrow, very tight and with very high heels.

Why Condon took time for all those observations, with annihilation threatening him from the mouth of that blued barrel, he could not have explained. Possibly it was his surprise which led him to look the man with the six-shooter over with such painstaking care.

The glitter gey in the blue eyes as he stood there delaying. He was a Western man, Condon surmised, and did not consider himself bound by any lawful Eastern conventions.

In Condon's hip-pocket there reposed one of those patent automatic lead-projectors which spray forth eight pellets in half as many seconds. On his junketings, he carried the thing simply for the feeling of security its possession gave him. Never had he dreamed that he should be called upon to use it.

Even had he been so disposed, to use the automatic just then would have been out of the question. His left arm was crooked round the black-paper package, and his right hand was filled with the head of his walking-stick. Besides, that irresponsible person with the six-shooter had the drop.

"I said walk in!"

He rasped out the words without taking the trouble to open his mouth. His lips parted a little and the words came through his tobacco-stained teeth.

"I heard you," said Condon, "but it isn't necessary to intrude myself on your hospitality. What business I have to transact with you will not take long, and can be done right here."

"You'll either walk in on your feet or be toted in. Which is it to be?"

His stubby forefinger strained ever so slightly at the trigger.

"I'll use my feet," Condon answered hastily, "but under protest. You're the victim of a mistake."

"Not me," and his voice was like a file on the teeth of a saw. "If there's any victim to this here mistake it's goin' to be you. Foller along."

He backed away from the door and down a hall. Not once did the point of that six-shooter swerve from a direct line with Condon's face.

Reaching a door at the end of the hall, the man swept his left hand behind him, turned the knob, and, with a push, cleared the way into the room beyond. Condon was drawn after him as by a magnet.

Five steps across the threshold Condon was told to halt.

"Back up," continued the man. "Back up till you hit a chair, then drop."

Condon was soon in the chair. The man kicked another chair to a vis-à-vis position and sat down, crossed his knees and lowered the six-shooter to a rest, its muzzle still covering Condon.

At that juncture a light, swift footfall obtruded itself upon Condon's painfully acute sense of hearing.

"Mr. Crenshaw," gasped a woman's voice, "you've made a mistake."

Here was further testimony to convince this lawless, blue-shirted, belted, and booted Westerner that he was in error. Condon swerved a glance in the direction of the hall door.

A young woman was standing there. She was in her early twenties, Condon judged, and had a slender, graceful form and an exceedingly beautiful face. It was a refined face, delicately chiseled, and entirely out of place in that lawless atmosphere.

"Now, Miss Bolton"—Condon was glad to note a certain amount of respect in the man's voice—"I ain't to be fooled. I've cut my milk teeth, I reckon."

"He's not the man, Mr. Crenshaw," persisted the girl, her horrified gaze resting on the six-shooter.

"Ain't that the same black-paper package?" demanded Crenshaw, nodding toward the square bundle that lay on Condon's knees.

"Yes," the girl admitted, studying the package for a moment, "it looks like the same one."

"That's an uncommon package, ain't it?" argued Crenshaw. "I don't reckon you'd find two such packages comin' up

the steps o' this house, within an hour an' a half of each other, in diff'rent hands. Hey?"

"This is not the man who called the other time. That man had only one hand."

"Mebby he ain't the same man," said Crenshaw, abruptly jumping to another detail. "The' was mor'n one man in that automobile. I'll bet a row of 'dobies this here is that other maverick's side-partner."

"But this man did not come in an automobile."

"Like enough he had his reasons for leavin' the machine down the road."

Condon saw that the girl was at the end of her resources, and roused up to take a part in the argument.

"Tell me, Mr. Crenshaw," said he, "did a blue motor-car with a broken lamp stop at this house a little while ago?"

"That's what it done," jeered Crenshaw, "an' bein' in the car yourself you must 'a' knowed it. A man come up the steps with that black-paper package in his hand, an' he asked for Jason Fyles."

"Miss Bolton answered the door. She told the man that Jason Fyles wa'n't to home. The man left a kyard, allowin' he'd return later an' expected to find Fyles in. Here's the kyard."

Crenshaw, still using his left hand, slipped a small square of cardboard from under his belt and flipped it toward Condon.

"Reckernize that, you?" he demanded.

The card fell at Condon's feet. Two words were written on it in pencil. If it was the visitor's name, then certainly the name was a queer one.

TRES ALAMOS.

"I don't recognize the card, Crenshaw," said Condon sharply, for his patience was waning, "nor am I acquainted with any man named '*Tres Alamos*.'"

Crenshaw peered at Condon with glimmering, suspicious eyes.

"It ain't a man's name," he growled. "I reckon you know that, too."

"I don't know anything about it," Condon maintained stoutly.

"You wasn't in that automobile?"

"No."

"Then how was you able to describe it so accurate? Blue, an' with a busted lamp. That's the machine, all right."

"It passed me on the road," Condon explained.

The other snarled incredulously.

"Ain't that the same black-paper package?" he asked. "There ain't two packages like that knocking round this *rodeo*. Don't try to run in no rhinecaboo on me. I got my suspicions, stranger, that you're one o' this skulkin' Cree outfit."

"Cree? Why, man, I never heard of Cree. Who's Cree?"

"Never mind. Tell me if that ain't the same package the one-armed man had?"

"I suppose it is the same."

"Then what you hemmin' an' hawin', an' side-steppin' for?"

"Listen," said Condon, and, at some length, explained just how the black-paper package had fallen into his hands, and why he had called at the house.

Crenshaw, he could see, was more than half convinced.

"He is telling the truth, Mr. Crenshaw," declared the girl.

"All Cree's pardners are from the West," Crenshaw muttered, looking the young man over carefully, "an' I don't reckon you could tell a blowout o' quartz from a scatterin' o' country rock."

"I couldn't," agreed Condon.

"What's your handle?"

"Arthur Condon."

"Where's your hailin' place, Arthur Condon?"

The young man overlooked Crenshaw's impertinence in a desire to set him straight.

"St. Louis," he answered.

"You're come sort of a ways from St. Louey."

"You'll always find me at a distance from St. Louis this time of year."

Crenshaw grunted. "What's your business?"

"I'm cashier in a bank."

"What bank?"

Condon told him.

"I wonder if you can prove it?" Crenshaw asked.

His impudence was annoying, but Condon had to bear with it. There was a letter in his pocket, written on the bank stationery. He showed the letter and pointed out his name on the printed form—"Arthur Condon, Cashier."

Crenshaw did not stop at the name, but read the letter. As luck would have it, the letter was from the president, giving Condon leave of absence.

Crenshaw heaved a breath of relief, handed back the letter and put away the six-shooter. Condon was likewise relieved as he saw the revolver vanish.

"You win," said Crenshaw. "Sorry I pestered you, Mr. Condon. You can go whenever you're good an' ready."

"If I leave this package with you," Condon asked, "will you return it to the man in the blue automobile when he comes?"

"Sure," said the other, not without a display of eagerness.

Condon got up and laid the black-paper package on a table. The girl had disappeared. Stepping to the door, Condon paused there a moment and faced around.

"You've asked me a few questions," said he, "and now let me ask you a few. What is there about that package that you should meet the man who brings it with the point of a gun?"

Crenshaw gave him a menacing look.

"What you don't know won't bother you none," he snapped. "Clear out."

There was nothing civil about the man. Smothering the hot reply that was on his lips, Condon wheeled and started down the hall towards the front door. Before he could leave the house, the girl glided out of a room that opened upon the hall.

"Please wait here," she whispered, her face drawn with fear and apprehension, "until my uncle returns from—"

"I said good-by," shouted the voice of Crenshaw from the other end of the corridor, "an' I reckon that'll be all."

The girl turned and vanished whence she had come, sending Condon one last appealing look. That she should be in that lonely house with this lawless, uncouth Westerner was a mystery tragically complicated by her fears. While Condon hesitated, at a loss as to what he should do in the circumstances, a decision was abruptly taken out of his hands. There came a heavy tread on the steps without, and the door was darkened by a burly figure.

"Here's Uncle Jason now!" cried Miss Bolton, in a tone of great relief, once more appearing in the hall.

CHAPTER III.

A HOUSE OF MYSTERY.

A MUTTERED exclamation escaped the man who had just stepped through the open door. He started back at sight of Condon,

pushing a hand toward his hip, under his coat. This was a movement which, in many places west of the Missouri, inaugurates proceedings of a tragic nature.

Condon was thunderstruck. The readiness of the men connected with that house to resort to deadly weapons augured ill for their motives.

"Uncle," cried the girl rebukingly, "this gentleman is Mr. Arthur Condon. He came on a friendly errand."

"That's right, Jason," seconded Crenshaw, shuffling toward the group at the front door. "I've talked with him and he's the clear quill."

The hand of Jason Fyles reappeared from under his coat and was thrust toward Condon.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Condon."

He was a large man, and the long, black coat which he wore made him look even larger. There was no superfluous flesh on his big-boned frame.

His face was ferretlike, almost cadaverous in its leanness, and was set off uncannily with two black, beady eyes. It was not the face of a man who had dealt fairly with his life, or with his conscience; and the eyes mirrored a mind that was certainly eccentric, perhaps on the ragged edge of derangement.

While he was shaking hands with Condon, a tree-branch, swayed by the wind, struck a corner of the porch. Fyles jerked away his hand, whirled like a beast at bay, and stood rigid and glaring. Then, suddenly reassured, he drew a hand across his eyes and laughed hollowly.

Crenshaw sketched hastily the substance of his interview with Condon.

"What the blazes did you want to pull a gun on him for?" demanded Fyles of Crenshaw, in fierce displeasure.

"I had a notion," answered Crenshaw darkly.

"Cut out notions like that, Jimmie. Men in blue automobiles have got a right to call on us if they want. What business have you got trying to start fireworks?"

"You seen yesterday's paper, Jason?"

"Been busy in Jonesville; haven't had time to look at the news. Why?"

"You're due for an eye-opener."

Fyles gave a start and a sickly pallor flashed through his thin face. He made as though he would speak further on the subject with Crenshaw, then abruptly caught himself up and turned to Condon.

"I can't let you go like this, Mr. Condon," said he. "Come into the library while we smoke a talk."

The young man had had quite enough of that house and was on the point of excusing himself when he caught a glimpse of Miss Bolton's face. There was the same appeal in the girl's eyes—a mute request for him to stay.

What play of cross-purposes was here? In what common tangle had the desperate Crenshaw, the haunted Fyles—for he surely had that look—and the apprehensive Miss Bolton been caught?

Reason told Condon to move on. Sentiment—for the girl was pretty and seemed friendless—counseled him to stay. Sentiment quite apart, the itch for adventure was running strong in his veins.

"All right, Mr. Fyles," said Condon. "It happens, just now, that I am a man of leisure. Nothing stands in the way of my accepting your invitation."

A gratified expressions crossed the girl's face, while a scowl crossed Crenshaw's. Evidently Condon's decision was as agreeable to the one as it was disagreeable to the other.

Fyles removed his hat and hung it on the hall rack, then preceded Condon into the room which he had recently quitted. The young man was relieved of his knapsack, cap, and walking-stick, and Fyles produced a box of excellent cigars.

While they smoked, Fyles volunteered a little information about himself, about the old house, about his niece, and about Crenshaw.

Jonesville had been his boyhood home. Orphaned before he reached man's estate, he had gone into the Southwest, worked among cattle and in the mines, and had finally made a strike, and returned to end his days in the country of his youth.

He had found all his relatives dead, with the exception of his sister's daughter, Brenda Bolton. She was doing her best to earn a livelihood by teaching music in Jonesville. The old Bolton place—which was the house in which they were having their talk—had been lost on a mortgage by Brenda's father.

Like the rich old uncle of old-style fiction, Fyles had bought back the place and had deeded it to Brenda. The sole condition accompanying the gift was that Fyles should have a home in the big house as long as he lived.

Fyles spent considerable time on the subject of the house. Brenda's grandfather, a stern old Abolitionist, had built it. The grandfather was a John Brown man, and was said to have helped many a negro slave to the North and to freedom.

Brenda was very young when her father lost the old place. For years tenants had occupied it, and steadily it had gone to rack and ruin. Of late years it had been unoccupied.

It was less than twelve months since Fyles had returned East with his "pile" and begun negotiations to acquire the property. And it was only a few weeks since the old home had come into his hands.

Crenshaw was a Western friend whom Fyles had invited to visit him. The refining influences of the East had not yet had time to work their will with Crenshaw, Fyles explained, and he hoped Condon would overlook the roughness of Crenshaw's behavior.

Fyles went on to state that he was very much mortified over the way Crenshaw had conducted himself, and he would be greatly pleased if Condon would not only take supper with them but also spend the night in the house.

Fyles talked like a man who was seeking a vent for his surcharged feelings, rather than from any desire to impart information. Apparently he was self-made, and so proud of his success that he was garrulous over it; but Condon read him for a man whose conscience was driving him hard, and who gossiped in the hope of finding some measure of relief.

Meeting his confidences half-way, the young man told him how, every spring, he suffered a violent attack of *wanderlust*, and went tramping through the country to get rid of it. While he was talking, Fyles leaned forward to drop the stump of his cigar into an ash-tray and to pick a fresh one from the box.

The small card shown Condon by Crenshaw lay face upward on the table. Fyles saw it, and the effect on him was almost indescribable.

Again a sickly pallor drove the blood from his face. Staring wildly, and breathing hard, he hoisted himself to his feet. With both hands clutching the table-edge, he humped over the card, mumbling incoherently. Finally he shot a suspicious look at Condon.

"Where'd that come from?" he asked

huskily, indicating the card with a shaking finger.

"I have only Crenshaw's word for it," Condon answered, amazed at Fyles's show of emotion. "He told me that it was handed to Miss Bolton by the man who called here a little while before I presented myself."

"The man who brought that—that black-paper package?" whispered Fyles, touching the package with his hand.

"Yes."

Fyles pulled himself away from the table and began pacing the room. His head was bowed and he was muttering under his breath and gesturing with his hands.

Crenshaw stepped suddenly into the room. At that moment Fyles had his back to the hall door. At the sound of footsteps he whirled like lightning, a tigerish expression on his face and his hand under the skirts of his long coat. It was a similar maneuver to the one that had taken place at the front entrance, and it filled Condon with wonder.

"It's only me, Jason," said Crenshaw with a grim smile.

"Of course, of course," mumbled Fyles, "it couldn't be any one else. Mr. Condon is going to stay to supper with us, Jimmie."

"That's what I understood."

Fyles returned and resumed his chair. Crenshaw stood leaning against a bookcase, his eye passing from Condon to Fyles.

"The man who came in that blue automobile left that card?" inquired Fyles, nodding toward the bit of pasteboard.

"Uh-huh," returned Crenshaw passively.

"Have you looked into that package, Mr. Condon to see what's inside?"

"There's nothing inside," said Condon, "to give a clue to the owner of the package."

"I believe I'll look for myself."

Fyles picked up the package, first using one hand and then, suddenly aware of the weight of the package, taking both hands to it.

"Heavy!" he murmured.

"It's a —"

Crenshaw interrupted Condon and gave him a silencing look.

"Open 'er up, Jason, an' see what's inside."

A sardonic look accompanied Crenshaw's words. Fyles's head was bent over the package, which he had taken on his knees, and he did not see Crenshaw's face.

Fyles's fingers fumbled with the knot of the string. At last the string was removed, the wrapper taken off and the cover lifted.

Fyles's eyes grew wide with horror as they rested on the contents of the box. The next moment he had thrown it violently from his knees. The box struck the carpet a yard away, the hand rolled out and the fingers snapped into the palm.

"That—that—" gasped Fyles.

His voice died in his throat and he threw both hands to his face, covering his eyes.

"Put it back, Crenshaw!" he shouted behind his palms. "Put it back! I don't want to look at the thing."

"Don't be in a takin', Jason," returned Crenshaw, picking up the iron hand. "It ain't no snake; it won't bit you."

Fyles did not uncover his face until the hand had been straightened out, returned to the box, and the box again wrapped up and tied. Jerking a handkerchief from his pocket, Fyles brushed the beads of sweat from his forehead.

"I—I don't know what's got into me," he muttered. "My nerves are in rags. Don't be flustered, Mr. Condon," he added to the young man apologetically. "I'll be all right in a little while. Jimmie," and turning to Crenshaw, "show Mr. Condon to the room with the wainscot. He'll want to wash-up for supper. After that, come back here; I want a few words with you."

By that time Condon's curiosity had reached a point where he would have dared anything to learn more about the members of that strange household.

The names of Jason Fyles and of Cree, it was slowly occurring to him, were names he had heard before, somewhere. But where? He was asking himself that question as he followed Crenshaw into the hall and up the broad stairs to the next floor.

"Here's where you can rinse yourself off," said Crenshaw none too amiably.

Condon passed into a sleeping-room, dropped his stick and knapsack, threw aside cap and coat, rolled up his sleeves and started toward a wash-stand. Then he paused and looked round.

Crenshaw was lingering in the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

"WELL?" said Condon tentatively.

A sudden dislike for Crenshaw was grow-

ing in him. It was rooted in vague distrust. The Westerner, he felt, was full of lawlessness and evil.

"Take a fool's advice, Condon," observed Crenshaw in a low tone, "an' leave this adobe as soon as you've sat in at grub-pile."

"You mean as soon as I have had supper?"

Crenshaw nodded.

"It's just a friendly tip," he went on. "You don't want to get mixed up in any lively doin's, I take it, an' that's what there'll be when Cree makes his next call."

"What sort of lively doings?" Condon inquired.

Crenshaw hesitated, and then continued after a brief pause:

"This Cree person is comin' here to wipe Jason out. You take it from me that he'll get wiped out himself if he tries it on. I reckon you got sense, an' that a word to a wise man is better'n a kick to a fool."

He turned as though to leave.

"Wait a minute, Crenshaw," interposed Condon. "I'm naturally curious about what just happened in the library. Fyles acted like a crazy man when he saw that *Tres Alamos* card, and—"

"I ain't a wonderin'."

"And then, when he opened the box and saw the iron hand, his actions were just as queer. What does it all mean?"

"That ain't for you to know," scowled Crenshaw. "Fyles was a fool for askin' you to stay to supper, but that's done an' it can't be helped. You go on an' git ready to eat. Right away after that, say *adios* an' hike. You'll thank me for tellin' you. I reckon there ain't no need to say anythin' more."

With that, Crenshaw departed, leaving Condon more firmly than ever in the toils of the mystery. If there were to be sanguinary proceedings when Cree paid his next call, then assuredly that house was no place for a peaceably disposed person like Condon. Nor, thought he, was it any place for Miss Brenda Bolton.

The girl's fair, appealing face arose before him as he poured out a bowl of water and bent to his ablutions.

There was something about the girl that reminded him of another girl in St. Louis, who had had his heart for years and would some day bear his name. For this other girl he was eager to do anything he could for Brenda Bolton.

This experience promised to blossom into a most remarkable adventure. Would Condon help Miss Bolton by remaining to see it through, or would his presence, in the face of Crenshaw's disapproval, complicate matters to Miss Bolton's disadvantage?

Having finished his toilet, he started for the door with the intention of returning down-stairs. He paused to remark upon the tall, paneled wainscot that lined the wall of the room.

It was a strange fancy that put such a wainscot in a sleeping-room. It was at least six feet high, of beautiful old walnut. A graceless hand had pounded nails into it for clothes-hooks, and it had been marred in other ways.

One window offered a view of the neglected yard at the side of the house. It seemed a long way from the window to the ground, owing to the vast height of the ceiling of the room below.

"This must have been a fine old place once," thought Condon, moving on to the door and passing into the hall.

Before he reached the head of the stairs, Brenda Bolton, pale as a wraith, appeared before him. She stood by the banisters, and her luminous eyes were regarding him fixedly.

"Miss Bolton!" he exclaimed, "are you ill, or—"

"Sh-h-h!" she murmured, lifting a warning hand. "Not so loud, Mr. Condon. I want to speak with you, and this seemed my only chance."

"If I can help you in any way," said Condon, lowering his voice, "I shall be glad."

"I want to ask you not to leave the house," whispered the girl, gripped apparently by some unseen terror. "My uncle invited you to remain all night. I wish you would do that—possibly to help me."

Her words ended in a half sob, and she swayed and clutched at the stair-banisters for support.

"Something is wrong here, Miss Bolton," Condon returned. "I am a stranger, but it is not difficult to see that. Can you tell me what it is?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answered; "but I am nearly frightened out of my wits."

"Is it Crenshaw who frightens you?"

"Not Crenshaw particularly, but everything—everything that has happened since he came."

"When did he come?"

"It has been almost two weeks now."

"He and your uncle used to be friends, in the Southwest?"

"Yes, in Arizona. That's where Uncle Jason used to live."

"Why did Crenshaw come?"

"Uncle Jason sent for him."

"Crenshaw lacks a good deal of being a pleasant companion for any one. It seems strange to me that your uncle should ask such a lawless person to visit him."

"Why," breathed the girl, "Uncle Jason even paid Crenshaw's fare."

"Then he was anxious to have him here! There was a purpose back of Crenshaw's coming, something besides just a visit to your uncle."

"For months Uncle Jason has not been himself. Something awful has been growing upon him. He is wild and half-crazy. You can see that. He tramps the house day and night, muttering to himself and tossing his arms. Something terrible is about to happen, I know it is."

"Haven't you any friends in the house?" inquired Condon. "Are you and your uncle and Crenshaw the only ones here?"

"The only other person is Chloe, the negro woman who comes in to do the cooking and some of the housework. But she goes home at night. There are no others in the house."

"Have you any idea what troubles your uncle?"

"No, and the suspense and uncertainty are terribly trying to me."

There was no doubt that the girl was undergoing an ordeal, and that her endurance had been almost swept away. In sympathetic silence Condon waited for her to proceed. There was little he could say to comfort or reassure her.

"I hadn't ever seen Uncle Jason—" Miss Bolton presently went on—"he left for the West before I was born—until he came back to Jonesville, less than a year ago, rich and anxious to help me. I wish he hadn't bought back this old, run-down place! I wish he had left me to make my own living in Jonesville. I was happier then, more happy than I have ever been since."

The girl's tone was always guarded. Now and again excitement or emotion seemed on the point of betraying her voice into a higher pitch, but she instantly collected herself.

"Did your uncle know you didn't care to have the old homestead bought back?" Condon asked.

"I told him I thought it a foolish waste of money," Miss Bolton answered, "and that if he was determined to buy a home for me I should like to have something more modern. But he talked of the sentiment that hovered around the old place, and insisted that it must be rehabilitated. I was born here, Mr. Condon, but I find it difficult to work up any sentiment regarding the house."

"Your uncle seems about the last man on earth to buy a place for sentimental reasons," hazarded Condon.

"So it seemed to me, and I couldn't understand his determination to go ahead in spite of my wishes."

"In his younger days, Miss Bolton, did your uncle have any personal associations here?"

"My—my mother lived here, for a time, and she was Uncle Jason's sister."

Condon had uncovered a sorrowful memory, as the girl's face assured him, and he made haste to lead her away from it.

"Did Mr. Fyles ever live here?"

"Not that I know of, but he seemed familiar with the house the very first time he came into it. My uncle is a very strange man. He and Crenshaw, ever since Crenshaw came, have spent hours in the library together, with the door closed. At such times Uncle Jason always appeared greatly excited, and once—"

She was interrupted by a blood-curdling cry from below—a cry followed instantly by a heavy fall. She clung to the banisters and stifled a scream.

"What's that?" she gasped; "what can have happened?"

"I'll find out, Miss Bolton," Condon answered, hurrying down-stairs. "Don't be frightened, for I'll see to it that no harm comes to you."

It was to the library that Crenshaw had returned, after showing Condon to his room; and he had returned there at the request of Fyles. Condon presumed that they were discussing that *Tres Alamos* card and the iron hand, both of which had wrought Fyles up to an amazing pitch of excitement.

The library door was closed. Not knowing what sort of a situation might confront him, Condon took the automatic from his hip-pocket and dropped it into the pocket

of his coat, where it could be more conveniently come by in case of need; then, flinging the door wide, he passed warily into the room.

A most peculiar scene burst upon his eyes.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHADOW OF THE GALLOWES.

A CHAIR was overturned. Between this chair and the table, prone upon the carpet, lay Jason Fyles. His limbs were sprawled out, and his clothing was crumpled and in disorder.

Crenshaw, kneeling on one knee, was down beside him and holding up his head. Fyles's eyes were closed and his face was haggard and ghastly. Crenshaw held a glass of wine to Fyles's tense lips and was trying to force the liquor down his throat.

"What's the matter with Fyles?" demanded Condon sharply.

"Went off his head," growled Crenshaw, turning to look at the young man.

"Anything happen to him?"

"He read somethin' in a newspaper"—Crenshaw nodded toward a paper that lay on the floor—"an' it didn't set well."

"Can I help you any?" Condon asked.

"Make yourself scarce—that's the best way you can help. I'll take care o' Jason an' bring him round."

Condon stepped closer and bent to pick up the paper.

"Leave it be!" barked Crenshaw savagely.

Condon had no wish to make a bad matter worse by having a tilt with Crenshaw, so he straightened up and left the room. In obedience to a command, gruffly flung after him, he closed the door. He found Brenda Bolton in the lower hall, anxiously waiting.

"What happened?" she whispered.

"Nothing to alarm you, Miss Bolton," Condon answered. "Your uncle has fainted."

"Fainted?"

That a strong man should have swooned so suddenly and with the accompaniment of such a tragic cry, must have struck her as queer, just as it had struck Condon.

"Yes," he nodded. "He read something in a newspaper. I judge it had a very powerful effect upon your uncle."

"That was probably the newspaper the rural carrier left in our box, at noon," said the girl thoughtfully. "Crenshaw got the paper and spent most of his time reading it. There was something in it that threw him into a tremendous state of excitement. He didn't give me a chance to look at the paper, but folded it and kept it in his pocket. What do you suppose it could be, Mr. Condon?"

The young man shook his head.

"I wish I knew, Miss Bolton," he answered. "With that article as a clue, we might be able to find out what ails your uncle. It's a city paper?"

"Yes, a St. Louis daily—yesterday's."

"Where was Crenshaw at the time the blue motor-car stopped in front and the man called and left that *Tres Alamos* card?"

"He was somewhere in the back of the house. He came, as soon as the car was gone, and when I showed him the card, and told him what the man had said, he went into a rage and ran up-stairs after his revolver.

"'Next time he comes,' said he, 'you let me answer the door.' He watched from a front window, and when you came to the door and rang the bell he was waiting in the hall."

"That was after he read the article in the St. Louis paper?"

"Oh, yes, several hours afterward. Fate has been kind to me," she added, "in sending you here just at this time. To-morrow I am going to leave the house and go to some friends in Jonesville, for I can't stand this awful state of affairs another day. I shall go to-night, unless you can make it convenient to remain here till morning."

"Crenshaw doesn't want me to stay."

"This is my house," and she threw back her head haughtily, "and Crenshaw has nothing to say about it."

"I'll stay," said Condon, "unless Crenshaw makes it so uncomfortable for me that I can't. If I find I have to leave, it will give me pleasure to escort you to your friends in Jonesville."

She thanked him with a look, and he went into the parlor to await further developments. Miss Bolton made her way to the library.

There was a musty odor in all the rooms, and Condon found it particularly noticeable in the parlor. The furniture was covered with haircloth, and was rich and heavy.

Here and there was a brazen piece in cheap modern oak, which made the whole *ensemble* exceedingly "common," or worse.

Perhaps a quarter of an hour after she left him, Miss Bolton appeared to announce that supper was ready.

"Uncle seems to be all right now," said she, "and perhaps it would be just as well not to say anything about recent events in the library. Chloe was busy in the kitchen and did not hear uncle cry out and fall, so the information belongs just to the four of us.

"Here is the paper"—she handed him the St. Louis daily—"the paper that appears to have had such a demoralizing effect upon Crenshaw and Uncle Jason. Crenshaw had laid it away behind some books in the library. Look it over when you get the chance."

Condon stowed the paper away in a pocket and followed her to the dining-room. Fyles and Crenshaw were waiting, and they all seated themselves and began the evening meal. Fyles seemed to be his normal self, although Condon imagined he was holding his feelings in check by a strong effort of the will.

What talk was indulged in was on general topics, and Crenshaw took no part in it. He bolted his food in sullen silence, keeping his eyes lowered upon his plate.

When the meal was finished, and they had risen from their chairs, Fyles repeated his invitation for Condon to remain all night. Before he could answer, Crenshaw lifted his eyes and gave him a warning glance.

"Thank you," said the young man calmly, "I shall be glad to stay."

For an hour or more Condon sat with Fyles and Crenshaw in the lighted library, smoking and talking. No mention was made of the blue car, and neither Fyles nor Crenshaw showed any curiosity regarding the contents of the black-paper package, and apparently no anxiety.

Fyles had recovered from his scare on first looking into the pasteboard box. The package, wrapped and corded by Crenshaw, lay on the library table.

When Condon had finished his second cigar he excused himself and made his way up-stairs to his room. With the lamp lighted and the door locked, he threw himself into a chair and began an eager examination of the St. Louis paper. He was not long in finding what he was after—a

most remarkable article concerning the man Cree. This article was headed:

GALLOWS HIS FRIEND.

and this was followed by the sub-head:

St. Louis Murderer Utilizes Scaffold on Which Was to Have Hanged Him.

Saws His Way Out of Jail.

Crawls Through a Sewer to the Scaffold, and Leaps from a Wall.

Wonderful Athletic Feats by a Man with One Hand.

Truly it was a weird and interesting story, and concerned the escape of a man who had been condemned to death. Condon remembered, then, where and when he had heard the two names of Fyles and Cree—the two names that had been knocking vainly at the door of his memory.

He had read the names in the newspaper reports of Cree's trial, in which all St. Louis had been more or less interested. Fyles, as Condon recalled the trial, had assisted the State's attorney in marshaling the evidence that had convicted Cree. It had been a peculiarly atrocious crime, and Cree was tried and sentenced in short order.

Cree's cell, it appeared, opened on the main area of the jail. In the rear of it was another door that opened upon the "bull pen," an open space that lay between the cells and the prison walls. This rear door was securely barred.

At some time or other, and for some purpose not mentioned, an opening had been made in the bottom part of the rear door. This opening had been closed by means of a plate fastened with iron rivets. A cleverly constructed saw had been found hidden away in the mattress of Cree's cot.

Cree had sawed through several of the rivets, and had then pried off the plate with a broomstick. It was the official opinion that Cree had worked at the rivets for a long time. There was another prisoner in the cell with him, and it was this prisoner who had first given the alarm.

Manifestly, Cree's cell-mate was not in the plot, and the puzzling conclusion was reached that Cree had done his work without the other prisoner's knowledge. How he managed it, Cree alone could tell.

After getting clear of the cell Cree had covered but the first step toward freedom.

The remaining steps, however, gave him little trouble.

Once in the "bull-pen," he found himself at the edge of a hole dug for the jail sewer. For several days men had been at work on the sewer, and Cree had been able to watch them through the steel lattice-work of the rear door.

Dropping into the hole, he had crawled to an opening and out into the jail yard. It was a stormy night, for which Cree, no doubt, was thankful.

Through the storm he made his way toward the morgue, guided by lightning flashes, and came to the place where his scaffold had been erected. The gangway, built for his passage on the way to death, he now made use of in his journey toward life and liberty.

If the lightning had not served, it was supposed, when he reached the scaffold, that he had lighted a match to get his bearings. Climbing to the railing, by a hair-raising athletic performance, he swung his feet upward to the crosspieces under the slanting roof. Balancing himself on the slender timbers, he drew his body up on the roof, swung to the top of the jail wall and then dropped twelve feet to the street.

This happened between three and four o'clock in the morning. A night watchman, going his rounds in a mackintosh and with a dark lantern, almost ran into Cree as he was hastening away from the jail wall. The watchman was promptly knocked down, and when he recovered his wits he found that he had been bound and gagged.

Two men were helping Cree—the watchman could give no lucid description of these assistants—and there was an automobile with a broken lamp at the mouth of the alley into which the watchman had been thrown.

The watchman distinctly remembered the automobile with the broken lamp. It stood squarely across the mouth of the alley, and a glare of lightning made him sure of the machine; and he believed, although he was not sure, that the color of the automobile was *blue*.

And this astounding escape, through walls of stone and steel, had been carried out by a maimed man, a man whose right hand was missing at the wrist! He had stood at the rear door of his cell in murderer's row and watched the sewer builders digging his tunnel to liberty, and he had heard the blows of hammers busily at work on the gibbet that was to help him over the jail wall.

Condon had to confess that there was something fascinating for him in all this. He could applaud cleverness and dauntless courage, even while he decried a lamentable failure of justice.

He recalled, too, that they had had a local rain in St. Louis very recently, a rain that had come eastward across the river but a short distance.

It was this article that had thrown Crenshaw into a savage rage, and had inspired such fear in Fyles that he had swooned.

Why was this? Condon believed that he could divine the reason.

Fyles had helped the prosecuting attorney make a successful case against Oliver Cree. Now Cree, helped by some friend with a motor-car, was devoting himself to a scheme of vengeance. Without doubt, Cree was a desperate man, and would halt at nothing. Fyles had ample warrant for his fright. Not for a million would Condon have stood in his shoes.

With that newspaper article to guide his reasoning, Miss Bolton's report that the first caller with the black-paper package had arrived in a blue automobile with a broken lamp, was enough for Crenshaw. The card, with the two penciled words—*Tres Alamos*—had probably clinched his conclusions.

Crenshaw's fury must have been born of his friendship for Fyles; or it might have had a more sinister cause, quite unknown to Condon.

Of all audacious proceedings that had ever come to Condon's notice, that of this condemned murderer, traveling round the country by automobile to run out a private trail of vengeance, was far and away in the lead.

"If the officers don't run him down before he runs down Fyles," Condon thought as he went to bed, "I wouldn't give two straws for Fyles's chances."

And then he thought of Brenda Bolton, caught in this desperate tangle, and heartily approved of her decision to go to Jonesville; only, it seemed to him, it would have been better had he taken her to Jonesville that night.

For who could forecast the events of that night? Suppose the murderous Cree were to come, in the solemn dark hours?

These reflections so worked upon Condon that he could not sleep. The sobbing of the wind in the trees so played upon his disordered fancy that he imagined it the

hum of an approaching motor-car. As one hallucination faded, another took its place. He thought he could distinguish the sounds of an opening door, of angry voices, of the muffled crack of a revolver.

At last he got up.

If he could find Miss Bolton, he asked himself, would it not be best to take her and leave at once, by stealth? As soon as he reached Jonesville, he could collect a force of men, return to the house, and wait for Cree to come.

He wondered why Crenshaw had not already notified the authorities, or, if he would not, why Fyles had not done so. Crenshaw, however, was a Westerner, and probably believed in looking after himself in his own way.

Softly turning the key in the lock, Condon drew open the hall door. The corridor was dark as Egypt; and out of the darkness came the voice he knew only too well.

"You was bound to stay, an' now you've got to, whether you like it or not. Gi'me the key, Condon. I reckon I'll lock the door on this side."

As the young man stepped back, startled, the speaker reached out of the gloom and snatched the key with his own hands. The next moment the door was closed, and Condon heard the key twisting and throwing the bolt.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TIGHTENING COIL.

"If you try droppin' from the window," Crenshaw finished mockingly, his lips to the keyhole, "it's more'n an even gamble that you break a leg. Go to sleep, Condon. When I want you I'll call."

There was nothing left for Condon to do but to take Crenshaw's advice. Before crawling into bed again, however, he wedged a chair under the door-knob in such a fashion that Crenshaw would not be able to unlock the door and come into the room without making a noise.

Again and again Condon would doze off, only to break into sudden wakefulness, his every faculty aquiver with apprehension. He had no confidence in Crenshaw, and the man had made himself his jailer and was holding the key to the door. The automatic revolver Condon had placed under his pillow, and when he finally slept, his right hand was gripping the stock.

He was awakened by the creaking of the chair at the door, and by Crenshaw's struggles to enter the room.

"Locked me out, did you?" snarled Crenshaw. "What good would that do if I had a real determined idee to git in, me holdin' the key?"

Condon, half asleep, mumbled some unintelligible answer.

"It ain't necessary for me to get in," Crenshaw went on. "All I want to say is that you better get up an' come down-stairs. I got somethin' to tell you."

Condon, blinking and rubbing his eyes, got up and made his way to a stand where he had left the lamp and some matches. It was still very dark. As soon as the lamp was lighted, he turned round to look for his waistcoat. His watch was in his vest and he had a curiosity to know what time it was.

His vest was not hanging over the back of the chair where he had placed it. A few minutes' search developed the fact that not only had his waistcoat disappeared, but the rest of his outer garments, as well. Even his heavy, hob-nailed walking shoes, his cap, his leggings, his knapsack, and walking-stick had vanished.

An exchange had been effected, it seemed, for in place of his own clothes he found a black slouch hat, a blue flannel shirt, dark corduroy trousers, leather belt, and boots.

On the wash-stand lay his watch and chain, his pocketbook, some small change in silver, his penknife, and a little leather case of toilet articles. This miscellaneous collection did not comprise all his personal property, by any means. Amazement faded into indignation as he realized what must have happened.

Crenshaw had taken his clothes and the rest of his missing property, and had left the other garments in their place. He had done this while Condon slept, using the key and entering the room and working noiselessly. But—

Condon's amazement returned. The chair was still blocking the door, in just the condition Condon had left it. Crenshaw could not have entered without displacing that chair; indeed, he had probably not tried to enter until a moment before when he had called and requested Condon to get up.

"How did my clothes get out and those others get in?" muttered the astounded Condon.

He thought of the window, which he had raised slightly before going to bed. Six inches up the sash was fastened by an old-fashioned catch at the side. Crenshaw could not have got in through that narrow space, and he could hardly have reached in with a pole and performed the feat that had been carried out.

The young man was all at sea, but speculations were useless. Crenshaw would have to explain, he decided.

It was three o'clock in the morning. Condon decided that he would not make a scene just then, but would protest vigorously as soon as he got down-stairs and faced the meddlesome Westerner. He was at a loss to understand the reason for such a stealthy proceeding. Why had Crenshaw wanted his clothes?

The garments that had been left, Condon was glad to find, were clean and fresh. Very likely they belonged to Fyles. Fyles was near enough Condon's height and build so that the clothes proved a tolerable fit.

Having finished dressing, and appropriated all his personal property except the toilet-case, Condon slipped the "automatic" into his hip-pocket, picked up the lamp, and started down-stairs. Midway of the long flight there was a landing and a turn.

Hanging to the wall, and accessible from the landing, was a telephone. He had noticed this instrument before, and he now made a grateful note of it. Circumstances might arise in which that telephone would play an important part.

Crenshaw was alone in the library. Sprawled out in an easy chair, his big six-shooter conveniently at hand on the table, he was whiffing at a pipe with every appearance of ease and comfort. He grinned at Condon as he walked in and put down the lamp.

"You're a dead ringer for an old rawhide in that get-up, Condon," he remarked.

"Where are my own clothes?" the young man demanded angrily.

"They're some sort of a ways from here by now, I reckon. Ain't them good enough?"

"If this trade in clothes is a joke, Crenshaw, it's a joke of doubtful taste."

"Don't fret. You wasn't robbed. You got value received for what was took."

"Where's Mr. Fyles?"

"He pulled out about midnight."

"Pulled out?" Condon echoed.

"That's the size of it. He had his eye

on them clothes o' your'n when he asked you to stay all night. I didn't *sabe* the move at all till he told me, an' then I was plumb tickled. He's a wise boy, if anybody asks you."

Condon was still more puzzled and mystified, and his temper was whetted to a keener edge. His annoyance was in no wise lessened by the suspicion that Brenda Bolton might have been helping her uncle in his designs upon that missing wardrobe.

"This is a splendid brand of hospitality," Condon observed with some sarcasm. "I was invited to remain here overnight so Fyles could make way with my clothes."

"You was."

"Why did Fyles go away?"

"That newspaper was in your coat-pocket, so I reckon you read the piece about Oliver Cree. That bein' the case, you've got sense enough to put two and two together, ain't you?"

"Fyles ran away to avoid Cree?"

"That's what he done."

"Why didn't he get the authorities out here from Jonesville? Cree's a hunted man, and there must be a reward out for him. The county officers would have been only too glad to get a chance at that reward."

A sneer curled Crenshaw's mustached lip.

"That ain't the way we do things out where I come from," said he. "If a man can't boss his own business he's only fit to be planted."

"Does a man run to avoid trouble—out where you came from?"

"Not noways. But this case is unusual. You don't *sabe* all the dips, angles, an' formations, an' I don't reckon you ever will. I was glad a heap to see Jason clear out in your clothes. He's that worked up, you see, he couldn't have done much if he'd stayed. Never seen poor old Jase in such a takin' before."

"He used my clothes as a disguise?" Condon asked.

"Sure. He didn't look much like you in the face, Condon, but a back view o' him was mighty convincin'."

"Why did he need a disguise?" Condon persisted.

Crenshaw was a few moments debating this question. Finally the answer came.

"You don't know Cree, but we do—a whole lot. He's a devil. The way he hocus-pocused his way out o' jail proves that.

Then that killin' he done in St. Louey is more proof. If you live in that town you ought to know."

"Where is Fyles going?"

"He's goin' some place where he'll be safe till Cree's took care of."

One thing was sure: it was useless for Condon to try to recover his missing property. Fyles had taken it, and Fyles was gone; already he had been three hours on the road to parts unknown.

He had taken with him some private papers, among them that letter from the president of the bank, giving the cashier leave of absence. That letter and the other documents might help him to pass himself off as Arthur Condon, providing that was his intention.

"How did you get into my room and take my clothes?" the young man asked.

"That wasn't me," answered Crenshaw. "Jase did that."

"How did he do it? You had the key, Crenshaw, but the door was braced shut on the inside with a chair. The chair wasn't disturbed until you called me a little—"

At that juncture, a startling sound drifted from without to the two in the library. It was the low rumble of a high-powered car, growing swiftly in volume.

Condon gave a jump and fixed his wild eyes on Crenshaw. The latter had hunched forward in his chair, head bowed so he might listen intently, his right hand moving to the table-top and grasping the butt of the revolver.

"That's him—that's Cree!" he muttered and sprang to blow out the lights. "He'll find us ready for him, by thunder. Condon!"

"Well?" The young man's voice was well up in his throat and his heart was pounding.

"When Cree pulls the bell, you'll answer. He'll ask for Fyles. Tell Cree Fyles is here, that he's up an' dressed an' in the lib'ry. You'll strike a match an' bring Cree to this room. See that he comes through the door ahead o' you, an' that your lighted match is behind him. That's all. I'll do the rest. If you try to play horse with me," he added in a hiss, "there'll be two down instead o' one when the dust settles."

The crafty Crenshaw had planned to take the fugitive Cree at a disadvantage, and he had planned for Condon to bear an ignoble

part in the treacherous scheme. That may have been the Western way for dealing with the difficulty, but the young man's whole nature revolted against it.

The instant Cree stepped over the library threshold the match at his back would throw his form into bold prominence; then, out of the dark, Crenshaw's revolver would spit a murderous bullet.

While groping his way through the dark hall Condon asked himself what there was that he could do. Cree must be captured, of course. He was a condemned man, and the law was at his heels. But how could he be captured and Crenshaw's sanguinary plans foiled?

Already the motor was roaring in front, the car at a standstill. The roaring ceased suddenly as the power was shut off.

At that instant Condon had a thought. The telephone! Could he use the instrument without being overheard by Crenshaw?

With one hand on the stair railing, Condon began a careful upward movement. As he climbed he listened. No approaching steps could be heard in front. Even though the door-bell rang while he was at the phone, however, at that hour some time would be considered necessary before the summons could be answered.

Reaching the landing, Condon put out his hand and felt round for the telephone. He had marked its position accurately in his mind, and was only a moment in laying hold of the crank and turning it. Then, the receiver to his ear, he waited.

The response was several seconds in coming, and each second seemed like an hour. At last Central answered.

"This Jonesville?" Condon murmured, his lips close to the transmitter.

"Can't hear you; speak louder."

He lifted his voice as high as he dared, and repeated the question.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Connect me with an officer, quick; the sheriff, if you can."

At that Central seemed to develop a good deal of interest in the case.

"The sheriff is at the county seat," she answered, "Burlington, twelve miles away. The under-sheriff, Mr. Claxton, lives in Jonesville. I'll call him."

She rang and rang, but the under-sheriff must have been a heavy sleeper. Before Central could win a response from Claxton an oath rolled out of the gloom below Condon.

"What're you doin' up there, Condon?" demanded the voice of Crenshaw. "Come down here, or—"

Crenshaw was interrupted by a crash at the rear of the house. From the sound, he judged that the kitchen door had been roughly forced.

He heard Crenshaw bounding away, swearing as he went. And just then a sleepy voice came to him from the other end of the wire.

CHAPTER VII.

A DETERMINED FUGITIVE.

THERE was an uproar in the back part of the dwelling. No firearms were discharged, but hoarse voices mingled with a sound of breaking furniture, a quick shuffle of footsteps, and heavy falls that made the house tremble. In order to shut out the noise, Condon pressed the receiver to one ear and closed the other with his fingers.

"Is that Claxton, the under-sheriff?" he asked.

"That's me," was the reply. "Who're you?"

"I'm telephoning from the old Bolton place. Know where that is?"

"If I don't, no one does. I've lived round here ever since—"

"An escaped criminal named Oliver Cree is in this house. If you hurry out you can capture him."

There were sounds of consternation at the other end of the wire. If the under-sheriff had been half asleep before, there was no doubt about his being wide awake now.

"Gee-cripps! Why, I talked with the St. Louis chief of police about that feller yesterday, over the long-distance, and I got a description and a letter by evenin' mail. There's a reward—"

"There's no time to talk, and you'll have to hurry."

"Hold him if you can. I'll pick up a man or two and get out there just as quick as the nation'll let me. But it's bound to take a little time."

Condon was not a second too soon in giving Claxton his tip. Before he could hang up the receiver an arm was looped round his neck and he was thrown heavily against the wall at the side of the landing.

"Switch on that light, Travis!" panted a voice.

"Is it Fyles?" asked some one from the head of the stairs.

"Can't see; but it's not Fyles's voice."

The young man became aware that the commotion had ceased below. Two men had climbed to the second floor by a rear stairway, had heard him telephoning, and one of them had run down to the landing. He felt rather than saw that the man who had hurled him away from the phone was blocking his descent downward. Taking his chances with the man at the top of the stairs, he bounced upward.

A ray of light, suddenly unshuttered, struck Condon full in the face. Blinded by the glare, he stumbled, missed a step, fell, and rolled back to the landing.

"That'll do you," said the man who had thrown him against the wall. "Who were you talking to over the phone?"

Condon made no answer.

"Make him tell you, Oliver!" came angrily from the man above.

"I know a trick worth two of that." Cree hung up the dangling receiver and rang the bell. "Hallo!" he called into the transmitter. "Give me the party I was just talking with, Central. Claxton, the under-sheriff, eh? Yes, he's the man."

An exclamation broke from the man called Travis.

If Cree was able to catch Claxton before he left his house, he might say something to keep the under-sheriff away from the Bolton place. In order to prevent that, Condon executed a dangerous move, and did it on the spur of the moment.

Throwing himself forward, he snatched the receiver out of Cree's hand, and, then, with a stout pull, tore the cords out of the telephone. As Cree whirled, he lurched against him with all his force, hurling him back against the transmitter. The transmitter was crushed and put out of commission as effectually as the receiver had been.

The man at the head of the stairs shouted furiously. To Condon's astonishment, Cree only laughed as he regained his poise.

"That was pretty well done," said he, "but I found out all I wanted to know. Keep the light on his face, Travis," he called.

"Who are you?" he added as Condon blinked in the steady glare. "Friend of Fyles's?"

"No," the young man answered. "My name's Condon, and I live in St. Louis. I only happened to be here."

"How did you happen to call up the under-sheriff on the phone?"

"I knew you were a fugitive from justice, and I heard your car coming."

Travis began to fume and to shuffle uneasily about the upper hall. Cree paid no heed to his impatience.

"You seem to know a lot about me, Condon. I suppose you've invited the under-sheriff to come out here and lay me by the heels, eh?"

"Of course he has," fretted Travis. "We've made a nice bobble of this."

"Where's Fyles, Condon?" Cree went on, his voice cool and his manner thoroughly self-possessed.

"He left the house about midnight," the young man answered.

There was another explosion from Travis.

"He expected you, Oliver, and that was why he lit out. It was a fool thing, your giving up that card when you were here the first time."

"Where did he go, Condon?" pursued Cree.

"I can't tell you. I was sleeping in the house, and my clothes were stolen, and Fyles went away in them. These clothes I'm wearing don't belong to me."

"I'll bet you! Ain't that just like the coyote, Travis?"

"Condon may be telling the truth, and he may not," said Travis. "If he's in this house he's probably a friend of Fyles's, in spite of what he says to the contrary. Don't take too much stock in him, Oliver."

"Any one else in the house, Condon?" asked Cree.

"Crenshaw—"

"We've nailed that cimiroon."

"And Miss Bolton, Fyles's niece."

"Too bad there's a woman round. She must have been the one I met when I called during the afternoon. Queer we haven't had a sight of her."

Condon also realized, with something akin to a shock, that it was queer Miss Bolton hadn't presented herself.

"Don't forget that confounded under-sheriff, Oliver," suggested Travis. "We'd better get back to the car and hit it up."

"I've something to do before I leave here, Travis. This is probably the only chance I'll ever have."

"You talk like a crazy man! How can you stay here if the officers are coming?"

"This may mean everything for me.

Hunt around up there and see if you can find anything of the girl. Knock on the doors and look into all the rooms."

Grumbling at the delay this move occasioned, Travis started his search.

"We'll go down-stairs, Condon," said Cree, pushing an arm through the young man's. "Considering the circumstances, you're probably no more friendly toward me than you are toward Fyles. But I want you to stick round this place for a while. Do that and obey orders, and there won't be any trouble."

Arm in arm, the two descended the stairs and made their way to the library. Here a lamp was burning, and Crenshaw lay on the floor, bruised and disheveled, another companion of Cree's standing over him vigilantly with drawn revolver.

The third member of the fugitive's party was a young fellow, lithely built, and with a fine face. Condon turned to Cree for a good look at him in the light. He was a straight, upstanding sort of person, more than thirty, he judged, with a calm, gray eye, and a face not unhandsome.

The prison pallor was in the man's cheeks, but there was nothing else about him to suggest the jailbird. Condon could hardly believe that he was the man who had committed a cold-blooded murder and had been sentenced to the scaffold.

That he, like Fyles and Crenshaw, was a Westerner, could easily be seen. Condon would have known it just by the look of the man, even had the fact not developed at the trial and remained fixed in his memory.

"Still out, eh, Jerry?" said Cree, stepping to Crenshaw's side and looking down at his bruised and bleeding face.

"He hasn't budged since we dropped him there," Jerry answered, giving Condon a curious glance.

"It might be well to get ropes on him. Put up your gun, and I'll help."

Right there, at that moment, in the library of the old Bolton place, Condon became impressed with the idea that a Western feud had made enemies of Cree, Fyles, and Crenshaw long before the St. Louis crime was committed or Cree put on trial for his life.

One Planchet—if Condon remembered the name correctly—was the victim, and he likewise had come from Arizona.

What weird drama had been transplanted from the far Southwest for culmination in

that peaceful Eastern countryside? Oliver Cree did not look like a person who would trail down a human being for the sole purpose of a bloody revenge.

During a brief silence that fell over the room Cree went calmly nosing around, peering speculatively at a desk, or letting his eyes roam critically over the old-fashioned bookcases.

He went the length of each wall, and came presently to a door. Opening the door, he found himself at the entrance to a shallow closet.

He went into the closet, and returned presently with a long, flowered dressing-gown and a skull-cap.

At just that moment something unexpected happened.

Jerry had put away his revolver, and was removing some light, stout cords from his pocket.

These, undoubtedly, were intended for Crenshaw.

The cords were coiled. While Jerry was opening them out and making ready to use them, Crenshaw suddenly got to his feet with a jump and darted at the wall between two of the bookcases.

What followed came with lightninglike rapidity.

Crenshaw struck the wall with his head, and a panel in the wainscot slipped back, revealing an oblong square of darkness. He vanished in the gloom.

But if Crenshaw was quick Cree was equally so.

He dropped the dressing-gown and the skull-cap, plunged after Crenshaw, and the panel flew back into place.

Condon and Jerry were left staring at the blank wall.

"Well, I'll be blamed!" muttered Jerry.

(To be continued.)



Bed Nineteen

by Charles Francis Read

IN the early fall of 19—, I was a senior interne in the great County Hospital of C——. I was then nearing the close of my two years of service and in charge of a male ward of some fifty beds.

Typhoid was rampant in the city, and Brown—my junior interne—and I had hard work enough keeping pace with the

motley crew sent up to us each day from the receiving ward.

Beds were at a premium though we hurried the sad procession along as fast as we could and filled the aisles with cots. The men in the receiving wards knew as well as ourselves just how crowded we were; and so it was with surprise and indigna-

tion that I found one evening after supper a fresh card of admission on the table in the nurse room, bearing the diagnosis of *ulnar neuritis*.

What were Wiley and Stober thinking of—to send up a case of simple neuritis at a time like this? I looked at the card again more closely.

The patient gave his name as Jaques Jaquossin, and "teacher of languages" as his occupation. The combination taken altogether was interesting as well as irritating, and I stepped out into the ward to look him up at once.

I found him in Bed Nineteen—a huge bulk of a man with a leonine head and a mane of grizzled-black hair. The nose and mouth were large and the heavy brows overhung a pair of shrewd dark eyes.

As I came up and introduced myself he sat up in bed and greeted me respectfully in correct English. By this I judged him to be somewhat different from the ordinary charity patient, and sitting down by his bedside I drew him into conversation.

That is, I asked him a few questions and after that there was no need of any farther drawing out. It was evident that his facile tongue had gained him the admission his ailment of itself could never have secured.

With the sure choice of an expressive phrase after a moment's easy hesitation; with the odd slightly foreign accent, a sprinkling of French, Italian and German phrases, and a singularly fascinating inflection, Jaquossin proved himself a wonderful *raconteur*.

Never have I heard a man talk as he did that night, when the mood was on him and the devil in him asleep.

He began with a simple recital of how he had slept in a saloon for several nights, sitting in a chair with his head in his left hand, the elbow propped upon a table—thus readily accounting for the left *ulnar neuritis*, for the relief of which he had entered the hospital.

This was but a beginning, however, and when I finally reluctantly rose to go, he was describing the panorama of Stamboul as seen from the Bosphorus. Just how he reached the City of the Golden Horn and through how many different lands he had passed, I could not say, but I still have dim cinematographic memories of arctic floes and desert sands, of typhoon-beaten waters and frost-locked tundras.

I remember, too, that as I listened spell-bound the *wanderlust* that lies more or less hidden away in the breast of every one of us, gripped me hard fast, and I forgot the hospital and my chosen work completely, conscious only of a great longing to be up and away and to see the world as this man had seen it, as it seemed to me no man had seen it before.

I even carried the glamour of it all into my dreams that night and as I slept the hospital walls melted away, leaving me free to travel out over the earth, breathing deep and looking far.

Very naturally, then, when I entered the ward the next morning my first thought was of Jaquossin, and I glanced down the long row of white cots to find him sitting up in bed slowly rubbing the painful fingers of his left hand and talking meanwhile with his neighbor in Eighteen.

To be sure the man had proclaimed himself a teacher of languages, but I was startled nevertheless, for the patient in Eighteen was a Chinese with some obscure malady not as yet fully diagnosed, owing to our failure to obtain any history since he spoke no English.

"Jaquossin," I asked, when I reached him in the course of my rounds, "does your list of languages include Chinese—or was it only pidgin-English you were using?"

He smiled faintly at this, and I noted with a queer sensation that this smile did not affect his eyes at all.

"I find that this man comes from Saigon," he replied, partially ignoring my query. "I spent a winter there not long ago."

"And do you pick up a language in one winter, then?" I persisted with some little irritation for, to tell the truth, I was beginning to feel uncomfortably young and inexperienced in the presence of this charity patient of mine.

"Oh, no, doctor," he answered, gravely. "I had been there before." And with this he calmly dismissed the subject and began to question me concerning his hand.

That same afternoon I took him into the examining room for a thorough overhauling, and soon found him to be suffering from more than a mere neuritis.

His big frame was loosely covered with a dry and wrinkled skin that hung upon it in flabby folds—the withered skin of an old, old man, though he gave his age as but sixty. Vague pains shot through him here

and there, and beneath his eyes the flesh puffed out unhealthily.

"Jaquossin," I demanded bluntly at length, "what drug do you use?"

"Chloral," he returned tersely and in quite a matter of fact a tone as my own.

"How much?"

"Sometimes as high as an ounce a day—not usually more than half as much though."

"An ounce a day!"

I could only repeat after him in incredulous astonishment.

His tone was sincere, however, and he did not even glance at me to observe the effect of his wild statement, but lay gazing out of the window with an air of courteous boredom.

"And how long have you taken it in such quantities?" I questioned him when I had recovered myself somewhat.

"I began a good many years before you were born, young man," and again the shadow of a pitying, sneering smile twisted his lips, although he seemingly spoke without irritation.

If any ordinary patient had treated me in this way, I doubtless would have laughed in his face and told him that he lied, but for some reason I could not do this with Jacquossin.

Most unaccountably I found myself overlooking the insult of his attitude as well as the affront offered my credulity, and merely expressing wonder that he should have been able to survive for so long a time a dosage that ought to kill any two men.

To this he replied very simply: "I have discovered that this ancient hulk of mine persists in spite of many insults"—words to which I paid no especial heed at the time.

"You will have to give up the chloral while your hand is getting well and let me tone you up a bit," I remarked without hope of any real acquiescence on his part, since I knew from sad experience what a miserably weak mortal fiber a drug-addict usually possesses.

To my great surprise, however, he languidly agreed to this, and though I am positive he had access to none of the drug while in the hospital, he never asked for it nor so much as hinted that he suffered in any way from its withdrawal.

For some time following this conversation I was busy and unable to give my unusual patient any especial attention aside from that of the ordinary ward routine.

A week passed and with it much of my interest in Jacquossin; for with a half dozen new arrivals in the ward each day, he speedily became an old patient and not a very sick one at that.

I often thought of discharging him, for we were in shameful need of room, but there was a certain sinister fascination about the fellow that led me to put it off from time to time.

Brown and I were both of us working late at night in those days, though by nine I usually left him in the ward while I went to my room to read up on doubtful cases.

Finally one evening feeling restless and not inclined to sleep, though it was nearly midnight, I thought I would go back to the ward and look at the very sick ones once more before going to bed.

Accordingly I started out down the long corridor, fully a block in length, that connects the wing where the house staff lives with the other wings in which the various wards are situated.

The great hall was deserted at this time of night and but dimly illuminated, while a heavy rain beat viciously upon the big windows.

I had covered a third of the distance perhaps, when a figure suddenly lurched out of a side passage at the end of the hall, fell sprawling in turning the corner and then picking himself up unsteadily started toward me on a clumsy trot. Even at a distance the effort of the runner was plainly apparent as he came on with his head thrust forward, arms churning and feet shuffling along as if encased in leaden shoes.

The effect was an uncanny one in the dim light—I had attempted to run in that same way in my dreams. Involuntarily I drew off to the side of the corridor; if it were a delirious patient I would rather know what he had in his hands before I tackled him. Then I saw his face. And then he had passed me without recognition.

"Brown, Brown!" I cried out.

Perhaps I only whispered it, however, for my mouth was dry and he ran on without heeding, awkwardly, drunkenly, to disappear through the swinging doors at the end of the hall.

I have seen many a strong man die in sudden agony, but not in the face of one have I seen the naked terror I saw in Brown's that night in the lonely corridor.

His face was not white, but purple, as if he were being strangled; his eyes were fixed in a ghastly stare, and his tongue lolled out of an open mouth through which he sucked in the air and expelled it again in a series of convulsive gasps.

Suddenly I felt the sickening sag of my own lower jaw as I gazed down the hall at the doors still trembling with the impact of his body. The infection of blind, unreasoning fear seized me and I turned about to follow him.

I had gone but a few steps, however, I am glad to say, when reason reasserted itself and I pulled myself together; my duty was toward my ward no matter what horror might be lying in wait for me there. I turned with an effort and hurried on down the corridor.

To my great relief, as I turned into the side passage I saw that everything was dark and quiet as usual.

Miss Hazeltine, the night nurse, coming out of the ward just then with her lighted candle in her hand, met me by the nurse-room door. She greeted me with a serene smile and I noted that the candle did not even waver as she held it out before her to extinguish it.

Evidently she had seen nothing very startling and I turned from her without comment to the door of the examining room just across the passageway. This was slightly ajar and I could see that the room was brightly lighted.

"I think Dr. Brown is in there with Nineteen," the nurse remarked as she entered the nurse-room, making it still more evident that she knew nothing of Brown's flight.

Mastering an instinctive repugnance, I stepped quietly into the room.

Jaquossin lay in bed with his back to the door, apparently asleep; but as I came round to the foot of the bed I saw that his eyes were not closed, but wide open and seemingly fixed upon a shadow beneath a table in a corner of the room.

"What is it, Jacquossin?" I exclaimed sharply, for I could see nothing under the table, and yet, strangely enough, I suddenly felt that I might at any moment if his gaze were to continue.

At the sound of my voice he turned his head with a visible effort. As he did so, and I looked full into his eyes, I think I must have betrayed myself in some manner, for I caught again the shadow of a

sneering smile upon his lips as he bade me good evening in calm, even tones.

But his eyes! His eyes as he turned them upon me were the eyes of one returned from the dead—and returned to tell of the horrors of hell.

In their cold, lusterless depths I saw an awful fear lurking, not uncontrolled as I had seen it in Brown's face a few moments before, but held in leash, as it were, by a supreme effort of the will and ready at any moment to leap to the front like a wild beast, ungovernable.

It was several minutes before I could control myself sufficiently to inquire after Brown in a fairly casual manner.

"He left me very suddenly a short time ago," was the slow, indifferent reply. "I am sure I do not know what has become of him."

Suddenly with this I blazed up in white-hot wrath, and, springing to the side of the bed, I shook a fist close before his sodden eyes and sardonic mouth.

"You miserable old rascal!" I jerked out. "What do you mean by that sneer that is always about your mouth? What did you do to Brown to-night, and who are you, anyway? Tell me, and be quick about it."

It was a childish outburst, and I repented it as soon as I had finished; but I was worn out, mentally and physically, and had not yet recovered from the shock my junior interne had given me.

Not so much as the flicker of an eye-lash betrayed the fact that Jacquossin even heard me—until I had finished.

Then he pulled himself slowly and laboriously into a sitting posture and leaned slightly forward, still with that fiendish thousand-year-old smile upon his lips.

"Young man," he murmured in low, emotionless tones. "I am weary for the moment of suffering alone, and because of these foolish words of yours I shall make use of my ancient privilege. You shall taste to-night of what I must endure—always."

There was nothing dramatic in Jacquossin's delivery of these strange words. Quite to the contrary, there was such an air of utter exhaustion about him that I found my sudden anger growing quite as suddenly cool again.

The man was evidently suffering from the withdrawal of his daily dose of chloral, and his words were only the wanderings of

a half-crazed dope-fiend. Brown was just beginning his hospital life, and was not yet accustomed to the strange things one sees and hears in a great institution where a multitude of queer characters are gathered together.

Smiling at myself for not thinking of this explanation before, I turned away without further remark and started to leave the room in search of the night-man, whose help I should need in getting Jaquossin's bed back into the ward.

I had already partially opened the door leading into the hall, when a chill of dread all at once swept over me, and my knees weakened, forcing me to cling to the knob for support.

Strangely enough, however, in place of utilizing what little strength I still possessed to push on out of the room, I turned about, impelled by a horrid fascination, and looked behind me.

The floor of the room had disappeared beneath a cloud of black vapor that curled and eddied about as if it were boiling, though my feet as I stood in it were dead-ly cold.

My first thought was of fire, and I opened my mouth to call; but the words refused to come, and, besides, there was no smell of smoke—only a faint, disagreeable odor I could not analyze.

Jaquossin lay back, supported upon both elbows, with his face turned away from me, as if looking again into that patch of shadow beneath the table in the far corner of the room.

His chest heaved tumultuously, and his breath rattled in his throat as if he were upon the verge of dissolution.

Then as I stood there, a helpless paralytic in the presence of this apparent death agony, I felt the grip of the vapor about my thighs and—merciful Heaven—the things I now made out with straining eyes, taking vague form in its sullen shadows, crawling out from the corners of the room, floating up from beneath the bed, writhing about my limbs! And over all the calm, brilliant illumination of the electric lights.

I struggled again to cry out, but could no more utter a sound than a man in a dream. Cold sweat sprang out upon my face and hands as I clung desperately to the door that beneath my weight slowly closed itself behind me.

The vapors were now eddying about my waist, and I could barely make out the bed

with the struggling form upon it. The breast was still heaving, but the head hung far back between the shoulders, while the throat worked spasmodically, and presently all was swallowed up in the black fog as it rose breast-high about me, bearing with it an intolerable odor.

What I saw floating and swimming about in the depths of this noisome flood I shall not attempt to describe. Even Poe, brave man that he was with the pen, did not venture to tell of the horrors of the *Pit*.

We have, all of us, our secret dreads and fears, and, strangely enough, as far back as memory serves me mine have been of the charnel-house and the loathsome things that creep and writhe and scurry about in its dark shadows—a fear doubtless originating in some childhood impression, but long since become an integral part of my mental phenomena.

That part of me beneath the rising level of the black flood now seemed turned to stone, while my lungs were full to bursting.

For what seemed an age I stood there staring into its depths with eyes that would not shut or turn away—until at length, goaded into the mad desperation of a trapped animal, I slowly wrenched myself about and contrived to open the door a trifle and to look out across the passageway into the nurse-room opposite, where Miss Hazeltine was busied with her back to me, getting out the early morning medicines.

The surface of the vapor was by this time at my throat, and I was faint with the smell of it; subconsciously I caught myself wondering if my face were as ghastly now as Brown's and Jaquossin's had been.

Just then the nurse turned about and stepped to her door, evidently to listen to some sound in the ward. I tried to call to her; I tried to open the door farther and step out, but the horror was already at my lips and I choked.

Then she glanced across at me, and I saw her reel and fall to the floor as if shot.

At that moment I did not doubt but that I was dying. I could breathe no longer. I could not see, and as I sank below the surface something cold as death wrapped itself about my neck and strangled me.

A sudden sharp pain and a rush of fresh air revived me to find I had fallen through the door and out into the corridor, striking my head upon the floor in the fall.

What followed I am ashamed to relate, for I am not naturally a coward.

Before me only a few feet away lay the unconscious nurse, while behind me, even then about my feet, curled the thing I had just escaped—and I scrambled up and ran madly, leaving the helpless girl there alone, never stopping in my flight until I lay panting on my bed behind a strong door securely locked.

It is painful for me to attempt to describe the remainder of that night. If I dozed, it was only to stand once more in that awful vapor with Jaquossin's labored breathing in my ears; if I waked, it was to picture it all again and again.

The thought of my cowardice in leaving the nurse alone was a torture sharper than the rest, however, and toward morning I forced myself to unlock my door with the intention of going back to the ward—only to find that in my miserable weakness I could not bring myself to open it.

At seven I took a cold plunge, and, feeling somewhat refreshed, went down to the dining-room for an early breakfast.

I found Brown there before me, looking pinched and ashen-gray. As I came in he looked up and stared inquiringly, but we drank our coffee in silence; nor did either of us have anything to say as we walked down to the ward together.

Miss Forbes, the head-nurse, was already upon duty, and of her I inquired casually after Miss Hazeltine, to find to my great relief that she had appeared as usual when she went off duty. She had evidently said nothing about her experience of the night, for which I was profoundly thankful, as I had no desire to be branded in the hospital as a madman or a coward.

As we entered the ward, Brown and I both glanced involuntarily down the row of cots to Nineteen.

Jaquossin was there—sitting up in bed quite as usual, rubbing the painful fingers of his left hand and apparently chatting meanwhile with the man in Twenty.

Brown's jaw dropped as he stared.

"Rodney, he is talking with Charley!" he exclaimed in a low voice, for the head-nurse was standing near by, and our nurses were already beginning to talk too much about Nineteen.

Now, Charley was our phonetic shortening of the unpronounceable name of a Lithuanian who had been in the ward some months with heart-trouble, and whose mother-tongue was certainly his only one.

"French, German, Italian, Chinese, Lithuanian—" Brown went on *sotto voce*. "What is the man, anyway, Rodney?" He was trying hard to speak lightly, but his lower lip quivered with excitement.

"Brown, you are under the weather this morning," I answered brusquely. "Go to the laboratory and make the analyses for to-day, and then get out of the hospital for a while. It will do you good."

"All right—if you say so," he replied, and turned back without further comment, though when I glanced after him a moment later I caught him standing on the threshold of the ward, staring down the room again.

When I came to Jaquossin in the course of my rounds I could hardly force myself to stop, but as he was still a patient in my charge I paused to ask a few routine questions.

"And so you speak Lithuanian, too?" I could not refrain from adding, though I had promised myself I would not talk with him, but would wait until later in the day, when Brown and I would take him into the examining-room and have it out with him there alone.

"Yes, I have been in Lithuania many times," he returned listlessly, but with the shadow of a subtle smile about the corners of his inscrutable mouth. I hesitated.

The very air about him seemed tainted; but, mindful of my sorry showing the night before and conscious of a certain challenge in his attitude, I lingered at the foot of the bed and studied him in silence, endeavoring to read the mystery of his mocking lips and fear-haunted eyes.

For a time he returned my gaze steadily, and without apparent constraint. Then he abruptly broke silence with a request for his discharge from the hospital.

For the sake of my self-respect I struggled to conceal my immense relief at this, but without success, for his lips bent into a still more evident sneer as he turned his eyes upon me.

"But your hand is not well yet, Jaquossin," I remonstrated, unwilling to acquiesce too readily.

"No—but it soon will be," he answered negligently. "I have lingered here too long already. I must move on—I must move on," and again he muttered the phrase so low that I could barely make out the words, "I must move on."

"Very well, then," I asserted resignedly.

I ached to get the fellow out of the ward, but I could not let him go without an explanation of the affair of the night—an explanation he did not appear at all disposed to volunteer.

I pulled myself together with a hasty resolve, and stepped round to the side of the bed.

"Jaquossin," I exclaimed low enough to prevent the other men hearing, "you must explain last night before I let you go. You drifted in here from Heaven knows where. You have apparently traveled everywhere, and you seem to speak all languages. You call yourself a Frenchman, but you look like a Jew.

"You claim to drink enough chloral to kill two men, and yet do without it perfectly well when it is taken away from you. And, to cap it all, you play the men who have taken care of you a scurvy trick of hocus-pocus in the dead of night. Now, what have you to say for yourself?—and be quick about it, for I haven't much more time to spend on you."

I concluded with bitter vehemence, for a sense of the injury he had done me quickened fast as I spoke, and I could have choked the man as he lay there for the foul memories he had forced upon me by a miserable trick.

Again Jacquossin listened without the movement of a muscle. Even at the moment I could not but grant this supreme control a grudging admiration. Nor did he even deign this time to reply when I had finished.

But suddenly a strange thing happened—a thing so incredibly strange that I hesitate to record it lest you think me altogether the weak creature of suggestion.

As I stood there in a ward full of men, many of them laughing and talking, and with the bright morning sun pouring in at the east windows—the faint odor of carrion again assailed me and the fear of the night before grappled me fast.

I stood there chained to the bedside, while through the windows I could see the feverish activities of the busy street that runs in front of the hospital.

I struggled to move, and the fear only tightened its grip.

Then I heard Jacquossin's voice as if from a long way off, saying: "And—is my answer—quite—sufficient?"

The words came slowly, as if uttered in pain. I could not speak; but with an

effort I bowed my head slightly, and as the fear loosed its hold quite as suddenly as it had seized me, I turned and looked down to find Jacquossin lying twisted about with his face buried in his pillow and the men in the beds near by staring at us in solemn curiosity.

My first impulse was to get out of the room as quickly as possible, but pride came to my rescue and I hurried on with the shaky pretense of completing my round.

When I reached the nurse-room again I made out Jacquossin's discharge, and told Miss Forbes to get him out of the ward as soon as possible—an order that was obeyed with surprising alacrity, for he was gone when I returned a half-hour afterward.

Late that evening Brown came into my room, still looking pale, but otherwise his normal self. He had not been in the ward since morning, and when I told him of Jacquossin's discharge his face lighted up with relief.

"Good!" he exclaimed, but sobered immediately as he added: "But I'm sorry I didn't have it out with him by daylight."

"You may be thankful you didn't," I rejoined dryly, and told him of my experience of the night and morning.

He listened gravely and without any apparent surprise.

"I thought the old fiend had put you through, too, when I saw you this morning," he commented when I had finished. "Perhaps you would like to know just how he made a fool of me?"

I had told Brown of seeing his wild flight through the corridor, and it evidently hurt his pride a bit to think I should have seen him in such a sorry plight, even though my own had been as bad or worse.

I lit my pipe and settled back in my chair—this was very different from the night before.

"Well, I don't know that there is so very much to tell, after all," he began somewhat awkwardly. "My experience was much the same as your own—with a difference, though.

"Jaquossin's mocking civility and his subtle smile got on my nerves when I had been in the room with him a short time last night, and I spoke angrily to him, much as you did. He answered me in almost the same words he used with you, and I laughed at him.

"Then suddenly that same black fog began to rise about me as it did with you—

only in it—in it I saw a seething mass of—angleworms.”

He laughed a shrill, forced laugh.

“Sounds foolish, doesn’t it, Rodney? But they were immense ones, and there were millions of them, all slimy and whitish and limp, twisted and intertwined just as you’ve seen them in an old bait-can, the kind boys use when they go fishing.

“I’ve never been able to go the things. I never could fish with them like other boys, and when they would crawl out on the walks after a heavy rain I used to take to the road—and I do it yet.

“So, you see, what it meant to me to see and feel an almost solid mass of the things rising steadily up round me. If I hadn’t fainted I’d have gone stark, staring mad.”

He jumped up to pace the room.

“Ugh!” he jerked out. “I could have cheerfully killed the old Jew this morning when I saw him sitting up in bed so placidly.”

“So you, too, thought he was a Jew?” I said, as he lit a cigarette and pulled at it nervously.

“I haven’t a doubt of it.”

“And you think it was some trick of hypnotism he played on us?”

“No—o,” Brown slowly replied, “not in any ordinary sense of the word, anyway. How was he to know the most disgusting and terrifying thing to suggest to each of us?”

“And he certainly suffered himself,” I added.

“Yes, poor devil!” Brown muttered soberly. “In a way I can’t help pitying him. He gave me the impression of a man facing something more horrible than death—every minute of the time.

“And do you know, Rodney, I believe it was the quintessence of elemental fear that he transferred to us last night by some species of mental contagion we know nothing about as yet. All that we did was to visualize this sensation after our own minds.”

My junior suddenly halted in his stride and faced me expectantly.

“Possibly so,” I granted. “But what about the man himself—who is he?” Brown gave me a quick look, then turned away to the door.

“How should I know?” he rasped as he opened it. “He called himself a wanderer. Farther than that you will have to do your own guessing.”

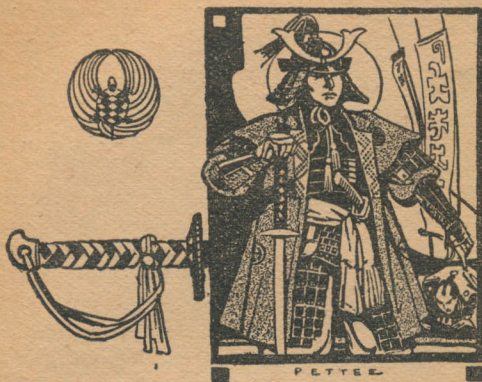
THE QUEST OF ARCADY.

By Ethel M. Colson.

LONG I looked for Arcady,
Sought it high and low—
Where green boughs wave high and free,
Where calm rivers flow.
“It has vanished,” I made moan;
But, you see, I looked alone.

“Silver streams hath Arcady,
Radiant, shining skies,
Flowers that could not fairer be,
Seen by human eyes.”
By these tokens still I sought—
Lonely, all my search was naught.

Scarce I dreamed of Arcady
In a city street,
Where no breath of balm could be,
But—her eyes were sweet!
When they softly on me shone
Arcady was all my own!



Prince Imbecile

by C. MacLean
Savage

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

RENNOSKE, hereditary *daimyo* of the Ackagawa of old Japan, is through the machinations of his uncle—the lord of the Matsuyama—severely wounded in a boyish fencing match, by his cousin, the Black Boar. Hida, Rennoske's old soldier servant, succeeds in stealing the boy away from the Matsuyama clan, but is finally mortally wounded. Before he dies he leaves the still stupefied boy, whose head has received the treacherous blow, in the care of a farmer, commanding the latter to give his sacred oath to care for the lad. Before he can say who the boy is, the old soldier dies.

CHAPTER VII.

BROKEN FINGERS.

HIS feet sinking into the sand, the Baron Matsuyama stood about sixty feet from the burning summer palace, for the heat was great and made him dizzy.

There was that burning inside him that was as hot as the roaring flames—the uncertainty of this last moment. He bit his nails as he saw the peasants and soldiers draw away from the burning building.

Had the prince and Hida perished in the fire? That was good, though he would rather have had him and the servant alive. His heart gave a bound as he saw two of his men bearing a small, limp body toward him. The gods be praised, this must be the boy!

His heart churned the blood in his veins as the men brought the body nearer. They laid it at his feet. With a yell he got to his knees to look at the face. When he saw who it was, he struck the thing a vicious blow in the mouth—it was the Ugly Dwarf, half conscious, moaning in pain.

The baron cajoled, roared, commanded, and threatened. It was no use. To face living men was one thing—to face the spirits of the dead amid roaring fire—not a man would budge.

The baron's rage turned again to the thing at his feet. He kicked it soundly in the side. The dwarf opened his eyes, howled, then thrust the fingers of his left hand into his mouth, gurgling and coughing with the pain of them.

"Speak, ape!" clamored his high excellency. "Where are Hida and the prince? Do they live? Answer, or, by Inari, I'll have thy tongue torn out!"

The dwarf waved his left hand madly in the air, and with his right pointed to the earth.

"A hole in the earth!" he panted between howls. "A trap—they have gone through a trap in the floor—Hida I stabbed in the neck—the boy was not there—*hei! hei!* my fingers—they are broken—*hei!*"

And the dwarf squealed with pain, nor could all the kickings of the baron get him to take his maimed fingers from out his mouth again.

The baron ran up and down the sand waving his long arms over his head.

"Two thousand yen for the dog Hida!" he shouted. "Three thousand for the imbecile Rennoske! After them; scour the woods, swim the waters—search, search, search! Who finds them will I make a prince, to share the kingdom with the Black Boar!"

The peasants, who had stood about ga-

ping at the strange figure who raved up and down, the fire throwing weird shadows on the beach, began to take heed to his words.

"This way, brothers!" cried one, and led the way up the hill. A dozen or so followed him.

"Nay, it is here—the mouth of the tunnel is here—I know full well!" an old, cracked voice shouted, running to the water's edge. Twenty-odd followed him.

Soon the peasants were running in all directions, shouting and baying like so many bloodhounds.

The baron listened to the sounds die away to the east, the west, and the south. Still he stamped up and down, gnawing his nails.

It was already sunrise when the fire died down, and the summer palace lay a heap of smoking ashes. It was noon before his high excellency called the soldiers who remained about him off from the task of raking and poking among the embers.

They could find no trace of the trap-door. The ashes lay too thick—superstition held the men from searching very hard.

The sun had passed the zenith when the baron, his back bent, strode wearily up the hill.

It was a glorious day. The gulls screeched over his head, the sun danced upon the water. In the woods the birds twittered; but he heeded them not.

Despair, disappointment, baffled desire, fought within his breast. He passed through the stone dragons of the gate, the dwarf at his heels, the seventy-odd soldiers tramping wearily after in a ragged file.

Before he reached the palace itself he crossed to a building of stone that was built half-buried in the earth. He beckoned to five of the soldiers to accompany him.

Two knights stood armed before the door of the house. The fight was short—the bronze-armored men soon lay stretched out on the grass.

"Bide ye here a while," growled the baron to the five.

They saw him descend the stone steps of the *godown*. He came up again, bearing in each hand a heavy bag. Back again to where the rest of the men waited he shuffled, set one of the bags upon the sunlit grass, and opened it.

Many times did those long fingers dive

into the bag and return from it the gleam of gold shining between them. One by one the men were paid.

"Shall we guard the *godown*, high excellency?" one asked.

"There is no need," the baron snarled. "It is empty. But," he added, with a significant raise of his fine eyebrows, "we will fill it again, and for every man who brings another to my service will I double the sum I have given now. Ye shall find me more than liberal; your women may wear fine silks, and those that have no women may go abroad and take what they see. A good master ye shall find me."

"A *banzai* to your high excellency," said the man.

They cheered with a will.

The baron smiled and whispered: "Again—for the Black Boar, your *Daimyo*—Nay, not here. Spread about—walk among the gardens, shouting: 'Long live the Matsuyama! Down with the Ackagawa! Long live the Black Boar!' Aye, we shall have a merry time of it if ye will but serve me."

"And the peasants who helped?" queried the man.

"The peasants shall be served as peasants," growled his high excellency. "Thou hast swords."

He left them then, treading the pebble-strewn path in the direction of the palace.

Under the red-tiled roof of the throne-room he found the woman—Mme. Golden Glow. Her painted face was drawn, the black lines below her eyes showing plainly her sleepless night.

"Well," she hissed, "are they slain?"

The baron cursed and ground his heel into the matting.

"We know not!" he cried in guttural tones. "Inari be cursed, we know not. But will I win without him—that I swear. The kingdom is mine—mine and my son's!"

He stroked his mustache and nodded his well-formed head.

Thus began the rule of the Matsuyama.

The young Black Boar's warriors—wavering, disaffected, to be bought, to be sold—harried the countryside, and, hirelings of a tyrant as they were, carried abroad with their swords and iron heels the unrest that permeated the palace.

As the years went by the peasants growled and muttered under death-dealing

taxes and brutal collectors, while within the palace's tissue-paper walls the baron and Mme. Golden Glow plotted and whispered, and taught the young Black Boar how hard he might drive his kingdom and what he must pay for the ride.

Upon a tiger skin under the crimson canopy, heavy with gold and silver thread, sat the Black Boar, a boy of seventeen, dark-skinned, dark-eyed, the inky eyebrows meeting in a point over the broad-nostriled nose. Squatted beside him was his father. The woman was there, too, paint and powder, silken wig, jeweled gewgaws, and all.

The room was dim, for the yellow paper walls of the house were up. From outside, above the clank of armor, came the shrill voice of command.

"Do you think, O my father!" said the boy wearily, "that the Captain Mori is a brave man, and capable?"

The baron smiled.

"Skeptical even in thy youth, O my son," he answered. "It is a good sign. Mori I trust. Has he not increased thy army from seventy to nigh upon seven hundred? Listen! He drills them now and every morn.

"Secure hast thou sat upon thy throne for two years without a sign of rebellion. Spring and fall the taxes pour in. The *godowns* are full of rice and wine. Is there aught that thou wouldst have? Speak but to me or Mori, and the blades of fourteen hundred swords will fetch it thee."

"Yet I fear the people," the boy went on, his hands twisting the silken rope of the curtain. "You know full well they loved the Ackagawa."

The baron sneered.

"And where are the Ackagawa, my son?" he asked. "Rennoske is dead or useless. Didst thou not rob him of his reason in that fight here upon the Lawn of the Roses? He is an imbecile—if he lives, which I doubt. His mother? Well dost thou know his mother is no more—*hei*, Mme. Golden Glow?"

The painted woman smiled back, black-toothed and ugly.

"Who is there else? Hida was wounded by the dwarf—his years were many. It is not in reason he could long live.

"Yet the dwarf goes abroad with spies to every nook and corner of the land. If Rennoske lives, he will find him. Art thou satisfied?"

"But it is the peasants I fear," the boy insisted. "How shall we curb them?"

The baron yawned and stretched his arms over his head.

"Dost thou remember, son," he spoke in cool tones, "the two great dogs we brought from the distant lands of snow? No one could go near them lest they be torn in bits.

"Dost thou remember the day they broke their chains and killed a waiting woman of the princess? The archers shot at them, but missed; for days they ran about till no one durst venture to take down their *shoji* walls. Dost thou recall what I did? I saw them go into the *godown* in search of food, and I closed the door and kept them in. For days they howled and whined.

"A week passed, and I had them let out again. What were they, these ferocious beasts that had threatened all our lives? Lean till the ribs showed, the white teeth snapped harmless at the air, their tongues lolled.

"They tried to run at me, but—gods! I can see them now—they fell down! Hunger, thirst, and darkness had done what the arrows of the archers could not do. I killed one each with a kick. A child could have done as well.

"Dost thou see, boy? If the peasants rise, we will take their food. Open the door, woman; let us look upon our men-at-arms."

CHAPTER VIII.

A HALTED VERSE IN A POEM.

STANDING in water that reached to the middle of his well-rounded calves was a Japanese boy of eighteen.

His face was a perfect oval, the eyes clear and wide-open; a tinge of pink flushed his high cheekbones; the mouth was small and well-formed, with a rich fulness to the lower lip. His fingers, wrinkled by long immersion, swiftly pulled forth green stalk after green stalk, laying the rice-plants on the mud dike behind him in a neat row.

He was dressed in a *haragakke*, a short pinafore of gray. Under it showed a *shuban* of cotton of the same color, while over his loin-cloth was drawn a pair of heavy cotton trunks—white they had been, but were now stained in brown splotches by the earth.

His legs were bare, and on his head a

straw *tycoon*, like an inverted soup-bowl. Even as back bent low and the head bobbed up and down in the sunlight, his voice came in a steady, songlike monotone, forming a sort of recitation.

"Diligent even at thy task, Little Warrior?"

The boy looked up quickly at the words, then bowed profoundly. Standing on the mud dike above him was a thin, wrinkled old man in a faded kimono. He was the Shinto priest, teacher, and philosopher of the countryside, honored and respected by all.

"I know it here in the rice-fields, O holy sir," the boy answered cheerfully.

"Then thou shouldst know it to-morrow," said the priest. "A prayer and an offering at the house-shrine and all will be well. Thou dost not yet recall the name of the man who brought thee hither?" he added gravely. "It is not well to pray to a spirit unknown."

"Then my prayers must be useless," the boy replied. "I know the man was good to me and I owe him my life, for it seems to me he brought me here through great danger, but who he was I cannot recall."

"And thyself?" quizzed the priest.

"Of myself I know still less," the boy answered. "I have a confused knowledge of swords, armor and much shouting, then flames burst forth and all is blackness. I cannot tell thee more, O holy sir, for it pains me here."

The boy pointed to a jagged scar above his forehead.

"Fear not," said the priest kindly. "Thou art now the adopted son of Miyoshi, the farmer, a sturdy lad and clever. Pray to the spirit of thy dead benefactor, who must haunt his grave these six years. May thy sinews grow with thy knowledge—until the morrow then, farewell."

The boy bowed low again as the old priest stalked majestically along the dike, turned the corner of a boulder and was lost to sight among the pine boughs.

All afternoon the boy toiled among the rice-plants in the water that trickled through irrigation ditches, one above the other, on the mountainside through the devious dikes of mud. All day long he culled the rice, his lips busy the while, mumbling the long, singsong recitation.

At last he knew that the sun was sinking, so he rose and watched it, a scarlet ball, dip behind the fir-clad hills. The

country was mountainous on all sides, the green slopes dotted with tiny houses of bamboo and thatch.

The ground where he stood was up about four hundred feet; it rolled down rather steeply to a narrow brown road that curved up and down like a toboggan track.

On the other side it rose again for perhaps a hundred feet, fell again, a higher rise behind it and so on, innumerable hills and dells, up and down, up and down, green with pine, spruce, cedar and maple, with the brown of cottage roofs the only contrast against the vernal hue.

Above the boy, as he turned, the mountain towered sheer, the top of it lost in a scarlet haze.

The boy heaved the sigh of one finished with his task and glad of it. He climbed out of the ditch and ran along the top of the highest dike, while the sun turned the many ditches below him into flashing ribbons of orange.

Once more a familiar scene came before him. It was the tiny plateau, in the middle of which stood the thatched roof of the cottage on its four beams and platform of wood.

He saw the figure of Miyoshi the Farmer, half enveloped in a cloud of blue smoke. Under the roof the kimonos of two women bustled about as they prepared the evening meal.

There were two cherry-trees before the house, two more round wells of stone, an oblong patch of ground behind the cottage where the chrysanthemums bloomed in November. This he had seen often. So often that it had become woven into his life, and he accepted it gladly as his life.

"How looks the crop for transplanting, son," asked Miyoshi, as the boy came up to him, his eyes still on the charcoal brazier before him.

"'Tis a goodly one, my father," answered the boy. "For you the winter should be a time of ease and plenty."

"So," said the farmer with a grunt. "If I can sell it all it may be. Yet methinks the soldiers of the Matsuyama will be upon me to seize their half after we have gone to the trouble to hull and bag it. Blessed be the day when the Prince Rennoske comes into his own—if he ever does."

"And who is the Prince Rennoske, O my father?" asked the boy.

So the farmer told the Prince Rennoske who he was, but the Prince Rennoske

learned nothing from that. He did not know that he, the adopted son of Miyoshi the Farmer, was the prince, hereditary *Daimyo* of the very ground he stood upon.

Miyoshi finished a highly garnished tale without small trace of the real truth in it. Then he turned to the boy with a curt: "My eyes tire, son; stay here and finish thou the task while I see if they have prepared supper."

And so in the twilight Prince Rennoske burned charcoal, while the light in the west changed from orange to blue over his dominion, and the blue of the smoke from his fire rose straight up to mingle with it.

"Father bids me tell you supper awaits you."

Rennoske looked up blinking from the red coals to find a girl of fourteen, with eyes downcast, standing before him.

"Then it is welcome, O Kiku San," he answered. "Welcome as thy presence here in the soft shades of evening." Then, leaning toward her, he added softly: "And that is as welcome as the nightingale's song in the springtime."

The girl blushed at the familiarity, then with a rippling laugh turned and ran back to the house, while the boy followed.

They squatted on the floor, each before their own little traylike table, the farmer, his wife, the boy, and the girl.

Rennoske would raise his eyes from his bowl of millet and they would meet the eyes of Kiku.

But Kiku's eyes would fall—not under Rennoske's gaze, for she could have gazed upon him while her food grew cold and never complain. It was the eyes of her father she felt ashamed under—girls are not supposed to look so longingly at adopted brothers. Yet Kiku looked when she dared.

Rennoske's eyes were always there to meet hers somehow. Kiku's eyes he had not seen in his childhood he felt certain. He would not have forgotten them if he had.

After the meal came the nightly game of *shogi*. This daily bore had become a dread to Rennoske.

Better to sit by Kiku, who embroidered by the alcove, where stood the green vase with the spray of flowers. Better to stroll with her by the mountain torrent and to watch the spray from it shine in the moonlight.

But talks and strolls with Kiku were for-

bidden things since they had both grown up—that is, while Miyoshi was in sight, so the young man swallowed a yawn and consented to let the farmer checkmate him.

By this time Miyoshi's wife had brought out the walls of paper with wooden frame and slid them into the grooves so that the one room became four, with one for each. Rennoske put up the outside walls, and taking up his quilting went into the little paper-enclosed square that was his own resting place.

He laid the bedding on whatever part of the heavy grass matting that best suited him, though there was not much room for choice, and laying his head upon his pillow of wood, he slept—to dream of Kiku's eyes.

In the early morning he rose and took the round little bathtub of wood into the garden. Then with water heated to the boiling point in a kettle placed upon a rude brick stove outside, he took his hot bath.

Returning to the house, he donned clean loin-cloth and *shuban*, and putting on his best kimono of dark green, with the tan sash, he was ready.

This was the day of the poetic contest, and so the farmer had excused him from work.

After a light meal he started off with the well-wishes of his foster-father, his literary composition in the wide sleeve of his garment. There was no reason why he should do so, but he took the path that led by the rice-fields.

There the reason became evident. Her kimono tucked above her dainty ankles, awash in the green-reflected water, stood Kiku.

"Wish me a lantern-full of luck, O Kiku," cried Rennoske. "I go to the contest."

"A lantern-full is too small, Little Warrior," she answered demurely. "Rather let my good wishes fill a temple. May the chrysanthemum of thy poem never fade."

"May she never," he answered smiling. "For if the water below thee were still, there might you see her, bright and yellow as the sun, O Kiku."

The girl hung her head, blushing again at the tender play upon her name. Then, stooping quickly, her hands were busy among the rice-plants.

"Would that I might come with you to the temple," she whispered without looking up.

"Would that you could, and farther," he answered softly.

She did not look up, though her whirling brain was far from the green stalks where her fingers were busy.

"I go," he went on. "Know that thou art the flower of my poem, O Kiku!"

But again Kiku did not reply, whereupon Rennoske went his way, wondering upon the strange ways of women.

Kiku tried then to tell him, but it was more than her trembling lips could utter. Still the tiny fingers worked on among the green stalks.

A tear stole down her cheek and splashed in the shallow water. She felt, as it was so quickly lost, that this would be her life, her grief, but the tiniest drop in the water, of circumstance. She was but a girl after all—and girls had no right to opinions or choice, in matters of love.

Rennoske kept to the mountain path that skirted the edge of the pine belt above him.

Below the road ran parallel, and between it and where he walked the slope was dotted with rice-fields and cottages, all alike, all with gardens at the back, that faced the south. Oxen labored in the mire, *tycoon*-covered heads of men, the bare heads of women, their glossy hair shining in the sun, bobbed up and down. A song floated now and then to him, mingling with the splash of the water.

By noon he came to the square in the center of the village of Takenaka, where the people made merry on holidays. He saw by the lack of shadow on the green lawn that it must be high noon, and struck off to his left through the maples, and by a short cut through the woods reached the temple grounds.

The temple itself was a small building, boasting a tiled roof with upturning eaves, elaborately painted and carved. The sides were boarded with a brilliantly varnished pine, while paper-covered windows were cut in the front, one to right and another to the left of two swinging doors of bamboo.

From under these came the steady buzz of voices.

When Rennoske entered the other scholars were already there, eleven in all, with quite a sprinkling of fathers, brothers, grandfathers, and uncles, all squatted upon the board floor. The old priest was standing upon the single step below the shrine, which stood on a raised platform.

The shrine itself was but a rude wooden

figure of the Fox Goddess Inari, flanked by two fantastic pictures on silk. From the heavy log rafters hung the great round brass gong with the padded stick attached for the invocation of the goddess.

The priest saw the boy enter and nodded to him, whereupon Rennoske bowed, and sat down in the rear. The old philosopher began a long discourse upon the muse of poetry, and the important place it held in the lives of all true subjects of the Mikado and true children of the Land of the Rising Sun.

Graven faces looked on without a sign, while eager ears drank in every word.

And now the contest was begun by Tsunejuro, tenth son of the Cormorant Fisher, who droned forth "The Shining of Torches on the Still Water."

Gentaro, the Wagoner's son, delivered his effort—"The Wild Geese Flying Cross-Winged Over the Meadow." One by one the boys recited their five-syllable, seven-syllable verses in turn.

At length the old priest called out:

"Little Warrior, son of Miyoshi the Farmer, who will deliver 'A Lone Chrysanthemum in a Garden on the Mountainside.'"

Rennoske walked majestically to the space before the shrine, beat the gong thrice, and turned to face his audience. Every one commented upon his regal bearing. The other boys felt the prize farther from them. The old priest smiled.

The boy began.

Almond eyes sparkled, dull brains marveled. The words were an inspiration! Had another poet like the great Tsuriyuki come among them?

"The daily task is easy when the golden flower at dawn—"

The boy stopped dead.

A titter ran about the room.

"It is not finished, my son," whispered the old priest anxiously. "There is more. Is it not about the joy it gives thee?"

But never a word answered Rennoske.

The boy's eyes stared straight before him, a childish smile was upon his lips. There was no pain there, yet the face was a blank like a baby's.

"The sickness is upon him," said the old man, as he solemnly held up his hand. "We are to pity and help him, for his mind is gifted. Tsunejuro and Gentaro, fetch thou the boy home, and my prayers shall be with ye both. Thou knowest where he bides."

They brought Rennoske home between them, an arm over each of their shoulders. Miyoshi they found by his charcoal fire and told him what had happened.

"Is it not odd? Is it not strange?" piped the farmer at sight of the lad. "Thrice have I seen him thus, like a stupid babe he stares and knows us not.

"Come, lad," and he took Rennoske by the hand, "lie thou in the house till this shall pass." Then to the boys: "I thank thee both for thy services. He will soon be well again."

The boys departed, giving each other sly nudges and strange glances. The farmer led his foster-son to his bed, bid him lie down, and then placed about him a folding screen of paper.

Then the old man sat upon his door-step and thus mumbled to himself:

"The gods do strange things to those upon the earth. A man comes to me with a roll of matting. The matting he unrolls and discloses this lad, lying there frightened half to death.

"The man makes me swear to guard this lad till he be sent for. I fain would refuse—the man like a tiger threatens me with haunting after death—I do as he bids me, for I want no spirits to curse my food before it goes adown my gullet—*hei!* A great lad, a hulking lad—strong, quick—a help to me he has been.

"The man who brought him must needs keep out of my dreams, for I need the lad. But this—this—this!" Miyoshi's voice rose to a high falsetto. "To stare like a babe, to know naught, *hei!*—it is strange! A perfect pot with a cracked lid, a fat ox with a blind eye—pish! The gods have made a mistake to put so sour a wine in so fine a cup. Yet must I to the rice-fields. Kiku cannot do all alone."

And Miyochi the Farmer strode along the path, turning the strangeness of it over and over in his mind; yet no conclusion could he come to.

Kiku San saw him coming, and quickly dried her eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

YELLOW LIGHT THROUGH THE SHOJI WALLS.

A JAPANESE boy, oval of face, knotty of limb, full-lipped and almond-eyed, took down the last paper shutter of the cottage on

the tiny plateau. The air was chill, for the sun had not yet shown its red rim over the distant fir-clad hills.

He hummed to himself as he laid the frame in its wooden box, for there was a tinge of autumn in the air that set his blood tingling. He went to the brick stove, set the kettle on the fire, and squatted upon the ground to watch the water boil.

When the steam sang through the spout, he called to his foster-father, and, when answered, rolled the tub near the fire. Then he took his ax and walked a hundred yards or so up the slope behind the house.

He selected a young pine, and soon the steady chop of his blows resounded through the early morning stillness, waking up the birds, who chirped him a gay good morning.

A year had passed in that mountainside *shoji*—a year of many happenings. As the farmer had predicted, the soldiers of the Matsuyama had come and taken three-quarters of the rice crop.

Miyoshi had unwittingly protested, whereupon he was rewarded by a kick in the groin that had left him limping throughout the winter. Rennoske had not seen the black-armored men, for he was afield with Kiku.

The sight of the farmer, groaning and kicking on the floor, had set a new feeling coursing through the boy's blood.

He hated himself for a week after this, for he had been doing less work in the rice-fields than he should have, having whiled away most of the time with pretty speeches for Kiku's ears.

"A little less play with a girl," he muttered scornfully to himself. "An hour quicker to return home, and I might have sent these blood-sucking fiends rolling down the hill."

He had great confidence in his own strength, this nineteen-year-old boy. The fact that he had never seen a soldier and was unarmed never entered his head at all. The soldiers kicked his foster-father—*hei!* Offending soldiers were to be picked up about the waist and flung like quoits down the hillside. It was easy—at nineteen.

But the resolve to play less with girls did not long remain a reality. Kiku smiled so prettily when he spoke, or cast down her head with a blush.

Once again neither old Japan nor a hard winter made any difference. Kiku was a girl—dainty, sweet, pretty. Miyoshi frowned on their being together much, so

what could be more natural than that they should be together at every chance they could. We are still to remember, Rennoske was nineteen!

On this particular morning we find him chopping down the young pine-tree, his head was full of Kiku San. Why not? he argued. There was no simpler way out of it.

The birds sang "Why not?" The ax thudded "Why not?" He thought so himself.

At last the tree was down, and he spent a joyful fifteen minutes sending it scampering down the hill. He bathed in the tub, dressed again, and, hungry, he squatted on the floor of the cottage before the traylike table, waiting for breakfast.

Now he could have eaten three more bowls of the millet; but he knew there was no more. What did that matter? He hated to see Kiku pick up those last few grains with her chopsticks and scrape her bowl. The sight made his resolve of the woods all the stronger.

"I must hie me to the fishing-village this day ere the sun grows hot," explained Miyoshi after the meal. "There is a junk in the water I would see."

Kiku sniffed, whereupon her father scowled at her. Rennoske wondered at this, but said nothing. His duty called him to the rice-fields, so thither he went with a light heart as light as his stomach was empty.

His feet had not been long in the water before Kiku came to help him. They worked in silence side by side, the thing that trembled on the boy's lips shut his mouth as those things will—at nineteen.

At first the lad thought it nothing; but the sound beside him, often repeated, made him look closely at the girl. She must have felt his gaze, for the sniffing changed to a soft sob. Yet her tiny fingers worked on.

"Gentlest flower," asked Rennoske then, "why dost thou grieve? Grieve not now, for I am happy, and it is because of thee I am so."

"Do you know, O Little Warrior," she faltered, "why my father goes this day to the fishing-village of Boruku?"

This was irrelevance indeed. He answered aloud:

"Perhaps for fish—perhaps for dried seaweed. Aught else?"

Kiku did not answer, bending her head over the nodding green stalks. The boy heard her sob again.

Why should she sob? *Hei!* Was this time for weeping?

The sun shone bright, the birds sang—her father went to the fishing-village, and she wept. Surely a maid was a strange, timid thing!

He kept his peace for an hour or two, but it would not down. He tried, faltered, and failed; and so the morning and the afternoon wore on, while they worked there in the sunlight, side by side.

At last it came.

"Gentlest flower," he said softly, "thou and I have spent many happy hours together. We have wandered hand in hand by the mountain-torrent, and seen the spray rise pearly in the moonlight. We have chased each other in the woods, happy in our childhood.

"Of thee have I been ever fond, Kiku San, and to prove I speak truly I will ask thy father for thy hand in marriage. Then will I truly be his son, then shall I truly take his name to protect him from the soldiers in his age, to be a help always. The spirit of the now blessed man who brought me hither comes to me in my dreams and tells me thou art to be my wife. Art thou willing, Kiku San?"

"Aye," answered the girl, "willing as the mountain torrent to rush toward the sea."

"Then, why weepest thou?" the boy insisted. "I am here. I would be ever at thy side. Tell me, why weepest thou, gentlest flower?"

"Have I not said," cried the girl petulantly, "that my father went this day to the fishing-village? And it is not for the dried seaweed, Little Warrior, not for the dried seaweed!"

She burst into tears.

"Why, then? Tell me, O Kiku. How dares any one hurt thee?" the boy said imperiously. "They shall answer to the Fifty for this. Not one shall remain living upon the—"

He stopped suddenly, not realizing the purport of his own words. The girl, too, stared at him through her tears. Then, looking over his shoulder, she cried out:

"See—even now he comes!"

Dressed in his black, feast-day kimono, half covered by a cheap silk *haori* of gray silk, picking his steps in the unaccustomed straw sandals, Rennoske saw Miyoshi. Behind him stalked a tall man in a robe of bright blue with a scarlet sash.

His head was bare and newly shaved, his

top-knot dressed elaborately. As he approached Rennoske noticed that his face was dark from exposure to the sun, his little nose was turned up and pointed, and his eyes snapped and glowed with health under high brows. Rennoske wondered who he might be, Kiku's "Even now he comes" echoing in his ears.

"Why comest thou not hither and quickly?" snapped Miyoshi to his silent, motionless daughter. "Thinkest thou we shall come to thee, minx?"

Kiku stepped awkwardly out of the ditch, and with a little hop prostrated herself before the man in blue. With unassumed grace he bowed profoundly to her, while a scornful smile lit up his face, showing a row of white, even teeth.

Then, as the girl rose, he brought from the sleeve of his kimono a branch of cherry blossoms and handed them to her with another low bow. Rennoske, watching open-eyed, saw the spray but touch Kiku's fingers.

Even from where he stood he saw the fire that blazed from her eyes. With a swift movement of her tiny arm, she dashed the branch to the ground, scattering to the wind the artificial petals of pink.

Miyoshi gasped. The man in blue stared open-mouthed. Rennoske, scarcely knowing what he did, sprang out of the ditch.

Hesitating but for an instant, the girl stamped her foot, screamed with rage, then turned and ran toward the house, leaving the three men to stare at one another.

"How now, my son?" said Miyoshi, finding his voice. "Hast thou filled my daughter's head with frippery with thy smooth tongue that she should act like a disobedient jade? What means this outburst?"

Rennoske knew what it meant, or thought he did. He had spoken of love and marriage to the girl. It seemed to him as if he had been accepted. So out he blurted boldly:

"I have filled the head of thy daughter with naught that is dishonorable, O my father! It is meet she refuses the blossoms, for I have asked her hand in marriage, and she would have no man but me, nor I any woman but her. It is simple."

"God of the Sea!" roared the man in blue. "Thou hast played me false, Miyoshi the Farmer! Thou shalt answer for this!"

Miyoshi at first dropped his jaw and

opened his eyes in utter amazement. He stood in this mood for a second or two, when another light came into his eyes.

At first his chest heaved slightly; then fast it moved up and down, till, opening his mouth, the sound of his laughter rang out.

"*Hei*—ho, ho!" he roared, shaking. "My daughter married to thee, thou hulking boy? And what wilt thou give her? Where wilt thou bring her if it could be? It can never be while this man lives—for to him she is betrothed, thou silly lad."

"Betrothed!" said Rennoske in a far-away voice. "Betrothed?"

Then, with a gurgling sound in his throat, he fell heavily forward on his face upon the ground.

"God of the Sea!" cried the man in blue with blanched cheeks, "I know death when it comes. Thy words have killed the boy."

"It is even as I thought when he first fell so," answered the farmer. "It is but a sickness he hath that comes at odd times upon him. Sometimes he falls as dead even as he did this moment; but mostly he stares like a babe at naught and knows us not."

"Do not heed him, Osaki; he knew not of thee. Come, give me a hand with him. So, thou hast his arms. *Hei!* It is strange how he came among us."

"How was that?" asked Osaki as they carried the limp figure to the house.

Miyoshi told him of the coming and the death of Hida.

"But I cannot send him hence," the farmer explained as he passed the first of the round stone wells. "The dead man's eyes come to me in my dreams when I but think to. His spirit watched o'er the boy; he must be blessed."

"Yet an oath is an oath, Miyoshi the Farmer," said Osaki, as they passed under the cherry-trees.

"And shall remain sacred, O Osaki!" said Miyoshi as they entered the house.

He laid Rennoske as before upon his bedding and placed the screen about him. Then, with a significant look at his daughter, who cowered by one of the corner posts, he snapped:

"Remember thou art but a girl, hence thou must obey. To thy task, and quickly, wench—*Isoge!*"

Quickly Kiku went, toddling out of the house and down the path to the rice-fields. Soon her fingers were busy, and for a while her tears fell into the water that washed about her dainty ankles.

Osaki—her betrothed—forsooth! She hated him—she would not marry him. There must be some way out of that?

She dashed the tears from her eyes and stood up, thinking. After all, there had been no word of that. He had only given her the blossoms of betrothal. She had refused them.

That thought gave her courage—she could do so again. Thinking on, she decided against it. She must be wily and cunning, she must listen and find out what was in the wind. And Rennoske?

His words came quickly back to her. In fancy she saw him again standing beside her.

How strong, how noble he looked! His short pinafore was gray and dirty—it was not so to her. His words were slow and bashful—they did not seem so to her. How different from this silk-clad, perfumed sailor!

The sickness—that brought forth another tender thought. What were sicknesses to her? Would not she pray to all the gods to clear his mind from that? Could she not help him and work for him day by day?

Osaki, hunter of the seal, cold, sneering, scornful Osaki. He her betrothed—out upon it! All the laws and all the vows—aye, all the fathers upon earth—could not make her be his wife.

She, Kiku San, loved Rennoske, and he—oh, divinely tender, or gloriously beautiful, thought!—he loved her!

The sun set and Kiku toddled home again as her father, her mother, and Osaki were sitting down to supper. There was bean-curd soup, raw carp, rice, and bamboo sprouts, all the gifts of Osaki; but not for Kiku. A bowl of millet was plenty for a disobedient girl.

Then, too, she was made to go to bed before the drinking bout of hot sake before the meal was over, while her father and her betrothed ate, drank, and played chess in the light of six paper lanterns brought out for the occasion.

She lay there for hours behind the walls of paper, her mother asleep beside her. Her sleek, black hair, its dressing undisturbed by the pillow of wood, while her tired little body lay stretched out upon the wadded bedding. Soon her father's voice came, slightly raised in tone from the effects of the wine, came to her listening ears:

"Thinkest thou, Osaki, I have been false to the vow I and thy father made when thou

and my daughter were but children? Did not we swear by the blessed spirits of our ancestors?"

"May they ever guard and keep us from all harm," interrupted Osaki's voice.

"Aye," the farmer went on, "by thine ancestors and mine did we swear that my daughter should be brought a bride to thy house while we burned the funeral fire outside our gate and gave her the robe of white to signify she was dead to us, and shall be borne to thee only as a corpse. Thus did we swear, Osaki."

"But the boy?" came Osaki's voice again. "He said thy daughter would have none but him, and he none but her. Thy daughter may refuse my first gift. I cannot force her to be my wife, nor will I."

Kiku San heard her father guffaw.

"And why dost thou pay heed to him, Osaki? Is he not my adopted son, and must he not obey me in all things? Moreover, were *shoji* to be had for the price of a fish-hook, he could not purchase himself a thatch roof.

"A penniless boy that is dependent upon me for his millet! Let thy fear sink in the sea, Osaki. My daughter shall be thy bride. She shall obey thy mother as a wife should. I am firm as Fujiyama upon that."

"Listen, then, O Farmer of the Three Wells," Osaki's voice came soft and low, "I go to-morrow to the cold and distant land of Yezo. Thither I go and farther to hunt the seal. Then shall I bring back many pelts and sell them. When the cherry blossoms are on the trees again, when the nightingale sings in the fir-trees, then will I return for my bride."

"Many yen for thy sealskins," chuckled Miyoshi. "It is a bargain then, Osaki. Let us drink."

"Let us drink, then," Osaki answered; "my father-in-law that is to be."

Kiku heard the clink of the cups and drew a tiny hand across her eyes.

But it was not to shut out the light that came yellow through the paper *shoji* walls.

CHAPTER X.

THE WISH FOR THE SECOND SWORD.

RENNOSKE, hereditary *Daimyo* of the province, feudal lord of old Japan, awoke from his trancelike sleep an hour before the dawn. He knew neither his title nor his heritage.

He remembered clearly that he was the adopted son of Miyoshi the Farmer, and also why he had been ill again.

Kiku San, his little foster-sister, the companion of his boyhood, was the betrothed of the man in blue. So much for that and the sting of it.

Another thing was knocking at the gate of his brain—a strange desire. At first he could not fathom it; but as he lay there it came to him so clearly, so forcibly, that he must needs pay it some attention.

The desire was to take his sword and dash out the brains of Osaki, shake it threateningly at Miyoshi, pick up Kiku San under his arm and carry her through all the land of Nippon till he had found his kin and his birthright, claim her as his bride before all, marry her, and live a life of ease and plenty. Always a sword!

So strong was the instinct that he sat up and felt beside him. There was no sword there. What wild fancy was it that made him think he had one? Where had he ever seen one? Not since he had been here under this roof? It must have been in that other boyhood, that boyhood that came now and then in strange flashes.

Yes, he was sure of it now, a long sword he had, the handle inlaid with gold. He would have it again—then let him beware, this man in blue!

All this was lost again in the usual morning bath, wood-cutting, and the rest till breakfast came. That, thanks be to the gods, was plentiful enough on account of the guest.

"I fear I cannot go with thee to the ship," said Miyoshi during the meal. "My side pains me and the walk is far, yet Kiku should not go alone."

"Yet what of the garments, my gifts to thee?" said the sailor. "A juban of silk, a wadded *shitagi* for the winter, and an *obi* of yellow for my betrothed, if she will deign to accept my gift. Then there is seaweed, bamboo, and spiced ginger, all in a great box. Who shall fetch them?"

"Cannot the boy go?" said the farmer.

Osaki raised his eyebrows, and showed his teeth in an insolent smile.

"Is he strong enough?" he said with a sneer. "I would not have him lie by the roadside for the girl to drag home."

It was in Rennoske's mind to tell the sailor that he was strong enough to thrust his words down his throat. Yet he choked his choler and answered firmly:

"I am willing to carry aught that you desire, my father."

The farmer and Osaki exchanged glances that said plainly: "He has changed his tune."

Osaki sneered and poohed, yet the upshot of the affair was that the boy was to go along.

Kiku dressed in her best traveling-rôbe of brown. All morning she was meek and docile, a sight that made her father congratulate himself on the effect of his discipline. Osaki was pleased to observe that she had not refused the offer of the sash.

At about eight o'clock the trio started off down the zigzag path down the mountainside. Kiku and Osaki walked ahead, while Rennoske, still in his short kimono, sash, and trunks, his sinewy legs bare from mid thigh to foot, trailed on behind.

The boy was living keenly in every inch of his frame, his senses alert, for this was his first long trip out into the world; a jaunt to the temple, or an hour or two of play at Takenaka, having been all he had ever known before.

He drank deep of every sound, sight, and smell.

The road led him along the base of the mountainside. On his right were dense woods on rising ground, the trees mostly pine, fir, and cedar, with here and there a maple. The roof of a cottage poked above the green, another showed in a green hollow, while the blue smoke from a round hut filtered through the cool shade.

These he knew were the homes of woodcutters and charcoal-burners mostly, children of the forest. To his left the scene was as if he looked upon his own home, for there were the dikes of the rice-fields, like steps of a stair, the heads of the workers bobbing up and down. Behind, where the mountain towered, a tiny cottage perched here and there upon it like swallows' nests.

By noon they reached the fork in the road. On the left it led up to the village of Takenaka, whose roofs showed every shade and tint of brown above the green of the trees and the gray of the granite boulders that stuck up out of the earth, resembling a miniature Gibraltar. They took the other road, Osaki and the girl, the one to the right, and the boy followed on.

This path—for it was no more than a thin, brown rut through the fallen leaves of the forest—wound in and out of black bogs and pools of stagnant water.

Rennoske saw mystery in everything. The fine tracery of a spider's web, the scarlet of sumac, a swooping hawk upon a robin—everything had so much interest for him that he forgot the man and girl who were his guides. He was surprised, therefore, to come upon Osaki and Kiku, standing upon the moss and fern-grown bank of a swollen stream that rushed, foam-white, and tumbling to a roaring fall, some fifty yards below.

"Look thee, boy!" said the sailor authoritatively as he came up. "Thou seest yonder log that lays one end in this stream. It should be our bridge, for yesterday I crossed it. Now, as thou seest, it hath tumbled into the stream, and we cannot cross."

The seal-hunter looked Rennoske squarely in the eye, his own with the light of mischief in them. Then the brows came up, the lips parted, and the scornful smile was in the even teeth. He went on:

"Thou, my mighty lad, have on no sandals. Were I the same, could I ford this trickle and lift yonder log to its place upon the bank. But the way is slippery; the torrent rushes free to sweep from under them the feet of those who dare not brave its foaming rush.

"Thou hast not the strength nor the courage for such a deed, I fear; so it must be that I shall do it, since thou art afraid. Boys were not so when I was one."

And Osaki sat down upon the bank and untied his sandal.

Every one of the seal-hunter's words struck Rennoske like a whip-lash.

"Some talk while others do, Osaki," he answered. "Thou shalt walk dry-shod upon the bank."

Then he leaped into the stream.

Kiku screamed and ran to the edge.

Osaki, shooting out his arm, caught her by the kimono-sleeve and held her. He slowly let his eyes wander to the stream, and smiled at the struggling lad in the water.

"*Hei!*" he muttered. "Thus will the child of Nowhere be swept back to Nowhere. Thus do the waters serve me as they have ever done. Squirm and twist, wondrous boy! Call now to the spirit that watches o'er thee. So does he hear, oh Kiku San?"

And Osaki laughed softly to himself.

"The spirit hears, Osaki!" cried Kiku, her breath coming fast. "See—he gains

the bank—a little farther, Little Warrior—on, on— See, Osaki—he stands firm!"

Rennoske, instinctively balancing himself with outstretched arms, was indeed nearing the opposite bank. The white water lashed itself into a foam about his hips, making a "V" of calm water on either side of his waist. Slowly he felt his way on uncertain feet to where the log lay, and the most difficult part of his task awaited him, for he must lift the log out of the water and raise it high above his head.

And now the rippling-muscle arms encircled the wet wood, the nails of his fingers dug deep into the slimy bark. Slowly the torrent gave it up, while the veins stood out on the boy's forehead like whipcords.

He heard Kiku scream again as his foot slipped upon the bottom. He was off his balance now, his arms no longer keeping him from falling. He knew he must go with the current. This he thought in that minutest fraction of a second, while he felt the sole of his foot slide along the stone; then his heel caught between two other stones behind it.

Panting now with the effort, with a mighty heave the log came free from the water and thumped sodden, dripping a thousand bright drops upon the soft, black earth of the bank.

"Well done, brother!"

That from Kiku was his reward.

"Hold it now till we pass over!" called Osaki. He picked up the girl in his arms, and planting his feet firmly on the log, he started to cross the crazy bridge.

But wo to those who hold their own deeds so highly, and look so lightly upon the deeds of others. About midway between the banks Osaki, the sure-footed, slipped.

He uttered a yell of dismay, and the instinct of self-preservation strong within him, he threw out his arms to right himself, while the girl tumbled into the stream that boiled and hissed below.

But Rennoske had seen the plight of his "gentlest flower" none too soon. He caught the girl in his outstretched arms. When he looked up, Osaki was on the bank above him, holding out his arms.

"Quick, boy!" he called. "Give me the girl ere the current sweep you both away!"

Rennoske, in that swift moment, saw every detail of the scene about him. There was the bank, black-soiled and fern-grown. Behind it the dark, cool forest of

pine, fir, and maple, stretched away in long aisles of black shadow, sunlit patch.

There before him stooped the man in blue with the scarlet sash. Rennoske looked squarely into his terror-stricken eyes.

"And what if it did, Osaki?" he asked calmly. "Where wouldst thou be, and thy boasting and thy bragging and thy belittling of me in her eyes? Fooled Osaki, *hei*, how he trembles! Thou art fooled, Osaki, braggart and little-hearted man! See, we go!"

"Nay, nay, nay!" Osaki screamed, his mouth working horribly. "Give me the girl! Thou serpent's brat! Thou unknown, nameless dog! Give me the girl!" Rennoske laughed in the seal-hunter's face.

"Take her, then, white-livered fisherman!" he scoffed. "Take her, and that will stop thy quaking. So—carefully, for she hath swooned."

Rennoske stood dripping upon the bank.

"What thinkest thou of the boys nowadays?" he muttered. "Were they so when thou wert one?"

"I shall tell the deed at my wedding, boy. 'Wilt thou be there?'"

There was a changed Osaki that led the way through the rest of the forest. They reached a white sandy road through a salt marsh in another half-hour's walk.

Rennoske came behind the sailor and the now chatting and laughing girl, swinging along with all the swagger of a wandering swashbuckler.

As the salt air tinged his nostrils he wished for more rushing torrents to ford, more maidens to rescue. Out of pure excess of youthful spirits he ran ahead, gave a cry as he leaped high in the air, turned, and landed on his palms, and sprang back again with the agility of a cat.

"Where learned you that cry?" asked Osaki, puzzled.

"'Twas the first that came to my lips," answered the boy. "Hast thou heard it before? Tell me where, Osaki?"

But Osaki's face was like stone, while his eyes blazed upon the face of the boy. He did remember the cry—remembered it as coming from the lips of a *Samurai* upon a charging pony as he cut his way through a mob of rebellious fishermen.

Osaki's eyes blazed, for he knew his rival to be no witless boy, but a foe worthy of his steel. What he was remained a mystery. Yet he was more than the adopt-

ed son of Miyoshi the Farmer. That he knew—and dreaded.

The semicircle of the fisher's huts came into view through the grass. A little farther, and the sea stretched out before them, green, blue, and gold. At the end of a single sandspit the square sail of a junk was silhouetted against the dazzling water.

"See!" cried Osaki, pointing to it. "There lays my *Maya Maru*. A brave ship that fears neither the ice of the north nor the typhoons of the southern seas. Thou shouldst be a sailor, boy. They are the doers of brave deeds."

"Gladly would I be one, then," answered Rennoske. "Yet I fear my father would not have me go. The man who brought me bid him keep me until 'they' should come for me."

"And who are 'they'?" queried Osaki, frowning.

"So—that I know not," answered Rennoske. "See the strange birds!"

The boy's eye had been caught by four cormorant fishers who were taking the ungainly birds out of their baskets. One by one the fowls, each with a ring about its neck, to which a string was attached, were caught by the men, and their long bills opened and their gullets emptied of fish.

Then, as each bird was set down, it shook itself and squawked, hopping back to its own particular basket like an old, lame hermit going to his cave.

Rennoske would have questioned; but a group of half-naked boys upon the beach again attracted his attention as they played at battledore and shuttlecock. It was with reluctance that he moved on after Osaki and the girl, his feet sinking deep into the sand.

Coming near the ship, he saw the sailors in their short pinafores of black with Osaki's name on each man's back in white characters. These bustled about with teak-boxes, carrying them down a rickety gangplank. As Osaki came up to them, they prostrated themselves in the white sand.

"How goes the cargo, *Iwashi*?" he called to a sturdy fellow with a white kerchief about his forehead.

"All is ashore but the presents for the mountain, O captain," answered the man.

"Bring them to the lad here," snapped the seal-hunter, motioning to Rennoske. "Then sport yourselves, for there will be work enough for all ere midnight."

He turned to Kiku, and said suavely:

"Wouldst thou see my ship, O maiden? The decks have never been trod by woman's feet. Perhaps luck will follow thy dainty tread."

"If I can bring it, Osaki," answered the girl. "I go gladly."

Osaki arched his eyebrows significantly at Rennoske, then, touching Kiku's fingertips, he led her up the gangplank.

Rennoske stood on the sand, arms akimbo, legs spread far apart, looking out on the broad expanse of sea, dotted with the square sails of three or four junks and smaller moving specks of black that were the fishing-boats. He was awakened from a reverie by the soft voice of Iwashi.

"The captain bid me give you this box," said the sailor, laying the bamboo and teak thing at his feet.

Rennoske nodded pleasantly, while the sailor stepped back a pace or two and stood eying him.

"How are thou called?" asked the man at length.

"Little Warrior, son of the Farmer of the Three Wells."

The sailor sneered at the word "farmer." Without another word he stripped off his *hara-gake* and *shirushi-hiki*, and stood in his loin-cloth, a muscular figure.

"I would cool myself in the water, Little Warrior!" he called banteringly. "Yet methinks that thou, a farmer's son, canst not swim."

"That I know not," answered Rennoske, removing his own kimono and shirt. "Yet will I try with thee."

The man looked puzzled.

"Be careful," he said. "The water is many fathoms deep. Those who know not whether they can swim or not had best keep out of it."

With a splash he dived into the water. A second after him came Rennoske. Down under the green water he went. It roared in his ears, confusing him.

Then, coming to the surface, he struck out, face downward, arms churning over his head. His brain was awl as he shot ahead. He could swim, and well, for, glancing over his shoulder, he saw that he was drawing away from Iwashi. Where had he learned this?

They kept up their splashing until their feet touched bottom near the shore. Iwashi looked at the boy through water-beaded eyelashes.

"I gave not full rein to my strength,"

he said, puffing. "Let us race back to the ship."

"Agreed," cried Rennoske in boyish enthusiasm and kicked himself free.

Iwashi had indeed checked his strength. Rennoske heard his puffing and splashing ever beside him. Soon there were shouts on the sand.

The sailors had seen the race and cried encouragingly to their fellow. But if Iwashi had not given full rein to his strength, neither did Rennoske.

Taking a deep breath about a hundred feet from the shore, the boy sank his head deep into the brine, and thrashing his legs from the knee down, his arms plunged through the water with a swift downward sweep. He rose dripping on the sand and turned to find Iwashi yet in the sea, ten feet from the shore.

There were shouts of derision as the sailor emerged from the water.

"Thy match is met, Iwashi," they cried. "There is one in all Japan who can defeat thee. Gods, what a stroke! Where learned he it?"

Something within the soul of Rennoske was wildly clamoring. He ran up and down the beach, his spirits seeming winged. something in the pile of teak boxes near the ship caught his eye.

Three long bamboo poles lay on the beach. He picked one up. Why, he asked himself, did he grasp it at one end with both hands? Then the feeling he had at dawn came back to him. Surely this was the length of a sword and one swung it above one's head—thus? He cut viciously at the head of an imaginary foe.

Came Iwashi and the other five of the crew of the *Maya Maru* to watch the lad who had defeated their champion at swimming. What now were these wonderful actions? What did the magical boy do with this long bamboo pole?

"Come, Iwashi," cried the boy. "Pick up a pole and joust with me. Come, lest I crack thee over the bald pate."

Now Iwashi, mate of the *Maya Maru*, was in no good humor, and even though he had never had a sword in his hand, he had seen many used.

"Impudent raiser of rice!" he yelled, seizing a pole. "I'll teach thee to make sport of Iwashi!"

With another yell he rushed at Rennoske, making a swinging cut at his head. But, alas, for hands that had never held a sword

against hands that had been trained by an old soldier of Shikoku though they knew it not.

The boy's pole parried and with a resounding thwack, came down on Iwashi's shaven head, following with a poke in the ribs that sent the sailor sprawling.

Long and loud laughed the crew of the Maya Maru. Frantic were the struggles of Iwashi as he rose to his feet. Completely losing his head, he picked up the pole again and rushed madly at the boy, whirling the stick over his head.

This time Rennoske's pole cracked him soundly across the shins. Iwashi, mate of the Maya Maru, dropped his pole, howling. He had had enough.

"Try it. Then will you all find how easy it is," he whimpered to the laughing crew.

"He is but a boy, Iwashi," said one of them. "For shame to be beaten by a boy. Ho, ho!"

"So. A boy with a wrist of steel," Iwashi answered. "Try it, thou; then will I laugh myself."

The sailor tried indeed, and Iwashi laughed indeed, for the boy's opponent hopped ridiculously about on the sand, one hand rubbing his head, while he strove to rub his shins with the other.

Next two were tried at once. Try as they might, their poles could not come within a foot of Rennoske's head, while their own were cracked unmercifully.

"Gods of the Sea, what scurvy knaves have I for a crew!" boomed Osaki's voice from the gangplank. "A boy of eighteen to crack your heads and you cannot touch him two to one—*faugh!*"

Rennoske, with the joy of victory thumping in his breast and rushing to his temples, called back:

"Try it, thou hunter of the seal. Or dost thou fear? I will muss thy headdress?"

Osaki smiled his insolent smile, and walking down the gangplank, took one of the sticks from the ground. With a firm grasp he held it aloft with both hands.

"Come, braggart," he said through clenched teeth. "Come, speaker of bold words, my cue will not be touched a hair. Come!"

The laughter of the crew changed to silent interest as the sticks sounded hollow in the cut and parry.

Round in a circle went the man in his flowing robes of blue and the lithe-muscled

boy. The shadow of the great square sail of the ship moved an inch on the sand, yet neither had struck a blow.

They ducked, thrust, parried, eyes gleaming, breaths coming fast through parted lips.

Suddenly Rennoske brought his stick down with a resounding whack on Osaki's knuckles. With a howl the sailor dropped his pole of bamboo. Yet before the boy could lift his weapon, Osaki caught his up-lifted arm by the wrist in a firm grasp.

"Thou art disarmed," whispered the boy.

"And thou art helpless," answered Osaki, his face close.

"Even so, but had I the second sword, I would pierce thy entrails, hunter of the seal!"

A sudden change came over Osaki's face, a look of a dog that has snapped at his master. His hand relaxed, his voice came in an awed whisper:

"I know not who you are—but what you are, I know full well!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SIGHT OF AN UGLY FACE.

THE crew of the Maya Maru stopped their sport and were clambering up over the ship's sides, busy with rope, anchor, and rudder, for the order had been given to cast off.

Rennoske stood by the water's edge, again in his short kimono, the rising tide eddying and swirling about his bare feet. He stood spread-legged, lip between thumb and forefinger, pondering upon the seal-hunter's words.

Why had he so much and yet so little? Why the change from the familiar "thou" to the respectful "you"?

Osaki was his elder, his superior. What wonderful revelation was behind that—"what you are"?

Then the sword crowded this out with a sudden rush of thought. Where had he learned the use of it; for he could use it, and well? How did he know there should have been two of them? What did that imply? Try as he might, it meant nothing except baffling ponderings.

He could ford rushing torrents, rescue maidens, swim like a fish, faster than another known for his speed in the water. He could use a bamboo pole so well that

two to one could not harm him. Truly, as he mirrored himself in his own thoughts, by the light of his own deeds, he was a wonderful person.

His thoughts were interrupted by the loud voice of the master of the ship. The gentleman in question was evidently in a state of great excitement. Rennoske was surprised to see the gangplank being put down again and the great sail, that had been raised, creaking and squealing down again on her rings.

"And hast thou not seen her, dogs?" Osaki roared. "She stood beside me as I looked down upon thy sport. Drop again the anchor, clowns that ye are. Gods of the Sea, look not so stupidly upon me—search for her!"

Then it suddenly occurred to the boy on the beach that his conceit had made him forget Kiku.

Where was the girl? He had not seen her since she went with Osaki aboard the ship.

His recollection of the seal-hunter's deeds of the morning gave him quite a qualm. Could it be that Osaki took this means of abducting the girl before his very eyes, thus putting an end forever to the rivalry?

He asked himself no further; but running to the ship's stern, he caught hold of a line and hauled himself, hand over hand, to the deck.

"Foul play, boy!" cried Osaki to him, as he clambered over the rail. "A pretty deed is this. The girl is gone!"

"Then it is thou who hast done the foul play, Osaki," Rennoske answered angrily. "Thou hast many tricks in thy bag, sailor. Why dost stand there gibbering, shamming a loss thou knowest thou hast not?"

"What mean you?" Osaki thundered, straightening his broad shoulders and glowering down at Rennoske.

"Ruffle not thy neck, gamecock," the boy replied, giving back deadly look for deadly look. "Thou hast hidden the girl in the ship and seek to fool me with cries and lamentations. Where is the maid? Tell me, lest I strangle the truth from thy lips."

"Call me trickster upon the decks of mine own ship, puppy?" Osaki raved. "Threaten no threats that cannot be carried out. It is more of your doing to tell the girl to meet you in some secret place you both have appointed for her shame and mine.

"Yet shall I follow you. Drop the anchor there. Haul down the sail! The

girl is mine by oath—mine shall she be. Maid-thieving outcast, where is Kiku San?"

Words and the effect of words went to the winds. With a snarl and a leap, seal-hunter and farmer's son were at each other's throats. There was murder in their hearts.

"Who calls the name of Kiku San?"

Rennoske and Osaki, at the sound of the gentle voice, let go their hold and, panting, wheeled quickly. Standing demurely before them was Kiku.

"Where wert thou, maiden?" asked Osaki, the first to find his voice.

"In the depths of thy good ship, my lord and master that is to be," she replied, a quaver in her voice.

"And wherefore?" snapped Rennoske suspiciously. "Art thou so shameless as to stay on board unbidden?"

"The puppy presumed," Osaki sneered. "I deal with the girl, boy."

"Fret me no more," the lad answered, his color rising again. "Enough have I stood of thy—"

"Nay, brother," Kiku broke in upon him. "I did but pray to Idzumo for a safe voyage and a quick return for my betrothed."

Neither traced the lie in her voice.

"See, boy," said he. "This is what comes of boasting in the ways of women. How think now you of your 'She would have no man but me!' Ho, ho!"

Rennoske turned to hide his blush of shame and walked toward the gangplank.

"A thousand bows of my head in parting," he heard Osaki say. "A thousand thoughts shall be of thee till my eyes are blessed by a sight of thee again, O Kiku San."

"A thousand winds blow you through pleasant seas," answered the girl. "A thousand years shall it seem till you return again to me, Osaki."

Rennoske felt her sleeve brush his arm and knew she waited for him to lead the way.

For a parting shot he turned and glowered at the seal-hunter, who answered the challenge with a white-toothed leer. Then he walked down the gangplank, Kiku's feet pattering after him.

On the full tide, the vessel soon drifted out on the sparkling water, slowly the great square sail rose and spread against the sun. Then, as it caught the wind, the junk turned awkwardly, showing her high,

galleonlike stern. Soon she dwindled into a speck of black on the golden sea.

The boy stood watching her, his brain full of pictures, painted in brilliant hues by his imagination, of storms, typhoons, distant lands and wild beasts to conquer.

A sound from Kiku made him turn toward her. She was chuckling and laughing to herself, her tiny, straw-sandaled feet beating a tattoo on the shining sand as if she danced with glee.

"Kiku, Kiku!" the boy called. "Thou art glad Osaki has left? Glad that thou canst be with me?"

Her laughter stopped short. She turned a pale, frightened face to him.

"Nay, nay," she faltered. "I am not glad—Inari bear me witness, I am not glad."

And she fell to sobbing.

"Then thou grieveest for Osaki," he went on, his own tone of anxiety changing at her negative reply to a question he had expected another and better answer. "Ships go and come. He will return—if that is what thou grieveest for."

"Nay, nay, nay!" she answered laughing now. "He will never return. It is thus that I prayed!"

And she wept again.

Fording streams was play, swimming races with sailors nothing to brag of, fencing with bamboo poles a joke compared with this! He shouldered the box and turned his face to the mountains, wondering again upon the strange ways of women.

The boys had gone from their game as they passed the beach. The cormorants slept, as did their masters, tired from their night of toil. All was silent in the hot afternoon sun that beat down yellow on sand, marsh, thatch, and bamboo.

Rennoske trudged ahead while Kiku toddled behind, both as silent as the sleepy land and sea.

Again they trot the white, sandy road through the cat-tails of the salt marsh.

Rennoske's head was bent by the load, his eyes on the ground. Suddenly the pitter-patter of feet ahead of him made him look up.

Down the road came a cloud of dust.

Out of it soon appeared six coolies, naked but for their loin-cloths and white band about the forehead, running at top speed. Between the first and the last three, for they ran abreast, swayed a rickety palanquin.

The boy stopped to look at the vehicle as it pattered by.

A man sat in it leaning far out, or rather half a man, for the creature was but three feet high. The face had all the animalism of an ape's, the lower lip protruded as he squealed and grunted to the coolies to go faster.

But a single glance had Rennoske of the deformed creature. That, it seemed, was enough. He dropped the box, screamed in terror and ran down the road as though a tiger were after him.

The dwarf, too, turned, saw him, then frantically waved his long hairy arms and screamed for the men to stop. They, thinking it but a command to go faster, puffed and panted and ran on.

Rennoske head erect, mouth open, hands clenched, ran along the road sending the dust flying behind him. He darted into the woods, stumbled and slipped through the bog-land.

At length, winded and worn out, he fell in a heap by the swollen stream he had crossed that morning.

There, dragging the box after her, a half hour later, Kiku found him.

"Little Warrior," she called, stooping over and touching him on the shoulder, "why did you fly from me? There was naught in the litter but an ugly dwarf. Little Warrior—come—he follows not."

He opened his eyes and looked at her.

There it was—the blank, stupid stare.

The sickness had claimed him again.

There was no light of recognition in his eyes. It was here, but a few hours ago; he had forded the rushing stream—yes, here he had caught her in his strong arms as she fell. Swooned? Not she! She had heard every word of his glorious challenge to Osaki above the water that bubbled so close to her.

Why should Osaki know? Go with him in the stream? Aye, if it led to the seventh hell! Here he was, this man who had snatched her from death and unselfishly handed her back to his rival. Here was the man for her—here was a chance to help him as he had her.

Gently she bade him rise, he obeyed her. Gently she led him over the span and came back again for the box. Gently she led him home again.

When they reached their dwelling, Miyoshi sat upon the doorstep, his head bowed in his hands.

"Here are the presents, O my father," said the girl, quickly putting down the box beside him.

"Aye, and we will need them, girl," the farmer answered. "The soldiers of the Matsuyama have been here. All my rice from last year's harvest have they taken—all—all."

"Thy mother—gods what brutal hounds!—she sought to hide from them the yen she had saved and one, discovering them,

struck her upon the mouth with his mailed fist.

"To Takenaka they went. Inari will help the village when those black dogs have finished with it! What thinkest thou of that, my son?"

But a stupid stare was the only answer of Rennoske.

Miyoshi the Farmer was not the only one who suffered at the hands of the House of the Mountains of Pines.

(To be continued.)



By William Patterson White

YE'LL mind the "Engine-Room." 'Tis near the Victoria docks, and it's no common pub. Ye'll find engineers there mostly. Now and then a captain or a mate comes in, but 'tis more popular with the engine-room crowd.

I was in there at a table drinking my beer, when a big red-headed josser came in. He went up to the bar and ordered a drink. He talked to the barmaid a bit, but I paid small attention. I'd my own troubles, being out of a berth just then.

"That's him," I heard the barmaid say, and the big lad walked over to me.

"Are you Mr. Allis?" asked the big lad.

"Right, mister. That's my name."

"Glad to meet you," said the big lad, and he shoved out his hand. "My name's Delaney—Michael Delaney. I was hoping I'd find you here."

"Were you, now? Best sit down and tell me why."

He sat, and the barmaid brought us two pints of three X.

"Are you looking for a berth?" he asked next.

"Man dear!" I said. "You're a philanthropist. I am. And who told you of me?"

"Captain Magruder of the Stellaland."

"I was chief in her a year ago, but she's not in port now."

"I know, I know. I met Captain Magruder at Bahia last May, and he told me of you. I just jotted your name down, thinking you might be useful to me later on. Now's the time, and it's lucky I found you."

"You were speaking of a berth."

I wasn't wishful for him to get off the subject.

"Right-o. I've chartered a steamer for a voyage to Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports, and I want one officer aboard who

can speak Arabic. Magruder said you spoke it.

"I can sling it a bit myself, so between the two of us we can do quite a business. Oh, I was forgetting—you will be chief, and the wages are twenty-five pounds a month."

"Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports, and wages twenty-five pounds a month. That'll mean gun-running."

"I didn't say so. Will you take the berth?"

"I will that."

And I winked at him. 'Twas a bit of gun-running all right enough.

We went aboard the steamer that afternoon. She was a twelve-hundred-ton tramp and her name was the Scanderoon.

Her plates were red with rust—she'd not been painted for years. But there was naught the matter with her engines, and they drove her along at a good ten knots, the second mate told me. Oh, aye, I know that's not racing, but it's not bad for a small tramp.

Next morning the Scanderoon cleared for Port Said. It did my heart good to be in an engine-room again and sniff the smell of oil and grip a handful of waste. You're welcome to white wings and mains'l haul and all that, but give me machinery.

By the time the Scanderoon was half across the bay, Delaney and I were friendly as could be. He'd talk for hours about the Persian Gulf and what chance there'd be for selling arms there. Once he was aboard ship he was very open about it, and said flat out he'd a cargo of arms to sell. He'd an idea the Emir of Abu Dom was in the market for some good Remingtons.

"We're not English when we go ashore," said Delaney. "We'll just be Americans, and the Scanderoon will fly the American flag."

"Ye forget the gunboats, mister. The Gloriana, Clytie, and Pandora are on station in the Persian Gulf, and one sight of the U. S. flag will be enough for 'em to hoist the 'heave-to.'"

"We'll dodge 'em," said Delaney. "It's a shame if an Arab can't buy a gun or two without having the British fleet sticking their noses in."

"The rifles now—will they be used against the British?"

Ye'll mind I'm half Scotch, and I will not be miscalled for an Englishman, but still I couldn't help England's enemies.

"Not at all," said Delaney. "The tribes aren't at war with England. They only fight among themselves. Never fear, those rifles will only kill Arabs—or Germans."

"Germans!" I was surprised.

"Germans. The Kaiser wants a look-in on the Persian Gulf. He has established one protectorate already, and he has an eye on Abu Dom. But the Emir of Abu Dom will fight if the Kaiser tries any such game on him. To fight, the emir will need arms. Do you understand now?"

I understood all right. Delaney had a brain. There's naught like taking advantage of an opportunity. I hoped we'd dodge the gunboats, for England allows no gun-running in the Persian Gulf.

The Scanderoon coaled at Port Said, and took on stores and water at Aden. Off Kuria Muria we passed the British cruiser Doris steaming sou'west.

"If she only knew," said Delaney, as we watched her drop astern.

"She'd follow us to Abu Dom quick enough," I said.

Two days later the Strait of Ormuz was astern, and the Scanderoon headed across the gulf for Cape Rekkan. We raised Seri Island, and there was a wisp of smoke behind it. I misdoubted 'twas a gunboat.

I knew she could do naught till we tried to land the rifles, but she could follow us easy enough, and the American flag would raise suspicion at once. I'd told Delaney just that more than once, but he would not change it.

Sure enough, when the Scanderoon rounded Seri Island, there were two gunboats, the Gloriana and Clytie at anchor. I watched for 'em to up-anchor at once, but they never budged, and in two hours we'd run Seri under.

The Scanderoon raised no more gunboats, and at sunrise, two days later, cast anchor between Anda Island and the shore off the port town of Abu Dom Seria. Abu Dom itself lay inland some twenty miles, and cargoes had to go through Abu Dom Seria first.

The skipper lowered a life-boat, and Delaney and I went ashore. Delaney hired two horses from an Arab, and we took the road for Abu Dom.

I'm no rider, but I can stick on a horse if the saddle's deep. Ye'll mind Arab saddles. Ye can't fall unless ye jump.

Five miles out of Abu Dom Seria the hills began. The road ran in and out

among 'em. The farther we went the higher and steeper they got.

Of a sudden we ran bung on top of a fort. 'Twas in the middle of a narrow valley, and the road ran through it. To starboard and port were two more forts—each of 'em on top of a hill.

Sentries stopped us at the fort gate. They would not let us through. Delaney talked up to 'em, but 'twas no go. Those sentries were as thick as Souwegian deck-hands, and that's saying quite a bit.

At last Delaney—he'd been feeling about inside his coat—pulled out a big envelope. He opened it and took out a bunch of papers. He shook these out and held 'em in front of the soldiers' eyes.

I'd an idea the papers were passports, though they'd overmuch red and green curlycues for them. Delaney tapped the papers with his long forefinger and nodded and grinned. The soldiers looked at the red and green curlycues and felt 'em with their dirty thumbs. Delaney grinned again, folded up the papers and put them away.

"Come along," he said to me, and he started his horse. The soldiers fell back and let us through with no more trouble. Those papers were a charm, all right enough, and I was curious to know just what they were. I'd small time to find out then, for Delaney was galloping ahead.

I was a hundred yards astern of Delaney when he rounded a point of rock and disappeared. I rounded the same point, and there were the walls of Abu Dom a mile away.

The town was built in a valley and on two hillsides. A strong place it was, too. 'Twould take a sizable army to capture it, and no merry jest.

The guards at the gate stopped us, of course, but we'd no trouble to get through. We'd passed the outer guards, and these lads seemed to think we were all right. One of 'em went with us to the palace and turned us over to another sentry.

We waited outside the gate, and after a bit a slave came out and said his master would see us. The slave led the way through the palace and into a garden at the back.

A tall old Moor, with a square, white beard was sitting on a rug close to a fountain. He was Ben Rasim, the Emir of Abu Dom.

"Peace be unto thee," said the tall old Moor.

"And to thee, peace," said Delaney and I.

The old boy ordered food for us and bade us sit. We passed compliments a bit, and then Delaney got down to business.

"I need rifles," said the emir when Delaney had done. "There is a tribe in the mountains—" and he smiled slow. "Where are the rifles?"

"In a ship off Abu Dom Seria."

"Have the rifles brought ashore. I will send a caravan."

"At a price," said Delaney. "The rifles will cost eight pounds English apiece."

"That is too much. I will give five."

The two argued and talked for an hour, and at last Delaney agreed to hand the rifles over for six pounds apiece. Three thousand there were in all, and a hundred thousand rounds of cartridges. For the cartridges the emir agreed to pay six pounds a thousand.

But when it came to the time of payment and delivery, they both balked. The emir held out for F. O. B. Abu Dom. Delaney was just strong for F. O. B. Abu Dom Seria, and the emir must be there himself to take over the arms and pay the money. The emir refused to do that.

"I will market the arms elsewhere," said Delaney.

Ben Rasim looked at the ground sullen.

"I do not trust the English," he said.

"We are not English. We are Americans."

Ben Rasim grunted.

"I can hold thee prisoner—thou and this other," said Ben Rasim after a bit. "I can then order my soldiers to go out in boats and capture thy vessel. What can the English do? No army can capture Abu Dom."

"True," said Delaney, "but I ordered the vessel, once we were ashore, to anchor outside the Island of Anda, and, if more than one boat puts out from shore, to go to sea at once. Of what avail to hold us prisoners. Thou wilt not obtain the rifles."

The emir looked sour enough at that. Then he laughed.

"Thou art a man of wisdom," he said. "Have the arms landed, and I will buy them."

"And thou wilt pay me here? No, thou must bring the money thyself to the coast."

The emir shook his head, stubborn.

"Come," he said, "let us eat and smoke. Here is sherbet and hashish."

We ate, but we stuck to tobacco and let the emir smoke all the hashish he liked. He invited us to visit him a while, so, as he said flat out, we'd come round to his way of thinking.

"What were the papers ye showed to the soldiers of the guard?" I asked Delaney just before we turned in that night. I'd no chance to ask him before.

"The papers?" And Delaney grinned at me. "Look here."

He fetched them out and spread 'em in front of me. I looked 'em over and laughed.

They were certificates for five thousand shares in the Snowshoe Mine at Thunder Mountain, Idaho. Very handsome they looked, too, with their red and green curly-cues, and they'd more engraving than a Bank of England note.

"I bought them two years ago," said Delaney. "The mine has never declared dividends, and the shares are worthless. I always carry them with me, however. Impressive looking, aren't they?"

"They are that. You've a brain, mister," I said.

"Not at all. The Arabian intellect is a trifle low. The emir thinks he's a shifty boy, but I'll get him yet. I'll be his best friend in two days. Wait till I discover what his hobbies are. He'll come to the coast, all right."

I'd my own doubts. That emir looked like a fair, determined lad. But so did Delaney. Well, well, the longer it lasted the better I'd be pleased. Ye'll mind I was drawing my twenty-five a month.

Next day Delaney started in again on the emir. No mention was made of the rifles. No, no, nothing like that. Delaney just made himself very pleasant and amusing, and Ben Rasim got into no end of a good humor.

Delaney told him funny stories. British stories, ye'll mind, aye, and American, too, with an Arab twist to 'em, and all in Arabic. I laughed at 'em myself.

By noon Delaney had found out that the two things Ben Rasim admired most were fancy shooting and good riding.

"I will show thee what can be done with a pistol," said Delaney.

We were in the garden at the time.

He pulled a shilling-piece from his pocket and tossed it high in the air. Then he reached quick under his coat, dragged out a big revolver, and pulled trigger. I'd my eyes on that shilling. 'Twas coming

down when he fired, and I saw it jump upward again and whirl off to one side. A slave ran and picked it up and handed it to the emir.

"Straight shooting," said the emir, when he'd looked the shilling over. "It is bent on the edge by the bullet. Again."

He tossed the shilling to Delaney, and he flung it up in the air.

Bang! went the big gun, and again the shilling spun like a top and dropped to one side. Ten times more Delaney threw the shilling up, and each time he hit.

'Twas a battered piece of money after the twelfth shot. Ye could never have passed it anywhere.

"Straight shooting," said the emir. "Canst thou ride a horse?"

"I can ride the worst horse that was ever foaled."

"Sayest thou so. I will make a bargain with thee. I have a stallion that is a son of Shaitan. No man can ride him. If thou wilt ride him, I will—yes, I will even leave Abu Dom and go with thee to the coast and buy thy rifles."

Delaney's face never changed.

"Bring out the stallion," he said.

Ben Rasim sent slaves for the stallion, and we all went down through the garden, through a gate, and into an open field. Soon the stallion was led in.

He stood on his hind legs mostly, with two slaves hanging to his bridle. The color of him was black, and his eyes rolled about till ye could see the whites. His ears were laid flat back, too.

I know little of horses, but my grandfather, Old Sandy Kennedy, who was a blacksmith, always said that rolling eyes and ears laid flat were signs of a bad temper. And from the way the stallion kicked, Old Sandy was right. So was the emir. The stallion was a child of Shaitan, and no merry jest.

A slave followed astern of the stallion with a saddle. They'd quite a job getting the saddle on. It took six slaves to do it.

When the stallion was ready Delaney stepped up to him and tested the girth. 'Twas tight enough, so he lengthened the stirrup-leathers. Ye'll mind the Arabs ride like jockeys, with their knees half-way to their chins.

Delaney got a tight grip on the reins, stuck one foot into the stirrup, and mounted. The two slaves at the stallion's head let go, and the stallion went crazy.

He stood on his hind legs and did a bit of a dance. Then he tried the same thing bow on, squealing and snapping his teeth like a mad dog.

Michael Delaney could ride, though, and he stuck to the stallion like he was lashed. When the stallion saw that he couldn't get him overboard by kicking and rearing, he threw himself over backward.

I expected to see Delaney crushed, but he rolled out of the saddle easy as you please and let the stallion tumble. When he scrambled up he jumped aboard once more. Man dear, he was a rider!

Five times the stallion tried falling over backward, and every time Delaney was out of the saddle when he landed and in it again when he got up. Then the stallion ran away.

Delaney hauled his head clean round to his midship section and turned him. Of a sudden the stallion jumped straight up into the air and came down hard. Then he kicked, jumped, squealed, and bit steady for a full six minutes. He did his best, did that stallion, but he couldn't throw Delaney. He stayed right there in the saddle.

The emir enjoyed the exhibition no end. For an Arab, he was quite the sporting man. At last the stallion understood Delaney was there to stay. He stopped jumping about and stood still, head hanging and the sweat dripping off him.

Delaney dismounted, went in front of him, and commenced rubbing his hands over the brute's eyes. The stallion never budged.

When Delaney stepped away from the stallion a slave took him by the bit and led him back to the stable easy as winking. The spirit was clean knocked out of him, and a kiddy could have managed him as easy as a grown man.

"I have never before seen such riding," said the emir. "Truly, thou art a man."

Delaney laughed.

"Thou didst make a promise," said he.

"I will keep it. And I never thought to leave Abu Dom during my life. But thou art not English, and thou art a man. I fear no evil from thee."

Delaney coughed, and told the emir not to forget to bring along the money to pay for the rifles.

Ben Rasim nodded.

"We will go to-morrow," he said.

Next morning Ben Rasim, Delaney, and I slanted away for the coast. The emir took

along a hundred soldiers and a pack-train of camels and mules for the cargo.

We reached Abu Dom Seria in the middle of the afternoon, and the emir wanted the cargo brought off at once. But Delaney said it was too late, and he'd have to wait till morning.

Delaney and I went off in a shore-boat to the Scanderoon, anchored outside Anda Island, and Delaney had a talk with the skipper. Then we went away ashore again.

As we rounded the island I looked astern, and I saw the smoke pouring thick and black from the Scanderoon's funnel. I thought that was odd. I was chief, but I'd heard no word for making steam. I told Delaney just that.

"'Tis all right," said Delaney. "My orders. The Scanderoon won't steam for two days."

He was the owner, ye'll mind, so I said naught. But it struck me as amazing odd. What's the sense in wasting coal?

We slept in Abu Dom Seria that night in the house of the kaid. Only the kaid knew that the emir was in town, and I heard Ben Rasim bidding him keep quiet about it.

When I woke up in the morning I looked seaward and rubbed my eyes. It didn't seem possible. Ranged in line between Anda Island and the mainland were the Doris, Gloriana, Clytie, Pandora, and Scanderoon.

I grabbed Delaney by the shoulder.

"Wake up!" I bawled in his ear. "We're caught!"

Delaney yawned, grinned, and laughed in my face.

"You've seen the fleet?" he asked.

"I have, and the Scanderoon's captured."

Man dear, he was taking it easy!

"'Tis all right," said Delaney. "Let's go down and see the emir."

We went below, and Delaney rapped on the emir's door. Ben Rasim was asleep, but he woke up quick and bade us enter.

"Look through the window," said Delaney.

The emir looked, then he turned like a rat and stared straight into the muzzle of Delaney's gun.

"Drop the knife," said Delaney. "Thou hast seen what I can do with a pistol."

Ben Rasim sat down on a rug and rested his elbows on his knees.

"Thou hast betrayed me," he said.

"Even as thou didst seek to betray me," said Delaney. "Thy intention was as plain

as a page of *Al Koran*. Thou wouldst never have paid me for the rifles. By thy own greed art thou undone."

"Where are my men?" asked the emir.

"In their camp, and between them and Abu Dom are five hundred of the English. Ben Rasim, thou art beaten."

"That which is to be, will be. Of what use to fight? Thou are not an American."

"English," said Delaney.

"What dost thou want?" asked the emir.

"We will make thy country a protectorate, and station a garrison at Abu Dom. Come, we will go aboard the war-ship."

The emir got to his feet slowly and went below with us. Only a few Arabs were in the street. As we walked toward the beach one of the emir's soldiers ran up panting and said he had seen a British sentry on a hill behind the town.

"I know," said Ben Rasim. "Return thou to the others. Bid them remain quietly where they are. There must be no fighting."

Delaney and Ben Rasim went off to the *Doris* in one of the cruiser's boats, and I went back to the *Scanderoon*. I understood but little of what had happened, and I was curious, I can tell you.

Delaney came aboard that night, and he told me the whole thing first off.

"Don't mind telling you now," said Delaney. "You see, Abu Dom lies in the only valley through which a railroad can be run to the coast. Germany knows it, and England knows it. Now you can't establish a protectorate without causing ill-feeling among the other nations—unless you do it quietly."

"England wanted Abu Dom. She knew that to take the town by force would require an army and a long campaign. You saw how strong the place was. The long campaign had to be avoided."

"Germany would have raised all sorts of questions, and the friendly relations between our two countries would have been seriously strained."

"So the government sent me here with the arms story and orders to get the emir to the coast where he could be captured quietly. Once the emir was in our hands the rest would be easy."

"You know how well I succeeded. It was very simple. I just had to find out his hobbies and play up. Funny that, how he was taken in. There wasn't a rifle or cartridge aboard. Not that he'd have paid me if there had been. He'd have seized the whole cargo and made off with it. Oh, I know these Arabian emirs."

"But the fleet? Ye'll mind we passed the *Doris* off Kuria Muria."

"Oh, the *Doris* followed us later. She knew who we were soon as she saw the American flag. So did the gunboats. The cruiser and the gunboats lay off beyond the horizon and waited till they saw the smoke signal from the *Scanderoon*."

"When night came on the four vessels steamed to within three miles of town. Then they landed a force of marines and sailors, who marched inland and spread out behind the town, so there would be no escape."

"The emir is aboard the *Doris* now. He has agreed to everything, even to the garrison, and work will commence on the railroad as soon as vessels and navvies can get here."

"To-morrow the emir returns to Abu Dom. Five hundred marines and sailors go with him to raise the British flag and hold the place. Won't the Kaiser squirm when he hears of it?"

"He'll do more than that."

"Much good may it do him. Possession is nine points of the law."

And so it turned out. Germany was no end shirty over it, but 'twas too late, and now England has the only coast-to-coast railway.

"Who was Michael Delaney?"

Well, now, I never found out. I asked him, but he wouldn't tell me.

From his actions, though, I set him down for some sort of a diplomat.

MILTON'S WIFE.

Anonymous.

WHEN Milton was blind, as all the world knows,
He married a wife, whom his friend called a rose;
"I am no judge of flowers, but indeed," cried the poet,
"If she be a rose, by the thorns I may know it."



REAL STUFF

By Edwin Baird.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

A YOUNG vagabond, Daniel Fitzhugh, is rescued from the clutches of his particular enemy, Detective Kelly, of the Chicago police, through the intercession of a beautiful young woman, who hands him a dollar and bids him go wash himself. Impulsively he falls in love with the girl, takes her advice, and with something like decent feeling, goes on his way to fall in with a crowd bound on an anarchistic demonstration. Here he meets another girl—Esther Strom, a Russian—who is powerfully attracted to him. Again impulsively and with his penchant for acting, he makes a powerful speech, rousing great enthusiasm. Esther presses money upon him (which he believes he gives back to her), and by her devotion angers her admirer, Nikolay. Dazed, Fitzhugh wanders away and helps an intoxicated worldling to his apartment, then overcome by the latter's condition, fights with him and finds round his neck a locket containing the portrait of his benefactress of the morning. Next day another fit of acting overpowers him. He forces his way into the residence of Symington Otis, a multimillionaire, and, claiming that a bundle under his arm (really containing old clothes) is dynamite, coerces Otis to write him a check for ten thousand dollars. In the midst of the transaction Otis's daughter enters the room, and Fitzhugh meets his benefactress for the second time.

The sight of the girl brings uppermost the best of Fitzhugh's nature. He desists from trying to get money from Otis; but the latter has him arrested. In a few days Fitzhugh is sent to the insane asylum as dangerous. To him Esther comes, succeeds in assisting him to escape, and hides him in her quarters out on Halstead Street; though the millionaire has offered a five-thousand-dollar reward for his capture and the police are on his trail.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JAUNDICED EYE.

WHEN Esther knocked at his room next morning about eight, Fitzhugh had been up an hour, having retired at two.

"Don't open your door for five minutes," she called to him, adding mysteriously: "Come to my room as soon as you're dressed; I've a surprise for you."

He listened until he could no longer hear her footsteps on the stairway, then opened his door and found, just without, a parcel. Opening it, he disclosed a complement of underwear, shirts, collars and socks.

Again he experienced a mingled feeling of tenderness for her and shame for himself for accepting, perforce, so much from a woman. In a closet at the end of the hall he had unearthed an old clothes tub. He filled it with water, carried it to his room, and stripped and enjoyed a cold bath. Then, arrayed in his new haberdashery, he went to his benefactress.

"You have three guesses," she said, holding her hands behind her and beaming radiantly.

"I'll take all three at once," he laughed. "Ham and eggs and coffee."

"Silly boy! Would that be a surprise?"

She fumbled with what she held behind

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her, shifting it to one hand, reached up, playfully tweaked his unshaven cheek and rubbed her palm against its bristly grain.

"Now, can you guess?"

He nodded, unsmiling.

"You've bought me a shaving outfit," he said soberly. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry?" She placed on the table the razor and other tonsorial articles she had been concealing. "Sorry—oh, I know; you believe a woman can't tell a good razor. Well, just you try this one and see."

He slowly stroked his rough cheek, pulling at the short, stubby hair thoughtfully.

"I meant to tell you, Esther," he said after a pause. "I'm not going to shave. I'm going to grow a beard—a Vandyke beard."

She was silent a moment. Then she laughed loudly, and he thought her laughter sounded a little hard and unnatural.

"I see. A disguise. How stupid of me not to think of that. That means, of course"—she picked up the shaving-mug and appeared to be interested in its contour—"that means you will be leaving me soon."

"Why so?" he evaded. "Anyhow it will require two months, maybe more, to grow a decent Vandyke, and I don't particularly care to leave this little nest till I'm pretty well disguised. That thousand dollar reward, you know—"

"But you will leave me eventually," she insisted, refusing to waive the first issue.

For a moment he was in a quandary. He knew not how to answer. Deep down in his heart he knew he was going to leave her, was going to shut her out of his life. He had decided that last night when perfecting his plans for the future.

"You will, won't you?" she demanded, her face reddening.

He hesitated no longer. He took the shaving-mug from her hands, replaced it on the table, and put his arms round her and kissed her three times in rapid succession.

It was decidedly the best answer he could have made, and when, upon her repeating her question, less insistently, he laughed and said, "Don't think about such things," she lighted the coal-oil stove and busied herself with breakfast preparations, and as she went about her work she hummed to herself happily.

Directly after breakfast, however, she returned to the troublesome topic.

"I don't," she began wistfully, refilling his coffee cup, "want you to have any secrets from me."

She put down the coffee-pot and supporting her elbows on the table, rested her chin on her interlaced fingers and looked at him steadily.

"Well?" He smiled encouragingly and reached for his cigarette papers. "What's on your mind now?"

"I want you to tell me what you are going to do," she continued. "I can easily see you are planning something. What is it?"

"Still harping on my daughter"—Polonius." He smiled, lighted his cigarette, and then flipped the match into the coal-box behind him. "I'm surprised and saddened. I never suspected I was so transparent."

Without heeding his facetiousness, she leaned across the square, scrupulously scoured table that separated them, and looked at him very earnestly.

"I'll tell you what I'd like." Her voice was low and serious. "I'd like you to go back to Russia with me. There's work to be done in Russia—oh, such quantities of work!—and you and I could do so much."

His expression changed. His brows lowered, his wide mouth compressed, and his eyes acquired a troubled, thoughtful look.

"What sort of work?" he asked quietly, looking down and slowly stirring his coffee.

"God's work."

"You mean work among the poor?"

"Yes. Oh, you don't know what it's like in Russia—the poverty, the misery, the millions cowed by tyranny. They are groping in the darkness. They need light. The iron heel grinds into their necks, and they know not how to squirm from under. They must be taught that all workingmen are their comrades, all the rich, all the authorities, their foes. They must be taught to strike back when they are struck—"

"See here, Esther!"

Fitzhugh's clenched fist struck the table sharply. His quiet, thoughtful demeanor had radically changed.

"I've something I want to tell you. I meant it to come later, but since you've started this thing it had better come now. The past month has marked the turning point in my life. Henceforth my entire

energy shall be expended toward but one end—material success. Money means power, and money is my goal.

"I've known all along I could reach it. I've only been deferring the starting-time. But I've been a lotus-eater long enough. The time has come to strike. And I shall strike hard! I shall have to be cold, heartless, selfish. There's no other way. The poor?—ha! What are the poor but beasts of burden to pack and carry for their masters, who are the rich and the intelligent!"

As he talked Esther had drawn farther back in her chair, as though each word he spoke was a blow in her face; withal she gazed with a sort of fascination at the hard, indomitable young face opposite her; she seemed dazed by the sudden transformation. One slim, dark hand was pressed to her bosom, which rose and fell rapidly.

"Naturally, you hadn't thought of me," she murmured, still staring at him. "I don't count, of course. You will cast me aside the moment you begin your money-mad career."

"On the contrary," he said, and there was a hidden meaning in his words, "you are the person of whom I am thinking most just now."

A glad light sprang into her eyes.

"Then you are going to take me up with you!" she cried. "With your money—you see, I'm optimistic and take it for granted you will become wealthy—how much we could do for the under-classes!"

He tossed away his cigarette, took a swallow of coffee, put down his cup abruptly. He was silent a few minutes, then looked up with a sudden movement.

"I—didn't—mean—exactly that," he said very slowly, as though carefully weighing his words. "But I'll do the square thing by you—remember that. Perhaps money can't compensate you for all you have done for me—I doubt very much if it can—but if it can, Esther, I shall repay you a hundredfold."

She sprang up, her momentary awe of him vanished. Her face was very white.

"So you are going to throw me over!" she blazed at him. "I thought so! You intend to get all you can out of me, then toss me aside like an old garment!"

"Have I ever shown any wild desire for your company?" he asked icily.

He, also, was standing. His face was white, too.

"In our brief acquaintanceship has it not

always been you who took the initiative?" he asked defiantly.

"The first time we met," she rushed on, "you were hungry. You had no money. Has it not been the same ever since? I gave you all I had, that first time—I denied myself. Shall I itemize that in my bill? But I suppose you have forgotten."

"I never took that money," he replied. "I put it—"

"Ha! Haggling already!" She laughed hysterically.

His brow darkened.

"I thought I was going to have trouble with you," he said. "Women of your sort always give a man trouble. I should have broken with you long before this. But, never mind. I'll settle in full my account with you, and we'll quit even."

A mad torrent of words rushed to her tongue, but before she could loose it something occurred that, even in her tempestuous mood, dammed its flow.

Through the window that was level with the street the sun was streaming brightly; just at the storm's crisis a bulky shadow obliterated the sunlight, and she glanced in time to recognize the huge form of Nikolay. A moment later his peremptory knocking rattled the door.

"Go to your room and lock yourself in!" she ordered Fitzhugh in a whisper, pushing him toward the hall-door. "It's Nikolay—the big Russian you met at Smulski's. He mustn't find you here. He's ready to murder you, almost. Go!"

"But I'm not afraid of him," he laughed. "Let him in, or he'll break the door down. But wait! Maybe he knows about the reward—he might sick the cops on me."

"Hurry, hurry!" she cried, almost in a panic of fear for his safety. "You can't tell what he'll do. Run all the way to your room and lock the door."

He tarried no longer; yet the excitement of the moment did not banish his diplomacy, for he pressed her hand and kissed her fervently before going. She waited a minute or two after his departure—what, while she composed herself at the breakfast-table—before answering the battering summons, which swelled louder with every second. Then:

"Come in, Nikolay!" she called, and made a pretense of eating.

He entered, glowering, and sat in the chair Fitzhugh had vacated.

"Why did you keep me waiting?" he asked sullenly.

She poured herself a cup of coffee, which she did not want, and looked serenely across the table at the forbidding face of a jealousy-inflamed eye and an unwholesome skin.

"Because," she replied evenly, "I was trying to decide whether or not I wanted to see you."

"And did you decide?"

She shrugged one shoulder and stirred her coffee.

"I had to let you in," she said indifferently. "It was self-defense, nothing more. Another minute, and you would have torn the house down."

He lifted his massive head and sniffed the air very audibly; then bared his large yellow teeth in an ugly grimace.

"I take it you care more for your friend who rolls his own cigarettes," he sneered, opening a box of fat Russian cigarettes.

She did not speak, and he went on:

"You've taken quite a fancy to this young spellbinder, haven't you?"

"If you mean the boy who left just as you came—he's my brother." Though her voice was steady enough, her fingers trembled slightly as she lifted her coffee-cup.

Nikolay threw back his head and gave vent to a loud, mirthless laugh.

"Your brother! Haw, haw! You are a skilful liar, aren't you? Your brother! Oho! What a liar!"

She caught her breath sharply and sat very erect, a crimson spot burning vividly in either white cheek.

"Be careful what you say to me!" she warned him; but the rising anger in her low voice seemed only to fan his jealousy to a fiercer flame.

"Come, come!" he jeered. "Why dodge and quibble? I know who the fellow is. He's the beardless orator who created a furor at Comrade Goldman's meeting. I saw him through the window as I came in. You see? You, Esther—you see?"

Esther thought rapidly. Clearly there was nothing to be gained by anger, or coldness, or further prevarication. No, the only thing to do was to conciliate this jealously mad giant—to soothe and wheedle him—even, if needful, to make love to him.

When she spoke—for Esther was not an indifferent actress—her voice was soft and caressing, and her eyes no less so.

"Why did you so dislike this youth,

Nikolay?" she asked him, as though really curious to know. "Has he ever done you an injury?"

He ground his teeth and shook his head at her pityingly.

"You will equivocate, won't you? As if you could hoodwink me for one instant! Don't try it, you Esther. You know well enough why I loathe this—this—"

"Randolph Fitz," she supplied quick as a wink. So he did not know Fitzhugh's real name. That was well.

"You know well enough, I say. It's because you love him. Because you're his mistress. Why else?"

He jumped up, kicked his chair out of the way, and began pacing the floor savagely. Already Esther's change of demeanor was showing its effect upon him. He was torn, struggling, and uncertain, by two desires—one to upbraid her and anger her, the other to fall at her feet in his love of her.

"What a jest, Nikolay!" She made a brave effort at gaiety. "You can't be serious. I care for him? Oh, what a jest!"

She held her head to one side and smiled at him coquettishly as he stopped and towered over her.

"Why will you torture me so?" he cried, holding out his great arms to her. "Can't you see how I love you? Don't you know I've loved you for years? And this Fitz"—he spat the word forth—"this vagabond of a Fitz! You've known him but a few days. Surely you cannot love him. Tell me that you don't. Tell me that you love only me!"

The woman hesitated but a moment. Then, breathing to herself the name of the man she loved, she arose and held up her lips to the man she despised.

Some while later Nikolay took his departure. At the street door Esther laid her hand on his arm and looked up at him beseechingly.

"And you won't tell, Nikolay?" she pleaded. "You won't give the poor boy away?"

Darkly, suspiciously, the Russian searched her face, seeking some covert design; but only compassion seemed writ there.

"The reward is big," he remarked tentatively. "It is not every day that I, Nikolay, can get so much so easily."

"Ah, yes; but you would do nothing so base, Nikolay," she said earnestly, and her voice was silky and seemed to caress him. "You have too much honor. After all, is

he not our comrade, and would you not die rather than turn traitor to the cause? You—Nikolay—an informer for a mere thousand dollars! It is laughable. You have honor, Nikolay.”

The man moved restlessly and felt behind him for the door-knob.

“Promise me you won’t tell the police, Nikolay,” she said very softly.

He put on his hat and opened the door. He was silent for several moments, watching her narrowly. Then:

“I promise!” he said firmly, and shook her hand, and turned and went out.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FRUIT OF MALICE.

SYMINGTON OTIS, in the palatial hall of his North Side home, was bidding good night to a group of smiling newspapermen, each of whom was supplied with a cigar from Otis’s imported stock.

In the midst of the merry leavetaking, Kathleen Otis came down the broad staircase; at the sweeping base, where stood a marble figure clutching a cluster of frosted incandescent bulbs, she paused a moment, watching the group near the front door, then passed into the drawing-room on her left.

There she found her mother—in war-paint and feathers, for she was going on to a fag-end dinner at which a famous Spanish painter, who was then quite the fad, was to be the guest of honor, and if there was one thing Mrs. Otis “adored” more than another it was foreign celebrities.

Mrs. Symington Otis was a stout lady of about forty-three striving to appear as a slender lady of about thirty-four. This difficult feat, though achieved with a fair degree of surface success, was accomplished not without some internal discomfort. Even now her pins and strings and hooks and things were causing her no little bodily torment—albeit from the serene expression on her smooth, round face you would never have guessed it in the world.

When her daughter entered she was standing before a tall French mirror, surveying herself critically, the while she wig-gled into her tight-fitting elbow gloves.

“Your father is incorrigible, dear,” she palpitated, fluttering round and tossing a backward glance in the mirror. “I really should not be astonished were he to employ

a press-agent and establish a publicity bureau—How do I look?”

“Lovely, mother.” Kathleen sat down upon a divan and absently turned the pages of a fashion journal lying there. “Er—what has father been doing now?”

Mrs. Otis lifted a plump, white shoulder in a fat, vivacious shrug.

“Oh, seeking notoriety—still seeking notoriety. Those dreadful reporters! They give me the shivers. They always suggest murders and divorces and graft in the City Hall—are you quite sure, dear, this gown doesn’t emphasize my *embonpoint* a wee bit? Rozet said—”

“It becomes you, mother. What did father give the newspapers this time—our family tree?”

“Not at all. He might be pardonable if he had. No, he is still harping on that curious person—Spitz—Fitz—whatever his name is—who threatened to blow the house up with a rag wrapped in a newspaper. You remember him? I believe you said he appeared such an interesting young man it seemed a shame to lock him up.”

A very faint blush came and went in the girl’s fine-grained cheeks. She put down the periodical and folded her hands in her lap.

“What has father done?” she asked quietly.

“Offered an additional reward of a thousand dollars for the man’s capture. And to what end, I’d like to know? Nothing but publicity. Vulgar publicity! A variety actor could do no more.”

Kathleen looked thoughtfully at the floor and shook her head very slowly.

“No,” she said, as though speaking to herself, “I don’t think that is it.”

Mrs. Otis darted a parting, and half-dissatisfied glance at the mirror and swept across the room toward the hall just as her husband entered. She hastily blew him a kiss and departed for the waiting carriage with all sails set.

The millionaire’s gray eyes were twinkling as he sat near his daughter and fastidiously flicked a speck of lint from his broadcloth arm.

“Amusing lot, those newspaper fellows,” he chuckled presently. “I never can understand why they want to waste their talents in such unremunerative occupation. One of them was telling me—”

“Father,” interrupted Kathleen, “why do you persist in hounding this man?”

Otis lifted his eyebrows.

"Hounding, my girl! A harsh word for one aiding the cause of justice!"

"You know as well as I that he has done nothing to merit so large a price on his head—or, indeed, any price at all. Were it not for your rewards how much time would the authorities spend looking for him? Not a minute's. I dislike to say it, but it looks very much like spite work to me."

"Just how much do you know of this fellow, please?" he asked, a bit sharply. "Why are you so interested in him? You objected when I offered the first reward, and your testimony at the trial was singular, to say the least."

"I merely took pity on him. After all, what has he done to us? Nothing. I am not vindictive, in any event."

"Don't you think, my dear," gently interposed the father, "your guest, Miss Halloway, might want to see you?"

Kathleen tossed her head, started to speak, then, thinking better of it, closed her lips tightly and left the room.

Up-stairs she found Fanny Halloway—a school chum who was spending a few days with her—almost buried in an enormous chair with a novel and a box of chocolates.

"What's bothering you, Kittykine?" asked the submerged one, putting down her book and fishing languidly for a bon-bon. "Not that little poodle, Artie Sparkle, I hope."

Kathleen leaned back in her chair and clasped her hands behind her head, and half closed her pansy eyes.

"Fanny, dear," she asked musingly, "did you ever wish you were a man?"

Fanny swallowed her sweetmeat hastily—and jumped to another conclusion.

"You have got it badly, poor dear, haven't you?"

"This is one time when I wish I were," continued the confessor, without noticing her question had been answered by another. "Not a rich man, Fanny, not an aristocrat, nor a snob—but a vagabond, a gipsy! Ah, there's the life! It's a man's world, Fanny, and I sometimes believe the gipsies have the most exciting time of all."

It was ten days since the reward for Fitzhugh's capture had been doubled, and though detectives, city, amateur and professional, as well as the police, had kept hot and unremitting search, not a trace of the

fugitive could they find. "Clues" they had by scores, but they led nowhere.

This tenth day fell on a Thursday in April—a cold, dark day of rain. Nikolay invariably called upon Esther every Friday, but on this Thursday night, happening to be in her neighborhood, he decided to take advantage of the opportunity and time by the beak, and drop in on her for a pot of tea and a word of good cheer.

Accordingly, he turned into the wet, poorly lighted street wherein she lived, thinking of happy things and walking with joyous stride, and so powerful is the necromancy of love, that even his half-bestial face seemed magically transformed and looked not entirely unhandsome by the feeble light of the gas street-lamps.

"I'll give the dear girl an unexpected pleasure," was his thought as he descended the two stone steps.

He was about to pass under the wooden staircase, and so to her door, when suddenly, just opposite the window, he stopped still and stood as though hewed from stone.

The curtain of the window was up, the room lighted, and whoever chose might stand where stood Nikolay and see plainly all that transpired within, and, since he stood in the darkness, while those in the room stood in the light, he might remain quite unobserved.

What Nikolay saw was this: In the center of the room, her back toward him, stood Esther, her arms were flung out, her head back, in the unmistakable gesture a woman uses only for the one man.

The next instant a very tall, young-looking man, whose lean face was adorned with an inch-length beard, untrimmed and coal black, stepped from some point outside Nikolay's range of vision, and took her in his arms and kissed her.

The watcher's face was pressed close to the slippery window, and the expression thereon was horrible. It seemed convulsed with a murderous hate, or a fiendish jealousy, or both.

His teeth ground together. His eyeballs blazed. His pimply skin was a purplish hue. He seemed to be on the verge of smashing in the window and springing upon his rival.

He did no such thing, however. Stepping lightly so as to make no sound, he retraced his steps to the sidewalk; then, his vision obscured by a blood-red haze, he rushed blindly down the street.

Through the incessant drizzle he saw a policeman rounding the corner, and increasing his fast walk to a run, he pounced upon the officer from the rear and caught him by the shoulder.

"You policeman, you want to make one thousand dollars, do you not?"

Seething with rage and jealousy, his voice was as a demon's.

The policeman, who was the Russian's inferior in bulk, looked at his assailant a little doubtfully.

"'Tis a shame," he muttered to himself, drawing his mackintosh about him. "Such a foine big buck!—and as dippy as a bug."

"You officer, I'm not crazy!" hissed the boiling Nikolay. "I have a thousand dollars for you—now, to-night. Step in here; I'll tell you all."

"'Asy now, 'asy. Don't git too gay, else Oi'll have to call th' little wagon for ye."

It took the excited man ten minutes to convince the suspicious one that he was sane; it took him three to explain his errand. They were to divide the two thousand-dollar reward equally between them as soon as the policeman had captured Fitzhugh and collected it.

"'Twould be best, no doubt," announced that sapient gentleman of the law, "to git um now while he's wid his ladylove. 'Tis always cl'anest and safest thus. Or at l'aste Oi've always found ut so."

"Dolt! He's probably not with her now. You've stood here wasting the valuable moments—"

"Sh-h, now! Oi see ye love the lady a bit y'self. Oi didn't know. Oi beg y' pardon."

"We'll go back and have a look, anyhow," growled the anarchist.

A look showed that Fitzhugh was no longer in Esther's room, and Nikolay counseled a wait until midnight.

"The rat will be asleep by then," said he, "and I'll lead you to its hole."

"M'anin' th' loonytic?"

"Who else? I know his habits; he retires early. He rises earlier still. I also know his room. I can find it in the dark."

"Yis, yis, ye'll have to; but how'll ye git in? 'Tis well an' good, p'r'aps, your doin' a housebreakin' stunt, but not seemly for a gardeen o' th' peace."

"I have a latch-key," was the prompt rejoinder. "I once had a room in this house. Luckily, I never returned my key. As for his door—we'll smash it in."

"Well an' good. Phist!—Oi fale loike a theayter actor—Oi'll mate ye here at midnight."

"And until then—what?"

"Oi'll walk this bate."

"I'll walk it with you."

And he did. Like two sentries, the Russian nihilist and the Irish policeman did picket duty before the house, passing each other every ten minutes in the middle of the block with a grave salute.

Meanwhile, Fitzhugh went to bed. Constant danger had given him constant caution; he not only locked his door, but moved the bed against it. Also, he slept in his clothes, removing nothing but his shoes.

He slept like a cat. A whisper would have roused him. Wherefore, when shortly past midnight the door was gently tried he was wide awake in an instant; the next instant he was tying his shoes together by the strings. These he slung round his neck and stepped noiselessly to the window.

A chisel was forcing the lock; he knew it was but a question of minutes until the door would be open and his pursuers upon him. He climbed out upon the narrow window-ledge, and, unmindful of the brick-paved alley some seventy feet below, grasped the cornice, swung himself into space, and mounted the roof, all with the ease and agility of a well-trained athlete.

Simultaneously the door crashed in, the bed was shoved aside, and Nikolay and the policeman stood in the room.

The roof was one of those long, flat ones, common in densely populous parts of Chicago, broken here and there by chimneys and the intersections of houses, and extending half a block.

The rain had ceased and the moon, just emerging from behind a bank of clouds, gilded the graveled roof a silvery hue. Swiftly, silently, with his shoes in his hand, Fitzhugh made for a fire-escape, the exact location of which he had previously ascertained.

The men in the room saw at a glance their quarry had eluded them and were not slow in surmising via the window. Venting his rage in a vivid streak of profanity, the Russian dragged his fellow man-hunter back into the hall.

"Wot's 'atin' ye?" growled that worthy.

"Where ye takin' us?"

"To the roof, you fool!" exploded Nikolay. "Where else?"

In a corner of the hall stood a ladder,

which Nikolay placed against a trap-door in the ceiling, and the men clambered up the rungs. Nikolay, first up, gained the roof just as Fitzhugh's head disappeared down the fire-escape three buildings away.

The hunters were at a disadvantage here. Fitzhugh, what of his nocturnal pilgrimages, knew every inch of the roof, and in the darkness could find his way upon it with despatch and sureness; they, knowing nothing of its pitfalls and irregularities, must needs grope about cautiously.

It was some while before they came upon the fire-escape, and in the mean time they stole about blindly, looking for their prey behind the chimney-pots; once the policeman saw something that in the tricky moonlight looked very like a man in a crouching a man was nothing but a pile of bricks left lowed triumphantly:

"Come out av ut now! Stand up, or Oi'll blow y' head off!"

Getting no response, he rushed upon the object, discharging his weapon in the air; but even as the red tongue of flame shot skyward he saw that what he had taken for a man was nothing but a pile of bricks left by the housebuilders.

All this time Fitzhugh had been hiding less than a block away in the stable of a coal and ice company. He remained here until nearly dawn, uncertain of his course. Ought he to go back? If he did, he might walk directly into the hands of the law; if he did not, Esther would be sure to think he had deliberately deserted her.

He thought of the lines, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," and deemed it safest on the whole to run the risk of returning to her, if only to explain his position and say good-by. He had already decided he must live no longer in the house. That would never do.

In the hour immediately preceding dawn, which is termed the darkest of the night, he stole forth and made his way to Esther's door. He was glad now that he had been chased from his hiding-place.

It would afford him ample excuse for breaking with her. Persistent knocking brought a sleepy response from her; but the moment she heard his voice she sprang from bed, slipped on a kimono, and threw open the door for him, wide awake with alarm.

"What's happened?" she cried excitedly. "They haven't found you?"

"Don't strike a light," he replied in a

low voice. "We must talk in the dark. I have only a few minutes."

"Then they have found you. And I took such pains!" Though the darkness forbade sight of her face, he could tell by her voice she was steeling herself against a nervous collapse.

He made her sit down, and, as briefly as possible, told her what had happened during the night. Before he finished she had gained her composure, and her voice was quite calm when she said:

"We must move at once. I was looking last week at a cottage on the North Side. We had best take it—to-day. I think I know where I can get the first month's rent."

For several moments he was quite silent, tugging at his short, stubby mustache and looking thoughtfully into the impenetrable darkness. Then, feeling his way, he moved his chair next hers, and took her in his arms.

In the low, tremulous voice which he knew so well how to use, he told her why they must see each other no more for the present. He pointed out that Nikolay would be sure to follow her and thus learn his whereabouts.

And, so skilful an actor was he, he betrayed not a sign of the eagerness and anticipation he really felt, but made her believe he was doing it all for her good and was making a sacrifice that hurt him sorely.

She did not speak for several minutes after he ended, but held him close, her head on his shoulder, her eyes moist. The day was beginning to dawn, and when she lifted her face to him she looked haggard and worn in the cold light.

"Perhaps it is for the best," she murmured, trying to conceal the catch in her voice. "But—oh, I love you so!—I love you so! In any event," she went on presently, recovering her composure, "you must not see Nikolay after this. I fear he would kill you should he meet you again."

He laughed softly.

"Oh, dear! You surely don't think I'm afraid of Nikolay?"

"He's a very powerful man."

"But, Esther!"

He removed his arm from her shoulders, and drawing slightly away, looked at her as though doubting her seriousness.

"Do you really think I'm afraid of that big tow-head? Why, it's absurd. I never

saw a man in my life I was afraid of. I never expect to see one."

She smiled wistfully and shook her head, as one who humors a precocious child; and her lips parted to say something, but before she could speak the door leading to the underground hall crashed open and Nikolay, his pimply face livid with fury, his yellow hair seeming to stand on end, burst into the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RUBICON.

UPON making sure the fugitive was not skulking on the roof, the policeman descended the fire-escape and reconnoitered in the alley and the contiguous streets; but Nikolay, filled with disgust over his *fiasco*, returned to Fitzhugh's room and flung himself on the bed and essayed to soothe his chagrin in Morpheus's embrace.

After lashing about for over an hour, he fell into a light doze, from which he awakened a few minutes before dawn. Moved by some unreasoning impulse, he removed his shoes and crept stealthily down the stairs to Esther's door, and there, applying his ear to the keyhole, overheard all the latter part of Esther's and Fitzhugh's *tête-à-tête*.

He became a demon. Bereft for the moment of all reason, he hurled his enormous body against the frail door, bursting it from its moorings, and stood an instant among the *débris*, glaring at the woman.

Then, his hands extended as though to clutch her throat, he came toward her, heaping tirades of vile abuse upon her, while she watched his approach as the helpless hare watches that of the boa-constrictor.

At the first sound Fitzhugh had sprung from his chair and vaulted the table, bringing it between himself and the door. He now sent it careening to the end of the room, and flinging his coat after it, stepped in front of the terrified woman.

"You'd better get out, Esther," he said quietly, rolling his shirt-sleeves to his elbows, "because I'm going to slaughter this beast."

She made no move to go, however, but drew to one side, and with hands pressed to her cheeks, watched the two gladiators with mingled horror and fascination. Without uttering a sound, the giant Russian

drew back his huge arm and drove his fist, full force, straight at Fitzhugh's face.

With telegraphic quickness, the younger man ducked and sprang aside, with the result that his antagonist plunged half-way across the room by his own momentum.

But if Nikolay was surprised at this, he was more astonished when a smashing blow caught him under the ear, another over the heart, and, lunging furiously, found he struck only air, and that his assailant was fifteen feet away, dancing about lightly on the balls of his feet.

Nikolay had the advantage of some forty pounds in weight, but Fitzhugh was vastly his superior in stamina, fistic skill, and quickness of eye and movement. To win the fight Fitzhugh knew he had to do but one thing, and that was to keep free of his opponent's clutches. Once the big Russian got those tremendous arms round him the combat would be too unequal.

For the third time Nikolay rushed upon his foe like a bellowing bull, and for the third time Fitzhugh ducked and side-stepped like a lean panther, springing in quickly to deliver two blows in rapid succession, the last of which brought blood.

In the fourth rush, however, a sledgehammer seemed to swing upon the point of his chin, and he spun dizzily backward, unable to regain his balance and bringing up heavily against the iron bed; but Nikolay was not quick enough to follow up his advantage, and when next he charged, Fitzhugh had partially recovered his wind and was dancing round him as before, his lip drawn back from his gleaming white teeth in a wicked, taunting smile.

Again and again Nikolay's triphammer fist flashed out for that smiling, mocking face; but always it seemed to be a little too late—the face was never there. His adversary danced in and out, delivering jabs and blows that stung and cut, and springing away as lightninglike as he had come.

The blood was streaming from a dozen cuts on the Russian's face, the salty taste of it was in his mouth, its crimson haze seemed to blot his vision; and ever that taunting, white-and-black face swam before his eyes like a pirouetting fantom.

He lashed about wildly, striking at it here, there, everywhere, with no precision, no aim, only with a blind fury. Once his haphazard fist found it, crashing into it and laying open the cheek to the bone, and a gloating satisfaction coursed through him,

Yet again his aim found its mark, but he lacked steam, and it was as though he struck a punching-bag that rebounded upon him, for Fitzhugh regained his equipoise like a steel spring, and to him each blow was as the spur to a race-horse.

Fitzhugh, knowing his endurance to be his strongest, and the other's weakest, point, desired chiefly to wear his opponent down until such time as he could rush in and finish him.

Round and round the room, dancing, springing from side to side, he led the ungainly Russian, upsetting the furniture and throwing it in his path, taunting him, mocking him, darting temptingly within reach and as suddenly darting out again.

Nikolay was fast becoming exhausted. Ten minutes of this mad pace was more than he could stand. His breath came shorter and shorter. At last he stopped and allowed his arms to dangle at his side.

His face was as a raw beefsteak, his bursting lips were swollen to twice their normal size, and one eye was entirely closed. Ten feet away stood his pantherlike foe, whose crisp, black mustache quivered over the large, white teeth in that fiendish smile.

For a space, coughing and spitting blood and catching his breath in short, wheezy gasps, he stared drunkenly; then he seized a water-pitcher which lay beside an overturned chair and hurled it at that grinning, maddening face.

Fitzhugh dodged the missile, which crashed through the window and smashed to pieces upon the pavement, and leaped for his foe.

He put every atom of his vigorous strength into the blow which he landed under Nikolay's jaw, and the man went down like a clubbed ox.

Fitzhugh walked over, picked up his coat and slung it over his shoulder. He turned to Esther, who crouched against the wall like one who has just awakened from some horrible dream. He smiled, but in the neutral light the smile looked ghastly.

"I'm sorry you had to see it," he said. "I told you I'd slaughter him."

His valiant effort to speak calmly was not a success, for he had difficulty in breathing and his throat was choked with blood; he began to realize, too, that his beard was sticky with it, and that his head seemed one solid, raw bruise.

The next moment the woman was sobbing hysterically in his arms.

"I can't let you go!" she cried. "I can't—I can't!" She clung to him as a drowning person, clutching his body, his arms, his neck.

"You must, Esther." He patted her shoulders tenderly. "The police may be here any moment. Get away as quickly as possible. Never mind about him—he'll come to soon enough.

"But, for Heaven's sake, don't be here when he does—he might kill you. Go to friends—go any place—only don't stay here. I'll write you at the General Delivery. You write me, too. I'll go every week. Good-by, dear, good-by. Kiss me and say good-by."

"Sweetheart!—oh, I can't!—you mustn't leave me—I shall die!"

She clung to him tigerishly, with arms, with limbs, as if to hold him to her by sheer physical strength; but he put her from him, after thrice kissing her lips, and with a final word of parting, turned and left the house.

She sank limply upon the floor, where she seemed to gradually curl up like a dying flower.

Her head fell forward, and she stared with dry, unseeing eyes at the gory head of the unconscious Russian, sprawled on the floor, gross and unsightly; and over and over she whispered huskily beneath her breath, as though not quite comprehending: "Gone—he's gone!"

And the man? Alas! for the victims of unrequited love. Outside, Fitzhugh threw back his shoulders and expanded his chest, and as he filled his lungs with the fresh, morning air he seemed to inhale something else—something exalting.

He was free—free! No longer was he tied to a woman's apron. No longer the puppet of a woman's caprice. No longer must he fume and fret in a stuffy room. At last he might strike out, unhampered, unquestioned, for the goal he had set for himself.

With his old, swinging stride, he turned the corner and started northward, whistling an old familiar favorite of his barrel-house days.

And in the dark, miserable, topsy-turvy room behind him sat the woman, dry-eyed and dumb, her body shaken with silent, wrenching sobs, her fingers working together, convulsively, endlessly. For her the light had gone from the earth. All was black.

Fitzhugh stopped in a saloon and laved his hurts and washed up, afterward studying his face very carefully in the lavatory mirror. He concluded he was effectually disguised against anybody who had not seen him during the past four weeks. He was one of those black-haired men who, shaving before breakfast, show a faint bluish tinge in their cheeks before lunch; and almost the only visible skin on the face that looked back at him from the mirror were two white spots under the eyes. The rest was a very thick, very black beard.

"Another month's growth won't hurt, though," he told himself, and left the saloon and continued northward.

In State Street, south of Van Buren, he stopped before an alleged restaurant—one of those dingy, unwashed places which can be scented for a block on a warm day, and where a full meal, from watery soup to wormy prunes, may be had for twenty cents—and read this sign hanging from a nail on the door-post:

DISHWASHER WANTED.

He removed the sign, walked inside, and handed it to the chemical blond cashier.

"I'm it," said he, favoring her with an engaging smile.

Her supercilious eye surveyed his be-whiskered countenance with a mammoth indifference; then she reached up with a delicious languor, patted the lemon-colored cone of puffs at the back of her head, and, turning on her high stool, called shrilly:

"Mr. Thermop-o-l-i-i-s! Here's a guy what wants de pot-walloper's job."

A squat, oily-skinned Greek, wearing a soiled shirt to which was attached an imitation-diamond stud, but no collar, came from behind the pie-case and around the lunch-counter and scowled sourly at the applicant.

"Whan you rady wuk?" asked this person darkly.

"This minute."

"A'right. Beat it back; much wuk f' you a'ready."

"What pay do I get?"

"Eight dollar wuk an' grub."

"That suits me," said Fitzhugh, starting kitchenward.

It was a sweltering, filthy place, reeking with multitudinous odors, in which Fitzhugh worked, and of the kitchen force he was the only one who spoke English.

The soiled dishes came in a never-ending torrent, and all day, with three interruptions for food, he bent at the wash-bench, his arms immersed to the elbows in black, soapy water.

At eight came the night-man, and Fitzhugh drew a breath of relief and a dollar on his weekly wage, and started home. Or, rather, he started to look for a home.

He found one in Indiana Street for two dollars a week—a depressing room a little larger than a coal-box tucked away in the upper regions of a shoddy lodging-house.

With a deep satisfaction to be spending money he had toiled for, he paid the grim-faced landlady half of his capital, bought a package of cigarette tobacco and some evening newspapers, and went to his room.

He stripped to his underclothing, and with the newspapers and a cigarette, stretched himself on the couch-bed, allowing his feet to rest on a chair. He inhaled a big, satisfying cloud of smoke and unfolded one of the news-sheets. Then his fingers closed rigidly on the paper and his heart seemed to stand still.

What he read at a glance stretched across four columns of the front page:

**MURDER MYSTERY AMONG
ANARCHISTS!**

**Olaf Nikolay, Russian Nihilist, Found Dead in
South Side Basement—Woman Suspect Gone!**

The story so shriekingly heralded was told in a few paragraphs, and Fitzhugh breathed easier as he read.

Substantially, it related that Nikolay had been found late that afternoon by Esther's landlady, who thought the man drunk and called the police. An examination showed he was stabbed to the heart and had been dead for hours.

Esther had disappeared and no trace of her could be found.

The landlady talked volubly of Esther's "brother"—for whom the police were also searching—but was forced to admit she could not describe the man, having never seen him.

Fitzhugh dropped the paper and stared thoughtfully at the ceiling, crushing his cigarette slowly between his fingers.

Suddenly he jumped up and began pacing the floor restlessly, knitting his brows, tugging at his beard.

"Pshaw!—she'll get away all right," he said aloud, as though to bolster his weakening conviction. "Don't worry—she'll get away all right."

On his way to work next morning he stopped at the post-office, and at the General Delivery found, as he expected, a letter from Esther. It was written on a scrap of wrapping-paper with a lead pencil, and began without preface:

If I've sinned it was because I loved you so. I did it for your sake. I am praying that your desire for wealth be granted you.

Even though your ambition is one of which I do not approve, I would willingly die that you might achieve it. That is how I love you.

It may be a long while before you hear from me again, because I am going far away. Destroy this letter.

Your erring and adoring,

ESTHER.

He burned the letter in the kitchen range and knuckled down to his opprobrious toil as on the previous day.

Fitzhugh had a clearly defined reason for doing scullery work in a restaurant. It provided a steady, if low, income; it facilitated economy, and, above all, it afforded him a secure hiding-place during the day.

He intended to stay there six weeks; by that time his beard would be sufficiently long to be shaped into a Vandyke; also, for he practised the most rigorous frugality, he expected to have thirty dollars with which to buy some presentable clothes. From that point on he felt positive, somehow, that his soaring aloft would be swift and sure.

He opened a savings account, and every week deposited five dollars, retaining three for current expenses, which were reduced to a minimum—room rent, laundry, and tobacco being the chief items.

The days stretched into weeks, and the weeks into a month, with terrible sameness; to-day was like yesterday, to-morrow would be like to-day—filled with steam and stench and unending piles of soiled dishes, and pots and pans and vessels of water, greasy and black.

Only once was the monotony broken. By one of those anomalous conditions peculiar to some cities, Indiana Street, a miserable,

poverty-stricken thoroughfare, is less than ten minutes' walk from Chicago's wealthiest residential section. This curious juxtaposition accounted for the break in Fitzhugh's routine.

It was late one warm night in June, and he had walked a few blocks from home and was taking the air along the Lake Shore Drive, when he saw Kathleen Otis.

A shining limousine stopped before the iron gateway through which he had twice passed, and as he drew back into the shadows of the shrubbery she alighted with her father. Over her bare shoulders she wore a snowy scarf of some filmy, lacy stuff, and against this and the whiteness of her skin her mass of wavy red hair swept smoothly back from her brow and, dressed in simple fashion, was vividly contrasted as she stood a moment in the soft moonlight.

Every night after that Fitzhugh promenaded the Drive. But he never saw her again.

He read later that she had sailed for France with her mother, and would not return until the autumn.

CHAPTER XIV.

QUIGG.

FITZHUGH began to fret and worry and grow impatient over his irksome employment.

He was coming to believe he had made a mistake in adopting such slow means to a desirable end, when, in the fifth week, something occurred that dispelled his growing pessimism.

It was Saturday night, and when he came from the broiling kitchen with his coat under his arm and dripping with perspiration, Thermopolis met him and handed him eight dollars, five of which he promptly placed between the leaves of his savings-bank book, that now showed a balance of twenty dollars.

As he nodded good-night to his employer he noticed a sharp-featured man in a check-board suit sitting on one of the lunch-counter stools. He was smoking a cigar and appeared to be a visitor rather than a patron.

Before Fitzhugh reached Van Buren Street this man confronted him, and smiling as pleasantly as his hard face would permit, asked:

"How much does the Greek pay you?"

"According to my desert, my solicitous friend. I receive the munificent salary of eight dollars per week."

"Would you rather do less work for more money?"

Fitzhugh laughed.

"Oh, come," said he, "don't ask such complex questions."

The questioner pushed back his hat and chewed his cigar savagely, his head bobbing up and down as he rapidly surveyed Fitzhugh from top to toe.

"I s'pose you'll do," he said finally. "Come 'long to the next block. I want to show you something."

He led the way up State Street, and near Jackson Boulevard stopped before a large, gold-and-white lunch-room, glittering with electric lights, brand-new and spick and span; across the wide, shining show-window in letters three feet high was the word:

MAX'S

"See that?" demanded he of the loud checks, spreading four fingers toward the window as though to point to each of the letters.

"I'm not blind."

"Well, that's me. I'm Max." He tapped his chest proudly. "You're goin' to make that name famous. Understand? Famous! Come inside and I'll tell you about it."

They went in, and over a pot of coffee and a box of cigars Mr. Max outlined his plan. Briefly, it was this: Fitzhugh, after a visit to a good barber, was to apparel himself in distinguished garb, and with an austere and aristocratic demeanor, he was to parade State Street for five hours daily. Painted in white letters on the back of his black frock-coat would be the word "Max's." Every so often he was to pause and look straight into the sky until a crowd collected; but if accosted he was to retain his haughty mien by saying nothing.

"Um-hum," said Fitzhugh, nodding his head and drawing reflectively on his cigar. "How much do I get for this stunt?"

"You said Thermopolis paid you eight."

"That doesn't count."

"We-ell, say fifteen a week—how does that strike you?"

"Not favorably. Make it thirty and the deal's closed."

After some further dickering it was agreed Fitzhugh was to receive twenty dollars the first week, and if Max decided to keep him longer, thirty dollars for all subsequent weeks.

Fitzhugh reported for work Monday morning; and accompanied by Max, paid a visit to a barber-shop, afterward going to a clothing establishment where ready-to-wear apparel of the better class was sold. About eleven he stepped from the restaurant and paused a moment in the vestibule to draw on his pearl gloves.

In hustling, bustling, workaday Chicago his was essentially the appearance to attract attention anywhere. His jet-black beard trimmed to a sharp point, a gardenia in the lapel of his frock-coat, his unusually tall figure enhanced by a shining silk hat, he was strikingly the sort whom the embryo reporter terms "distinguished foreigner" and whom the populace reveres.

Passers-by, having but a front view of him, therefore never guessing his mission, gave him respectful, even humble, notice while he stood in the doorway; but when he stepped out into the crowd and strolled up the street, swinging his gold-headed cane, his hat towering high above the mass of heads, he started a furore far greater than the sanguine Max had expected.

Six out of ten of those walking against him, struck by his fore appearance, turned to look back at him; seeing his back, one out of these six followed him curiously—"just to see what was up."

When he reached Adams and State there was in his wake a jostling number of these curious ones, anxious to keep him in sight, yet loath to betray their eagerness. He stopped on the corner, mounted a metal refuse-box near the curb, and removing his silk hat with a sweeping gesture, stared straight into the zenith.

Several minutes he remained thus, the press about him thickening with every second. The sidewalk became speedily choked with the jam of humanity. A policeman shoved his way through the congestion, reached up and jabbed his knuckles in Fitzhugh's side.

"Come out of it, professor," said he, "It's the closed season for star-gazin'."

Fitzhugh put on his hat, stepped down from his pedestal, nodded silently to the officer, and with all the pomp and dignity of the first trip, retraced his steps down the street, the crowd following.

It had swelled twofold by the time he had reached the restaurant. Max, his face wreathed with smiles, met him as he entered and pumped his hand jubilantly.

"You get your thirty all right," he said enthusiastically, watching the incoming stream of customers.

"Yes, I know. I'd rather get something to eat just now, however."

In the afternoon he again sallied forth, and the success of the morning was repeated.

As far back as he could remember Fitzhugh had possessed a fondness for histrionics, for "showing off" before an audience, and, try as he would, he could never quite get away from it.

He felt the old familiar tingle of gratified vanity as he saw the street crowds staring at him, heard them speaking of him; and though he knew his "rôle" was a mean one and the approbation shoddy, he nevertheless relished the applause.

He stopped this time at Monroe Street for his sky-gazing. Again the crowd surged about him, and again his poise was jarred by a heavy hand. Instead of a policeman, however, he turned to find a man of his own height, but of larger bulk, regarding him with favor rather than ill-will; he was attired in the latest word of fashion, and there seemed to envelop him an indefinable air of "cash." In the June sun his large, closely-shaven face showed plainly the marks of dissipation, and his baggy eyes were those of a man who has seen overmuch of life's seamy side.

"I would like to have a few words with you, alone, my friend," he said pleasantly. "Shall we adjourn to the nearest buffet?"

Fitzhugh drew himself up and eyed the man haughtily, conscious of the dozens of listening ears.

"Sir," he began, "I have not the honor—"

"Aw, don't, Bill!" The stranger looked pained. "Don't pull any of that stuff. It wearies me."

He lowered his voice.

"I've something for you, friend, that'll make this picayune job of yours look like a cheese sandwich after a Dutch picnic. You're coming?"

"Out of curiosity—yes."

In a few minutes they were seated in a dark, cool place, where large fans whirled softly overhead, and tall glasses were placed

before them. The breezy one flipped a card across the table with the remark:

"I'm Quigg."

The card fell face up. Fitzhugh read:

QUIGG & PEEVY

STOCKS—BONDS—GRAIN

and held his hand across the tall glasses, saying:

"And I'm Fitzhugh."

"Well met! What're you getting, Fitz, for this sandwich-man stunt?"

"Such impertinence merits a reprimand, but I'll give you a truthful answer—thirty dollars per week—commencing next week."

Mr. Quigg agitated his drink with the straws, what while he regarded his *vis-à-vis* very steadily his bushy brows knitted, his puffy eyes narrowed. Then:

"Friend," said he, "I'm going to take a chance. I've watched you twice to-day, and I think I've got you right. And I'm no bad judge of a man, either."

He produced a fat morocco wallet and slipped therefrom a treasury note, which he passed across the table.

"There's your first week's salary in advance. When you're ready for work, I am."

Fitzhugh glanced at the bill, saw it was of a hundred-dollar denomination, and raised his head and leaned across the table.

"Just what is your game, Mr. Quigg?" he asked slowly.

Quigg chuckled and raised a fat, gloved hand.

"Does look a little fishy, doesn't it? But it's only my little way. I'm taking a chance, as I said before. Here, boy, get me a taxi."

He flipped a dollar into the air, which the menial caught dexterously, then turned back to Fitzhugh, consulting his watch and pushing back his chair.

"I've twenty minutes to spare. We'll hustle over to my tailor. That's a rotten outfit you're wearing."

CHAPTER XV.

HOCUS-POCUS.

FITZHUGH, in accordance with previous arrangement, reported to his new employer

promptly at nine-thirty next morning. Ever watchful of opportunities for parade of person, he came in a hansom cab, this being the vehicle affording the greatest modicum of personal display. Already he had given up his room in Indiana Street and had taken an unpretentious apartment in a pretentious hotel farther north.

His correct morning attire, faultless, well-tailored, expensive; his finely-pointed beard and mustache, brushed away from his lips in a French fashion; even the flower in his buttonhole lent to his inches an air of individuality, of distinction, foreign to Chicago's higgledy-piggledy financial district, that commanded attention.

But it was not this so much as his bearing—for he was acting perfectly the popular conception of a gentleman of leisure—that earned him quick, sidelong glances from the hurrying brokers, clerks, speculators, who were pressing down La Salle Street toward the Board of Trade as he alighted, paid the cabby, and, pausing a moment to give a short, upward flirt to his mustache, crossed the pavement and entered the building where was the abode of Quigg & Peevy.

A busy place, this—a place of bustle and fluster and businesslike activity. The acute observer, however, would have detected amid the hum and buzz of animation a hectic undercurrent, as though some definite effect were being studiously striven for.

On a narrow platform before the blackboard which extended the length of the "customers' room" a phlegmatic youth walked up and down, chalking mystical figures, cabalistic signs, while the telegraph instrument in a little box at one end chattered out its interminable tale.

In the three rows of chairs, also spanning the room's length, sat men, well-dressed and nondescript, the latter jotting in dog-eared memorandum books with stub pencils, the former watching the blackboard and chatting animatedly to each other about stocks and bonds; ever and anon messenger-boys would scurry to and fro across the floor, clutching at their caps and slapping their books shut, entering and leaving some inner office whence issued a typewriter's clinkety-click.

And in all this feverish activity there was something vaguely unnatural, artificial—too subtle for the casual onlooker, but there nevertheless.

As Fitzhugh entered, casting a bored,

blasé glance around the place, he was met by a uniformed attendant, who said:

"Mr. Quigg asked that you please step into his private office at once, sir."

Fitzhugh nodded, and walked to a door at the end of the room, upon the glass panel of which was printed—"Thomas Quigg"—and below, in smaller type—"Private."

The preceding night, in Quigg's apartment in a Loop hotel, Fitzhugh had been thoroughly apprised of the nature of his duties. There had even been "rehearsals"—for his employment was of a peculiar sort—with the shades drawn and transoms closed. He was, therefore, not unprepared for what followed when he opened the door and entered Quigg's sanctum.

Mr. Quigg, large and prepossessing, held a large cigar in a large hand and occupied a large chair before a large desk, at one end of which sat a colorless, commonplace, inconspicuous man whose weak face was at once inquiring and impressionable. Nearby a stock ticker drooled its tape into a wicker waste-basket, and from a partly open door came the furious clattering of many typewriters.

And here, as in the outer room, there was an artificial note—faint, almost indistinguishable, but there just the same.

As the door closed behind Fitzhugh, Quigg glanced up, then leaned quickly toward the colorless one and said something in a low voice. Not so low, however, but that Fitzhugh caught the words: "Pattington . . . Eastern capitalist . . . worth ten million dollars if he's worth a nickel. . . ."

This was Fitzhugh's cue.

Instantly his demeanor changed. His tired air vanished. His eye, languidly supercilious a moment before, became cold, arrogant, alert. He was no longer the blasé aristocrat.

He was now the high-tensioned financier, whose minutes were diamond-studded. He stood a moment at the door, his brows drawn together in a slight scowl, his right thumb and second finger snapping impatiently. Thus, until he received his next cue.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Pattington."

Quigg rose and smiled deferentially—this was the cue—and motioned to a chair. "Won't you sit down? I shall be at leisure in a moment."

Fitzhugh's frown grew a little heavier and his eye a little harder.

"I was told I could have an interview with you—at once. My time is very limited this morning. Our transaction must be consummated in a few minutes, or not at all."

He consulted his newly purchased watch and closed the case with a snap.

"You wish to see me about that Queen Bee Gold Mine stock, do you not, Mr. Pattington?"

"Yes, yes."

"I think you said you wanted a thousand shares?—the last thousand, to be exact."

"Why so much digression, sir? Of course I said so."

Mr. Quigg smiled broadly, and leaning back in his swivel chair, clasped his plump hands behind his fat neck. He shook his head, his eyes twinkling.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Pattington, but I'm afraid you can't have those thousand shares."

"What d'you mean?" snapped the pseudo-millionaire. "Why not?"

"Because this gentleman"—with a nod Quigg indicated the colorless man, who, eyes wide, mouth agape, had been swallowing whole every word uttered—"is just about to buy 'em."

"You see, Mr. Pattington, I'm on to you Eastern fellows. I know all about your little game. I know you're trying to get possession of the Queen Bee, and I know you've had your secret agents asaying here, and I know you've discovered what a fat little chunk o' gold she really is."

"But I'm afraid you can't have her, Mr. Pattington. First, because the Queen Bee people don't want you Eastern capitalists to own the controlling interest, and second, because Mr. Blake here has spoken first, and, in fact, is just about to negotiate the purchase of the remaining thousand shares. Isn't that right, Mr. Blake?"

Quigg fixed his ox-eye benevolently upon the colorless Blake, who moistened his lips, fingered his hat, looked down, then up, and cleared his throat.

"I—I guess—" He hesitated, moistened his lips again and took the plunge with a rush: "Yes, that's right, Mr. Quigg. I'll take them thousand shares."

Fitzhugh, keenly awaiting further cues, searched the grafter's face intently, and though he received but a bare flicker of an eyelash and the faintest suggestion of a nod toward the door it was sufficient,

and with no further word, but with a loud snort of disgust, he turned and left, slamming the door behind him. For the benefit of the little crowd in the outer room he again assumed his bored, aristocratic mien as he leisurely crossed the place and went out into the corridor.

He boarded the elevator and ascended to the top floor of the building. Before an office, devoid of lettering and apparently unoccupied, he stopped, took a key from his pocket, unlocked the door, let himself in and locked the door behind him.

It was a small room, furnished with a leather chair, a box of cigars, a table, an array of current magazines, and a full-length tailor's mirror, placed in a corner. Also, at one side of the room there was another door opening into a second chamber of like dimensions.

He removed his coat, hung it on a hook, placed his hat upon the table and his gloves upon the hat, then stretched out in the leather chair and rested his feet on the steam radiator. He lighted a costly cigar, exhaled a long swirl of fragrant smoke and took a magazine from the pile on the table.

He had scarcely read the table of contents, however, before a tiny electric buzzer concealed somewhere about the table, began to hum spasmodically.

Almost immediately there was a tap at the corridor door and he admitted a messenger-boy, who handed him a yellow envelope and departed.

Upon reading the enclosed despatch he tore the paper into small bits and hurried into the adjoining room, throwing off his waistcoat and loosening his tie and collar as he ran.

In ten minutes he reappeared. But nobody would have known it was he. He was completely masqueraded.

Instead of the smart morning coat, he wore a long tan "duster"; instead of the stylish derby hat, he wore a broad-brimmed yellow one; and he wore a green flannel shirt with attached collar and white buttons, and rough corduroy trousers tucked into knee-boots, and in one hand he carried a drover's ten-foot whip.

In fine, he was the typical stockman, just arrived in Chicago with a load of cattle and a big wallet for the thousand-dollar bills.

Even his beard was magically changed; it was tousled and all askew, and against

his dust-caked face appeared to be that of a man badly in need of a shave rather than of one who has been recently barbered.

He cocked his sombrero at a rakish angle, lighted a rank cigar, surveyed himself fore and aft in the mirror, and went out and locked the door.

A few minutes later he entered the "customers' room" of Quigg & Peavy and strode across the floor toward Quigg's private office with great, awkward movements of his long body, flickering his whip to either side after the manner of a typical ranchman and puffing like a tugboat at his evil-smelling cigar.

(To be continued.)

A Night

of Life

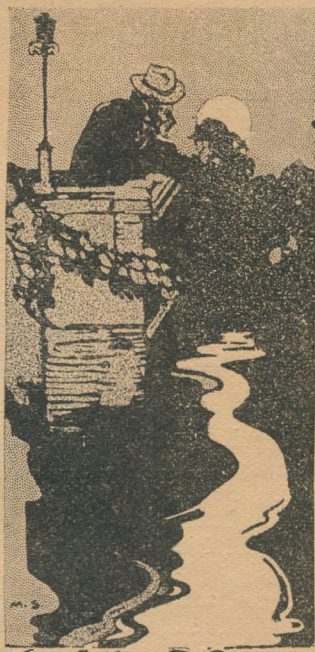
ALL through the hot August afternoon Watson lay in bed, watching a ray of sunshine crawl steadily over the worn carpet of his room.

He was weak and ill from his unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide by turning on his landlady's gas. The effect had been a ludicrous failure, a grotesque blunder.

Having shut the two small windows, he had painstakingly stuffed the keyhole and the cracks in the ill-fitting door, and, after destroying all his papers and cutting out from his underwear the laundry marks and burning them, he had turned on the feeble current of gas furnished by Mrs. Jilson to her gentlemen lodgers, and had lain down to await Nirvana.

From habit, he removed his coat and hung it carefully over a chair back, and spread a newspaper on the cheap coverlet to protect it from his shoes, as he had been accustomed to do on Sunday afternoons when he stretched himself upon his bed and plowed through the voluminous Sunday supplements.

The gas smelled outrageously, his head ached, his stomach revolted; but he waited vainly for any hint of drowsiness. And presently Mrs. Jilson had come and knocked



by John D. Swain

imperiously upon his door, and he had been obliged to answer her, and to say that he had inadvertently struck the cock off his gas fixture, but that it was all right now.

After she, sniffing with surprising vigor, and muttering about the added expense that thoughtless young men constantly imposed on the burdens of a poor widow, had scuttled down the hall, he rose and turned off the gas.

A moment later he discovered that he had left his transom open, and, laughing weakly at himself for a wretched bungler, lacking even the intelligence to do away with himself decently, he had crept back to bed.

Later in the day, Mrs. Jilson had returned and asked for his room.

This was the day previous; and his time expired at six o'clock to-day. He had no preparations to make, no luggage to pack, and one nickel in his pocket. There was absolutely nothing to get up for; so he lay, in a half stupor, wondering why it was so hard to die, and how it happened that so many seemingly unintelligent creatures managed it with no apparent effort.

He had never for a moment considered using a razor; he abhorred blood, and a generally messy time, and even in his ex-

treme poverty contrived to look neat and keep clean.

A pistol was decidedly better; but he had not in weeks possessed sufficient capital to acquire one, and he was wholly uncertain of will-power enough to pull the trigger at the last. Often, he knew, this method failed lamentably; the pain, and notoriety, and presumable disfigurement resulting from an unsuccessful attempt repelled him.

The only fairly sure way to use a pistol, he had read, was to place the barrel in one's mouth, pointing up to the thin roof which guards the mysterious regions we associate with mentality. This, he knew, he could never, in any stress, bring himself to do.

There remained hanging, a vile death, and poison; but here, a nice adjustment is essential; the better known, easily obtainable poisons cause frightful and prolonged convulsions; the more subtle and obscure toxins must be taken in a certain quantity, and a grain too little or too much spells failure.

But for the fact that he was absolutely beaten, destitute, with no means for the present or hope for the future, he would have abandoned suicide altogether. Having decided to put an end to himself, his thoughts naturally turned to drowning.

It was, as he had many times heard and occasionally read, a painless, almost, as it seemed, an agreeable form of death; resuscitated persons had described their sensations verging on the first delightful transports of hashish.

One must not struggle; a deep inhalation of water, filling the lungs, should be taken; there would follow, it seemed, a kaleidoscopic glimpse of the past; a jumble of the flotsam and jetsam long forgotten and little considered at the time of occurrence—a sacked orchard, a furtive smile caught from behind a half-drawn curtain, the inconsequential jest of a friend dead long ago; then, the pleasing arabesques of pure fancy, and oblivion.

Of course, no one positively drowned had ever returned to give his imprimatur to this form of dissolution; but it possessed advantages over every other method.

Watson decided to drown.

Fortune favored him in that he could not swim a stroke; chance came to his aid with the knowledge of a deep pool darkling in an obscure corner of the Park, in

the riding circuit where pedestrians seldom wandered. So Watson tossed upon his bed, and the little beam of sunlight, having pitilessly shown up the faded roses and the patched squares of the old carpet, crept up the side of the wall, and went away; and six o'clock came, and Mrs. Jilson ostentatiously swept the hall, lingering near his door.

Watson rose, put on his coat, and walked out of the house with peace in his heart and a nickel in his hand. The nickel he spent for a big cup of hot coffee. Drowning is, at its best, a soggy, cheerless sort of death, and the walk to the silent pool was a very long one.

It was, in fact, quite dark when he arrived there. The riders had long since disappeared. The distant rumble of the streets came to him in a monotone; a few insects, unknown to him by name, began a rather grim little dirge.

He threw off his coat, going mechanically through the empty pockets, and, in the shadow of a mountain-ash, he leaned over the stone parapet, idly playing with a loose block of granite, and smiling into the cool, dark bosom of the little pool. Quite slowly, but with no hesitation, he threw one leg over the parapet.

The sound of swiftly running feet, a hoarse shout, an odd twinkling light flickering through the fringe of shrubs lining the riding circuit, interrupted him.

He quickly withdrew his leg, and shrank into the shadow of the mountain-ash, and hardly had he done so when two dark figures dashed by him, closely followed by a couple of mounted police.

As the foremost figure gained the bridge, he hurled a small object almost directly at Watson, though not seeing him. Immediately thereafter the two figures separated and crashed into the underbrush; the police dismounted, and plunged after them, and for a long time Watson could hear them beating about and see their electric torches flashing here and there.

Presently the policemen returned, mounted their horses and trotted away, and Watson was once more alone. Then he groped in the dark for the object which had fallen at his feet.

It was a pocketbook, bulging with bills. In the dark, he could not, of course, tell their denomination, but there were a great many of them.

It occurred to him that the two evident

thieves who had crossed the bridge would return presently and search for the plunder they had discarded in the imminency of capture. Everything bade him leave the vicinity at once.

He got into his coat again and struck hurriedly off in the direction of the nearest avenue, and presently came to an arc-light standing in an azalea glade. Under its glow Watson paused and glanced hurriedly at the pocketbook. It was crammed with bills of all denominations, from ones to twenties. Five minutes later he was seated in a taxi, and was speeding away towards the Café Patricienne.

The dinner ordered by Watson was not the sort one would naturally associate with one whose thoughts were bent on self-destruction. It was not the sort he had tasted for years; but there are some dishes and vintages the discriminating diner-out never forgets, be his fast never so long.

Watson, returning from the Valley of the Shadow in a taxi, won the respect of his waiter by the distinctiveness of his ordering.

When, with a sigh, he pushed away his tiny glass of the original yellow chartreuse, and said: "Now, bring me one of those Victorias I always smoke," no one was imposed upon, and he got just the sort of a cigar he would have selected for all his dinners had he been able. Already the skilful waiter knew his tastes, his foibles, better than those of many a heedless *bon-vivant* he had served for months.

After the dinner, a play. Watson decided on a roof-garden, where, surrounded by pretty women and frosty glasses, he laughed indulgently at the newest thing in skirts and in topical songs.

After that, decision became more difficult. He counted his money, and it toted up some seven hundred and eighty odd dollars, after the expenses of the evening. He wandered into some of the gayer cafés which he had formerly frequented, and met and bought drinks for men whom he had never seemed to run across in the days when hunger had gnawed deeply into him, and he had reeled from sleeplessness on bitter winter nights. He was a good fellow again; pretty girls smiled upon him, and he joined gay parties here and there, with no desire to attach himself permanently to them.

Then, suddenly, he remembered Pop White's.

Pop conducted a temple of chance, where the dice were never clogged, the wheels always greased. There was a recognized "kitty" in the card games, a small and unvarying percentage elsewhere; but no one was ever fleeced at Pop White's, and the rashly optimistic were not infrequently dissuaded from staking their last hundred when luck was running with the house.

Thither Watson shaped his now slightly erratic course, and found a seat at a poker table, where the limit was five dollars, the drinks mixed with discretion, and the company excellently taciturn.

He bought a handsome stack of blues and yellows, and dropped a couple of hundred before he got an inkling of the characteristics of his fellow-players. Then he began to win.

Pop White, flitting from wheel to table, from layout to hazard, beamed approvingly upon him as he scanned his hands and draws. Having never a worry in the world, being as it were a man raised from the dead and with an unearned fortune thrust into his pocket, being moreover, or having been, an excellent and discerning player, Watson won where men who positively needed the money lost.

Luck ranged herself on his side. He became fastidious in his play. Time after time in jack-pots, he passed low openers, only to fill outrageously when some one ventured to open.

He got fours once on a five-card draw; he filled flushes and straights until it ceased to rouse comment. Finally, after a long course of good fortune, he stood pat on three tens and, scaring them all out before the draw, he won the largest pot of the evening, rose, shared a bottle of wine with the pleased and benignant Pop, and stepped out into the comparative coolness of the night air.

It was past two, and the streets were still and quite deserted.

Watson, pausing to light a cigarette, reflected on the three thousand dollars stuffed about his person, and smiled at the thought of his sordid room at Mrs. Jilson's. Death was far from his thoughts. He was an immortal. Only forty, he foresaw long years of comfortable success.

With his present stake, nothing could daunt him, no one deny him. Long before his money should have been spent, he would force the public to recognize his merit.

Feeling anything but sleepy, he determined to look up good old Billy Rich, on the *Morning Wireless*, which had given him, as he believed, his *coup de grâce*, in refusing him a desk when he was down to his final dollar, and worse.

Rich was "night city," and he smiled brightly at Watson as the latter entered.

"Awfully glad to see you, Watson!" he said.

Watson was not in the least surprised.

Every one had been glad to see him since prosperity had found him out.

Of course, Billy Rich could know nothing of this, but that made no difference. The rolls of greenbacks in his pockets acted as magnets to attract kindly regard and attention. Already Watson was becoming accustomed to it, beginning to look for it.

"Be with you in a minute, old man," Rich continued, attacking a sheaf of copy. "Crocker just came in with a late suicide story. Young chap, up in the Park. Got to get it in, and we've already gone to press."

He jabbed the hurried lines, broidered them with cabalistic marks and symbols, passed them over to a waiting copy-boy, and wheeled round facing Watson, who was serenely smoking, and speculating on the folly of one's committing suicide. Chap was probably out of his head, he decided.

"I've got news for you, Watson," said Rich. "Bully news!"

He removed and wiped his glasses, and continued, fixing Watson with a benevolent glance.

"We've had a change up here. Todd has gone at last, darn him! And we have a new manager—Weldon, from the *St. Louis Comet*. Corking good man, too. And I've got you fixed up with us! You know I always was strong for your stuff, but Todd had it in for you, and I could do nothing.

"I told Weldon about you, and you are to begin to-morrow; a column daily on dramatics, at twenty bucks a week, space rates for anything over. I guess that's better than the bread-line and a hand-out—what?"

Billy smiled anticipatively.

Watson swung his long legs contentedly from the opposite desk. He was sincerely pleased to hook up with the *Wireless*—it had been, in fact, his pet ambition to cover the theaters for it; but there lacked the element of surprise.

Everything was coming his way now,

so he answered: "That's bully, old fellow, and I am awfully obliged to you."

"You will like Weldon," said Rich, a little surprised at his lack of enthusiasm. "Old man is a little blue to-night. Funny thing—a couple of footpads held him up near the Park and got his entire roll. You ought to hear him cuss New York police protection! See his editorial in to-day's issue."

Watson leaned forward attentively.

"What did they get?" he asked.

"Eight hundred dollars, and an old folding pigskin wallet," answered Rich, with the cheerfulness of the immune.

Watson fumbled in several pockets, and finally drew out a rather battered pigskin wallet. From other pockets he hauled forth fat rolls of greenbacks before the bulging eyes of Billy Rich; from which he counted off sufficient yellowbacks to total eight hundred dollars.

"Happened to find it," he remarked carelessly. "Give it to him with the compliments of his new critic." And he began to stuff the remainder back into his clothes.

"Well—I'm—" began Rich, and was unable to continue. "But see here. Watson, I'm not going to keep this stuff! I might get held up myself!"

"Put it in the safe," yawned Watson. "I don't want it. I'll buy you a drink."

Rich sighed regretfully.

"Not for an hour yet," he complained. "I'll meet you at the Press Club then."

"No, you won't!" laughed Watson. "I'm off. Got to get in trim for my daily column. Ta-ta!"

He left Rich staring dully at the eight hundred dollars. Once more on the street, he decided that it was a shame to waste time in sleep. He would have a nice ride, and then breakfast at the Urban. He glanced up and down seeking a vehicle.

A shrinking girl, pretty, and rather shabby, edged towards him, trying to decide upon his status and condition. She finally opened her lips to speak, but Watson shook his head and smiled. Drawing a twenty-dollar bill from his coat pocket, he handed it to her.

"Run away, kiddie, and have a long sleep, and then a big breakfast," he said.

The girl had not found voice in which to thank him, when Watson hailed a passing taxi, and jumped in. The chauffeur naturally held the door open for the girl to enter, but Watson closed it.

"Where to, sir?" asked the chauffeur.

Watson thought for a moment.

"Up through the Park," he decided.

It would be, he felt, an entirely fitting end to his large evening, to revisit the little pool in the wood, and make faces at it, and see if he could comprehend the frame of mind in which he had stared into its depths seven hours ago.

At the beginning of the riding circuit he dismissed his taxi, and proceeded on foot.

Arrived at the little bridge, he leaned meditatively over the parapet, under the mountain-ash, and found plenty of food for thought.

He found, as well, the loose block of granite, which suddenly gave way beneath his elbows, and he fell headlong into the dark pool, and rose to the surface strangling with the brackish water he had swallowed.

As I have said, Watson could not swim a stroke.

Oh, yes! he fought with the desperation born of despair.

That was quite evident when, in the fresh dawn, a mounted policeman passed, and—but anyhow, and after all, he learned the truth about the curious sensations of drowning; but, like the rest, he never came back to tell.

KITTY NEIL.

By John Francis Waller.

"**A**H, sweet Kitty Neil, rise up from that wheel,
Your neat little foot will be weary from spinning;
Come trip down with me to the sycamore-tree,
Half the parish is there, and the dance is beginning.
The sun has gone down, but the full harvest moon
Shines sweetly and cool on the dew-whitened valley,
While all the air rings with the soft, loving things
Each little bird sings in the green-shaded alley."

With a blush and a smile Kitty rose up the while,
Her eye in the glass, as she bound her hair, glancing;
'Tis hard to refuse when a young lover sues,
So she couldn't but choose to—go off to the dancing.
And now on the green the glad groups are seen,
Each gay-hearted lad with the lass of his choosing;
And Pat, without fail, leads out sweet Kitty Neil—
Somehow, when he asked, she ne'er thought of refusing.

Sweet Kate! Who could view your bright eyes of deep blue,
Beaming humidly through their dark lashes so mildly,
Your fair-turned arm, heaving breast, rounded form,
Nor feel his heart warm, and his pulses throb wildly;
Young Pat feels his heart, as he gazes, depart,
Subdued by the smart of such painful yet sweet love;
The sight leaves his eyes, as he cries with a sigh:
"Dance light, for my heart it lies under your feet, love!"

The Bolting Baroness



Translated from the German of August Weissl
BY ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

YOUNG BARON SPHOR, of Vienna, having resigned from the army, is employed by Deputy Police Commissioner Wurz to find a spy who has stolen political papers from a distinguished general. The theft is connected with the murder of an alleged laborer—Strebinger—who has been found shot in a house in a poorer quarter of the city) and still further, with the beautiful widowed Baroness Sternburg—the daughter of a Venetian Senator, Castellmari. She flees from town and goes to Venice. After much searching it is discovered that there can be little doubt but that Strebinger is, really an educated man in disguise, and moreover, that he has, some years previous, answered to the name of Giardini, at which time he was arrested at Marcone, in Austria near the Italian border, as a spy, though later he escaped. At Marcone he was known to be intimate with Castellmari and his daughters. Baron Spchor, much against his will—because his best friend, Captain Fernkorn, is in love with the baroness—is sent to Venice on the track of the lady. Spchor, with Dr. Martens, of the Austrian police, sees the baroness, disguised as a girl of the people, go to a disreputable inn and pay a man a large sum of money.

Finally the baroness tells her story. The murdered man was her brother, an Italian spy. Because she feared that even though dead, her brother's personality, if revealed, would hurt her in the eyes of Fernkorn, she had refused to divulge her knowledge of the theft of the papers. This theft was done by Heinen, a quondam friend! He threatened her with all sorts of degradation, unless she kept silence. She at last got the papers by buying them. In this way she explains the transaction in the Venetian tavern. The police start on the track of Heinen, but he is warned and escapes across the border into Switzerland.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BARONESS TELLS ALL.

THE next morning, Baroness Sternburg arrived punctually at Deputy Commissioner Wurz's office.

She found the room full of people. The deputy had arranged a confrontation unknown to herself, and had sent for the servant-girl who had seen the red-haired

woman and the two cabmen who had driven her to establish whether that woman was Baroness Sternburg or not.

When the baroness entered she was keenly scrutinized from every side. The three witnesses shook their heads.

Before asking the baroness any questions the deputy requested her to press her finger in a saucer of finely-sifted soot. The baroness thought the request most extraordi-

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nary, but complied when she was assured that this experiment was of importance for the investigations.

The immediate comparison of her fingerprint with that in Martens's possession showed so distinct a difference between the two that the presumption that it was the baroness who had stood at the window was completely shattered.

The deputy commissioner was much too good a criminal expert any longer to entertain the slightest doubt of the baroness's innocence. All the suspicious circumstances must now be taken to point to coincidences which the baroness was in a position to explain.

"I must ask you now to tell me all you know about the theft of the documents, as coherently as you can."

The baroness leaned back in her chair, collected her thoughts for a moment, and began:

"I must go farther back, in order that you may thoroughly understand my actions and everything that I have to tell about this matter. As you know, my brother appeared; he was staying at Marcone during the imperial maneuvers; was arrested just as he was paying us a visit, and was afterward escorted by Count Heinen to Morpiero, to be passed on to the fortress.

"I was looked upon at the time as his *fiancée*. This had to be, in order to keep the secret of his identity and yet make communication possible. Count Heinen is my cousin. We are connected through my late husband. He knew that the prisoner was my brother. Heinen was looked upon by the family as a pleasure-loving officer, heavily involved in debt. He had often borrowed considerable sums from my father, which he gambled away at cards.

"I appealed to him as a relation, and begged him to allow the prisoner, who was recovering from his wound, every possible comfort during his removal. Heinen consented, and was even willing to go further.

"He undertook to give the prisoner a parcel which I handed to him, together with an I O U for eight thousand lire, which he had lost to my father, two days before, at cards. I do not know whether Heinen knew that the parcel contained a file.

"He also managed to delay the arrival at Morpiero, so that my brother had to be locked up in the town prison, from which he escaped with the aid of the file. Heinen, of course, was held responsible.

"The case looked rather black against him at the time, especially as he had not a good reputation in the regiment. He managed to clear himself at the court-martial, but sent in his papers afterward. He came to see me in Vienna later on, a time when I was already engaged to Captain Fernkorn.

"By threatening to reveal to the captain that I was the sister of a man suspected of being a spy, he continually extorted money from me. He kept me in a perpetual state of fear by bringing in all sorts of reports about my brother. I had the constant feeling that a word from Heinen could ruin my brother and shatter my life's happiness. So I was weak enough always to comply with his requests for money.

"Then came that evening. There was a big reception at my uncle's. Heinen had blackmailed me again that night. He told me that my brother was at Gratz and was shortly coming to Vienna under the name of Adolf Strebinger. He asked for money. I told him to come to my house next day.

"Nervous and out of sorts, I tried to steal from the party unnoticed. I went to my aunt's bedroom. There I sat for quite half an hour alone, away from the crowd, alone with my thoughts. Suddenly a faint light shone through the chink of the door which connected my aunt's bedroom with my uncle's study.

"Some one must have switched on the electric light, for the room was dark when I passed through it half an hour before. I remained perfectly quiet, for I did not want to be discovered and have my privacy disturbed. I peeped through the chink, and saw my cousin Heinen, who had evidently just entered the room.

"He went straight up to the writing-table, opened it with a key which he had in his pocket, took a bundle of papers from the middle drawer and disappeared as quickly and stealthily as he had come.

"I was speechless. I had certainly no high opinion of Heinen, but I did not think him capable of theft. You will ask why I did not at once raise an alarm? Or why I did not reveal everything to my uncle on the following day, when the whole house was in a state of commotion over the inexplicable theft?

"I did not do so for two reasons: first, because I was afraid of Heinen, who knew my secret; secondly, because, though I was aware of his worthlessness, I felt grateful

to him in a sense for helping my brother to escape that time at Morpiero. He was undoubtedly my brother's savior.

"When I saw the importance attached to the vanished documents, I communicated with a private detective-office and had Heinen watched. I did this in order to collect evidence against him. Then I heard casually from my uncle that the police were also watching my *fiancé*.

"This was a terrible blow to me. I looked about for a way to prevent the authorities from following this false clue and to turn their attention in the right direction. I started a correspondence with Dr. Specht, of whom my uncle had spoken as the commissary in charge of the investigations.

"At last, I sent for Heinen himself to come and see me, called upon him to restore the papers and threatened to tell my Uncle Holmhorst everything. What do you think he coolly answered?

"My dear cousin, you will do nothing of the kind,' he said. 'You will hold your tongue, unless you do wish to bring disaster upon your own head. I have taken the papers in order to do a deal with your brother. Mark what I say! If you expose me, you ruin him as well.'

"I don't believe it,' I answered. 'If you do not return the papers to-day, I will tell the whole story to Dr. Specht, the commissary of police, with whom I have been in correspondence for some time.'

"To prove that I was speaking the truth, I showed Heinen a letter from the commissary. He put it in his pocket, chuckling and saying: 'This little note will be of use to me, I dare say. Do as you please. Expose me, if you like. But don't forget that I shall not be the only one to suffer.'

"He left me with these words. Next night was the night of the masked ball. I wrote to Dr. Specht to meet me at the Sophia Hall. I had heard from my uncle that the police were still watching my *fiancé*; and this strengthened me in my determination to put the authorities on the right track without myself abandoning my reserve.

"It is true I had an appointment with Captain Fernkorn in the Sophia Hall, but I wanted to remain unrecognized, so as to be able to speak to Commissary Dr. Specht. I therefore drove to my friend, Frau Von Sellheim, in order to discuss

what was necessary with her. She declared herself willing to accompany me.

"My car was waiting outside; and so we drove to a shop where we bought two dominoes, as I did not wish to be recognized by Captain Fernkorn while talking to Dr. Specht. I intended to change the domino later. Then we drove back to Frau Von Sellheim's, where we changed, and lastly to the masquerade.

"The private detective who was watching Heinen had told me that he had been three times, during the past week, to Number Forty-six Grillhoferstrasse; and I concluded that he was negotiating for the sale of the papers. He had gone there twice in my motor-car, which was placed at his disposal when I was not using it myself.

"I spoke to Commissary Specht in the ball-room, told him that the police-authorities were on a wrong tack, hinted to him who the criminal was, and was just beginning to speak of the Grillhoferstrasse when my friend dashed up and told me that my brother had been shot, an hour before, at Number Forty-six.

"Frau Von Sellheim had been strolling round the room, feeling rather bored, until she came across Heinen, who was evidently looking for some one. She spoke to him; and he asked her to tell me at once that Giorgio had been shot.

"I took the whole thing for a false alarm invented by Heinen, who had perhaps seen me in conversation with the commissary. However, I at once drove to Ottakring. I stopped at the Gürtel and sent the chauffeur down the Grillhoferstrasse.

"He came back with the news that a young man called Adolf Strebing, had actually been the victim of a murder there. I knew from what Heinen had told me that my brother had taken this name; and I could no longer doubt the accuracy of the report. I drove straight back to my house and packed my trunks.

"My intention was, first and foremost, to break the news to my father; but I also wanted to disappear from the scene myself, lest I should be put in an awkward place through some chance discovery.

"I wrote to Heinen from Venice. I asked him to come to Venice and to tell me of some safe spot where we could talk. Heinen knows Venice thoroughly. He came at once, and fixed on a little tavern near the Rialto, where, much against my will, I met him.

TO THE READERS OF THE ALL-STORY MAGAZINE.

I used to talk to you often about the things we were doing with our publications, but within the last year or two I have drifted out of the way of these talks.

One reason for this is that we have not done much recently in the way of new publications or in the way of changes. But now we are doing something very new, and I want you to know about it.

This very new thing is a WEEKLY MAGAZINE—a regular magazine in shape, and in contents much like THE ALL-STORY. It is made up of two of our monthly magazines—THE CAVALIER and THE SCRAP BOOK—which we have consolidated into one publication, the name of which will be

THE CAVALIER AND THE SCRAP BOOK

Of course, everything is an experiment until it is a proved success. The publication of a magazine every week instead of once a month or twice a month is an experiment, but it looks to me like a promising experiment. Thousands of readers have expressed the wish that THE ALL-STORY and our other publications were issued weekly instead of monthly.

An all-fiction magazine that has to do largely with serial stories can, it seems to me, serve its

readers much better with weekly issues than with monthly. As concerns my own taste, I have always found a month too long a wait to get the continuation of an absorbing story, and the serial stories are the worth-while stories.

The weekly issue of a story magazine, is, therefore, the more logical publication. I hope that in this new weekly magazine, **THE CAVALIER**, my reasoning will square itself to your taste, and that I can count on you to help me to give it a good send-off.

With a new publication, a good deal depends on the start it gets. I am going to ask you to tell your friends about this **NEW WEEKLY MAGAZINE**.

By reason of the consolidation it so happens that the first issue of the magazine as a weekly will contain two Oppenheim stories—one from **THE SCRAP BOOK** and one from **THE CAVALIER**.

A very strong serial story, by Louis Joseph Vance, begins in the first number of the weekly issue. It is called "**THE DESTROYING ANGEL**." This is, without doubt, the most dramatic serial from the pen of this graphic writer.

The first weekly issue of **THE CAVALIER** is dated Saturday, January 6, and is now on sale. Don't fail to get a copy from your newsdealer and read the new Vance story. And don't fail, please, to tell your friends about this new thing in magazine-publishing, a weekly issue.

The price of **THE CAVALIER** is our standard price, ten cents a copy.

FRANK A. MUNSEY.

"And this is what he told me: He was with my brother, negotiating over the papers. My brother was sitting at the table, under the full light of a lamp. Heinen was standing beside him. Suddenly there was a click in the window-pane; and my brother fell from his chair.

"Heinen tried to help him up, but it was too late. A tiny drop of blood was oozing from the left temple. Heinen had heard no report of firearms, only the click of the window-pane. Seeing that my brother was beyond assistance, he thought it wiser to go.

"My car, which he had used and then sent back to me, fetched him. The chauffeur told him where I was. He was looking for me when my friend spoke to me.

"I soon came to terms with Heinen at Venice. I bought the documents from him for the sum of thirty thousand crowns, intending to return them to my uncle and thus with one stroke to settle the whole matter. And that is all I know."

Commissary Martens had taken down the baroness's statement as she made it.

"Have you finished, baroness?" asked the deputy commissioner.

"Yes. I may not have acted very correctly, but I did so under the force of circumstances. Only the fact that my *fiancé* was suspected could have made me reveal a secret which I have kept for years.

"At the same time, if I had not been engaged to Fernkorn, I would certainly not have hesitated a moment to give the information. So you see how my life's happiness was quivering in the balance."

The deputy commissioner rose:

"I can repeat what I have already promised you. Neither your *fiancé*, nor any one else shall know anything of what you have told us. The spy affair will be done with when you have signed this report; we can look upon it as pigeonholed.

"But nevertheless, I shall often have to request your presence here in the next few days, for it now becomes a case of clearing up the murder in the Grillhoferstrasse."

CHAPTER XVI.

A LETTER.

THE statement made by the baroness had cleared the situation to this extent, that certain suppositions of the authorities were completely confirmed on the one side, while

on the other side it was now possible to draw a sharp distinction between the two crimes.

When, two hours after the baroness's examination, Deputy Commissioner Wurz handed in his report to the chief commissioner, in the presence of Dr. Specht and Dr. Martens, he was able to say with full conviction that the spy case was over and done with, as far as the authorities were concerned.

The documents were returned to Field Marshal Holmhorst and the affair was laid aside for the time being, as there was no trace of Heinen and no inclination to take further measures against Baroness Sternburg.

The chief commissioner received a hint from an exalted quarter to shelve the case for good. Baron Sphor was telegraphed for to Venice.

He appeared the next afternoon, looking somewhat depressed, for he had left Venice much against his will. He related what he had been able to glean from the murdered man's sister about young Castellmari. It was not much.

Giorgio was intended for the army as a boy and passed the staff examination and the difficult riding tests at Turin. From that moment fate appeared to have turned against him.

The young girl either knew very little about it, or else the strictness of the education imparted to the daughters of aristocratic Italian families prevented her from explaining the thing more fully. She only told Sphor that her brother had had relations with a circus-rider whom he met at Turin and that this had caused him constantly to neglect the service.

His father's representations were of no more avail than were the serious expostulations of his colonel, who was very well disposed toward him. Suddenly, he ceased his connection with his circus-rider; and, a week later, he had disappeared.

Marietta had no idea that the brother had been sent abroad as a spy. It only struck her as odd that her brother should suddenly turn up again at Marcone and that she was told to know nothing about him on that occasion.

Sphor called on Baroness Sternburg in the afternoon to give her the messages of her family. He also informed the baroness that he had put his services at the disposal of the police, as he had promised Marietta

to do everything in his power to bring about the arrest of her brother's murderess.

"So you, too, speak of a murderess! Has it been definitely proved that the crime was committed by a woman?"

"Yes, baroness."

Sphor gave the baroness details. Nevertheless, she refused to be convinced and shook her head incredulously:

"I can't understand it. It is not likely that, during the few days that Giorgio was in Vienna, he should have made an acquaintance. And he was never here before. It must therefore have been some woman whom he knew in Italy and who had cause to pursue him with hatred.

"As far as I know my brother's life he had no relations with any woman whom I should consider capable of such an act. Nor do I know of any event in his life that could explain this awful thing. The whole case to me is inexplicable.

"I continue to fear that the police will once more follow a wrong tack again, if they persist in the assumption that it was a woman who committed the crime."

"Can you tell me of any one, baroness, who was particularly intimate with your brother and from whom he probably had no secrets?"

"Oh, yes, a friend of his youth, Ernesto di Cartelane, who is most likely stationed at Turin at this moment."

"Will you give us, the police, a letter of recommendation to this gentleman, to use if and as we think fit?"

"With pleasure," said Meta, "but I think that you would do better to let me write to Ernesto privately. I will gladly place his answer at your disposal."

"Then, baroness," said Sphor, kissing her hand, "please let me have a line when you receive the answer."

The door closed on Sphor and the baroness at once sat down at her writing-table and wrote to Captain Ernesto di Cartelane.

DEAR BARONESS:

It was with deep emotion that I received your letter informing me of my friend's sad end; and I hasten to send you my most profound sympathy in the heavy loss sustained by you and yours.

Of course, I am at your disposal and am prepared to tell you everything that I know. Only the question which you put to me is not an easy one to answer. You yourself know, dear baroness, that your brother lived every moment of his young life.

You will, perhaps, remember that he had any number of love affairs; that he fought more than one duel and came out victorious from more than one amorous struggle. When I think of all the figures—now rising like ghosts before my eyes—that passed through his life, there appears to me to be only one that he could have in view in the unfinished letter which was doubtless addressed to me.

If there be a woman connected with his terrible end, then this is the only one to whom I could ascribe such a deed. Please note, I say "could!"

I mean the woman who was the great passion of his life and against whom I was always warning him, because something told me that she would be his ruin.

And I only imagine her capable of such an act because she was a woman of uncontrollable passions, an ardent daughter of our soil, whose love was fatal, and whose hate spelled doom. And one other fact turns my thoughts to this woman.

I know that she swore to be revenged on Giorgio when he left her . . .

The woman of whom I speak is Mara Cincinnati, the circus-rider. Your brother met her at a circus performance at Turin, when he was going through his course of cavalry instruction.

It will probably interest you to know what she was like. She was tall and slight, with dark, glowing eyes and jet-black hair; altogether a beautiful woman and capable of making a deep impression on any young man.

From that evening your brother was a different being. Did she love him?

Certainly. After her fashion. With a passion which consumed everything that lay within its reach. In a wild, despotic way, which led to the most terrible outbursts of her ungovernable temper when Giorgio followed any other inclination than hers. She wielded the worst possible influence over him. But there was no means of combating the result.

In the three months during which the relations between Giorgio and Mara lasted, your brother fought no fewer than three duels. On each occasion it was his jealousy that led to open scenes, scenes which had their sanguinary aftermath on the following day.

It was in Mara's nature to keep your brother in a perpetual condition of tension. If, once in a way, he showed her a little less attention than usual, her eyes that evening would glow at some stranger in the circus, only with the object of inflaming Giorgio anew.

Then came the catastrophe. An elderly gentleman happening to pass through Turin, saw Mara, fell in love with her, and offered her his hand.

Giorgio was furious if Mara so much as

exchanged a word with the newcomer; and he forbade her to have anything to do with him.

Then she stayed away from a ride which they had arranged to take together. Giorgio hurried back to her rooms and learned that she had driven off with the other man in a carriage.

She remained away for two days. Then, when she returned, she said that she now meant to marry. Giorgio made her a terrible scene and declared that he had done with her.

Mara simply laughed. She was convinced that, in a few days, he would think differently. She thought it absolutely out of the question that he could ever give her up.

But this time she was wrong. His male pride flared up. He showed himself firm. Perhaps it had already dawned upon him that this state of things could not go on forever.

Perhaps my influence carried a little weight. I put it to my friend that now was the time to shake off his fetters.

I persuaded my friend to ask for a furlough, and I took him away the same evening. Our journey had neither aim nor object. I wanted to distract your brother, to give him another range of ideas, to heal him, in short.

After three weeks we returned to Turin. There were about twenty letters waiting for Giorgio at his rooms, all in Mara's handwriting. His man had not been able to forward them, as he did not know our address.

The letters were so many passionate outbursts. Mara prayed, pleaded, cursed. A wild vow of revenge ran through the whole correspondence.

I began to be afraid. I feared that all this frenzy of love would break open my friend's hardly healed wound, that the old charm which he had just escaped would regain its power and that he would fall into the woman's hands once more.

But—whether it was that his previous will-power and energy returned, I cannot say—the fact remains that the letters made no impression on him.

A few days passed.

Then, one morning, Mara met your brother on his way to duty in the street. Wherever he went, during the following weeks, she was sure to be. She tried every means to win him back again.

She went about with strange men in the hope of making him jealous; she compromised him by causing scenes in public places, and carried it to such a pitch that life for Giorgio soon became unbearable, became a torture.

She behaved as though she had gone mad. Giorgio treated her as one against whom nothing avails but stoicism.

At last, the officers at the head of the riding-school, which we both visited, interfered. They put it to Giorgio that it would not do for an officer to be continually mixed up in public scandals.

They advised him to join his troop. He asked for leave, but begged me not to mention it to anybody. The preparations for departure were kept as quiet as possible.

Mara heard of it nevertheless. She made a last attempt to win him back to her. She came to his rooms and made a dreadful scene.

I happened to be with him when Mara rushed in like a madwoman and flung herself on her knees before Giorgio. When she saw nothing but a look of cold contempt in his eyes, she knew that it was all over and that he had really finished with her.

"So you are going away?" she said.

"Yes," answered Giorgio in a hard voice.

Then she went to the door. She turned on the threshold, faced him once more, and just said in tones of incredible clearness:

"Don't forget this day. I shall kill you!"

When we were returning home the following night, we were set upon by two ruffians in a dark alley. I do not know if they were acting by Mara's orders.

In any case, it was very remarkable that their knives were only aimed at Giorgio. The adventure cost Giorgio that scar on his forehead.

This attempt on his life brought the seriousness of the situation home to us. I recognized that Mara was resolved to go to all lengths. The woman's passionate nature made me fear for my friend's life.

I wanted to report the matter to the police. But Giorgio would not hear of this, though he saw that his life was henceforth exposed to hourly danger.

I advised your brother to go abroad, or else to disappear for a time. He saw the necessity of it and, three days later, during which time I never left his side, he sent up a request to the military authorities, asking for employment in the "special service department," which, in view of his particular qualifications, was granted.

You know the rest.

As is usual in those cases, Giorgio's name was struck off the active list of officers. He was looked upon as having disappeared; and not even I knew where his secret orders carried him.

His arrest at Marccone gave me news of him through you. Since then I have heard nothing of him, until your letter telling me of his sad end.

I can assure you that no other woman in Giorgio's life has played a part that could admit of so terrible a suspicion.

I must add that since that time I have neither seen or spoken to Mara Cincinnati.

I have only heard that she is married and that she is living somewhere abroad, in Paris, I believe.

And now, if I can be of any use to you, send for me.

With every expression of heartfelt sympathy, I remain,

Always most sincerely yours,
ERNESTO DI CARTELANE.

CHAPTER XVII.

COUNT HEINEN TALKS.

STROLLING beside the lake at Geneva, Count Heinen noticed a strange gentleman, at the corner of the Place du Pont, who bowed politely and looked as though he wished to speak to him.

Heinen returned the bow frigidly, appeared not to notice the stranger's intention, and avoided him by taking a wide curve round the National Memorial.

"That's an unfortunate fellow," he muttered to himself. "He has been following me like a shadow for the last two days."

Heinen returned to the hotel. There were only two seats vacant at one of the tables in the luncheon-room.

Heinen had hardly seated himself when the "importunate fellow" walked in and took possession of the other empty chair.

The stranger bowed to the count with studied politeness and addressed a few casual remarks to him, but stopped when he noticed that Heinen did not respond.

When lunch was over and Heinen was making his way to the smoking-room, the stranger confronted him at the door.

"Excuse me, Count Heinen. May I ask for a few minutes' conversation?"

"I beg your pardon," replied Heinen nervously, "but I am in a great hurry. Another time, perhaps—"

"Forgive me, but it concerns a matter of some importance to yourself."

Heinen lowered his eyes angrily.

"What can I do for you?"

"Our conversation must be private."

The count hesitated for a moment and then said impatiently:

"Please come up-stairs to my room."

He walked on in front.

The waiter on the first floor officially opened the door of a sitting-room. The count and his visitor entered. Count Heinen pointed to a chair, by way of inviting his companion to be seated, and said:

"I am rather pressed for time, sir—I

am sorry to say I have forgotten your name."

The stranger introduced himself as Dr. Martens and added with a smile:

"Commissary of police of the Vienna Criminal Investigation Department."

The count threw the commissary a quick, penetrating glance and observed:

"Ah, so you are a commissary of police? That alters the case. Then the attention which you have been paying me for the last few days has formed part of your official duty.

"And so I suppose that this conversation is an official rather than a private one? May I ask why the Vienna Criminal Investigation Department honors me with its attention? Or perhaps you are only staying at Geneva in a private capacity?"

"No, Count Heinen, I am here officially. I was sent here because we ascertained that you were still here, and because we attach great importance to some statements which we expect to obtain from you."

"And what if I am not prepared to make any?" asked Heinen, eying the other askance.

"I am sure that you will not refuse. I will begin by telling you that the matter does not concern you personally, but has to do with a crime which is occupying the authorities and which to a certain extent concerns your family."

"My family? You must be wrong there, doctor!"

"No, I think not. Surely young Castellmari, who was found shot in the Grillhoferstrasse, in Vienna, was your cousin?"

The count looked up startled and nervously stroked his upper lip.

After a pause he said:

"Then the police have got so far? They know who the victim was?"

"Yes. And we also know that you were a witness of the crime."

"You are merely expressing a supposition for which, I take it, you will have some difficulty in providing evidence."

"No, count, I am stating a fact which I can prove. You were seen with Castellmari by the watchman, Stolzengruber, in the room where the murder took place. And on the other hand, you yourself told your cousin, Baroness Von Sternburg, that Castellmari died in your arms."

Count Heinen leisurely knocked the ash from his cigar, crossed his legs and replied with a yawn:

"These are assertions which may or may not be true. I do not see how you are going to prove it."

"It is quite simple. I brought the watchman, Stolzengruber, with me to Geneva, and he has recognized you."

"Oh, please! Recognized! After all these months! When he can only have caught a passing glimpse of the person! You don't call that a proof?"

"Certainly not," replied Dr. Martens. "For this reason, and also to have a surer basis to go upon, I borrowed one of your patent-leather shoes last night. Your footprint corresponds exactly with the tracks which you left in the snow on that eventful night."

"I go so far even as to say that you were wearing the very shoes which you have on at this moment. So that the watchman's evidence and the impressions of the footprints are both against you."

The count was again silent for a moment. The gravity of the situation began to stare him in the face. He tried to think of a way out. But he still retained his composure.

Then he answered with bland sarcasm:

"I must congratulate you on your conscientious zeal and perspicacity. Well, well, let us admit that things are really as you say. What do you want of me now that you have established all these so-called facts?"

"Allow me, count. Before asking you any further questions, I should like to make the position between us quite clear. No doubt you have your own reasons for your sudden departure from Vienna and your stay in Switzerland."

"It is not part of my program to interest myself on these points. In the first place, I have no instructions to that effect; and, secondly, the laws of the country in which we now are forbid any interference on my part."

"Very true," observed the count calmly.

"So—?"

"So I will not touch on those topics at all," continued the commissary. "My instructions are simply to clear up the mystery of the Grillhoferstrasse murder, and, in this connection, I must draw your kind attention to the fact that Switzerland offers no protection in the case of that class of crime."

"So I put the alternatives to you—either you listen to my questions and answer them,

or else you decide to go back with me to Vienna, where you will be obliged to answer these questions and others in addition."

The count leaned back in his armchair, looked up reflectively at the ceiling, and then asked calmly:

"How could you force me to return with you to Vienna?"

"By calling upon the local authorities for their assistance."

"What crime could you accuse me of that would enable you to induce them to consent?"

"None at all. I should simply ask to have you arrested on suspicion of being implicated in the murder."

"In other words, what you mean to convey is this: that if I refuse to give you certain explanations, or if I do not succeed in clearing myself in your eyes, you will apply for the aid of the local police. And what happens if my answers satisfy you in every respect?"

"Then I leave for Vienna this evening and you can stay and do what you please."

Count Heinen walked to the balcony window and looked out over the blue lake of Geneva. If he wished to avoid a scandal in the town he must needs consent. He had no intention of rousing the attention of the authorities of that hospitable country, Switzerland.

He made up his mind. He went back to his chair and sat down again opposite Dr. Martens. His voice betrayed none of the excitement that possessed him as he said:

"Let us be quite frank. I see that I am in your hands. You will understand that it is to my interest to remain here undisturbed. Put your questions. I will tell you everything I know—everything."

"I repeat, I am only interested in the murder. This, therefore, is the sole point on which I must ask for the absolute truth."

"You shall have it. Please proceed."

"Were you with Castellmari when he was shot?"

"Yes—it was after half past eight in the evening. Giorgio was sitting at a table, with a little lamp upon it. I was standing near him. We were talking."

"Suddenly there was a click in the window-pane, and, at the same instant, Castellmari sank back in his chair. I did not grasp what had happened. I must tell you I had heard no report of firearms."

"Giorgio's face was a ghastly white. He put his hands to his head. I thought my

cousin had fainted and tried to raise him up. Then I noticed, for the first time, the dim look in his eyes and the drop of blood oozing from a wound in his left temple. I shook him and called to him. I heard the rattle in his throat, and then it was over.

"I did not wish to be found in this position, so I made off through the window and drove to the masquerade at the Sophia Hall, where I hoped to meet Castellmari's sister, as I knew she had an appointment with Captain Fernkorn. There Frau Von Sellheim came up and spoke to me, and I asked her to break the dreadful news to the baroness. That is all I know."

"You distinctly remember hearing no shot fired?"

"Certainly. No report reached my ears. The click in the window-pane was like the sound of a little stone thrown against it, a short, clear sound, as of a glass suddenly cracking."

"Can you remember any details that struck you? Did you ever meet Castellmari anywhere else than at the house in the Grillhoferstrasse?"

"Oh, yes. He arrived in Vienna on the 1st of January and stayed first at the Hotel Blum, in Mariahilf. An accidental meeting in the street made him decide to leave the hotel and move to the Grillhoferstrasse, in order to get rid of his tracks.

"He told me this. I do not believe, however, that it has anything to say to the murder. It was connected with a private affair—an old love affair."

"Was no name mentioned on that occasion?"

"Certainly," answered Heinen. "But I don't think that's important. Castellmari, as I said, met a lady with whom he had been friendly in the old days, and, as he wanted to remain undisturbed, he changed his address so as to make it impossible for her to get at him."

"Was the name of Mara Cincinnati mentioned, by any chance?"

Count Heinen looked up, startled.

"Yes, the name was mentioned. How do you know?"

"I must urge you to give me all the particulars of the meeting as fully as you can, for the police have been inquiring for the woman for some days."

"Castellmari asked me if I knew a lady whose maiden name was Mara Cincinnati, and who had been a circus-rider. I said no, I knew no one who bore that name as

a girl. When I asked why he was so greatly interested in this woman, he answered:

"She was my fate once, and now she will be my doom. She suddenly faced me yesterday, coming out of a shop, as I was crossing the Mariahilferstrasse. I recognized her at once, though she is rather changed. As she stood in front of me, the look of hatred which she gave me from her dark, glowing eyes was almost like a stab."

"I heard, later, that she had asked the porter for a gentleman named Castellmari. The porter said that there was no one of that name staying there. My cousin had given his name as Adolf Strebinger, just as he did later in the Grillhoferstrasse.

"Castellmari ended his story with the words: 'If anything happens to me in the next few days, you need not look far to find the criminal. Ask for Mara Cincinnati. She is sure to have had a hand in it.'

"Since that day my cousin was always nervous and anxious. He determined to leave Vienna as soon as possible. His departure was settled for the evening of the 13th of January, but the calamity happened on the 12th."

"Is that all you have to tell me?"

"I can think of nothing more. I have given a faithful account of everything I know."

"I had one more question to ask you, though it has no direct bearing on the murder. A note was found on Castellmari, saying: 'Ring up Fernkorn to-morrow.' What is the connection?"

"I can explain that," answered Heinen. "You probably think that it refers to Captain Fernkorn, of the general staff. I give you my word of honor that this is not the case. It refers to a political agent who is known as Fernkorn, though his real name is something different. He has nothing to do with the murder."

The commissary reached for his hat. Count Heinen saw him to the door with the finished courtesy of a man of the world, and drew a breath of relief as it closed behind the commissary of police of the Vienna Criminal Investigation Department.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BACK TO THE BEGINNING.

THE letter which Baroness Von Sternburg had placed at the disposal of the police,

combined with Dr. Martens's trip to Geneva, naturally caused the detective office to concentrate its attention upon the one woman, Mara Cincinnati, who appeared, in the circumstances, to lie under very grave suspicion.

This new discovery led to a perfectly fresh track. There could be no doubt, from Castellmari's unfinished letter to his friend, that he had met the woman before moving to the Grillhoferstrasse. It was probably to escape from her, to avoid her persecutions, that he had entered the secret service; for a spy leads a living death.

He is alive only to a dozen superiors or so; but he is dead to his family, acquaintances, and friends. The essence of his work lies in the secrecy of his existence. This was the only explanation why young Lieutenant Castellmari was looked upon by his acquaintances as having disappeared, and why even in his own family his name was never mentioned.

The opinion that Mara Cincinnati was the murderess became steadily more and more plausible. The deputy commissioner had looked upon the crime from the beginning as the outcome of some love tragedy.

Everything discovered so far tended to confirm this impression, which was justified by the letter from Castellmari's friend, by Heinen's statement, and by Castellmari's own notes.

It only remained now to find this Mara Cincinnati.

The police began by going to work in the usual professional way. The registers were searched, but no person of the name was discovered. Inquiries were made at the hotel where Castellmari stayed before moving to the Grillhoferstrasse. The hall-porter was able to give a very casual description of the woman who had called and asked for Strebinger.

The description did not tally absolutely with that which Castellmari's friend had given of Mara Cincinnati.

True, she was again said to have been tall and slight, with large, dark eyes; but, whereas the letter spoke of her as having black hair, the porter stated most positively that the lady who asked for Strebinger had auburn hair. The discrepancy, however, was explained by the *fleur d'or*, the presence of which had been certified by the expert in the hairs which were found by Dr. Martens.

There was a second circumstance which

convinced the police that, in spite of the varying statements as to the color of the hair, the two persons were one and the same.

The hall-porter described the woman as possessing an uncommon, distinguished appearance; and the *commissionnaire*, who was found after much trouble, stated that the woman stepped out of a carriage near the Mariahilf church, and told him to go to the Hotel Blum and ask Strebinger to come to Schumann's Circus.

Now, all the particulars gleaned in the course of Dr. Martens's first investigations pointed to the fact that the crime must have been committed by a woman moving in the best circles.

As the lady for whom they were now seeking was a circus-rider, which might account for the appointment at Schumann's Circus, inquiries were made in music-hall circles.

A telegram was despatched to the manager, who was away in Berlin, but led to no result.

The *artiste's* name was well known to the variety-agents; but it appeared that she had not accepted any engagement for many years, as she had retired into private life.

Of course, the police did not fail to communicate with the Italian authorities with regard to Mara Cincinnati. The reply despatched from Turin stated that Mara Cincinnati was the stage name of Violetta Crespo, who was born at Naples on the 12th of September, 1873.

Her father was an acrobat; her mother was a dancer. Her childhood was spent on the music-hall stage; afterward she left her father's troupe to join a young trick-rider, and eventually became a circus-rider herself.

She toured all through Italy as the star attraction of the Primavesi, Sidoli, and Grande companies, and then accepted an engagement in Paris, where she was said to have married.

The Vienna detective office now turned to Paris, in order to obtain the husband's name.

But here Deputy Commissioner Wurzel met with his first disappointment.

Paris was absolutely ignorant of the existence of a circus-rider called Mara Cincinnati, *alias* Violetta Crespo.

So they stood now where they were at the start. And Baron Spohr was commissioned to make further researches. His instruc-

tions were to obtain a firm footing in the Italian colony, and try and see if anything was to be learned in this quarter.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER LADY.

BARON SPHOR began his life of a month ago.

Once again he paid calls, danced, and flirted. He lunched and dined out in various houses in succession, and was bored to tears.

Among others, he called on the Contessa di Campobello, at whose reception his attention had first been called to Baroness Von Sternburg. After beginning with the usual commonplaces, he opened the topic of the Grillhoferstrasse murder.

The countess knew no more of the murder than had appeared in the newspapers, and showed no interest in the case. The count did not join in the conversation at all.

And as they happened to be talking of the police, the countess asked where the Lost Property Office was. She said that, coming out of the Hotel Bristol on the previous evening, she had lost a bracelet with a medallion in the Ringstrasse. It was a family heirloom.

She hoped that it might have been found and deposited with the police. Baron Sphor, out of sheer politeness, offered to make inquiries at the Lost Property Office himself, and asked for a detailed description.

"Oh, it would be easily recognized," said the countess. "The bracelet consists of six rows of thin Venetian gold chains, which are fastened with four clasps. The last clasp has a medallion on it, with a picture of the Blessed Virgin in enamel.

"I should be very grateful if you could make inquiries for me, for I should be sorry to lose this old family piece.

"I am prepared, of course," she added, "to pay a reward to the finder. It has not much value as an ornament, but I am attached to it for the sake of its traditions."

Baron Sphor took his leave, and next morning before going to Deputy Commissioner called at the Lost Property Office to ask if a bracelet answering to the description had been left there.

"I will see," answered the policeman in charge, casting a suspicious look at Sphor, and left the room.

He was away for some little time, and returned accompanied by a detective.

"The bracelet which you describe has been found. Please go with this gentleman, who will show it to you."

Greatly to his astonishment, Baron Sphor was shown into Deputy Commissioner Wurz's office.

The bracelet was lying on the writing-table. The deputy commissioner seemed equally surprised to see Sphor enter the room. He had obviously expected some one very different.

"Now, really, my dear baron, are you the owner of this bracelet?"

"Not exactly the owner," said Sphor, smiling. "But I am authorized by the probable owner to fetch it."

"Oh, indeed?" drawled Wurz. "A curious coincidence, that you of all people should be interested in this particular thing."

"Well, but why, Mr. Deputy?"

The deputy did not answer at once.

"Well, how does the matter stand? Who commissioned you to come? To whom does the bracelet really belong?" Wurz asked, rapidly and excitedly, after a pause.

The Contessa di Campobello asked me to call, if I was passing, and see if a bracelet of this kind had been brought in, as she lost one the evening before yesterday in the Ringstrasse."

"Really! This is most interesting. So the lady's name is Campobello? Well, is this her bracelet?"

"That, of course, I can't say, Mr. Deputy. Only the countess herself can tell us that. If you will let me have it to take to her, I can bring you an answer to-day."

"Certainly, my dear Baron Sphor," replied the deputy commissioner eagerly. "Certainly you shall have it. It is even much more important to me than you think to know to whom it belongs.

"It is a matter of the very greatest interest to me," Wurz exclaimed, springing from his chair. "A matter of the most extraordinary interest! The bracelet will perhaps provide the solution of all the mysteries."

The obviously excited deputy continued:

"Yes, yes, I dare say you're surprised. This is how the matter stands. This bracelet was found two nights ago on the pavement near the Hotel Bristol by the hotel detective, who was just going home. He left it at the Lost Property Office, and of

course said that he meant to claim the reward, if one was offered.

"The bracelet, therefore, was inventoried according to rule, and in the course of this was closely examined. The clerk thereupon by the merest accident discovered a little knob at the back of the medallion which sprang open when the knob was pressed. And what do you think it contains?"

"Well?"

"Look for yourself."

The deputy commissioner took the bracelet, pressed on a given spot on the back edge of the medallion, and the enamel Madonna sprang open. Behind was a miniature photograph.

"Ah!" exclaimed Baron Sphor. "That I did not expect. It's young Castellmari."

"Yes," nodded the deputy excitedly. "It's the likeness of the murdered man in the Grillhoferstrasse."

Baron Sphor went straight from the Lost Property Office to Baroness Von Sternburg to see if he could obtain any information from her beforehand about the Contessa di Campobello. If there were grounds for suspicion, the baroness would certainly be able to give him a hint or two.

In the hall he knocked up against Captain Fernkorn, who called out to him:

"The baroness has good news for you. Marietta is coming to Vienna the day after to-morrow, and is looking forward to seeing you."

The baroness stood at the door of her little drawing-room, waiting for Sphor, and cordially offered him her hand.

"My sister sends you ever so many messages. She is leaving Venice to-day. I hope that you will do me the pleasure of dining with us the day after to-morrow. We shall be quite a small party."

Sphor bowed gladly and gratefully over Meta's white hand.

"And what news have you for me?"

"Important news, baroness."

"Let's hear it."

The baroness pulled forward an arm-chair for Sphor, and sank back into the corner of her settee.

"Well, what has happened?"

"Nothing, or a great deal. The next few hours will tell us that. You know the Contessa di Campobello?"

"Yes—slightly. I know her as one knows a person to whom one has talked on

three or four occasions for a quarter of an hour at a time. But there has never been the least sort of intimacy between us."

"I am rather surprised to hear you say that, baroness," said Sphor. "I took it for granted that just you and the countess would be on very friendly terms."

"Why should you think so?"

"Because she is a fellow countrywoman of yours; and so I thought—"

"Excuse me," interrupted the baroness, "she is not my fellow countrywoman; her husband is an Italian."

"Is the countess not an Italian?" asked Sphor with disappointment.

"No," replied the baroness. "Her maiden name was— Wait a moment—"

"Cincinnati?"

"Not at all. Gobboms—Gibbon—Gadson—that sort of name. I can't remember it at the moment. But I know that she was the daughter of a wealthy mine-owner from Chicago."

"Then she is not an Italian. That rather alters the case," said Sphor half to himself.

He paused, and then asked:

"Did the countess never mention that she knew your brother?"

"The countess? My brother? This is quite new to me. What makes you think that? Has she spoken of Giorgio to you?"

"No," said Sphor. "But an accident put the idea in my head. The countess has lost a bracelet, which has been found by the police. The bracelet contains a picture. And whose picture do you think it is?"

Baron Sphor put his hand in his pocket and produced the bracelet.

"Why, that's my bracelet!" exclaimed the baroness.

"Yours?"

"Yes—or, at least, I have one just like it. Wait a minute."

The baroness hurried out of the room, and returned in a few moments with a jewel-case in her hands.

"I was wrong, but just look at this—it is precisely the same as the other."

"Allow me."

Sphor compared the two bracelets. The medallion in the one belonging to the baroness could also be opened. And this also contained a photograph of the murdered man.

"Where did you get this ornament?"

"My brother sent it to me from Turin with his photograph inside, as you see."

"It's beyond me. This medallion, too!"

Sphor pressed the spring and handed the baroness the open medallion of the bracelet which he had brought with him.

Meta started back.

"Why, it's he! Giorgio! And is this the bracelet which the Contessa di Campobello lost?"

"From the description she gave me of it, it must be hers."

"I can't understand it. She never mentioned Giorgio to me with so much as a single word. And she must have been on intimate, very intimate terms with him if she could not part with his photograph; for you must know that this is an old likeness of my brother, as you see."

Meta opened her own medallion and pointed to the little miniature photograph.

"There you have the same portrait. This was taken when Giorgio was stationed in Turin for his cavalry course. It is the last likeness of my brother that I ever had. And now it occurs to me . . . an awful idea . . . Oh!"

The baroness's hand fell like a dead weight on Sphor's arm; and she clutched him convulsively:

"Something occurs to me which I never understood before! . . . My brother once said to me, that time, when we were at Marcone, emphasizing his words as I showed him the photograph: 'If ever you come across a woman possessing this same photograph of me, avoid her. She is our enemy. Never let her know that I am still alive, for she wishes me death.'"

"And now you think that this photograph belongs to the Contessa di Campobello? If so, she is the . . ."

"Do not be overhasty. For the present, we know nothing. I am on my way to the countess now. In half an hour I shall be able to tell you if the bracelet is hers or not."

Sphor rose from his chair.

"Wait a moment!" exclaimed Meta.

She rang and said to the footman:

"Send Anna to me."

The lady's-maid appeared.

"Tell me, Anna, do you remember your former mistress's jewels?"

"The countess had so many jewels . . ."

"Just look at this bracelet. Does this belong to the countess?"

"Yes, certainly. I know that one. She always wore it. She was never without it. It was always on her arm, even when she was asleep."

"That will do. You can go."

When the girl left the room, Sphor and the baroness stared at each other. Both had turned pale.

"So it appears to be true," whispered the baroness, with trembling lips.

"Yes. And we must be quick. You will know for certain very shortly."

Baron Sphor flung himself into a passing cab and drove to the Contessa di Campobello's.

"It is very kind of you, my dear baron, to have taken all this trouble," said the countess, as she shook hands with Sphor. "Has the bracelet been found?"

"Yes, countess. That is to say, a bracelet has been found on the pavement near to the Hotel Bristol; and it answers to your description exactly. You alone can tell if it is really yours."

Sphor placed the bracelet on a little table close to the sofa.

The countess eagerly took up the ornament and exclaimed:

"Yes, this is it. I cannot tell you how much obliged I am to you for getting it back for me."

"Pardon me, countess, but 'getting it back' is hardly the word. I have only brought the bracelet for you to see."

"What do you mean? It is my property."

"Countess, the police are full of tedious formalities. Everything has to be done by routine. Of course, I could not tell if it was really your bracelet and I could not pretend to be the owner myself; so the ornament was given to me on the express condition that I should bring it back again; for no one except the actual owner is allowed to take possession of it. And that only if she is able to prove that the lost article really belongs to her."

"Good Heavens! You talk like any official yourself! Tell me plainly what I have still to do in order to recover my property from the authorities. What other formalities must I go through?"

"You must go to the Lost Property Office yourself, countess. It stands to reason that they will believe your statement and hand you your ornament after you have paid the reward and signed a receipt."

"How good of them!" replied the countess satirically. "I must say, things are very complicated in this country."

"It is probably the same everywhere, countess," said Sphor.

"Possibly, but I don't understand these things. Besides, I am not feeling well.

"And I hate having to do with officials, even when I am well. Don't you think it will be enough if I give you a receipt for the ornament and pay the reward?"

"Unfortunately, I am not authorized to agree to that. In the eyes of the police, I am only a private individual, like yourself, countess. But I will ask if matters could be simplified by their sending somebody here to complete the formalities, as you are not well enough to go to them."

"If there is no other way, I should prefer that. Anything to avoid an official's den."

"I must remind you, countess, that any police official will set to work with a good deal of pedantic caution, especially when it concerns a valuable ornament like this one. You will have to prove to him that you are really the owner of the bracelet."

"Well, but how can I? My husband and my servants could give evidence. Will that do?"

"Yes, I think so," said Sphor.

He rose and held out his hand for the bracelet. The countess gave it to him.

"I shall go back to the Lost Property Office now and ask them to send some one to you this afternoon."

Sphor hurried off to the detective office to Wurz. He soon told him what Baroness Von Sternburg had said, and what had happened at the Contessa di Campobello's. The deputy commissioner gave him an approving nod:

"You managed that very well. So she is an American, not an Italian?"

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Why unfortunately?"

"I was afraid— You see, Mr. Deputy, it makes it out of the question."

"Nothing is out of the question, nothing at all," interrupted the deputy commissioner. "First, it has not yet been proved that she is really an American; and, even if she were, everything is possible with those eccentric women, especially when there's a man in the case. Just give me the bracelet."

CHAPTER XX.

AND STILL ANOTHER.

THE deputy commissioner rang and ordered a detective to go for the nearest jew-

eler. When the man came he told him to examine it carefully, and note the manufacturer's mark and number.

"In the first place," said the deputy to Sphor, "she spoke of an old family heirloom, didn't she? Old family heirlooms, my dear fellow, have no manufacturer's marks.

"In former days there were no factories, but each goldsmith worked on his own account in his own shop. So we can dismiss the idea of an heirloom from our minds."

Wurz opened the medallion and asked the jeweler to raise the miniature photograph, which lay under a small glass. There was a cross in black ink on the back of the photograph, with under it the words: "12 January, 1907."

Wurz replaced the little portrait in the frame and closed the clasp. The jeweler was dismissed, and Sphor and the deputy commissioner remained alone.

The deputy thoughtfully paced the room, puffing great clouds of smoke from his cigar. Then he began to talk as he walked, as though thinking aloud:

"Those few words at the back of the photograph speak volumes. More than that, they may prove a death sentence. The writing is not fresh. The woman to whom the bracelet belongs must, therefore, have known who the murdered man was at a time when all of us were still in the dark as to his identity.

"How, I ask, did she know that Adolf Strebinger and Giorgio di Castellmari were one and the same person? How could she know unless she stood in direct connection with the murder?"

The deputy commissioner stopped opposite Sphor and asked:

"What does this Campobello woman look like exactly?"

"She is one of the *fleur d'or* ladies," replied Sphor. "The description given by the two cab-drivers of the woman who took such an extraordinary route to go from the Grillhoferstrasse into town would fit her as well."

The deputy commissioner went to the window and stood looking out into the street without speaking. Suddenly he turned round and said:

"Yes, that will be best. I will go to her myself. No report, however good, is worth one's personal impression. Meet me here again at six o'clock, please; then we will discuss our further plans."

At half past four Wurz was announced to the Contessa di Campobello as an official from the Lost Property Office.

Dressed in ordinary clothes, he was shown into the drawing-room where the countess was waiting to receive him.

He took in the countess's appearance at a single glance. Without raising her eyes, she asked him to come nearer.

"I have called about the bracelet," he began.

"I know, I know. Pray shorten the preliminaries. How much have I to pay as the reward?"

"Ten per cent of the value."

"Well, let us say, four hundred crowns. Here you are."

The deputy commissioner put the banknotes away and made out a receipt.

"Now, give me the bracelet."

"Certainly. But I must first ask you for a detailed description."

"Heavens! What a fuss! However, to avoid any mistake—"

She went to the door and called her husband:

"Please describe the bracelet to this gentleman. Otherwise, perhaps he will think that I noticed the details when Baron Sphor showed it to me."

The count appeared on the threshold, nodded curtly to the police counselor, and gave the familiar description.

"Quite correct," said the deputy commissioner. "Are there no details to be mentioned?"

While the count was speaking his wife had gone over to the window, and stood drumming nervously on the panes. She turned sharply round at the question.

"I know of no particular marks," said the count.

The countess exclaimed angrily:

"There is nothing particular about the bracelet. If I had known that it would mean all this fuss and all these questions, I would never have thought of asking the baron to take the matter up."

"Excuse me, but it is my duty to keep to the regulations. I am sorry, but I cannot depart from them, even at the risk of being troublesome. However, the information which I have received is sufficient. Here is the bracelet."

The count disappeared into the next room.

"I have now only to ask you," said the deputy, "to sign this receipt."

He placed a form on the table, and the countess quickly signed it. Then he took his leave.

As he was going down-stairs he suddenly heard a voice call to him from above. A footman was bending over the baluster:

"The *Frau Gräfin* would like to see you again for a moment."

Wurz was shown back into the room he had just left. The Contessa di Campobello was sitting at a table with the bracelet in her hand.

"Sir," she said, with a slight tremor in her voice and without raising her eyes, "this bracelet does not belong to me. Take it back, so that it may be restored to the lawful owner."

The deputy was surprised for the moment. What had happened?

He glanced round the room. It was precisely as he had left it. He turned to the countess, and said politely:

"Excuse me, but a few minutes ago both you and the count recognized this bracelet as your property. You also told Baron Sphor that it was yours."

The countess rose from her chair in a fury. She clenched her fists, and her great, dark eyes flashed defiance at the deputy commissioner.

"I should have thought that it was enough for me to say that the bracelet does not belong to me! Am I to appropriate other people's belongings? I made a mistake. There is an apparent resemblance, but this is not my bracelet."

The deputy commissioner left the house without wasting more words. He walked away, plunged in thought. All the way to his office he kept asking himself the same question:

"What could have induced the woman suddenly to renounce her claim on an ornament to the possession of which she attached such importance, which she never laid aside?" For the deputy felt positive that it was hers.

Something must have occurred during those few moments when she was alone to disturb her inmost being. Otherwise, he would not have found her so pale and trembling when he came back.

The police counselor examined the bracelet again in the light of his lamp. Opening the enamel cover, he noticed, to his astonishment, that the glass over the photograph was missing. Then, as his eyes wandered over the table, he caught sight of the tiny

little glass lying on his papers. Hang it all! To think that he had overlooked that!

Obviously, that afternoon, engrossed in conversation, he had forgotten to replace the glass.

Now, of course, the whole thing was clear. The countess had looked at the picture when she was left alone and noticed the absence of the glass.

She had concluded, to her dismay, that her secret was discovered, recognized the importance and danger of the discovery, and, to protect herself against all the consequences, had chosen the only expedient—to deny the ownership of the dangerous ornament.

It was an unfortunate business; it prevented their getting at her. How could they prove that she was the owner of the bracelet? How could they prove that it was the Contessa di Campobello who had lost it?

The Baroness Von Sternburg had thought for a moment that it was hers; might not the countess have made the same mistake? If so, they were indeed on the wrong tack, losing time, and wasting energy.

Meta had received the bracelet from her brother, from Turin, at the time, therefore, when the young officer was passing through the dark, tragic romance of his life. Did the lost ornament also date from that day?

To prevent any error, Wurz charged Martens to make the necessary inquiries. Dr. Martens was assured that it was not an antique, but a work of recent date, although it represented an excellent imitation of an old Venetian design.

As all the subsequent investigations of the police were bound to circle round this ornament, Dr. Martens was despatched to Bologne, the town of origin, as shown by the manufacturer's mark, to make further inquiries.

At Bologna he sought the assistance of the local police, and an official was sent to introduce him to the manager of the factory. The manager confirmed that the bracelet was a specimen from his workshops, and stated that six of these bracelets were turned out in the year 1900 and that, a year later, two of them were sent to Bianchi, a jeweler at Turin.

Dr. Martens proceeded to Turin. Fortunately, Bianchi kept his books very carefully. After a lengthy search, he found the entry relating to the bracelets. It said, "Purchaser: First Lieutenant Giorgio di Castellmari," followed by the words—"one

to be delivered this evening to Signorina Mara Cincinnati, Circus."

After establishing this important fact, Martens returned to Vienna and drove straight to the detective office. He was at once admitted to the deputy commissioner.

"Well, thank Heavens, you're back!" exclaimed Wurz. "We have already had unpleasantness about the bracelet. A lady has been twice to claim it at the Lost Property Office.

"We put her off with all sorts of reasons. To-day she declared that if the bracelet is not handed to her to-morrow morning she will lodge a complaint with the chief commissioner."

Dr. Martens told the deputy commissioner the results of his journey, and ended:

"So this brings us once more to Mara Cincinnati. There is no doubt that Castellmari made a present of the bracelet to the girl. We must now try and discover how it came to be in the Contessa di Campobello's possession."

Baron Sphor called on the deputy commissioner next morning.

"Any news?" asked Wurz.

"Yes, and no, as you please," replied the young man. "Last night I went and saw the countess in her box at the opera. She was very gay and lively, but complained bitterly of the pedantry of the police. Then she told me with great satisfaction that the bracelet had been found in the hotel."

"Oh, indeed?" drawled the deputy commissioner.

"I haven't finished yet, Mr. Deputy. Of course, I went round to the Hotel Bristol last night and made inquiries. Not a soul knew anything about the bracelet," Baron Sphor continued eagerly. "They did not even know in the hotel that a bracelet had been lost. So the countess has simply invented the whole story."

"And she must have had very strong reasons to make her do that, must she not?" said the deputy commissioner. "People don't go to the length of lying about merely trivial matters."

A detective came in to say that the deputy commissioner was wanted in the Lost Property Office.

"This is the second attempt, you see," said the deputy, rising. "Come on immediately after me. We must not go in together, lest it should attract attention."

A youngish-looking woman was waiting

for the deputy commissioner, and received him very ungraciously. She was tall, slight, elegant, had dark eyes and a mass of auburn hair. She did not seem to notice the deputy's piercing glance.

"I don't understand what all this means!" she cried angrily. "This is the third time I have had to come here! Am I to get my bracelet this time or not?"

"Immediately, *gnädige frau*. It was mislaid in the storeroom and was not found until this morning. From your description, this must be the one."

The deputy handed the bracelet to the stranger.

"Yes, this is it."

She was just about to take it when the police counselor drew his hand back:

"Excuse me. If this bracelet is yours,

(To be continued.)

you must know it thoroughly. Can you give anything peculiar about it?"

"Certainly. The clasp opens by pressing a spring at the back. There is a space inside containing the portrait of a young Italian officer."

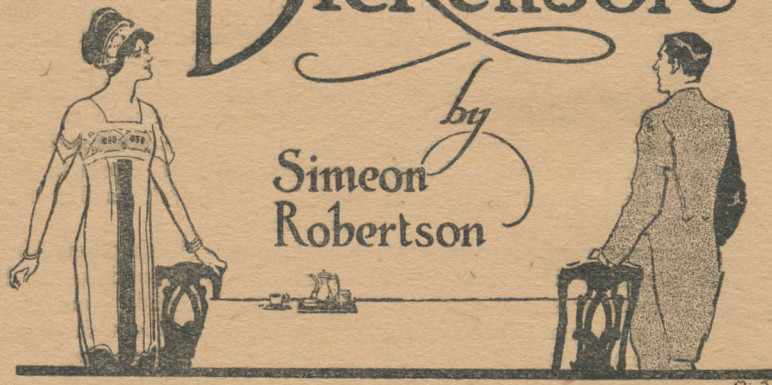
"That will do," replied the deputy commissioner. "I see that you are the lawful owner of the ornament, and I have no hesitation in handing it over to you."

"Herr Wernburg," he said, turning to an official, "go through the usual formalities and then give the lady the ornament."

The deputy commissioner bowed politely to the stranger and left the room. In the passage he beckoned to a detective:

"Follow the woman who will leave the Lost Property Office presently and find out who she is."

Comfortable Dickenson



CATHERINE ELDER almost invariably caught the 5.33 P.M. from New York to Laurelton. She did so more particularly after she became aware of the fact that Joseph Dickenson always rode on that train. Not that she knew Joe; she did not, but he interested her very much, and, afterward, more than she cared to admit even to herself.

She was a widow with a desk in a broker's office—young, accomplished, a fluent, scintillating talker, tall, with majesty in her movement, and disdain in the poise of her head. Her hair was light brown,

her cheeks pale, and her mouth and chin and gray eyes indicated that her mind was no puny thing to be easily toyed with.

She had been a widow for three years, and it almost seemed as if she would remain so, though, having no children, she was perfectly eligible. Several disappointed gentlemen could testify to that.

Joseph Dickenson was not one of those. He had no reason or right to be; in the first place, because he was married, and in the second, third, and all other places, because he was very comfortably married indeed.

Ellie, his wife, had made him so, with a complete understanding of his idiosyncrasies and his varying moods, knowing just when to sympathize and when to allow the periodical fits of depression to be dispelled by the calm influence of their spotless home.

In a very short space of time her tall, strikingly handsome husband had settled down solidly into the lap of a comfortable existence that, in almost seven years, had become a round of daily tasks, little inconsequential amusements, of watching their two wonderful children grow—and of catching the 5.33 to St. Albans, which is one mile beyond Laurelton.

Mrs. Elder saw him almost every evening as he passed the car in which she sat *en route* to the smoker. At first she wondered who he was, and when, by cautious inquiry, she came to know, the full knowledge was more painful than she had previously imagined it might be.

Nevertheless, the catching of the 5.33 became a very important part of her daily life, and finally was accompanied by a distinct feeling of hopelessness that would not be allayed, until she began to negotiate for the sale of her home in Laurelton, feeling that anywhere would be safer and more comfortable than that.

Joe's nature was not frivolous or fickle, and never had been. Ellie had never given that phase of his character a thought—still, one evening shortly before the seventh anniversary of their marriage, her husband did not enter the smoking-car of the suburban train as was his wont.

He did not feel as if he wanted to smoke, and had been troubled with a peculiar feeling of unrest all week, which seemed to have reached its apex that day.

Everything in the office had gone wrong, and he knew the children would be sure to bother him when he got home. He felt himself growing older, which was true enough; that his health was not as good as formerly, which was imaginative; and that the machine was running slower. He was not saving as much as he would like, and the cost of living was going up every day.

He was tired—of what, he did not know; of the routine, the sameness of everything day by day—the same work, the same train home, the same recounting of the day's incidents, the same picayune diversions, the same everything.

Entering one of the center cars, he sank heavily into a vacant seat by a window,

leaned his elbow on the sill, and looked out glumly, his brows contracting in a frown. Presently some one sat down beside him, and, because he was sprawled over three-fourths of the seat, he moved a little to allow the newcomer more room—and heard a soft voice say quietly:

"Thank you."

He turned his head at the sound of it, encountering the quiet, gray gaze of a lady who started slightly and instantly averted her eyes.

Joe did not observe her slight confusion, nor did he realize that his frown had gone and that he was studying the lady's clear-cut profile with a suddenly awakened stare that was unconsciously rude.

Mrs. Elder's thoughts were in a tumult, wondering how and why he came to be there. His nearness, so suddenly thrust upon her, robbed her of the power to think clearly, and she instantly sought refuge behind the screen of an evening newspaper, blotting her face from Joe's sight, thereby making him conscious of the direction of his attention.

He colored slightly, and also sought the diversion of his newspaper just as the train pulled out of the station.

He did not read a single item to an end. There was nothing of interest, it seemed, and the black plumes in the lady's hat were incessantly getting between him and the print—even though they reared their curling height above his head. So far as he knew, she did not know that he existed, but at Laurelton, as she rose languidly, he looked up.

For a single fleeting instant their eyes met, and there was a look in hers of interrogation and, it almost seemed, of fear—a look he did not in the least understand—and it puzzled him.

When he got home he kissed Ellie and the children as usual, sat down to dinner, and talked with great animation upon a variety of disconnected subjects, seeming to have recovered a measure of his former brightness. Ellie observed, with a mild question in her eyes, and remarked that he "was surely feeling better to-night."

"Yes—I do feel better," he responded. "I had a good, even-running day to-day."

He did not realize that it was a lie until after he had said it. He did not correct himself, and the following evening did not enter the smoking-car, either.

Mrs. Elder, occupying the seat he had

had the previous evening, looked for him, and, when she saw him enter the car, come up the aisle, and deliberately seat himself beside her, she trembled. There were other vacant seats he might have chosen, consequently the question in her eyes deepened, and a slight, almost imperceptible, flush mantled her cheeks.

Joe's attention was apparently all upon his newspaper. He hardly knew why he had come there; a compelling force—perhaps it was the mystery of the frightened question in her eyes the previous evening—had guided his steps, and when the train pulled up at Laurelton it was with a strange regret that he arose to allow her to pass.

"Thank you."

The words were barely audible, but the smile that accompanied them, though slight, was a wonderful thing—and Joe had no idea of the effort it cost. It remained with him till he got home, throughout dinner, all that evening, and the next day.

He did not want to smoke on the way home now, feeling that he appreciated dinner much more as a result of the restraint. It was not long—a few days—till he came to know who she was, what she did, and that she was a very clever woman.

He found the office and Mrs. Elder's desk easily enough and looked guilty when she smilingly invited him to be seated. He was also too embarrassed to observe that the lady's eyes widened a trifle and that her hand trembled as she drew a scribbling pad toward her.

The result, after a few minutes' talk, was a commission to purchase several shares of a certain stock upon a margin.

Joe won.

It was the beginning of the end.

He made several hundreds, lost them, and made them again. Mrs. Elder was more fascinating every time he saw her, and he discovered that her name was Catherine. They rode home in the same train together and, honest man, he told her of Ellie and the children.

Again he failed to observe the lady's expression, which was momentarily pained, or see her right hand, which held a small mesh bag, tighten its grip upon it. So far as he was aware, she accepted the information with a radiant smile of understanding, and immediately explained how lonely a life she led in comparison, hoping that he appreciated his good fortune.

Joe's reply was not altogether enthusi-

astic, and he was very sorry for her. Her life, upon consideration, was one of those silent tragedies he had heard and read of; but he never told Ellie a thing about it.

He was always the same to her. Each morning saw him leave for business, each evening saw him return at the usual time. But like seed planted beneath the soil, there was growing, unseen, in his mind, an indefinable something which he did not wholly understand, yet understood sufficiently to be careful that Ellie did not have cause to dream of its existence.

Mrs. Elder was a relief from the day's monotony. Her conversation was brilliant, her wit scintillating, her personality very fascinating indeed. There was nothing vulgar or peculiar in anything she said; though, sometimes, Joe caught her eying him, funnily, in a manner he confessed to himself he did not like and which he was half afraid of.

They became very friendly as Joe continued to give her commissions to buy for him—losing, winning, and losing again.

One day he called about lunch-time and something prompted him to invite her to lunch with him at a well-known restaurant in which he was not known at all.

The invitation was not accepted. Mrs. Elder excused herself upon the plea of a prior engagement that did not exist.

Joe persisted and hoped he might have the pleasure in the very near future.

She stared at the blotter, her lips very tightly together. After a little while, her eyes swept upward to his face.

"Perhaps," she said indefinitely, with a smile. "I cannot promise."

With which Joe had to be content.

That evening, studying her reflection in the mirror, Mrs. Elder saw that her eyes were unusually bright, her cheeks tinged with a faint flush, while her hands, as she arranged her hair preparatory to dinner, were perceptibly nervous.

She did not eat a great deal, very little, in fact, and afterward, seated alone in her drawing-room, her gaze was peculiarly fixed upon one spot in the rug—which she did not see.

It has been said that her mouth and chin indicated strength of mind; and while the dictates of her heart tempted her, so that she felt as if the incessant, gnawing pain, and the utter hopelessness of it all must break down the barrier of her self-control, she shut her lips tightly and turned her

thoughts with steely deliberation from the impossible.

When Joe had invited her that day to lunch with him, the last futile screen, between herself and the truth that she loved this man, fell, and revealed to her mind that hopeless passion that had taken root in her heart.

She had, in that instant, become afraid, and for that reason had not accepted his invitation and given him no encouragement. Now—she was wondering what she should do if he invited her again, debating the probability with herself and striving to find a way to send him out of her life.

After a while she rose, and there flickered in the corners of her mouth a smile that had no mirth in it. Her eyes were still brighter than they had been before, but now, their brightness was wild and dangerous.

That night, without restraint, she cried herself to sleep.

Two days later, Joe called up from a booth-telephone and asked if he might not meet her and take her to lunch. Consequently, he did not see her smile as she thankfully accepted, or he might have been constrained to cancel the engagement. It was a very triumphant parting of the lips, yet her eyes were soft, tenderly so.

After that, because she talked so brilliantly, looked so very fascinating, and was so much of a relief from the monotonous grind, they lunched together frequently, a perfectly innocent diversion for Joe and a saving of expense for his companion, who appeared so thoroughly to enjoy his company that he felt the expenditure was worth it, particularly as it seemed to add a little harmless zest to her lonely life.

One evening, as they sat in the train going home, Mrs. Elder asked, innocently:

"Are you a member of any fraternal organization or anything of that sort?"

"No—nothing at all," Joe answered, almost with a note of regret. "I never go out at all."

His companion raised her eyebrows, slightly, and there followed a short pause.

"Perhaps," the lady suggested mildly, "you might care to—er—join one. I have a friend who is a member of one of the strongest fraternal societies in America. I don't even know the name of it, but he could explain its principles and so forth to you. It is a very good thing, I believe, and I think carries a good insurance."

Joe allowed a few moments to pass, then asked with some hesitation:

"A—er—a friend of yours?" The question was very pointed, and Mrs. Elder's eyes were carefully averted.

"Er—yes—a Mr.—Matthews. He will be at my home on Thursday evening some time after eight—if you would care to talk the matter over with him."

Joe felt a sudden chill, not at all aware of its cause; but there was a pertinent question in his mind. Who was Matthews? And what was he to her? The answer to either was none of his business, but he was very anxious to know, nevertheless.

"Thank you," he said in a low tone, after a short pause. "I will be very pleased to meet your friend and have him tell me all about the organization. Insurance in any form is a good speculation."

Mrs. Elder's eyes were turned from him, and he did not see the strange, bright light that shone in them for a few moments or hear the sharp, little breath she drew. Presently she turned smilingly toward him.

"Then—I can look for you on Thursday at half past eight?"

"Thank you. I will be very pleased to come," Joe replied, feeling very elated and eager to meet Mr. Matthews.

On Thursday at noon he telephoned an invitation to lunch, which was at once accepted. Across the table, when he thought she was not looking, he studied her face intently, wondering why she fascinated him so much—and whether Mr. Matthews was equally in the toils.

For some reason she was unusually silent upon this occasion, and had Joe been a student of humanity he would have seen that she was nervous, too. When she spoke her sentences were disjointed, carrying none of their usual precision and brilliance of tone.

Several times he was on the point of asking her why she was so quiet, but each time was restrained by an incomprehensible influence. He took her to the entrance of the building in which she worked, and as they shook hands he said quietly:

"You may expect me to-night at eight-thirty?" The remark was a question, and her gray eyes swept upward a moment, then looked past him.

"Very well—I will—look for you—then."

She drew her hand away slowly and smiled, but the effort did not have its ac-

customed brilliance. It seemed forced and unnatural, and she appeared to be tired.

Turning, she passed through the swinging doors of the building and stood waiting for the elevator. Her upper teeth bit upon her lower lip nervously, though her expression was reflective.

She smiled to the elevator-runner as she passed into the car, smiled to the clerk at the information-desk in the office, smiled to herself often throughout the afternoon; but there lurked in her eyes a look that gave the smiles the lie—a strained, fearful expression that made her deliberately miss the usual train and allow Joe to go home to Ellie disconsolate.

His face betrayed the existence of a foreign thought upon his mind, and when he had kissed his wife and pecked the children upon their cheeks Ellie asked sympathetically, with her hand resting on his shoulder, her peaceful face upturned to his: "What is it—dear?"

For a few moments he did not apparently know—then a brilliant idea came to him.

"I'm scheduled to go to Laurelton tonight," he said testily. "Man I came across the other day wants me to join a fraternal society. It's a business proposition, or I wouldn't have bothered. I think I've got all the insurance I can pay for."

Ellie's face brightened, and she rubbed his cheek tenderly.

"Poor boy!" she murmured softly. "It's a shame; but if it's for the good of your business, I think you should go and try to make the best of it. We'll have dinner in a few minutes, and after that you'll feel better."

Joe did feel better—in fact, he was in excellent spirits, but took care not to allow his dissatisfied demeanor entirely to pass away. Occasionally he renewed his glum look for the benefit of his wife's peace of mind. A little while later he kissed Ellie warmly and went out.

As he walked upon the road to Laurelton, there being no convenient train and having a fair margin of time, he began to feel guilty. The nearer he drew to her, the deeper became his understanding of the truth that he was not going to her home for the purpose of becoming acquainted with a method of insurance.

He was not quite sure why he was going, or why Mrs. Elder's gray eyes should have taken command of his reason, except that

she was so bright a diversion from the humdrum of every-day life.

When he arrived at the entrance to her home he was agreeably surprised to find that it was no better and no worse than his own. She was upon the same plane as himself, and he derived some consolation from the thought.

A trim maid respectfully showed him into the drawing-room, which he found to be tastily furnished. Mr. Matthews had evidently not arrived.

In a few moments later his hostess entered, smilingly shook hands with him, and, it seemed, held his fingers more tightly and longer than was necessary.

She crossed the room to the door and quietly closed it. Joe looked up, a little startled, just as she faced him.

"Mr. Matthews telephoned a few minutes ago—that he could not come," she informed him with a note of regret as she chose a chair opposite, intently watching his face. "I am very sorry."

Her visitor's expression was half afraid, half pleased, and it was as if he was uncertain whether to be relieved or annoyed.

"Oh—that's a—pity!" he said dully. "Did—he give you the—er—the particulars regarding the—society?"

Mrs. Elder looked toward the door pensively a little while; then, with a peculiar twitching in the corners of her mouth, rose and turned the key in the lock.

Joe stared, gripping the arms of his chair tightly.

"There is no—Mr. Matthews," he heard his hostess say very clearly, and saw her eyes fixed upon him queerly—with that underlying meaning in them he had not liked.

He felt very silly, and then more guilty than he had ever done. Suddenly, before he realized how near she was, she stood directly before him, forcing him to look up and meet her gaze.

"Did you wish to meet—Mr. Matthews?"

The question was very direct, quietly and coldly put, demanding a reply. His eyes as they fell to the rug gave the answer. The incoherent mumbling his tongue made was quite unnecessary.

Mrs. Elder's gaze, had he seen it, became soft, pitifully so. Her hand went out impulsively, and almost touched his hair; but she drew it slowly back again, inhaling a deep breath. There was a long pause, which ended when Joe looked up.

His expression had lost a measure of its fear; there was now predominant a wild, irresponsible look in his eyes that caused his hostess momentarily some alarm. His hand reached out quickly and caught her wrist.

"Why—why did you bring me here?" he asked a little hoarsely, half rising from his chair.

Mrs. Elder drew back a pace, and his hold upon her wrist forced him to stand upright. He saw her lips come together, her eyes to look past him a few moments, and waited for her reply. When she spoke she did not look directly into his face, and made no effort to release herself from his hold.

"I need—one thousand dollars, Mr. Dickenson," she declared in a steady, inflectionless voice. "You can make the check out now, payable to me."

Joe dropped her wrist, slowly, disengaging his fingers one by one and stepped backward until the chair stopped him.

"You—you—what?" he gasped.

"I think you heard what I said," Mrs. Elder remarked in a tone that was indifferent to the look of horrified surprise in his eyes.

She moved languidly toward the center table and picked up a stiletto paper-cutter, which she hung suspended from her finger and thumb of her right hand, her eyes upon its pendulumlike movement. "Explanations are superfluous, or should be. You are married—and you are here with me—with the door locked. Rather embarrassing—don't you think?"

Evidently Joe did think so—to the full extent. His mind in a few moments raced over the situation, madly, and found no escape; and he suddenly became aware of the fact that, above all things, he did not wish Ellie to know. That she possibly might do so, made him feel chilly, then warm with a sudden anger because of the manner in which he had been trapped.

Upon a mad impulse, with a guttural, throaty cry, his rage showing in his reddened face, he moved toward his captor with his hands clenched and raised as if he would strike her down.

She did not move. Her gray eyes were fixed upon him, and his forward movement stopped. His arms dropped in jerky descent, limply, to his sides, and he stood gazing at her with an expression that was

almost stupid. Her lips parted in a smile and then, she laughed, a low ripple of derision.

"That—would be very foolish," she advised, in a tone that chilled because it told a painful truth—without mercy. "Your position would then be so much more embarrassing—and I would be wholly exonerated. Don't you think so? I'd probably scream, if you struck me. That would bring my maid, and she would find the door locked."

Joe did not hear distinctly. Something within his head hummed and the humming was growing louder. Mrs. Elder's features were not at all clear.

"You have your check-book with you?" he heard her say after a while, and his hand went mechanically to the inside pocket of his coat. He drew the small book slowly forth.

"I—I haven't a—thousand—in that bank," he stammered, growing very red as his eyes met hers.

She took the book from his shaking hand, without resistance, examined the balance noted therein, and saw that it stood at six hundred and fourteen dollars.

"Very well. Let me have a check for five hundred now and a promissory note for the other half payable—at noon—to-morrow."

Her tone was mechanically decisive, so much so that Joe barely hesitated. His trembling hand made out the check and the note in wonderfully quick time—and one thousand dollars was a great deal of money to him. His one hope was that Ellie might never know.

Poor Ellie! he thought. It would break her innocent, trusting little heart, and, to save that, he would pay anything! How he was going to explain the thousand-dollar deficit, he did not know, but he knew that this cold, gray-eyed woman had him at her mercy, and felt the need of some fresh air and an opportunity to think clearly. He also, in these few, agonizing moments, came to hate Mrs. Elder.

She took the proffered oblong slips, without looking at him, examined them with a most businesslike air, nodded her approval, folded them carefully—and tore them into very small pieces.

Joe started back and stared blankly. The next moment, the fragments struck him full in the face and fluttered to the floor. His eyes blinked and widened still more.

Mrs. Elder seemed to tower above him and her eyes shrivelled him up, making him feel very infinitesimal indeed.

"You fool!" she breathed, in a tense voice. "Oh, you fool! Heaven has given you everything of which a man might be proud and which you should cherish as you do your life, and you have not sufficient intelligence to appreciate it. I have seen your wife and your children and I have watched you, too.

"You have been so satiated with love and comfort and peace that you have grown tired of them and you thought that—I—would be a harmless diversion. You thought that I could amuse you and add a new interest to your life, without giving the consequences a moment's consideration."

She paused a moment, drew a long breath, and gripped the table tightly.

"You—you little know what you have done and what misery you have wrought, or how much more might have come to those you love. Yes," and she threw the truth into his face, "you love that woman and your children as much as a man can love—anything.

"If they were to go out of your life for a single week, you would know how much of you they are. Go back to them and love them and appreciate them every hour you live—and forget that you ever knew—me. You will please not call at the office again."

Ere he was aware of it, the door was unlocked and flung open. She stood, very erect and stiff, waiting for him to pass out.

For a little while, he remained quite still, his gaze upon the rug at his feet, his mind almost a blank. Something in his throat choked an effort to speak, and, when he moved forward, suddenly, past her, he did not dare to meet her eyes.

In the hall, he seized his hat and coat, and, without taking time to put them on, opened the outer door and was gone.

His hostess, standing in the doorway of the drawing-room, had not moved. His exit had been so suddenly and quickly accomplished, it took a little while to recover from its effect—and that of the truth that her little play had been played, her little lesson taught—and that she would never see him again.

At first, she laughed, a pitiful effort that was really a sob in disguise. Closing the door, she walked with unnatural deliberation toward the center-table, and

stood trifling, absently, with the stiletto paper-cutter, no very distinct thought in her mind—then—she looked down at her hand and saw the bright gleam of the toy in its grasp.

It seemed to create a sudden thought, then another and another, till her cheeks were deathly white and her eyes were filled with a wild look. The cutter was tightly clenched in her right hand, while her left leaned heavily upon the table.

She shivered, and her glance fell from its glittering smoothness to the floor. The pieces of Joe's check and note were scattered about the place where he had stood, and, in a flash, she remembered how abject and helpless and pitiful a figure he had cut.

And—because she loved him, she felt no contempt. She was sorry for what she had done; sorry she had given him a moment's pain or fear.

Her lips twitched and the hard light in her eyes died out. The grip of her fingers upon the paper-cutter loosened, and it fell to the floor, while the hand that had held it, dropped lifeless to her side.

Her head sank lower and lower, her gaze fixed upon the fragments of paper, and, in a moment, a low, gasping sob came from her unwilling throat; others followed it, more harsh and painful, from a heart that was torn by an unspeakable anguish.

She dropped, suddenly, to her knees, and her trembling fingers picked up the fragments of paper, one by one, blindly, till they were all gathered together.

Later, she placed them in an envelope and deposited them in a small drawer of her safe—where they have been ever since.

Joe declared when he got home that night that the insurance proposition was of no use to him, but that he had decided to take out a five-thousand-dollar policy with one of the large companies.

Though Ellie told him that she didn't like to think about insurance because of what it was for, the decision was accepted with a smile of approval.

She wondered why Joe was so kind and considerate in the days that followed; but she asked no questions, and he certainly never told her.

He returned to the smoking-car the very next evening—a precaution that was quite unnecessary.

Mrs. Elder never seemed to be able to catch the five-thirty-three.

The One Who Knew

by
Isabel
Ostrander



SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

MISS LUCINDA LAWRENCE tells the story of the mystery which surrounds the sudden death of her older cousin, Winthrop, whose body was found floating in the little lake on his property early one morning after a stormy night. Lucinda's sister, Athalie, whose short married life has been unhappy and who has separated from her husband, seems somehow to be mixed up in the matter, as does the elderly and crotchety Aunt Veronica; but Lucinda can learn nothing, in spite of her sister's great agitation. The only person who might be able to tell the secret of Winthrop's death is Josephine, who, having years before had brain fever from overwork, has never recovered her intellect, but who was found lying at the bottom of the stairs on the fatal morning, and before sinking into a coma has repeated a few words that suggest she has seen the murder. The family has to await her possible recovery.

Suddenly Athalie disappears, in a manner so suspicious that Lucinda fears she may in some inconceivable way be connected with the crime. She does her best to locate the missing girl, but fails, and learns to her chagrin that for some unknown reason Athalie has been systematically deceiving her for months.

The coroner's inquest brings out no possible suspect or motive for the crime, though Yorke, the detective in the case, is heard to remark that he has some culprit "in the hollow of his hand." Suddenly, Edward Remsen, the husband from whom Athalie has been separated, is brought by Yorke into prominence in the case. In a conversation with Lucinda he tells her that Remsen is living in New York under the name of Randall, and that with him are a woman and a baby.

Lucinda sees Remsen and talks to him for a long time, apparently with little effect, though he is friendly. When Lucinda goes back home she finds Winthrop's will is about to be read. The result is terrifying. He has lost practically every cent of his money and that of many trusting relatives. Suddenly Athalie appears. Her hair is a flaming red (this, of course, explains the red-haired woman in Remsen's apartment). Winthrop has left her a letter, which, when she reads it, leads her to make a full explanation. She states that Winthrop has caused an innocent man to go to prison for taking bank funds, thus to hide his own guilt. Remsen has known of this, and it was necessary for Athalie and him to escape persecution from the guilty man, who pursued Athalie with unwelcomed attentions.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO KILLED WINTHROP?

THERE was a paralyzed silence which seemed as if it would last forever.

I sat quivering with a hot, agonized feeling of rage and disgust against the dead, of which the revelation of his theft and knavery had failed to arouse a trace in comparison. That he should have

dared for an instant to entertain such feelings toward Athalie seemed to me a disgrace unpardonable.

It was incomprehensible that he, cold-blooded, inscrutable as we had always found him to be, should have been capable of such a passion for any one; but it was probably all the more intense for its profound repression.

That the natural tenderness of his pas-

sion—unspeakable as that passion was, considering their relationship, as well as the despicable character of Winthrop himself—should, instead of dying the death of all hopeless things, have crystallized into a deadly hatred for, and implacable jealousy of, the rival which fate and Athalie's unknowing heart had successfully placed in his way, had proven a bitter thing indeed, and all but wrecked two lives.

Finally some one stirred; it was George. He raised his hands, and let them fall helplessly on his two fat knees.

Aunt Veronica rose heavily, and said slowly, as if speaking to herself:

"Winthrop, my nephew, in whom I depended wholly! That Winthrop could make of me a catspaw to further his plans against Athalie! Athalie!"

She turned to her suddenly, where Athalie stood as motionless as if she was carved from stone, and held out her quivering old hands. Athalie never moved.

"Athalie, surely you will believe it! Surely you must know I did it for the best! It was out of affection for you, Athalie! Affection, and a fear that the honor of the Lawrence family should be smirched. Smirched! And now—"

She dropped her hands wearily, and turned toward her husband with the first glimpse of femininity we had ever seen in her grim nature.

"Take me home, Maldon," she said as simply as a child; "take me home. I am tired, and I feel very, very old."

There was something pathetic in the surprise which mingled with the tenderness of his quick response to her. At the door, however, she turned on his arm, with a flash of her old spirit, and said:

"If there are any more disgusting revelations made this afternoon concerning Winthrop, I know I can trust some of the family to bring them to me!"

With this last shot she departed.

But there were no more revelations. We talked quietly together, and prepared to go to our several homes. At first they all besieged Athalie with questions and exclamations of sympathy; but after her outburst she was cool and quiet, though utterly unapproachable.

George took care of the box containing Winthrop's documents and other papers, including the remarkable "statement," and said that he would examine into the matter fully, and notify us all as to the exact con-

dition of things. He feared, however, from a cursory examination, that Winthrop had told only the truth when he had written that everything was lost.

And so we left—Athalie and I arm in arm, in the old schoolgirl fashion, as if I were afraid to let her out of my grasp for fear of losing her again. Constance, with unexpected tact, had seized upon Daphne and borne her off with Jack.

A strange silence fell between us as soon as we were alone. Suddenly Athalie said, with half a sob in her voice:

"I am so ashamed, Linda! I am so ashamed of having deceived you, when you were always so good to me, and I was all that you had in the world, but I couldn't betray my husband, I couldn't!"

"Never mind, dear, it's all over now," I said as gently as I could. "Don't think about it any more. You need never tell me another word than I know now, and I shall not ask one question."

"I know you wouldn't," she replied. "You'd just take me to your arms again, and forgive me for causing you all the pain and suffering of this past fortnight; you're so dear and kind. But I want to tell you everything. You don't know how relieved I am that now, at last, I can speak!"

"It seems as if I never could say enough. I can't tell you how many times I've almost burst out the truth, especially last winter and spring, when baby was coming, and in September, when you got back from Europe and she was here! I almost spoke then, but I stopped in time."

"And how hard it was to lie, Linda—all about those Atterburys, and Fanshaws, and Renwicks, and the rest of them. It's a wonder you didn't find me out; you would have, only you are such a quiet, stay-at-home little body. Still, you might have met some of them, and then the truth would have been out."

"You understand now, don't you, that I had to go when—when Winthrop was found murdered, and I knew, or I thought I knew, that Ned had been with him the night before? I had to find him and warn him—and he thought I was guilty, and we were utterly miserable trying to be brave and pretend to be happy for each other's sakes."

"You didn't look very miserable yesterday morning when you waved Edward goodbye from your window," I remarked.

Athalie's eyes widened.

"Where on earth were you?" she gasped.

"Watching you from across the street," I returned.

"How did you know we were there?" she cried. "Oh, I suppose through Franklyn Yorke. But how he ever traced us is a mystery to me. He found us once, and I dyed my hair so that we could get safely away; I thought he wanted Ned, to arrest him for Winthrop's murder, you see.

"Ned and I had planned to run away, pretending to each other that we were so happy because, now Winthrop was dead, there was no fear of any one else tracing us, and we could go away with baby and be happy together. All the time we were each planning an escape for the other from the consequence of his supposed crime, and purposing to share the exile. And it was all so unnecessary; that's the pitiful part of it.

"When you saw me at the window yesterday waving to him we may have seemed light-hearted enough, but you could not even see closely enough to recognize me—in spite of my dyed hair, you might be expected to know your own sister; so it is no wonder we fooled you, especially as we had succeeded in fooling each other.

"When Ned came home last evening and told me of your talk with him, I was so surprised, and glad and sorry, too, at the same time! But tell me how you found us, and all about yesterday!"

When I had finished we had reached our own gate. The sun had long since set, the last rose of twilight was fading in the west, and overhead a faint luminosity shone through the milky whiteness of the moon, hung in the darkening sky.

The sweet odor of wistaria greeted us from the blue-lavender clusters hanging over the veranda, and the petals fell all about the path. And from within came that sound which, heard throughout the southland, makes young lovers draw closer together, and old ones reach out to touch each other's hands in memory; makes the heart of the mother leap, and that of the childless woman turn to dust within her; the rich, soft, full-throated notes of the negro mammy's lullaby.

I turned and gripped Athalie. I could not speak.

"Yes," she said softly, "the baby. I brought her here before I went up to Way's End. Oscie has her."

I opened the door softly.

Oscie sat in a rocking-chair, in the passageway leading to the kitchen, with something soft and misty-white foaming over in her arms. She looked up in utter bliss as I came softly, on tiptoe, down the passage, and fell gently on my knees before her burden.

I watched the tiny pink lids flutter and open, and the bright blue eyes beneath rove about the room questioningly and then settle on mine.

They gazed steadily for a moment, then little crinkles grew in the corners, a diminutive mouth opened like an unfolding rose—a delighted gurgle issued forth, and two tiny fists shot out and grasped my hair—and when I could look up through my happy tears, Ned was there.

There are some things so sacred that one cannot express them. Even in looking back, the heart grows too full for words to come. One can only remember.

The next day was an exciting one. The whole family, including George Latimer, dropped in to see the baby.

Aunt Veronica and Constance had another tiff, because the former said, in a slightly disappointed tone, she couldn't distinguish one feature in the baby remotely resembling the Lawrence family, and Constance remarked that that certainly was one blessing, at any rate.

Aunt Veronica responded with vigor, and Jack turned to Uncle Maldon with a sort of younger-brotherly commiseration.

"They're off!" he said, and Uncle Maldon nodded philosophically.

Daphne arrived with Constance, and fairly worshiped at the baby's shrine. She kissed its tiny pink toes and hands, and went into ecstasies over its eight-toothed smile.

When George Latimer dropped in, she plumped the helpless mite down upon his more helpless knees and stood back gleefully to watch the general effect.

At first he smiled the fatuous kind of smile the bachelor male invariably affects when such a situation is thrust upon him; then fear came lest he should hurt her, and he called vociferously for help until Mary Bradford went to his rescue.

I had been afraid that Athalie would not unbend toward Aunt Veronica, should she call. Not that my indignation was not almost as furious against her as against Win-

throp, for Athalie's long martyrdom; but I felt that Winthrop had deceived her, and she had only done what she conceived to be her duty toward Athalie and toward the family in assenting to his edict.

When, however, the Graham family appeared, Edward Remsen was the first, with the kindest magnanimity in the world, to step forward to greet Aunt Veronica, and she was so surprised and touched she just saved herself in time from unbending utterly and kissing him. After that Athalie drew her aside, and what the conversation was which took place I have never inquired; but at its conclusion Aunt Veronica kissed her more tenderly than I have ever seen her embrace any one else, and they went together to where Daphne sat squeezing the baby affectionately.

It was then, after careful scrutiny, that Aunt Veronica made the unfortunate remark about the baby's looks which called down Constance's rebort.

As I looked about at the happy-seeming, chatting, smiling family group, it did not seem possible that a grim tragedy not three weeks old still hung over us, a dreadful mysterious pall—that the fortunes of more than one of us had been swept away and their disappearance laid bare only the day before.

In the presence of the irradiating happiness of Athalie and Ned, and before the baby's beaming joviality, the rest seemed momentarily to cast aside, or at least to keep from the surface their cares and troubles, and the day took on almost the air of a really happy family reunion. But the tragic mystery was there, lurking and grim.

I noticed George Latimer trying to signal me from the window-seat during a temporary lull in the general buzz, and I made my way over to where he sat. He looked worried, a trifle anxious, and I wondered, with a sudden sinking of my heart, what trouble could be coming next.

"Linda," he began, "I spent almost the whole of last night going over Winthrop's papers, and he spoke the truth, in all except one thing. He has made over a package of notes and securities which cannot be touched, without her consent, to Athalie.

"It amounts to quite as much as her fortune. She won't take it, of course. I hardly like to interrupt her happiness by telling her of it. And, if she won't take it, what shall be done with it?"

"I'm sure, of course, that she won't touch it," I answered. "But I'll call her over and you tell her yourself. I confess I shouldn't care to see her face when she hears of this latest and last mark of our cousin's favor."

I called her, and then went out to the gate to speak to Henry Brown, who had come with the motor to take Daphne for her customary drive.

He asked me how long we would continue to require his services, and I told him I could not tell; he must ask Mr. Latimer. As I spoke it came over me how much we owed this little, fat, faithful, indefatigable man, who so assiduously gave himself to our interests out of pure friendship for the family. I thought how carelessly we all accepted his assistance as a matter of course, and what small thanks he got from any of us.

As Daphne came out to get in her motor—and they must have had hard work to tear her from the baby, for she seemed to come most reluctantly—I turned to Henry and asked if he had another place in view, and was anxious to leave.

"Well, no, ma'am," he said, reddening, "not exactly. But I thought I should like to know about when my services will no longer be required. A—an old employer of mine will take me on at any time. Good afternoon, ma'am"—he touched his cap and the car shot forward as I turned to the house.

Just as I had supposed, Athalie indignantly refused to touch the money Winthrop had laid aside for her, and after some little talk it was decided to place it with the rest of the few available assets left from the wreck of Winthrop's insane speculations had caused.

The whole family gradually drifted over and the reunion became a business meeting. As far as could be at present ascertained, the assets were pitifully small—the property, Way's End, and its appurtenances, the motor, the office furniture, and a few thousand scattered about in different banking institutions, together with Athalie's legacy.

It was unanimously decided to turn the entire amount over to the three outside estates which had also been under his care, and which had been wiped out with the rest, and let them adjust matters, as none of the family cared to go into any litigation with them over the unsavory affair. The portion which the family would receive after the estate had been settled, it

was decided, should be put aside equally for Daphne, who was really not a member of the family, and for the care and maintenance of Josephine.

As we talked and planned the afternoon shadows grew longer, the chill little breeze of the coming spring night stirred the budding lilac bushes, and one by one the family departed.

Athalie, Ned, and I stood on the steps together and watched the last one of all, George Latimer, go slowly up the street.

"Isn't it wonderful!" breathed Athalie, touching her husband's shoulder with her cheek for a moment, as she stood with her hand through his arm. "Isn't it perfectly wonderful! All our trouble, and subterfuge, and heartbreak, and bitter loneliness over, and only happiness ahead for us! Linda, you don't know what it means!"

"Yes," burst out Ned, as if some thought which could not be controlled had forced itself from his lips. "And to think of the one chap who has helped us, from the very start; who has been the best friend, through all these years, that a fellow could ever have—the stanchest—"

"Ned!" cried Athalie, warningly, it seemed to me.

"Well, I will always believe he saved me from making an end of it altogether more than once, and why his happiness should have been spoiled forever, and Linda's—"

"Mine?" I asked coldly, but my heart stopped beating. "What has this person's happiness to do with me?"

"He—he is Roger Underhill!" blurted out Ned.

I turned abruptly, and leaving to them the glory of the sunset I went into the gloom and quiet of the house. My brain was in a tumult.

Roger Underhill! Ned called him his best friend—Roger had stood by him when every one else had failed! Yes, he would; that would be like Roger.

Now, if I would only ask, I could know what all these years I had prayed to know—where he was, and if he were happy. I could not ask. I knew that I never could.

It grew late and they came in, but Daphne did not return. Dinner-time came and went, but still no Daphne. I grew frantically worried—the child had always returned before twilight at least, and now it was dark. What could have happened?

At last I heard the chugging of the motor

outside, and Daphne slipped in, pale as a little ghost, with great dark circles around her eyes.

She quivered that there had been a stupid breakdown and it took hours to fix it, and she got terribly tired and cold, and was dying to go to bed. No, she wouldn't want any dinner, thanks—just to go to her room.

At the bottom step of the stairs something in Athalie's expression of quiet, intense happiness seemed to arrest her attention, for she went up to her and said with a weary sort of wistfulness which went to my heart:

"You are happy now, Cousin Athalie, aren't you?"

"Happy?" thrilled Athalie. "I'm the happiest woman in this world! I don't care that my money is lost; I don't care that Ned has no position; I don't care that my hair will take weeks to grow out, and the baby hardly knows me. I am happy—happy! I don't even care if we never know who killed Winthrop—"

She started abruptly, for Daphne started back and clutched the banisters with both hands. She stared at Athalie, her eyes wide with a sort of introspective horror.

"Who killed Winthrop!" she whispered, as if to herself. "Who killed Winthrop! Cousin Athalie, pray—pray that we may never know!"

Then, as if fearful of saying any more, she turned and fled weeping up the stairs.

Athalie and I turned and looked at each other, the same thought plain in both our faces.

What could it mean?

What could Daphne know about Winthrop's death, or his assailant?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ONE WHO KNEW.

NEXT morning, bright and early, the telephone tinkled with maddening insistence. Daphne had not left her room, Athalie was out on the porch, where Ned was enjoying the sacred rites of an after-breakfast cigar, and I was holding the baby.

At any other time Oscie or Viney would have heard the bell, but now it rang again and again, until finally I tucked my small niece under my arm and went to reply to it myself.

George Latimer was at the other end of

the wire. He seemed greatly excited and asked if we had heard anything from Franklyn Yorke since the previous day. I told him we hadn't, and asked what the trouble was.

"Can't tell you now," he replied shortly. "I rather imagine the authorities are going into action at last. They've stopped trailing Spottiswoode for the last day or two, and seem to have been hot on some other scent. I've just received information that they intend to make an arrest within a few hours, and where the deuce is that fellow Yorke!"

"Arrest! Arrest who?" I cried, but George had rung off.

I became conscious, as I hung up the receiver, of a sound of sharp, quick breathing just behind me, and turning I faced Daphne. She was very pale, and her hands were clasping and unclasping nervously.

"Cousin Lucinda," she began, and then hesitated as if the words somehow failed her. "Cousin Linda, who—who was that?"

"It was Mr. Latimer," I answered. "Why, Daphne? Why do you want to know?"

"What did he mean?" she asked breathlessly. "What was that about an arrest? Who is going to be arrested?"

"I don't know," I said. "He told me the police might arrest some one soon for Winthrop's murder, but he didn't say who. What is the matter with you, Daphne. I insist upon knowing. Why do you act so frightened?"

"I?" she echoed faintly. "Frightened?"

"Yes," I went on. "Yesterday when you went out you were bright and comparatively happy. You came in looking like a ghost and were terribly agitated. Something had changed you utterly since you left here—something, I am sure, very serious. I think you ought to tell me what it was, Daphne, I don't think you should have any secrets from us now."

"Why, nothing happened—nothing whatever," faltered Daphne. "I'm getting more and more nervous over this horrible mystery, that's all. I think of it until I feel as if I should scream, or—or something!"

"Did you stop anywhere?" I asked.

"No; only the breakdown."

"Where was that?"

"Over by Martin's mills."

"Did any one talk to you?"

"No."

"Did you talk to Henry?"

"Of course—a little. He—he's very nice—really, Cousin Linda."

"What did he say to you?"

"I—I don't understand."

"Daphne, what did he tell you about Winthrop's death? What does he know of the murder?"

"Nothing—I can't understand why—why you should think he would know anything more than the—the family, or the—detectives—and I don't see how you can think I—I would discuss family matters with a mere chauffeur! And—and I shall answer no more questions, Cousin Linda!" she cried, flaring up suddenly.

"You have no right to catechize me like this. I am not a child, nor am I under your guardianship. I am a guest in your house, but I will not be treated like this. I went out in the motor because you—you wished me to. I will never go again!"

"Because you and Cousin Athalie are—are nervous and imagine things, is no reason why I should be held to account for them!"

And she turned and marched up-stairs with angry tears in her eyes.

I let her go, without another word. I could do nothing with her in her present mood, and her changed attitude gave me food enough for thought. For Daphne had changed indeed.

The girl had suddenly become a woman—a woman with some knowledge to guard. What could that knowledge be? What could have happened the previous day?

Athalie and Ned sat shamelessly in one hammock on the porch, and I went slowly out to them, their offspring dangling placidly under my arm.

"Who was that on the phone?" asked Athalie.

"Only George," I answered in a purposely absent-minded tone. I did not mean to annoy them with any disquieting news which I could help their hearing. They had suffered so much through Winthrop when he was alive, that dead, I did not mean he should cause them one minute's more unhappiness if I could help it.

I sank down in a low chair and cuddled the baby contentedly against my breast, and we all fell silent, brooding in the warm wistaria-scented air.

And then the tocsin sounded! The sign for which we had waited nearly three long

weeks—the message from the only one who, besides the guilty one himself, could know the truth. We little thought as the telephone shrilled again wildly, what its summons portended.

"There's that old phone again!" murmured Athalie, half-drowsily.

I rose and went into the hall. This time Oscie had heard, and started for the telephone, but I made her take the baby, and I again unhooked the receiver.

It was Constance's voice which came to me over the wire, low, but thrilling with excitement.

"Josephine is conscious! She is waking! It is only a matter of a few minutes, Dr. Crandall told me over the phone. I told them I'd notify you. We must go up there at once. Jack and I will be round in the big car for all of you in three minutes; he's cranking up outside now. Hurry, Lucinda!"

I did not stop to reply to her, but dashed up the receiver and called:

"Athalie! Ned!"

Daphne came down the stairs as they ran in, and when I told them, she turned so white that I was frightened for her, but she steadied herself quickly and turned without a word and ran up-stairs for her hat. We were all ready when Constance's big car, with Jack at the wheel, bounded up to the curb.

We said little on the way—Constance had nothing more to tell us than her first hurried message, and we were all overcome with a feeling of tense expectancy. I am sure that I shall never forget that brief mad dash through the shady tree-lined avenues, up the hill, to what we all felt was to be the final solution of our mystery.

When we reached Way's End, we found the Grahams all there, and George Latimer, but beyond a nod and a whispered word or two we were silent. The house was as still as the grave, and we sat about mutely, waiting.

The moments passed, and no sound came from up-stairs. It seemed to me that we sat there for hours. George cleared his throat nervously, and Aunt Veronica's chair creaked audibly as she moved.

Mary Bradford sniffed once or twice, and Daphne's hands were never still—even Constance twisted about restlessly.

Suddenly our vigil was rudely interrupted. Two pairs of feet scuffled up the gravel walk and strode heavily across the veranda

—a hand was even on the bell, when George Latimer flung open the door with a warning gesture for silence.

Two men entered quietly, looking rather surprised at seeing us all in possession. One was a stranger, a great burly person whom I did not remember to have seen before, and the other was Parks, the detective who gave the evidence at the inquest concerning the wheelbarrow and its tracks from the side door of the house to the lake.

The situation was explained to them and Mr. Parks civilly enough expressed his regret at having come at such a time, but added that he had a duty to perform. He said something in a low tone to George, who uttered a startled exclamation, and entered into a quick, low-toned conversation with them.

All the rest of us sat, with every nerve tense, staring at the unwelcome visitors, as if we could drag from them by our very gaze the reason for their coming. At that moment the little side door opened, and Henry Brown entered—and the detective walked up to him and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

A sort of shuddering gasp went round among us, and some one—I think it must have been Daphne—gave a little sharp cry.

"Henry Brown," said Mr. Parks solemnly, and the big, burly man stepped quietly up close to one side, "I arrest you, in the name of the law, for the murder of Winthrop Lawrence."

At these fateful words, there was an instant of stunned silence, and then Daphne started up with a terrible cry.

"No! No!" she screamed, and the depth of grief and fear in her voice was a revelation to all of us, of what had been going on, all unsuspected, before our very eyes. "He is innocent! He—"

Suddenly she stopped at a steady look from Henry, and strangling back the words in her throat, she sank down in her chair and covered her face with her hands.

In the subdued, but general hubbub and confusion which followed, Henry himself seemed the only calm and self-possessed person present.

He made no display of surprise at the accusation, but stood quietly between the two officers. He made no attempt to speak, to either deny or affirm the charge against him, but appeared to be waiting for the next move. Only his face was waxen in its pallor, and his eyes, with a soft, but

steady light in them, never left the crouching figure of Daphne.

Suddenly, in the midst of all our excitement and dismay, a figure appeared at the head of the stairs, and a deathlike silence fell upon us all.

It was Dr. Crandall, with uplifted hand.

"The moment of consciousness has come," he announced, and the solemnity in his tone allayed our confusion like oil upon water. "The patient is awake, and—I think she will live. She seems to be in partial, if not complete, command of her faculties, and she is asking for her family.

"She speaks of her Cousin Lucinda, and I shall ask Miss Carewe to come in to her. The circumstances of the case are so urgent that Mr. Latimer must come in, too, but I cannot permit any one else to enter the room."

A sort of rustle went around the group.

"In view of the circumstances," he went on, "you may come up quietly and wait in the hall outside, and I will leave the door open that you may overhear, but no matter what information the patient may impart, there must not be a sound outside. Is that understood? Mrs. Bradford, if you are not perfectly sure you can control yourself, I must ask you to remain down-stairs. This is a matter of life and death!"

Mary tried to look injured, but visibly quailed, and they all started noiselessly to troop up-stairs.

Henry still stood quietly between the two men, but it seemed to me that now his face wore a look of anxiety, of alarm, even, which had not been there previous to the appearance of Dr. Crandall.

As Daphne passed him to go up-stairs, she paused and silently pressed his hand. He turned his eyes from hers, however, and gently disengaged his hand, and with a little sob, she passed on up the stairs.

The detectives started for the door with their prisoner, and George stepped forward.

"Henry, you'll see me later in the day," he said.

"Thank you, sir," said Henry quietly.

"Don't you worry, Henry!" I said impulsively; I couldn't help it. "I don't believe it's true. I'm sure Mr. Latimer will make everything all right!"

And after these irregularities, the detectives hurried him away.

"Come, Lucinda," said George to me. "You're calm enough? You think you can go through with it all right? Just be quiet

and soothing, and lead her on, if you can—and she needs it—to talk about that night. Don't tax her too far, but get all you can from her. Understand? Now, come."

With a heart beating so loudly that I feared it would be audible in the sick-room, I followed George up the fateful staircase, past the silent expectant little group of relatives, and into the room where all our hopes and fears now clustered. I longed, yet dreaded, to enter.

What would the next few moments bring us all?

As I entered, a nurse swung the door wide open behind me, and quickly set a large screen in place before me.

It seemed quiet and dim and very peaceful within. Josephine was lying on her wide, white bed, and her big eyes seemed fairly to reach out and hold mine from the moment I entered. I don't think she saw George at all, or recognized him.

I went straight up to the bed, and leaning over, I kissed her thin cheek.

"How do you feel, Josephine, dear?"

I tried to speak as casually as if I had been a daily visitor, and although my voice trembled so at first that I could scarcely utter a word, it soon grew stronger and more under control.

Josephine reached out feebly and took my hand between her two poor, thin ones, and tears streamed from her eyes.

"Lucinda! Lucinda!" she murmured. "How long is it since I have seen you? It seems years! Have I been ill?"

My heart gave a great bound within me, and then fairly raced—for the voice was no longer the voice of a child, but of Josephine, the woman. The six years had been wiped out as one passes a sponge over a slate.

"Yes, dear," I said, trying with all my might to keep my voice even. "You've been very ill, but you are better now, and you are going to get quite well. You have had a—an accident—"

"I know," she half whispered. "When—Lucinda, will you tell me the truth?"

"I will," I answered quietly, but with decision.

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"Lucinda," her eyes seemed to burn into mine, "is Winthrop, my brother—dead?"

"Yes, Josephine," I replied as gently as I could. "He is dead."

"That—night?"

"The night you were taken ill? Yes."

"Lucinda, who was the—man?"

"What man, dear?"

"The one I saw in the hall—the man who—killed him."

"Suppose you tell me all about what you saw, Josephine, dear, and then I will tell you anything I can," I said. "What were you doing on the stairs?"

"It's funny," said Josephine, "but I don't quite know. All I do know is, I seemed to have a dream of waking up after a dream-sleep here in this room, and wanting somebody—somebody who looked like that nurse there," pointing feebly at Miss Nevin across the room, "although I don't remember ever to have seen her before. Isn't that queer?"

"Go on, dear," I said, half under my breath.

"I dreamed that I went out in the hall and saw a light shining up the staircase and I followed it, and when I was halfway down I thought I heard my brother's voice below, only not quiet like he always is, but mad with rage. He seemed to be exclaiming: 'You did well to come first to me! You shall never leave this house to carry that story elsewhere!'

"I dreamed that I crouched against the wall, and went down a few steps farther, and I saw Winthrop standing in the hall before the library door, with a pistol in his hand. There seemed to be a terrible storm going on outside—blinding flashes of white light in the windows, and crashes and rumbles of thunder overhead.

"I saw him raise and point the pistol at a man standing in the center of the hall. At the same instant the man moved quickly and fired, and Winthrop fell—but slowly, catching at a big chair that was there, and dragging it over on him.

"And then, suddenly, I came awake—really awake, not dreaming at all, and there I was actually on the stairs, with the storm crashing outside, and the man standing there in the center of the hall—and Winthrop lying there, so still, under that chair.

"A piece of it had crashed off—a piece with a knob on it, or something round, which made it roll and roll in a wide circular sweep into the library, where it stopped under the table. It seemed to fascinate me, I could not take my eyes off it—I thought it would never stop rolling!"

Miss Nevin came forward here and moistened Josephine's lips with something pungent and aromatic. Her voice had been getting weaker and weaker, till I had fairly to hang over her to catch her last words.

I only feared that she would not have strength to finish her story, before, in mercy to her, she must be allowed to rest, but she seemed eager to tell it, and after a stimulant, which Miss Nevin administered to her, she went on weakly, but distinctly:

"Then I saw that the man had come forward, and knelt down by Winthrop. He picked up the pistol Win had pointed at him, and put it in his pocket—he did it slowly, as if he wasn't thinking what he was doing. Then he got up and turned and disappeared down the hall toward the front door. Nobody came, but I guess nobody heard the shot in the crash of the storm.

"I looked at poor Winthrop, and something seemed to snap in my brain—it seemed to me that I had seen that picture always—Winthrop lying there by the staircase, crushed under the big chair. I tried to scream, but somehow—I—couldn't. Then I remembered sinking—sinking—"

Her voice trailed off into silence, but Miss Nevin again moistened her lips, and she rallied, a little, but she was perceptibly weaker than before.

"What did the man look like, dear?" I asked gently, at a sign from George to take advantage of this brief spell of returning strength.

"What—man?"

"The man you saw shoot Winthrop, and then take his pistol—what was he like? Was he young and tall, with broad shoulders and—"

"Oh, no! He was old—about sixty, I should think—quite slender, and narrow-chested and stooping. He hadn't any beard or mustache, and his hair was quite gray. One of his shoulders seemed to be a little higher than the other, and he limped slightly—"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated George, under his breath. His eyes seemed fairly starting from his head.

"Oh, yes," Josephine went on, but faintly, "there was a scar—or, something—right across one of his temples—a long white—mark—"

Her voice trailed away into an indistinguishable murmur, and stopped. And this

time Dr. Crandall came forward with his finger on his lip warningly, and George and I stole out.

The rest of the family were grouped close about the door, and the varying degrees of wonder and stupefaction on their faces made it plain that if I was still in the dark, one or two of those outside, at least, had recognized the description.

George silently motioned below, and they followed us down to the great hall.

"Well," said George. "You heard? What do you make of it, Maldon?"

"I—I don't know," admitted Uncle Maldon, passing his hand over his head in a troubled fashion. "I don't know."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Aunt Veronica decisively; "the poor girl is delirious! Oh, some of the story may be straight enough, of course, though why one man should shoot another and then take away that other's pistol—the only evidence beside her word that he shot in self-defense—passes my understanding."

"Oh, absent-mindedness—a sort of numbness following the shock of his action—he didn't for the moment realize what he was doing. Often happens in cases of unpremeditated violence," returned George.

"That may be," Aunt Veronica's tone suggested mental reservations; "but that description was pure delirium!"

"Why?" asked George, quietly.

"George Latimer, you told us yourself that that cashier, Henry Bailley, died in prison. How could he come to life again?"

"Some mistake in the prison records, very probably," returned George. "It seldom occurs, but it has been known to. At any rate, Josephine's description just now of Winthrop's assailant was identical with that of Henry Bailley."

"Nothing of the kind," maintained Aunt Veronica stoutly. "The trial, and pictures of Henry Bailley, and his description, filled the newspapers for weeks just before that trouble of Josephine's six years ago."

"If you remember, that trial made a great impression on her—she felt very strongly for this Bailley, and censured Winthrop for prosecuting him so pitilessly. Well, naturally, she's subconsciously retained it in her memory—"

"Subconscious rot, Veronica!" cried George frankly but inelegantly. "She's had no memory for six years! She's sane, but that trouble in Louisiana and everything before it has slipped from her mind."

In spite of the fact that we all thought he was dead, Josephine is assuredly speaking the truth. It must have been Henry Bailley!"

"Did any one speak of Mr. Henry Bailley? He is here."

The quiet penetrating voice of Franklyn Yorke came from the door. We whirled round, and there stood Mr. Yorke, with a meek, narrow-shouldered, gray-haired little man, who looked at us quite impersonally, as if we were actors in some drama.

While we were petrified with astonishment, there was a sudden movement, and Daphne bounded over to him.

"Oh, are you Mr. Bailley?" she cried, with both her hands out to him. He looked wonderingly at her.

"Yes," he said slowly. "My name is Henry Bailley."

"Oh," she cried again, "do you know that your son was arrested this morning?"

"And who are you," he asked gently, "that gives me this news?"

"I am Daphne," she sobbed. "I love him!"

"Don't worry," he said more gently even than before. "He shall not suffer. I killed Winthrop Lawrence."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. YORKE EXPLAINS.

"You see," began Mr. Yorke, leaning forward in his chair, "it was a tedious problem, but it wasn't a particularly intricate one, once I got on the right thread."

"It began with the dried mud on a motor car, and it ended—" he smiled—"in the First Book of Thessalonians."

"What-t!" ejaculated George.

We were talking it all over a few days later—Athalie, Ned, George, Mr. Yorke and I. The meeting was a most unpremeditated and informal one, and we had asked Mr. Yorke to tell us how he had so opportunely delved to the very heart of the mystery.

"Well, to begin at the beginning—I take it that there are no secrets now in the family? Nothing, that is, which I might have discovered, and might put my foot in it by mentioning? You've asked me to tell you how I found Henry Bailley and his connection with the death of Mr. Lawrence, you know, so on your own heads be it."

"The first thing which struck me as

being significant was little Miss Ames's embarrassment in telling me her version of the affair on the day the murder was discovered. She flushed and stammered and contradicted herself over details which did not matter, anyway, and if she was guilty herself she could not more completely have looked the part.

"However, when I found Mrs. Remsen's barrette in the hall next the wall between the study door and that of the side porch, and asked Miss Ames whose it was, and when she replied readily enough that it was Mrs. Remsen's, and then looked as if she would give anything to take back her admission, it was obvious that she knew something concerning Mrs. Remsen which she was trying to conceal.

"Also obvious was the half-burned cigarette with B. S. G.—which a little judicious questioning proved to be the initials of a member of the family—a person, by the way, whom I afterward found to be the owner of the car which left the Hardwick-Symes tire tracks about the gate.

"The wheelbarrow traces and the barrow itself, with its bloodstains, I came upon out doors that morning and—" here he smiled again—"left for my colleagues of the police to discover.

"I knew all these clues could teach me, you see, but I wanted the main thread.

"What I did not point out to my colleagues were too small and seemingly irrelevant items. First, that in three distinct places in the study, peculiar letters and figures had been scratched, and then criss-crossed as if they had been made in a moment of abstraction and then obliterated, or partly so.

"They were on the safe top itself—the iron top, visible when the false front was swung back—and repeated twice on the desk. After considerable difficulty I made them out, 'I. T. IV. 9.'

"I could think of only one thing in connection with the two letterings so put together and that was the Bible, but I had not gathered from what I had been told that Mr. Lawrence was a particularly religious man. I put that by for the time.

"The second item I kept to myself was the fact that when I went out to the garage I found Henry Brown cleaning the car. There was nothing very extraordinary about that, if he was a neat young man, beyond the fact that he had selected a peculiar time for the car's ablutions, not knowing at what

moment he might be called upon to go on some distant errand.

"But the appearance of the garage—which, while not dirty, was in evident long-continued disorder—showed Henry Brown to be no such methodical crank as to clean a car at a most unsuitable time, merely for the sake of having it bright and shining, and in order. Also his diction and bearing, though he evidently made an effort to be subservient, betrayed him as being highly superior to his position, to say the least. Moreover, the mud he was removing from the car as fast as he could was in two coats, not one.

"The previous day, and successive days before that, had been dry and fair—the only mud in the roads had come from the violent storm of the night before, a storm which came up after that car had been supposed safe under cover for the night. On the contrary, however, the car had been out in the heaviest of the mud, if not in the actual storm, and had had hours to dry under shelter before being taken out for the second coating of thicker mud.

"I had these things to think of. Kathleen, the cook, had previously told me of the supposed bursting tire she had heard in the night, and that seemed at the time to bear out my theory, though it developed later that she alone of all the household, except Miss Lawrence, actually had heard the shot which killed Mr. Lawrence.

"When, later, I took Mrs. Remsen's barrette down to her, as an excuse, of course, for an interview, I found myself fairly barred out by a servant who seemed frightened enough at first, but fairly panic-stricken at the mention of Mrs. Remsen—and then afterward received by a no-less-trembling and apprehensive lady of the house, and informed that Mrs. Remsen was 'out.'

"Now, when I considered their trepidation, in connection with what I had been told of Mrs. Remsen's strange behavior during the morning—for those who had first told me the circumstances had, in their excitement, told more than they probably meant—it occurred to me that Mrs. Remsen might have left town for some purpose not unconnected with the disclosures of the morning.

"I strolled down, therefore, and interview the stationmaster at the depot and found out that though Mrs. Remsen had not left by any train from that station, her

servant had been making inquiries concerning her. My dear Miss Carewe, that was clumsy of you!" he added, suddenly turning to me.

I hung my head.

"I suppose it was," I admitted; "but I was beside myself with anxiety. I didn't dare tell any one, and so I had no one to advise me."

"At any rate," he continued, "I had to find out other matters connected with the murder than how the lady left town, and early in the afternoon found me examining some motor tracks just at the corner of Miss Carewe's street, which correspond with those outside the gate at Way's End—more Hardwick-Symes.

"As I was examining them, the very car came along which had left these latter traces—Judge Garretson's. The chauffeur was alone, and ready—with the aid of a cigar—for a chat, and after finding out all I wanted to know about *his* car and its whereabouts the previous night, I asked casually if he had seen a lady with a bag going along as if she was in a hurry. He chuckled.

"I sure did!" he said. 'Picked her up right here at the corner and drove her to the junction—ten dollars for fifteen miles; not bad taxi rates, eh? She belongs in that house there.' He pointed to Miss Carewe's house.

"At that moment Miss Carewe herself came along with a little bag in her hand, and I followed her to the station, to New York, and to her hotel, even, and learned from her telephone messages and telegrams that she was indeed in the dark as to her sister's whereabouts.

"I left the hotel then, took the trouble to put a man—a sort of minor assistant of mine—on the record of Mr. B. S. G., of the cigarette, and her associates, and also of Mr. Lawrence himself, to see if that gentleman's passion for finance had led him, as I suspected it might have, in the direction of Wall Street.

"Then I spent the rest of the night tracing Mrs. Remsen. It wasn't difficult; she evidently felt herself perfectly secure as soon as she got on the train at the junction, for she made no attempt to conceal herself or her destination at the New York end.

"I easily found the porter who carried her bag, and the taxi-driver who put her down at her destination—which was a small but very nice apartment-house in Eighty-

Fourth Street—and after ascertaining that she was still there, and setting a watch upon her, I caught a train back here just before daybreak.

"I called again upon Miss Carewe, and learned from her maid that Mrs. Remsen had the barrette still in her hair, on her return from the dinner at Way's End the night of the murder, and that she only wore it in the evening—yet I had found it early the next morning at Way's End—*ergo*, the lady must have returned there late the night the crime was committed, and all in that storm.

"That was interesting—so interesting that it seemed urgent I should know more. As a most persistent pedler, with astonishingly low prices, I put in an appearance at the rear door a little later, and learned from your charmingly conversational cook, Miss Carewe, all I needed to know of Mrs. Remsen's visits from home, and movements on the night of the murder. My interest concerning Mrs. Remsen was at an end, so far as this town was concerned.

"I hadn't the slightest reason for believing her guilty, and every reason for believing she thought her husband was, and had gone to warn him. In New York my man was discovering that she was with her husband and child, and was piecing together their history—among other things establishing, all unknown to them, an unassailable alibi for Mr. Remsen in his presence at the riding-school the night of the crime.

"My assistant had come upon other items of interest in New York, also—the fact, for one thing, that Mr. Lawrence was a heavy and unfortunate speculator, and for another, that Mr. Spottiswoode Graham had had his car out alone on the afternoon preceding Mr. Lawrence's death, and had returned late that night—or early the next morning—in a very bad temper indeed.

"He also unearthed a few anecdotes of some of the gay and festive doings of Mr. Graham and his associates, and at the inquest I thought it as well to interest the coroner and the police a little bit in him.

"That would have been my duty, of course, had he been guilty; but privately I didn't believe that he was, and thought him capable of taking care of himself in the industrious hands of my colleagues, and incidentally keep them from too great a curiosity about the person I myself was interested in—the remarkably well-educated young chauffeur.

"Through careful investigation I had discovered that, with the exception of the victim himself and two or three young boys in the town who could by no possibility have had any connection with the crime, Henry Brown was the only person anywhere in the neighborhood who could operate a naphtha-launch.

"Then, his reticence at the inquest concerning his past—an ordinary chauffeur would not hesitate to drag the names of his previous employers into any sort of a court case in order to give themselves a good character.

"More significant than all was his pat description of the method in which a naphtha-launch might be destroyed—my subsequent examination of the wreckage of the engine and the launch, with the aid of an expert, points to the method he elucidated as being the one actually used. This was ominous.

"I now had to cast about for a motive. You'll be surprised when I tell you that right here those funny letters and figures I had found scratched on the safe and desk in the library came into my head, and again I couldn't help connecting them with the Bible. I took up the first Bible at hand, and looked for I T. IV. 9.

"The first epistle to Timothy, fourth chapter and ninth verse: 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,' didn't seem to lead anywhere which would help me, but the first epistle to the Thessalonians, fourth chapter and ninth verse, read:

"'But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.'

"'Brotherly love!' That stern, cold, money-making machine thinking of brotherly love! Suggestive, isn't it? Might be a touch of remorse, mightn't it? Well, I thought I would look up Mr. Winthrop Lawrence's past.

"One of the first items which I unearthed was the prosecution and conviction of Henry Bailey, the bank cashier—I thought it was significant until I looked up the prison record and found he was dead.

"I had started to find out if he had left any family, when I received word from my assistant in town that it looked as if Mrs. Remsen and her husband were preparing for flight. I went in to reconnoiter, but by that time she had an idea, I think, that

she was being watched, and unfortunately she saw me once or twice that day shadowing her, I fancy.

"Still thinking her husband guilty of murdering her cousin, she naturally thought we were on his trail through her, and became panic-stricken to disguise herself so as to get him successfully beyond our clutches. Anyway, she bought some dye, colored her hair in a futile attempt at disguise, and they moved in the night up to the address where Miss Carewe later, with my assistance, found them.

"I was certain they had nothing to do with the crime itself. All my energies were bent on finding out what had become of Henry Bailey's family. And in my researches I came across the fact that a mistake had been made in the prison records—probably in transferring from the old penitentiary at Wroxport to the new one at Carbridge—and that Henry Bailey was not dead, but had been discharged.

"When I found—as I did, the next thing—that his son had been educated for a mechanical engineer, I felt that I saw my way clear to the end.

"But Henry Bailey himself, or his family, I could not trace. He had been released from prison over a month before the crime, but he had disappeared as if he had stepped off the prison door-step into nowhere. Of the son I could find no trace up to two years before the crime. Matters with me seemed at a standstill.

"I thought of that text again. I wondered if it might refer to some message in some particular Bible; and the day after the funeral I examined every one I could find at Way's End—including Mrs. McGrath's, if that worthy lady only knew it!"

Here Mr. Yorke chuckled with amusement, like the veriest schoolboy, and then resumed:

"She was very indignant because I fairly ransacked the library. I found a great many ecclesiastical volumes there, but not the particular one for which I was searching.

"Well, the day came for the reading of the will. Of course, the news of the bankruptcy was not new to me; I had known of Mr. Lawrence's losses in speculation through my New York assistant—but it cleared up for me the tangle concerning Mr. and Mrs. Remsen.

"Just as everything was over, a thought came to me to ask Miss Nevin if she

had ever seen any other Bible about the house than those which I had examined; so I went up-stairs, and found her just outside the door of the sick-room.

"She told me that she had never seen any—not to examine closely—save her own, Miss Lawrence's, and the large family one in the library, but that she believed Mr. Lawrence had kept a little old worn one in his study which had belonged to his mother. She thought it was in one of the compartments of his desk.

"Well, I found it! Between the first two pages of the first epistle to the Thessalonians was a thin envelope. It was addressed to Henry Bailey, at Rowantown, a little place near Albany. It was sealed, but I soon surmounted that difficulty.

"The envelope contained a brief but complete confession, exonerating Henry Bailey and admitting the theft of the money from the bank himself.

"I took that envelope and set out to deliver it to Mr. Bailey. Of course I could not foresee that two events would occur during my absence to hasten matters to a climax.

"I expected that Miss Lawrence would at some time awaken from her stupor and be able to relate what she had seen on the stairs, but I could not anticipate that it would happen during my absence, nor that almost at the same time new, if misleading, evidence would spring up to turn the attention of the police at last to Henry Brown's possible complicity."

"By the way, whatever did the police get hold of, George?" I asked. "You telephoned me that morning, do you remember? You wanted to know if we had heard from Mr. Yorke, and you said you heard the police were to make an arrest."

"Why, a farmer drove into town at dawn with a whisky-crazed tramp securely tied up in the back of his wagon. The tramp had been hanging round his place and terrorizing the women folk when the men were away in the fields, so he brought him in to the lock-up.

"It transpired that this tramp had been asleep in the little pavilion the night of the murder, and had seen Henry Brown wheel Winthrop's body down in the wheelbarrow, put it in the launch, start it up and let it go.

"The whole thing, together with the blinding flash of intense blue light, just about crazed him, and he's been hiding in

the woods and keeping himself full of liquor—when he could get it—ever since. As soon as he got in jail he began to rave about what was on his mind, and the police had just the evidence they had least looked for. But go on, Yorke—what happened when you found Henry Bailey?"

"Well, he didn't deny his identity, or even seem surprised at my coming. He's living up there in an old house his wife owned. She is dead now—died while he was in prison, and one of their former maids, who proved faithful, is his house-keeper."

"Why did he wait a month after his release from prison, and then come here secretly, by night, and quarrel with Winthrop?" I asked. "Oh, I admit he must have felt as bitterly toward him as one man has ever felt toward another since the world began, but what had he to gain by coming here?"

"Lucinda," replied George gravely, "if you had nursed a grievance—an unjust grievance—for seven years, in a solitude which gave plenty of room for thought, you would not stop to think how much good it was going to do you to confront the cause of that grievance."

Franklyn Yorke nodded.

"That was the way with old Henry Bailey," he said. "As soon as he got out of prison they took him up to Rowantown, and he was ill, desperately ill for a month, but as soon as he was able to travel he came straight here to confront the man who had unjustly accused him."

"But what was his son doing here, working as a chauffeur for Winthrop all these months?" asked Athalie.

"What were you doing at Way's End, Mrs. Remsen, when you came back by stealth, late that night?" returned Mr. Yorke.

Athalie was silent.

"He came to try and find proof of his father's innocence, to clear his name. Perhaps, also, he came to watch Mr. Lawrence and gain such a hold on him as would compel him to acknowledge the innocence of the man he had wronged."

"What did old Mr. Bailey say when he read Winthrop's confession?" I asked.

"I thought he would go down on his knees—I have never seen such an expression of utter gratitude and thanksgiving on any mortal face. When I reminded him, as gently as I could, of the fact that murder

had been done, he answered as simply and quickly as a child, as if surprised that I had not divined it:

"Oh, but that was no murder. I shot him in self-defense."

"He was quite willing to come back with me—he seemed anxious to tell me all about it, for fear lest I might put a wrong construction on it. It did not appear to be apprehension for the consequences which actuated him so much as an almost pathetic desire not to be misjudged."

"The story he told of the shooting was just as Miss Lawrence related it in every particular, and he said that after he shot him he had become confused, and could not find his way out. Finally he started for the back, and his son—doubtless awakened by the shot—had come down the back stairs to investigate, and had discovered him, and learned the truth. You can imagine their mutual surprise."

"The son had taken him out to the garage, and made him wait there for him, half an hour or more. The storm was at its worst, and Bailey did not dare strike a light."

"That must have been when young Brown—Bailey, I mean—disposed of Winthrop's body," observed Ned.

"Yes, it was," said George. "He trundled the body out in the wheelbarrow to the lake, just as the tramp said, and put him in the launch. Then he started the engine ahead, with an overpressure on the naphtha tank—just as, at the inquest, he testified that hypothetically a launch could be exploded—and the blue flame from the burners ignited that naphtha tank. Of course the whole thing went up!"

"It was the merest accident that the body was blown clear of the wreckage, and except for a few contusions, practically uninjured. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it would have been blown to pieces. Henry told me all this quite frankly when I saw him in jail the night of his arrest—he seemed only too glad to get it off his mind, so long as he could no longer help his father by keeping silent."

"After he disposed of the body as well as he could," went on Ned, "what did he do with poor old Henry Bailey?"

"Put him in the car and drove him to the five-mile junction," Franklyn Yorke took up the narrative. "There he waited till morning for a little way-train to Oldeburg, where he changed cars for his home."

"Meanwhile his son came back, put up the car in the garage as usual, let himself in the back door, and went up the back stairs to his room, to await the result of his father's act."

"By the way, Miss Ames and the cook were right about hearing the collie, Highlander, howling during the night."

"After Henry had conducted his father to the garage he tied up the dog for fear of possible interference in removing the body, and did not untie him until his return from motoring his father over to the junction, so I suppose the poor beast howled for hours."

"It's funny neither of them noticed Josephine on the stairs just after the murder," I remarked.

"Well, she had some sort of a dark dressing-gown on over her night-dress, and besides, she made no sound, remember. Anyway, old Henry Bailey was too dazed with what he had done to notice anything else, and his son too intent on disposing of the body and getting his father safely away, to even glance at the stairs. I don't suppose he would have righted the chair, only he was compelled to to get the body out from under it."

"There isn't a shadow of a case against the old man, I suppose," observed Ned.

"Not the least," said George. "Josephine's statement as an eye-witness will be sufficient to corroborate his evidence that he shot in self-defense."

"But how about poor Henry Brown?" Athalie cried. "Isn't he guilty of something—'accessory after the fact,' isn't it called?"

"He certainly is," responded George gravely. "And I'm going to have a deuce of a time getting him off. I've got influence enough at Albany to be able to arrange to hush it up, I think, especially in view of the extenuating circumstances. I'll do my best, for Daphne's sake, so long as you are determined to let the child marry him."

"It can't turn out disastrously!" exclaimed Athalie. "He's a fine, clean young fellow in every way. He only tried to save his father. And even if it turns out unfortunately, there have been enough broken marriages and unhappy love affairs in our family. Daphne shall have her way."

"Did you ever know, Mrs. Remsen," vouchsafed Franklyn Yorke, "that Miss Ames glanced from her window during the storm the night that Winthrop was killed

and saw you running across the lawn away from the house?

"She recognized you in a sudden flash of lightning, and you can imagine what she must have thought the next day when the murder was disclosed. Her loyalty to you was unswerving, but she is no dissembler."

"The dear child!" exclaimed Athalie.

"I'd like to have seen Winthrop Lawrence's confession," remarked George.

"I took the precaution to copy it," Yorke responded. "Here it is. It is dated February 26, the day Henry Bailley was released from prison. It's rather remarkable, all things considered."

He handed a piece of paper to George, and we all crowded up close and read:

I, Winthrop Lawrence, wish to make this confession in full.

Henry Bailley was guiltless of the embezzlement of thirty thousand dollars from the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank, seven years ago. I borrowed that sum of money from the bank myself, for the first stock operation which turned out disastrously for me, and then I found it inconvenient—impossible, unless I sacrificed large interests which then seemed certain to bring in phenomenal results—to return that amount to the bank.

Some one had to be responsible for its disappearance. I altered the books a trifle, and Henry Bailley was convicted and sent to prison. At that time it seemed a necessary expedient, but now such conscience as I have, troubles me somewhat, and at times I cannot rest. I have determined to leave it to fate.

I shall write this confession and place it between the leaves of my mother's Bible, at the text she taught me first of all. If it is found during my lifetime, I shall not repudiate it, but shall take the consequences.

If, after my death, I trust the world will make what reparation lies in its power to Henry Bailley for the years of usefulness I have of necessity taken from him

WINTHROP LAWRENCE.

"A gambler to the last!" cried George. "He gambled with his own honor as he gambled with the fortunes and happiness and honor of every one in his path. He trusted to fate, and in the end fate loaded the dice!"

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER SEVEN YEARS.

IN less than a month after the *dénouement* of the mystery surrounding Winthrop's

death the tragic events had faded so far in the background of our thoughts that it seemed to me as if fully a year had gone by.

I was sitting out in our diminutive garden, sewing on Daphne's wedding-clothes—for George did succeed, after heaps of red tape had been unrolled, in having that "accessory after the fact" business conveniently forgotten, and they are to be married in September, and are going with Henry's father to California to live, where young Henry has work of a large order to do.

"California!" cried Daphne joyously. "Why, it's summer here now, and when we get to California it will be summer, too! It will always be summer!"

And I hope with my whole heart that it may always be summer—for her.

George has worn himself almost thin finding something for Ned to do, and has at last succeeded. Not that Ned was hard to please—on the contrary, he was pathetically eager to accept any proposition placed before him.

He offered with (almost) equal alacrity to read for the ministry or manage a circus. He's working for a life-insurance company now, however, which he says is a happy medium, and we are all living in my little home together.

I didn't have to take boarders, after all. Winthrop's end came before he had time to make that last effort to recoup which he mentioned in his statement, consequently, when his affairs are settled up and the money divided *pro rata* between our family and the three outside estates, we will each have a comfortable fraction of our original little fortunes.

Josephine, who is getting well fast, is amply provided for, and though Daphne vehemently declares she would never touch a penny of the money if she were starving, and her future husband is equally determined not to permit her to, it has been arranged that George Latimer is to hold her portion in trust for her; for after all the money was hers originally, even if it did pass through Winthrop's hands.

Constance has taken Jack and gone to the south of France, and the Grahams, too, have flown. Spottiswoode never would tell what he wanted all that money for that he tried so unsuccessfully to get out of Winthrop.

His mother thinks it was for some unfortunate stocks bought on a margin and lost

—and whenever she has an opportunity she holds Winthrop up to him as a terrible example; but we have heard rumors of something known as a “breach of promise.” Whatever it may have been, Spottiswoode seems to be settling down, if one can judge by a month, and is taking an interest in business, which delights his father.

I was thinking it all over as I sat there thinking of the great changes a few short weeks could make in so many busy lives.

I felt indecorously light-hearted, too—I had on a white gown, and Athalie had twisted a blue ribbon in my hair, and a thrush was singing his little heart out on a syringa-bush near by.

Athalie was sitting on a rug on the grass, with tousled hair and shining eyes, playing with her baby. She looked up at me at last, and sighed portentously.

“Well,” I said encouragingly.

“I’m sorry for Edward,” she announced, with an expression which was intended to be unutterably sad.

“Are you?” I retorted, ambiguously. “I’m not.”

“Well, it is hard for him not to be able to have his very best friend call on—on us, once in a while. I—I’m sure he feels it very much.”

“Does he? I’m sorry,” I rejoined. “I’m sorry Daphne will insist on having these empire, they never will fit properly under the arms, and when they’re washed they’ll pull all out of shape!—Well, why can’t Edward’s very best friends call on him?”

“‘Friend,’ I said, not ‘friends,’” corrected Athalie with a dignity which was marred by a frantic dive after the small Lucinda, who was creeping energetically toward the edge of the rug. “You know perfectly well, Linda, Edward wants Roger Underhill to call, and it’s so awkward—”

“What is awkward?” I said, sitting up very straight and letting my work fall in my lap. “Have I ever interfered with any of your guests?”

“Oh!” wailed Athalie, pounding the rug in her exasperation at my obtuseness. “You know Roger wouldn’t come here to this house, Linda, if you wouldn’t—wouldn’t receive him.”

“I—have never said that I would not receive Roger Underhill—”

It was the first time in seven years I had spoken his name. Seven years!

“I would receive him—of course.”

I finished hurriedly, and, picking up my work, I began to sew furiously. Athalie gasped, and sat up and stared at me.

“Oh!” she said at last, in a funny, embarrassed, stifled voice. “Oh, I—didn’t know! Edward never supposed you—you’d like it. You hardly would let us speak of him a month ago!”

“I don’t see why Edward’s friends should not call here,” I maintained, speaking as coldly as I could to make up for the sudden trembling inside. “Just because they—they happen to have fancied, years ago, that they—cared for me, is no reason for my being rude to them now.”

There was a horribly embarrassing silence which became almost as intolerable as our conversation had been. Finally, Athalie rose, and seized her surprised infant by her waistband.

“Heavens!” she exclaimed. “Look how long the shadows are getting—and baby out here at this hour, she’ll catch her death of cold! Come along, Babykins, in we go! Stay where you are, Linda,” she called over her shoulder hurriedly. “I’ll be out again, in a little while.”

I settled back in my chair, and went resolutely on with my sewing, my brain in a tumult at my audacity. To seem fairly to invite Roger to come again! How could I ever have been so bold!

The shadows grew longer and longer, and finally the sun sank in a blaze of glory, but still Athalie did not come.

All about me, in the low hanging bushes, the birds were going to rest with soft rustlings and sleep murmurs, and a gentle swaying of the blossom-laden branches beneath their tiny weight.

A cricket chirped somewhere at my feet, and near-by a tree-toad shrilled and one replied from farther off in the garden.

A tiny breeze sprang up from nowhere, and scattered the petals of an overblown rose along the path, and brought the dew-wet scent of the syringa to me with almost cloying sweetness.

Some one came to me, out of the twilight.

I knew it was Athalie, but I did not look up—I was buried in my thoughts, my memories.

But some one paused before me, and stooping, gathered up my clasped hands and held them close.

“Lucinda,” said Roger, “I have come to call.”

Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r BOOM!



by
Epes Winthrop Sargent

IT is very difficult—it is men's lives," demurred Fritz, sipping his beer, and wondering if Paul would order another if he drank it quickly. "For me, my work is easy; just the *pom-pom-pom* of the trombone, you understand. It is noise. It is enough. But the drums!"

He paused to give his words a chance to sink in, for he saw that Paul was interested.

"The big trick is on! The man is ready for the big swing. The band must keep still. It is not for them to play while a man risks his life. Only the drum—your drum.

Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

"The man leaps into the air on the swing. He lets go! Through the air he goes! *Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!* Boom! He has made the catch as the drum has told him.

"He goes too fast to see, but you, sitting there in the stand, know when he should catch. At your *Boom!* he clasps hands. Suppose the beat comes too soon or too late? The man is perhaps dead. It is a great responsibility, Paul."

The little drummer's eyes gleamed with excitement and his hands clasped and unclasped nervously. He was only a drummer in a dance orchestra, but he had the artistic temperament and long hair of a solo-violinist.

"It must be fine," he cried passionately. "Mine. Mine is like yours. I beat the drum to mark the time. I make the noise. Slow or fast, it does not matter. I am tired of dances, Fritz, but always I get dances.

"Summer and winter, it's all the same. In summer at the Island. In the winter at the halls: New Prospect, Webster, Clarendon. They are all the same.

"Every night I play the same music. I see the same dances. Nothing ever happens, perhaps, but a fight or two over the change with the waiter, or with another feller over a girl. Your work is life. I am dead, yet."

He drained his glass and motioned to the waiter to bring more. Fritz's smile was sympathetic, and his look conveyed a diplomatic suggestion of commiseration.

He had played in the same band with Paul for several seasons. The boy was not married; not even in love. He saved his money, and there must be a nice bank account somewhere.

Only that morning Kit Clarke had carelessly asked him if he knew of a drummer who could stay sober. Here was a chance to get in with Clarke by giving him a good man and at the same time to make the money that would take him over the interval that must elapse before he could decently ask Clarke for an advance on salary.

"I wish perhaps I might fix it, Paul," he assured, "but the work is very responsible, and I think Clarke gets his old man back. Still, I like you, Paul, and I know Clarke well. Him and me is pals. Perhaps if I shall slip him perhaps fifty—but you can say nothing about it. It is against the union, and perhaps Kit does not want you should pretend to know."

Eagerly Paul produced a roll of bills of such proportions that Fritz was stricken with regret that he had not said a hundred. He had expected to be beaten down to twenty-five dollars by the thrifty Paul. He

had not realized the attraction of the circus to the man who played only at the cheap East Side balls.

"I give you the money, not to Clarke," he announced, with a solemn wink, never dreaming how unconsciously truthful the speech was, and Fritz repeated the remark with appreciative unction, and surprised the waiter by ordering the next round himself. Fifty dollars would keep him very nicely until the tenting season.

Paul played out the ball engagements with a fine scorn for the work, but his self-esteem suffered a jolt when he saw at rehearsal how placidly his fellow players regarded the appearance of a new man at the all-important drums.

It was not until the dress rehearsal that Paul regained his sense of importance, for then the assistant to the equestrian director, who is the circus stage-manager, came and stood beside him, and as the big tricks were essayed signed Clarke to hush the music, and coached Paul in the long roll of the drum that ended with a bang on the big drum as the catch was accomplished or a safe landing made.

Paul thrilled afresh at the thought that these daring men and women unquestioningly placed their lives in his hands. To the man who knew only the drudgery of the dance halls it was emergence into a new life, and once, when he was almost too slow, his heart leaped into his mouth at the thought that he had nearly been responsible for a death.

So engrossed was he in his duties that he scarcely saw the performance, and it was not until just before the hippodrome races that he came suddenly out of his dream and came face to face with reality.

The "big" aerial act, in which all of the gymnastic acts worked in one massed spectacle, "A Delirium of Death-Defying Deeds of Daring," was over, and the white-clad men and women were scampering over the tan-bark of the track in their clumsy clogs, when the curtains of the saddling tent parted and an automobile *chugged* out, bearing the woman who in all his life was to have the foremost place in Paul's thoughts.

She was lithe and slender, but well rounded, and the clean-cut features, a little too white, despite the heavy application of rouge, were cameolike in their fineness. A blue auto-wrap clung closely to her form as she sat easily in the tonneau, with driver

and footman in the front seat as stiffly erect as the men on any fashionable turnout.

The band blared its most inspiring gallop as the car sped once around the ring and to the blue-painted structure at the far end of the tent.

Even the musicians broke and missed notes as the blue-cloaked figure was drawn to the top of the run, and they were glad when Clarke answered the assistant director's sign for silence, and they were free to stare, untroubled by the need for making music.

"Now!" warned the assistant.

He spoke scarcely above a whisper, but it sounded like a shout in the tense silence. Paul ruffled the drums, his eyes fixed on the car, that now shot down the runway at terrific speed.

"Now!" called the assistant again, and the drum boomed out as the car struck the spring receiving platform with a resounding crash after a breath-taking somersault, and "Now!" came the third call, as Mlle. Diabolo shot clear of the enveloping wrap, somersaulted safely into the net placed beyond, and swung down to the ground.

If Mlle. Diabolo had seemed attractive in the blue cloak, she was entrancing in the fleshings and bodice of the acrobat, as she swung herself over the edge of the net and into the arms of the watchful director.

Paul hated the man for his presumption in daring to profane the slender form with his profaning touch, and he did not breathe until Diabolo was released and was running lightly toward the exit after slipping into the light cloak that a waiting attendant held.

She passed directly below Paul, and the assistant and the leader shouted in unison to bring him back to earth and remind him that the band had struck up again for the entrance of the first of the racers.

Clarke upbraided him savagely after the show was at an end, and Fritz reproached him for disgracing his recommendation, but Paul did not care for threat or reproach. He could think only of Diabolo, and he wandered over to a stake-wagon and sat down, heedless of the call to the cook-tent for supper.

It was there Fritz found him when his own supper was over, and he sought Paul to remind him that in the circus one eats on schedule or not at all.

"There is still time," he counseled, "so get over and be glad that we open under

canvas and you don't have to 'pay your own' while we play under a roof for a few weeks. Last season I had to pay my own board for three weeks after the show started."

"Who is she?" demanded Paul abruptly. "In the automobile," he added, as he saw that the question was not understood.

"Mrs. Sinclair?" asked Fritz, with a laugh.

"In the automobile. That was not the name."

"It's Diabolo on the bills, but she's Mrs. Sinclair, of the Sensational Sinclairs. She works with her husband in the first aerial display over ring one, and she does the single rings over three in display seven.

"In love, Paul? Remember, she's married, and she's dead in love with her husband. Sinclair is one of our best. He's the chap that does the double-somersault blind-folded in the big act."

"She is an angel," declared Paul earnestly, as Fritz, with a laugh, and a last reminder about the chuck-tent, strolled away.

The fact that she was married was like a knife-stab to Paul for a moment, but he promptly put the thought from him.

It was enough that she was the most beautiful woman in the world, and that it was he who held her safety in his keeping. Long he sat there with his thoughts, his first dream of love, and one of the watchmen had to order him from the lot.

Blindly he stumbled along to the railroad yards, and sought the shelf in the band-car, that would be all the home he would know until the end of the season.

The circus opened with a parade the next morning, and it was well for Paul that he was used to playing for the dance and watching a fight over by the bar at the same time, for Diabolo, in the car used in the ring, followed the band-wagon, and Paul rode the route with his glance over his shoulder.

Some of the men noticed his engrossment, but they merely smiled and shrugged their shoulders. It was a part of the game for the new men to fall in love with one of the artists. They soon learned that the morale of the circus is beyond reproach, and actual experience was the quickest way of learning the lesson.

But if they expected Paul to make incoherent declaration of love and be soundly thrashed by an irate husband with circus-trained muscles, they were disappointed.

Paul would have shuddered at the mere suggestion of a brutal declaration such as had gained a blackened eye for Fritz himself the year before, when he had told his love to one of the riders. He fed his love on silent adoration, and that was sufficient to the dreamer.

After that first shock he had given no thought to Sinclair. He did not even think of Diabolo as being married. She was a being far above connection with such earthly thoughts. When she worked with Sinclair over ring one she was nothing to him.

Not even her single specialty on the rings, when acts were split up to make a showing, meant anything to him. It was the Lady of the Automobile, the Queen of Daring, whom he worshipped, and she was a supernal creature.

For two months he lived in a dream of love, giving no thought to aught save those few blissful moments twice a day when the long roll heralded her start and the second beat of the bass told that once more she had gamed with death and had won.

He was careful of the others, watching their every movement, and timing the jump with a nice exactness that won Clarke's approval; but he went through the show mechanically, and he lived only for the thriller.

It was well in the third month before Paul realized that at each performance Sinclair waited behind the green curtains, as intent upon the act as Paul himself. One of the springs that served to throw Diabolo out of the car into the last somersault failed to work with the others, and the girl was thrown out with a twist that promised serious result.

She straightened herself in the air and landed safely, but Paul almost forgot to be at the bass drum that was to announce her safety, in his astonishment at finding Sinclair, still in the white tights and leotard, standing outside the curtains in his anxiety.

It brought home to Paul with a sudden shock the realization that some one else—with perhaps a better right—shared his anxious watch. It was the first time that Sinclair had intruded on the act of Diabolo and became other than the man who did the double somersault to a catch.

Diabolo ran lightly from the ring, as though the touch of the wing of the death-angel were a matter lightly to be treated; but, once behind the shelter of the curtains, Paul could see her sink limply into the strong arms held out to her; could see the

shapely head drawn down to the broad shoulder, while her nerves found relief in the feminine luxury of tears.

It was just a moment before the curtains fell upon the second of the chariot teams and shut out the tableau that was in such glaring contrast to the pretense of the tan-bark, but the scene was seared into Paul's memory, and it rose before him as he lay in his bunk in the sleeper that night.

Sleep would not come to exorcise the vision, and he tossed in torment through the long, hot night, welcoming the jolting that proclaimed the arrival at the next stand and the switching that usually provoked mild German expletives.

Haggard-eyed, his muscles aching, Paul rose in a fever that fed upon his thoughts, and ever the fever grew. Mechanically he went about his preparations for the parade, and he rode in the band-chariot with his eyes straight ahead instead of turned to devour with their glance the sight of the divinity in the touring-car behind.

He was acutely conscious of her presence, but he could not bear to look. Now she had a double entity.

She was Diabolo, whom he worshiped as he had from the first instant that he had seen her, but now she was also Mrs. Sinclair, whom he might not love. His was a cleanly German ancestry, simple-minded, and of decent life. He must not love a married woman.

There was a strange confusion of the two identities in his mind. Always he had thought of Diabolo as loving him. The scene behind the curtain had shown that she loved the big, black-haired man who shared her fearlessness in the face of death.

It was not until the massed act came and Sinclair stood poised for the big trick that the solution came to chill his soul with horrid fear.

He was the master of fate. The drum-beat a half second too soon, and all obstacles would be removed. There was the safety-net, but blindfolded Sinclair would stand small chance to right himself.

They would lift him down over the edge of the net, his head hanging limp; perhaps it would be that death would not come so quickly, but over the pinocle-games in the car the men were all agreed that if Sinclair ever missed the hands of Jimmy Duff, hanging head down from the short trapeze, he could not survive the drop.

For a moment his foot quivered nervously

on the pedal of the bass drumstick, but habit and training were against him, and the boom that announced the catch came at the exact instant, as it had come every show since the opening matinée.

The next second Paul was glad that he had resisted the impulse, but when the gymnasts were dropping or diving to the net, and he heard the snort of Diabolo's automobile behind the curtain as the mechanic cranked up, he regretted that he had not allowed impulse to win. Now he would have the struggle all over again at the night show.

His heart almost stopped its beating at the thought of the deliberate murder of a fellow man. Scores of generations of stolid, phlegmatic ancestors protested against the crime, and yet the next instant the hot blood coursed through his veins at the thought of Diabolo, and he told himself that at the night show he would surely carry out his plan.

Again it was a struggle between impulse, habit, and the longing for love—and again it was habit that won, and left Paul faint and weak with the internal struggle.

Wearily he crept down to the car after the concert to spend another restless night as the car jolted over miles of uneven track. Thinking of his plan as he lay there, staring with unseeing eyes into the dim-lit interior, was vastly different from his thoughts as he sat in the band-stand, with his sense of power, added to his sense of wrongs, to goad him to action. The thing was abhorrent to his reasoning mind.

It was necessary to insure his happiness, but he could not think of it in cold blood, and it was this that held him back the next day, and on other days, though the fever grew with longing and lack of sleep, and he went about his work as a man in a dream.

He felt sure that once Sinclair was out of the way he stood a chance to win the woman he loved. He was modestly conscious of his own good looks. His glass told him that, and more than one fickle dancer in the old ballroom days had "lost her steady" because the indifference of the handsome young drummer but goaded her to fresh endeavor to win his attention. Diabolo would grieve, of course, but she would remain with the show.

It would be more than ever necessary that she earn the extra money that the somersault supreme would bring. His polite sympathy would gradually change to a livelier expression, and by the season's close he would have won her promise.

Lack of sleep and mental stress were leaving their imprint upon Paul. He grew gaunt and hollow-eyed, and more than once a bottle of whisky was bought on the way to the train in the vain effort to bring the surcease of unbroken sleep.

His work was done as carefully as ever. Every selection was played with care, the big tricks were "played up" with veteran skill; but only when Diabolo rode into the ring, blowing kisses right and left, did Paul gain a momentary respite that lasted until the curtains swallowed her up again and there came the flooding anguish of the thought that she had gone straight into Sinclair's arms.

He found an exquisitely torturing delight in peering through the crack in the curtains that enabled him to see Sinclair standing there to receive the wife, and then one night he looked as the gymnasts trooped through the opening, and he saw Sinclair give his wife the farewell kiss that was always exchanged before he went out with his fellows.

Neither knew what time the other might return to the saddling-tent borne by kindly hands, and that kiss had all the sacred tenderness of an eternal farewell.

This Paul had not seen before.

He was almost in a delirium through want of sleep and mental quiet, and the kiss seemed to set his brain aflame. With scrupulous care he played up the big tricks with which each aerial star brought his act to a close, and now the men were climbing to their perches for the dives that brought the act to a sensational finish, and Sinclair stood on the swing-platform binding the handkerchief about his eyes, while Jimmie Duff was letting his empty swing make its pendulum beat.

Now the knot was tied, and Duff had caught the bar. Out he swung and back again, once more, and then he swung his legs around the side ropes and hung head downward.

The band stopped in the middle of a bar, and Paul nervously took a fresh grip upon the drumsticks.

"Now!"

Duff's voice rang clear in the dead silence, and Sinclair steadied himself for the leap. The drum rolled as he shot through the air the full length of his swing and back again. Back he came almost to the platform, and once more he swung outward.

As he returned he gathered himself for the throw, and the great beads of perspira-

tion stood out on Paul's brow. His very being seemed shaken to his quaking soul, but his trained muscles responded to the subconscious will, and the roll was as smooth and as even as ever.

"Right!"

A little stir ran through the huge throng as the blindfolded man launched himself into space, and the trapeze-bar swayed drunkenly on the return swing, relieved of its steady weight.

"Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

The roll was as even as ever, but Paul's face was ghastly white, and horrid fear of what was to come looked out through the staring eyes—eyes that saw at once the twisting figure in the air and that tender parting kiss.

One full turn was complete, and the second was half over; already the outstretched hands of the bearer were opened to catch the slender wrists of the flying man—wrists that seemed fragile, but which would grip like steel.

"Boom!"

Clarke turned sharply toward the band. Paul was a full half-beat too soon. He had never missed before.

But Paul did not see his leader turn; he did not see the flying figure; even the thought of the kiss was blotted out. The whole nature of the real man rose superior to the miasmic evil that had obscured the good.

The world went dark, and, without a word—with only one great, heart-broken moan—he toppled from his seat, over the flimsy railing, to the runway below.

He wakened with a sickening sense of his crime, and he quivered as he saw above him the anxious face of Diabolo bent over him.

It was the refinement of cruelty that she, whose husband he had killed, should minister to his welfare in her hour of anxiety, and the world went black again.

This time the faint was but momentary, and as he opened his eyes to look again into hers he moaned faintly, and feebly sought to push her away. It was intolerable that she, of all others, should give aid to him who deserved only execration.

"Don't!" he moaned. "I killed him on purpose."

"Killed—on purpose?" she repeated, as the others in the little group exchanged glances.

His fellows had declared that they knew he was going crazy, and Fritz, as his friend, was a center of attraction.

"Raving!" he exclaimed, voicing the thoughts of the rest.

"I killed your husband on purpose," explained Paul, finding comfort in the confession. "I love you, and—it was the only way to be rid of him. I struck the drum too soon, and then the blackness came. Is he—dead?"

A look of comprehension came over the face of the girl wife—an expression of tender sympathy—for she understood, and was touched by the simple confession. Her quick wit caught what the others failed to grasp.

"Some one has been telling you that it all depends upon the drummer in the leaps," she explained, with a little laugh that was rare melody to Paul. No woman bereft of her loved one could laugh like that.

"It's a way the boys have of hazing the newcomer, but do you suppose that a man would trust his life to the keeping of whoever sits in the drummer's chair? That is all very well in stories; but it is done by counting, dear lad. One—two—three—four—five. Jump! One—two—thr—

Catch! The drum helps the effect, but that is all. The man on the swings trusts only to his careful count."

"And I didn't kill him? He didn't fall?" gasped Paul.

For answer, Mrs. Sinclair turned to a stalwart figure in the background.

"Bobby," she commanded, "come here, and tell the drummer that you are not hurt, and be very nice to him because he does your wife the honor to be in love with her, and you want to respect his excellent taste. For my sake he sought to kill you by beating the drum too soon, but he is very glad now that he didn't."

"As though I'd trust my life to any dun-der-headed Dutchman what needs a hair-cut!" growled Sinclair as he came forward, more embarrassed by this little audience of friends than by the thousands of strangers under the big top; but the hand-clasp told what he could not voice, for Bobby Sinclair found it hard to blame men for falling very much in love with his pretty young wife—for wasn't that precisely what he had done himself?

Manikins of Malice



Charles Stephens

A NOVEL—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEVERAL IDENTITIES.

THIS is a very strange story. It may be that I lack the ability to do it justice, in which case I will join with the reader in regretting that the facts did not fall into better hands.

I will ask the reader's indulgence, not by way of apology, but for charity's sake,

while I briefly etch in the outlines of the several identities concerned. By so doing at the outset, and by the reader's grasp of these identities, the amazing things that are to happen hereafter will be the more readily understood and appreciated.

John Ellis, before he volunteered in the Spanish-American War, was a young man of the city's respectable middle class, and had no living relatives.

Anxious to progress, he was, by sensible choice, studious when his time was his own. He worked all day as a shipping-clerk in a garden-seed store. In the evening he attended a free night-school, where he studied building construction. He had no bad habits.

In short, he was a young man in earnest.

For the sake of physical identification, which happens in this case to be important, he was clean and strong, about twenty-three years old, broad-shouldered, broad-browed, fair-haired and gray-eyed. He had a firm mouth and a good jaw. When he read a book he habitually rested a finger on his lips, ever preparing to moisten it and turn a fresh page.

He was engaged to marry a girl of his own class.

Her name was Jennie Coulter, and her father was a very decent bricklayer. Jennie was a pretty girl, very fond of pleasure and gaiety. She respected John's earnestness and balance.

Unfortunately, and unknown to John Ellis, her weaker side took her to dance halls and other places while her lover was studying building construction at the night-school.

When the awakening came for John Ellis there was a break.

So much for John Ellis and Jennie Coulter, except that, as usual, there was another man in the case. John Ellis never knew or cared to learn his name, which happened to be that of a "man about town," Alden Lee.

Alden Lee came of a good Baltimore family. He inherited a substantial fortune and came to New York to spend it. Presently he was a full-fledged New Yorker (of a sort), a familiar figure at the race-track, on Broadway, and in the front row of the theater on opening nights.

He never worked, though he had studied art abroad, had some talent, and for a time maintained a studio near Washington Square. He had scores of hail-fellow acquaintances, but few genuine friends.

Alden Lee was dark and handsome in a dressy, immaculate way. (I repeat that physical identities are important.) He had passionate brown eyes and a perfectly-shaped black mustache, which he had a habit of stroking daintily when and while speaking. The strongest thing about him was his weakness—a convivial one.

Nevertheless, by virtue of his polish, family antecedents and financial status, he be-

came engaged to marry Heloise Maxwell, daughter of Daniel Maxwell, the great architect, who was head of Burnham, Black & Maxwell. Maxwell's father had been a contractor, a rough diamond. In the contractor's son the diamond was cut; in the architect's daughter it was polished.

Heloise was the fine type of American womanhood that surprisingly appears in the third generation of new-world absorption. But there was still in her enough of the first generation's blood to stir a secret aversion to the ultra-civilized habits of the class to which wealth had elected her. She still felt a distinct loving sympathy for unaffected things, including persons.

She did not love Alden Lee. But she did not love any other man, except her father, and nobody proposed that she marry her father. She would marry Alden Lee mainly to please her father, who felt that the union would permanently establish the Maxwell social status.

Heloise herself had no particular objection to Alden Lee, except that he was hardly her ideal of manhood. His weaknesses often aroused in her a feeling akin to contempt. Her grandfather, the contractor, had had toil-scarred hands, but she remembered her grandfather as a very admirable old man, despite his uncouth manners and speech.

So much, then, for John Ellis, Alden Lee, Heloise Maxwell, and Jennie Coulter. The color of Miss Maxwell's eyes and of Jennie Coulter's hair matter little at present.

It is safe to proceed with a very strange story if the reader can identify Ellis and Lee apart, with the dissimilarities of physical appearance, personality, and character that mark them as distinct individuals.

When the Spanish-American War began, Alden Lee and John Ellis volunteered for service, John Ellis after the sad awakening as to Jennie Coulter's skin-deep character, Alden Lee after an unfortunate interview with Heloise Maxwell—an interview to which he went slightly intoxicated, and from which he came convinced by a sensible young woman that he was lacking in manhood, ambition, and self-respect.

John Ellis went to Chickamauga, his mind bent upon any diversion from the bitter thing that had temporarily poisoned his heart. Alden Lee went to the same mobilization camp in a fit of self-reproach, which was glorified by the thought of proving his manhood by getting shot.

Chickamauga was as near as either man got to the first seat of war. When Ellis's volunteer regiment was disbanded the young man promptly joined the regulars in the hope of better luck.

His company was presently sent to the Philippines, where real fighting was in progress.

When Alden Lee's company was sent back from Chickamauga the would-be hero felt that fate was returning him to his lady a bigger fool than when he left her. His sacrifice had not been accepted, which is always galling to the sacrificial spirit.

He also joined the regulars as a private, after he had vainly endeavored to purchase a handle to his name as a soldier. But he would make a handle for himself, he felt sure of that, and like many another young man of means during that valor-smitten period, he took his place in the ranks with a slightly increased opinion of himself for his patriotic altruism.

So John Ellis and Alden Lee sailed for the Philippines in the same transport.

There is nothing to indicate that they ever became more than casually acquainted with one another, although they were fighting almost side by side that day when the bolomen closed in from all sides.

Shortly after that they figured together in the American newspapers as among the killed in that skirmish.

Now for the story.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE RECEPTION.

It was a day in the early summer of 1900 when the United States transport *Dallas* came into San Francisco harbor. The square-built young man who stood in the bows surveying the Pacific city was filled with an enchantment of content and gladness.

After an absence of two years, five months of which had been spent in a hospital cot, five weeks in absolute unconsciousness of his name and being, he was home again to the land where he had been reported dead.

In less than a week he would set foot in New York City and see her again—Heloise. She would know that he was, as he knew himself to be, a changed man. The one thing he could not understand now was why he had been such a despicable fool then. Why had he ever been so blind as to weigh

the love of such a woman as Heloise in the scales with the empty vanities of life about town.

"It must have been that knock on the head with a bolo," he said to himself. "They say a thing like that sometimes makes idiots, or cures them of their idiocy."

"Wake up, Lee!" cried a voice behind him. "Let's do the town to-night, and every man his own paint-brush. It's justifiable after what we've gone through."

"Oh, it's you, Ellis?" said the one addressed as Lee, turning to find a swarthy, brown-eyed fellow who had suffered a similar injury on that memorable day in the brush. "No, thanks. I'm going straight through to New York."

"Bet it's a woman!" cried Ellis.

"It is the lady whom I hope to make my wife," said Alden Lee stiffly.

He disliked Ellis, who went off with a shrug. John Ellis puzzled him. He knew him only because they had been fellows in misfortune. But this Ellis was a queer composite of character.

Lee had observed him on the run from Manila. Sometimes the man was the life of the ship, playing practical jokes, indulging in mad revels of gambling and other things.

Again his mood was the very opposite, and he would draw apart from every one and brood, if he was not devouring books, newspapers, magazines, anything that was readable, with his finger at his lips as if impatient to turn the next page.

But then Alden Lee had to admit himself a bit queer. He supposed it was the effects of that bolo crack on the head. Certainly he was haunted at times by the feeling that he was not the same man he had been before the skirmish.

There were moments when he was almost overpowered by the idea that he was a stranger to his own affairs, to his own past.

Of course, all that could readily be accounted for. The odd sensation of being "outside of himself," as he expressed it, did not attack him as frequently now as it had done when he first came out of that long unconsciousness.

Still, it remained. For instance, during the voyage he had caught himself in a train of thought which Ellis's gay suggestion had suddenly resurrected.

Several times he had found himself thinking of how nice it would be, when

San Francisco was reached, to abandon himself to a night's round of dissipation. Always he had started from the reverie to find his mouth parched and his blood tingling with a queer yearning.

He had asked Battista about it—Battista, the stone-faced, owl-eyed surgeon who had operated upon his head in the hospital and who was now aboard the transport on a leave-of-absence trip home.

"Perfectly natural," said Battista in his cold way, and peering at his patient through the smoked goggles he almost habitually wore in public. "You used to be a drinking man, weren't you?"

"Yes, I think I was— That is to say, I was," said Alden Lee. Battista's goggles turned full upon him at the hesitation. "But I am not now."

"Ah—resolutions?"

"Not at all," said Lee. "I am not conscious that I have made any, but—it's hard to explain—I somehow disapprove of drinking. I wonder now why I ever did it."

"That's interesting," said Battista, with a faint smile—a mere curling of the mouth- corners. "Let's hope you'll continue to feel that way. I think you will. Of course, you may expect to have queer things happen in your head for a little while."

"The marvel to me is that you are not a gibbering idiot. It took you five weeks after the operation to come to your senses. You must not expect too much."

"Do you mean that—that I am not quite right in my head? Is there any danger of—" He could not utter the horrible word.

"Not the faintest," said Dr. Battista, with a decisive jerk of his head. "You're getting better all the time. If you have any little passing tricks of the mind, keep cool—that's all. Don't go off at half-cock and think insanity is on you, tooth and claw."

"The little mind tricks will disappear entirely, especially after you get back to your friends and old haunts. You haven't got a full grip of yourself yet. You follow me?"

"I think I do," said Lee, much relieved.

"By the way, you are a New Yorker, aren't you?" said Battista, as Alden was leaving him.

"Yes," said the other, turning.

"Come and see me," said Battista, in the manner of one who recognized the other's social fitness. "You could always get

in touch with me through my club—the Unity. I am interested in you, Lee, and it may do you good to see one who understands your case. Don't forget."

"Thanks," said Alden Lee. "I'll be glad to. In fact, the thought of seeing you occasionally eases my mind already."

"Good. The more you ease it, the easier it will be. Take things as they come and don't worry."

Alden Lee laughed. There was a light heart behind the laugh.

"I don't think I'll worry," said he, "after I get to New York."

Battista looked up quickly.

"Ah," said he, "a lady waiting for you?"

"I—I hope so," said Alden Lee, coloring a little.

The expression on Battista's face was one of amazement, not at all commensurate with Lee's gentle admission.

"You mean," said he, taking off the goggles and looking at the younger man with unwinking, disconcerting orbs, "you were engaged to some young lady before you joined the army and you are going back to her?"

"Just so," said Lee, smiling.

Battista clapped the goggles back to his eyes and abruptly ended the interview with—

"So! I wish you luck. Don't forget to look me up at the Unity."

That evening Alden Lee started on his train trip eastward, leaving most of his companions of the transport celebrating their return to the land in their own particular choice of celebration.

The last he saw of John Ellis that young man was in a fair way along the rosy path that ends in thorns at daylight. Battista he had not seen again.

Alden Lee's heart was fluttering like a bride's when he at last set foot in New York. It was late in the afternoon, but he knew that before he slept again he would have looked into the face of the woman who had become all life to him.

He drove to a hotel where he was not known, instead of his old club. At the latter he would have been recognized and treated not only as one returned from the dead, but as the Alden Lee of other days would have wished to be treated.

Then, there was a sentiment attached to the move. She should be the first to know that he lived. Hers should be the first

familiar face into which he looked; hers the first familiar voice that would greet him.

He wondered how she would receive him. He had not warned her of his being alive, of his coming. It would be—a test. If she loved him her startled face would reveal that love. If she did not love him, his sudden resurrection would have little effect upon her, especially when his material presence would convince her that he was merely not dead.

He planned to arrive at the Maxwells' between the dinner hour and the hour when departures are usually taken for evening engagements. It would be the time surest to find her at home.

As he dressed to go to her, he fell to wondering what she felt toward him—now. Indirectly she had been the cause of his going to that reported death in the Philippines. He felt ashamed that this should have been so.

But the fact remained that, so far as she knew to the contrary, he was dead. How had the knowledge affected her at the time? Had she thought sadly and then dismissed the matter? Or had the memory of him lingered, becoming purged of its dark blots? Yet he had never been sure whether she cared for him in the slightest.

Perhaps she was married, or again engaged to be. Many things can happen to an eligible and beautiful young woman in two years. He did not relish the thought of playing "Enoch Arden."

It so happened that while he was dressing at the hotel, Heloise was making her toilette in her own room at the Maxwell residence—and thinking of Alden Lee.

She was still heart-free, although not because her heart or mind were bound to the memory of Alden Lee. She had not loved him, although there was a time when she could have loved him if—he had been less of Arden Lee and more of a man.

The report of his death had been a shock to her, of course, partly because she felt that it was her rebuke that night which had sent him on the desperate road to battle, but mainly because he had been killed before he had had a chance to prove himself; for when she heard that he had joined the army and gone to the Philippines, her heart had leaped with a hope that—that he might yet prove worthy of the respect, if nothing more, that she wished to accord her prospective husband.

When she had finished dressing she joined her father, just as dinner was announced. When it was over the architect asked to be excused. He was due at some civic reform meeting.

"I won't be lonely," said Heloise. "Dr. and Mrs. Neville are calling for me at eight. Opera."

It was half past seven when Daniel Maxwell left the house. Ten minutes later, as Heloise sat in the library, reading while she waited for the Nevilles, the front door bell rang. Presently Heloise's maid came to her with a card. Heloise stared at the name engraved thereon.

She turned very pale and her left hand crept to her bosom. She rose to her feet, still staring at the name on the card, then turned startled eyes upon the maid. She was about to speak, to ask, for the maid had been with her for four years. On her side, the maid seemed about to volunteer some remark.

But Heloise changed her mind, and the maid prudently kept quiet.

"Show him in—in here," she said, with the faintest quiver in her throat.

The maid departed. Heloise remained standing, her left hand pressed to her bosom and her eyes fixed on the door which the maid had closed behind her in going out. She hardly knew what she felt, save that there was a great turmoil in her heart and mind. For the moment she knew only this:

Alden Lee was not dead. Alden Lee was alive. Alden Lee was here!

She heard a murmur of voices in the hall, a man asking some question, the maid replying. Then there came a step outside the door of the library. The door opened and she saw him silhouetted against the light beyond.

The library was but dimly lighted. At first she could hardly distinguish his features. But she noticed that he was changed, and she felt, too, by that mysterious, instantaneous telepathy of personality, that he, himself, was altered in character.

Alden Lee on his side saw her standing in the full but soft light of the reading lamp. It was Heloise!—as beautiful, as womanly, as superb as ever.

The pale gravity of her face and the slender hand and smooth forearm raised to her breast made her seem like some gracefully posed statue. Yet she was warm flesh and blood, for the light that shimmered in

her golden crown of hair revealed also the quick billowy rise and fall of her bosom, and her blue eyes were wide with wonder and heart-stir.

The maid stepped out and softly closed the door after her. Then, and not until then, did he speak.

"Heloise!" he cried huskily, and came toward her rapidly, with both hands extended.

His voice, as she heard it, was tense with a deep love, a love tried and tested, a passion purged of all grossness. At the sound of it, something leaped within her.

"Alden!" she cried impetuously, and she came to meet him, both her own hands extended and eloquent of forgiveness and welcome.

They met almost in the middle of the room. Then she saw his face clearly. Her hands fell to her side and she seemed as one suddenly petrified. To his astonishment, she stared at him like one bereft of intelligence. She slowly backed away, her eyes still fixed upon his countenance.

"Heloise!" he pleaded. "Don't you know me—Alden? It wasn't true. It nearly was, but not quite. Heloise—"

He took another step toward her, but again she backed from him, her eyes slowly filling with horror.

"What is it?" he said. "Yes, I know—I ought to have warned you. Shall I ring? Let me help you to a seat."

"Don't touch me!" she said tensely. "Don't come a step nearer."

He stopped dead short. Over his broad brow there came a puzzled frown, and his strong jaw set against her inexplicable hostility.

"I did not expect this, Heloise," he said quietly. "Do I deserve so little?"

"It is not a question of desert," she said, her bravery surmounting her fears, "although it may be if you do not at once leave this house."

"You are not Alden Lee. You are an impostor. I never saw you in my life before!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MASQUERADER.

"You never saw—me—in your life before!" stammered Alden Lee. "Did I hear you say that?"

"That is exactly what I said," answered

Heloise firmly. Her face, as Lee saw it, was unrelenting in its expression, and there could be no doubt that her eyes looked upon him without a trace of recognition.

"You are an utter and absolute stranger to me," she added. "Your face is as unfamiliar as your actions are incomprehensible. Will you go, or—"

She said no more than that. With the exception of the servants, she was alone. She wished no disturbance, and there was that about the man's manner which suggested a greater astonishment than her own.

She experienced a slight twinge of pity, the feeling that possibly the man was a victim of some unfortunate delusion and was hardly to be held responsible for his actions. Besides, his sudden painful embarrassment suggested a gentleman—in instinct, at least.

She was speaking the truth when she said that his face was quite unfamiliar to her. It was to be expected that Alden Lee would have changed much in those two years of hardship and suffering; but it was hardly to be credited that the contour of his features and the coloring of his eyes and hair could change.

Alden Lee, as she had known him, was an esthetic-looking person with a delicate, narrow face, a gentle chin, languid brown eyes, black hair, and a mustache of the same ebony hue. The man who stood before her, claiming to be, and acting exactly as if he were, Alden Lee, was a more robust person altogether.

He had fine, square shoulders, braced in military fashion, a well-shaped, well-developed head, a pair of gray eyes that were full of the eagerness of a hungry intellect, and his hair was decidedly fair!

He was certainly not Alden Lee. Yet, as he recovered from the first shock of his own amazement and prepared to speak again, his right hand stole to the place where a mustache would have been had he not been clean-shaven. It was purely a habitual action, and he dropped his hand at once. But the little movement struck Heloise with a thrill of awe.

"Heloise—" he began.

"Miss Maxwell," she said quietly.

"Very well, Miss Maxwell," he agreed sadly. "I can see that there is something wrong. But may I assure you that this is even a greater shock to me than to you.

"I cannot understand your present attitude. It is unnatural and, as far as I can

see, uncalled for. Is it a whim rising out of your anger at seeing one whom you had forgiven, dead, but whom you cannot forgive—amazing boldness."

"It is not a matter for forgiveness," she said, although her heart beat wildly, for there was that about the man's address, his choice of words, his manner that was distinctly reminiscent of Alden. "It is not a matter for forgiveness. You are merely a masquerader, though I cannot see what end or success you hoped to achieve by this amazing boldness."

Suddenly he smiled. The smile broke into a laugh. It was the careless inflection of Alden Lee, but the tone was of another voice.

"Is this a joke, Heloise?"

"Miss Maxwell!" she repeated, and her eyes blazed. "Is it a joke to impersonate a dead man to the woman who would have been his wife had he lived?"

"Would have been his wife had he lived," he echoed, his gray eyes lighting slowly. "Then you cared?"

"How dare you!" she said tensely. "Once more, will you leave this house, or shall I summon the servants to remove you?"

"There will be no necessity, Heloise—Miss Maxwell," he said, suddenly downcast. "Heaven knows I do not understand this, but—"

"Why!" he finished, with a flash of honest anger, "what have I done to deserve this? I know that our last interview was not of the most amicable sort. But I took your words to heart. I am changed—yes, I know—think what I have suffered!—but the greater change is not in my face. It is in my heart.

"I am no more the same man who sat in that chair"—he pointed to a quaint old piece of furniture—"that night, than you are the woman who talked to me then more in sorrow than anger."

"That chair?" she echoed, her face pale with an intangible terror. "Yes, you—he—Alden Lee sat in that chair. Oh, what does all this mean? Again I say it! You are a masquerader. Not all the changes possible in a human being could deceive me in the identity of Alden Lee. You are not he!"

"You ask what it all means?" he said dazedly. "I know no more than you, and, I suspect, a great deal less. Possibly I am mad. It is even possible that I am

dead—that I am not here—that you are no more real than I—that it is all a dream—a hallucination. It—"

"It is no dream, no hallucination," she interrupted coldly. "You are here, where you have no right to be. You are addressing Miss Heloise Maxwell, who never saw you before and has no desire to make or further an acquaintance with you. For the third time, will you—"

"Yes, I will go. I will admit that you are right, that I have made some mistake. But I do not behave like a madman, do I?—beyond making the statement that I am Alden Lee, that I believe I became engaged to you on that memorable seventh day of June, that—"

"The seventh day of June?" she repeated, almost wildly.

"Yes, and for the sake of my sanity," he continued, "let me say a little more, in order to convince myself, more than you.

"Remember that I have been ill, that for five weeks I lay as one dead to the world; that for five months I did not know myself or remember much; that my memory has returned slowly; that even now there are moments when the world seems to turn backward in my brain.

"Please be patient, Heloise, and consider, and whatever your own motive is in refusing to recognize me, try not to make it harder for me."

For a moment she thought she understood. It was an insane man. But—"

"The seventh day of June!" she repeated. "What do you know of 'that memorable seventh day of June'?"

"Know? What could I have forgotten? Surely you have not forgotten all that passed between us—by that little table in the open air, the vine-clad Hermitage behind us and the river dreaming by almost at our feet. You know as well as I do that it was weariness on your part, sheer persistence on mine, that won your consent after your refusals of ten times before.

"But, Heloise, I give you back that promise. You did not love me, and I think that at that time I loved my vanity more than the real you. I give you back that promise. I ask nothing now, save that you recognize me as one who loves you now and would bid you good-by, wishing you every future happiness."

"Did he betray even that to you?" she asked, with a scorn that was not directed at the man before her.

"Who?" he asked, puzzled for the moment.

"Alden Lee—the real Alden Lee."

He turned away in despair. But presently he said:

"Granting for the moment that I am a masquerader and that I have acquired information from the 'real' Alden Lee, is it likely that a man would whisper to a conspirator the details of such a delicate incident, or that he would repeat to any man what you said to him at that last interview in this very room?"

"It is possible," she said. "Anything seems possible at this moment."

"Then you know nothing of the vanity of a man, or you unjustly credit Alden Lee, bad as he was, with an offense against decency of which he was incapable."

"But granting that he was a villain," he went on, "would he, even for a sinister purpose, inform his masquerader of a detail like this:

"On the day we sat in the table-bower behind the Hermitage Inn, our luncheon consisted of chicken jelly into which the *chef* seemed to have upset a bag of salt."

She started. Her eyes, turned full upon him, were alight with a supernatural awe. He saw the effect of that reminiscent remark, and hope returned upon the instant. Again he lifted his hands and stretched them toward her in lover's appeal.

"Heloise!" he pleaded, and it was as if two years had rolled backward and he was asking for clemency, as on that last night.

He came step by step toward her. She did not move, but her blood was rushing through her veins like a cataract and her heart was fluttering like a leaf at the torment's edge.

She was as one fascinated, hypnotized beyond all voluntary effort. It was Alden Lee and it was not Alden Lee who was pleading for love, for recognition.

The personality was that of Alden, a personality devoid of all its old weaknesses, and now manly and honest. But the man—the physical man that her eyes looked upon was as different from Alden Lee as tar is from milk!

Her mind welcomed him, yet at the approach—the approach of a strange man with the love-fire in his eyes, her flesh crept and her instincts arose in revolt. But she could not move. She could only stare at him in rooted wonder and fear.

The spell was broken by the cheery horn of an automobile which stopped in the street before the residence with a whirl of machinery.

The Nevilles had come for Heloise Maxwell!

She woke from the trance into which she had fallen, but she made no sign that she was herself again.

She realized her position. He was undoubtedly a masquerader. She did not know how to get rid of him without a scene. She had asked him to go many times. Each time he had assented, but he had kept the interview going, nevertheless.

She would go herself and leave him here, for she was more than half-convinced that he was not a thief, that he believed he was the person he claimed to be; that, in short, he was a poor, deluded creature who had but one mania.

If his claimed identity and his love for Heloise were the subject of his monomania, then she knew that this would not be the end of the affair. She would probably be the victim of insane letters, gifts of flowers and jewels, and ever troubled by appeals for further interviews—at least, until she was driven to disregard publicity and make an appeal to the police.

Yet she was more than sorry for the man. She did not wish to add to his affliction. She hoped that this might be the end. For the rest, she would risk leaving him in the library and make her escape with the Nevilles, to whom she would say nothing of the unfortunate incident.

She was still standing looking at him. Neither of them had sat down or moved from their respective positions during the entire scene, though he was now slowly approaching her, his hands extended and his face full of touching appeal.

Her face brightened as voices sounded in the hall, and there came the sound of the maid's tap upon the library door.

"Just one moment, Gibson," she cried.

Still smiling, she crossed the room to a small table which was littered with bric-à-brac and adorned with a few photographs. She picked up a picture of a young man with great brown eyes and carefully groomed dark hair which had caught a shimmering light effect.

She returned to the man and extended the picture.

"Remember, please," she said kindly, but with a nervous quaver in her throat,

"I do not say that you are not Alden Lee. But if you are, this must be the picture of yourself that you gave me when we became engaged."

He took the photograph in his hands. His face lit up with sudden joy and relief, for he distinctly remembered giving her the photograph, though he had forgotten the incident and the picture until this moment.

When he had taken the photograph from her hands, Heloise quietly crossed the room and passed through into the hall, gently closing the door after her.

Lee looked at the picture and smiled. Of course it was his picture. Had he not many a time seen himself thus in the mirror—?

Then Alden Lee clapped a hand to his brow and shut his eyes in an agonized manner.

Again he felt that "outside of himself" sensation. For a moment it had seemed that he distinctly recognized the photograph as a likeness of his own countenance.

But as quickly the sense of familiarity had vanished and the face in the picture had looked up at him with the eyes of a stranger.

Yet not quite a stranger, and that was why he clung to his brow in an effort to retain the fleeting impression. In a moment, he looked again, and now he felt that he was himself once more. The photograph was not a picture of himself. It was that of another man!

But who was this man? He knew him—slightly, he believed, but nevertheless he knew him, had met him somewhere.

Who? Where? When?

His mind traveled back to the Philip-pines, to the hospital, to the returning transport, and the man in the picture seemed to laugh recklessly and cry:

"Wake up, Lee! Let's do the town to-night, and every man his own paint-brush!"

Yes, it was he—the man who had been knocked over the head in that skirmish wherein he himself went down, the man whom he grew to dislike on the homeward trip of the Dallas.

It was a photograph of John Ellis!

CHAPTER IV.

LEE VISITS HIS CLUB.

It was long after midnight when Alden Lee returned to the hotel at which he was

temporarily stopping. The clerk noticed the man's haggard appearance and at once concluded that there would be a suicide case that night.

"It would be all right, as the boss says," he reflected, "if they'd only leave a call, so we could send up and turn off the gas when they're done with it."

Suicide was not in Alden Lee's thoughts, however, although the events of the evening had been enough to justify the thought, if it ever is justifiable.

It was not only the amazing reception which had been accorded him by Heloise. There were other things—things that had happened after he left the Maxwell house. The nature of those after-events had led him to think that perhaps Heloise was right if she supposed him insane, which she undoubtedly did.

Her refusal to recognize in him the man whom she had once promised to marry was at the bottom of the rest of the evening's strange adventures. He had left the Maxwell house in a dazed condition, his brain paralyzed and his body moving mechanically.

His mind was more confused than ever as he went up to his room in the hotel and began to undress for bed. He tried to think of just what happened after he left the house.

At present it was like a bad dream, but he had not forgotten Battista's warning injunction, to the effect that the "little mind tricks" might recur and that under any emergency he must keep cool, as the best way of sheering off madness.

Surely the mind tricks had recurred with a vengeance. He had a foggy remembrance of walking aimlessly through the streets, endeavoring to arrive at some solution of the mystery which presented itself to his mind in only one phase of its entirety. Why did Heloise refuse to recognize him? He did not think of her as failing to recognize him. It was, to his mind, a case of deliberate refusal!

The matter of the photograph he dared not think about. That way lay madness. It was a picture of John Ellis. Yet he remembered giving it to her more than two years before, as a picture of himself.

Why had he given her a picture of a man who was a stranger to him at that time? Why had he at that time told her it was a picture of himself?

Why had the face seemed his own for

a moment when she handed it to him? How did he discover that it was not a picture of himself? Why had he, or she, for that matter, not noticed the difference years before?

Over and over again he had asked himself such brain-twisting questions, and over and over he had checked himself, realizing that he was playing with the fiend that usurps sanity.

Still, he had wandered on through the streets, thinking and thinking and determining not to think. He remembered coming to a standstill in some part of the extreme east side of the upper city and finding himself half-way up a flight of stone steps that led to the big doorway of some public building.

Why he stopped there, he did not know. He looked up and saw a signboard which announced that a free night-school was the main reason for the building's existence.

In his present frame of mind Alden Lee had little fancy for attending a night-school. He regained the street, momentarily puzzled. But again his dazed mind was drowned in the mystery of Heloise's refusal to recognize him.

Then came the queerest happening, the memory of which was drawing his face into haggard lines as he stood before the mirror in the hotel. He was not sure that it had happened at all. It might have been merely another hallucination.

Still, here is what happened, or what he thought happened: In his dazed reverie he entered a dingy hallway in some side-street, the name of which he did not now remember, if he had even noticed it. His action had been purely mechanical, like that of a man who, changing his clothes in the daytime, forgets that he is not retiring and winds up his watch.

He had as mechanically ascended a flight of stairs and knocked at a door. A man had responded—an old man of the working-class—who stared at his visitor for a moment, then pretended to be glad to see him. At first Alden Lee had thought that he, himself, knew the old man, but upon a second glance he discovered that he did not.

The old man had called him John Ellis. Alden Lee had denied that that was his name and had bidden the old man a curt farewell, after making a short apology for his intrusion.

Of course, if the whole thing were a

hallucination, it was not strange that the name, John Ellis, figured in it, for the name had been burning in Lee's brain from the moment that he saw the photograph.

But there was something else. Passing out of the hall door to the street, feeling very much astonished, annoyed and embarrassed, Alden Lee had collided with a gay young butterfly who was just on the point of entering. He had turned to apologize, but when he looked at the girl's face his tongue for the moment had become paralyzed.

Something had apparently happened to the woman, too. She had leaned against the railing of the stoop and her face had turned ghastly with terror.

"John!" she had gasped. "John Ellis!"

Was it a dream, or had he answered:

"Jennie!"

In any event he had instantly realized that either he was mad or nearly so. His name was not John Ellis, and if hers were Jennie, it must be coincidence, for he had never seen the woman before that he could remember!

Then he had done the very thing Battista had warned him against. He had lost his nerve, believing himself insane, and had taken to his heels, leaving the woman with her eyes almost jumping from her head and her two hands clutching the cheap fripperies at her bosom.

Now he was back in the hotel, his panic stilled but his nerves overwrought. He was battling hard against what he felt was certain insanity. He must sleep—at any price he must sleep. But how, in his present condition?

Then memory flashed. He frowned, but presently the frown relaxed. It was in the grip—at the bottom. He dug for it and brought out a hypodermic outfit. He had forgotten that he had such a thing.

It was a habit of the old days. He had not touched it since—since before his injury in the skirmish. He remembered that he was full of the drug that day. His long unconsciousness had broken him of the habit and when he recovered he had decided not to renew it, or any other of his ancient weaknesses.

But now it would be his salvation, and common sense overruled any pang that he felt over the breaking of a resolution. Oddly enough, when he began to prepare

the syringe, though he had done the same thing hundreds of times, his fingers seemed to be hopelessly unpractised. The clumsiness with which he drove the needle home was a source of wonder and astonishment to himself.

Presently trouble departed from his mind. He slept like a log until ten o'clock next morning, when the day-clerk, who had received a "tip" from the night-clerk, took it upon himself to hammer on the door. The day-clerk seemed somewhat surprised to find the room occupied by a living person, who stated quite emphatically that he wished to be called at noon and not a minute before noon.

When Alden Lee came down-stairs about one o'clock he was a different man, in the sense that he was physically the better for his long sleep.

"Now," said he to himself, when he had done justice to an afternoon breakfast, "all I need do to complete the cure of my funk is to get down to the Circle and meet the bunch."

The Circle Club was Lee's old haunt. He smiled as he remembered that in other days his entrance at any time had been the signal for a general enlivening of the club's affairs and the club's café business. Now that they all believed him dead and buried in the Philippines, he could feel sure of an extra-convivial welcome when he made his unexpected resurrection at the Circle.

It was not that Alden Lee had any desire to wax convivial. In fact, he had developed an abhorrence to alcoholic beverages ever since his "knock on the head."

But he wished to be made feel that he had friends in the world. He longed to hear the old voices cry, "Look who's here!" and feel the grasp of hands that bespoke at least a splendid imitation of genuine friendship.

When he entered the club he was disappointed to find it deserted. It was not yet four o'clock, about which time the members begin to drop in from down-town and to come in increasing numbers until after midnight.

Lee settled himself in a corner where there was a little round table adorned with a bell and a match-stand. Though he did not ring the bell a steward came lightly to his side and asked if there was anything he could do.

"Ah—er—" murmured Lee. "A dry martini."

The steward went off but presently returned with the cocktail and a wine-card. Across the latter Lee scribbled his signature. The steward went away again, while Alden Lee raised the glass to his lips. Almost immediately he set it down with a shiver.

"I seem to have forgotten the taste of liquor," he said to himself. "It's positively sickening."

Thereafter the glass was untouched, while Lee sat in deep thought. Presently he looked up with the consciousness that someone was studying him. It was Davidson, the chief steward, whom he had known, and who had known Alden Lee, for many years.

"Hallo, Davidson!" cried Lee. "I suppose you think I'm a ghost. Come and try me by shaking hands. By Jove, it's good to see a friendly face again!"

The chief steward came slowly toward Lee, his placid face blank with astonishment, save that there was a little frown of suspicion.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said he, coldly, "but I was just about to come forward and ask you a question. You see—Mr. Lee is—at least, we supposed him to be dead."

"Exactly," said Lee with a chuckle. "But now you see I'm not."

"I'm—begging your pardon if I am wrong—but I'm not so sure that you are Mr. Lee."

"What do you mean!" cried Lee, jumping to his feet, but with the horror of the previous night returning in full force.

"Now don't let's be hasty, sir," said the chief steward. "If you are indeed Mr. Lee I am sure that you would wish me to protect your rights as a member of this club against—against any one who might take liberties with your name."

"Of course. Quite right," said Lee, resuming his seat. "I know I'm very much changed, and naturally you would not look for Alden Lee to walk in here again."

"I have taken the liberty," continued the chief steward, now perfectly placid, "of looking up our visitors' books and some old checks, and I find that Alden Lee's signature is not at all like your writing of his name."

"Now be very careful what you say, Davidson," Lee cautioned with a flash of his gray eyes.

The chief steward indulged in a slow smile.

"You seem to know me well enough, sir," said he, "and I had the honor and pleasure of knowing Mr. Alden Lee very well. I am sorry to confess that I don't know you at all!"

Again Lee was on his feet. What he was about to say to the steward was checked by a sound of laughter and footsteps in the entrance to the clubhouse. Lee turned and then relief dawned upon his face.

"Hallo, there!" cried Lee. "Minshull—Dixon!" He knew both of the newcomers. "Come and save me from Davidson. He doesn't know me."

Lee himself went to meet the two men, who came toward him at his summons, their faces puzzled and unsmiling.

"I'm Lee—Alden Lee—back from the dead. How-do, Minshull! You're fatter than ever. And Dixon—"

Then he stopped in his tracks and his extended hand fell to his side. The two men, with whom he had been most intimate in the old Circle days, were staring at him. It was the stare of non-recognition.

"Don't you know me?" he blurted.

"I'm afraid I don't—speaking for myself," said Mr. Minshull.

Lee glanced at Dixon, who shook his head regretfully.

Then amid the silence that fell upon the three, the chief steward explained the situation as it appeared to him. During the explanation, Alden Lee stood there nervously stroking his upper-lip where a mustache might have been but was not.

The man called Dixon was eying him keenly. Dixon was in the line of writing books and thought he could classify types. He decided that, whatever else the self-styled Lee might be, he was honest and a gentleman in the general sense of the term.

Suddenly Dixon began to laugh softly. He fancied there was a practical joke somewhere behind this. It was not Lee, but it was not roguery, for there was nothing conceivable to be gained by masquerading as a dead man—at least in the Circle Club, where Alden Lee had been so well-known.

"Let's sit down and oil up the wheels of investigation," said the novelist jocularly. "Leave this alone for a bit," he added in a whisper to the steward, and at the same time he flickered a single eyelid at his friend, Minshull.

The trio sat down and at once Lee ordered refreshments after the manner of one

who felt his every right to club facilities. Then he began to talk in a way that uncomfortably recalled Alden Lee to Dixon and Minshull.

"This is a funny turn," said Dixon frankly. "You are distinctly not Lee—I mean physically, but your manners and speech are sufficiently like his to suggest a very close relationship."

"It could hardly be closer," said Lee. "But look here, you fellows. I'm going to throw myself upon your mercy and tell you my whole story."

And he did, beginning with his volunteering disappointments, his enlistment in the regulars and his life in the Philippines until a boloman put his light out with a smash over the head. Then he told briefly and simply of his long unconsciousness and longer convalescence in the hospital at Tagallog, Mindanao.

"They saved my life by some operation which removed something that was pressing on my gray matter," said he, "and all this about my most intimate friends not knowing me is leading me to think that either I'm mad, or everybody else is!"

While he had been telling his story, which took some time, other members of the Circle had come in and there had been many interruptions. Lee hailed some, who looked blankly at him. Others came up quietly and, as if instructed by some one who knew—the chief steward probably—quietly greeted him by name and offered to shake hands.

By the time the story was ended, there was quite a group around the table.

"Now, gentlemen, are you satisfied?" concluded Lee.

"With your history—of course," said Dixon, who seemed to have elected himself, temporarily, sponsor for the situation. "But how do you account for the fact that you are not Alden Lee and yet think and act and speak as if you were."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Dixon!" said Lee, rising to his feet with agony, disappointment and indignation written on his frank, manly face.

Before Dixon could say anything more there came a hubbub from behind the group round the table. A voice, almost hysterical in its tense excitement, cried:

"Good Lord! Here's Alden Lee himself!"

Every man sprang to his feet and turned to look at the door.

There stood a man of about twenty-seven or eight, dark-haired, with a black mustache, a weak chin and a pair of dreamy brown eyes. He was swaying lightly on his heels, and had obviously been drinking.

Upon his face, as he stood there blinking at the strained countenances turned toward him, was an expression of wonder, not so much at this unexpected reception as at being where he was at all. He looked exactly like a man astray.

"Alden Lee!" cried a dozen voices.

"H'lo, fellows," said the man in the doorway.

Dixon left his chair and crossed to the newcomer's side. He took him by the arm and ran him to the table in the corner.

The other man, whom everybody refused to recognize as Alden Lee, was standing like a statue and with his eyes fixed upon the man who was now hailed as Alden Lee.

The newcomer was the living original of the photograph in the Maxwell library!

"Look here," said Dixon briskly, addressing the brown-eyed man, while he pointed to the gray-eyed one. "Do you know this gentleman?"

"Why, cert'nly," said the newcomer with an insipid smile. "Guess I ought to. That's Alden Lee. H'lo, Lee. See you've fall'n off the water-cart."

"Then!" shouted Dixon, amid the silence of amazement. "If that is Alden Lee, what do you call yourself?"

"I?" said the brown-eyed man, nervously placing a finger-tip upon his lower lip. "I'm John Ellis."

"And say, fellows," he added, "what place is this and—where's the bar?"

CHAPTER V.

JOHN ELLIS'S STORY.

IN a room of another club—the Unity—and the next day, Dr. Battista, the army surgeon, told the telephone-operator in the office down-stairs to "send Dr. Neville up."

Dr. Neville, himself, had served in the army, but was now a physician of some repute to the upper class of New York society. He had once been a colleague of Battista, but had not seen that remarkable man for quite a number of years. He had just learned that Battista was home on a furlough.

They were glad to see one another, as was evidenced by their mutual greeting when Dr. Neville entered the room.

As they stood there, hand clasped in hand, they were in marked contrast as types. Neville was medium-sized and not very robust in build. He bore all the polished touches of the refinement that moves amid refinement.

Battista, on the other hand, was a tall man, heavily-built and with a large, massive-browed head upon which the hair was thinning at the temples. The goggles that hid his eyes could not conceal the rugged strength of his countenance, of which the predominant feature was a massive pair of jaws, a fit setting for a wide, thin-lipped and relentless mouth.

Those who had seen Battista's eyes had no particular curiosity to look into them again. They bespoke either a demon behind them or were in the nature of an affliction to a good and great man. For Battista was a great surgeon, and if he was not altogether observant of certain professional principles, his greatness belittled the fact.

Battista was not more than forty years old. Had he been more of a charlatan and less indifferent to the applause of the dress-circle, his might have been a name to conjure with in medical and surgical affairs.

But he was a surgeon only for the sake of surgery. He was cold-blooded in manner and with regard to any action that he considered necessary, not so much for the welfare of a patient as for the proving of his own theories.

He was also very unprofessional—almost uncouth—in speech. He hated the frills of his profession. He refused to discuss surgery in technical terms, preferring to call a man's brain his "gray matter," and his stomach something too inelegant to print.

He was a law of surgery unto himself and cared not a straw for any precedent that stood in the light of any theory that he might develop.

Neville knew of the man's astounding abilities as a surgeon, and often regretted that such a man should be wasting his talents in the army. But, on the other hand, it was as if nature had designed Battista, with all his brutal directness of method, to employ his genius in a field where the sons of the war-god were the

patients and where ills required desperate and daring remedies.

Desperate and daring remedies were Battista's longest and most successful suit. He took little interest in amputations, bullet extractions and troublesome appendices, and he never operated personally, unless the case had stirred up one of his theories, which often resulted in the patient's death and some further advance in surgical knowledge and practise.

Upon meeting Neville, Battista had taken off his goggles. His old colleague looked into his eyes, as a friend might; but he experienced a cold shiver as he did so.

Battista's eyes had a peculiar flatness of the usually convex surface, and there was a jerkiness of movement between the moments of fixity when he gazed upon one object or another. The pupils were pin-points surrounded by deep-fired, tawny irides. They were the eyes of a stuffed owl, except that they moved and had the sinister fascination of a snake's.

"Well," said Neville, when the exchange of first greetings and first inquiries was over, "and what brings you East, Battista?"

"Not a vacation, you may rest assured," said the other, with a smile. "My work is all I care for, so you may conclude that it was my work that brought me all this way. I am trying to arrive at the results of a very remarkable case I had at Tagalog. Two young men, privates in the—"

The telephone-bell rang. Battista listened and his face lighted up.

"Send Mr. Ellis right up," said he.

"Neville, you're in luck," he added, turning to his friend. "I was going to state the case and the theory, but there's no time now. Here's one of the two patients. You'll understand afterward, but pay strict attention to whatever this young man says, and, whatever you do, don't shove in your oar."

"Come in!"

In response to the invitation, the man who called himself John Ellis, the same who denied at the Circle Club that he was the real Alden Lee, came in.

Ellis bore the marks of recent dissipation, but this morning he was quite sober and nervously frightened about something. He seemed disappointed when he found a stranger with Battista.

"Glad to see you, Ellis," said Battista.

"I thought you would forget your promise to look me up once you got into this center of seething gaiety. By the way, how have you been feeling?"

"That's what I've come about," said Ellis, glancing uneasily at the stranger. "I'm fair funny in my head—and that's all there is about it!"

Again he glanced at Dr. Neville, who, from the moment of the brown-eyed young man's entrance, had been sitting there with a look of wonder on his face.

"So!" said Battista. "You needn't mind Neville. He's a doctor and an old army surgeon. Two heads may be better than one if you need medical advice. Dr. Neville, this is an old patient of mine from Mindanao. This is—"

Dr. Neville rose to his feet and held out his hand. From the look on his face it was instantly apparent to Battista that no introduction was necessary—at least for Neville. Neville seemed to know the young man—to have met him before.

"How-d'-do, Al—"

But Battista cut in sharply.

"This is John Ellis, doctor. Ellis, this is Dr. Neville."

"How-do, Dr. Neville," said John Ellis civilly, taking the doctor's hand, which seemed all at once to be as limp as a wet dish-cloth.

Battista shot a warning glance at his colleague, who sank back into his chair with a deep-drawn breath of amazement. It was very strange, but— Of course, he had looked for something strange, and Battista had warned him not to "shove his oar in."

"All right," said Battista lightly. "Now that we are all acquainted, let's hear what the trouble is, Ellis. Dr. Neville," he added, "perhaps you will listen to what Ellis has to say. A fresh mind on a subject, you know—"

"Of course—yes, of course," said Neville, nervously clearing his throat, but never removing his eyes from the young man opposite him.

"Now, look here, Dr. Battista," said Ellis, hitching up his chair and swallowing his funk, "you may think me crazy, and maybe I am, but I'm going to tell you exactly the things that have happened and that I don't understand."

"Precisely what I want you to do," said Battista, turning his goggles full upon the young man's face.

"Everything seemed fine until I hit New York. In San Francisco I celebrated with the rest of the boys and got a bad head—"

"I thought you did not drink," said Battista quickly.

"No, I didn't," said Ellis desperately. "I never touched a drop of liquor in my life before I arrived in San Francisco, off the Dallas."

At this point Dr. Neville was seized with a fresh fit of staring. Never touched liquor! Was the young man insane, or was he (Neville) mistaken in the identity after all? If this were the gay young spark Dr. Neville supposed him to be—why, he had once tided him through a collapse which had alcoholism for its cause.

"No, I never touched the stuff till I hit Frisco, and then I don't know why I started in on it. I felt as if I just had to, and I've been drinking ever since.

"But that's nothing, though it may have had something to do with the queer things afterward. I got to New York yesterday. I had some more drinks, and maybe I wasn't quite myself, for I wandered into a swell club—the Circle they call it—a place I'd never been in before."

"His own club!" muttered Neville.

"A man as illuminated as I was might easily do a fool thing like that," went on Ellis, "but how do you account for this, doctor?—everybody called me—Alden Lee!"

Neville gave a great start, but Battista merely adjusted his goggles and said:

"Lee—Alden Lee. The name's familiar—"

"Sure it is!" cried Ellis. "Don't you remember the other fellow that got smashed over the head during the skirmish, and came home in the same transport with us?"

"Why—certainly, certainly. He's in New York, also. Promised to look me up, too. But this is very odd."

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Ellis, with irony. "That's a detail. Here's something interesting. Alden Lee was sitting at a table in the club, and there was some sort of mix-up.

"It appears all the other fellows refused to believe he was Alden Lee, and they all declared I was not John Ellis. It may have been a joke, but between one thing and another it got my head buzzing, and—well, I came away, and I think Lee beat it, too."

"Very extraordinary," said Battista, while Neville leaned back in his chair, white as

a corpse. "But, of course, you had been drinking, and were a bit confused at the time, as you yourself admit—"

"But hold on!" said Ellis, anxious to vindicate himself as much as possible. "I admit all that, but I wasn't so very bad—not bad enough to forget what happened afterward."

"Something happened afterward?" said Battista gently. "Now, don't get in the least excited. Tell me everything."

"That's what I'm here for," said Ellis, "and I'm less excited than when I came in.

"Before I joined the army," he went on, "I was engaged to a girl called Jennie Coulter; but we had some trouble. That's why I enlisted. So you'll understand about—about things that happened last night, I may as well say right out that there was another fellow in the case."

"So!" said Battista.

"Well, I went to look up Jennie last night. I dunno. I didn't feel as sore at her as I did—before. I sort of felt that I had been too much of a solemn ass in the old days and maybe that was what made her take up with the other fellow—I never knew his name.

"I thought last night that maybe if I told her this, we might make up and go to a show or one of the dance-halls. She used to be fond of that sort of thing.

"She and her old man were still living at the same place. The old man was in, but Jennie was out—at a certain dance-hall, I guessed. Then the funny business began.

"Her father said he didn't know me, although in the old days he used to take my part against Jennie's flightiness. No, sir! Said he didn't know me and didn't want to. Said there were too many young fellows coming around Jennie, anyway, and told me to get about my business before he chucked me down-stairs.

"I was pretty mad, not only at him, but at Jennie. It makes a fellow sore when he's been away a long time to come back and find that she's keeping a string instead of pining over a fellow's tintype in a ten-cent frame.

"I knew where that dance-hall was and went round to it, though I never once went there before we had the row. But soldiering knocks the finnickiness out of a man.

"I was no sooner through the door than Jennie makes a dive across the room and starts in with—"

"Oh, Alden!—Alden Lee! Where have you been for two whole years?"

"Well, I didn't say anything. I was sort of dizzy, and took her off into a corner.

"Then there was a hopeless mix-up. I tried to tell her that I was changed, that I had been a solemn ass—too much so—and I was game for the cut-ups nowadays. I tried to tell her I forgave her for going off with that other fellow, whoever he was—the fellow that made the old row, and so on and so on.

"Well, she thought I was crazy or drunk for a while, and then she decided that it was a joke and laughed in my face. From all she said, I was Alden Lee, and I was talking through my hat about being John Ellis, and that Alden Lee was the name of the man that John Ellis had got mad about.

"In other words, I had been jealous of myself!

"Well, I got mad clear through, and told her that I was glad to know the fellow's name at last. I told her I knew this Alden Lee, and that if there was any more fooling with him I'd kill her and him, too.

"And what's more," cried Ellis, starting to his feet, his face flushed with nervous rage, "I meant it, too! I've had about enough of this Alden Lee business, and if it don't let up I'll put Alden Lee out of business!"

A queer gasp came from the direction of Dr. Neville. Ellis sank back into his chair and suddenly covered his face with his hands. The reaction was upon him.

"But, doctor—" he almost groaned. "What does it all mean? Is everybody in the world putting up a joke on me, or am I just plain batty in my head?"

"I—think—perhaps," said Battista slowly, "that it is a little of both."

He lied, and Neville knew that he lied.

But Dr. Neville also knew that for once the phlegmatic Battista was deeply upset. Neville felt sure it was not conscience that was troubling the other, merely an irritation caused by the appearance of complications that threatened to spoil the aspect of some experiment—whatever that experiment might be.

"Look here, Ellis," said Battista, "this is a very strange story you tell, though, as I said, I think your drinking may have much to do with it. It may be all hallucination on your part, caused by dissipation. Remember your head was doctored

up not eight months ago, and a man does not get over that in a hurry.

"My advice to you, until I can arrive at the cause of these phenomena and can suggest a better course, is for you to keep cool, go about your business, keep away from drink and this Miss Jennie, and don't think of killing Alden Lee or anybody else.

"If the situation gets any worse, or there are any new developments, come to me here. I shall be glad to see you and hear you.

"And now," he added, with a nervousness that was strange in Battista, "I think you had better be off. I want to talk this matter over with Dr. Neville here. Good morning, Ellis—and remember—*keep cool!*"

There was silence in the room for a few seconds after Ellis's departure. Then Dr. Neville fairly bounded to his feet and brought down his clenched fist upon the table.

"In the name of Heaven, Battista!" he cried. "What devilish thing is this you have done! That man is Alden Lee. He doesn't know me—and perhaps you know why—but I know him for the drunken, drug-eating weakling that he is. I was his physician.

"That man is the real Alden Lee, but what have you done to him that he talks like another man of another man's affairs that he thinks are his own?"

The surgeon seemed deaf to Neville's words, although the physician had almost shouted them.

"I seemed to have lacked a little foresight," said Battista at a tangent. He walked about the room with his head bent and his hands clasped behind him. "Of course, the mistake does not affect the surgical aspect and success of the experiment.

"I did not expect that either of the two men would live. They did. Even then—but the domestic relations. There is where I lacked foresight. And the other man was engaged to a woman, too."

He stopped short, removed his goggles, and turned his disconcerting eyes upon Neville.

"Neville," said he, "I'd give five thousand dollars to see the other man—at this moment. My intentions—if I had any beyond surgical accomplishment—were good, but—"

The door of the room flew open.

On the threshold stood a pallid, haggard, fair-haired, gray-eyed man.

It was the other man—the self-styled Alden Lee that Heloise Maxwell and the members of the Circle Club refused to recognize!

CHAPTER VI.

CONDITION MINUS THEORY.

ALDEN LEE, self-styled and by many denied, remained in Dr. Battista's office but a short time.

Battista listened to the gray-eyed young man's story with keen attention, but as each succeeding statement fell from the narrator's lips, the face of Dr. Neville became more and more amazed, blanched and horrified.

The adventures, or misadventures, of this unhappy young man are already familiar to the reader. In some degree, more or less, they were to be expected by Battista, probably. But to Neville they were abruptly and startlingly new.

Neville heard this young man say that he was Alden Lee. Neville knew at once that this was either a delusion on the young man's part, or a deliberate lie. Neville knew that the real Alden Lee had just stepped out, calling himself John Ellis.

This young man was probably John Ellis.

But Dr. Neville could not account—at least without a creepy chill from his head to his feet—for this young man's minute knowledge of Alden Lee's affairs, and the fact that in every respect, save that of physical appearance, the stranger sitting opposite him bore haunting resemblances to Alden Lee—inflections of the voice, tricks of manner, *et cetera*.

Yet through it all there was a strength behind this personality which Alden Lee's had always lacked.

When he heard this self-styled Alden Lee describe (with admirable reserve) his visit to Miss Maxwell, his later encounter with a strange young woman of the East Side, and his misadventures at the Circle Club, wherein appeared a generally acclaimed Alden Lee who denied his identity, the chill of horror increased in Neville's veins, while conviction deepened despite human reason and physical logic.

Without in the least understanding the matter—save that the limit of Battista's surgical abilities had never been reached—Neville felt sure that in some way the re-

spective identities of Alden Lee and one John Ellis, had been transposed—transferred—

No, that was not the way to put it. Better to say that the soul—mind—personality—of John Ellis was animating Alden Lee, and *vice versa*.

What was it?—a kind of metempsychosis without death—the transmigration of two souls between two living bodies?

Supposing it were, and without speculating that such an improbable thing might be made probable, which of the two was strictly John Ellis, and which Alden Lee?

Was the physical John Ellis that carried the soul of Alden Lee more Lee or more Ellis?

Was either one entitled to his own name and place in the world when the physical identity of each denied the true personality of each? Which was the real man, the soul or the body? And how must such a tangle end, where there were other persons involved in their human relationship?

Neville had been thinking deeply amid a silence that had fallen between the three men. Battista seemed perturbed as before, but now his perturbation was quite marked.

The gray-eyed, square-shouldered young man sat with his elbows on his knees and his hands clasped under his chin. He was a picture of mental agony and desolation.

Neville could stand it no longer. One thing he did know—this was one of the fiendish works of Battista, and it was beyond the pale of human tolerance.

The physician sprang to his feet and faced his army colleague.

"In the name of all that is fair and professionally permissible," he cried, "what have you done, Battista?"

Battista started and glanced quickly at the self-styled Alden Lee. The blow—if any blow had been intended—struck at the already suffering man. Alden Lee rose to his feet unsteadily, his face expressive of dull wonder and the pain of further mental effort.

"Do you mean," he said huskily, "do you mean that he is responsible for my condition?"

Neville saw his error, and Battista's eyes, ungoggled and fixed upon him, disconcerted him even in his indignation.

"No," said he with a helpless wave of his hand. He began to walk up and down the room, passing back and forth between the other two. "I did not mean that. I do

not understand this, Mr. — Mr. Lee, any more than you do. I—I dare say I had better express no opinion until I have thought over the matter."

Again there was silence. Then Battista spoke.

"I expected some sort of minor troubles, Lee," said he, replacing his goggles and resuming his calm, cold manner. "But I will admit this is—quite remarkable."

"For the present, I am inclined to think your own version of these happenings is exaggerated by the fact that you are the—victim."

"Go back to your hotel, Lee. Use your will-power to master mental panic. Keep away from Miss Maxwell and the Circle Club for a few days. Steadfastly refuse to think that there is anything the matter—just for a few days. Then come and see me again."

As Alden Lee turned to go Battista followed him to the door. He laid a hand on his shoulder and said with an air of conviction more than the desire to console:

"Lee, believe me when I tell you one thing that is a fact: You are a better and fitter man at this moment than you were when you entered the army. Before you are done you will know that, and so also will Dr. Neville."

"I'll try to do what you suggest. I hope you are right," said the young man in a dull voice.

Battista closed the door after him, and turned to find Neville standing up by the table with his right hand clenched upon its smooth top.

"Battista," said Neville, "I need hardly make an apology for interfering, for there is something here which is—ungodly. I make no apology for saying so, or for demanding an immediate explanation. You invited me to what is generally understood in our profession as a consultation. Now, I wish a clear statement of the case."

Battista laughed dryly.

"You approach the case in a very antagonistic spirit, Neville," said he. "Is your eagerness to hear only that you may have an excuse to disapprove?"

"That is quite aside from the matter. I shall approve or disapprove as I see fit. But I wish to know the truth, and it has become my right."

"Very well. You shall know. I would tell you to go to the dickens, as far as professional ethics were concerned in any-

body's right to ask me questions that I did not care to answer.

"But I am glad to have one in whom I may confide, for I do not mind admitting to you that for once an experiment has got beyond my control. In other words, my work has turned upon me as the monster did upon Frankenstein."

"Am I right," interrupted Neville, "in saying that the man who has just left is not Alden Lee, but John Ellis? I happen to know, as I said, that the first man who came was Alden Lee, and not, as he called himself, John Ellis."

"You are right in the simple sense," said Battista, "although it would be more correct to say that Alden Lee was John Ellis, and John Ellis was Alden Lee."

"It would not be so easy to define which is which now, despite the apparent simplicity of physical identification."

"I think I understand that," said Neville impatiently. "But how does this condition come about?"

"Ah, that should interest you," said Battista with a smile. "It will not require a great deal of explanation—at least to you, who not only know a great deal of my past work, but have on several occasions assisted me at the operating-table."

"Go on, please."

"It will first be necessary to tell you something of the two patients. One, John Ellis, whose physical body has just left us, was a young man of the middle class, strong, earnest, brave, and clean. Of his home connections I knew nothing. It was generally thought that, if he had any, he either did not care about them, or for reasons of his own had cut himself off."

"The other patient was Alden Lee, a reckless, vainglorious, popularity-seeking weakling, whose soldierly qualities were mostly inspired by rum, morphin, and preconceived notions of bravery—the notions that may make an accidental hero in hot battle, but collapse when it comes to the moral nerve required to fight cholera or the plague or yellow-jack."

"I understand," said Neville. "Did you know anything of this young man's antecedents?"

"Not a thing," replied Battista cheerfully. "He was not popular, and was a disturbing element in his company. He might have been the President's nephew for all I knew or cared. But it was generally supposed that he was some ne'er-do-

well who had not made good on a college education, and was going to the deuce via the worst phase of army life.

"I wish now," added Battista, after a pause, "that I had known—at least, of the woman in the case. There seems to be two, although Jennie Coulter hardly counts. This Miss Maxwell—"

"A splendid woman," said Neville. "But please enlighten me."

"Preliminaries disposed of—very well.

"Alden Lee was reported dead. So also was John Ellis. They were both smashed over the head in a row with some bolomen. A trivial affair, but serious enough for them.

"They were brought to Tagalog hospital," Battista continued. "Under ordinary circumstances they would have died. Under extraordinary circumstances they did not. They owe their life to the chance which I took primarily in the interests of surgical science.

"You—and they—might credit that to balance whatever may be the results.

"I have always had a theory concerning mind and matter—"

"Pardon me, Battista," interrupted Neville quickly, "I am not in the proper mood to hear the theory just now. What did you do?"

"Presently," smiled Battista.

"Do you happen to remember, Neville, that time we trephined a man's skull, took out his brain, cleaned it, and put it back?"

"Yes," said Neville, his eyes momentarily glowing with professional enthusiasm.

"You said at the time the thing was impossible?"

"I did," admitted Neville, "but you did it, and the man lived three or four months."

"You forget. He is still alive," said Battista. He fixed his goggled eyes upon Neville and added significantly: "Of course *he* is *himself*."

Neville stared at his colleague for a full half-minute. Then his lips parted, his eyes widened, and his color became ghastly. He rose slowly to his feet, his right hand gripping the edge of the table.

"May the Lord forgive you, Jean Battista!" he said, his slowly enunciated words coming in a tense whisper. "Was it that? Did you—"

"Exactly," said Battista coolly. "With Hargreaves assisting, I operated, removed

their brains, and put them back. But after the operation was over Ellis's brain was in Lee's skull and *vice versa*!"

"But," gasped Neville, "the thing is impossible!"

"You said that once before," retorted Battista. "Yet I did it."

Neville was stunned to silence by a sudden conviction that it was so. Battista had done it.

In a flash of the mind's eye he saw it all clearly, the metaphysical tangle of the two men, the peculiar personal reminiscence of Alden Lee that was in John Ellis, and the slight grossness of speech and manner that was probably the middle-class Ellis in the polished, if unmoral, Lee.

But, looming over everything, Dr. Neville saw, not so much the enormity of the surgical feat, as the horrible enormity of its results.

He suddenly awoke from a temporary lethargic daze. His face flushed. His eyes flashed. He struck the table with his clenched fist, and upon the smiling Battista he turned a countenance that was wrought with honest indignation.

"Dr. Battista," said he in a resonant, strong voice, "I believe what you say. As a physician and surgeon, I will not congratulate you upon your astounding accomplishment. Neither will I as a man congratulate you upon your sense of decency and human fairness.

"You have taken a most unwarrantable liberty against the rights of two human beings. You have interfered with the happiness of a woman—possibly two. You have committed a crime that is without precedent in human history or in the annals of my profession—which I dare you to call yours any longer."

"My dear Neville," protested Battista, somewhat amused, "you do not suppose I did all this for a jest, without a theory, which will yet be proven—"

"Theory!" cried Neville, his fury overcoming his control of it. "Devil take your theory, sir! You have committed worse than murder. You have defied the line which Heaven has set against human effort. You—you—"

Neville became inarticulate with shock and anger. He seized his hat and coat and flung open the door. Upon the threshold he turned a blazing face to the other.

"Battista," he cried, "you are an unspeakable scoundrel!"

The door closed with a crash.

Battista sat for a few minutes, inwardly disturbed, but outwardly smiling.

"It takes the smallest man," he muttered finally, "to be the largest fool.

"If he had only listened to the theory!"

CHAPTER VII.

BEGINNING LIFE AGAIN.

THE square-jawed young man, who called himself Alden Lee, remained at his hotel for three days. He was trying to obey Battista's injunction to keep away from everybody and everything that had formed part of his life before he went to the Philippines.

It was no easy task, especially while his mind was haunted by a dread which pleasurable associations might partially drive out. Still, he realized that the time had come when he must make a battle for his own sanity.

During the three days he descended from his room only when hunger compelled him to visit the restaurant on the ground floor. Between times he sought every possible means of diverting his mind in the solitude of his room.

Only one memory was hard to put away from his mind's eye—that was the visionary face of Heloise Maxwell. That was not a matter of the mind as much of the heart and mind in conjunction, and, though the fact might have puzzled Neville and the young man himself, the mind of the real Alden Lee, which had taught the physical John Ellis to love Heloise, was beginning to be influenced by the strong, healthy physique of John Ellis.

Unknown to any one but Battista perhaps, the whole affair was beginning to resolve itself into the question of mind and matter. Which was master in the human personality? Was it always mind?

During these three long solitary days the young man had discovered in himself a new trait. It at first terrified him as a possible symptom of approaching madness. But presently it interested him, then absorbed a great deal of his time.

It was this. From his window he could see the tower of Madison Square Garden. The graceful lines of that colorful piece of architecture interested him greatly.

There were times when he had a vague memory of having once been interested in

buildings, but purely from the practical structural standpoint, never from the viewpoint of artistic architectural beauty.

Now he found himself looking, not only at Madison Square Tower, but at other buildings in range of his window, with an interest that was as inexplicable as it was highly pleasurable. It suddenly came to him that he would like nothing better in the world than to be a designer of graceful towers of beauty in stone.

He suddenly found himself covering hotel stationery with designs of his own conception, and was astonished and delighted at some of the fancies he penciled upon paper. That was after his first suspicion of the new "craze" and when he had fallen under the spell of it.

He would have worried more about it had he not been so determined to carry out Battista's injunction to speculate upon nothing, but take all things for granted—at least, for a little while.

On the afternoon of the third day he was just finishing up a design for an imaginary library structure, when a bell-boy came to announce a visitor. It was Dr. Neville.

"I have come, Mr.—my young friend," said Neville, "because I have been thinking about you. I am much interested in your case. I would have come yesterday, but it was not such an easy matter to find you among the many hotels."

"But Battista could have told you I was here," said Alden Lee, self-styled.

Neville's face darkened.

"I did not ask him," said he sharply. "He is no friend of mine, and he is no friend of yours, my boy. I came to tell you that."

"I don't understand," said the young man. "I beg you not to suggest any more puzzles. My head is tired of the things I don't understand."

"I can appreciate that," said Neville kindly. "In fact, I want to be your friend, and to help you through the dilemma in which you find yourself. Will you permit me?"

A wave of gratitude crossed the other's face.

"Nobody knows how much I feel the need of a friend," he said. "But would it be fair to Dr. Battista?"

"Don't consider him," said Neville quickly, and with a little heat. "Let me assure you that he does not consider you. You and another as unfortunate as your—

self are but the catspaws of his selfish ambitions.

"But, there," he broke off, "if I talk like that I will be under the necessity of explaining my sudden antipathy to the man. I cannot do that altogether—not yet; but I will tell you what I may, and then do for you what I can as a man and a human brother. The one thing necessary is that you trust me."

The gray eyes of the younger man settled upon Neville's face. The latter could have nothing to gain by this. His words, his hand-clasp, the expression of his face, suggested no more than deep sympathy and a desire to share another's burden.

"I trust you," said he simply.

"Very well," said Neville. "If you should decide to trust yourself wholly to me, and refuse to have anything further to do with Battista, I believe it will be better for you in the end. However, I will not ask you to promise that. I leave it to your own judgment."

"It will depend largely upon what you tell me," was the reply.

"That's fair," said Neville. "Now," he went on, drawing his chair closer to the other's, "I am going to be as candid with you as I think is good for you at this time. As you yourself must have surmised by this time, you are not, strictly speaking, Alden Lee, but in some way you have acquired his personality."

"How could that be, doctor?"

"That is the question I want to leave unanswered for the present. I know it to be the truth. I know how it comes about. But you must trust me when I say it is so, and until such time as I, as your new physician and adviser, think it best to enlighten you.

"You have acquired the mind of Alden Lee, but the physical and material you is another person.

"Of course, the question which is open to debate is whether, having the mind of Alden Lee, you are more Alden Lee than the body which is presumably controlled by that mind."

"By the body I take it you mean the original person who was me," said the other. "Who was he?"

"I think," said the doctor slowly, his eyes fixed upon the earnest gray ones—"I think you are John Ellis."

"I began to suspect that," said the young man, "and I begin to understand a few

things, though without the faintest idea of how such a seemingly impossible thing could come to pass."

His eyes brightened with a sudden relief.

"Then, if I am only Alden Lee in mind, and my physical identity in the world is of this John Ellis, for the sake of peace let me be *called* John Ellis from this moment."

"Good!" cried Neville. "We're getting along splendidly. But, of course, if you make this resolve, you will have to start life afresh. Not having the mind of John Ellis, you cannot go back to his life and pursuits, whatever they were. Having the mind of Alden Lee, but not his identity, it will be impossible for you to take advantage of his past."

"I see," said the young man, whom we may henceforth call by his real name, John Ellis, "and as far as I have experienced the life of Alden Lee; with the exception of one thing in it, it does not meet with my—personal tastes—somehow."

"Don't worry about whose 'personal tastes' they are," laughed Neville, noting the puzzled frown again on his patient's face. "I can see clearly that the mind of a not very admirable man has not completely effaced what I suspect must have been a very clean, healthy physical personality—that of John Ellis.

"Who knows how this will turn out!" he continued, almost with enthusiasm. "Being a composite of two persons, you are not either of them, but a distinct, new individual who may develop into something entirely different from either of your parts."

"I see," said John Ellis, interest surmounting discomfort. "But tell me one thing: Is the other fellow—the one who called himself John Ellis—is he the real Alden Lee?"

"I suppose he might be called so for the sake of physical identification; but, of course, he is like yourself. He has the mind of John Ellis in the body of Alden Lee."

Dr. Neville refrained from adding that he suspected Alden Lee's body was carrying the stronger mind of the two, and that it would be interesting to note what effect upon the moral weakling's future character the possession of that stronger mind would have.

"I see," repeated John Ellis thoughtfully. "I am a made-over man—somehow. It is a question of future development. I can

see, too, that my own original personality is not extinct, either, for whenever my mind—let us call it mine, for it is now—whenever my mind is not thinking of anything particular I have memories of things I cannot place when I pull myself together. I dream foreign things, for instance, and once when I was in a deep reverie I wandered into the East Side and did things which were obviously bodily habit.”

“Yes, yes,” said Neville quickly. “But, of course, you must see that all that must be put aside, just as you must put aside your remembered past of Alden Lee. You must begin life afresh, for you are not a dual personality, but a composite one!”

“I see that. You’re doing me good, doctor. You’re helping me wonderfully. What I must do now is to worry or wonder about nothing that is of the past, but bend my energies to the present and the future of a new life. It should be easy if I can get a start that will stir new interests. How do you propose that I begin?”

“Now we’ve come to that!” cried Neville, jubilant at his success. “Let’s consider ways and means. Have you any money?”

Again the clouded brow.

“I might say that I have lots. As Alden Lee, I have a bank-book and considerable funds, but since my identity has been denied by all who knew him, I have feared to present myself at the bank, and I have refrained from risking a charge of forging a check. Now that I know I am not Alden Lee, that money is not mine, and I cannot touch it.”

“It simplifies matters not to,” said Neville approvingly. “Make your own way, and until you are started, if you will permit me—”

“I’ll be glad of your help,” said John Ellis, his face working as if he strove to down some emotion. “I’m an infant, in a sense, and you are befriending me like a father.”

“Tut-tut!” said Neville. “There’s a keen professional interest in this thing—as much for me as there was for Battista. But I’m trying to straighten out his damnable work—”

Again the gray eyes fixed themselves inquiringly.

“Could I not go and tackle him about this—force the truth out of him?” he asked fiercely.

“No,” said Neville decisively. “I

know what happened, and I could tell you now as well as he; but it would not help you at this stage of the game. I will tell you in time. For the present believe me, trust me, and act upon my advice.”

“I will,” said Ellis, after a pause.

“Now, what sort of career are you going to follow? There’s the ticklish point. There we must make use of whatever education and training may be in you, inherited either from John Ellis or Alden Lee.”

“Speaking from the only memory I have got,” said the other, with a whimsical smile, “I had some training in art. At one time I maintained a studio where I mostly gave luncheons to chorus-girls.”

“Sounds like Lee. I heard something about it.”

“You knew Lee—before—”

“Oh, yes,” said Neville. “That’s why I am so cocksure of my ground. But don’t let’s go into that, except to say that his art training and the use he made of it won’t help you much now.

“Among all those other memories that creep up—the vague ones,” Neville went on, “you don’t happen to remember what John Ellis’s bent was?”

John Ellis shook his head sadly. But suddenly he looked up with startled eyes. Again a vague memory had trickled into his brain; from what source who shall say?

“Look here,” said he, and his manner was of growing excitement and wonder, “it came to me just now that at one time I was interested in building construction. I never worked at it, but I think it was a recreation—a hobby that I studied in theory, or maybe with the idea of bettering myself.

“Maybe,” he went on, his face glowing more and more with a conviction that he was on the track of something—“maybe it was at the night-school that I nearly butted into. If John Ellis went to a night-school, it means that he worked all day and tried to improve himself in the evening.”

“Yes,” said the doctor, who had heard the masquerading John Ellis’s story, “John Ellis did go to a night-school.”

“Yes, and that was what he studied—building construction!” cried Ellis, starting to his feet, “and that accounts for this!”

He picked up at random one of the many sheets of penciled paper that were scattered about the table and the floor. He handed the sheet to Dr. Neville, all the while talking rapidly.

"That notion came to me several days ago, when I was sitting here, trying to keep my mind off things. Lee was no architect, but he had the artistic sense. John Ellis was no artist, but he must have had some idea of how to erect a practical building.

"Doctor, I see it clearly. Here is the result of a dual education. I believe my new vocation is provided for me by the same phenomenon that has made me a new personality."

"I believe so, too," said the doctor, laying down the paper and picking up another which happened to be the design for a public library.

"This is obviously the practical training of John Ellis merged with the artistic sense and training of Alden Lee."

"By Jove, Ellis, this is downright interesting! Will you let me take some of these things away with me?"

"I'm in your hands, doctor."

"In the mean time, have dinner with me to-night. Don't touch that money. If you need any for immediate wants, call on me.

"And now good-by." The doctor shook him warmly by the hand. "We'll see what sort of man we can make out of you in spite of that—Battista!"

When Neville was gone, John Ellis sank into a chair and smiled contentedly. At last the torture had vanished from his mind. He had no past, although he might really have two. He had only a future, and from that moment his every faculty must bend toward success in it.

As for the little pleasures of life—he would soon make his own circle, his own hobbies, and fit into his own groove.

What was the Circle Club to him? What were riches and idleness? There had been nothing in Alden Lee's life that appealed to him, except—

But that love he had inherited from another man. He had no right to it as John Ellis, and as John Ellis he could never aspire to Heloise Maxwell.

That was the one regret. She must be swept out with the rest that was of the past.

Could it be done?

CHAPTER VIII.

UNFORTUNATE ENCOUNTERS.

THE next six months seemed to fulfil Dr. Neville's hopes of John Ellis—the real John Ellis. The policy of forgetting

seemed to be working wonders. He was already a very different young man, with a personality that was distinctly individual, while it was still reminiscent of certain characteristics of the two personalities that had gone to the making of it.

It was to Dr. Neville that he owed his position with the firm of Burnham, Black & Maxwell, architects, the head of which was Daniel Maxwell, Heloise's father.

At first John Ellis had balked at the proposition of being associated with Maxwell; but Neville had reasoned him out of his natural trepidation.

"Don't throw away a chance like this for any trivial reason," said he. "I know that the lady is wiped out with the rest, and your desire to avoid her is very commendable; but what chance have you of ever meeting her again?"

"You, as Alden Lee, know her father, but you must train yourself into remembering that he never saw or heard of 'John Ellis' before. He will no more recognize you than he would any other stranger.

"As for Heloise—I don't believe she ever set foot in her father's business offices in her life, and she is hardly likely to in the future. You need not worry on the score of the past. Apply yourself to hard work, and make your future, my boy."

Next day John Ellis made his bow to the head of the firm that had built the city's most beautiful edifices.

Daniel Maxwell, whose every tone and gesture was as familiar to the mind in John Ellis as the color of Heloise's eyes, greeted the young man as an utter stranger. If there was the slightest warmth or interest in his reception of the new employee, it was only because he had a deep-down feeling that there was a streak of architectural genius in this gray-eyed, quiet young man who drew such crude but remarkable designs.

But, influenced by the experience with which he was presently surrounded, the crudeness rapidly disappeared from John Ellis's productions. Several times he had made designs which, deftly touched up by more practised, if less gifted hands, had been carried into builded execution.

There was no doubt about it. Ellis had the stuff in him, and he rose by leaps and bounds in the confidence and esteem of Burnham, Black & Maxwell.

When, at the end of six months, his design for five uniform schools for Jewish children of the East Side, was accepted,

Daniel Maxwell called John Ellis into his private office, looked the young man over from head to foot, and said quietly:

"Ellis, you're a made man. That's the funny thing about genius in the United States. It is usually recognized at once, or never at all. You must come and have dinner at my house some night and we will talk over your future."

Daniel Maxwell wondered at the time why the young man turned pale, seemed agitated, and left the private office with hardly a word of coherent acknowledgment. But Maxwell smiled. It wasn't often he invited anybody from the office to his residence. In fact, excepting Mr. Black—Burnham was dead—it was without precedent.

Neville had a visitor that night.

"Just what I feared has happened," said John Ellis. "Maxwell proposes to ask me to dinner at his own house, and you know who is hostess there."

Neville whistled in surprise and a sort of dismay. Then he turned his back on John Ellis and a peculiar smile flickered across his face. Neville thought he understood. John's pleasing personality, his industry, talent, and balance, combined with his late achievement, had impressed Daniel Maxwell.

Future plans? Again Neville smiled.

Was it possible that Maxwell, who had no male heir to step into his shoes, was about to provide one?

Yet what would happen should the invitation be pressed and Ellis compelled to accept? What would happen when Heloise discovered in the guest the masquerading Alden Lee of six months before?

It might ruin everything.

"Don't you think the time is come when you ought to tell me the truth—the whole truth?" said Ellis.

"Not yet, though I may decide otherwise when I have had time to think this over. It's a bit awkward, isn't it?" said Neville.

"Suppose I take the matter into my own hands and go see Battista?"

"You wouldn't do that," said Neville confidently. "Besides," he added, "Battista is back in the Philippines. Neither of his patients came again to see him and he quit in disgust. I know, because I have heard from him."

"What became of the other fellow?" asked Ellis.

"I don't know," said Neville. "He just dropped out. From something I have learned from Battista since his return to Mindanao, I don't think we will have any more trouble from Alden Lee."

"You see, Ellis, on the day of my last interview with Battista, we parted in some confusion. I was hasty and flew off at half-cock when he had merely stated a condition concerning you. I forgot all about a possible theory with which he has since favored me by mail."

"However," he broke off, noting the old puzzled frown returning to John Ellis's face, "I forget myself. That belongs to the past which you have so successfully set aside. I didn't mean to stir up an agonizing curiosity—though I may decide to tell you very soon. Let's see first if it is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, you're happier in ignorance."

When Ellis had gone Dr. Neville drew a long envelope from a pigeonhole of his desk. It bore foreign stamps and contained a folded manuscript. He had read it a dozen times before, and now he read it again, his face brightening as he did so.

What that manuscript contained did not alter his disapproval of Battista's experiment, but the ultimate aspiration of the theory embodied in it softened the physician's wrath against the array surgeon.

So far as Neville could see, John Ellis was fulfilling the theory contained in the letter from the Philippines. Of course, he could not answer for the vanished Alden Lee, but he was more than half-convinced that Lee, too, was fulfilling the promise laid down in the theory.

What that theory was, none but Battista and Neville knew, although, if this dinner invitation fell like a sword, it might be necessary to reveal the secret presently—at least to Ellis.

But something happened next day which precipitated the catastrophe in another and unexpected way.

It was Heloise herself who cut the hair that suspended the sword.

She had not forgotten the mystery of that evening six months before, although she had kept it a secret to herself. Discussing it with none, to Heloise it had gradually taken on the aspect of a queer, but vivid dream.

One thing which she did not understand, even to herself, was that there was a wish in her heart, allied with a dread, that she

might meet the masquerader again. His face haunted her—the face so seemingly honest, the face that was so drawn with a deep and genuine love for her, in spite of every other appearance against him.

The incident had become as a dream, but the man remained in the woman's mind as a thing strangely real.

What could it have meant? Who was the man? Where was he now?

Then there were other things which had disturbed her during the week after that incident in the library.

She had heard queer rumors concerning a mix-up of identity at the Circle Club, in which the name of Alden Lee was concerned. Some said that an impostor had turned up there one afternoon and disappeared again. Some said Alden Lee himself was there, but it was a confused matter all around.

Neither Alden Lee nor the man who called himself Alden Lee had returned there, so it was hard to conclude whether there was any truth in the matter at all. The mix-up had not repeated itself and the matter had been forgotten.

In her own heart and mind, Heloise Maxwell believed that only one man had turned up at the Circle Club—the same impostor who had entered the library that night. The real Alden Lee, she believed, was dead.

But the latter belief received a shock the day after John Ellis's conference with Dr. Neville.

Miss Maxwell was driving to see a friend who lived in upper Madison Avenue. A torn-up street compelled her carriage into Lexington Avenue.

She was idly looking through the window when she saw the very man of her thoughts—the real Alden Lee!

The carriage was past before she awoke to a realization of it. Then doubt assailed her. She had been mistaken. It could not be.

The man she had seen had been hopelessly intoxicated and had been arguing with a policeman, who was apparently threatening him with the alternative of arrest if he did not move on.

Yet she had distinctly seen his face, and—it was Alden Lee!

For a moment the impulse had been to stop the carriage and order it to be driven back to the spot. But suppose it were a mistake? Or suppose it were no mistake

and in his drunken condition Alden Lee recognized and addressed her? What could she do with him?

By the time she came anywhere near a decision toward action, the carriage was far beyond the spot where she had seen him. But now she was sure. She had seen Alden Lee!

When the footman swung open the carriage door at the residence of Miss Maxwell's friend, he found his mistress in a half-fainting condition.

"Johnson," she said faintly. "I have changed my mind. Drive at once to Mr. Maxwell's office."

"Mr. Maxwell's office, m'm?" echoed the footman.

"That is what I said."

Shocked to the depth of his ultra-fastidious soul, Johnson gave the order to the coachman.

Twenty minutes later Heloise Maxwell ascended in the elevator to the offices of Burnham, Black & Maxwell. She would see her father and lay the whole mystery before him.

As she opened the outer door of the offices and stepped into the reception-room, an inner door opened and a gray-eyed, square-jawed young man came out with a bundle of papers in his hands.

He stopped short at sight of her. She looked straight into his eyes and her face became deathly in hue. Then she gave a low cry and reeled toward a lounge set in a corner of the luxuriously appointed reception-room.

She was in a swoon when John Ellis, dropping his papers instinctively, caught her in his arms. He laid her gently upon the lounge, his own face white and shimmering with a sudden cold sweat. He rushed back into the offices and hastily, but quietly, summoned Daniel Maxwell.

"My daughter!" gasped Maxwell. "Impossible!"

He never stopped to inquire how John Ellis came to recognize her, but rushed to the reception-room.

"She must have felt ill and driven here because it was nearest," said Maxwell, recovering his presence of mind. "Telephone Dr. Charles Neville at once. Tell him to drop everything and come here."

John Ellis made use of the telephone in Maxwell's own private office. He got the connection with Neville and whispered tensely over the wire:

"Neville — it's happened. Miss Maxwell came into the office, saw me, and fainted. Nobody knows that was the reason, but Maxwell wants you to drop everything and come here at once." His own love prompted him to add: "For Heaven's sake, Neville, hurry!"

Neville made good time. When he got to the offices of the firm, Heloise was reviving from the faint.

John Ellis was standing behind her, but at a glance from Neville he withdrew to the inner offices.

"Has he gone?" said the woman in a weak whisper.

"Who?" asked Maxwell. "Has who gone?"

"I saw him—" she began, then she gave a little moan and said: "Please take me home!"

"Just what I would suggest," said Neville quickly. "I saw your carriage waiting as I came in. Home is where you ought to be."

Having assured Daniel Maxwell that his daughter was in no danger, and that she had best be left alone with her physician for a little while, Dr. Neville took her away in the carriage, declining Maxwell's escort.

On the way to the Maxwell residence, he asked no questions. While Miss Maxwell's maid helped to make her comfortable, Neville seized the chance to speak to the footman.

"If I may be allowed to say so, sir," said the footman, "the mistress was not well before she reached the offices." He then told of her perturbation when she gave the order to drive to Burnham, Black & Maxwell's.

Neville was puzzled.

"Possibly, then, she was ill, and the sight of Ellis did the rest," was his reflection.

Presently he went to see Heloise, who was now well enough to talk and seemed eager to unload something from her mind.

"Dr. Neville, you have always been as much of a friend as a physician," she said. "Do you remember the evening when you and Mrs. Neville called to take me to the opera—'Tales of Hoffmann'—just before Christmas?"

"Yes—vaguely."

Then she told the story of what had happened before the automobile's arrival on that evening. Neville listened gravely,

for he must not betray to her that he was already in possession of the whole story from the lips of John Ellis, himself.

But his surprise was not assumed when she told him of the man she had seen in Lexington Avenue. He even made use of his unfeigned amazement to assure her that she must have been mistaken, though he knew that she probably was not.

"But—what does it mean?" she cried. "But for that first incident I would believe I made an error to-day. What does it mean?"

Neville was silent for a while. Then he determined to take a plunge for Ellis's sake, for her own sake, for everybody's sake.

"I can't explain it all," said he with a smile, "but I think I can explain Mr. Ellis's part in it. The young man you saw at the office is called John Ellis."

"John Ellis!" she gasped, suddenly sitting up. "That was the name of the—the other man—at the Circle Club. You heard—"

So she knew of that affair, too! The tangle was disconcerting to Neville, who was undertaking the difficult task of unraveling a bit of it.

"No doubt, no doubt," said he, with all the suavity he could command. "In fact, you are right in that John Ellis was the man who came to you here that night, and the Circle Club affair was of a similar nature."

"I know this young man, Heloise, and I want you to misjudge him as little as I do. I have been his physician for six months and understand a good deal about his case."

"It is—or rather was—a very sad one at that time. It was a case of—of psychic phenomena, for want of a better term. He was as he is now, a very honorable young man who would descend to no imposture. In fact, the moment he became aware of his anomalous condition, he resolutely fought his dilemma, and you know how he has succeeded as plain John Ellis in your father's service."

"But I don't understand. Was he mad?"

"No—not mad," said Neville. "I see I must make myself clearer, although I am afraid only one of the profession could possibly understand the matter. You must believe me, Heloise."

"This young man was in the Philippine service. He was severely injured about the

head in an engagement with the natives—a skirmish in which, oddly enough, Alden Lee received a similar injury.

Then Neville made the plunge.

"Of course you read in the papers of the death of Alden Lee?"

"Yes," said Heloise, her eyes fixed on Neville's. "But was he dead? Is he?"

"The Alden Lee that you knew is dead," said Neville bowing his head.

"Then— But how—?" She shook her head wearily.

"There it is—the thing that it will be difficult for the lay mind to comprehend. Remember, we of surgical and medical science are still in the dark ages where psychic phenomena are concerned.

"This young man lay in the cot next to Alden Lee's. In some way this John Ellis received into himself the mental being of Alden Lee. When he regained consciousness it was found that he had completely forgotten his own personality—that of John Ellis—and lived and moved and came home as Alden Lee.

"Now you will readily understand how he came to you as he did, and about his behavior at the Circle Club. And I want to tell you something that will prove to you the nobility of his character in the face of a terrible handicap.

"He came to me and stated his strange case. I had received data upon it from the chief surgeon of the army hospital. For his own sake I decided not to tell him everything.

"It would be adding to his burden of mental anxiety. But I talked quietly with him and explained his case much as I have explained it to you. He trusted me and believed me. Then he made the sacrifice.

"He wiped out his past, you included—though the latter may be the one remaining sore place—began life again, and his bravery and ability have made him what he is after six months.

"His own name is John Ellis, and though he has no memory of his life as John Ellis, he has taken his own name again and has also resolutely refused to take any advantage that might have accrued to Alden Lee."

"He must be a brave man," said Heloise quietly. Then she added impetuously: "Oh, I am so sorry for him."

"There is one more thing," went on Neville. "If you are sorry for him you will help him—and you can.

"You know what his life has been in the past six months, how he has risen by his own unaided merits and in spite of his handicap. He is almost your father's right hand man. For you to oppose him or to reveal what you know to your father may spell his ruin—the blighting of the career so bravely begun again.

"The other day, after his success with the Jewish schools design, your father proposed that he come to dinner here some evening soon."

"Yes, my father spoke of it to me," said Heloise quietly.

"He demurred—for your sake. He knew that to meet you would be pain to you. He would have refused when the invitation came, and the consequences of that refusal might have been serious, as affecting the relationship between him and your father. You see, he could not have explained."

A peculiar light shone upon Heloise's face.

"Dr. Neville," she said, "I do not understand. It is all a puzzle to me. But I believe and trust you, as he did in his darkness. I would not hurt such a man for the world. What do you wish me to do?"

"If he accepts the dinner invitation it will be upon your consent, given through me. Will you receive him as John Ellis, forgetting that you ever saw him before, and holding nothing in your heart to his prejudice?"

"I will—as far as is humanly possible," she answered.

On a night ten days later John Ellis, erect and immaculate in evening dress, faced his hostess in the Maxwell residence.

"Mr. Ellis," she said, extending a frank hand and smiling, "I am glad to meet you. I have heard so much of you from Mr. Maxwell and your friend, Dr. Neville."

"Why not? Why not?" thought old Daniel Maxwell, as they walked ahead of him to the dining-room.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING INTRUSION.

WHERE was the real Alden Lee? It was he that Heloise Maxwell had seen in Lexington Avenue in the toils of a blue-coated limb of the law.

To be brief and truthful about a deplorable fact, Alden Lee spent that evening in a cell. He was arraigned in a police court next morning upon a charge of intoxication, but as it was the first time he had been before the court for any offense he was discharged.

Since the day he walked out of Dr. Battista's room at the Unity Club, he had been engulfed among the teeming masses of the upper East Side.

He had been living the life of John Ellis, save that it was a John Ellis who had fallen from his old, regular ways, yielded to the spell of a foolish, flighty woman, and to a number of weaknesses which were as much of the original Alden Lee as his body was.

It seemed as if the strong brain of John Ellis had deteriorated in the vice-ridden body of Alden Lee, even as the unambitious brain of Alden Lee had improved and developed in the energetic, clean, physical setting of John Ellis's body.

As a matter of fact, and as time went on, the drunkard who associated with Jennie Coulter and her associates became more and more Alden Lee himself, although he had no recollection of his own past as Alden Lee.

Jennie Coulter's father—the respectable bricklayer—had died a few months before of a broken heart, superinduced by Jennie and loneliness. Thus, Jennie Coulter was emancipated from the last bond of respectability, and sank to the level to which her nature had—unconsciously, of course—aspired. And Alden Lee sank with her.

He was a hanger-on at dance-halls; his besetting sins became deliberately besought, and most of his life was spent under the false light that shines from liquor by day and morphin by night.

The fiend of jealousy, which had been a sensitive weakness of John Ellis, became rampant in Alden Lee, and was fed to fury by his vices and the fickle conduct of Jennie Coulter.

Many and many were the battles between the man and the woman. Love, or the gross substitution for it, died. Liking even vanished, and there came between the two a hatred which was held in check by Jennie Coulter only for the sake of holding a man in her toils, and by Alden Lee only that he might yet lead her into a trap.

In his fire-eaten brain Alden Lee nursed the half-formed decision that, when the

trap closed upon her, there would be a killing done.

All of which is very sordid, but is necessary to the complete history of a strange case.

At the end of six months Jennie Coulter had thrown over Alden Lee and had taken to herself a new love—a young light-weight prizefighter named "Kid" Matthews.

She had no further use for Alden Lee—for so she called him still, and so Lee allowed himself to be called, for he had grown tired of denying his own name, and the line of least resistance is the course of the weak.

It was Jennie's scorn of him and the prizefighter's open baiting of the jilted rival that stirred the demon of revenge in Alden Lee. He nourished the demon with copious libations and frequent applications of the needle, under the influence of which he determined on the wholesale massacre of all parties concerned.

He bought a revolver of the quick-firing, deadly, automatic type.

He watched his chance for months, but never caught it. The prizefighter worked somewhere about the city by day, and although Jennie was always available for a murder, Lee's ambition was to get them together, for after the first volley he knew there would be little chance for a second.

He never found them together, save in the evenings at the dance-hall. Usually about that time the man who was feeding his demon all day was in no condition to aim straight or to execute any sort of plan.

One night about two months after Heloise had seen him in the avenue, and after he had been discharged from court for intoxication, Alden Lee came to the conclusion that he had postponed the event long enough.

By dint of his remaining will-power he managed to keep comparatively sober until evening came. He was not by any means normal, of course, but he thought he was clear enough in his mind and calm enough in body to—to aim straight.

But he was no match for the quick-witted Jennie and the agile light-weight lover. Jennie had recently acquired a suspicion, which she had confided to "Kid" Matthews.

Seeing Lee sidling round the entrance to the dance-hall with a hand fumbling in his right-hand coat pocket, the light-weight

surprised everybody by walking swiftly to Alden Lee's side and knocking him into the gutter with a neat and scientific upper-cut.

When Alden Lee recovered his senses his demon rose in fury. Controlling himself, as a maniac alone can, he entered the dance-hall, careless of where the massacre took place, so long as it was executed at once.

But the prizefighter had deemed it expedient to take Jennie Coulter to another dance-hall. Sympathizers with Lee assured him that the pair would not be allowed to return after the assault that had been made upon "an old patron." Several of them suggested to Lee that he might find his man and the girl together at lunch-time any day.

It appeared that "Kid" Matthews worked at a factory close by, and that he and Jennie Coulter ate lunch together at "Cheap John's," on the corner.

Elate with this information, and with his plans all remade for a daylight massacre, Alden Lee proceeded to make up for the day's comparative abstemiousness.

Before nine o'clock that evening he was in that frame of mind where there is really no frame and the mental canvas is a sort of cinematograph, if it is not a complete blank.

He left the dance-hall and its refreshment-bar as one in a dream. His body moved forward independently of whatever mind he had left. Oddly enough, he walked fairly straight, which is a symptom of a peculiar form of intoxication. But he had lost all sense of his identity, his name, whereabouts and his immediate purpose.

He came to himself at a street corner under an arc-light. He stared up stupidly at the light, then around him. He was at a crossing which was the heart of the district where he had been living those eight months, yet he failed to recognize it, save as it was utterly strange to him.

"Where am I?" said he to himself. "What the dickens am I doing here? I don't belong here. 'Tis no place for a gentleman."

Still in the dazed condition, he turned westward and walked on until he reached Fifth Avenue. At that point he seemed to get his bearings and turned southward, still walking with the steady, slow step of a somnambulist.

It was as if his mind was asleep and

dreaming, and his body moved as per ancient habit.

That was the night when John Ellis sat in the library once more with Heloise Maxwell. That room he and the lady had carefully avoided during the two months since that first dinner—the two months that had been fraught with a growing love for Heloise on the part of John Ellis, and a growing interest in Ellis on the part of Miss Maxwell.

The first thing he noticed when Daniel Maxwell led then to the library was that the picture of the person whom he now knew to be Alden Lee had disappeared. His eyes had sought the table from which she had taken it that night. Then his eyes roamed around the room, and finally met the gaze to Heloise.

She seemed to understand what he sought. The color mounted in her cheeks and she averted her eyes.

Later, Daniel Maxwell, who may have been conspiring to some dénouement between the two, excused himself and went to his own home sanctum.

There was a deep silence between John Ellis and Heloise, for each felt the impending inevitable. The missing photograph, and their presence together in that fatal library, seemed to scream for recognition and remark.

But Ellis was determined not to recover the past—just as determined as he was that, as John Ellis, he had a right to put his fortune to the test.

He did. He told her. Her hand lay unresistingly in his. For a moment or two it seemed that she meant to yield with never a word of that which was troubling in the further recesses of her mind.

But it was humanly impossible that she should do so. The question could not be disposed of in that manner, least it arise like a monster between them and their future happiness.

"John," she said quietly. "I do care. I care—very much. But—pardon me for speaking of it—that mystery would hurt our love. How can we be happy until that is cleared up?"

The sudden resurrection of that past thing came as a shock. But he pulled himself together, knowing that she was right and wise.

"I know," he said in a low voice. "I have striven to forget. Could you not forget? Could you not accept me and all con-

nected with me, just as conditions are and as I am?"

"Yes, yes—I would. But could I? Is it in human nature? Suppose he lives? No, not that either, for I should never marry him, now that I have known a man, but—the horror of not knowing how that ghastly thing happened, how—"

John Ellis laid a gentle hand upon her arm.

"If that could be explained, Heloise," he said, "and I know one who can, and will explain it—would you then—?"

"Yes I think so, John. No matter what it was—I think so. It is just not knowing. I must know. You must know, too. Don't you feel that?"

"Yes, and I will know. I might have known at any time in the past two months. But things were going smoothly and I had a fear that to know might spoil my happiness, for I have been very happy, Heloise, in the past two months.

"But to-morrow, I shall see Neville, who knows. He will tell me everything. Until then—"

He bent over her hand and kissed it, just as there came the sound of some slight altercation from the hall.

There came a heavy tread and a hand fell upon the knob of the library door.

It was drawn open, and a man walked into the middle of the room.

It was Alden Lee!

"Good evening, Heloise," said he in a quiet, bland way.

Then his knees shook under him and he fell from his height to the floor, striking it with a crash and lying still.

CHAPTER X.

THE READJUSTMENT.

ODDLY enough, Heloise was the first to recover. She sprang to her feet and passed into the hall, where Ellis heard her summoning her father.

She returned in a moment accompanied by Daniel Maxwell. John Ellis was stand-up by the chair in which he had been sitting. The prostrate figure of Alden Lee, as white-faced and motionless as a dead man, still lay where it had fallen.

"I want you to look at that man and tell me whom he is," said Heloise to her father, her manner one of suppressed excitement.

The face of the man on the floor was turned upward. Maxwell bent over it, then started to his feet with a gasp.

"Lee!"

"Then I have not been suffering from any hallucinations," said Heloise, with a triumphant air.

She was almost unnaturally self-possessed, and both Ellis and her father felt uneasy about her on the instant. But, to be exact about the matter, her certainty of the position in which she and John Ellis and Alden Lee now stood, overcame all other feelings at the moment.

She knew in that instant that she bore not the slightest spark of feeling toward the man on the floor, and it was a relief to think that now all parties to the mystery were present and that presently the whole matter would be cleared up.

She would dismiss Alden Lee as soon as he was himself again, and she would be happy in her love for John Ellis. It never occurred to her, of course, that there might be any difficulty in deciding which was Alden Lee and which John Ellis.

Daniel Maxwell, on his side, was shocked with amazement. But that did not overcome a feeling of resentment against the man on the floor. Lee had once been engaged to his daughter and the engagement had never been broken.

But here was good and sufficient reason for the breaking of that which, nowadays, did not fall in with Maxwell's plans for the future of Heloise and John Ellis. Also, Daniel Maxwell had a deep suspicion that Alden Lee's present condition was not due to a fit of any sort.

But what did the man mean by turning up at this inopportune time and in this condition, especially after he had been reported dead? There would be a scandal, a great to-do in their own and Lee's former circle, if this affair became known.

It must not be known.

"Heloise," said Daniel Maxwell. "This is no place for you. Be so good as to retire upstairs."

Heloise started to obey, but at the library door she turned.

"Heavens—not there!" she exclaimed. "I should go mad. I shall wait in the drawing room until the doctor comes."

"By Jove—yes," said Maxwell. "Ellis, ring up Dr. Neville."

Ellis groaned. Neville would add to the tangle. Furthermore, the telephone was

in the library and he was not sure that he could forewarn Neville in summoning him.

He did not try to forewarn. He merely summoned him to the Maxwell residence with all speed.

"Don't you think you'd better join Miss Maxwell in the drawing-room?" said Maxwell.

"No," said John Ellis. He feared to be alone with her, for she would naturally ask questions that none but Neville could answer. "I will stay here and help until Neville comes. Let us hoist this poor chap on the sofa."

They did. Neville arrived a few minutes later. Heloise met him at the door and mutely pointed toward the library. Neville, afraid that Daniel Maxwell was the victim, rushed through the hall and came upon the three men, one lying still and pallid upon the sofa, the other two standing beside him in a kind of speechless helplessness. The unexpected third man took the doctor's attention at once.

He stared for a moment. Then he dropped his medical case upon the floor and exclaimed:

"Good Heavens! Lee!"

He bent over the man, feeling his pulse and examining under the lids of his eyes. Once he bent low and sniffed. Then he stood up, and Dr. Neville was again the cool practitioner.

"He'll be all right in the morning," said he. "He's simply full of whisky and morphin. But—how did this man get here?"

Ellis told him all he knew about it.

The maid was called and she stated that the door-bell had been rung and that when she had opened the door, this man, whom she at once recognized as Mr. Lee, had walked in just as he used to do years ago. She tried to tell him that Miss Heloise was engaged in the library, but he had passed her as if he had not heard.

Neville pondered for a moment. Then Ellis heard him mutter:

"I see—I see. By Jove, Battista knew!"

"Neville," said Daniel Maxwell, sharply, "I understood that Lee was dead."

"He isn't" said the doctor simply, "and he won't die this time either, although if this is his regular pace, he won't last long."

Neville turned slowly to Ellis, at the same time placing his back toward Maxwell.

"I fancy you needn't stay, Ellis," said he, pointedly. "I mean to remain all night,

if Maxwell doesn't mind, and I'll talk with this young man the minute he comes to."

"As for you Maxwell, this is nasty work, and it isn't in your line. You might as well get to bed. I'll make myself comfortable in a chair."

It was agreed. As Ellis went toward the door he encountered Heloise. There was a question on her lips, but before it could be delivered, Dr. Neville came up softly behind.

"I'm afraid you won't rest comfortably to-night," he said, and it would have been difficult to say whether he spoke to Ellis or to Heloise, or to both, "but I fancy this muddle will be straightened out in the morning."

It was Neville who opened the front door for Ellis. He stepped outside after him and whispered:

"Isn't this a deuce of a mess? But it may be as well in the end. Come to my office sometime to-morrow."

As soon as Neville returned to the library, Daniel Maxwell left it. Heloise also disappeared. The matter was safe in Neville's hands, although that did not bring sleep to Heloise's eyes.

In the library Alden Lee still lay in the stupor, as he was likely to do for hours. Dr. Neville examined him again. In doing so he ran across something heavy and hard in the right pocket of the patient's coat. He felt, and found an automatic revolver.

Neville shivered. Was it possible the man had come here to kill John Ellis, whom he believed to be Alden Lee, as he had threatened to do that day in Battista's office.

Dr. Neville temporarily took possession of the weapon.

But how did the man's memory of his own identity return, so that he came seeking his old associate? Neville thought for a while and mentally read over again that MS. which lay in his desk at home. Yes, Battista had prophesied something of this sort.

Presently Dr. Neville was satisfied that the man would hardly stir before morning. He chose a book from the library, read for an hour or two and finally fell into a light sleep.

He was awakened by a voice that said: "Now where the dickens am I?"

The man on the sofa was speaking. A gray light was stealing through the library windows. It was daylight.

Neville hastened to Lee's side.

"Well," said he, "how do you feel this morning?"

"Rotten!" was the laconic response.

"What is your name?"

"I guess any name'll do—at least until I know where I'm at. How did I get here?"

"You wandered in."

"Gee whiz! I must ha' been bad."

"You were. No harm is meant you, however. You rather alarmed Miss Maxwell, but you were not responsible—quite."

"Miss who?"

"Miss Maxwell. Did you ever hear of a lady of that name?"

"Search me," said the man indifferently. He turned his eyes upon Neville and stared rather fixedly. "Say," he added, "I've seen you before."

"Why, of course. You saw me in Dr. Battista's office about eight months ago."

"Sure thing! Well, then, you know me. I'm John Ellis."

"Sure that is your name?" said Neville.

"Sure!"

"I fancied it was Alden Lee."

"Oh, that was the other fellow. You're mixed. I'm Ellis—and say, doctor," he broke off, "either I'm crazy as a tinker or everybody else is. People are still calling me Al Lee. I'm sick of him. If I could get hold of Al Lee, I'd blow his darn brains out."

"No, I wouldn't either," he went on, after a while of thought. "I've got a bigger job on hand, and, by thunder, this is the day, too, now I remember. Lee used to be stuck on her, but he got his, same as I got mine. But I'm not as soft as Al was. I'll fix her all right."

There came a tap on the door. Daniel Maxwell came in attired in a bathrobe.

"Now look here, my friend," said Neville to his patient, "I want you to look at this gentleman and tell me if you ever saw him before."

"Don't be absurd, Neville," said Daniel Maxwell irritably. He looked at the man on the sofa and said rather severely: "Can't say I'm glad to see you again, Lee—in this condition. Still, for old time's sake—"

"Lee! Lee!" shouted the patient, starting up in nervous impatience. "Here's another dip. Say, I want to get out of here!"

"Don't you know him?" asked Neville, pointing to Mr. Maxwell.

"Naw," said Alden Lee with infinite dis-

gust. "I never clapped eyes on him before, and don't want to again. Where's my clothes?"

"They're on you," said Neville quietly. "I see no reason to keep you any longer, Mr. — whatever you call yourself. As soon as you're ready I'll show you the front door."

"Heavens, Neville!" whispered Maxwell, "I don't understand this. Is he insane that he doesn't know me—this library—"

"You'll understand before the day's out," said Neville. "Let him go."

He gave the man a strong solution of spirits of ammonia and led him into the hall. Just then there came the swish of a dress and Alden Lee and Heloise nearly collided at the foot of the stair-case. She had been awake all night. Hearing voices, and unable longer to bear the suspense, she had come down-stairs.

For a moment Neville was horrified at the collision. Then he determined to take advantage of it.

"Look at this lady, my friend," said Neville to Alden Lee. "Did you ever see her before?"

"Sorry to say I never did," said Lee with a smiling appreciation of the lady's fine points.

Heloise reeled as if struck, but Neville caught her and whispered:

"Bear up. Everything will be cleared up to-day."

Maxwell was in a semistupefied condition and had nothing to say.

Dr. Neville escorted the degenerate Lee to the steps in front of the residence.

Here he drew the automatic revolver from his pocket and handed it to the man.

"Here's your pistol," said he coolly. "I thought it best to keep it until you were out of the house. I advise you, my friend, to be careful what you do with that weapon."

"Oh, I know what I'm going to do with it," said Lee savagely.

"That's your affair, not mine," said the doctor, quietly closing the door between him and Lee, who presently sallied up the street.

"Heloise," said Neville, when he had returned to father and daughter, "have you ever told your father what happened in the library eight months ago?"

"No," she replied.

"I advise you to do so after breakfast. It will simplify matters when I add more

facts this afternoon. In the mean time I must see Ellis first. It concerns him closely."

"If that man denies that he is Alden Lee," said Maxwell, in a sort of verbal explosion, "whom does he say he is?"

"John Ellis," said Neville, "but it is no use torturing your head with questions. Hear Heloise's story, and then, if you will, come to my office at your convenience—preferably in the afternoon, so I will have had time to talk to Ellis."

The doctor left Maxwell in a state of blank astonishment. Heloise was troubled, yet there was a ray of hope in her heart. To-day would end the mystery.

About noon Daniel Maxwell arrived at the offices of the firm of architects. He at once summoned John Ellis, whose face bore traces of a sleepless night. Ellis at once saw, from the cloud on Maxwell's brow, that his own fate was trembling in the balance.

"Ellis," said Maxwell coldly, "personally I have always liked you. My daughter has told me this morning of what occurred in the library one evening some months ago. Have you anything to say for yourself?"

"I can have nothing to say until I have seen Dr. Neville," John Ellis respectfully answered.

"Then you had better see him at once."

"He has already called me on the telephone," said Ellis, "but I was waiting for you or for the arrival of lunch-time."

"It's lunch-time now," said Maxwell gruffly. "See him at once."

Dr. Neville received his young friend in a kindly manner. He told him to make himself comfortable for a talk which might be lacking in comfort.

Then, when they were settled down, Neville carefully related what Dr. Battista had told him that day at the Unity Club.

The bare facts with regard to that uncanny operation in the Tagalog hospital had a very natural effect upon John Ellis. The young man sat there with horror stamped on his face. As the truth began to be fully realized in his mind, he bent forward and set his elbows upon his knees and his hands upon his temples.

Neville could see that John Ellis was having a hard fight to hold on to himself. At the end of Neville's story, Ellis started up with a wild cry:

"Heaven help me! Who am I? What

am I? Where is this man, Battista? I'll kill him as he killed me!"

"Easy, my boy, easy!" cautioned Neville, laying kindly hands upon him. "When this thing was first told me, I felt much as you do, only in a so much smaller way, as it did not touch me personally. I don't blame you.

"But time has passed. I have become used to it. I have watched you, and now I see that for you, at least, it may have proved a splendid thing.

"Do you remember Battista's last words to you: 'You are a better and fitter man than you were when you entered the army. Before you are done you will know that, and so also will Dr. Neville.'

"Ellis, my boy, I know it now, Battista was right—at least in his prophecy."

He went to his desk and procured the MS. from the envelope with the foreign stamp.

"Read that," said he. "Take time. Understand it. Read every word twenty times, or until what it means to you sinks home."

John Ellis took the MS. in a hopeless manner. He mechanically sat down and began to read.

Dr. Neville took a seat by a window whence he could keep an eye on the young man. The doctor smoked and pretended to read a book, but he was watching every movement of John Ellis's face.

At first it was dazed and miserable. Then a look of interest crept in. All at once it became afire with hope. The only sound in the doctor's study was the rustle of manuscript leaves impatiently turned over.

When the end of the manuscript was reached, John Ellis, without lifting his gaze, turned to the beginning and read again. Four times he read the letter before he seemed to have had enough of it.

It was during the third reading that there came from the street the raucous voices of newsboys calling extras. Ordinarily Dr. Neville would have paid no attention, but suddenly his ear caught a word—a name—and he started to his feet as if shot.

He tiptoed across the room and passed out without disturbing the reader.

Presently Neville came back with a fresh afternoon paper, across which headlines were lettered in blood-red and the word "*tragedy*" stood out in the boldest type.

Now there were two readers, and one was no less gripped by tense interest than

the other. At last John Ellis broke the spell. He rose slowly to his feet and faced Dr. Neville:

"I see," said he, his voice quivering. "I am a better man, but—Neville, is this thing fair to the other poor fellow?"

Neville came forward with the newspaper in his hand.

"I contend that it was not," said he, and his voice, too, was quivering. "But you cannot help that, and the crime—for it has come to tragedy—lies upon Battista's conscience, not on yours or mine.

"Now read this," said he, extending the newspaper. "It's like nature trying to readjust her affairs. It means the end of your dilemma, my boy."

John Ellis took the paper. One glance at the headlines told him everything:

JEALOUSY LEADS TO TERRIBLE TRAGEDY.

John Ellis, Alias Al. Lee, Murders His Sweetheart and Fatally Wounds His Rival.

HE COMMITS SUICIDE.

Then followed the familiar sordid tale of drunkenness, jealousy and assassination.

The affair had occurred in Cheap John's restaurant at noon. Jennie Coulter was dead. Her lover, the amateur lightweight, was fatally wounded.

And Alden Lee had finished his work by killing himself on the spot.

CHAPTER XI.

BATTISTA'S THEORY.

EVEN while John Ellis and Dr. Neville were staring at one another, each trying to realize the full significance of the tragedy and its probable effect upon the situation, Daniel Maxwell put in an excited appearance.

In his right hand he carried a later edition of the afternoon paper which had first published the murder and suicide story.

"Neville, and you—Ellis," said Maxwell with a quick ominousness in his voice, "I want a full and clear explanation of this—at once!"

"Sit down," said Neville quietly. "You shall have it, and welcome. The first part I shall have to tell you. The rest you can read for yourself."

Then Dr. Neville repeated for the architect's benefit all that Battista had revealed to him by word of mouth that day at the Unity. Maxwell listened with great feeling, but no apparent amazement. He did not seem to realize the marvel of Battista's surgical feat, but appeared to be forming in his mind a highly unfavorable opinion of Battista's morality.

"That man must be an unprincipled scoundrel!" he shouted, when Neville had finished.

Neville noticed that Daniel Maxwell paid hardly any attention to John Ellis, as if Ellis's position had—as yet, at least—made no impression.

"Possibly," said Neville, "but it is too late to discuss that. For the rest, my dear Maxwell, will you read over this manuscript—carefully."

Maxwell took the letter from Battista and settled into a chair. Neville motioned John Ellis to the window and talked quietly with him, while the architect plunged into the surgeon's explanation of his action.

"Now, look here, Ellis," said Neville, "I can't tell just how this thing is going to affect Maxwell when it sinks into him. Much less can I imagine how it is going to affect Heloise and her feeling toward you.

"She loves you. I have seen that. All will be well if her woman's instinct does not revolt against—well, against marrying a man who is really made up of two men.

"However, we can only put it to the test, and I think you had better not do it personally, nor press her for an answer until she sees fit to summon you and offer it herself. To press a woman under such circumstances might be fatal to your future happiness.

"I propose that you write her, enclose Battista's theory which, after her first horror, she will see has been fulfilled, and leave the rest to the strength of her love for you and the healing influence of time. One becomes used to anything, no matter how strange and grotesque and horrible it may at first appear."

"You propose that I go away for a time?" said Ellis.

"Yes—at least keep out of the lady's way while she is thinking. Better still, go away on a vacation, so there will be no danger of your meeting her prematurely. She must be allowed a chance to see this thing calmly.

"Also, your name figures in this tragedy. So does the name of Alden Lee, though the

slang abbreviation of the latter name may throw sand in many eyes. Still, there will be many—at the Circle Club, for instance, who will remember the queer incident of two men named Alden Lee and John Ellis and talk about it.

"Also, Alden Lee was a well-known man about town in his day and some reporter may identify the body as that of a man who has been reported dead for over a year.

"I propose that you drop out for a bit and let the matter quiet down and rearrange itself."

John Ellis turned away with a nod of his head. His eyes encountered the fixed gaze of Daniel Maxwell. The architect was looking at him with an expression of countenance that was discomforting.

The look was one of sheer amazement, mingled with a kind of horror. It was as if Daniel Maxwell was trying to remember that John Ellis was no monster, while his instincts were in rebellion against the negative.

Ellis saw the architect pull himself together and proceed with the manuscript.

Maxwell read it but once. When he laid it aside he arose to his feet and walked up and down the room in a state of great perturbation.

"I know how you feel about it," said Neville quietly; "but you will get over that presently, Maxwell. It is only a question of your primordial instincts and fixed ideas against the breadth and fairness of your reasoning."

Maxwell stopped. He looked steadily at Dr. Neville.

"You are right," said he, like one battling with himself.

He turned his eyes to John Ellis, who met his gaze without wavering. Maxwell suddenly jerked up his right hand.

"Neville's right," said he, "only it's a queer thing—at first. Shake hands, Ellis. That will show you that I want to regard you—as you were—before I knew this thing.

"But," he added sharply, "you can't marry Heloise—at least—"

He stopped short, and his face turned a fiery red.

"That's all right," said Ellis with a smile. "You have guessed right. Heloise loves me as I love her. At least, she loved me last night. I'm going away for a little while.

"With your permission I will lay the

matter before her—not in person, but by letter, enclosing Battista's, and giving her all the time she wants to make up her mind about it.

"You can be the judge. If it is too much for her, I shall never return to New York or anywhere that I might annoy her by my presence. If she outgrows what I admit is a natural horror, she herself can summon me. Do you consent to this course?"

"Yes," said Maxwell, nodding approvingly. "John Ellis, I don't know just what a respectable Christian might call you, but you're a pretty good man.

"By all means go away. You deserve a vacation; and if you will engage yourself to Burnham, Black & Maxwell, at their option, you might go to Europe at their expense and study classic styles in architecture. I make the proposition."

"So far so good," put in Dr. Neville, when the bargain had been sealed. "The rest is up to you, Ellis."

Next day Heloise Maxwell received a heavy letter from John Ellis. There is no use in detailing the girl's emotions when she read Ellis's own letter to her, in which he set forth all that the reader already knows.

It explained much to her—explained all, in fact, but it aroused in her an instinctive horror, a physical revulsion which did mighty battle with the love which she had unreservedly given to him in the secret recesses of her own heart.

She blessed him for two things: That he had not laid his case before her personally, thus compelling an immediate answer, for her answer must have been fatal to them both. Also, she was grateful for the consideration that had prompted him to go away for a time, leaving her to determine by time whether her love was greater than her natural prejudices.

It was an hour before she ventured to open the lengthy letter from Dr. Battista to Dr. Neville. It follows:

Tagalog, Mindanao,
May —, 19—.

MY DEAR NEVILLE:

It may be more or less of a relief to you to know that I am back at Tagalog. I learned in a roundabout way, before leaving New York, that you had taken charge of young Ellis, alias "Alden Lee," with the hope, no doubt, of saving him from the further machinations of his satanic majesty's emissary—Jean Battista!

Anyway as you had run off with one of my patients and as the other failed to eventuate for weeks after that general visiting day—I suppose you took the real Lee from me, too—I became disgusted and, in a measure, relieved, and returned here.

Now, in justice to myself and in fairness to you, you ought to be made aware of that theory which, in your righteous indignation, you refused to hear. Your knowledge of the theory is hardly likely to affect your patients in the long run, but it may aid you in guiding one of them, at least. It will also add to any interest you may feel in watching my ideas fulfil their promise.

I have already told you how I transposed the brains of John Ellis and Alden Lee.

Now, as I remarked when you headed me off that time, I have a theory touching mind and matter. It is this:

Most persons believe that mind controls matter. It may do so, just as a king may rule his people. But a monarch who does not please may still find his subjects the more powerful factor in the government and himself subordinate to their laws—as in the case of Charles I or of Louis XVI.

In short, it has always been my belief that mind controlled only through the strength or weakness of the material body.

In the experiment of Alden Lee and John Ellis, I have proved it, I believe, even at this early stage of the game, and now I make a prophecy.

In the weak, vice-ridden body of Alden Lee, I have placed the healthy, capable, but not highly developed brain of John Ellis, a sober, industrious young fellow, who might have done fairly well in the world.

I prophesy, upon the strength of my theory and my convictions, that the vicious traits of Alden Lee's body are so rooted and habitual that the clean mind placed in his skull will not control them. On the contrary, the healthy brain thus placed in the unhealthy body will be affected and deteriorated by the rotten vehicle in which it finds itself.

Here, matter will affect the organ which is the instrument of the mind. That healthy brain will degenerate.

The other case now. I have placed in the powerful physique of John Ellis the brain of Alden Lee—a brain which is cultured, developed, and polished—a brain which might have been an asset in the world had it been exercised and not half-ruined by the bodily habits of the indolent, physical-pleasure-loving Lee.

In the case of the polished but debased brain of Alden Lee placed in the healthy body of John Ellis, what, according to my theory, should be the result?

Unforeseen accidents barred, that hitherto abused brain should thrive in copartnership

with that unabused body which is now its tenement.

The salutary effect of healthy matter will at once operate upon the brain whose qualities have lain dormant so long, and if Alden Lee's brain happens not to be too far gone, it will be so far built up by Ellis's clean physical attributes that, after a time, the brain will find itself "king" by the moral influence of the body which it is to govern.

It will rule wisely and well, because it must. All the best qualities of Alden Lee's redeemed brain and all the best qualities of John Ellis's instinctively moral body will develop in this copartnership to the ultimate composite accomplishment of a splendid man.

There is but one thing of which I am afraid, and that is the possibility of one or the other of the patients reverting to his former life by reason of mental abstraction, reverie, dreams, or intoxication, during which suspension of the normal mental faculties, ancient bodily habit might gain temporary control.

In that case, although it would not last, it might create a sad tangle, for the body of Lee might wander back to old haunts, as might also the body of John Ellis.

This, then, is my theory, Neville, and this is my prophecy in a nutshell. The original Alden Lee will go straight to the gutter while the original John Ellis may climb to the seats of the mighty.

The great point which I wish to drive home is that brain and mind are not to be confused one with the other.

The brain is merely an organ. It is the induction coil which, unsupplied with the power of which it is the instrument, is merely—an idle machine.

Mind, on the other hand, is that mysterious force which animates the machine called the brain. The possession of intellect more or less in a human being is due, according to my ideas, to the perfection more or less of the brain which is mind's induction-coil.

Madness, for instance, is a defect, not of the mind, but of the intellectual machine or organ. Childhood's simplicity is due to the undeveloped machine; senility to the deterioration of the worn-out machine.

It all opens a wide field, but I agree with you, Neville, that the surgical practise of adjusting brain to body will not, and should not, be sanctioned this side of millennium. It savors too much of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Much might be done, however, toward the doctoring and careful development of the personal mind-machine, and surely surgical science has advanced so far as to make such an operation possible with a minimum of risk.

Personally, I have merely proved something to please myself, and many a victim has died

upon the operating-table that science might establish a point trivial in comparison.

Should the developments of the case prove my theory fallacy, do not spare me; should they prove my case, in fairness to me—be honest.

Fraternally,

BATTISTA.

Next day John Ellis, who had not yet left town, received the following letter from Heloise Maxwell. It was not lengthy, but it was touching in its simplicity:

In spite of everything, I ask myself if my love is touched. No. It is only that the woman in me shrinks back from—I hardly know what, nor can I find words to express my lack of understanding.

John, I love you too much to end it all

(The End.)

now. I will be honest with you and with myself. I will try to adjust my viewpoint to what now seems—unnatural in you.

There! I have said it!

Give me time, John. I am only a woman, and I know not what I would have. Thank you for going away for a time.

If my heart prays to see you and yearns for your presence, I shall send word, for then I shall know that nothing matters, so long as you are the you that I learned to love since this thing happened to you.

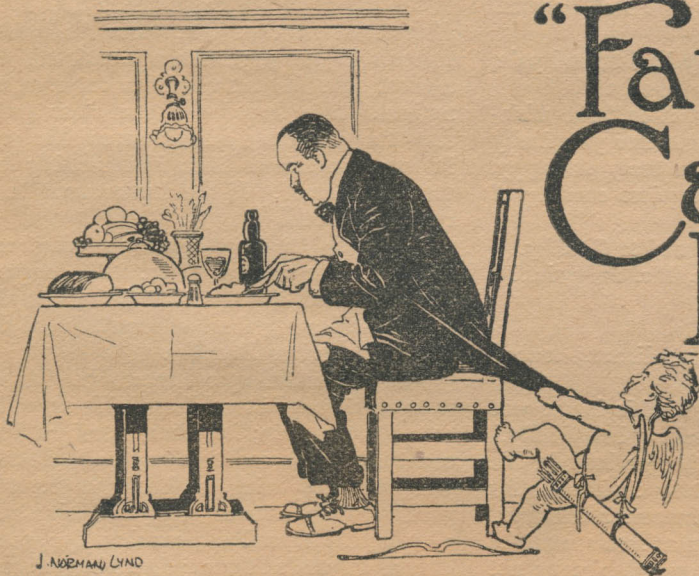
Be patient with me.

HELOISE.

In less than a month she cabled him at Florence, Italy:

Come to me.

HELOISE.



"Fatted Calf Love"

by
Jane
O'Ryan

BUT would it be fair?" Dorothy whispered with a sigh.

"Fair, when I love you so much?"

Mortimer's hand closed over hers under cover of the table.

He leaned slightly forward and beheld Chubby Sedgwick on Dorothy's left. He was just finishing his last morsel of fish, and was entirely oblivious of all about him.

A placid look was upon his cherubic countenance, his large, blue eyes were intent upon nothing tangible. They seemed rather to have a partly reminiscent, partly anticipatory expression, as though in dwelling upon the pleasures of the departing

mouthful he was likewise dreaming of the delights of the dishes to follow. Mortimer's eyes wore a puzzled expression.

Could it be possible that Dorothy actually loved Chubby? But why should he feel surprise? Chubby was his friend and a fine fellow. Yet he wondered, nevertheless, and tried to solve the puzzle.

Perhaps her liking was merely that of comradeship. Chubby was a man of leisure, and in his generous way had given Dorothy much enjoyment. He had not shown that he thought seriously of her, and as long as Dorothy was free Mortimer felt he had a right to plead his cause.

His eyes rested upon her face.

"You mean more to me than any girl I have ever met."

He spoke with a smile upon his lips to hide the import of his words from the rest of the assemblage.

Dorothy's hand moved uneasily in his. He pressed it gently.

She turned to Chubby, but he was busily engaged with his entrée. His whole attention was centered upon it. Deftly he prepared a piece for his mouth. He carried it to his lips in one quick, skilful sweep.

Dorothy watched him as he slowly masticated; then, with a little sigh, she turned to Mortimer. She blushed as she realized that he still held her hand. She disengaged it at once and began to eat.

"Miss Woods—Dorothy," Mortimer said, "I've only this one year, then I'll be a full-fledged M.D.; then two years at hospital work, and—"

He paused, for Dorothy had turned pale, and her lips trembled ominously.

"I can't tell you what it is," she whispered, as the butler removed her practically untasted portion. "I am truly unhappy, yet this is almost the happiest evening of my life."

Then, abruptly, she turned to Chubby.

"Did you speak to me, Mr. Sedgwick?" she asked.

"Eh? I?"

He sighed. His eyes were directed toward the approaching butler.

"The last bird I ate in this house was beautifully cooked," he said, "beautifully."

There was a strained, eager look in his eyes, and his tongue gently moistened his lips. Dorothy had not become accustomed to his supreme inattention at meals, and she wondered if she had wounded him by not having given him more of her time.

"That's right," whispered Mortimer. "I thought you would never put it down."

He pressed Dorothy's hand with considerable warmth. She found it very comforting. It soothed her hurt at Chubby's attitude. She wished his attentions had never been. She wished that she might listen to Mortimer and look into his eyes. She started slightly at his whisper.

"Dorothy, if you tell me I haven't the ghost of a chance, I'll not bother you again. I wouldn't take advantage of your loneliness and your sweetness for the world."

Dorothy withdrew her hand as she smiled, but she could not meet his eyes. She nur-

tured an answer to an imaginary question of Chubby's. Mortimer turned to the lady on his right, and Dorothy's eyes rested upon Chubby.

He was dissecting his bird with a nicety too dainty for masculinity and eating it with an enjoyment showing too freely upon his face. He drank his wine with the keenest appreciation.

Dorothy ate silently, though the fact that she was not conversing with Chubby was not apparent to Mortimer, as she turned slightly from him. She was lonely and wretched. She felt as far removed from Chubby as though she were in another hemisphere.

A sigh of deep satisfaction roused her. Her eyes unconsciously sought Chubby's plate. Upon it rested a small array of bones brought to a polished condition through the dexterous manipulation of knife and fork.

She closed her eyes, while a feeling of distaste swept over her. She had eaten scarcely anything, yet she was satiated. For a short time she sat unspoken to, even unnoticed. She feared that the other ladies saw the neglect. She lowered her eyes in deep confusion. How interminably long the time seemed. If the dinner would only come to an end.

Presently Chubby began to grow conscious of his surroundings. His appetite was appeased for the time being, so that upon swallowing the last mouthful of desert he turned to Dorothy.

His gaze rested upon her profile. He was not conscious of its coldness. He noted her sunny, wavy hair; her short, straight nose; the lowered lids and the length of her lashes upon the deepening pink of her rounded cheek, which showed, too, the hint of a dimple; the tremulous, curving lips, pretty chin and rounded throat; then his eyes swept the ensemble and found the face lovely.

She was as complete, as perfect in her way as the dinner had been. He gave an almost inaudible sigh of satisfaction. His eyes were still upon her, and his sluggish heart-beats quickened.

The thoughts which had been in his mind ever since he first saw her shaped themselves into a definite, insistent form. A faint fire burned in his eyes, and he leaned toward Dorothy.

"Will you meet me in the conservatory after dinner?"

His voice was somewhat raised, and Mortimer heard the question; and as Dorothy hesitated in her reply, he said in low tones:

"I will not be discouraged until you tell me there is no hope."

Dorothy gave Mortimer a swift, appealing glance.

"I—I wish I could be courageous," she said tremulously.

Then Chubby repeated his question. Mortimer turned to the other girl, and as he did so a feeling of lonesomeness stole over Dorothy. She realized how much she cared, but how helpless she was. She looked into Chubby's altered eyes.

"Yes, I shall meet you," she said in a lifeless voice.

"Thank you," said Chubby with a smile.

His smile changed his face entirely, for it not only lost its stolidity, but took on a sweetness so attractive that one felt disposed to like him hugely.

"Near the fountain," he whispered as the ladies arose.

Dorothy went to the conservatory as soon as she was free to do so. Ingenuous as she was, she felt that it was something important which Chubby had to communicate.

A sigh escaped her. There was a certain happiness expressed in it; but, too, a deep uneasiness. If she could only stay here with her friends, the Marshalls, for the time it would take to make a doctor! But the impossibility of such a scheme caused her to dismiss the thought instantly.

The pleasures in which she had been indulging made the idea of returning to the stagnant country town very repugnant, and the repetition of the bickerings of her aunt, so galling to her pride, seemed more than she could endure.

She could not survive the strain of years of waiting, and she had not been trained to become a breadwinner. The alternative caused her to frown, and when Chubby entered she watched him half curiously, half wistfully.

He walked slowly, almost languidly, his hands clasped behind his back. Upon reaching Dorothy he seated himself beside her without delay. He rested one arm along the back of the seat and fell into an attitude of complete comfort. He heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

"Will you marry me, Dolly?" he asked in a slow, unimpassioned way; yet he gazed at her with an earnestness which would have been a surprise to his friends.

Beneath Dorothy's long lashes flashed a look of resentment. She raised her head sharply, and her lips parted; then suddenly

she relaxed. A strange gust of feeling, which caused the tears to rush to her eyes, swept over her.

She turned away, and a faintly whispered "yes" reached Chubby's ear.

"Dorothy!" he exclaimed.

His eyes actually were bright. He drew her to him and kissed her once upon the lips, then took his handkerchief and tenderly brushed away her tears.

"Dear little girl," he said. He patted her hot cheek, and added in the same tone: "Let's keep it a secret. I hate all these congratulations and fuss. You're going home to-morrow—Thursday. Let us get married the following Tuesday secretly at your house, then surprise our friends."

A strong desire to run from him possessed Dorothy, but this changed almost instantly to a vehement resentment against her aunt. She was the cause of all her unhappiness.

At least Chubby loved her. There was a tightening of the muscles in her throat and a painful palpitation of her heart. She raised her eyes to Chubby's. The fire of resentment had burned out.

Her voice was calm as she said: "I, too, like a quiet wedding."

Chubby pressed her cold little hand and gazed at her with lazy admiration.

"You have the right idea," he said; "it will be just you and me all to ourselves, Dolly."

He was supremely satisfied. The arrangements were completed, and there was nothing more to be said. He held Dorothy's hand, and occasionally patted it. She was submissive.

Her world was so thoroughly changed that she needed time in which to think. Freedom and independence were within her grasp. She thought of her aunt, eager and curious to know all. She pictured her delight upon learning of Chubby's wealth. Dorothy's mouth set grimly.

"She will know nothing," she determined, "not even his name, until he is in the house."

This was her revenge for several years of suffering and humiliation. It satisfied Dorothy, though, and she smiled even now in anticipation of the actual pain her aunt would experience at being kept in ignorance of what her future nephew was until he was upon her.

The following Monday Mortimer and Chubby dined. It was Chubby's farewell bachelor dinner. But he ate scarcely any-

thing; in fact, since Dorothy's departure, even his favorite dishes proved distasteful. Mortimer, too, had no appetite, for he had promised to stand up with Chubby upon the morrow.

It was quite early when the dinner was over, and Chubby went directly home. He was unusually tired—tired enough to stay abed for a whole day.

He sighed. It was a happy sigh—that is, in an abstract way—but it was positively a weary one, for it was born of the recollection that he would have to rise early the following morning—extra early, as he had discharged his valet.

He wondered now at his sending him away. To be sure, he had been insolent and was not above suspicion, but he should have borne with him longer. However, it was done; and he turned his back, as it were, upon further rumination and walked to the dresser, upon which reposed his most recent purchase—a good-sized alarm clock with a good-sized bell.

He wound the alarm slowly and thoroughly, set it for seven-thirty, then placed the clock back upon the dresser.

Dorkins, the butler, was to knock at seven-fifteen. That would stir him, and before he had time to doze the alarm would rouse him thoroughly. Chubby never had been so determined.

Within an hour he was in bed, quite used up; but Dorothy was worth it. He smiled at the thought of her, then turned on his side to sleep. How calm and tranquil was his sleep.

A sharp rap made him stir.

"Yes," he said sleepily. It was the last rap of many delivered by the faithful Dorkins, who would not depart until he had received a response.

"Seven-ten, sir," he said solemnly.

"Yes," said Chubby with a sigh.

He had five minutes more. It was nice that he did not have to spring up at once.

He seemed to be walking in a golden springtime, surrounded by fragrant flowers and sweetly chirping birds, and in the distance he could hear the sound of bells—church bells they must have been—yet there were no chimes, no stops between the strokes, just a long, continuous, vibrating sound, and as he began to wonder at the strangeness, the sound ceased, leaving a faint echo, and while this grew less and less, his sensibilities became by degrees roused, slowly wondering, until finally he

sat up with a half-puzzled look in his eyes, but when his gaze encountered the clock all doubt left him.

He became thoroughly awake.

"What!" he cried.

It was five minutes to eight.

Thrusting aside the covering he jumped from bed and began to dress. A determined look stamped his face. As each piece of clothing was adjusted he gave a short, satisfied exclamation.

He showed remarkable agility and despatch. He was breathless when he rushed to the dresser to brush his hair, but a smile was upon his lips. Then he looked into the mirror and a startled cry escaped him. How altered he was. His face was bathed in perspiration and was unusually red.

"Dolly," he said mournfully, as though in chiding.

He mopped his face and shook his head slowly, yet in his heart was the sense of victory, and as he proceeded with his toilet another feeling, stronger than all the others, possessed him, causing an expression of relief to pass over his countenance, leaving a look of pleasurable anticipation in his eyes.

He was hungry!

He struggled into his coat, eager for breakfast, then his eyes again encountered the clock. He would have time only for a cup of coffee. Chubby's jaw dropped, but almost instantly a wonderful smile lit up his lineaments.

"I'll just take a cup of coffee," he said.

There was a ring of triumph in his voice.

At the door of the breakfast room he met Dorkins. He nodded.

"I'm in a hurry, Dorkins," he said breathlessly.

"Good morning, sir," said Dorkins. "Everything is in readiness as you ordered yesterday."

Chubby walked to the table and seated himself. Four covered dishes and a pot of coffee were before him. He poured his coffee.

"Dorkins, please see if there is a taxi at the door."

He spoke in hurried tones and stirred his coffee briskly.

Dorkins left the room.

Chubby took three or four large swallows of coffee, all the while staring at the covered dishes, then, merely out of curiosity, he lifted one of the covers. Before he

quite realized it he had transferred a small portion of the contents of the dish into his plate.

He ate a mouthful hurriedly, but the second was eaten slowly, while his eyes wandered and fastened upon another covered dish. His hand unconsciously reached out to it and lifted the cover. It was his favorite dish.

A large quantity was placed upon his plate. There was a slight show of haste over the first mouthful or two, then he succumbed to the pleasure of masticating slowly. All thought of extraneous matters became entirely eradicated from his mind.

He even was unaware of the return of Dorkins.

After a few seconds' waiting Dorkins coughed once, twice. The cough was imperative. Chubby glanced toward him questioningly.

"The taxi is at the door, sir," Dorkins announced impressively, and added: "A gentleman phoned, sir, and inquired for you. I said you were at breakfast. He did not give his name."

A dark red flooded the cheeks of Chubby. With a bound he was out of his chair and in a few strides out of the room. In the hall he picked up his hat, coat and grip.

Before the astonished Dorkins had recovered himself Chubby was in the taxi.

Having just escaped arrest for speeding, and in his hurry tripping over his bag upon jumping from the cab, Chubby reached the station two minutes too late. There would not be another train for one hour and a quarter.

He dropped onto a seat, completely fagged out. He did not stir for ten minutes. Then he sent Dorothy a telegram announcing his arrival upon the next train. He felt too disturbed to while away the time in reading.

There were still excitement and worry. There was an explanation to be made, and he hated explanations, but when it was all

over Dolly and he would have an excellent breakfast together and take as much time over it as they pleased. Suddenly he realized that it would be much too late for breakfast and that he had a long journey and had very little to stay him.

But he turned from the temptation of leaving the station and decided to wait until he was upon the train before eating.

The train had no dining-car attached.

Chubby tried to cheer himself with thoughts of Dorothy. He succeeded for a time, but even her loveliness could not for long appease and rest him. He tried to sleep, but each time he was about to lose consciousness the fear of missing the station caused him to start up. It was a relief when the train drew up at his destination.

He dropped off before it came to a full stop. He got into the first hack and told the driver not to spare his horse. A smile of accomplishment rested upon his pale lips as the horse started off at a gallop.

The conveyance creaked its lack of springs, aided by the unclassed action upon the part of the horse, caused a lurching, jolting motion, yet Chubby steadied himself nobly and gazed steadily from the window.

As the carriage neared the house of Dorothy, Chubby saw two figures, amid a shower of rice, run quickly down the steps and into a carriage, which immediately rumbled off.

A gasp of astonishment escaped him.

"Dolly, Mortimer," he murmured.

For a space he sat absolutely inert. For the first time in his life, amazement encompassed him, numbed him.

His eyes blinked incessantly and slowly the red in his cheeks faded to their natural hue.

The sudden ending of the horse's desperate effort aroused him to action.

He leaned forward and spoke to the driver sharply.

"Drive on to the best hotel," he said.

ON ONE PETER.

Anonoyous.

DOOR Peter was in ocean drowned,
A harmless, quiet creature;
And when at last his corpse was found,
It had become salt-peter.

The EXIT of BAD DAWSON



By Harold de Polo

THE single street of Pachuca, chiefly made up of saloons, dance-halls, and a few stores and cabins, lay baked and still under the sun of Arizona.

Not a person could be seen, but in front of the buildings were groups of cow-ponies, quietly waiting for their owners.

The silence of the afternoon was broken into by three muffled reports of a gun—first one, then, simultaneously, two more, followed by "Bad" Dawson, outlaw, breaking through the swinging doors of the Copa de Plata saloon.

His face wore its usual sardonic leer, as when under fire, and in each hand he held a smoking revolver.

He turned, quick as lightning, with mechanical exactness, and, facing the doors, threw all the lead that his "shooting-irons" held straight into the room.

With quick, practised hands, he stuck his two guns into their holsters, whirled round, gave a jump, a leap, and landed clean in the saddle on his horse's back.

With wonderful rapidity, he had his feet in the stirrups, his hand on the reins, slapped his horse sharply on the flank, and was off.

In barely a few seconds he had left the street behind him and was out on the prairie. He bent low, glanced back, and chuckled amusedly, contemptuously, to himself.

"Bad" Dawson had again won out—on the first play—and that, to him, meant everything. For his horse was the finest, strongest, and swiftest in the State. And he and his animal were good friends; they knew each other—intimately.

Dawson brought his knee-pressure into play, shortened the reins, and with quiet, firm words, urged the horse forward.

The big black bent lower, his cleanly-cut feet working rhythmically. His tail stood stiff; his neck and head were stretched far out; his ears cocked ahead.

The master glanced back. He could see the sheriff, with a crowd of men at his back, emerging from the Copa de Plata saloon. He saw the sheriff wave an order and spring to his horse's back.

The men rushed, pell-mell, to the side of the saloon, where a dozen or more horses were tethered.

The sheriff was after him, followed by the noisy, excited crowd, yelling, swearing, brandishing guns and quirted their animals fiercely. Dawson eased his knee pressure, pulled in the reins slightly, and, putting his mouth to his horse's ear, spoke caressingly, proudly:

"Not yet, Son, not yet. We don't need all that speed now; we may later, pard, but don't waste it on that pack of low-down snides."

Son understood, raised his head high, his ears flew back a couple of inches, his tail dropped half-way, and he moved at a slower, but full, swinging gallop.

The man looked backward; he saw the sheriff spurring and quirting his horse without mercy, about a quarter of a mile behind. And at the same distance from the officer of the law, but slowly dropping back, the crowd of men.

Dawson's thin, bloodless lips tightened sneeringly over his white teeth; his eyes glittered, and he laughed ironically.

"Look at the way that measly sheriff treats his horse, Son, darn him. He thinks he can git us; but we'll just keep out of gun-range till the crowd tires out. Then we'll git him alone, Son."

The sheriff changed his tactics; he stopped maltreating the animal, and slackened the pace. The outlaw saw that the other man was playing his own game.

Fool, did the sheriff think that his nag could tire out Son? Fool, trying to outride the best horse in the State, the best horse in the country for endurance.

The sheriff was a hard, cruel rider; he had killed many horses, but now, for him, he rode easily. Dawson noticed that the ground between them was lengthened by over a hundred feet.

The distance between the sheriff and the crowd was now almost half a mile; the dirt they raised almost obliterated them from Dawson's sight, and all that was visible was a moving black spot, enveloped in clouds of dust.

The outlaw and the sheriff went along at the same pace; the distance between them had not changed. The crowd was closer to the sheriff by maybe two hundred feet or so, for they had been running their animals for all that was in them.

Dawson, straining his sharp eyes to their utmost, saw that one of the horses was slowly dropping back, foot by foot, yard by yard, then was lost from sight. He smiled amusedly, for he knew that there were very few horses in that pack who could keep up the deadly pace.

He knew that all of them, long before his own horse was even feeling the strain, would drop back, foot by foot, yard by yard, as the first one had. The only horse to be—no, not feared, but—considered was the sheriff's; for his enemy's animal, he grudgingly admitted, was known to be the next best horse to his own in those parts.

He swore, for it pained him greatly to see such a fine beast under such a cruel master. He consoled himself by running his fingers through Son's long, silky, jet-black mane; and the thought that he had treated Son and all the horseflesh he ever owned as well as beast had ever been treated by man.

Glancing backward, he saw that the sheriff was quickening his pace. He had quirted his horse, and was running his sharp spurs over the soft part of his belly. He had bent lower and given his animal rein.

Dawson saw the dazzling sun reflect brightly on the blue steel barrel in his pursuer's hand. He knew that the sheriff was trying to get within pistol range.

The outlaw had a fine sense of humor, and now, as his enemy was doing his utmost to draw bead on him, it struck him more forcibly than ever.

He laughed, this time loudly, good-naturedly. His mirth vibrated through the saddle; his horse whinnied questioningly. Dawson pulled in on the reins, and affectionately slapped the animal's shoulder.

"A little slower, Son, an' in a minute we'll have the pleasure of seeing our friend back there do some rotten lead-throwing."

Son's neck arched, his feet struck the earth heavily, and he covered ground at a much slower lope.

The hunted saw that his hunter had taken the bait; he saw him press in with his knees, with all his strength; dig in his spurs fiendishly, and brutally pound his animal on the rump with the butt of his pistol. It was pitiful to see the poor animal respond to the cruel call of his master.

Dawson had not long to wait.

His horse dropped back, inch by inch; his enemy came closer, foot by foot, until finally they were not more than two hundred yards apart. He then saw the sheriff's thick, bulldog neck strain forward; his gross, wicked face harden; his arm shoot stiffly out, and squint long and hard over the sight of his gun.

It spat fire, cracked loudly, and curled smoke—once, twice, three times.

Again, he laughed as he saw his enemy's bullets strike the ground, possibly some fifty feet behind him. Turning in his saddle, he bowed mockingly to the sheriff, who again quirted and spurred his animal in the hope of gaining enough ground to come within better gun-range.

Dawson frowned; he was a crack shot,

a deadly shot, but a methodical one. He ran over quickly in his mind his chances on a pot-shot at his man. His eyes traveled rapidly over the ground which was shortening between them.

He paused barely a second in indecision. Instinctively, his hand went to the butt of his gun; his lips tightened; his eyes narrowed and again traversed the ground, and rested on the oncoming horseman. Immediately, his mind was made up. The distance between them was fully a hundred and fifty yards, and "Bad" Dawson, dead pistol-shot, never wasted lead. Once more he waved to the sheriff, turned in the saddle, and, tightening his reins, spoke to his horse.

"Come on, Son!" he shouted, and brought down his palm on the glossy black flank.

Son's immediate response was beautiful to see; his arched neck shot forward, his nose was stretched low, his tale swished and stood out, his feet touched the ground almost noiselessly, and his belly was close to the earth. It was wonderful how, in so few seconds, he could work up to high speed.

Dawson was vastly amused at the futile efforts the sheriff made to get within good gun-range. His animal, a large, heavy buckskin, was trying nobly to keep up with the black, though in its own heart the poor beast knew that it could never outrun the horse whose dust it was now taking.

The running, so far, had been across the flat, even, sun-baked and dusty prairie. The ground now became more uneven; there were more rocks, more ruts, and sometimes small, unpleasant hills. They were coming to a district full of large boulders and cañons.

It was rough going on animals. In the distance, maybe ten or twelve miles, the outlaw could see the gray-green silent range of mountains. He was tiring of playing with his enemy, for the pace was killing, and he hated to use up Son on such bad ground.

The officer of the law was steadily dropping back. They had covered more than ten miles, and it was telling sadly on his horse; its sides were working like bellows; it was panting and frothing, for the sheriff was a hard rider.

Even now, though not at such a terrible pace, the buckskin had enough endurance for ten more miles, for he was a sturdy Western horse. He had known many mas-

ters—hard masters some, and he was famed for his staying powers.

"Bad" Dawson knew horseflesh; he could tell at a glance twice as much about it as another man could, and he was sure that his pursuer was mounted on a horse that, disregarding mishaps, still had in him ten good miles.

He grunted contemptuously, as his enemy crooked his arm, rested his gun upon it, and taking quick aim, rapidly emptied his six-shooter. The outlaw was disgusted at the waste of lead, as he saw the bullets, all within a circle of a few feet, kick up little spurts of dust, some seventy-five feet behind him.

He saw that the sheriff had at last found out that his shooting was useless at such a distance, and was now trying his old but hopeless game of tiring out his adversary's horse. They went along quietly for more than a mile, the black swiftly, easily; the buckskin speedily, but fastly weakening.

The distance between them had now lengthened to more than half a mile, and the crowd was out of sight.

Dawson brought his mental faculties into play; he could run over any problem in his mind in a phenomenally short time, and always come to an excellent conclusion.

Should he continue leading his man on? Should he run his horse for all that was in him to the mountains he knew so well; for there, in a cave just large enough for himself and Son, he knew he could easily defy detection.

He wavered a moment, and peered questioningly ahead. Instantly his mind was made up, for about half a mile in front of him there rose a rocky cliff, its sides cut straight and even, for over a hundred feet in the air.

At its base was a pathway, not more than twelve feet wide, and on the other side of that a deep, impassable chasm. He knew that the road, after a hundred feet or so, turned and lengthened out into the foothills leading to the mountains.

He would ride at top speed for this cliff, and there, beyond the turn, dismount, await his hated enemy, kill him, and then away—away to his beloved mountains.

Dawson dropped his reins over the saddle-horn and extracted his pistols from their holsters. He broke them, first one, then the other; the empty cartridges flew out and the guns were ready for loading.

With his left hand he held both his pis-

tols, and with his right searched for bullets. Slowly his hand made the *détour* of his belt; still more slowly and carefully it traveled back along the leather.

His face changed to blank astonishment, then dismay. He unstrapped his belt and examined every inch of it minutely.

It was difficult to realize, but true. He had not an ounce of lead for either of his revolvers. Then suddenly he lost his head.

He became possessed of a fiendish rage; his teeth and lips seemed to snap and snarl, like those of an angry tiger. The veins in his forehead stood out, and he was cursing filthily. With one hand he held his two guns, in the other his belt and holsters.

He shook them, squeezed them, and tried to dig his nails into the steel and leather, as if they were at fault. His face grew black, and with all his strength he hurled the offending objects from him.

He rode on, insanely furious, his head muddled, for a few hundred feet, and then as quickly as he had lost them, he regained his acute senses. His face once more grew calm, and his lips curled, in a sneer of contempt at his own foolishness, and he again became the cool, collected, dead-shot Dawson.

His face was gray, as he thought of how he had shown his cards to his enemy. It was useless, and he would also lose much time if he went back for them.

He smiled, for there was still one card which the sheriff knew nothing about, or even dreamed that he held. Even Dawson, for the moment, had forgotten its existence. Few men in the West ever carried such a card in their decks; the outlaw had never had occasion to use his. It was a small, single-shot forty-five, not more than four inches in length. He carried it in a pocket on the inside of his high-laced boot. His reason was that whenever he was captured he would still hold one hidden card.

Once again he slipped the reins over his saddle-horn and leaned over the side to unlace his boot and get at his gun. The ground was now more rocky and uneven; that and the uncomfortable position he had taken were hard on his horse; for Son was going at high speed. It was a deadly pace.

Dawson's thin fingers unknotted the rawhide laces of his boot. He was just about to get at his gun when his horse struck a stone badly with his right foreleg and his left stumbled against a boulder.

The poor black crashed down, its right

knee doubled up under it, and was crushed and cracked on a stone; and the man was under the horse.

Unconscious of what was happening, he had not had time to remove his foot from the stirrup; his knee, in the fall, had struck a rock, and the weight of his poor beast had done the rest. His leg, from ankle to thigh, was crushed, broken, and bleeding.

He drew in his breath sharply, with pain, and raised himself on his elbows from the ground, for he knew the one thing he should do was to get free from the weight of his horse. The black lay there, unconscious of the pain it was causing its master, for its right foreleg was broken at the knee.

It had been badly battered by the fall, and the animal was in crucial agony. But Son was game, as was his master, and did his best to keep back his whinnies of pain.

The injured man drew his lips taut, his eyes closed; he braced himself with his elbows and hands, and tried to pull his leg from under the horse.

His lips closed more tightly; he drew in his breath hard, and the bone in his nose showed sharp and blue.

His nostrils dilated and quivered; his face turned a sickly white, for every moment he was suffering excruciating torture. He sank back, limp and exhausted, but still he thought of his horse.

The animal could not help emitting a neigh of agony. Dawson choked, his eyes watered.

"Son—Son," was all he could gasp. But in a few seconds he nerved himself and again became the wily, hunted man. The thought that was uppermost in his brain was that he must get his leg from under the animal, his pistol from his boot, in time to get the sheriff when he came up.

He sighed with relief, for his pursuer was still more than a mile away. Once more he braced himself, his chest welled out, his jawbone showed sharp and clean; the muscles in his neck were stiff and taut. He dug his elbows into the ground till they bled. His hands clasped and unclasped; he worked his fingers into the earth, and pulled—slowly—surely.

This time a faint understanding came to Son; though almost paralyzed with pain, he raised himself an inch or so, and only for a second, but it was sufficient.

The man, though in agony, yanked his foot free. He fell back, almost fainting, and for a short time was too weak to get at

his gun. But his indomitable spirits came forward, and he thought only of his approaching enemy.

His face set hard; he bent over; and painfully unlaced his boot. At last, he had his gun—his gun with one bullet, his gun that was the only card he held. He grasped lovingly the small weapon, so small that it seemed incongruous in Dawson's big, slim-fingered, long hand.

Son, no longer able to stand the pain in silence, quivered, and whinnied agonizedly.

The outlaw's own feelings were forgotten at sight of the suffering of the one thing he loved in the world. He pressed his gun to his horse's head.

How he wished he might pull the trigger and put the animal out of pain! But no, he must keep his one bullet to kill the sheriff.

He murmured inarticulate words of affection to his horse; the animal moaned answeringly.

He aimed at a boulder about a hundred and fifty feet away to test his sight. His hand shook; he was puzzled, and, lowering his gun, examined it closely. He again took aim at a different and nearer rock. He tried to steady his arm and stretched it out stiff and far.

His muscles showed in hard bunches; his veins stood out like whip-cords—but his hand trembled, ever so slightly trembled.

He tried to laugh, but only succeeded in making a jarring, croaking noise. He mumbled to himself; he was nervous. "Bad" Dawson was nervous!

He glanced at the small, deadly piece of steel. Why, his gun was too small; it weighed nothing; there was no hold to it. He wasn't used to a little plaything like that; he had always handled a man-sized gun—a big, long, heavy forty-five.

But that was all right—that was all right. Even if he didn't have a pistol to his own liking, he'd get the sheriff sure enough. His nervousness would pass; it was just momentary. Maybe he was steady now. He would see.

Raising his hand, he drew bead on a mark not quite a hundred feet away, but his arm shook and trembled, shook and trembled from the shoulder to the fingertips.

His horse shuddered with pain, and pawed the ground with his two hind feet. Why hadn't he another bullet?

A half a mile away he saw the sheriff

coming on, at an easy lope, slow—but sure. And then "Bad" Dawson was afraid—afraid of his own shooting.

"Bad" Dawson, dead pistol-shot, was afraid of his own shooting. Suppose he didn't get the sheriff. What if he missed him? But that wouldn't happen. No—no, he'd shoot straight when the time came. Why, he'd never missed his mark yet.

But—but suppose he did miss! Then the sheriff would get him. He didn't fear for himself, though. No, but for Son.

He glanced up, and cursed, for the man and the buckskin were coming on, slowly but surely.

Again the outlaw swore, for he knew what would happen to his animal if he was killed; he knew that the sheriff was fiendishly cruel to animals, and if there was one horse his enemy hated it was Son—hated him because he was better than his own horse; hated him because he had once had the outlaw cornered, and it was solely the black's high speed that had cheated him of his prey.

Dawson was sure that if his pursuer ever caught Son he would cruelly torture him to death, slowly and demoniacally. He recalled to his mind an incident he remembered about the sheriff.

The man had once backed a horse he owned against several others in a Western cross-country run. The poor beast had done noble work, but could not finish better than second. And for this the sheriff had beaten him with a blacksnake whip until there was barely an inch of his body that was not raw and bleeding.

He cursed at the recollection, and again glanced hatefully at his oncoming enemy. Then he looked at Son, and there crept into his eyes the faintest glimmer of fear. What if he missed his man, and his horse fell into his enemy's hands? Why hadn't he another bullet?

Once more he raised his gun and sighted the approaching horseman. The barrel swung from side to side like the pendulum of a clock.

He grasped it tighter, but his hand only trembled—trembled and shook—and dropped. Why, he couldn't shoot straight at ten feet.

But he knew what was the matter, though. It was the gun, the little blue-steel gun that wasn't big enough for a baby. Why had he emptied both his guns through the saloon door? Why hadn't he saved just—just two

bullets? Or if only he had a big forty-five with one bullet! He knew he'd miss the sheriff, and the man would kill him, and then—then his poor, faithful horse!

If only his leg wasn't broken, if only he could walk. He'd use his cartridge on his animal, and take his chances on getting away. But he couldn't have crawled more than a couple of hundred feet.

His pain was excruciating; he felt weak; his head was light; he saw the other man coming closer, closer, the sun dazzling upon the blue-steel tube that projected from his enemy's hand.

Son shuddered convulsively, and, turning his head, gazed eloquently at his master.

Dawson choked and mumbled. No, his one bullet was for the sheriff.

Then, if he killed his man, he could somehow manage to crawl to the body, get the revolver and cartridges, and kill Son. He would then use all his strength in a supreme effort to mount the buckskin, and then away—away to the range of mountains which he could see in the distance overhung with hazy heat.

Carefully he closed his fingers over his small firearm, and his arm shot out rigidly. But the little gun fluttered like a leaf in the wind. The outlaw cursed with inarticulate rage.

He'd miss the sheriff. He was sure he would, and then Son—Son!

His enemy came closer—closer.

His arm stood out stiff, and his gun was pointed straight at the outlaw. Dawson knew that the sheriff thought he at last had his prey at his mercy, and that he was walking his horse only to prolong the outlaw's suspense.

He was suffering the tortures of the damned. Every nerve in his body was racked with pain. He saw Son double up in agony, his eyes wild with pain.

The sheriff was not more than a hundred and fifty feet away. The wounded man saw that his lips wore a cruel, self-satisfied smile at what he thought the helplessness of his prey.

Again the hunted man's arm shot forward—and shook—and trembled—and fell. His head grew muddled.

There passed before his eyes the picture of the sheriff, unscathed by his bullet, himself on the ground, killed by the other man's lead, and Son, the only thing he cared for, being tortured by his enemy. But no, he revolted at the thought.

His horse would never fall into the hands of the sheriff while "Bad" Dawson had one bullet in his gun.

The man on the buckskin came closer—closer. The outlaw's body shook, and his face twitched with nervousness.

The sheriff was not more than a hundred feet away, and Dawson—he was so nervous he couldn't raise his hand. The other man would get him. He was sure of it.

But he wasn't afraid for himself; he didn't fear death; but again he thought of his suffering horse.

The sheriff came closer—closer—closer. His lips curled in a wicked leer.

The outlaw knew he couldn't have shot straight at two feet.

Still, he could use his gun well enough to cheat his enemy of the pleasure of torturing his animal.

He pulled himself up on his good knee, put the barrel of his wicked little forty-five to Son's head—and pulled the trigger!

His horse tossed quietly, stiffened out in jerks, and lay still—dead.

With superhuman strength the man raised himself from his knee to his foot, and stood there over the horse, his empty, smoking gun poised in the air.

The only thought in his mind was that his animal would never fall into the hands of his enemy.

He saw the sheriff, not fifty feet away, stop and stare in wonder at the smoking gun.

He saw his arm jump forward; he saw his fingers tighten around the blue steel; he saw the steel spit fire.

He heard a noise—and dropped—dead, across the body of his horse.

THE LADIES.

By Thomas Brown.

THEIR care and their pains the fair ones do bestow,
Not to please heaven above, but men below.
Who think them saints are very much mistook;
They're only saints and angels in their look.

The Fourth Fight



IT was only after Simon Smith had fought his third losing battle with "Gotham" Grimes that Manager Harmon shrugged his shoulders despairingly and gave up hopes of him as a championship possibility.

"You've got th' punch," grunted Harmon, glaring at the resuscitated fighter, now sitting dazedly on the edge of a cot in his dressing-room at the Calumet Club.

"You ain't afraid, either—an' you know th' game from A to Z. I'm a goat if I can figger you out, Sime. I guess it's jes' a question o' your ol' man's leavin' you so much coin that th' purse don't cut no ice. Ain't I right?"

The fighter rubbed the last bit of sleep out of his eyes and rose and stretched himself much in the manner of one who has kept to his bed too long.

"So he got me again, did he?" demanded Smith, the well-shaped lips above the strong chin curving in a rueful smile.

"On the jaw, as usual," snorted heavy-shouldered, snub-nosed Harmon. "T'ree different times he's slipped that wallop over on you, an' I'm tellin' you now, Sime, that you couldn't draw ten people t' see you fight agin. You're dead, see?"

Harmon paused to stare across at his protégé, somber gloom in his ferret eyes.

"You're dead, Sime, an' I'm done wit' you. I'm sorry, but I can't afford to waste my time wit' a secon'-rater—an' anyhow it's jes as well. You got plenty o' money an' th' ring can't help you a bit. You're

a good, clean kid, but there's sompin' lackin'—when it comes to figgerin' you fer championship material. You won't do."

This was the manner of Simon Smith's release from the stable of that maker of winners, Herman Harmon.

The youth took his dismissal as stolidly as he had done his three defeats from the champion light-weight of the world. He went away, and, for a time, out of the professional ken of Harmon.

There was some truth in what the manager had said. Simon Smith, son and heir of "Klondike" Smith, had no ambition for either the long or short end of the purses in his various bouts, and he frankly acknowledged that he had little interest in the game except for the opportunity it presented to don the gloves with trained fighting-machines and prove himself more than their equal.

He was the amateur champion for the first two years after his graduation from a well-known Eastern college, and he had been persuaded to enter the professional ring only because, like the sighing Alexander, he had nothing left to conquer in the medal division. Until he met Gotham, professionalism had been his meaty nut.

Klondike Smith, an illiterate, fortune-buffed miner, had, in the evening of his life, fallen upon roseate ways, and accumulated some millions of dollars before he conveniently passed away.

Early in his career he married a shy

maid of the Hudson Valley, and, although she had seen little enough of him, he rewarded her constancy, years later, by willing her all his riches; this just before death, in Dawson, thrust him out upon the White Trail.

In another twelvemonth Simon Smith was an orphan, with penchants for both study and athletics, and enough of the glittering stuff to make his dreams come true.

Young Smith graduated from college a full-fledged B.A., but here he strangled his ambitions and began to take life easily.

Smith had no bad habits. He did not drink. He did not smoke. Invariably, he kept good hours.

Harmon had enthused over his clever find—at first. He seemed to be the ideal fighter, and gifted enough to draw the colors of the long-time champion, Gotham Grimes. Other aspirants for Gotham's toga fell before the tall, broad-shouldered Smith in one, two, three order, and there seemed nothing to it but a niche in champion hall for the college-educated gladiator.

Smith gave the impression of holding something back; he never seemed to wholly unleash himself. This was "good dope" in ring parlance, as long as the ex-amateur won his battles, but the same subtle impression was conveyed when he went down to defeat in the sixth round of his first fight with Gotham Grimes.

Nor did he seem to put forth any further effort when he fell in the eighth round in their second meet. The third go resulted in Smith taking the count before the fourth round was ended. It was little wonder that Harmon released his protégé. His reputation was now a bursted balloon.

"Smith's lazy," ventured Harmon to his close crony "Velvet" Perkins. "He didn't have to work for th' big end of the purse, and he always let th' other chap take th' aggressive an' waited fer th' last round before he cut loose.

"No one can do that wit' Grimes, though, an' get away wit' it. Maybe Sime had what these writer ginks call th' 'artistic temperament'—I dunno. Anyway, he don't fight accordin' t' th' Hoyle I learned, an' I've let him out."

"Jesso," came from squint-eyed "Velvet," fight philosopher and owner of the Calumet fight club. "Jesso. Mebbe he'll lose his money some time, an' then, if he ain't too old, an' he ain't hit th' white streak, he'll do t'ings."

"Jesso," repeated Harmon, after the manner of his friend. "But I'm bettin' he won't. He's lazy."

Fighters came and went, but Harmon often thought of Simon Smith, of whom he had not heard since his release.

Two years had elapsed, and the star in Harmon's string was now Sting Murphy, a youth with a conspicuous red thatch, an undershot jaw, little red eyes, close together, and no passing cleverness, but with a punch that invariably engineered those who mixed with him to dreamland in the first few rounds of fighting. Also, Joe Grimm had nothing on him when it came to a point of assimilating punishment.

Murphy had many faults. Among these was his penchant for "puddler's high-balls" (he originally dabbled in melted metal), and an utter disregard for the ethics of training.

But Sting had youth, a keen eye for his opponent's jaw, and the ability to end a battle in short order. Despite his laxity he was always in form, and up until the night scheduled for his fight with Gotham Grimes, punctual. Grimes was still a blond nemesis, who kept to his business of sealing nimble comers in the crypts of oblivion.

In the seats round the raised pavilion in the center of the Calumet Club, tolerant fight fans watched the mediocre preliminaries to the main bout. The man up before the old champion this night was a popular favorite with all followers of the game.

Never had he lost a battle. Never had he allowed an opponent to remain with him longer than six rounds. To-night the crown of conquest in the light-weight division stood a chance to change uneasy heads—this, in the estimation of those assembled.

The preliminaries dragged to a monotonous close, and a moment or so afterward the strong shoulders of Gotham Grimes shoved through the ropes, and the champion, with a word to his following manager, huge, bulbous-nosed Barney Neil, strode about examining the floor for springy boards, and the ropes and posts that went to make up the squared circle. Grimes was a man of caution.

The gaunt referee, Martin O'Toole, some time champion middle-weight wrestler, followed the others through the ropes. He looked inquiringly toward Murphy's de-

sented corner, and then at his huge watch. Murphy was late.

The crowd restlessly clapped their hands and stamped their feet.

"Get 'em goin'," yelled a harsh-voiced ringside sport. "Get 'em goin', bo. We ain't got all night to wait."

O'Toole spread a few seconds with action by introducing Grimes, and dwelling at length on his various exploits.

Down in the dressing-room allotted to Herman Harmon's erratic fighter, an excited manager paced backward and forward.

"Where th' deuce's that Sting?" grumbled Harmon for the hundredth time. "Who's he think he is, to keep them guys out front waitin' till they turns on him. Why didn't you dig him up, Flannigan?"

Flannigan, a typical handler, and scheduled this night to appear in the corner of Murphy, shook his bullet head impatiently.

"I tell you I couldn't," he growled. "I went everywhere he orn't to be—which is th' mos' likely places to find him, an' I struck into all his ol' hangouts, too. He mus' be on a bat."

"Bat nothin'," snorted th' manager. "Don't tell me he's fool enough to hit th' red stuff on th' night he gets his chanct at Gotham. You go up-stairs an' stall 'em till he comes."

Harmon suddenly paused in his stride and scratched his head musingly.

"I al'ays been unlucky wit' Grimes, though," he complained, as Flannigan passed out. "It wouldn't surprise me if sompin' went wrong. Look at Sime Smith. That feller ort to got Grimes ev'ry time he fought him, an—"

Dramatic touch! The door of the little room opened to interrupt the soliloquy of the dour manager, and in walked—

Simon Smith!

"You!" cried the startled Harmon. "Why, where in the name of—"

"Don't talk," came from Smith impatiently. "I've got something to say to you, and a proposal to hand out. Listen!"

Harmon did listen, and while he gave attention to the words of the other, his astute senses were taking into consideration the wonderful change in the youth before him.

The Simon Smith now pouring a hurried monologue into the startled ears of the fighter specialist was a different Smith than the battler of bygone days. Purpose

now accentuated every one of his eager words. It told, too, in the curl of his clean-shaven lips, and even in the aggressive angle of his battler's jaw.

Harmon sensed all this before Smith had fairly launched on his verbal play. And then, suddenly, his one-time protégé's monologue became a monologue no longer.

"You say Murphy's drunk?" roared Harmon, his shredded nerves now giving way completely. "What t'ell. How do you know he's drunk. Where'd you see him?"

"If you'll keep quiet until I explain," rebuked Smith, "I'll tell you all about it—and in less time than if you keep on interrupting."

"Go ahead, then," gloomed Harmon. "I won't say a word more—there's nothin' I can say t' do this dope justice."

"I know Murphy's drunk because I saw him not over twenty minutes ago with 'Medicine Ball' Higgins. The two were evidently coming here in a hurry. I saw them start away from Rourke's place in Murphy's car."

"Murphy was steering, and after he had gotten fairly under way he ran into another machine and took a wheel off. He's in jail now, and his language was so lurid that I doubt if he'll get out in a month. It's the dungeon for him. He's too far gone to fight anyhow."

"We've gotta have him," came from Harmon excitedly. "We've—"

"Not got to have him," emphasized Smith sharply. "I tell you, Harmon he can't win. He'd have his hands full winning if he was sober—and he stands no chance as it is. I'm going to propose that—"

"You step in and take his place," sneered the manager. "Is that it?"

"It certainly is," came crisply from the ex-battler, "and don't get snarly about it, Harmon, because you're in the position of those metaphorical beggars who couldn't be choosers."

"I'll fight Gotham, and he'll fight me. This is the only chance you have got to save your forfeit. I'm in form, Herm. If you put me up against Grimes, I'll win! I'll not only save your forfeit—I'll win!"

"Yes, you will," sneered Harmon. "You'll win—not! You fought him three times when you was right, and you didn't win, did you? Wake up, Smithie. You mean well, but you're asleep. I wish you c'u'd do what you think you can, but—"

"When I fought Grimes before," sharply intoned the ex-protégé of the old manager, "it literally made no difference whether I won or lost. I had no desire for the honors, and the purses didn't enter into consideration.

"I boxed for the love of the game. You've never seen me fight, Herman." The youth leaned toward the older man and a grim smile twisted his lips. "You've never seen me fight," he repeated.

"But why—" demanded Harmon.

"I've lost all my money. The Mercury Trust failed this morning, as you probably know. Every cent I had in the world was in that company, Herm, and—and—"

Smith paused for a second.

"I have a wife, Herm. I was married two years ago. My wife is an invalid. Yesterday the doctor told me that the only way to possibly save her life was to take her on a long sea voyage. You see, Herm, I've got to have that purse—and by the Lord I'm going to have it—"

Through this amazing recital, Harmon sat silent. Now he bounded to his feet and started for the door.

"Get into the trunks you'll find in that suit-case," he called back. "If I can frame this up, I will, an'—you'll win, Smitty! You got th' punch, an' now you need th' money. You'll win!"

In five minutes Harmon was back in the little dressing-room, where Smith, his pink-tinted, muscular limbs protruding from the fight raiment of the digressing Sting Murphy, restlessly awaited him.

"I've framed it," came from Harmon excitedly. "Th' crowd's waited so long, they want t' see any ol' kind of a fight, an' th' more blood th' better. They're willin'—an' so is Grimes. Grimes was sort o' 'fraid o' Sting—but he ain't of you—nachurly.

"He's so tickled he don't even draw down th' forfeit. Come on, now, we'll get up-stairs. Gee, Sime, if you're as fit as you look, you can go some."

"I'm fit, all right," gruffly assured the returned. "If you can get any bets, Harmon, snap 'em up. I've got two hundred in my kick—all I've got in the world. Bet it!"

As Smith, followed by Harmon, strode down the aisle, a titter followed.

"Goin' t' slap th' saucy Grimesy on th' wrist?" came from a facetious sport as the substitute passed by.

"He's goin' t' show Sting Murphy that fightin' wit' Gotham is a reg'lar marathon race," called an admirer of the champion. "This is Smitty's fourt' lap."

Grimes awaited his thrice-defeated opponent with a good-humored smile on his broad mouth.

"Welcome t' our city," grinned the champion, as Harmon's man came over to him and extended a friendly hand. "It'll seem like ol' times, Sime, t' rap you one on th' jaw."

"Nothing doing," laughed Smith. "I'm here for the money this time, Grimesy. The money—understand? You'll know more about it when I get through with you. This isn't a boxing-match, old chap; it's a fight."

"Do tell!" taunted Gotham Grimes.

O'Toole, the referee, introduced the two men with a little apology for Murphy's absence, and a few good words for the past record of the substitute.

"Let him stick fer a few roun's, Gotham," called a jocular voice as the introduction was completed.

A wave of laughter ran through the crowd. The returned was well remembered—but it was evident that he was to be tolerated.

At the gong both men came to the center hurriedly. Both were clever boxers—and with the "punch."

"Must 'a' mussed up th' grass on your grave when you climbed out," jested the champion, as the two exchanged a few light blows and came to a sudden clinch.

"I left it open for you. You can see for yourself when you climb in," tallied Smith, as O'Toole crowded between them.

Gradually a frown corrugated the heavy brow of the blond fighter. Smith was fighting, not in the listless ultra-artistic manner of past bouts, but much as did the champion himself.

He followed every advantage and fought desperately in the clinches despite the cautions of the referee. It was evident to the sensitive gentlemen beyond the ropes that this battle was to go down in the annals of pugilistic history.

They sat up and began to take notice. Round after round went by in a whirlwind of concentrated action. Smith was floored for the count in the fourth round.

The gong saved him. Up until that time the odds had been in favor of the champion.

But Gotham Grimes was an institution crumbling in under the weight of years.

A hurtful smash to the jaw in the fifth by the wholly-recovered Smith thrust him into a giddy haze that came and went like the swinging fog of London's streets. He felt that his blows lacked steam.

He sensed a determined something about this thrice-conquered battler that had been strangely absent before. His crown of conquest was awry. Was this to be his Waterloo?

The tenth round found the battered and bleeding champion fighting on the defensive. One eye was wholly closed, and the other was swelling fast.

There was a prayer in his heart that he be given strength to finish the few seconds that remained to the bout. Ten-round goes were all that the law allowed in New York, and it was possible—barely possible—that the referee would be influenced by friendship and spare Gotham the humiliation of defeat by calling the fistic affair a draw.

"Smash!"

A myriad stars clustered before the wondering champion's eyes, and he slumped heavily to the canvas.

When his senses returned, Simon Smith, now best in his class, was receiving the congratulations of the fickle fight fans.

Herman Harmon and his very good

friend, Velvet Perkins, proprietor of the Calumet Club, were enshrined behind two cold steins of beer in the back room of Casey's café.

"Th' lad's got fight in him," came enthusiastically from Perkins. "You know I told you, Herm, that if things come right he'd make good. You gotta champion now that 'll trim 'em all."

"Nothin' doin'," came roughly from Harmon. "Sime'll never fight agin, an' if he did, I have me doubts that he c'u'd do anything." He motioned the startled Velvet to continued silence.

"You don't understand," he prefaced. "Member I told you how Smitty bruk in on me to-night, an' what he said 'bout th' Mercury Trust Company goin' t' th' wall? You do, eh? Well, that made him fight."

"But he's gotta keep fightin'," protested the club owner. "He's gotta eat."

"He don't have t' scrap," corrected Harmon morosely. "Listen, pal, Sime didn't read that newspaper yarn right. It wasn't th' New York Mercury Trust that went bum; it was th' one in Philly."

"Smith was excited and he didn't read th' date line or he'd 'a' seen it was a wire-story."

"I bought a paper an' saw it. Hard lines, eh, Velvet!"

"Jesso," said Perkins slowly.

A SERENADE.

By Edward Coate Pinkney.

LOOK out upon the stars, my love,
And shame them with thine eyes,
On which, than on the lights above,
There hang more destinies.
Night's beauty is the harmony
Of blending shades and light;
Then, lady, up—look out, and be
A sister to the night!

Sleep not! Thine image wakes for ay
Within my watching breast.
Sleep not! From her soft sleep should fly
Who robs all hearts of rest.
Nay, lady, from thy slumbers break,
And make this darkness gay
With looks whose brightness well might make
Of darker nights a day.

Runaways



by

Carrie
Louisa
Shaw

COVERTLY pulling back the window-shade, Mrs. Carson watched Lila pass out of the gate and down the street, swinging her books. She could not deny herself what might be a last glimpse of the little blue-checked figure.

As the girl passed from sight, Mrs. Carson raised the window to admit the bright, still air of a May morning. Some young vines formed a harmonizing frame as she leaned out to inhale the spring.

Small she was, with sweet, anxious eyes, her soft, brown hair fastened back in a neat coil. It was a face one would love to see bending over an infant.

Slowly she turned and walked to a desk that stood in the room. It was the one at which she sat each morning to write the household accounts. To-day it seemed to her the property of another. Every inanimate thing appeared to stand coldly aloof. She sat down and wrote, her hand trembling slightly:

JIM DEAR:

Three months is not a great length of time, but it has been long enough to convince me that I am a failure.

The children will never accept a blundering old maid as their mother. That is why I am leaving to-day for the West. Oh, if I could only have made them care for me—that was my greatest dream.

I love them more than you can imagine, but they will be happier without me. I have looked truth squarely in the face and I know they want no substitute for that real mother, poor little things.

After you have considered all things very carefully, you will see my view-point and realize that I have acted wisely.

She folded the note, and addressed it to her husband.

Three months of the only real happiness she had ever known, and her stronger self said this must be the end. It would be hard to leave them all, and the white, clean little house; but the futility of staying had come to her quite suddenly that morning.

Lila—ten, dark eyed, and reserved—had prefaced a request with “mother.” To Mrs. Carson “mama” had somehow always seemed a sweeter, more intimate term.

“Don’t you think the word ‘mother’ a bit formal, dear?” she had ventured, with fast-beating heart.

Lila looked up quickly.

“I’ll call you Mrs. Carson, then,” she announced briefly.

It was like a wound to the little woman, but she remained silent.

“It’s no use—no use!” a voice in her mind kept crying. “They may even come to dislike you.”

There were two others—Fred, seven, and Alice, the baby.

Fred was frankly indifferent to his new mother, but indifference at seven she knew

to be conquerable. Little Alice alone held out fat hands to her, and gurgled a complete approval of the second mama.

She kissed the baby, but shyness withheld her from caressing the two impregnable little strangers who very plainly did not wish to be caressed.

All her patient life she had longed for domesticity and little ones, but for years perverse necessity had kept her in the schoolhouse of a Middle West town, where she drew an insufficient salary for the support of herself and sister.

Some time after the sister's wedding she met Jim Carson, a widower, and after a brief but sincere wooing he brought her East as his bride—a girl no longer, but full of the innocence and illusions of youth.

It had seemed a sacred privilege to mother Jim's children, and to win the love of small, desolate hearts. For a long time she felt no discouragement, for always there was the hope that ultimately they would yield. Their small wardrobes were freshened and replenished by her eager hands, and many books upon the care of children were bought.

Yet, more and more, she had come to feel herself an intruder, and unconsciously she drew away from them.

So this bright morning had merely been the climax.

A patch of sunlight on the floor told that time was passing.

The train she must take left at two. She placed the note in the center of the round table, and entered the bedroom—her bedroom and Jim's.

Carefully she took her clothes from the closet and piled them on the bed. They were new, neat things that were her trousseau. Her lip trembled, but she only worked the faster. It would never do to weaken.

In opening the top bureau-drawer, a small package and a sealed envelope met her gaze. Both were addressed in very round, precise letters to "Mrs. Margaret Carson."

The writing was vaguely familiar. She tore open the letter first. It read:

DEAR MRS. CARSON:

I take my pen in hand to tell you that I am going to run away to-day. If my brother, Frederick Carson, will go, I will take him, too. You can keep the baby because you love her, I know you do, because you kiss her and call her my little darling. Here is your berth-day present. I sowed on it every day after

school so I could get it done by May 12th (twelfth), but it is not done yet. If you will kindly imbroidery the big green leaf it will be done. I am sorry you did not like for me to call you mother.

Respectfully,

LILA CARSON.

P. S. I know you won't care because you don't love me. You never kissed me good-night in your life.

"Mrs. Margaret Carson" drew a long breath, then almost reverently untied the package.

A large cushion-top, embroidered in bright red and green, unrolled to view. There must have been hundreds and hundreds of the crude little stitches, and the goods had puckered wofully; but to the recipient it was a glorious thing.

"She spent all of her playtime on that," flashed through her mind.

And then, because she was a woman, she cried. It was all so plain now.

The child had never understood her subtle devotion. She was only a little girl who yearned for bedtime-stories and simply demonstrated love.

Soon small feet came pattering through the house, and in a minute Fred stood in the doorway, eying her solemnly. His kindergarten was out at noon.

"Kin I have a doughnut?" he asked.

"Yes, dear, yes. Did your sister come home with you?" she queried eagerly.

"Yes'm. She's out in the wood-shed. She wants me to run away with her, but I won't," said Fred virtuously. "Don't tell her I told."

In the wood-shed she found her hiding behind a box. A bit of the blue checked dress had betrayed her. Silently the little mother raised and folded her in her arms.

She kissed the flushed face several times.

"My dear, dear little girl, you will not run away from mother now. Won't you believe I love you?" The tone carried conviction.

Lila glanced up shyly.

"I thought sure you didn't. And then you said you—you thought I was too familiar, or something, because I called you mother."

The mother gave a wabby little laugh.

"I said formal, dear; but that only meant I would rather be called mama. I like it better. Now I am going to give my babies their lunch," she paused, "after I have torn up a very foolish letter I wrote to-day."

FOLLOWING THE LAUNDRY BAG

A LITTLE STORY OF A GREAT INDUSTRY THAT TURNS WASH-DAY
INTO A HOLIDAY AND FREES ALL WOMANKIND FROM
THE TYRANNY OF THE TUB

BY FOSTER GILROY

THIS question concerns every housewife in America:

"Do you actually *know* what happens to the contents of your laundry-bag after it leaves your home?"

In other words, have you ever thought of the conditions under which your clothes are laundered? Have you ever seen the *inside* of a modern American laundry—are you acquainted with its "spick and spanness," its

In the first place, the capital invested in the laundry business places it among the leading half dozen in the list of American industries.

Every week the American people turn over millions as the price of wearing clean linen.

It seems high time, then, that the American housewife should take a deep and abiding interest in the ultimate destination of her laundry-bag.

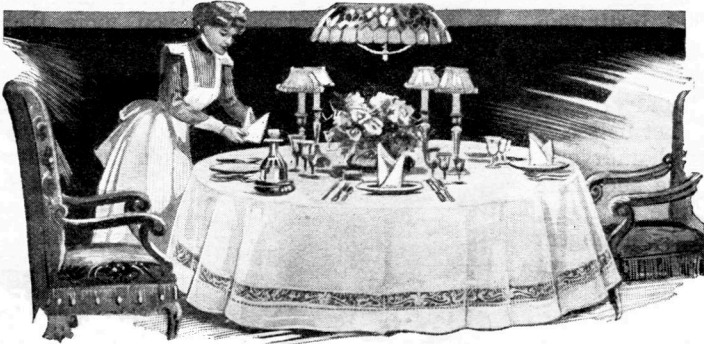


TABLE LINEN COMES OUT SNOW WHITE FROM THE UP-TO-THE-MINUTE LAUNDRY

immaculate cleanliness, sanitation, and ventilation?

The old-fashioned wash-day is an echo of the past, a memory that had best be left to undisturbed forgottenness.

Question any student of economics about the leading industries of America, and he will glibly rattle off figures without end on the output of coal, iron, and steel, the manufacture of household necessities, and the ascendancy of agriculture.

Ask him about the laundry industry, and you have him stumped for reply!

Possibly he may laugh at your temerity—washing shirts and collars, indeed! How does this figure as an industry?

But it does figure as an industry, and a very important one.

To the average household the "laundry" consists of a vague establishment somewhere in the neighborhood, the chief opinion being largely influenced by the degree of popularity of the person who calls for and delivers the "wash." His semiweekly visits make of him a sort of fixture, and more importance is attached to this messenger than to the institution itself.

If the work and service are good, the driver is accordingly popular. "John" is the one who gets the credit.

"He is the best laundryman we ever had." If the work and service are bad, John gets called down for it; and if this keeps up, he probably forgets to call any more, and a new "laundryman" is engaged.

Nine times out of ten the housekeeper does

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not even know the street address or phone number of her laundry, much less what is done with her wash after it reaches there.

This article is written for the purpose of arousing interest in the laundry *itself*; the driver is only an incident, one small spoke in the large wheel of laundry service.

It so happens that man has been muck-raking his laundry since way back in the dim ages when time began.

It probably started in the stone age, when the fad was to cleanse the family wearing apparel by beating it between a couple of flat stones, at the edge of some near-by stream.

Only a shirt of mail could stand many trips to the primeval laundry, and one would judge that its luster must have been dimmed, rather than improved.

And so it is that modern times came honestly by its propensity to "blame it on the laundry," no matter whether that much-abused institution was at fault or not. Some one had to "catch it," so why not the defenseless laundry?

Defenseless? Let us see.

Little bodies of laundrymen began to meet here and there for the interchange of ideas. They were keen, intelligent business men. Soon they got together into a big National Association, in order that these ideas might assume a broader scope.

What is the result? The modern American laundry of the present day is representative of the highest order of thought and ingenuity of mechanical and electrical engineering; it is a science and an art combined.

It employs, in the production of its work, machines that do everything but think.

In plain English, the business of handling the "week's wash" has advanced to a point where it takes its proper place as one of the greatest industries of the age, and I doubt if any other industry has taken such enormous strides in trying to merit the trust and confidence of the public it serves.

I talked, a few weeks ago, with the proprietor of one of the leading laundries of a great city. He had just been asked to lecture, in a university course in domestic economy,

on "The Function of the Laundry."

The trustees of the university had been so impressed with the success attending the visits of the student bodies to his laundry that they invited a first-hand discussion of the question in the class-room.

But to go back to the organization of the laundry interests.

Sound thinkers in the councils of the Association said:

"Let us throw open the doors of our laundries. We have no secrets. There is nothing mysterious about the simple process of washing. Let us arouse the interest of our customers in our work."

This policy of "getting chummy" with your customers is a wise one, the proof being that more of our great institutions are doing it every year, and profiting by it.

You will find *your* laundry, if it is the right sort, will meet you more than half-way in order to *know you*, and have you *know it better*.

Perhaps it has already started the good work by sending you little chummy chats about its business. Hundreds of them are doing it in all parts of the country.

You owe it to yourself, from a purely selfish standpoint, to take note of these things.

Most of our troubles are caused by misunderstanding the motives of the other fellow.

It is becoming quite the thing, in certain cities, for women to get up parties to

visit laundering establishments. They always enjoy these trips, and I have heard many of them say that "they had no idea that a laundry was anything like what it is, and that they could have spent a whole day most enjoyably in watching the different processes."

They were surprised to see how many times a collar must be handled, and how carefully each operation must be performed. Then they wondered how all these different attentions could be given it for the modest price of from two and one-half to three cents.

There probably is no other industry in existence so splendidly organized as to turn over a profit out of so many careful han-



THE WELL-DRESSED MAN RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS LAUNDRY—

dlings at so small a return.

The up-to-the-minute laundry presents one of the most interesting of present-day economic problems. As a bulletin reproduced elsewhere so concisely states it, laundries are "selling cleanliness."

Cleanliness means contented labor.

Restless, drifting, dissatisfied workers are not fitted temperamentally to insure that condition which tradition teaches is next to godliness.

I visited a prosperous laundry during the preparation of this article, and found the proprietor feeding collars into a dampening machine.

"I like to help out when the rush is on," he explained; and I found this same spirit of helpfulness and team-work in every laundry I visited.

In one of them a system of promotion prevails that operates as rigidly as the National Civil Service laws.

A standing rule requires foreman and superintendents to reprimand their subordinates only in private. No worker can be "called down" before his companions.

The result is obvious. Loyalty is written all over the establishment, on every package that leaves its doors.

You may ask, why this attention to what appears a mere detail? There is plenty of labor; why court its favor?

It is all a part of scientific service—the modern American laundry is a business-builder. It knows the law of success, and is working in harmony with it. It knows that "the science of business is the science of service," and that "he profits most who serves best."

Perfection in organization disarms criticism, creates cooperation or team-work, and perfection of output is the logical consequence.

The organization responsible for the readjustment of the laundry industry is known as the Laundrymen's National Association of America. More than two thousand laundries are represented in its membership. You will no doubt find in your locality one of these laundries.

They are generally known by the efficiency of their service, the quality of their output, and their interest in all matters pertaining to the general welfare of the community in which they live. These men are modest; few of them advertise the fact that they are members of the L. N. A., but prefer to let their work speak for them.

Seek out one of these plants, and you will usually find, upon inquiry, that it is a member of the National Association, and is proud of it.

Now let us see what actually happens to the clothes we entrust to the laundry.

From the time they are placed in the collection-bag to their arrival back home, they are not subjected to a single process that would tend to injure the most delicate fabric.

On their arrival at the laundry, the packages are sorted into bins, according to the nature of the work in them.

The next step in the process is performed by several clean-looking, happy-faced young women.

One of them opens the bag or package and assort its contents; another counts the pieces and records them on a printed list, with blank spaces to be filled in with the number of pieces of the different articles.

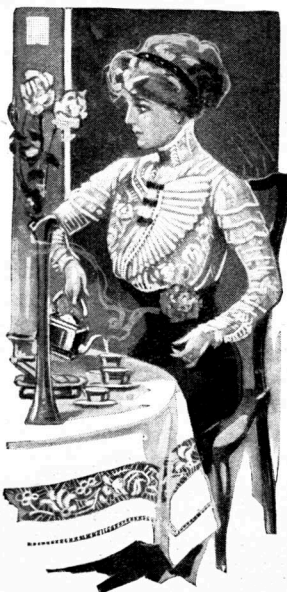
The cleaner pieces do not require so much washing as those which are badly soiled, and are handled separately. Silks and wools, as well as delicate colors, are washed by

hand in the softest of water and with the finest of soap. Nothing but white goods is ever boiled.

The best work, whether in laundering or in any other line of industry, cannot come from the dark cellar or the underground refuge. The kind of men and women who ought to care for your linen cannot be prevailed upon to work under such conditions.

The improvement in laundry methods has meant a vast improvement in the standard of the employee.

Many large laundries have their "welfare departments," devoted to the help and advancement of the workers.



AS WELL AS THE WOMAN WHO
TREASURES HER DAINTY
WAISTS



THE MOST EXPENSIVE LACE CURTAINS MAY BE ENTRUSTED TO THE MODERN LAUNDRY

We will find this department in charge of a big-hearted, motherly woman who has a large sympathy in the problems of the young women under her care. The writer knows one prominent launderer whose own daughter took a special training to fit her for this humane work.

Principles of absolute cleanliness must be instilled.

A sense of responsibility, or trusteeship, must be developed, that the utmost care should be taken of the property of others temporarily in their keeping.

A high standard of sanitation must be set up and adhered to.

The comfort and happiness of every employee must be secured to them, otherwise their work will not receive the careful attention it should.

All these things you should know. Women who have taken their stand upon questions of great public policies have wrought important reforms.

They have won their fight for healthful milk in clean bottles; they have closed up unsanitary bakeries; they have battled successfully against the short-weight grocers.

Why should they not look to their laundry, and see that their linen is handled in a clean, light, well-ventilated establishment by men and women whose very appearance bespeaks the pride they feel in their work?

I have tried to show you that the laundries are doing their part to improve conditions.

The creed of the laundry business to-day may be summed up in three paragraphs:

That every piece of poor work that goes out of the laundry brings back its own penalty;
That inefficient, underpaid, discontented employees are a ruinous extravagance, and not an economy;

That the dirty, ill-lighted, ill-ventilated, slovenly laundry should be shunned, and the clean, bright, progressive laundry patronized.

Now, gentle reader, are you doing your part? Have you made it your business to find out if your laundry is the high-grade institution I have described?

The next time your laundry comes home, open your bundle yourself and examine each piece. You will be impressed with a freshness, a snow-white cleanliness, seldom found in the "home wash." Another thing that may impress you is the fact that here is an organization equipped to handle *all* of your wash. You may be sending it only part of your work; but when you find the right kind of a laundry, you will have located an establishment that can handle everything washable better, more carefully, more cleanly than it can be done anywhere else. If you remember the old-fashioned

Monday, the houseful of steam, the luncheon of left-overs flavored with the heavy aroma of boiling clothes, you will be quick to appreciate the part the laundry has played in the pursuit of comfort.

You can get a great deal more information by addressing the Secretary of the Laundrymen's National Association of America, 425 First Street, La Salle, Ill.

A REQUEST TO OUR EMPLOYEES

This Company sells cleanliness. We all make our bread and butter through it. If cleanliness is our business, we must also practise it personally, and in our work—therefore this request is made to you.

Your personal appearance and neatness will always speak for itself.

The place that you work in must be as clean as you are.

Won't you therefore see that it is, and help us to make this place what you all want it to be, as well as ourselves:—**SPOTLESS.**

Do not allow papers or rubbish to litter the floor.

Have a place for everything and keep everything in its place.

A good example on your part will be followed by others.

LAUNDRY thanks you beforehand for your assistance, knowing well that it will be cheerfully given.

WHAT ONE LAUNDRYMAN KEEPS POSTED
BEFORE HIS EMPLOYEES

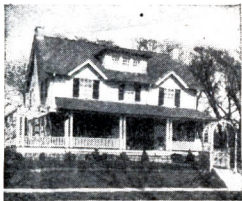
Heating hopes realized

Mothers of the last generation, sitting at their drafty fire-places, dreamed of better things to come for their grand-daughters. They knew much was lacking in home-warming devices, and that improvements would come. And in the fulness of time their visions have taken form in



AMERICAN & IDEAL RADIATORS & BOILERS

Nothing better has been brought out in the forward steps from fireplace, bed-warmer and foot-stove—from uncertainty to certainty—than warming a home by IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators. They put the glow of dependable comfort in every room, and give the women of to-day more time to realize their highest ideals. Because (unlike old-fashioned heating methods) they bring no smoke, gases, soot or dust into the rooms, cleaning work is enormously reduced. Not only do they insure a clean home, but AMERICAN Radiators are themselves easy to clean. You have no rusty stove-pipes to put up and take down; no stoves to "black;" no registers to throw out dust or soot.

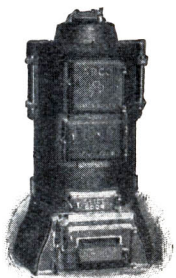


A No. 1-25 W IDEAL Boiler and 575 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$230, were used to heat this cottage. At this price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which are extra, and vary according to climatic and other conditions.

Showrooms in all large cities

Our Radiators can be easily brush-cleaned, and all patterns for kitchens, laundries, bath-rooms, etc., can be scrubbed like a kitchen floor. They make for the "clean and simple life." IDEAL Boilers are self-acting. Kindle the fire once a year, put in coal once or twice a day, take up ashes every other day, and your rooms are automatically kept *evenly* warm. No parts to wear or burn out, warp or loosen—will outlast your building.

Our immense annual sales in America and Europe enable us to offer IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators at a cost no greater than asked for inferior apparatus—at prices now easily within reach of all. Our several factories are so located that they save heavily in freight on raw materials and on finished outfits from factory to user. We therefore offer the greatest possible value in heating outfits. Accept no substitute. Start in to-day to realize your "heating hopes" by writing for our "Ideal Heating" catalog (free). It is full of facts you ought to know.



AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write Dept. F
816-822 S. Michigan
Avenue, Chicago



You Can Rise To

Position is merely a question of knowledge.

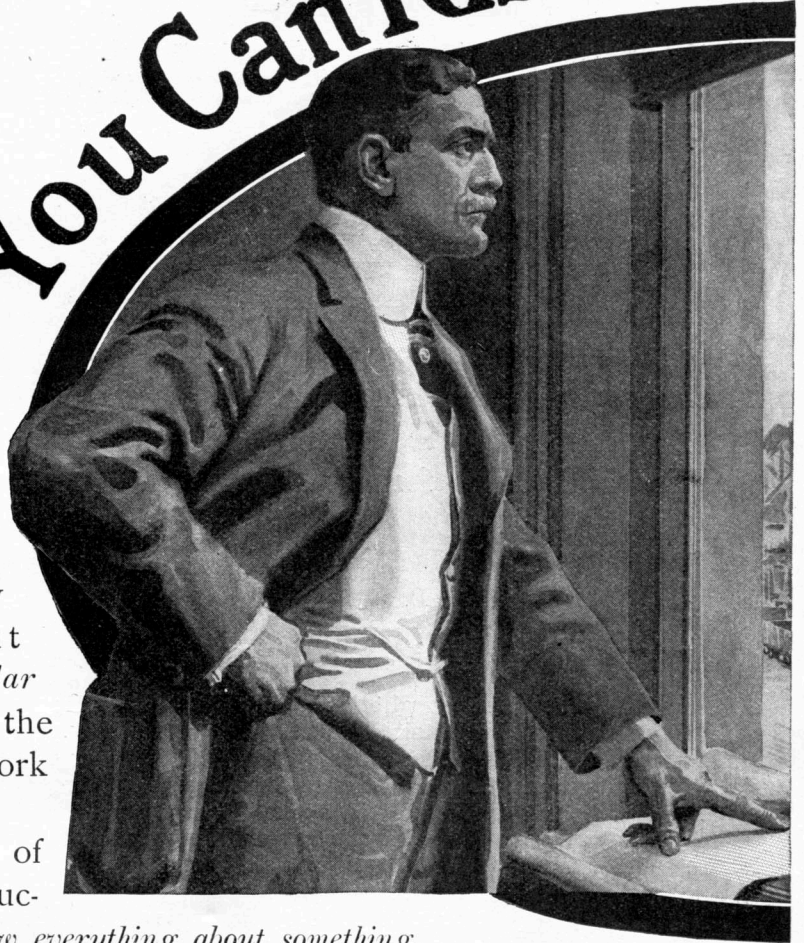
To hold a position of power you need to know more about *your particular business* than the men who work beside you.

The secret of power and success is to *know everything about something*.

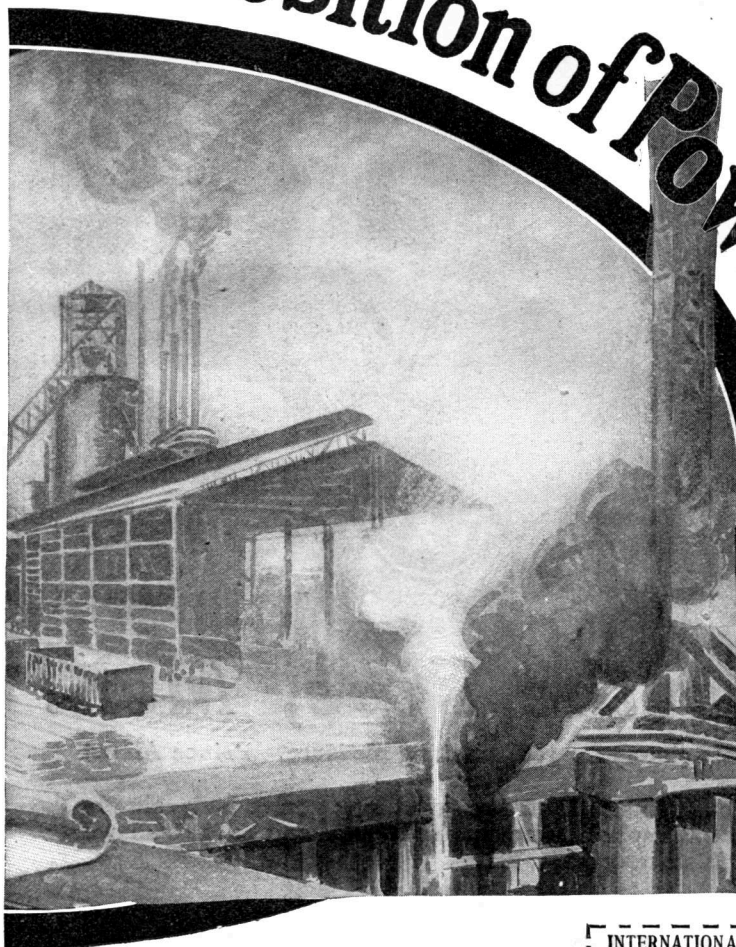
Right along these lines the International Correspondence Schools train men for Positions of Power.

Unlike any other method of special training, you do not have to wait until you graduate before you can advance. Your rise in position comes step by step as you gain in knowledge and qualify for more and more responsible work.

By the I. C. S. method you do not have to read through volumes to pick out the essential facts. Everything is given to you in a concise manner—no more, no less than you need to become an *authority* in your chosen line of work.



A Position of Power



The
I. C. S.
gives you
“concentrated”
knowledge—
specialized
training that
enables you to
master easily
and quickly
everything you
need to know
to work up to
the Position of
Power.

If you can read and write, the I. C. S. can help you to succeed in the occupation of your own selection. To be convinced of this, just mark and mail the coupon—the I. C. S. will send you detailed information as to just how you can become qualified to hold a high position.

Marking the coupon involves no obligation on your part.

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Box 856 SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

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Concrete Construction
Civil Engineer
Textile Manufacturing
Stationary Engineer
Telephone Expert
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Mechanical Draftsman
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Electrical Engineer
Elec. Lighting Supt.

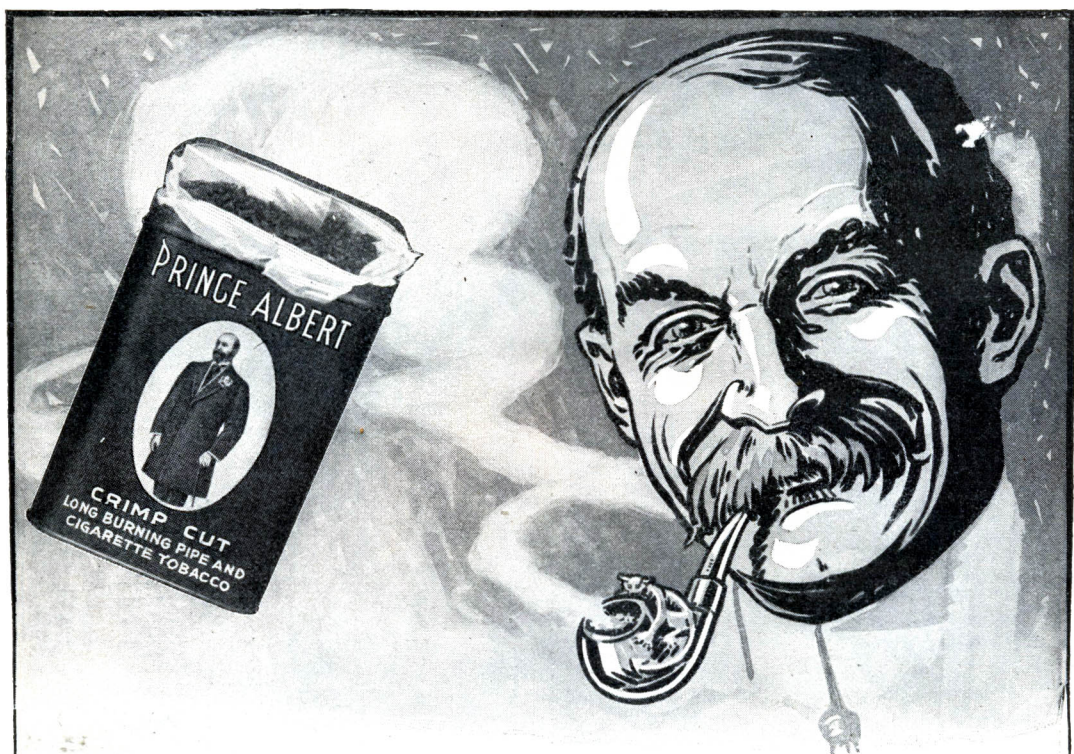
Civil Service
Architect
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Languages
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Back to the good old jimmy for real smoking pleasure. Prince Albert shows the way.

No matter what your grouch, no matter what kick you've had—simply forget 'em. You *can* smoke a pipe, smoke it long, smoke it steady, if you load up with this *different* tobacco.

PRINCE ALBERT

the national joy smoke

simply hits it right off with every pleasant idea you ever could have about a pipe smoke. Has all the mellow flavor and fragrance of real tobacco but none of the old kicks. That's why P. A. is different. The sting and the rankness and soggiess that you used to look for in a pipe tobacco—they don't get into *this* tobacco because of our exclusive, patented process of preparation. Prince Albert CAN'T BITE YOUR TONGUE.

You can buy P. A. in any city, town, village or crossroads in America. 10c in the tidy red tin. Also in 5c bags wrapped in weather-proof paper and pound and half-pound humidor.

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It is easy to make it right—simply boil it 15 to 20 minutes after boiling begins.

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POSTUM

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I know that there are thousands of people who have never heard the Genuine Edison Phonograph. Now, there's only one way to convince people that the Edison is superior, and that is to let them actually see and hear this remarkable instrument for themselves. That is why I am making this offer. The only way to make you actually realize these things for yourself is to loan you a Genuine Edison Phonograph free and let you try it.

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All I ask you to do is to invite as many as possible of your friends to hear this wonderful Fireside Edison. I feel absolutely certain that out of the number of your friends who will hear your machine there will be at least one and probably more who will want an Edison of his own. If there isn't (and this sometimes happens) I won't blame you in the least. You won't be asked to act as our agent or even assist in the sale of a single instrument.

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that is if you wish to make the phonograph your own, you may do so. Either remit us the price in full, or if you prefer, we will allow you to pay for it on the easiest kind of payments.

Our Easy Payment Plan

Two dollars a month pays for an outfit. There is absolutely no lease or mortgage of any kind, no guarantee from a third party, no going before a notary, no publicity of any kind, and the payments are so very small, and our terms so liberal you never notice the payments.

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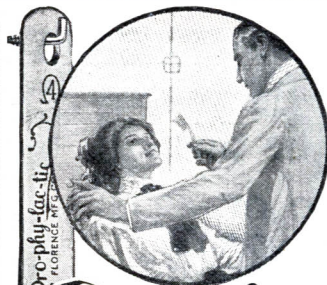
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Sole makers of Pro-phy-lactic Tooth, Hair, Military and Hand Brushes.

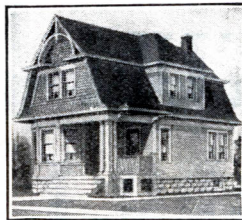
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Send 25c (and 10c postage) for our big \$1 book of

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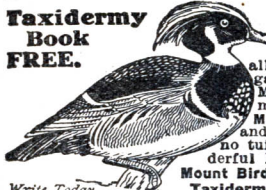
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Are made of carefully selected white corn;
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Breathe It For Catarrh

Breathe **Hyomei**, it is a soothing antiseptic that penetrates the folds and crevices of the membrane of the nose and throat, destroys the microbes and heals the sore catarrhal spots.

Made of pure Australian Eucalyptus combined with other antiseptics. It does not contain opium, cocaine or any harmful or habit forming drug.

To get quick relief and best results from the **Hyomei** treatment in addition to using the inhaler as directed, try this vapor treatment just before retiring.

Into a bowl of boiling water pour a scant teaspoonful of **HYOMEI**; cover head and bowl with a towel and breathe for five minutes the soothing, healing antiseptic vapor that arises.

Money will be refunded if **Hyomei** doesn't give satisfaction in cases of catarrh, catarrhal deafness, coughs, colds and croup. Complete outfit, which includes inhaler, **\$1.00**; extra bottle **50 cents**, at pharmacists everywhere. Free trial bottles on request from

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ILLINOIS — the Best Watch on Earth — Now Sold on CREDIT

For the first time in history the great genuine **Illinois** Watch is now sold by mail on the easy payment plan. No man or woman need be, nor should be, without a famous **Illinois** Watch.

This is the greatest public triumph of a decade—a believed impossibility made possible. It will revolutionize the watch business. Just think of owning the world-renowned **Illinois**, and paying for it as you please! For over **40 years** the **Illinois** has been acknowledged the standard—the one great conspicuous watch value—the one watch chosen and worn by the great men and women of our nation.

A Guarantee that Means Something

Part for part—in accuracy, in wear, finish, beauty, quality of material and workmanship, and every other feature, the **Illinois** is superior to any other watch at any price. Both the makers and we stand back of this remarkable time-piece with an ironclad, legal, broad guarantee—a guarantee that means something—that protects you in every respect—that assures you of the best watch on earth.

Largest Watch Distributors In The World

We are one of the largest direct, easy-payment, dependable watch houses in the world. For over **35 years** we have sold all kinds of watches, and honestly can say that we have never seen a watch—at any price—equal in quality to the marvelous **Illinois**.

How We Save You Money

This famous **Illinois** will cost you less than inferior makes, so why not get the best for your money? This is indeed a profit sharing plan. Nowhere else can

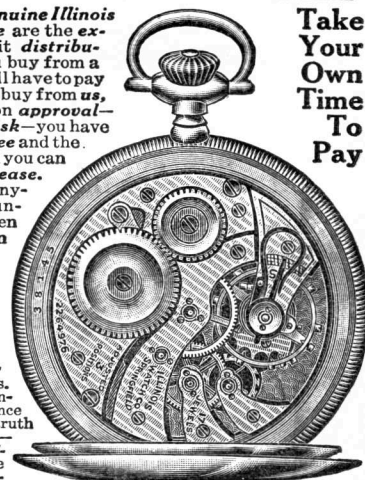
you buy a genuine **Illinois** on credit—we are the exclusive credit distributors. If you buy from a jeweler, you'll have to pay cash. If you buy from us, you'll get it on approval—you take no risk—you have our guarantee and the maker's and you can pay as you please. No dealer anywhere can undersell us even for all cash on delivery.

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Our free, beautiful, profit-sharing book, describing this great **Illinois** watch—reproducing many handsome styles. It's worth owning. Get it at once and learn the truth about watches—learn why an **Illinois** should be in your possession—learn how you can own one on your own credit terms.

Send your address. **The American Watch Company of St. Louis**
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Take
Your
Own
Time
To
Pay



Only a short time ago these men were right where you are now. They were discontented and drawing small salaries. They saw men around them holding good positions and **they** wanted good positions. They saw men drawing good salaries and **they** wanted good salaries. When the American School offered them a way to make themselves **worth more** by **knowing more** they jumped at the chance.

and mailed it. In spare moments and without great effort each one acquired ***special knowledge and training*** that made him ***more valuable*** to his employer, that fitted him to step into a better position at the first opportunity.

Sign the coupon **now.**

Opportunity Coupon

American School of Correspondence, Chicago, U. S. A.

Please send me your Bulletin and advise me how I can qualify for the position marked "X." All-Story, 2-12

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3 Years to Pay
for the Sweet-Toned

Meister PIANO

\$175.00



**30
Days
Free
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**In
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We Pay the Freight

If the piano proves to be all we claim for it, and you decide to buy it, these are the terms of sale:

**\$1.00 a Week or
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No cash payment down; **no interest** on payments—no extras of any kind. Piano stool and scarf **free**. **Sold direct from the maker to you** at a guaranteed saving of \$100.

SEND NOW FOR OUR BEAUTIFUL **FREE CATALOG**, which shows eight styles of Meister Pianos.

Our resources exceed \$4,000,000. We sell more pianos direct to the home than any other concern in the world.

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Chicago, Illinois

Queen Quality Tobacco

is the stuff that dreams are made of

And the rosier ones at that! ♪ Just roll a **Queen Quality** cigarette and hit a soft spot somewhere. Then a few puffs—and you'll be Prince of a Castle in Spain.

♪ **Queen Quality** tobacco is all tobacco and a *real man's smoke*. It is the finest flower of North Carolina—rich, *tasty*, and filled with tobacco tang.

♪ But no bites or bitters or scratches.

♪ So you like to let the *taste* sink into your system.

♪ **Queen Quality** is granulated—good in a pipe, but made specially for the chap who likes to roll his own cigarettes.

♪ It comes in the *Big Blue Bag*—a generous sack at a nickel everywhere, coast to coast.

It turns you out Sixty Satisfying Cigarettes or Twenty Plentiful Pipefuls.

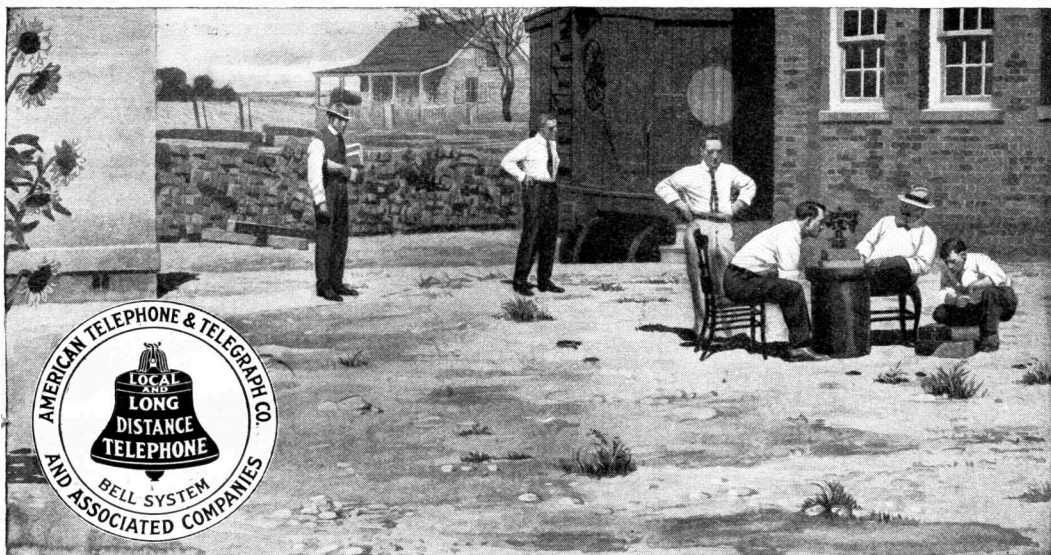
Put a match to its golden flakes and you'll be grateful to the *Big Blue Bag* forever. You'd better hurry—some stores close early.

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for the *Big Blue Bag*

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Tobacco Co.
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From a Photograph Showing the Last Step in Locating the Exact Center of Population of the United States.

“The Center of Population”

A Title that Fits Every Bell Telephone

From the census of 1910 it is found that the center of population is in Bloomington, Indiana, latitude 39 degrees 10 minutes 12 seconds north, and longitude 86 degrees 32 minutes 20 seconds west.

“If all the people in the United States were to be assembled in one place, the center of population would be the point which they could reach with the minimum aggregate travel, assuming that they all traveled in direct lines from their residence to the meeting place.”

—*U. S. Census Bulletin.*

This description gives a word picture of every telephone in the Bell system.

Every Bell telephone is the center of the system.

It is the point which can be reached with “the minimum aggregate travel,” by all the people living within the range of telephone transmission and having access to Bell telephones.

Wherever it may be on the map, each Bell telephone is a center for purposes of intercommunication.

To make each telephone the center of communication for the largest number of people, there must be One System, One Policy and Universal Service for a country of more than ninety million.

**AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES**

One Policy

One System

Universal Service

STICK - POWDER - CREAM

*Choice of Method
and every shaver satisfied*

COLGATE'S SHAVING LATHER

Colgate's needs no mussy "rubbing in" with the fingers—working up the lather with the brush softens the most wiry beard.

The lather lasts—it retains its moisture—does not dry on one side of the face while the other is being shaved.

The delightful after-sense of coolness and comfort is in marked contrast to the "smart" you used to dread.

Antiseptic and exceptionally
free from uncombined alkali.

**SOFTENING SOOTHING
SANITARY**

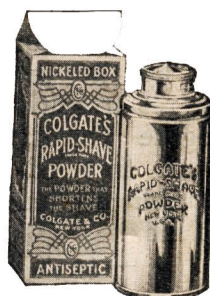
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Stick, Powder or Cream.*

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All the hard work taken
out of scrubbing with

Old Dutch Cleanser

Many uses
and full
directions
on large
sifter can 10¢



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