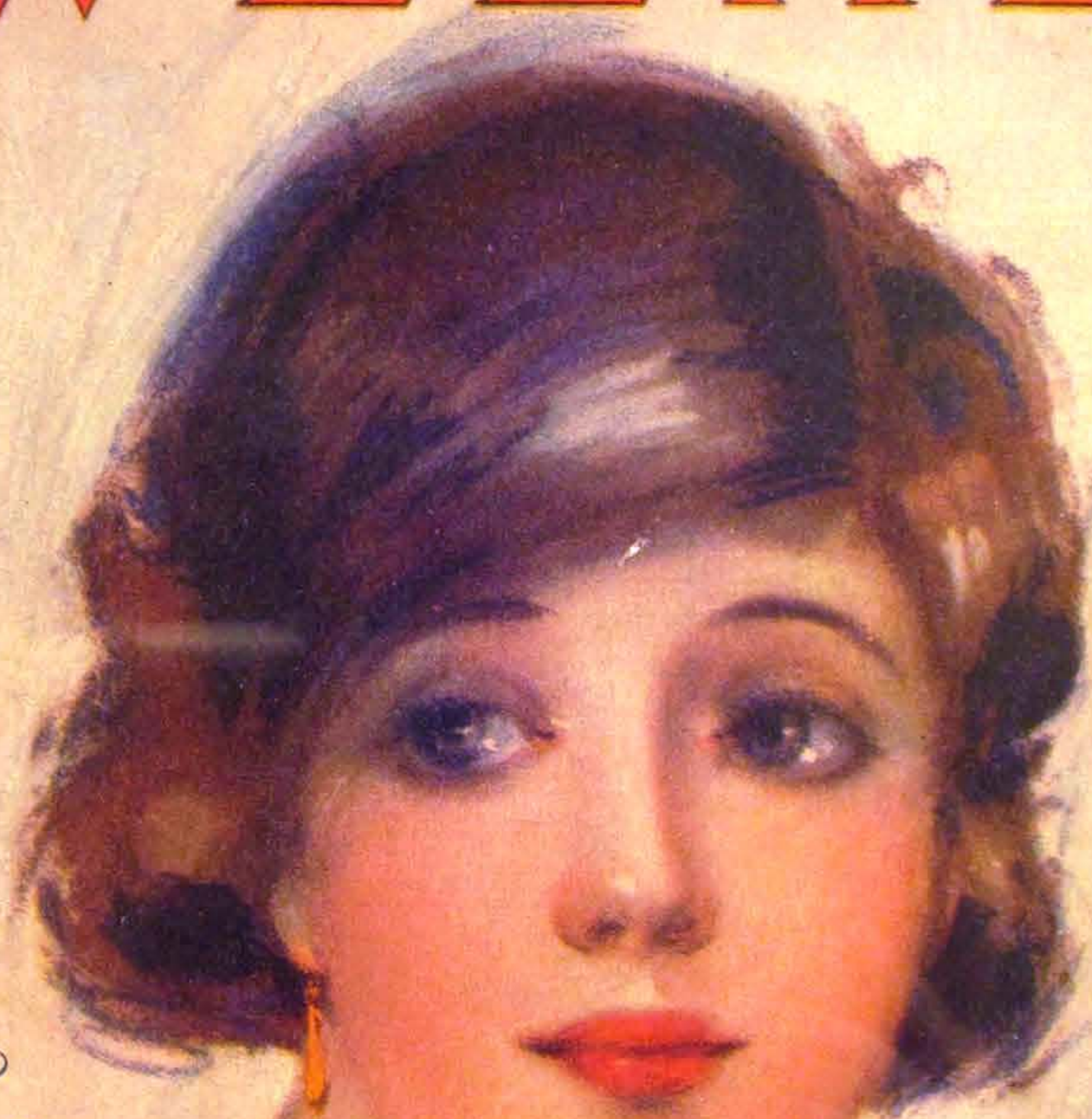


SATURDAY

JUNE 5

TEN CENTS

ALL-STORY WEEKLY



The
Thirty-nine
Steps
A War Mystery
by John Buchan

Cinder-Eve
by Fred Jackson

Harold Lloyd



Any Watch You Want From Square Deal Miller On CREDIT



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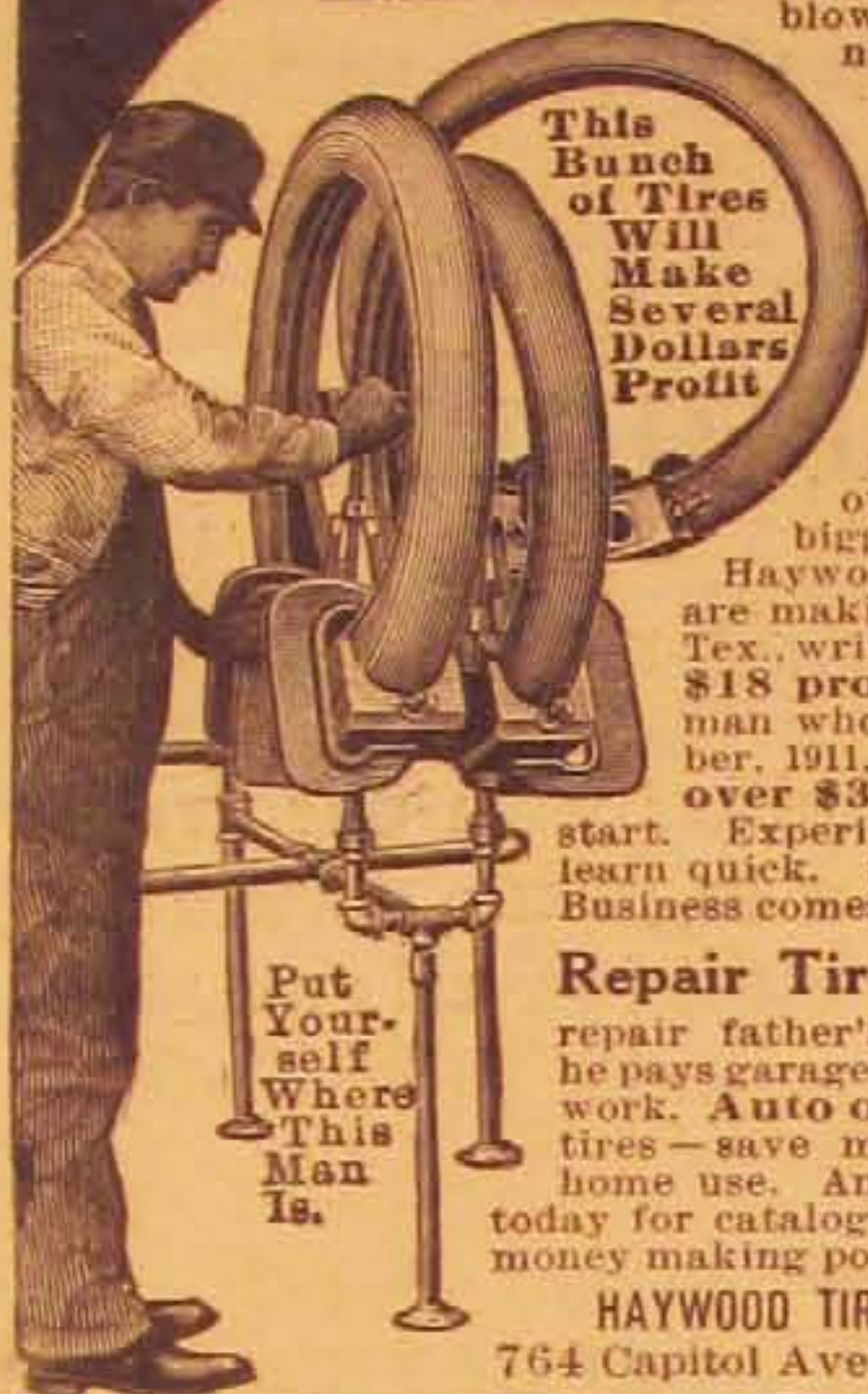
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Be first to enter this new big paying business in your town. Open your pockets. Let the dollars pour in. Act quick. Automobile business growing fast. Each Auto Sold Means More Tires to Mend. Enormous field for tire repairing. Punctures and blowouts are common. Tires need retreading and vulcanizing. Something going wrong all the time. Thousands forced to buy new tires because they can't get old ones fixed. Think of the old bicycle days—repair shops on every corner—all making money—busy day and night. Autos make same proposition over again—only ten times bigger and better. Users of Haywood Tire Repair Plants are making big money. Johnson, Tex., writes, "I made as high as \$18 profit in a day." Another man who bought a plant September, 1911, writes he has cleared over \$3,000.00. Be the first to start. Experience unnecessary. You learn quick. Simply follow directions. Business comes fast and easy.



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An astounding offer. This Triple Silver Plated Lyric Cornet will be sent to you for only \$2.00. Pay the balance at the rate of only 10c a day. Free trial before you decide to buy.

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Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X

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15 CENTS

ALL NEWSSTANDS

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. XLV

NUMBER 4



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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 8 WEST FORTIETH STREET, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$6.00 to Canada, and \$8.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

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Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

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

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines

Magazine	Line Rate	Special Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$2.00	\$4.49 Less 3% cash discount.
The Argosy	1.30	
Railroad Man's Magazine	.80	
All-Story Weekly	.60	
		\$4.70

July 3d All-Story Weekly Forms Close June 12th.

"A New Force In Business" is a booklet that tells how to advertise successfully in the Classified Department of the Munsey Magazines. Mailed anywhere on request.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

I WANT 100 PARTNERS—MEN AND WOMEN! To help me introduce my new Oxygen Toilet Articles, etc., etc. They are selling like wildfire. I want live wire men and women partners to help handle fast increasing business. I will share enormous profits with those who join me now. I mean business. I stand all risk. If fifteen days don't prove your entire satisfaction, that ends it—the contract is cancelled. No traveling necessary. You can live at home and devote all or spare time to the business. Here's something New, Different. Write today, quick. Try this partnership plan for fifteen days. You don't risk a cent. Sam Katz, Suite T28, 1325 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

A DOLLAR A MINUTE CAN'T BE MADE WITH OUR GOODS or anybody's. But you can make good money with our quick sellers, not sold in stores. Write and say "show me." S. Mfg. Co., 41D Warren Street, New York.

FREE SAMPLE—NOSPLASH WATER STRAINERS SELL THEMSELVES. No talking—experience unnecessary. Daily profits \$5 upwards. Send 2c (mailing cost). F. U. R. Union Filter Co., New York.

ATTENTION—BUTTER 4c A POUND. WONDERFUL PATENT MACHINE, which merges one pint of milk into one pound of butter (making two pounds) in two minutes, 150 per cent. to Agents. Write for information. Family Butter Mergers Co., Washington, D. C.

AGENTS WANTED TO TAKE ORDERS FOR "Visiting and Business Cards of Distinction." Large profits. Outfit free. Forman Printery, 693 M., Waterbury, Connecticut.

HELP WANTED

RAILWAY MAIL AND POSTAL CLERKS: examinations soon: over 2000 appointments yearly. Prepare at home. Write for our Plan No. 301 of payment after appointment. Philadelphia Business College, Civil Service Department, Philadelphia, Pa.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS PAY BIG MONEY. Examinations everywhere soon. Get prepared by former United States Civil Service Examiner. 64 page booklet free. Write to-day. Patterson Civil Service School, Box 1304, Rochester, N. Y.

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EARN \$20.00 PER WEEK. Any Woman Can Earn This taking orders for Young's Victoria Toilet Articles. They are beautiful goods and sold on a guarantee. Success is sure by our plan. Let us tell you how you do this. Write today. F. H. Young & Co., 320 Oakwood Avenue, Toledo, Ohio.

NEW PROFESSION—Either Sex—Fitting Glasses By Scientific Methods. Quickly taught by "Home Study" course. Diploma granted. Liberal payment plans. Great demand for graduates. Big income. Full particulars and catalog free. Write now. Chicago School of Refraction, 508 Journal Bldg., Chicago.

ALASKA NOW OFFERS YOU Greatest Opportunities On Earth. Questions regarding work or business chances here carefully and truthfully answered by return mail. Enclose fifty cents. H. W. Ellis, Seward, Alaska.

FOR WOMEN

FREE TO ANY WOMAN. BEAUTIFUL 42-PIECE GOLD DECORATED DINNER SET for distributing only 3 dozen free cakes of Complexion Soap. No money or experience needed. J. Tyrrell Ward, 224 Institute Place, Chicago.

MUSIC AND SHEET MUSIC

SONG POEMS WANTED for publication. Big money writing song poems. Past experience unnecessary. Our proposition positively unequalled. We accept available work for publication and secure copyright in your name. Send us your song poems or melodies today or write for instructive booklet—it's free. Marks-Goldsmith Co., Dept. 26, Washington, D. C.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AGENTS—Crescent Orangeade Powder makes finest drink imaginable by just adding cold water and sugar. Many make \$10 to \$50 a day selling this delicious drink by the glass at Picnics, Ball Games, Dances, Fairs, Etc. Over 4c profit on every glass—50c on every dollar. Also Big Money selling the powder to families, restaurants, stores, etc. Send a dime for enough for one gallon with catalogue, postpaid. Morrissey & Co., 4417-20 Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.

JUST OUT! EVERY LINE OF BUSINESS WILL BUY from 6 to 100 of our Universal Advertising Sign Sets. Agents' price 15 cents each. Prepaid. Sells on sight 35 cents. W. W. Lanterman & Co., City Hall Square Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS WANTED—TO ADVERTISE OUR GOODS by distributing free sample to consumer. 90 cents an hour. Write for full particulars. The Favori Company, 1001 West Street, Dayton, Ohio.

\$250 FOR RELIABLE MAN OR WOMAN; DISTRIBUTE 2000 Free Packages Borax Powder with Soaps, etc., in your town. No money or experience needed. J. Ward Co., 224 Institute, Chicago.

\$10.00 SAMPLE WATCH FREE TO MEN AND WOMEN who will sell our watches. \$18 to \$30 a week easily made by agents who devote their entire time. Write today for our Free Sample Watch and terms. Ogden Jewelry Co., Dept. 58, Chicago.

MAGIC INK ERASER. NO BLADE, NO ACID. Removes ink like magic. 10c. Sells 25c to 35c. Offices buy 1 to 12. Any man that can't sell hundreds couldn't sell bread in a famine. Sample 10c. S. Mfg. Co., Dept. 99, 20 Warren St., New York.

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PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. ADVICE AND BOOKS FREE. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for search. Watson E. Coleman, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—TRADE-MARKS. Send For My Free Book, "How To Get Them." It's full of information you should know. Joshua R. H. Potts, 8 S. Dearborn St., Chicago; 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia; 805 G St., Washington.

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE RETURNED. Send sketch for free search. Our four books sent free. How to Obtain Patent and What to Invent with List of Inventions Wanted and \$1,000,000 in Prizes Offered for Inventions. Patents advertised Free. Wanted New Ideas. Send for list of Patent Buyers. Victor J. Evans & Co., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

"PRIZES FOR PATENTS." "MONEY IN PATENTS." "How To Get Your Patent And Money." "Why Some Inventors Fail." "Needed Inventions." Sent free. Randolph & Co., 630 F Street, Washington, D. C.

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WRITE MOVING PICTURE PLAYS, \$25 TO \$100 EACH. Big demand. Previous experience, literary talent or correspondence course unnecessary. Send today for free details and special offer. E-Z Scenario Co., AC, 309 West 93 St., New York

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AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

POETS, AUTHORS! MAKE GOOD MONEY WRITING Short Stories, Poems, Etc. Mss. sold on commission. Our system unequalled. Prompt service; quick returns. Particulars free. National Literary Bureau (Literary Brokers), M2, Hannibal, Mo.

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\$50.00 PAID For Dollar 1873 S. Mint; \$2.00 For 1904 Proof Dollars; \$7.00 for 1853 Quarters, no arrows, etc. Watch your change. Many valuable coins circulating. Get posted. It may mean large profits to you. Send only 4c for Large Illus. Coin Circular. Send to Numismatic Bank, Dept. M, Fort Worth, Tex.

\$4.25 PAID FOR FLYING EAGLE CENTS dated 1856. We pay a cash premium on hundreds of old coins. Send 10c at once for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, 4x7. It may mean your fortune. Clarke & Co., Coin Dealers, Box 103, Le Roy, N. Y.

TYPEWRITERS

GENUINE TYPEWRITER BARGAINS; no matter what make, will quote you lowest prices and easiest terms, or rent, allowing rental on price. Write for big bargain list and catalogue 16. L. J. Peabody, 286 Devonshire St., Boston, Mass.

PRINTING

100 GOOD REGULAR SIZE WHITE ENVELOPES, your name and business printed on the corner, 30 cents postpaid; 500 for \$1.25. Samples free. M. Breneisa Co., Wheeler, Indiana.

FIREARMS WANTED

FIREARMS—OLD-TIME AND MODERN. Buy, sell, exchange all sorts. Stephen Van Rensselaer, West Orange, N. J.

REAL ESTATE—FARM LANDS

MISSISSIPPI

IS HE CRAZY? The owner of a plantation in Mississippi is giving away a few five-acre tracts. The only condition is that figs be planted. The owner wants enough figs raised to supply a Canning Factory. You can secure five acres and an interest in the Factory by writing Eubank Farms Company, 783 Keystone, Pittsburgh, Pa. They will plant and care for your trees for \$6 per month. Your profit should be \$1,000 per year. Some think this man is crazy for giving away such valuable land, but there may be method in his madness.

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If you want to win boat races buy the famous MICHIGAN Propellers, Reverse Gears and motor boat accessories.

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Delivered to You Free

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MEAD CYCLE CO., DEPT. A-288 CHICAGO



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I can make a good penman of you at home during spare time. Write for my free book "How to Become a Good Penman." It contains specimens and tells how others mastered penmanship by the Tamblin System. Your name will be elegantly written on a card if you enclose stamp to pay postage.

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TYPEWRITERS DISTRIBUTING SYNDICATE
1510-33 E Wabash Ave., Chicago





This country recognizes three grades of truth:

- the truth*
- the whole truth*
- nothing but the truth*

“The Truth” by itself may be false because of what it leaves unsaid, or because while technically correct it is designed to mislead.

“The whole truth” may be ineffective because it leaves one asking—“Well, what are you going to do about it?”

“Nothing but the truth” involves a grasp and expression of right fundamentals, rounded knowledge, fair play—an irresistible appeal.

In Chicago from June 20th to 24th there will be a convention of The Associated Advertising Clubs of the World. The standard under which this convention assembles is

“Nothing but the Truth in Advertising”

This is not a sentimental standard. It is a commercial standard maintained by the contact of idealists, enthusiasts, and hard heads.

It is the only standard under which the annual expenditure of \$600,000,000 for advertising can be made to pay. It is the standard under which 2,000 people met last June in Toronto and, before that, in Baltimore, Dallas, Boston.

It is the standard under which every reader of newspapers, magazines, outdoor signs, booklets, novelties—the printed or painted advertising message—has come to believe what he reads.

You are Invited to Attend

No adult in this country but uses or is affected by advertising. The convention in Chicago will give you ideas for application to your own business and your own life. You will come in contact with the discoverers and pioneers in the development of the economic force of advertising—a force which will grow with your support as you will grow by contact with it and its workers.

For special information address CONVENTION COMMITTEE, Advertising Ass'n of Chicago, Advertising Bldg., 123 Madison Street, Chicago.

Associated Advertising Clubs of the World

11th Annual Convention

MAKE MONEY HERE

AGENTS!

**DROP DEAD ONES. AWAKE!
GRAB THIS NEW INVENTION!
THE 20th CENTURY WONDER**

AGENTS!

LEARN the NEW WAY

Get started in an honest, clean, reliable, money-making business. Sold on a money-back guarantee. World's magical gift realized by this new invention. The **BLACKSTONE WATER POWER VACUUM MASSAGE MACHINE** for the home. No cost to operate. Lasts life-time. Price within reach of all. No competition. New field. New business. That's why it's easy. Removes blackheads, wrinkles, rounds out any part of the face or body and brings back Nature's beauty. Endorsed by leading doctors and masseurs. Listen: Parker, Okla., says, "8 orders first day." Marg-warth, Pa., writes, "I am making \$19.00 per day." Shea, "First order 12, second 36, third 72." Schermerhorn, Ia., orders eight dozen machines first month. Shaffer, Va., "selling 4 out of 5 demonstrations." Vaughn, Wash., orders one dozen. Four days later wires "Ship 6 dozen by first express." Spain, Tenn., started with sample. Orders one dozen, then 2 dozen, next 3 dozen. Lewis, Ind., sells 3 machines first hour. Says "Best article he ever saw for merit and money-making." No experience necessary. Territory with protection given free to active workers. Nothing in the world like it. Best agent's article ever invented. We own all U. S. and foreign

patents. Big book entitled, "The Power and the Love of Beauty and Health." Free. Investigate now, today. A Postal will do. A big surprise awaits you. Address **BLACKSTONE MFG. CO.** 80 Meredith Bldg., TOLEDO, O.

The **BEST**

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DO you like fiction that tickles your ribs, stirs your imagination, satisfies your desire for adventure?

☐ Fiction that places before you the tang of the camp-fire wood-smoke, the brine of the ocean breeze, the shock of charging armies, the alkali dust-mirage of the American desert, the glare of Northern snows?

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Cinder = Live

by Fred Jackson

Author of "The Masked Bride," "Business Is Business," "Mollie of the Movies," "The Cosmic Chord," etc.

CHAPTER I.

The Accident.

MR. OGDEN BLACKWELL knew exactly what he was doing when he ran his ninety-horse-power roadster into the telegraph-pole.

He always knew exactly what he was doing and why he was doing it. He liked knowing the reason for things.

All of which proves that the newspapers that insinuated that he was not responsible at the time knew nothing whatever about the adventure. Young Blackwell himself capitalized the word when he applied it to the affair.

To him it was an Adventure. For, of course, there was a girl in it, and she was a Beauty. That's why he ran the car into the lamp-post.

He was presented with the alternative of running into the post or running into the girl; and, naturally, he chose the post, risking his car and his own bones without a second's thought or hesitation. And this in spite of the fact that it was the girl's own fault.

She had darted out from the curb

without warning—being hidden behind the post until the instant before she darted. There was neither time nor space to apply brakes. So Mr. Blackwell coolly steered the car into the post, smashed one head-light, bent one mud-guard, and got a sound jolt against the steering-wheel himself.

People screamed, the policeman from the corner advanced on a lively trot and arrived just in time to catch the Beauty, who, womanlike, promptly fainted when the danger was all over. A crowd gathered about the motor-car, from which young Blackwell had descended—to make his way to the policeman's side.

"If you'll help her into the car," he said, "I'll get her out of this. She's not hurt. Just frightened."

The policeman recognized young Blackwell and greeted him.

"Yes, sir," he said. "That would be best, sir."

It was near six o'clock and traffic was heavy. He lifted the Beauty as though she were a child and deposited her beside Mr. Blackwell in the damaged car, Mr. Blackwell tooted his horn—and running slowly at first—

gradually increasing speed as the crowd gave way before him—disappeared in the direction of the bridge.

He had been headed that way, aiming for his father's place on Long Island where he was expected to dine. He did not alter his course—not knowing exactly what destination was the girl's. So they ran on for a block or two in silence. A side-glance informed him that she was recovering—that she was quite aware of where she was and of what had happened, but he did not look at her directly until she spoke.

"If you will set me down," she said at last, in a very uncertain voice. "I—think I am—quite myself again."

Then he turned and smiled a little. There were still tears on her thick dark lashes. And she *was* a Beauty!

"You can't walk on this part of the bridge," he said. "I'll turn and take you back. Where do you want to go?"

"I am sorry I've caused you so much trouble," she said wistfully. "It's all my own fault. I ought to have been killed! I'm afraid you've wrecked your car badly."

"Not at all," he answered. "Hardly any, in fact."

He had halted and was waiting an opportunity to swing round.

She shivered a little in spite of her black furs. There was a chill in the air, with the first flurry of snow. Mr. Blackwell regarded her anxiously.

"Cold?" he asked.

"A little," she answered frankly. "because I'm tired, I think—and—hungry."

He accomplished the turning—then pulled up and got out a short robe which he tucked about her.

"Don't bother," she protested. "*please*. If you'll just take me as far as the car-line again, I shall be deeply grateful. I'm delaying you—I've proved too great an inconvenience already."

But she could not help reveling in the warmth of the fur robe.

It was a tiger's pelt, beautifully soft. Its black and gold suited her strikingly—for she was slim and rather pallid, with great dark eyes, and dark hair, just visible beneath her black hat. It was a rather serious face at that moment.

"I'll run you home," he said. "You're too badly shaken up to wait for street-cars to-night."

"Please don't. I'd really much rather—" She flushed a little.

"It's bad enough to think of your using them every other night," he growled, looking down at her.

She stiffened a little, sat a little further from him and remained silent.

"What address?" he asked grimly, as they left the bridge.

"East Fifty-Fourth," she said, after biting her lip an instant, and added the number. He guided the car between the elevated posts, turned down—and presently headed west on Fifty-Fourth.

It was just growing dark. Everywhere, lights were beginning to sparkle brightly. And as they progressed—the rattle of wagons, the thunder of the elevated, the grinding rumble of street-cars receded—leaving a certain quiet.

They felt painfully conscious of each other, of the unusualness of the situation, and of their silence. She spoke first, again.

"The fourth house, there, on the other side," she said. And as he turned and halted—she threw aside the robe and stepped down, and turning—faced him.

An arc light on the corner revealed them to each other. He saw that she was very slender, daintily made, a sort of child-woman—and that she was very lovely. She saw that he was big and strongly modeled—and she was glad—because adventures were rare in her little limited existence—and to have a heroic-looking man for the hero of this, was good fortune.

"I hope you will forgive me," she said, holding out her hand to him,

"for running in front of your car and making you wreck it. I thought I could get across safely, and the cars are so slow and that one wasn't very crowded. I'm sorry—and I'm very much obliged for your kindness. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Mr. Blackwell. "At least—good-by unless you give me leave to stop in upon you some time and convince myself that you haven't suffered any ill effects from this—and that you are quite all right."

She flushed.

"But I am all right! And I couldn't think of letting you put yourself out any further."

"But I should enjoy coming. I really should. And something unexpected may develop."

"Do you think so, really?" she gasped. "But I wasn't hurt at all. Only frightened."

"To be quite frank," he admitted, "I don't think you will be any the worse for your experience—but I should like to come. Mayn't I?"

They looked into each other's eyes.

"No," said the girl quietly. "I think not."

"Why?" he asked, astonished.

She was flushed, uncomfortable, but determined.

"We don't know each other," she said. "The fact that I—made you run into a lamp-post hardly constitutes an introduction."

"Oh!" said he, slowly.

"And in the ordinary course of events, we'd not be likely to meet. You must realize that."

"But I don't." She smiled a little.

"You do, but you don't admit it. I am a stenographer—in the offices of Grey & Bailey. You are Ogden Blackwell, son of Cyrus R. Blackwell, one of our possible presidents."

"As though any one cared about such distinctions," he scoffed.

"I do. I—don't think it—quite fair to me—to continue our acquaintance."

"Not fair to you?" he repeated,

leaning toward her over the wheel.

"Why not?"

"There is too great a gulf between us. It isn't possible for us to be friends. Our—friendship would be misunderstood and there would be—gossip—and most disagreeable consequences to me. Oh, there are many, many reasons why—we'd best—let it be good-by, Mr. Blackwell. I'm happy to think you—you'd like to be friendly. And now—I'm cold and I'm tired and hungry—and you must be getting on your way. Good-by."

She held out her hand again. Again he took it in his.

"At least," he said, "you'll tell me your name. I must know how to think of you. And you know mine."

"Oh, you are a sort of celebrity. Yes—if you like. I am Eve Neville."

"Eve?" he repeated slowly.

She nodded.

"And once I had an ancestress," she added, "who was called Eve—and who permitted herself to be tempted by what she ought never to have had—and she was punished. And I do not want to suffer and be punished, so I shall be wiser than she. Good-by!" She turned from him.

"But—this—" he began.

"Good-by," she said again with an air of finality, and running lightly up the steps, disappeared into the doorway. For an instant, he sat still, staring after her with a most distressing sensation of disappointment. Then he slowly tooted away. But all through his long ride to his father's place he kept thinking of her. And afterward—after he had changed and had descended to the drawing-room to be presented to his mother's guests—and later, too, when he sat at table—he was struck by the contrast between this sort of thing—and the life Miss Neville had contrived to suggest to him—by the little that she had said about herself and *her* world! Surely, between them there was a great gulf fixed. But that it was unbridgable, he seriously doubted.

For some hours that night, after he had gained the solitude of his own rooms, he sat pondering the question. More than he had ever wanted anything in his life he wanted to know this girl—to see her frequently—to explore the secret places behind that calm white brow and those wide, dark, tranquil eyes.

But he was forced to admit to himself that there was something behind what she had said. A friendship of any sort between them *was* likely to be misconstrued. In the end, after several sleepless hours, Mr. Blackwell decided to abide by her decision and to forget her as speedily as he could.

Whether or not he was simply deceiving himself in this will never be known. He realized that to press his acquaintance with her would be taking an advantage—and in his code of honor, gentlemen never took unfair advantage of ladies.

But he did not forget her. For three days he tried—or pretended to try. He went about as usual, amusing himself, or trying to amuse himself. It was a sorry business. He had long ago tired of most known forms of amusement.

Then on the fourth day he sent her some violets and a note. He sent them to the Fifty-Fourth Street house in her name. In the note he said:

MY DEAR MISS NEVILLE:

For the past three days I have resolutely attempted to forget all about you and ignore the fact that you exist. But it is simply no use. I can't help wondering if you are all right. Couldn't we be friends without taking the whole world into our confidence, if you are afraid of gossip? At least, mayn't I stop in just once to see you and assure myself that you are well and contented? Be kind. Frankly, the little time we were together you interested me very much, and I should like to know you better. I should like it more than I have liked anything in a long time. If we know our friendship is harmless, does it matter about what other, evil-minded people suspect? Please drop me a line, reversing your decision.

In great anxiety, very sincerely yours,
OGDEN BLACKWELL.

To this, upon the following day, came her answer:

MY DEAR MR. BLACKWELL:

The interest you feel in me is simply the result of the glamour our foolish little accident threw about me. Analyze it yourself, and you will agree with me that it could be nothing else. I am not of your world. We probably have nothing in common. You are a gilded idler. I toil.

In the short half-hour we were together in your car we talked only such commonplaces as were suggested by the situation. To be sure, I am pretty. But the sort of friendships I care about do not result from the prettiness of the persons concerned.

Thank you very much for your violets, which I have enjoyed. You must not send me any more, however, and you must not begin to lay siege. It is no use, frankly. We cannot be friends. I should like to be, but we cannot. I know you will be generous enough to abide by my decision in this matter and to see the wisdom of it.

Very sincerely yours,

EVE NEVILLE.

P. S.—I suffered no inconvenience from my fright, I assure you. Nothing developed. Set your mind at rest.

E. N.

CHAPTER II.

A Business Transaction.

IT is the nature of man to desire that which is denied him. In justice to Blackwell, it is necessary to admit that he would probably have been keen about continuing his acquaintance with Eve, even if she had not held him off.

But he was the more keen, for the obstacles she threw in his way. It became little less than an obsession with him to overcome her objections and overtake her. He set his wits to work to contrive this—and being a clever young man when he bothered to be, he evolved a scheme that promised something. It was revealed to the lady in his answering letter:

MY DEAR MISS NEVILLE:

In justice to myself I really can't permit you to underestimate me and to hold such an erroneous view of the situation existing between us. It is not because you are pretty that I desired to continue your

acquaintance. In our conversation the other day it seemed to me that a sort of harmony existed between us, placing us in accord, and when—added to this—you mentioned that you are a stenographer, I was seized with an inspiration. Let me explain—in absolute confidence, if you please.

To begin with, I am not the idler you—and the rest of the world, for that matter—suppose! I am a very busy man. For some time I have been engaged in the writing of a novel. And try as I may, it has seemed impossible to get hold of a stenographer who will take dictation from me without interrupting or breaking my train of thought or offering suggestions or precipitating her own personality into my work. I was at my wit's end when the accident happened. I had just discharged my eleventh stenographer for foolish giggling! It struck me as—possibly—the intervention of Providence when you informed me so casually that you are a stenographer. Now the secret is out, you see. I had in mind to offer you a position which would be better than the one you are at present holding—providing, of course, you proved—on better acquaintance—as much in accord with me as I thought you would.

Now, may I come to see you about this? The book really must be completed. I want your answer with impatience.

Very sincerely yours,
OGDEN BLACKWELL.

At first he had thought of engaging in some sort of imaginary business, but he soon abandoned that idea, realizing that the invention of business letters eternally would lead him into difficulties. Besides, the letters would have to be mailed—and, of course, that wasn't possible. They'd all be coming back from their bogus addresses by way of the Dead-Letter Office.

The next thing that occurred to him was being an author. He knew absolutely nothing about being an author, but he thought it would not be a difficult task to pretend to be one. He assumed that every author is different from every other one in his methods of work and so on.

Every way he considered the matter an author was the easiest thing he could be—requiring the services of a stenographer. He was determined to batter down the barriers between them

—by fair means or foul. If she would not be friends with him, she should be his stenographer, and the world could find nothing to object to in that—and to gossip about. All men had stenographers.

However, Miss Neville was not quite so gullible as he hoped she would be. She answered simply:

“It's no use.”

And signed the letter—if you could call it a letter—“E. Neville.”

In great indignation then, that very evening, Mr. Blackwell called.

Miss Neville resided in a very old-fashioned apartment house. It was four stories high, and she lived in the top apartment. Finding the name on the bell in the vestibule, Mr. Blackwell rang—and when the ticking at the door notified him he admitted himself and climbed the stairs.

She came to the upper door herself, so she could not deny him. Before she had recovered from her astonishment he was stalking past her into the drawing-room—and there was nothing for her to do but meekly follow.

“I have come,” he announced firmly, “to find out why you cast such an insinuation at me? Have I deserved that you think me a falsifier?”

Miss Neville smiled a little, revealing two very notable dimples. And when she smiled she was really irresistible.

“I'm sorry if I offended you,” she said contritely. “But your explanation was *so* remarkable.”

He glared and scowled.

“Is it so remarkable that I am writing a book? Does it seem so unlikely? Do I appear an utter imbecile?”

“Oh, no,” replied Miss Neville hastily. “but you don't seem at all the sort of person who writes books. And I—I'd never heard that you were engaged that way. And— Well, it all seemed so unlikely.”

“That's hardly grounds for insinuating that I am inventing reasons for knowing you,” said he indignantly.

She flushed.

"You should have mentioned it when we first met—and you shouldn't have sent me flowers. That led me off on the wrong trail, you see. Won't you sit down?"

They had been standing, facing each other under the central chandelier—Blackwell in evening clothes, a white gardenia in his buttonhole, his gloves still on, his topcoat open, his hat and stick in his hands. Miss Neville was in a simple house-gown of some soft, pale pink stuff. And she held a book—her finger marking the place.

"Thank you," said he, seating himself a little stiffly on a fat, green-plush chair.

"You'd better lay aside your things," she added, smiling. "I suppose I must be polite now, so long as you are here."

He rose angrily.

"I'll go, if you prefer," he said.

"Not at all. I told you I should like to be friends with you. It's only other people standing in the way. I've so much to contend with as it is. I didn't fancy complicating things any more."

She was taking his hat and stick. He threw off his topcoat and began to draw off his gloves.

"How much do you get at Grey & Bailey's?" he asked. "You'll pardon the question, if I seem to be taking a liberty. I ask for business reasons purely."

"I quite understand," she answered slowly. "I am paid eighteen dollars a week."

He looked horrified.

"Eighteen? And what are the hours?"

He gasped in indignation.

"Eight-thirty to five."

"That's criminal!" he cried. "It's atrocious. I will pay you thirty-five a week, and you need work only mornings."

She stared and then laughed a little, and shook her head at him.

"Don't you see?" she said. "You

make it so hard for me to believe you."

"Why?"

"It's too much money for such short hours. You could get the most experienced stenographer for less than that."

"But I refuse to pay wages that will torment my conscience. Besides, I'm very trying. I'm difficult to get on with when I'm in the throes of composition. You've no idea."

She opened wide eyes and considered him thoughtfully.

"Did you pay your last stenographer this rate?"

"I pay all my stenographers at this rate."

"And still you find it hard to get suited?"

"Almost impossible. Their—their personalities annoy me. I have very bad luck. Perhaps you think me less susceptible to insignificant details than I am. I have a sensitive nature."

She smiled.

"I might prove equally undesirable."

"I am sure you wouldn't. I was sure of it the instant I saw you. I said to myself—or rather thought—'Here is the very girl for you. Here is the one you've been looking for at last!'"

"Meaning stenographer, of course," said Miss Neville, flushing.

"Of course," cried Mr. Blackwell innocently.

She reflected, toying with the book in her lap absently.

"Of what would my duties consist?"

"Taking dictation chiefly. I dictate the book. You take it down in shorthand and type it later. Then you return the sheets to me for revision and correction. I can work only in the mornings. I work very slowly. Some days I cannot work at all. These days you will have free."

"Are there letters, too, and so on?"

"Almost never. I attend to all that myself."

"But it sounds ridiculously simple."

"You would like to try it, then?" said Mr. Blackwell eagerly.

She hesitated.

"Or do you still doubt me and my reasons for persisting in knowing you?"

"N-no—but Grey & Bailey have been very good to me. In a way I dislike leaving them. And I may not give you satisfaction. I've a certain position now and a certain fixed income. That's an advantage, you see—especially when one is the man of the family, as I am. This household rests chiefly on my shoulders."

"That's rather a burden, isn't it?" he said. And it seemed to him almost a sacrilege. But he carefully kept his feelings to himself. "How many do you support on this eighteen dollars a week, may I ask?"

"My mother and my sister. She's still at school."

"Three. It seems incredible. I should think the increase I offer you would be a great advantage."

"It would be."

He leaned toward her.

"Suppose we agree that the arrangement is to last a definite number of weeks. Would that insure you against risk? And I'd agree to give you—say a month's notice, if your services should prove unsuitable. But, of course, I know they will not."

She lay back in her chair, studying him.

"What is the name of your book?" she asked.

Under her curious eyes his glance rested upon the carpet. He had not thought out a name. On the spur of the moment he seized upon the first suggestion that came to him. The carpet was of pale green with pale pink roses on it and yellow butterflies.

"Butterflies!" he said, raising his eyes calmly.

"Butterflies?" she repeated curiously. "It sounds very attractive, but not at all unusual."

"It's rather difficult to get an un-

usual title nowadays," said he. "Everything's been chosen. Oh, I've not really settled upon 'Butterflies' definitely. If I think of a better title as the story progresses, of course I'll choose it."

"I see. Is much of your story written?"

"About one-fourth," he replied at random, "but I've been thinking of doing even that over—and of making some improvements."

"Tell me the plot," said Miss Neville, leaning back in her chair and clasping her hands behind her head. Her eyes were alight with eager interest, her red lips fell a bit apart, there was a tinge of color in her cheeks. She looked very lovely—and Mr. Blackwell found some difficulty in keeping his head.

"I shouldn't think of it," he said. "You'd be horribly bored."

"Nonsense. I should be interested."

"Anyway, I tell things badly. I'd much rather have you wait and find out as we go along."

As a matter of fact, he couldn't have invented a plot to save his life.

"But just the general theme?" she suggested wistfully. "Just in a word or two. You can outline the idea of it, can't you?"

"I could," he said, "of course, but— Well, what should you think the theme would be?"

"It's not about real butterflies, of course," she said meditatively.

"Of course not."

"You said a novel."

"Ye-es."

"So it must be a story. Is it about gay idlers—butterfly people? That's it. You'd know a lot about that sort of thing."

She beamed at her own perspicacity.

"I don't know why you persist in calling me an idler in a tone that makes it an insult, especially now when I've told you my secret about the book."

"I didn't mean that you are an idler. I meant that you were born into that set, you know. Was I right about the general idea of your story?"

"Yes. It's a society story."

"A love-story?"

"Of course."

He was very emphatic about it.

"Fancy your being able to write love-stories," she cried wonderingly. "You don't look at all like it. Are you writing from experience or from observation and imagination?"

"A little of each," said he wisely. "But, I say, haven't we talked quite enough about me?"

"Have I been rude and curious?" she asked, flushing. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be. But I suppose you do dislike talking shop. Most of us do."

"I'm lots more interested in other things," he admitted.

"Not really more than in your own work?"

"We-ell, n-no. But—"

"I understand. You get so much of it during business hours."

"Exactly."

"I should have known that," said she, "but you see I've aspirations to write myself, and that's why I was interested."

"Not really?" he cried.

She nodded proudly.

"But we won't talk about it," she said. "What shall we talk about?"

"Let's talk about you," he suggested pleasantly.

She smiled and shook her head.

"There's nothing about me to talk of. Nothing interesting."

"Everything about you would interest me, I'm sure," said he.

She opened her eyes.

"Why should it?"

"Because I — I'm interested in studying people—types—for my book, you know. Everybody interests me."

"I see—in a purely professional way."

"Ye-es."

"But I don't think I fancy being put under your microscope."

"You've nothing to fear, surely," said he.

"To think," she murmured irrele-

vantly, "how mistaken people are about you. They think you a useless, spoiled, overrich and pampered idler of fashion—a sort of Beau Brummel—and all the time you are devoting yourself to writing this book and studying people to put into it. It's a sort of game with you, isn't it? You can find out more about people by pretending you've no reason for wanting to know, and that you don't care whether you know or not. You must be awfully clever."

He wasn't quite sure whether she had seen through him and was amusing herself with him—or whether she had believed all of his fabrications.

"Do people think such uncomplimentary things about me?" he asked curiously.

"You know they do. I dare say you help to create the impression."

"I'd no idea they thought about me at all."

"Of course they do—especially just now when your father is in the public eye as a political possibility."

"It's a disadvantage having a celebrated father."

"And a wealthy one, too," she added thoughtfully.

"What makes you say that?"

"It's seldom the son of a moneyed man has any ambition to distinguish himself. He's usually contented to spend his father's acquisitions."

"I suppose that's true."

"That's why I admire you," said she; and then stopped suddenly, realizing that she had said more than she intended, and flushing crimson. He regarded her, fascinated.

"Thank you," he said slowly. "It's bully of you to say it, anyway."

He was sure that she had been teaching him a lesson. And in some humility and discomfort and embarrassment he rose.

"Not going?" she cried sweetly.

"Yes, I think I must."

"But you must meet my mother first."

She moved to the portières at the

door, and, turning, nodded slightly as for pardon, and left him alone. He struggled into his topcoat and began to draw on one glove. Before he had got it fastened Miss Neville returned, followed by a small, robust, cheerful-looking little woman dressed in black. She had white hair dressed with jet combs and white collar and cuffs.

"Mr. Blackwell?" she said cordially. "Eve has spoken of you. I'm very glad to know you. Won't you have some fruit before you go? Eve!"

"No, thanks," said he. "Really—not. I dined late."

"Some cocoa, then? It's cold outside. Some cookies?"

"Another time gladly," said he. "I'm really not able to do justice to them now."

"Don't be bashful," she said with twinkling eyes. "But I take it, you are not. Very well. Another time. We shall hope to see you soon again, Mr. Blackwell."

"Thank you," said Blackwell. "Good night!"

Mrs. Neville departed. Blackwell took up his hat and stick and preceded Eve to the door.

"Good night," he said.

"Good night," said Eve.

They shook hands.

"When do I report for duty?" she asked then.

He was startled, incredulous. He stared searchingly into her eyes. There was no mockery there, no mischief, no scorn. She had evidently taken him seriously after all. She had not pointed a moral.

"How soon can you come?" he asked. "I should like to get on as soon as possible."

"The day after to-morrow?" she suggested.

"Splendid."

"And where do I report?"

"At my father's house—up the avenue. I have a sort of study there."

She nodded.

"And the time?"

"Nine."

"I shall be there," said Eve, simply.

Blackwell descended the four flights of stairs in astounding good humor. And that night he could hardly sleep for delight at the success of his scheme.

CHAPTER III.

Troubles of Another.

HOWEVER, the most serious drawback now confronted him. He had got a stenographer who believed him to be an author—and he could not even compose a good letter. If he would keep her deceived he must speedily develop the ability to reel off endless literary matter—and this necessitated the memorizing of pages and pages of somebody else's creations.

He would have to spend his nights in study in order to keep up the deception—or so he thought at first. He went to the nearest public library and asked a good-natured librarian for the most unpopular but interesting book of fiction she had, stipulating that it must chronicle the doings of ultra-smart society.

She was so used to supplying unusual demands that she expressed no wonder or curiosity at this one, but simply classified Mr. Blackwell mentally as a "freak." The book that was forthcoming was an old English novel, in six thick volumes, written by a lady named Ann De Ortha, and called "The Mistress of the Manse." Mr. Blackwell had never heard of it in his life, and after reading a few pages here and there, he fancied that very few others of his generation had.

Proudly he bore his treasure home and set about memorizing enough to form the first day's work with Eve. But he had flattered himself. It was easier to plan memorizing it than actually to memorize it. After two solid hours he called a halt and sought some means of escape from so much

needless labor. And he who seeks shall find.

Mr. Blackwell—possessing himself of his father's study—arranged it after a manner of his own in preparation for the morrow's toil. Since the rest of the family was still at the Long Island place, and only the servants were about, there was no one to question him.

Upon the following morning Miss Neville presented herself precisely at nine, and was ushered by the footman into the study. There Mr. Blackwell greeted her.

He wore a lounge-coat of blue velvet (especially purchased for its artistic air), his dark hair was tousled just enough to make it look careless. He desired to create the impression that already his mind was busy, and that hair was too insignificant to interest him. In his dark blue eyes dwelt a serious and soulful look.

"Have you breakfasted?" he asked as Miss Neville removed her small, plain, businesslike hat before the mirror, patted her hair into order, and produced her pencils and a note-book.

"Certainly," said she, somewhat astonished. "Does your stenographer usually breakfast with you?"

"Sometimes," said he, "but since you have breakfasted, perhaps we'd better get to work at once. I want to accomplish a great deal to-day. I feel that I can accomplish a great deal. We are going to begin at the beginning again."

She took her place at the side of his desk, ready to take dictation.

Mr. Blackwell rose and moved toward a screen that stood in one corner by a window.

"I always dictate from behind this," he said. "I get self-conscious and nervous when I can see the stenographer. I feel so foolish saying things that look all right written. And her eyes always bore through me if I pause a moment to think. Back here I can pretend that I am alone in the room."

He looked at her anxiously to see if she was crediting him. She seemed to be. He departed behind the screen.

"Can you hear me distinctly?" he asked, seating himself in a comfortable chair, arranged for him beforehand, and letting his eyes wander approvingly over a smoking stand, a pile of cigars and cigarettes, a cellaret supplied with liquid refreshment, and a low stand on which the four volumes of "The Mistress of the Manse" reposed. The first volume was open at the first page. He seated himself comfortably, drew the volume toward him, lighted a cigar.

"I hear you perfectly," said Miss Neville.

He glanced at her suspiciously through the peep-hole in the screen. She was bent over her note-book in an attitude of deep attention. He paused an instant, admiring her. Then he began:

"Butterflies, a four-part novel by Ogden Blackwell."

He waited.

"Yes," said Miss Neville.

"It was a clear, cold, starlit night in early November," he began. He read in a pleasant voice, glancing up as often as possible to watch her through the screen. "Lady Merri-man emerged from her coach—" And so on, dictating word for word as it was written, but halting now and then dramatically, as though to think of what he wanted to say next. As he read Miss Neville took it all down in shorthand. And with endless satisfaction he observed that she seemed surprised and pleased with his humble attempts at literature.

As a matter of fact, Mistress Ann De Ortha had not an uninteresting style, and her tale—if somewhat sensational for these realistic times—was not in the least dull. Mr. Blackwell brought it up to date. He skipped the long descriptions in which she seemed to revel and substituted automobiles and private yachts for coaches and riding parties. It was amusing to

see what he really could do with it. But it was in the love scenes he really scintillated.

He gave them with such force and fervor and fire and emphasis that Miss Neville was forced to marvel—and in the end—when he suddenly called a halt, remembering that her fingers would be getting tired holding the pencil—she congratulated him warmly.

"Are we through for the day?" she asked in some astonishment as he came from behind the screen, running his fingers through his hair in a truly literary fashion, and wishing that it was longer.

"Indeed we are," he said. "How long do you suppose I can sit in there at a time reading that stuff."

"Reading it?" she repeated.

He caught himself up.

"From my notes, of course. You didn't suppose I was really composing then? Dear me, no!" He shook his head in gentle negation. "I'm refining it—polishing—improving. If you notice any inconsistencies as we go on, don't fail to call my attention."

"I'll not," replied Miss Neville, putting aside her note-book and pencils. "And when do I type this, now?"

"Have you much?" he asked.

"Enough to fill twenty pages, typed, I should say."

"How long will that take you?"

She glanced critically through her notes.

"Three or four hours, perhaps."

"You'd better do that to-morrow morning, then. We'll go on that plan. One morning we'll dictate and on the next one, type and correct."

"But we've the afternoons?"

"I never work in the afternoons," said he. "I don't believe in overdoing anything. You can do better if you go at it fresh every time. Besides in the afternoons I go about to—to places that I am going to put into the story and get—well what we writers call 'local color'—and take notes,

and so on. This afternoon, for instance, we are going to motor to a very charming inn out the road, and take tea and watch them play winter polo."

"We?" cried Miss Neville, staring.

"To be sure. I—I shall want you to—take notes, and remember things for me. I—I've a rotten memory."

"Oh," she said slowly. "Then I do work afternoons."

"Didn't I explain about that?" he cried, astonished. "I thought you understood. Of course, it isn't exactly work because it is entertainment, too, in a way—and all that. But I shall require your presence every afternoon and many evenings."

"Evenings?" she repeated, rising and regarding him thoughtfully.

"Well—there are theaters, you know—and opera—and the gay cafés. Mistress Evelyn and the Lady Esmerelda Merriman drift through all the popular gaieties."

Miss Neville considered him, her pencil pressed against her full red lips, her dark eyes grave.

"Let us understand this," she said. "My time is going to be all taken up—instead of just the mornings as you led me to believe."

"Did I?" he cried contritely.

"You did."

"Well, well," he exclaimed uneasily. "I—I'm more than sorry. I—I'm afraid I've not a very good business head. It was carelessness. I—suppose we raise the salary, then, to compensate."

"Give me more than thirty-five?"

"If you accepted thirty-five thinking that you would be required only in the mornings, and I am going to need you afternoons and evenings, too, I think a hundred is not too much."

She laughed.

"You aren't much of a business man," she admitted. "A hundred a week for an ordinary stenographer who has never gotten more than eighteen."

"Am I to blame if people haven't

appreciated you?" he cried impatiently. "You are not an ordinary stenographer. You are a very extraordinary stenographer. You are the most extraordinary stenographer I have ever employed."

Which was quite true.

"In what way am I so extraordinary?" she asked artlessly.

"You sit still. You don't fidget. You don't giggle. You don't interrupt, snuffle, cough, nor sneeze."

That wasn't at all what he meant, but it was what he said—warned by her suspicious eyes.

"It's going to cause comment, when I'm seen about with you," she said slowly. "You're so well known—and I—I've hardly any clothes that are suitable to—going about."

"An additional reason why you should have an additional salary. You wouldn't have required the clothes, I take it, if I hadn't insisted upon taking you about."

She flushed.

"I think I shall have to have my mother, too. It is only fair to me."

"Do you really think so?" he asked regretfully.

"Most people like my mother and are honored to know her and to be with her," said Miss Neville. "She was a Hampton of South Carolina."

"Dear me," said he. "You misunderstand me. Don't do it! I detest people who misunderstand me. I simply thought it would all bore your mother and tire her out—and I thought—well—somehow—the presence of other people always makes me more or less self-conscious and unable to work well. But, of course, if you can't go about without your mother we will have her, by all means."

"I'll think it over," said Miss Neville. "I shouldn't like to interfere with your work."

There came a knock at the door. Timmons, the aged Blackwell butler, responded to Blackwell's "Come."

"Luncheon is served, if you please, sir," he said.

"We'll be down directly," said Blackwell, nodding. Timmons departed. Miss Neville stared.

"I am lunching here?" she asked.

"Surely. It would be absurd for you to go away to lunch when we are going out immediately afterward."

"I see," she cried, nodding. "I told my mother I would be back. And she—we have no telephone—and she's apt to worry. Naturally, the thought that I—am compelled to—go to men's offices and rooms, worries her a little. She doesn't seem to realize how well able I am to take care of myself."

"We can stop there and relieve her anxiety on our way to the inn," said he. "Shall we go down now?"

They went—Miss Neville observing the hallway and dining-room with approving eyes.

"Do you often have to go to men's rooms?" he asked, as they seated themselves opposite each other at the small, oval table.

"I've had to do it only once before—when Mr. Grey was ill. But, of course, his wife was there and so on. It wasn't difficult at all. It was very hard to come here to-day though."

She confessed this with a faint flush and a timid smile.

"Not really?" he asked, troubled.

"I didn't know you, you see—and—you acted—at first—at least I got the impression that—you admired me. But I had to trust you. Your offer was simply too glorious to refuse—with the youngster coming on to need winter things—and thinking of boarding school, too, and everything. Thirty-five dollars a week seemed like a fortune after eighteen."

"But it's a hundred now—not thirty-five."

"Nonsense," she cried, her dark eyes widening, her color deepening. "I couldn't take so much."

"But think of the time you will be spending!"

"Amusing myself. It isn't such a fearful fate."

"And the clothes you will require."

"That is a consideration," she admitted. "I shouldn't like you to feel uncomfortable on my account."

"A hundred a week it is, then," said he. "That's agreed."

"Of course I do believe all you have told me now," she said slowly, "and I suppose you are satisfied that you are making a good bargain, but it's wonderful luck for me that I ran in front of your car. Heaven knows how much longer I should have been tied down to that eighteen dollars a week, and the sort of life my income necessitated—no fun—no larks—no—or at least—very few good times."

"Please don't," said Mr. Blackwell, wistfully.

"Don't what?"

"Don't remind me of all that. I can't bear to think of it."

"Why?" she asked mildly.

"It's such a beastly world," he announced disgustedly. "Some have too much, and the rest, hardly any at all. I've had more than enough to—share."

She sighed.

"I suppose there's a reason for it or it wouldn't be," she said, philosophically. "Only—we're all too little to see the reason."

"How old are you?" asked Mr. Blackwell curiously.

"Twenty," said Eve.

"You don't look it—not by a good deal."

"Really? I feel hideously old—or I did, I should say. Of course, my new salary rejuvenates me. We'll not have to stint much now. I suppose you've no idea what stinting means?"

"We-ell. No," he admitted gravely.

"It's not at all pleasant," she told him. "I—I am infinitely grateful to you for putting an end to it. Can I say that to you without your misunderstanding?"

"You can say anything to me without my misunderstanding," said young Blackwell.

She nodded slowly.

"I think that is so. You have a sort of understanding look. I noticed in your book, too, your knowledge of character-drawing seems to be excellent—and you go into great details in description. You must be very observant."

"I am," he acknowledged, nonchalantly.

She buttered a bit of toast and popped it into her red mouth. He stared—fascinated—wishing that she would do it again.

"What do you think of the book as far as we've gone?" he asked. "Frankly, now?"

"I like it. It's not at all what I expected though. You're so big and strong and vital-looking. Your style has a—well a soft touch I hadn't anticipated."

"Oh," said he.

"Generally, it seems to be a lot like Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto' and that school. I suppose you've read them?"

"Can't say I have," answered Blackwell.

"You'd find them entertaining," said she. "And instructive, too. Nothing is more instructive than a wide knowledge of books."

That afternoon they motored out the road to see the winter polo—Miss Neville changing to her very best clothes when they stopped to notify Mrs. Neville about her additional hours. They dined at the Inn afterward, and motored back to town to see a show.

Then they had supper—and a very weary, though very happy Eve it was, who combed her long dark hair before her mother's dressing table—as she reported the day's doings. And yet, it was not a sleepy creature who reported the next day at nine. Youth doesn't require so very much sleep, and after her years of 'stinting' the plunge of gaiety brought all that was fresh and joyous and young in Eve to the surface.

She was a girl, after all, if she had borne a man's burdens for three long years. Mr. Blackwell had toiled for an hour or two in the night, planning the portion of the story to be dictated next day and deciding how it could be altered.

Accordingly, his heroine, Mistress Evelyn Pomphrey, niece of Lady Merriman, announced her intention of visiting the shops—prior to a visit to the States—and Blackwell informed his stenographer that he knew nothing of shopping and must learn.

So that second afternoon they shopped. Miss Neville bought clothes—at first demurring—objecting—arguing—but eventually giving in, when it was agreed that the sum total of her purchases should be subtracted from her weekly wage.

Mr. Blackwell had the most exciting time of his young career selecting things for her, for she was slender and graceful and lovely—and there was nothing she couldn't wear. Her hair and eyes were dark, her skin fair—and already beginning to lose that colorlessness that he had marked the day of the accident. The cold air may have whipped a tinge of color into her cheeks, or the fact that the salespersons exchanged significant glances over them, may have had something to do with it. At any rate they chose hats—a black and white fur one—and an all-brown one with burnt-orange plumage, and a dark blue one of unspeakable *chic*, and hair ornaments of maline-and-gold embroidery, and aigrets, and an evening wrap of black velvet and white fur, and another of royal purple velvet and white fur, and another all white, and four evening gowns—a white one, a pale yellow one, a pale pink one, and a pale blue one—with slippers and stockings and gloves to match—handkerchiefs, blouses, a suit or two—a heavy fur coat for motoring, with a toque to match, and necessary odds and ends of jeweled knick-knacks.

Shopping to a woman is like some intoxicating wine of marvelous bouquet—and like some irresistible poison. The firmest will falter.

So despite Miss Neville's initial struggles to oppose him, he persisted—ordering one thing after another—until her heart sank at the thought of the money they had spent—and she dreaded to estimate how many years she would have to continue as his stenographer in order to liquidate her debts. But he shrugged when she mentioned this, and remarked that she required the clothes in order to fulfil her duties. And this was unanswerable.

That night he agreed to her suggestion that she remain at home to try on her new clothes and dispose of them to advantage. The thought of losing her even for that once was almost unendurable, but he yielded reluctantly and spent the time at a dinner-dance, given by his sister, where he regarded all the ladies in attendance and made ungallant remarks to himself about them, comparing them much to their disadvantage with some one that he knew.

And he got away early—realizing that he preferred the mere thought of her to the living presence of these other women—and back he went to his rooms, to sit and smoke in the library over "Mistress of the Manse," and plan the chapter for next day. At last he went to bed determined to dream of her, and was very much annoyed, upon awakening the next morning, to find he had not done so.

Miss Neville, meanwhile, had been like a youngster again—trying on all the new garments before her mirror—while her mother and Frankie looked on, and marvelled, and applauded.

It was their firm and fixed belief that Eve was the most beautiful person in the world any way, and that now, with these clothes for a setting, others would begin to realize it. And Eve was forced to admit to herself that she was not exactly plain. After-

ward, Frankie had been permitted to pin up her curls and try on the finery—her airs and graces sending Mrs. Neville and Eve into peals of laughter. Altogether, the top-floor flat, at number—something-or-other Fifty-Fourth Street, resounded with more merriment than it had seen this many a day. Eve, staring at the stars, later on, her cheek pillowed on her arm, decided that it was not such a very bad world, after all.

CHAPTER IV.

Smoothing a Few Wrinkles.

MR. BLACKWELL had been seen about with a beautiful, young, and unknown lady for no more than a week, when word of his probable entanglement was whispered into the ear of Cyrus R., and that gentleman abandoned his business affairs and political meetings, postponed his appointments and came up to town in haste to look into the matter.

Arriving at the door of the study one morning somewhere about eleven, having been guided that far somewhat reluctantly by Timmons, he was amazed to hear in his son's voice:

"For years I've loved you madly, Evelyn. The first time I saw you I adored you. I have never ceased adoring you."

To say that Mr. Blackwell was startled is to undershoot the mark by a great deal. He was far from expecting to find the object of his displeasure here within his very study—but he rejoiced to realize that he had arrived at such an opportune moment. Lest some definite understanding be arrived at before he could interfere, he opened the door without knocking.

To his astonishment there was no sign of Ogden, but at his own desk sat an exceedingly attractive, dark-haired young woman, writing in a thick notebook.

She glanced up in some surprise at the sound of the opening door and

surveyed Cyrus R. without enthusiasm. At the same instant, while Cyrus R. and the strange young woman were taking account of each other, young Ogden Blackwell's voice sounded again. His father now discovered that it emerged from behind the screen.

"What care I for the difference in our rank?" Ogden was crying valiantly. "Love cannot be governed by such a small thing as earthly rank."

Cyrus R. nodded slightly to the young woman at the desk, entered, closed the door behind him, and advanced.

At the same instant there came an exclamation from behind the screen and young Blackwell appeared, rather flushed, astonished, and somewhat embarrassed. His father's eyes rested wonderingly upon tousled hair, blue velvet lounging jacket—and the pencil thrust behind Ogden's ear.

"I beg pardon," said Cyrus dryly, removing his glasses and polishing them. "I trust I am not intruding."

"N-not at all, father," said Ogden. "My father—my new stenographer—Miss Neville. Would you mind waiting in the music-room, Miss Neville, please?"

Ogden advanced as he made the appeal. Eve rose instantly and went out. Father and son were left alone together—but not exactly face to face, for Ogden was busy selecting and lighting a cigarette.

"Did I understand you to say—stenographer, Ogden?" asked Cyrus R. curiously.

"Yes—stenographer," said Ogden, nodding. And he blew out a puff of smoke. "Anything wrong at Woodlands?"

"No," said Cyrus R. "Everything is moving nicely at Woodlands, but Grace has written me that no such desirable state of affairs exists here. Hence my visit."

He sat down in the nearest arm-chair, crossed his legs, fitted his fingertips together, and regarded his son from under bushy, grizzled eyebrows.

He was a remarkable looking man—this Cyrus R. Blackwell, nominee for Governor of the State, and the very probable next President.

An aristocrat through and through—descended of aristocrats—yet a diplomat and a statesman—and therefore democratic. He had amassed his huge fortune without relinquishing his claim to honesty and uprightness. Now, having won wealth, he was preparing to achieve glory.

He wore the conventional frock-coat and soft black felt hat, the old-fashioned standing collar and black tie that had distinguished him when he served his term in Congress. His hair was gray—his eyes, too—and he adopted the flowing mustache and goatee of the South, from whence he had come.

"I see," said Ogden. "And what is troubling Grace?"

"You are troubling Grace," answered his father mildly. "It appears that you have gotten yourself entangled some way—or at least you have been seen about rather frequently with some one Grace doesn't know, and she is a little worried."

"I see," said Ogden, smiling.

"No doubt," assented his father. "Well, what have you to say about it?"

"Grace is right, of course," the younger man replied. "I've been about with Miss Neville."

"Your—eh—*stenographer*?"

He smiled a little over the word.

"Exactly. Also, I have to say that I am intending to *marry* Miss Neville—as soon as I've persuaded her to accept me."

"Indeed," said Cyrus R. curiously. "This *is* news!"

Ogden seated himself opposite his father and waited.

"Who is Miss Neville, if I may ask—besides being your *stenographer*?" asked Cyrus R. finally, seeing that *he* would have to break the silence.

"Nobody that you know—or that any of us know. Her father was a

lawyer in the middle West. Her mother was a Hampton of South Carolina. She was in school until her father died—three years ago. Then she studied typing, and stepped into her father's shoes as man-of-the-family."

"I see"—laconically. "And for how long have you been assisting her in this respect?"

He glanced about the room.

"About a week," said Ogden. Swiftly he explained the circumstances of his meeting with Eve, her attitude toward him, and the means he devised for continuing her acquaintance.

"Dear me," said Cyrus R. at the end of the recital. "Now I begin to understand. The—the impassioned love utterances that I overheard from the hallway were merely cribbed from this book you are supposed to be writing?"

"Exactly."

Cyrus Blackwell smiled.

"A very ingenious arrangement," he admitted. "A very pretty girl, too. But, of course, the idea of *your* marrying her, my boy, is quite out of the question."

Ogden rose in some excitement.

"And *why* so?" he demanded.

"Because she is not of your station in life. Marriages of persons in different stations almost never end happily. And I want *your* marriage to end happily."

"What have stations to do with it?" cried Ogden disgustedly.

"They determine one's view-point—one's tastes, preferences, habits, ideas—one's attitude toward life. All these things are of inestimable importance."

"Rot!" said Ogden. "The only thing that counts is—if two people care for each other—care enough to go through with it, make the necessary sacrifices, put up with the necessary inconveniences."

Cyrus R. shook his head.

"I expect to be the next Governor of New York State, Ogden—and then

President of the United States. I think you are overlooking that!"

"I don't see what that has to do with my marrying?" cried Ogden, opening his eyes.

"I had planned a more ambitious marriage for you."

"I am not seeking to further my ambitions — or yours — in my marriage," said Ogden. "I'm intending to gain my own happiness."

"But not at the expense of mine, your mother's, and Grace's."

"No. Nor will I expect them to interfere with me. How can my marriage to Eve prevent your election?"

Cyrus R. smiled.

"I didn't intend to insinuate that it can. But by allying ourselves in this fashion we lose prestige. I must urge you, my boy, to think twice before you do this thing."

"I have no need to think any more," said Ogden. "I've decided."

"Has it occurred to you that all of your income is derived from me?"

Ogden flushed.

"Not all of it," he said. "I have something from grandmother. But if it *were* all from you—and you were to cut me off—do you suppose *that* would compel me to change my mind? Do you suppose I'm *that* worthless?"

Cyrus R. smiled gently.

"I don't suppose you are worthless at all. I am assuming that you are sensible."

"I dare say I can work at something," said Ogden. "I've intelligence and strength; and other men seem to be able to get on—men infinitely less equipped than I am."

Cyrus R. stared.

"You'd actually displease me, deprive yourself of your income, and go out and work for this girl?"

"I would," said Ogden decidedly.

"You *must* be in love with her."

"I am," said Ogden, flushing.

A little silence fell between them. Blackwell, Sr., rose and stood considering his son thoughtfully.

"In three days," he said, "we are

closing Woodlands and are coming back to town. I shall expect you to give me your final decision then."

"Whenever you like," said Ogden.

"Have you the least idea what you could do—what it would be like to earn your own living; what you would be worth to any one?" asked his father, smiling gently.

"No—but it can do no harm to find out. I'm beginning to think I might be a lot better off if I had to struggle for myself."

"Humph!" said his father slowly. "Well, you'll be given the opportunity, if you persist in this nonsense!"

He put on his hat.

"Until Thursday, then," he said.

Ogden nodded, and Cyrus R. Blackwell passed out.

Young Blackwell waited until he heard the front door close. Then he started toward the music-room—but Miss Neville met him half-way. They came face to face on the stairs and stopped—regarding each other.

"I heard the door close," said Eve. "I thought you'd be wanting me again."

"I was just coming for you," he answered. His eyes were searching her face intently.

"What is it?" she asked. "Is anything wrong?"

He nodded.

"My father has just notified me of his intention to cut off my allowance."

She opened wide eyes.

"Why?"

"Because he thinks I mean to marry you."

"*What-at?*" she gasped. "Why—How *absurd!* How can he think such a thing!"

She was flushed, breathless, wide-eyed.

"I told him."

"*You* told him?"

Young Blackwell nodded.

"Oh, his curiosity was aroused. He had heard we'd been going about a lot together. He was anxious, so I—I told him that I meant to marry you

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He glanced about the room.

"About a week," said Ogden. Swiftly he explained the circumstances of his meeting with Eve, her attitude toward him, and the means he devised for continuing her acquaintance.

"Dear me," said Cyrus R. at the end of the recital. "Now I begin to understand. The—the impassioned love utterances that I overheard from the hallway were merely cribbed from this book you are supposed to be writing?"

"Exactly."

Cyrus Blackwell smiled.

"A very ingenious arrangement," he admitted. "A very pretty girl, too. But, of course, the idea of *your* marrying her, my boy, is quite out of the question."

Ogden rose in some excitement.

"And *why* so?" he demanded.

"Because she is not of your station in life. Marriages of persons in different stations almost never end happily. And I want *your* marriage to end happily."

"What have stations to do with it?" cried Ogden disgustedly.

"They determine one's view-point—one's tastes, preferences, habits, ideas—one's attitude toward life. All these things are of inestimable importance."

"Rot!" said Ogden. "The only thing that counts is—if two people care for each other—care enough to go through with it, make the necessary sacrifices, put up with the necessary inconveniences."

Cyrus R. shook his head.

"I expect to be the next Governor of New York State, Ogden—and then

President of the United States. I think you are overlooking that!"

"I don't see what that has to do with my marrying?" cried Ogden, opening his eyes.

"I had planned a more ambitious marriage for you."

"I am not seeking to further my ambitions — or yours — in my marriage," said Ogden. "I'm intending to gain my own happiness."

"But not at the expense of mine, your mother's, and Grace's."

"No. Nor will I expect them to interfere with me. How can my marriage to Eve prevent your election?"

Cyrus R. smiled.

"I didn't intend to insinuate that it can. But by allying ourselves in this fashion we lose prestige. I must urge you, my boy, to think twice before you do this thing."

"I have no need to think any more," said Ogden. "I've decided."

"Has it occurred to you that all of your income is derived from me?"

Ogden flushed.

"Not all of it," he said. "I have something from grandmother. But if it *were* all from you—and you were to cut me off—do you suppose *that* would compel me to change my mind? Do you suppose I'm *that* worthless?"

Cyrus R. smiled gently.

"I don't suppose you are worthless at all. I am assuming that you are sensible."

"I dare say I can work at something," said Ogden. "I've intelligence and strength; and other men seem to be able to get on—men infinitely less equipped than I am."

Cyrus R. stared.

"You'd actually displease me, deprive yourself of your income, and go out and work for this girl?"

"I would," said Ogden decidedly.

"You *must* be in love with her."

"I am," said Ogden, flushing.

A little silence fell between them. Blackwell, Sr., rose and stood considering his son thoughtfully.

"In three days," he said, "we are

closing Woodlands and are coming back to town. I shall expect you to give me your final decision then."

"Whenever you like," said Ogden.

"Have you the least idea what you could do—what it would be like to earn your own living; what you would be worth to any one?" asked his father, smiling gently.

"No—but it can do no harm to find out. I'm beginning to think I might be a lot better off if I had to struggle for myself."

"Humph!" said his father slowly. "Well, you'll be given the opportunity, if you persist in this nonsense!"

He put on his hat.

"Until Thursday, then," he said.

Ogden nodded, and Cyrus R. Blackwell passed out.

Young Blackwell waited until he heard the front door close. Then he started toward the music-room — but Miss Neville met him half-way. They came face to face on the stairs and stopped—regarding each other.

"I heard the door close," said Eve. "I thought you'd be wanting me again."

"I was just coming for you," he answered. His eyes were searching her face intently.

"What is it?" she asked. "Is anything wrong?"

He nodded.

"My father has just notified me of his intention to cut off my allowance."

She opened wide eyes.

"Why?"

"Because he thinks I mean to marry you."

"*What-at?*" she gasped. "Why—How *absurd!* How can he think such a thing!"

She was flushed, breathless, wide-eyed.

"I told him."

"*You* told him?"

Young Blackwell nodded.

"Oh, his curiosity was aroused. He had heard we'd been going about a lot together. He was anxious, so I—I told him that I meant to marry you

as soon as I could persuade you to accept me."

"Please," she said. "You shouldn't say these things to me."

"You asked me what had gone wrong."

She drew a deep breath—glanced up at him.

"But if I don't marry you," she said, "he won't disinherit you; and I'm not intending to marry you—so nothing is wrong after all."

"You are going to marry me," he said; "and to—somewhere or other with his money!"

"I am not going to marry you," she said. "Do you want me again to-day, Mr. Blackwell—or may I go?"

"I want you—not only to-day but always," said he, "and you may never go with my permission."

She flushed.

"Have you forgotten," she asked, "that I am here—quite alone with you?"

"What of that?" he cried impatiently. "Am I to pretend I'm not in love with you just because we don't happen to be chaperoned?"

"You are taking advantage of my presence here to say things that I prefer not to hear," she answered gravely.

He hesitated an instant in silence, looking down at her. Then he said gravely:

"Will you come up to the study an instant, please?"

She nodded.

"Certainly," she said.

He led the way. When they had entered the room and the door was closed behind them, he said:

"Please take a letter for me."

"A letter?" she repeated.

"Do you mind?"

"Certainly not."

She drew a sheet of paper toward her and selecting her sharpest pencil, waited.

"Dear Miss Neville:" he began.

She looked up blankly.

"Please—" she began.

"Won't you take my letter?" he asked.

She hesitated, flushed a little, shrugged.

"I am writing this," he dictated, "to tell you that I love you and that I want to marry you. I've loved you since the instant I saw you in front of my car on Fifty-Ninth Street. I lied about being an author and needing you. I—"

"If you are going to explain all that," said Eve, "you are merely wasting time. She knows it. She read 'The Mistress of the Manse' years ago and remembered it quite well."

"Eve!" he cried, advancing.

She put aside her pad and pencil.

"Let's be sensible," she said.

"Wait. Don't come near me, please, until you hear what I have to say. I knew you were just pretending to be an author. I let you, because I—I was as anxious to see you again as you could possibly have been to see me."

He took both her hands in his. She struggled to free them.

"Please!" she cried. "You mustn't. I could never, never marry you without your father's consent."

"Why not?" he demanded.

"I couldn't deprive you of so much money. You'd hate me afterward."

"Nonsense. Do you think I care about money. I can earn enough for both our needs. I don't know how. I've never tried out. But know that I can. You don't care about the money, do you, Eve?"

She flushed.

"I'd rather have you if you were a pauper," she said, "than any other man in the world with millions. But I don't want to stand in your light. And there are my mother and Frankie remember—three of us. Could you manage for us all?"

"I've a little money he can't take away. My grandmother left it to me," he said. "And what more we need, I will get, somehow, Eve."

That time she could no longer resist him. He drew her into his arms, and their lips met.

"What does anything else matter," he cried, "if we have each other. We can do without the Blackwell money."

On the following Wednesday, Cyrus Blackwell sat before his desk in an attitude of listless dejection when his secretary announced "Mr. Butler." This jovial gentleman strode over to him with a hearty hand-clasp.

"How are you, old man? They tell me things are looking up—that you have an even chance at least—with Thompson. Why. What's the matter? You don't look very chipper over the news."

"Chipper! Hell!" was the succinct reply.

"Bless me! What's the reason for the tears?" Blackwell swung around in his chair angrily.

"That fool boy of mine wants to marry his stenographer, and—"

"Stenographer? Didn't even know he was in business!"

"Oh, he's been writing a book," and as the other's roar of incredulous laughter subsided, Blackwell stated the facts of the case and an unwilling gleam of amusement came into his stern eyes as he recounted the part played by "The Mistress of the Manse."

Butler chuckled often during the recital, and when Blackwell finished, slapped him violently on the knee.

"Gad! The boy's a wonder! Turn genius like that into business channels and you'll own the world. Let him have her! It'll make a man of him instead of a mollycoddle with too much money to spend. He loves her and he's willing to work for her. Give him a good job, but make him earn the salary. Besides, this marriage will accomplish more for you than anything else during the campaign. You need the backing of the common people. They have an in-born suspicion of our class, but when

they find out that money and society can't make you turn up your nose at your son's marrying his secretary, their confidence in you will crystallize overnight. Of course, if she isn't a lady—"

"Oh, she's all right on that score," reluctantly admitted Blackwell, "and Ogden said her mother was a Hampton of South Carolina, in the same tone an Englishman speaks of Queen Victoria."

"Hampton, of South Carolina? Bluest blood in the State! See here, Cyrus, you're making a bad mistake. You're not the man I've grown up with and loved and admired all these years, if you let the fact that the girl has earned an honest living stand in the way of Ogden's happiness."

"But his mother and Grace—"

"Bother his mother and Grace! I'll get my wife to talk to them. She can persuade anybody."

And after exhorting his friend in like vein for half an hour, he went out, leaving the latter in a very lenient frame of mind, induced by the comforting thought that the opposition of his wife and daughter would be much softened by the knowledge that Mrs. Franklin Butler, social arbiter, approved and abetted the match.

Late in the afternoon Cyrus Blackwell climbed the stairs to his son's rooms to find that young man, disheveled and dusty, perched on the resisting top of a much overfilled trunk. Ogden looked up with a glance of inquiry, which speedily changed to a hostile glare when he recognized the intruder.

"Ogden," said his father in deprecatory tones, "are you really going to leave us for that girl?"

"I am, sir. I love her and I'm going to marry her, with or without your consent. I'm grateful to you for having given me all this luxury"—he made a sweeping and dramatic gesture across the richness of the room—"but I care so much for her that I don't want it without her."

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"You may have them both," came the placid rejoinder.

That evening there was presented to the astounded gaze of Eve Neville as she answered the door-bell the apparition of two gentlemen in evening dress, whose festive appearance was further

increased by an expression of happy anticipation. And then and there, amid a setting of unbelievably ugly wall-paper and imitation-oak stairs, she yielded to their joint and fervent plea that she become "the mistress of the manse" of Blackwell junior.

(The end.)

U U U U

THE DESERT

BY JENNIE HARRIS OLIVER

I AM the desert life—
 Tenacious, wizard life!
 I grasp and hold and hug each shriveled thing;
 I know no loss and fear no withering.
 Gray, mummied sticks and threadlets, powder-dry,
 We fiercely cherish them, the gods and I.
 I am the desert life.

I am the desert wind—
 The wild, resistless wind!
 I lace the skies with hot, white mystery,
 And drive the sands with death and treachery.
 The dunes that mark a pictured waste to-day
 I'll shift and shape in more fantastic way.
 I am the desert wind.

I am the desert stars—
 The lambent, low-hung stars!
 I weave a tent of glowing witchery,
 And woo grim shapes with softening sorcery.
 I gather jewels from the ether, rare,
 And give them glistening to the desert air.
 I am the desert stars.

I am the desert moon—
 The white, enchanted moon!
 I lay a floor of burnished-silver light,
 And bridge with gems the danger-place of night.
 I brew a cup of hope, wine-cool and sweet,
 And pour it glowing at the desert's feet.
 I am the desert moon.

I am the desert bones—
 The dry, bleached, crumbling bones!
 The barrens drew me from the things that were.
 My harvest blossoms—Change, the harvester!
 Without my sacrifice the things that be
 Had never been; the desert needed me.
 I am the desert bones.


The Thirty-nine Steps

by John Buchan

Author of "Prester John."

CHAPTER I.

The Man Who Died.

 RETURNED from the city about three o'clock on that May afternoon pretty well disgusted with life. I had been three months in the old country and was fed-up with it. If any one had told me a year ago that I would have been feeling like that, I should have called him a liar; but there was the fact.

The weather made me liverish; the talk of the ordinary Englishman made me sick; I couldn't get enough exercise, and the amusements of London seemed as flat as soda-water that has been standing in the sun. "Richard Hannay," I kept telling myself, "you have got into the wrong ditch, my friend, and you had better climb out."

It made me bite my lips to think of all the plans I had been building up those last years in Buluwayo. I had got my pile—not one of the big ones, but good enough for me; and I had figured out all kinds of ways of enjoying myself.

My father had brought me out from Scotland at the age of six, and I had never been home since; so England was a sort of "Arabian Nights" to me, and I counted on stopping there

for the rest of my days. But from the first I was disappointed with it.

In about a week I was tired of seeing sights, and in less than a month I had had enough of restaurants and theaters and race meetings. I had no real pal to go about with, which probably explains things. Plenty of people invited me to their houses, but they didn't seem much interested in me. They would ask me a question or two about South Africa and then get on to their own affairs. A lot of Imperialist ladies asked me to tea to meet schoolmasters from New Zealand and editors from Vancouver, and that was the dismalest business of all.

Here was I, thirty-seven years old, sound in wind and limb, with enough money to have a good time, yawning my head off all day. I had just about settled to clear out and get back to the veld, for I was the best-bored man in the United Kingdom.

That afternoon I had been worrying my brokers about investments to give my mind something to work on, and on my way home I turned into my club—rather a pot-house, which took in Colonial members. I had a long drink and read the evening papers. They were full of the row in the Near East, and there was an article about Karolides, the Greek premier.

I rather fancied the chap.

From all accounts he seemed the one big man in the show, and he played a straight game, too, which was more than could be said for most of them. I gathered that they hated him pretty blackly in Berlin and Vienna, but that we were going to stick to him, and one paper said that he was the only barrier between Europe and Armageddon.

I remember wondering if I could get a job in those parts. It struck me that Albania was the sort of place that might keep a man from yawning.

About six o'clock I went home, dressed, dined at the Café Royal, and turned into a music-hall. It was a silly show, all capering women and monkey-faced men, and I did not stay long. The night was fine and clear as I walked back to the flat I had hired near Portland Place. The crowd surged past me on the pavements, all busy and chattering, and I envied the people for having something to do.

These shop-girls and clerks and dandies and policemen had some interest in life that kept them going.

I gave half a crown to a beggar because I saw him yawn; he was a fellow sufferer. At Oxford Circus I looked up into the spring sky and I made a vow. I would give the old country another day to fit me into something; if nothing happened I would take the next boat for the Cape.

My flat was the first floor in a new block behind Langham Place.

There was a common staircase with a porter and a liftman at the entrance, but there was no restaurant or anything of that sort, and each flat was quite shut off from the others. I hate servants on the premises, so I had a fellow to look after me who came in by the day.

He arrived before eight o'clock every morning and used to depart at seven, for I never dined at home.

I was just fitting my key into the door when I noticed a man at my elbow. I had not seen him approach, and the sudden appearance made me start. He was a slim man with a short,

brown beard and small, gimlety, blue eyes.

I recognized him as the occupant of a flat on the top floor, with whom I had passed the time of day on the stairs.

"Can I speak to you?" he said. "May I come in for a minute?" He was steadying his voice with an effort, and his hand was pawing my arm.

I got my door open and motioned him in. No sooner was he over the threshold than he made a dash for my back room where I used to smoke and write my letters. Then he bolted back.

"Is the door locked?" he asked feverishly, and he fastened the chain with his own hand.

"I'm very sorry," he said humbly. "It's a mighty liberty, but you looked the kind of man who would understand. I've had you in my mind all this week when things got troublesome. Say, will you do me a good turn?"

"I'll listen to you," I said; "that's all I'll promise." I was getting worried by the antics of this nervous little chap.

There was a tray of drinks on a table beside him, from which he filled himself a stiff whisky and soda. He drank it off in three gulps, and cracked the glass as he set it down.

"Pardon," he said; "I'm a bit rattled to-night. You see, I happen at this moment to be dead."

I sat down in an armchair and lit my pipe.

"What does it feel like?" I asked. I was pretty certain that I had to deal with a madman.

A smile flickered over his drawn face. "I'm not mad—yet. Say, Mr. Hannay, I've been watching you, and I reckon you're a cool customer. I reckon, too, you're an honest man and not afraid of playing a bold hand. I'm going to confide in you. I need help worse than any man ever needed it, and I want to know if I can count you in?"

"Get on with your yarn," I said, "and then I'll tell you."

He seemed to brace himself for a great effort, and then started on the queerest rigmarole. I didn't get hold of it at first, and I had to stop and ask him questions. But here is the gist of it:

He was an American, from Kentucky, and after college, being pretty well off, he had started out to see the world. He wrote a bit, and acted as war correspondent for a Chicago paper, and spent a year or two in southeastern Europe. I gathered that he was a fine linguist, and had got to know pretty well the society of those parts. He spoke familiarly of many names that I remembered to have seen in the newspapers.

He had played about with politics, he told me—at first for the interest of them, and then because he couldn't help himself. I read him as a sharp, restless fellow, who always wanted to get down to the roots of things. He got a little farther down than he wanted.

I am giving you what he told me as well as I could make it out. Away behind all the governments and the armies there was a big subterranean movement going on, engineered by very dangerous people. He had come on it by accident; it fascinated him; he went further, and then got caught.

I gathered that most of the people in it were the sort of educated anarchists that make revolutions, but that besides them there were financiers who were playing for money.

A clever man can make big profits on a falling market; and it suited the plans of both classes to set Europe by the ears. He told me some queer things that explained a lot that had puzzled me—things that happened in the Balkan War; how one state suddenly came out on top; why alliances were made and broken; why certain men disappeared, and where the sinews of war came from.

The aim of the whole conspiracy was to get Russia and Germany at loggerheads.

When I asked why, he said that the anarchist lot thought it would give them their chance. Everything would be in the melting-pot, and they looked to see a new world emerge. The capitalists would rake in the shekels and make fortunes by buying up wreckage.

Capital, he said, had no conscience and no fatherland; besides, the Jew was behind it, and the Jew hated Russia worse than hell.

"Do you wonder?" he cried. "For three hundred years they have been persecuted, and this is the return match for the pogroms. The Jew is everywhere, but you have to go far down the back stairs to find him.

"Take any big Teutonic business concern. If you have dealings with it the first man you meet is Prince von Something, an elegant young man who talks Eaton-and-Harrow English. But he cuts no ice. If your business is big, you get behind him and find a prognathous Westphalian with a retreating brow and the manners of a hog.

"He is the German business man that gives your English papers the shakes. But if you're on the biggest kind of a job and are bound to get to the real boss, ten to one you are brought up against a little, white-faced Jew in a bath-chair, with an eye like a rattlesnake. Yes, sir, he is the man who is ruling the world just now, and he has his knife in the empire of the Czar because his father was flogged in some one-horse location on the Volga."

I could not help saying that his Jew anarchists seemed to have got left behind a little.

"Yes and no," he said. "They won up to a point, but they struck a bigger thing than money, a thing that couldn't be bought—the old elemental fighting instincts of man. If you're going to be killed you invent some kind of flag and country to fight for, and if you survive, you get to love the thing. These foolish devils of soldiers have found something they care for, and that has upset the pretty plan laid

in Berlin and Vienna. But my friends haven't played their last card by a long sight. They've got the aces up their sleeves, and unless I can keep alive for a month, they are going to play it, and win."

"But I thought you were dead," I put in.

"Death is the door of life," he smiled. "I'm coming to that, but I've got to put you wise to a lot of things first. If you read your newspaper, I guess you know the name of Constantine Karolides?"

I sat up at that, for I had been reading about him that very afternoon.

"He is the man that has wrecked all their games. He is the one big brain in the whole show, and he happens also to be an honest man. Therefore he has been marked down these twelve months past. I found that out—not that it was difficult, for any fool could guess as much. But I found out the way they were going to get him, and that knowledge was deadly. That's why I have had to de cease."

He had another drink and I mixed it for him myself, for I was getting interested in the beggar.

"They can't get him in his own land, for he has a bodyguard of Epirotes that would skin their grandmothers. But on the fifteenth day of June he is coming to this city. The British Foreign Office has taken to having international tea-parties, and the biggest of them is due on that date. Now, Karolides is reckoned the principal guest, and if my friends have their way, he will never return to his admiring countrymen."

"That's simple enough, anyhow," I said. "You can warn him and keep him at home."

"And play their game?" he asked sharply. "If he does not come they win, for he's the only man that can straighten out the tangle. And if his government is warned he won't come, for he does not know how big the stakes will be on June 15."

"What about the British govern-

ment?" I said. "They're not going to let their guests be murdered. Tip them the wink, and they'll take extra precautions."

"No good. They might stuff your city with plain-clothes detectives and double the police, and Constantine would still be a doomed man. My friends are not playing this game for fun. They want a big occasion for the taking off, with the eyes of all Europe on it. He'll be murdered by an Austrian, and there'll be plenty of evidence to show the connivance of the big folk in Vienna and Berlin. It will all be an infernal lie, of course; but the case will look black enough to the world.

"I'm not talking hot air, my friend.

"I happen to know every detail of the hellish contrivance, and I can tell you it will be the most finished piece of blackguardism since the Borgias. But it's not going to come off if there's a certain man who knows the wheels of the business alive right here in London on the 15th day of June. And that man is going to be your servant, Franklin P. Scudder."

I was getting to like the little chap. His jaw had shut like a rat-trap, and there was the fire of battle in his gimlety eyes. If he was spinning me a yarn he could act up to it.

"Where did you find out this story?" I asked.

"I got the first hint in an inn on the Achensee in Tyrol. That set me inquiring, and I collected my other clues in a fur-shop in the Galician quarter of Buda, in a Strangers' Club in Vienna, and in a little book-shop off the Racknitzstrasse in Leipsic. I completed my evidence ten days ago in Paris.

"I can't tell you the details now, for it's something of a tale. When I was quite sure in my own mind I judged it my business to disappear, and I reached this city by a mighty queer circuit. I left Paris a dandified French-American, and I sailed from Hamburg a Jew diamond merchant.

"In Norway I was an English student of Ibsen, collecting materials for lectures; but when I left Bergen I was a moving-picture man with special skee films. And I came here from Leith with a lot of pulpwood preparations in my pocket to put before the London newspapers. Till yesterday I thought I had muddied my trail some, and was feeling pretty happy. Then—"

The recollection seemed to upset him, and he gulped down some whisky.

"—then I saw a man standing in the street outside this block. I used to stay close in my room all day, and only slip out after dark for an hour or two. I watched him for a bit from my window, and I thought I recognized him. He came in and spoke to the porter. When I came back from my walk last night I found a card in my letter-box. It bore the name of the man I want least to meet on God's earth."

I think that the look in my companion's eyes, the sheer naked fright on his face, completed my conviction of his honesty. My own voice sharpened a bit as I asked him what he did next.

"I realized that I was bottled as sure as a pickled herring, and that there was only one way out. I had to die. If my pursuers knew I was dead they would go to sleep again."

"How did you manage it?"

"I told the man that valets me that I was feeling pretty bad, and I got myself up to look like death. That wasn't difficult, for I'm no slouch at disguises. Then I got a corpse—you can always get a body in London if you know where to go for it. I fetched it back in a trunk on the top of a four-wheeler, and I had to be assisted upstairs to my room.

"You see, I had to pile up some evidence for the inquest. I went to bed and got my man to mix me a sleeping-draft, and then told him to clear out. He wanted to fetch a doc-

tor, but I swore some and said I couldn't abide leeches. When I was left alone I started in to fake up that corpse.

"He was my size, and I judged had perished from too much alcohol—so I put some spirits handy about the place. The jaw was the weak point in the likeness, so I blew it away with a revolver. I dare say there will be somebody to-morrow to swear to having heard a shot; but there are no neighbors on my floor, and I guessed I could risk that.

"So I left the body in bed dressed up in my pajamas, with a revolver lying on the bed-clothes and a considerable mess around. Then I got into a suit of clothes I had kept waiting for emergencies. I didn't dare to shave for fear of leaving tracks; and, besides, it wasn't any kind of use my trying to get into the streets.

"I had had you in my mind all day, and there seemed nothing to do but to make an appeal to you. I watched from my window till I saw you come home, and then slipped down the stairs to meet you. There, sir, I guess you know about as much as me of this business."

He sat blinking like an owl, fluttering with nerves and yet desperately determined.

By this time I was pretty well convinced that he was going straight with me. It was the wildest sort of narrative; but I had heard in my time many steep tales which had turned out to be true, and I had made a practise of judging the man rather than the story.

If he had wanted to get a location in my flat and then cut my throat he would have pitched a milder yarn.

"Hand me your key," I said, "and I'll take a look at the corpse. Excuse my caution, but I'm bound to verify a bit if I can."

He shook his head mournfully. "I reckoned you'd ask for that, but I haven't got it. It's on my chain on the dressing-table. I had to leave it behind, for I couldn't leave any clues

to breed suspicions. The gentry who are after me are pretty bright-eyed citizens. You'll have to take me on trust for the night, and to-morrow you'll get proof of the corpse business right enough."

I thought for an instant or two.

"Right! I'll trust you for the night. I'll lock you into this room and keep the key. Just one word, Mr. Scudder; I believe you're straight, but if so be you are not I should warn you that I'm a handy man with a gun."

"Sure!" he said, jumping up with some briskness. "I haven't the privilege of your name, sir; but let me tell you that you're a white man. I'll thank you to lend me a razor."

I took him into my bedroom and turned him loose.

In half an hour's time a figure came out that I scarcely recognized. Only his gimlety, hungry eyes were the same. He was shaved clean, his hair was parted in the middle, and he had cut his eyebrows.

Further: He carried himself as if he had been drilled, and was the very model—even to the brown complexion—of some British officer who had had a long spell in India. He had a monocle, too, which he stuck in his eye, and every trace of the American had gone out of his speech.

"My hat! Mr. Scudder—" I stammered.

"Not Mr. Scudder," he corrected; "Captain Theophilus Digby, of the Seventh Goorkhas, presently home on leave. I'll thank you to remember that, sir."

I made him up a bed in my smoking-room and sought my own couch, more cheerful than I had been for the past month. Things did happen occasionally even in this God-forsaken metropolis!

I woke next morning to hear my man, Paddock, making the deuce of a row at the smoking-room door.

Paddock was a fellow I had done a good turn to out on the Selakwi, and

I had inspanned him as my servant as soon as I got to England. He had about as much gift of the gab as a hippopotamus, and was not a great hand at valeting; but I knew I could count on his loyalty.

"Stop that row, Paddock," I said. "There's a friend of mine, Captain—Captain—" (I couldn't remember the name) "dossing down in there. Get breakfast for two, and then come and speak to me."

I told Paddock a fine story about how my friend was a great swell, with his nerves pretty bad from overwork, who wanted absolute rest and stillness. Nobody had got to know he was here, or he would be besieged by communications from the India office and the prime minister, and his cure would be ruined.

I am bound to say Scudder played up splendidly when he came to breakfast.

He fixed Paddock with his eyeglass, just like a British officer; asked him about the Boer War, and slung out at me a lot of stuff about imaginary pals of whom I had never heard. Paddock couldn't learn to call me "sir," but he "sirred" Scudder as if his life depended on it.

I left him with the newspaper and a box of cigars, and went down to the city till luncheon. When I got back the porter had an important face.

"Nawsty business 'ere this morning, sir. Gent in No. 15 been and shot 'isself. They've just took 'im to the mortuary. The police are up there now."

I ascended to No. 15 and found a couple of bobbies and an inspector busy making an examination. I asked a few idiotic questions, and they soon kicked me out. Then I found the man that had valeted Scudder, and pumped him; but I could see he suspected nothing.

He was a whining fellow with a churchyard face, and half a crown went far to console him.

I attended the inquest next day. A

partner of some publishing firm gave evidence that the deceased had brought him wood-pulp propositions, and had been, he believed, an agent of an American business. The jury found it a case of suicide while of unsound mind, and the few effects were handed over to the American consul to deal with.

I gave Scudder a full account of the affair, and it interested him greatly. He said he wished he could have attended the inquest, for he reckoned it would be about as spicy as to read one's own obituary notice.

The first two days he stayed with me in that back room he was very peaceful. He read and smoked a bit, and made a heap of jottings in a notebook; and every night we had a game of chess, at which he beat me hollow.

I think he was nursing his nerves back to health, for he had had a pretty trying time.

But on the third day I could see he was beginning to get restless. He fixed up a list of the days till June 15 and ticked each off with a red pencil, and made remarks in shorthand against them. I would find him sunk in a brown study, with his sharp eyes abstracted, and after these spells of meditation he was apt to be very despondent.

Then I could see that he began to get edgy again. He listened for little noises, and was always asking me if Paddock could be trusted. Once or twice he got very peevish and apologized for it. I didn't blame him.

I made every allowance, for he had taken on a fairly stiff job.

It was not the safety of his own skin that troubled him, but the success of the scheme he had planned. That little man was clean pluck all through, without a soft spot in him. One night he was very solemn.

"Say, Hannay," he said, "I judge I should let you a bit deeper into this business. I should hate to go out without leaving somebody else to put up a fight."

And he began to tell me in detail what I had only heard from him vaguely.

I did not give him very close attention. The fact is I was more interested in his own adventures than in his high politics. I reckoned that Karolides and his affairs were not my business, leaving all that to him.

So a lot that he said slipped clean out of my memory. I remember that he was very clear that the danger to Karolides would not begin till he had got to London, and would come from the very highest quarters, where there would be no thought of suspicion. He mentioned the name of a woman—Julia Czechenyi—as having something to do with the danger.

She would be the decoy, I gathered, to get Karolides out of the care of his guards. He talked, too, about a Black Stone and a man that lisped in his speech, and he described very particularly somebody that he never referred to without a shudder—an old man with a young voice who could hood his eyes like a hawk.

He spoke a good deal about death, too. He was mortally anxious about winning through with his job, but he didn't care a rush for his life.

"I reckon it's like going to sleep when you are pretty well tired out and waking to find a summer day with the scent of hay coming in at the window. I used to thank God for such mornings 'way back in the blue-grass country, and I guess I'll thank Him when I wake up on the other side of Jordan."

Next day he was much more cheerful, and read the life of Stonewall Jackson much of the time. I went out to dinner with a mining engineer I had got to see on business, and came back about half past ten, in time for our game of chess before turning in.

I had a cigar in my mouth, I remember, as I pushed open the smoking-room door. The lights were not lit, which struck me as odd. I wondered if Scudder had turned in.

I snapped the switch, but there was nobody there. Then I saw something in the far corner which made me drop my cigar and fall into a cold sweat.

My guest was lying sprawled on his back. There was a long knife through his heart, which skewered him to the floor.

CHAPTER II.

The Milkman Starts on His Travels.

I SAT down in an armchair and felt very sick. That lasted for maybe five minutes, and was succeeded by a fit of the horrors. The poor, staring, white face on the floor was more than I could bear, and I managed to get a table-cloth and cover it. Then I staggered to a cupboard, found the brandy, and swallowed several mouthfuls.

I had seen men die violently before; indeed, I had killed a few myself in the Matabele War. But this cold-blooded indoor business was different. Still I managed to pull myself together.

I looked at my watch, and saw that it was half past ten. An idea seized me, and I went over the flat with a small-tooth comb. There was nobody there, nor any trace of anybody, but I shuttered and bolted all the windows and put the chain on the door.

By this time my wits were coming back to me and I could think again. It took me about an hour to figure the thing out, and I did not hurry; for, unless the murderer came back, I had till about six o'clock in the morning for my cogitations.

I was in the soup—that was pretty clear. Any shadow of a doubt I might have had about the truth of Scudder's tale was now gone. The proof of it was lying under the table-cloth. The men who knew that he knew what he knew had found him, and had taken the best way to make certain of his silence.

Yes; but he had been in my rooms

four days, and his enemies must have reckoned that he had confided in me. So I would be the next to go. It might be that very night, or next day, or the day after, but my number was up all right.

Then suddenly I thought of another probability. Supposing I went out now and called in the police, or went to bed and let Paddock find the body and call them in the morning. What kind of a story was I to tell about Scudder?

I had lied to Paddock about him, and the whole thing looked desperately fishy. If I made a clean breast of it and told the police anything he had told me, they would simply laugh at me. The odds were a thousand to one that I would be charged with the murder, and the circumstantial evidence was strong enough to hang me.

Few people knew me in England; I had no real pal who could come forward and swear to my character. Perhaps that was what those secret enemies were playing for. They were clever enough for anything, and an English prison was as good a way of getting rid of me till after June 15 as a knife in my chest.

Besides, if I told the whole story, and by any miracle was believed, I would be playing their game. Karolides would stay at home, which was what they wanted. Somehow or other the sight of Scudder's dead face had made me a firm believer in his scheme.

He was gone, but he had taken me into his confidence, and I was pretty well bound to carry on his work. You may think this ridiculous for a man in danger of his life, but that was the way I looked at it.

I am an ordinary sort of fellow, not braver than other people, but I hate to see a good man downed; and that long knife would not be the end of Scudder if I could play the game in his place.

It took me an hour or two to think this out, and by that time I had come to a decision. I must vanish somehow and keep vanished till the end of the second week of June.

Then I must somehow find a way to get in touch with the government people and tell them what Scudder had told me.

I wished to Heaven he had told me more, and that I had listened more carefully to the little he had told me, I knew nothing but the barest facts. There was a big risk that, even if I weathered the other dangers, I would not be believed in the end. I must take my chance of that and hope that something might happen which would confirm my tale in the eyes of the government.

My first job was to keep going for the next three weeks. It was now the 24th day of May, and that meant twenty days of hiding before I could venture to approach the powers that be. I reckoned that two sets of people would be looking for me—Scudder's enemies to put me out of existence, and the police, who would want me for Scudder's murder.

It was going to be a giddy hunt, and it was queer how the prospect comforted me. I had been slack so long that almost any chance of activity was welcome. When I had to sit alone with that corpse and wait on Fortune I was no better than a crushed worm, but if my neck's safety was to hang on my own wits I was prepared to be cheerful about it.

The next thought was whether Scudder had any papers about him to give me a better clue to the business. I drew back the table-cloth and searched his pockets. I had no longer any shrinking from the body. The face was wonderfully calm for a man who had been struck down in a moment.

There was nothing in the breast-pocket, and only a few loose coins and a cigar-holder in the waistcoat. The trousers held a little penknife and some silver, and the side-pocket of his jacket contained an old crocodile-skin cigar-case.

There was no sign of the little black book in which I had seen him making

notes. That had, no doubt, been taken by his murderer.

But as I looked up from my task I saw that some drawers had been pulled out in the writing-table. Scudder would never have left them in that state, for he was the tidiest of mortals. Some one must have been searching for something—perhaps for the notebook.

I went round the flat and found that everything had been ransacked—the inside of books, drawers, cupboards, boxes, even the pockets of the clothes in my wardrobe and the sideboard in the dining-room. There was no trace of the book.

Most likely the enemy had found it, but they had not found it on Scudder's body.

Then I got out an atlas and looked at a big map of the British Isles. My notion was to get off to some wild district, where my veldcraft would be of some use to me, for I would be like a trapped rat in a city. I considered that Scotland would be best, for my people were Scotch, and I could pass anywhere as an ordinary Scotsman. I had half an idea at first to be a German tourist, for my father had had German partners and I had been brought up to speak the tongue pretty fluently, not to mention having put in three years prospecting for copper in German Damara-land.

But I calculated that it would be less conspicuous to be a Scot, and less in a line with what the police might know of my past. I fixed on Galloway as the best place to go to. It was the nearest wild part of Scotland, so far as I could figure it out, and from the look of the map was not overthick with population.

A search in Bradshaw informed me that a train left St. Pancras at seven-ten, which would land me at Galloway Station in the late afternoon. That was well enough, but a more important matter was how I was to make my way to the station; for I was pretty certain that Scudder's friends would

be watching outside. This puzzled me for a bit; then I had an inspiration on which I went to bed and slept for two troubled hours.

I got up at four and opened my bedroom shutters. The faint light of a fine summer morning was flooding the skies, and the sparrows had begun to chatter. I had a great revulsion of feeling and felt a God-forgotten fool.

My inclination was to let things slide, and trust to the British police taking a reasonable view of my case. But as I reviewed the situation I could find no arguments to bring against my decision of the previous night; so, with a wry mouth, I resolved to go on with my plan. I was not feeling in any particular funk, only disinclined to go looking for trouble, if you understand me.

I hunted out a well-used tweed suit, a pair of strong-nailed boots, and a flannel shirt with a collar. Into my pockets I stuffed a spare shirt, a cloth cap, some handkerchiefs, and a toothbrush. I had drawn a good sum in gold from the bank two days before, in case Scudder should want money, and I took fifty pounds of it in sovereigns in a belt which I had brought back from Rhodesia. That was about all I wanted. Then I had a bath and cut my mustache, which was long and drooping, into a short stubbly fringe.

Now came the next step. Paddock used to arrive punctually at seven-thirty and let himself in with a latch-key. But about twenty minutes to seven, as I knew from bitter experience, the milkman turned up with a great clatter of cans, and deposited my share outside my door.

I had seen that milkman sometimes when I had gone out for an early ride. He was a young man about my own height, with a scrubby mustache, dressed in a white overall. On him I staked all my chances.

I went into the darkened smoking-room, where the rays of morning light were beginning to creep through the shutters. There I breakfasted off a

whisky-and-soda and some biscuits from the cupboard. By this time it was getting on to six o'clock.

I put a pipe in my pocket and filled my pouch from the tobacco jar on the table by the fireplace. As I poked into the tobacco my fingers touched something hard, and I drew out Scudder's little black note-book.

That seemed to me a good omen. I lifted the cloth from the body, and was amazed at the peace and dignity of the dead face. "Good-by, old chap," I said; "I am going to do my best for you. Wish me well wherever you are."

Then I hung about in the hall, waiting for the milkman. That was the worst part of the business, for I was fairly choking to get out of doors. Six-thirty passed, then six-forty, but still he did not come.

The fool had chosen this day of all days to be late.

At one minute after the quarter to seven I heard the rattle of the cans outside. I opened the front door, and there was my man, singling out my can from a bunch he carried—and whistling through his teeth. He jumped a bit at the sight of me.

"Come in here a moment," I said; "I want a word with you." And I led him into the dining-room.

"I reckon you're a bit of a sportsman," I said, "and I want you to do me a service. Lend me your cap and overall for ten minutes, and here's a sovereign for you."

His eyes opened at the sight of the gold, and he grinned broadly. "What's the game?" he asked.

"A bet," I said. "I haven't time to explain, but to win it I've got to be a milkman for the next ten minutes. All you've got to do is to stay here till I come back. You'll be a bit late, but nobody will complain, and you'll have that quid for yourself."

"Right-o!" he said cheerily. "I ain't the man to spoil a bit of sport. Here's the rig, gov'nor."

I stuck on his flat, blue hat and his

white overall, picked up the cans, banged my door, and went whistling down-stairs. The porter at the foot told me to shut my jaw, which sounded as if my make-up was adequate.

At first I thought there was nobody in the street. Then I caught sight of a policeman a hundred yards down, and a loafer shuffling past on the other side. Some impulse made me raise my eyes to the house opposite, and there at a first-floor window was a face.

As the loafer passed he looked up, and I fancied a signal was exchanged.

I crossed the street, whistling gaily and imitating the jaunty swing of the milkman. Then I took the first side street and turned up a left-hand turning which led past a lot of vacant ground. There was no one in the little street, so I dropped the milk-cans inside the hoarding, and sent the hat and overall after them.

I had only just put on my cloth cap when a postman came round the corner. I gave him good morning, and he answered me unsuspectingly. Just then the clock of a neighboring church struck the hour of seven.

There was not a moment to spare.

As soon as I got to Euston Road I took to my heels and ran. The clock at Euston Station showed five minutes past the hour. At St. Pancras I had no time to take a ticket, let alone that I had not settled upon my destination. A porter told me the platform, and as I entered it I saw the train already in motion.

Two station officials blocked the way, but I dodged them and clambered into the last carriage.

Three minutes later, as we were roaring through the northern tunnels, an irate guard interviewed me. He wrote out for me a ticket to Newtown Stewart, a name which had suddenly come back to my memory, and he conducted me from the first-class compartment where I had ensconced myself to a third-class smoker, occupied by a sailor and a stout woman with a child.

He went off grumbling; and as I mopped my brow I observed to my companions in my broadest Scotch that it was a sore job catching trains. I had already entered upon my part.

"The impidence o' that gyaired," said the lady bitterly. "He needit a Scotch tongue to pit him in his place. He was complainin' o' this wean no haein' a ticket and her no fower till August twelvemonth, and he was objectin' to this gentleman spittin'."

The sailor cheerfully agreed, and I started my new life in an atmosphere of protest against authority. I reminded myself that a week ago I had been finding the world dull.

CHAPTER III.

The Literary Innkeeper's Adventure.

I HAD a solemn time traveling north that day.

It was fine May weather, with the hawthorn flowering on every hedge; and I asked myself why, when I was still a free man, I had stayed on in London and not got the good of this heavenly country. I didn't dare face the restaurant car, but I got a luncheon basket at Leeds, and shared it with the fat woman.

Also I got the morning's papers, with news about starters for the Derby and the beginning of the cricket season, and some paragraphs about how Balkan affairs were settling down and a British squadron was going to Kiel.

When I had done with them I got out Scudder's little black note-book and studied it. It was pretty well filled with jottings, chiefly figures, though now and then a name was printed in. For example, I found the words "Hofgaard," "Luneville," and "Avocado" pretty often, and especially the word "Pavia."

Now I was certain that Scudder never did anything without a reason, and I was pretty sure that there was a cipher in all this. That is a subject which has always interested me, and

I did a bit at it myself once as intelligence officer at Delagoa Bay during the Boer War.

I have always had a head for things like chess and puzzles, and I used to reckon myself pretty good at finding out ciphers.

This one looked like the numerical kind where sets of figures correspond to the letters of the alphabet, but any fairly shrewd man can find the clue to that sort after an hour or two's work, and I didn't think Scudder would have been content with anything so easy. So I fastened on the printed words, for you can make a pretty good numerical cipher if you have a key-word which gives you the sequence of the letters.

I tried for hours, but none of the words answered.

Then I fell asleep, and woke at Dumfries just in time to bundle out and get into the slow Galloway train. There was a man on the platform whose looks I didn't like, but he never glanced at me; and when I caught sight of myself in the mirror of an automatic machine, I didn't wonder.

With my brown face, my old tweeds and my slouch I was the very model of one of the hill farmers who were crowding into the third-class carriages.

I traveled with half a dozen in an atmosphere of shag and clay pipes. They had come from the weekly market, and their mouths were full of prices. I heard accounts of how the lambing had gone up the Cairn and the Deuch and a dozen other mysterious waters.

Above half the men had lunched heavily and were highly flavored with whisky, but they let me alone. We rumbled slowly into a land of little wooded glens and then to a great, wide moorland place, gleaming with lochs, with high, blue hills showing northward.

About five o'clock the carriages had emptied and I was left alone, as I had hoped. I got out at the next station,

a little place whose name I scarcely noted, set in the heart of a bog. It reminded me of one of those forgotten little stations in the Karros.

An old station-master was digging in his garden, and with his spade over his shoulder sauntered to the train, took charge of a parcel, and went back to his potatoes. A child of ten received my ticket, and I emerged on a white road that straggled over the brown moss.

It was a gorgeous spring evening, with every hill showing as clear as a cut amethyst.

The air had the queer rooty smell of bogs, but it was as fresh as mid-ocean, and it had the strangest effect on my spirit. I actually felt light-hearted. I might have been a boy out for spring-holiday tramp, instead of a man of thirty-seven, very much wanted by the police.

I felt just as I used to feel when I was starting for a big trek on a frosty morning on the high veld.

If you believe me, I swung along that road whistling. There was no plan of campaign in my head, only just to go on and on in this blessed honest-smelling hill country, for every mile put me in better humor with myself.

In a roadside planting I cut a walking stick of hazel, and presently struck off the highway up a by-path which followed the glen of a brawling stream.

I reckoned that I was still far ahead of any pursuit, and for that night might please myself. It was some hours since I had tasted food, and I was getting very hungry when I came to a herd's cottage set in a nook beside a waterfall. A brown-faced woman was standing by the door, and greeted me with the kindly shyness of moorland places.

When I asked for a night's lodging she said I was welcome to the "bed in the loft," and very soon she set before me a hearty meal of ham and eggs, scones, and thick sweet milk. At the darkening her man came in from

the hills, a lean giant who in one step covered as much ground as three paces of ordinary mortals.

They asked no questions, for they had the perfect breeding of all dwellers in the wilds; but I could see they set me down as some kind of dealer, and I took a little trouble to confirm their view.

I spoke a lot about cattle, of which my host knew little, and I picked up from him a good deal about the local Galloway markets, which I tucked away in my memory for future use. At ten I was nodding in my chair, and the bed in the loft received a weary man, who never opened his eyes till five o'clock set the little homestead a going once more.

They refused any payment, and by six I had breakfasted and was striding southward again.

My notion was to return to the railway line a station or two farther on than the place where I had alighted yesterday, and to double back. I reckoned that was the safest way, for the police would naturally assume that I was always making farther from London in the direction of some western port.

I thought I had still a good bit of a start, for, as I reasoned, it would take some hours to fix the blame on me and several more to identify the fellow who got on board the train at St. Pancras.

It was the same jolly clear spring weather, and I simply could not contrive to feel careworn. Indeed, I was in better spirits than I had been for months. Over a long ridge of moorland I took my road, skirting the side of a high hill which the herd had called Cairnsmore of Fleet.

Nesting curlews and plovers were crying everywhere, and the links of green pasture by the streams were dotted with young lambs. All the slackness of the past months was slipping from my bones, and I stepped out like a four-year-old. By and by I came to a swell of moorland which dipped

to the vale of a little river, and a mile away in the heather I saw the smoke of a train.

The station, when I reached it, proved to be ideal for my purpose. The moor surged up around it and left room only for the single line, the slender siding, a waiting-room, an office, the station-master's cottage, and a tiny yard of gooseberries and sweet william.

There seemed no road to it from anywhere, and to increase the desolation the waves of a loch lapped on their gray granite beach, half a mile away. I waited in the deep heather till I saw the smoke of an east-going train on the horizon. Then I approached the tiny booking-office and took a ticket for Dumfries.

The only occupants of the carriage were an old shepherd and his dog—a wall-eyed brute that I mistrusted. The man was asleep, and on the cushions beside him was that morning's *Scotsman*. Eagerly I seized on it, for I fancied it would tell me something.

There were two columns about the Portland Place murder, as it was called. My man Paddock had given the alarm and had the milkman arrested. Poor devil, it looked as if the latter had earned his sovereign hardly; but for me he had been cheap at the price, for he seemed to have occupied the police the better part of the day.

In the stop-press news I found a further instalment of the story.

The milkman had been released, I read, and the true criminal, about whose identity the police were reticent, was believed to have got away from London by one of the northern lines. There was a short note about me as the owner of the flat.

I guessed the police had stuck that in, as a clumsy contrivance to persuade me that I was unsuspected.

There was nothing else in the paper; nothing about foreign politics or Karolides or the things that had interested Scudder. I laid it down, and found that we were approaching the station at which I had got out yesterday. The

potato-digging station-master had been gingered up into some activity, for the west-going train was waiting to let us pass, and from it had descended three men, who were asking him questions.

I supposed that they were the local police who had been stirred up by Scotland Yard and had traced me as far as this one-horse siding.

Sitting well back in the shadow, I watched them carefully. One of them had a book and took down notes. The old potato-digger seemed to have turned peevish, but the child who had collected my ticket was talking volubly. All the party looked out across the moor where the white road departed. I hoped they were going to take up my tracks there.

As we moved away from that station my companion woke up. He fixed me with a wondering glance, kicked his dog viciously, and inquired where he was. Clearly he was very drunk.

"That's what comes o' bein' a teetotaler," he observed in bitter tones.

I expressed my surprise that in him I should have met a blue-ribbon stalwart.

"Aye, but I'm a strong teetotaler," he said pugnaciously. "I took the pledge last Martimass, and I havena touched a drop o' whisky sinsyne. No even at Hogmanay, though I was sair tempted."

He swung his heels up on the seat and burrowed a frowsy head into the cushions.

"And that's a' I get," he moaned. "A heid better than hell fire and twae een lookin' different ways for Sunday."

"What did it?" I asked.

"A drink they ca' brandy. Bein' a teetotaler, I keepit off the whisky, but I was nip-nippin' a' day yestereen at this brandy, and I doubt I'll no be weel for a fortnicht."

His voice died away into a stutter, and sleep once more laid its heavy hand on him.

My plan had been to get out at some station down the line, but the train suddenly gave me a better chance, for it came to a standstill at the end of a culvert which spanned a brawling porter-colored river. I looked out, and saw that every carriage window was closed and no human figure appeared in the landscape.

So I opened the door and dropped quickly into the tangle of hazels which edged the line.

It would have been all right but for that infernal dog. Under the impression that I was decamping with its master's belongings, it started to bark and all but got me by the trousers. This woke up the herd who stood bawling at the carriage door in the belief that I had committed suicide.

I crawled through the thicket, reached the edge of the stream, and in cover of the bushes put a hundred yards or so behind me.

Then from my shelter I peered back, and saw the guard had several passengers gathered round the open carriage door and staring in my direction. I could not have made a more public departure if I had left with a bugler and a brass band.

Happily the drunken herd provided a diversion. He and his dog, which was attached by a rope to his waist, suddenly cascaded out of the carriage, landed on their heads on the track, and rolled some way down the bank toward the water. In the rescue which followed, the dog bit somebody, for I could hear the sound of hard swearing.

Presently they had forgotten me; and when after a quarter of a mile's crawl I ventured to look back, the train had started again and was vanishing in the cutting.

I was in a wide semicircle of moorland, with the brown river as radius and the high hills forming the northern circumference. There was not a sign or sound of a human being; only the plashing water and the interminable crying of curlews. Yet, oddly

enough, for the first time I felt the terror of the hunted on me.

It was not the police that I thought of, but the other folk, who knew that I knew Scudder's secret and dared not let me live. I was certain that they would pursue me with a keenness and vigilance unknown to the British law, and that once their grip closed on me I should find no mercy.

I looked back, but there was nothing in the landscape.

The sun glinted on the metals of the line and the wet stones in the stream, and you could not have found a more peaceful sight in the world. Nevertheless, I started to run. Crouching low in the runnels of the bog, I ran till the sweat blinded my eyes. The mood did not leave me till I had reached the rim of mountain and flung myself, panting, on a ridge high above the young waters of the brown river.

From my vantage ground I could scan the whole moor right away to the railway line, and to the south of it, where green fields took the place of heather. I have eyes like a hawk, but I could see nothing moving in the whole countryside.

Then I looked east beyond the ridge and saw a new kind of landscape—shallow green valleys with plentiful fir plantations and the faint lines of dust which spoke of highroads.

Last of all I looked into the blue May sky, and there I saw that which set my pulses racing. Low down in the south a monoplane was climbing into the heavens. I was as certain as if I had been told that that aeroplane was looking for me, and that it did not belong to the police. For an hour or two I watched it from a pit of heather.

It flew low along the hilltops, and then in narrow circles back over the valley up which I had come. Then it seemed to change its mind, rose to a great height, and flew away back to the south.

I did not like this espionage from the air, and I began to think less well

of the countryside I had chosen for a refuge. These heather hills were no sort of cover if my enemies were in the sky. I must find a different kind of sanctuary.

I looked with more satisfaction to the green country beyond the ridge, for there I should find woods and stone houses.

About six in the evening I came out of the moorland to a white ribbon of road which wound up the narrow vale of a lowland stream. As I followed it, fields gave place to banks, the glen became a plateau, and presently I had reached a kind of pass, where a solitary house smoked in the twilight.

The road swung over a bridge, and leaning on the parapet was a man.

He was smoking a long clay pipe and studying the water with spectacled eyes. In his left hand was a small book, with a finger marking the place. Slowly he repeated—

“As when a Gryphen through the wilderness
With winged step, o'er hill and moory dale
Pursues the Arimaspians—”

He jumped round as my step rung on the keystone, and I saw a pleasant, sunburnt, boyish face.

“Good evening to you,” he said gravely. “It's a fine night for the road.”

The smell of wood smoke and of some savory roast floated to me from the house. “Is that place an inn?” I asked.

“At your service,” he said politely; “I am the landlord, sir, and I hope you will stay the night, for to tell you the truth I have had no company for a week.”

I pulled myself up on the parapet of the bridge and filled my pipe. I began to detect an ally.

“You're young to be an innkeeper,” I said.

“My father died a year ago and left me the business. I live there with my grandmother. It's a slow job for

a young man, and it wasn't my choice of profession."

"Which was?"

He actually blushed. "I want to write books," he said.

"And what better chance could you ask?" I cried. "Man, I've often thought that an innkeeper would make the best story-teller in the world."

"Not now," he said eagerly. "Maybe in the old days when you had pilgrims and ballad-makers and highwaymen and mail-coaches on the road; but not now. Nothing comes here but motor-cars full of fat women, who stop for lunch, and a fisherman or two in the spring and the shooting tenants in August. There is not much material to be got out of that. I want to see life, to travel the world, and write things like Kipling and Conrad. But the most I've done yet is to get some verses printed in *Chambers's Journal*."

I looked at the inn, standing golden in the sunset against the wine-red hills.

"I've knocked a bit about the world, and I wouldn't despise such a hermitage. D'you think that adventure is found only in the tropics or among gentry in red shirts? Maybe you're rubbing shoulders with it at this moment."

"That's what Kipling says," he said, his eyes lightening, and he quoted some verse about "Romance bringing up the nine-fifteen."

"Here's a true tale for you then," I cried, "and a month hence you can make a novel out of it."

Sitting on the bridge in the soft May gloaming, I pitched him a lovely yarn. It was true in essentials, too, though I altered the minor details. I made out that I was a mining magnate from Kimberley, who had had a lot of trouble with I. D. B.* and had

shown up a gang. They had pursued me across the ocean and had killed my best friend, and were now on my track.

I told the story well, though I say it who shouldn't.

I pictured a flight across the Kalahari to German Africa, the crackling, parching days, the wonderful blue-velvet nights. I described an attack on my life on the voyage home, and I made a really horrid affair of the Portland Place murder.

"You're looking for adventure!" I cried; "well, you've found it here. The devils are after me, and the police are after them. It's a race that I mean to win."

"By God," he whispered, drawing his breath in sharply, "it is all pure Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle!"

"You believe me," I said gratefully.

"Of course I do," and he held out his hand. "I believe everything out of the common. The only thing to distrust is the normal."

He was very young, but he was the man for my money.

"I think they're off my track for the moment, but I must lie close for a couple of days. Can you take me in?"

He caught my elbow in his eagerness and drew me toward the house. "You can lie as snug here as if you were in a mouse-hole. I'll see that nobody blabs, either. And you'll give me some more material about your adventures?"

As I entered the inn porch I heard from far off the beat of an engine. There silhouetted against the dusky west was my friend, the monoplane.

He gave me a room at the back of the house with a fine outlook over the

* This refers to the Illicit Diamond Buyers of South Africa. As explained by Dr. George Frederick Kunz in an address before the National Geographic Society (1903): "The diamond mining companies of South Africa have unusual power under the laws of the colony so that no one is permitted to buy or sell diamonds unless authorized rough diamond buyers. Any one in whose possession uncut stones are found is brought to immediate punishment and the penalty is unusually severe for innocent or guilty buyers or guilty dealers. The detective system is remarkable. People in all walks of life belong to this special force. Had it not been for the importance of the diamond mines under Cecil Rhodes and his stringent laws, it would have been impossible to mine diamonds with profit."

plateau, and he made me free of his own room, which was stacked with cheap editions of his favorite authors. I never saw the grandmother, so I guessed she was bedridden.

An old woman called Margit brought me my meals, and the innkeeper was around me at all hours.

I wanted some time to myself, so I invented a job for him. He had a motorcycle, and I sent him off next morning for the daily paper, which usually arrived with the post in the late afternoon. I told him to keep his eyes skinned and make note of any strange figure he saw, keeping a special, sharp lookout for motors and aeroplanes.

Then I sat down in real earnest to Scudder's note-book.

He came back at midday with the *Scotsman*. There was nothing in it except some further evidence of Paddock and the milkman, and a repetition of yesterday's statement that the murderer had gone north. But there was a long article, reprinted from the *Times*, about Karolides and the state of affairs in the Balkans, though there was no mention of any visit to England. I got rid of the innkeeper for the afternoon, for I was getting very warm in my search for the cipher.

As I told you, it was a numerical cipher, and by an elaborate system of experiments I had pretty well discovered what were the nulls and stops. The trouble was the key-word, and when I thought of the odd million words he might have used I felt pretty hopeless. But about three o'clock I had a sudden inspiration.

The name Julia Czechenyi flashed across my memory. Scudder had said it was the key to the Karolides business, and it occurred to me to try it on his cipher.

It worked. The five letters of "Julia" gave me the position of the vowels. A was J, the tenth letter of the alphabet, and so represented by X in the cipher. "Czechenji" gave me the numerals for the principal conson-

ants. I scribbled that scheme on a bit of paper and sat down to read Scudder's pages.

In half an hour I was reading with a whitish face and fingers that drummed on the table. I glanced out of the window and saw a big touring-car coming up the glen toward the inn. It drew up at the door and there was the sound of people alighting. There seemed to be two of them, men in acquascutum and tweed caps.

Ten minutes later the innkeeper slipped into the room, his eyes bright with excitement.

"There's two chaps below looking for you," he whispered. "They're in the dining-room having whiskys and sodas. They asked about you and said they had hoped to meet you here. Oh! and they described you jolly well, down to your boots and shirt. I told them you had been here last night and had gone off on a motorcycle this morning, and one of the chaps swore like a navvy." I made him tell me what they looked like.

One was a dark-eyed, thin fellow with bushy eyebrows, the other was always smiling and lisped in his talk. Neither was any kind of foreigner; on this my young friend was positive.

I took a bit of paper and wrote these words in German as if they were part of a letter:

Black Stone. Scudder had got on to this, but he could not act for a fortnight. I doubt if I can do any good now, especially as Karolides is uncertain about his plans. But if Mr. T. advises I will do the best I . . .

I manufactured it rather neatly, so that it looked like a loose page of a private letter.

"Take this down and say it was found in my bedroom and ask them to return it to me if they overtake me."

Three minutes later I heard the car begin to move, and peeping from behind the curtain, caught sight of the two figures. One was slim, the other was sleek; that was the most I could make of my reconnaissance.

The innkeeper appeared in great excitement. "Your paper woke them up," he said gleefully. "The dark fellow went as white as death and cursed like blazes, and the fat one whistled and looked ugly. They paid for their drinks with half a sovereign and wouldn't wait for change."

"Now I'll tell you what I want you to do," I said. "Get on your bicycle and go off to Newton Stewart to the chief constable. Describe the two men, and say you suspect them of having had something to do with the London murder. You can invent reasons. The two will come back, never fear. Not to-night, for they'll follow me forty miles along the road, but first thing to-morrow morning. Tell the police to be here bright and early."

He set off like a docile child, while I worked at Scudder's notes.

When he came back we dined together and in common decency I had to let him pump me. I gave him a lot of stuff about lion hunts and the Matabele War, thinking all the while what tame businesses these were compared to this I was now engaged in. When he went to bed I sat up and finished Scudder.

I smoked in a chair till daylight for I couldn't sleep.

About eight next morning I witnessed the arrival of two constables and a sergeant. They put their car in a coach-house under the innkeeper's instructions and entered the house. Twenty minutes later I saw from my window a second car come across the plateau from the opposite direction.

It did not come up to the inn, but stopped two hundred yards off in the shelter of a patch of wood. I noticed that its occupants carefully reversed it before leaving it. A minute or two later I heard their steps on the gravel outside the window.

My plan had been to lie hid in my bedroom, and see what happened. I had a notion that if I could bring the police and my other more dangerous pursuers together, something might

work out of it to my advantage. But now I had a better idea.

I scribbled a line of thanks to my host, opened the window and dropped quietly into a gooseberry bush.

Unobserved I crossed the dike, crawled down the side of a tributary burn, and won the highroad on the far side of the patch of trees. There stood the car, very spick and span in the morning sunlight, but with the dust on her which told of a long journey I started her, jumped into the chauffeur's seat, and stole gently out on to the plateau.

Almost at once the road dipped so that I lost sight of the inn, but the wind seemed to bring me the sound of angry voices.

CHAPTER IV.

The Radical Candidate's Adventure.

YOU may picture me driving that forty-horse-power car for all she was worth over the crisp moor roads on that shining May morning, glancing back at first over my shoulder and looking anxiously to the next turning; then driving with a vague eye, just wide enough awake to keep on the highway.

For I was thinking desperately of what I had found in Scudder's notebook.

The little man had told me a pack of lies. All his yarns about the Balkans and the Foreign Office conference were eye-wash and so was Karolides. And yet not quite, as you shall hear.

I had staked everything on my belief in his story and had been let down; here was his book telling me a different tale; and instead of being once-bit-twice-shy, I believed it absolutely. Why? I don't know.

It rang desperately true; and the first yarn, if you understand me, had been in a queer way true also in spirit. The fifteenth day of June was going to be a day of destiny, a bigger des-

tiny than the killing of a man. It was so big that I didn't blame Scudder for keeping me out of the game, and wanting to play a lone hand.

That, I was pretty clear, was his intention.

He had told me something which sounded big enough, but the real thing was so immortally big that he, the man who had found it out, wanted it all for himself. I didn't blame him. It was risks after all that he was chiefly greedy about.

The whole story was in the notes—with gaps, you understand, which he would have filled up from his memory.

He stuck down his authorities too, and had an odd trick of giving them all a numerical value and then striking a balance, which stood for the reliability of each stage in the yarn. The three names he had printed were authorities, and there was a man, Ducrosne, who got five out of a possible five, and another fellow Ammersfoort, who got three.

The bare bones of the tale were all that was in the book—these, and one queer phrase which occurred half a dozen times inside brackets, "Thirty-nine steps" was the phrase, and at its last time of use it ran, "Thirty-nine steps I counted them; high tide 10:17 P.M."

I could make nothing of that.

The first thing I learned was that it was no question of preventing a war. That was coming, as sure as Christmas; had been arranged, said Scudder, ever since February, 1912. Karolides was going to be the occasion.

He was booked all right and was going to hand in his checks on June 15, two weeks and four days from that May morning. I gathered from Scudder's notes that nothing on earth could prevent that. His talk of Epitrote guards that would skin their own grandmothers was all nonsense.

The second thing was that this war was going to come as a mighty sur-

prise to Britain. Karolides's death would set the Balkans by the ears, and then Vienna would chip in with an ultimatum. Russia wouldn't like that, and there would be high words.

But Berlin would play the peacemaker and pour oil on the waters, till suddenly she would find a good cause for a quarrel, pick it up, and in five hours let fly at us. That was the idea, and a pretty good one too.

Honey and fair speeches and then a stroke in the dark. While we were talking about the good will and good intentions of Germany, our coast would be silently ringed with mines, and submarines would be waiting for every battleship.

But all this depended upon the third thing which was due to happen on June 15. I would never have grasped this, if I hadn't once happened to meet a French staff officer, coming back from West Africa, who had told me a lot of things.

One was that in spite of all the nonsense talked in Parliament there was a real working alliance between France and Britain, and that the two General Staffs met every now and then and made plans for joint action in time of war. Well, in June, M. Royer, the French minister of marine, was coming over from Paris, and he was going to get nothing less than a statement of the disposition of the British home fleet on mobilization.

At least I gathered it was something like that; anyhow, it was something uncommonly important. But on the 15th day of June there were to be others in London—others at whom I could only guess. Scudder was content to call them collectively the Black Stone.

They represented not our allies, but our deadly foes, and the information, destined for France, was to be diverted to their pockets. And it was to be used, remember—used a week or two later, with great guns and swift torpedoes, suddenly in the darkness of a summer night.

This was the story I had been deciphering in a back room of a country inn, overlooking a cabbage garden. This was the story that hummed in my brain, as I swung in the big touring-car from glen to glen.

My first impulse had been to write a letter to the Prime Minister, but a little reflection convinced me that that would be useless. Who would believe my tale?

I must show a sign, some token in proof, and Heaven knew what that could be.

Above all I must keep going myself, ready to act when things got riper, and that was going to be no light job with the police of the British Isles in full cry after me, and the watchers of the Black Stone running silently and swiftly on my trail.

I had no very clear purpose in my journey, but I steered east by the sun, for I remembered from the map that if I went north I would come into a region of coal-pits and industrial towns. Presently I was down from the moorlands and traversing the broad haugh of a river.

For miles I ran alongside a park wall, and in a break of the trees I saw a great castle.

I swung through little old thatched streams, and past gardens blazing with hawthorn and yellow laburnum.

The land was so deep in peace that I could scarcely believe that somewhere behind me were those who sought my life; ay, and that in a month's time, unless I had the almightiest of luck, these round, country faces would be pinched and staring, and men would be lying dead in English fields.

About midday I entered a long, straggling village and had a mind to stop and eat. Half-way down was the post-office, and on the steps of it stood the post-mistress and a policeman hard at work conning a telegram.

When they saw me they wakened up, and the policeman advanced with raised hand and cried on me to stop.

I nearly was fool enough to obey. Then it flashed upon me that the wire had to do with me, that my friends at the inn had come to an understanding and were united in desiring to see more of me, and that it had been easy enough for them to wire the description of me and the car to thirty villages through which I might pass.

I released the brakes just in time. As it was the policeman made a claw at the hood and only dropped off when he got my left in his eye.

I saw that main roads were no place for me, and turned into the by-ways. It wasn't an easy job without a map, for there was the risk of getting onto a farm road and ending in a duck-pond or a stable-yard, and I couldn't afford that kind of delay.

I began to see what an ass I had been to steal the car.

The big green brute would be the safest kind of clue to me over the breadth of Scotland. If I left it and took to my feet, it would be discovered in an hour or two and I would get no start in the race.

The immediate thing to do was to get to the lonliest roads. These I soon found when I struck up a tributary of the big river, and got into a glen with steep hills all about me, and a corkscrew road at the end which climbed over a pass.

Here I met nobody, but it was taking me too far north, so I slued east along a bad track and finally struck a big double-line railway. Away below me I saw another broadish valley, and it occurred to me that if I crossed it I might find some remote hostelry to pass the night.

The evening was now drawing in, and I was furiously hungry, for I had eaten nothing since breakfast except a couple of buns I had bought from a baker's cart.

Just then I heard a noise in the sky, and lo and behold there was that infernal aeroplane, flying low, about a dozen miles to the south and rapidly coming toward me.

I had the sense to remember that on a bare moor I was at the aeroplane's mercy, and that my only chance was to get to the leafy cover of the valley.

Down the hill I went like blue lightning, screwing my head round whenever I dared, to watch that damned flying machine. Soon I was on a road between hedges, and dipping to the deep-cut glen of a stream.

Then came a bit of thick wood where I slackened speed.

Suddenly on my left I heard the hoot of another car and realized to my horror that I was almost upon a couple of gate-posts through which a private road debouched on the highway. My horn gave an agonized roar, but it was too late.

I clapped on my brakes, but my impetus was too great, and there before me a car was sliding athwart my course. In a second there would have been the deuce of a wreck. I did the only thing possible, and ran slap into the hedge on the right trusting to find something soft beyond.

But there I was mistaken.

My car slithered through the hedge like butter and then gave a sickening plunge forward. I saw what was coming, leaped on the seat and would have jumped out. But a stout branch of hawthorn got me in the chest, lifted me up and held me, while a ton or two of expensive metal slipped below me, bucked and pitched, and then dropped with an almighty smash fifty feet to the bed of the stream.

I subsided first on the hedge, and then very gently on a bower of nettles. As I scrambled to my feet a hand took me by the arm, and a sympathetic and badly scared voice asked me if I were hurt.

I found myself looking at a tall, young man in goggles and a leather ulster who kept on blessing his soul and whinnying apologies. For myself, once I got my wind back, I was rather glad than otherwise.

This was one way of getting rid of the car.

"My blame, sir," I answered him. "It's lucky that I did not add homicide to my follies. That's the end of my Scotch motor tour, but it might have been the end of my life."

He plucked out a watch and studied it.

"You're the right sort of fellow," he said. "I can spare a quarter of an hour, and my house is two minutes off. I'll see you clothed and fed and snug in bed. Where's your kit, by the way? Is it in the burn along with the car?"

"It's in my pocket," I said, brandishing a tooth-brush. "I'm a colonial and travel light."

"A colonial," he cried. "By Gad, you're the very man I've been praying for. Are you by any blessed chance a Free Trader?"

"I am," said I, without the foggiest notion of what he meant.

He patted my shoulder and hurried me into his car. Three minutes later we drew up before a comfortable-looking shooting-box set among pine trees, and he ushered me in-doors. He took me first to a bedroom and flung half a dozen of his suits before me, for my own had been pretty well reduced to rags.

I selected a loose blue serge, which differed most conspicuously from my own garments, and borrowed a linen collar.

Then he haled me to the dining-room, where the remnants of a meal stood on the table, and announced that I had just five minutes to feed. "You can take a snack in your pocket, and we'll have supper when we get back. I've got to be at the Masonic Hall at eight o'clock or my agent will comb my hair."

I had a cup of coffee and some cold ham, while he yarned away on the hearth-rug.

"You find me in the deuce of a mess, Mr. —; by the by you haven't told me your name. Twisden? Any relation of old Tommy Twisden of the Sixtieth? No. Well, you see I'm

Liberal candidate for this part of the world, and I had a meeting on to-night at Brattleburn—that's my chief town, and an infernal Tory stronghold.

"I had got the Colonial ex-Premier fellow, Crumpleton, coming to speak for me to-night, and had the thing tremendously billed and the whole place ground-baited. This afternoon I got a wire from the ruffian saying he has got influenza at Blackpool, and here am I left to do the whole thing myself. I had meant to speak for ten minutes and must now go on for forty, and, though I've been racking my brains for three hours to think of something, I simply cannot last the course.

"Now you've got to be a good chap and help me. You're a Free Trader and can tell our people what a wash-out Protection is in the Colonies. All you fellows have the gift of the gab—I wish to Heavens I had it. I'll be for evermore in your debt."

I had very few notions about free trade one way or the other, but I saw no other chance to get what I wanted.

My young gentleman was far too absorbed in his own difficulties to think how odd it was to ask a stranger who had just missed death by an ace and had lost a one-thousand-guinea car to address a meeting for him on the spur of the moment. But my necessities did not allow me to contemplate oddnesses or to pick and choose my supports.

"All right," I said. "I'm not much good as a speaker, but I'll tell them a bit about Australia."

At my words the cares of the ages slipped from his shoulders and he was rapturous in his thanks. He lent me a big driving coat—and never troubled to ask why I had started in a motor tour without possessing an ulster—and as we shuffled down the dusty roads poured into my ears the simple facts of his history.

He was an orphan and his uncle had brought him up. I've forgotten

the uncle's name, but he was in the Cabinet and you can read his speeches in the papers.

He had gone round the world after leaving Cambridge, and then, being short of a job, his uncle had advised politics. I gathered that he had no preference in parties. "Good chaps in both," he said cheerfully, "and plenty of blighters, too. I'm Liberal, because my family have always been Whigs."

But if he was lukewarm politically he had strong views on other things. He found out I knew a bit about horses, and jawed away about the Derby entries; and he was full of plans for improving his shooting. Altogether, a very clean, decent, callow young man.

As we passed through a little town two policemen signalled us to stop, and flashed their lanterns on us. "Beg pardon, Sir Harry," said one. "We've got instructions to look out for a car and the description's no unlike yours."

"Right-o," said my host, while I thanked Providence for the devious ways I had been brought to safety.

After that we spoke no more, for my host's mind began to labor heavily with his coming speech. His lips kept muttering, his eye wandered, and I began to prepare myself for a second catastrophe. I tried to think of something to say myself, but my mind was dry as a stone.

The next thing I knew we had drawn up outside a door in a street and were being welcomed by some noisy gentlemen in rosettes.

The hall had about five hundred in it, women mostly, a lot of bald heads, and a dozen or two young men.

The chairman, a weasely minister with a reddish nose, lamented Crumpleton's absence, soliloquized on his influenza, and gave me a certificate as a "trusted leader of Australian thought." There were two policemen at the door and I hoped they took note of this testimonial.

Then Sir Harry started.

I never heard anything like it. He didn't begin to know how to talk. He had about a bushel of notes from which he read, and when he let go of them he fell into one prolonged stutter.

Every now and then he remembered a phrase he had learned by heart, straightened his back, and gave it off like Henry Irving, and the next moment he was bent double and crooning over his papers. It was the most appalling rot, too.

He talked about the "German menace," and said it was all a Tory invention to cheat the poor of their rights and keep back the great flood of social reform, but that "organized labor" realized this and laughed the Tories to scorn. He was all for reducing our navy as a proof of our good faith, and then sending Germany an ultimatum demanding that she should do the same.

He said that but for the Tories, Germany and Britain would be fellow workers in peace and reform. I thought of the little black book in my pocket!

Yet in a queer way I liked the speech. You could see the niceness of the chap shining out behind the nonsense with which he had been spoon-fed. Also it took a load off my mind. I mightn't be much of an orator, but I was a thousand per cent better than Sir Harry. I didn't get on so badly when it came to my turn. I simply told them all I could remember about Australia, praying there should be no Australian there—all about its labor party and emigration and universal service.

I doubt if I remembered to mention free trade, but I said there were no Tories in Australia, only Labor and Liberals. That fetched a cheer, and I woke them up a bit when I started in to tell them the kind of glorious business I thought could be made out of the Empire if we really put our backs into it.

Altogether I fancy I was rather a success. The minister didn't like me though, and when he proposed a vote of thanks spoke of Sir Harry's speech as "statesmanlike," and mine as having the "eloquence of an official emigration agent."

When we were in the car again my host was in wild spirits at having got his job over. "A ripping speech, Twisden," he said. "Now, you're coming home with me. I'm all alone, and if you'll stop a day or two I'll show you some very decent fishing."

We had a hot supper—and I wanted it pretty badly—and then drank grog in a big, cheery smoking-room with a crackling wood fire. I thought the time had come for me to put my cards on the table. I saw by this man's eye that he was the kind you can trust.

"Listen, Sir Harry," I said. "I've something pretty important to say to you. You're a good fellow and I'm going to be frank. Where on earth did you get that poisonous rubbish you talked to-night?"

His face fell. "Was it as bad as that?" he asked ruefully. "It did sound rather thin. I got most of it out of the *Liberal Magazine* and pamphlets that agent chap of mine keeps sending me. But you surely don't think Germany would ever go to war with us?"

"Ask that question in six weeks and it won't need an answer," I said. "If you'll give me your attention for half an hour I am going to tell you a story."

I can see yet that bright room with the deers' heads and the old prints on the walls, Sir Harry standing restlessly on the stone curb of the hearth, and myself lying back in an arm-chair speaking. I seemed to be another person, standing aside and listening to my own voice, and judging carefully the reliability of my tale.

It was the first time I had ever told any one the exact truth, so far as I understood it, and it did me no end

of good, for it straightened out the thing in my own mind.

I blinked no detail. He heard all about Scudder and the milkman and the note-book, and my doings in Galloway. Presently he got very excited and walked up and down the hearth-rug.

"So you see," I concluded, "you have got here in your house the man that is wanted for the Portland Place murder. Your duty is to send your car for the police and give me up. I don't think I'll get very far. There'll be an accident and I'll have a knife in my ribs an hour or so after arrest. Nevertheless it's your duty, as a law-abiding citizen. Perhaps in a month's time you'll be sorry, but you have no cause to think of that."

He was looking at me with bright, steady eyes. "What was your job in Rhodesia, Mr. Hannay?" he asked.

"Mining engineer," I said. "I've made my pile cleanly and I've had a good time in the making of it."

"Not a profession that weakens the nerves, is it?"

I laughed. "Oh, as to that, my nerves are good enough." I took down a hunting knife from a stand on the wall, and did the old Mashona trick of tossing it and catching it in my lips. That wants a pretty steady heart.

He watched me with a smile. "I don't want proofs. I may be an ass on the platform, but I can size up a man. You're no murderer and you're no fool, and I believe you are speaking the truth. I'm going to back you up. Now, what can I do?"

"First, I want you to write a letter to your uncle. I've got to get in touch with the government people some time before the 15th of June."

He pulled his mustache.

"That won't help you. This is Foreign Office business, and my uncle would have nothing to do with it. Besides you'd never convince him. No, I'll go one better. I'll write to the permanent secretary at the For-

eign Office. He's my godfather and one of the best going. What do you want?"

He sat down at a table and wrote to my dictation. The gist of it was that if a man called Twisden (I thought I had better stick to that name), turned up before June 15 he was to treat him kindly. He said Twisden would prove his *bona fides* by passing the word "Black Stone" and whistling "Annie Laurie."

"Good," said Sir Harry. "That's the proper style. By the way you'll find my godfather—his name's Sir Walter Bullivant—down at his country cottage for Whitsuntide. It's close to Artinswell-on-the-Kennet. That's done. Now, what's the next thing?"

"You're about my height. Lend me the oldest tweed suit you've got. Anything will do, so long as the color is the opposite of the clothes I destroyed this afternoon. Then show me a map of the neighborhood and explain to me the lie of the land. Lastly, if the police come asking about me, just show them the car in the glen. If the other lot turn up tell them I caught the south express after your meeting."

He did, or promised to do, all these things.

I shaved off the remnants of my mustache, and got inside an ancient suit of what I believe is called heather mixture. The map gave me some notion of my whereabouts and told me the two things I wanted to know—where the main railway to the south could be joined and what were the wildest districts near at hand.

At two o'clock he wakened me from my slumber in the smoking-room armchair and led me blinking into the dark, starry night. An old bicycle was found in a tool-shed and handed over to me.

"First turn to the right up by the long fir-wood," he enjoined. "By daybreak you'll be well into the hills. Then I should pitch the machine into

a bog and take to the moors on foot. You can put in a week among the shepherds, and be as safe as if you were in New Guinea."

I pedaled diligently up steep roads of hill gravel till the skies grew pale with morning. As the mists cleared before the sun I found myself in a wide green world with glens falling on every side and a faraway blue horizon. Here at any rate I could get early news of my enemies.

CHAPTER V.

The Spectacled Roadman's Adventure.

I SAT down on the very crest of the pass and took stock of my position.

Behind me was the road climbing through a long cleft in the hills which was the upper glen of some notable river. In front was a flat space of maybe a mile all pitted with bog-holes and rough with tussocks, and then beyond it the road fell steeply down another glen to a plain whose blue dimness melted into the distance.

To left and right were round-shouldered, green hills as smooth as pancakes; but to the south—that is the left hand—there was a glimpse of high heathery mountains, which I remembered from the map as the big knot of hill which I had chosen for my sanctuary.

I was on the central boss of a huge upland country, and could see everything moving for miles. In the meadows below the road, half a mile back, a cottage smoked, but it was the only sign of human life. Otherwise there was only the calling of plovers and the tinkling of little streams.

It was now about seven o'clock, and as I waited I heard once again the ominous beat in the air. Then I realized that my vantage ground might be in reality a trap. There was no cover for a tomtit in those bald green places.

I sat quite still and hopeless while the beat grew louder.

Then I saw an aeroplane coming up from the east. It was flying high, but as I looked it dropped several hundred feet and began to circle round the knot of hill in narrowing circles, just as a hawk wheels before it pounces. Now it was flying very low, and now the watchman on board caught sight of me.

I could see one of the two occupants examining me through glasses. Suddenly it began to rise in swift whorls, and the next I knew it was speeding eastward again till it became a speck in the blue morning.

That made me do some savage thinking. My enemies had located me, and the next thing would be a cordon round me. I didn't know what force they could command, but I was certain it would be sufficient. The aeroplane had seen my bicycle, and would conclude that I would try to escape by the road.

In that case there might be a chance on the moors to the right or left. I wheeled the machine a hundred yards from the highway, and plunged it into a moss-hole where it sank among pondweed and water-buttercups. Then I climbed to a knoll which gave me a view of the two valleys. Nothing was stirring on the long white ribbon that threaded them.

I have said there was not cover in the whole place to hide a rat. As the day advanced it was flooded with soft fresh light till it had the fragrant sunniness of the South African veld. At other times I should have liked the place, but now it seemed to suffocate me. The free moorlands were prison walls, and the keen hill-air was the breath of a dungeon.

I tossed a coin—heads right, tails left—and it fell heads, so I turned to the north. In a little I came to the brow of the ridge which was the containing wall of the pass.

I saw the highroad for maybe ten miles, and far down it something that was moving and which I took to be a motor-car. Beyond the ridge I looked

on a rolling green moor, which fell away into wooded glens. Now my life on the veld has given me the eyes of a kite, and I can see things for which most men need a telescope.

Away down the slope, a couple of miles away, men were advancing like a row of beaters at a shoot.

I dropped out of sight behind the skyline. That way was shut to me, and I must try the bigger hills to the south beyond the highway. The car I had noticed was getting nearer, but it was still a long road off, with some very steep gradients before it. I ran hard, crouching low except in the hollows, and as I ran I kept scanning the brow of hill before me.

Was it imagination, or did I see figures—one, two, perhaps more—moving in a glen beyond the stream?

If you are hemmed in on all sides in a patch of land—there is only one chance of escape. You must stay in the patch, and let your enemies search it and not find you. That was good sense, but how on earth was I to escape notice in that table-cloth of a place?

I would have buried myself to the neck in mud and lain below water or climbed the tallest tree. But there was not a stick of wood, the bog-holes were little puddles, the stream was a slender trickle. There was nothing but short heather and bare hill bent and the white highway.

Then in a tiny bight of road, beside a heap of stones, I found the Roadman.

He had just arrived, and was wearily flinging down his hammer. He stared at me with fishy eyes, yawning.

"Confoond the day I ever left the herdin'!" he said as if to the world at large. "There I was my ain maister. Now I'm a slave to the government—tethered to the roadside, wi' sair een, and a back like a suckle."

He took up the hammer, struck a stone, dropped the implement with an oath, and put both hands to his ears. "Mercy on me! My heid's burstin'!" he cried.

He was a wild figure, about my own size, but much bent, with a week's beard on his chin and a pair of big horn spectacles.

"I canna dae't," he cried again. "The surveyor maun just report me. I'm for my bed."

I asked him what was the trouble, though indeed that was clear enough.

"The trouble is that I'm no sober. Last nicht my dochter, Merran, was waddit, and they danced till fower in the byre. Me and some ither chieles sat down to the drinkin'—and here I am. Peety that I ever lookit on the wine when it was red!"

I agreed with him about bed.

"It's easy speakin'," he moaned. "But I get a post-caird yestereen sayin' that the new road surveyor would be round the day. He'll come and he'll no find me, or else he'll find me fou, and either way I'm a done man. I'll awa back to my bed and say I'm no weel, but I doot that'll no help me, for they ken my kind o' no-weelness."

Then I had an inspiration. "Does the new surveyor know you?" I asked.

"No him. He's just been a week at the job. He rins about in a wee motor-car, and wad speir the inside oot o' a whelk."

"Where's your house?" I asked, and was directed by a wavering finger to the cottage by the stream.

"Well, back to your bed," I said, "and sleep in peace. I'll take on your job for a bit and see the surveyor."

He stared at me blankly; then, as the notion dawned on his fuddled brain, his face broke into the vacant drunkard's smile.

"You're the billy," he cried. "It'll be easy enouch managed. I've finished that bing o' stanes, so you needen chap ony mair this forenoon. Just take the barry and wheel enouch metal frae yon quarry doun the road to make anither bing the morn."

"My name's 'Alexander Trummle, and I've been seeven year at the trade, and twenty afore that herdin' on Leithen Water. My freends ca' me

Ecky, and whiles Specky, for I wear glasses, bein' weak i' the sicht. Just you speak the surveyor fair and ca' him sir—and he'll be fell pleased. I'll be back or midday."

I borrowed his spectacles and filthy old hat; stripped off coat, waistcoat, and collar and gave him them to carry home; borrowed, too, the foul stump of a clay pipe as an extra property.

He indicated my simple tasks, and without more ado set off at an amble bedward. Bed may have been his chief object, but I think there was also something left in the foot of a bottle. I prayed that he might be safe under cover before my friends arrived on the scene.

Then I set to work to dress for the part.

I opened the collar of my shirt—it was a vulgar blue and white check such as plowmen wear—and revealed a neck as brown as any tinker's. I rolled up my sleeves and there was a forearm which might have been a blacksmith's—sunburnt and rough with old scars. I got my boots and trouser-legs all white from the dust of the road, and hitched up my trousers, tying them with string below the knee.

Then I set to work on my face. With a handful of dust I made a water-mark round my neck—the place where Mr. Trummle's Sunday ablutions might be expected to stop. I rubbed a good deal of dirt also into the sunburn of my cheeks. A roadman's eyes would, no doubt, be a little inflamed, so I contrived to get some dust in both of mine, and by dint of vigorous rubbing produced a bleary effect.

The sandwiches Sir Harry had given me had gone off with my coat; but the roadman's lunch, tied up in a red handkerchief, was at my disposal.

I ate with great relish several of the thick slabs of scone and cheese and drank a little of the cold tea. In the handkerchief was a local paper tied with string and addressed to Mr. Turnbull—obviously meant to solace

his midday leisure. I did up the bundle again, and put the paper conspicuously beside it.

My boots did not satisfy me, but by dint of kicking among the stone I reduced them to the granitelike surface which characterizes a roadman's foot-gear. Then I bit and scraped my finger-nails till the edges were all cracked and uneven. The men I was matched against would miss no detail.

I broke one of the bootlaces and re-tied it in a clumsy knot and loosed the other so that my thick gray socks bulged over the uppers. Still no sign of anything on the road. The motor I had observed half an hour ago must have gone home.

My toilet complete, I took up the barrow and began my journeys to and from the quarry a hundred yards off. I remember an old scout in Rhodesia who had done many queer things in his day—once telling me that the secret of playing a part was to think yourself into it. You could never keep it up, he said, unless you could manage to convince yourself that you were *it*.

So I shut off all other thoughts and switched them on the road-mending.

I thought of the little white cottage as my home, I recalled the years I had spent herding on Leithen Water. I made my mind dwell lovingly on sleep in a box-bed and a bottle of cheap whisky. Still nothing appeared on that long white road.

Now and then a sheep wandered off the heather to stare at me. A heron flopped down to a pool in the stream and started to fish, taking no more notice of me than if I had been a milestone. On I went trundling my loads of stone, with the heavy step of the professional.

Soon I grew warm and the dust on my face changed into solid and abiding grit. I was already counting the hours till evening should put a limit to Mr. Turnbull's monotonous toil.

Suddenly a crisp voice spoke from the road, and, looking up, I saw a little

Ford two-seater and a round-faced young man in a bowler hat.

"Are you Alexander Turnbull?" he asked. "I am the new county road surveyor. You live at Blackhopefoot, and have charge of the section from Laidlawbyres to the Riggs? Good! A fair bit of road, Turnbull, and not badly engineered. A little soft about a mile off, and the edges want cleaning. See you look after that. Good morning. You'll know me the next time you see me."

Clearly my get-up was good enough for the dreaded surveyor.

I went on with my work, and as the morning grew toward noon I was cheered by a little traffic. A baker's van breasted the hill and sold me a bag of ginger biscuits, which I stowed in my trouser-pockets against emergencies. Then a herd passed with sheep, and disturbed me somewhat by asking loudly, "What had become o' Specky?"

"In bed wi' the colic," I replied, and the herd passed on.

Just about midday a big car stole down the hill, glided past and drew up a hundred yards beyond. Its three occupants descended, as if to stretch their legs, and sauntered toward me.

Two of the men I had seen before from the window of the Galloway Inn—one lean, sharp and dark; the other comfortable and smiling. The third had the look of a countryman—a vet, perhaps, or a small farmer. He was dressed in ill-cut knickerbockers, and the eye in his head was as bright and wary as a hen's.

"Morning," said the last. "That's a fine, easy job o' yours."

I had not looked up on their approach, and now, when accosted, I slowly and painfully straightened my back, after the manner of roadmen; spat vigorously, after the manner of the low Scot, and regarded them steadily before replying. I confronted three pairs of eyes that missed nothing.

"There's waur jobs and there's better," I said sententiously. "I was

rather hae yours, sittin' a' day on your hinderlands on thae cushions. It's you and your muckle cawrs that wreck my roads! If we a' had oor richts, you sud be made to mend what ye break!"

The bright-eyed man was looking at the newspaper lying beside Turnbull's bundle.

"I see you get your papers in good time," he said.

I glanced at it casually. "Aye, in good time. Seein' that that paper cam out last Setterday, I'm just fower days late."

He picked it up, glanced at the superscription, and laid it down again. One of the others had been looking at my boots, and a word in German called the speaker's attention to them.

"You've a fine taste in boots," he said. "Those were never made by a country shoemaker."

"They were not," I said readily. "They were made in London. I got them frae the gentleman that was here last year for the shootin'. What was his name now?" And I scratched a forgetful head.

Again the sleek one spoke in German. "Let us get on," he said. "This fellow is all right."

They asked one last question:

"Did you see any one pass early this morning? He might be on a bicycle or he might be on foot."

I very nearly fell into the trap, and told a story of a bicyclist hurrying past in the gray dawn. But I had the sense to see my danger. I pretended to consider very deeply.

"I wasna up very early," I said. "Ye see my dochter was merrit last night, and we keepit it up late. I opened the house-door about seeven—and there was naebody on the road then. Since I cam up here there has been just the baker and the Ruchill herd, besides you gentlemen."

One of them gave me a cigar, which I smelled gingerly, and stuck in Turnbull's bundle. They got into their car and were out of sight in three minutes.

My heart leaped with an enormous

relief, but I went on wheeling my stones. It was as well, for ten minutes later the car returned—one of the occupants waving a hand to me. These gentry left nothing to chance.

I finished Turnbull's bread and cheese, and pretty soon I had finished the stones. The next step was what puzzled me.

I could not keep up this road-making business for long. A merciful Providence had kept Mr. Turnbull indoors, but if he appeared on the scene there would be trouble. I had a notion that the cordon was still tight round the glen, and that if I walked in any direction I should meet with questioners.

But get out I must. No man's nerve could stand more than a day of being spied on.

I stayed at my post till about five o'clock. By that time I had resolved to go down to Turnbull's cottage at nightfall and take my chance of getting over the hills in the darkness. But suddenly a new car came up the road and slowed down to stop a short distance from me. A fresh wind had risen—and the occupant wanted to light a cigarette.

It was a touring-car, with the tonneau full of an assortment of baggage. One man sat in it, and by an amazing chance I knew him. His name was Launcelot Brown, and he was an offense to creation. He was a sort of blood stockbroker who did his business by toadying to eldest sons and rich young peers and foolish old ladies.

"Lancie" was a familiar figure, I understood, at balls and polo-weeks and country houses. He was an adroit scandalmonger, and would crawl a mile on his belly to anything that had a title or a million. I had a business introduction to his firm when I came to London, and he was good enough to ask me to dinner at his club.

There he showed off at a great rate, and pattered about his duchesses till the snobbery of the creature turned me sick. I asked a man afterward why

nobody kicked him, and was told that Englishmen revered the weaker sex.

Anyhow, there he was now, nattily dressed, in a fine new car, obviously on his way to visit some of his fine friends. A sudden daftness took me, and in a second I had jumped into the tonneau and had him by the shoulder.

"Hello, Brown!" I sang out. "Well met, my lad!"

He got a horrid fright. His chin dropped as he stared at me. "Who the devil are you?" he gasped.

"My name's Hannay," I said, "from Rhodesia, you remember?"

"Good God—the murderer!" he choked.

"Just so. And there'll be a second murder, my dear, if you don't do as I bid you. Give me that coat of yours. That cap, too."

He did as he was bid, for he was blind with terror. Over my dirty trousers and vulgar shirt I put on his smart driving-coat, which buttoned high at the top, and thereby hid the deficiencies of my collar.

I stuck the cap on my head, and added his gloves to my get-up. The dusty roadman in a minute was transformed into one of the neatest motorists in Scotland. On Mr. Launcelot Brown's head I clapped Turnbull's unspeakable hat, and told him to keep it there.

Then with some difficulty I turned the car. My plan was to go back the road he had come, for the watchers, having seen it before, would let it pass unremarked.

"Now, my child," I said, "sit quite still and be a good boy. I mean you no harm. I'm only borrowing your car for an hour or two. But if you play me any tricks—and, above all, if you open your mouth—as sure as there's a God above me, I'll wring your neck! *Savez?*"

I enjoyed that evening's ride. We ran eight miles down the valley, through a village or two, and I could not help noticing several strange-looking folk lounging by the roadside.

These were the watchers who would have had much to say to me if I had come in other garb or company. As it was, they looked incuriously on. One touched his cap in salute, and I responded graciously.

As the dark fell I turned up a side glen which, as I remembered from the map, led into an unfrequented corner of the hills. Soon the villages were left behind, then the farms, and then even the wayside cottages. Presently we came to a lonely moor where the night was blackening the sunset gleam in the bog-pools. Here we stopped, and I obligingly reversed the car and restored to Mr. Launcelot Brown his belongings.

"A thousand thanks," I said. "There's more use in you than I thought. Now be off and find the police."

As I sat on the hillside watching the tail-light dwindle, I reflected on the various kinds of crime I had now sampled. Contrary to general belief, I was not a murderer, but I had become an unholy liar, a shameless impostor, and a highwayman with a marked taste for expensive motor-cars.

CHAPTER VI.

The Bald Archeologist's Adventure.

I SPENT the night on a shelf of the hillside, in the lee of a boulder where the heather grew long and soft. It was a cold business, for I had neither coat nor waistcoat. Those were in Mr. Turnbull's keeping, as was Scudder's little book, my watch, and—worst of all—my pipe and tobacco-pouch. Only my money accompanied me in my belt, and about half a pound of ginger biscuits in my trouser-pocket.

I supped off half those biscuits, and by worming myself deep into the heather got some kind of warmth.

My spirits had risen, and I was beginning to enjoy this crazy game of hide and seek. So far, I had been miraculously lucky. The milkman, the

literary innkeeper, Sir Harry, the roadman, and the idiotic Lancie, were all pieces of undeserved good fortune.

Somehow the first success gave me a feeling that I was going to pull the thing through.

My chief trouble was that I was desperately hungry. I lay and tortured myself—for the ginger biscuits merely emphasized the aching void—with the memory of all the good food I had thought so little of in London. There were Paddock's crisp sausages and fragrant shavings of bacon, and shapefully poached eggs—how often I had turned up my nose at them!

There were the cutlets they did at the club, and a particular ham that stood on the cold table, for which my soul lusted. My thoughts hovered over all varieties of mortal edibles, and finally settled on a porter-house steak and a quart of bitter with a Welsh rabbit to follow. In longing hopelessly for these dainties I fell asleep.

I woke very cold and stiff about an hour after dawn.

It took me a little while to remember where I was, for I had been very weary and had slept heavily. I saw first the pale blue sky through a net of heather, then a big shoulder of hill, and then my own boots placed neatly in a blackberry-bush.

I raised myself on my arms and looked down into the valley, and that one look set me lacing up my boots in mad haste. For there were men below, not more than a quarter of a mile off, spaced out on the hillside like a fan, and beating the heather. Lancie had not been slow in looking for his revenge.

I crawled out of my shelf into the cover of a boulder, and from it gained a shallow trench which slanted up the mountain face. This led me presently into the narrow gully of a burn, by way of which I scrambled to the top of the ridge. From there I looked back and saw that I was still undiscovered. My pursuers were patiently quartering the hillside and moving upward.

Keeping behind the skyline, I ran for maybe half a mile till I judged I was above the uppermost end of the glen. Then I showed myself, and was instantly noted by one of the flankers who passed the word to the others.

I heard cries coming up from below, and saw that the line of search had changed its direction.

I pretended to retreat over the skyline, but instead went back the way I had come, and in twenty minutes was behind the ridge overlooking my sleeping place. From that view-point I had the satisfaction of seeing the pursuit streaming up the hill at the top of the glen on a hopelessly false scent.

I had before me a choice of routes, and I chose a ridge which made an angle with the one I was on, and so would soon put a deep glen between me and my enemies. The exercise had warmed my blood, and I was beginning to enjoy myself amazingly. As I went I breakfasted on the dusty remnants of the ginger biscuits.

I knew very little about the country, and I hadn't a notion what I was going to do. I trusted to the strength of my legs, but I knew well enough that those behind me would be familiar with the lie of the land, and that my ignorance would be a heavy handicap.

I saw in front of me a sea of hills, rising very high toward the south, but northward breaking down into broad ridges which separated wide and shallow dales. The ridge I had chosen seemed to sink after a mile or two to a moor which lay like a pocket in the uplands.

That seemed as good a direction to take as any other.

My stratagem had given me a fair start—call it twenty minutes—and I had the width of a glen behind me before I saw the first heads of the pursuers. The police had evidently called in local talent to their aid, and the men I could see had the appearance of herds or gamekeepers.

They hallooed at the sight of me, and I waved my hand. Two dived

into the glen and began to climb my ridge, while the others kept their own side of the hill. I felt as if I were taking part in a schoolboy game of hare and hounds.

But very soon it began to seem less of a game. Those fellows behind were hefty men on their native heath. Looking back I saw that only three were following direct, and I guessed that the others had fetched a circuit to cut me off.

My lack of local knowledge might very well be my undoing, and I resolved to get out of this tangle of glens to the pocket of moor I had seen from the tops. I must so increase my distance as to get clear away from them, and I believed I could do this if I could find the right ground for it. If there had been cover I would have tried a bit of stalking, but on these bare slopes you could see a fly a mile off.

My hope must be in the length of my legs and the soundness of my wind, but I needed easier ground for that, for I was not bred a mountaineer. How I longed for a good Africander pony!

I put on a great spurt and got off my ridge and down into the moor before any figures appeared on the skyline behind me. I crossed a burn and came out on a high-road which made a pass between two glens.

All in front of me was a big field of heather sloping up to a crest which was crowned with an odd feather of trees.

In the dike by the roadside was a gate, from which a grass-grown track led over the first wave of the moor. I jumped the dike and followed it, and after a few hundred yards—as soon as it was out of sight of the highway—the grass stopped and it became a very respectable road which was evidently kept with some care.

Clearly it ran to a house, and I began to think of doing the same. Hitherto my luck had held, and it might be that my best chance would be found in this remote dwelling. Anyhow, there

were trees there — and that meant cover.

I did not follow the road, but the burnside which flanked it on the right, where the bracken grew deep and the high banks made a tolerable screen. It was well I did so, for no sooner had I gained the hollow than, looking back, I saw the pursuit topping the ridge from which I had descended.

After that I did not look back—I had no time. I ran up the burnside, crawling over the open places, and for a large part wading in the shallow stream. I found a deserted cottage with a row of fantom peat stacks and an overgrown garden.

Then I was among young hay, and very soon had come to the edge of a plantation of windblown firs. From there I saw the chimneys of the house smoke a few hundred yards to my left.

I forsook the burnside, crossed another dike, and almost before I knew was on a rough lawn. A glance back told me that I was well out of sight of the pursuit, which had not yet passed the first lift of the moor.

The lawn was a very rough place, cut with a scythe instead of a mower, and planted with beds of scrubby rhododendrons. A brace of black game, which are not usually garden birds, rose at my approach. The house before me was the ordinary moorland farm, with a more pretentious white-washed wing added. Attached to this wing was a glass veranda, and through the glass I saw the face of an elderly gentleman meekly watching me.

I stalked over the border of coarse hill gravel and entered the open veranda door.

Within was a pleasant room, glass on one side, and on the other a mass of books. More books showed in an inner room. On the floor, instead of tables, stood cases such as you see in a museum, filled with coins and queer stone implements. There was a knee-hole desk in the middle, and seated at it, with some papers and open volumes before him, was the benevolent old

gentleman. His face was round and shiny, like Mr. Pickwick's, big glasses stuck on the end of his nose, and the top of his head was as bright and bare as a glass bottle.

He never moved when I entered, but raised his placid eyebrows and waited on me to speak.

It was not an easy job, with about five minutes to spare, to tell a stranger who I was and what I wanted, and to win his aid. I did not attempt it. There was something about the eye of the man before me—something so keen and knowledgeable, that I could not find a word. I simply stared at him and stuttered.

"You seem in a hurry, my friend," he said slowly.

I nodded toward the glass. It gave a prospect across the moor through a gap in the plantation, and revealed certain figures half a mile off straggling through the heather.

"Ah, I see," he said, and took up a pair of field-glasses, through which he patiently scrutinized the figures.

"A fugitive from justice, eh? Well, we'll go into the matter at our leisure. Meantime, I object to my privacy being broken in upon by the clumsy rural policemen. Go into my study and you will see two doors facing you. Take the one on the left and close it behind you. You will be perfectly safe."

And this extraordinary man took up his pen again.

I did as I was bid, and found myself in a little dark chamber which smelled of chemicals and was lit only by a tiny window high up in the wall. The door had swung behind me with a click like the door of a safe. Once again I had found an unexpected sanctuary.

All the same I was not comfortable. There was something about the old gentleman which puzzled and rather terrified me. He had been too easy and ready, almost as if he had expected me. And his eyes had been horribly intelligent.

No sound came to me in that dark place.

For all I knew the police might be searching the house, and if they did, they would want to know what was behind this door. I tried to possess my soul in patience and to forget how hungry I was. Then I took a more cheerful view.

The old gentleman could scarcely refuse me a meal, and I fell to reconstructing my breakfast. Bacon and eggs would content me, but I wanted the better part of a fitch of bacon and half a hundred eggs. And then, while my mouth was watering in anticipation, there was a click and the door stood open.

I emerged into the sunlight to find the master of the house sitting in a deep armchair in the room he called his study, and regarding me with curious eyes.

"Have they gone?" I asked.

"They have gone. I convinced them that you had crossed the hill. I do not choose that the police should come between me and one whom I am delighted to honor. This is a lucky morning for you, Richard Hannay."

As he spoke his eyelids seemed to tremble and to fall a little over his keen gray eyes. In a flash the phrase of Scudder's came back to me when he had described the man he most dreaded in the world. He had said that he "could hood his eyes like a hawk."

Then I saw that I had walked straight into the enemy's headquarters. My first impulse was to throttle the old ruffian and make for the open air. He seemed to anticipate my intention, for he smiled gently and nodded to the door behind me. I turned and saw two men servants who had me covered with pistols.

He knew my name, but he had never seen me before. And as the reflection darted across my mind, I saw a slender chance.

"I don't know what you mean," I said roughly. "And who are you call-

ing Richard Hannay? My name's Ainslie."

"So?" he said, still smiling. "But, of course, you have others. We won't quarrel about a name."

I was pulling myself together now, and I reflected that my garb, lacking coat and waistcoat and collar, would, at any rate, not betray me. I put on my surliest face and shrugged my shoulders.

"I suppose you're going to give me up, after all, and I call it a dirty trick. I wish I had never seen that cursed motor-car! Here's the money and be damned to you!" And I flung four sovereigns on the table.

He opened his eyes a little. "Oh, no, I shall not give you up. My friends and I will have a little private settlement with you, that is all. You know a little too much, Mr. Hannay. You are a clever actor, but not quite clever enough."

He spoke with assurance, but I could see the dawning of some doubt in his mind.

"For God's sake stop jawing!" I cried. "Everything's against me. I haven't had a bit of luck since I came on shore at Leith. What's the harm in a poor devil with an empty stomach picking up some money he finds in a bust-up motor-car? That's all I done, and for that I've been chivvied for two days by those blasted bobbies over those blasted hills. I tell you, I'm fair sick of it. You can do what you like, old boy! Ned Ainslie's got no fight left in him."

I could see that the doubt was gaining.

"Will you oblige me with the story of your recent doings?" he asked.

"I can't, gov'nor," I said in a real beggar's whine. "I've not had a bite to eat for two days. Give me a mouthful of food, and then you'll hear God's truth!"

I must have showed my hunger in my face, for he signaled to one of the men in the doorway. A bit of cold pie was brought and a glass of beer, and

I wolfed them down like a pig — or rather like Ned Ainslie, for I was keeping up my character.

In the middle of my meal he spoke suddenly to me in German, but I turned on him a face as blank as a stone wall.

Then I told him my story—how I had come off an Archangel ship at Leith a week ago, and was making my way overland to my brother at Wigton. I had run short of cash—I hinted vaguely at a spree—and I was pretty well on my uppers when I had come on a hole, in a hedge, and, looking through, had seen a big motor-car lying in the burn.

I had poked about to see what had happened, and had found three sovereigns lying on the seat and one on the floor. There was nobody there, or any sign of an owner, so I had pocketed the cash. But somehow the law had got after me. When I had tried to change a sovereign in a baker's shop the woman had cried on the police, and a little later, when I was washing my face in a burn, I had been nearly gripped, and had only got away by leaving my coat and waistcoat behind me.

"They can have the money back," I cried, "for a fat lot of good it's done me. Those perishers are all down on a poor man. Now, if it had been you, guv'nor, that had found the quids, nobody would have troubled you."

"You're a good liar, Hannay," he said.

I flew into a rage. "Stop fooling. I tell you my name's Ainslie, and I never heard of any one called Hannay in my born days! I'd sooner have the police than you with your Hannays and your monkey-faced pistol tricks! No, guv'nor, I don't mean that. I'm much obliged to you for the grub. I'll thank you to let me go now—the coast's clear."

It was evident he was badly puzzled. You see he had never seen me, and my appearance must have altered consid-

erably from my photographs — if he had got one of them. I was pretty smart and well dressed in London, and now I was a regular tramp.

"I do not propose to let you go. If you are what you say you are, you will soon have a chance of clearing yourself. If you are what I believe you are, I do not think you will see the light much longer."

He rang a bell and a third servant appeared from the veranda.

"I want the Lanchester in five minutes," he said. "There will be three to luncheon."

Then he looked steadily at me, and that was the hardest ordeal of all. There was something weird and devilish in those eyes—cold, malignant, unearthly, and most hellishly clever. They fascinated me like the bright eyes of a snake.

I had a strong impulse to throw myself on his mercy and offer to join his side, and if you consider the way I felt about the whole thing you will see that that impulse must have been purely physical—the weakness of a brain mesmerized and mastered by a stronger spirit.

But I managed to stick it out—and even to grin. "You'll know me next time, guv'nor," I said.

"Karl!" he said in German to one of the men in the doorway. "You will put this fellow in the store-room till I return, and you will be answerable to me for his keeping."

I was marched out of the room with a pistol at each ear.

The storeroom was a damp chamber in what had been the old farmhouse. There was no carpet on the uneven floor and nothing to sit down on but a school form. It was black as pitch, for the windows were heavily shuttered.

I made out by groping that the walls were lined with boxes and barrels and sacks of some heavy stuff. The whole place smelled of mold and disuse. My jailers turned the key in the door, and

I could hear them shifting their feet as they stood on guard outside.

I sat down in the chilly darkness in a very miserable frame of mind. The old boy had gone off in a motor to collect the two ruffians who had interviewed me yesterday. Now, they had seen me as the roadman, and they would remember me, for I was in the same rig.

What was a roadman doing twenty miles from his beat, pursued by the police? A question or two would put them in the track. Probably they had seen the real Turnbull, probably Lancie too; most likely they could link me up with Sir Harry, and then the whole thing would be crystal clear.

What chance had I in this moorland house with three desperadoes and their armed servants? I began to think wistfully of the police, now plodding over the hills after my wraith. They at any rate were fellow countrymen and honest men, and their tender mercies would be kinder than these ghoulish aliens.

But they wouldn't have listened to me. That old devil with his eyelids had not taken long to get rid of them. I thought he probably had some kind of graft with the constabulary. Most likely he had letters from Cabinet Ministers saying he was to be given every facility for plotting against Britain.

That's the sort of owlish way we run our politics in the old country.

The three would be back for lunch, so I hadn't more than a couple of hours to wait. It was simply waiting or destruction, for I could see no way out of this mess. I wished that I had Scudder's courage, for I am free to confess I didn't feel great fortitude.

The only thing that kept me going was that I was pretty furious. It made me boil with rage to think of those three spies getting the pull on me like this. I hoped that at any rate I might be able to twist one of their necks before they downed me.

The more I thought of it the angrier I grew, and I had to get up and move about the room. I tried the shutters but they were the kind that lock with a key and I couldn't move them.

From the outside came the faint clucking of hens in the warm sun. Then I groped among the sacks and boxes. I couldn't open the latter, and the sacks seemed to be full of things like dog-biscuits that smelled of cinnamon. But as I circumnavigated the room I found a handle in the wall which seemed worth investigating.

It was the door of a wall cupboard—what they call a "press" in Scotland—and it was locked.

I shook it and it seemed rather flimsy. For want of something better to do I put out my strength on that door, getting some purchase on the handle by looping my braces round it. Presently the thing gave with a crash which I thought would bring in my warders to inquire.

I waited for a bit and then started to explore the cupboard shelves.

There was a multitude of queer things there. I found an odd vesta in my trouser pocket and struck a light. It went out in a second, but it showed me one thing. There was a little stock of electric torches on one shelf. I picked up one and found it was in working order.

With the torch to help me I investigated further. There were bottles and cases of queer smelling stuffs, chemicals no doubt for experiments, and there were coils of fine copper wire and hanks and hanks of a thin oiled silk.

Then away at the back of a shelf I found a stout brown cardboard box, and inside it a wooden case. I managed to wrench it open, and within lay half a dozen little gray bricks, each about a couple of inches square.

I look up one and found that it crumbled easily in my hand. Then I smelled it and put my tongue to it. After that I sat down to think. I hadn't been a mining engineer for

nothing, and I knew lentonite when I saw it.

With one of these bricks I could blow the house to smithereens. I had used the stuff in Rhodesia and knew its power. But the trouble was that my knowledge wasn't exact.

I had forgotten the proper charge and the right way of firing it, or rather I knew that it needed an electric spark, but I wasn't sure about the timing. I had only a vague notion to add to its power, for though I had used it I had not handled it with my own fingers.

But it was a chance, the only possible chance.

It was a mighty risk, but against it was an absolute black certainty. If I used it the odds were, as I reckoned, about five to one in favor of my blowing myself into the treetops; but if I didn't I should very likely be occupying a six-foot hole in the garden by the evening.

That was the way I had to look at it. The prospect was pretty dark either way, but anyhow there was a chance, both for myself and for my country.

The remembrance of little Scudder decided me. It was about the best-liest moment of my life, for I'm no good at these cold-blooded resolutions. Still I managed to rake up the pluck to set my teeth and choke back

the horrid doubts that flooded in on me.

I simply shut off my mind and pretended I was doing an experiment as simple as Guy Fawkes's fireworks.

I pulled a couple of the electric torches to pieces, and with their small batteries and coils of wire constructed an elementary fuse. Then I took a quarter of a lentonite brick, and buried it near the door, below one of the sacks, in a crack of the floor, linking up my fuse to it. For all I knew half those boxes might be dynamite.

If the cupboard held such deadly explosives, why not the boxes?

In that case there would be a glorious skyward journey for me and the German servant, and about an acre or two of the surrounding country. There was also the risk that the detonation might set off the other bricks in the cupboard, for I had forgotten most that I knew about lentonite.

But it didn't do to begin thinking about the possibilities. The odds were horrible, but I had to take them.

I ensconced myself just below the sill of the window. Then I waited for a moment or two. There was dead silence—only a shuffle of heavy boots in the passage, and the peaceful cluck of hens from the warm out-of-doors.

I commended my soul to my Maker and touched off the fuse.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.



DUSKY EYES

BY H. S. HASKINS

RETOUCHING was an art once used
 Exclusively on pictures,
 But women have preempted it
 To touch up facial fixtures,
 Until their lashes, 'pon my soul,
 Look just as if they'd shoveled coal.

Venus by the Pound

By Anne Cameron

THE little man in the checked cap was poring over the passenger list, commenting half audibly on each name as he pointed to it.

"Mrs. and Miss James—no, she's traveling alone. Mrs. James Rinehart—I don't think she's married. Miss Edith Payne, no, that's a thin woman's name. Astrid Klumpff—she's not a foreigner. Miss Mayme Cole; that might be her. Mrs. Ethel Stevens; maybe she is a widow. Miss Lolita Walsh—that's her! The name just suits her, all soft and full of curves."

He gave the purser a really good cigar. "Say, do you know the name of the blond young lady who sits third from the end on the left at the first officer's table?"

"The fat girl?"

"No, I wouldn't call her fat. She's just a little plump."

"Guess we're not talking about the same one. I mean the whale of a blonde that wore the Roman stripe dress last night. You couldn't forget her after you once saw her."

The little man drew closer. "That's the one! I'm like you; I just couldn't forget her!"

The purser rubbed his chin. "She's a good looker all right. Wait a minute till I look her up on the list. Here she is, Walsh, Miss Lolita Walsh, going to Manila."

The little man's thin face broke into a wrinkling smile. "That's just the name I'd picked out for her from the whole list!" he said excitedly.

The purser's eyes twinkled a bit. "Why?" he asked.

"It sounds just the way she looks, you know. There would have to be an 'l' in her name somewhere. She might be Lois, or Lulu, or Clara, or Louise, or Alice, but she could never be Jane or Frances or Hester or Edith." He paused, "My first wife's name was Edith."

The purser eyed his retreating back with knowing amusement.

"I've got your number, skinny," he thought. "You're a six-months' widower looking for a change."

The little man stalked his quarry from the saloon to the promenade deck, from the promenade deck to the hurricane deck without once seeing her.

She could not be ill on that smooth sea, so by natural inference, he knew she must be on deck, and he stared with painstaking care at every occupied deck chair.

At length, passing a row of chairs whose occupants were swathed in sleep and blankets beyond recognition, he turned to watch a school of porpoises. A misstep tangled his feet in a blanket, and he fell prone upon the sleepers.

In his wild struggles to right him-

self, he fell between two deck-chairs, with his small, neat feet waving in the air where his head should have been.

"Goodness! What was that?" came shrilly from his jailer on the left. "I believe we are on the rocks."

A throaty contralto chuckled from his jailer on the right thrilled him. "No, only a man thtumbled, I gueth. Here are hith feet. Hith head mutht be under your chair. Jutht thtand up a minute, can't you?"

"My word!" said the sharp-voiced one, jumping up hastily.

A soft, plump white hand, clutching the prisoner, lifted him to his feet. He stood crimson and speechless before the object of his search.

The longer she looked at him the harder she laughed, mellow, deep-chested chuckles that shook her fat ripplingly. He had ample chance to notice her round, blue eyes, her apple-blossom complexion, the light aura of her hair, her chin, or more exactly, chins, tipped with rose, before she could control herself.

"I'm thorry I'm tho rude," she lisped, "but I'm not uthed to being arouthed in jutht that way."

He marveled at the music of a lisp issuing from red, satiny lips. Strange that he had never noticed before how it enhanced the simplest phrase—a lisp so slight that any attempt to set it down in print must grossly exaggerate it.

"I'm very sorry," he stammered. "My foot must have caught."

"Are you hurt?"

"No, thanks, only shaken up a bit."

The other lady, having received his apologies in acid silence, retired to her stateroom; and the little man looked questioningly at her chair. "May I?" he asked.

"Oh yeth, do. If you don't mind my telling you, your cravat theemth to be ecthited and trying to run away, and your hair needth thmoothing down."

"Is that better, Miss Walsh?" he

asked boldly, after repairing the ravages of his spill.

Her round eyes became still rounder, a thing which he would have declared impossible. "How did you know my name?" she asked.

"A little bird told me," he said playfully.

"Mutht have been a thea-gull," she lisped, "Gothipping bird! If you meet him again tell him to come around and tell me yourth."

"I'll save him the trouble," retorted the little man, intoxicated by his own repartee.

"My name is Sloan, Alfred Sloan, of Denver."

"I knew thome people from Denver when I was a child. Their name was Thteele," she said. "Did you know them? There were two daughterth."

"Yes—oh, yes," answered Mr. Sloan, reddening unaccountably.

"May married a man from Portland—a very good match. Edith, the older one—let me think. It theemth to me she married thome one that didn't amount to much, didn't she?"

Mr. Sloan's face looked like a radish of rosy hue. "Well—I don't know. She married me!"

Utter consternation seized Miss Walsh. "Oh, oh—" she gasped. "I mutht have mixed her up with thomebody elth."

"No, I guess not," said Mr. Sloan, humbly. "I never did amount to an awful lot, and Edith had slim pickings until my uncle died and left me his money a year ago—Edith died last January."

"Well, I know you were alwayth kind and gentle with her, anyway. Jutht making money ithn't the only thing in the world," she consoled.

That night, through the good offices of the purser, who was a kindly youth, his seat was changed to the first officer's table, fourth from the end, on the left side.

The fair Lolita's plump shoulders towered above him like chalk cliffs,

over which her smiling face beamed like a benevolent moon. She was engrossed in the *carte d'jour*.

"I think I'll have pea puree, creamed thweetbread, thmothered chicken, athparaguth, candied thweet-potatoeth, and thtring beanth," she said to the waiter.

"I'll give the retht of the order later. Oh, I want potatoeth thoufflé, too. Don't you love potatoeth thoufflé, Mr. Thloan?"

Mr. Sloan, who had contemplated a lettuce salad and a mutton-chop with zwieback, as became a man of uncertain digestion, gallantly decided to duplicate the lady's order.

"I'll take thome, too," he said, infected with lispng. Then he blushed furiously. "I mean I'll take some stew," he corrected. There was an audible titter. "No, I mean bring me the same as the lady ordered."

Lolita radiated cheering warmth like a base-burner stove. Under her cheering influence Mr. Sloan, who was a bashful soul, expanded into jest and even querulous autobiography. At the end of two days Lolita was familiar with his frail, bullied boyhood, his stormy days with the ambitious Edith, whom his meek futility exasperated into a virago, and his economic failure until his uncle's legacy relieved him. He was on his way around the world, it seemed.

Lolita offered no confidences in return; but he noticed that in pensive moments her broad, white brow drew into unaccustomed knots, her blue eyes clouded, and all her chins quivered pitifully.

It was more than his sympathetic soul could bear; he besought her to confide in him.

She sighed mightily. "You would not underthtand if I did tell you," she replied. "No man would." But later in the day she beckoned him mysteriously into a secluded corner of the saloon.

"Jutht look at thith," she whispered dramatically, handing forth a photo-

graph of a very pretty girl. "Do you know who it is?"

Its haunting familiarity bewildered him. "No, I don't."

"Look at it clothely. Ithn't it like thome one you know?"

"It does look like some one, but I can't think who." He looked up at her hazily. "Say, it isn't your sister, is it?"

She dropped limply into a chair. "Oh, ithn't it dreadful?" she be-moaned. "But funny, too. I could die laughing over it."

And the astounding girl giggled while Mr. Sloan shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other.

"That picture is me, taken three yearth ago; and I've grown tho fat that no one knowth it!"

Mr. Sloan sprang gallantly into the breach. "Why, of course it is you. I should have known in a minute if I'd had on my other glasses; only it is thin."

She shook her head pensively. "No, not thin—I'm fat. When that picture wath taken I weighed a hundred and forty. Now"—she glanced around warily and lowered her voice—"now I weigh two hundred and fifteen."

Mr. Sloan swallowed hard. He weighed one hundred and thirty-seven. "Wh-what started you to g-gaining?" he hazarded.

"I think it wath cod-liver oil. They made me take it for a bad cold. And then I like candy and potatoeth and pathtry and all thweet things. The wortht part of it is, I'm going out to Manila to be married, and George can't bear fat girlth."

Mr. Sloan winced at the news. "Doesn't he know that—you have gained?"

She shook her head. "No. I kept thinking that I'd diet or roll or play golf, but I never got around to it. He went out to the islandth four yearth ago. He callth me 'little angel' and 'little girl.'"

In the midst of her trouble she giggled.

"Well," said Mr. Sloan stiffly, "if he prefers scrawny scarecrows, he can have them. I prefer 'em plump."

"The scarecrowht?"

"No. Girls."

"He thent me beautiful embroidery from the Philippineth—heapth of them, all meant for a thirty-six model. Why, the waitht I have on is made from two waitht-patternth. Each one made a thleeve—luckily they were alike—and I filled out the reht with plain linen."

"Don't you care," said the gallant Sloan. "Don't you care. The sweetest things grow large, like sugar-cane and watermelons, and lots of things."

By the time the Manchuria reached Honolulu Mr. Sloan was the fervent and avowed suitor of Lolita, with the approval of every one from the captain to the deck-stewards.

"Say," he said to the orchestra leader confidentially, "can't you play 'Oh, You Beautiful Doll!' sometimes? I think that's a mighty pretty song."

"Sure," agreed the musician. "And wouldn't you like 'You're My Great Big Blue-Eyed Baby'? It's somewhat the same."

They spent a happy day sightseeing at Honolulu. Late in the afternoon Lolita dismissed her escort with the excuse of shopping, returning just at sailing-time, puffing and flushed.

"My word," she panted as she came up the gangplank. "I nearly mithed the boat. It took me an age to find any thealeth without a crowd hanging around. I've gained two poundth on the trip," she said pensively. "Are you quick at arithmetic? 'If a fat lady gainth two poundth in a week on a thea-voyage, how much will she gain in three weekth?' No, don't work it out; it will make me grouchy."

"I wouldn't have you any different than you are," said Mr. Sloan; and he meant it.

She came as near to a sardonic grin as her cupid's-bow mouth would permit. "You!" she said. "I'm not

worrying about you—but George! He *hateth* a fat girl!"

"Let him go, then. I love a fat girl."

"Let him go—how can I? He and Aunt Mabel will meet me at the dock. We are going to be married at her home. They will catch me coming down the gangplank. I can't get away without jumping overboard."

Then did little Sloan prove himself of heroic stuff. "Well, if you won't have me, you might as well reduce to suit George."

She rewarded him with a brilliant smile—she had an adorable smile. "How shall I begin?"

He produced a pencil and note-book, and in the lee of the cabin they formulated an antifat code.

Diet: Breakfast and dinner only; rations to consist of dry toast, weak tea, untrimmed; green vegetables, one small piece of meat each day, and no sweets. Sleep: Six hours a night; no naps. Exercise: Three-mile sprints around the ship.

"Now, if I could only roll!" exclaimed Lolita.

"The cabin?" he suggested.

"Umph-um. Thomebody forever thnooping around."

"The hurricane-deck, after every one has gone to bed?" with a sly sense of strategy in securing several hours more of her society each evening.

"Great!" she agreed. "Mr. Thloan, you are the betht friend I ever had."

And so the epic struggle against fat began. Lolita stoically stuck to her uninteresting diet with the flesh-pots of Egypt about her.

The curtailed sleep followed as a corollary of the nightly rollings, which were harder to accomplish than to plan. Mr. Sloan and Lolita were astounded at the number of moon-struck strolling couples who sprang up like mushrooms in the night.

Had they been at all inclined to gossip, they might have spread many an ear-whetting item. It was most dis-

concerting, when he had reported the deck as deserted, and she, clad in her oldest clothes, was just preparing to roll, to hear, "You silly boy, I'll bet you say that to every girl you meet," and amorous murmurings from shadowy corners.

When at length the last belated insomniacs had departed, Mr. Sloan essayed the faithful scout while Lolita rolled back and forth on the deck.

"One—help me get thtarted; two—I hope they keep the deck clean; three—Lordy, I'm fagged now, and I have to do it fifty timeth; four—darn that poht; five—I've no—breath—left; thix—thith ought to—take—it—off; theven—ouch! I'm lame—all—over; eight—I—know—I'm black—and—blue."

But by that time she had no breath except for an occasional smothered giggle. Mr. Sloan stood by unsmiling and solicitous till the allotted rollings were over.

The next morning she showed him multicolored bruises on her white arms. "I've got more than I can count, all over me. And lame! It hurt me to turn over in bed."

Mr. Sloan fumed. "Oh, Lolita, why do you go through all this torture? If you would only marry me, I wouldn't care how fat you were. I adore every single ounce of you."

Lolita sighed. "Yeth, I know; but George—do you think I've loht any?"

"I don't know. I'm losing every day, just from the way you're treating me."

For almost three weeks they patiently followed the same program without visibly decreasing Lolita's girth.

When at length she was able to pinch up a few scanty wrinkles of loose cloth in her gown and move the hooks on her skirt, he rejoiced with her until he reflected that he was helping his rival's cause.

After a particularly strenuous evening's rolling, when sudden lurches of the ship had sent her careening into

every post on the deck, she sat down and cried softly. Mr. Sloan sought to comfort her after the world-old manner without resistance.

"Lolita, are you hurt?"

No answer.

"Poor little girl! Tell old Alfie what's the matter."

For reply she nestled closer, sobbing more deeply. "Are you crying for fear George won't—want you?"

She nodded negation. "Umph-um—for fear he *will* want me," she sobbed.

It took him a full minute to get that. "Don't—don't you care for him any more?"

"No, no!" she wept. "I like you a million timeth more."

For a brief period both of them were too engrossed for conversation. At last he said: "Then you'll marry me in Manila, instead of George?"

"Oh, mercy, no!" gasped Lolita. "George would kill you—dead. You have no idea how jcalouth he is, or what a horrible temper—"

Mr. Sloan straightened up manfully. "I shall tell him as soon as we land that your feelings have changed, and he can't play leading man at your wedding."

"Alfie, he would throw you off the dock," she whispered, shivering.

"Let him try—just let him."

"Oh, Alfie, you are tho fool-hardy!" (Strange, sweet tribute to Mr. Alfred Sloan!) "He is thix feet tall, and an amateur heavyweight. He would jutht naturally kill you in five minuteth."

Alfie shook his head in dogged bewilderment. "It's too much for me. First you were afraid he wouldn't want you, and now you're afraid he will."

On the morning they were to land Lolita disappeared immediately after breakfast. "Wait for me on the forward deck," she commanded. "Thtay there till I come, no matter how late I am."

He waited with impatience that gave way to anxiety when, in Manila

Bay, she was not visible among the land-eager passengers. He took his unobtrusive farewells of his ship acquaintances, with one eye alert for her.

The ship docked, the crowd jostled down the gangplank, and still she had not appeared. He moodily scanned the throng on the dock in an effort to single out George and Aunt Mabel. That must be they on the left—the huge, glum man and the middle-aged, florid woman at his elbow.

She was rather younger and more coquettish than he had pictured her. In bold fancy he walked up to them, saying: "Excuse me, Mr. —Mr."—what the deuce was George's last name?—"but I merely wanted to tell you that Miss Walsh and I are going to be married. She—"

His imaginary bravado suddenly vaped off when George abruptly turned his way with an aggressive squaring of those terrific shoulders. He started at a touch on his elbow. A very large lady swathed in heavy weeds stood beside him, and Lolita's voice issued from behind the crape: "Alfie, gueth who?"

"My goodness, Lolita, what in the world are you up to? Where did you get that rig?"

"From the thtewardeth. Would you know me?"

"I should say not!"

"Then I gueth George won't either. It was the only way to get by him without a row. Careful, now! Look back as we go by and tell me what they are doing."

She indicated the couple, now among the last on the dock, whom Alfie had selected for George and Aunt Mabel. Just as they brushed by George boomed out in a great bass: "She must be there somewhere! There's nothing for it but to ask the captain."

Lolita clutched Alfie's arm. "Quick—run," she panted, "before any one can tell him! Call a carriage, and we can think what to do while we are ethcaping."

"There's only one thing to do," said Alfie, in the protection of an ancient victoria. "We must get married first and tell him afterward. He can't do anything then." Since seeing George, the idea of announcing their engagement to him failed to attract him.

"*Can't do anything?*" said Lolita in italics. "I gueth he could make me a widow in about five minuteth. Well, I'd be Mitheth Thloan, anyway," she beamed.

Two hours later, gazing too deeply into the eyes of her brand-new husband to mind her steps, Lolita crashed into a large man as she turned a corner.

The usual recoil and apologies followed; then she gave a hysterical giggle, while the man's face turned a sickly green.

"Lolita, how you're changed! And where in the world have you been?" he exclaimed.

"How d'ye do, George?" she said tranquilly. "Why didn't you meet me?"

He stammered unintelligibly, and it flashed over Mr. Sloan that he seemed scarcely less prepared than Lolita for the meeting.

"The fact is, Lolita—I might as well get it over—I'm a cad and all that, but my feelings have changed in the last year. Since I've been going so often to your aunt's I've—that is, we—well, we've come to care for each other."

Lolita stared, and stared, and stared, her eyes rounder every minute. "Aunt Mabel," she murmured.

George blundered on, drops of perspiration oozing from him in his distress.

"She is a remarkable woman, and only six years older than I. Besides, she is—that is, she has great business ability, and—please don't look at me like that, Lolita. I'm sorry if you're disappointed; but Mabel said we'd better let you come on and have a nice visit, and stay for the wedding if you

want to. I think we can show you a good time."

He looked at her anxiously. "Please don't faint, or anything like that, Lolita," he implored. "I'll get you a drink of water."

She laid her hand on his arm to detain him. "George," she said calmly, "let me prethent my huthband, Mr.

Thloan. I haven't had him very long, and I'm quite proud of him."

In a daze the two men shook hands, while she beamed largely before them.

"Phone to Aunt Mabel, George, and we'll all dine together. I'm going to have chicken and potatoeth thoufflé. Can you get potatoeth thoufflé in the Philippineth?" she asked anxiously.



W H I C H ?

BY "TENDERFOOT"

IN the smoke of its hundred foundries,
 In the dust of the fetid street,
 In the glare of its man-built cañons,
 Is it wiser, O Lord, and meet,
 That I should stay on by this city,
 Where my fathers built with pride,
 When the Voice of the North is calling—
 Calling me back to her side?
 Back to her wind-blown ridges,
 Where the moose stalk, bold and free;
 Back to the lonely packer's trail—
 Which is the better for me?

In the fight of the mad day's progress,
 In the swirl of the money-gods,
 In a mart *sans* honor and mercy,
 Must I stay, not counting the odds—
 Living each day like the other,
 Following the sign-posts of men,
 When the Voice of the North is calling—
 Ever calling me back again?
 Back to the wild brook's singing,
 And pools where the red trout lie;
 Back to the red fires gleaming—
 Which is it, to live or to die?

In the race for show with your betters,
 In an age when faith is unknown,
 In the warp of the tangled threads of life,
 Must I reap where others have sown,
 And play when the dice roll heavy,
 Well knowing a crooked game,
 When the Voice of the North is calling—
 Calling me, ever the same?
 Back to the still lake's edges,
 Where the deer come out to play;
 Back to the loon's lone crying—
 Which is it, to go or stay?

The Promise

by James B. Hendryx

Author of "The Law of the Woods," "Marquard, the Silent," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

BILL CARMODY, big, powerful, red-blooded, inheriting through his mother the reckless strain of the fighting McKims, has been going the pace on Broadway. As the result of a particularly wild escapade he is disinherited by his father, a cold, narrow-minded millionaire banker, and dismissed with chilling contempt by his sweetheart, Ethel Manton. Bitter and disheartened, but with the avowed intention of making good, Bill starts West. On the way the train is wrecked and he saves a wounded stranger from two crooks who are about to rob and murder him. The stranger proves to be H. D. Appleton, a prominent lumberman, who offers Bill a job either in the woods as a lumber-jack, or in the office. Bill chooses the woods, and starts alone for the camp of which Buck Moncrossen, a fine lumberman, but a bully and general bad man, is boss. Being a greener (tenderfoot), Bill starts to walk the eighty miles of rough forest trail between the end of the railroad and the camp, without proper food or boots, and with no snow-shoes or firearms. Thanks to his great strength and endurance, however, he wins almost through, but at nightfall of the third day a pack of wolves—led by an enormous, gaunt, battle and trap scarred female—that have been trailing him for hours, begin to close in threateningly. Enraged, Bill hurls his ax among them, killing one, and then armed only with his knife, attacks the huge leader. Together they go down locked in a death grip.

CHAPTER XV.

The Werwolf.

NOW, as all men know, Bill Carmody had done a most foolish and insane thing.

But the very audacity of his act—and the god of chance—favored him, for as the ax whizzed through the air the keen edge of the whirling bit caught one of the larger wolves full on the side of the head.

There followed the peculiar, dull scrunching sound that stands alone among all other sounds, being produced by no other thing than the sudden crush of a living skull.

The front and side of the skull lifted and turned backward upon its hinge of raw scalp and the wolf went down, clawing and biting, and over the snow flowed thick red blood, and a thicker mucus of soft, wet brains.

At the sight and scent of the warm blood, the companions of the stricken brute—the gaunt, tireless leaders, who had traveled beside him in the van, and the rag-tag and bobtail alike—fell upon him tooth and nail, and the silence of the forest was shattered by the blood-cry of the meat-getters.

Not so the great she-wolf, who despised these others that fought among themselves, intent only upon the satisfaction of their hunger.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for May 29.

Her purpose in trailing this man to destruction was of deep vengeance; the assuagement of an abysmal hatred that smoldered in her heart against every individual of the terrible man kind, whose cruel traps of iron, blades of steel, and leaden bullets had made her a monstrous, sexless thing, feared and unsought by mating males, hated of her own breed.

And now, at the moment she had by the cunning of her generalship delivered this man an easy prey to her followers, they deserted her and fell in swinish greed upon the first meat at hand.

So that at the last she faced her enemy alone, and the smoldering fury of her heart blazed green from her wicked eyes. She stood tense as a pointer, every hair of her long white coat bristlingly aquiver.

Suddenly she threw back her head, pointed her sharp muzzle to the sky, and gave voice to the long-drawn ululation which is the battle-cry of wolves.

Yet it was not the wolf-cry, for long ago the malformation of a healing throat-wound had distorted the bell-like cry into a hideous scream like the shriek of a soul foredamned, which quavered loud and shrill upon the keen air and ended in a series of quick jerks, like stabs of horrible laughter.

And then, with tight-drawn lips and jaws agape, she hurled herself straight at the throat of the stumbling man.

Darkness was gathering when, a mile to the northward, Jake LaFranz and Irish Fallon, who were laboring with six big horses and a rough log drag to break out the trail, suddenly paused to listen.

Through the thin, cold air rang a sound the like of which neither had ever heard. And then, as if in echo, the long-drawn wail of the great white wolf.

They stared at each other white-lipped; for that last cry was a thing

men talked about of nights with bated breath and deep curses. Neither had heard it before—nor would either hear it again—but each recognized the sound instinctively, as he would recognize the sound of Gabriel's trump.

"It's *her!*" gasped LaFranz. "God save us! It's Diabliesse—the *loup-garou!*"

"'Tis none other—that last. But, man! Man! The first wan! Was it a human cry or from the throat of another of her hell-begotten breed?"

Without waiting to reply the Frenchman swung the big six-team in their tracks and headed them toward camp. But Irish Fallon reached for him as he fumbled at the clevis.

"Howld on, ye frog-eater! Be a man! If 'twas human tore loose that yell he'll be the bether fer help, notwithstanding there was more av foight nor fear in th' sound."

"No, no, no! It's *her!* It's Diabliesse!" He crossed himself.

"Sure, an' ut is; bad cess to her altogether. But Oi got a hear-rt in me ribs o' good rid blood that takes relish now an' agin in a bit av a foight. An', man or baste, Oi ain't particular, so 'tis a good wan.

"Oi'll be goin' down th' thrail a piece an' see phwat's to see. Oi ain't axin' ye to go 'long. Ye poor prayer-dhrivlin' haythen, wid yer limon av a hear-rt ye've got a yallar shtripe that raches to th' length an' width av ye. Ye'd be no good nohow.

"But 'tis meself ain't fearin' th' evil eye av th' werwolf—an' she is called be the name av th' divil's own.

"But listen ye here, ye pea-soup Frenchy! Ye'll not go shnakin' off wid thim harses. Ye'll bide here till Oi come back."

The other made a whimper of protest, but Irish Fallon reached out a great hairy hand and shook him roughly.

"Yez moind now, an' Oi mane ut! Here ye shtay. An' av ye ain't here, ye'd bether kape on goin'. F'r th' nixt toime Oi lay eyes on ye Oi'll

br-reak ye in two! An' don't ye fer-git ut!"

The big Irishman turned and swung down the tote-road, the webs of his rackets leaving a broad trail in the snow. LaFranz cowered upon the snow-plow and sought refuge in craven prayer and curses the while he shot frightened glances into the darkening forest.

He thought of cutting the horses loose and starting them for camp at a run. But, much as he feared the wer-wolf, he feared Irish Fallon more; for many were the tales of Fallon's man-fights when his "Irish was up."

When the white wolf sprang the man had nearly reached the snarling pack. Before him, scarcely six feet away, lay his ax, the blade smeared with blood and brains, to which clung stiff gray hairs.

Instinctively he ducked, and as the huge form flashed past his right arm shot out straight from the shoulder. The long, clean blade entered just at the point of the brisket and, ranging upward, was buried to the haft as the knife was torn from his grasp.

One step and the man's fingers closed about the helve of his ax, and he whirled to meet the second onslaught.

But there was small need. The great brute stood still in her tracks and, with lowered head, snapped and wrenched at the thing that bit into her very lungs.

The stag-horn plates of the protruding hilt were splintered under the clamp of the mighty jaws, and the long, gleaming teeth made deep dents in the brass beneath. Her lips reddened, and before her the snow was flecked with blood.

All this the man took in at a glance without conscious impression. He gripped his weapon and sprang among the fighting pack, which ripped and dragged at the carcass of the dead wolf.

Right and left he struck in a reck-

less fume of ferocity, which spoke of unreasoning fights in worlds of savage firstlings. And under the smashing blows of the ax wolves went down—skulls split, spines crushed, ribs caved in—a side at a stroke, and shoulders were cloven clean and deep to pink sponge lungs.

As if realizing that her hurt was mortal, the great she-wolf abandoned her attack on the knife-haft and, summoning her strength for a supreme effort, sprang straight into the midst of the red shambles.

The man, caught unawares, went down under the impact of her body. For one fleeting second he stared upward into blazing eyes. From between wide-sprung rows of flashing fangs the blood-dripping tongue seemed to writhe from the cavernous throat, and the foul breath blew hot against his face. Instantly his strong fingers buried themselves in the shaggy fur close under the hinge of the jaw, while his other hand closed about the dented brass of the protruding knife-hilt.

With the whole strength of his arm he held the savage jaws from his face as he wrenched and twisted at the firmly embedded knife. Finally it loosened, and as the thick-backed blade was withdrawn from the wound it was followed by spurt after spurt of blood—bright, frothy blood, straight from the lungs, which gushed hot and wet over him.

Blindly he struck; stabbing, thrusting, slashing at the great form which was pressing him deeper and deeper into the snow. Again and again the knife was turned against rib and shoulder-blade, inflicting only shallow surface wounds.

At length a heavy, straight up-thrust encountered no obstacle of bone, and the blade bit deep and deeper into living flesh.

As with a final effort the knife was driven home, a convulsive shiver racked the body of the great white wolf, and with a low, gurgling moan

of agony her jaws set rigid, her muscles stiffened, and she toppled sidewise into the snow, where she lay twitching spasmodically with glazing eyes.

Bill staggered weakly to his feet.

The uninjured wolves had vanished, leaving their dead upon the snow, while the wounded left flat, red trails as they sought to drag their broken bodies to the cover of the forest.

Irish Fallon rounded a turn of the tote-road. He brought up sharply and stared open-mouthed at the man who, sheath-knife in hand, stood looking down at an indistinct object which lay upon the blood-trampled snow.

Carmody turned and shouted a greeting, but without a word the Irishman advanced to his side until he, too, stood looking down at the thing in the snow. Suddenly Bill's hand was seized in a mighty grip.

"Man! 'Tis *her*, an' no mistake! She's done for at lasht—an' blade to fang, in open foight ye've knoifed her! Sure, 'tis a gr-rand toime ye've had altogether," he said, glancing at the carcasses, "wid six dead besides her an' three more as good as."

Bill laughed: "This wolf—the big white one—seems to enjoy a reputation, then?"

"R-r-reputation! R-r-reputation, is ut? Good Lord, man! Don't ye know her? 'Tis th' werwolf! D'ablich, th' *loup-garou*, the Frinchies call her; an' the white divil, the Injuns—an' good rayson, f'r to me own knowledge she's kilt foive folks, big an' shmall, an' some Injuns besides.

"They claim she's a divil, an' phwin she howls 'tis because some sowl has missed th' happy huntin' grounds in th' dyin', an' she's laughin'."

"I don't know that I blame them," said Bill. "She favored me with a vocal selection. And, believe me, she was no mocking-bird."

"Well, she looks dead, now," grinned Fallon; "but we'd besht make sure. Owld man Frontenelle kilt her wunst. Seven year back, ut was, over on Monish.

"He shot her clean t'rough th' neck an' dhrug her to his cabin be th' tail. He was for skinnin' her flat f'r th' robe she'd make. He had her stretched out phwin wid a flash an' a growl, she was at um, an' wid wan clap av th' jaws she ripped away face an' half th' scalp.

"They found um wanderin' blind on th' lake ice an' carried um to Skelly's phwere he died in tin days' toime av hydrophoby, shnarlin' an' bitin' at folks till they had to chain um in th' shtorerroom."

As he spoke, Fallon picked up the ax, and with several well-directed blows shattered the skull of the werwolf against any possibility of a repetition of the Frontenelle incident.

"But come, man, get yer rackets an' we'll be hittin' the thrail f'r camp. Sure, Frinchy'll be scairt shtiff av we lave um longer."

"Rackets?" asked Bill, with a look of perplexity.

"Yer shnow-shoes, av coorse."

"Haven't got any. And I don't suppose I could use them if I had." The other stared at him incredulously.

"Not got any! Thin how'd ye git here?"

"Walked—or rather, stumbled along."

"Phwere from?"

"It started to snow as I left the old shack—the last one this way, I don't know how far back. It was there I traded my boots to an Indian for these." He extended a moccasined foot.

"'Tis a good job ye traded. But even at that—thirty-foive moile t'rough th' snow widout webs!" The Irishman looked at him in open admiration. "An' on top av that, killin' th' werwolf wid a knoife, an' choppin' her pack loike so much kindlin's!

"Green, ye may be—an' ignorant. But, frind, ye've done a man's job this day, an' Oi'm pr-roud to know yez."

Again he extended his hand and Bill seized it in a strong grip. Somehow, he did not resent being called green,

and ignorant—he was learning the north.

“Fallon’s me name,” the other continued, “an’ be an accident av birth, Oi’m called Oirish, f’r short.”

“Mine is Bill, which is shorter,” replied Carmody, smiling.

For just a second Irish hesitated as if expecting further enlightenment, but, receiving none, reached down and grasped the tail of the white wolf.

“’Tis a foine robe she’ll make, Bill, an’ in th’ north, among white min an’ Injuns, ’twill give ye place an’ shtandin’—but not wid Moncrossen,” he added with a frown.

“Come on along. Foller yez in behint, f’r th’ thrail’ll be fair br-roke. Phwat wid two thrips wid th’ rackets an’ th’ dhrag av th’ wolf, ’twill not be bad. ’Tis only a mather av twinty minutes to phwere Frinchy’ll bether be waitin’ wid th’ harses.”

CHAPTER XVI.

Moncrossen.

THEY found LaFranz waiting in fear and trembling. The heavy snow-plow was left in readiness for the morrow’s trail-breaking, and the horses hitched to a rough sled and headed for camp.

“An’ ye say Mither Appleton sint ye up to wor-rk in Moncrossen’s camp?” The two were seated on the log bunk at the back of the sled while the Frenchman drove, keeping a fearful eye on the white wolf. For old man Frontenelle had been his uncle.

“Yes, he told me to report here.”

“D’ye know Moncrossen?”

“No.”

“Well, ye will, ag’in’ shpring,” Irish replied dryly.

“What do you mean,” asked Bill.

Irish shrugged. “Oi mane this,” he answered. “Moncrossen is a har-rd man altogether. He hates a greener. He thinks no wan but an owld hand has any business in th’ woods, an’ ’tis his boast that in wan season he’ll make

a lumber-jack or a corpse out av any greener.

“An’ comin’ from Appleton hisself he’ll hate ye worse’n ever, f’r he’ll think ye’ll be afther crimpin’ his bird’s-eye game. Take advice, Bill, an’ kape on th’ good side av um av ye can.

“He’ll throw ut into ye wid all manner av dhirty thricks, but howld ye’re timper, an’ maybe ye’ll winter ut out—an’ maybe ye won’t.”

“What is a bird’s-eye game?”

Fallon glanced at him sharply. “D’ye mane ye don’t know about th’ bird’s-eye?” he asked.

“Not a thing,” replied Bill.

“Thin listen to me. Don’t ye niver say bird’s-eye in this camp av ye expect to winter ut out.”

Bill was anxious to hear more about the mysterious bird’s-eye, but the sled suddenly emerged into a wide clearing and Irish was pointing out the various buildings of the log camp.

Bright squares of light showed from the windows of the bunk-house, office, and grub-shack, with its adjoining cook-shack, from the iron stovepipe of which sparks shot skyward in a continuous shower.

Fallon shouldered the wolf and, accompanied by Bill, made toward the bunk-house, while the Frenchman turned the team toward the stable.

“Agin’ we git washed up, supper’ll be ready,” announced Irish, as he deposited the wolf carcass beside the door and entered.

Inside the long, low room, lined on either side by a double row of bunks, were gathered upward of a hundred men waiting the supper call.

They were big men, for the most part, rough clad and unshaven. Many were seated upon the edges of the bunks smoking and talking, others grouped about the three big stoves, and the tobacco-reeking air was laden with the rumble of throaty conversation, broken here and there by the sharp scratch of a match, a loud laugh, or a deep-growled, good-natured curse.

Into this assembly stepped Irish

Fallon, closely followed by Bill, the sight of whose blood-stained face attracted grinning attention. The two men passed the length of the room to the wash-bench, where a few loiterers still splashed noisily at their ablutions.

"I heard it plain, I'm tellin' you," some one was saying. "'Way off to the south it sounded."

"That ain't no lie," broke in another, "I hearn it myself—jest before dark, it was. An' I know! Didn't I hear it that night over on Ten Fork? The time she got Jack Kane's woman, four year ago, come Chris'mus. Yes, sir! I tell you the werwolf's nigh about this camp, an' it's me in off the edges afore dark!"

"They say she never laughs but she makes a kill," said one.

"God! I was at Skelly's when they brought old man Frontenelle in," added a big man, whose heavy beard was shot with gray, as he turned from the stove with a shudder.

"They's some Injuns trappin' below; she might of got one of them," opined a short, stockily built man who, catching sight of the newcomers, addressed Fallon:

"Hey, Irish, you was down on the tote-road; did you hear Diabliesse?"

Fallon finished drying his face upon the coarse roller-towel and faced the group who waited expectantly. "Yis, Oi hear-rd her, all roight," replied Fallon lightly. "An' thin Oi *see'd* her."

Others crowded about, hanging upon his words. "An' thin, be way av showin' me contimpt," he added, "Oi dhrug her a moile or more t'rough th' woods be th' tail."

Loud laughter followed this assertion; but not a few, especially among the older men, shook their heads in open disapproval, and muttered curses at his levity.

"But me frind Bill, here," Irish continued, "c'n tell ye more about her'n phwat Oi kin. He's new in th' woods, Bill is; an' so damned green he know'd nayther th' manein' nor use av

th' rackets. So, be gad, he come wid-out 'em. Mushed two whole days t'rough th' shnow.

"But, listen; no mather how ignorant, nor how much he don't know, a good man's a man—an' to pr-rove ut he jumps wid his ax roight into th' middle av th' werwolf's own an' kills noine, countin' th' three cripples Oi finished.

"But wid D'ablich herself, moind, he t'row'd away his ax an' goes to a clinch wid his knoife in his fisht. An' phwin 'tis over an' he picks himsilf up out av th' shnow an' wipes th' blood from his eyes—her blood—f'r he comes out av ut widout schcratch nor scar—D'ablich lays at his feet dead as a nit."

Fallon gazed triumphantly into the incredulous faces of the men, and, with a smile, added, "'Twas thin Oi dhrug her be th' tail to th' sled, afther shmashin' her head wid th' ax to make sure."

"An' where is she now, Irish?" mocked one. "Did she jump off the sled an' make a getaway?"

Over at the grub shack the cook's half-breed helper beat lustily upon the discarded saw-blade that hung suspended by a wire, and the men crowded noisily out of the doors.

"Oi'll show ye afther supper, ye damned shpalpeen, how much av her got away!" shouted Irish, who waited for Bill to remove the evidence of his fight before piloting him to the grub shack.

A single table of rough lumber covered with brown oilcloth extended the full length of the center of the room. Above this table six huge "Chicago burners" lighted the interior, which, as the two men entered, was a hive of noisy activity.

Men scuffled for places upon the stationary benches arranged along either side of the table. Heavy porcelain thumped the board, and the air was filled with the metallic din of steel knives and forks being gathered into bearlike hands.

Up and down the wide alleys behind the benches hurried flunkies bearing huge tin pots of steaming coffee, and the incessant returning of thick cups to their saucers was like the rattle of musketry.

But the thing that impressed the half-famished Bill was the profusion of food; never in his life, he thought, had he beheld so tempting an array of things to eat. Great trenchers of fried pork, swimming in its own grease, alternated the full length of the table with huge pans of baked beans.

Mountains of light, snowy bread rose at short intervals from among foot-hills of baked potatoes, steaming dishes of macaroni and stewed tomatoes, canned corn, peas, and apple sauce, and great yellow rolls of butter, into which the knives of the men skived deeply.

The two passed behind the benches in search of vacant places when suddenly an undersized flunky stumbled awkwardly, dropping the coffee-pot, which sent a wash of steaming brown liquid over the floor.

Instantly a great, hulking man with a wide, flat face and low forehead surmounted by a thick thatch of black hair, below which two swinish eyes scintillated unevenly, paused in the act of raising a great calk-booted foot over the bench.

The thick, pendulous lips under his ragged mustache curled backward, exposing a crenate row of jagged brown teeth. He stepped directly in front of the two men and, reaching out a thick hand, caught the unfortunate flunky by the scruff as he regained his balance.

From his lips poured an unbroken stream of vile epithets and soul-searing curses while he shook the whimpering wretch with a violence that threatened serious results, and ended by pinning him against the log wall and drawing back his huge arm for a terrific shoulder blow.

The vicious brutality of the attack following so trivial an offense aroused

Bill Carmody's anger. The man's back was toward him, and Bill grasped the back-drawn arm at the wrist and with an ungentle jerk whirled the other in his tracks.

The man released the flunky and faced him with a snarl. "Who done that?" he roared.

"I did. Hit me. I tripped him."

Bill's voice was dead level and low, but it carried to the farthest reaches of the room, over which had fallen a silence of expectation. Men saw that the hard, gray eyes of the stranger narrowed ominously.

"An' who the hell are *you*?" The words whistled through the bared teeth and a flush of fury flooded the man's face.

"What do you care? I tripped him. Hit me!" and the low, level tone blended into silence. It seemed a *thing*—that uncanny silence when noise should have been.

There were sounds—sounds that no one heeded nor heard—the heavy breathing of a hundred men waiting for something to happen—the thin creak of the table boards as men leaned forward upon hands whose knuckles whitened under the red skin, and stared, fascinated, at the two big men who faced each other in the broad aisle.

The swinish eyes of the brutish man glared malignantly into the gray eyes of the stranger, in which there appeared no slightest flicker of rage nor hate, nor any other emotion.

Only a cold, hard stare which held something of terrible intensity, accentuated by the little fans of whitening wrinkles which radiated from their corners.

In that instant the other's gaze wavered. He knew that this man had lied; and he knew that every man in the room knew that he had lied. That he had deliberately lied into the row and then, without raising his guard, had dared him to strike.

It was inconceivable.

Had the man loudly shouted his

challenge or thrown up his guard when he dared him to strike, or had his eye twitched or burned with anger, he would have unhesitatingly lunged into a fight to the finish.

But he found himself at a disadvantage. He was up against something he did not understand. The calm assurance of the stranger—his fists were not doubled and his lips smiled—disconcerted him.

A strange, prickly chill tingled at the back of his neck, and in his heart he knew that for the first time in his life he dared not strike a man. He cast about craftily to save his face and took his cue from the other's smile. With an effort his loose, thick lips twisted into a grin.

"G'wan with yer jokin', stranger," he laughed. "Y'u damn near made me mad—fer a minute," and he turned to the table.

Instantly a clatter of noise broke forth. Men rattled dishes nervously in relief or disappointment, and the room was filled with the rumble of voices in unmeaning chatter. But in the quick glances which passed from man to man there was much of meaning.

"God, man, that was Moncrossen!" whispered Fallon, when the two found themselves seated near the end of the table. Bill smiled.

"Was it?" he asked. "I don't like him."

CHAPTER XVII.

A Two-Fisted Man.

A HALF-HOUR later when Bill sought out the boss in the little office, the latter received him in surly silence; and as he read Appleton's note his lip curled.

"So you think you'll make a lumber-jack, do you?"

"Yes." There was no hesitation; nothing of doubt in the reply.

"My crew's full," the boss growled. "I don't need no men, let alone a

greener that don't know a peavey from a bark spud. Wha'd the old man send you up here for, anyhow?"

"That, I presume, is *his* business."

"Oh, it is, is it? Well, let me tell you first off—I'm boss of this here camp!" Moncrossen paused and glared at the younger man. "You get that, do you? Just you remember that what I say goes, an' I don't take no guff offen no man, not even one of the old man's pets—an' that's *my* business—see?"

Bill smiled as the scowling man crushed the note in his hand and slammed it viciously into the wood-box.

"Wants you broke in, does he? All right; I'll break you! Ag'in' spring you'll know a little somethin' about logs, or you'll be so damn sick of the woods you'll run every time you hear a log chain rattle; an' either way, you'll learn who's boss of this here camp."

Moncrossen sank his yellow teeth into a thick plug of tobacco and tore off the corner with a jerk.

"Throw yer blankets into an empty bunk an' be ready fer work in the mornin'. I'll put you swampin' fer the big Swede—I guess that 'll hold you. Yer wages is forty-five a month—an' I'm right here to see that you earn 'em."

"Can I buy blankets here? I threw mine away coming out."

"Comin' out! Comin' in, you mean! Men come *in* to the woods. In the spring they go *out*—if they're lucky. Get what you want over to the van; it'll be charged ag'in' yer wages." Bill turned toward the door.

"By the way," the boss growled, "what's yer name—back where you come from?"

"Bill."

"Bill what?"

"No. Just Bill—with a period for a full stop. And that's *my* business—see?" As Moncrossen encountered the level stare of the gray eyes he leered knowingly.

"Oh, that's it, eh? All right, *Bill!* 'Curiosity killed the cat,' as the feller says. An' just don't forget to remember that what a man don't know don't hurt him none.

"Loggin' is learned *in* the chop-pin's. Accidents happens; an' dead men tells no tales. Them that keeps their eyes to the front an' minds their own business gen'ally winters through. That's all."

Bill wondered at the seemingly irrelevant utterances of the boss, but left the office without comment.

On the floor of the bunk-house Irish Fallon, assisted by several of the men, was removing the skin from Diabliesse, while others looked on.

The awkward hush that fell upon them as he entered told Bill that he had been the subject of their conversation. Men glanced at him covertly, as though taking his measure, and he soon found himself relating the adventures of the trail to an appreciative audience, which grinned approval and tendered flasks, which he declined.

Later, as he helped Fallon nail the wolfskin to the end of the bunk-house he told him of the interview with Moncrossen. The Irishman listened, frowning.

"Ye've made a bad shtar-rt wid um," he said, shaking his head. "Ye eyed 'im down in th' grub shack, an' he hates ye fer ut. How ye got by wid ut Oi don't know, fer he's a scr-rapper from away back, an' av he'd sailed into ye Oi'm thinkin' he'd knocked th' divil out av ye, fer he's had experience, which ye ain't.

"But he didn't dast to, an' he knows ut, an' he knows that the men knows ut. An' now he'll lay fer a chanst to git aven. Ut's th' besht ye c'n do—loike he says, kape th' two eyes av ye to th' front an' moind yer own business—only kape wan eye behint ye to look out fer throuble. Phwat fer job did he give yez?"

"I am to start swamping, whatever that is, for the big Swede."

The Irishman grinned.

"Oi thought so; an' may God have mercy on yer sowl."

"What is the matter with the Swede?"

"Mather enough. Bein' hand an' glove wid Moncrossen is good rayson to suspicion any man. Fer t'is be the help av Shtromberg that Moncrossen kapes a loine on th' men an' gits by wid his crooked wor-rk.

"He ain't long on brains nohow, Moncrossen ain't, an' he ain't a good camp-boss nayther, fer all he gits out th' logs.

"Be bluff an' bullyin' he gits th' wor-rk out av th' crew; but av ut wasn't that Mистер Appleton lets um pay a bit over goin' wages, he'd have no crew, fer th' men hate um fer all they're afraid av um.

"Th' rayson he puts ye shwampin fer th' big Swede is so's he'll kape an eye on yez. As long as ye do yer wor-rk an' moind yer own business ye'll git along wid him as well as another. But, moind ye, phwin th' bird's-eye shtar-rts movin' ye don't notice nothin', or some foine avenin' ye'll turn up missin'."

"What is this bird's-eye thing?" asked Bill. "What has it got to do with Moncrossen—and me?"

The Irishman considered the question and, without answering, walked to the corner of the bunk-house near which they were standing and peered into the black shadow of the wall. Apparently satisfied, he returned again to where Bill was standing.

"Come on in th' bunk-house, now," he said. "I want to locate Shtromberg an' wan or two more. We'll sit around an' shmoke a bit, an' phwin they begin rollin' in ye'll ask me phwere is th' van, fer ye must have blankets an' phwat not. Oi'll go along to show ye, an' we'll take a turn down th' tote-road phwere we c'n talk wid-out its gittin' to th' ears av th' boss."

Wondering at the man's precautions for secrecy, he followed, and for a half-hour listened to the fireside gossip of the camp. He noticed that Fal-

lon's glance traveled over the various groups as if seeking some one, and he wondered which of the men was Stromberg.

Suddenly the door was flung open and a huge, yellow-bearded man stamped noisily to the stove, disregarding the curses that issued from the bunks of those who had already turned in.

This man was larger even than Moncrossen, with protruding eyes of china blue, which stared weakly from beneath heavy, straw-colored eyebrows. Two hundred and fifty pounds, thought Bill, as the man, snorting disagreeably, paused before him and fixed him with an insolent stare.

"Hey, you! Boss says you swamp for me," he snorted. Bill nodded indifferently.

"You know how to swamp good?" he asked. Bill studied the toes of his moccasins and, without looking up, replied with a negative shake of his head.

"I learn you, all right. In couple days you swamp good, or I fix you."

Bill looked up, encountered the watery glare of the blue eyes, and returned his gaze to the points of his moccasins. The voice of the Swede grew more aggressive. He snorted importantly as the men looked on, and smote his palm with a ponderous fist.

"First thing, I duck you in water-hole. Then I slap you to peak an' break off the peak." The men snickered, and Stromberg, emboldened by the silence of his new swamper, continued:

"It's time boys was in bed. Tomorrow I make you earn your wages."

Bill rose slowly from his seat, and as he looked again into the face of the big Swede his lips smiled. But Fallon noticed, and others, that in the steely glint of the gray eyes was no hint of smile, and they watched curiously while he removed his mackinaw and tossed it carelessly onto the edge of a near-by bunk from where it slipped unnoticed to the floor.

Stromberg produced a bottle, drank

deep, and returned the flask to his pocket. He rasped the fire from his throat with a harsh, grating sound, drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and kicked contemptuously at the mackinaw which lay almost at his feet.

As he did so a long, thick envelope, to which was tightly bound the photograph of a girl, slipped from the inner pocket. Instantly he stooped and seized it.

"Haw, haw!" he roared, "the greener's got a woman. Look, she's a—"

"Drop that!" The voice was low, almost soft in tone, but the words cut quick and clear, with no hint of gentleness.

"Come get it, greener!" The man taunted as he doubled a huge fist, and held the photograph high that the others might see.

Bill came. He covered the intervening space at a bound, springing swiftly and straight—as panthers spring; and as his moccasined feet touched the floor he struck. Once, twice, thrice—and all so quickly that the onlookers received no sense of repeated effort.

The terrific force of the well-placed blows, and their deadly accuracy, seemed to be consecutive parts of a single, continuous, smoothly flowing movement.

In the tense silence sounds rang sharp—the peculiar smack of living flesh hard hit, as the first blow landed just below the ear, the dull thump of a heavy body blow, and the clash of teeth driven against teeth as the sagging jaw of the big Swede snapped shut to the impact of the long swing that landed full on his chin's point.

The huge form stiffened, spun half-way around, and toppled sidewise against a rack of drying garments, which fell with a crash to the floor.

Without so much as a glance at the ludicrously sprawled figure, Bill picked up his mackinaw and returned the envelope to the pocket.

"Irish," he asked, "where is the van? I must get some blankets. My nurse, there, says it's time to turn in."

"Oi'll go wid ye," said Fallon, and a roar of laughter followed them out into the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Bird's-Eye" and Philosophy.

BILL quickly made his purchases, and shouldering the roll of blankets, followed Irish to the head of a rollway, where the two seated themselves on the bunk of a log sled.

"Oi don't know how ye done ut," Fallon began. "'Twas th' handiest bit av two-fisted wor-rk Oi iver see'd. 'Tis well ye've had ut out wid Shtromberg.

"Fer all his crookedness, he's a bether man thin th' boss, an' he'll not be layin' that lickin' up again yez. 'Twas a foight av his own pickin', an' he knows ye've got him faded.

"Aven av he w'ud of befoor, he'll see to ut that no har-rm comes to ye now t'rough fault av his own, fer well he knows the men 'ud think 'twas done to pay ye back, an' he'll have no wish to play th' title rôle at a hangin'.

"From now on, 'tis only Moncrossen ye'll have to watch, fer ye're in good wid th' men. We undershtand ye now. Ye see, in th' woods we don't loike myshtery an', whiles we most av us know that Moncrossen's givin' Appleton th' double-cross, 'tis none av our business, an' phwin we thought ye'd come into th' woods undher false pretinces to catch um at ut, they was more or less talk.

"Mesilf was beginnin' to think ye'd come into th' woods fer th' rist cure, ye read about in th' papers, seein' ye'd loafed about fer maybe it's foive hours an' done nothin' besides carve up th' werwolf an' her pack, eye down th' boss in his own grub-shack, an' thin top off th' avenin' be knockin' th' big Swede cold, which some claims he c'ud put th' boss himself to th' brush, wunst

he got shtar-rted. But now we know phy ye're here. We're pr-round ye're wan av us."

"What do you mean — you know why I am here? I am here because I needed a job, and Appleton hired me."

"Sure, lad. But, ye moind th' picture in yer pocket. 'Twas a woman."

"But—"

"'Tis none av our business, an' 'tis nayther here nor there. Av there's a woman at th' bottom av ut, 'tis rayson enough—phwativer happens."

Bill laughed.

"You were going to tell me about the bird's-eye," he reminded.

"Ut's loike this: Here an' yon in th' timber there's a bird's-eye tree—bird's-eye maple, ye know. 'Tis scarce enough, wid only a tree now an' agin, an' ut takes an expert to spot ut.

"Well, th' bird's-eye brings around a hundred dollars a thousan', an' divil a bit av ut gits to Appleton's mills.

"Moncrossen's got a gang — Shtromberg's in ut, an' a Frinch cruiser named Lebolt, an' a boot-leggin' tree-spotter named Creed, that lives in Hilarity, an' a couple av worthless divils av sawyers that's too lazy fer honest wor-rk, but camps t'rough th' winter, trappin' an' sawin' bird's-eye an' calico ash on other men's land.

"Shtromberg 'll skid till along toward shpring phwin he'll go to teamin'. Be that toime th' bird's-eye logs 'll be down, here an' there in th' woods beyant th' shoppin's, an' Shtromberg 'll haul um an' bank um on some river; thin in th' summer, Moncrossen an' his men 'll slip up, toggle um to light logs so they 'll float, an' raft um to th' railroad phwere there'll be a buyer from th' Eastern vaneer mills waitin'.

"Ut's a crooked game, shtearlin' Appleton's logs, an' haulin' um wid Appleton's teams, an' drawin' Appleton's wages fer doin' ut.

"Now, bechune man an' man, th' big Swede's th' brains av th' gang. He's a whole lot shmar-rter'n phwat he lets on. Such ain't th' nature av men, but 'tis th' way av women."

Irish thoughtfully tamped his pipe-bowl, and the flare of the match between his cupped palms brought out his honest features distinctly in the darkness. Bill felt a strong liking for this homely philosopher, and he listened as the other eyed him knowingly and continued:

" 'Tis be experience we lear-rn. An' th' sooner a man lear-rns, th' bether ut is fer um, that all women know more thin they let on—an' they've always an ace fer a whole car-rd bekase av ut.

" Fer women run men, an' men politics, an' politics armies, an' armies th' wor-rld—an' at th' bottom av ut all is th' wisdom an' schemin' av women.

" Phwin a man fools a woman, he's a fool—fer she ain't fooled at all. But, she ain't fool enough to let on she ain't fooled, fer well she knows that as long as she knows more thin he thinks she knows, she holds th' edge—an' th' divil av ut is, she does.

" Take a man, now; phwin ye know um, ye know um. He's always willin' to admit he's as shmar-rt as he is, or a damn soight shmar-rter, which don't fool no wan, fer 'tis phwat they expect.

" A man c'n brag an' lie about phwat he knows, an' phwere he's been, an' phwat he's done; an' noine toimes out av tin, ye cud trust him to th' inds av th' earth wid ye're lasht dollar.

" But wanst let um go out av his way to belittle himsilf an' phwat he knows, an' Oi w'udn't trust him wid a bent penny as far as Oi cud t'row a bull be th' tail—fer 'tis done wid a purpose. 'Tis so wid Shtromberg."

Fallon arose, consulted his watch, and led the way toward the bunk-house.

" So now ye know fer phwy Moncrossen hates ye," he continued. " He knows ye're a greener in th' woods, but he knows be this toime ye'll be a har-rd man to handle, an' he fears ye. Oi've put ye wise to th' bird's-eye game so ye c'n steer clear av ut, an' not be gittin' mixed up in ut wan way or another."

" I am much obliged, Fallon, for what you have told me," replied Bill quietly; " but inasmuch as I am working for Appleton, I will just make it my business to look after his interests in whatever way possible. I guess I will take a hand in the bird's-eye game myself. I am not afraid of Moncrossen and his gang of thieves. Anyway, I will give them a run for their money."

Fallon shrugged.

" D'ye know, Oi thought ye'd say that. Well, 'tis ye're own funeral. Tellin' ye about me, Oi ain't lost no bird's-eye trees, mesilf, but av ye need help— Be th' way, th' bunk above mine's empty; ye moight t'row ye're blankets in there."

CHAPTER XIX.

A Frame-Up.

IN the days that followed Bill threw himself into the work with a vigor that won the approval of the men. A "top" lumber crew is a smooth-running machine of nice balance whose working units are interdependent one upon another for efficiency. One shirking or inexperienced man may appreciably curtail the output of an entire camp and breed discontent and dissatisfaction among the crew. But with Bill there was no soldiering. He performed a man's work from the start—awkwardly at first, but, with the mastery of detail acquired under the able tutelage of Stromberg, he became known as the best swamper on the job.

Between him and the big Swede existed a condition of armed neutrality. Neither ever referred to the incident of the bunk-house, nor did either show hint of ill-feeling toward the other. The efficiency of each depended upon the efforts of the other, and neither found cause for complaint.

With the crew working to capacity to supply Appleton's demand for ten million feet of logs, there was little time for recreation. Nevertheless, Bill

bought a pair of snow-shoes from a passing Indian and, in spite of rough weather and aching muscles, utilized stormy days and moonlight nights in perfecting himself in their use.

He and Fallon had become great chums and, contrary to the Irishman's prediction, instead of hectoring the new man, Moncrossen left him severely alone.

And so the routine of the camp went on until well into February. The clearing widened, the timber line receded, and tier upon tier of logs was pyramided upon the rollways. As yet Bill had made no progress—formulated no definite plan for the detection and ultimate exposure of the gang of bird's-eye thieves.

Occasionally men put up at the camp for a short stay. Creed and Lebolt were the most frequent visitors, but neither gave evidence of being other than he appeared to be—Creed a hunter seeking to dispose of venison taken out of season, and Lebolt a company cruiser engaged in estimating timber to the northward.

It was about this time that Bad Luck, that gaunt specter that lurks unseen in the shadows and hovers over the little lives of men for the working of harm, swooped down upon the camp and in a series of untoward happenings impaired its efficiency and impregnated the atmosphere with the blight of discontent.

An unprecedented thaw set in, ruining the skidways and reducing the snow of the forest to a sodden slush that chilled men to the bone as they floundered heavily about their work.

Reed and Kantochoy, two sawyers, were caught by a "kick-back." One of the best horses was sweenied. A teamster who fell asleep on the top of his load awoke in the bottom of a ravine with a shattered arm, a dead horse, and a ruined log-sled. Bill's foot was mashed by a rolling log; and last, and most far-reaching in its effect, the cook contracted spotted fever and died in a reverse curve.

Moncrossen raged. From a steady eighty thousand feet a day the output dropped to seventy, sixty, fifty thousand—and the end was not in sight. Good-natured-banter and friendly tussles among the men gave place to surly bickering and ugly fist-fighting, and in spite of the best efforts of the second cook the crew growled sullenly or openly cursed the grub.

Then it was that Moncrossen knew that something must be done—and that something quickly. He shifted Stromberg and Fallon to the sawing crew, made a skidder out of a swamper, and filled his place with a grub-shack flunky.

Then one afternoon he dropped in upon Bill in the bunk-house, where that young man sat fuming at his inaction with his foot propped up on the edge of a bunk.

"How's the foot?" growled the boss.

"Pretty sore," answered Bill, laying aside a magazine. "Swelling is going down a bit."

"Ever handle horses?"

"Yes, a few."

The boss cleared his throat and proceeded awkwardly.

"I don't like to ask no crippled man to work before he's able," he began grudgingly. "But things is goin' bad. What with them two pilgrims that called theirselves sawyers not bein' able to dodge a kickback, an' Gibson pickin' a down-hill pull on an iced skidway for to go to sleep on his load, an' your gettin' pinched, an' the cook curlin' up an' dyin' on us, an' the whole damned outfit roarin' about the grub, there's hell to pay all around."

He paused and, receiving no answer, shot a crafty look at the man before him.

"Now, if you was able," he went on, "you c'd take the tote-sled down to Hilarity an' fetch us a cook. It seems like that's the onliest way; there ain't nary 'nother man I c'n spare—an' he's a good cook, old Daddy Dunnigan is, if he'll come. He's a in-

dependent old cuss—work if he damn good an' feels like it, an' if he don't he won't.

"If you think you c'n tackle it, I'll have the blacksmith whittle you out a crutch, an' you c'n take that long-gear'd tote team an' make Hilarity in two days. They's double time in it for you," he added, as a matter of special inducement.

Bill did not hesitate over his decision.

"All right; I think I can manage," he said. "When do I start?"

"The team 'll be ready early in the mornin'. If you start about four o'clock you c'n make Melton's old No. 8 Camp by night without crowdin' 'em too hard. It's the first one of them old camps you strike, and you c'n stable the horses without unharnessin'; just slip off the bridles an' feed 'em."

Bill nodded. At the door Moncrossen halted and glanced at him peculiarly.

"I'm obliged to you," he said. "For a greener, you've made a good hand. I'll have things got ready."

Bill was surprised that the boss had paid him even this grudging compliment, and as he sat beside the big stove, puzzled over the peculiar glance that had accompanied it.

In a few minutes, however, he dismissed the matter and turned again to his six months old magazine. Could he have followed Moncrossen and overheard the hurried conversation which took place in the little office, he would have found food for further reflection, but of this he remained in ignorance; and, all unknown to him, a man left the office, slipped swiftly and noiselessly into the forest, and headed southward.

"'Tis a foine va-aca-tion ye're havin' playin' nurse fer a pinched toe, an' me tearin' out th' bone fer to git out th' logs on salt-horse an' dough-gods 't w'd sink a battle-ship. 'Tis a lucky divil ye ar-re altogither," railed Fallon good-naturedly as he returned from supper and found Bill engaged in

the task of swashing arnica on his bruised foot.

"Oh, I don't know. I'll be back in the game to-morrow."

"To-morry!" exclaimed Irish, eying the swollen and discolored member with a grin. "Yis; ut 'll be to-morry, all right. But 'tis a shame to waste so much toime. Av ye c'd git th' boss to put ye on noight shift icin' th' skidways, ye wudn't have to wait so long."

"It's a fact, Irish," laughed Bill. "I go on at 4 A.M. to-morrow."

"Fure A.M., is ut? An' phwat 'll ye be doin'? Peelin' praties fer that dommed pisener in th' kitchen. Ye've only been laid up t'ree days an' talk av goin' to wor-rk. Man! Av Oi was lucky enough to git squose loike that, Oi'd make ut lasht a month av Oi had to pour ink on me foot to kape up th' color."

"I'm going to Hilarity for a cook," insisted Bill. "Moncrossen says there is a real one down there—Daddy Dunnigan, he called him."

"Sure, Dunnigan 'll not come into th' woods. An' phy shud he? Wid money in th' bank, an' her majesty's—Oi mane, his nibs's pension comin' in ivery month, an' his insides broke into Hod Burrage's whisky—phwat more c'd a man want?"

"The boss thinks maybe he'll come. Anyway, I am going after him."

"Ye shud av towld um to go to hell! Wor-rkin' a man wid a foot loike that is croolty to animals; av ye was a harse he'd be arrested."

"He didn't tell me to go. He is crowded for men; the grub is rotten; something has to be done; and he asked me if I thought I could make it."

Irish pulled thoughtfully at his pipe, and slowly his brows drew together in a frown.

"He said ye c'd make ut in two days?" he inquired.

"Yes. The tote road is well broken, and forty miles traveling light with that rangy team is not such an awful pull."

"An' he towld ye phwere to camp. It'll be Melton's awld No. 8, where ye camped comin' in?"

"Yes."

Fallon nodded thoughtfully, and Bill wondered what was passing in his mind. For a long time he was silent, and the injured man responded to the hearty greetings and inquiries of the men returning from the grub shack.

When these later had disposed themselves for the evening, the Irishman hunched his chair closer to the bunk upon which Bill was sitting.

"At Melton's No. 8, Oi moind, th' shtables is a good bit av a way from th' rist av th' buildin's, an' hid from soight be a knowl av ground."

"I don't remember the stables, but they can't be very far; they are in the clearing, and Moncrossen had the blacksmith make me a crutch."

"A crutch, is ut? A crutch! Well, a man ud play hell makin' foorty moiles on a crutch in th' winter—no mather how good th' thrail was broke."

"Forty miles! Look here, Irish—what are you talking about? I thought your bottle had been empty for a week."

"Impty ut is—which me head ain't. Listen: S'posin'—just s'posin', moind yez Oi'm sayin'—a man wid a bum leg was camped in th' shack av Melton's No. 8, an' th' harses in th' shtable. An' s'posin' some one shnaked in in th' noight an' stole th' harses on um an' druv 'em to Hilarity, an' waited f'r th' boss to sind f'r 'em."

"An' s'posin' a wake wint by befoor th' boss c'd sind a man down to look up th' team he'd sint f'r a cook, wid orders to hurry back. An' s'posin' he found th' bum-legged driver froze shtiff on th' tote road phwere he'd made out to hobble a few moiles on his crutch—phwat thin?"

"Why, th' man was a greener, an', not knowin' how to handle th' team, they'd got away from um."

Bill followed the Irishman closely, and knew that he spoke with a pur-

pose. His eyes narrowed, and his lips bent into that cold smile which the men of the camp had come to know was no smile at all, but a battle alarum, the more ominous for its silence.

"Do you mean that it is a frame-up? That Moncrossen—" Fallon silenced him with a motion.

"Whist!" he whispered and glanced sharply about him, then leaned over and dug a stiffened forefinger into the other's ribs. "Oi don't mane nothin'. But 'tis about toime they begun bankin' their bird's-eye."

"Creed et dinner in camp, but he never et supper. Him an' th' boss made medicine in th' office *afther* th' boss talked to ye. Put two an' two together an' Oi've towld ye nothin' at all; but av ye fergit ut Oi'll see that phwat th' wolves lave av th' bum-legged teamster is buried proper an' buried deep, an' Oi'll blow in tin dollars f'r a mass f'r his sowl."

"Av ye *don't* fergit ut, ye moight fetch back a gallon jug av Hod Burrage's embalmin' flooid, f'r me inwards is that petrified be th' grub we've been havin' av late, they moight mishtake ut f'r rale liquor. Good-by, an' good luck—'tis toime to roll in."

CHAPTER XX.

A Fire in the Night.

THE sledding was good on the tote-road.

The thaw that ruined the iced surface of the sideways was followed by several days of freezing weather that put a hard, smooth finish on the deep snow of the longer road, over which the runners of the box-bodied tote-sled slipped with scarcely any resistance to the pull of the sharp-shod team.

Bill Carmody, snugly bundled in robes in the bottom of the sled, idly watched the panorama of tree-trunks between which the road twisted in an endless succession of tortuous windings.

It was not yet daylight when he rounded the bend which was the scene of his fight with the were-wolf.

But by the thin, cold starlight and the pale luminosity of the fading aurora, he recognized each surrounding detail, and wondered at the accuracy with which the trivialities of the setting had been subconsciously impressed upon his memory.

It was here he had first met Fallon, and he remembered the undisguised approval in the Irishman's voice and the firm grip of the hand that welcomed him into the comradery of the Northmen as he stood, faint from hunger and weary from exertion, staring dully down at the misshapen carcass of Diabliesse.

"Good old Irish," he muttered, and smiled as he thought of himself, Bill Carmody, proud of the friendship of a lumber-jack.

He had come to know that in the ceaseless whirl of society the heavier timbers—the real men are thrown outward—forced to the very edges of the bowl, where they toil among big things upon the outskirts of civilization.

He pulled off his heavy mitten and fumbled for his pipe. In the side-pocket of his mackinaw his hand encountered an object—hard and cold and unfamiliar to his touch.

He withdrew it and looked at the wicked, blue-black outlines of an automatic pistol. Idly he examined the clip, crowded with shiny, yellow cartridges. He recognized the gun as Fallon's, and smiled as he returned it to his pocket.

"Only in case of a pinch," he grinned, and glanced approvingly at the fist that doubled hard to the strong clinch of his fingers.

Hour after hour he slipped smoothly southward, relieving the monotony of the journey by formulating his plan of action in case the forebodings of Fallon should be realized.

Personally he apprehended no trouble, but he made up his mind that

trouble coming should not find him unprepared.

When at last the team swung into the clearing of Melton's old Number Eight, the stars winked in cold brilliance above the surrounding pines, and the deserted buildings stood lifeless and dim in the deepening gloom.

Bill headed the horses for the stable which he found, as Irish had told him, located at some distance from the other buildings and cut off from sight by a knoll and a heavy tangle of scrub that had sprung up in the clearing.

He climbed stiffly and painfully from the sled-box, and with the aid of his crutch, hobbled about the task of unhitching the horses. He watered them where a plume of thin vapor disclosed the whereabouts of a never-freezing spring which burbled softly between its low, ice-encrusted banks.

It proved a difficult matter, crippled as he was, to handle the horses, but at length he got them into the stable, chinked the broken feed-boxes as best he could, and removed the bridles, hanging them upon the hames.

He closed the door and, securing his lantern, blankets, and lunch-basket, made his way toward the old shack where he spent his first night in the timber land.

The sagging door swung half open, and upon the rough floor the snow-water from the recent thaw had collected in puddles and frozen, rendering the footing precarious.

Bill noted with satisfaction that there still remained a goodly portion of the firewood which he had cut and carried in upon his previous visit, and he soon had a fire roaring in the rusty stove.

He was in no hurry. He knew that any attempt to make away with the team would be delayed until the thief believed him to be asleep, and his plans were laid to the minutest detail.

Setting the lantern upon the table, he proceeded to eat his lunch, after which he lighted his pipe and for an hour smoked at the fireside. In spite

of the pain of his injured foot his mind wandered back to the events of his first visit to the shack.

There, in the black shadow of the pile of firewood, lay the empty whisky-bottle where the Indian had tossed it after drinking the last drop of its contents.

Carmody stared a long time at this silent reminder of his first serious brush with King Alcohol, then, from the inner pocket of his mackinaw, he drew the sealed packet and gazed for many minutes at the likeness of the girl—dimming now from the rub of the coarse cloth of the pocket.

Suddenly a great longing came over him—a longing to see this girl, to hear the soft accents of her voice and, above all, to tell her of his great love for her, that in all the world there was no woman but her, and that each day, and a hundred times each day, her dear face was before his eyes, and in his ears, ringing above the mighty sounds of a falling forest, was the soft, sweet sound of her voice.

He could not speak to her, but she could speak to him, even if it was but a repetition of the words of the letters he already knew by heart, but which had remained sealed in the envelope ever since the day he bid farewell to Broadway—and to *her*.

His fingers fumbled at the flap of the heavy envelope. He could at least feast his eyes upon the lines traced by her pen and press his lips to the page where her little hand had rested.

His foot throbbed with dull persistence. He was conscious of being tired, but he must not sleep this night. Rough work possibly, at any rate, a man's work, awaited him there in the gloom of the silent clearing.

Again his eye sought the whisky-bottle and held. His fingers ceased to toy with the flap, for in that moment the thought came to him that had the bottle not been empty, had it been filled with liquor—strong liquor—with the pain in his foot and the stiffness of his tired muscles and the work ahead

—well, he might—for the old desire was strong upon him—he might take a drink.

"Not yet," he muttered, and returned the packet to his pocket unopened. "I told her I would beat the game. I've bucked old John Barley-corn's line and scored a touchdown; the hardest of the fighting is past, but there is just a chance that I might miss goal."

Bill looked at his watch; it was eight o'clock. He stood up, wincing as his injured foot touched the floor, and hobbled across the room where he wrenched a rough, split shelf from the wall. This, together with some sticks of firewood, he rolled in a blanket, placing it near the stove. He added more wood until the bundle was about the size and shape of a man, and covered it with his other two blankets. Filling the broken stove with wood, he blew out the lantern and limped silently out into the night.

Two hours later Creed, bird's-eye spotter and bad man of the worn-out little town of Hilarity, knocked the ashes from his pipe and held a glowing brand to the dial of his watch.

"The greener should be asleep by now," he muttered, and, rolling his blanket, kicked snow over the remnant of his camp-fire, picked up his rifle, and ascended the steep side of a deep ravine lying some two hundred yards to the westward of the clearing where Bill Carmody had encamped for the night.

After leaving Moncrossen's office on the previous afternoon he had traveled all night, and reached Melton's old Number Eight in the early morning.

All day he had slept by the side of his fire in the bottom of the ravine, and in the evening had lain in the cover of the scrub and watched the greener stable the horses and limp to the deserted shack.

At heart Creed was a craven, a bullying swashbuckler, who bragged and blustered among the rheumy-eyed

down-and-outers who nightly foregathered about Burrage's stove, but who was servile and cringing as a starved puppy toward Moncrossen and Stromberg, who openly despised him.

They made good use of his ability to "spot" a bird's-eye tree as far as he could see one, however, an ability shared by few woodsmen, and which in Creed amounted almost to genius.

The man had never been known to turn his hand to honest work, but as a timber pirate and pedler of rotgut whisky among the Indians, he had arisen to comparative affluence.

His hate for the greener was abysmal and unreasoning, and had been carefully fostered by Moncrossen who, instinctively fearing that the new man would eventually expose his nefarious double-dealing with his employer, realized that at the proper time Creed could be induced to do away with the greener under circumstances that would leave him, Moncrossen, free from suspicion.

In the framing of Bill Carmody, Stromberg had no part. Moncrossen could not fathom the big Swede, upon whose judgment and acumen he had come to rely in the matter of handling and disposing of the stolen timber.

Several times during the winter he had tentatively broached plans and insinuated means whereby the Swede could "accidentally" remove his swamper from their path.

The reversing of a hook which would cause a log to roll just at the right time on a hillside; the filing of a link; the snapping of a weakened bunk-pin, any one of these common accidents would render them safe from possible interference.

But to all these suggestions Stromberg turned a deaf ear. The boss even taunted him with the knock-out he had received at the hands of the greener.

"That's all right, Moncrossen," he replied; "I picked the fight purpose to beat him up. It didn't work. He's a better man than me—or you either—an' you know it. Only he had to lick

me to prove it. He chilled your heart with a look an' a grin—an' the whole crew lookin' on.

"But beatin' up a man is one thing an' murder is another. Appleton's rich, besides he's a softwood man an' ain't fixed for handlin' veneer, so I might's well get in on the bird's-eye as let you an' Creed an' Lebolt steal it all.

"But I ain't got to the point where I'd murder a good man to cover up my dirty tracks—an' I never will!"

And so, without consulting Stromberg, Moncrossen bided his time and laid his plans. And now the time had come. The plan had been gone over in detail in the little office, and Creed in the edge of the timber stood ready to carry it out.

Stealthily he slipped into the dense shadows of the scrub and made his way toward the shack where a thin banner of smoke, shot with an occasional yellow spark, floated from the dilapidated stovepipe that protruded from the roof.

The hard crust rendered snow-shoes unnecessary, and his soft moccasins made no sound upon the surface of the snow.

Gaining the side of the shack, he peered between the unchinked logs. The play of the firelight that shone through the holes of the broken stove sent flickering shadows dancing over the floor and walls of the rough interior.

Near the fire, stretched long and silent beneath its blankets, lay the form of a man. Creed shifted his position for a better view of the sleeper. His foot caught in the loop of a piece of discarded wire whose ends were firmly frozen into the snow, and he crashed heavily backward into a pile of dry brushwood.

It seemed to the frightened man as if the accompanying noise must wake the dead. He lay for a moment where he had fallen, listening for sounds from within. He clutched his rifle nervously, but the deathlike silence

was unbroken save for his own heavy breathing and the tiny snapping of the fire in the stove.

Cautiously he extricated himself from the brush-heap, his heart pounding wildly at the snapping of each dry twig. It was incredible that the man could sleep through such a racket in a country where life and death may hang upon the rustle of a leaf.

But the silence remained unbroken, and, after what seemed to the cowering man an eternity of expectant waiting, he crawled again to the wall and glanced furtively into the interior. The form by the fire was motionless as before—it had not stirred.

Then, as he looked, a ray of fire-light fell upon the white label of the black whisky bottle that lay an easy arm's reach from the head of the sleeper. A smile of comprehension twisted the lips of his evil face as he leered through the crevice at the helpless form by the fireside.

"Soused to the guards," he sneered, "an' me with ten years scairt offen my life fer fear I'd wake him." He stood erect and, with no attempt at the stealth with which he had approached the shack, proceeded rapidly in the direction of the stable.

It was but the work of a few moments to bridle the horses, lead them out, and hitch them to the sled.

Tossing the horse-blankets on top of the big tarpaulin which lay in the rear of the sled-box ready for use in the covering of supplies, he settled himself in front and pulled the robes about him.

He turned the team slowly onto the tote-road and glanced again toward the shack. A spark, larger than the others, shot out of the stovepipe and lodged upon the bark roof, where it glowed for a moment before going out. The man watched it in sudden fascination.

He halted the team and stared long at the spot where the spark had vanished in blackness, but which in the brain of the man appeared as an ever-

widening circle of red, which spread until it included the whole roof in its fiery embrace, and crept slowly down the log walls.

So realistic was the picture that he seemed to hear the crackle and roar of the leaping flames. He drew a trembling hand across his eyes, and when he looked again the shack stood silent and black in the half light of the starlit clearing.

"God!" he mumbled aloud. "If it had only happened thataway—" He passed his tongue over his dry, thick lips. "Why not?" he argued querulously. "Moncrossen said 'twa'n't safe to bushwhack him like I wanted to—said how I ain't got nerve nor brains to stand no investigation.

"But if he'd git burnt up in the shack, that's safer yet. He got that booze somewhere—some one knows he had it. He got spifficated, built a roarin' fire in the old stove—an' there y'are, plain as daylight. No brains! I'll show him who's got brains—an' there won't be no investigation, neither."

He drew the team to the side of the tote-road and, slipping the halters over the bridles, tied them to a stout sapling and made his way toward the shack.

One look satisfied him that the sleeper had not stirred, and noiselessly he slipped the heavy hasp of the door over the staple and secured it with the wooden pin.

He collected dry branches, piling them directly beneath the small, square window which yawned high in the wall. Higher and higher the pile grew until its top was almost on a level with the sill.

His hands trembled as he applied the match. Tiny tongues of flame struggled upward through the branches, lengthening and widening as fresh twigs ignited, and in his ears the crackle and snap of the dry wood sounded as the rattle of musketry.

His first impulse as the flames gained headway was to fly—to place distance

between himself and the scene of his crime. But he dared not go. His knees shook, and he stared with blanched face in horrid fascination as the flames roared and crackled through the brushwood.

They were curling about the window now, and the whole clearing was light as day. He slunk around the corner and gained the shadow of the opposite wall. Fearfully he applied his eye to a crevice—the form by the stove had not moved.

The air of the interior was heavy with smoke, and tiny flames were eating their way between the logs. The smoke thickened, blurring and blotting out the prostrate figure. He glanced across at the window. Its aperture was a solid sheet of flame—he was safe!

With a low, animal-like cry Creed sprang away and dashed in the direction of the team. With shaking fingers he clawed at the knots and slipped the halters.

Leaping into the sled, he grabbed up the lines and headed the horses southward at a run. Behind him the sky reddened as the flames licked hungrily at the dry logs of the shack.

"It's his own fault! It's his own fault!" he mumbled over and over again. "Serves him right fer gittin' soused an' buildin' up a big fire in a busted stove. 'Twasn't no fault of his that spark didn't catch the roof. Serves him right! Maybe it did catch—maybe it did. 'Tain't my fault no-how—it must 'a' caught—I seen it thataway so plain! Oh, my God! Oh, my God," he babbled, "if they git to askin' me!

"It was thisaway, mister; yes, sir; listen: I was camped in the ravine, an' all to wunst I seen the flare of the fire an' I run over there; but 'twas too late—the roof had fell in an' the pore feller must 'a' been cooked alive. It was turrible, mister—turrible!

"An' I run an' hitched up the team an' druv to Hilarity hell bent fer a potlatch—that's the way of it—s'elp

me God it is! If you don't b'lieve it ask Moncrossen—ask Moncrossen, I mean, if he didn't have no booze along—he must 'a' been drunk—an' him crippled thataway!

"Oh, Lordy, Lordy! I ain't supposed to know it was the greener, let alone he was crippled! I'm all mixed up a'ready! They better not go askin' me questions lessen they want to git me hung—Goda'mi'ty! I'd ort to done like Moncrossen said!"

So he raved in a frenzy of terror as the horses sped southward at a pace that sent the steam rising in clouds from their heaving sides.

And under the big tarpaulin in the rear of the sled-box the greener grinned as he listened, and eyed the gibbering man through a narrow slit in the heavy canvas.

CHAPTER XXI.

Daddy Dunnigan.

IT was broad daylight when Creed pulled the team up before a tumbled-down stable in the rear of one of the outstraggling cabins at the end of Hilarity's single street. Hastily he unhitched and led the horses through the door.

As he disappeared Bill slipped from under the canvas and limped stiffly around the corner of the stable, and none too soon, for as Creed returned to the sled for the oats and blankets the cabin door opened, and a tall, angular woman appeared, carrying an empty water-pail.

"So ye've come back, hev ye?" she inquired in a shrewish voice. "Well, ye're jest in time to fetch the water an' wood. Where d'ye git that rig?" she added sharply, eying the sled.

"None o' yer damn business! An' you hurry up an' cook breakfast ag'in' I git back from Burrage's, er I'll rig you!"

"Yeh, is that *so*? Jest you lay a finger on me, you damn timber-thiev-in' boot-legger, an' I'll bust you one

over the head with the peaked end of a flatiron! Where ye goin' ter hide when the owner of them team comes a huntin' of 'em? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shet up!" growled the man so shortly that the woman, eying him narrowly, turned toward the rickety pump, which burbled and wheezed as she worked the handle, filling the pail in spasmodic splashes.

"One of Moncrossen's teamsters got burnt up in the shack at Melton's No. 8, an' I found the team in the stable an' druv 'em in," he vouchsafed as he brushed by the woman on his way to the street. "'Twouldn't look right if I shet up about it; I'll be back when I tell Burrage."

"Fetch some bacon with ye," called the woman as she filled her dirty apron with chips. She paused before lifting the pail from the spout of the wooden pump and gazed speculatively at the tote-sled.

"He's lyin'," she said aloud. "He's up to some fresh devilment, an' 'pears like he's scairt. Trouble with Creed is, he ain't got no nerve — he's all mouth. I sure was hard up fer a man when I tuk *him* — but he treats me middlin' kind, an' I'd kind of hate to see him git caught — 'cause he ain't no good a liar, an' a man anyways smart 'd mix him up in a minit."

She lifted the pail and pushed through the door of the cabin.

"Nice people," muttered Bill as he cast about for an exit.

Keeping the stable in line with the window of the cabin, he made his way through a litter of tin cans and rubbish, gaining the shelter of the scrub, where he bent a course parallel with the street.

He was stiff and sore from his cramped position in the sled, and his foot pained sharply. His progress was slow, and he paused to rest on the edge of a small clearing, in the center of which, well back from the highway, stood a tiny cabin.

In the doorway an old man, with a short cutty-pipe between his lips,

leaned upon a crutch and surveyed the sky with weatherwise eyes.

Bill instantly recognized him as the old man with the twisted leg who tendered the well-meant advice upon the night of his first arrival in the little town, and his face reddened as he remembered the supercilious disregard with which he had received it.

For a moment he hesitated, then advanced toward the door. The old man removed his cutty-pipe and regarded him curiously.

"Good morning!" called Bill with just a shade of embarrassment.

"Good marnin' yersilf!" grinned the other, a twinkle in his little eyes.

"May I ask where I will find a man called Daddy Dunnigan?"

"In about foive minutes ye'll foind um atein' breakfast wid a shtrappin' young hearty wid a sore fut. Come an in. Oi'm me own housekaper, cook, an' bottle-washer; but, av Oi do say ut mesilf, Oi've seen wor-rse!"

"So you are Daddy Dunnigan?" asked Bill as he gazed hungrily upon the steaming saucers of oatmeal, the sizzling ham, and the yellow globes of fresh eggs fried "sunny side up."

"Ye'll take a wee nip befoor ye eat?" asked his host, reaching to the chimney-shelf for a squat, black bottle.

"No, thanks," smiled Bill. "I don't use it."

"Me, nayther," replied the other with a chuckle; "Oi misuse ut," and, pouring himself a good half tin cupful, swallowed it neat at a gulp.

The meal over, the men lighted their pipes, and Bill broached the object of his visit. The old man listened and, when Bill finished, spat reflectively into the wood-box.

"So Buck Moncrossen sint ye afther me, did he?"

"Yes. He said you were a good cook, and I can certainly bear him out in that; but he said that you would only work if you damn good and felt like it, and if you didn't you wouldn't." The old man grinned.

"He's roight agin, an' Oi'll be tell-

in' ye now Oi damn good an' don't feel loike wor-kin' f'r Moncrossen, th' dirthy pirate, takin' a man's pay wid wan hand an' shtealin' his timber wid th' other. He'd cut th' throat av his own mither f'r th' price av a dhrink.

"An' did he sind ye down afoot an' expict me to shtroll back wi' ye, th' both av us on crutches?"

"No, I have a team here," laughed Bill. "They are in Creed's stable."

"Creed's!" The old man glanced at him sharply. "Phwat ar-re they doin' at Creed's?"

"Well, that is a long story; but it sums up about like this: I see you know Moncrossen—so do I. And Moncrossen is afraid I will crab his bird's-eye game—and I will, too, when the proper time comes.

"But he saw a chance to get rid of me, so he sent me after you, probably knowing that you would not come; but it offered an excuse to get me where he wanted me. Then he framed it up with Creed to steal the team in the night while I was camped at Melton's No. 8, and leave me to die bushed.

"I built a fire in the shack, ate my supper, rigged up a dummy near the fire, and then went out to the sled and crawled under the tarp. After making sure that I was asleep Creed stole the team as per schedule, but he did not stop at that. He decided to make sure of me, so he locked the door on the outside and fired the shack.

"I remained under the tarp, and as Creed was going my way I let him do the driving. While he put up the team I slipped out the back way, and here I am."

"Th' dirthy, murdherin' hound!" exclaimed the old man, chuckling and weaving his body from side to side in evident enjoyment of the tale.

"An' phwat'll ye do wid um now ye're here?" The old man sat erect and stared into the face of his guest, whose eyes had narrowed and whose lips had curved into an icy smile.

"First, I'll give him the damnedest licking with my two fists that he ever got in his life; then I'll turn him over to the authorities."

Daddy Dunnigan leaned forward and, laying a gnarled hand upon his shoulder, shook him roughly in his excitement:

"Yer name, b'y? Phwat is yer name?" His voice quavered, and the little eyes glittered between the red-rimmed lids, bright as an eagle's. The younger man was astonished at his excitement.

"Why, Bill," he replied.

"Bill or Moike or Pat—wurrah! Oi mane yer rale name—th' whole av ut?"

"That I have not told. I am called Bill."

"Lord av hiven! I thocht ut th' fir-rst toime Oi seen ye—but now! Man! B'y! Wid thim eyes an' that shmile on yer face, d'ye think ye c'd fool owld Daddy Dunnigan, that was fir-rst corp'l t'rough two campaigns an' a scourge av peace f'r Captain Fronte McKim?"

"Who lucked afther um loike a brother—an' loved um more—an' who fought an' swore an' laughed an' dhrank wid um t'rough all th' plague-ridden counthry from Kashmir to th' say—an' who wropped um in his blanket f'r th' lasht toime an' helped burry um wid his eyes open—f'r he'd wished ut so—on th' long, brown slope av a rock-pocked Punjab hill, ranged round tin deep wid th' dead naygers av Hira Kal?"

Bill stared at the man wide-eyed.

"Fronte McKim?" he cried.

"Aye, Fronte McKim! As sh'u'd 'a' been general av all Oirland, England, an' Injia. Av he'd 'a' been let go he'd licked th' naygers fir-rst an' diplomat-ed phwhat was lift av um. He'd made um shwim off th' field to kape from dhroundin' in their own blood—an' kep' 'em good aftherward wid th' buckle ind av a surcingle.

"My toime was up phwin he was kilt, an' Oi quit. F'r Oi niver 'listed

to rot in barracks. Oi wint back to Kerry an' told his mither, th' pale, sad Lady Constance—God rist her sowl!—that sint foor b'ys to th' wars that niver come back — an' wud sint foor more if she'd had 'em.

"She give me char-rge av th' owld eshtate, wid th' big house, an th' lawn as wide an' as grane as th' angel pastures av hiven—an' little Eily—his sisther—th' purtiest gur-rl owld Oirland iver bred, who was niver tired av listhenin' to tales av her big brother.

"Oi shtayed till th' Lady Constance died, an' little Eily married a rich man from Noo Yor-rk—Car-rson, or meby Carmen, his name was; an' he carried her off to Amur-rica. 'Twas not th' same in Kerry afther that, an' Oi shtrayed from th' gold-camps av Australia to th' woods av Canada."

The far-away look that had crept into the old man's eyes vanished, and his voice became gruff and hard.

"Oi've hear-rd av yer doin's in th' timber—av yer killin' th' werwolf in th' midst av her pack—av yer lickin' Moncrossen wid a luk an' a grin—av yer knockin' out Shtromberg wid t'ree blows av yer fist.

"Ye might carry th' name av a Noo York money-grubber, but yer hear-rt is th' hear-rt av a foightin' McKim—an' yer eyes, an' that smile—th' McKim smile—that's as much a laugh as th' growl av a grizzly—an' more dangerous thin a cocked gun."

The old man paused and filled his pipe, muttering and chuckling to himself. Bill grasped his hand, wringing it in a mighty grip.

"You have guessed it," he said huskily. "My name does not matter. I am a McKim. She was my mother—Eily McKim—and she used to tell me of my uncle—and of you."

"Did she, now? Did she remember me?" he exclaimed. "God bless th' little gur-rl. An' she is dead?" Bill nodded, and Daddy Dunnigan drew a coarse sleeve across his eyes and puffed hard at his short pipe.

"And will you go back with me

and work the rest of the winter for Moncrossen?"

The old man remained so long that Bill thought he had not heard. He was about to repeat the question when the other laid a hand upon his knee.

"Oi don't have to wor-rk f'r no man, an' Oi'll not wor-rk f'r Moncrossen. But Oi'd cross hell on thin ice in July to folly a McKim wanst more, an' if to do ut Oi must cook f'r Appleton's camp, thin so ut is. Git ye some shleep now whilst Oi loaf down to Burrage's."

CHAPTER XXII.

Creed Sees a Ghost.

WHEN Bill awoke, yellow lamp-light flooded the room and Daddy Dunnigan was busy about the stove, from the direction of which came a cheerful sizzling and the appetizing odor of frying meat and strong coffee.

For several minutes he lay in a delicious drowse, idly watching the old man as he hobbled deftly from stove to cupboard, and from cupboard to table.

So this was the man, he mused, of whom his mother had so often spoken when, as a little boy, he had listened with bated breath to her tales of the fighting McKims.

He remembered how her soft eyes would glow, and her lips curve with pride as she recounted the deeds of her warrior kin.

But, most of all, she loved to tell of Captain Fronte, the big, fighting, devil-may-care brother who was her childish idol; and of one, James Dunnigan, the corporal who had followed Captain Fronte through all the wars, and to whose coolness and courage her soldier brother owed his life on more than one occasion, and whose devotion and loyalty to the name of McKim was a byword throughout the regiment, and in Kerry.

And now, thought Bill, that I have

found him, I will never lose sight of him. He needs some one to look after him in his old age.

Over the little flat-topped stove the leathern old world-rover muttered and chuckled to himself as he prodded a fork into the browning pork-chops, shooting now and then an affectionate glance toward the bunk.

"Saints be praised!" he muttered. "Oi'd av know'd um in hiven or hell, or Hong-Kong. Captain Fronte's own silf, he is, as loike as two peas. An' the age av Captain Fronte befure he was kilt, phwin he was th' besht officer in all th' British ar-rmy—or an-ny ar-rmy.

"Him that c'd lay down th' naygers in windrows all day, an' dhrink, an' play car-rds, an' make love all noight—an' at 'em agin in th' marnin'! An' now Oi've found um Oi'll shtay by um till wan av us burries th' other. For whilst a McKim roams th' earth, James Dunnigan's place is to folly um.

"An', Lord be praised, he's a foightin' man—but a McKim that don't dhrink! Wurrah! Maybe he wasn't failin' roight, or th' liquor didn't look good enough fer um. Oi'll thry um agin."

Bill threw off the blankets and sat upon the edge of the bunk.

"That grub smells good, Daddy," he sniffed.

"Aye, an' 'twill tashte good, too, av ye fly at ut befure ut gits cold. Ye've had shleep enough fer two min—Captain Fronte'd git along fer wakes at a toime on foorty winks in th' saddle."

"I am afraid I will have a hard time living up to Captain Fronte's standard," laughed Bill, as he adjusted his bandages.

"Well, thin, Oi'll tell yez th' fir-rst thing Captain Fronte'd done phwin his two feet hit th' flure: he'd roar fer a dhrink av good liquor.

"An' thin he'd ate a dozen or two av' thim pork-chops, an' wash 'em down wid a gallon av black coffee—an' he'd be roight fer an-nything from a carouse wid th' brown dancin'

Nautch gir-rls, to a brush in th' hills wid their fightin' brown brothers.

"Th' liquor's waitin'—ut moightn't be as good as ye're used, but Oi've seen Captain Fronte himself shmack his lips over worse. An' as fer th' tin cup—he'd dhrink from a battered tomaty can or a lady's shlipper, an' rasp th dhregs from his t'roat wid a cur-rse or a song, as besht fitted th' toime or th' place he was in."

The old man began to pour out the liquor: "Say phwin," he cried, "an' Oi've yit to see th' McKim 'twud hurry th' wor-rd."

Bill crossed to the old man, who, propped against the table, watched the contents of the bottle gurgle and splash into the huge tin cup, and laid a hand upon his arm.

"That will do, Daddy," he said.

The man ceased to pour and peered inquisitively into the cup. "'Tain't half full yit!" he protested, passing it to Bill, who set it before him upon the table, where the rich fumes reached his nostrils as he spoke:

"This whisky," he began, "smells good—plenty good enough for any man. But, you don't seem to understand. I don't drink whisky—good whisky, or bad whisky, or old whisky, or new whisky, or red, white, and blue whisky—or any other kind of booze.

"I have drunk it—bottles of it—kegs of it—barrels of it, I suppose, for I played the game from Harlem to the Battery. And then I quit."

"Ye ain't tellin' me ye're timperence?" The old man inquired with concern as he would have inquired after an ailment.

"No; that is, if you mean am I one of those who would vote the world sober by prohibiting the sale of liquor. It is a personal question which every man must meet squarely—for himself—not for his neighbor.

"I am not afraid of whisky. I am not opposed to it, as an issue. In fact, I respect it, for, personally, it has given me one peach of a scrap—and we are quits."

The old man listened with interest.

"Ye c'n no more kape a McKim from foightin' thin ye c'n kape a da-coit from staylin," he chuckled. "So ye tur-rned in an' give th' crayther himsilf a foight—an' ye win ut? An' phwat does th' gir-rl think av ut?"

"What!"

"Th' gir-rl. Is she proud av ye? Or is she wan av thim that thinks ut aisy to quit be just lavin' ut alone? For, sure, ut niver intered th' head av man—let alone a McKim, to tur-rn ag'in' liquor, lessen they was a gir-rl at th' bottom av ut.

"An' phwin ar-re ye goin' to be marrit? For, av she's proud av ye, ye'll marry her—but av she takes ut as a mather av coorse—let some wan ilse git stung."

Bill regarded the old man sharply, but in his bearing was no hint of jesting nor raillery, and the little eyes were serious.

"Yes, there *was* a girl," said Bill slowly; "but she—she does not know."

"So ye've had a scrap wid her, too! But, tell me, ye didn't run away from ut—ye're goin' back?" Bill made no reply, and the old man conveyed the food to the table, muttering to himself the while:

"Sure they's more foightin' goin' on thin Oi iver thought to see agin. Ut ain't rid war, but ut ain't so bad—werwolves, Moncrossen, booze, Creed, a bit av a gir-rl somewheres, Shtromberg—th' wor-rld is growin' bether afther all, an' Oi'm goin' to be in th' thick av ut!"

Supper over, Bill donned mackinaw, cap, and mittens.

"Phwere ye goin'?" asked Dunningan.

"To find Creed."

"Wait a bit, 'tis early yit. In half an' hour he'll be clost around Burrage's shtove, tellin' th' b'ys about th' bur-rnt shack at Melton's."

Bill resumed his chair.

"Oi've been thinkin' ut out," continued Daddy between short puffs at his cutty pipe. "Ye'll have no fun

lickin' Creed—'tis shmall satisfaction foightin' a man that won't foight back. An-nyhow, a black eye or a bloody nose is soon minded. An' av ye tur-rn um over to th' authorities ye ain't got much on um, an' ye can't pr-rove phwat ye have got.

"But listen: Creed's a dhrivlin' job-bernowl that orders his comin's be th' hang av th' moon, an' his goin's be th' dhreams av his head. He thinks ye're dead. Now, av ye shtroll into Burrages loike nothin' out av th' oordinary has happened, he'll think ye're a ghost—an' th' fear in his heart will shtay by um.

"Oi'll loaf down there now, same as ivery noight. In about a half an hour ye'll come limpin' in an' ask fer Dunningan, an' will he cook out th' sayson fer Moncrossen? 'Twill be fun to watch Creed. He'll be scairt shtiff an' white as a biled shirt, or he'll melt down an' dhribble out t'rough a crack av th' flure."

And so, a half-hour later, Bill Carmody for the second time pushed open Hod Burrage's door and made his way to the stove.

The scene in no wise differed from the time of his previous visit. Slabs of bacon still hung from the roof logs beside the row of tin coffee-pots; the sawdust-filled box was still the object of intermittent bombardment by the tobacco-chewers, the uncertainty of whose aim was mutely attested by the generous circumference of brown-stained floor of which the box was the center.

Grouped about the stove, upon counter, barrel-head, and up-ended goods box, were the same decaying remnants of the moldering town's vanishing population.

The thick, cloudy glass with its sticky edges still circulated for the common good, and above the heads of the unkempt men the air reeked gray with the fumes of rank tobacco.

Only the man who entered had changed. In his bearing was no hint of superiority nor intolerance; he ad-

vanced heartily, hailing these men as equals and friends. Near the stove he halted, leaning upon his crutch, and swept the group with a glance.

"Good evening! Do any one of you men happen to be named Dunningan?"

From the moment the tap of Bill's crutch sounded upon the wooden floor, Creed, who had paused in the middle of a sentence of his highly colored narrative, stared at the newcomer as one would ordinarily stare when a person known to be dead casually steps up and bids one good evening.

His mouth did not open, his lower jaw merely sagged away from his face, exposing his tongue lying thick and flabby upon yellow teeth. His out-bulging eyes fixed the features of the man before him with a glassy, unwinking stare, like the stare of a fish.

Into his brain, at first, came no thought at all; merely a dumb sense of unreasoning terror under which his muscles went flaccid, and out of control, so that his body shrank limp and heavy against its backing of bolt-woods.

Then, suddenly a rush of thoughts crowded his brain, tangled thoughts, and weird—of deep significance, but without sequence nor reason.

What had they told of this man in the woods? How he had battled hand to claw with the werewolf and received no hurt. How he had cowed the boss with a look, and laid the mighty Stromberg cold in the batting of an eye.

He himself had, but twenty hours since, seen this man lying helpless upon the floor of a locked shack, ringed round with roaring flames, beyond any human possibility of escape.

And here he stood, crippled beyond peradventure of trail-travel, yet fresh and unfatigued, forty miles from the scene of his burning! A thin trickle of ice crept downward along his spine and, overmastering all other emotions, came the desire to be elsewhere.

He slid from the counter and, as his

feet touched the floor, his knees crumpled and he sprawled his length almost at the feet of the man who could not die.

As a matter of fact, Creed aged materially during his journey to the door, but to the onlookers his exit seemed a miracle of frantic haste as he clawed and scrambled the length of the room on hands and knees in a maudlin panic of terror.

And out into the night, as he ran in the first direction he faced, the uppermost thought in his mind was a blind rage against Moncrossen.

The boss himself was afraid of this man, yet he had sent him, Creed, to make away with him—alone—in the night! The quavering breath left his throat in long moans as he ran on and on and on.

"Your friend seems to have been in something of a hurry," ventured Bill, as Burrage gave a final twist to the old newspaper in which he was wrapping Fallon's jug.

The storekeeper regarded his customer quizzically and spat with surprising accuracy into the box.

"Yes," he replied dryly, "Creed, he's mostly in a hurry when they's strangers about. But to-night he seemed right down *anxious* thataway."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Head-Lines.

THE brute in Moncrossen held subservient the more human emotions, else he must surely have betrayed his surprise when, twelve hours ahead of schedule, the greener swung the long-geared tote-team to a stand in front of the office door.

Not only had he made the trip without mishap, but accomplished the seemingly impossible in persuading Daddy Dunningan to cook for a log camp, when in all reason the old man should have scorned the proposition in a torrent of Irish profanity.

Moncrossen dealt only in facts.

Speculation as to cause and effect found no place in his mental economy. His plan had miscarried. For *that* Creed must answer later. The fact that concerned him now was that the greener continued to be a menace to his scheme.

Had Creed in some manner bungled the job? Or had he passed it up? He must find out how much the greener knew. The boss guessed that if the other had unearthed the plot, he would force an immediate crisis.

And so he watched narrowly, but with apparent unconcern, while Bill climbed from the sled, followed by Daddy Dunnigan. In the hard-packed snow of the clearing the two big men faced each other, and the expression of each was a perfect mask to his true emotions.

But the greener knew that the boss was masking, while Moncrossen accepted the other's guileless expression at its face value, and his pendulous lips widened into a grin of genuine relief as he greeted the arrivals.

"Hullo! You back a'ready? Hullo, Dunnigan! I'm sure glad you come; we'll have some real grub fer a change.

"Hey, LaFranz!" he called to the passing Frenchman. "Put up this team an' pack the gear to the bunk-house."

As the man drove away in the direction of the stable, Moncrossen regarded the others largely.

"Come on in an' have a drink, boys," he invited, throwing wide the door. "How's the foot?"

"Better," replied Bill. "It will be as good as ever in a week."

"I'm glad of that, 'cause I sure am cramped fer hands. I'll let Fallon break you into sawin' an' put Stromberg to teamin'; he's too pot-gutted fer a sawyer."

Moncrossen produced a bottle as the others seated themselves.

"What—don't drink?" he exclaimed, as Bill passed the bottle to Dunnigan. "That's so; b'lieve I did hear some one say you didn't use no

booze. Well, every man to his own likin'. Me—about three good, stiff jolts a day, an' a big drunk in the spring an' fall, is about my gait. Have a *seegar*." Bill accepted the proffered weed and bit off the end.

"How!" he said, with a short sweep of the arm; then, scratching a match on the rung of his chair, lighted the unsavory stogie.

Thus each man took measure of the other, and Daddy Dunnigan tilted the bottle and drank deep, the while he took shrewd measure of both.

It was in the early afternoon of the following day that Bill Carmody tossed aside his magazine and yawned drowsily. Alone in the bunk-house, his glance roved idly over the room, with its tiers of empty bunks and racks of drying garments.

It rested for a moment upon his bandaged foot propped comfortably upon Fallon's bunk, directly beneath his own, and strayed to the floor where just under its edge, still wrapped in the soiled newspaper, sat the gallon jug that Fallon suggested in case the greener saw fit to heed his warning.

Bill smiled dreamily. Unconsciously his lips spelled out the words of a head-lines that stared at him from the rounded surface of the jug:

POPULAR MEMBERS OF NEW YORK'S FOUR HUNDRED TO WED.

"Wonder who?" thought Bill. Reaching for his crutch, he slipped the end through the handle of the jug and drew it toward him. He raised it to his lap and the words of the succeeding line struck upon his brain like an electric shock:

Engagement of Miss Ethel Manton and
Gregory St. Ledger Soon to be Announced.

Feverishly his eyes devoured the following lines of the extended heading:

Time of Wedding Not Set. Will Not Take Place
Immediately, 'Tis Said. Prospective Bridegroom
to Sail for Europe in Spring.

And then the two lines of the story that appeared at the very bottom, where the paper folded under the edge of the jug:

NEW YORK, February 1. (Special to Tribune).—As a distinct surprise in élite circles will come the announcement of the engage

He tilted the jug in frenzied eagerness to absorb every detail of the bitter news, and was confronted by the rough, stone bottom which had worn through the covering, leaving mangled shreds of paper, whose rolled and mutilated edges were undecipherable.

Vainly he tried to restore the tattered remnants, but soon abandoned the hopeless task and sat staring at the head-lines.

Over and over again he read them as if to grasp their significance, and then, with a full realization of their import, he closed his eyes and sat long amid the crumbled ruin of his hopes.

For he had hoped. In spite of the scorn in her voice as she dismissed him, and the bitter resentment of his own parting words, he loved her; and upon the foundation of this love he had builded the hope of its fulfilment.

A hope that one day he would return to her, clean and strong in the strength of achievement, and that his great passion would beat down the barrier and he would claim her as of right.

Suddenly he realized that as much as upon the solid foundation of his own great love, the hope depended upon the false substructure of her love for him.

And the false substructure had crumbled at the test. She loved another; had suddenly become as unattainable as the stars—and was lost to him forever.

The discovery brought no poignant pain, no stabbing agony of a fresh heart-wound; but worse—the dull, deep, soul-hurt of annihilation; the hurt that damns men's lives.

He smiled with bitter cynicism as his thoughts dwelt upon the little love

of women, the shifting love, that rests but lightly on the heart, to change with the changing moon. And upon the constancy of such love he had dared to build his future!

"Fool!" he cried, and laughed aloud, a short, hard laugh—the laugh that makes God frown. From the water-pail at his side he drew the long-handled dipper and removed the cork from the jug and tilted the jug, and watched the red liquor splash noisily from its wide mouth.

From that moment he would play a man's game; would smash Moncrossen and his bird's-eye men; would learn logs and run camps, and among the big men of the rough places would win to the fore by the very force and abandon of him.

He had beaten the whisky game; had demonstrated his ability to best John Barleycorn on his own terms and in his own fastnesses.

And now he would drink whisky—much whisky or little whisky as he saw fit, for there was none to gainsay him—and in his life henceforth no woman could cause him pain.

He raised the dipper to his lips, and the next instant it rang upon the floor, and over the whole front of him splashed the raw liquor, and in his nostrils was the fume and reek of it.

Unmindful of his injury, he leaped to his feet and turned to face Daddy Dunnigan, who was returning his crutch to his armpit.

"Toimes Oi've yanked Captain Fronte from th' road av harm," the old man was saying, and the red-rimmed, rheumy eyes shone bright; "wanst from in front av a char-ge av the hillmen an' wanst beyant Khybar. But Oi'm thinkin' niver befor was Oi closter to th' roight place at th' roight toime thin a minit agone.

"Whisky is made to be dhrank fer a pastime av enj'ymint—not alone—wid a laugh loike that. Ye've got th' crayther on th' run, but ye must give no quarter. Battles is won not in th' thruse, but in th' foightin'.

"No McKim iver yit raised th' white flag, an' none iver died wid his back to th' front. Set ye down, lad, an' think it over."

He finished speaking and hobbled toward the door, and, passing out, closed the door behind him. Alone in the bunk-house Bill Carmody turned again to the jug and fitted the cork to its mouth, and with his crutch pushed it under the edge of Fallon's bunk.

Hours later, when the men stamped in noisily to the wash-bench, he was sitting there in the dark—thinking.

The results of Daddy Dunnigan's cooking were soon evident in the Blood River camp. Men no longer returned to the bunk-house growling and cursing the grub, and Moncrossen noted with satisfaction that the daily cut was steadily climbing toward the eighty-thousand mark.

The boss added a substantial bonus for each day's "top cut," and in the lengthening days an intense rivalry sprang up between the sawyers; not infrequently Bill and Fallon were "in on the money."

It was nearly two weeks after the incident, that Creed came to Moncrossen with his own story of what happened that night at Melton's No. 8, and the boss knew that he lied.

As they talked, in the little office the greener, accompanied by Fallon passed close to the window.

At the sight of the man the spotter's face became pasty, and he shrank trembling and wide-eyed, as from the sight of a ghost, and Moncrossen knew that his abject terror was not engendered by physical fear.

He flew into a rage, cursing and bullying the craven, but failed utterly to dispel the unwholesome fear or to shake the other's repeated statement that at a few minues past ten o'clock that night he had seen the greener lying hopelessly drunk upon the floor of the shack with the flames roaring about him, and at six 'clock the next evening had seen him hobble into Bur-

rage's store, forty miles to the southward, fresh and apparently unharmed save for his injured foot.

Moncrossen's hatred of the greener rested primarily upon the fear that one day he would expose him to Appleton; added to this was a mighty jealousy of his rapid rise to proficiency and the rankling memory of the scene of their first meeting in the grub shack.

But his fear of him was a physical fear—a fear born of the certain knowledge that, measured by his own standards, the greener was the better man.

And now came the perplexing question as to how the man had reached Hilarity when Creed was known to have arrived there with the team eight hours after the burning of the shack.

The boss had carefully verified so much of Creed's story by a guarded pumping of Dunnigan, and the crafty old Irishman took keen delight in so wording his answers, and interspersing them with knowing winks and quirks of the head, as to add nothing to the boss's peace of mind.

While not sharing Creed's belief in the greener's possession of uncanny powers, nevertheless he knew that, whatever happened that night, the greener knew more than he chose to tell, and as his apprehension deepened his rage increased.

Hate smoldered in the swinish eyes as, in the seclusion of the office, he glowered and planned and rumbled his throaty threats.

"The drive," he muttered. "My Bucko Bill, you're right now picked for the drive, an' I'll see to it myself that you git yourn in the river."

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Log Jam.

THE feel of spring filled the air; the sun swung higher and higher; and the snow turned dark and lay soggy with water. With the increasing warmth of the longer days, men's thoughts turned to the drive.

They talked of water-front streets, with their calk-riddled plank sidewalks and low-fronted bars; of squalid back wine-rooms, where for a week they would be allowed to bask, sodden, in the smiles of the painted women—then, drugged, beaten and robbed, would wake up in a filthy alley and hunt up a job in the mills.

It was all in a lifetime, this annual spring debauch. The men accepted it as part of the ordered routine of their lives; accepted it without shame or regret, boasting and laughing unblushingly over past episodes—facing the future gladly and without disgust.

“You mind Jake Sonto’s place, where big Myrtle hangs out? They frisked Joe Manning fer sixty bucks last year. I seen ’em do it. What! Me? I was too sleepy to give a cuss—they got mine, too.”

And so the talk drifted among them. Revolting details of abysmal man-failings, brutal reminiscences of knock-out drops, robbery, and even murder, furnished the themes for jest and gibe which drew forth roars of laughter.

And none sought to avoid the inevitable; rather, they looked forward to it in brutish anticipation, accepting it as a matter of course.

For so had lumber-jacks been drugged, beaten and robbed since the first pine fell—and so will they continue to be drugged, beaten and robbed until the last log is jerked, dripping, from the river and the last white board is sawed.

On the night of the 8th of April the cut was complete, and on the morning of the 9th ten million feet of logs towered on the rollways along the river, ready for the breaking up of the ice.

Stromberg had banked the bird’s-eye to his own satisfaction, and Moncrossen selected his crew for the drive—white-water men, whose boast it was that they never had walked a foot from the timber to the mills; bateau men, who laughed in the face of death as they swarmed over a jam;

key-log men, who scorned dynamite; bend watchers, whose duty it is to stay awake through the long, warm days and prevent the formation of jams as the drive shoots by—each selected with an eye to previous experience and physical fitness.

For, among all occupations of men, log driving stands unique for its hardships of peril, discomfort, and bone-racking toil.

From the breaking out of the rollways until the last log slips smoothly into its place in the boom-raft, no man’s life is safe.

Yet men fight for a place on the drive—for the privilege of being soaked to the bone for days at a time in ice-cold water; of being crushed to a pulp between grinding logs; of being drowned in white-water rapids, where a man must stand, his log moving at the speed of an express train, time and again shooting half out of water to meet the spray of the next rock-tossed wave; of making hair-trigger decisions, when an instant’s hesitation means death, as his log rushes under the low-hanging branches of a “sweeper.”

For pure love of adventure they fight—and that a few more dollars may find their way into the tills of the Jake Sontos, of the water-front dives. For among these men the baiting of death is the excitement of life, and their pleasures are the savage pleasures of firstlings.

Those who were not of the drive were handed their vouchers and hauled to Hilarity, while those who remained busied themselves in the packing and storing of gear; for, in the fall, the crew would return to renew the attack on the timber.

Followed, then, days of waiting.

The two bateaus—the cook’s bateau, with its camp stove and store of supplies; and the big bateau, with its thousand feet of inch and a half manila line coiled for instant use, whose thick, flaring sides and floor of selected timber, were built to over-

ride the shock and battering of a thousand pitching logs—were carried to the bank ready for launching.

The sodden snow settled heavily, and around the base of stumps and the trunks of standing trees, appeared rings of bare ground, while the course of the skidways and cross-hauls stood out sharp and black, like great veins in the clearing.

Each sag and depression became a pond, and countless rills and rivulets gurgled riverward, bank full with sparkling snow-water.

Over the frozen surface of the river it flowed and wore at the shore-bound ice-floor. And then, one night, the ice went out.

Titanically it went, and noisily, with the crash and grind of broken cakes; and in the morning the river rushed black, and deep, and swollen, its roiled waters tearing sullenly at crumbling banks, while upon its muddy surface heaved belated ice-cakes and uprooted trees.

At daylight men crowded the bank, the bend watchers strung out and took up their positions, and white water men stood by with sharp axes to break out the rollways.

The first rollway broke badly.

A thick-butted log slanted and met the others head-on as they thundered down the bank, tossing them high in the air whence they fell splashing into the river, or crashed backward among the tumbling logs, upending, and hurling them about like jackstraws.

The air was filled with the heavy rumble of rolling logs as other rollways tore loose at the swift blows of the axes, where, at the crack of toggle-pins, men leaped from in front of the rolling, crushing death; and the surface of the river became black with bucking, pitching logs which shot to the opposite bank.

Coincident with the snapping of the first toggle-pin, the branches of a gigantic, storm-blasted pine, whose earth-laded butt dragged heavily along

the bottom of the river, became firmly entangled in the low-hanging limbs of a sweeper, and swung sluggishly across the current.

Against this obstruction crashed the leaping, upending logs of the wrecked rollway. Other logs swept in and wedged, forcing the heavy butt and the riven trunk of the huge tree firmly against the rocks at the head of the rapid.

Rollway after rollway tore loose and the released logs, swept downward by the resistless push of the current, climbed one upon another and lodged. Higher and higher the jam towered, the interlocking logs piling in hopeless tangle.

Moncrossen was beside himself. Up and down the bank he rushed, bellowing orders and hurling curses at the men who, gripping their peaveys, swarmed over the heaving jam like flies.

The bateau men, forty of them, lifted the heavy boat bodily, and working it out to the very forefront of the jam, lowered it into the water, while other men made the heavy cable fast to the trunk of a tree. Close under the towering pile the bateau was snubbed with a short, light line, and the men clambered shoreward, leaving only Moncrossen, Stromberg, Fallon, and one other to search for the key-log.

It was a comparatively simple jam, the key to which was instantly apparent to the experienced rivermen, in two large logs wedged in the form of an inverted V. The quick twist of a peavey inserted at the vertex of the angle, and the drive should move.

Fallon and Stromberg, past masters both of the drive, made ready while the other stood by to cast off the light line and allow the bateau to swing free on the main cable.

Moncrossen clambered to the top to shout warning to those who swarmed over the body of the jam and along the edges of the river.

At the first bellowed orders of the

boss, Bill Carmody had leaped onto the heaving jam and, following in the wake of others, began picking his way to the opposite shore.

New to the game, he had no definite idea of what was expected of him, so, with an eye upon those nearest him, he determined to follow their example.

To watch from the bank and see men whose boast it is that they "c'd ride a bubble if their calks wouldn't prick it," leap lightly from log to rolling log; hesitate, run its length and leap to another as it sinks under them, nothing looks simpler.

But the greener who confidently tries it for the first time instantly finds himself in a position uncomfortably precarious, if not actually dangerous.

Bill found, to his disgust, that the others had gained the opposite bank before he had reached the middle, where he paused, balancing uncertainly, and hesitating whether to go ahead or return.

The log upon which he stood oscillated dizzily and as he sprang for another, his foot slipped and he fell heavily, his peavey clattering downward among the promiscuously tangled logs, to come to rest some six feet beneath him, where the white water curled foaming among the logs of the lower tier.

Bill glanced hastily about him, expecting the shouts of laughter and good-natured chaffing which is the inevitable aftermath of the clumsy misadventure of a riverman. The bateau men were just gaining the shore and the attention of the others was engaged elsewhere, so that none noticed the accident, and, with a grin of relief, Bill clambered down to recover his peavey.

And Moncrossen, peering over the top of the jam, took in the situation at a glance—the river apparently clear of men, and the greener, invisible to those on shore, crawling about among the logs in the center of the pile.

It was the moment for which he had waited. Even the most careful planning could not have created a situation more to his liking. At last the greener was "his."

"There she goes!" he roared, and turning, slid hastily from the top and leaped into the waiting bateau.

"Let 'er go!" he shouted.

Fallon and Stromberg leaped forward and simultaneously their peaveys bit into the smaller of the two key-logs.

Both big men heaved and strained, once, twice, thrice, and the log turned slowly, allowing the end of the other to pass.

The logs trembled for an instant, then, forced by the enormous weight behind them, shot sidewise, crossed each other, and pressed the tree-trunk deep under the boiling water.

A mighty quiver ran through the whole mass of the jam, it balanced for a shuddering instant, then with a mighty rush, let go.

Over the side of the bateau tumbled Fallon and Stromberg, sprawling on the bottom at the feet of the boss, while the man in the bow cast off the light line.

The next instant the heavy boat leaped clear of the water, overriding, climbing to the very summit of the pounding, plunging logs which threatened each moment to crush and batter through her sides and bottom.

The strong, new line was singing taut to the pull of the heavy bateau which was being gradually crowded shoreward by the sweep of the down-rushing logs.

Suddenly a mighty shout went up from those on the bank. The men in the bateau looked, and there, almost in the middle of the stream, was the greener leaping from log to log of the wildly pitching jam.

They stared horror-stricken, with tense, blanched faces. Each instant seemed as if it must be his last, for they knew that no man alive could hope to keep his feet in the mad rush

and sweep of the tumbling, tossing drive.

Yet the greener was keeping his feet. Time and again he recovered his balance when death seemed imminent, and amid wild shouts and yells of encouragement, climbing, leaping, running, stumbling, he worked his way shoreward.

He was almost opposite the bateau now, and Stromberg, hastily coiling the light line, leaped into the bow. Then, just when it seemed possible

that the greener might make it, a huge log shot upward from the depths and fell with a crash squarely across the log upon which he was riding.


A cry of horror went up from half a hundred throats as the man was thrown high into the air and fell back into the foaming white water that showed here and there through the thinning tangle of logs.

The next instant a hundred logs passed over the spot, drawn down by the suck of the rapid.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

The Moll Buzzer

by Samuel J. Lewis

 THE Monday morning horde of women milled and volleyed around the bargain square in the sub-basement of the People's Emporium.

Above the eager heads and flopping hats of those nearest the firing line, signs lured and beckoned those back in the ruck of the bargain-hunting army.

"Was 75c.—Now 25c."

"Worth \$1.00—Choice 19c."

True, half the shoppers in the rear guard did not know what it was all about; but clearly it was worth risking an eye, an ear, or a switch to learn.

Probably shirt-waist transparencies were on display; it might be new-fangled mouse-traps, or bed, dresser, or

corset-covers. But the printed counter-tags called and urged as would an enemy's battle-flags, and the assault flowed, was repulsed, ebbed, and flowed again.

In the trenches within the square, flushed and perspiring girls poised their pencils like bayonets, valiantly withstanding each attack.

Some went down, crushed and breathless, before carefully planned sorties; only to spring back to the fray with challenging shrieks of—"Two for you, lady?" "Cash or charge?" and "Bought by self?"

One militant eagle, goaded by hopeless desperation, pummeled an obstructing wren who blocked the path to victory.

The eagle struck with heavy shopping-bag, but the wren retaliated with an elbow thrust straight at the eagle's jugular.

The eyes of another quick-saler suddenly flamed with battle's lurid light. With a screaming babe held high above her head as though she were about to hurl a deadly hand-grenade, she executed a brilliant forward pass, crying:

"Take your kid, Annie; I want some myself!" and, empty handed, surged into the midst of the awful riot.

Floor-walkers skirted the crowd, harrying and jeering the buyers on to fresh atrocities against the weary trench-holders. Cash-girls, hair flying, eyes staring, weaved and threaded and catapulted like powder monkeys, saucing here, scratching there, and biting yonder.

Finally, when a grim-visaged patriot seized a garment and waved it aloft as a banner of defiance, only to see a sleeve torn from it by one of the defied, a floor-walker remarked to a companion in crime:

"It's a great day for the Emporium!" And it was.

Also a great day for Moll Hencher. Moll fluttered and pecked through the crowd like a small and scrawny mother hen, much to the sniffing and sometimes more vociferous and ribald disgust of the women. For Moll was a man—a short, squat, oily, sallow-faced, derby-hatted and coat-buttoned individual, but a man nevertheless.

And, pray, what was a man—and especially one with a dinky market-basket on his arm—doing in a place where chemises, hosiery, garters or other unmentionables and unnoticeables might be on exhibition and sale?

But Moll assailed with the fiercest, advanced with the bravest, crawled and squirmed forward with the sneakiest.

It was too much. The women almost gave up browbreating the sales-ladies to tongue-lash his cringing male anatomy.

"My pocketbook! It's gone! You—you wretch—you've got it!"

The cry of a female in distress echoed through Emporium aisles. A gaunt arm flipped above the heads, and an open shopping bag, hairpins, powder rag and handkerchief flying, plopped down on the Moll's derby, denting and crushing it until his ears stood at right-angles with his skull.

"My pocketbook! Give it up, thief! I felt him jerk my bag! Take that—and that! Police! Don't let him get away!"

The words and blows engulfed Hencher as a verb-avalanche and fist-tornado combined.

He expostulated, fumed and denied while he struggled in the grip of bony but strong fingers. He looked furtively around for a chance of flight, as other women, snatching anxiously at their own belongings, drew back in dismay.

Floor walkers, cash girls, and the more intrepid of the passers through other aisles closed in. The looted lady again blew up with a loud report.

"He has my purse—the skinny wretch! Red outside, black inside"—she was telling of her pocketbook, not the Moll, although the description would have fitted either—"and it had five dollars and eighty cents!"

"Are you sure of your man, madam?"

The voice was impressive, and the question came in solemn and judicial manner from a tall, sleek, flashily attired man who had been halted on his walk through an adjacent aisle by the first cry.

He had pushed through and taken a place at the right of Hencher—between that gentleman and the bargain shambles. As he put his query he twisted a heavy watch chain with one hand and oratorically waved another on which a great diamond sparkled imposingly.

"Yes, are you quite certain?" peevishly asked a floor walker, showing in his tone that he was not vastly in love

with this diversion in Emporium festivities.

"Sure? Of course I am!" spluttered the exasperated lady. "Fools! Don't I know when my pocketbook's gone? I felt his skinny hand. He's got it! Search him—go through the beast!"

"But he looks like a nice homebody," insisted the prosperous stranger, his black mustache raising and parting in a placating smile. "A regular Mr. Gentleman Flat-Dweller out shopping for the good wife."

"All bosh! That silly basket—more bosh! What's a man doing here, anyway?" She eyed the Moll's defender belligerently. "Search him!"

Hencher gulped and wheezed as if about to enter a few remarks in his own behalf, when the stranger, still sitting in judgment, interrupted:

"Well, madam; if you're so sure of your ground, will you please pass upon the ownership of that red purse—on the counter, there—among those—er—those goods?"

"Mine!" exclaimed the shopper, grabbing the article from where it was partially hidden and quickly assuring herself that the five dollars and eighty cents was undiminished. "But I felt that fellow crowd me. He tugged at my bag, too. What's a man doing here, I'd like to know? Serves him right. Skinny men! Pooh!"

The maddened bargain-hunters closed in; the floor walkers were hustled away; the bayonet wielders, again on the defensive, parried and thrust and stabbed, and Moll Hencher, basket on arm and crestfallen derby on ears, ambled miserably down an aisle, with the elegant stranger as pilot and preacher.

"You, Dave Hencher! Still a moll-buzzer, I see!"

"Well, Platt, what's a gink to do? You gotta get along," whined the Moll, hands deep in pockets and basket trailing like some new style of wicker-bustle. "I gotta live, ain't I?"

"That's obvious," sneered his critic.

"But this time you came close to living off the State for a while. However, I see you recognized me."

"Reco'nize you? I'd reco'nize you in—well, in hotter places than a moll-rush to a bargain-counter. How'd y' turn the trick, Platt? I thought I was gone up th' river—me again fer stir!"

"I just fell back on the old stuff," explained Platt, smiling over his own accomplishment and the unspoken praise in the Moll's words. "I happened to be in the store on business with one of the department heads. I heard the baying of the hounds and recognized you as the one up the tree."

"I took the leather—you still call them leathers, don't you?—from your coat-pocket and slipped it onto the counter, just like that. But *you*—still a moll-buzzer, after fifteen years! Still preying on women! The lowest of thieves! Why don't you try second-story work, stealing door-mats—or something dignified?"

"Yes, still a moll-buzzer!" blurted Hencher. "Tell me what else I c'd do, will you? Ain't the bulls all hep t' me? Ain't it 'move on' all th' time? Get away f'om here an' hot-foot f'om there? Ain't it once a dip allus a dip with th' bulls, an' ain't a moll-buzzer, just 'cause he frisks women's handbags an' pockets, trun out by th' crooks an' yeggs who t'ink they're a bit higher?"

"Oh, I knew the gang wouldn't have much use for one of your kind," assured Platt, "but I didn't know the police were barking so close to your heels. Have you done your time?"

"Barkin' is good, but bitin' would be better," wailed the Moll, bringing up on a corner when it seemed that his benefactor had gone about as far as he cared to with one so notorious. "Mebbe not in this town th' bulls ain't so keen on me, but in other places—gee! An' certain I've done my bit. Two years—five years."

Then, as if comparisons might help his weak case: "But you've done a stint 'r two yerself."

"Only one, Dave; let me correct you," protested Platt, grinning in an indulgent and superior way, and sizing up Hencher's shabby and shiny suit, which did not bear close inspection, although at a distance he might have passed for the loving husband and father out to pick up a week's bargains in groceries.

"That was the only time, Dave—the one you helped me out of," he continued. "And it was because of your aid on that occasion that I took a chance and helped you this morning. But I must be moving, Dave. Due at the office, you know."

"Wait a minute, Platt—just a minute," pleaded the Moll, practically unscrewing the derby in his efforts to get it off and fashion it into a less maudlin shape. "Gimme a tip, old scout. What's yer lay now? Y' look some genteel fer fair. Iron lid, tin shirt, b'iled vest, spitty-spats an' shiner shoes. My-o, Platt! Wise me up!"

"It isn't a line, Dave," answered Platt, pausing and turning back. "At least no line that you would know anything about. I simply branched off the old road. For fifteen years I've been decent and honest, dealing with decent and honest folk. It was a new and thick leaf I turned over. I'd advise you to do the same. A home and wife and children on one side, Dave. On the other—well, there's stir and the long time. Think it over."

"Huh! A swell chance I'd have, Platt, with th' bulls gorin' me on one side an' th' gang harpoonin' me on t'other. No use!"

Nevertheless Hencher gazed enviously at the silk hat, perfectly groomed figure, white vest, gray spats and patent-leather shoes as he added:

"It'd be a fine hick of a boob who'd give me a show now. Wouldn't it? Me—pickin' women's pockets an' doin' penance up river fer fifteen years—me!"

"I might be the boob," declared the other, "and—I believe I will—for the sake of that—well, because I don't

think you got started right. Any man can make good, if he'll work. But it isn't Platt any more, Dave. It's Perrin—Robert J. Perrin instead. Here's my card. If you'll come to my office in, say, an hour—better not come in with me—we'll talk it over. In the mean time ditch the basket and cut the moll-buzzing."

A convenient alley received into its flinty bosom the undesirable wicker-work, and Hencher took a few turns around the neighborhood, thinking over his own career and what he had come to, as he compared it with the sunnier, happier paths of the one who had been Bob Platt.

He had come upon Platt in an up-State workhouse, where they were both doing their six months' bit as vagrants.

Really they were not vags, but vagrancy covers a multitude of sins—and sinners.

A robbery had been committed; the police dragnet had been thrown out, and both Hencher and Platt had been hauled in with the greater and lesser fishes.

Neither was guilty, and both had money in their pockets; yet for being birds of passage—without nest or visible means of support—they had assisted the county in its road-building efforts by making little rocks out of big ones.

But only for three months. Then Hencher had proposed to Platt, his rock-pile buddy, because he was the human anchor at the other end of his leg-chain, that they escape through the simple expedient of crawling into a thicket while a somnolent guard was taking his afternoon siesta, knocking off the rusted and ill-fitting shackles with a rock-hammer and walking away.

Their scheme had miscarried only when Platt, in nervous haste, wounded his ankle more than the iron bracelet.

Hencher, already released, had refused to desert his injured comrade; had supported and half carried him for

miles to a safe retreat in the underbrush of a ravine; had foraged provisions over the countryside for three days until Platt was in condition to go his way.

There had been no pursuit—the officials evidently figuring it a good riddance, and the pair had separated, journeying in almost opposite directions.

That was fifteen years ago. Since then Hencher had done his seven years in two instalments.

With women always as his victims, he had come to be known as Moll Hencher; his picture adorned several rogues' galleries, and on this morning, after the long struggle, he could only boast of the clothes on his back—worth in the aggregate about twelve dollars; the few coins in his pockets, a poor room in the lower town, and a reputation which would get him ten years, if he ever showed his nose to a criminal judge again.

A scant fortune, of which he did not boast—the entire fruits of criminality and petty dipping—was embraced within the narrow limits of an account in a side-street savings bank. This bank-book, having across its face a carefully chosen *alias*, and holding in its folds a credit for three hundred and twenty-five dollars, was concealed under a corner of the carpet in his room.

With the crook's usual caution, Dave had managed to provide a fee for a mouthpiece, or attorney, against a day when he might be compelled, in spite of his wriggling, jostling ways, to face that criminal judge.

His pursuits took him to store-sales, matinees, concerts, into the crowded streets, to busy corners, on street-cars—to all places where women might congregate.

He seldom buzzed a male. Women were safer, more easily outrun—took jostling more amiably than did men.

The game could hardly be called profitable, but the wolves at his door apparently drove away the dogs of the

law, for he had not seen the inside of a jail in eighteen months—nor the inside of a first-class restaurant, either.

It would never do, and the Moll knew it, to eat into that nest-egg for the mouthpiece, whose spieling might be needed any day.

With the Bob Platt of other years things must be quite different.

The department store episode had brought him out of the past. He was clad in much purple and fine linen.

The "iron hat" which had aroused the Moll's jealousy, while it might constitute an unpardonable offense in a pickpocket's eyes, nevertheless bespoke a considerable plutocracy. The perfect fitting and tight-buttoned coat hinted at an august and capable check-book beneath—a book that would pass much more readily than the puny thing in the inner lining of Dave's blowzy coat.

And the diamonds on the hands and in the necktie—

"Why, th' guy sports more ice th'n a rink," soliloquized the Moll. "He sparks like a arc lamp!"

Platt—or Perrin—must be doing pretty well! Honest ways paid, if you had the wit to get by and the brain to put it over.

And yet Platt had been a crook himself, or, at least, Hencher thought so. He had never been quite sure until the bargain-counter scene.

The dexterity with which his old prison mate had extracted the leather from his kick and concealed it among the flubdub on the counter was convincing. It was a cinch! Platt had certainly been a dip in the old days—or he never could have pulled such a flooey.

And now look at him! Why, the old josser probably lolled in his own gas-bucker and bullied a shover. And he could go around to the bull-pen and hoot at the cops.

No fanning of *him* by cheap peelers and town constables. It all came from the honest lay—from the respectable road.

Well, maybe for the sake of the old days, that back-door foraging and self-denial, Platt would wise him to how the road was traveled.

He would go through with the thing, anyway. If he could do no better, he might con Platt into kicking in with a few iron men for his general maintenance, or he might pipe the line-up around the offices with an eye to a little transom work and desk jimmying.

But the mere thought of such desperate criminality made the rabbit-hearted Moll sicken with terror.

Hencher slunk past the uniformed attendant at the door of the office building, and tried to efface himself in a far corner of the elevator on his ride to the twelfth floor indicated on the Perrin business card.

He had a deep-rooted aversion to uniforms, even on elevator pilots. Blue or gray, with braid and brass-buttons, always seemed tuned to the jingling of keys and clanging of locks.

Besides, the elevator door had a way of snapping like a greedy steel jaw—the jaw of stir, for instance.

A few beads of sweat stood out on Hencher's mere sample of a forehead, and he jammed the low-crowned derby still further over his eyes. He was far from happy as he sidled and edged along the corridor and eased through a door on which was printed in letters of impressive size:

ROBERT J. PERRIN & CO.
Investments

"Ah, right on time, Mr. Henshaw, I see," smiled Perrin or Platt, speaking over the head of a stenographer at whose side he had been standing when the Moll came in, blinking at the opulent array of counters, cages, desks, filing cabinets, clerks, and office boys.

Perrin put a significant emphasis on the "Henshaw," implying that the Moll-rose by another name would be much sweeter.

"Glad to see you, Henshaw! Henry, show the gentleman into my private office. I'll be with you in a moment, Mr. Henshaw."

Inside and alone, Hencher gaped at his surroundings.

The easy chairs, the directors' table, the desk as big as a concert piano, the rugs, hat-racks—everything modern and expensive got under his tough hide. What a vast difference there was in all this from the meager pilfering of housemaids and jostling of women already burdened with bundles and babies!

A settlement worker had once earnestly endeavored to chisel into the Moll's flinty head the admonition that "Honesty is the best policy."

He had insisted in his dull defense that if men were only honest because it was the best policy, they were not necessarily honest at heart. It seemed to him that merely being upright through fear of the law or public censure did not constitute genuine rectitude.

Had he been writing that phrase he would have put it, "Honesty is the right policy."

But now he was convinced that probity, integrity and fairness paid dividends. There were financial and moral gains not to be overlooked. Chicanery, deception, theft, and fraud were the handmaidens of poverty and misery.

Why, the whole thing was exemplified in the personalities of Dave Hencher, thief, and Robert J. Perrin, broker. They had started over different paths from the same chain-gang.

Both were thirty-eight years old, and—now look at them!

Hencher was hard-pressed to dispose of his derby. It did not loom as a suitable decoration on the office rug, nor on a near-by chair, and he would not have crossed that room to one of the hat-racks—no, not for a moll's hand-bag full of greens!

So he laid the greasy head-gear on

the open desk, and in doing so his eyes bugged out at sight of a thin stack of bills beneath a round glass paper-weight.

"A plant! Framin' fer me, eh?" he sneered as he noted another door evidently leading out into the corridor. "Thinks I'll fall fer th' small bunch o' lettuce. Nix on that! Gee, if th' crib's worth anyting, it'll do better th'n that!"

For five minutes, plenty of time to make a getaway, he sat eying the money and tilting in his chair. Then Perrin came in breezily, nonchalantly tucked the bait in a vest-pocket, handed over a fat cigar which looked to have cost about as much as the buzzer's shoes, lit one himself, and began:

"Now, we'll not be disturbed, Dave, so listen me out, please. You don't appear overfed, overdressed or overprosperous. Evidently you haven't done well. That's the fault of your system. It doesn't pay."

"So it don't, Platt—Mr. Perrin." The Moll looked around apprehensively as if large ears might have heard his break. "I got two years wunst fer friskin' ninety cents f'om th' pocket of a dame that looked like she'd be good fer ninety thousand."

"That's my point," continued Perrin, grandly flicking the ash from his cigar with a bejeweled finger and daintily lifting a lint speck from his lapel. "I never exactly tried it; merely fell in with a crooked lot for a time—and you helped me out."

"Now, I might contend that this morning's stunt squared matters, but really I ran no risk. No one would have suspected Robert J. Perrin, even without the pocketbook trick. Why, I number among my clients at least two dozen women heads of departments in that store."

"Now, I've decided, if you're willing, of course, to give you a chance at the straight road—the one I have traveled. It may be just a whim, but it's going through. The thing pays in dignity, respectability—and funds. When

you arrive you are looked up to and esteemed; your name becomes a great asset.

"However"—as an afterthought—"speaking of names, I think the Henshaw of the outer office will be better than the Hencher of the past."

"Anyting'll be better th'n th' moll-buzzer," gulped Hencher. "It's a snide monniker, Mr. P-Perrin. But how d'ye know I won't snitch on you fer that past yer speakin' of?"

"Oh, I hadn't given it a thought. But no one would believe you, Dave. You could blat it from the Battery to the Bronx and you couldn't get one rise a day, although you might get a fall-back for blackmail."

"However, I'm expecting you to be grateful, thankful. You'll be a sort of helper around the office—whatever you can do at the start. Your pay will be ample, sufficient. You'll get a decent room and decent clothes."

"I could do the story-book act and hand you over the money"—tapping the vest-pocket loftily—"but I prefer to see you earn it. Sometimes I may give you little confidential jobs, but"—shaking an admonitory finger—"no moll-buzzing. We have a dozen or so girl employees and hundreds of callers—mostly women—every day."

"Don't let the hand-bags or other articles of virtu get you down. Keep straight, follow me, do as I have done, and some day David Henshaw may be quite as prosperous and well-to-do as one Dave Hencher was notorious and ne'er-do-well."

Perrin's delicately manicured finger pushed a button and something in a uniform bounced through the door. Hencher, gurgling his surprise, started to his feet, but slumped back into his chair when he perceived it was only an office boy.

"Henry," explained Perrin, "this is Mr. David Henshaw, who will take charge of the letter-press and the circular and pamphlet room. You will show him what there is to be done."

As the Moll gathered his soiled

chapeau under his arm and departed from the philanthropic Perrin's presence, he leaned over and whispered:

"Gee, Platt—I can't get hep t' these uniforms! I t'ought you'd called th' harness bulls."

For ten days the Moll, in his incompetent, haphazard and low-browed way, pattered around the offices of Robert J. Perrin, investment broker. But what he lacked in efficiency he made up in zeal.

Each morning he was waiting in the corridor when the door was opened. At night he almost had to be evicted by the janitor.

Either his soul was in his efforts or he hoped to find himself at some time the sole occupant of the rooms, with principal eye to the cashier's cage and vault.

The latter seemed to occupy most of his thoughts. He gazed rapidly at the important looking books and the more satisfactory heaps of currency which disappeared into it of evenings and reappeared next morning, the books to be scattered over desks while the cash was arranged in imposing stacks on the glass counter of the cage.

Once the cashier remonstrated with him.

"Your place is in the mailing room, Henshaw. There is nothing around the vault that could possibly interest you except the combination — and that's only known to Mr. Perrin and myself."

"I wasn't pipin' th' crib," grumbled Hencher, falling back on his old jargon.

Then, as the cashier moved away with a smirk at his own low wit:

"Th' old josser! Poof fer him—he wears cuffs!"

After the first week the Moll blossomed forth in cheap but gaudy improvements.

With Perrin as a model, he went in for a tin-shirt; he installed a white piping in the collar of his vest; a pair of gray spats concealed much of his decrepit shoes. His suit was pressed,

and he affected an article which looked more like a hat than the sad-eyed derby which he consigned to a trash-can.

He had the fringe of mousy hair harvested from around his ears, and three shaves grew where one had sufficed before.

Really the Moll, at small outlay, was arriving with a bound; and Perrin, rather grandiloquently though, complimented him on his neater appearance.

One afternoon, while observing the results of his work at a letter-press, he spelled his way through several sentences of an outgoing communication.

The Moll's early education had been somewhat neglected—his father hovering too close to a corner saloon, while his mother, in her turn, had hovered too close to an eternally active washtub. This had not made for class-pins, but Dave, after a fashion, could bludgeon and blast his way through plain, typewritten English.

And so he read:

DEAR MADAM:

We note what you say about the investment of two thousand dollars made two years ago, with your statement that it has brought no dividends as yet. In reply we wish to assure you that extensive development work on the properties in question has cut down the net profits far beyond a dividend paying point.

However, such improvements have been economically and ably installed and are real and permanent assets to the stockholders.

While the stock has depreciated greatly since you invested—and will hardly pay dividends within the next few years—we can say, speaking for the directors and not on our own responsibility, of course, that—

Hencher walked over to a stenographer, who seemed the most amiable of the office force because she had nodded pleasantly each morning, and asked:

"What is this t'ing, anyway, miss?"

"Oh, the letter?" holding out her hand for it. "You are to make two copies, Henshaw."

"Yeh, I know about th' letter, miss. I mean this t'ing." He waved his hand to include the Perrin quarters, file room, vault, and private offices. "You know—this dump."

"Why, an investment office, Henshaw," the lady smiled indulgently, wondering where Perrin had found what appeared to be only a simple, unsophisticated worker.

"Who invests, miss?" Henshaw leaned two yellow fists on the desk and peered at her from a pair of dark eyes sunk in sallow cheeks.

"Anybody with money, I suppose." Then, returning to her work, "Why don't you ask Mr. Perrin? Or maybe you'd better not. I don't think he'd like your cross-examination."

At another time he read almost through a sheet which ran:

MADAM:

We have learned from the Big Brother Insurance Company that you will receive within the next few days five thousand dollars as insurance following the sad death of your husband. We knew him in life, and are certain that were he here to-day we need only refer to him concerning our business standing and resources.

Realizing that you will be looking for permanent and profitable investment, we solicit your consideration of—

There followed a glowing eulogy of the very business properties against which the former investor's complaints had been aimed.

Even the dwarfed intellect of the Moll could embrace the fact that, while one woman had lamented a paucity of returns from her money, the Perrin agency was still actively engaged in crowding the same stock onto others at a fancy figure, insisting that it would pay amazingly.

Thereupon the Moll became even more inquisitive, certainly more interested in the money which fell into the vault in currency flakes and was carted to the bank in currency drifts.

He opened letters as he had once opened hand-bags, and pried into their contents quite as eagerly as if they were leathers which he was examining

in the privacy of a convenient alley. And for one of such shallow brainpan, he learned much, even while he kept away from the traps of small financial bait which Perrin and the cashier, who evidently acted on instructions, frequently set for him.

He was not to be tempted by petty cheese. He knew they were trying him, and he also knew that if he decided to grab it would be at dollars instead of pennies.

The two facts that soaked in deepest were that few men came to the cashier's window and few letters went forth to men, unless it might have been to attorneys who had protested in behalf of clients.

Generally—almost always—the visitors were women—women of a certain shabby and somber black, with careworn, sorrowful faces and eyes that looked out as through a constant, tearful mist.

Also the printed circulars in the mailing room sent pleas to investing women rather than to men, telling of wise ways in which to invest insurance moneys, inheritances, the savings from salaries earned in stores, offices, workshops, and even kitchens. The addressing machine, at which the Moll labored much of the time, contained the title of Miss or Mrs. a dozen times where it held a Mr. once.

At intervals, too, the Moll had heard words other than friendly at the cashier's window, and on several occasions from Perrin's inner office had leaked damp sounds as of tears and sobby protestations. But the others of the force seemed to have no ears, so the Moll did not worry his head greatly, although he did shake it often enough and vigorously.

On the afternoon of his tenth day Hencher was busy sealing and stamping some of Perrin's private mail. The work was being done under the watchful eye of the boss, who had taken a keen and very secret interest in the preparation of the letters and in the list of people to whom they were to go.

"This is a private drag, Dave," Perrin explained. "I don't want the 'company' to know of it."

Hencher had never seen the "company" alluded to on the door plate, although he had understood the word to apply to a wealthy citizen who came rarely to the office and was interested in other concerns of similar nature.

"I'm putting it through myself as a side-line," ran on Perrin. "I expect you to keep quiet. I can't always trust the stenographers and the others to do that. Some way, I fancy they'd bite me if I ever permitted them to grow sharp teeth."

"Aw, I'm no snitch," mumbled the Moll from over a stamp-glued tongue. "Either way, it ain't no time off my term."

The door opened with a pop and a woman came hurriedly into the inner office. Her face was flushed as from the excitement of some daring deed. A black veil was pushed back over the brim of a black hat. A shiny dress, inexpensive and in a past style, covered her scant figure.

Black gloves and shoes made her a veritable woman in black, except for the color of her cheeks and the gray flash from her eyes.

Perrin half leaped from his chair, his face red as the carnation he persistently sported in his lapel. Controlling the mingled anger and frustration which showed in his eyes, he greeted her affably enough.

"Why, Mrs. Erhardt, good afternoon! Did the boy show you in?" The last with just a taint of rebuke.

"He did not, Mr. Robert J. Perrin & Co.!" snapped the visitor, going at once into battle. "I walked in without any boy. I've cooled my heels outside, with a grinning boy staring at me, the last time I intend to."

"Very well, Mrs. Erhardt; we needn't get excited," calmed the suave Perrin. "I didn't know you had been refused admission, I can assure you. Henshaw, you may leave the letters for a while."

"Let the man stay," ordered the truculent Mrs. Erhardt. "He looks honest enough. It will do me good to see one honest male around."

"This will never do," smiled the broker, nervously motioning Dave back to his task. "Now, what is the trouble, my dear Mrs. Erhardt?"

"Just this, Mr. Perrin—and don't 'dear' me. I've been here four times—yes, half a dozen—to find out why I never have received any returns from that precious stock you coaxed and cajoled me into buying. And not once have I been allowed in this office until I opened that gate, pushed the boy aside, and came in."

"Now I want to know, and I'm going to wait for the information. You and your fine-worded letters! I'd be willing to guess that man over there—the fellow with the honest face—is mailing some of them out right now."

Hencher's cheeks took on a faint salmon color. Blushing was not his strongest point, but he knew the woman had spoken the truth. The letters were being sent to the nearest female relatives of a score of men who had been killed in a building collapse and on whose claims the contracting firm had decided to settle.

"You know very well," the visitor pursued, "that your letters promised me big dividends. And you know it was the only money I had to support my children. You said you knew my husband and wanted to help me. You have been a tremendous help, I must say! Two and a half years, and I haven't seen a cent. I can't live, and my little ones can't be sent to school, on promises."

"I don't believe my husband ever knew you. I'd hate to think that of him, anyway. Now, I either want satisfaction, or I'll see a lawyer!"

"My dear Mrs. Erhardt," Perrin placated speciously, applying the term in spite of the woman's angry gesture, "so far as employing an attorney is concerned, let me assure you it will only be an added expense. I haven't

your money. It went for the stock which you purchased in a perfectly legitimate way and with eyes wide open. You received the certificates and receipted for them. Your threats do not frighten, I may as well tell you."

"I want that money—my last three hundred dollars—you have it," in a voice which was rapidly breaking and mixing with tears. "It's here some place—in these fine jimcracks," waving one of her poorly gloved hands at the costly furniture. "I want it! I'll see a lawyer—or maybe you'd prefer the police?"

At the last word the scarlet tinge in Perrin's cheeks met up half-way with a pallid fear, turning his face to a sickly purple, splotted with yellow. But he proceeded with his explanations, while his white hand fell as softly on the jacket's worn sleeve as if he had been smoothing the feathers of an angry hen.

"Now, don't talk about unpleasant things — lawyers and — police. And you don't want your money, either, Mrs. Erhardt — not the principal, at least. Let's say you want your dividends. Isn't that it? Of course it is. I have it from the directors of Crested Butte Consolidated — not on my own say-so, mark you, but on theirs—that in six months the company will be in such shape that you'll be sorry you ever doubted the stock."

"Oh, is that a promise, Mr. Perrin?" cried the woman, finally bursting into the tears which had been but a word or two away during the whole conversation. "If it is—I don't mind the—the hard work I'm doing to keep the ch-children fed and clothed and in school. But I c-can't stand the grind another day unless I know—know it's coming right in the end."

"Not a promise," reneged Perrin hastily, who seemed unable to part with real money, "but my best judgment."

A hand reached over his shoulder, picked up a pen, and dipped it into a

cut-glass inkwell, probably as expensive as anything in the Erhardt home.

The Moll explained as he walked back to the table: "One o' these letters ain't right; I'll fix it."

Then he scratched away for a few seconds while the visitor, still sobbing, gave evidence of returning to her first advantage.

"Well, that isn't satisfactory, Mr. Perrin. It was your judgment that got me in; and, oh, for God's sake—for the sake of my babies—please get me out! You have that money. It's here some place. I want it."

"Are y' sure o' yer man, madam?"

The words were spoken as the Moll Buzzer came for the second time from the temporary mailing table. Perrin paused in the middle of a calming reply, started in surprise, and made as if to motion the intruder back.

The woman answered:

"What? Of course I'm sure! Didn't I hand it to this man Perrin myself? Didn't I see him take it?"

"I asked, lady," answered the Moll, as if repeating something he had memorized, "because if you're so sure o' yer ground, what have y' t' say t' this check for three hundred dollars—your money? Perrin ain't got it. I'm th' one. I'm one o' them directors he's talkin' about."

"Here's yer check, ma'am. Go cash it — right away — fer them there babies!"

The woman seized the slip, eagerly assured herself that it set forth the things described, and cried:

"Thank God for an honest man! I knew it!"

The door opened and closed with a slam. Mrs. Erhardt was gone, but Perrin, the purple departed and the red again in his angry face, turned on the Moll.

"Now what? Do you think that's the way I give up money? What do you mean?"

"I mean just this!" screeched the Moll, back at his place and his fist coming down on the sealed and

stamped envelopes with a thump which made Perrin half hop out of his chair. "I mean that you—you—can go clean, immac'lately, c'nsecitively, an' ev'ry other way, plumb t' hell! Here's where I quit this dump!"

The words came almost as loud as the table blow.

The stubble at the back of Hencher's head, where the hair was cropped close and shaved round, seemed to stand out like hackles; cheeks that had long since lost the art of flushing turned drab as old ashes; drops of sweat stood out on the bulges below the dark eyes as if the man were in actual physical pain. Again he whacked the top of the polished table.

"Right here's where I blow the joint! See?"

"You quit—you—you quit *me*?" scoffed Perrin, coming the other half out of his seat. He started with a sneer, but ended with scorn as he saw that the Moll must mean what he was saying.

"That's it," came the reply. "You did me a good turn wunst, an' I've done you one just now. That was a narrow squeak—she'd 'a' had th' bulls down on yuh. 'Sides, she ought t' had th' money. You an' me're square—an' I'm through. Through an' busted, too! But I'm satisfied."

"What's the idea, Hencher?" growled Perrin in a milder tone as something in the nature of a great light seemed to break over him. "I'll admit that maybe it was the right thing to do. But for me to have given her the money would have been an admission of guilt, don't you see? I'm obliged to you. Now calm down."

"Don't be obliged t' me fer anything!" bristled Hencher. "I want t' quit 'thout any obblegations."

"Oh, don't be a fool, Hencher! Be a crook if you must, but not an idiot. I've had enough grand-stand plays for one afternoon."

"Crook? Idiot? Who's a crook, Platt?" shouted the enraged looter of women. Then, noting the consterna-

tion and rising temper of his employer: "Yes—Platt! Bob Platt! An' it goes. You're a fine one t' talk about crooks! Why, you'd climb yer own porch t' crack yer baby's bank!"

"Sit down, you cheap pickpocket, and shut up! You d—— moll buzzer, d'you want the whole building to hear you?"

"They wouldn't be su'prised," fumed Hencher—"not if they've got th' sense God gave a goose. An' as fer moll-buzzin', I'm here t' tell *you* there's more'n one kind—an' I'm t'rough with this kind. Get out o' me way, Platt! Lemme out! This dump stinks!"

"So that's the game?" husked Platt, his hands opening and closing and his face twitching in tremendous wrath. "Blackmail, eh? You think to make capital by peaching about those letters? You're out for a snitch, huh? You're going to hold me up on that check?"

"I'm not a snitch, Platt," interrupted the Moll. "I wouldn't touch a piece o' coin 'round here with a pair o' tongs. We're quits! No more women's weeps fer me."

"No, I suppose not," jeered Perrin. "The old crook can't stand prosperity. The dip can't toe the honest mark. The yegg don't care for respectability. I gave you a chance to be decent—"

"Decent! Honest! Prosperity!" exploded Hencher. "That's swell! I've swallered all that mush I want. Why, you'd frisk yer own wife's leather! Let me out!"

"Well, then, get back to your burgling of housemaids and your bargain-counter rushes!" cried Perrin, stepping to one side and pointing toward the door. "Git! Back to the moll-buzzing!"

"Not on yer life, Platt! Not on yer slick face an' dolled up hands!" flouted Hencher, jerking the door open and turning for a parting blast. "Here's where I—*go t' work!* Me fer a job! D'ye get me?"

The Man-eater

by Anne Warner

Author of "Susan Clegg," "The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary," "Sunshine Jane," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

NINA DARLING, wife of Colonel Darling, an English officer in the Indian service, enters into a violent flirtation with Gerald Andrews, of the civil service; but when, at a dance at the viceregal lodge in Simla, he pleads with her to "bolt" with him, she laughs at him and tells him coldly that she always tires of men when they begin to get serious. She also coolly confesses that the only man she really loves is not her husband, but a man whom every one has for years thought to be dead. Later, Andrews identifies this man as Nina's cousin, and, at the time of his disappearance, her *fiancée*, Lord Harry Kneedrock, who was reported killed at Spion Kop in the Boer War, his body being identified by Colonel Darling himself.

Kneedrock turns up unexpectedly and Nina meets him at the bungalow of an American friend, a Mrs. Sibylla Ramsay. She begs him to take her away, but having discovered her affair with Andrews, he contemptuously refuses. That night, while in his gun-room, Darling is shot dead. The official verdict is "death by accident," but popular gossip is divided between the theories of suicide and murder by either Nina or Kneedrock. Nina returns to England, where after a number of more or less serious flirtations, all ending disastrously for the men, she starts a still more furious one with Sir Caryl Carleigh, whose engagement to an American girl, Miss Rosamond Veynol, has recently been broken. The country-house where Nina, Kneedrock, and Carleigh are visiting is burned to the ground, and Nina is terribly injured; if she recovers at all, it is said, she will be horribly disfigured. The guests all seek refuge at a near-by estate; there Carleigh is sitting at the breakfast table when the door opens and Rosamond Veynol enters.

CHAPTER XIX.

Fate's Fearful Ingenuity.

ROSAMOND VEYNOL stopped short just inside the door and every vestige of color left her face.

Everybody remembered then, and everybody was scared. It was a tryingly dramatic moment.

Carleigh, astounded and greatly confused, half rose in his place and bowed slightly and awkwardly. Miss Veynol bent her head without looking at him. The Countess of Cross Saddle pretended to know or notice nothing.

One man whistled under stress of

the moment and then turned deeply crimson. The butler, who knew details of which all his superiors were naturally ignorant—he being a regular reader of *British Society*—let fall a muffin cover.

And then, suddenly, everybody perceived that the only space left vacant at table was the space next to Carleigh, and saw with horror that one of the men who knew nothing had pushed a chair in there for the newcomer.

Miss Veynol looked waveringly about. The countess choked.

"Of course you two are old friends—" she began.

And then, her tongue cleaving to the roof of her mouth, she rose

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hastily, stammered something quite unintelligible about the injured woman upstairs, and precipitately fled.

"I had better go too," Carleigh murmured, starting to rise. "I—I—" He would have sold his soul to be able to say, "am betrothed to Mrs. Darling." But he wasn't sure she was going to die, and so he didn't dare.

Nevill Dalgries, who had the place on the other side of him, and being a good friend, was awfully sorry, put out a strong hand and pulled him back into his seat again.

"You can't do anything, old man," he said with a roughness that was kindness. "Finish your tea."

And at that instant Rosamond sank into the proffered seat beside him. So there they sat, side by side, those two, one blazing red, one deathly white, silent and constrained.

And all the rest at the breakfast-table talked feverishly and painfully with a haste and loudness that appeared to them obligatory.

Those who watched say that Sir Caryll drank his tea and ate two slices of buttered toast, and that Miss Veynol spooned an egg without upsetting the cup; which may be perfectly true, though neither he nor she was aware of doing any such thing.

What they did they did subconsciously, their conscious minds being very much otherwise engaged. One thing is certain, however, and that is that neither of them spoke, until, happening to look up, Carleigh saw that everybody else had got up and got out and left them quite alone.

He felt then that he simply had to say something, and so he said, as so often happens, the one thing that he shouldn't have said. He asked: "Is your mother here?"

Miss Veynol looked down, shivered slightly, rose, and moved over to a window. Carleigh rose too and followed her.

"Mama is in Ireland," she answered at length, in a low, sweet voice.

"She told me before she went—she—" Then she stopped.

He threw his gaze over her from head to feet. He felt bitter and scornful, and yet the memories crowded fast. After all, she was very lovely, and—odd how he had seen her face early this very morning when for all he knew he was dropping to his death!

"What do you think of me, anyway?" he asked at length. "What is your final opinion of us all three?"

She looked up at him. All her shyness seemed suddenly gone. Her eyes met his fearlessly. Yet her voice was very low as she said: "I think that you love mama."

Of course she would think that. If she had ever doubted it his question uttered a minute ago on their re-meeting must have convinced her.

He took a backward step and drew in his breath. Up-stairs Nina was dying perhaps. On every hand fortune seemed bent on breaking with him. He was lashed, stung, crumpled. He looked at her and truth covered naked.

"Not at all," he said with biting emphasis. "Perhaps people talk that and you believe it. But I've never thought of such a thing. I have offered myself to Mrs. Darling, and I've given her your ring."

He paused expectant; but Rosamond just stared at him.

Then he walked out of the room, hurt and—rather frightened.

It had been one of those fearfully ingenious tricks of Fate which she deals out in such a startlingly unexpected manner—this meeting with his whilom fiancée.

Chasing the woman who had the power to make him forget, only to be abruptly thrust, in the very midst of it, under the same roof with her he was striving never to remember, was malevolent cruelty. And it was very awful.

Yes, it would have been much better had he slept five minutes longer.

Then there would have been no escape, and his troubles would have been over.

CHAPTER XX.

Fires of One Kind and Another.

IT was a very miserable morning for Carleigh. It was pretty miserable for every one, seeing that things were all at sixes and sevens owing to the enforced mingling of two house parties; but the young baronet, with counter emotions tearing things apart deep down in the soul of him, found it especially so.

Out-of-doors was quite impossible. The heavy clouds were unloading their burden in a drenching downpour. Some brave one proposed a tramp to Carfen and a search of the cooling ruins, but found so few volunteers that the project was given over.

Bridge games were started in both the red and yellow drawing-rooms. Blissmore, the novelist, had induced Nevill Dalgries to oppose him at chess, and the pair sat in silent concentration over board and men in the library.

For a long while Sir Caryll hung about the hall in expectation of a word with Dr. Dodson on his morning visit; only to learn after something like two hours of waiting that the medical man had come and gone during that period of agony in the breakfast-room.

Nevertheless there was some measure of relief for him in the tidings that Dodson had pronounced his patient improving steadily.

Julian Archdeacon had told him this, having had it direct from Cecile. "He doesn't say that Nina's out of danger; but he does say that with a continued absence of fresh symptoms she very soon will be."

Carleigh sighed and a faint color tinged his wan pallor. He had been pallid as a ghost ever since he told Miss Veynol about the ring. "If I could only see her," he muttered.

But Julian thought that quite impossible.

"It's mostly shock, don't you know," he said, "and everything depends on keeping her quiet."

The relief, small as it was, was not lasting. When he had flung that final ill-considered speech at Rosamond he had really believed Nina's case hopeless.

If she got well Rosamond would be sure to learn that what he said wasn't true, and she would probably hate him all the more for it. Therefore it was actually imperative that he have a word with Mrs. Darling at the very earliest opportunity.

"I mean to ask Dr. Dodson, at all events," he said. "When will he be here again?"

The Honorable Julian didn't know. He might be over in the afternoon; and then, just as likely he might not be over until evening.

"Waldron is burned worse than was thought," he added. "He never gave a sign, and yet he must have been suffering torments. His self-command was nothing short of Spartan."

But at this Carleigh frowned.

"We have thought best to wire for his wife," Archdeacon added.

"His wife!" exclaimed Caryll.

"Yes. Good little woman. Does a lot of slum work in London, and all that sort of thing, you know. Time was too much taken up to come down with him."

So here was a measure of relief from another quarter.

"Did you wire for any of Mrs. Darling's people?"

"No. She didn't want any one. We suggested sending for the duke and duchess. But the idea only excited her. Then we thought of Kneedrock. He's a cousin, you know, and a sort of next-of-kin protector and adviser. But she wouldn't have him at any price. Gritty little woman, Nina."

Dr. Dodson came between tea and

dinner, and it was more through good luck than good management that Carleigh saw him.

He had gone to his nursery bed-chamber, where he had been looking over the evening things laid out for him, only to discover that the pumps provided were fully two sizes too large.

Twice he had rung for valet or footman without response—his own man had been shipped up to town that morning—and was on his way to Nevill Dalgries's quarters when he encountered an elderly gentleman—bearded, carrying a small professional-looking hand-bag, and stepping with professional briskness—turning into the corridor from an intersecting passage.

He stopped him without the least hesitation. "I fancy you are Dr. Dodson?" he said.

The physician signified assent, and Carleigh introduced himself.

"I do so want to learn of poor Mrs. Darling," he went on. "I am very anxious."

"Mrs. Darling," Dodson replied, "is doing capitally. I have every reason to believe that she will make an amazingly quick recovery, Sir Caryll."

"That is good news indeed," Carleigh rejoined. "And now there is a favor I have to ask. I really think that I should be allowed to see her."

The doctor pursed his lips and his eyes shot a question through his glasses.

"I am deeply interested in her," the young man went on, "and I believe she would wish it, if you let her know."

His effort was to speak in exactly the right tone, all things considered. Yet he was wofully uncertain as to just what were the things he had to consider.

"I will ask her, of course," returned Dodson. "But I must warn you in advance, Sir Caryll, that Mrs. Darling does not care to see any one. Aside from the severe shock, she is at

present, you know, so very badly disfigured."

Caryll experienced a deathlike sinking at his heart. Until this minute he had barely considered this matter of disfigurement. He just couldn't believe it—couldn't realize it as a possibility.

"How—" he began, and stopped short.

"One side of her face is very badly burned," said the doctor.

A man doesn't like to hear such things about a woman for whom he has just confessed an attachment. It took a brief moment for Carleigh to collect himself. Then: "Beg her to see me, please," he asked a little stiffly.

He saw the physician go, but he had very little hope. It was hardly possible that she would accede to his plea.

She didn't want "Doody" and "Pucketts." She didn't want even "Nibbetts," who, it was clear to him, was usually her help in time of trouble. What chance then was there that she would see him?

But to his surprise and that of the doctor as well, she did.

Her maid came back with Dodson and took him to the room. And there, in the half dark made by the drawn window-curtains he saw her lying in the wide, white bed, her beauty hidden—or was it her hideousness—by swathing white cloths.

She looked curiously Eastern and uncanny, and his thoughts crowded, and he was dumb.

But she held out her right hand to him and said: "So nice to see you! But—what is this I hear they are telling about us? Such astounding tales."

Then he knew that Rosamond had made no secret of his daring speech and that the doors and windows of gossip were all set open afresh.

He sat down in a chair close by her side and took the hand she offered, and held it close to his own.

"I have been telling the truth," he

said, with that cool, odd courage which leaps like a well-trained servant to do the bidding of some men. "It is only a few days as time is counted, but clocks should be our slaves instead of our masters. To me it seems an eternity since you so gave me back to myself that I"—he faltered ever so slightly—"could love—yes, really and truly—love again. And I do. Oh, Nina, I do! Just you—only you."

Then, all at once, he remembered, and looked sharply about the room. He had forgotten the maid. He had not thought of Cecile Archdeacon. They might be there, somewhere, curtailed by the gloom.

"Don't be alarmed," Nina said, amused. "There is no one but I to hear your confession. Cecile withdrew discreetly before you came, and my maid parted from you on the other side of the door."

"I love you," he repeated, reassured.

"But you have said openly here, in this house, that we are engaged—that I had your ring."

For a breath he hesitated. Then: "Let it stand," he pleaded, and bent toward her. "You are like me, you are sick of it all. The world has bruised us both—has tried to make outcasts of us both—has blackened us falsely.

"Let us go away together—to Yukon, to Ceylon, to where you will. Let us build for ourselves a free life—a new, clean life, out in those free, new clean surroundings."

He was actually surprised at his own eloquence and at how in earnest he felt; and how chivalrous. But he was still more surprised at how keen he was to prove to Rosamond that he had spoken truthfully.

"But I'm disfigured," said Nina behind her white windings. "Horridly disfigured."

"It will not matter," he declared.

"And I am old. I count for ten years beyond you."

"That is our own affair—our very own affair." He felt the hand within his quiver lightly and hope rose. "I really am very fond of you," she whispered.

"Believe me, it is love," he whispered in return. "See how it snatched us both in the same instant."

Her fingers nestled sweetly in among his own.

"Did Kneedrock tell you more than you told me?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered frankly. "But it made no difference. I don't care what people say about you."

"But I have played with fire so often—once too often," she added with a laugh. "Fire came near ending me at last."

Abruptly his curiosity roused. "They say you were safely down stairs, and that then you turned and went back. Why did you go back?"

"I wanted something."

"What? What was worth the risk?"

For just a little she did not answer. Then, slowly, she reached out her other hand—her left hand. "For this," she said.

He looked and fancied he must be dreaming, for, lo, there on her engagement finger sparkled a ring—his ring. The ring that he believed lost; the ring that he believed no woman would ever wear again.

For a full minute he was too amazed, too stunned, to speak.

"You—you found it!" he stammered at last.

"I never threw it away at all," she confessed. "I only made the motion. Why should I throw away a perfectly good pearl and diamond ring when the mere motion of throwing answered every purpose?"

"Every purpose? What purpose?"

"My purpose," and she smiled.

"But I—I don't understand. What could have been your object?"

"I'll tell you," she replied. He could see her eyes quite clearly now. His own had grown accustomed to the

gloom. He could see them so clearly as to read mischief in them. He wondered whether it was possible that she was suffering the least bit.

"I just wondered what you would say and do. I knew of no better way to test a man's whole character than by pretending to toss away as worthless something that he highly values."

"My whole character?" he echoed. "Did you have to test it?"

"I didn't have to. I wished to. One learns of the real man, then. And I am so interested in real men."

The thing rather hurt him, but he said: "I suppose you were satisfied."

"My *interest* was," she answered, and he was clever enough to note the distinction she effected by the word and the emphasis.

"I'm glad if it amused you," he said, not at all pleased. "Are you going to tell me what you learned?"

"I'm going to let you draw your own conclusions," she answered. "I told a man once in India that there was a cobra in the corner of the room in which we were sitting, just to see what he would say."

"What did he say?"

"He didn't say anything. He acted."

"Was there a cobra there?"

"Of course. We could both see it."

"You were telling the truth then?"

"After my fashion, yes."

"And what did he do?"

"He shot."

"And—"

"The bullet knocked the cobra over. It was bronze."

Then, for the first time since he entered the room, he let go her hand.

"And that satisfied your interest?"

"That satisfied me," she said, and he would have sworn she slightly emphasized the pronoun.

"There must have been a lot of shooting out there in India," he said significantly. Somehow he felt terribly vexed.

No, he didn't want to go into any

wilds with this woman. He recalled that reincarnated tigress idea of Kneedrock's. No Yukon or Ceylon. No, surely not.

She seemed to read his thought. She drew back her right hand which he had dropped so coolly and turning a little on her side she reached out her left.

"There! Take off the ring and give it to Miss Veynol," she said cheerfully. "I really can't marry you. Indeed I can't. Don't pass me. Don't even press my hand. It's absolutely no use. Go on, now, and leave me to sleep."

It was Caryll's mood of the moment to feel relieved. He took the ring from her finger, thrust it into his waistcoat pocket, and rose. Then he bowed a little stiffly. After which he left her to sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

An End to the Gossip.

ALL masculine and human as he was, Sir Caryll Carleigh emerged from that darkened room with a vivid vision still remaining of the white bandaged face and a keen awareness of the engagement ring once more in his possession, enormously eased.

If there was a sense of somewhat summary dismissal to annoy, it was more than offset by the knowledge that he was absolutely free. Yes, free even of the chain made by his own impulsive speech.

A thoroughly foolish man, embarrassed by the product of his various and gregarious emotions, may still have sense enough left to experience relief at being afforded a fresh chance.

Life, in spots, was very trying to the young baronet, but still it might have been far worse.

One may not enjoy being buffeted about by a woman one is almost sure one loves. Still it's a poor ball that isn't conscious of a thrill as it rises

in the air of limitless freedom after a hard kick.

So Carleigh went lightly along the corridor and turned lightly at the angle. And as he turned he came face to face with Rosamond Veynol. And Rosamond, it so chanced, was looking beautiful as she had never looked beautiful before.

He stopped abruptly, and so did she. He gasped, and she likewise gasped. But, somehow, it was far less awful than before, because here there was no one present to witness their behavior.

He put out his hand and she put hers in it before she thought. It came to him just then, suddenly, that he had told her he had offered himself to Mrs. Darling and given her the ring. And now he had that very ring in his waistcoat pocket.

His breath came fast—so fast that it almost choked him.

"Rosamond!" he stammered. "Oh, Rosamond!"

She was dressed for traveling and was evidently just on her way down. In point of fact she was about quitting the house to have herself further embarrassment.

She wasn't expecting to meet Carleigh on that side of the house, and the encounter had startled her, as it did him, more than slightly.

She stood, actually panting. She strove to look at him, and failed utterly. Then she tried to free her hand and failed in that too.

Had the place been less public he would surely have taken her in his arms. But dinner was barely an hour off, and guests were likely to be passing at any minute.

Moreover, being at the angle of the corridor, they were likely to come upon them without any warning whatever; just as they had come upon one another.

"Rosie," he said, without the slightest premeditation or consideration, "I've been very unhappy and very foolish, and Mrs. Darling has

brought me to my senses. She doesn't want me and she doesn't want the ring. Will you take it back? Will you take *me* back? She says that you are the one I love, and I think she knows."

All this at headlong speed, spoken as fast as he could form and utter the word. As he ended he opened the hand that had been fumbling at a pocket and showed her the ring—her engagement ring—lying in his palm.

She seemed to stumble and fall sideways against the wall, and his arm went out to steady her.

"Oh!" she gasped. "And mama? What of mama?"

"We'll run away and get married." His words were as wild as her own. "We'll tell no one. We'll fly. And afterward—afterward—" But there he stuck.

"And mama?" she said again. "And mama?"

He was sure now that for him she was the only woman in the world. "We will live abroad," he said heartily. "Ceylon, Yukon, or some place"—his imagination surely had limitations this evening—"and we will never come back."

Rosamond at length achieved control.

"Mama will never leave us in peace," she declared. "Mama will find us wherever we go. Believe me, mama is quite set against the marriage. She will not have it. And she says if it goes forward *ever*, she'll surely take you away from me. I can't tell you what awful things she's told me—things you've said to her. Terrible things."

At that he paled and loosed her hand. Certainly the corridor was far too public for this kind of conversation; and yet all he could sense was the odor of probable triumph—the exaltation, the exhilaration of winning out.

Never mind the mother; that selfish, narrow-viewed American grass-widow, who had her little way of

having her little way on all occasions and under all circumstances.

He was determined that Rosamond Veynol must go off with him, so that Nina—and everybody else, of course, might hear of it. All other considerations were forgotten. He seized her hand again.

"Listen, my dear girl," he pleaded. "We do love one another. We've said so a thousand times. Your mama doesn't want the match, and we've tried to break it off. We can't break it off. It's too strong for us. We both have found that out.

"When I suddenly saw you this morning I knew it was too strong for me. Now you know it too. But we can't put it through in the open. So let us put it through in the only other way. Let's run off. And at once."

She lifted her eyes to his and he felt that she would help him to manage it somehow. He didn't stop an instant to consider that perhaps she too had her triumph to secure. Rosamond was human too.

There was the world, and her mother, and—Mrs. Darling. Oh, especially there was Mrs. Darling. Carleigh didn't know, and Nina didn't know. Nobody knew, in fact, but Rosamond Veynol.

Caryll took her in his arms, unre-sisting, and hugged her very close. He had been warned about the corri-dor, but he didn't heed in time.

He was still holding her, and his lips were pressed tightly to hers, when Cecile turned the angle and uttered a little cry of astonishment.

Of course there was no escape.

"We—we're going to be married at once," Carleigh explained, stam-meringly. And Rosamond nodding, blushed as red as a peony.

"I am glad," Cecile congratulated.

"But—but—you see," the young baronet continued, one arm still held possessively about his fiancée's waist, "while we're delighted that you should know, we aren't quite ready to tell society in general."

"I understand perfectly. Rely on me to preserve your confidence. I think it is positively lovely."

"Yes, isn't it?" said Rosamond. "Caryll and I were made for one an-other. You do understand, don't you, dear Mrs. Archdeacon?"

"Perfectly," repeated Cecile. "By the bye, dear, the car has been waiting for you this half hour. If you've changed your mind—"

Rosamond shook her head vigor-ously. "Oh, but I haven't," she re-turned. Then she said to Caryll: "I'm going over to The Manse, at Ranleigh Copse for a couple of days. If you'd care to ride over to-morrow—"

"Care to?" he murmured. "How can I wait until to-morrow? Suppose I run over with you now, just to see you safely there."

"Won't you be late getting back to dinner?" asked the chatelaine of Carfen House. "The countess might, you know, be annoyed."

Carleigh smiled. "As the earl has failed to fit me with pumps," he said, "I consider myself excusable. Would you mind explaining for me, my dear Cecile?"

Of course he drove over to The Manse with Rosamond. Nothing in the world could have held him back just then.

And on the way he told her of how nearly he had lost his life in the fire and of how her face had come before him in what he believed was his last moment.

"That should prove beyond every-thing how I love you, dearest," he murmured.

"I don't require any proof, Caryll, my own," she said. "I feel it so deep, deep down in the heart of me. Our brain knows other things, but it is with our heart that we know the things of love."

There was a great deal of this sort of thing on the way over, and if the chauffeur had sharp ears he must have been very much amused or—very much bored.

Love-making is always so infinitely entertaining to the lovers, with every burning word a fresh delight; and yet how tiresome, flat, trite, stale, and unprofitable to the disinterested yet enforced listener.

Carleigh got back to Cross Saddle Hall in ample time to dress for dinner, and found no less than a dozen pairs of pumps of varying sizes spread out on his floor for inspection and selection.

After dining he redressed and went up to town by a late train. The next day he returned his borrowed attire, and then he went down to Bellingdown once more for a long and important conference with his aunt.

It took place in Lady Bellingdown's boudoir, and this is the way he began it: "Rosamond and I are to be married within a week, and we'd like to be married here."

Lady Bellingdown's breath was quite taken away. She couldn't say a thing. So her nephew proceeded: "You see, we thought first of going to the registrar, saying nothing to any one, and just slipping off to some foreign paradise all by ourselves.

"But Rosamond says she never expects to be married but once, and that as she has her wedding-gown all ready and waiting she might as well wear it and show it."

"But I thought—" began his kinswoman, and got no farther.

"You thought I was in love with Mrs. Darling," he interrupted. "So I— No, I wasn't. I was fascinated, infatuated. But I— Of course you heard about the fire at Carfen?"

"We heard she was horribly burned. Do tell me the particulars."

"They say she's disfigured," he explained. "Her face is all swathed now."

"That will rob her of her power. And she was so beautiful."

"Yes, she was beautiful," agreed Carleigh. "And she did have power. She could make a man forget his eternal soul."

"Nina was wonderful at making men forget," said his Aunt Kitty. "She made you forget, didn't she?"

"For a little while. Then, by purest chance, I saw Rosamond again, and—well, I knew that she was the only woman I could ever really care for as one's wife should be cared for. She is an angel."

"But her mother?"

"Ah, her mother. We are going to keep clear of Mrs. Veynol."

"Can you?"

"Certainly. We must, you see. I don't know what it is, but she rouses all the devil there is in me. And then—" He paused.

"And then?" Lady Bellingdown asked.

"Then she tells Rosamond."

"Was that how she separated you before? I never exactly knew."

"That was at the bottom of it."

"And you mean to be married now—here—without letting her know?"

"Yes. Once we are married, what can she do? Rosie's of age, you know. She doesn't have to ask any one's consent. When she is Lady Carleigh we can defy the mater."

"But I thought you were going to keep out of the way."

"We are if—if we can. Absence is better than defiance, isn't it?"

"Absence may be defiance," said his aunt. "I didn't think of it that way."

"Yes," he agreed, but he evidently had some misgiving.

"But you're not so certain as you were a minute ago that you can keep the place of your absence a secret. Is that it?"

"Mrs. Veynol has an uncanny faculty of finding things out," he confided miserably.

"Now, there's where Nina has an advantage," Lady Bellingdown suggested. "She has no mother. You would have had no distressing mother-in-law."

Sir Caryll was thoughtful. Then: "But Mrs. Darling is too old for me. She said so herself."

"I suppose that's true. Nina seems fixed in her purpose never to marry. Fancy a woman saying she is too old for any man!"

"She counts by experience rather than years possibly. One would never think of age in her case if she didn't remind one."

"She's very lovely," said Kitty Bellingdown with something of finality. "Where will you and Rosamond spend your honeymoon?" she added.

"That's just it," Carleigh returned with knitted brow. "It's the one problem that troubles me. Honeymoon places are so devilishly well known. All Mrs. Veynol would have to do is to keep her eyes on the newspapers. She'd spot us within a week. And then—she'd follow."

"You might travel *incognito*."

"On one's wedding journey? Never! How can you think of it, Aunt Kitty? Don't you see—"

"Of course I see," she broke in. "Forgive me. It never once occurred to me."

Then they let that question drop, having been frightened away by thus straying on dangerous ground.

The arrangements for the nuptials were all completed in the next hour. They were not to be in any wise simple. They were to be very imposing, in fact, with a whole houseful of guests, hurriedly brought together, yet every one under a strict bond of secrecy.

Rosamond was to stop on at the Manse until the second day before. Then she was to withdraw her trousseau from where it had been so hurriedly rushed into storage in London and appear at Bellingdown on the eve of her last day of maidenhood.

Lord Waltheof was deputed to look after minor details; but Lord Kneedrock, could his consent be obtained, was to be best man.

Carleigh saw personally to this, of course, and encountered no trouble. Kneedrock consented without demur and offered to see his grace, the arch-

bishop of Highshire, and arrange with him to perform the ceremony.

And, wonder of wonders, everything was carried out precisely as planned! The September day proved glorious. The sun shone on the bride in good omen, and the bride was a picture of loveliness.

Many of the presents, returned six weeks before, came back in the same wrappings, and most of the rest would probably come later when the givers learned what had happened and how.

But no one—not even Lady Bellingdown—was given a hint as to the honeymoon destination of bride and bridegroom.

They drove away toward London under a deluging shower of rice and old slippers, and with white ribbon—yards and yards of it—streaming from every attachable place on Sir Caryll's own motor-car.

After they had gone the guests continued very merry. A great quantity of champagne had been consumed in drinking the health and happiness of the launched voyagers on the matrimonial sea, and every one's spirits were keyed high.

Every one's, that is to say, except Kitty Bellingdown's and Kneedrock's.

"Poor dear Caryll!" sighed his aunt, who, like some others, always chose to weep over those that were given in matrimony. "Well, and so he's married at last!"

"And such a surprise!" exclaimed the duke. "I say, Doody, wasn't it a surprise?"

Doody didn't say anything. She was trying a new dance-step with Waltheof.

"And so now there's an end to the gossip," contributed Charlotte Grey.

Kneedrock, who had his back turned, wheeled around.

"Oh, is there?" he observed in his characteristic ringing undertone.

The duchess gave over trying the dance-step, and joined the group.

"His mother-in-law will be after them, of course," she said. "There'll

be no keeping it from her. Such a dreadful person she is!"

"She rides races in boy's clothes," put in the duke. "She does—doesn't she, Doody?"

"And she bathes in one-piece, Continental bathing-suits," volunteered Waltheof. "I've seen her at Ostend. Ripping figure for the mother of such a big girl!"

"I wonder what will happen next?" mused Lady Bellingdown, who loved Carleigh like a son and was more than a little frightened.

"Nina will happen next," said Lord Kneedrock, *sotto voce*.

He was wondering why it was that the new Lady Carleigh reminded him so much of that Ramsay girl he had met through Nina at Simla.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Interrupted Honeymoon.

THE Carleighs went to Madeira for their honeymoon. It is a popular place for honeymoons; but not so popular as some others, because it's farther away.

No one knew but they, and they hoped that the mater wouldn't find out. They didn't in the least see how she was to find out.

Rosamond went so far as to write her a letter, omitting all mention of her wedding, of course, dating it from San Remo, and sending it there under cover to a confidential friend, to be mailed to "dear mama," who, it so happened, was still in Dublin.

Having thus taken every precaution to guard against pursuit, they threw care to the winds and reveled in their new and blissful companionship, amid tropical surroundings.

Everything amused them—the natives, the bullock-sledges, the *rêdes*—hammocks swung on poles and carried by native bearers.

They explored the long ravine, visible from the windows of their rooms in the hotel at Funchal, riding on the

backs of gaily harnessed mules and sampling the wines of the vineyards along the way.

Of evenings there were always the botanical gardens, with their palms and rhododendrons, and the light-hearted Madeirans making a fiesta of the hour.

There had been two weeks of it now—rapturous weeks—with Mrs. Veynol so far from their thoughts that even momentary memories had ceased to obtrude.

They sat in the half light of the gardens, a giant palm nodding above them, a soft breeze in their faces, lovers of another land—but still lovers like themselves—sauntering by, the men swinging malacca-sticks, the women's bright eyes shining beneath becomingly arranged mantillas, and believed paradise their very own.

And that was the moment that Fate chose for dropping a shadow. It descended while their heads were turned the other way, and their first warning was when a voice they both knew and recognized instantly fell like the knell of doom on their joy-attuned ears.

"Aren't you going to kiss mother, son?"

Carleigh seemed propelled to his feet. It appeared to him that he came up with a whirling motion. If he could only have gone on whirling and rising, like certain cardboard toys he remembered to have seen, it would have been such a satisfaction.

But, instead, he seemed to whirl straight into his mother-in-law's open arms, which closed affectionately—oh, so affectionately!—around him. And it wasn't at all a nice kiss she gave him or he gave her.

There was nothing maternal about it. It was so ardent that he felt ashamed, and when he was at length released and caught sight of Rosamond's eyes he was more ashamed than ever. He couldn't understand himself.

He didn't love Sibylla Veynol. He was sure he didn't. He would have

been delighted never to see her again. And he did love her daughter. Yet this was the way it had been before.

Then their kisses had been in secret. Now that she had the right she chose to demand them openly. Heretofore she had told her daughter things. Now she meant to show her.

"I don't know whether to kiss you, Rosamond, or not," she said. "That letter you sent me from San Remo was a very low piece of work."

"But, mama—" began Lady Carleigh, and got no farther.

"What must the world think," her mother went on, "when it learns you are married and that I was not bidden to your wedding?"

"Why, mama—" the bride attempted once more.

"I don't blame Caryll in the least," mama continued. "I am sure that he had nothing to do with it. He would have been only too glad to have me there. It was you, my ungrateful daughter—my own flesh and blood—who was at the bottom of it all."

"Oh, I say—" It was Carleigh who made the attempt this time.

"No, you needn't speak," Mrs. Veynol checked him. "You are a gentleman and wish to take the blame on your own shoulders; but, no matter what you said, I shouldn't believe you. Fortunately, I know my own daughter at last."

"It—it was the only way," Rosamond faltered.

"It was a very wicked way. Still, I don't see how I am to blame you. Caryll is so fascinating it is all I can do to resist him myself. But—oh, dear, I had quite forgotten!"

She turned abruptly to where a fair-haired young man, slightly round-shouldered, stood hat in hand behind her. "Let me present Mr. Miles O'Connor, Lady Carleigh—Sir Caryll Carleigh."

Rosamond inclined her head, and Carleigh bowed a little stiffly. Mr. Miles O'Connor withdrew a tentatively advanced hand.

"Mr. O'Connor," explained Mrs. Veynol, "is the subeditor of *British Society*. It was through him that I located you. How he managed it I don't know. I am curious myself; but he tells me it is an office secret, which is equivalent to a secret of the confessional."

Neither Sir Caryll nor his wife spoke. Both would have liked to cut out the tongue that had betrayed them.

"Mr. O'Connor came with me from London. He has been most kind and considerate. I can never hope to repay him."

"Has *British Society* ceased publication?" asked Carleigh bitingly.

"It's a little vacation I'm taking," ventured the subeditor.

"Sorry you delayed it so long," rejoined the baronet, still more acidly.

"We were fortunate enough to secure rooms on the same corridor with you at your hotel," Mrs. Veynol disclosed.

"Mr. O'Connor again, I assume," said Carleigh. "As capable a courier as an editor—I mean as a subeditor."

"Sir Caryll is pleased to be ironical," snapped the young Irishman, boiling.

"I'm not pleased at all," Sir Caryll replied equivocally. "Ordinarily I am most complacent, but I can't bear a sneaking, snooting busybody who's always attending to every one's business but his own."

O'Connor's fists doubled, but Mrs. Veynol laid a quieting hand on his curving shoulder.

"Caryll dear," she soothed, "you are unjust. You are, really. Mr. O'Connor has served me at great personal sacrifice. I don't know what I should have done without him. When I learned that Rosamond was not at San Remo—had never been there—I was torn with anxiety. Fancy the feelings of a fond mother! I applied to Mr. O'Connor in my extremity, and he proved himself a friend in need."

Carleigh turned away, but no less

vexed. In his wife's eyes he saw tears glistening. And they had been so inexpressibly happy.

He was tempted to allude to *British Society's* theory of why his engagement had been broken—to inquire about the convict first husband—his Rosamond's own father—but he resisted the impulse, determining, nevertheless, to thrash out the matter with Mrs. Veynol privately at the first opportunity.

But there was no opportunity that evening. He managed it, however, the following morning. He was astir early, leaving Rosamond, who had been wakeful from nervousness, to get some compensating slumber.

And he met his mother-in-law, as if by prearrangement, in the hotel gardens while the dew was still on leaf and flower. To his delight she was unattended.

"You grow younger every time I see you," he said, kissing her hand in the continental fashion he knew she liked. "You might be Rosa's sister."

It was odd how against his will such pretty speeches were wrung from him by this woman who in one way repelled him.

They strolled about for a while, and then sat down on a bench, which Carleigh did not observe was in full view from his wife's windows. But it was.

"Couldn't you have come here alone, mater?" he asked. It was the first time he had called her that, and it didn't please her. He saw it before she spoke.

"For Heaven's sake, Caryll dear, don't!" she begged. "You make me feel a hundred. If you can't find a pet name for me you may call me Sibylla, or Sibyl, or just Sib. But I'll hate you if you mater me. And I don't want to hate you. I don't really."

"No more than I wish to hate you," he laughed. "But I will unless you send that Irish bounder about his business. Fancy you fetching a cad like that, Sibyl—dear!"

"But I didn't," she protested. "It was he who fetched me. He would find Rosamond for me on no other terms. We came by train to Lisbon, you know. And he never mentioned Funchal until we were on the steamer."

"He's even more of a cad than I thought then."

"He's in love with me," Sibylla said.

"And you have encouraged him. Good Lord!"

"For a purpose. Purely for a purpose."

"And after what he did—after that vile screed he published."

She colored softly. "Then you saw it?" she asked.

"It was sent to me in Scotland. Of course I knew it wasn't true. I was tempted to horsewhip the beggar."

"But it was true," she declared boldly. "That was the worst of it."

And at that Carleigh sat suddenly upright, whereas he had been lounging. "I never knew it. I never threw Rosamond over for it. You know that."

"That was its only inaccuracy. The prison part was quite true. Your wife's father is still serving his sentence in the United States Federal Prison at Atlanta, Georgia."

"And you never told me! She never told me!" he cried reproachfully.

"It was a secret we thought buried. Why should we have dug it up?"

"Because I was marrying into the family. I was entitled to—"

"I had no intention of permitting you to marry into family. You must grant I did all in my power to stop it. I even resorted to attracting you myself. I felt sure that my daughter would never marry a man who flirted with her mother. It was shameful perhaps, but I could not afford to be too discriminating."

"You had far better have told me," he protested.

"You mean that if you had known you would not have married?"

"No. I am not sure. But I should have had the chance to consider. Now it is too late."

Mrs. Veynol laughed ringingly.

"Not at all," she denied. "Marriage is the least irrevocable of steps. Give my daughter the grounds and I promise you she will divorce you."

"I have messed things up," mused Carleigh dismally.

"You see, I've lost neither time nor effort to let you know," said Mrs. Veynol. "As a gentleman, though, you will preserve my confidence. As a son-in-law I have told you what I could not even as a *futur*."

"But the whole world knows it," he retorted. "It has been published."

"And it has been denied—retracted with an apology—a very abject apology. Mr. O'Connor did it. He was most kind."

Carleigh fell to musing again. Finally he said: "What was your first husband's name?"

"The same as always," she answered, smiling at his past tense. "He hasn't changed it. It was only I that changed mine and Rosamond's. His name is Ramsay—J. Sprague Ramsay."

"You divorced him before or after he went to prison?" Caryll asked.

"I divorced him *when* he went to prison," was her precise answer. "Then I took back my maiden name, called my daughter Rosamond instead of Jane—she had been christened Jane Rosamond—and deserted the world that knew us for Cape Town, where I met Mr. Veynol and married him."

"You are an ambitious woman, Sibyl," observed her son-in-law thoughtfully.

"Yes, I am," she admitted candidly. "And, you see, my ambition runs higher than a mere baronet. Let the girl divorce you, and I'll marry her to an earl."

"But I'm not going to let the girl divorce me." He had reached a decision. "I love her too much, and—"

His eyes dwelt appraisingly for a moment on the woman beside him. In her dark, Spanish, almost gipsy way, she held a lure that for the susceptible Carleigh was well-nigh irresistible. "And," he added, "her mother is far too fascinating."

Mrs. Veynol laughed, but his flattery was not lost. "Kiss mother, son," she commanded and leaned toward him.

He glanced furtively from right to left. Not a soul was in sight. Then he took her in his arms and pressed her close, and the kiss was that of the night before over again. If anything it was warmer.

The subeditor left Madeira by the next calling steamer, liberally remunerated for his services.

Relieved of his presence, the Carleighs and Mrs. Veynol stayed on. They stayed for another fortnight. Then they traveled to Nice, arriving a little in advance of the season.

No one of them, however, was quite happy. The serpent had entered paradise, and its sweetest fruits had turned acrid.

In these days Sir Caryll talked more with his mother-in-law than he did with his wife. Her experience was wider, and she had more imagination.

Occasionally there were revelations that were like sudden drops into icy waters. For instance, one day when they had gone to Monte Carlo together, leaving Rosamond at Nice with a headache or some other ill, she surprised him by saying:

"It's odd Nina Darling never told you of us."

"You mean she knew?" he asked in astonishment.

"I'm not sure. We've never met—since. But we were great friends five years ago in Simla."

"It isn't possible she knows?" said Carleigh.

"I wouldn't be certain," said the whilom Mrs. Ramsay. "She can keep a secret. None better. You know,

there's no doubt she shot poor Darling. They were alone in the gun-room together, and he couldn't have done it himself."

"I'll never believe that," he returned.

"Then you'll never believe the truth."

"But why? What was her object?"

"She wanted him out of the way to marry Lord Kneedrock, who was supposed to be dead, but was only buried for eight years in the South Seas."

"Nonsense!" said Carleigh. "She doesn't love Kneedrock. Never did. I've seen them together. I've heard them both talk, and I know."

"I told you she could keep a secret," said Sibylla Veynol.

They returned to Nice before dinner, and Carleigh found his wife reading.

"Feeling more fit?" he asked.

"I shall never feel more fit," she answered without looking up from her book.

"You don't mean it's incurable? Have you had in the physician?"

"Oh, it's not physical," she replied petulantly. "It's mental. It's the conditions. I'm sick of everything. You don't care in the least for me any more. You haven't since mama came back. You had an assignation with her in the gardens of the hotel at Funchal the very next morning, and you kissed her there under my window. I saw you."

The thing took him so by surprise that he couldn't muster a single word for defense.

"I do wish you'd leave me," she went on. "Why don't you ask mama to bolt with you? I'm sure she would, and then I'd be rid of you both."

He nearly reeled under the shock of that speech. It held him still mute. It was painfully plain that something was wrong in a social fabric which made it possible for a wife to say such a thing—a young and pretty wife, too. And

to say it without seeming to find it very heinous.

He noticed that she yawned and went on reading her book.

When he fully sensed it all, hours later, alone on the promenade, he decided to go off. But not with "mama."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Mysterious Widow of Bath.

JUST as soon as she could possibly manage it Nina left the Dalgries, and alone with her maid hied herself to that stupidest of all English resorts—Bath.

There she took a flat and secured two servants, and kept herself so secluded that the story went abroad that the blind beggar in the famous poem was a beauty beside her.

Some said that she was sightless and some that she had been scarred beyond all recognition; but nobody really knew because nobody had really seen her.

Nobody, that is to say, except her surgeon and his assistant, and Delphine, the French maid.

Nina chose Bath because of this wonderful surgeon, Mr. Pottow, who was connected with the chief hospital there, and knew more about the skin and cutaneous affections than any man in England.

He promised to restore her if restoration were possible, but he was very reticent about the method until his success was assured. Then he told her that it had been necessary to resort to the grafting of new and healthy skin to take the place of that which had been scorched practically to a cinder.

"But where did you get it?" Nina asked, deeply interested. She knew that it had not been taken from her and transplanted.

"I was fortunate enough to find a volunteer," answered the surgeon.

"I suppose she required some fab-

ulous price," Nina rejoined. "But if it has given me back an unmarred countenance I shall be only too glad to pay."

"There is nothing to pay," Mr. Pottow told her. "He gave it gratuitously, and was glad to."

"He gave it!" exclaimed the patient starting up, impelled by flooding emotions.

"Yes, he."

"Shall I have to shave?" she asked, seriously startled by the dread possibility.

"No," came the answer with a smile. "The skin wasn't from his chin. There'll be no beard to bother you."

"I'd much rather had it from my own sex," she pouted.

"My sex is less selfish," said the surgeon. "Few women would sacrifice their cuticle that an afflicted sister might regain her beauty."

"Still I don't like the idea of being even that much man," she insisted. "I have always been so thoroughly — so entirely feminine."

"The cells are constantly renewing themselves." It was the scientist speaking. "You will wear these only temporarily."

Nina thought for a moment. Then she said: "Of course I shall pay him. I shall insist on it."

"I'm sure he won't accept. He regarded it a great privilege, he was delighted at the opportunity."

And at that she became really alarmed. It was some one she knew, of course. It was one or another, no doubt, of the army of lovers she had sent about their business when their ardor grew too oppressive.

But which one? Ah, that was the question—which one?

"But you've put me under a terrible obligation," she complained. "I think you should have consulted me, Mr. Pottow, before accepting such a sacrifice. I am very uncomfortable over it."

"You should have been more un-

comfortable disfigured for life," he replied sagely.

Of course it wasn't Nibbetts. He would delight in seeing her hideous. The cabinet minister was out of the question, too. He'd be sure to get into the newspapers. Besides, he was very bitter.

The soldier of fortune was out of the country. And Carleigh was married and honeymooning. The American aviator had been killed volplaning.

"It might be the poet," she said aloud.

"I don't think he's ever been guilty of sonnets," observed Pottow. "Still we never know. He's most interested now in sheep-raising and in quarrying freestone."

"Good Heavens!" cried Mrs. Darling. "He isn't even a gentleman. How could you? Oh, how could you, Mr. Pottow?"

He smiled quizzically and excused himself with: "I hadn't any choice, you know. To tell the truth, I've done so much of this sort of thing that I've reduced the visible supply of skin, here in Bath, to the minimum."

"I don't see how he knew me," she went on, puzzled. "I'm very secluded here. I don't know a soul in the place, except you."

"You know him, or did. He says he owes you something, and—"

"What is his name?" she demanded, interrupting.

"I thought you'd ask that before. But you wished to place him for yourself, didn't you? And I'm afraid you'll have to. You see, when he volunteered it was on certain conditions; and that he was not to be known in the premises was one of them."

"But you've told me everything but his name."

"That was especially stipulated."

"And I am never to be any the wiser?" she inquired. "That seems hardly fair. Since I can't pay him I certainly should be permitted to thank him."

"I'll take your thanks to him."

"No. I wish to thank him myself, in person."

"You want him to come here?"

"I want him to come here—just as soon as I am fit to be seen."

"He'll come to-day, if you say so," he surprised her with.

"Oh, no, no, no. Not while I'm like this."

"But he's seen you worse than this, remember. He's been in this room a dozen—a score of times."

"Here!" she exclaimed, amazed.

"Of course. While your eyes were bandaged. While the transfer was made."

"Then he saw how awful I was?"

"I fancy he didn't regard you as awful. He seemed—"

But she wouldn't let him go on. "Send him this evening," she commanded, "and I'll have the lights arranged so that I can see him while I myself am veiled by the kindly shadow."

When the surgeon was gone Nina fell to wondering once more. There were flirtations she had totally forgotten; there was no question about that. But she had always been rather a stickler for caste, and she couldn't at all reconcile the sheep-raising and the stone-quarrying with any of her lightly amorous adventures.

Perhaps, after all, she had been on the wrong track. Certainly she had been on the wrong track. This man owed her something, the perplexing Pottow had said, meaning evidently a debt of gratitude.

Then it couldn't be one of those. They were the last persons to think themselves in arrears of that kind. It must be some one she had befriended. She supposed she had befriended poor men on occasions, but she couldn't recall individual cases.

Possibly it was a coachman or gardener, or one of the tenantry at some place she had been years gone.

Or—why to be sure—some private from the ranks, who had completed

his service, fallen heir to a little farm and a little quarry here in Somersetshire, and settled down to the prosaic life of a plodding civilian.

The idea robbed the prospect of the meeting of most of its interest. And it was the only idea she could accept. She even forgot to tell Delphine that she was expecting a caller, and she forgot, too, to have the lights arranged as she had planned.

When, therefore, her maid came to her with the announcement that a gentleman was calling—a gentleman who wouldn't give his name, but said that he came at Mr. Pottow's suggestion—she was not in the least prepared.

"Does he seem a gentleman, Delphine?" she asked, interested afresh.

"*Oh, oui, madame!* A young gentleman, and good-looking."

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"Of a certainty, madame. Here, with M. Pottow."

"But you never heard his name?"

"Never, madame."

Then, hastily, she had her arrange the lights and give her a fan with which to mask the lower part of her features where the now healing burns were still more or less unsightly.

And then she waited—sure still that she was to be disappointed.

She heard the steps at length in the passage, and fixed her eyes upon the door. But the light was not very good there either—she had had it concentrated as far as possible on the chair placed for the visitor at least four yards from her bedside, toward the foot and facing her.

He was in the room now, just over the threshold, bowing at what must have seemed to him just a black shadow, and save that he was tall, and that his figure was gracefully slender, what she saw meant nothing to her whatever. He hadn't even spoken, so there was no voice to recognize.

As he came forward, though, there was something in his walk and carriage that seemed familiar, though she couldn't place them for the life of her.

"Do sit down," she urged. "There! I'd rather you wouldn't come nearer."

Still he didn't speak. But he sat down as she bade him with the light full on his face, and she saw he was Gerald Andrews.

It was quite a minute before she could speak. Then, "You—of all the persons in the world!" she breathed barely above a whisper.

"It is odd that we should meet again here under such circumstances," he agreed, pleasantly amused over her astonishment. "And yet not so singular, either. It's a tight little island, this, and any two persons on it are more or less likely to run across each other in time."

"But I thought you were still in India," she said.

"It's three years since I came home. The governor died suddenly, and—well, there were things to be looked after."

Nina smiled, thinking of what Mr. Pottow had told her.

"Where's little boy blue that looks after the sheep?" she quoted. "Was that it?"

"Yes," he answered, "the sheep were part of it. But the quarry is the biggest job."

She wondered how she could be so rude to him after all he had done. Somehow it didn't just seem to her a gentleman's work. But he wasn't ashamed of it, evidently. And she was glad of that.

"I read in the newspapers about your misfortune," he told her. "I'm glad you came to Pottow. He's the best man on scars in all England."

"Scars," she repeated, remembering. But it would be ruder still to ask him about his. She wondered whether he really did think of her every time he shaved.

"He took an old scar out for me—a very delicate bit of work, too."

"How vain you must be!" she exclaimed.

"No; it was hardly vanity. I was ashamed of it, not for what it was, but

for what it meant. It symbolized cowardice, and I was ashamed of that."

"I remember," she said; "but I'll forget it, if you'd rather."

"I would rather."

"You're stronger now, aren't you? I'm so glad."

Then for the first time came something of that old boyish lilt in his voice that recalled the Simla days—days prior to the night of the season's last dance at Viceregal Lodge, which wasn't the end of everything, after all.

"Are you glad, really?" he asked, delighted. "Do you care just that little bit?"

"Indeed I am," she told him. "I care a great deal—for your happiness. I want you to be happy."

"I'm hardly that," he confessed. "That is, I haven't been. But I'm very nearly so this evening."

She must have experienced some little emotion, for she forgot her fan for an instant and left her chin unmasked. But she lifted it again almost instantly.

"How good you have been to me!" she murmured. "I didn't deserve such sacrifice."

"It wasn't a sacrifice. It was a delight. Besides, it was the least I could do to make good for being a cad when you were in trouble."

Even in the shadow he could see that she didn't understand. Her eyes showed him that.

"I lost my head," he confessed. "I wasn't only weak; I was half wild. It was I that told Dinghal all you'd ever said to me. It was I, really, who started the horrid stories that got about. I feel I can never do enough to wipe that out."

To his surprise she showed no resentment. "I dare say that all you said wasn't half the truth. I did kill poor Darling, you know."

His brow contracted to a frown.

"You didn't," he protested. "You couldn't—you couldn't have meant to. If you had any part in it, it was accidental."

She didn't insist. All she said was: "I don't see why you should think so well of me, Gerald. I was perfectly horrid to you."

"Were you?" he asked, dreaming. "You were very good to me, too. I can't forget that. I don't want to. It's that and that only I care to remember."

"Would you think it good of me if I should let you come every day to see me?" she asked suddenly, with fresh impulse. "It's a privilege I've allowed no one."

"Oh, will you?" he cried, delighted. "I *would* be glad."

"I've seen no one but Mr. Pottow, you know; not even my oldest, dearest friends. Not my own people."

His smile was rapturous.

"I know it," he said. "Have you heard what you are called here? No? Well, you are 'the mysterious widow of Bath.'"

"Isn't that funny?" she laughed. "Fancy how dull I have been! You will come and amuse me, won't you, Gerald?"

"Every day. And if ever I bore you, or you'd rather not see me, say so. You'll do that?"

"I'll do that. And"—she hesitated just an instant—"and you mustn't neglect your sheep or your freestone, you know. If you don't come I'll know a lamb has strayed from the fold and you're out on the hill looking for it. Do you carry a crook?"

"My shepherds do," he said solemnly.

"Send me some south-down mutton, Gerald. I'm so fond of chops." And at that he laughed.

"I'm not going to be teased," he said and stood up. But Nina made him sit down again. She was enjoying his call so much. She made him stay another hour.

He came every day after that, as she bade him. She usually set the hour herself, and he arrived on the minute.

As he was leaving one afternoon he heard voices in the vestibule. The

housemaid was sending away an insistent caller.

"Mrs. Darling doesn't see any one," he heard her say.

"But I'm sure she'll see me," the persistent male voice continued. "You just take her my card."

"She forbids me to fetch cards," rejoined the housemaid. "I'm sorry, sir."

He heard the jingle of silver coin. The caller was about to resort to bribery. As a privileged one, out of compassion for Nina, he would lend his aid. He might pretend he was the attending surgeon or physician, and that it was by his orders that the patient was denied visitors.

He drew the door, which was slightly ajar, wider. He made a third in the vestibule. And then he recognized the caller. It was Lord Kneedrock.

Nibbetts recognized him, too. He shrugged his hulking shoulders and thrust his handful of coins back into his pocket. Then he turned to the housemaid again.

"I understand," he said in his penetrating undertone. "I quite understand. Mrs. Darling sees no one."

Then he reopened the outer door and stalked lumberingly away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Disinterested Married Man.

THERE was a house-party at Puddlewood, and all the kinsfolk and friends who haunted Bellingdown were there.

"Who's seen Nina?" asked the duchess.

"No one," answered Waltheof laconically.

"Too bad, when she's so entertaining," said the duke. "I always say there's no one like Nina. I say, Doody, don't I say there's nobody like Nina?"

"Everybody knows what you think of Mrs. Darling," affirmed the duchess calmly. "But I do wonder what she looks like!"

Charlotte Grey had been to Bath, but had not succeeded in seeing the recluse. She got as far as Delphine, and that was all.

"*Madame ne reçoit personne,*" said the French maid.

"Nibbetts has been, too," said Kitty Bellingdown. "And he was equally unsuccessful."

"I thought she'd have seen you," ventured the duchess.

"I thought so, too; but it appears not," returned Kneedrock gloomily.

Meanwhile the Carleigh split-up had occurred, but the fact had not yet reached this bureau of family and friendly counsel.

Strolling ruminantly on the promenade at Nice, Caryll's heart turned thirstily toward the giver of oblivion.

"I don't care what she looks like, I must see her," he said, and he left by that night's *Paris rapide*.

On the journey to Bath he did a great deal of thinking. He hadn't been happy for weeks—not since the night Mrs. Veynol came so suddenly into his paradise in Madeira.

It is idle for a man to hope to keep his perfect balance in a desperate flirtation with his own mother-in-law. One might as well contemplate tight-rope feats on a newly thrown and, consequently, not firm rope.

Carleigh realized that he hadn't made any manner of success of the task. And the worst of it was that his wife didn't in the least care.

When Sibylla had killed her daughter's betrothal, the daughter had rebelled slightly. She had been pale—but she appeared happy.

Now, however, when the marriage had gone under, she exhibited neither reluctance nor grief. She did not resent losing her husband in the least. She only yawned and said: "Why don't you bolt with mama?" and then read further.

It was all very distressing—exceedingly distressing. But now he was nearing Bath and Nina. And that meant consolation.

Nina, receiving his card, experienced a rush of vivid anticipation. Is there any situation so piquant as that of meeting the man one did not marry after he has "hashed it" with another woman?

Her embargo had been lifted that morning, and the precious new skin—partly Gerald's, partly her own—which the specialist had worked so hard to foster into beauty was at last firm enough to stand the gaze of the most critical of all judges—the man that one might have married.

Carleigh, waiting in the drawing-room, was far more nervous than she was. He had been told that she was horribly disfigured, and he expected to find her so.

Now he could hear her step in the passage. She was outside there in the chill hall. Then the latch clicked, the portière swung, and—he was rising to touch Nina Darling's hand again.

After all these months! The bedroom and the bandages rushed back upon his memory, and he was prepared to need self-control when he should look up. But when he did look up he saw, with a curious jump in his heart, that she was not scarred.

Then in the same instant that he realized she was unchanged he knew himself to be greatly changed—branded on brow as well as in soul. And he felt that through and through.

He took her hand—both hands—in his and gazed thirstily into her eyes—a serene violet-blue.

"I've blundered, too," he said as a greeting. "I've made an unhappy marriage, too, now. I have more sympathy for you than I had. But *she* never plays with guns, unfortunately."

He laughed, really quite gaily, for he was most awfully glad to feel her hand in his again. And she laughed as well.

"It's funny how people talk, isn't it?" she said. "Of course I never had anything to do with it; but people like to talk—after all these years, too. It was just an accident."

And it was just the only day that she had insisted the reverse. But that was to another man—a different type of man.

He laughed and put his arm about her. "Kiss me, dear," he said. "I'm so very unhappy."

If she had averted her head he would have been her slave afresh; but she didn't avert her head. Instead she kissed him placidly—so placidly that he almost started.

"You see you're married now," she told him and drew her hand out of his and went and sat down.

He felt stunned and sick. It was as if there was no bottom anywhere for a little. But then he remembered.

"Nina," he said, calling her again that which in all the fervor of his nomenclature during the passionate, passed-by period he had so often voiced. "Nina, I've come to ask a great kindness at your hands—two, in fact."

She sat quiet, staring at him with those lash-veiled eyes that had driven him and so many, many others not quite mad; and, had the lesson he had spent months conning in such a hell as may exist amid our earthly surroundings been a bit less bitter and thorough, he must have felt that near-madness course in his veins again. But he was seared so that no near-madness was for him any more.

"How you've changed!" she observed, not seeming to notice his speech, and speaking herself in a certain tone of absolute childlike wonder, which was not the least of the weapons in her arsenal of personal persuasion. "Why, you've lines across your forehead—at your age, too! Lines that I can see even from here."

"Never mind," he said; and then some impulse led him to go over and kneel beside her, conscious only of an acute wonder as to what would come next. "Never mind, dear girl, listen to me."

She put her hand upon his head.

"And white hairs," she pursued, tracing them with an astonished finger. "At your age, too. One—five. Why, I can count eight."

"Never mind," he repeated, pulling down the impertinent finger and wondering as he did so that its fresh imprisonment left him so pitifully, piteously, unthrilled. "Never mind—I don't care what I look like any more."

"It's all so futile—life is so empty—things seem to me so very, very trivial. What are wrinkles beside things—untellable things—that stone one's immortality and make one wish that on the Judgment Day God Himself wouldn't know!"

Even as he spoke he caught himself questioning whether she believed him—whether his words stirred any feeling in her.

She dropped her eyes and pulled her hand free.

"I know what you mean," she said in a toneless voice. "I had such secrets, too. But they're not what people fancy them to be. People think I killed my husband; but I didn't. I did what you've done—what we all do. I killed myself."

He looked at her. It was such a pitiless, relentless glare—that into which her words thrust his consciousness.

"I can't believe that yours were like mine," he said miserably. "No one can ever have done what I have done. Yes, you're right—and it has killed me."

She didn't seem greatly interested.

"But I didn't come to talk of that," he exclaimed quickly. "I came to ask of you two things. Will you grant them?"

She turned her head, leaving only her profile showing. "Certainly not," she said. "I will grant you nothing."

"You mustn't say that. You don't know what I'm asking."

"You're married," she told him, "and I won't have a thing to do with you. I hate the love-making of mar-

ried men. It's dangerous, too, for they always talk."

That dull, heavy red that had been crimson before he took on chains stole over his face.

"I'll tell you without asking, then," he said. "It may not be the great and tremendous thing to you that it is to me. I think, perhaps, that you may even laugh."

"Very likely," she assented.

He rose and went to the chimney-piece and stood there, striving for greater quietude. It was a long moment—minutes long.

Then, finally, he threw over his shoulder, "Nina, you must hear me. I'm going away. I'm going to cut it all. Suetonius was pretty bad, but you can be tracked by a mother-in-law until life becomes hideous. I—"

"But everybody knew why your betrothal was called off," she said with simple finality; "and then you deliberately married the girl even after that."

"I know—I know—I know," he cried in irritation; "but those things must be written in the Book of Fate. Some curses must be launched beyond recall. At any rate, it's done. We both know that."

"Yes, we know that," she agreed simply.

"And now I am going away, and I'm not sure that I shall ever return. But I want an object in going, and I would rather have it something in connection with you than anything else on earth. I've thought what I want to do, and I wish you'd give me permission to do it.

"Of course there was a man you loved, and of course you love him yet. Equally of course he accounts for everything, and of course he's still alive or you'd be a better woman. If he was dead he'd have a hold over you that would keep you straight."

"How funny for you to know all that!" she exclaimed, opening her eyes very wide. "You certainly have been learning." Then she broke forth

into laughter. "And if it were the duke now!"

"Don't laugh," he cried angrily. "I tell you I'm in earnest. I know that there's a man, and that he's somewhere. Well, then, I want to go where he is, and to see him face to face, and to try to right whatever separates you. I've got to get away—and far away—and I'll be able to build some sort of respect for myself if I know that I've a good purpose and a clean mission."

She wasn't laughing now. He was very much in earnest, and she had caught some of his seriousness. It was contagious.

"I understand what persons like you and me can suffer, and how much they need help, and how the mock of love unfulfilled can drive them into hideous rocks and sink them in a seething whirlpool of temptations. I can read your life like a book now—can read it by the lurid light of my own burning wreck. And so I know that whatever might happen you would be forgivable. And it's what I know—what I have learned—that I want to tell him. And whatever is wrong—if he believes it—if I can make him believe—However, it—" And there he stopped—broke off abruptly.

Nina was staring at him hard.

He had spoken so fast and in such a passion of pleading that he appeared to be for the moment breathless. She sat there before him in the low chair she had chosen, and her eyes were fixed on him.

He had poured forth the last phrases with his head bowed and his hands gripping the edge of the velvet-draped shelf behind him.

It was she who spoke next.

"There is no one for you to go to," she said—"no one in all the wide world. As to my husband, it was a kind of accident. But really I didn't care if it hadn't been. All my crimes are against myself. I've injured no one else. Do you understand?"

He nodded dumbly, feeling rather blank.

"There is no 'man' in my life," she went on. "I never have 'loved' as women are supposed to love. I've just liked men—liked them as such—that was all."

She paused briefly, looking at him, expecting some word; but he was silent.

"I've never been really bad," she continued. "I've never wanted to be bad. But I like to be kissed, and I've been so unhappy through just sheer loneliness that I could only remember a few of the commandments, and the marriage service not at all."

Sir Caryll Carleigh stood very still there, trying to read her meaning in her face, but failing.

"Pretty nearly every one thinks I was in love with Kneedrock," she pursued presently. "You may ask him about that if you like. And they think that we made way with poor Darling between us. But they are wrong."

She paused again, in doubt whether or not to say more—whether or not to tell the truth—the whole truth—as she had never told it before. Carleigh neither urged nor encouraged, but of her own free will she decided. It was due him in a way, and frank confession might probably be the best thing for her. She had carried the burden alone now for five years, always growing heavier, and the temptation to share it was too much for her.

"He was cleaning his gun, you see"—that was how she began it; just that simply—"and a cartridge shell stuck in the barrel. He tried to get it out, and then he held it—the gun, I mean—and asked me to try—with a sharp thing, you know. He thought that it was an empty shell and so did I. But it wasn't. That was all."

Carleigh shivered ever so slightly. "You cannot say that you didn't kill him, then," he declared.

She pursed her lips a bit thoughtfully. Already she felt better. She

had not misjudged the effect—she *was* relieved.

"No; because of course I did. But, on the other hand, of course I didn't. Anyhow, it mattered very little. I was so mad over life and living that his death seemed a very small event to me. I couldn't remember a thing at first.

"The shot seemed to have stunned my memory. But it all came back later—horridly. The scene, I mean. Yet the event—the fact that poor Darling was gone—appeared of so little importance. And I foolishly expected the world to see it as I did."

"But the world didn't?"

"No" she shook her head quite seriously—"the world chose to talk, and has talked ever since. So very stupidly, too."

Carleigh felt dazed. Nina's viewpoint was very puzzling at times.

"And yet I understand," he said, seizing on the most obvious end of the tangle. "I don't suppose I'd—you see I have been so close to desperation myself—I don't suppose I'd care either, if—" But he got no further.

Nina hooked her fingers together tightly behind her head.

"I wouldn't think such thoughts if I were you," she said quite gravely. "You know if you do, the chance comes, and then you do something—and God—only God—will ever measure you by what you really did mean."

Then she looked at him very intently and went on with great impressiveness both of tone and emphasis: "I did give a most awful jab with that sharp thing, and the cartridge exploded and killed my husband, and—I was glad. So, of course, I *am* a murderess at heart. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Carleigh somberly.

"And that was my crime," she continued—"that I wanted to do it. And the results haven't mattered so much. What matters is that *I wanted to do*

it. That's all that matters. All that can ever matter."

"I understand," said the man, his voice so low that the words were barely articulate.

There was a long, grim silence which grew oppressive.

"It's years ago, is it not?" he asked then.

"Five years," she answered. "It's not a pretty story, is it? How the duchess enjoys telling it! What she knows and what she thinks. And she's my great-aunt. Fancy what fun it has afforded the rest of the world!"

"That is unworthy of you," Carleigh rebuked under his breath—"to rail about the horror that has blighted your life. I can't laugh over horrors. They turn me cold in the night."

"Ah, but I've grown used to mine," she returned lightly. "And besides, it wasn't so bad as what followed—as the realizing that I could never be clean again. I wonder if all those who've sinned as I have sinned are trying to fill an empty life as I've been trying!"

He moved to a seat, sank down and clutched his head between his hands. "But love wasn't killed in you—you find pleasure in men. It has been in me."

She whirled in her seat so suddenly that he started.

"Good Heavens!" she cried, "you don't fancy that I get any real joy out of flirting, do you? Why, it's only to pass the time. I never forget for one second. I—I couldn't."

There was another silence—briefer, this time—and then Carleigh rose, a bit heavily.

"You're horribly human, you know," he said. "I don't know what to say or what to do. I know only that I long more than ever for you. You—you couldn't care for me again, I suppose?"

She began to laugh. "Oh, you very manlike man!" she cried. "As if I didn't know that was what you came for. No; I couldn't ever care for you. No; not possibly."

There was a tap on the door and the housemaid entered with a card for Nina, who knew whose name it bore before she glanced at it.

"Certainly, Wilson," she said; "show Mr. Andrews in at once."

CHAPTER XXV.

The Interested Married Man.

LORD KNEEDROCK lived, when he was in town, in a small suite in St. James's Square.

Here Carleigh came on a bright morning, three days later, to find Kneedrock in the little sitting-room reading before a fire, three windows open and two dogs asleep at his feet.

They talked for half an hour before the visitor reached his point.

"She told me all," he said, then. "I suppose it's fairest to say outright that she told me all."

Kneedrock didn't look at him. He was smoking his pipe, and his gaze fixed itself on the curling clouds of smoke that eddied in the cross-currents of air from the open windows.

"I suppose that she told you she was to blame, eh?" he drawled after a moment.

"She said that she hadn't cared what happened."

"It isn't a pretty story, no matter how you look at it," the viscount observed, putting his reflections into words. "Two desperate persons who didn't care what happened. Poor Darling! He didn't care what happened, either, don't you know. I've often wondered if he didn't load the thing and call her to manage the discharge."

Carleigh's eyes were fascinatedly fixed on the flames in the grate—little blue, dancing devils of light whose heat was overpowered by the chill from outside.

"I thought of that, too," he said, grimly.

"Poor Darling!" Kneedrock went on musingly. "I saw him before any one else. The smoke hadn't cleared

away. His face was quite gone, you know. It was awful."

"Good God!"

There was a little pause, and then the older man said:

"What horrible things go on in the world, anyhow!"

"Yes," the other said simply.

"I saw him after that, though," pursued Kneedrock, "in his coffin, tricked out in his dress uniform, a handkerchief spread where his face used to be, and his head on a silk pillow. He looked very peaceful. Glad it was all over, I dare say."

Carleigh only nodded, still looking at the fire. And then there was another pause, which Kneedrock broke eventually with: "We're awfully primitive. . . . Still Nina's story wasn't strictly primitive. It was all warped and twisted by civilization."

"In the stone age things would have been different. The troglodyte would have clubbed Darling, and later, if the lady played tricks, he would have ended her in the same way. That's how to manage women."

He stretched out his iron hand and wrist and looked at them—his right hand and wrist, not the scarred ones. "I hate civilization," he said then suddenly. "I hate honor, and *noblesse oblige*, and all such tommyrot. It's the ruin of the race."

He spoke slowly now, but with a frightful bitterness.

"Yes," said Carleigh, sympathy swelling quick, "we've gone a long way from the truth of existence."

"It isn't any use going on a wild-goose chase after happiness in these times," Kneedrock went on. "You can't cure your ills, nowadays. I tried to help myself once, and made the worst kind of a mess of it. Go back to your wife, or go off with your mother-in-law, but don't imagine that either course is going to help you to happiness. Because it isn't."

Carleigh was looking Nibbetts straight in the eyes now.

"And yet," he said frankly. "I

think that I could be happy—quite happy—with Mrs. Darling."

"No, you couldn't," returned the viscount sharply—gruffly, in fact. "You couldn't. She's too shallow."

"Shallow?"

"Yes, shallow. She has no depths—of feeling, or anything else. Her whole life shows that. She was too pretty when she was young. She led her husband a devil of a dance, and she'll never reform."

"You must go after some other trail or grail, or whatever you choose to call it. You can never either help Nina or get her. Take my word for that."

Carleigh, who wasn't in any sense a strong character, felt depressed at the words. Kneedrock, who was a very strong character, relit his pipe and waited. After a little the other said:

"Do you, by any chance, know a man named Andrews?"

"I know one Andrews," answered Kneedrock, and this time he held out his left hand and wrist. "It was he who gave me that," he added, indicating the healed wound, "the night before poor Darling was shot."

"In India?"

"In India."

"What sort of a chap?"

"Tallish, rather good-looking, brown eyes and hair, young. Was in the civil service."

Carleigh looked puzzled. "I wonder if it could have been the same?" he asked, half to himself. "I met him at Mrs. Darling's the day I called."

"Oh, I dare say," said Kneedrock, non-committally. "He's followed her after five years. Once one gets the virus in one's blood, it's likely to break out any time. So Andrews is at Bath!"

"He seemed to be quite at home."

"Doubtless he is. Nina can make one feel that way. He was very much at home in the Darling bungalow at Umballa. Just before he fired at me he and Nina seemed to be sharing a

single chair. You see, I was there on a spying expedition."

"You mean—" queried Carleigh. He couldn't just reconcile Kneedrock and the word.

"I'd heard that Darling was cruel to her and I traveled all the way from Tuamota to the Punjab to find out."

Sir Caryll held his peace and Kneedrock added. "Of course I found it was the most unwarranted slander. Darling was a saint."

He got up and closed the three windows. Then he poked the coals, and took a place on the hearth rug with his back to the grate. The dogs still slept.

"So she's amusing herself with Andrews again, eh!" he chuckled. "Recalling those halcyon days of bloodshed, I suppose."

"Perhaps," said Carleigh, thoughtfully, "now, after all these years, she'll marry him."

"Oh, no, she won't," flashed from

Kneedrock, who was smiling. "She can't, you know."

"I don't see why not," the other rejoined. "She's her own mistress. She's of age, and a widow, and of sound mind."

The viscount maintained a rather disconcerting silence for the space of several seconds, puffing at his pipe and following the smoke with his eyes. Then he patted the head of the nearest dog with the toe of his boot.

When, finally, he spoke, it was to ask: "Did you ever hear me spoken of as her lover?"

"Yes," answered Carleigh, surprised beyond words.

Kneedrock raised his head and his eyes as they rested for a moment upon Sir Caryll's were curiously devoid of expression.


"I was," he said with a sort of dry grimness. "I'm more than that—I'm her husband."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.

The White Gorilla

by Elmer Brown Mason

FOR eight months no word came from my friend Van Dam.

 Those of us in his debt virtuously assured ourselves that we had intended to pay him back at once, and tried to bear up; others who wished to borrow were naturally somewhat resentful at his absence. As

usual, he had given no intimation of his flitting, and all who called at his diggings—so he designated the enormous top-story apartment where he dwelt among his countless trophies and collections—were met by the always smiling Jap with the information: "Mr. Van Dam, he will be back—oh, quite soon some day."

This same phrase had excused a

two years' disappearance of his master in the interior of Borneo. Gradually we ceased to think of him, and each little life traveled around its own restricted orbit as though the absentee had ceased to exist.

My own affairs were going rather well and orders simply poured in. This halcyon state was due to a Hercules, for which Van had provided me with an extraordinary model, and a Pittsburgh millionaire bought because it was the image of a fellow steel worker he had known in his undollared youth.

These orders, however, were entirely for portraits, which I do not like doing — my forte is large allegorical canvases, though Van thinks differently—but never having had any money, I developed a lust for it and painted all who paid. My most lucrative commission had just come to me, a portrait for a political club of one of its most prominent—and worst—members, and it was giving me a great deal of trouble. To begin with, the man would not sit more than fifteen minutes at a time, and his face was simply horrible.

I painted it first, nearly from memory, in all its brutal reality of low forehead, eyes set far back, and enormous jaw development — a positively bestial thing. And it looked not the slightest like the original.

Then I conceived the idea that a soul was shining through this fleshy mask and put the light of holiness in the eyes, the curve of renunciation at the corner of the lips. When my man called, his own face made its painted counterpart look like the delineation of some kindly saint. That day I devoted myself solely to the hands—veritable Gargantuan paws they were—and after he had left, very discouraged, started to scrape and turn the face. Just as I had eliminated all but chin and forehead the phone rang.

"Hello!" I said crisply into the transmitter with the intonation I have adopted since I consider myself a successful artist.

"Come to dinner, painter-man," drawled Van's voice over the wire. "I have something to show you."

"I'm very busy," I answered loftily; "but I'll try to manage it if you'll tell me beforehand what we are eating."

Van has one idiosyncrasy that is positively ghastly. He is always cooking the most awful, uncivilized dishes concealed in such delectable sauces that you can't help liking them till you find out what they are. At his table I have eaten a lizard creature tasting exactly like delicate chicken, and a savory dish of what appeared to be roasted oysters and was really the larvæ of the black palm weevil.

"What are you busy with?" came over the wire. "If it's a Vulcan, I have a good model for you."

"I'm trying to paint a baboon," I snapped, "and no model will do."

"Surprising," he answered in really animated tones. "I can furnish you with a gorilla, and I have a young cannibal here to go with it."

"Am I to act as a meal for your guests?" I began, but he had hung up.

Van and I dined luxuriously on what I took to be very young lamb and afterward adjourned to the den, on the walls of which are ranged the cases containing his albino collection—the traditional white blackbird, the enormous, glittering, white toucan, the snowy racoon, the white panther, and that last acquisition in a huge case by itself. There was a roaring wood fire, and before it, partially covered by a snow-leopard's skin, twitched, while he slept, the coffee-colored slim cannibal boy. Once he reached up a long, bare foot and scratched his ear exactly as a dog attends to a flea.

There was a livid, five-inch scar on Van's cheek, and while he talked the blood would pulse to its top, run down underneath the skin, and disappear exactly as an electric advertising sign lights and flashes out.

"Of course you know, painter-man," he began, "that I am in touch

with people throughout the world whom I pay to keep their eyes open for the albino phase in animals and birds. The mail daily brings me offers of specimens or word where they may be procured; but, for the most part, they are of species I already have or else out-and-out fakes—I have been offered scores of white elephants. You see, among savages, the abnormal in nature is very often an object of direct worship.

“Contrary to our ideas of religion, the untutored savage has the delicacy not to inflict his beliefs on strangers, and does not, so to speak, wear his god on his sleeve. It is, therefore, hard to get reliable information regarding animals that are white when they normally should be quite a different color.

“It was, as a matter of fact, the very indefinitiveness of the data that sent me on this last expedition. From Libreville, in the French Congo, an Englishman wrote me it was common talk among the Mpangwe, who had recently been driven out of the region at the headwaters of the Gabun River, that their conquerors worshiped and sacrificed to a white woman who walked on her knees and elbows and was covered with long hair. A Dutch trader sent word from Booue that the Fan tribe of cannibals had an old, old man for chief who walked on all fours and was fed entirely on human flesh. A French rubber exploiter in the Sierra de Crystal told one of my agents that there was a large, white monkey in the Ogowé division of the Fan cannibals which was held sacred and accompanied them to war.

“The very meagerness of this information and the improbability of collusion between its widely separated sources gave me something on which to theorize, and I sailed for Libreville. The building of my theory was simplicity itself. The third informant had distinctly stated that the creature was a white monkey. Monkeys are regarded by many tribes in Africa as only slightly modified human beings.

“The final link in my reasoning came from the statement that it walked on its elbows and knees. The gorilla walks, or rather swings itself along, on the back of its hands—the wrist, we would call it—and often turns the toes of its feet under. In short, I hoped for an albino gorilla, and my theory was strengthened by the knowledge that gorillas, when caught young, are docile and easily tamed, in spite of the unquestioned ferocity of the wild, old males. As a matter of fact, we know little more about this largest of all primates than has been vouched us from the fertile imagination of Paul de Chaillu.

“There are current, in Africa, tales of men snatched from the ground to die a horrible death in the tree-tops; of an African tribe that kept a huge, old male for executioner until it was killed by an Englishman about to be sacrificed, who noticed a swelling over its heart and struck it in this vulnerable spot. At any rate, I had never seen a gorilla in the wild state, and the adventure promised many thrills.

“From Libreville I made a short expedition among the Mpangwe whom the more warlike Fans had driven from the interior. Savages, I have found, Mr. Painter-man, belong to two categories: Those that are honest, trustworthy, and truthful, and those that are the exact opposite.

“The Mpangwe belong to the latter class. They were the worst liars I have ever met, and told me only what they thought I wanted to hear. The hairy woman was endowed with wings and made to lay eggs that hatched into serpents, and when they found it was a monkey I was after, they agreed to a man that she always assumed that form at night.

“There was nothing to be learned from these swindling blacks, and I made up my mind to follow rumor to its source and go up the Gabun River into the gorilla country where dwelt the Ogowé Fans. The local French government, not without a warning against

its unsettled state and the absolute lack of positive knowledge of the region into which I proposed to penetrate, finally gave me a permit for a scientific exploring expedition.

"They even went further and provided me with a guard of twenty soldiers — so, you see, I traveled rather *en prince* — and helped to collect the rather large caravan which I required.

"A trip of this nature to one who has been through the same kind of thing before, contrary to the general idea of you city dwellers, is remarkable only for the length of time it takes to reach a given point. There was, of course, the usual revolt of the porters for higher pay, which had to be summarily quelled; the leopard that blundered into my tent-ropes one night, and the killing of a man by a wounded buffalo; also an ill-advised attempt to assassinate me. These are only the incidents one expects in jungle travel, however; and, on the whole, it was rather a dull journey, and a very hot one.

"As we neared our destination the country became rugged with open but shady and damp forests, and there were interminable thickets of scitamines and tree-ferns, on the fruits of which the gorilla feeds. All along the route I made guarded inquiries about my quest, and, from what I could *not* learn, fully made up my mind that a white gorilla, or at least some extraordinary animal, its existence well known to the natives, was in possession of the Fans. I came to this conclusion because every approach to the subject, no matter how indirect, instantly inspired fear, and those interrogated either became dumb or lied wildly.

"One day's journey from our destination I sent ahead runners with gifts to the sorcer (so is designated the local priest) and to the chief. Of course word of my coming had long ago preceded me, and, partially through curiosity, partially through respect for my guard and my large caravan, they sent back friendly messages.

"The next evening, to the monotonous beat of tom-toms, I pitched camp on the edge of the valley in which dwelt the Ogowé Fans. These savages were quite different from any I had met in Africa. They were not black, but coffee-colored, well made, with thin lips, intelligent faces, and were tall and, according to our standards, excessively slim.

"Best of all, their language was a slight variation of the great Bantu tongue, as spoken by the Zulu Kafirs, and with which I am thoroughly familiar. The women, who were quite handsome, worked in the manioc-fields, while the existence of the men was made up of war and hunting. To a high degree they were both truthful and honorable.

"Savages love ceremony, and our mutual greetings took up all of three days, on the last of which there was a feast with wild dances and much palm-wine. I was not at all sure of the bill of fare, and, in order to be on the safe side, pretexted a vow of fasting, an expiatory rite which they practise, and so understood. My rôle was that of a sorcer who had come to study their birds and beasts, but most to consort with my brother priests to our mutual advantage, and I was accepted at my own valuation.

"A liberal gift insured me the privilege of dwelling in their country as long as I pleased, and so well did I get on with my hosts that finally, with the chief, I went through that not unpoetic ceremony of mysterious origin which they call blood-brotherhood. This practical adoption into the tribe so reassured me as to my safety that I sent back my guard of soldiers, much to their horror, and in spite of their protestations, and with them the greater part of my porters, retaining only a few in whom I had implicit confidence.

"I've lived with savages before, Mr. Painter-man, and I must say there is no pleasanter or easier life. To a very great extent every man does

exactly as he pleases. Food is the only real necessity, and is largely furnished by the labor of the women.

“Moral and ethical considerations are never personal, but the affair of the high priest (better called sorcer), and are left entirely in his hands.

“In spite of ideal conditions for happiness, it was distinctly wanting among the Ogowé Fans. There was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction running through the tribe, and an atmosphere of mental discomfort. Quarrels were frequent, and there were several cases of absolute insanity, the victims of which were promptly put to death, tribal law permitting of no mental or physical deficient.

“In my assumed character it was naturally the sorcer that I saw the most of, and we found much in common. As a matter of fact, the priest among savages represents not only the highest mental, but what we must characterize for want of a better definition, as scientific attainments of the race. My confrère of the Ogowé Fans was a shrewd, middle-aged man, leaning toward asceticism, and a real fanatic in his beliefs.

“He had one daughter, and if you can imagine such a thing as a soft, brown rose glowing in the tropical jungle you will have a fairly accurate picture of her. The Fan faith was a kind of Pan-deism with just a dash of sun worship, interwoven with superstition, its manifestation interpreted by the sorcer from the actions of various sacred animals. There was also an additional and very unusual way of learning the wishes of their deity.

“The priest was master of a crude but none the less effective form of hypnotism, which he practised on members of the tribe, but principally on his daughter. Through her, while she was ‘possessed of the spirit,’ otherwise in a cataleptic state, he unconsciously impressed his own will on the tribe.

“I give him absolute credit for at-

tributing divine origin to the words that she uttered, which made him only the more determined in his purposes, in the same way that a man with an honest belief is much more likely to be successful than one who must admit in his own heart that he is a faker.

“The girl was so completely under his mental control that a few moments’ gazing into a large crystal, which had been roughly rounded and held a thousand lights, made her mind blank and instantly receptive of to any impression from him. This crystal was a very sacred thing, and it was the duty of a different warrior each day to rub at the inequalities with fine sand with the purpose of finally bringing it to a perfect roundness.

“The sorcer was enough of a man of the world to appreciate the awe he might inspire by means of a few chemicals I gave him and the—to savages—startling tricks I was able to teach him. As a matter of fact, he ruled these frankly cannibal warriors through fear alone; and so great was his mental dominance that, at times, it seemed to me, he held half the tribe in a semihypnotic state. There was a bitter feud between him and the temporal chief.

“The latter wished to move on to new conquests; the priest held firm that they remain where they were for a year until expiation had been made by endless religious ceremonies for the ‘blinding of the eyes of piety,’ a phrase which meant nothing to me then, but which I now understand.

“I was, of course, more or less affiliated with the chief since, with him, I had gone through the blood-brotherhood rite, but my closest friend was his son. He was a youth of some twenty summers, and the most marvelous hunter and tracker I have ever known. Ikstu—that is as near as I can Anglicize his name—accompanied me on all my collecting expeditions, and, what was of the greatest importance, since I was supposed to know them instinctively, told me the birds

and animals that were sacred and not to be molested.

"Chief among those tabu were the gorillas, and they throve and were quite unafraid under such treatment, though naturally rather retiring beasts. In the manioc-fields, which the women cultivated, toward evening I have literally seen dozens of them. The males would wander out from the jungle with their two or three mates and family, or sometimes I would come upon a solitary old bachelor, grayish-white, and a very dangerous animal to approach.

"Some would run away, screaming with fright, in a tryingly human manner; but there was one old fellow who never gave a step until I myself retired.

"He was fully six feet tall when standing braced against a tree-trunk, his hands hanging below his knees, the hair on his neck and head erect with rage, and the ruff under his chin quivering. Two great canine teeth protruded from each side of his snarling mouth, and beneath their enormous protuberances his little eyes blazed red in his coal-black face. I learned to hate that animal, and, as he hopped away on all fours, his legs swinging out beyond his arms, I longed to turn and put an explosive bullet in him.

"Policy, that was even a question of personal safety, held me in check, however, and I wisely refrained. Ikstu, who feared nothing else in the world, was deadly afraid of these old males; but, even more than he feared them, he hated the sorcer.

"As we became better acquainted and I gained his confidence, the reason for this was apparent. I noticed that on several occasions we found two purple orchids, their stems crossed, lying in the narrow trails through the scitamines thickets, and each time this sign appeared I lost my companion for the rest of the day. The connection was obvious.

"The daughter of the sorcer-priest

always wore these orchids in her hair and as a garland—in fact, they formed by far the greater part of her wardrobe.

"Always, however, she was back from these love rambles at her father's hut before sunset; and, after he had made her gaze for a few moments into the sacred crystal, she would hurry off into the jungle with a basket of manioc and fruit of the scitamines on her arm. You may well believe I was curious in regard to these expeditions, but I kept this curiosity to myself. Once I tried to pick up her trail in the morning, and was very nearly empaled in a leopard-trap. That afternoon I received a warning from the sorcer of the presence of a very sacred and awful spirit in the direction I had gone.

"My excuse for lingering in the neighborhood was wearing thin, and the priest was beginning to look on me with unconcealed suspicion. Meanwhile, there was no hint of what I sought, and the whole tribe was humming with an undercurrent of politics that would have done credit to Tammany Hall during election.

"My time had not been entirely wasted, however, for I had the skin of an albino thrush (it proved new to science), and also a large, white spider of the trap-door variety, the first absolute case of albinism I had ever found among the *Arachnida*. My camp was ready to be abandoned and my porters to travel, and I made up my mind to start for the coast the moment I had solved the problem of the girl's nightly trip.

"The crisis came sooner than I expected. In spite of the objections of the spiritual power, the chief made a raid toward the sea and returned with heavy spoil and ten captives. There was much rejoicing in the tribe, though the sorcer was very angry, and the captives were closely guarded and well fed, so that their ultimate, gruesome disposal was only too obvious. The war party gained in strength, and it was decided the matter of moving

on to new conquests be finally decided at the Feast of the Gorillas, when the moon was full.

"My position was now not only very uncomfortable, but positively dangerous, and I kept exclusively to my own camp, my only connection with the Fan village being through Ikstu. Time hanging heavy on my hands, I hit on an expedient that I should have thought of long before.

"Through a pair of powerful field-glasses I spied the girl's route each evening until I finally traced her down to her destination, a rocky amphitheater hardly a mile distant from the village.

"That night darkness came so quickly I could not see what she did, but the next evening the secret of her expeditions and, at the same time, the end of my quest were revealed to me. From the crotch of a great rubber tree I watched her set down her basket and, swaying slightly as people do in the cataleptic state, raise her arms above her orchid-crowned head evidently calling.

"Twice she did this, and then, from a cleft in the rocks, an unbelievable object swung slowly out to meet her.

"Never have I seen so beautiful and so repulsive an animal. It was an enormous female gorilla with fur long and white as that of an Angora goat. Even in a crouched position, practically on all fours, its jet-black face was above the girl on whom it looked down from eyes that seemed, through my field-glasses, milk white.

"One mighty arm rose and rested on the girl, the other groping in the basket at her feet, and thus the two figures stood while the fruits were crammed into an enormous mouth. Then the girl lifted, with both hands, the great paw from her bare shoulder, and before the quick tropical darkness shut them from my sight, I saw her catch the wreath of purple orchids from her own neck and throw it over the brute's head.

"At camp, with his chest bleeding

from a knife wound, I found Ikstu waiting for me. Without giving him time to explain his own errand I told quickly what I had seen. He was in no way astonished, and I doubt even if he heard half I said, so full was he of his own troubles.

"The sorcer had somehow learned of the meetings with his daughter and was keeping her in a continual hypnotic state, so that, quite unconscious of what she was doing or saying, she had actually stabbed him at their last rendezvous and even threatened him with 'the blind eyes of piety.'

"His simple request was that I should take him and the girl away with me after he had killed the sorcer during the coming feast. I consented without the slightest hesitation, bargaining only that he should tell me, in return, all he knew of the white gorilla.

"Gradually, though it was apparent he feared a celestial thunderbolt, I dragged the story from him. The beast, under the care of the sorcer, had been the fetish of the tribe ever since he could remember, and figured in every religious ceremony. At the beginning of the Fans' march toward the coast the gorilla had always gone into battle with them and, maddened by a great beaker of the potent palm wine, proved a terror to their enemies. Then, to the lasting grief of the sorcer, during a night attack, it had lost the sight of both eyes from a fire-brand.

"Formerly it had been a docile and friendly animal (when not inflamed by the palm liquor), with the unrestrained freedom of the village; but this accident changed it into a she-devil that dwelt morosely alone and could only be approached by the sorcer's daughter, and that only when under her father's hypnotic influence.

"It's a wild tale, painter-man, and sitting here before the fire one can hardly believe it actually happened. In the jungle, though, with the blackness of the tropical night wrapped around

us like velvet ribbons, the squeak of the vampire bats, the far-away roar of a male gorilla, and the cough of a leopard circling the camp, it seemed perfectly natural and fitting for me to be conniving, with a cannibal, at a cold-blooded murder.

"Besides, I wanted the skin of that albino primate, and I was going to have it at any cost. I believed every word of Ikstu's story, even to divine attributes with which he credited the brute and of which I have not told you—you see, I had seen it, and alive."

Van Dam snapped on the electric lights and turned in his chair to face the glass cabinet which contained his latest acquisition. My eyes followed his and I shuddered to the very depths of my city-swaddled soul. The great monkey had been mounted bending slightly forward, its hands swinging between and far below its knees. In its immense paws it held a pear-shaped crystal larger than an ostrich's egg, which caught and imprisoned the light.

Beautiful, long, silky fur, white as silver, clothed the enormously powerful body, and beneath the low forehead, deep in the black face, were set, in lieu of eyes, two round milky-white agates. The mouth was curled back in a fixed grin revealing the broken, yellow, doglike fangs, repulsive beyond belief by contrast with the beauty and power of the rest of the animal.

"Go on, Van," I said, "you couldn't make me disbelieve anything about that thing. For Heaven's sake, out with the lights, though. I don't want to look at it."

The blood showed at the top of the scar on Van Dam's cheek, slithered down its ragged length, and winked out leaving it livid white. He switched off the electric current and we were left again with only the light of the fire.

"I gave Ikstu no advice as to his killing," Van Dam continued, "because I felt that he was quite competent to carry out his private ven-

detta in his own way. However, since the next evening was to see the beginning of the Feast of the Gorillas, I moved my camp a mile toward the coast and prepared everything for immediate flight. In the afternoon I made Ikstu guide me by a round-about route, to the very edge of the rocky amphitheater above the beast's den, and ensconced myself, within easy hearing and seeing distance, in the thick top of a scitamines bush.

"Hardly was I comfortably settled when the sorcer and his daughter, both heavily laden with baskets, appeared beneath me.

"I don't think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than that girl. Of actual clothes she wore only a white loin-cloth, but her hair was braided full of the purple orchids and garland on garland of the same flower hung from her neck and covered her lithe, brown body.

"The sorcer was hideously painted in crimson and white and his face was made up to simulate a gorilla, the hair drawn far back and two extra, white eyes daubed on the forehead.

"Immediately the girl, sitting with crossed legs, began to beat a tiny tomtom, while the sorcer built a small fire and busied himself with the baskets and three other articles. I recognized them as a leopard skin worn by one of the under chiefs, a mat from a hut, and Ikstu's favorite spear.

"When the fire was going well the girl stood up and called. The third time her voice rose the white gorilla emerged slowly from its den and hesitatingly hopped and swung down to her. Then, before my eyes, took place the most remarkable performance I have witnessed.

"The man cast some herb into the fire and the girl led the animal into the thick, scented smoke. Time and again it broke from her and rushed to its rocky refuge, time and again it came back to her call. Herb after herb, each with a different odor, went

into the flames, and gradually the movements of the great beast became slower, lethargic, till it finally stood swaying, its blind agate eyes turned to the sorcer.

"Once the girl faltered and seemed to be awakening from a trance, but her father held the crystal to her eyes till they went blank and she again mechanically did his bidding. Now he transferred the sacred stone to the gorilla's paws and began a chant. The words were not of the Bantu tongue but from some language older than the hills. I don't know what they mean, but I remember the sound, mixed with the beat of the tom-tom, as well as though I were now hearing it.

"Nala (*bong*) Nala (*bong*)
Nala impi (*bong, bong, bong.*)
Nala (*bong*) Nala (*bong*)
Nala impi (*bong, bong, bong.*)
Nala (*bong*) Nala (*bong*)
Nala impi (*bong, bong, bong.*)

Intoned to the sullen beat of the drum till the world seemed to go to sleep and the brain reach forward for the next repetition.

"The great brute began to move slowly in a swaying dance keeping time with the rhythm. One by one the girl held the leopard skin, mat and spear against its flat nostrils while, for each separate article, the sorcer pressed a hot coal to the slowly shuffling feet. At every burn the beast reared and raising the glittering crystal, to which its paws seemed glued, dashed it down on the object before it.

"Extraordinary as was the idea, I recognized at once that, for the usual passes and crystal gazing used in hypnotism, the sorcer had first substituted the scent of herbs and then the chant, and actually held the frightful beast in control by that thin thread of sound.

"Still beating her tom-tom with measured strokes the voice of the girl took up the mysterious words, and

the sorcer grew silent crouched over the fire. Night was coming fast. I slipped from my hiding place as the forest shadows blackened the cliff and silently slid down to the very cleft whence had come the gorilla. There I lay in the darkness peering at the three figures before the fire.

"First one tom-tom, another, a third, till their number seemed countless, awoke in the village. There was a high, shrill scream of agony from far away, then the voice of the whole tribe raised in a great chorus, the words growing distinguishable as they grew nearer.

"In English they would go like this:

"The sun, oh, the sun, from the rising
of the sun,
We go through jungle aisles until
the moon is high.
There's blood within our footsteps,
and every warrior one,
Lifts up a limp, dead body unto the
bleeding sky.

"Always before goes the white one.
(Piety, Piety thou!)
Leads us in the path of the sun.
(Piety, Piety thou!)
Judge at the feast when the red
blood runs free.
Leading the Fans to hot, cruel vic-
tory,
We come for thy judgment, again
come to thee.
(Piety, Piety thou!)

"Meanwhile, under the roar of voices the girl sang her monotonous strain and beat her tiny drum.

"The whole tribe defiled into the amphitheater, chiefs first with the leopard skins, which they alone are privileged to wear—a custom that links them with the Zulus—then the warriors with the prisoners in their midst, now significantly reduced to nine, and last the women and children.

These bore fagots which they piled in the center and a large fire was soon blazing. The ceremonies began, to the music of the inevitable tom-toms, with a furious dance by the warriors.

"It was a wild scene, the nearly naked savages brandishing their spears and whirling around the fire; the prisoners conscious of the horrible fate awaiting them, cowering in the background; the crouching figures of the great, white gorilla, the hideously painted sorcer, and the exquisite, brown girl intoning her endless chant.

"As a proper stage setting the heavens began to grumble, lightning flashed across the sky, and a few, big, hot drops of rain fell.

"The dance and the tom-toms ceased with such startling suddenness that the voice of the girl cut sharp as a knife through the murmur of the multitude. The priest faced the great white brute and spoke:

"'Piety, against whom the Ogowé Fans have sinned, before we ask thy judgment for the tribe, select from us in expiation. Let the sacred crystal gleam red in thy honor.'

"He raised a close-woven basket full of palm wine to its nostrils, and, while it still held the crystal pendant in its paws, tipped it till it was drained of the last drop. For a moment the white gorilla staggered, then hopping forward, balanced at its full height before the chief. While the girl's song and the beat of the tiny drum alone broke the silence it circled to the right, bent with distended nostrils above the chief whose leopard skin was in the sorcer's possession, and, quicker than I can tell it, the great paws rose and the crystal came crashing down on the doomed man's skull. Resolved to end the scene then and there, cost what it might, I raised my rifle to my shoulder and then lowered it again at what I saw.

"Sinuous as a snake, stealthy as a leopard, Ikstu, a knife in his hand, was creeping up behind the sorcer. Warned by some subtle instinct the priest turned barely before the spring. One hand shot out the finger pointing straight at the boy and their eyes locked with nearly an audible snap.

It seemed as though invisible bonds held the would-be murderer. He struggled in vain to raise the knife, to go forward.

"The pointed finger described a slow circle, Ikstu's head followed it. Faster it swung and faster. With a great burst of strength the sorcer snatched the sacred crystal from between the gorilla paws and held it to the boy's face. For a breath Ikstu swayed away from the glittering lights, then his head went forward, and, eyes glued to the shining thing, he sank with it to the ground.

"The sorcer silently faced the breathless multitude, then deliberately picked up Ikstu's own spear and turned toward him. There was a great crash of thunder and the gorilla, still swaying to the girl's music, groped blindly forward. The priest raised the spear. The girl broke off in the middle of a note and, quicker than light, covered her lover's body with her own.

"Released from the spell of the chant, though suddenly animate, the white gorilla tore the priest into his terrible arms and bore him to the ground. A blinding flash of lightning split the heavens as I fired. Catching the outline of the gorilla I pulled the trigger again, and sprang down into the arena. Every savage had fled save the chief who stood, spear poised, between the lovers and the struggling man and brute. With a back-hand sweep of his long arm the gorilla ripped open my cheek at the very moment I sent a final bullet through its forehead.

"The sorcer was quite dead, practically every bone in his body broken by the awful clutch of those hairy arms. The white gorilla still feebly moved through the mushroom bullet had carried away practically the entire back of its head. The girl, the chief, and I alone were alive and sane and until morning, in the hot rain, we labored to strip the skin from that great carcass.

"Then, the girl leading Ikstu by the hand, and the skin swinging between us on a pole, we struck out for my camp. The chief, in silence, watched his son depart, and did not try to hinder us.

"Perhaps he was thinking of the fate of those among the Fans who were found mentally wanting, and, in addition, there was the sacrilege of the attack on the priest."

Van Dam lay back in his chair and carefully lit a cigarette.

"That isn't all?" I asked after a moment's silence.

"That's all, he answered.

"But what's the end of it? What became of the girl and Ikstu?"

"The girl died on the way out. Ikstu lies there before the fire, his mind never came back to him. I have hopes, however, he has taken to worshipping the beast in the case and bowing down to the crystal. Interest in anything is an encouraging sign."

"You have a pleasant way of entertaining your guests," I said, for want of something better, "Cannibalism, murder, madness, everything but starvation."

"We had about come to that, too," Van answered carelessly, "on the way back, when we ran into a great migration of spider monkeys. They make very good eating, we just had one for dinner."



"MOON-MADNESS"

BY DOROTHY FOSTER

IF a girl I know
 Would watch the moon,
 And see the things *I* see,
 A twinkle
 In the crinkle
 Of his smile might speak for me;
 And the shrewdly winking,
 Blandly blinking,
 Wise old, nice old moon
 Might beam her
 Words a dreamer
 Sang to an old, familiar tune.

But if she knew
 The things *I* do,
 I think perhaps she'd find
 A token,
 Left unspoken,
 In the sighing of the wind.
 And the dear, old, flirting,
 Disconcerting
 Moon that hangs so high,
 Might lisp her
 Name, and whisper
 Me a hint of by and by.

Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



JAPAN the beautiful; Japan, Land of the Rising Sun, land of quaint people, queer customs, and curious treasures; Japan, shining light of the Eastern world, is the scene of

HOUSE OF THE HAWK

BY J. U. GIESY

This is a sequel to "The Blue Bomb," which ran in *The Cavalier* from November 8 to November 22, 1913. In that story *Miss Katharine Deering*, otherwise *White Kate* of Nagasaki; actress, avenging murderess, expatriate and geisha-house manager, saved the life of *Shiela McRae*, an American girl who fell into the clutches of Japanese inimical to the United States.

In "HOUSE OF THE HAWK," *Kate*, fully pardoned by the American government, and about to sail for the land of the free, had just finished her bath in her hotel in Yokohama when *Howard Sargent*, member of the American Secret Service, and *Arthur Kenton*, an attaché at the United States Embassy at Tokyo, were announced. They told *Kate* that *Norma Sargent*, daughter of the Secret Service man, had disappeared while teaching school in the prefecture of *Baron Chiba Izashiki*. Would *Miss Deering* help find the girl?

Now, *White Kate* knew something about the malodorous reputation of this baron, and it did not take her long to decide upon a course of action. The girl had been gone three days, and much can happen in that space of time—in Japan!

This fine story will begin in next week's issue of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and will run through four numbers.



When *Seth Parkney* reckoned up his accounts for the last time and he once more found and entered down the sum of \$100,000, he nodded his head with satisfaction. "Now I have it," he said. "All I've got to do is make my getaway." There was the fifty thousand dollars in yellow-backs in safe-deposit boxes. There was an air of permanent respectability in his fifteen-thousand-dollar bank-account, while good negotiable securities made up the rest of the estimated one hundred thousand dollars at current market prices. He called up the local stock-broker and told him to sell the stock "at the market," and two

days later he received the latter's check for thirty-five thousand six hundred and forty-eight dollars and forty cents. That gave him six hundred and forty-eight dollars and forty cents for moving expenses; about six times what he needed.

This is the way

A ROUND WITH NEMESIS

BY RAYMOND S. SPEARS

a complete novelette, which will appear in next week's ALL-STORY WEEKLY, begins: *Seth Parkney* had scrimped and saved

and suffered for years the pangs of poverty and the feeling of doubt as to whether next week or next month would be provided for. Now he had provided for himself and had made certain that live as long as he would he would never want for money enough to live on.

But even the best laid plans of mice and men "gang aft agley," and on the afternoon that *Parkney* received the broker's check a widow and her young son came into his office. She brought with her three thousand dollars cash, the money that had come to her because her husband had been killed in a local mill. "I want to have this money invested for me," she told the lawyer. "Certainly, very well," *Parkney* answered, and gave her a receipt, explaining that the papers would be ready for her some time the following week. He hesitated for a moment and turned to gaze at the boy.

He was a flat-faced, square-shouldered lad with deep-set eyes and thin lips. Instinctively *Seth Parkney* disliked the lad, for there was something grim in the countenance. "You'll know me the next time you see me, I expect," was the attorney's remark to the staring boy; and he did not realize at the time that he was making a prophecy.

This is only the second long story by *Raymond S. Spears* which has appeared in the pages of this magazine, but he has written quite a number of short ones for us. If you have read them I am sure you will look forward to "A ROUND WITH NEMESIS" with a great deal of pleasant anticipation.

"CAPTAINS OF THE RAINBOW," by *C. Williams Wood*, is a sea story with the real salt tang. When the captains three, to wit, *Captain Henry Wagg*, *Captain William Stubber*, and *Captain John Swiggles*—all of whom had sailed the seven seas "when a Yankee clipper was a prouder ship than a turbined liner is today"—start to run guns and other contraband into Mexico, they are sure some little filibusters.

But there are some things even the most seasoned old salt cannot be expected to anticipate. Fog is one of them, and the idiosyncrasies of a squarehead skipper of a rusty old Swede tramp is another, and the all-seeing, impertinently inquisitive "Eye" is the third and worst.

Even so, the story might have had a different ending if it hadn't been for the perversity of inanimate things—anchors, to be exact—which maliciously—well, did things they shouldn't. Sounds interesting,

doesn't it? It is; and it carries a full cargo of hearty laughs as well.

"WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT," by *Frank Condon*, is the veracious history of a man who was certain that he knew. The gentleman was none other than *Wilberforce Hereward Junius Fry*, and he was an Author—yes, with a capital A! True, he had never sold anything, but that was the fault of the editors. One in all, they were trying every mean trick they knew to keep *Wilberforce et cetera et cetera Fry* from his due meed of fame. But he found a way to beat the game.

"THE TEN-DOLLAR GOLD PIECE," by *Isabel Ostrander*, contains a very queer bit of psychology. *Grant Ridgeway* was one of the supreme powers in the financial world of two continents. He was worth more thousands than the average man has cents, and never, from his entrance into the financial field, had he neglected to attend a directors' meeting.

That was the one rule of his life—everything must give way before it. Yet the real, secret, compelling reason for *Grant Ridgeway's* attendance at directors' meetings was simply—that he wanted the bright new ten-dollar gold piece that would come to him as a reward for his punctuality!

Can you think of anything stranger—or more reasonable? And *Grant Ridgeway's* curious obsession led to some cataclysmic changes in a number of lives, as you will find.

"THE MYSTERIOUS FISHERMAN," by *Edwin Cole*, is a good example of the ancient saying: "You never can tell."

Edith Osborn thought he was a colossus of a man as she watched him with his trousers rolled to his knees and the sleeves of his flannel shirt to his elbows, pulling a boat up on the beach. But *Mitchell*, who was with her, sneered.

"He is making his brawn do the work of his brain," was his comment.

The girl said nothing, but did not agree. Yet she could not have known how soon and under what circumstances they were to meet the *Fisherman* again.

A REGULAR TO THE FRONT

TO THE EDITOR:

It is with great pleasure that I write you these few lines of praise.

I am what you might call a regular in

the reading of your magazine, as I look forward to its coming each week.

I have only been reading the *All-Story Cavalier* for about four months, and believe me, I'm sorry that I missed so much before.

I just got through reading "Into the Fifth Dimension"; finished "Barriers Strong"; read the second instalment of "Doc"; and started "Pellucidar." In fact, I just simply ate up the whole book.

If it is possible I would like you to print more of Edgar Rice Burroughs's stories, as he is certainly great. "The Mucker" was fine, except its ending. I don't think Billy got what he deserved. But just keep up the good work and I'm your faithful follower.

Wishing you all the success in the publishing world,

CHARLES H. SMITH.

633 Oliver Street,
Toledo, Ohio.

MONEE TALKS!

TO THE EDITOR:

Hurrah for the ALL-STORY! You certainly have a fine magazine. It can't be beaten. I hope you can keep it up always.

I haven't any favorite authors, but would like to hear from Burroughs again. Where is he keeping himself? Also Terhune.

Enclosed find \$2.00, for which please extend my subscription.

W. C. LE MERE.

R. D. No. 1, Box 21,
Monee, Illinois.

FROM BUCK THORNTON'S PAL

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been a constant reader of *The Cavalier* for some time. Your staff of authors is O. K. in every respect. Of course I like some of your stories much better than others.

Now, for instance, *Buck Thornton* was all right, and Jackson Gregory, at some time in his life, must have lived in the West. I have known several men in my time that were similar to *Buck Thornton*, only no one ever discovered them.

And George Washington Ogden did a good job when he wrote "The Bondboy." However, I hardly think that *Joe* was justified in committing perjury in such a cause. Anyway, it was a mighty interesting story, and another one along the same line would not come amiss.

"The Fur Bringers" was a very good story of the far north, and Hulbert Footner would do well to try again. Others

probably like some of the other stories better than the ones that I have mentioned, as it takes all kinds to please the public. As for me, I would like to have Jackson Gregory find another *Buck Thornton*, as there are many out in this part of the country.

GEORGE LUFKIN.

303 W. Pac.,
Spokane, Washington.

YOU LOSE, AL!

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been a reader of your magazine for some years, but I can't see where Fred Jackson gets his stuff. It is all right for ten, twenty, and thirty melodrama, but in written form it is rotten.

I think J. U. Giesy and J. B. Smith are two of the best writers you have. I also like Octavus Roy Cohen's stories.

I don't believe your Heart to Heart Talks are genuine, and bet five dollars with a *Cavalier* reader that you would not print this.

AL A. WILLIAMS.

165 East Congress Street,
Detroit, Michigan.

HURRAH AND THREE CHEERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Hurrah! Three cheers for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY! Beyond all doubt this is the best magazine on the market to-day.

I have read *The Cavalier* since the appearance of "The Changing Lights." To name my favorite authors would be best said in "I love to read from them all." Of course all stories appearing in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY do not interest me, and when I find one that does not I simply do not read it and do not complain, for I know it interests many hundreds of other readers.

By all means do not give up our Heart to Heart Talks, for I just love this part. I read it the first thing each week. I only wish there was more of it.

I just finished "The Web of Destiny." Say, it was great. All of J. U. Giesy's and J. B. Smith's works are great. I would love to meet *Semi Dual* and *Gordon Glace*.

I see Hulbert Footner will appear next week with "The Fur Bringers." I am glad to hear this. But why not in a sequel to "The Sealed Valley"? I am reading for the first time from Maurice Drake in "Austin Voogdt, Sherlock of the Sea." It's a crackin' good 'en 'o. "The Mucker" ought to have a sequel. "Sand" was certainly full of pep.

Your short stories are fine. "Winner Take All" was a dandy. I certainly did laugh at the conclusion.

Your poems deserve praise. I read them all. Gladys Hall suits me best in this line.

I wish the ALL-STORY WEEKLY a long life, a heart full of congratulations to the editor for his good taste in choosing stories for publication, sympathies for his many cares and troubles, and a "hello" for every ALL-STORY reader.

LLOYD FRANKLIN,

Seelyville, Indiana.

THE PLEASURE'S ALL MINE

TO THE EDITOR:

I wish, Mr. Editor, I could shake hands with you and tell you how glad I am to know you, because it's grand to know a man like you who cannot only pick authors, but such dandy stories, too.

Signed by one who knows.

MRS. MAME WOLF.

"LONE STAR RANGER" LEADS

TO THE EDITOR:

I have noticed in the Heart to Heart Talks that many readers write you their opinion with regard to this magazine, and so trust that my letter will not be considered an intrusion.

About the first *All-Story* I purchased was the November, 1909, number. Since then I have been a constant reader, nearly six years.

It would be wrong for me to say that every story suits me, although a very large majority have my vote.

The stories of adventure and mystery are good, and as I think back, for Western fiction, "The Lone Star Ranger" and "To the Victor" come to my mind as about the best yet, while "Doc," which ends in this week's number, is not to be placed behind but alongside the two first named. However, if a leader must be picked, let it be "The Lone Star Ranger."

Hoping the good work may continue,

JOHN O. RIGGS.

Somerville, Massachusetts.

A READER REGARDLESS OF PRICE

TO THE EDITOR:

If the price of the ALL-STORY is raised to five jitzneys I will continue to have it every week.

Keep up your good work. I am always for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

L. C. BACON,

Concrete, Colorado.

HARD TO BEAT THIS RECORD

TO THE EDITOR:

Just finished reading the issue of May 8 of the *All-Story Cavalier*, and was very much disappointed in you for announcing the proposed abolition of the word "Cavalier" from the title of this, the best of the all-fiction magazines.

I take about fifteen different publications every month, but prefer the combined-title magazine to all the rest, not only because I can get it every week, but because it contains, in my opinion, just the right proportion of comedy, tragedy, and pathos to appeal to almost any reader.

I will not say I prefer any one, two, or three authors more than I do others, because if I do not like the title of a story I do not read it. This does not mean that the story is no good, because other members of my family probably do like it, and I have quite a large family, consisting as it does of ten people, eight of whom are weekly readers of *The Cavalier*.

I really do not wish to bore you, Mr. Editor, as I know you surely are a very busy man. However, I was reading in the Heart to Heart Talks some time ago of some people who claim that they are the oldest readers of this magazine. Unless I am wholly wrong in my contention, I am about as old a reader, not subscriber, as the magazine has. I thought I would write and ask if the following is, or is not, correct:

Is not the present day *All-Story Cavalier* the lineal descendent of *The Ocean Magazine*, and is not the following the direct line of magazines from that old-timer?

First *The Ocean*; then *The Live Wire*; third *The Scrap Book*; then you brought out *The Cavalier*, which was eventually combined with *The Scrap Book* under the title *Cavalier-Scrap Book*; then the word *Scrap-Book* was dropped from the title, leaving *Cavalier*, which stood until the present combination was consummated. Now the name will be the plain ALL-STORY just as *The All-Story* was before the combination.

Well, Mr. Editor, I will not tire you any longer with this rigmarole except to say I do not believe that I have missed a dozen issues since the first *Ocean* came out, and although I haven't a copy of any of the above list, I well remember them all.

Wishing the magazine all kinds of success,

An ardent admirer of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY,

HUGH L. SHANNON.

1501½ Harrison Street,
Davenport, Iowa.

ABU, the Dawn-Maker

by Perley Poore Sheehan

Author of "The Woman of the Pyramid," "The Lost Hearthstone,"
"Judith of Babylon," "We Are French!" etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

ABU, a slave of white extraction on the East Coast of Africa, is goaded to fury by the theft of a Double-Eye talisman he has found, and kills Al-Marwazi, his master, recovering it. Kula, the old, black witch-doctor, hails Abu as the Dawn-Maker, the Messiah of the slaves, who revolt. Abu takes an oath against possessions, wine, and women, and resists the blandishments of Khadija, Al-Marwazi's newest bride. He takes Zena, a fair-sized city, despite the treachery of Razi, Al-Marwazi's chamberlain. An old woman comes, begging the prophet to raise her dead—and as Abu looks into the painted log coffin, there is a movement in it.


The "corpse" proves to be Khadija, and her "coming to life" is hailed as a miracle by the populace. He resists her advances again, and after a council with his generals, goes to the Sacred Grove to be initiated by the priests. But he scoffs at their mummerly, declaring that vital things are toward, and with a whip he beats his followers from an orgy they had started. His own oath he administers to them, and they start for Zemballa, meeting some horsemen on the way.

Reaching Zemballa, Abu and his party are welcomed by the sultan, Sayd Bin Sayf, who invites them to a feast, meaning to poison them and steal Khadija. But Sefu manages to learn of the plans, kills Razi and the sultan, and is made sultan by Abu, who goes on toward Mamangno, Mother of the World. The caravan stops by the seashore on the way at night, and Abu sits to meditate. Khadija comes up behind him, and the wind, called the Breath of Allah, blows her hair across his face. He is sorely tempted to break his oath and take her in his arms.

But Abu finds strength to stick to his purpose, Khadija helping him. They reach Mamangno, where he is eagerly welcomed as the prophet. In the night Abu's longing drives him to Khadija's tent. She is delighted. But again he resists her. Kula sees them and tries to poison her, but Abu drinks the fermented milk, breaking part of his oath and all but dying. They pull him through, and Khadija goes away, feeling it her duty. Abu is hailed as one who has come back from death. All is going well, but the English have taken cognizance!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The First Thunder-Clap.

T happened that at that time, as afterward, England and Portugal had a working agreement as to the management of certain affairs connected with their neighboring colonies in Africa.

In many respects, their interests were mutual and inseparable, such, for

example, as in the good conduct of the native hordes, the suppression of piracy, the maintenance of the *status quo*.

On the day that Abu made that great speech of his, H. M. cruiser *Vanity* came floating tranquilly into the harbor of Zanzibar, and no sooner was her anchor down than Captain Berwind was over her side and off in a sparkling launch to call on his old friend, the agent.

This story began in *The All-Story Cavalier Weekly* for May 3.

The Agency was one of the pleasantest places on the coast—large, light and airy, in the midst of a charming garden, verandas that were alike famous for their view and their hospitality.

And Captain Berwind sighed as he bade his host good-by with a hearty handclasp and a slap on the shoulder.

"It makes me quite ill to leave you so soon," said the captain, who was the picture of pink health and jollity as he said it; "but really, we shall have to look in on the beggars. Back again in a fortnight, you know."

The agent smiled.

"I fancy it's nothing serious. Deuced pity you have to toddle off like this!"

The sparkling launch once more trailed her wake across the harbor. In a little while there came the silver trill of a bo's'n's pipe and up from the mud and water came the Vanity's anchor.

It was a beautiful day, calm and transparently clear.

While the mosques and towers and the long white walls of the town were still as distinct and colorful as a picture by Gérôme, there lifted above the horizon the dim contour of the mainland, almost thirty miles away.

"They say the fellow, sir, is something of a religious fanatic," Lieutenant Gordon remarked to his chief.

"Religion and murder usually go hand-in-hand in these latitudes," said the captain.

"As in dear old Glasgow, sir, some time back."

"You may have a chance to lead a shore-party," the captain remarked.

"Oh, sir, I shall be the proudest man in the fleet!"

"Tut, tut," said the captain benignantly. "There'll be little enough glory; a few niggers more or a few niggers less!"

The Vanity steered south, not going very fast, burning no more coal than she had to. There was no occasion for reckless haste—not so far as any-

one knew. She would take her time, give a look round on the way.

Besides, there was the time of the day she would prefer to pay her respects to Zemballa, that being the more important of the two towns that she had in mind.

She was keeping well out, but along toward sundown she managed to pick up a dhow, with a villainous-looking crew aboard, under the captaincy of one Msenna, who was as much a follower of the Prophet as he was a follower of anything—excepting the shore; for to hug the coast was his only science of navigation.

Captain Berwind invited Msenna into his cabin, and Msenna came, where they discussed the weather and the local gossip, with the greatest possible cordialty.

It was a pleasant place, in spite of the breeches of a couple of big guns that obtruded their presence on the uninitiated visitor. There was an electric fan, a fernery, a couple of geraniums that had come out from England, a lively canary in a cage, a table with a red cloth.

"It is even as I tell you," said Msenna, with his eyes now on a little stack of sovereigns which lay to the left on the captain's table, and again on the service-revolver, which lay to his right. "Sultan Sayd Bin Sayf was killed four days ago, and now his throne in the palace is occupied by Sultan Sefu, surnamed the Giver of Gifts, surnamed the People's Friend, surnamed the Dawn-Maker's Elder Son. He is—"

"Where is this Dawn-Maker now?" asked the captain.

"Lo, they say he is ascended in a cloud, even as—"

The captain scowled at his revolver, looked Msenna over.

"Where is the Dawn-Maker now?"

"Lo, even as I said, and he has come to earth again at the hill called the Mamangno."

The captain started. The place was indicated on all marine-charts as one

of the ancient coast-marks of importance.

"Msenna," he said, "I hate to do it; but I am going to give you and your men a free ride and your boat a tow."

Msenna began a protest.

"You had no papers. I suspect you of piracy," snapped the captain. "If I find that I am mistaken, and a mighty short time will permit me to find out, I'll pay you this gold."

The captain raised his hand an inch or two, and the marines who had been Msenna's honorary escort, hustled him to the upper deck, where the ventilation was better.

The Vanity, belying her name, had the ragged dhow in tow as she circled out and up the coast in the direction of Zena, and while she was still a good eight miles off her destination, another dhow was reported, dipping to the breeze, doing her best, apparently, to head the cruiser off.

Ten minutes later, the officer of the deck reported that the dhow had run up the Portuguese flag, that there was a man who appeared to be a Portuguese officer aboard.

In another ten minutes, the captain of the Vanity was receiving the second visitor in his cabin—a small man, wiry, efficient.

"Braga!"

"Berwind!"

"You'll excuse me," said the Portuguese captain with a laugh, "for appearing without shirt and collar, with slippers instead of shoes—"

He had pulled on a suit of linen—jacket and trousers—and nothing else, except the Moorish slippers he wore.

"—but you see I was an Arab when I left the shore. I left my rags in the dhow, and you can thank God for that, Berwind."

They looked at each other with smiling seriousness.

The flag-officer who had accompanied Braga to Captain Berwind's quarters saluted and withdrew.

"You have arrived just in time," said Captain Braga, when they were alone. "I knew you would. Oh you British! The thing was getting serious!"

"I smelled it at Zanzibar," said Berwind. "I didn't like the way the fellows in the dhows looked up at me, the way the niggers on the water-front strutted and bunched together."

"They're all in it," said Braga; "Swahili and Kafirs, Amatonga, Mombasah, bushmen from the back-country—all!"

"By the Lord Harry!"

"You know about Zemballa. No regrets! Sayd Bin Sayf is well out of the way. This fellow Sefu, who, according to my secret agents, has taken Sayd's place, appears to be not a bad sort—'people's friend,'—easy to manage if we show him that we are the people's hope. It is like that with Saadi, now on the top of the heap at Zena—"

"So they hold Zena, too?"

"They've done me that favor," said Braga. "They've performed a real service—cleaned out Al-Marwazi and his friends—you know, those fellows who have been plotting another Arab conquest? Saadi will make the best of allies for us if we treat him right. But—"

"But this chap they call the Day-Breaker, or the Dawn-Maker, or—"

"Him," said Braga, slowly, "we shall have to get!"

"Another mad mullah?"

"Another Mohammed!"

"No!"

"Precisely! Berwind, you and I have grown gray in this part of the world, haven't we? We've seen some pretty ticklish situations, by and large, haven't we? Well, my friend, this is one of them—the beginning of one of them, at any rate. They had a *chauri* on the Mamangno to-day. They've decided that their next step will be the capture of—Zanzibar!"

"My word!"

"They say the natives there, nig-

ger and Arab, afloat and ashore, are ready for the word. And, you know, 'if you play the flute in Zanzibar'—"

"What's he like, this prophet—a swash-buckler, a blood-drinker?"

"Worse! The swine's a poet!"

"Curse it! I'll get the beggar and take that out of him."

"The sooner the better for all of us. I've made my arrangements. Over in Zemballa I can have Sefu seized at any time. I can also have a certain mullah who has been helping him, knifed by an enthusiast. That done, all that remains is diplomacy.

"Here in Zena, my men and the Arabs of the back country, who are ready, can clean up the town the moment that this d—d Dawn-Maker is out of the way, and—*sure—not—to—come back.*"

"He won't come back."

"I suggest that we get him to-morrow at daybreak. He'll be on his hill. We can pen him up for the night. I'm afraid there'll be a hot ten minutes or so. He won't surrender. He's not that kind."

The captain rubbed his nose. He touched a bell.

"A nip before dinner, Braga? No, it will scarcely be worth while to ask him to surrender—not until—"

In the meantime, the Vanity was pawing the smooth green water like an impatient horse on the turf. Her smoke curled upward, then slanted toward the shore in response to the variable breeze.

She was barely moving, but getting closer and closer to the coast.

The shore, from where she lay, was a picture of perfect peace—a flaming sky over a tropic waterfront; jungle-covered, except where Zena lay, a streak of saffron and pinkish white a little to the north; flat, except where the headland called the Mamangno thrust out its dark-green cliff almost to the water's edge a little further south.

Lieutenant Gordon, on the bridge,

studied the scene passionately through his binoculars. The light was bad, with the shore in the shadow and the sea as brilliant as the sky. But he saw enough to keep him interested.

"There appear to be enough of the rascals scampering about," he said; "more than enough for any good."

"There'll perhaps be fewer of them when the Old Man gets through with them," said Lieutenant Smith, his particular friend, who was there at his side. "Why, what—"

From the black top of the Mamangno there had come a spark of light in the deepening twilight, a puff of smoke, then, long afterward, the thud of a cannon.

"A salute," said Smith.

"No," said Gordon; "by the Great Horn Spoon, it's a challenge!"

A spurt of water marked where a shot had struck the oily, rocking surface of the sea.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Night Before the Dawn.

THERE was a tremor of panic among most of the natives assembled on the Mamangno and around it.

A good many of them had never seen a warship before, but they had all heard about such a thing. It had always been one of the chief instruments of the white man's magic.

There was a tradition concerning it that was more potent even than the tradition of the Dawn-Maker.

Abu sought to allay this panic. He was all the more keen in his efforts to do so because he recognized that there was a trace of it, perhaps, in his own heart.

Not that he was afraid. He had passed beyond fear of any kind, long ago. He was a man who had cast off definitely all claim to life and to those things that render life dear.

It was he who ordered the cannon fired, although he was not fool enough

to imagine that it could have any possible effect on that great steel mystery floating out there in the offing. It was the effect on his followers that he was after, for he glimpsed the great tragedy that was already drawing near.

He called his counselors about him, talked to them about the reconstitution of the old Zenj empire to the north, of Chaka's old empire to the south.

He commanded the drummer to send out the call for all the fighting men of all the tribes of Africa; and this time the sound of the drum tumbled and rolled like thunder—something wholly different from the calls that had gone out to the wise men.

It was to such an accompaniment as this that he talked of achieving empire through sacrifice—ten thousand, or a hundred thousand Dawn-Makers, not one; and each of them, like him, the bridegroom of a new day.

But in the midst of all this there came a new excitement. It was panic mixed with exaltation, this time.

Around a point of land to the south there had suddenly appeared a dhow with the flag of the Dawn-Maker flapping at the masthead.

There was scarcely any breeze, but the crew of the dhow, evidently numerous, had the sweeps out and were rowing.

The first dhow was followed by another, then another and another, until there was a full score of them. It was the fleet of Abdallah.

The sails were red and yellow, or striped blue and dirty white. The hulls were crowded.

While these were fanning out and away from the shore, evidently in keeping with some prearranged plan, there appeared from the same quarter a small iron steamship that had long been familiar to every native living on the shore.

It was the Portuguese gunboat Diogo Cam.

She was shaggy from neglect. She

was belching blue wood-smoke. But she also floated the flag of the Double Eye.

And, a good deal as a terrier would bolt for a bull, she headed straight for the cruiser.

All this in the flare and shimmer of the setting sun, with the Indian Ocean rocking lazily, with stupendous Africa looking on.

It was the cruiser that spoke first. There was a puff of smoke, followed by an inadequate but spiteful bark. It was a blank cartridge, more likely than not.

The Diogo Cam kept her course. She seemed to be picking up a little speed, although her progress seemed slow enough to those who watched her from the shore.

There ruffled up the first breath of a breeze that sent her flag to writhing, and which was seized upon immediately, moreover, by the quick sailors in the dhows.

One or two of them, the first to catch the breeze, heeled over and raced in the direction of the cruiser like gulls intent on a feed.

The cruiser barked again, and this time there was a jump of white water near the Diogo Cam's stem. At the same time a little trail of signal-flags shook out over the cruiser, as foolish-looking as a line of washing.

But to neither of these things did the Diogo Cam pay any more attention than she had paid to that previous shot. She kept right on.

Then, suddenly, the Diogo Cam herself boomed out a challenge. She had two small cannon mounted in barbets to port and starboard, and a quick-fire mounted on her bridge.

She must have fired all of these simultaneously; only the quick-fire was still rippling out its blasphemies after the cannon had already coughed their say.

At the same time there was desultory firing from several of the dhows.

This much happened in one of those breathless, eternal seconds which are

long enough for the destruction or the creation of a universe. Then the cruiser fired twice, and it was seen that something had happened to the Diogo Cam and likewise to one of the dhows.

The gunboat had grown smaller by her top-hamper. Her bridge and her smoke-stack had jumped below as if they had been pulled by strings.

The stricken dhow was fluttering over on its side like a winged bird, and some of her people were overboard.

Another one of those surcharged seconds, shattered by a double puff and a double, snapping bark from the cruiser, and the Diogo Cam answered instantly with a puff of steam, a faint, rumbling roar.

She pawed the air for a second or two. She disappeared.

All this on the rocking ocean, in the last red flare of the sunset, in the midst of a sort of magnificent cynicism in which even the cruiser shared—as if the cruiser were a part of that superworld which has no regard whatsoever for the affairs of men.

And then panic had broken out again on the Mamangno and in the vicinity of it, and there was a swirling movement of the people in the first distracted, aimless rush of an incipient stampede.

As if it had seen enough, the sun plopped down, and it was almost instantly night—just enough light left out at sea to show how other dhows were being crippled by the leisurely, occasional sniff of the great steel beast out there.

“Brothers, brothers!” cried Abu.

But he could scarcely make his voice heard. His heart was filled with anguish at the thought that thus Abdallah had sacrificed himself in some wild hope that he would be protected by the Double Eye, and the parallel thought that all these men who had assembled here to do him honor, to share his dream of the Dawn, might similarly be annihilated.

He had been looking forward to some sort of a miracle, and this was the answer to it.

“Brothers, brothers,” he shouted, nevertheless; “nothing can happen to you—nothing but death! And what is death, if we die for the Dawn?”

Darkness closed in, sudden and tight, almost like an act of imprisonment. But some one fired the pile of brushwood that had been prepared in front of his tent, and the flames roared up showing the throne-chair there and the piled-up treasure on the elephant-skin.

Abu rushed into the tent in search of Rennyvo, in search of Kula. The lamps were lighted, but the place was deserted.

A moment, and he was listening to the huge sough of a rising storm, remoter and greater than the shouting and movement of the camp outside the tent. Before he could make a move to learn the meaning of this new tumult, Kula and several other of the witch-doctors burst in upon him.

It was Kula who spoke, even as he came slanting forward and knelt in front of him.

“Something has happened at Zena, also,” cried Kula. “They are storming here in this direction. We are afraid that they mean no good. Save yourself!”

“Save *myself*?” Abu exclaimed, tensely. He laughed. “Save *myself*, when I’m meant to save the world?”

Kula looked up at him with the mute appeal of a tame animal. The other witch-doctors cried out to Abu and among themselves that there was a time to fight and a time to flee.

Abu cursed.

“Where’s Rennyvo? Where is Mandanda? Oh, by Allah, I’ll go alone—”

“Come away with us to the Sacred Grove,” cried Kula.

“Have you still faith in the Sacred Grove?”

“Yes! The world changes, and the

men in it, but the Sacred Grove never changes!"

"Then hurry to it—you and all the old men," Abu answered. "Pray to your gods, and pray to Mecca, and pray to the Father of All Gods, black and white. But we younger men shall stay here to fight. The white men can beat us on the ocean, but on the land we're equal, we're—"

What he was saying was interrupted by a fusillade at the foot of the Mamangno, a surge of cheering and shrieks.

Just outside the tent, in the midst of the general clamor there, Abu heard a voice he recognized. He started to spring forward, but before he could take a step, Matanda staggered in—gasping, naked, wounded.

"*Bwana!*" he cried.

Abu caught him, lowered him to the carpet.

"The Arabs—they have taken Zena by surprise—an army of them gathered from the hills—aided by the Portuguese—who have left their fort—"

"Kula, quick! Matanda is wounded," cried Abu, apparently indifferent to anything else. "Linen—water—brown powder—"

Matanda smiled up at Abu.

"Dawn-Maker! Dawn-Maker!"

The smile remained as his life slipped out.

The old men lifted Matanda and started off with him across the tent, but it was doubtful where they hoped to carry him. The human storm, which, at its height, is always more terrible than thunder and lightning can ever be, was growing momentarily more violent, more pressing.

There were shots at the very door of the tent, the voice of Rennyvo in command, a howl of savage laughter.

It was a strange contrast—first that group of old men carrying off the body of Matanda, staggering a little under the weight; then that other group that staggered in under Rennyvo's command, for they were young and excited and they were tugging at

the elephant-hide with its piled-up treasure.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

While Hope Flickered.

"LO! the mob from Zena," cried Rennyvo, "came like a pack of famished hyenas! Traitors had spread word that the treasure was here for the taking. They—"

"The Arabs?" Abu asked.

"It was the opportunity the Arabs and the Portuguese were waiting for. Saadi has been seized and taken to the fort. The Portuguese control the town. The Arabs are scattering through the brush. I came to save this."

He indicated the treasure.

"I came to save you. I shall cut a path for you, get you to a place of safety."

"I flee?" cried Abu, fiercely. "I am in the arms of my mother. Here I remain!"

"You could return here later."

"I could, Rennyvo. I, Abu! The Dawn-Maker could never return!"

"Spoken like a king!" cried Rennyvo. "Spoken like a Hova!"

He knelt and kissed Abu's hand.

But the immediate danger was evidently not from either Arabs or Portuguese, but from the mob that had come out from Zena.

There was a swirl of cries and fighting at the door of the tent, and the first of the mob appeared, overwhelming the warriors whom Rennyvo had left on guard while he tried to make the treasure safe.

They fought their way in with famished cries, eager, indifferent to blows, their eyes, their faces, their every movement indicating that they were the human wolf-pack that has scented loot.

They were worse than they had been that night at Al-Marwazi's house, worse even than they had been afterward at Zena, for now they had tasted

the sort of blood they wanted, had become insatiable.

A dozen men fell as they scrambled at the glittering horde on the elephant hide.

Rennyvo shrieked something that was both order and curse, and sprang forward. He was unarmed. He kicked and struck. It was as though he kicked and struck a waterfall.

Abu seized the copper incense-urn. He swung it up. He advanced with it poised.

Not Samson with his jaw-bone of an ass could have slain more Philistines than Abu could have slain with a club like that.

But he stayed his hand.

A hollow-eyed beach-comber whom he recognized, and who must have been cheated out of the good things of Zena, for he was still gaunt and still in rags, was sprawled there, just in front of him, and had turned and looked up at him as he clutched at gold and gems.

The mob was like a swarm of rats in a granary.

Abu staggered back, cast his weapon from him. He caught the furious Rennyvo by the arm and drew him away.

"Let them do as they wish," he said. "Call off your men."

But even those warriors of Rennyvo's were not exempt from the same passion that consumed the mob. They had guessed the order before it reached them, were themselves dipping into the treasure.

In its scrambling haste the mob was making poor progress. Many of the men who composed it were almost naked, or, at best, clad in mere rags. They tried to gather the treasure into their arms. It slipped from their grasp.

They tried again.

Sometimes one would get as far as the opening in the rear of the tent, would be jostled or toppled over, would have to begin all over again.

But a huge Kafir made a sack of

his loin-cloth and scraped it full, started to stagger away into the concealing night.

Others were wildly following his example—mauling, grabbing, scratching, disappearing with all they could carry. The treasure melted fast. Soon there were those who crawled about on hands and knees in the dim, light shrieking with joy over a single nugget, a single gem, a single minted coin.

Kula was there again, telling Abu that he had had a sign and that he was going out to meet his own death in a fitting way—a way that would do good, perhaps, for the cause. There was a sacred serpent he knew about on the flanks of the Mamangno itself.

"You are the Dawn-Maker, the son of the world," said Kula. "There remains to me a little fire, a little strength. I place it, O Abu, on your altar with the sacred serpent as my priest."

"Don't do it," said Abu. "Don't! What's the use? It's in vain."

"No act like that, or yours, is ever in vain, O Abu. Farewell!"

"Live while I live! O Kula, we were slaves together. You were a father to me. Leave me not. Don't you remember when I was little, and Razi had beaten me, and I had crawled into the stables to weep alone, and you came to me—"

"That night I read your destiny on your brow. The time has come—"

"And then, when I lay fettered, it was you who went to Al-Marwazi, on your knees, to beg—"

"Son, son, there is another Master—the Compassionate—one I need not fear." Kula glanced about him, looked back at Abu. "Nor you," he said. "We both belong to Him."

Kula put a hand to his ear. He seemed to listen.

"The red night," he whispered. "The angel calls. I go!"

Like a shadow he went, but like a shadow that had left something of itself on Abu's spirit. He dropped his head in his hands. There were still a few naked mongrels pawing about,

but they did not notice him, nor did he notice them.

In a moment, in a breath, the whole fabric of his empire had come tumbling down. A giant hand had reached out and shaken him from his dream. He was engulfed in an atmosphere of nightmare.

A little while ago he had debated the conquest of the earth. He had looked out upon a world that was new. Now it was all as it had been. He had no power except the power of his body, his brain, and his spirit. Panic had swept his people away.

Old greeds, old lusts, old fears, had them in their grip again—the real masters of the world!

And the world had changed for him, as well. He knew it. Deception fell away from him. Clear sight came to him now, with the roar of battle and confusion all about him—came to him as it had come often before, in the old slave days, when the elements of his life and circumstances fused like the metals in a crucible into a single flash of blinding truth.

He had seen the faith and courage of Abdallah snuffed out like the light of a candle, by a breath out of the infinite.

Snuffed out also was the flame that had blinded him for these past few days—his dream of empire, his dream of world-deliverance. He had felt it when panic first fell upon the people who had assembled about him—that they were on a foolish quest.

That the great world would roll on in its appointed way he saw clearly now, whatever the aspirations and prayers of men. But to compensate this void that overwhelmed him there rushed in the thought of Khadija—her love for him, his renunciation, his desire for her!

This desire had become the one tremendous fact of the universe. He laughed. He shuddered. And he had sent her away from him!

All this in a small group of seconds—such seconds as a man might live

when he is being hanged, or going over the brink of Eternity in any other way. It sent him rushing into her part of the tent.

The place was still instinct with her presence. No bloodhound could have been more sensitive to the atmosphere that still lingered there despite all those who had passed since she had gone.

He caught up a cushion she had used, he smelled it while his breast heaved.

“Khadija,” he whispered.

His brooding was ended by a fresh outburst of heavy firing from the direction of the shore.

It aroused him to energy.

He sprang up, looked about him, saw what he wanted in the hippopotamus-hide whip that hung against the wall of the tent. It brought a smile to his lips even now to recall that Khadija had filched it from him for the sake of some girlish whim.

He seized it, swung it in the air.

The remaining grubbers about the elephant-hide squealed and chattered and scrambled out into the night.

He tore away the linen tunic until his arms and breast were bare and his movements unhampered. The medalion of the Double-Eye was still hanging there. He pressed it to his lips, lifted it above his head, looked up at it.

“You, Eye of Omnipotence, Eye that looked brightly forth at the Dawn of Creation,” he said, “look into the night and tell me—where is—Khadija?”

CHAPTER XL.

What the Double-Eye Saw.

AS Abu came out of his tent, armed with his whip and the strength of almost superhuman exaltation, he paused for a moment or two to look around him.

The wide fire still blazed, sending its quavering red light to the jungle all around and up among the huge, far-reaching branches of the calabash tree,

making a small red light, like the one to which Kula had referred, in the midst of the greater night—the night of stars and eternity.

He saw a slinking crowd of people—who they were he could not tell—off to one side, and he started toward them. But they fled from him, although he shouted after them:

“Ye are free. What do ye fear?”

He turned.

The camp was deserted, although there were sounds of war in several directions, now vague and small, now clear and complex.

Yet, strangely enough, these did not interest him immediately so much as did the sight of the animals that had been left there, the cattle and the wild beasts that had been brought to him that morning as gifts.

He was touched, whether by the irony of it, which was enough to make him pity himself, or by pity for the beasts, he could not have told.

He noticed the young elephant, tethered by its leg to a tree, and periodically making mighty efforts to tear itself free; the lion, which had looked into his eyes that morning from its wooden cage and which was clawing and biting now at its bars with the pitiful patience of all dumb creatures.

For the time being Abu forgot everything else. Then he laughed, not mirthfully.

“Am I not the liberator?” he cried softly.

He ran toward the elephant. It swung at him with its trunk, but Abu showed no fear. He spoke aloud.

“Behold, even as I freed myself!”

The thongs that bound the elephant’s leg were held by a toggle. Abu knocked this free, and the elephant slowly lifted its foot from the loop. It essayed a step. It swung its huge bulk forward at a trot.

Before it had plunged into the jungle, Abu was already working loose the pegs that held the bars of the lion’s cage in place. The lion sparred at him, kept up a purring growl. Abu

scarcely noticed. He jerked loose two of the bars at once.

There was a yellow flash, and the lion was crouched on the earth in front of him.

It looked up at him, complaining, lifted an armed paw.

“Fly to your mate, and let naught hinder you,” said Abu, as he swung his whip.

The lion was gone.

He freed the tame leopard with the collar about its neck. He liberated a cage of apes. He addressed the frightened cattle, telling them to remain near the fire until their enemies were safe away.

Then he thought again of the quest that had brought him out, and he plunged into the nearest path that led down the Mamangno’s side.

He came plunging into a horde of struggling men, and he could not tell whether they were enemies or friends; but he struck about him with his whip and shouted that peace had come and that there should be no more fighting.

He was in a din of shouting, some of which he understood.

“It is a genie!”

“It is the *Sasabonsum!*”

In the midst of the tumult, he struck something with his foot. He reached down and found a cloth twisted around a jangling weight, and he knew that he had recovered a portion of the wealth that had been taken from the tent. Without thought, he clung to it. He still had it when he emerged on the beach.

The night was starlit.

The breath that came into him from the blue-black sea brought with it a surge of feeling that was almost joy.

Far out he saw the lights of a ship, and knew instinctively that this was the warship that had been there earlier in the night—quiet now, as if in waiting—for what?

“I have a greater power than yours,” he said, addressing it. “Have you a heart? Have you a soul? Have you a hope?”

He might have said more, but he saw, emerging from the nearer darkness the ghostly shape of one of the Arab dhows. At the same moment he caught the thud of hoofs, and, by some peculiarity he had noticed subconsciously on the ride from Zemballa, he knew that it was the horse that Rennyvo had ridden then.

Rennyvo he intercepted, hailed, and the Hova slipped from his horse and embraced him.

"The road to Zemballa," he panted, "is cut at the marsh, held by a force from the warship. Zemballa is betrayed; Sefu a prisoner. O Dawn-Maker, you are still my master, but let me command! Our dream is ended. Flee with me to Madagascar!"

There was a splash and they both turned to look in the direction of the dhow. Some one had jumped overboard.

Rennyvo leaped forward before Abu could detain him, drew a revolver, cried a challenge.

"I seek the Dawn-Maker," cried the man in the water. "I come from my lord Abdallah."

He floundered ashore, Rennyvo giving him a helping hand.

"What is the word from my Abdallah?" asked Abu.

The man peered at him through the darkness, would have fallen on his face, but Rennyvo and Abu both held him up.

"You are the Dawn-Maker?"

"Yes, and Abdallah?"

"We were up the coast, above Zena, when we heard the news, and as fast as the breeze would bring us we hastened to your aid. The wind died out. Abdallah towed us with his ship of iron. Afterward we rowed. His only thought was to keep the enemy's warship from attacking you—his only thought has been of you—and now, to think—"

"Quick, my Abdallah!" cried Abu.

"We picked him up from the water, after his ship was blown to pieces—"

"Was he hurt?"

"He was dying—he is dead."

"O Abdallah!"

"His last words were of you. He charged me to come and save you. When I promised, he said that he died happy, for he knew you would forgive him, find some one to take his place."

"Sweet Abdallah! You'll be my captain when I cruise the stars. Rennyvo, you and this brave comrade sail away while yet there's time. Here—oh, here—is enough to enrich both him and you—"

He thrust the cloth with the treasure in it into Rennyvo's hand, but both the Hova and the man of the sea cried out that they would never leave him.

"I command you!" said Abu. "Am I not the Dawn-Maker? My escape is planned. I prepare a mystery. Go! Go with my blessing!"

"They will kill you," said the sailor.

"I shall live."

"You will appear again?" cried Rennyvo, wonderingly.

"Yea, each time you dream."

Abu laughed. Then he kissed each of these two murderous, devoted idealists on the forehead, thrust them toward the water, sprang toward Rennyvo's horse, and, in a moment was on its back.

The horse plunged into the darkness of the beach in the direction of Zena.

They passed several figures who fired after them.

Two hundred yards past the last slope of the Mamangno they charged into a sudden sheet of flame, and it was as if the horse had taken wings, it was leaping so high and far.

But Abu understood, and was ready when it fell.

Dismounting he charged into the company that had fired, slashing with his whip, fighting as he had fought that other night when he freed himself forever—as much as any man can be free. Before the enemy could recover themselves from his onslaught, almost before they had realized what had happened, he was well off into the darkness along the beach again.

He paused.

He had started out for Al-Marwazi's house as the most likely place for Khadija to have sought a retreat, acting as she had done, no doubt, with the cognizance and aid of Kula. But, suddenly, he knew that she was no longer there.

Where was she?

He lifted the Double-Eye once more above his head, and looked up.

"I asked you," he averred.

Over toward the back of the Mamangno, across the marshy jungle, there came the sound of scattered firing.

"Your answer?" he asked.

The Double-Eye seemed to twist his arm, while a spasm of fierce joy swept into his heart. The Double-Eye had answered him!

He plunged into a path he had known ever since his boyhood. He was running as swiftly and securely as that young lion he had released a little while ago must be running now.

He ran into an Arab patrol, there to head the Dawn-Maker off if he attempted to escape. In the midst of them, as dim as a wraith of vapor in a cave, he saw her for whom he sought.

Without a word, with scarcely a sound, he charged.

CHAPTER XLI.

"So Endeth Empire!"

NOT until he had struck once, twice, thrice, with such brutal force that the terrible whip might as well have been a simitar, did he utter a word, and then it was to Khadija:

"Run! Run! I shall follow you!"

But, instead of running, Khadija snatched a rifle from one of the reeling men and fired it twice without lifting it at two rearing shadows to the left.

A moment later she was swept from her feet, swooning, weak, and

Abu was leaping forward with her in his arms.

He crouched and was off the path as a ripping fusillade came hurtling after them. He made his way carefully along a fallen log in darkness that would have made the road impossible to one bred to a different school; again found solid ground.

He went along for a while as stealthily as a man-eating tiger approaches a village. Not even a dog could have heard him. There was no dashing recklessness now. He had Khadija to protect.

He held her close. She reached up and put her arms about his neck. He knelt with her for a moment, pressed his lips to hers, while his heart pounded.

"Let me walk," she whispered. "O Abu, I have found thee!"

Not more than ten yards away was the report of another rifle. The line was drawing close. They were within that line.

There was no outlet by the beach. To escape through the jungly swamp on either side of the Mamangno except by the paths would have been well-nigh impossible, even had Abu been alone. With Khadija it was altogether impossible.

It was increasingly clear that the cordon had been tightly drawn across the back of the old fortress. There also he could have fought his way through had he only himself to look out for.

He got away from the danger-zone as rapidly as possible, and was well up the slope of the Mamangno before he paused again.

There he knelt again to rest, to catch his breath, to think, to speak. They were on a path that only he could see. Khadija crouched on the ground, and huddled close into his arms like a frightened child.

"I came to find thee," she whispered. "Now we are together!"

"I must give you up," said Abu; then held his breath for her answer.

No answer came. His hand stole softly to her face. It was as he suspected. There were tears.

He pressed her to him tenderly. He would have kissed her again, but he did not dare. He wanted to keep his head cool. He was trying to think, trying to see clearly, as he had done so often before in his life.

It wasn't death that frightened him, not in the least. He would have charged his enemies again as gladly as he had a little while ago, and broken through the lines.

What frightened him was the memory of what he had seen back there on the path through the swamp, Khadija an East-Coast prisoner. It made him sick.

What if he *hadn't* found her? What if the Double-Eye had not led him to the place where she was? What if he had been killed too soon?

Khadija was whispering to him, but his thought had been so intense that at first he did not get the purport of what she was saying.

"—because life without thee would not be life. So I left Al-Marwazi's house and crept out along the beach; but saw other armed men who talked of slaying thee, and then I took the path to the right—and there saw other men. I sought to pass them. I ran. They fired. Still other men appeared in front of me—"

"My Khadija!"

"My heart cried out to thee. 'Twas all I asked—thou and death! And now thou sayest thou must give me up!"

"It was on your account!"

"Abu!"

"Say on."

"What saidst thou about the Door of Death? Abu, thy Khadija sought to pray. She asked that she be not left in darkness when thou passest through; that she grope not for thy hand in vain; that she call thee not in loneliness and silence. Abu, the night waneth. Perchance our door shall open with the dawn."

Abu kissed her again, and he was flooded with such mad joy as he had never known before.

He arose and gathered her up in his arms again. He stood there, peering for a moment straight ahead.

He saw a dim shape, the sheen of two eyes, heard the breathing of a lion. Silently he said:

"You are hungry, but I am he who set you free."

As silently as it had appeared, the lion was gone again.

Abu went slowly now, as one who performs some sacred rite.

It was a rite.

He was bringing back his bride to his mother's house. So his heart sang, for his heart was unburdened as it had not been since the night that the breath of Allah blew Khadija's hair against his face.

He had asked the Mother of the World for peace. His prayer was answered!

They came to the top of the hill, to the edge of the cleared space, and there Abu put Khadija down. She stood at his side with her arm around him. She looked up at him.

"Oh, Abu," she thrilled softly, "we are home!"

Home!

The word smote his heart, brought a lump to his throat, and filled him with such intense joy that there was a pain in his chest.

The place was deserted as when he left it. Only the cattle were still there, and they mooed and moaned a welcome, for they knew that the lion was lurking about; and they were glad to see this man and woman who, for them, were as gods no doubt.

But the gold tent of the Dawn-Maker was still there under the calabash-tree, and the lesser tent at its side. The fire was dying down, but it still cast a red glow over everything.

It cast a red glow over the deserted throne-chair that had been brought up from Al-Marwazi's house.

Abu pressed Khadija to his side.

"Throne," he said, "you have embraced how many men? Were they happier for that? Was the world gladder? You have led a harlot life!"

He smiled down at Khadija. He was pleased with his fancy. So was she.

"Burn it," she said. "We'll offer it up as a sacrifice."

"O-ho!" cried Abu; "that all thrones could be burned as a sacrifice!"

He seized it and dragged it forward. It must have weighed two hundred pounds, but he picked it up and cast it to the center of the fiery heap.

There was a curl of yellow smoke that instantly grew in volume; the flames caught, and the throne began to blaze.

They watched it, fascinated.

"See how the flames leap upward," said Khadija; "as if they were glad!"

"They are glad because they go upward," said Abu.

"We are flames," said Khadija.

"Of the one fire," said Abu.

"So also shall we be glad."

She smiled up at him, weirdly and tenderly, with the firelight on her face.

"Yea!" whispered Abu; "so ends empire, so begins life."

They passed through the door of the tent.

CHAPTER XLII.

On the Mamangno's Bosom.

THERE was but little change apparent in the interior of the tent.

The lamps that had been lighted earlier in the night were still burning. The curtains hung in place. Through the raised partition walls was Khadija's divan with its tumbled cushions.

Inanimate objects have a way of speaking their indifference to human change.

Khadija and Abu paused just inside the door and looked about them.

"I thirst," said Abu; "and you?"

"Thou art my husband!" cried Khadija, like a child who proposes a game; "and thou hast just returned from thy work; and I—I am thy wife who hasteneth to prepare thy supper!"

"Nay!" cried Abu. "You are the bride, and I am the bridegroom; and you command the wedding-feast."

He kissed her, and she ran away.

He looked back through the door of the tent. It was almost dawn.

On the floor of the tent he found two things that had been overlooked by the looters in their haste and excitement. One of these was an antique ring. The other was a bracelet, likewise of antique workmanship.

He looked at them curiously, and was about to toss them to one side, when Khadija returned.

She carried an earthenware jug and a painted cup.

"Fami hid this—palm-wine of the best—to quench thy thirst and to bring thee back thy strength. What hast thou there? Rest, sweet Abu. Sit down beside me here on the divan."

"Your wedding present, my Khadija. See, the ring of some long-dead princess; the bracelet of some old king."

They were seated side by side on the edge of the low divan. Abu took Khadija's hand and kissed it, and slipped the ring on her thumb.

"Poor little princess!" Khadija sighed. "Even if thou wert a princess thou must have loved and suffered and wept, and had thine hour of almost killing, maddening happiness, even as I! Nay, nay! Not the bracelet. That was the king's. Give it to me, Abu. Now, it is mine?"

She had taken the bracelet, and was pressing his arm against her breast, as if she asked a gift that he might refuse.

"All yours, my goddess-bride!" said Abu.

"Then see!" She began to fasten it about his wrist. "Then I give it to thee. Say that thou wilt never part

with it; that it is thine; that it is a gift from thy Khadija!"

"I say all of that, and also that I love you as no man ever loved woman; as Allah loved Allat and thus brought love into the world."

"Oh, Abu, I let thee thirst!"

"You are my life-giver."

"I love thee so!"

"Love gives life!"

"More than vows—"

"Love is the universal vow," thrilled Abu. "Keep that, and all other vows are vain. Give me the cup. Nay, hold it to my lips."

Into the silence that fell upon them there came the sound of a bird-song. They looked into each other's eyes. They recognized it. They had heard it together on the shore. It announced the coming of the day.

"Yea, Khadija," Abu whispered, "thus begins life."

"Thou art the Maker of the Dawn," Khadija answered.

He put his arms about her.

The bird sang again. There came the chirp and twitter of other birds. The cattle lowed, for they were thirsty, and soon they could go down from the hill to drink.

"Hast thou not made the dawn for me and thee?" Khadija whispered tenderly, her breath on his face. "O Abu, is not this the Dawn of Creation, with a new paradise swimming out of the darkness, and only one man and one woman in it?"

"You are the Dawn-Maker, not I," Abu answered with a straining heart. "See, for thirty years I existed. For these thirty minutes have I lived. Oh, now I know why they call Allah the Compassionate!"

For a period the earth seemed to have been engulfed in an atmosphere so fine that it vibrated and sang to the music of the universe, responded to no other sound. Time stood still, or sped over centuries and eons.

It was the Dawn in Cosmos to which they had each referred. Destruction and sudden death beset

them on every side, and yet they were as unconscious of these things as if they had been moats dancing in a sunbeam—as perhaps they were.

Yet the night was fading. The Mamangno, as if regretfully, was getting up from a bed of mist.

The Arabs, Portuguese, and British—the latter being the eternal law-givers in these regions—had drawn their cordon tighter and tighter around the Mother of the World. All of her children who would have been permitted to escape—all save this last one, who was there now with this bride of his. Clever Arab scouts, as stealthy as tigers and as cogent as hate, had made themselves as certain of this as they could be.

But when Captain Berwind of the *Vanity* learned that the camp was still standing he decided to try the place out with a shell or two before undertaking the final charge.

"I thought of you," Abu whispered, "when I told them that the other word for Dawn was Love."

There came a shaking detonation from the east, an eery roar, the thunderous shock of an exploding shell.

Khadija let out a quavering little cry.

"They kill thee!"

"They cannot kill me," Abu answered. "Like this we'll live forever."

He strained her to his breast, and lifted his head.

The stampeding cattle were rushing past. A second shell fell and exploded closer than the first. The war-ship was getting the range.

"Shall we flee, Khadija?"

He asked it, although he knew there was little hope.

"Nay, nay!" she answered with joy. "We stand together at the door."

The second shell, or the third, must have found the fire and sent its embers against the front of the tent, for it began to burn. It flamed up eager-

ly, as if it also were through with earth, glad to go. Abu staggered to his feet, and still held Khadija close.

There was a cessation of the bombardment, while the fire burned brightly and more brightly still, and they could look out through the dropping curtains to the jungle-fringe, to the red-and-purple sea, the rising glory of the sun, and, in the midst of it all, man's instrument of destruction, the dim, gray cruiser.

The sun sent its light in upon them, and clothed them with its warmth.

"Our dawn," said Khadija.

"The eternal dawn!"

He pressed his lips to hers.

Time ceased to exist for them. They seemed to be on the threshold of infinity at last.

Then with one accord they were speeding together down the flank of the Mamangno. It was as if the sun had brought them another sort of light than that which it brought to the rest of the world. It was as if in response to their supreme prayers and their supreme faith they had been granted a vision.

Somewhere near the foot of the hill they encountered a squad of British marines, immaculate and white, in charge of a young lieutenant. And the lieutenant stared at them curiously, murmured the one magical word, "White," and let them pass.

They came out on the golden beach in the almost blinding light of the rising sun. Dawn indeed!

They were hailed by a voice they recognized, and they saw Rennyvo rushing upon them.

"The dhow awaits you!" cried Rennyvo. "We couldn't go away without you. Glory to the Name of the Most High! Glory to the Maker of the Dawn and to his chosen bride!"

They steered to the east, with the whole visible world above and about them "enameled in fire." Abu and Khadija were in the bow of the boat, their arms about each other.

"Yea, God!" whispered Abu. "This is empire. Thou hast given me liberty. Thou hast given me love. Thou hast given me sorrow. Brother, you also will see it—the Dawn of Dawns—the Sunrise of the Soul!"

There are stories on the East Coast, stories current among the people that will be handed down for generations, perhaps to pave the way for some new prophet in ages to come. They tell of Abu, the Dawn-Maker, of his humble origin, his conquests, his sayings, his miracles.

And greatest of all the miracles that are recounted of him is that of how Abu, surrounded by his enemies, fired upon by the white men's war-ship, was snatched bodily to paradise from Mamangno, Mother of the World, together with the woman who clung to him in the face of death.

And Abu, in his wonderful new world with Khadija beside him, would perhaps admit its truth.

(The end.)

U U U U

SAFETY FIRST

BY WALTER G. DOTY

WHEN babies start to cry,
The women standing by
With one accord begin
A still hunt for the pin.
It seems, at such outburst,
The motto's: Safety First.

Bad Blood and Blue

by Fletcher Chenault

MY partner had heartlessly deserted me to consort with a sallow-complected youth, and I had paused in a doorway to watch the dancers whirl by and listen to the music.

It was then that I looked up suddenly, to behold old Dr. Bertrand treading his way toward me and to fear the worst.

Sure enough, the old sawbones hove to alongside and buttonholed me, to resume an argument that I supposed had been settled—if not to his satisfaction, at least to mine.

“But, sir,” he wheezed with pompous dignity, “blood *will* tell, I say! If this conceited upstart—this uncouth farmer—dares show his face here to-night he will be ruined, world without end, politically. And bless your sweet life, he knows it!”

“Dare is hardly the word, doctor,” I objected, shaking my head. “Remember that I have seen Sheriff Boyd put to the test. If he fails to show up here to-night it will not be because of Rupert nor Major Ware. All that can keep him back will be respect for the occasion.”

I flung my arm out in a gesture that included the dancers in the hall, the senile gossipers in the big room across the hall—even the dusky musicians screened behind palms.

“Times have changed,” I reminded the old aristocrat. He had singled me out as a target for his wrath, it seemed—no doubt because he knew that Sheriff Boyd was my old schoolmate and boyhood friend. “A great moral wave is sweeping the country. But that is not the point, doctor. The point is that a sheriff—any sheriff—who fails to enforce the law as he finds it is not a capable official.”

“But *poker-playing!*” Dr. Bertrand exclaimed—one might have supposed that he had mentioned the most honorable occupation in the world. “Whoever heard of a man being arrested in this county for playing *poker?*”

“Poker-playing has descended to a lower level since the days of the ‘gentleman’s game,’” I argued. “But poker-playing, forgery, or horse-racing—it’s all one to the majesty of law. A sheriff—”

I had other sound and reasonable arguments in mind, but was not given an opportunity to present them. A commotion near the front door arrested my attention.

Those who stood nearest the entrance were greeting a newcomer, a man whose broad-brimmed black hat floated above the swaying dancers like the head-dress of a giant Jesuit.

Our question was answered; the sheriff had come!

I turned on Dr. Bertrand with a

cynical smile—a smile, however, that escaped his attention. He, too, had seen the big felt hat with the wide brim, and the pale, serious face of Jerry Boyd beneath it.

For a moment my old friend—for Dr. Bertrand was an old friend, too—was swept off his feet, so to speak, by the turn of events.

“Well, I’ll be — jiggered!” he wheezed in a tone almost as emphatic as profanity.

Down the long dance-hall came Jerry Boyd, keeping well out of the circle of waltzers and glancing about sharply.

I supposed he was seeking young Rupert Ware, but found that I was mistaken.

As Boyd came down the hall he inquired for Major Ware; and having found and addressed the major, the two of them came toward the door of the smoking-room where we were standing, Major Ware in the lead.

Trouble of some kind was brewing on Riverside Plantation.

I knew it, and old Dr. Bertrand knew it, and the tall young sheriff knew it better than either of us, although to my mind he was more tranquil than any of our bidden guests. But he knew the Wares, an excitable, quick-tempered breed — men and women.

If he didn’t know them, he was to learn something of their fiery nature when he came face to face with Helen Ware on the edge of the circle of merry-makers.

Short, hot words passed between them, the rapid speech of ruffled temper; and as I moved a step nearer I caught a fragment of the girl’s monotone, which reminded me of the buzzing of an angry bee.

“—And if you humiliate me here before my guests,” I heard her warn him, “I shall never—”

“Never speak to you again,” no doubt, but of that I cannot be sure. The sheriff was making a futile effort to explain.

“I’m not to blame, Helen,” he whispered—every word, I fancied, falling on unheeding ears. “If only you will—”

A sudden, discordant squawk of the bass violin drowned his words, and before the heavy notes had ebbed Helen was moving majestically down the hall.

Boyd checked himself when he realized that by the simple expedient of leaving him the girl had contrived to avoid an argument.

His face was a flaming red as he shouldered his way through the door and halted expectantly in the center of the smoking-room. Certainly he could not have been highly pleased with the way events were shaping up, for the good opinion of this one girl meant more to him, as I happened to know, than the good opinion of all the other Wares combined.

I followed behind the sheriff and saw Major Ware circle the table, for which I was thankful, and turn defiantly to face the intruder.

One or two of the loungers, understanding that the interview was of a private nature, rose languidly from their seats and edged toward the door. But Major Ware halted all of us with upraised hand.

“And now, sir,” he said, turning to Boyd again, “what can I do for you? I understand you come in an — ah — official capacity.”

“My business is with your son—with Rupert Ware,” Boyd rejoined briskly. “I thought it best—that is, as a matter of courtesy, Major Ware, I have come to you first. No doubt you have been advised that I have a warrant for Rupert.”

“Good Heavens, sir!” the major exploded. “You’re all-fired civil, I *must* say—breaking in on a dance to serve a warrant! You thought my son would run away, I suppose—like a thief in the night?”

“I will admit that I had reasons to believe your son might try to escape,” said Boyd gravely. “In fact, he sent

me word that he intends to leave the county and that I had better not interfere. I had to take him at his word, major. I did not intend to interrupt the dance."

"The —— you didn't!" roared the major, who was casting about for a chance to shift the burden of fault. "You came here to be in the lime-light, didn't you—to advertise this thing from one end of the county to the other?"

"I call on you to witness, gentlemen"—he indicated our little group by a sweep of his hand—"I call on you to witness how this man has gone out of his way to insult me. I want you to observe and to bear in mind what I have to say. I pledge you my word this man will never again be sheriff of Sheridan County!"

The major flung this defiance not at the silent and abashed sheriff, who stood twirling his hat on his forefinger, but at the half dozen of us strung about the room in awkward poses.

I supposed all of us realized its significance. For Major Ware, when he was pleased to take a hand, could make himself a power in Sheridan County politics.

We watched the two men as they stood and surveyed each other like cocks in a pit, the major glaring fiercely, and Boyd returning the stare with a calmness that I was forced to admire. Then the door to the rear porch flew open, admitting a draft of fresh air, and with it young Rupert Ware himself, red-faced and perspiring.

I for one noticed that the boy had been drinking. All of us observed the pistol in his hand.

Behind us the rollicking strains of music rose and fell without a pause. The door stood ajar, but the dancers were as if in a world apart from the little by-play in the smoking-room. Only two of the young people—Helen and Natalie Ware—knew why Sheriff Boyd had come to the Riverside dance.

Rupert held his pose too long for the

startling effect he had planned, but finally he spoke.

"Here I am, Jerry Boyd—why don't you take me?" he blazed out sneeringly. "You say you have a warrant for me; why don't you serve it?"

The sheriff met Rupert's defiant stare without flinching—a cynical, tolerant smile masking any anger he may have felt.

"You have the advantage, I believe," he admitted. "I supposed you would go peaceably, Rupert. You are a man of good family. I—well, the fact is I haven't a gun."

He made this announcement apologetically, certainly without the faintest trace of anger; yet his veiled sarcasm stung the pampered youth to the quick.

"You lie!" Rupert cried, his thin, high-pitched voice rising almost to a shriek. "You're afraid to shoot it out with me—that's what! You haven't the nerve of a—a calf!"

Boyd shrugged his shoulders and made a sudden conciliatory gesture with outstretched palms.

"Any man in the room want to search me?" he suggested. "I came on duty—"

"Don't give me that hang-dog spiel! Clear out of here, Jerry Boyd—and don't ever come back."

Boyd glanced at the major for confirmation of this sullen command.

The stern old planter stared back frigidly.

I saw there was no sympathy for my tall friend in that quarter, and I found myself sighing as it came home to me that the major was taking a stand for the first time in his life against law and order.

Boyd also sighed.

"I'll go," he said, "but before I go I want to warn you that we are going to serve this warrant if it takes a month. I'll bring my gun next time, if you're spoiling for a fight."

He lifted his wide black hat from the table and placed it gently on his head. Seeming to reconsider, he removed the hat and stepped back a

pace, still facing the major and the latter's irate son.

"Major Ware," he began, clearing his throat in an embarrassed manner, "You are a citizen of some standing in the community. You ought to use your influence to—"

"There's the door!" the major thundered. "Good-night, sir!"

Boyd smiled grimly, clapped his hat back on his head, bowed profoundly, and left the room.

In the hall he met Helen Ware on the arm of a perspiring youth, who begged to be represented on her program card and seemed loathe to accept no for an answer.

Boyd removed his hat again and faced the major's elder daughter.

"I just wanted to tell you—" he began briskly, and paused.

Without deigning to notice him in the least, Helen swept down the hall on the arm of her escort, leaving the sheriff staring after her in some confusion.

We were to take the boat for New Orleans the next afternoon—Major Ware, his two daughters, Dr. Bertrand, and myself; and the five of us were grouped at the Ware landing when the Nancy Lee paused at the bank with throbbing engines to take us on board.

The Ware landing was an adjunct to the Ware plantation, a private landing seldom used, and a few boxes of freight were piled up for down-river points.

Within five minutes the last of these boxes had been hoisted on board and the captain gave the signal to cast off.

The roustabouts darted down the stage planks, but a voice from high above us halted them at the stakes.

"Hold up!" the pilot yelled in a deep-toned river accent.

I glanced aloft and beheld the veteran riverman framed like a giant spider behind his wheel. He was staring across the fields at something

screened from our sight by the sandy bluff.

Two minutes later a horseman dashed up and dismounted, passed his reins to a negro, ran down the bank and flung himself on board.

I recognized our belated passenger the moment he came into view. I recognized him by his tall, well knit frame and the broad-brimmed black hat he wore; but why Sheriff Boyd had decided at the last minute to follow our party was beyond my comprehension.

"You're an unexpected guest," was my greeting when he had trudged up the boiler deck stairs and joined me—"an unwelcome guest, I might add. If you're looking for Rupert Ware you're on a cold trail."

Boyd glanced over his broad shoulder toward the ladies' cabin, and I could almost read his thoughts. Helen Ware, who had been standing at my side, had retreated in that direction the moment she recognized her whilom lover—had flown, I am tempted to say.

Some one was thrumming on the piano in the cabin, but it was not Helen. I knew whose sly fingers were toying with the ivory keys, and matching them with a perfect whiteness. No musical instrument could remain at peace while Natalie Ware was around.

Boyd sighed as he turned back and watched the crew cast off.

"Not so cold, perhaps, as you imagine," he mused, after a little. "Your brother-in-law-to-be is on the boat."

"Foiled again!" I chuckled. "I saw every man who stepped on board and Rupert was not among those present. You'd better back up and take a fresh start."

"Do you know who boarded the Nancy Lee at Ellis Island?"

"Oh, that's it!" I gasped. "He caught the boat at Ellis Island!"

"And brought along his body-guard—Joe Hardin and Ad Morris,

I'm going to take the three of them off at Bodfish Landing, Herbert. I shall try them single-handed, but I may have to call to you for a little help before it's over."

"Count on me," I boasted. "I've never had a chance to put my commission as a deputy to any practical use. I believe you appointed me just because I voted for you. I'd have taken a hand last night if you had once chirped."

"Last night?" Boyd laughed, and instantly became serious again. "I don't like for that boy to make a monkey out of me as he did last night."

"It's the first time I have ever seen you back down from a business proposition Jerry. But, of course, I understand why. You couldn't have done otherwise."

Boyd smiled, a grave, mirthless smile.

"You don't understand at all," he assured me. "I'm a changed man, Herbert. I picked up a novel at a circulating library the other day—you know I've never had much education and I've been reading a little. Well, this book taught me a lesson. It's called 'The Virginian'—perhaps you've read it. That *Virginian* was true blue; he was metal of the right sort.

"There's no great honor or glory in going around with a chip on your shoulder. The bravest man is not always a loud talker—like that man *Trampas*, for example."

"Better tell Dr. Bertrand and Major Ware that. They've never given you credit for much nerve, I fancy."

"They may be nearer right than you imagine. I was a little like Rupert myself once, but I'm older now—much older. Nerve is not to be measured by the length of a six-shooter. I like that *Virginian*. He went about his business in a quiet way; no fuss and feathers, but when it came to the scratch he was Johnny-on-the-spot."

I saw Natalie Ware come out of the ladies' cabin. She paused a moment on her way to the texas deck and made a wry grimace at Boyd's back.

I smiled and turned again to the sheriff.

"You'd better be careful how you go at Rupert," I warned him.

"I know it. What that boy needs is a good spanking, and he'll get it some day. But there'll be no shooting. I'll not have a man's blood—any man's blood—on my hands."

He paused and stared again toward the cabin. Major Ware and Dr. Bertrand were approaching arm in arm. Each swung a heavy cane in his free hand, and the grayness of the doctor's heavy mustache reflected the major's grizzly goatee.

I was satisfied the old cronies knew that Sheriff Boyd was on board, and that Rupert was on board, too—circumstances that did not augur well for a pleasant voyage. But it was obvious that they had determined to ignore the sheriff altogether, for they veered toward a pair of cane chairs by the guard rail and did not even so much as glance in our direction.

When I looked around again Boyd was edging away.

"Where to?" I asked.

"The card room," he shot back at me in a brisk undertone. "I think my men are there."

I stared after him until he ducked his head to enter the main cabin door. As he passed out of sight, Natalie Ware came tripping down from the upper deck, her face a wonderful flush of pink.

"What is that man doing on board this boat?" she demanded of me.

"He came aboard to arrest Rupert," I said, "and I think he'll do it, too."

"And you patronize him!" she protested, with feminine lack of logic. "You're not playing fair with us, Herbert. You know he is our enemy."

"In the first place, he is not your enemy," I replied. "In the second place, he is your friend and mine. Furthermore, the only enemy in the world Rupert has is himself and the men he associates with. Isn't Rupert amenable to the law the same as the rest of us?"

Dangerous ground this, you will perceive. But I was determined to have done with beating about the bush and to speak my mind.

"Not to a trumped-up charge, a frame-up—"

"Well, if there's a frame-up he has a good case in court and should stand his trial. At any rate, Jerry is but an agent of the court. The grand jury indicted Rupert for poker playing—for being a common gambler."

"Now you're trying to pick a quarrel," she exclaimed, pouting. More feminine logic, you will see.

"Not at all. I'm trying to show you where Boyd is right and the rest of you are wrong. I would—"

The provoking creature stopped her ears with the ends of her forefingers and began waltzing backward. I started toward her in pursuit, whereupon she wheeled and ran.

Just as she flitted by the cabin skylights on the larboard I caught her around the waist and kissed her.

It was child's play, of course, but we were both rather young and rather foolish.

We strolled forward again, hand in hand. The major and the doctor had deserted their post by the guard rail, and as we reached the edge of the cabin the coarse whistle overhead signaled for Bodfish Landing, reminding me sharply of Boyd's visit to the card room.

I began wondering what had been the outcome of that visit. There had been no pistol shots, no unusual noise. Who had been victor in that quiet contest of nerve and will power?

Sheriff Boyd's position was anomalous, whatever the outcome of his visit to the Nancy Lee.

If he permitted Rupert to browbeat him from the line of his duty he was a coward in the eyes of Helen Ware. If he took Rupert prisoner by force, he would be considered a bully, inconsiderate of her feelings. If he should shoot Rupert in self defense, he would be a murderer.

Because of this peculiar style of reasoning, my friend was doomed at the outset to lose the lady's favor.

I knew what Boyd would do. He would arrest Rupert Ware, even though Helen should never speak to him again. Yet he would have to make quick work of it for Bodfish Landing was only a mile inside the county line.

The cabin door flew open almost in our faces, and out trotted Boyd with his prisoners, Rupert and the two disreputable gamblers, the two men who were to blame for the boy's dissipations.

The prisoners walked across the deck abreast, Rupert in the center, and Boyd followed close at their heels.

Behind Boyd came Major Ware, who was calling on high Heaven to witness that there would be a sequel to the day's events.

I had a feeling of pity for the old fire-eater. He was approaching seventy, I remembered, and growing more childish every day.

But it was plain that Helen Ware neither asked nor received pity as she stepped out on deck, her cheeks scarlet and her eyes flashing, a silent witness of her brother's degradation. I knew her well enough to know that she would not have interceded with Boyd at that moment at any price, not even if she had known that a word from her would have brought about the boy's release.

A princess of the house of Hapsburg could not have been more sulkily proud.

The sheriff went about his task with calm precision. I fancied that he could almost feel the looks that

were as daggers aimed at his broad back.

But if he realized that the Wares were marking him down in their books for slaughter, both in love and in politics, nothing in his manner indicated that he cared very much one way or the other, and I admired his firmness in that.

The boat was within fifty yards of the shore by this time, circling down slowly, like a swooping hawk, on the half submerged barge that was used for a landing.

Boyd marched his men down the boiler-deck stairs, ignoring the black looks and muttered imprecations behind him—not the least being those of old Dr. Bertrand—and lined his men on the port, freight deck.

None of us followed the quartet downstairs. We stood in a row by the guard rail on the upper deck and looked on without a word.

I kept my eyes on Rupert Ware, for I knew that the sulky youth's spirit of resistance was not broken completely. As the boat neared the landing barge I saw Rupert creeping nearer to the edge of the deck, and I began to wonder if already he had conceived some plan of escape.

He had sworn that Jerry Boyd would never take him prisoner, and nothing would be too bold for him to attempt.

He had planned a means of escape, for when the engines stopped and the boat continued plowing the water by the force of its own momentum, I could see Rupert measuring the distance that separated him from the landing barge.

When not more than six feet of turbid water lay between the two hulls, he crouched to half his height and leaped into the air across the intervening space.

By less than six inches he fell short of the mark. As his feet went down into the water he reached out with both hands and grasped the edge of the landing barge.

The river beneath him was ten feet deep—and the boy could not swim a stroke! But more to be dreaded than that, all of us realized that when the hulls crashed together Rupert would be ground into a shapeless mass.

There was one chance—a slim one. If the pilot overhead had seen the lad's attempt to escape, and had time, he might port his helm and keep the crafts apart.

That chance went by in a flash. High above the scene on the freight deck the pilot had observed Rupert's predicament and was spinning his wheel with all his might—uselessly.

Nothing but a miracle could prevent the boat, with the momentum it had gained, from crashing into the barge!

We, who stood on the boiler deck, were helpless. I shot a swift glance down the rail, and for many a day I shall remember the picture I saw.

Major Ware stood with one hand on the guard rail, the other clutching his half-raised cane, his mouth open, his breath coming in short, quick gasps. Helen Ware, still in an attitude of stiff disdain, stood with blanched cheeks.

Natalie's actions were quicker. She had sunk into a chair and covered her face with her hands to shut out the horrible sight we expected to see.

Sheriff Boyd alone retained a perfect presence of mind. Rupert himself was paralyzed with fear, otherwise he might have saved himself by putting forth a superhuman effort and scrambling on board the barge.

This was his one chance, but his mind was too slow of action to seize it.

The current swept the boat toward the barge with incredible swiftness. The ribbon of murky water between the two hulls narrowed.

Five feet—four feet—three feet!

"*Brother!*"

The word leaped in a shrill appeal

from Helen's white lips—an appeal to Rupert not to suffer himself to be crushed to death. It might have been considered an appeal to Boyd too, for the sheriff instantly flung himself headlong from the deck.

I held my breath in anxious suspense. Would there be two deaths instead of one—two men crushed between the timbers?

Boyd seized Rupert around the waist, but Rupert clung to the barge in a frenzy of fear. A foolish notion seemed to have possessed him that safety lay in holding on, but the sheriff's weight tore his fingers loose one by one.

Rupert's head and the sheriff's feet went out of sight at the same moment. The next instant the heavy timbers of the water-soaked hulls came together in a shock that caused the Nancy Lee to quiver like a leaf in the wind.

The boat was headed up-stream, but it drifted slowly with the current. The water above the submerged men was covered by the two dark hulls.

All the boat's officers could do was to let the Nancy Lee drift.

We floated three feet or more away from the barge, all of us with our eyes glued to the place where the men went down. It did not occur to us, so panic-stricken were we, that they might come to the surface elsewhere.

Twenty feet forward of the boat two heads bobbed up as one, and

Boyd began spouting water and air spasmodically from his mouth and nose. Breathless, almost lifeless, he was barely able to keep his half-strangled prisoner afloat.

But as they drifted down-stream, the roustabouts ran forward, at a signal from the captain, and hoisted them on deck, where they lay panting on a pile of cordage.

Twenty minutes later the captain bustled forward.

"Well, what are you going to do?" he shouted at our group. "I can't be kept waiting here all day."

Old Dr. Bertrand primed himself at once for a farewell speech.

"Sir," he said, addressing Boyd, "I am happy to say that you have proved your mettle. I am told your grandfather was a hero of the Mexican War; and as I have always said, sir, blood will tell—"

"Thank you very kindly, doctor," Boyd said, laughing, and cutting short the threatened speech. "And now we must be going—"

He motioned for his prisoners to go ashore. They went along as obediently as lambs, and Boyd turned to shake hands with us one by one.

Last in line stood Helen Ware, blushing and smiling—far from defiant.

"Good-by—God bless you!" was her fervent prayer. "I'll write when I get to New Orleans!"

THE COLLEGE FURNACE

BY N. PARKER JONES

THE freshman arrived in September afire
 With plans to improve and develop his brain;
 Soon followed by equally ardent desire
 For honors athletic, his muscles to train.
 Dramatics then fired him with thoughts of his looks,
 And tennis and golf warmed his heart, but alas!
 So cool grew his ardor ere long toward his books
 That in June he was fired for the good of his class!

A Course of Sprouts

by Una Hudson



IT was after Miss Henrietta Tripp quit boarding and began to keep house that she acquired the habit of asking her nieces to visit her. This, they strongly suspected, was because Miss Henrietta could neither cook herself nor keep a maid beyond her first pay-day.

Miss Henrietta was a forceful person of an exacting nature, and even the nieces found it necessary to come in relays, three months for each.

Eileen's turn came just before Thanksgiving. The family, *en masse*, went with her to the station and saw her depart, with many misgivings.

For Eileen was a gentle incompetent person, not at all like her bustling, capable sisters, and they were firmly of the opinion that while Eileen might be able to stand Miss Henrietta, yet Miss Henrietta could not possibly stand Eileen.

The day after Eileen's arrival Miss Henrietta, according to her usual custom, handed her a roll of bills.

"That's the housekeeping money for three months," she said. "You will do all the ordering and pay all the bills. I dislike petty housekeeping details, and do not wish to be bothered with them."

She left the gasping Eileen standing in the middle of the kitchen floor and

went out to feed the dozen chickens that she insisted upon keeping to her own inconvenience and the exasperation of her neighbors, who objected to being wakened before daylight by the noisy crowing of a rooster.

Eileen, mechanically clutching the money and dazedly repeating "Housekeeping money for three months," had not moved when a shrill scream from the back yard jarred her into action.

She ran out to find that Miss Henrietta had slipped on a bit of ice treacherously concealed under the newly fallen snow and lay in a crumpled heap with one leg twisted under her. She groaned with pain when Eileen attempted to help her to her feet.

"Go next door," she said, "and get some one to help carry me in. I've broken something, I guess."

Miss Henrietta's surmise proved to be entirely correct, the "something" being her hip.

"You'll be laid up for three months," the doctor told her—and said something about a hospital.

But Miss Henrietta very decidedly negatived the suggestion.

"Your bill," she snapped at the doctor, "will probably be all I'll want to pay. I'll stay where I am. And you needn't bring any nurse here either. My niece will look after me."

The doctor turned a doubtful eye in Eileen's direction, but he knew Miss Henrietta and recognized the uselessness of attempting to argue with her. So he put her in a plaster cast, gave Eileen the necessary instructions for her care, and went away.

It was the next morning that Eileen, tidying her aunt's room, put a hesitating question.

"The money that you gave me yesterday," she said, "is it to pay for *everything* for three months?"

"Yes," said Miss Henrietta very firmly.

Eileen sighed.

"I don't see," she said, "how it can *possibly* be made to do that."

"It's what I gave Rose and Margaret and Barbara when they were here," Miss Henrietta told her. "And it's *plenty*."

Eileen would have attempted a further protest, but she dared not, for Miss Henrietta, it was plain to see, was rapidly growing belligerent; and the doctor had said that above all things she must be kept quiet and unworried.

Eileen carried her aunt's breakfast-tray down-stairs and began thoughtfully to wash the dishes.

"I suppose," she told herself mournfully, "it's just as they've always said at home—I'm not capable like the other girls, and can't do things the way they can. But how they ever managed to keep house for three months on that little bit of money I do *not* see."

She wiped a plate and set it on the table, and her soft mouth set suddenly in a firm straight line.

"If they did it," she said, "so can I. I can and I will. *I'll show Aunt Henrietta!*"

The little bell she had left with Miss Henrietta to summon her if she was wanted rang decidedly and she went back up-stairs.

"Eileen," directed her aunt, "don't forget to feed the chickens. Give them the breakfast scraps and—"

"There aren't any scraps," Eileen

objected promptly. "I knew what you wanted to eat and I knew what I wanted to eat, and I cooked just that. There was nothing left."

"Then feed them out of the bag of chicken-feed that's on the back porch," said Miss Henrietta. "No scraps," she was thinking after Eileen went out. "Rose and Margaret and Barbara always had scraps." Then she laughed. "Eileen has more sense than they think," she said.

Eileen let the chickens out of their tight little house and watched them eat the grain she scattered for them.

They were a hungry lot, and it was plain that what was left of the bag of corn would not last long. Eileen eyed them speculatively.

"They'd make a lot of broth," she decided. The doctor had ordered broth for Miss Henrietta.

Three days later, Miss Henrietta, dining with difficulty because she had not yet accustomed herself to taking her food while in a recumbent position, remarked casually that she had not heard the rooster crowing that morning.

Eileen flushed guiltily.

"He—he froze his feet," she explained after a moment's hesitation.

"I was not aware," said Miss Henrietta dryly, "that he crowed with his feet."

"I couldn't do anything for his feet," said Eileen nervously, "and so I—that is—"

She paused, her eyes fastened on Miss Henrietta's soup bowl.

Miss Henrietta followed the direction of her niece's glance. "Oh!" she said. And took another spoonful of soup. "Well," she pronounced, "he made good soup at any rate. I suppose," she went on probingly, "none of the others show signs of frozen feet?"

Eileen quaked.

All her life she had followed the path of least resistance, letting other people choose her opinions for her just as they did her clothes. She had never

thought for herself because no one had ever expected her to, and it had not been necessary. Now she had been suddenly forced out of her accustomed groove and no one could possibly understand how terrified she was.

"That big Plymouth Rock hen," she said in a voice that shook in spite of her effort to control it, "seems to—to be limping a little."

The Plymouth Rock had been selected by Eileen for the next victim because she had the largest appetite.

"It's very strange about their feet," said Miss Henrietta. "They went through all last winter without anything happening to them, and—"

"If you want to *see* their feet—" flashed Eileen almost too quickly.

"I've already told you," Miss Henrietta came back also with suspicious readiness, "that I do not wish to be bothered with tiresome details. Of course, I understand you'll do the best you can with the chickens; but if any more of them do freeze their feet, why it's better to make soup out of them than to let them go about suffering."

She tilted her bowl and took the last spoonful. "You make very good soup," she complimented. "Who taught you?"

"No one," said Eileen. "I never made soup until I came here. At home mother makes it, or Barbara. But I know how it ought to taste when it's done, and if you know how a thing ought to be when it's finished, all you have to do is to keep at it until it is that way."

"Humph!" said Miss Henrietta. "You never got that recipe out of a book?"

"No," said Eileen seriously; "out of my head."

II.

A MONTH later Mrs. Carrington Keith came.

Mrs. Keith was Eileen's married sister. She was a large lady crosswise with an earnest manner and a tendency toward minding other people's busi-

ness. She had been away at the time of Miss Henrietta's accident, and she was profuse in her regrets and apologies.

"And, of course," she wound up, "now that I am back, I shall take charge here, dear Aunt Henrietta, and see that you have every care and attention."

"It *isn't* necessary," said Miss Henrietta with sharp promptness. "Eileen is giving me all the care and attention I require."

"But Eileen is so young," objected Mrs. Keith, "and, therefore, not very capable. I am sure, dear Aunt Henrietta—"

"And you needn't," went on the unmoved Miss Henrietta with a glance at the glass jar and the covered bowl Mrs. Keith had placed on the table beside the bed, "bring me anything more to eat. I have money of my own to buy the raw material, and the way Eileen cooks it suits me very well."

Mrs. Keith gasped. She had not supposed that Eileen could cook. She made a few more suggestions, all of which were promptly set aside by Miss Henrietta, and finally she took her reluctant leave.

But two days later she came back. She stopped in the living-room below stairs, sat down heavily, and folded her hands over her hand-bag.

"It has come to me," she said to Eileen, "from a source that I cannot but consider entirely reliable that you are not getting on very well."

A cold chill wavered up Eileen's spine. She was in a hard position, and nothing she was doing, she very well knew, would meet with her sister's approval, did she know of it. And Hortense was such a difficult person to combat! But Eileen faced her defiantly.

"I don't know what you mean," she said shortly.

"Eileen," Mrs. Keith said impressively, "I know that *your gas has been turned off.*"

"Well," said Eileen, "and what if

it has? There's no sense in having it on when it's not needed."

"But it *is* needed," insisted Mrs. Keith. "The gas-range—"

"I *prefer* to cook on the water heater," said Eileen. "That's run by coal."

"But your lights?" insisted Mrs. Keith.

"Aunt Henrietta always uses a lamp in her room anyway," said Eileen. "She likes it better than gas light."

"But the rest of the house?"

"Do you suppose?" said Eileen, "we have only *one* lamp?"

"We were told," said Mrs. Keith, "that the gas was turned off *because* Aunt Henrietta could not pay her bill. So I have come to offer help."

Eileen's face flushed.

"We do not *need* help," she said.

"Aunt Henrietta can pay that bill, and she will—when she gets good and ready."

Mrs. Keith got to her feet.

"I think," she said, "I shall have to see Aunt Henrietta about the matter."

She went into the hall, but Eileen was quicker than she and at the foot of the stairs barred the way.

"The doctor," she stated positively, "has said that Aunt Henrietta must *not* be worried. It makes her temperature rise. You can't see her to-day, Hortense, and I think you'd better go home."

Mrs. Keith tried argument and expostulation, but finding both alike useless she finally went. Eileen carefully locked the door after her and went upstairs to her aunt.

"I thought," Miss Henrietta greeted her, "I heard Hortense's voice in the hall."

"Probably you did," Eileen admitted, "and mine, too," she added.

"What were you doing?" demanded Miss Henrietta.

"Putting her out," said Eileen. "She was butting in."

"Humph!" said Miss Henrietta.

"She wouldn't be Hortense if she was not doing that. Can you *keep* her out?"

"Yes," said Eileen determinedly, "I can."

Miss Henrietta chuckled.

"Then do it," she said.

That night Eileen, returning just at dusk from the grocery store on the corner, saw a man and a woman getting out of an auto that had been stopped before her aunt's house.

Recognizing them, she was devoutly thankful that the front door was securely locked on the inside and that the back door key was safe in her coat-pocket. She intercepted them at the front of the porch steps.

"Well, what do you want *now*?" was her chilly greeting.

"We want to come inside, for one thing," Mrs. Keith told her.

"Well, you can't," Eileen said decidedly. "If you have anything to say to me I'll listen to it right here."

To let them in would have been to reveal the fact that there really was only one lamp in the house. Miss Henrietta had that one.

Eileen for the most part went about in the dark. But she had a carefully hoarded end of tallow candle that could be pressed into service when absolutely required. She did not, however, propose to waste it on Mr. and Mrs. Carrington Keith.

They looked at her somberly.

"We want," they said in unison, "to help you."

"I've already told you," said the harassed Eileen, "that I don't want any help."

"That's just your pride," said her sister. "I'm sure you *need* help."

"If *my* gas had been turned off," said Mr. Carrington Keith, "I'd think I wanted help. We have decided, Eileen, to pay Aunt Henrietta's gas bill."

"If you're bound to pay it," flared Eileen, "I suppose I can't stop you. But I can tell you one thing—I won't let them in to turn on the gas again."

"Of course," conceded Mr. Keith, "if you won't use the gas there'd be no sense in my paying the bill. But I think, Eileen, we are entitled to an explanation. For either Aunt Henrietta is short of money and cannot pay the bill, or she can pay and won't. And it is not honest to refuse to pay your bills when they are due," he stated virtuously.

"Aunt Henrietta," affirmed Eileen, "has just as much money as ever she had and she's just as honest as you are.

"But our gas bill," she announced defiantly, "is our own affair and you've no right to come asking questions about it. And I've no time to stand here any longer talking to you," she ended.

She crossed the snowy yard, but at the corner of the house she turned.

"It's not a matter of pride with me," she flung at them. "It's one of decent self-respect. And you needn't come back again, for if you do I won't let you in."

She disappeared round the house and they heard the slam of the back door as it closed after her.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Keith to her husband, "there's no use in following her?"

"None whatever I should say," he told her. "We've done all we could." And he piloted his wife to their waiting car and helped her in.

Eileen heard them drive off.

Then her overstrained nerves gave way and she began to cry. Her eyes were still red when a little later she carried Miss Henrietta's dinner tray up-stairs.

"You've been crying," her sharp-eyed aunt accused her. "What's the matter?"

"Hortense brought Carrington here," Eileen explained. "And I told them if they came back again I wouldn't let them in."

"Humph!" said Miss Henrietta. "And now you're sorry you did it?"

"No," said Eileen with a gulp.

"But it makes me mad to think of all the other things I might have said and didn't."

III

THE next morning the gas collector called for the second time. On the occasion of his first visit Eileen nervously, almost tearfully, apologetic because of her inability to pay, had fairly cringed before him.

Now her attitude had changed.

"That old gas company," she stated distinctly, "made more than a million dollars net last year. I know because I read it in the paper. If they have all that money they can get along without the little we owe them a whole lot better than I can get along without the gas.

"I'm turning black and blue from hitting myself against the furniture in the dark; and I have to do all the cooking on the water heater, and it never in this world was built for a cook stove."

She paused a moment for breath then hurried on.

"We're not ready to pay yet," she said, "and I don't know when we will be. But when we are we'll pay at the office. There's no use at all in your coming here; you're just wasting your time."

Eileen was angry because in the gas collector she recognized the "reliable source" from whom the Keiths had learned of Miss Henrietta's turned-off gas and unpaid gas bill.

By the simple expedient of muffling the door-bell every evening Eileen had managed to keep people out after dark, and no one, not even Miss Henrietta, knew that the gas had been turned off.

But the gas collector knew, and Eileen remembered that Hortense had once said with a laugh that she knew which of her friends kept their gas bills paid up and which didn't, for Carrington's friend, the gas collector, told them.

Circumstantial evidence was all

against the gas collector, and Eileen having finished her defiant speech stood glaring at him and waited to see what he had to say.

But he merely remarked mildly that it sometimes did happen that people could not pay their bills and he guessed the gas company would have to wait for this one. Then he grinned, remembering Eileen's statement concerning the net earnings of the gas company.

"I guess you're right," he said, "it won't break 'em to wait." And he mounted his wheel and rode off.

At their first meeting the gas collector had given considerable more thought to the bill he was trying to collect than he had to Eileen. Now he remembered her snapping eyes and flushed cheeks.

"Gee!" he said to himself, "I didn't think she had it in her. I like 'em spunky like that."

The next week when he called he began to talk almost before Eileen had fairly got the door open.

"I'm sorry to keep coming here and bothering you like this," he apologized, "but they keep pretty close track of the unpaid bills at the office, and they expect me to report on them about every so often.

"I'm a new broom," he explained with a laugh, "and I have to sweep clean or lose my job. Maybe when I've worked for 'em longer—"

"Oh," interrupted Eileen, "aren't you the collector they've had for the last two years?"

He shook his head.

"No," he told her; "that man blatted about who paid their bills and who did not, and they found it out and fired him. I've only had this job two weeks. This was the first place they sent me to."

Eileen stared at him, her mind working rapidly.

Just as she had thought, the gas collector had told Carrington. But it was not this collector; and she had misjudged him and been rude to him.

She began to cast about for a way of making amends.

Her eye fell on his wheel leaning against the curb.

"Isn't it," she ventured, "rather cold going about on a wheel in the winter?"

"Sometimes it is," he admitted. "But," he added with his ready laugh, "the gas company doesn't provide its collector with an auto."

"Perhaps," suggested Eileen shyly, "you'd like to come in long enough to get warm."

The gas collector would and did. He followed Eileen to the kitchen, for that, she explained, was the most comfortable room, and he pulled off his thick gloves and stood beside the water-heater warming his hands.

"So you cook on this?" he said.

"In it," Eileen corrected. "You see," she explained, "the top of it is so far above the fire that you can't possibly get it hot enough to cook anything. So what I want to cook I put in a small covered bucket and hang it on a poker inside the water-heater."

"Gee!" said the gas collector. "How'd you ever happen to think of that?"

"I had to think of something," said Eileen, "for, of course, we couldn't stop eating just because the gas was turned off and I couldn't go on cooking on the gas range. When you have to think of things," she added, "you can."

"Well," admitted the gas collector, "I never thought of it in just that way, but I suppose you're right."

He stood for a moment in silence, eyeing Eileen reflectively. Then:

"If you think I'm being nosy," he burst out, "you can say so and shut me up, but I wish you'd put me on to the combination—tell me what sort of a circus in three rings you're running, anyway. They told me at the office that I ought to have no trouble at all in collecting this bill; the old lady had loads of money, they said. But that doesn't somehow jibe with cooking in-

side a water-heater. I can't figure it out."

"No one could," said Eileen. "That's why I can't let any one know." She sighed. "Do you know how much things ought to cost?" she questioned abruptly.

"That depends," said the gas collector. "Some I do and some I don't."

"I mean," said Eileen, "things to eat, and coal and—"

"Oh, living expenses!" the gas collector helped her out. "Well, I pay six dollars a week for my room and board. It's not the best board, and the room—"

"I don't mean quite that," Eileen interrupted. "I mean things before they're cooked and coal by the ton and— What I want to know," she added desperately, "is how much money two people really ought to have to live on for three months."

"You see, my sisters have been coming to stay with Aunt Henrietta, turn about, three months for each of them. Then I came, and she gave me the housekeeping money for three months."

"She said it was just what she had given each of the others, and everything must be paid out of it. But it didn't seem enough to me, and I tried to tell her so, but that was after her accident; and talking about it made her temperature rise, and the doctor had said she must not be worried; so I had to give it up and *make* the money do, whether it was enough or not."

The gas collector looked deeply interested.

"How much did she give you?" he questioned in a businesslike way.

Eileen told him.

"Gee," he said, "and then some! I'd say that was scarcely enough to buy even the plainest food for two people for three months."

A relieved look came over Eileen's face.

"That was what I thought," she said. "And that's why I didn't pay the gas bill. I thought I needed the money for food."

"Well, I guess you did, all right," the gas collector conceded. "Why don't you," he suggested, "speak to your aunt about it again? There must be a mistake somewhere."

Eileen shook her head.

"I'm afraid there's no mistake," she said. "Aunt Henrietta surely knows what she gave to the girls and what they bought with it. It's just, I suppose, that I'm not capable like they are and don't know how to manage. But I'll do the best I can, and that's all I can do. I can feed us, but I can't pay gas bills."

"What do you have to eat?" demanded the gas collector sharply.

"Aunt Henrietta—" Eileen was beginning, but he cut her short.

"I didn't ask about *her*," he said. "You don't need to tell me that you somehow squeeze out every last thing she wants or thinks she wants. I want to know what *you* have?"

Eileen flushed.

"Mostly cabbage and potatoes," she reluctantly confessed. "They're cheaper than anything else."

"I hate 'em both!" the gas collector exploded viciously.

He pulled on his gloves with a jerk and took an abrupt departure. Eileen, wondering at his sudden change of manner, hoped she had not offended him.

In half an hour he was back. He came to the back door, and he strode in and placed on the kitchen table a large, bulky paper sack.

"Look here!" he said. "I hope you won't think I'm being fresh, but the etiquette books all say a gentleman may present a lady with fruit and candy if he wants to. I know you're a lady, and I hope I'm a gentleman, and I've stayed within the limits, and I thought—that is, I hoped—well, you know cabbage and potatoes all the time—"

Eileen pulled the sack toward her and slipped off the string.

"I'd be sorry to think," she said, "that I couldn't understand and ap-

preciate real kindness when it's shown me. And those apples and oranges and bananas look better to me than anything I ever saw. Thank you so much."

The gas collector beamed with pleasure at her receipt of his gift and took an oblong box from his pocket.

"I was forgetting the candy," he said.

Eileen put out her hand and took the box from him.

"But it's sixty-cent candy," she reproached him.

"Sure it is," he said. "All the girls I know think a fellow a cheap skate if he pays less than that for candy."

"It's too much," said Eileen decidedly. "There's twenty-five-cent candy in this town that's good enough for any girl; and forty cents is always enough to pay."

The gas collector stared. Then he recovered with a jerk.

"Say," he said with startling frankness, "you're my kind, all right. I'd like to get better acquainted with you. What do you do evenings?"

Eileen giggled.

"Muffle the door-bell," she told him, "so no one can get in and find I have no light."

"But if I came to the back door," the gas collector insisted, "and brought a tallow candle with me?"

"Tallow candles," said Eileen demurely, "are three for a nickel, and *three* will last a whole evening."

IV.

"AUNT HENRIETTA," said Eileen, "my three months will not be up for another week; but to-morrow you're coming down-stairs, and you'll find there's a bill to be paid. It seemed better to tell you to-night."

Miss Henrietta looked at her sharply.

"Only *one*?" she said.

"Yes," said Eileen. "The gas bill," she explained. "And we ought to order coal."

"Then order it," instructed Miss

Henrietta, "and pay for it. Pay the gas bill, too. I gave you housekeeping money for three months," she reminded.

"Yes," said Eileen slowly, "I know you did; but in no way, shape, or manner could I make it enough to meet all the expenses. I can buy us food for the one remaining week, but I cannot pay the gas bill or get coal."

"Um," said Miss Henrietta. Then she began to laugh. "I'm not really surprised that you can't," she said. "Eileen, I suppose you're not aware that you've been keeping house on *one-tenth* the money Rose and Margaret and Barbara had?"

Eileen stared at her.

"*One-tenth* the money they had!" she gasped. "But I thought—you know you said—"

"Yes," Miss Henrietta cut in, "I know I did, and I thought I was telling the truth; but, Eileen, I made a mistake. There were two rolls of bills in my money-box, one of them tens and the other ones.

"I meant to give you the tens, but I gave you the ones, and never knew it until this morning, when I looked in my box for the first time since I broke my hip. Why, child, what's the matter?"

For Eileen had turned suddenly and, burying her face in the curve of her arm, was sobbing violently.

Miss Henrietta reached across and patted her niece's shoulder.

"Why, there—" she said in a voice curiously unlike her usually sharp one.

Eileen lifted her head and achieved a watery smile.

"I guess it's nerves," she said. "I wasn't expecting such a let-up. Some of it's been pretty awful, Aunt Henrietta."

"*All* of it, I should say," corrected her aunt grimly. "Child, *how* did you do it, and *why*?"

"I began," said Eileen, "because I thought I *had* to, but I kept on, Aunt Henrietta, because I *wanted* to."

Her aunt nodded thoughtfully.

"I always thought, Eileen," she said, "that there was good stuff in you, but something out of the ordinary was required to bring it out. And *how* did you do it?"

"I could buy us food," said Eileen, "but nothing else. That gas bill that we owe is the *first* one they sent in."

She smiled a little.

"It's also the last," she said, "for I couldn't pay it, and they turned off the gas."

"I never suspected it," said Miss Henrietta.

"No," said Eileen. "You had your lamp, so of course you wouldn't know."

"But you had light of some sort?" insisted Miss Henrietta.

"Just a tallow candle," said Eileen. "But I only lighted that when I was fixing your tray and *had* to see."

"But you were always afraid of the dark," objected Miss Henrietta.

"Yes," said Eileen; "I thought I couldn't even sleep without a light."

She clasped her hands about her knees and gazed reflectively into the glowing coals of Miss Henrietta's open fire.

"I'm not afraid now," she said. "And I guess when you are afraid of a thing, the only way to get over it is to keep going up against it until you're not afraid any more."

"Most of us haven't the nerve to do that," said Miss Henrietta.

"But if you *have* to," said Eileen, "you *can*. It was because of the gas being turned off," she went on, "that I had to fight Hortense. She found it out and was determined to interfere."

"Of course," she conceded, "it was all right for her to ask if I needed help—I'm sure she meant to be kind—but when I said 'No,' she should have stopped there, but she wouldn't. So," she ended simply, "I made her stay out."

"Why wouldn't you let her help?" demanded Miss Henrietta abruptly.

"Hortense doesn't *help*," said Eileen. "She insists always on running

things her way, and her way is not my way. It was *my* job."

"You'd given me what you said was three months' housekeeping money and told me what you expected of me. That made me responsible. But because you were hurt and helpless, and could not see to anything yourself, I was doubly responsible. So I just did the best I could."

"I think," said Miss Henrietta, "no one could have done better."

Praise from Miss Henrietta was so rare that it was praise indeed. Eileen flushed with surprise and pleasure.

"At first," she went on, glad to talk it all over with Miss Henrietta, "I was angry that Hortense had found out about the gas. Then I began to see it really didn't matter, for if I hadn't fought her about the gas I'd have had to about the fires."

"She said the first time she was here that I wasn't keeping the house warm enough. And of course," Eileen cheerfully admitted, "I wasn't, for I wasn't running the furnace at all—just the water-heater in the kitchen and your grate up here."

"I never knew," said Miss Henrietta. "But surely you bought some coal, Eileen?"

Eileen shook her head.

"Why, I *couldn't*," she said. "But there was already a great deal in the cellar, and I used it as carefully as I could. Then when I saw it wasn't going to last through, I kept it for just stormy days and other days I—"

She stopped flushing.

"You what?" questioned her aunt. "Go on, Eileen."

"I said more than I meant to," said Eileen. "I hadn't intended to tell. But, if you want to know, I picked up coal in the alleys."

"You—" began Miss Henrietta, and stopped, for words failed her.

"You wouldn't think any one would get much that way," said Eileen, "but you *can*. It's spilt when they're shoveling it from the wagons into the coal-houses and down coal-chutes, and lots

of people just let it lie and never trouble to pick it up. I guess, Aunt Henrietta, there's more waste in the world than any one imagines."

"Yes," Miss Henrietta agreed absently, "I suppose there is."

But it was not of that she was thinking. Rather she was wondering of what stern stuff was this girl made that she had done a thing like that. She had not been actuated by the instinct for self-preservation.

That would have sent her hurrying to the nearest coal-dealer where Miss Henrietta's name would easily enough have secured her credit.

Rather was there in her something better and higher and nobler—that something that causes men—and women, too—to die for a principle or at the post of duty, and lifts them nearer God.

"I don't know," said Miss Henrietta slowly, "if any one of your sisters *could* have done what you have, but I do know that not one of them *would*."

"But I *had* to," said Eileen.

Miss Henrietta looked at her and a slow twinkle dawned in her eye.

"You've done your part, that's certain," she said. "Now I'll begin to do mine. Bring me a pencil and a piece of paper, I want to figure what your wages will amount to."

"My wages!" gasped Eileen. "I did not know I was to have any."

"Your sisters had," said Miss Henrietta. "The housekeeping allowance I made them was no miserly one, and I told them that from it I expected nothing beyond a fairly good table and the payment of such necessary bills as came in. Whatever they could save they could keep. And, since a dollar saved is two dollars earned, at the end of her three months I doubled for each girl what she had saved."

"But—" objected Eileen.

"Not so fast," warned Miss Henrietta. "A cipher remains always a cipher whether you multiply it by two or by twenty-two. But though they

saved nothing, Eileen, yet they had their wages.

"That they preferred chocolates and matinée-tickets and a new hat or gown rather than a sum of money *saved* was their affair and not mine. *Their* wages I figured in my head, but yours I cannot.

"If Barbara had been with me when I broke my hip I'd have gone to the hospital, for flat on my back I could never have stood Barbara. So I consider that you saved me hospital expenses.

"Had Margaret been here I'd have stayed at home with a trained nurse to look after me. So, you've saved me what I would have paid a nurse. Rose could have cared for me, and she would; but she'd have had in a woman to do the housework. You've saved me her wages. And as you spent only one-tenth of the money allowed for household expenses, the other nine-tenths you saved."

As she talked, Miss Henrietta had set down figures. Now she added them up, and Eileen, looking over her shoulder, gave a gasp of wonder.

"It's a thousand dollars!" she said in an awed voice.

"Two thousand," corrected Miss Henrietta. "For each dollar of that thousand is a dollar *saved*, and a dollar *saved* is *two* dollars *earned*."

"But—" expostulated the amazed Eileen.

"Some people," said Miss Henrietta crisply, "leave their money for their relatives to fight over after they're dead. I prefer to see mine earned and pay it while I'm still here. Bring me my check-book, child. It's in my money-box."

Eileen stood by silently watching her aunt fill in the check. She went from red to white and back to red again when the slip of paper was put in her hand.

"There aren't words to thank you," she said earnestly.

For that money meant more to her than her aunt guessed or imagined,

And *why* it meant so much was as yet a secret between Eileen and the improvident gas-collector who could have saved his money but hadn't until he met Eileen, and so now had enough to furnish a house or even a little flat; though he could, he earnestly assured Eileen, support a wife if the wife were herself and he had a place to put her.

Miss Henrietta put her check-book back in the money-box and took out a roll of bills.

"Eileen," she said, "this is the housekeeping money I meant to give you and didn't. Will you take it now and stay on for another three months?"

The girl's sensitive face quivered and flushed.

"Oh," she cried, "I'll be *glad* to. And I think, Aunt Henrietta, it's because I've found myself here. I can do things at last—not big things or great things, of course, but—"

"Child," interrupted her aunt, "the big things and the great ones don't always show so on the surface. And which are big and which are little I sometimes thing only God Himself can rightly judge."

From the direction of the back door came the sound of one knocking, and Eileen started to her feet.

"It's — the gas-collector," she faltered.

"The nerve of him," flared Miss Henrietta, "coming at this time of night! But you've the money now,

Eileen. Pay him and send him about his business."

"But he doesn't come officially any more, Aunt Henrietta," Eileen explained in some confusion. "He comes to see me, and his name is Jones."

"Humph," said Miss Henrietta. "Not much of a name, according to my thinking."

"He has another," defended Eileen. "It's Fordham."

"Well," conceded Miss Henrietta, "his mother evidently tried to do what she could to improve matters, but I can't say I think she altogether succeeded. Plain John or Henry would have been much better. However," she handsomely admitted, "he's not to blame for either Jones or Fordham. Go and let him in, Eileen, and bring him up. I'll look him over."

Eileen went down-stairs, but before ever she reached the kitchen the listening Miss Henrietta heard the back door open and close again.

Evidently the gas-collector, whose name was Jones, was well accustomed to that place and very sure of his welcome. Miss Henrietta thought she understood, and like the sensible woman she was, she accepted the inevitable.

"If I like his looks," she decided, "half as well as I do Eileen's house-keeping, I'll ask them to live here, for I guess if we both tried, he and I could get used to each other in time."



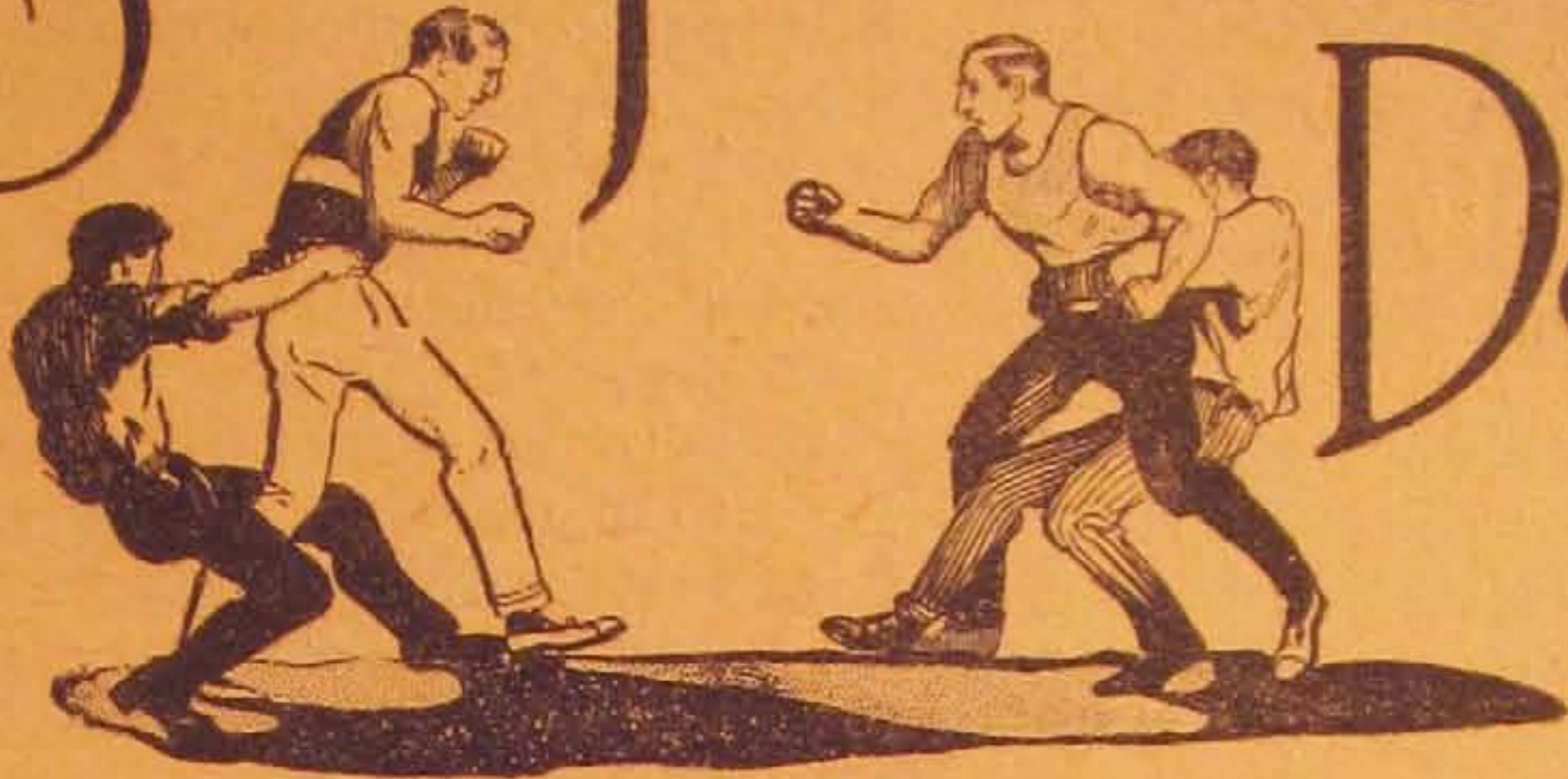
THE CONTRADICTION

BY AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL

THE women he had loved before
Had made him promise o'er and o'er
He would be true till both were dead:
Then love had fled!

But when one came with rainbow smile
Who kissed him, saying all the while,
"Tis sweet because it cannot last,"
Love stayed steadfast!

A Scrap in the Dark



By Paul West

BEFORE I tell this story I want one thing thoroughly understood. I'm not looking for sympathy. I don't want, and I don't expect, anybody to say: "Poor fellow, it was a shame!"

It wasn't a shame. All that I got was coming to me, plainly directed and prepaid. I deserved it. Maybe more. Now that I look back I think I got off pretty lightly. At all events, I'm not complaining.

This being settled, *en avant!* as we say in France.

I must have been the most unconscionably fresh thing that ever needed salting. Of course I didn't think I was at the time, being spoiled by my last two years in college, where they had made a sort of idol of me ever since the day I won the middle-weight championship by whipping all comers.

After that they began to puff me up, and like an idiot I allowed the adulation to turn my head.

I was husky—very; and, if I do say it, I could box. I liked the sport, and I was always at it. Pat Donoghue, our boxing instructor, said he had never seen a college man anywhere near my class.

He used to bring some of the best

professionals down to put on the gloves with me. I'm not bragging when I say there wasn't one of them who could do much to me. They all had to admit that, and they all agreed with Pat that in going in for the law I was absolutely ruining what couldn't have helped being a great career in the ring.

But, while all this praise made me horribly conceited, I wasn't quite fool enough to consider seriously any proposition to become a prize-fighter; so when I graduated I left poor, old Pat and his plug-ugly friends mourning my loss to the ring.

The family all thought I had worked so hard to get my degree that I ought to have a good, long rest that summer. I thought so myself. So when Garravan, Haddaway, and about twenty others who were going into camp in the Adirondacks asked me to come along, I gladly accepted.

They were overjoyed. My presence—the presence of the intercollegiate middle-weight champion boxer—would add tone to any camp, they thought. I guess maybe I thought so, too.

From the very start, as I can see now, I began to cook up my fate. It was entirely unintentional on my part.

I didn't mean to be conceited or overbearing.

I suppose it was my great strength that made me always squaring off to other fellows, hitting them playful little taps—not so soft, I'm afraid, the way the weaker ones used to wince under them—and generally showing my companions what a big, muscular person I was.

And I was always posing around in a short-sleeved shirt—or it must have seemed posing to the others—getting tanned up till my muscular frame looked like a piece of modeling in bronze.

But nobody called me down for it, all being a little afraid of me, I suppose; though I know now, of course, that they noticed it and poked fun at me behind my back. It was more than fun, too; some of the boys began to get a little jealous at the way I attracted the girls.

This is not conceit, please understand me. I was a good-looking chap, and it didn't take me long to find that masculine strength made an awful hit with the other sex; so, of course, I worked it for all it was worth.

How I doted on showing those bulging biceps of mine as I wielded a paddle before the admiring eyes of some pretty girl from one of the cottages near our camp. And how well I knew that, as I stood poised on the spring-board for a dive into the lake, more than one smitten maiden was observing my herculean proportions from the piazza of the lodge.

For this camp of ours was not in the wilderness, but on the edge of one of those fashionable summer settlements in which the Adirondacks abound, and there were plenty of people to nurture the admiration in which I was beginning to hold myself so highly.

Poor fool that I was! Ah, well! "Those whom the gods would destroy," and so on!

Along came Vickery. The first morning I saw him I failed to size him up for what he was. I looked on

him only as an unusually fresh bouncer for daring to take Millicent Peters canoeing when it was generally known along the lake that she was one of my particular conquests, if not *the* one.

Almost every morning about this hour for a week I had been hopping into my canoe—in white flannels with a sleeveless silk shirt that showed my arm-and-shoulder muscles to the best advantage—and running up the shore to the landing in front of the lodge to take Millicent for a ride.

Why, at the very moment when Vickery's canoe hove in sight, with Vickery doing the paddling and Millicent propped against the cushions in the stern, I was just about to get into my own to go after her!

I stepped back on the dock, scarcely believing my eyes, as Vickery paddled the canoe alongside at Millicent's request.

"Hello, Mr. Kneeland," she called. "I've brought somebody down you ought to know. Mr. Vickery, Mr. Kneeland. Mr. Vickery's just come up to the lodge for the summer. You've heard me speak of Mr. Kneeland—he's the college champion boxer, you know!"

"Glad to meet you," said Vickery, reaching up to the float.

I stooped down to grasp his hand after holding Millicent's a moment. I would have liked to yank him out of the canoe and dump him in the lake in his dark-blue serge suit; but I thought I could attend to all that later.

Vickery didn't look as if he would be much trouble, giving no great appearance of unusual huskiness. I rather put him aside and addressed myself to Millicent after a formal greeting to him. He sat quietly in the canoe as she and I chatted.

Even when they went back to the lodge, after inviting me up to play tennis in the afternoon, I somewhat pitied Vickery, as I thought I noticed an admiring light in his eyes when he looked in Millicent's direction.

Poor fellow! So he had already

lost his heart to her. Oh, well, another fly for me to brush aside!

That afternoon I went up to the lodge, and as Vickery came down to the court ready for a set of doubles—he and some other girl were going to play Millicent and me—I had a slight shock.

He, like me, wore a silk shirt, sleeveless, and for the first time I saw that he was about as husky an individual as myself! His muscles were big and developed, and his shoulders were wonders, while his neck was short and corded.

His face, too, bore all the marks of a man in good training, and his general action as he got into the game told me that I was up against an athlete like myself. I wondered if he were a boxer, and at the first chance I asked him.

"Oh, a little," he said. "I've done quite a little at college, but I wouldn't care to call myself much of a terror with the gloves, especially when you're around."

"I'm not so sure about that," said I, laughing, but thinking to myself:

"I'm on to this boy. He's somebody, and he's trying to lead me on!"

That night I found out more about Vickery. I learned that I was right in my estimate of his prowess. It was Haddaway who tipped me off as we lay around the camp-fire waiting to go to sleep.

"Vickery?" he said. "If it's Tom Vickery, he's one of the crack Western college middle-weights; Michigan, I think."

Then I remembered an M on Vickery's tennis-cap and knew that this was the man. Ah, well! Maybe it would be a little more work to teach him his place than I had at first expected; but I guessed I was equal to the emergency!

I didn't want to pick any trouble with him though; not that I was afraid of him, for I give you my word I was not. I had whipped many men who looked a good deal tougher than

he was, and when it came to the question of skill, I hadn't any doubt that any advantage on that score was on my side.

But almost from the first I could see that trouble was coming. Vickery began to establish a proprietorship over Millicent Peters that was galling to me, and when I stepped in and put a stop to it you could see he didn't like it a bit. And one day when a canoe-trip was organized by a crowd along the lake and I kidnaped Millicent for my canoe-mate just when I could see he thought he had it all fixed, I imagined for a moment that Vickery was going to start the row right then and there and have it out with me. Well, I'd have been willing, I think.

Anyway, from that time on I kept my eye peeled for war, and in no half-measured way I showed Mr. Vickery, from day to day, that I wasn't going to stand any fooling. I'll even admit that the chip which each of us carried around on his shoulder became apparent to the rest of the crowd.

II.

NOTE BY GEORGE GARAVAN, CAMP CAREFREE, MIRROR LAKE, ADIRONDACKS.

My friend, Ted Kneeland, one of the finest fellows you ever knew, has turned his "Confession," as he calls this story, over to me to continue at this point.

"George," he said, "you'll see what I've written, and you'll notice the place where I'm stuck. I could write it all right, but you know some of the details better than I do; and besides I've some sense of shame left.

"Put in the part up to the fight. Don't tell too much, but make it plain why you and the bunch finally had to step in and teach us two big hulks a much-needed lesson. Don't spare either of us, but have a little pity, George, just a little pity!"

So here goes:

It was just as Kneeland said; everybody soon discovered that he and Vickery had a chip on the shoulder and were looking for trouble. At first we looked on the whole matter as a joke, but after a while it got tedious and bothersome, because we couldn't go anywhere without the enmity of the two spoiling things.

Our crowd and the lodge crowd began to grow rather chummy during the summer—nice fellows up at the lodge and a lot of bully girls. So we had them over at Camp Carefree for little picnics and dances and things, and they returned the compliment.

But instead of these little games being good fun, as they should have been, they commenced to be the bane of our young lives, because Vickery and Kneeland spoiled them.

It wasn't only over the Peters girl, though goodness knows every time the two came within three feet of each other and she was anywhere around, we all thought we'd soon have to throw red pepper in their eyes to pry them apart.

No; the two clashed everywhere; and at last it came to a point where we either had to be on the watch all the time or there'd have been murder.

"Look here, Garry!" said Had-daway to me one day. "There's going to be murder up in these diggings pretty soon."

"Over what?" I asked.

"Vickery and Kneeland. We can't keep 'em apart much longer. Honestly, every time they're on the same side of the lake I look for a battle to the death. Just now, for instance, Vickery came up to the float in his canoe and Kneeland was standing there and wouldn't move an inch.

"I saw Vickery push his way back of Kneeland, and I give you my word if he had brushed the tip of the nap on Kneeland's sweater he'd have gone overboard. Kneeland's fist was doubled up like a ham at the end of a catapult."

"And Vickery, I suppose, wasn't looking for anything?"

"Oh, not at all! He was not only looking, but begging for it! I tell you, they're spoiling the whole summer. Millicent Peters says she won't go up the lake with the party we're getting up next Saturday if either Vickery or Kneeland goes along. She thinks there'll be a tragedy before they get back, and she doesn't want her name in the papers as the bone of contention."

"It's a darned shame!" said I. "But I don't see what I can do unless—"

"Unless what? Talking to either of them won't do any good."

"Unless," I said, an idea flashing through my head, "they get together before Saturday and fight it out."

"They wouldn't do it," said Had-daway. "It's my candid opinion that Kneeland, for all his record and fine opinion he has of himself, is a little afraid of Vickery. And I don't imagine Vickery is dying to try Kneeland out either.

"They're like a couple of dogs that growl at each other across a fence. If the gate were opened they'd probably both run."

"I doubt that," said I. "I think Kneeland could kill Vickery. He's considerably heavier."

"But Vick's like a bundle of whips-cords. I'd like to see them together. If we could only fix it somehow."

We mentioned our idea to Millicent Peters, who we ran across that evening. She was hiding from both Vickery and Kneeland, who were looking for her to take her canoeing in the moonlight.

"Oh, I think any such plan is perfectly brutal!" she exclaimed in horror. "You are all dreadful!"

"But it's the only way," said Had-daway. "You can't have two cocks of the walk; one's got to whip the other and have it over with, so the question of mastery's decided once and for all."

"Yes," said Millicent. "And whichever one was whipped would pack up and go home and leave the other, and that wouldn't do, because they're both such charming fellows! And charming fellows are very scarce up here!"

"Oh!" said we, understanding her, and went away.

But five minutes later we decided that our plan must be followed out, after all. It was just as we were leaving the lodge. Suddenly, down on the lawn near the lake, there broke out a noise like the falling of a sky-scraper, and we got there just in time to keep Kneeland, who had bumped into Vickery, from chucking Vickery clear across the lake—or *vice versa*.

We dragged Kneeland down to our camp and sent Vickery up to the lodge under a strong escort. And that night we planned it all out.

We put it to Vickery and Kneeland next morning—that is, we put part of it to them—not all. There was one little portion we reserved for ourselves—the secret part.

"You and Vickery are spoiling everybody's summer," we told Kneeland. "You're on the verge of a battle all the time. Everybody's afraid to go anywhere because they think it's liable to break out any moment.

"Now, the only way to get this thing over is for you two fellows to fight it out. Vickery thinks he can put it all over you; he's been around bragging that you're afraid of him. You feel a little the same way about him, and we hope and believe thoroughly you're right.

"But it's got to be settled, and here's our arrangement: You and he are to fight a duel, but a different sort of a duel from most of them. You're going to fight blindfolded."

"Blindfolded?" shouted Kneeland. "Not on your life!"

"Oh, yes; you are," said we. "It's Millicent Peters's idea. We think we know why. She's a little afraid you can lick Vickery too easily, and she doesn't want him marked up too much.

Not that she really cares more for him than she does for you; but she's sympathetic, and favors the under dog. She thinks that if you're blindfolded you won't be able to hit him so hard and so often, and—"

"Once will be enough," grunted Kneeland. "When's the duel coming off?"

We told practically the same things to Vickery, and he also fell for our plan when we mentioned why Millicent wanted the blindfolds on her two heroes.

He said he could lick Kneeland blindfolded, and if it would please Millicent at all we would tie one of his hands behind his back. But we said no; we only wanted the blindfolds on, and the duel would take place in B Camp, which was a good, big room, that night.

And promptly at eight o'clock Vickery landed at our float with his canoe and two seconds, Charley Deane and Jack Peters, Millicent's brother. He was introduced to Kneeland, who had Haddaway and me to look after him, and then the arrangements were laid before them.

I will now surrender as narrator in favor of Mr. Kneeland himself.

III.

NARRATIVE CONTINUED BY EDWARD KNEELAND, FORMER INTERCOLLEGIATE MIDDLE-WEIGHT CHAMPION.

"GENTLEMEN," said Garry, who did most of the talking, "it is unnecessary to rehearse the reasons for the coming combat or why it is to be fought as we have arranged. Further details are few. B Camp has been stripped for the fray—all the furniture taken out, as you will see when you are admitted.

"You will be taken in there, the gloves—two ounces—adjusted, and the blindfolds put over your eyes. Mr. Kneeland's seconds will put Mr. Vickery's on, and Mr. Vickery's

friends will perform a similar duty for Mr. Kneeland.

"You will then be left to fight it out behind locked doors. At the end of ten minutes the doors will be unlocked, the blindfolds removed from your eyes, and the winner declared.

"That there will be a winner we sincerely trust and believe. That the fight will be fair we have no doubt, relying on each combatant's honor to strike no foul blows or to remove his blindfold.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"We are," we said.

Then Garry and the other three seconds took us inside of B Camp, which, as he had said, was stripped clean—not a chair or a table or a hammock left inside; no hiding-place.

We stripped, and, though it wasn't the first time I had seen Vickery in the buff, I was seized with strong admiration for his appearance; but I wasn't a bit scared of him. Then they put on the gloves—pretty nearly skin-gloves, too—as you know two ounces isn't much.

Then Peters and Deane put on my blindfold, doing a thorough job, all right.

First they slipped a baglike thing of black silk down over my head and tied it securely under my chin. And then over that they put another strip across my eyes, tying that tightly at the back of my head.

See? I couldn't see the inside of my own eyelids!

Garravan and Haddaway were attending to Vickery at the same time—doing a thorough job, too, for I heard him exclaim in a muffled way:

"Ouch! Not so tight over the right eye there! I'm a little tender—boxing a bit this morning!"

"You'll be tenderer!" thought I to myself.

Finally they had us both ready. Deane and Peters stepped away from me.

"All fixed?" I heard Garravan ask.

"All fixed," replied Millicent's

brother. "Do you care to examine his blindfold?"

"Not unless you want to look over Vickery's," said Haddaway. There was a moment's silence, while I stood there like a dummy, wondering what was coming next.

"Everything being arranged," said Garravan, "I suppose we may as well let them start. How about the lamp? Do we need to leave it in here?"

"I don't see how a light can be of any advantage to them under the circumstances," said Deane. "And they might knock it over."

"All right," said Garravan. "I guess we'd better take it out with us.

"Now, gentlemen," he added, "let's get down to business. Your hand, Kneeland!"

He took my right, and I felt him place it in Vickery's, holding them together with both of his.

"You understand the rules of this—er—affair of honor," he said. "Ten minutes it's to last. You can arrange the rounds to suit your convenience. At the end of ten minutes we will unlock the doors and present ourselves to you. Till then matters are in your hands. Are you ready?"

"I am," said I.

"I am," said Vickery.

"Then," said Garravan, "when you receive the signal you will begin; but not till then. Gentlemen—Deane, Haddaway, Peters! Are you ready?"

"Yes," answered Haddaway from the direction I remembered the door to be in. "Come on, Garravan! Got the lamp, Deane?"

"Got everything."

"Wait for the signal," said Garravan, pressing my hand into Vickery's and releasing his grasp on our wrists.

Then he walked rapidly toward the door.

"Wait!" he said.

There was a scuffling of feet. The door slammed to and was locked, and from outside came Garravan's voice:

"Go!"

We were alone! The battle was on!

Not till that moment did I realize the peculiar conditions of the fight. Not till we were left alone in that big room, facing each other in the dark, did I entirely comprehend what I had agreed to. Somehow, while Garravan remained holding our hands, I could see—or at least could sense—my surroundings; but with his withdrawal and the withdrawal of the other three seconds from the room there came a feeling of helplessness that I can't describe.

I felt lost, like a ship without a rudder. I almost forgot that facing me, in precisely the same predicament, was Vickery, and that he and I were there to fight each other.

Then suddenly I heard a slight sound, like that of a foot being moved tentatively on the bare floor. It brought me to my senses. It was Vickery, setting himself for the first punch, which he meant to make a good one, before I should have any chance to elude him in the Stygian darkness.

"Two can play at that game!" flashed through my mind.

I drew back, my mind's eye, if not my physical optic, fixed on the point of Vickery's chin, which must be within striking distance. I let fly—a straight, full - forced, right - arm jab, with all the weight of my body behind it.

It landed—on the air!

But at that same instant Vickery's blow, which must have been a counterpart of my own, was launched, and I felt the heel of his hand come crashing against my left cheek. It was a glancing blow, and that was all that saved me, for it was a crusher, delivered with all the force he could put into it—I could tell that by the grunt with which he accompanied it—and if Vickery's punch had landed fair on my jaw it might have finished me then and there.

So! I had been none too quick for my foxy opponent.

Almost before the thud of his fist had lost its force I side-stepped quick-

ly, so as to forestall a second jab of the same sort should he try it. As I side-stepped I took a step forward and let go at him with my right again; but this time in a swing, to catch him on the side of the face if he were still there.

This time I landed—landed good and hard—and I heard him grunt. But before I could follow it with an uppercut from my left, somehow he crossed me. It was wonderfully quick, wonderfully well measured, and it took me flush on the mouth.

Oh, what a crusher! Behind my impenetrable blindfold I saw stars—all the stars in the world—and, what's more, they were red stars, for now I was mad clear through.

I let fly at Vickery. I missed. I followed up and drove again at him—wide swings first with my left, then my right.

They swished through the air, but they met nothing. I began to think I was fighting away from him, when *whack!* it was my left ear this time that got it—got it with a ringing, palm-open slap that made my brains ring and buzz!

I was maddened, not so much with the force of the blows already landed on me as at the thought that Vickery could get me almost at will, while I could not find him.

I stopped, crouching, nursing my smarts, listening.

Then I heard him behind me, creeping stealthily, mouselike. I turned on my toes and let fly where I could hear his sharp, quick breathing. Before my blow had finished the arc in which I swung my fist, *crash!* Again that smash on the mouth; and *swash!* Again that echo-awakening slap on my ear—my right ear this time.

I swung wildly, leaping forward. Once or twice, as I rained a shower of blows in all directions, I landed, though not effectually. But neither did Vickery. I was making him cover and give ground, anyway, which was some satisfaction.

I pressed on, with a wilder swing than ever; but I hit nothing more. A sound like a quick tread to one side gave me a hint that he had side-stepped me. I leaped away, fearing a flank attack; but I was too late.

Bang! Bang! Not one, but two staggering blows landed on my neck just below the ear—a trifle higher and I should have been a goner.

I followed their direction. I fought into them—and suddenly I landed.

Oh, yes; I landed—hard! I thought my hand was broken, for it was the wall I had struck, sending my knuckles crashing against the rough pine! And as if that were not enough, from fully ten feet away I heard a mocking laugh.

“Is that so?” I roared, now fairly beside myself with rage. “Look out now! You’ll get it good and plenty this time!”

Smack! Something landed on my eye! *Smash!* Something else met my nose with terrific impact.

And then for the first time I knew what it was to actually fear an adversary. His uncanny success in hitting me and getting away again made me drop to the floor, holding my breath, coming nearer than ever before in my life to wishing the fight were over.

But almost before I had crouched down to my utmost my budding terror gave way to a desire for revenge. It was utterly impossible that Vickery, blindfolded as I was—and of the tightness of his bandage I had no doubts—could see any better than I could.

It must have been luck, or a skilful way of fighting—waiting for me, listening to my footsteps, and locating me by the sound. I would do the same thing; I, too, would be cautious.

I rose slowly to my feet, listening, scarcely daring to breathe lest I should shut out the sound of his slightest movement.

All was still. Nothing but the beating of my heart alarmed the night. Yet I listened, until at last I thought

I could hear the slightest sort of noise—perhaps breathing, perhaps movement—to my left.

Slowly, cautiously, hardly daring to move a foot for fear it would be heard, I began to creep in that direction.

Crash! This time it was another of those glancing blows on the side of my face. *Crash!* Another on the opposite cheek. With the second one I turned one loose with everything I had behind it. Nothing suffered but the air!

I stood still, gasping, not from loss of breath, but in astonishment. How could he do it? Where was he? Well, let him come on now! If he had me located he could not be far away. Next time I, too, would—

Crack! My left ear rang. I leaped fully five feet to the right. *Smack!* On the side of my nose—the right side. I danced backward, bringing up my guard.

Blam! An uppercut from underneath my guard, jarring my teeth, but jarring a thousand times more my state of mind. Where was Vickery? How did he do it? How—

Crash! Full in the space between my eyes. I went down. I won’t admit it was entirely from the blow. I dropped willingly, *and I stayed down!*

Afraid to get up? Well, yes; I’ll admit it, and if you laugh at me and call me a quitter all I have to say is, let them put you in a dark room with another man, both blindfolded, and let him hit you as often and as hard as he pleases when you can’t find him to save your life. And see if you aren’t afraid, too!

Yes, I was afraid. I lay crouching there, gasping, my hands resting on the floor ready to spring if that fist should find me again, but not knowing which way to jump.

It was very still. Not a breath could be heard but my own, and I took scarcely enough into my lungs to keep them bellowsed, lest the sound of it should tell Vickery where I was.

I even crawled along the floor like a whipped dog. He must not find me—not unless I could find him, too.

Then I realized what a coward I was. I rose slowly and began feeling along the wall till I came to the locked door. It was almost in my mind to draw the bolt and leap outside to get away from this uncanny adversary, but I shook off the desire and stepped out into the center of the room.

If he were there I had another plan now. I would let him strike me, and would wait. But when the second one came I would clinch, and then—

Oh, I didn't care if it was against the rules or not! Once I got hold of him there would be no rules, no anything but revenge! With teeth clenched I waited. I waited, but not long!

Crash! I took the blow and got ready, my hands half lifted, not for a blow, but to grab the arm next time it came at me.

Blam! Back of my ear!

I whirled with gritting teeth and pawed at the air to clutch him by throat or arm—by anything.

Crash! Behind my ear again, but now from the other direction! Now I wildly, madly covered and sank to the floor—whipped!

And then suddenly I heard the bolts of the door being drawn and the sound of voices—

“Ten minutes up!”

With the horrid thought that they would find me cowering—punished—licked!—I leaped to my feet and stood in a fighting position. There came the rush of feet, my blindfold was torn off, and there, two feet from me, in the same position as that which I was holding, stood Vickery.

I was ashamed to look at him—I, with my lips puffed; my eyes, one completely closed, the other only a slit through which I could see but dimly; my nose swollen, my chin and cheeks scraped and bulging! While he, I knew, was practically unscathed.

Then suddenly through my half-

closed eye I saw what I did not believe.

Vickery was a sight! If my eyes were bad his were shocking. His upper lip was puffed out so that you could have hung a towel on it; his nose was twice its natural size, his whole countenance seemed so distorted that I hardly knew him. But through his bloated features he was staring at me as I would have stared at a superman, awe, admiration, complete worship in his maudlin glance!

I looked from this sight, the meaning of which I could not fathom, to our seconds for an explanation.

I looked in vain. I thought I saw the retreating form of Garravan going through the door, and so did Vickery. But we were too slow for the little rabbit, and all we could do was look out after the scurrying quartet into the dark of the woods, and curse them—for what, we did not know exactly!

Then we turned back into the big room and looked at each other, standing under the lamp, which they had had the decency to replace before making their exit.

“My Lord, Kneeland!” gasped he. “What's happened to you? You're a sight!”

“What's happened to me!” I flashed back. “What's happened! You ask that after what you did to me!”

“I!” he gasped. “I! What are you talking about? I never landed on you once! While you simply had me whanging all over the place! Look what you've done to my face!”

“I!”

It was my turn to gasp.

“I! Why, Vick, I never laid a glove on you through the whole thing!”

“You didn't! Then who—”

I think it came to us simultaneously. I know that Vickery was no quicker than I in spying those four pairs of two-ounce gloves that somebody had hurriedly thrown on the floor! I

know he saw no sooner than I did what it all had meant! And I know we both looked pretty well ashamed as we shook hands.

"And there were four of them in the room all the time, whanging us any way they wanted to!" said he. "Four of them! Just think of it!

And I thought it was you. Will we kill them for it?"

"We ought to," said I. "But somehow, Vick, I think we'd do better to forget it. Don't you think maybe we brought it on ourselves? Come, let's shake hands!"

And we did again!



THE MASTER—DEAD

BY DJUNA CHAPPELL BARNES

HIS sighs were sonnets out of school.
 He made replies
 Like any wise, artistic fool
 With gabled eyes.
 He told his truths as men have done
 Since men knew lies.

He was alone the master grain
 In all the crowd.
 A thousand hammers on his heart
 Beat high and loud.
 Aye, it's a wasted field indeed,
 Untilled, unplowed.

His sense of tolerance was marred
 By inborn leers.
 His eyes, the fountain-springs of life,
 Half warped with tears.
 Some said that he had wept too much
 Throughout the years.

And so he gambled at life's board
 (Breath has its price);
 A prison's built with iron bars,
 A man with dice.
 A kitten is a king because
 It knows its mice.

And so he died, yet lying dead
 Was incomplete;
 For though his head laughed loud in hell,
 The shudd'ring wheat
 In God's stern granaries was stirred
 By his great feet.

Though half of him, irreverence,
 And half retrieves,
 His chest he left beneath our sod
 And leaves;
 And in the dawn, when God is still—
 It heaves.



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