

ATURDAY

MAY 20

TEN CENTS

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

The Green Sachem
by Raymond S. Spears

*Sequel to "Trail of the
Offer Pelts"*



The Romance
of a Fresh-
Water Pearl

Missing Page

Inside front cover

Missing Page

All-Story Weekly [v58 #2, May 20, 1916] (The Frank A. Munsey Company, 193-384pp, pulp)

193 · *The Green Sachem* [Part 1 of 4; Janie Frete] · Raymond S. Spears · sl

219 · *The Seven Ages* · Joe H. Ranson · pm

220 · *The Crewell Emeralds* · John D. Swain · nv

232 · *Song of a Bank Clerk* · Thomas Pearce · pm

233 · *The Enemy in His Mouth* [Part 2 of 5] · Raymond Ashley · sl

257 · *In Shakespeare's Time* · James S. Ryan · pm

258 · *'Twixt Devil and Deep Sea* · Captain A. E. Dingle · ss

264 · *Mr. South of Somewhere* [Part 3 of 5] · Frank Blighton · sl

298 · *A Worm That Re-Turned* · Suzanne Buck · ss

304 · *The Prompter* · Jane Burr · pm

305 · *Wolf Breed* [Part 4 of 4] · Jackson Gregory · sl

319 · *A Paradoxology* · Will Thomas Withrow · pm

320 · *Finigan* · A. de Ford Pitney · ss

323 · *When the Devil Was Sick* [Part 5 of 5] · E. J. Rath · sl

352 · *The Color of Red* · Genevieve Wimsatt · ss

355 · *Ye Poet's Bride* · Grace G. Bostwick · pm

356 · *This Woman to This Man* [Part 6 of 6] · C. N. & A. M. Williamson · sl

The Star Jan 7-Mar 7 1916

375 · *The Lure of May* · Stokely S. Fisher · pm

376 · *King Boreas, Life-Saver* · David A. Wasson · ss

380 · *The Broken Vase* · Frank Arthur French · pm

381 · *Heart to Heart Talks* · [The Editor] · ed

Missing Page

Multiple ad pages

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. LVIII

NUMBER 2



SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1916



The Green Sachem

by Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Trail of the Otter Pelts," "A Round With Nemesis," "Down the Mississippi," etc.

IN a way, this fine story is a sequel to "Trail of the Otter Pelts" (January 29 to February 19, 1916), that stirring tale of the Northwest in which Janie Frete played such a striking part. At all events, Janie is the heroine of "The Green Sachem," and this time a little more on the side of right and justice.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

RUSK'S FIND.



ANIE FRETE went to New York in early May, which is one of the most diverting seasons in which to visit the metropolis. She arrived on one of the night-line boats down the Hudson. Leaving

the boat at the Harlem dock, she ate breakfast in a One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street restaurant, and bought a newspaper to read on her way down-town.

She read only the head-lines up and down the first and second pages. But on the third and subsequent pages she

found numerous little items of general interest sent in from all over the country. They described the news that created furors in scores of places that New York regards as "back-country"—happenings and mishaps in Pittsburgh, Columbia Cross Roads, St. Louis, St. Genevieve, Burlington, Muscatine, Detroit, Sheboygan and so on down the list.

To Janie Frete these little items were like personals in the home-town *Chronicle*. Probably no one in the country read them with greater average interest and understanding. It seemed to her, when she stopped to think about it, that every day some one whom she knew had something happen to him, or some-

thing happened in a town where she had been.

That is one of the larger joys of the cosmopolite, the far-traveler. He knows the far places as well as the home-burg person knows the First National at the corner of Main and Ann.

There was a one hundred thousand dollar fire in Doyer; Janie recalled that town to think that it was a pity the flames had not destroyed two hundred thousand dollars worth of property and a few leading citizens besides. Her memories were so intimate that not all of them were pleasant.

But all the rest of the newspaper gave way to the transcendental interest which blazed up in her mind as she read the "ff lc" head-line of a third page paragraph known as "telegraph."

The black head-line read:

FINDS DINMO RIVER'S BIGGEST PEARL.

DISBROW, Wis., May 7.—John Rusk, a pearler, brought to town to-day a green pearl weighing 100 grains, which he found in the Dinmo River. The jewel is the largest pearl found in this locality. The lucky fisherman refused an offer of \$1,500, declaring that it was worth much more.

"One hundred grains!" Janie repeated with parted lips. "A green pearl of one hundred grains! Offered fifteen hundred for it! What is the matter with it?"

She read and reread the item. As soon as she could do so she went to Maiden Lane and entered one of the old buildings there. She took the elevator to the top floor, where she turned to an office on the glazed door of which was the brief inscription:

**MOYEN FIRMAN
PEARLS**

She knocked and then impatiently tried the knob. The door opened; she entered precipitately, but stopped within the threshold. A young woman rose from her chair and faced the visitor

with quite smiling countenance, but with a certain firmness of expression in the eyes, indicating a New York business woman's examination of a stranger's intentions. The secretary of a dealer in pearls must needs be a good judge of humanity.

The office contained three desks. A great safe stood in one corner. A stack of books stood along one wall. Upon the polished surface of each desk were things that caught and held the eye and the curiosity. For instance, close at hand was a great bludgeon of a crystal. But the glint of mother-of-pearl drew the eyes from the crystal—not one glint, but numerous glints and sheens.

The door opened against a maple desk; the secretary watched the visitor's hand as it held the door-knob. That hand was within a foot of a great stack of rectangular pieces of stout white linen paper folded into envelopes, like the large papers in which druggists wrap up powders for veterinary-surgeon prescriptions.

"Is Mr. Firman coming in to-day?" Janie asked doubtfully.

"I expect him any time now," the other answered. "Won't you sit down? He will certainly be here within half an hour."

"Yes; I will wait for him," Janie nodded. "My name is Frete—Janie Frete."

"Oh, yes; I remember. He will not be long in coming."

Janie sat down at the desk in the center of the room. On this desk was the huge crystal, and papers, letter-envelopes, and a number of manufacturing-jewelers' pamphlets.

Before the young woman had passed beyond the stage of conversational commonplaces the door opened and a man entered—a tall, slender, smiling man. At sight of him Janie sprang to her feet.

"Mr. Firman!"

"Miss Frete!"

"Look!" she continued. "Have you seen this?"

Firman perused the item about the

large, green pearl, taking his time and reading with care. When he had quite finished he looked toward the window, then drew from his own pocket another morning newspaper and showed her a similar item around which he had drawn a black pencil-mark.

This item said:

HUNDRED-GRAIN PEARL FOUND

DISBROW, Wis., May 7.—A perfect ball pearl, green in color and weighing 100 grains, was found in the Dinmo River still-water several miles below this place yesterday by a button-sheller, John Rusk. The pearler refused to consider any offer for the pearl, declaring he was going to sell it to some millionaire or king. The jeweler who weighed the pearl said it was the greenest green pearl taken out of the Dinmo River since pearls were discovered here.

"It sounds like a real nice pearl," Janie suggested. "It must be real cute—"

"Cute! Cute! Nice! A hundred-grain green pearl cute—nice!" the pearl man cried, and then smiled, rolling his eyes at the two young women as he added:

"I might have known you were ballyragging! It's the Green Sachem—it's the great green pearl the trade has been waiting for! It's worth—I hate to think what that pearl is worth!"

"I suppose you would like to have it—at a reasonable price," Janie observed.

"Like to have it! Like to have it! Why—why—I'd pawn—I'd—"

Firman seemed unable to think of anything adequate as he continued almost hopelessly:

"There isn't a chance in a thousand that pearl will get to me, and if I obtained it I don't know whether I would ever have the heart to sell it—to take money out of it again."

He began to pick over some of the envelopes of stout linen paper. He unfolded one of them and handed it to Janie. In the envelope was a lump of pearl nearly an inch long, more than half an inch wide and oval-shaped. It

was green, bright grass-green, but it had a rich, lustrous bronze along the crinkled edges, which flashed and flowed as Janie turned it in her fingers.

"That's a Dinmo pearl," he told her. "It came in three days ago. I bought it from the Disbrow jeweler, who said the hundred-grain pearl was the greenest pearl he had ever seen. The pearl-ers all go to him to have their finds weighed. You can see—"

"It's that color! That great pearl is that green?" Janie whispered. "What a wonderful pearl it must be! Of course, you want me to go get it for you."

"Eh! You don't think—do you mean it?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"But how—I beg your pardon! Of course, get it! I know better than to ask you such a question. But the price? Think what the price will be—that color, and that size!"

"You could raise half the value in a day?"

"That would be at least fifty thousand—I could raise that."

"Be ready then," Janie admonished him. "Now I must go shopping. I must have some—let me see."

She drew a list from her pocket, and addressing herself to the other young woman began to ask questions. Firman listened for a minute, and then hastily excused himself. He explained that he had to be going immediately. When he returned nearly two hours later both young women were gone, so he had to let himself into the office with his key.

Again he looked, then picked up the paper to read once more the item about the great pearl—about the Green Sachem, for which the pearl-buyers of America were waiting, for which they had been waiting since long before the pearl was found or was known to exist.

He discovered, however, that the item had been torn out of his own paper, as well as out of the paper in which Janie had espied it. Immedi-

ately he called a boy who served in several offices, and demanded a copy of every morning newspaper printed in New York.

"Of course," he said to himself, "I'll receive the clippings from the bureau—but I want that item. Think of it! A hundred-grain green pearl—grass-green at that!"

CHAPTER II.

JANIE LEARNS ABOUT PEARLS.

JANIE and Firman's secretary went shopping together. Janie bought a pair of hunting boots, a gray waist, a short brown skirt, and a cap to match the skirt. She bought many other things, too; in fact, she had what she called a "regular shopping spree."

After luncheon the two parted. Janie returned up the Hudson to Albany on the night liner. She had enough merchandise to fill a trunk waiting for her at the Harlem pier. On the trip up she engaged the stewardess to help stow her purchases away in the trunk which she had bought for exactly that supply of summer things.

As soon as her goods were thus disposed of Janie resumed thinking about the Green Sachem, a subject more exciting and attractive to her than a dozen shopping tours. At Albany Janie expressed the trunk home to Cape Vincent, off which on Two Canoe Island, was her rubble-stone cottage.

With a suit-case only, Janie went aboard a through train for Chicago, and settled herself quite comfortably in the observation car. Always when traveling Janie Frete was prepared to read a magazine; but in this instance as in a thousand others there was an interference.

Sitting opposite her was a stocky, rather heavy-featured young man. His cravat set off a magnificent white pearl. In his hand he had a copy of the leading jeweler's weekly. He was quite restless.

Janie turned to look out of the win-

dow. As she did so her magazine slipped to the floor. Instantly the man opposite sprang to reclaim it for her. Janie flashed her smile upon him.

"Thank you!" she cried. "It was stupid of me—"

That was the beginning. Janie was voluble.

"I'm going to Chicago," she told him. "And then I'm going to Wisconsin. It's an awful long ways. Why, it'll take more than forty hours to get to where I am going!"

"To Wisconsin!" he repeated joyfully. "That's where I'm going! You see, I'm a—commercial man. I make these trips occasionally, and they are so long and so dull!"

"You going to Wisconsin?" she asked. "How fast this train runs! Oh! Did you see that cunning little house? I don't like riding so fast. You can't see hardly anything—just glimpses."

"Well, after you've been over a line a few times it becomes an old story. Then the train doesn't go half fast enough. You'd be glad to fly."

"I suppose so; and business demands so much speed, too. A friend of mine sells threshing-machines, and he says even the farmers want to do things faster now."

"I suppose so; even in my line they are speeding things up more and more."

"A watchmaker?" Janie asked, glancing at the paper which the young man carried in his hand.

"Oh, no," he answered quickly; "not watches. Er—ornamental work, you might say."

"Oh—beads and so on. Anyhow it's nice clean work."

The young man started and glared at her doubtfully. Janie changed the subject.

"They have real good cows out this way, don't they?"

"Yes—er—I suppose so. You live on a farm, do you?"

"No."

Janie shook her head.

"Not lately," she qualified. "I live in the woods some. I wonder if the

hunting is any good on those hills? Looks as though there might be some birds in those woods. Probably nothing but suckers live in that creek. What is it—that stream?"

"The Mohawk, I think."

"Oh-h!"

"That's the Erie Canal over there; the new Barge Canal is being dug through here. That's what makes the water so yellow—dredging, you know."

"It's a real good thing, isn't it?"

"Spoil all the mussel-beds; that's bad. Out in Indiana they dug drainage-ditches which ruined more pearl-shells than the land the ditching redeemed was worth."

"Mussel-beds?" Janie repeated doubtfully.

"Yes; that's where they find the raw material for pearl buttons, you know. The mussels grow in the streams, and then fishermen catch them—"

"They're a kind of fish then?"

"Oh, shellfish—like oysters or clams. They tong them, and in shallow water they fork them out. It's getting to be a great industry, gathering shells for the buttonmakers."

"I wonder if that isn't what they meant? They wrote to me that my cousin was shelling or pearling, or something like that. He found a shell worth a hundred dollars."

"That must have been a pearl to be worth that much. It might have been a shell with a pearl-lump in it, though."

"Perhaps. That's a nice chicken house, wasn't it?"

"Eh—chickens? I didn't notice."

"Yes; a fine flock of Rhode Island Reds. They're good layers."

"I suppose so. This cousin of yours; where does he fish?"

"I just don't know; he went to Ohio, or Indiana, they wrote. The Wabash River, I think."

"They've found lots of fine pearls in the Wabash, and sold a good many tons of button-shells there, too."

"Pearls? They find pearls? A lady friend of mine had some real nice pearls. They were made in France—"

"Artificial pearls," the youngman explained with just a shade of distaste for artificial pearls. "Real pearls are very valuable. Some of them are worth thousands of dollars."

"I saw a real pearl, I think, one time. It was dreadfully little. It was set in a ring with a real diamond, too."

"This is a genuine pearl," the young man remarked, deftly removing his stick-pin. "It weighs just a trifle over eleven grains. It's a White River pearl."

"It is very pretty," Janie said, turning it over and looking at it from all sides. "That's a real pearl? I remember when I was a little girl we used to go down to the brook and find little pebbles in bokies, like clams, only almost black outside. Inside they were green. We played marbles with the round ones—"

"Where—where was that?" the young man breathed, his voice catching.

"Why—I was so young! My people moved around a good deal. I don't just—Oh-h! Did you see that herd of Jerseys? Why, they must have been blooded cattle!"

"Yes—yes; very fine. But can't you remember where it was—those green—er—pebbles, marbles?"

"That I used to play with? I was such a little girl!"

Janie shook her head.

"But perhaps I'll remember," she continued hopefully. "You see, my people were cheesemakers, and they moved around so much. Isn't that a nice garden!"

"I—I wish you could think where that stream was," he said thoughtfully. "Was it a large one?"

"No, not very; it was just a little brook. We made bridges across it, and fell into it. But there were lots of bokies in it. That's what we called them—bokies."

"Bokies? That's a new one to me."

"Yes; green bokies. There were pink and white bokies, too, but not very many of them. I remember one of the

boys was angry, and took all the biggest ones and hammered them on a stone, and broke them all up."

"Ah—oh!" the young man gasped in real agony.

"Boys are mean, now aren't they?"

Janie asked archly.

"The brats! They were large, those marbles?"

"Oh, about so large as I remember them."

"They were worth thousands—tens of thousands of dollars!"

"What! Green bokies—valuable?"

Janie demanded, sitting up.

"Yes; green pearls are worth four times as much as this kind. No other pearls are worth so much. Why, I'm going half way across the continent just on the chance of seeing, let alone buying, a great green pearl that a fisherman is reported to have found. If you could only think of where that little brook is—"

"Yes; if I only could! But probably it's all dried up by this time. You know when they cut away the woods streams dry up. They were making deadenings around there then, I remember, killing off the trees so they could pasture and farm it.

"Funny I can't remember where that was. I can see the country so plain! But I was young—just a little girl, four or five years of age."

"Dried up!" he repeated as if a great calamity had been suggested to him. "I suppose so. You know, they find pearls in Indian mounds, bushels of shapes and baroques, but all calcined, the lime softened, the horn decayed."

"Shapes and bar—which?"

"Shapes—that means pearls of perfect shape. This is a ball pearl. There are biscuit, pear, egg, button—a number of perfect shapes.

"Then there are baroques—fishermen call them 'slugs'—which are irregular. There are a great many baroque-shapes; some are quite common, as dog-teeth, wings, heart, saucer, and irregular biscuit, pear, egg, button. These have greater or less value, ac-

cording to their orient and beauty and size."

"I should think so," Janie nodded with wise ignorance.

"They are used more and more in ornamental-jewel manufacturing. Lately they have begun to make little pearl grotesques. They take a great number of these pearl baroques and make them into statuettes. A pearl that vividly suggests a face is one of the most valuable of baroque-shapes. Arms, legs, feet, hands, all have value too. The sorting-out of pearls is an art in itself, as is the use of the natural shapes in manufacturing and construction."

"No doubt," Janie commented. "And they find all those things in—in bokies?"

"In bokies," he smiled in superior kindness. "They grow—"

"Pearls grow!"

"Certainly. Pearls are formed of a network in layers of horny matter and lime. The lime comes from the inside of the shell. So does the horny matter. The outside of the shell and the hinges are composed wholly of horny matter. Sometimes a pearl is formed so close to the edge, or lip, of a shell that it is covered or composed entirely of the horny matter—"

"Like cowhorns?"

"Very like, indeed—composed entirely of the horny matter from the outside of the shell. Such a pearl is black or red or brown or white and slightly transparent. You have seen those old horn-books they used to have? Thin, transparent horn was put over the sheet on which words were printed for spelling lessons?"

"Oh, yes; my grandmother had some of them."

"Well, the horn-pearls are like that—thin layers of horn. Fishermen used to find and bring them in as pearls, but pearl-buyers thought they were water-worn pebbles or quartz or glass bottles which had been broken in the streams. We thought they lied when they said they found them in the shell.

"But in late years we have learned the truth the fishermen were telling. I have found them myself; but even so, not many people know this outside of the trade."

"It is very interesting, I am sure. I suppose green pearls are just like cow-horns, then—only—"

"Oh, no! There is something in the water, some chemical, mineral substance that makes the nacre green; the pearls of great price are composed of both lime and horn," he made haste to say, glad of an interested listener, but slightly exasperated at times by her apparent ignorance.

He enlightened her from an abundant store of pearl lore and pearl facts. He recurred often to the little brook by which the young woman said she had played with green pebbles out of "bokies," and she as frequently pointed out scenes of agricultural interest. She did not fail to note every milk-station, cheese factory, well-kept or large dairy-farm or practical hencoop.

No one ever met a young woman of greater entertaining qualities than Miss Janie Frete. Incidentally she learned in due course that the young man was Frederick Eidemar, that he had an office on Maiden Lane and represented a great jewelry and silverware concern.

"They have commissioned me to purchase a large and unusual pearl," he confided in Janie. "One of their customers is a collector of pearls. He is a man of great wealth; if I were to tell you his name I imagine that even you would recog—"

"Even me?" Janie asked, rolling up her eyes. Then as he choked with confusion she continued with a sort of mothering smile and tone:

"Really, I ought to have told you that I make part of my living writing and I just have to read newspapers and magazines, mostly agricultural periodicals."

"Oh, I beg pardon!" he exclaimed. "I'm ashamed of myself!"

"Oh, you needn't be!" she told him,

"I suppose I'm dreadfully stupid to talk to!"

"Indeed not!" he declared, laughing ruefully. "You are—er—decidedly interesting."

"Thank you very much," she smiled gratefully. "You see, I'm just a country girl."

CHAPTER III.

HOW RUSK FOUND THE GREEN SACHEM.

JOHN RUSK, six feet tall, weight one hundred and fifty pounds, with short, grayish-brown whiskers, lived in a tent or house-boat, or shack, according to his convenience. His small, sky-blue eyes peered from under a mass of tangled eyebrows. His hands were as broad as most men's are long. His hair hung in sunburnt locks over his ears and around his neck. He wore black slicker overalls and a faded blue woolen shirt.

Now he was living in a tent on the mainland five miles below Disbrow, on the bank of the Dinmo River, a winding stream that carried clear, beautiful waters from numerous shallow lakes in the knolly timberland through new and then the aging farming land on down into tributaries of the upper Mississippi.

John Rusk's tent was slightly tinged with gray—a half-season's weather-beating. It stood on a little flat under tall trees. To a practised eye the tent presented several novel features, which only an old-timer in the outdoors could have devised.

In the first place the tent was homemade. The peak and eaves showed this clearly, for the canvas had been sewed along the peak, making a three-inch loop from end to end of the ridge.

Up from this peak reached strong canvas loops at each seam. The ridge pole, a long, slim evergreen sapling, was outside; it was above the tent, which hung down from the ridge-pole on stout trot-line cords.

The canvas had been looped in the

same way at the eaves, and the side-lines reached out from real, overhanging four-inch-wide eaves to the stakes on each side. The ground-cloth was sewed fast to the tent. There was a threshold eight inches high across the doorway. The door consisted of an outside roll of strong, fine-meshed mosquito-netting and an inside roll of heavy canvas. The door could be laced into position. So it was plainly to be seen that the tent was insect and reptile proof.

A galvanized stove-pipe stuck up through a long, wide zinc pipe-hole; an ax-blade was stuck in a tree near a hacked chopping-block; a jointed fly-rod extended along on forked sticks out of possible rain under one of the tent-eaves, and a landing-net leaned against the taut tent-end. A fish-basket swung by its pack-strap from a limb-stub near the net.

There was a stone fireplace in front of the tent and a pile of both green and dry firewood in sapling sticks near by. Under an old piece of tarpaulin beside the tent-door was a pile of dry wood and kindlings—at least a half-cord of stovewood. As this wood had sawed ends it was plain to the mind that the camper had a cross-cut saw in the tent, out of the wet—or at least a buck-saw. A series of "X" buck-ends beside the pile of firewood saplings indicated where the man cut up his wood, in thorough woodsmanlike fashion.

It was a pretty, clean, and thoroughly convenient camp. Less than forty feet distant was a clear-water little brook, in the bottom of which at intervals cold springs boiled up. The pool in which the fisherman dipped his pail was dug out and carefully lined with cobblestones. At the boat-landing was a skiff.

More than a hundred yards downstream was a boxlike, sheet-iron stew-pan on a stone fireplace. Up the bank from the pan was a pile of dark mussel-shells, amounting to ten or twelve tons. The fact that the fisherman had his shelling outfit so far from the tent indi-

cated a sensitive nostril in spite of his occupation. The decay of the mussels plucked from the shells after the stewing is such that many people fail to enjoy to the full the romance of button-shelling and pearling.

But this camp of John Rusk possessed most of the best features of his occupation. Old John himself loomed well against the woods background as he tonged the mussels from their bed in the still-water of the Dinmo River and drew them up, pried them over the banister around his scow-flatboat and opened the long-fingered pincers to let the shells fall upon the heaps at either end of the boat. It was such a clean river-bottom that it was hardly necessary to give the shells more than one swash through the water to carry out the few sand-grains that clung to them.

As he tonged the mussel-bed the fisherman sang in a low voice. Perhaps some people would not have called it singing, especially people who are able to scan and who suffer from overperception of meter. He drawled and intoned and hummed "The Pearler."

"In Arkansas an' Tennessee,
In Texas an' in Iowa,
In Michigan, Kaintuck,
From Saranac to Caddo-a-a
I tong the mussels up.

"In muckets an' in butterflies,
Deer-toes an' spreading wings,
I find the slugs an' button-blanks,
And other worthy things.

"So I drudge an' foot the waters
My fortunes for to seek;
A thousand for the beauties,
An' shells at a hundred a week!

"I go to town in the mornin',
An' I don't come back at night;
I live a life of gaiety,
When I cash my pearls so bright.

"You see me lank and scrawny,
My whiskers full o' tar;
But let me tell yo', honey,
I'm the boy who sells at par!"

Bluejays came along the bank to mock his singing; crows and ravens answered his shouts from afar; squir-

rels walked sidewise on limbs overhanging the water, chattering against the disturbance of atmospheric conditions; but Old John sang on with occasional sidelong glances at the trees and their occupants. Now and then when he heard the distant splash as a black bass leaped to seize an early spring moth or fly he would turn to watch the circling wavelets, smiling.

Thus the sheller and pearler attended to his occupation. He worked with methodical steadiness, for he was getting his living out of it. He could think back to the "finds" that he had made—a "big one" that brought him a thousand dollars at Newport, Arkansas, back in White River excitement days; a "pear" that brought him eight hundred and sixty dollars auctioned off on the banks of the Wabash. He could remember some good jokes, too, as there on the Wabash when a smart commercial traveler pretended to take a great black pearl out of a mussel, and then sold it on the spot for four hundred and fifty dollars, the unfortunate speculating pearl buyer learning in New York that the black pearl was worth two hundred and fifty dollars and had been taken in fact from a salt-water clam down in Fulton Market.

Singing, thinking, working, the old pearler wasted neither his strength nor his mind. Over and over again he repeated the stories that he had heard. He even sang some of the stories to blank verse, as, for instance:

"Oh, I found a great big peeler
In the Wabash by the bridge.
And sold it to a buyer
For a thousand on the spot.

"He liked the shape so pretty
That he bought it on spec.;
But though he peeled it an' peeled it
There wa'n't no shine within."

Old John had just emptied a tongful on the heap in his banister-boat when his eye caught sight of a "cripple" shell of large size. It was a "wash-board," more than three inches long. At the posterior end there was a

drooping grin in the shape of the lip; on the top there was a distinct bulge; in the bottom was another, less distinct little mound. It was gnarled and rough, like many another shell that has lived a hard life, victim of accidents and intruders.

Rusk turned the shell over in his hands, and then tossed it into the pail he used to bail the boat. He turned away from it, to resume the tonging. Afterward when he thought of what he had done after holding that shell in his hands his breath came in short gasps.

Now calmly, with certain regulated motions, he worked on to gather his day's stent of shells. When he had finished his thousand-pound heap he hauled in his down-stream anchor-rock, then drew in his up-stream one. As the boat was losing headway from the up-stream kedging, he took up a long pole with which he kept the boat driving up-stream. At last he turned in to the stew-pan and the shell-heap.

There he forked about two hundred pounds of the shells into the pan, filled it with water, built a fire under it, and sat down to open the misshapen shell he had put aside in the bailing-pail.

He slipped a thin, flexible knife-blade into the shell beside the hinge and cut through the tough muscle there; then he cut through the mate of that muscle on the other side, and the shell fell open upon his palm. There in the lips of the shell, resting in one of the two cavities that matched, was a round ball like a large musket-bullet.

It reflected the sunlight, the flickering of the just-spreading leaves, the shadows and the substance of the tree-trunks round about.

Rusk sat, his lower jaw falling till there were no corners to his mouth. He stared, paralyzed by what he saw—a green pearl larger than any other gem he had ever seen! Even in his dreams he had never seen a phantom of the color and beauty of this one.

Small white clouds passed one after another across the face of the sun, and

in the depths of the pearl the lights changed accordingly. There was a moment of pale, Cumberland river green; there was a green like that of evergreen trees; there was a pale spring green; there was a bronze-purple and a lake-green.

Rusk stared at it unwinking, hardly breathing.

"I wa'n't lookin' fo' hit!" he whispered at last. "I wa'n't lookin' fo' no such pearl as that! Ho, law! An' hit's green! Sho!"

The fire blazed up under his stew-pan and the water began to steam. The shells opened; the water began to boil; the shells sizzled and the water slopped around; the fire died away and became a bed of coals. When at last he stirred up from his stunned reverie John's hand could bear the heat of the cooled water.

"Sho!" he muttered. "I done b'iled an' ruinated them shells!"

CHAPTER IV.

MASKED VISITORS.

RUSK'S strength seemed to have deserted him. It was with much difficulty that he rose to his feet and stumbled along up the bank to his tent, carrying the shell and its loose, wobbling pearl in his trembling hands. He sat down on the chopping-block before the tent and stared at the pearl.

He knew that it was valuable. He had seen pearls, tiny compared to this one, sold for hundreds upon hundreds of dollars. He had seen a pearl no larger than "one side" of this pearl sell for three thousand dollars. He himself had sold a pearl for a thousand dollars—just an ordinary large White River pink. A green pearl of the same size would sell for three or four thousand dollars.

Here was a pearl times and times as large! He could feel its weight on the palm of his rough, calloused, water-rived hand. A pearl that he couldn't feel on that palm might be worth five

hundred dollars. A pearl that would roll along one of the creases in his palm—along his life-line as in a groove—a pearl no larger than a BB shot or a swan-shot, would be worth a hundred, or even two or three hundred dollars.

This pearl seemed to fill his palm. It was a fistful when he closed his hand upon it. A baby's fingers could hardly reach around it. Turning it over and over on his palm, he could not find a sign of a fleck, flaw, dullness, opaqueness, crease, or even false color.

"She's perfect!" he whispered. "Ho, law! They neveh was no such pearl in the world 'fore this! Sho! Sho!"

Rusk would have liked to go up to Disbrow to have the pearl weighed at Yoker's jewelry-store. He thought of rowing up to town that afternoon. He even attempted to go to the skiff, but he was obliged to sit down. He felt dizzy; he had a kind of a bad spell; he had lost his strength; his head pounded and thumped.

"Peah's like I'm took bad," he whispered. "I ain't feelin' very well. Lawse! I ain' no mo' strength than a deer hard hit. I don' know what ails me. 'Peah's like I cayn't hardly breathe no mo'."

"Sho! Ain' hit the bigges' pearl eveh growed green? 'Peah's like I cayn't swallow no more. An' I got a sweat; I'm sweatin' an' sweatin'!"

Beads of perspiration rolled down his face and sparkled in his beard. It got into his eyes and smarted a little. He thought it must be malaria or watery rheumatiz or wet fever or some of those things.

He was so faint that he crawled into his tent and lay upon his back on the folding cot, with his hands clutching the gem in its crippled casket. He managed to pull out all the meat, leaving the bare shell with its priceless, perfect child—a pearl so large that one could not dream about it and claim sanity and knowledge of pearls.

For twenty years John Rusk had lived upon imagination. He had gone

pearling on the Cumberland in the days before there was a market for button-shells, when men had to live on their finds or work to save up money to live on while they hunted fortune.

He had hunted pearls up the Missouri to where there are no pearls of price. He had prospected down the Holston, where the pearls are small and poor in color. He had gone over the divide into the Great Lakes watershed, though he knew that for some reason or other the mussels on that side did not yield pearls of price, except away down east, where in the Saranac is a pearl fishery which has never known an excitement. He had found pearls of price in Caddo Lake, and had sold hundreds of tons of button-shells, and many pearls and baroques found in eastern Arkansas rivers and bayous.

He knew privation, hunger, cold, all weathers, sickness, malaria, cottonmouths and blue racers and rattlers, black flies, mosquitoes, punkies, gallinippers. He had fished for mussels through ice on the upper Mississippi, and had dragged crow-foot hooks along bayous during the overflow of the lower Mississippi.

Restless, homeless, friendless, tireless, he pursued the phantom of his dreams, not even knowing that he was a dreamer, not even realizing that to his soul Nature had called, and that he had answered the summons of imagination, to seek pearls and pursue them.

For years and years he had been climbing a mountain of hope and crossing the mesas of dreamland. All those years in his mind's eye he had been looking past all troubles, past all difficulties, to the concentrated essence of fulfillment and satisfaction.

He did not know even now that he had passed the last, utmost barrier and that the prize of his earning had fallen into his hands. All he knew was that he couldn't breathe very well; that the strength of the morning seemed to have passed out of him and that he wasn't feeling very good.

"Sho! Hit's an awful 'size, that there pearl! My lan'! But I ain't feelin' very well to-day. 'Peah's like I'm took bad!"

So he lay there in weariness, his mind reverting occasionally to the button-shells which he had allowed to boil, and thus ruined by crackling and crumbling. He told himself that he ought to be down shucking those other clams. He reckoned the spoiled shells at thirty dollars a ton—say three dollars. He had known poverty and penilessness so often between his days of prosperity that, with the unimaginable green pearl in his hands, he felt a little gloom of despondency because he had wasted three dollars.

"I could mux 'em up with them other shells," he told himself, tempted.

However, he quickly shook his head.

"But I'm honest; I don't try to sell no all-profits to no man."

"All-profits" is the name given by button-shellers to shells which are too small or valueless to be usable, but which nevertheless are of some weight. They are so called because only the shellers make anything out of them.

Rusk forgot his dinner; he forgot his supper; he forgot his evening smoke; he forgot everything except his weakness and his pearl.

Darkness caught him by surprise. The splash of muskrats coming out of their holes startled him from his recumbent posture. He fumbled around till he found matches. He lighted his lantern and built a fire. The heat felt good. He realized that he was hungry, so he cooked some potatoes and fried a black bass in pork-grease and cornmeal. He brewed a pail of tea.

When he had eaten he felt his strength returning; but now he was cursed with sleeplessness. He had slumbered soundly through thunderstorms and gales, through blizzards and night winds, but now there was such singing in his ears, such thunderings in his head that he could not rest.

Long after midnight he did at last doze off. When he awakened in the

morning his watch said that it was after ten o'clock. He went down to his shell-heap, threw the boiled shells out into the river, then carefully stewed out the other shells, shucked them, and threw them up on to their heap.

He returned to camp, cooked and ate dinner, changed his working-clothes to a store-suit, and rowed up to town in his light skiff. He walked up to Yoker's jewelry-store, and stood by waiting while a man took and paid for a repaired watch, and while a girl bought a seventy-five-cent ring.

"Howdedo, Mr. Rusk!" Yoker smiled. "What can I do for you to-day?"

"I got a pearl I wish you'd weigh fo' me, Mr. Yoker."

"So? Got a good one, eh? . . . For the love of Heaven, man!"

Rusk had rolled the pearl across the glass top of the counter. The jeweler stood staring, paralyzed. At the cry his assistant came running.

Yoker brought out his scales and put the pearl on the balance. He then piled on the tiny brass disk-weights. He kept heaping and heaping them on, till at last the weights began to swing down their side of the balance.

"My Heavens, Jim! Count them! See'f I've got it right! Count them!" the jeweler half-whispered, half-breathed to his assistant.

"One hundred and a half grains, sir," the less comprehending employee responded.

"Yes—yes! That's what I made it!"

"One hundred grains?" the fisherman repeated almost doubtfully.

Then he grinned with satisfaction.

"That's quite a trick, ain't it?" he remarked.

"Yes, sir! It's—it's the largest green pearl ever found! What'll you take for it? I'll give you—I'll give you five thousand—I'll give you fifteen thousand dollars for it!" Yoker pleaded.

"No!"

Rusk shook his head.

"They ain't money enough in this town to pay for that pearl; you know that. I'm agoin' to sell hit to some millionaire er the King of Russia. He buys right smart pearls, they say. Yes, sir, hit's shore quite a trick!"

Then Rusk wrapped up the pearl again in a wad of cotton and put it into a tin box, which he slid down into his trouser-pocket.

"Much obliged, Mr. Yoker!" he called back. "I got some little tricks—slugs an' two biscuits—I'll bring up some day; but I ain't got time now, suh. Good day, suh!"

"Good Lord! He's right!" Yoker repeated over and over again.

He told his next customer about the great pearl. The story was repeated, till before long people were coming to Yoker's to see it. But he told them the truth; Rusk had carried the gem away with him.

Among the rest came the editor of the local newspaper, who was also correspondent of several newspapers in cities far and near. He made twelve dollars on despatches about the pearl. Two of his stories went clear to New York. An error in transmission made it appear that the pearler had refused fifteen hundred dollars instead of fifteen thousand dollars. But the weight went through accurately as one hundred grains.

Rusk bought some bacon, sugar, tobacco, salt pork and other supplies on his way to his skiff. He rowed back down the river to his tent and sought to recover his complete mental equilibrium, now that he realized that he had a hundred grain green pearl.

The offer of fifteen thousand dollars for it was so large that Rusk could not quite comprehend it. Three thousand dollars, five thousand dollars would have been easier to understand; but fifteen thousand dollars was too large to figure out. He had handled a good deal of money in his day—hundreds of dollars at a time. Even so he could not reckon it in terms that he could really measure.

But that did not matter. It was a heap of money. There was no hurry about it. He wasn't a man to go clean off the handle at the first ripple of excitement.

"I'm too old a gull-hawk to lose my head about a pearl!" he said to himself confidently. "All I got to do is keep cool an' get things straightened out the way they ought to be!"

He went on living and thinking in his tent, just as he had always thought and lived. He looked with some wonderment to the weakness which had overcome him on first sight of the pearl. He now attributed it to something he had eaten for breakfast; or may be it was his heart or his liver. He couldn't quite make out. Anyhow, he knew it was something the matter, so he gathered some swamp-herbs and brewed himself a medicine, which he drank copiously.

"That will fix me up good!" he shivered as the bitterness assailed him. "I reckon hit were spring fever ailed me. Yessir, that's what hit was; hit were spring fever! Now, ain't that plumb ridiculous?"

On May 9, two nights later, while sitting in his tent on a camp-chair, smoking by the lantern-light, he heard a hail from without.

"Howdy, boys!" he answered, rising to his feet. "Come right in!"

He pulled the slip-knots of the door-flap, and raised it to let the visitor enter. On the face that appeared were long, crooked whiskers.

The man thrust a revolver against his abdomen.

"Hands up!" the intruder ordered.

Then to his companion:

"Now, get a move on, you!"

CHAPTER V.

"A NICE LITTLE COUNTRY GIRL."

FREDERICK EIDEMAR found Janie Frete immensely amusing and entertaining. She was naive, unsophisticated, and surprising. She

seemed to love cows and chickens, horses and cheese-factories.

As they sat at a table in the dining-car, he observed that she instinctively did the right thing. She was an ornament to the occasion, as well as charming.

"It's so kind of you!" she murmured when he told her to pick what she wished. But again she indicated the habit of economy. She asked only for the things that were priced the least. She would not impose on a stranger, a chance and probably a mere passing acquaintance.

"You write for newspapers?" he asked.

"Yes, to make my living, or most of it. I write just little items, you know—recipes and easy methods and that kind of thing. Some day I hope to be able to write a real story—plot, you know, and atmosphere, and characters. I've just a beautiful character to a story. It's a cow."

"A cow!" he exclaimed, trying not to laugh, and yet to display an appreciative smile.

"Yes, a cow. You know Black Beauty, and Old Dog Tray. Lots of stories have been written about animals, but never about a cow; I mean about a nice, placid, pasture-loving middle-aged Jersey cow, and a great awkward calf—perhaps a bull calf. Anyhow there they are under the great shade elm, with all the rest of the herd around them. Then something happens, you know—some day I'll think of what might happen.

"An editor—a real nice man, too—told me that all I lack is experience. One must know so much to write stories! Everything almost!

"Wouldn't a story with a cow for a heroine be just splendid? It's real novel, too, don't you think?"

"Yes, indeed!" he bubbled.

"If I could only think of something that might happen to a nice motherly cow. You see, you must have incidents in a story."

"I suppose so," he nodded. "I've

often wondered how authors get their ideas for stories."

"It's dreadfully hard work if you haven't any experiences to draw on. You must have lots and lots of interesting experiences, going around the country the way you do. You must see lots of strange things?"

"Oh, yes! It's quite a romantic business, buying pearls is. I bought a pearl at Wittsburg, on the St. Francis River, one time. It was a nice little pink pearl, and I paid three hundred and fifty dollars for it.

"A boy had gone down to the ford that afternoon and as he stood there a man and two youths came driving some cattle up onto Crowley's Ridge to pasture there. One of the cows kicked a big knife-blade shell out of the water as she stumbled along. The boy picked up that shell, opened it with a piece of—ah—corset steel, and there was the pearl, a beautiful egg-shape."

"Oh-h! Old Biddie kicks up the pearl-shell! There's an incident for my cow story!" Janie exclaimed breathlessly. "Do tell me, then what happened?"

"Why, the boy, he just grabbed the pearl and held it above his head and came running up the street, yelling. I offered him three hundred and fifty dollars and he took it. That's all. It was worth much more than three hundred and fifty dollars, I should say, but it was a wet pearl, and wet pearls of good orient sometimes fade or cloud or check—crack, you know—when they dry. I think they do that because the layer of shell is not quite fully grown—"

"And that blessed boy had three hundred and fifty dollars because old Biddie kicked it out the mud!"

"Not mud—sand! Beautiful, clear white sand with some gravel in it!"

"Now I've found an incident for my cow story!" Julie exclaimed, her eyes shining brilliantly. "I'm so grateful to you!"

"And you'll send me the story when it's printed?" he asked.

"Indeed I shall!" she responded heartily, and added:

"But I don't know when it'll be printed; editors are so awfully uncertain, you know."

"They don't print everything then?"

"Oh my, no! Writers would get so rich if they did that there'd be no standing them at all. I wonder if I couldn't have Biddie kick out a bokie and have her find a green pearl. How large do green pearls grow?"

"Well, I—um-m—"

Eidemar looked at Janie questioningly.

"I saw an item in the paper yesterday," he went on, "about a man who had found one that weighed a hundred grains out in Wisconsin."

"That would be kind of expensive, wouldn't it?"

"Expensive? It would be cheap at fifty thousand—a bargain at forty!"

"Gracious! Are they worth as much as that!"

"Oh, yes. Why, if that pearl is perfect—I mean if it has no cloud, spot, wrinkle or any blemish—it is almost priceless. A prince of India might pay several hundred thousand for it. Of course you cannot tell much about what you read in the newspapers. This clipping says Rusk—he's the pearler—refused fifteen hundred for it. No wonder if he knows his business at all! In the field that way a green pearl orient would bring fifteen thousand quicker than fifteen hundred."

"Then my cow heroine could pay off a mortgage and send the hero to college and do lots of things, couldn't she?" Janie asked, her countenance beaming with inspiring delight.

"Oh, yes," Eidemar answered almost shortly. Janie seemed to divine his mind.

"You see," she said, "it wouldn't be just a scrub cow; Biddie would be registered stock, but nobody would really know it, till somebody, hearing about the beautiful green pearl, would recognize in her the long-lost blooded

calf. You see"—Janie started up—"there'd be some mark—some spot—and they'd know! And just plain old Biddie would prove to be a real prize. Why, I'm finding my plot! Isn't that beautiful?"

"Oh, yes—yes," her companion nodded.

"They might hang the green pearl on a long, fine gold chain around her neck, at the State fair, and everybody—"

"Hang a hundred-grain green pearl on a cow's neck?" Eidemar snorted, staring at Janie.

Her viewpoint stirred the emotions of a man who catered to the throats of the most beautiful in the land.

"Well," Janie changed thoughtfully, munching her bread, "perhaps the poor farmer's daughter might wear the pearl."

"She'd better sell it and buy a farm," he suggested.

"Then you don't think country girls ought to wear real pearls?" Janie asked, looking at him in a way that made him shiver.

"Oh, no! I didn't mean that—not at all! You see—you see what I mean; pearls denote a certain culture, require a certain setting—"

"And country girls have neither the wit, beauty, charm, bearing to wear pearls—especially green ones!" Janie sighed as if her greatest ambition had been thwarted.

"Oh, I didn't mean you!" he floundered around. Janie laughed lightly and glanced up at him with her eyes all atwinkle.

"You—you—" he choked.

Then he laughed as he asked:

"What are you—who, I mean—really?"

"Sir?"

"Oh, I beg pardon. Of course I believe you. Only you—sometimes—"

"Look—quick!" she told him, indicating a wide marshland on the south. "Isn't that splendid! Just think what onions they would raise there if they drained it and properly cultivated it!"

"I wish I could have such enthusiasm for agriculture," he grumbled.

"There's rye! I believe that man expects to plow it under for fertilizer and that he'll plant late corn for his silo, don't you?"

"Why, yes. I don't know, though. . . . They find some mussels in all these streams. We had a good pearl from the Erie Canal once."

"Is that so? When you hear of a large pearl you go and buy it?"

"Sometimes; of course it's better to have the customer come to you. If a pearler knew you were going half-way across the continent just for a chance to buy his pearl he would expect a price out of all reason. Newspaper stories, exaggerating the value of pearls and not describing the really valuable pearls as they are—what makes them valuable—make some of the pearlers think that a rough slug ought to bring thousands.

"We had a nice lilac baroque come in only day before yesterday. It was really worth about ninety dollars, but the pearler asked five hundred dollars. Of course we mailed it back to him. It was not worth while to try and argue the matter with him. Some day he will sell it for a hundred dollars."

"What would anybody do with a hundred-grain green pearl?" Janie asked.

"Well, it would be bored and hung as a pendant in a string of pearls, for one thing. An India prince very likely would mount it in a head-piece like a bangle or even in a turban-crown. There are collectors who would place it in a cabinet with other pearls. A gem like that would certainly create a great deal of excitement in the pearl-trade circles."

"Lots of people will try to get it, don't you think—if there is such a pearl?"

"Lots of them," Eidemar assented thoughtfully. "I will have lots of competitors. If I was an old fisherman I wouldn't like to have that pearl in my pocket over many nights. Why, there

are gangs, mostly river rats, that make a specialty of following up pearlers and robbing them either of their pearls or of the money they receive for pearls, which is safer."

"And men who buy them, too?"

"Yes, of course; but pearl-buyers are subject to another kind of attack. People try to work them by various kinds of confidence games. We have to be alert all the while. You never know when some one will spring a new one, and most assuredly you don't want to be the first one to fall for it. Some of them pretend to be old fishermen, and they try to work off medicine pearls—"

"Medicine pearls?"

"Yes—doctored pearls. A pearl subjected to certain kinds of electric-light rays becomes very brilliant, radioactive, and appears far better than after the light has faded."

"Isn't it dreadful how people think up such schemes!"

Janie's face drew down as she thought of the wickedness of the world.

"But it takes a wise one to pull one over on a pearl-buyer of experience these days," he assured her. "You get so you don't trust anybody. Why, there was a man we had known in the trade for years who was doing a nice little business, especially in baroques of quality. One day when his credit had become established he dropped out of sight with a cool hundred thousand. He was just a plain rascal, who had planned and worked for more than five years with never an honest thought, and always looking ahead to the day when he would make his getaway. But he got his. A girl took him in good and proper."

"A girl?"

"Yes. Firman on Maiden Lane was one of his victims. Firman baited a hook and—well, swindling pearl-buyers and jewelers isn't as popular as it used to be."

"Who was she?" Janie asked.

"I don't know. No one knows apparently. If you could get acquainted with her she would give you stories and

plots enough out of her own experience to fill more than one book."

"I wish I could write them." Janie shook her head.

Eidemar was sorry when the hour grew late and Janie retired to her compartment, which indicated to his mind that she was a girl of ready money even if she did talk about writing cow stories. He was sorrier still when their ways parted at Madison, Wisconsin. Still he had her address—Two Canoe Island, Cape Vincent, New York.

"She's a bright girl, all right!" he remarked to himself. "All she needs is just a little more polish and—um-m—she'd pass anywhere, even in a crowd!"

He went up the Northern Line and crossed on the branch to Disbrow. On this branch line he met two other pearl-buyers. They greeted one another cordially.

"It's sure a big green one—it's the Green Sachem we've been waiting for!" one said. "It'll be the grandest old auction that was ever seen in Mussel-Shell Island. Whoo-e-e!"

"He refused fifteen thou. for it—John Rusk? Any of you know him?"

"I do," the Philadelphia specialist nodded. "He's a Kentucky hill-billy who took to pearling on the Cumberland. He's been in all the excitements for twenty years or so. Had some luck too. He brought in a hatful of baroques at Newport in 1902. I bought eleven ounces from him, and some nice rosebuds. He sold a good one to Firman about the same time, I think—Firman come out, has he?"

"Haven't seen him yet, but he'll be there; you can bet he will!"

The three hurried to Yoker's jewelry-store. They found the street in front of it as well as the store itself crowded with people.

"It's stole!" Eidemar heard a man exclaim. "What a haul! A hundred-grain green pearl stolen!"

"The Green Sachem stolen!" Eidemar gasped.

He stood as the others stood, aghast

at the calamity that had fallen upon the pearl-trade. After that first outcry the men—buyers from all the centers—stood and talked in whispers, so that it sounded like some good man's funeral.

CHAPTER VI.

RUSK'S STORY.

AS soon as she had bidden Mr. Eidemar good-by Janie went to the Yellow Pine Hotel, where she immediately called up Yoker's, at Disbrow, on the telephone. When the connection was made she said to Yoker, who responded:

"Will you please tell me where a pearler named Rusk is?"

"After the big pearl, eh?"

"What pearl? He is a relative of mine. His sister married and so I am coming to visit him and do you know where he is?"

"Well, he's down the river about five miles from here—or was. But he was robbed last night of a big pearl—"

"Robbed! Robbed of a big pearl? I—what happened? Did they hurt him?"

"No, he's all right, but most crazy. He had a big green pearl, and a fellow held him up and stole it."

"Stole the big green pearl? Who was it?"

"Don't anybody know. Fellow with a long yellow beard an'—"

"Poor Uncle John! I must get to him right away then; mustn't I? Well, I'll come right—"

"You won't find him here any more, I expect, lady. He took down his tent and has gone on down the river. He's all broke up! He said he'd pike right on through to the Mississippi now, and leave this country."

"Thank you; good-by!" Janie cut him short.

Even over the telephone men liked to talk with a person whose voice sounded like hers.

"Gone on down the river? That means—let me see," Janie meditated.

Taking from her coat a map of Wisconsin, she traced the Dinmo River down from its source to Disbrow and from Disbrow to the Wisconsin. There at the mouth a railroad crossed.

In half an hour Janie was on her way to the mouth of the Dinmo. As she sat in the rattling, banging side-line passenger-train she wondered to herself why she was on the way to the mouth of the Dinmo to talk to the old pearler who no longer had the great green pearl which had brought Eidemar and no doubt a score or more of others beside herself to the scene.

"But I've a hunch!" she repeated to herself. "I've a hunch! It'll be time enough to go to Disbrow after I've seen him—if I catch him!"

She was all anxiety to arrive at the Dinmo River. John Rusk would not arrive there that day, even though he pulled hard down-stream from morning to night. It was too far for a day's run. But if he kept pounding down he would certainly arrive the following day. He might row all night as well as all day, in which case he would make about seventy miles by morning, and run into the Wisconsin by nine o'clock or thereabouts.

"If he doesn't come down I'll go up and meet him," Janie determined.

She arrived at Dinmo Crossing at 6.10 o'clock. There was a little rough-hewn hotel, with loafers sitting along the front porch, and on the right a livery-barn in which stood trampling horses. The sand was deep up the main street; there was a wormy look to the trees.

But for Janie Frete it was a delightful-appearing place. It was a regular vacation kind of a town for her. The loafing men were lumberjacks who had brought down some timber; the street was a kind of backwoods sporting place, as a little store window full of fish-rods, landing-nets, trolling-spoons, fish-lines, artificial flies and an assortment of well greased firearms indicated. Civilization had starched only the collar of the postmaster's son, who

smirked from the top step as Janie passed, heading for the hotel.

The supper bell rang for the train. At that sound the loggers ceased to loaf. They started up with a bang as one man. One of them paused to nod to the young woman, taking the suitcase from her hand.

"That's some pack to tote," he remarked. "You should of come up in the bus, lady."

"I'd rather hoof it," Janie answered. "I was afraid they'd charge me double for killin' the hoss!"

"Whoe-e-e!" the logger called softly. "Gee! I knowed you was all right. Whatche doin'?"

"I gotta man comin' down the Dinmo, an' I sure want him—bad! If he gets by me I don't know what I will do!"

"We won't let him get by. What is he?"

"Pearler—relative of mine. He's a button-sheller; good feller, but he left Disbrow this mornin' an' I'm headin' of him."

"It's a good bunch here; my name's Bradigan—Blue Brads they calls me. Missus Joupay keeps this place. There's a pan in there to wash up, an' come right in. Supper's ready."

"I heard the bell—and I could eat cattails, I'm that starved," Janie responded.

As she entered the dining-room the young logger half-rose and pointed across to a table that had a whitish cloth; but she shook her head and sat down at the head of the loggers' table, which was covered with oil-cloth, coffee-cups and messes of things to eat.

"I'm some careless with the sloppings," she remarked.

Then as the tall, freckled-faced waitress appeared with coffee, plate and tableware, Janie began to help herself from the heaps of meat, potatoes, bread, pickles and other things that the loggers had moved up her way.

Janie ate with the daintiest of precision, however. Every motion was a poetic curve. At first thought the log-

gers were embarrassed, but Janie soon put them at their ease. She began by turning to them as she ate with heartiness and saying:

"That train was a bone-shaker; it was like riding a tote-wagon on the corduroy. I'd rather walk, but I had lots of time, so I rode. Any of you boys know Pete the Gooser?"

"Know him?" several exclaimed. "Know him! He a friend of yours?"

"Well, I'm a friend of his'n. He was contractin' in Michigan, but he come up here—"

"Two years ago; that's right," a big logger nodded. "I come up with his crew. He's goin' to farm it now, that's what he said."

"When I saw him he was goin' tow-boatin' around the Soo," Janie said. "He couldn't be snaked out the woods with log chains!"

"That's right; he's took a pine-job up north this year."

The loggers were at ease, as, of course, Janie was also. She asked about the Dinmo River, and was told that it was a slow creek through a lot of flat country, winding around a good deal, but having only a few shoals and long stillwaters between.

"It's nearly all cut-over country," one said. "Some farms and little villages. Disbrow's the largest town. Good bass-fishing in the stillwaters and upper lakes."

"How long will it take a man to come down from Disbrow poling a boat?"

"Why, three or four days; if he came right along, a night and a day."

Supper over, Janie went to the room given her by Mrs. Joupay, but did not stay there long. She came down first to the empty sitting-room, and then went out on the front veranda, where the loggers were lined up, chatting.

Upon her appearance Blue Brads immediately sprang to his feet. As she started down the three steps he tipped his hat, saying:

"I'll show you the way up to the creek."

"Thank you, I wish you would," she accepted.

They strolled along the street toward the bridge, a hundred yards distant. At the bridge were two loggers, sitting on the railing.

"Ain't nobody come by yet," one of these told Janie.

"You watching for him? Thank you ever so much, boys!"

The four stood there looking up the clearwater stream. They could see a quarter of a mile to the bend. Beyond that was lowland, with river-bank trees marking the stream's course toward the east and southeast.

"It's good fishing up that way," Blue Brads remarked. "They got some big ones. There is a feller up there gettin' out clamshells, too." I see by the paper he had a lot of them, worth thirty a ton. He's just up the bend there, about two mile. There's some up above him, too. One of them's the feller you're lookin' for?"

"Yes, he's a button-sheller."

"I thought you said so. If he don't come down you can run up an' find him if he ain't left the creek."

"He left word he was comin' right down."

"Then he'll come here, all right."

Sunset was at hand when a skiff rounded the bend up above. It was rowed with long, strong strokes. There were two men in it. As they came nearer Janie saw that they had two suit-cases with them. The men landed a hundred yards up-stream, where several boats moored to a float indicated a boat-delivery.

"Them the fellers?" Blue Brads asked.

"Why, they're very young! I—"

She walked away and Blue Brads followed her. When out of hearing of the others she continued to him.

"Find out who those men are, will you, Mr. Bradigan? They row like rivermen; but don't let them know you are interested in them, though. Is there a train out of town to-night?"

"No; you came in on the last one.

It comes down in the morning at 8.05. This is a jerkwater branch, you know." "Then they'll stay here to-night, probably."

"They'll have to. I won't ast no questions, but if they talk, I'll get it," he assured her, and turned up the side street toward the livery.

Janie returned to the bridge, where she explained to the two:

"Blue Brads's gone up to find out for me. It's been a long time since I saw my uncle. It was before auntie died—"

"You sure don't want to take no chances with them river rats," one of the two approved. "Brads's got a smooth tongue, an' I sure expect he'll find out for ye. Good feller, Brads."

"He is real nice," Janie nodded. "Good natured, too."

"When he ain' lookin' for a fight, he is," one continued. "Brads is a good man with his dew-claws; ain't he, Jink?"

"Ain't nobody 'round here puts 'em up to him!"

"It's a land of good men, too!" Janie remarked.

"You bet!" the others agreed.

As it was coming on dark, the three sauntered back toward the hotel. No one would be likely to go on down in the night, especially after an all-day pull on the river.

Bradigan overtook them before they reached the hotel.

"They're apple-tree agents; b'en up in the cut-over country workin' the farmers for orders for trees," Bradigan told Janie in a low voice. "Guess they kinda want to get out the country. Fly-by-nighters—you know them kind. But see for yourself!"

The two men were of a height. They carried small suit-cases, one of cane the other of leather. Their slouch hats came low over their foreheads. Their chins and jaws were hard and bony, with two or three days' growth of thin, scattering whiskers. One walked with a firm, determined step; the other shuffled along, giving the impression of dragging behind.

In the twilight gloom they passed Janie and turned into the hotel. They asked the bartender if they could get something to eat, and he answered he would see the missus. The two stood by the clerk's desk, waiting for word. Mrs. Joupay soon appeared. Hearing the demand for something to eat, she said she would have something set up for them.

"They're no friends of mine."

Janie shook her head.

"If they was," she added, "I'd sure move into some place where I didn't have no friends."

"That's right!" Brads assented.

"They're sports—town sports; that's what they be!"

"That upstander pulled a good oar, though," Janie suggested.

"He sure did that; he acted disappointed about the train."

Janie sat down on the steps. Blue Brads also took a seat and leaned against a post. The kerosene reflector-light cast a rather tawny, flickering glow over the scene.

In a few minutes Janie went inside. She entered the dining-room where the two men were eating.

"You didn't happen to see an old man coming down the river, did you?" she asked.

"Old man? No."

"Probably he hadn't started yet, then. I'm expecting him."

Janie shook her head.

"He ought to be here to-night."

"They wa'n't nobody passed us, an' we passed nobody coming down," the spokesman repeated.

"Well, he will come down," Janie remarked.

"He's a pearler—an old man!" she observed as she turned away.

"Eh? Pearler? What?"

Both started and looked at her. One gazed at the other and hissed. The other began to drink his coffee. Janie stood as if uncertainly and then left the dining-room.

She went out on the porch again. Bradigan was waiting for her.

"There's a lady sells ice cream up the street toward the depot," he suggested.

"Good!" she rewarded him. "Let's go have some!"

The two walked up the street together. They had plates of yellow, home-made ice cream with sponge cake—also home made. It tasted delicious to Janie. Bradigan was proud, too. While they were sitting there a two-seater rattled along the gloomy main street, as Janie remembered a little later when they returned to the hotel.

"Them two fellers pulled out," some one said to Bradigan.

"Gone!" Janie repeated.

"Yep; piked out—broke away!"

"They said they expected to stay all night."

"They did; but Mrs. Joupay told 'em they'd have to go bunkies, so they hired a rig an' went down to Dallia, on the other road, to Portage."

It was nearly noon on the following day when a boy came running to Janie with the information that a shelling-outfit was coming down the river. Janie hurried to the bridge, and sure enough there was John Rusk. Rusk answered her hail doubtfully, but came ashore upon her demand.

"I wanted to make sure I found you," she told him. "Won't you tell me all about the hold-up? That pearl will surely show up some day, and if you will tell me about it perhaps I can help you trace it."

"Who are you?" the pearler demanded.

"You know Firman, the Maiden Lane pearl-buyer?"

"I've hearn tell of him; yes."

"Well, I represent him. My name is Frete."

"Frete? Say! I bet I heard a feller tell that knowed yer. Hit were down on St. Francis. You—"

Janie laughed.

"You mean Doldrum?"

"That's the cuss!"

"Well, he deserved it! Now won't—"

"You bet he did!"

"What happened? Sit down and tell

me about that big green pearl; won't you?"

The shadow of fortune lost crossed the man's countenance. He stared up the river a minute, and then looked at her.

"They ain' much to it. They jes' come into the tent. They hailed, an' I neveh suspected nothin'. They come in with guns, an' they held me up. They wa'n't nothin' I could do. One leveled his gun at me, an' t'totheh went a searchin'. I had the big green un into a tin box—"

"What kind of a tin box?"

"Hit were a Bucko Salve box. You know Bucko Salve, don't yah?"

"A green-and-yellow-striped box?"

"That's the kind. They was jes' a little of the salve around the bottom on hit, but I put in a wad of cedar-shred-din's an' nested hit, an' then I put in the pearl, an' put anotheh wad on top. She was jes' a nice fit. Lawse! Lawse! An' them fellers found hit first whack. Hit were into my chest, theh. Theh neveh touched the slugs er the otheh box I had pearls in—"

"Other pearls?"

"Some little fellers—one about five grains. I hadn't got to sell them."

"Green?"

"Green."

"Want to sell them now?"

"No; hit'd mean bad luck not to have a nest-egg, yo' know."

"That's so; a man does need a nest-egg, pearling. It helps bring other pearls along," Janie nodded. "What kind of fellows were they—I mean the hold-ups?"

"Fellers about of a size. One had a long, yellor beard; t'other had sunthin' tied around his face under his eyes."

"Two men? Had you seen any strangers around?"

"Not to notice. Theh'd be'n some down from Disbrow to see the pearl next day afteh I was up theh. But I knowed 'em—seen 'em aroun' town."

"Where do you get your mail?"

"Cairo Wharf Boat Number Four. The clerk theh sends hit on to me

same's to all the river people about wunst a month, when I write fo' hit—hit's gone; they ain' no uset! Them fellers is gone—"

"Two men?" Janie asked again. "No more than two men?"

"Two fellers is all. They was inquiring aroun' back theh, but they wa'n't no hide ner hair left of 'em. They skinned right out. 'Course they watched all around."

"They was some buyers come in from Chicago to get that pearl. They said they'd give fifty thousand fo' hit! Lawse! Fifty thousand dollars! Why—why—hit'd made me rich! I could of had a gasolene bo't long's this bridge, an' two three fellers to run hit if I could of sold hit an' had the money."

"An' they robbed me! I wa'n't neveh robbed befo'. 'F I had 'a' be'n I wouldn't of be'n so plumb keerless."

He choked as he remembered the calamity.

"Yoker offered me fifteen thousand, but I knowed hit was wuth more," he went on. "'Sides, hit were sech a big feller, hit were so tarnation purty a trick, I jes' couldn't let hit go all to wunst, 'fore I'd what yo' mout say seen hit myse'f."

He sat down on the river bank, and buried his face in his hands. Janie sat down beside him. She put her hand across his shoulders. Rusk had kept down his grief a long time, but now he gave way to it. He sobbed and shivered.

Janie said not a word. She stared at the sheller's outfit. Then as the old man quieted a little she asked:

"Did you have many shells?"

"Why, sho! I did now!" he replied. "Yes; I sold 'leven tons."

"Then if I write to you at Cairo Wharf you'll get the letter?"

"I expect," wearily.

"All right, Rusk. Won't you come up to the hotel and have dinner?"

"No; I'll jes' git out of this yeah country! I'm goin' clar to Louisiana bayous!"

"Good-by—good luck!"

"Thank ye kindly. I hearn tell of yo'! See yo' ag'in some time!"

He went into his banister boat, picked up the long pole and headed away down-stream, towing his skiff behind. Janie walked slowly back to the hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

PENGUINE MURRE.

PENGUINE MURRE loved pearls. They were his one love; to it all other human passions gave complete sway, except a streak of economy.

Penguin lived in a squat, square little building on the Heights, in Harlem. Daily he made his way down Manhattan Island on the Subway to Liberty Street, where he was not known by any one to have any love for anything.

He had a suite of several offices, in which were clerks, stenographers, and a pert office boy-secretary. He transacted business over the telephone directly or through his manager or other member of his office force.

Murre dealt in spices, the stranger the better. He bought and sold herbs and roots, barks and leaves, stalks and flowers—the withered products of all continents, gathered by the readers of trappers' and feather-hunters' periodicals.

From him one could purchase the original leaves, whose cocaine principle gave strength to porters and packers in the Peruvian Andes; he offered a ready market for ragwort, horse-nettle, pleurisy root, corn-smut, false hellebore, sheep-sorrel, blacksnake-root, pipsissewa, poke, cramp-root, haw, scouring bush and skunk-cabbage. He touched the realms of almost familiar commerce in ginseng, golden seal and catnip.

But his appearance was that of a plain business man, well-tubbed, clean-shaven, well-dressed. In the multitude he attracted no more attention than if

he loved theaters and dealt in real estate or listed stocks and bonds.

He did wear in his cravat a stick-pin which betrayed his real, true love—a small, bright-gold pearl mounted in a platinum triangle. Most people want white or Arabian cream pearls. A select few are familiar with the rare and priceless green pearls.

Murre betrayed his unique taste by wearing an odd pearl. Only a specialist would have recognized Murre's genius in the pearl that shone and looked like new gold.

Murre's dark eyes were small and deep set. His stocky frame was not perfectly in harmony with the hard, thin line of his long jaw. He was one who would not attract particular attention in a crowd of driving, relentless, predetermined business men, but there was something baleful, something distressing, something repelling in his bearing—not so conspicuous, not so clearly observable as to be unique or even unusual among successful money-makers of a certain type, but notable by a close student as an uncomfortable spiritual undertone. The appearance of his house, dark, shadowy, with blinds drawn and an air of dustiness, accentuated what one could not fairly determine in Murre personally.

The great profits from his trade Murre invested in two ways—sure-income bonds and pearls. Perhaps he would have put all his profits into pearls if he could have found enough of the kinds that he desired to take the money.

He collected shapes and baroques, matching few of them. He sought colors especially. So many people seek standardized pearls that other than the common, easily matched colors are low in price by comparison. Thus the white, pink, black, green and lilac pearls are held in great esteem by those who have passed the glittering-bauble stage of diamond and ruby ornamentation, but only a few people have the taste of a Murre, who loved colors in pearls.

The trade knew his hobby and understood his desires. He proved a market for many pearls undesirable in ordinary trade. He would buy a cloudy pearl for instance, or a flecked, wrinkled, pitted, piebald, or similar gem. He would not pay more than the fair price, however, and generally obtained what he wanted at a bargain, since purchasers of odd shapes and colors are not numerous. A dealer would rather sell at a small profit than carry an uncertain quantity over for a long period.

All this was fair and without blame, although it was not exactly open and aboveboard. Murre delighted to work in secret. He never was seen on Maiden Lane for example, but would bargain with pearl-brokers in out of the way places—an eccentricity which was respected in the trade. Some people buy for parade, and have their fancy manufactured pieces displayed for a long time in windows placarded:

\$100,000. FOR MR. R.—.

Also sundry people have their pictures taken with their modest selections from their strong-boxes. Editors of Sunday editions and illustrated sections know how easy it is to obtain such photographs. Sometimes it is harder to keep them out of print than to put them into the new process-engraving sections.

But Murre loved pearls for their own sake. The trade believed that he had at least a million dollars invested in them. His collection was certainly one of the five or six collections of national supremacy. He had pearls which a prince of India might well envy.

All this is necessary to tell because Murre was also connected with the underworld of pearls and pearling. There was no safer fence for stolen pearls outside of India. His passion carried with it an uncanny knowledge of the gems whose charm attracted him. He

watched for example the travels of the famous baroques and shapes. He knew who owned the Simitar, the White Dumbbell, the Eye of Heaven, the Half-Moon, the Red Heart. He watched pearl owners with constant espionage. Through the clipping-bureaus he kept track of all pearl-items and all owners of pearls he thought worth having.

Because there were people who had pearls which he longed to possess, and because it was impossible to purchase these great gems at what he thought a reasonable price, he resorted to other methods. He was crafty in this work too.

For instance, there was a brief item in the newspapers one day back in 1908. The item read:

The police were informed to-day of a theft of \$14,500 worth of jewelry belonging to Mrs. Van de Zea. The gems were stolen by a house-enterer on Thursday evening. The missing property includes a gold watch, a brooch, several rings, and a beautiful pearl string and pendant.

The pendant is a wing baroque exactly like the feather of a peacock's tail, and is valued at \$6,000. Pawnshops have been notified, and it is believed the thieves will be unable to dispose of any of the pieces.

A few days later Mrs. Van de Zea offered a reward for the return of her jewels, and they all came back with the exception of the priceless peacock-feather baroque, of which no trace could be found. The gold swivel on the necklace, from which the wing hung, was broken. Murre had made it worth another kind of specialist's time to obtain that peacock-feather baroque.

Murre had learned of a collection of pearls owned by a traction-magnate. This collection was unlisted in Murre's notes, and he found some difficulty in learning about its contents. However, he put an advertisement in a newspaper which read:

PEARLS.—I have a 26-grain, bright-pink, White River dog-tooth pearl. I wish to dispose of it to some one who will appreciate its natural and traditional value.

PRESTO, Box 11.

Murre mailed a marked copy of this newspaper to the rival collector, and within the business day received a telegram to which Murre responded with the pearl as described.

"I don't like to part with it—I'll not sell it unless I know it will be taken care of," he protested. "I couldn't bear thinking of having this mounted in an ugly Jap statue with other slugs."

"Its history?" the other asked.

"Well"—Murre hesitated—"this was found near Muscatine, Iowa. It was stolen from that pearler by a river rat, who carried it to Memphis and sold it to a politician for twenty-five dollars. The politician gave it to the mayor of an Ohio River town as a token of appreciation. The mayor used it as a luck-piece, and sure enough he made a fortune.

"But a servant found it in the library one day on the floor. She threw it into the waste-basket at first, but then decided to keep it as no account. She went on to a river showboat, and now she's making a hatful of money—movies, you know. So I got it—"

"Who told you I wanted historic pearls?" the man demanded.

"Maiden Lane," Murre answered; "so I came to you. Of course—"

"It's straight—but I want those names."

"I got them; you can get it straight too from—um-m—here's the advertisement the mayor put in the paper for it. You see it's a luck-piece."

"All right. Six hundred?"

"No; a thousand; she gave it to me, but I've got to raise a thousand."

"Can't see you at that."

"You never bought as good a piece that cheap!" Murre declared.

"What-t!" the other answered. "Let me show you some things!"

He went to a plain mahogany cabinet and pulled out a drawer. There were a hundred baroques, all flat ones, on black velvet. From among them the man picked up a baroque of nearly the same shape but at least ten grains heavier and of as good a color.

"I paid five hundred dollars for that," the collector said almost scornfully. "I offered six hundred because I know the mayor who lost that luck-piece. I want to give it back to him—for luck!"

"A thousand dollars!"

Murre shook his head.

After a little thought the traction-magnate shrugged his shoulders and then counted down a thousand dollars ready money. He put the pearl in his pocket. . . . It was not among the two thousand specimens which found their way to Murre's house a month or more later—specimens of baroques and pearls, many of them of little intrinsic value but in some way linked with events.

Murre, a thoroughly unscrupulous collector, laughed to himself when he had spread down this great addition to his own assortment.

"I knew he'd fall for that little story," he told himself. "I have a few history pieces myself; but he'd give up a good one just to get snucks with the signer of franchises."

So Murre as soon as most men learned of the great green pearl which John Rusk, the nomad pearler, had found out in the Dinmo River in Wisconsin.

The very thought of a hundred-grain green pearl—the Green Sachem of trade expectation—made him warm behind the ears and dry in his throat. No sooner known than acted upon; Murre went out to a public telephone and over the long distance got in touch with a man in Milwaukee, one Corneil Agate.

"This is Mucket Yell," Murre said. "I wish you would find out about a green head at Disbrow. Do it?"

"Sure thing!" the reply returned.

Thus thirty-six hours later the hundred-grain Green Sachem changed hands by violence.

Murre read in the newspapers that the old fisherman had been robbed of his find. He smiled with satisfaction. He prided himself on getting what he

went after, especially in the line of pearls.

"Forty years from now my executor will discover that I had two collections of pearls," he mused. "One will be pearls that the trade brought to me; the other will be pearls that no one will know how I obtained. . . . And I've sure caught my share of the lost pearls of history!"

Then he laughed.

"I have some dandy souvenirs!" he nodded, chuckling. "There's no close season on pearls! Now I get the Green Sachem! It's worth a hundred thousand!"

CHAPTER VIII.

MURRE IS WORRIED.

PENGUINE MURRE went to his business as usual from day to day. He was seething within, thinking more and more about the great green pearl which was as good as his. He was ready for his hired hold-up, whenever the man should appear at the end of a telephone wire. Murre would go and meet him and pay him, not the full value of the prize, but enough.

"He can't ask more'n twenty-five thousand for it!" Murre told himself. "He hasn't many markets he can sell it at, if he don't bring it to me. Of course that kind aren't particular—but he don't dare peddle it around. Besides I tipped him off!"

Agate ought to have appeared within a week. He did not show up in two weeks. Murre grew more and more uneasy. He was afraid something was wrong. He watched the newspapers anxiously, trying to find out whether one Corneil Agate had been arrested anywhere.

The Disbrow weekly paper printed more than two columns about the green pearl, its discovery and its loss. Murre received the clipping within a week of the publication—ten days after the theft. He read it through with

interest and satisfaction. One paragraph made him fairly exult:

Gathered at Disbrow were some of the foremost pearl-buyers in the world. Representatives of great jewelry-firms were here to bid against one another for the possession of what they all agreed is a pearl superior to anything of its kind ever found.

Disbrow goes on the map now as the producer of a gem that will be remembered as long as pearls are remembered, and Sheriff Grope and his deputies are ransacking the country in an effort to bring the pearl and the desperate miscreants back to Disbrow and to justice.

This is the first time in more than twenty years that the foul crime of hold-up has been committed in this county, and the district attorney is determined that when the scoundrels are captured, they will receive the limit of punishment.

"They'll have a lot of fun catching those boys!" Murre nodded. "They made their getaway, and now they're taking their time about coming this way. Probably they are covering their trail, so they won't get me into any fix."

Murre's satisfaction had two question-marks to disturb it. One was the fact that the authorities out in Wisconsin were so determined to capture and punish the miscreants (he refused to admit to himself that he was one of them). The other question-mark was the troublesome doubt whether the green pearl was being held back.

When three weeks had gone by and there was still no word from Agate Murre began to realize that the thieves were holding out on him. He had always been a hard-fisted, bargain-making fence. He had screwed two or three of the underworld specialists pretty hard, taking advantage of the character of their necessities.

"Agate had some money, or he wouldn't have been loafing around Milwaukee," Murre at last divined. "He had some, and he isn't in any hurry. He knows I want that pearl bad. I'd ought to have waited—but if I had some buyer would have grabbed it up."

What to do the collector could not think. The days dragged along un-

comfortably. He could not rest for thinking of holding that great green pearl in his hands. He read the full account of the affair in one of the jewelry weeklies, which had sent a reporter to the scene to learn all about it.

The fame of the Green Sachem was thus established. It was a prize of vast price; it would sell for full value the day it arrived in the market if the flaw in its title could be wiped out. The trade paper said:

There were several men on the scene, willing and able to pay not less than seventy-five thousand to eighty thousand dollars for this wonder, if the orient is as good as Yoker, the Disbrow jeweler and only expert who had opportunity to examine it, said it is.

Murre cursed the publication of the figures. The two hold-ups would not fail to know them; they were just the kind of men who study values and demand their full meed of cash.

"They could get forty thousand dollars in India—no questions asked," Murre muttered. "Perhaps they've double-crossed me! If they've sold me out—"

Murre tried to think of some revenge he could take. Daily he pondered over the subject. He watched the advertising-columns in three or four papers, thinking that perhaps the green pearl would be brought to his attention in that way. The telephone was the better way and the common one, but only the hold-up held the number. Murre called up Milwaukee from a public phone; but, as he knew, Agate had left some time previously.

Murre's thinking and watchfulness at last brought its reward. In a newspaper he found an item in the Lost and Found department that struck home. It read:

FOUND.—Large, unusual pearl. Owner please identify same and pay for advertisements. Box 456.

"The sons of guns!" Murre growled. "I've got to bid on that pearl I showed them how to get!"

He took a sheet of blank card-index paper and wrote on it:

It's a go. How much for ad? What I want is a hundred gr. green pearl. Ans. Ads.

He mailed the note in a blank envelope in a street-box. Then he resumed watching the advertisements. Two days later there was an answer:

FOUND.—Pearl as identified. Address lost.

Murre addressed the same box and gave his unlisted telephone number and the hour of seven o'clock p. m. At that hour Murre was called to the telephone. Upon answering he heard a woman's voice.

"You have had some correspondence about a pearl?"

"Yes—a big one," he answered.

"Well, of course you must tell me about it. I don't want to take any chances, please."

"Well, I wrote it's a go, didn't I? And the big green one—"

"Exactly. Isn't that enough?" the voice interrupted.

"No. You see how it is; I was asked to step in on this," Murre explained.

"Well, I want you to identify the rest of it. If you're right you know more than you've said. A name perhaps, or any one of several things—understand?"

"Oh, yes, I see. Milwaukee? You mean and the boys?"

"That's better, but I want to know just a little more. You see how it is—"

"Did you ever play marbles?" Murre asked.

"What kind? What is that?"

"Well, I mean with glass agates or any kind of agates."

"What else?" the voice asked.

"You go to blazes!" Murre swore. "You're butting in!"

He hung up and sat wetting his lips with his tongue. Cold shivers chased up and down his spine. Something had gone wrong. There was a terror in his heart that he had never suffered before.

It came back to him that he had played with fire. He had sent men to rob. He was linked up with thieves. If one squealed— He turned and looked to right and left behind him in his own library.

"She almost trapped me!" he whispered. "Who was that? She don't know Agate! She was fishing, and she got a bite. I'd 'a' swallowed the bait in a minute! I—it's that Sheriff—the prosecuting attorney!"

He staggered to his feet and went to the front door to look at the street. A

man was passing by on the opposite side. He turned and looked at Murre's house.

Murre drew back lest he be seen.

Now any man, any woman, might be a detective tracing him. He was stunned by the realization of his jeopardy.

"I'm a fool!" he groaned. "If it had been Agate he'd had my private number. I went and wrote it to that—that woman! Wasn't I a fool! Wasn't I a fool! . . . What next, I wonder? What next?"

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 SEVEN AGES

BY JOE H. RANSON


. . . ALL the world's a game
 'And all the men and women merely players.
 They have their umpires and their managers,
 And one man in his time makes many errors,
 His plays being seven ages. At first the bushier,
 Swaggering and blustering in his backwoods club:
 Then comes the Leaguer with his trophies
 And shining evening nose, lining the bars
 Of cities in his circuit. And then the Big League,
 Smiling on him with a contract goodly,
 Promises new glories overnight. Then the company
 Of heroes of the diamond, Plank and Shang and Johnson,
 Jealous in fielding, sudden and fierce in batting,
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even in the Umpire's mouth. And then the Umpsy,
 Brazen of voice, arbitrary, final,
 With fines severe and rules of formal cut,
 Full of importance, tyrant of the season.
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and unresponsive bench,
 With hands on knees and wistful eye
 Scanning the youthful hopes who take his place:
 His speed is gone and his once mighty arm,
 Turning again to childish weakness, hangs
 A useless thing indeed. Last scene of all
 That ends this strange, eventful history,
 Is waivers and the bushes, mere oblivion,
 Sans hope, sans youth, sans fame, sans everything.

The Crewell Emeralds

by John D. Swain

CHAPTER I.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

 IN some of the reminiscences I have culled from the none-too-fragrant bouquet of my life, I have referred to my unvarying rule to play a lone hand.

The advantages were obvious, the disadvantages equally so. Nine criminals out of ten are finally convicted through the "squealing" of an accomplice. I was at all times secure from betrayal, and my safety thus enhanced ninety per cent., to say nothing of my peace of mind. There were many big deals, however, which I was unable to negotiate alone. I was, in a way, obliged to content myself with smaller pickings. Still, some of these were by no means inconsiderable, and among them must certainly be included the emeralds of the Earl of Crewell.

I was never much of a bookkeeper, and seldom knew my cash balance. Many times the first warning that it is low comes from an increased lavishness in tips. Some subconscious, plodding stratum of my brain keeps track of my finances, and when they touch danger mark I begin to tip exorbitantly in what must be a sort of bravado to keep both courage and reputation up.

The day I gave a guinea to Eric, head waiter of the Clayton, a brooding creature whom I rather disliked, I received a first warning that it would be well to draw off a trial balance.

For obvious reasons I am my own banker. I had no charge accounts, and the one hundred pounds I found in my money belt represented my assets. With regret I realized that my play spell was over, and that I must return for a time to the routine of vulgar trade.

Among the items I had filed away during my leisure was the fact that the Wanderers was the richest club in England. It probably derived its name from the fact that few of its members ever left London. It was an elderly men's club, ultra-conservative. I decided to look it over.

To scrape acquaintance with a Briton of the upper class was the hard task I set myself. I knew by sight one member of the Wanderers, a melancholy old colonel who frequently dined at the Clayton, and occasionally wandered through the billiard-room. I could not even imagine him addressing a stranger. The marker, a cheerful cockney named George, informed me that Colonel Davenant played, at rare intervals, a game of Chinese billiards, and would always stop to watch anyone else play it.

It was evident to me that the melancholy gentleman had a weakness for this little-played variation, and I determined to use his fad as a lever to scrape acquaintance.

Years ago I had learned to play Chinese billiards in a Shanghai dive. I began to practice, and soon recovered the knack of handling two cues at once. I tipped George, and told him that if I were to address him in the presence of the colonel, he was to reply "Yes, sir," and no more. Then I laid in wait for the man whom I had elected as my sponsor to the Wanderers.

On the third night of my vigil he appeared. I signaled George and bade him stand by. In the course of his solitary patrol the colonel reached my table. From the corner of my eye I noted that a gleam of pleased incredulity flashed across his face, and he sank unobtrusively into the lounge by my table, laid aside his stick, polished his monocle, and ordered a brandy and soda.

For quite a while I practiced the most difficult shots I knew, never, of course, glancing at my gallery of one, who smoked peacefully and followed every move with gleaming monocle. Suddenly I threw down the cues, sighed, and turned to the marker.

"George," said I, "it's no use. I guess the present generation doesn't play Chinese billiards. I shall not come to the Clayton again."

"Yes, sir," said George.

I seated myself on the lounge at the far end from the colonel, ordered a drink, and lighted a cigarette.

The agony of spirit endured by Colonel Davenant was perfectly evident to me. He had found me only to lose me. He yearned to grapple me to him with hooks of steel—but "it wasn't done, you know." Of course, I could have spoken to him before sauntering away, but my position would be much stronger were I able to force him to take the initiative. Ultimately, with Heaven knows what inward misgivings, he did.

And in due season, exactly as I had planned, he introduced me to the Wanderers, that we might play Chinese billiards undisturbed in its funereal hall.

I never discovered that he had any other fad; and here, having fulfilled his task, he fades from my life. He was one of the few comparatively poor members. It was my object to meet John Wattington Chivers, Earl of Crewell.

The mere fact of possessing a guest card to a London club is by no means an open sesame to friendly converse with its members. It but scales the outer walls of the fortress. I relied upon the same tactics that had borne me thus far.

The Earl of Crewell was a man of mystery. None of his fellow members could be termed intimates. If he had a real friend, the fact was not known. About all that any one knew of him every one knew. He had served his country in India, bringing home some wonderful recipes for curries and chutneys, and an unusual collection of emeralds. The latter had been worn a few times by his countess, years ago, and had caused a sensation. He spent most of his time in the club, reading and working over tournament chess games. He had never been known to play over the board. He had a castle somewhere, and a Hindu valet. To these meagre facts Colonel Davenant added a few others.

"Poor beggar," he said one night after I had allowed him to win a game of Chinese billiards, "he has had a devilish run of luck. His wife eloped with a blooming young chauffeur, and his secretary bilked him out of a small fortune. Then his adopted daughter, a girl he had done everything for, went away somehow and disappeared, so that he is now alone in the world."

"Didn't he get any of 'em back?"

"Not one; he didn't even try to retrieve his wife and the adopted daughter, and the secretary chap was never heard from. Oh, he has money enough,

of course; but the game has gone against him in every way. Tough luck—what? His horses never ran to form, and his old pals died off. So he just toddles in here and plays solitaire chess. No chance to lose at that, you know. Not a bad old chap, but deuced hard to get to know. I never managed it myself."

I managed it. I had little to work on, but placed my bet on the green stones. I have a number of perfect gems. They are the best investment possible for one who carries his property about with him. A diamond, pearl or emerald of first water usually increases in value faster than bank interest on the original cost. They can be realized upon anywhere, and occupy little space. Among my stones was an unset emerald. After diligent search I found an ancient Spanish ring, whose flawed pearl I had replaced by my emerald, and fitted to my finger.

It was my hope that the Earl of Crewell might notice it; and not only did he speak to me the very first time I sat near him while he rummaged among the chess departments of the magazines, but I found him an informal sort of chap, talking freely enough when in the humor. Of course I had a story ready, wherein my ring, a family heirloom, had come down from an ancestor who had helped sack a palace during the Mexican war, and I carelessly admitted I knew nothing as to its intrinsic value. I don't know whether he believed me or not, nor if the cutting of the stone harmonized with my chronology; but he examined it with interest through a pocket glass, and estimated its value offhand within five pounds of what I had actually been offered for it, and asked me if I were a connoisseur. I admitted that emeralds appealed strongly to me, but that I had never seen any rare ones.

*The rest was only a matter of time. I was asked to run down with him to his country seat for a day or so, just as I was wondering if all my reading up on emeralds and my efforts to be an

agreeably unobtrusive companion were coming to naught after all. I strolled over to the Clayton to pack my kit-bag (I am always ready to move at short notice) and settle my bill. Quite on good terms with myself and the world, I took tea on the Embankment Terrace, and smoked a leisurely cigarette while waiting for the limousine of Lord John. He had given me two hours to prepare. It was more time than I needed. In my profession the lingering adieu is rare.

CHAPTER II.

THE EMERALDS AND—

I HAVE but a vague recollection of the ride to Hollowheath, Upper Deeping, Shrops, the seat of the ancestral castle of the Earls of Crewell. I know that we stopped off at none of the inns frequented by tourists. We lunched at one obscure hostelry because Lord John fancied their rook pies and home-brewed ale. We avoided another because he was once served with lukewarm tea there. We rode for the most part in silence, the Hindu valet in front with a Hindu chauffeur.

All the Earl's servants were Hindus, he informed me. They were loyal and discreet, and all belonged to the same caste. If one died, Lord John shipped his body back to India to be buried with due ceremony beside the river Ganges. If one became homesick, he was at liberty to return; but in such case a substitute always appeared to replace him. It was all left to Vivekanda, the steward.

"How many are there?" I asked.

There were seven; the steward, house-boy, cook, a char-man, gardener, chauffeur and valet. No woman on the place.

The castle, by Lord John's account, was a rambling affair, a nucleus of immense antiquity, with additions made by each succeeding generation. His own contribution had been a garage.

"I suppose there are dozens of rooms

I have never been in at all," he said. "I could easily get lost in my own house. Secret panels and staircases, and all that sort of thing, I dare say; never fancied them myself."

Most of the time Lord John worked out problems on his pocket chess-board in silence. His remarks were made unexpectedly and at long intervals. Near the end of our journey he observed that on his death the estate would pass out of the direct line. But this had happened before. The title had originated some time in the thirteenth century, and the family had suffered numerous vicissitudes. Few drops of the original blood flowed in his own veins.

"Rather a pity you have no issue to inherit the old place," I ventured.

Lord John shrugged indifferently. His bones would rest in the family vault; his Hindus were remembered in his will and would return to India, well provided for. For the rest, he half believed in the doctrine of Karma anyhow, and rather expected to pass on through various incarnations where it would make no difference whether he had once been Earl of Crewell, or John the plowman. With which philosophical conclusion, our car swerved into a driveway bordered by great oaks, and the grim pile of Crewell House loomed black against the sunset.

Vivekanda met us at the door, a magnificent turbaned statue in bronze. In his flashing eyes I saw the same look I had already noted in the faces of valet and chauffeur. Lord John was well served. These silent Hindus would throw away their dinner if his shadow were to fall across it, but would shed their blood for him with equal readiness. They were proud and loyal—"the best in the world," their master had said.

After bathing and slipping into my dinner clothes, I rejoined the Earl of Crewell in a small room where he usually ate. The regular dining room of the castle was too large, and he had furnished an ante-room off the library

with Indian screens, mattings, bronzes, weapons, teakwood chairs and tables, silk hangings and odds and ends he had collected. Here I enjoyed one of his famed curries; a gorgeous dish, but so hot that I took refuge in the various chutneys, which in turn drove me back to the curry. My tongue was nearly paralyzed when we sat down in the library to coffee and cigarettes.

I was highly satisfied. Of course, I should have managed somehow to get at the Crewell emeralds, but my finances were at a point where time was precious. Unaided, I might have found it both dangerous and slow work to penetrate a crazy old castle whose very owner was liable to lose his way in its mazes, peopled as they were by shrewd servants doubtless familiar with every turn. I should have succeeded in time, but how much more agreeable to be installed by the master himself! I was set many steps nearer the goal.

But good fortune was not done with me yet. I was to be set at the very threshold, and that at once; for Lord John presently remarked, "I dare say you are curious to have a look at the emeralds?"

I puffed indolently at my Indian cigarette before replying. "Naturally I am anxious to see them, but as you know, I am not a connoisseur."

"You do not need to be; they make their appeal to any one with eyes and a sense of beauty. Their value does not reside in their market value. Even I don't know that; no one does. For there are few like them in the world."

He led the way to a small alcove on the opposite side of the library from the dining room, severely furnished with large square table, a few chairs and in the corner a medium sized safe.

You can picture the attention with which I watched him turn the dial. I could not hope to get the combination in full, of course, but certain vital details might be gathered. It was, I noted, a Chubb safe, model of about the year 1900. Chubbs are not easily

cracked. I sincerely hoped to open this one by conventional means.

The Earl of Crewell spun the dial several times, and set it at some number between 60 and 70. I could estimate no closer than that, and dared not edge any nearer the safe. I sat on the table, idly striking match after match in the apparent attempt to light a fresh cigarette. He seemed to make about one and a quarter revolutions to the right, three-quarters to the left, two full turns to the right again, and a dozen notches to the left. These figures I jotted on my cuff as the heavy door swung wide. He turned and smiled.

"Few men have ever been inside Crewell House in this generation," he said. "It was sheer impulse on my part asking you down. I always follow impulses. Otherwise they follow me, and annoy me. I have some rather unusual collections here, and it is a pity not to share them. But I'm going to show you only the emeralds. No one but myself has looked on them for ten years."

He opened a little iron door which covered a set of drawers; pulling one out, he rose and placed it on the table. It contained a number of small boxes and envelopes. Selecting one, he dumped it suddenly on the plush cover; and it was as if a stream of green fire poured forth. It seemed to my astonished gaze as if there were jewels among them as large as robin's eggs; square, round, oval, all shapes and sizes, and ranging from pale sage to deep-blue green in color. I had barely gasped with surprise when, with a sharp click, the room was plunged in darkness. A second later, Lord John turned on them the ray of a pocket electric torch. It seemed as if the emeralds moved and writhed about in green flames that hurt my eyes. Against the inky blackness this strange glitter played across Lord John's face in ghastly hues. In an instant he had switched on the lights again, and had opened his lips to speak, when a sinister interruption broke the silence with terrifying unexpectedness.

My nerves are not jumpy, as a rule. But so utterly engrossed had I been with the glorious gems in that silent little room that at the dreadful clamor I jumped like a cat, and my right hand flew to the automatic in my coat pocket. It was evident that the Earl of Crewell was at least as startled as I. He had not even glanced at me, but stood with neck thrust forward, face blanched, and rigid as a statue. Then, quick as a flash he scooped up the emeralds, thrust them into their drawer, jammed it in the safe and spun the dial and, still without a look in my direction, he darted into the library, I at his heels.

One voice alone rose above the din; a sort of maniacal scream, which was at times incoherent and again crystallized into speech.

"My God, I will never be put back there!" I heard; and again, "Kill me, damn you! I *won't* go back to that hell!"

All the time there were sounds indicative of a life and death struggle; gasping breath, sobbing groans, the dull impact of heavy bodies against the corridor walls, scuffling of feet, gradually drawing nearer the open door of the library.

Suddenly a writhing group filled the space for an instant; I caught sight of a pale, gaunt man somewhere in the late forties, with staring eyeballs and slavering mouth; of the figures of Vivekanda and the house-boy turned desperately about him; and then they were gone. The body of the white man seemed to collapse grotesquely, like a stuffed figure; the two Hindus prevailed, and a moment later there came a scraping sound, as of a sack being dragged along the hall, a door slammed violently, and all was silent. The even voice of Lord John brought my eyes back to his.

"This has been most distressing," he remarked. "I must crave your indulgence for the present. All shall be made clear to you at breakfast. I owe you an explanation now; but I am not up to it to-night."

We drank a couple of brandies and seltzers as if nothing unusual had happened; and soon after he bade me good night after escorting me to my room. The house-boy did not appear, nor did I expect him to.

The disturbing incident had nothing to do with my own plan, and when engaged on business I do not permit my attention to be distracted. Of course I made a thorough examination of the state of my doors and windows, and slipped my automatic beneath a pillow; whereupon I sensibly went to sleep. I slept soundly.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRISONERS.

LORD JOHN and I breakfasted next morning in silence. I am never discursive before coffee, and was well content to exchange the usual amenities and let it go at that. Directly we had finished, however, he said, shaking his head:

"Most unfortunate—the row last night. Never happened before, and shouldn't have happened at all. However, *kismet*, as they say. What? Well, the beans are spilled, and if I were not to explain the whole situation, you would be jolly certain to fancy something worse. So I owe it to myself as well as to you to make a clean breast of it. To tell the truth, it has to do with one of the unusual collections I was speaking of last night. Now there is nothing to it but to show it to you. It explains itself. Will you follow me?"

He led the way through a number of halls and cross corridors, up one short flight and down another, until we came to a great oak door with an unusually heavy bolt. I don't know what I expected to see on the other side—but when the door swung back there was only a long hall, with many closed doors on either side. Lord John paused a moment.

"Pardon personalities, my dear fel-

low—but I wish to say that I was born with rather a lovable disposition. There can be no doubt of this—family traditions are unanimous; and as far back as I can remember I hated cruelty and would never tolerate it in others; much less practice it. I never tormented cats, or stoned dogs, or abused younger children, and I was always being gulled because I was too trustful. Please remember this—for you behold a man who has been betrayed continuously for more years than you have lived. I sha'n't bore you with a list of all those who have done everything possible to wreck my faith in human nature; but they explain the singular collection you are about to gaze upon. Outside of my servants, no eye but mine has beheld it."

We proceeded down the hall for perhaps a third of its length, and paused again before one of the doors.

"On principle," said my strange host. "I do not believe in revenge. But if revenge preys upon you, it is necessary to do one of two things: You must either banish it or gratify it. Brood over it and it will destroy you. I was unfortunate in being unable to banish mine.

"Ten years ago, one night in this very house"—his superior, aristocratic face wore a look of pain and unutterable disgust—"I overheard my wife say to a handsome young devil of a chauffeur recently engaged on her recommendation:

"If I am ever parted from you, I shall die! What is life to me if it is empty of love? All this glitter and make-believe happiness cloaked by absurd upper-ten poses are just the empty husk of sham. And I'm tired of it,—oh, so tired of it! I want you to chain me to you so that they can't ever part us!"

The Earl of Crewell turned and looked at me with a smile that bared his yellow teeth.

"Well," he added, "I gave them their wish. Look!"

Greatly wondering, I watched him as

he slid back a narrow panel in the door and motioned to me to look through.

I saw an exceedingly comfortable and even luxurious living-room. A sea-coal fire glowed in the grate; on a mighty table lay a veritable cargo of books and magazines. There were soft rugs on the floor, admirable prints and canvases on the walls, a writing desk, easy chairs, well-filled bookcases, vases of flowers, a linnet at a sunny window; these I took in at a flash, before my eyes fastened upon a man and a woman breakfasting at a little table before the fire. The woman might have been forty-five; she possessed a sort of petulant beauty, and was becomingly clad in a pale lemon morning gown which set off her brunette type in an almost Japanese manner. The man was a few years older, I should judge, but a common looking chap, heavy jowled and paunched, and with a fat, pink face. He was reading a newspaper propped before him against a marmalade jar, while crunching his toasted muffin and from time to time taking a swallow of tea. The woman gazed everywhere but at him. She seemed not to avoid him; rather it was as if he did not exist. Her own tea had scarcely been tasted.

For some time I gazed at this scene of placid domesticity without comprehension. Little by little I was puzzled over something which I could not quite identify. Suddenly it flashed upon me; both were using only one hand; he his left, she her right. No matter what little service they performed for themselves, only one hand was used. And as I speculated he finished his last swallow of tea with a gulp, and rose abruptly from the table. She rose so coincidentally as to give the impression of being dragged to her feet. And I saw—I saw that a fine steel chain, about three feet in length, passed from a steel wristlet on her arm to a similar one on his!

A grating laugh at my side drew my eyes from the little slide to the face of the Earl of Crewell.

"And she never has been parted from him," he chuckled; "not once in all these ten years. So she didn't die."

I shivered. I can only describe my feelings by saying that I felt very ill. The full horror of it did not grip me at once—that came gradually, and long after; but the high lights of the situation reeled across my brain like a photo-film. Ten years—and never for a moment more than three feet apart! There flashed across my memory that most ghastly of all medieval punishments, wherein the man guilty of some unusually brutal murder was fettered to the corpse of his victim and left alone. I could never bring myself to speculate for long upon this situation, and I found the present one sickeningly like it in all but death itself. I was glad when we crossed the hall and paused before another door.

"My next exhibit," said Lord John, whom I now regarded as unquestionably mad, "is a man who worshiped gold. He was my private secretary. I took him from a bleak orphan asylum, educated him, paid him more than he was worth, and he betrayed me. He sold private information to my enemies, and robbed me beside. If he had taken the money for some wild escapade of youth, or lost it gambling, I could have forgiven him; but he didn't. He prudently invested it all, and was pretty well-to-do when I found him out. Some day I'll tell you how I found him—and where. He loved gold; well, he has it. Coals of fire. What?"

I applied an eye to the little panel and looked into a gorgeously furnished room. Everything in it represented extravagant outlay. The very walls were singularly papered with canceled checks, notes, drafts and other commercial issues; richly framed copies of Holbein's "Miser" and a good "Danaë and the Shower of Gold" hung upon the wall, and I noted several cabinets of rare coins. Upon the table glittered an ornate breakfast set with the steam rising from the coffee urn.

"Solid silver," spoke Lord John at

my side. "You should see his dinner set, though. Fourteen karat gold, every piece. He wanted gold—and he has it. But I expect it's no good waiting to see him. He was the chap who almost broke away last night. He's pretty well done up—probably not out of bed yet."

I made no comment, and we passed on to the fourth door on the same side.

"They all have suites," my genial guide explained. "Their tastes have been consulted in each case. The man you are going to see now was a professional gambler. He trimmed me to the bone when I was just out of public school. I wouldn't have minded that—needed the lesson. It was the cold-blooded way he did it, and the laughing stock he made me by spreading the story where it hurt most. He made life a hell for me while I was forking over all my salary as fast as I got it; and finally when I simply couldn't meet the last note quite on time, he went to my governor and blackmailed it out of him. I only caught him four years ago. Have a look at him."

I beheld a pale, nervous old man sitting at his table, breakfast half eaten and pushed away, chin resting on his two fists. He heard me at the panel, for he gazed in my direction with dead black eyes full of hatred.

"He seems to have enough to read," said I, having noted plenty of books and magazines about.

"He has," agreed Lord John. "Yet he seldom reads. Every book in that room is devoted to gambling in some phase. There are treatises on bridge and poker, volumes of systems to beat faro, roulette and the ponies; court records of trials of gamblers; a history of Monte Carlo, a few novels based on sporting life. And every magazine you saw is confined to some sport associated with betting. He has packs of cards and a little wheel to amuse himself with, but I haven't known him to play solitaire for over a year. Occasionally he practices shuffling, cutting and dealing, however.

But he seems bored and ungrateful. Certain types are hard to please."

We moved on to the end of the hall.

"My last curio," said the Earl, "and on the whole my most contented one: I had a daughter once, an adopted one I took from poverty, and would have given anything within the power of love and money. I didn't wish to shape her life for her. I was willing to give her a pretty loose rein, but I expected her to derive at least some intelligence from the schools and governesses I paid for, and to rise a degree above the Billingsgate standard of taste.

"All was wasted. There wasn't a spark of affection in her. She wanted an American cocktail—the fad in the fast set of her day—the first thing on waking, and she would read nothing but the unwholesome novels of the decadent French modernists. The public supposes that she eloped; but she has, in fact, retired perpetually to a hermitage."

He slid the panel aside, looked in for a moment, shrugged his shoulders, and stepped aside so that I could see.

I still carry in mind the picture of a pale, curiously beautiful girl with sleepy, sea-green eyes, and pale, golden hair, clad in a morning gown which might have been created by Paquin himself. Her breakfast egg remained unbroken, her coffee cup half empty. As I gazed at her, she languorously added a gold-tipped cigarette stub to the little pile which had already accumulated in her cloisonne ash-tray.

She idly and somewhat disgustingly poked over a file of magazines with lurid covers, and others, which had arrived by that morning's mail, remained unopened. An entire side of the wall was occupied by a bookcase wherein loosely sewed French paper novels held a comfortable majority. The shelves looked dusty, as if their contents had long since ceased to interest her; and an abandoned game of solitaire, whose cards were partly scattered about the floor, testified to her bored effort to flog the limping

hours. I turned away, glad that this was the last exhibit.

I invented an errand to my room when we had left the exhibition hall. I desired to meditate for a little while, and the Earl was palpably relieved. I selected a strong cigar and an easy chair. Under no consideration must I do or say anything to offend Lord John; that much was clear at the outset. To be packed off now, with the emeralds almost within my grasp, would be to lose the extraordinary advantages gained. As to my course of action once I had the jewels in my belt, that bridge would be crossed when I came to it. As I smoked and planned, a very faint rustling attracted my eyes to the door. From beneath, a white envelope protruded. I picked it up, tore it open, and read:

MY DEAR FELLOW:

It is with shame and regret that I am obliged to lock you in your apartment for a bit. Imperative business calls me to London this afternoon, and will keep me there for two or three days. On such short notice I have no possible alternative but to secure your person until I have time to decide what to do.

You have vital secrets of mine in your possession, revealed through no fault of yours. You will understand how grieved I am to appear such a deplorable host. Every attention to your wishes will be given by my servants—save, of course, that you cannot communicate with the outside world. I may add that any attempt at escape will be both futile and dangerous. Forgive me—if you can.

(Signed) CHIVERS.

It was with difficulty that I repressed a rousing cheer upon reading this missive. Locked in! The one stroke of luck I needed to make me happy had befallen me. The Earl of Crewell was actually leaving me in his castle for not less than two full days. If in that time I could not accomplish my purpose, then indeed I deserved to fail.

An admirable luncheon was served me at noon, the house-boy asking me to indicate my pleasure as to dinner, and anything I might need in the meantime. The menu I left to the Hindu

chef; but to give the impression that I was resigned to my duress, I ordered the daily papers, magazines, tobacco, Scotch and a few bottles of soda. Before I had done lunching I saw from a window the big limousine of Lord John, with both chauffeur and valet aboard, rolling over the drawbridge *en route* for London.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESCAPE.

MY apartment consisted of three rooms, a bedchamber with bath opening into a sitting-room, which in turn adjoined a smaller one where I took my meals. Sunny windows lighted all the rooms on one side; the opposite walls were unbroken. No bars were visible until these windows were closely examined, when it was apparent that the sashes and divisions were solid steel set in the stonework of the wall. The separate panes, too small to admit a human body, opened on hinges for ventilating purposes.

The door leading from dining to sitting room was secured by a massive bolt. In the morning, when my bedroom was made up, and I was breakfasting, this door was left open. When the house-boy retired, I was confined to bed and sitting room. Thus at no time was I able, by overpowering the servant, to gain freedom; for he entered the dining room with my meals and was locked in by Vivekanda, and only then did he unlock my door and let me out. After eating I was locked in the living room, and the house-boy departed with the empty dishes. The same process was repeated when I summoned him by shaking the bell cord.

I had no jimmy or other forcing implement with me, not having dreamed that restraint would be one of my complications. I had pliers, of course, but they were useless against the bolt on the other side of the door, which, as it opened outward, presented no hinges that I might otherwise have

removed. A search of the room failed to reveal any tool with which I could cut or saw through the door. I was not alarmed in the least, but admit I was puzzled when I retired that night.

Here I may remark for the benefit of the innocent householder, that simplicity, rather than complexity, foils the burglar. It is the old-fashioned key in the door, secured by a simple loop of telephone wire bent over the door, and the small wooden wedge that baffles him while he laughs at patent locks and window fastenings.

No ingenious dream came to help me, no inspiration from the kippered herring at breakfast next morning. It was while I sat staring at the door after the house-boy had gone that an idea came to me. I was idly watching the broad band of sunlight that crept across it.

In an instant I was on my feet, searching for a certain article I vaguely recalled having seen the preceding day.

The thing I sought and found was a powerful reading glass. I knew some of the strange uses to which lenses may be put. With an ordinary watch crystal the hunter can light his pipe or his fire. Conflagrations have been started by sun rays focusing through goldfish bowls, leaving the little fishes unharmed. Bubbles in window panes have acted similarly. In tropical countries a solar engine has been found practical.

Surely I could burn out a section of the door containing the bolt which held me prisoner!

Presently the sun struck full upon the oak door. I scratched upon it an outline which I knew would include the bolt, whose position I had noted. Steadily bringing my glass to bear until the intense white focus bore upon the surface, I had the satisfaction of seeing a tiny puff of smoke rise from the varnish.

The result was all that I could have hoped for. It was like cutting into steel by an oxy-acetylene flame. As fast as the wood charred, I scraped it out with my knife blade.

Once I had to pause, baffled, as the band of sunlight threatened to pass off the door. It stumped me for a moment; then I solved the difficulty with the mirror from the dressing table. This slightly weakened the sun's rays, but in two hours and at the cost of tired wrists, a tiny ray of light showed me that I had eaten through the door. In ten minutes more it swung gently open, leaving the great bolt clinging futilely to its useless wooden strip.

It was next in order to find some hiding place in this room; for I had noted in the outer door a little slit through which I had no doubt the room was observed each time before being entered. I selected a highboy, which I pulled out a little way from the wall to give me room to slip behind. My mind was now working at top speed, and I rapidly completed the necessary preparations.

The house-boy, finding my door forced, would of course give the alarm, and I should still be a prisoner, besides losing all the advantage of surprise. I must therefore conceal the break. To this end I whittled out small wooden wedges and drove them into the burned crevice from the sitting room side, thus making the piece quite firm. On the other side I filled the cracks with moistened soap, smoothing it over with a silk handkerchief. It was not likely to be noticed, with the bolt apparently secure. A few more details, and I had but to wait behind my highboy until the servant brought my luncheon.

When the servants arrived, I heard them outside the door as they paused and inspected the room, finding it apparently empty. A bolt was then drawn and the house-boy entered with the tray, while Vivekanda closed and re-locked the door. I had eliminated all chances of failure within my control, but I had to assume that the steward would not look through the slot again. If he did my plans were spoiled.

The house-boy set out my luncheon, drew up the chair, and stepped softly to the locked door. I held my breath

as he drew the bolt. Nothing went amiss. He opened the door, paused a moment on not seeing me, then stepped into the room and spoke. Instantly I slipped from the highboy and followed him, covering him with my automatic.

"One cry, my friend, and you are due for a reincarnation," I said softly.

He probably did not understand my words, but he did my gun. I would have killed him instantly, and he knew it.

As rapidly as possible I bound him. I was obliged to use the bell cord, having no rope. I have an effective method, of which I am rather vain. I bind my victim with his back to an open door, one hand to each knob. He can struggle to his heart's content, and merely cut into his own wrists, for the simple reason that a thick plank separates the hands, and unless they can work together they are helpless. The fingers cannot even get at the knots.

As soon as my boy was made fast, I slipped back to the other room, after assuring him that I would murder him if he so much as sneezed.

Presently, wondering at the silence, Vivekanda began to call out and ask (as I suppose) what was the matter. Seeing nothing through his slot, hearing nothing, he entered. When he was well inside the room I stepped forth and covered him as I had the house-boy. He was a sensible fellow, and made no attempt to resist or escape.

The house-boy had been a frail chap, but the steward was big and brawny. I had a vivid recollection of his manhandling of the prisoner the night of my arrival. I could not very well tie him to the door knobs and keep him covered with my gun, and I felt that he would be more than a match for me unarmed.

Having figured this out in advance, I drew from my pocket a paper of specially prepared tacks I use for various purposes, such as putting automobile tires out of commission when desirable. They are half-inch carpet tacks with rounded brass heads. In the concave

side of each head I melt a drop of solder; the tacks thus always lie point up, like certain weighted toys. I made Vivekanda remove his sandals, and scattered a handful of these tacks about the door I proposed to tie him to.

The rest was simple enough. He could not take a step without getting two or three half-inch points into his bare feet. I gambled on this deterring him, and won. In five minutes I had him tied fast till doomsday or outside help arrived.

Having used all my bell cord before, I took strips of a linen sheet prepared by wetting thoroughly. They were very strong, could not injure his wrists and possessed the merit of shrinking tighter as they dried out.

I wish it to be understood that it was in no spirit of bravado that I then ate a quick but hearty repast. I prefer not to work on an empty stomach.

When, kitbag in hand, I stepped out into the corridor and bolted the door, I knew exactly what dangers threatened me. There remained three servants; the cook, charwoman and gardener. None of them suspected anything, and it was unlikely that they would leave their quarters. It was possible the two prisoners might screw up enough courage to yell, and that they might be heard; if so, and help arrived, it would be my unpleasant duty to reduce their particular Hindu caste by two or three adult males.

I proceeded at once to the little alcove where Lord John's safe reposed. Opening a safe is a tedious task, like a particularly difficult game of solitaire. I adjusted my pocket microphone, and, turning the dial slowly, prepared to note the numbers used in the combination.

This method is not infallible. If the safe is new, and has been opened but a few times, or if the combination has been changed recently, it will fail. I doubted if Lord John had had occasion to change his, and hoped that it had been used enough so that the tumblers might give, to a trained ear like mine,

that infinitesimally different sound that betrays them.

It may have been an hour before I had noted five numbers I must stake all upon.

Now the various combinations which can be built up of five numbers, taken in conjunction with from one to three revolutions each to right or left, is fairly sickening. This was where my notes of Sir John's manipulations were of service.

By using these in connection with the numbers, success came at last. At exactly half past two, the drawer of emeralds lay before me on the table.

The museum pieces I had no intention of touching. They were too dangerously conspicuous; practically impossible to dispose of. I might as well wear the broad-arrow. I was satisfied with a double handful of the smaller ones, worth, I roughly estimated, some fifty thousand dollars. A thorough overhauling revealed nothing else in the safe except private papers and a number of ancient heirlooms of little intrinsic value.

I replaced the depleted drawer and locked the safe. Never have I committed a robbery with less compunction. The big jewels I had left; the others Lord John did not need. He did not exhibit them to others, and probably seldom looked at them himself. Besides, he was a madman, whose victims I was about to set free.

I was filled with the warm glow of conscious virtue.

The beautiful feature of my little operation was my comparative immunity. No one had seen me at the strong box, or could prove that I had robbed it. I was justified in the measures taken to effect my release. The servants would never be called upon to testify. When I released the prisoners, it was pretty certain that some, if not all, would take to flight. Any one of them might be suspected of the theft of the emeralds.

I had left no traces in London, and Lord John would hardly court public-

ity. Once more I was justified in my iron-clad rule to work without confederates.

I wish that I might have stayed on to see the thing through. The interview between the various inmates must have been dramatic. But I dared tempt fortune no further. When I had after great difficulty found their wing in the castle and unlocked their doors, I explained briefly that as a guest I had by chance learned of their fate, and, in the temporary absence of our host, released them. I advised them to arm themselves at once in the gun room, and told them that two of the servants were bound upstairs and three more at large, while Lord John himself would be down in a day or so.

I left them babbling thanks, and saw them scurry to the gun-room before walking out with my bag.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEST OF THEM.

IT was a dreary walk to the nearest station, with a tedious wait for a train to follow; but in due season I found myself at Paddington station; and about the time Lord John must have set out for Crewell House I boarded the Channel boat at Folkestone.

Smuggling is only difficult when one is suspected, or in war time. To secrete valuables from the customs inspectors when one is believed to carry them on his person is no mean achievement. I have done it, but it taxed my ingenuity to the uttermost.

In this case there was no difficulty whatever. I bore the emeralds in the lunch-basket from which I was refreshing myself while my effects were being pawed over. It added a droll touch that I paid duty on half a dozen peaches in that same lunch-box—fruit being dutiable.

The tax assessed was very reasonable—for the hollows where the peach stones had been were solid masses of green gems. The suave

young inspector remarked that it was a pity I had not eaten the peaches and avoided the tariff. I think he rather expected I would have offered him one, and I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I had!

Weeks later, in a boulevard café, I read in the *Galignani Messenger* of the death of the Earl of Crewell at his London club and of the expected arrival at the Continental Hotel of his wife and adopted daughter.

I felt a curiosity to look upon them once more. After several vain attempts, I saw them in the hotel café one afternoon. They were drinking tea—at least the widow was. Upon her left wrist was a wide gold bracelet set with emeralds.

Once it slipped down so far I could see a faint red mark—the scar left by another bracelet, made of steel, worn for many years.

Her companion—and I wondered a little at these two opposites being together even for the sake of appearances—was looking terribly bored and palpably sulky. Having just pushed away an empty liqueur glass, she ordered a brandy and soda and lighted another cigarette—the sixth or seventh, according to the ash-receiver before her.

Both looked as if their freedom was something they, as yet, hardly knew what to do with. But there was a relief in the older woman's eyes which I am not likely to forget.

I wished that I might know how it fared with the others; the unfaithful secretary, the gambler and, especially, the quondam debonair chauffeur.

And as I thought of them, one by one, there came over me a faint suspicion that perhaps John Wottington Chivers, last Earl of Crewell, was the best of the lot after all!

(The end.)

U U U U

SONG OF A BANK CLERK

BY THOMAS PEARCE

THIRTY-SEVEN, forty-two, and fifty-one—
Oh, the air is heavy laden with the spring!
Down in Dixie niggers singing in the sun,
Chopping cotton to the crazy tunes they sing.

Debit—credit—check it off and rule it down—
Oh, the fragrance of the newly furrowed loam!
And the little moon a peeping through the Maréchal
Niel that's creeping
O'er the trellised, broad veranda back at home.

Carried forward, page one hundred thirty-nine—
Oh, the sunlight dancing on the swimming-pool,
Girdled round with maiden-hair and muscadine,
Gravel-bedded, crystal clear, divinely cool!

Entry: "Mary's lips are just the heart of June"—
Oh, it's sick I am to feel the summer rain
On my upturned face a falling! . . . I have heard
the South a calling—
'S out of balance—I must check it all again.

The Enemy in His Mouth

by Raymond Ashley

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

"MAJOR" BUFORD CARBOROUGH, FOURTH, of Virginia, scion of a fine old family and a man of more than ordinary culture and ability, has fallen, through his love of liquor, to the position of "swamper" or cleaner-out of the Oasis bar in the mining camp, Toquima City. There, known simply as "Old Maje," or Bud Cobber, his only friends an ex-prize fighter, Kid Burke, and the night bartender of the Oasis, Dave Alderson, the latter a clean-living young man much above his position, he lives a life of alternating alcoholic forgetfulness and regret for the wife and daughter in the East, who imagine him in some sort of business and to whom he sends all his scanty wages. One day, getting into the cellar where the liquor is stored, he drinks whisky and absinthe in great quantities, but the effect is a curious psychological phenomena; he forgets his recent life and becomes the Buford Carborough he should have been. In this condition he takes the train to the capital of the State, where he meets Bishop Sumner and John Merling, the leaders of the great State-wide Anti-Saloon League, and, offering to fill-in for a Senator who is called away, makes a speech that becomes a classic and makes him famous. That night he dines with the bishop and other leaders, and is invited to make a speech some weeks later at another big political meeting. He accepts, but by this time the effects of the liquor are wearing off. His surroundings are becoming unreal, and vague memories are stirring. He pleads weariness, and retires to his hotel, where he goes to bed and to sleep. But in the morning it is "Maje," the swamper who awakes, his mind wiped clear of the events of the past twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MORNING AFTER.

MAJE rubbed his eyes and commenced to stretch his limbs, desisting at once, for one leg, the left, manifested a pronounced disinclination to bend at the knee-joint. He tested it slowly, flexing and straightening it again and again until the hinge seemed to operate with better lubrication than at first.

He swung to the side of the bed and examined the knee in the dim light; a patch of skin the size of a

silver dollar had been scraped off and the raw spot covered with adhesive plaster—doubtless by Kid Burke. Feeling a stiffness of forehead, the old swamper wrinkled his features to dislodge whatever the something was; failing, he raised his hand to it, and found a small cross of adhesive plaster there, too.

"Kid!" he called. Receiving no reply: "I guess Buhke isn't on deck this afternoon. I'd like ve'y much to consult with him in regahd to my condition and its cause—I must have been on a busteh this mo'nin' sho'!"

He attempted to remember a se-

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for May 13.

quence of events which might lead up to and be responsible for his sore, used-up sensation. The attempt was futile; he remembered perfectly the incident of the rubber tube and the whisky barrel in the dug-out behind the Oasis. He had gotten through his labor of the morning, had repaired to the cellar, broken an absinthe bottle open and mixed the contents into a soul-satisfying beverage by the judicious use of the rubber tube.

He had drunk once, and again, and again, and—here he was, sitting on the side of the bed, with a head which felt at least as large as the whisky barrel and a thirst as sharp as the broken edges of the green bottle! Of the interval he was entirely ignorant.

It must be late afternoon, he thought, for he had a conviction that he had slept many hours, and nine in the forenoon was his usual hour of retiring. He glanced at the window; rubbed his cheek with a dubious palm and glanced again. No, there was no mistake; there were three windows, instead of the customary one! Furthermore, the cheek against which his hand rested was as smooth as the skin of a baby, except for a slight stubble when his palm moved against the grain.

This combination of mysteries was becoming tiresome! Maje reached for the silver watch which always hung at the head of the bed; his fingers touched an electric button, and a four-bulb chandelier flashed its tungsten glare over the room.

"Gawd!" murmured Maje in awe.

He stood tentatively upon that complaining left leg and hobbled to the window; snapped the curtains to the top and gazed out with a ludicrous expression of amazement. He was looking from a fifth-story window, at the dawn-lit streets, roofs and railroad yards of a city! Below, an early passer-by or two hurried past, coats buttoned to ward off the chill wind.

A taximeter-cab driver slept peacefully on the seat of his machine in

front of the hotel; a beer-wagon rolled up to the door of a saloon across the way—Maje could hear the *clumpity-clump* of hoofs on asphalt—discharging uncomfortably cold-looking ice and kegs of beer which induced mental associations in the beholder.

Whew! How thirsty he was! Maje drank from the ice-water pitcher, scorning the infinitesimal glass, and turned to his clothing, to encounter the greatest surprise of all! Carefully folded on chair and bureau lay the raiment of a king (Maje was somewhat vague in his ideas of what constituted royal garb), and there, upon the chiffonier, the hat of a haberdasher's dreams!

The old swamper ruffled the fur with a finger, then smoothed it again and commenced to dress. Perhaps this clothing did not belong to him, but there was no other owner in evidence, and it at least would serve to clothe his nakedness until he could solve the riddle of existence—and get many, many drinks to alleviate the villainous thirst which scorched him from head to toe!

He finished dressing, picked up the heavy cane he found hooked to the edge of the bureau, switched out the lights and found himself in the dark hallway. Not knowing the exact procedure through which it was necessary to go in order to get the elevator, he grasped the cane and negotiated the five flights of stairs, every step causing the sore knee to flinch with pain.

In the *foyer*, a clerk smiled a sleepy "Good morning."

"Good mo'nin', seh," Maje answered, "can you tell me if my account with the hotel has been settled?"

The clerk raised a supercilious eyebrow. "Name?"

Maje hesitated; he was not at all certain as to his own identity; everything else was topsy-turvy, so perhaps his very name had undergone some metamorphosis, as had his clothes and personal appearance! "Cah'bro," he ventured finally.

"M-m-m, yes, sir, you settled last evening, I believe."

"Thank you, seh." Maje stumped to the door, thence into the street, and some sixth sense impelled him toward the location of the beer-wagon, on a corner facing the railroad, where an electric sign, garish in the daylight, informed the world as to the whereabouts of the Hoffman House Bar.

Inside the swinging door, Maje paused in a caution born of much experience, and felt in his pockets. He pulled out a handful of gold, silver and currency, and his twisted little smile came to the surface.

"Well, seh," he said, "wheaheveh I've been, and whateveh I've been a-doin', it was celtainly profitable!—I'll take a lil' Bou'bon," he confided to the man in white.

A newspaper lay upon the bar, and to this Maje sidled; here was a chance to learn his whereabouts. Madron *Morning Advertiser*, he read, and sighed with relief. He was at the capital of the State, and Toquima City lay only fourteen hours' travel southward.

At this moment, the liquor he had ordered was served, and Maje forgot all else. A grateful warmth pervaded him; soreness in leg and forehead disappeared as if a magic cure-all wand were waved above him, and he felt an almost uncontrollable desire to sing the little song anent his complete indifference to the sight of Josie and Joe. The paper was pushed aside; the bartender wiped his mahogany with a glass-towel and threw towel and newspaper into a pile of rubbish.

When Maje had lowered the surface of the whisky in the bottle some three inches, he departed in the direction of the station. The sun was rising when the train for Toquima City slid to a stop and he climbed into the vestibule. He went to the dining-car and ensconced himself in state.

"Nigguh!" he called to an attendant, "bring me a lahe glass of Bou'bon whisky!"

The steward came running forward. "I am sorry, sir, but no intoxicating liquor is served on the diners of the Sierra Western!"

"Dahn the old women who ah always meddling with otheh people's business!" Maje grumbled, aghast at the fourteen hours of internal Sahara confronting him. He ate gloomily, then slumped into a seat in the chair-car and went to sleep.

That first drink in the Hoffman House Bar had been served too quickly; it had robbed Maje the swamper of one of the most exquisite pleasures of man—that of seeing one's name in print. Across the page of the daily, in black letters an inch in height—a "seven-column head," we believe, is the correct designation—was the inscription:

ANTI - SALOON LEAGUE ORGANIZES.

Hon. Buford Carborough, Orator of the Day.

Young Bob Connell had performed his stint remarkably well. Leading off with a full description of the hall, the delegates and the various speakers, he had saved the big speech of the southern orator for the climax of his article. The words of Carborough were printed in full, the telling phrases of his scathing arraignment of the drink-evil being quoted in italics and spaced with pithy headings from the brain of Bob Connell.

On an inside page the Irish newspaperman, with the ingenuity of his ilk, had taken what little was known of Carborough and his antecedents and had reconstructed the story of his life; Carborough himself would have been surprised at the faithfulness of the picture to the original!

Nor was that all the publicity to which Maje the swamper would have been treated had he delayed the first drink for a time sufficient to allow the perusal of the *Advertiser*. In the news section, the automobile accident received notice, and in the society column

mention was made of the dinner-party at the home of Bishop Sumner, and also of the fact that Carborough had been asked to address the Suffrage Alliance organization-meeting in June.

It is said of every canine quadruped that he has his twenty-four-hour interval of greatness. This was one of those dog-days in the life of Maje the swamper—and he did not even know it!

We spoke, upon a time, of the workings of Kismet, and of Chance; how Fate makes puppets of us all, swampers and bishops, bartenders and senators. But the proof is not yet finished; not yet do we set down "Q. E. D.," to show that the task is done.

CHAPTER X.

HOME.

"D'YOU know who I am?" Johnny the Hop demanded of Dave the grave-yard bartender as the last customer went out into the night, leaving a quietude favorable to light conversation.

"No, Johnny, who are you?" Dave humored him absently, not looking up from his labor. He set on the mahogany slab that topped the bar four bottles labeled, respectively, "Rye," "Bourbon," "Sour Mash" and "Sixteen-year-old Oasis Special," and proceeded to fill them impartially from one copper funnel, releasing the spring-valve with practiced finger until the beautiful maroon liquid gurgled into the neck of each bottle in turn.

Johnny did not answer. He was staring, loose-lipped, at an apparition which confronted him as he faced the open front door. It looked very much like Maje, the vanished swamper, gone these three days, none knew where—like him, yet somehow different.

In place of the ragged grayish beard they had known, this strange Maje presented a brown mustache, well-trimmed, above a little "goatee" which went far toward matching his honorary military title. Gone, too, the soiled gray

trousers, upheld by a single suspender; instead, the returned wanderer into unknown fields was dressed like unto a gilded lily, in frock coat, not-too-clean linen and a hat more glorious than ever desert had seen before—shiny, tall, with a nap like the fur on a black mouse; patent leather shoes below spats of just the right shade of gray to match his cravat and the glove-fingers peeping from a breast pocket!

But the man within the clothes confirmed the adage regarding fine feathers and the birds they deck; old Maje slumped along, as Kid Burke phrased it somewhat later in the day, "draggin' bot' feet about t'ree yards behind him." Maje's face was a study in grief, the color of an unripe olive, streaked where little rivulets of perspiration had furrowed the dust of his rail-journey.

The bartender would have greeted his associate effusively, but the Hop, insistent upon the idea which obsessed him—of "telling his right name," cut in, repeating the query of a moment before.

"D'you know who I am?" he demanded of old Maje.

"No, Misteh Johnny, seh, I don't know who you ah, seh, and I don't give a tinkeh's dahn. At present, my whole attention is engrossed by weightieh mattehs, chiefest of which is a profound feeling of nausea, which I am about to alleviate with a modicum of this heah sublime cohn-distillate, if you will permit it, Misteh Davey, seh?"

"Go to it!" Dave assented. "I am so glad to see you back that I'll give you anything in the shop. I have wrestled with that mop the last few days until my back is as crooked as a fish-hook!"

"Well, now, that's too bad, Davey. I'm mo' than so'y. You see, I—I left town ratheh suddenly!"

"You did, for a fact!" Dave was consumed with curiosity, but one of the axioms of the country where his days had been spent says that a tongue in the cheek saves much vexation of spirit. The drug-fiend, however, had not been answered.

"D'you know what my name is?" he reiterated.

"Yes," Alderson replied judicially, "your name is Johnny the Hop. Your first name is Johnny; your middle name is 'The,' and Hop is your last or surname. I suppose 'The' is short for 'Theodore,' thus, 'Johnathan Theodore Hop.' Is that right?"

"Aw, quit your kiddin'," Johnny complained, "I'm serious!" He coughed violently, then adopted the cute, kittenish expression which is so ludicrous and so infinitely pathetic; "my name is Merling!"

The name meant nothing to Dave, but to Maje the swamper it seemed strangely familiar. The old fellow scratched his head; Merling—Merling, where had he heard that name before? Some vague association stirred, but would not utter, however hard the attempt at concentration. Concentration was a difficult process at best this morning; his brain seemed more nearly adapted to the state of muddled coma than to remembrance.

Maje glanced in pity at the drug-habitue. So Johnny the Hop had a name, after all, like other men! Funny, the lack of it never had been noticed before—any old "tag" was sufficient for one of the unfit! During the years of his wandering before coming to Toquima, Maje remembered spending a day or two in the vicinity of the crumbling, abandoned prison near Yuma, and the utter desolation of the spot had made an impression that could not fade away.

Most desolate of all had been the bleak penitentiary cemetery, in the lee of a hill on a spit of *adobe* land jutting into the river, where the weathered wooden slabs each held but a terse number to denote the occupant below.

Maybe, he thought now, they, too, once had possessed names, once had been real, living men of loves and hates and faults and illusions, like Johnny the Hop; maybe, like Johnny, they had gone down and out because of a damnable craving they could not re-

sist. Johnny had said his name was Merling; it might as well have been, well, say, Alderson, or Carborough—it was all a question of chance, resistance and opportunity: "But fo' the grace of God, theah stand Bufo'd Cah'bro'!" Maje paraphrased softly.

Many a better man than he, Maje, had taken the well-worn trail along which all land-marks point downward, never back up the slope! Perhaps Johnny had commenced with a little lemonade "with a kick in it"; or a bottle of whisky purloined from saloon or club out of bravado; maybe a sniff of the wonder-working cocaine while "painting the town red" with other young fools, or maybe the lure that is said to prevaricate in feminine visual orbs—it mattered not which.

To paraphrase the gruesome little song, "Drink and the devil had done the rest!" whether the wreck alongside him at the bar was a Merling or a Smith or only Johnny the Hop!

"Johnny," Dave, the bartender, shrewdly queried, "I thought they had quit giving you snow; where did you get it?"

"Get what?"

"The dope—you are full to the muzzle!"

Johnny assumed an air of ponderous, asinine wisdom. "Oh, I can get it all right, when I've got the price! See there!" He extended a hand containing a few minor coins; the knuckles rattled against the bar like castanets.

"Here!" Dave pushed the "Special" bottle forward, "take a little of this cyanide. As Doc Boland says, '*Simile simultaneous tarantler!*' which I take to mean 'Poultice with the hair of the dog that bit you!'"

Johnny accepted without cavil or delay.

A sound of stertorous breathing came in the door, followed a moment later by Emmett Burke, fresh from a two-mile run on the level *playa* valley below Toquima, his cheeks flushed and the breast of his sweater pumping as if it held a bellows.

"Gimme a barrel of water, Dave!" he commanded, ranging at the bar beside the Hop.

Dave grinned at the symbolic picture—the pair and the brown bottle. "Before and after taking!" he said.

Kid Burke, until now, had not noticed his room-mate Maje, who still was absorbed in soulful reflection. The pugilist turned and "gave him de wunst over" from smooth-shaven jawl to shining shoes.

"Who's de patent medicine ad?" he asked of Alderson.

Dave, amused, performed an elaborate introduction. "Majah, let me present my friend and admirer, Mr. Emmett Kid Burke, right-hand man to the Marquis of Queensbury!"

"Well, damned if it ain't Maje!" Kid Burke stepped back, shading his eyes from the glare of the swamper's splendor. "Where've you been, you old chuckawalla?"

"I—I've jes' been galivantin' around 'lil bit, Emmett."

It was the best answer he could muster, anxious as he was to explain and to meet the evident worried friendliness of the Kid. "Galivantin' around," indeed, expressed perfectly Maje's own concept of the occurrences of the last few days. He knew, nebulously, that Buford Carborough, the aesthetic, critical analyst of motives, had been in the ascendent—and there was a lurking conviction that the said Carborough, had made several separate and distinct varieties of an ass of himself!

Somehow, a mental image of that other self intruded, in which there were many faces upturned, many voices raised in acclaim; what the object of their plaudits, or why they should have seen fit to applaud at all, memory refused to divulge with any satisfactory degree of clarity. That mental picture was "too dahn post-impressionistic," anyhow!

Sounds, colors and movements were combined in confusing miscuity; the clang of trolley-car gongs, the nerve-racking screech of automobile horns

created a mind-Bedlam, punctuated by a steady, throbbing "boom-boom-boom" behind his temples which was only his over-strained heart complaining. The bar, these familiar figures of Davey and Johnny and Emmett, seemed as unreal as the figments of his detached state.

Maje wished now, more poignantly than at any previous occurrence of his amnesia, that there were some one in whom he might confide, with whom he might consult in regard to precautions necessary to prevent further repetition of the "galivantin'" procedure. Dave was out of the question; Maje had an uncomfortable—probably mistaken—idea that to the bartender the whole matter would be a subject for jest.

Kid Burke, while offering sympathy and help wherever possible, would not understand—the Kid lived in the domain of the actual and the physical, not among the fourth-dimensions of psychology or psychiatry. No, Maje must keep his own counsel, as in the past.

One precautionary measure, however, was possible, necessary—he must give up drinking, absolutely and at once. In pursuance of this newly-formed resolve, he reached for the bottle of "Oasis Special," poured a stiff drink, and swallowed it, squinting through the empty glass as he had seen Dave Alderson do.

CHAPTER XI.

MOVING PICTURES.

D R. BOLAND read the Madron papers with interest and a feeling of genuine regret that professional matters on the desert had prevented his attendance at the organization of the Anti-Saloon League.

The name "Carborough," which appeared so frequently in the typography of the *Advertiser*, was utterly unfamiliar, but that was not surprising; one must not expect a country physician to know personally every man in the

State, even though the physician be high in political and fraternal circles.

As a matter of fact, the newspaper merely described Carborough as "prominently identified with legal and Temperance causes in his own State and in this, the State of his adoption"; indefinite phrases which might mean a great deal or nothing!

Boland found most impressive in all the printed matter at hand the spirit of sane, earnest practicality which permeated the meeting at the capital, manifested in the speeches, the personnel of officers and committees and the businesslike manner in which the subject of drink regulation had been approached.

The remarks of Bishop Summer, in particular, Boland considered to be a series of verbal bullets aimed at the very "bull's-eye" of Truth. The problem was, as Bishop Summer said, to deal with the bodies of men, not with their souls; that should be considered later, when "*mens sana in sana corpore*" should come to be the rule, when health and sanity should lend receptiveness for teaching religion and ethics.

That statement hit Joseph Munson Boland, as he expressed it, "right between the face and eyes!" The doctor's workshop was the human body, his one obsession a millennium resulting from preventive therapy based upon a philosophy declaring the seeming paradox that the best time to cure any given disease is before the malady has been contracted!

Granted, without argument, that such an ultimate development would bring about the almost total elimination of Boland's own profession, displaced by sanitary engineering and rising standards of health, but what of it? "Doc" Boland confessed to a "hankering" for two other fields of endeavor, anyhow—the legitimized faro-game of mining and the newly-developed field of the animated film!

This latter ambition was of recent origin. Like every other community where two or more men are gathered together, Toquima City boasted a thea-

tre where the silent "movies" pictured life as it is and is not with charming impartiality.

More; in the last few weeks a film company had been busy with reel and camera re-enacting scenes from the camp's earlier days—the days when the drama of casual existence moved almost as swiftly as the successive lengths of celluloid film now depicted them.

Boland had followed the actors in keen enjoyment and curiosity, scraping acquaintance wherever possible, and asking innumerable questions. Thus was he engaged on the day following the receipt of the Madron papers containing news of the meeting of the "Antis."

Seated on a basalt boulder on the sunny slope of the hill, with Dave Alderson beside him, Boland watched the filmatization of a scene which was to achieve fame and dollars under the title "The Jumping of the Wild-Horse Claim." As the actors rehearsed again and again in order to meet the idea of the director as to how a claim should be jumped Dave became bored at the reiteration and indulged in small-talk.

"Old Maje came back last night," he said.

"Which old Maje?" Boland asked indifferently.

"Don't you know Maje? The old swamper at the saloon—the good-for-nothing old Southerner who tries to create a whisky famine every morning!"

"Oh, yes, sure; noticed him around there a hundred times, but never asayed, examined or analyzed him very thoroughly. Where has he been?"

"If the Lord don't know any better than I do he's a lost man! He caught the night train out last Sunday, I think, and showed up again at midnight last night, all toggled out like a gambler in love. Kid Burke and I kidded him, but Maje didn't open up with any information. Burke says old Maje gets mail from somebody; I guess he's got folks somewhere, and maybe he went to make a little visit."

Dave was silent a moment, tossing pebbles at a diminutive lizard; then he smiled: "Speaking of Burke reminds me—the Kid came into the saloon this morning and squared up to the bar while Johnny the Hop was in the act of mooching a drink. The sight of them—the Kid as pink as a cherub and Johnny just about on his last legs from whiffing the old dream-stuff—kind of tickled me; I told them they ought to have their pictures taken—before and after taking!"

Boland looked speculatively, first at the motion-picture camera in the foreground, then at his companion. "Dave, I've got it!" he said, rising.

"I should say you have—got it bad, too!" Dave opined. "Let me see your tongue!"

The doctor complied, laughing, "I'll let you see my heels, too, as soon as they get through jumping the Wild-horse claim down there!"

"What's the idea?"

"I'm going to take that picture you mentioned—before and after taking—and a lot more just like it, and I'm going to make about the fastest prohibition literature out of them that this tame and barbered West ever saw!"

Dave considered this very gravely. "Doc," he said, "I'm with you clear around the track. But if the proprietors of that little 'Oasis' meal-ticket of mine get onto it, they will tie a can to me as big as that bucket they are hoisting up there at the Octoroon shaft!"

Boland sought the camera man and talked long and earnestly. An hour later he wired State headquarters for a very little assistance and a great deal of money to be furnished from the coffers of the Anti-Saloon League. Receiving authority to draw upon the organization for the necessary funds, the two amateurs proceeded about the "stage-setting."

First, they decided on a general summary of the liquor business as represented in Toquima City. To this end pictures were taken of the various saloons, so-called "barrel-houses," dance

halls and pseudo-Bohemian resorts of wine and revelry. Then the "drama" proper was begun.

It being impracticable to photograph the Oasis Bar in the night and early dawn, owing to difficulties in the way of successful lighting effects, Boland and Alderson reconstructed the night scenes, as nearly as possible, and enacted them during the afternoon hours, when the sunlight through the canvas sides of the structure was at its best. The big tent-house lent itself surprisingly well to the rôle of studio.

Kid Burke entered into the novel diversion with enthusiasm, Maje with a grumble or two which were stilled by the usual lubricant, and the many physical wrecks who called the Oasis "home" were subsidized easily by the promise of a few dollars. Questioned, as he often was, as to the purpose of all this demonstration, Boland would smile and mutter "local color," or if he happened to be very busy at the moment, "none of your doggoned business!"

When the film was finished and developed, after some little cutting, repeating of scenes and "smoothing" of rough spots in the plot by the director of the film company, Dave Alderson and the doctor voted themselves and their efforts to be unqualified successes.

"What I like about it, Dave," Boland explained, "is that there is no bunk, no 'mellerdrammer', about it; it depicts, faithfully and ruthlessly, the sordid, mean, pitiful and deplorable vice of a mining camp, than which there is no vice vicier! It isn't like a lot of those 'underworld' dramas, where a fellow sees, beneath a guise of uplift and sentimentality, the same old sensuality, the same old wickedness that is as alluring as it is untrue to the eternal verities, and realism *ad nauseam* pandering to a morbid desire which defeats the very purpose it purports to seek!"

"It isn't one of those plays wherein carousals are attractive, marital infidelities the rule rather than the exception, and the devil is a young man of

careless mien who seems to be daring a fellow to 'try it and see'! It is exactly what we meant it to be—a smash at the saloon business and the men who fatten off of it!"

"—And the 'villain' is one of the most polished actors I have ever seen!" Dave finished, at which Boland guffawed. Dave himself was the "villain" to whom allusion was made, and, like Maje the swamper, Dave had marred an otherwise excellent piece of histrionic work by his amateurish faults of self-consciousness and looking at the camera—"registering idiocy," the director somewhat unkindly had called it!

In all, the completed film consisted of four reels of about one thousand feet each. The first reel was taken up with the various scenes of the camp; the remaining three were devoted to the story, with the Oasis Bar as setting for the more important incidents. The thread of narrative was simple, but effectual.

Kid Burke, who performed as hero in the early portion of the scenario, was shown as a well-fed, healthy young prize-fighter who had had an ear chewed off by an opponent who thought the little rules evolved by the Marquis of Queensbury included permission to commit mayhem.

The hero refused drink again and again, finally yielding to the importunities and sneers of his comrades, becoming first the partaker of a casual glass, next a boon-comrade of more consistent drunkards, and finally a hungry, down-at-heel "moocher" sleeping or lounging in the filmed Oasis Bar.

Maje, the old swamper, performed throughout as "back-ground" and "local color," and managed some very creditable effects in the scenes which revealed him mopping the bar-room floor, hauling sleeping idlers here and there, or joining the revelers at the bar—here, especially, was Maje realistic to the point of enthusiasm, as he refused the warm tea which formed Kid Burke's beverage, and demanded

"Oasis Special," citing as precedent the fact that Richard Mansfield always carried realism to the smallest details! But Maje *would* look at the camera!

The downward path of Kid Burke, from total abstinence to figurative saturation, proceeded as the film progressed. In successive "sets" he was prosperous athlete, not-so-prosperous athlete, not prosperous at all, and, at length, not at all athletic, owing, presumably, to his growing tendency toward dipsomania.

At this point Johnny the Hop (made up, of course, to resemble Kid Burke as nearly as might be), became the hero, and traversed the descending trail. Descents were a specialty with Johnny; he did nothing else half so well. His antics before the camera, brought out with careful coaching by Boland and Kid Burke, were ludicrous, laughable, in the extreme; yet the cumulative impression derived by a spectator would not be humorous in the slightest degree—the smile of amusement gradually would be displaced by pity, the laugh of aroused interest by something akin to horror.

The last scene of all was a masterpiece. It revealed Johnny, at the lowest mental, moral and physical ebb, ejected from the saloon because his custom was no longer profitable, and left to wallow in the slush of the gutter. Here Doctor Boland made his debut as an Aesculapius of the screen, attending the victim through fatal "black pneumonia" brought about by alcoholism and exposure.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BORDER LINE.

M AJE drifted quite naturally back to his labor as porter in the Oasis Bar, and to his laxity of habit and deportment. For days after his return to the mining camp, his physical condition was far from satisfactory. The headache persisted, and, as liquor aggravated the symptom, he

avoided the fearful Oasis whisky as much as he could.

Another reason counseled abstinence; Maje, on examining the contents of his pockets, found some two hundred and sixty dollars in currency and silver—it must have been nearly three hundred, he thought, before the amount of his rail fare from the capital of the state to Toquima City had been deducted.

Whence this money had come, he had no means of ascertaining; probably Buford Carborough had acquired it by some secret process of "benevolent assimilation," but whether honestly or otherwise only Carborough knew, and Carborough was too far away across the gulf separating sanity from amnesia for his testimony to be taken in the premises.

Maje kept his own counsel in the matter, afraid to consult either David Alderson or Kid Burke lest they manifest a curiosity which he would find it difficult to satisfy. He spent none of the money, for two reasons; first, because that would entail explanations as to where he had gotten it, and second, because he wished to hold it as nearly intact as possible in case any claimant for the funds should appear.

However, after a week of deliberation during which no whisper of another owner reached his ears, he grasped his courage firmly and forwarded one of the hundred-dollar units to Caroline, with a great many pages of wistful love written into a long-winded dissertation which told nothing at all.

He would have sent more, but for the same reasons—there was no adequate way in which he could confess the possession of a large sum of money and at the same time render satisfactory excuses for longer delay in paying the promised visit to Virginia.

Virginia was out of the question; Maje the swamper was still a beast!

Another disturbing thought intruded. While Buford Carborough had been "gallivanting," some sort of

compact had been made, some contract entered into, perhaps, when he had been in the half-and-half state between his twin consciousnesses of swamper and "gallivanter," and the memory of which was common property of his brain in either individuality.

Indeed, right at this point Maje, for the first time in the history of his puzzling duality, made a near approach to the truth, in all probability. An alienist considering the manifestations of his delirium, mania or whatever it should be called, would have looked at the outset for just such symptoms.

In the transitory stages of this man's mind from one "self" to the other, he would ask, was there not a period, short or long, in which the mind was peculiarly susceptible to suggestion? Might not the excursion of Maje to Madron City have been the result of some mental stimulus, some hypnotic suggestion acting upon him when his mind was in a median-state of receptiveness?

Investigating under this theory, such a scientist would search the late past of his subject, seeking a word or an episode which would meet the supposititious case—and almost inevitably he would seize upon that early-morning conversation between the bartender, the physician and the drug-habitué, with its newspaper quotation, its diatribes against liquor, and the effect of these upon Maje the swamper, who had been spectator and auditor.

But there was no alienist; there was only old Maje, old, muddled, ineffectual Maje, who mopped the floors and cudgelled his brain in an effort to recollect that "promise." The effort was futile, except for one little gleam of light which dazzled for a moment and then left the murk darker than before; *his promise had had to do with the tenth of June!* The simple date, that was all he knew.

On the trip from Madron to Toquima City, the rails had clicked it out—"clickety-click, the tenth of June, the tenth of June, clickety-click"—until Maje had hated the unoffending day

like poison! In the succeeding days it became almost an obsession.

It worked insidiously into his little song about Josie and Joe, and he rhymed *June* and *moon* and *tune* and *soon* as if he had ceased being swamper and turned his attention to the writing of topical songs! He wanted to ask Dave Alderson what significance, if any, that special day held in chronology, but as always he shrank from possible prying ridicule.

He surreptitiously turned forward the calendar on the wall of the Oasis, and found, to his infinite surprise, that the cursed day was like all other days, not even being granted the distinction of being printed in red!

Maje knew but one cure for obsessions. He applied it, so persistently that Dave Alderson and Kid Burke consulted and again put into operation the little "card-index system" of drink enumeration.

Doctor Boland's motion-picture project had come as a welcome diversion, affording, to Dave, a means whereby Maje could be interested in something extraneous and thereby won away from overindulgence in whisky; and to Maje an opportunity to develop a large but hitherto-unsuspected talent for theatricals.

And here, again, an alienist would have found meat, in tracing the analogy between this histrionic ability and the brilliant magnetism of Buford Carborough. But Maje was no tracer of analogies; he was chiefly concerned with getting his mopping finished with the expenditure of the least possible physical effort, and with circumventing the officious interference of Kid Burke and "Davey" in his personal affairs, as exemplified by their cursed restrictions where his drinking was in question.

Why in the world should they be impelled to take his welfare upon their shoulders? Why not let him severely alone, to go to the devil after his own peculiar fashion? And what the reason for all this "ten nights in a bar-room" realistic photography of old Doc

Boland's—was he, Maje the swamper, to be made into a "horrible example," to warn other drunkards away from the drink that both cheers and inebriates? He took the matter up seriously with Davey.

"What's the object of these heah pichehs, Davey?" he asked as they rested after filming Johnny the Hop in a particularly unesthetic environment, "you an' Doc goin' join the ol' women in a Teme'ance crusade?"

"You bet we are, Maje! We are going to go as far as we can toward putting old Rum on the bum; we are going to make you good drinking men as lonely as Robinson Crusoe was on Thursday! We are going to show as many people as we can just how ugly an old brute you are when you are soaked to the eyebrows—"

Maje felt a tremor of panic. "Wheah—wheah you goin' show these heah films?" he quavered, "all oveh the United States?"

"Oh, no, just in this state, during the campaign."

Maje heaved a relieved sigh. It would not do; it would not do at all for his pictured features and environs to start traveling at random across the country—perhaps to end at some little show-house in Alexandria where Caroline would learn exactly the sort of "mercantile establishment" in which her father was employed!

Matters were not any too satisfactory where Caroline was concerned, anyhow. Her last letter had seemed to have, between the lines, a suggestion of reserve, almost of suspicion, as if at last she had commenced to pierce his translucent sophistries and to inquire as to real reasons for fundamental facts.

At intervals, for perhaps an hour at a stretch and generally after he had retired to his bed in the early forenoon, Maje seriously considered beginning to abstain from Oasis whisky, though the bare thought was sufficient to turn his blood to warm saline water which demanded imperiously to be diluted with

the "cohn-distillate," as he had facetiously termed it.

There had been many, many of these fine resolves in the past, some of them maintained for weeks or months, always to terminate because of some mental storm-period which weakened his will-power and resistance, or because of the damnable, insidious, irresistible fact that he wanted whisky with every molecule of him and the whisky always was there before him, waiting, beckoning, smiling, singing, luring.

Except for the ever-presented means of gratification, the appetite could have been fought off indefinitely. It was not hard to refuse one drink, or another, or a dozen; it was nearly impossible to be always and always on guard, when the very fact that he *was* on guard was sufficient to wake the craving if it were otherwise asleep!

Chancing one morning to see a telegram from Bishop Sumner at Madron City to Doctor Boland, Maje felt stirring again that queer inner-knowledge that here was a totally unknown but vaguely familiar name.

The word "Sumner" flashed before his eyes a genial, big man, a dinner-table and other grouped faces, as one sees a panoramic landscape in the fractional second of a lightning-bolt. It also brought dancing back the phrase he was coming to detest—"clickety-click—the tenth of June!"

He had heard that the slow dropping of water would wear away a slab of marble; might not the infinite repetition of a sequence of words wear away a man's brain in a similar manner?

He remembered the ancient jest of the man condemned to death who petitioned the governor of a state: "Governor, I've got to hang on Friday, and here it is Wednesday!" Maje knew not *what* was to happen to him on the fateful date, but, whatever it was, it was getting more and more imminent!

It was regrettable that John Barleycorn did not conduct a proprietary-medicine business; Maje the swamper would have sent in a very sweeping tes-

timonial. For with Maje, fiendish Oasis whisky cured obsessions, blues, hypochondria and all the evils to which flesh or spirit are heir! As the tenth of June approached, Maje began a new course of his old treatment.

Alderson, having affairs of his own and knowing nothing of Maje's financial wind-fall which had netted three hundred dollars in some secret fashion, thought that the ten cards on the cash-register would limit the swamper's indulgence. This time Maje did not need to employ subterfuge; he calmly walked to the lower town on the edge of the wind-swept *playa* and purchased what balm his hurts demanded.

"Maje is off on a bust again!" Kid Burke confided to Dave when he noted the swamper's uncertainty of walk.

"I wonder where the old tank gets it!" Dave speculated, "he hasn't been bothering me asking for booze, and I stopped letting him fill the service-bottles in the cellar—I'm sure that's where he got his skin full of whisky that time he went rambling across the country two or three months ago."

"I don't know," the Kid replied, "but I seen him and Johnny the Hop early last night hittin' the trail for Squatter-town like they'd been over the road before and knowed the blazes!"

"But where would they get the money to buy whisky down there? There's no philanthropists running those dance-halls!"

"I dunno. I guess mebbe Maje is usin' up his wages dat way instead of payin' his bills."

"Well, if *that's* what the old chuckawalla is up to, I will just hold his money and deal it out to him as he needs it!"

He did; but, contrary to expectation, Maje offered no demurrer. The old swamper accepted the new ruling meekly, and went his bibulous way. On the sixth of June, he sobered sufficiently to look about him, learned the date and was seized with unreasoning panic.

On the seventh, he was happily optimistic, singing about Josie and Joe as he worked his mop. On the eighth, he was morose, sodden. On the ninth he was gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIFTH ESTATE.

A FEW generations back, a man named Jean Jacques Rousseau evolved and proclaimed to the world his doctrine of the "Twin Estates"—*Les Deux Etats*; on the one hand, the Nobility, supposedly secure in their feudal rights as overlords, on the other hand, the Church, whose capital "C" acknowledged but one other equivalent letter in the alphabet, the capital "S" in State.

Years passed, and *Le Tiers Etat*, the "Third Estate" of the Proletariat, wrote its name largely in letters of blood upon the page of history, as chronicled by one Carlyle. In his turn, Carlyle the chronicler forecast the birth of another world-force which he called the "age of pamphlets," and which we, catch-word philosophers that we are, call the Press, or the "Fourth Estate."

It remained for the West to labor and bring forth a fifth, and we hailed it with jest and jibe, quip and smile, as our forebears hailed Copernicus or Columbus.

. . . And Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. . . ."

And Ruth (we use the name in the larger sense, as symbol for her sex, calmly disregarding the fact that she spoke to one of her fellow-militants)—Ruth has kept her word; has followed her "Caius" in the bright light and through the dusk, with hand now extended to aid him, now suppliant that

he might guide her when the way was rough.

Her touch has thrilled, and aided, and soothed him, from the first soft maternal finger his small atavistic hands clutched to the tear-accompanied aid in his final "little folding of the hands to sleep." She has been friend, counselor, comrade, following, or leading, even to the Poles, even to the polls. One tenet only Ruth omitted from her prophetic avowal—"Whither thou votest, I will vote!"

It was to this Dr. Boland had referred, that dawn in the Oasis Bar at Toquima City, when he shrewdly pointed out the mistaken policy of the Drayley administration in overlooking the "Fifth Estate," as exemplified in the "keynote" speech of Governor Drayley at the annual banquet of the Associated Vineyardists.

The physician, of course, did not mean to infer that the Drayley administration was so utterly imbecile as to disregard the fact that forty-five thousand women voters would voice their protest against existing political evils for the first time at the forthcoming November election.

He meant simply that the "keynote" speech was ill-advised and hasty, that Governor Drayley erred in stating his opinions so unequivocally at the beginning of a campaign and upon clean-cut moral issues, where public sentiment—at least that portion of public sentiment which has given to philology the beautiful word "suffragette"—of a surety would be antagonistic.

Already the pro-administration papers were commencing to "hedge"; editorial after editorial appeared in the *Madron Mail* venturing suggestions of compromise, of dissimulation, counseling temporary avoidance of the liquor issue.

"Let us equivocate, let us quibble; let us not act in haste, lest we have plenty of the leisure resulting from business stagnation in which to repent!" one imagined them saying.

As for the opposition journals, they

had seized upon the pretext offered as a Persian kitten upon a plush-covered catnip ball! Here was grist for the polished millstones of a horde of space, Sunday, editorial and cartoon men, alert for the first smell of the mixed-metaphorical fray!

Governor Drayley was a firm believer in the value of publicity; to be cartooned, caricatured and "written up" was "all in the game" and desirable; but the governor began to have an uncomfortable feeling that he was being made ridiculous—a far different thing, and not at all desirable—when the *Morning Advertiser* commenced its famous series of day-to-day cartoons entitled "So the people may know!"

The *Advertiser*, owned outright by Bishop Sumner, was the official organ of the Anti-Saloon League, locally known as "the Antis." Asked "Anti what?" Drayley probably would have answered, "Anti-everything—administration, progress, development and constructive politics!"

Sumner, if the same question had been put to him, probably would have said, "Anti what? Anti-graft, anti-saloon, anti-corruption—yes, if you will have it so, anti-administration!"

Bishop Sumner owned the *Advertiser*, and dictated its policies; but the worthy churchman himself bowed in fealty to a higher will, that of the sweet-faced lady who graced his household. Here entered the far-famed feminist movement; in other words, the "State Non-partizan Suffrage Alliance," of which Mrs. Sumner was temporary president.

The *Advertiser* quite as a matter of course became the official spokesman for the inceptive alliance, greeting its advent with a blare of figurative trumpets. The *Mail* perforce accepted the claim of Bishop Sumner's paper, but found cause for resentment in the loss of its catch-word nickname, when the *Advertiser* began to give equal space to the women, the day's news and the Anti-Saloon League (named in the order of their relative importance).

The "Aunties," the *Mail* had termed the prohibitionists with glee; now they were forced to discontinue use of the derisive appellation, for fear of ambiguity—it might smack of impertinence if Mrs. Sumner and the ladies associated with her should consider the epithet addressed to them!

About June first, or, in other words, about ten days previous to the organization-meeting of the Suffrage Alliance, the *Advertiser* began to allot to the feminists their share of daily space; your true woman of the world, be she social leader or clubwoman or politician, loves her publicity, and the paper meant to see that this want should be filled, fully and capably.

The names, pictures and articles of Mrs. Sumner and the other temporary officers shared honors with the orator of the swiftly approaching day, Buford Carborough. By dawn of the ninth of the month, the fame of the brilliant southerner was at its zenith.

Strange, no word from Carborough had been received to date, and no one in or about the capital had seen him since the evening following his masterly address to the members of the Anti-Saloon League; but the orator had given assurance that nothing but the pressure of personal or business affairs should hinder his appearance in June, and undoubtedly he would have advised them of such a contingency in plenty of time to secure another speaker in his stead.

Bishop Sumner and the railroad president, John Merling, went ahead assisting in the preparations for the feminine "feast of reason and flow of soul" with an easy confidence that Carborough would not fail them.

It must not be supposed that Buford Carborough had been accepted without the most rigid investigation as "one of us" by the bishop, his family and his associates. Far from it. The day following the meeting of the Anti-Saloon League Sumner had wired the Washington daily upon which the *Advertiser* depended for current news at

the national capital, asking that a reporter be assigned to cover the life of Buford Carborough.

The orator had spoken of Alexandria, Virginia, and Sumner knew that this city was just across the Potomac from Washington. In wiring for information he was careful to ask that the correspondence be kept secret, and that no prying into family affairs should be done.

A night-lettergram one day later brought the desired information. Translated from "journalese" into English, it was to the effect that the Carboroughs were an old and respected family of Virginia, of which the present Buford Fourth was the sole surviving member along the line of direct male descent.

Carborough had graduated from Yale, *cum laude*, in "ninety-four," and had commenced to practice law in his home town. Married one year later to Caroline Buller; one child, a girl, now twenty years of age. Wife and daughter living in Alexandria, very quietly, giving rise to the supposition of poverty, which was denied by the mother and admitted by the daughter in a private interview.

The reporter suspected family discord resulting in a separation, although this was denied by the daughter, who said her father was expected in Alexandria for a visit. Pictures had been secured by the staff photographer of mother, daughter, home and surroundings, and if notified the Washington paper would be glad to furnish any amount of Sunday stuff desired at the usual rates.

All very satisfactory, and exact verification of what Carborough himself had told them, the bishop admitted with a slight feeling of shame at his inquisitiveness.

In his attempt to save words in telegraph tolls (and, possibly, because of the hesitancy of a metropolitan newspaperman to admit that he had been baffled at every turn of his inquiry by two very charming women), the re-

porter had said nothing about the lapse of years between the graduation of Buford Carborough and the present—an oversight which Bishop Sumner naturally failed to perceive.

However, by reference to the registration-lists of the State for the past few years Merling readily found the name of Carborough among the registered voters in Lotus County, and this ended their prying.

Poverty? Yes, there could be little doubt of that; Carborough's clothes before the automobile accident had been threadbare, although neatly kept and scrupulously clean except for the soiling it received in the street. But poverty in this big west was no disgrace; Merling himself could remember many, many days in his career when he had gone hungry to sleep!

In his address before the Anti-saloon League, Buford Carborough had shown himself a man of rigid principles and the ability to present those principles forcibly and well. In the home of the bishop he had been affable, courteous and as poised as if he were the master of millions instead of a man in worn clothing whom they had extricated from under the wheels of a car.

If Carborough had left home because of marital infelicity, that also was of no consequence in this connection; the reporter said that the daughter knew exactly where her father was, and that she expected him home at any time; this effectually disproved any possible accusation of willful neglect or desertion on the part of the southerner. In fact, after the investigation, Carborough stood higher in the estimation of his two friends than before.

Inquiry at the Madron Hotel revealed the fact that Carborough had departed from the capital on the morning after the meeting of the "Aunties," leaving no address for mail to be forwarded and no inkling as to his destination.

Sumner proceeded to forget the orator and prepared for the two forthcoming conventions, of the Suffrage Alli-

ance on the tenth and the Non-partizan Fusion on the eleventh of June.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TENTH OF JUNE.

IT was a great speech.

Words are but faulty tools with which to build visualizations of other words; phrases limp under the strain of over-loads; superlatives are only comparative, after all; and hyperbole scrambles metaphor into hopeless miscuity approaching that into which one Humpty Dumpty of fable is purported to have fallen; these are the limitations of the chronicler who has no colors nor intonations nor gestures to aid him.

There is no unit by which oratory may be calibrated, no turn of phrase to describe it. The words of Bob Connell, in the city-room of the *Advertiser*, are as good as any.

"It was big stuff, boys," said Bob, who ordinarily was not impressed by anything under the shining sun, "big, fine, sob-stuff, with a kick in it like that in the link-motion gears of the justly-famed Missouri mule! That Carborough is a wonder; listen to me, because I am a prophet, though, as usual, without honor: he's a big man, and he's bound for the top of the heap!"

This was fulsome praise, coming as it did from Bob the cynical.

There is very little need for description; the speech of Buford Carborough Fourth, before the Suffrage Alliance, or fragmentary portions of it, are as familiar to the reader as the words of Antony above his dead friend, or those of Rienzi to his compatriots.

Who has not heard, as an instance, the simple, sheer poetry of his opening lines, printed a thousand times since that tenth of June under the caption "Motherhood" or "Woman"? Who that would see first here (if we should render the speech *verbatim*), his closing words on "Drink, the Curse of Nations!" Surely, no one. More than

surely, no one who was present in the Madron Auditorium that day.

Carborough had reached the capital city in the morning, had purchased a complete change of linen and betaken himself to the barber's, as on the occasion of his former visit. Not until these formalities had been concluded did he call up Bishop Sumner. The latter, having allowed himself to become anxious at not hearing from the man who had changed the meeting of the Anti-saloon League from a threatened failure to a pronounced success, had rushed to the hotel and carried Carborough to his home.

A "stag" luncheon negotiated—Mrs. Sumner being too deeply engrossed in affairs of state for the lesser housewifely duties—the two men had taken their way leisurely to the Auditorium, stopping in at the railroad offices for John Merling. The president of the Sierra Western was unfeignedly glad to see the southerner, his eyes lighting with an affection as genuine as it had been quick in incubation.

"Ah, there, Mr. Carborough, seeing you is like meeting a boy from the old swimming-hole, sir! How are you?"

"Fine, Misteh Merling, seh, thank you, seh—fit as a fiddle, as they say down ouh way; and you all, seh?"

Merling smiled at the colloquialism, at the friendly solicitude, at the fine earnestness of the southerner's courtesy which allowed just a shade of anxiety to reflect in his voice as if it mattered greatly whether or not the railroad man was "fit as a fiddle," too!

The audience, as they entered the assembly-hall and traversed the center aisle to their seats on the stage, presented a humorously-apparent reversal of the order which had obtained at the meeting of the Anti-saloon League in April. Now, the women were grouped, with the tense faces of amateur arbiters of destiny, on the main floor; the men filled the gallery, curious as to how the representatives of forty-five thousand neoteric electors would wield their power.

The election of permanent officers, choosing of standing committees and routine transactions having been finished at the business-session of the Suffrage Alliance in the forenoon, nothing remained except this, the great public ratification of the fact that the State Suffrage Alliance was a-borning.

Mrs. Sumner spoke, briefly; introduced the subsequent speakers, and finally Mr. Carborough, who came to the edge of the platform as a *crescendo* of applause arose from floor and balcony.

Buford Carborough was true to the best traditions of a southern chivalry, which is very real despite the jibes of outlanders and the tiresome pretense of that strange not-fish-not-fowl, the "professional southerner."

His introduction, as has been said, was a splendid tribute to womanhood. Next came an erudite historical study, tracing feminism from the first vague manifestations in the concepts of savage races to the doctrines of equality in suffrage, economics and education; from the practices of matriarchism to the near-ultimate of modern sex-balance.

Exhausting this topic—dwelling not too long lest he become tedious—he drifted gradually to the subject nearest the hearts of all, drink, more especially in its relation to the life of woman through the pages of history.

Her part, he said, had been the passive one; always had she paid, though the debt contracted had been another's; she had reaped the whirlwind, even though her "Caius" had usurped the function of sowing the wind of thoughtless pleasure. At last it was to be given her to have a voice in the discussion, a ballot in the decision; it remained to see how wisely she would utilize these prerogatives.

At this point, as at an analogous stage in Carborough's impromptu effort before the Anti-saloon League, the subconscious, abeyant personality of Maje the swamper intruded, and the orator sketched for his hearers a de-

lineation, not of Maje, the drink-cursed wanderer, but of a woman, and of her relation to that wanderer—her faith, her love and ultimate despair.

"Sob stuff," Bob Connell called it. "Sob stuff?" . . . Yes. Sob stuff, also, were the three pitiful crosses, side by side on Calvary; so, too, the words uttered in the Garden of Gethsemane, and those spoken on the field of Gettysburg!

Carborough ended and sat down amid a silence more eloquent than tumultuous applause.

The spell cast by the orator upon his hearers was succeeded by a hum of conversation and restlessness. The men and women in the circle of chairs on the stage turned curious eyes upon Mrs. Sumner, whose "next move" it seemed to be. That estimable lady was gazing out across the hall, rapt in some introspective contemplation of her own.

She saw not the auditorium, not her fellow-members of the Suffrage Alliance; she was looking at herself, among imagined scenes and, judging from the smile that flickered and disappeared, whatever she saw was very pleasant. Her lips moved; an expert lip-reader might have discerned the words, "Mary Sumner, maker of Governors!"

To-morrow, the eleventh of June, would witness the primary or nominating convention of the Non-partizan Fusion, in which an entire State ticket, from governor to clerk of the Supreme Court, would be placed in the field. Why not seize upon this, the "psychological moment," if ever there existed such a division of time, to put forward a man for the executive chair; a man behind whom they could marshal at least a majority of the feminine votes?

Such a man, in the very nature of things, would not forget the means whereby his name had been presented; again, he would be pledged, by his acceptance of the candidacy, to support suffrage, school reform and uplift legislation. The addition of the Alliance to the forces of the Non-partizans would strengthen both, and, through

them, the Temperance agitation, which was to be the paramount issue of the campaign.

Finally, the incident would redound to the *personal* credit of him or her who should broach the nomination. In short—why not launch the “boom” of Buford Carborough for governor of the State, here and now?

The bishop, seeing that his wife had forgotten her duty, rose and would have tip-toed across to her side, but she recovered her presence of mind, and reached for her gavel.

“Fellow members and State representatives of the Suffrage Alliance,” she said evenly and clearly, “I have the honor to propose to you, and to request a motion to the effect that we, as an organization banded together for the good of the commonwealth, pledge ourselves to support the Non-partizan State ticket in the November election; provided, the convention of that party shall incorporate within its platform such bills for school, suffrage and purity-of-election laws as our committee on legislation shall submit; and provided further, the said party at its convention to be held in this hall to-morrow shall nominate for Governor of the State the Honorable Buford Carborough, of Lotus County!”

While his wife was speaking Bishop Sumner gathered the trend of her thought. Quietly he pinched the arm of John Merling and led the mystified railroad president into the wings.

Merling went reluctantly, holding back until he caught the name “Carborough” at the end of the surprising verbal bomb-shell Mrs. Sumner was igniting.

“Well, what do you think of *that*?” Sumner demanded.

“I think,” Merling was running his fingers slowly through his gray thatch, the while a slow smile widened across his face, “I think Mary Sumner has more sense and knows more politics than the whole kit and kiboodle of us!”

Sumner considered this gravely. “So do I,” he said.

As for Buford Carborough, he sat as though stunned for a long interval. The effort of his oration had left him weak and unnerved, his mind sluggish to receive so startling an impression.

Could it be that he had heard aright, he wondered—had this regal woman really proposed his name for the highest executive office of a state? Or was it simply another of the subconscious murmurings which caused him at times to doubt his own sanity?

Furtively he pinched his leg to see if his sensory perceptions were normal; they were, beyond doubt. He tried to cast back along his career, but that was more difficult; only a dozen short periods of time could be recalled with any degree of clearness and, strangely enough, nearly all of those periods revealed Buford Carborough in a position analogous to the one in which he found himself now—the central figure in a large concourse of people, the dominant personality in gatherings where to attain that eminence required stamina, intellectuality and moral fiber above the ordinary.

True, there were long periods during which the individuality of Buford Carborough seemed to become as nebulous as the *genii* of a hasheesh dream, spaces of time covering the lapse of years for which there was no semblance of memory save the curious, continual intrusion of that other man, with the face of Buford Carborough but with the soul, tastes and moral principles of a beast of the field.

It was all fragmentary, enigmatic—a bit of landscape here, a snatch of conversation there; now a fragment of memory returning vivid and clean-cut as an etching, and now a phantasmagoria of scenes and faces and episodes in confusing heterogeneity.

Even here, with his new-found friends, Merling, Bishop Sumner and his wife and these other members of the Suffrage Alliance, it all seemed unreal, theatrical, the good people moving and talking like puppets responding to strings held by an unseen hand,

while he, Buford Carborough, sat in a position apart and studied, analyzed, classified them.

He pinched his leg again, wishing that he might subject his brain to some similar test to find if it, too, were really awake, or only dreaming through a trance from which he presently would recover consciousness and find himself again the old, battered hulk of a man who appeared and reappeared in the back-ground of his mind!

Yet why, he thought, was it necessary for him thus to falter, thus to question the motives and inner reasons which lay behind his enigma? To Bishop Sumner and John Merling, bowing and smiling encouragement over there at the side of the stage, he was accepted, acclaimed as Buford Carborough, the leader in a state's fight for reform in politics.

To these hundreds of men and women before him he was the man of the hour. While that hour should last, why not realize to the fullest the ideals of which the present enthusiasm was the voice?

Suddenly the resolve was made. Let the unborn future take care of its unthought-of contingencies; there was a fight to be waged, a struggle which would strain every resource of the Non-partizan forces, and it would be the part of a coward to refuse the proffered leadership in the campaign.

This cogitation had taken place within the space of a few moments. Even as Carborough rose Bishop Sumner and John Merling entered from the side and crossed to the orator. At sight of the churchman and the magnate shaking hands with Carborough in silent concurrence with the sentiments expressed by Mrs. Sumner, the cheering, loud enough before, became deafening.

Tears stood in the southerner's eyes as he walked forward and raised his arm for silence. But the time for silence was past, and not a word he uttered could have been heard five feet away. He stood uncertain, crying with

nervousness and happiness. Which, perhaps, was as effective as many speeches!

CHAPTER XV.

FOR GOVERNOR, BUFORD CARBOROUGH.

WHERE are the conventions of yesterday? The winds of initiative and referendum have blown them nearly all away—nearly, but not quite, all. In one or two commonwealths the wheels of the old political machine still whirl, grinding out what grist the voice of the "boss" directs, but even here the voice has grown strangely querulous, a plaintive whine replacing the ancient growl.

Twice had the law for initiative, referendum and recall passed the Legislature during the Drayley administration, each time to meet the "thumbs down" of gubernatorial veto; Governor Drayley had no intention of "letting the people rule" while a mere scratch of his pen could avert such a fell catastrophe!

It was easy to pack a convention with sympathetic "insiders;" it might prove more difficult to convince a whole electorate at the polls that the phrase "business administration on sane, conservative lines" was other than a catchword of very small relative significance!

Bishop Fred Sumner had fought tooth and nail for the passage of the referendum measures; but, under the unlooked-for turn of events brought about by Mrs. Sumner's startling advocacy of Buford Carborough, the bishop found cause to revise his sentiments.

He had meant unobtrusively to lend his support to the cause of Prohibition, and to give such space in the columns of the *Advertiser* as should seem warranted. Further than that, he had planned and hoped only that "timber" for state offices would be found which would deserve and attain victory at the election.

Merling and he had gone over the available material from which candidates might be selected many times during the spring months, without reaching any very definite conclusion. Sumner himself had been mentioned as a possibility, as also had Merling, who was well known throughout the state as a strong advocate of temperance enforcement.

But it is a curious fact, of which both of them were fully cognizant, that neither churchmen, editors nor millionaires make winning political candidates, possibly because the nature of their callings conduces toward unpopularity in certain circles.

Up to now, the most likely man in the state for the executive nomination had been Dr. J. M. Boland of Toquima City, one of the old "war-horses" of the parties going to make up the Non-partizan Fusion. Boland had signified his desire to run for an office, but steadfastly had refused to head the ticket, even though Sumner had brought pressure to bear in an attempt to overcome the physician's scruples of modesty.

Boland undoubtedly would get the nomination he wished—that of Lieutenant Governor, and he remained unshaken in the resolve not to "shoot too high," as he expressed it in letters to the bishop at state headquarters. Boland, at present was in the northern part of the state, laboring on his motion-picture project, and his latest letters had expressed uncertainty as to his attendance at the caucus.

Failing to convince Boland that success at the polls depended upon his candidacy, Sumner had turned elsewhere. Samuel Bayless, a banker of Pickford, would have accepted the nomination, but Sumner looked with misgiving upon this, too.

What the Non-partizans needed was not a solid, prosaic business-man; they required a candidate capable of stirring people, of firing their imaginations and winning their hearts. Such a man suddenly had sprung into the lime-

light at the last moment—Buford Carborough.

Now at last Bishop Sumner realized the importance of being able to dictate to a convention, without the tedious and cumbersome process of allowing the rank and file of voters to designate their choice of candidates. He occupied that position, and he meant to make the most of it.

On the morning of the eleventh of June he called John Merling at the railroad offices, asking for an immediate conference. There had been no opportunity for discussion on the preceding evening, as a round of receptions, dinners and dances had followed the suffrage demonstration.

Merling arrived and plunged into the midst of things, as was his wont. "Morning, Fred," he greeted, "has the governor shown up yet?"

"Good morning, John—no, governor Carborough isn't here yet, but I 'phoned him, and he said he would come at once."

Merling drew up a chair, and lowered his voice confidentially. "Fred," he said, "I am afraid the southerner is going to jump the hurdles!"

"What do you mean—have you seen him?"

"No-o, I'm simply putting two and two together. Carborough has had a night of sober thought, and I am afraid he will want to back down, that's all."

"But why—why should he?"

"Well, for one reason, he will be scared stiff; for another, he is as poor as a church-mouse and as proud as the devil, saving your presence!"

"How do you know all this?"

Merling confessed what he had learned at the Sierra Western Hospital on the day of the automobile accident; that the orator's clothing had been threadbare, his linen frayed, and that there had been precious little of the coin of the realm in the pockets. But, characteristically, he made no mention of his own little "donation for current expenses," inserted into the new habiliments they had purchased.

"That is bad," Sumner shook his head gravely.

"Not as bad as it might be."

"No?"

"No. I've got a bank-roll big enough to choke an elephant. I'll furnish the money; you must see to it that it reaches Carborough."

"Why don't you do your own charitable work?"

"Simply because I could not get across with it. I am a rich railroader, with nothing to redeem me but my money, from the standpoint of Carborough, and he would consider neither a loan nor a gift from me—he would think it was tainted Sierra Western slush-funds."

"It must be put up to him as coming directly from party funds, as a loan; that is the only condition under which he would accept, I am certain. To save your conscience in the matter, I hereby donate ten thousand dollars to you, as custodian for the Non-parties, to use as you see fit. Go to it!"

"Maybe my conscience is not so tender as you think!" Sumner replied whimsically, "however, I'll make the attempt."

When the maid announced the orator, Sumner commenced as soon as the greetings had been dispensed with. "Have you had your breakfast, Mr. Carborough?"

"Oh, yes, Bishop Sumneh, hohs ago, thank yo'!" Carborough looked as fresh as if he had slept like a baby; in reality, he had passed a sleepless night, twisting and turning in a nervousness that would not yield to the desperate counting of many thousand sheep; but the ministrations of a *masseur* had removed all traces of exhaustion, leaving a much more healthy color in cheeks and lips.

"Well, then, we can get right down to business: If John Merling can stand it to have money mentioned in his presence without getting out his sandbag, I would like to discuss campaign funds for a moment."

"You know, Mr. Carborough, under

the laws of this state all campaign contributions must be published in the form of affidavits by candidates. For this reason, all expenses connected with the campaign of the Non-partizan Fusion are to be paid from the offices of the State Central Committee out of a general fund.

"As regards your personal expenses, should we be able to secure the nomination, we would wish that you draw upon the committee for any sums necessary; or, better still, I can see to it that sufficient funds will be deposited to your credit, and you may use any or all of it, as you see fit, rendering an accounting whenever that is convenient."

"I do not know anything about your personal circumstances, and do not wish to know anything; I simply am telling you of our plans, not only in the case of the gubernatorial candidate, but for all the state offices in which we are interested."

Carborough thought this over carefully. As Merling had surmised, he had come here prepared to refuse the nomination because of the financial expenditure which would be necessary and which he was totally unable to meet.

He had tried to think it out in the small hours of the night, but had made slow headway, as that dull, persistent frontal headache muddled his thoughts, and the same vagueness of perception he had noted in the afternoon became worse as the night wore on. Finally he had given it up, no nearer a solution than when he had commenced.

Now, in the light of morning and logic, finances did not loom so largely portentous, especially after Bishop Sumner had explained. Carborough decided to ask another question.

"Bishop Sumneh, seh, this peshonal fund yo' speak of: would that be in the natuh of a loan, to be repaid at some definite time in the futuh?"

"Yes, surely, if you would prefer to put it upon that basis." Sumner's voice held a world of complete indifference. Seeing that the southerner

was wavering, Merling intruded a word. "Mr. Carborough," he said hesitantly, "I would be very glad, as a slight personal favor, to go with you on a note for the amount advanced—I think my name would be good for any sum of that magnitude, wouldn't it, Fred?"

"Well," Sumner grinned, "I would have to look you up first, John, but I think it very probable."

The facetious tenor of their remarks was happily chosen; it impressed upon Carborough, as no amount of argument would have done, that the financial aspect of the matter at hand was of slight consequence, a relatively unimportant but necessary detail.

Sumner was too wise to wait for a definite answer; he went ahead, taking it for granted that the point was settled. Carborough, not knowing how to reopen the subject without seeming to draw too fine distinctions, was perforce content, and dropped the matter.

"Theh is anotheh thing of which I must speak," he said. "I have promised my lil gal in Vuhginia that I would pay them a visit. Would that intehfeah with any of yo' plans, gentlemen?"

"Why, no, Mr. Carborough, I don't see how that would cause any trouble. How long do you intend to remain away?"

"Oh, six weeks, two months at the outside, I should say; I must attend to some mattehs heah befo' I leave, then spend a month oh two with my family, and pe'haps bring them with me when I retuhn in the fall, seh."

Sumner and Merling conferred. In the likely event of Carborough securing the nomination his presence in the early months of the campaign was not necessary. The Non-partizan campaign could be conducted by the central committee as ably and well as if he were on the ground. No possible objection could be made, they assured him.

"Now that we have settled as to what we will do when we have grabbed this nomination," said Merling, looking around for his hat, "let's go get it!"

The convention, after the excitement and furore of the suffrage rally, partook of the nature of an anti-climax. To all intents and purposes Buford Carborough had been nominated the day before, by Mrs. Sumner, and one ballot after his name was presented for consideration by the delegates merely confirmed her choice.

Mr. Bayless withdrew his name, and any hurt he might feel was salved by presenting him with the nomination for State Treasurer. At five in the afternoon the *Advertiser* published a special edition giving the complete "slate" of the Non-partizan Fusion; Buford Carborough, candidate for Governor; J. M. Boland, not present, but nominated by Mr. Merling, for Lieutenant-Governor, the various lesser state offices being distributed with a view toward allotting patronage to the several political districts according to population.

For the first time in the history of the state a non-partizan reform ticket entered the field as a political factor commanding respect.

Merling, Sumner and Carborough quitted the auditorium together.

"Mr. Carborough," Merling said as they stood on the curb, "I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart—go in and win! We all will stand behind you to the last gasp! Now, I have to go up the line this afternoon. My car will be coupled onto the 'Limited,' and Fred is going with me as far as Pickford. Can't you join us?"

Carborough could not rouse any answering enthusiasm. He felt old, old as the granite cobblestones at his feet. As always, the excitement and mental labor of the day brought about a physical and nervous reaction. He was certain that a rail trip, even on the palatial Columbine, John Merling's private car, would make him car-sick—there was a suggestion of nausea at the mere thought of it.

He wanted sleep, sleep, sleep—hours, days, weeks of complete oblivion to overcome the ragged feeling

and recover his poise. He excused himself as gently as possible, and urged the bishop and the president of the Sierra Western to make haste.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LIGHT FADES.

ALONE and somewhat confused by the busy thoroughfare, Carborough wandered at random about the streets, that most forlorn of human bipeds, a stranger in a city.

Yet he found on close self-analysis that the feeling of loneliness was inside himself, a vast nostalgia for the Carolines, mother and daughter, to whom he could have opened his heart and from whom he might receive sympathy, homage, love, and the sweet "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," which would mean more than the congratulations of a thousand political admirers.

Of this last form of adulation there was sufficient and to spare; as he passed a group of men at a corner one whispered to another: "That's him, that's Carborough—'Rah for Carborough!'" and the cheer, "'Rah, 'rah, 'rah for Carborough!'" spread through the crowd as the object of their cheers doffed his hat and smiled in friendly fashion.

Man after man whom he never before had seen stopped him, slapped him uncomfortably hard upon the back and introduced him one to another, magnifying his little meed of fame after the manner of ward politicians.

The bedlam of traffic was deafening to his unaccustomed ears, but it, too, held something of pleasure, for on the tongues of passersby, in the voices of newsboys, on bulletin boards or the blackboards of newspaper or stock broker's office the name of "Carborough, Non-partizan candidate," was blazoned or heralded.

This was fame, and Buford Carborough, Fourth, was not less susceptible to the glamour than another. He bought

copies of the extra edition of the *Advertiser*, and almost fainted with surprise; on the front page were pictures, faithful to the last detail, of Caroline his wife and Caroline his daughter, the water-front below Alexandria and the old home!

Where in all the world had these enterprising newspapermen secured their material upon such short notice. It was inexplicable. Also it increased his homesick feeling almost to the point of physical pain. He felt the need of communion with "lil Cah'line." First he entered the newspaper office, bought other copies of the edition, ready-wrapped for mailing, and dropped them into the mailbox; then he subscribed for the regular paper to be sent to Alexandria, and returned to the Madron Hotel.

He wrote briefly to Caroline, telling his good fortune and mailing a check upon his new bank account. The letter was little more than an eulogy of Bishop Sumner and John Merling, closing with a word of love and the expressed hope of seeing them very soon.

After mailing the letter he trudged the streets in the gathering dusk, more lonely than ever because of the mental associations called to mind as he wrote. He stopped at a drug store, purchased aspirin for his aching head, and walked on and on.

One by one the incandescents flashed into being; the daytime clang gave way to evening sounds of taxicab and homing crowd. But to Buford Carborough the scene was of a sudden unreal. Despite the drug the headache persisted, the sense of detachment from his surroundings became more pronounced.

Happening to pass a restaurant, a feeling of familiarity caused him to hesitate and attempt to correlate impressions. By an effort he remembered the place; it was here that he and Sumner and Merling had eaten luncheon on the day of the automobile accident.

How long ago it seemed! Looking back, it was as if one remembered a

vista of the Quaternary, seen during some previous incarnation. That day in Madron City, and a scant half dozen other days, stood out in recollection like red threads in the drab woof of a carpet, and even they were vague, as though the red threads were frayed and faded by the years.

He entered the restaurant, called for a private room, ordered a tureen of clear soup and a chop, and dropped his head upon his arm. He was tired, tired to the very soul, and sick and miserable and old.

The waiter brought his chop, and stood awaiting instructions, until the orator, at a loss as to what the man wanted, called for his check, paid it and dismissed the servitor. He tasted the food, desisting at once, for he felt no hunger.

The room seemed stiflingly hot. The music of a string orchestra out in the main dining room was punctuated by a steady, *tempo*-shattering "boom-boom" as of a misplaced bass-drum, but Carborough knew that the sound was entirely within his own body.

His eyes burned, the lids twitching as if he were trying to wink at his face, reflected in the *carafe*; his nerves seemed ragged, frayed, and he knew that he could not sleep, although he felt that he had been continuously awake through the lifetime of a Wandering Jew.

He must summon all his faculties and win away from this place before suffocation ensued. He got to his feet, walked very carefully to the front of the restaurant—a hundred miles of narrow lanes between tables and staring diners, he thought, and out into the street.

Turning south because the glare of incandescence hurt his eyes, he walked to the memorial bridge across the Madron River, and leaned upon the concrete parapet, soothed by the ripple beneath. His nerves gradually quieted, his head fell forward, and he seemed to sleep.

Rousing himself as he choked for

breath, he grasped one corner of his collar and tore it from his neck, so that he might breathe. The high beaver hat slipping onto the parapet, he examined it with casual interest, then dropped it into the black water, smiling as it bobbed along and was lost in the gloom. Then he went to sleep again.

In an hour a policeman tapped him upon the arm. "Come, come, move on!" he said, not unkindly. "This is no lodging house, sir!"

Carborough looked at him vacantly. "What—what did you-all say, seh?"

"I say, you will have to hump along, sir. Where did you stop?"

"At—at the Oasis Bah, seh."

"The which?"

"The Oasis Bah, seh."

"I don't know any bar of that name here," the officer said. "Where is your hat?"

"I—I lost it—in the riveh, seh!" He thought this as good an explanation as any; in truth, he had not the faintest recollection where the hat was, or where he himself was, for the matter of that!

"I don't know any Oasis Bar in Madron!" his interrogator was saying. "Where is it?"

"In Toquima City, seh. I—I meant I belong in the Oasis Bah in Toquima City, seh. Can you tell me wheah you and I can go and get-lil drink, officeh?"

"Why, you can get a drink down here a block or so—I don't drink—while I am on shift."

Thinking swiftly, Maje the swamper had been able to gather his whereabouts from the other's mention of the city, and his answer evidently had been sufficiently coherent to satisfy the minion of Madron's law.

"Good night, sir!" the blue-coated policeman saluted and passed on.

Maje skirted the business section, and at length reached the railroad yards and the haven of a cheap saloon. As walking was warm work, he had removed his frock coat and carried it, folded carefully, on one arm. Somewhat later he left the place, after hav-

ing fortified the inner man with a great deal of that which he carried under his arm in a parcel wrapped in his coat. He paused, considered for a few moments, then trudged away down the track.

Whether or not he intended to walk the two hundred and seventy miles to Toquima City is not known. If so, he had traversed only some three miles before he repented of his bargain. He sat on a rail, pulled the cork from his bottle, threw the cork into the sage with true Rabelaisian prodigality, and toasted the high Sierras which guarded the sleeping Madron Valley. Then he staggered on, the bottle in one hand, his coat in the other.

His feet became sore, and he got down and crawled toward a switch lamp which looked at him from a green eye—two green eyes—a little way down the track. It was the junction of the southern route with the main line of the Sierra Western, but Maje did not know that. He waited, entertaining himself as best he could, until a

freight train flashed into view coming from the west.

Maje climbed laboriously, removed the switch light, turned the red eye to the approaching headlight and swung it widely.

"What's the matter?" the conductor asked, running up breathlessly.

"Nothin' the matteh, seh," Maje mollified him; "I just want to get abo'd, seh!"

"Well, I'll be— Got any money?"

"Yes, seh, plenty of it!" Maje proved his assertion by revealing a handful of legal tender.

"All right, get on. We had to stop here and turn the switch anyway, or else I would take a fall out of you!"

Maje smiled his little ingratiating grin. "Oh, now, seh, you wouldn't spect a man to stay out heah in the brush all night, would you?"

The conductor laughed. "Turn her loose, Casey!" he called to the engineer. "This old guy stops trains like he was a personal pal of old John Merling's!"

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.



IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

BY JAMES S. RYAN

WHEN Shakespeare wrote and Burbage played,
No scenic splendors made a show,
No meretricious "props" delayed
The nightly psychic tidal flow.

There were no big electric signs
Atop of tower or steeple
When Burbage sang the poet's lines
And Shakespeare charmed the people.

The majesty of human rage,
The softest fancy's flight
Required no overgilded stage
The people to delight.

When Burbage played a Shakespeare part
He must have felt it in his heart!

Twixt Devil and Deep Sea

by Captain A.E. Dingle

HIS baptismal entry read "Samuel Blodger"; among the riffraff of the Far East, the scene of his later efforts to scratch a living out of his kind without breaking his nails or blistering his palms,

he was known as "The Cheery Wrong 'Un." The "Cheery" part of his *nom de crook* was an outward, uncrackable veneer, his chief stock-in-trade; the "Wrong"-ness in him was inherent and ineradicable.

And Sam was in a bad mess. As a gambler to whom a fifth or sixth ace was never superfluous, finding his fleecy lambs in native dens among illicit pearlers, opium smugglers, renegade European skippers of Chinese near-pirates and the like, naturally he took the rough with the smooth. An occasional beating up was to be expected; a black eye or a hot punch on the nose from a disgruntled sailor with flat pockets never bothered Sam after the actual moment of impact. The re-treating figure of his victim was ever the signal for the set and oily smile to settle back into his face.

But this case was different. His pickings in Macao had not been so good as he had been accustomed to get in Singapore. Ships were not so frequent. His first few pluckings had been shared with Fang, the proprietor

of the den in which he operated, and returns had not at all satisfied him. So he had driven a hard bargain with Fang, by which he paid a definite rental for his verandah room, and kept the proceeds of his games of chance for himself.

Prospects looked bright again when a big, briny, rolling seaman fell into his hands, more than half seas over, and loaded with money. It was a comparatively simple matter to ease the victim of his wealth—so easy that Sam had not thought it necessary to enlist the aid of other players. Fang, apart from any arrangement as between tenant and landlord, had always sat in at Sam's little games, sometimes as a decoy, sometimes as a handy assistant in case of trouble; and he was ill pleased at the notion of being left out.

Sam ought not to have slighted a tried comrade.

His new pigeon submitted to the plucking operation with noisy good temper, drinking himself more and more deeply under the weather as he lost; but contrary to all precedent, the more fuddled he became the keener he watched Sam, and when the last of his money lay on the table, and Sam smilingly raked it in after a brilliant juggling feat with the dice, the victim got to his feet unsteadily, balanced himself with stubborn determination, and

without malice calmly spread Sam's nose over his face with a battering-ram of a brown fist.

Now the slighting of Fang bore fruit. Sam's yell should have brought a horde of swarthy, muscular bouncers to his aid, and his victim would have been lucky to get out alive. Sam yelled, and kept on yelling, while the room, really twelve feet square, contracted to a tiny space bounded by walls that pushed him always into the way of a lurching demon with forty flying fists.

And Fang remained deaf.

It was the heartiest beating Sam had ever experienced; doubly painful because, when the playful sailor left him, a huddled, whimpering heap amongst the splinters of a bamboo table, the only piece of currency remaining in the room was the copper Chinese "cash," nailed to the door by a brass tack through its little square hole and kept in the place as a luck-piece.

A pipeful of poppy and the ministrations of the local cuticle renewer would have brought back Sam's smile had it not been for the violation of all the rules of the game. His pride was touched when his pockets were emptied. Why, the drunken sailor had not only taken back the money he had lost; he had actually taken Sam's roll, too!

The smile fled far from Sam. He ceased yelling as his assailant's footsteps died away on the squeaking stairs, and murder flashed from his puffed and blackening eyes as he stepped with catlike tread to the veranda.

A big earthenware pot, containing a weedy aloe, stood beside the window. Sam wrenched the plant out, picked up the heavy pot, and peered over the veranda rail. Below was the back door of the den, opening on to a narrow, noisome alley, full to the brim with black, fetid darkness, and the scuffings and squealings of a myriad monster rats fighting over toothsome morsels of animal and vegetable garbage.

Out from the denser shadow of Fang's house stepped a burly figure,

and Sam's itching ears were assailed by a rumbling laugh of drunken triumph.

The heavy hush of the alley seemed intensified for a brief second; then simultaneously a spiteful curse ripped out from Sam, the earthenware pot crashed full upon the head beneath, and the jovial roysterer fell like a pithed ox, catapulting his senseless body against the flimsy house walls with a bang.

Any one of a dozen doors in the alley might open and belch forth a human hyena, attracted by the freshly smitten prey, and Sam wanted the prey for himself. Swiftly extinguishing the light in the room behind him, he slipped over the veranda rail and dropped to the ground beside his victim. Before he knelt to search for booty he bent a keen ear to catch any note of warning; and faintly, above the hum of the port and a far-off clatter of steam winches, he heard brisk footsteps and rough voices speaking in English.

Biting off a furious malediction which consigned nocturnal rambles to perdition wholesale, the Cheery Wrong 'Un glided like a shade into the dark doorway at his back and peered in the direction of the approaching footsteps. At the end of the alley toward the water-side a single lamp winked like a yellow eye in a black face, and in the lesser blackness of its gleam swung three men, clad in white, in uniform of sorts.

Sam's acquaintance with uniforms in the East was not extensive. He cast one swift, sorrowful glance at the figure on the ground, sighed from the bottom of his regretful soul, and vanished like an eel in a bucket of oil, breathing one word:

"Police!"

At last the combined forces of evil luck threatened to erase the smile from the Cheery Wrong 'Un's fat face for good and all. Sam used all his uncanny knowledge of byways of human cesspools and found brief sanctuary

among others of his own kind and color. But Fang had been busy, too; the withered old Chinaman was a power in the Macao gambling world, which is as swift a planet as any in the whirling world of chance, and the raiding and complete cleaning out of his place which had followed close upon Sam's exploit had started a buzz of comment which sounded unmistakably hostile to Sam's trained ears.

The staggering knowledge that even Portuguese territory was not safe for him any longer took the wind out of his sails. Singapore was long since closed to him; his brother jackals had promised him before he left that port that if he ever showed his oily grin back there again he need have no fear of the police; the undertaker would take care of his carcass.

Shanghai—well, he'd never reach Shanghai; he'd be smelled out by a fresh-faced English policeman before the ship's anchor fairly took hold of the mud at Woo-Sung. And as for Hong-Kong, there was an ugly matter of a man, last seen in Sam's company, found in a Kow-Loon fan-tan joint with a knife between his shoulders.

The veneer of his cheeriness was badly strained whenever Sam allowed his mind to wander to Hong-Kong.

But the glaring necessity of leaving Macao was before him. Everywhere he went that was placed first in the news he got, and he consigned to the darkest dice-less, card-less, prohibition depths of a womanless hereafter the sailor who had left him penniless in such a plight. There was only one small glimmer of light in his darkness: among other activities, he had dabbled during slack times in a little scientific crimping, and still had one or two friends in that line.

To Leoung-Foo, wealthy owner of *sampans* and dealer in sailors' souls, Sam therefore applied, asking aid in getting out of the port on the strength of services before rendered.

"No can do, Misser Sam," breathed the Chinaman softly, pushing the door

against his applicant. "Policeman he look f'you. You go 'way!"

"Hey! what's up?" demanded Sam, inserting a foot between door and lintel. "You get me a ship out of here, see? I got to leave to-night."

Sam shoved hard against the door, and immediately behind the wood he heard pattering feet and whispering voices. The pinch upon his boot increased as men put their weight against the door, and a sweat broke out all over him as he realized the far-reaching power of Fang's influence. He saw that if he ever got clear of Macao it must be by his own wits, and he gave up struggling with the insistently closing door.

He asked, before withdrawing his foot altogether:

"Hey, Leoung-Foo, I'm going. Tell me if there's any ships leaving, will yuh? That's all I want."

"Two steamer go 'way chop-chop," returned the soft voice of the Chinaman. "Both load at dock bottom dis street. One he go Samarang. Oller one he go Hong—"

"All right, all right," sang out Sam, backing away. "It's the Dutchman for mine! So long, and thanks, old boy."

On his hurried way down to the wharf Sam chuckled aloud at the new avenue of escape. The Dutch islands had never occurred to him; there, at least, he was unknown, and a fresh, perhaps fruitful, field lay open to him. In any case, whatever the prospects might be in Java, it was unthinkable that he waste his time with the Hong-Kong ship. There was no doubt as to his prospects in the "Isle of the Scented Stream."

The glimpse of a flitting figure in white duck uniform reminded him sharply that he was an object of much interest to the police, and for thirty seconds the Cheery Wrong 'Un halted with bated breath in the shadow of a warehouse, debating in his mind whether, after all, it was safe to board any ship, wherever bound, just then. But stronger than all the imaginary

terrors ahead, behind him was the recollection of a dark alley, a shattered flower-pot and a fallen man.

Sam braced up his courage, fixed his face in the oiliest of smiles and marched up the gangway of the Samarang steamer.

"Passage?" queried the skipper, to whom he addressed himself, looking Sam over from top to toe. Signs were not lacking of the rough-and-tumble treatment he had received in Fang's gambling-house. On the steamer's fore deck men were busy unrigging cargo lights; on her fore-castle-head others worked at singling up mooring lines, and the skipper evinced little inclination to devote much time to a man of Sam's outward condition of impecuniosity.

"Passage?" repeated the skipper. "Got any money?"

"Why, no, skipper, not right here. But I'll pay you in—"

"Oh, sure! No doubt you will. I need another hand in the stokehold. Want a job firing?"

Sam shuddered, and his face went gray for an instant. Feeding ravenous furnaces in the hot belly of an iron steamboat had no place in Sam's ambitions. In an instantaneous comparison between stoking a steamboat and humping rock for the Government in a chain-gang the stoking gave him the more violent qualms.

"Do I look like a fireman, cap'n?" asked Sam deprecatingly, bringing his inevitable smile to bear. "I'm a man of leisure, and not—"

"You may be the Rajah of Kiss-me-hand for all I care," snapped the skipper. "You don't look much, anyhow, and a passage costs real money in this ship. If you're crazy to leave this man's port there's a job below. If you don't want to take it, gettahelloffmy ship!"

The Cheery Wrong 'Un gulped noiselessly and cast a fearful look back at the town, where lay his natural enemies. But that job of stoking stuck hard in his gizzard. He couldn't force

himself to undertake that horrible servitude without another try for an alternative.

"I can get you a stoker, cap'n, if you'll give me a passage," he blurted desperately without the remotest idea of where such a man could be found just then, but hoping for the best.

"You get men?" The skipper's tone was incredulous. "Where d'ye think you can get men when old Leoung-Foo himself can't get 'em?"

"Make a dicker, cap'n," urged Sam, his old assurance returning. "Do I get a passage if I find a good, husky fireman?"

"Surely. But don't come aboard my ship again unless you have the goods. So we might as well say so-long."

Sam slipped down the gangway again, and almost ran along the wharf in the direction of the small boat-landing. His quick-moving wits had worked at high pressure while making his bargain, and a bright ray of hope had rewarded the stress of his brain. Leoung-Foo might turn him down—had undoubtedly done so; but Leoung-Foo's *sampans* were manned by the water-rats who carried out his nefarious schemes for supplying unwilling labor to short-handed ships; and these men knew Sam, had done jobs for him at the behest of their legal master and had been well paid for them, for the Cheery Wrong 'Un was free of hand when flush of money.

There was the bare chance that Leoung-Foo had neglected to convey to his men in the river the altered status of Sam Blodger, and toward the *sampans* hurried Sam. Every *sampan* was fitted with a tiny, shed-like house aft for the accommodation of her two-man crew; but in only one small house was there a glimmer of light, and Sam stepped down into this *sampan*.

Of course all the water-rats were congregated together to pass a hectic night of gambling. They did that every night when idle.

Here again his judgment was adrift. His feet had scarcely touched the tiny after-platform of the boat when he was confronted by dark, menacing figures swarming out of the house. The light went out suddenly, but Sam caught the flash of steel inside before it went. Hoarse voices within were hushed, and in his ears outside hummed angry tongues. He made himself known, and the angry note diminished, but an undercurrent of suspicion still lay in the voices that spoke to him.

"You no stopalong here, Misser Sam," warned the boatman in whose *sampan* they stood. "No play fan-tan to-night. To-morrow. Go 'way now."

"Huh, listen," returned Sam, in extremity. "I don't want to play. I want one fireman for steamer. You help me find, yes? I pay you proper to-morrow."

A rapid interchange of unintelligible river jargon ensued among the boatmen, and apparently a dispute was on foot. The boatman-in-chief, however, wielded some authority, and soon he turned to Sam and asked:

"What ship? He make sail one-time? Chop chop?"

"Right away," stated Sam emphatically. "Only waiting for one fireman. Come on. You can get a man for me, yes?"

A further jabbering argument was quickly settled, and a scuffle was heard inside the black-mat cabin. Then the boatman briefly bade Sam lead on, and he followed with a companion; between them the two Chinamen bore a naked white man, while a third boatman ran alongside hurriedly wrapping a filthy loin-cloth about the stark figure as he ran.

Too elated to bother with the problem of what the white man had been doing aboard the *sampan*, only making quite sure that it was not a corpse he had secured, Sam boldly led the way up the steamer's gangway again, and reported his success to the astonished skipper. That busy person briefly waved an order to carry the new fire-

man aboard, and as briefly conducted Sam to a small cabin off the saloon; then went about the business of getting his ship to sea.

The Cheery Wrong 'Un took immediate advantage of his new lodgings to the extent of treating himself to a good, refreshing wash and brush up. Then he removed his shoes and stretched himself on the bunk, luxuriously relaxing to the manifold sounds of bustling preparation outside. Hatches were slapped into place, iron battens clanged into their cleats, far forward the forecastle windlass clattered metallicly and wound in the snaking wire springs.

Voices sounded in a loud exchange of reports between forecastle, stern and bridge, and Sam closed his eyes peacefully as the engine-room telegraph rang out "Stand-by!"

To his lulled senses it seemed as if somewhere, far away, many tongues were wagging in furious debate. He smiled contentedly, for such was an invariable accompaniment to the business of sailing. But voices sounded much nearer to his small cabin, and Sam wrenched himself back from the brink of dreamland with a start, and sat up. Two men were in the saloon, just outside his door, and one spoke in tones of disgust; the other was sarcastic—biting.

Sam thrust his head outside the door and listened.

"Any trouble, cap'n?" he inquired nervously. "Going to sail to-night, ain't you?"

Both men ignored him. They were too full of their own troubles.

"Here we are, ready for sea, and held up by that drunken Jock Ballantyne!" fumed the skipper. "He's been ashore since noon to get one measly fireman! What you wanted to send a boozy, shore-crazy second engineer on an errand like that for beats me. I've got you a fireman without stepping off the ship!"

"Jock's all right, skipper," retorted the other—chief engineer he was; "I

thought he was aboard long ago. Maybe something's happened to him. He knows we're sailing as soon as the cargo's in. I think I'll slip ashore and see if I can find him."

"Slip ashore nothing!" exploded the skipper. "We'll sail without him!"

Sam withdrew his head and closed the cabin door. He smiled happily, feeling perfectly secure now. He blessed the skipper from the bottom of his heart for having so keen a sense of duty to his employers, whoever they might be. He stretched himself on his bunk again, sighing blissfully, and allowed his senses to drift off into a visionary realm in which Samarang and a plethoric bank-book were embodied in welcoming *genii* as he disembarked in his new haven.

Then again in the cabin rose angry voices—three of them now, and they were close to the door of his berth.

Sam leaped from the bunk, his skin going flabby and damp as the sweat poured down him.

He recognized the skipper's voice, and the chief engineer's; the third voice sounded vaguely familiar, though he couldn't place it. He was speedily enlightened. The door was flung open, two men entered the berth, and two huge, horny hands grabbed his collar and hauled him into the saloon.

A third great hand fell heavily on his shoulder, twisting him around with ridiculous ease until the light shone full upon his face. That third hand possessed the same vague familiarity for Sam as had been conveyed by the voice.

He raised his eyes, half terrified, and they fell on the naked figure, of his own contribution to the stokehold strength of the steamer. And topping the glistening, muscular figure, leered the face of his late gambling antagonist, bandaged about the skull, grim as to lips, but alight with unholy joy—and awfully, horribly sober.

"So *this* is the little man who took me away from those river pirates, is it?" chuckled the second engineer. "And put me into the fireman's

fo'c's'le! Well, I don't know that I'm quits for that flower-pot at that. I'm skinned now, clear to my shirt."

"What's it all about?" demanded the skipper. "We'd ought to be half way down the harbor by now, and we're still short of that fireman. Where've you been, Jock?"

"Oh, just a ramble, skipper," grinned Jock. "I had a little dice game with this gent. I won all his money, didn't I, sonny? Then a flower-pot fell on my crust and I got knocked out. The police got to me before any of them alley rats could reach me. They patched up my head, and I started to come aboard. Then I remembered we wanted a fireman, and I slipped along the river to seek one. Next thing I knew was that I was waking up in yon sweet-smelling fo'c's'le."

The skipper broke in impatiently:

"You're still lacking your fireman. You'll have to do with a man short, for I won't hang about any longer."

"Sure, we'll hook her out right away, skipper," returned Jock. "We're lacking nobody now," and he took Sam by the wrist and beamed upon his chief and the skipper.

The grip on his wrist was like a shrunken iron band, and Sam saw his fate clearly. He shivered, and gulped:

"All right. I'm it. Where's my shovel?"

His right to the name he went under was established there, in his hour of discomfiture. He smoothed his shining face into a slick smile, and remarked:

"Sooner I get to work, the sooner I'll get to Samarang."

Then came the utter catastrophe. "Samarang?" the skipper asked irritably. "Who told you this ship was going to Samarang?"

"Ain't you going to Java, skipper? Ain't you?" gasped the Cheery Wrong "Un. "Don't say you're going to—"

"We're going to Hong-Kong, son," snapped the skipper, mounting the stairs two at a time, leaving Jock Ballantyne to follow with his stricken stokehold hand.

Mr. South of Somewhere

by Frank Blighton

Author of "Mr. North of Nowhere," "The Materialized Million,"
"Swami Ram's Reincarnation," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

JOHAN NORTH, the commanding spirit of the great United Products Corporation, the richest and most powerful concern in the world, is attending a banquet on the roof of the mighty Olympian Building in New York, when he sees a wonderfully beautiful girl, attended by a handsome young cavalier of foreign appearance. Realizing that he is on the verge of falling in love with her, which he has no wish to do, he goes to his rooms, shaves his heavy, blond beard, and getting into his huge aeroplane, heads it southwest and lets it go. Ultimately he lands in the middle of a swamp near the Gulf, where he is found by Jean Genet, a native of the little isolated village of Vaudreil, Louisiana, who takes him home. There he gives his name as Mr. South of Somewhere, and is conversing with the village doctor and wise man, Dr. Carondelet, when a young man, Baptiste Lafrénière, whom he recognizes as the companion of the girl he has seen in New York, approaches, forces a quarrel on him, and challenges him to a duel. He accepts, naming as a weapon a bomb, that a returned soldier from France has brought over, it to be placed between them and the fuse lighted. This is done, when suddenly the girl herself appears and rushes toward them. Mr. South catches her in his arms, kisses her, and forces Lafrénière to take her out of danger, while he stays by the bomb. Luckily the bomb does not explode. Later that evening the girl's uncle, Joseph de la Chaise (*her* name, he learns, is Enterpe de la Chaise) calls at the inn, and asks him to come to his home for the purpose of apologizing to his niece for kissing her on the dueling-ground. Mr. South goes, his head awheel.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PIRATE'S HOME AND HOARD.

MR. SOUTH OF SOMEWHERE walked with a swinging stride alongside the uncle of Enterpe de la Chaise, a prey to peculiar emotions. So he held his tongue, for the thing he had unhesitatingly pledged himself to do he had never before done in all his life—apologize.

Had any other person in the world made a similar demand it would have been as brusquely refused as it had

been readily granted to the avowed guardian of the Creole beauty. Mr. South, however, was quite uneasy—not so much because he had pledged humiliation to himself as because of the person to whom his words must be directed.

He was utterly insane, without a doubt.

But after all, it was the kind of lunacy, so he consoled himself, which, in ordinary men and women, made the world go round. In his case, however, it would probably result in more personal opprobrium—for those scarlet lips could pout as obdurately as they

This story began in the *All-Story Weekly* for May 6.

could smile beatifically—those swimming, amorous pools of eyes could sparkle with anger as intensely as his own tawny orbs.

And therein lay the rub.

Mr. South realized that Enterpe de la Chaise was far removed from the conventional milk-and-water type of female seeking a protector—as much as he was, in his own eccentric way, removed from the routine life of some indifferent individual of his own sex who starts in with a business house and by punctuality and the unremitting exercise of all other cardinal virtues, establishes a world's record for punching the time-clock on the second—until he is at an age when he can retire—and degenerate—on a pension, with all the respectability inherent in the commonplace.

The very fact that he was now plunging along the ancient flagged walks of Vaudreil on such an errand but emphasized the willful pride of Enterpe. Otherwise, why the apology? Mr. South was sure that the amiable old uncle, trotting placidly by his side, possessed no initiative to demand it for himself—he was, doubtless, echoing her wish, although uttering it as his own.

His reflections were cut short by a remark from Joseph de la Chaise, whose tone suggested confirmation of South's previous deductions regarding his character—or lack of it.

"You are not well acquainted with this section, *m'sieu*?" he hazarded, with a glance that might have come from a rabbit.

"What I lack in extent I seem to atone for in intensity," evaded Mr. South, with a rumbling chuckle. "Have you lived here long?"

"Oh, yes, *m'sieu*. I was born in Vaudreil; in fact, in the house whither we are bound."

"Is it far from here?" indifferently queried the stranger.

"About a mile beyond the home of M. Jacques Lussat—you have heard of him—no?"

"I do not seem to place him—no, I think not."

"M. Lussat is the ablest advocate in this section. He is also the county prosecutor."

"Judging from the conduct of Baptiste Lafrenière, the able M. Lussat is not overwhelmingly convinced that duels are worth troubling himself about, I should say," rejoined South, sarcastically.

"Ah!" The elderly Creole's expression suggested possibilities. "*M'sieu*, you have not heard why M. Lussat does not interfere with the code duello?"

"I plead utter ignorance of the prosecutor's neglect of such matters. In fact, *M'sieu de la Chaise*, the only thing that interests me in Vaudreil is my present errand—and yourself."

Enterpe's uncle shot him another sidewise glance, half-timid, half-eager, as if he greatly desired to uncork some information which, however, owing to Mr. South's polite aloofness, he would forego.

But his natural garrulity impelled him to renew the chat when, after passing the moody but prim residence of M. Lussat and rounding a curve in the bayou road, in the distance gleamed the bright lights of a larger and more pretentious house than Mr. South had seen in the village itself. It was not without a certain degree of pride which showed in the wave of his hand and the tone of his next remark that Joseph de la Chaise said:

"There, *m'sieu*, is my home—and Enterpe's."

To his companion the effect was much the same as if he had said: "Behold, wanderer! Before thine eyes is the sacred tripod of Delphi—and the flame which thou seest is from the altar fires of the Oracle herself."

Mr. South stopped short, transfixed with admiration for the sight. The mansion itself was huge, and sat on a knoll rising from the low ground around it so abruptly that the outlines of the building showed half above the

tops of the trees. Every window was blazing with light. And on the curiously shaped apex of a tower, rising above the north wing, was a blazing brazier-like basket, filled with pine knots or some resinous wood, which flared up into the heart of the quiet night not unlike the beacon-flame of some dead-and-gone band of wreckers seeking to lure a ship to its doom with a false signal.

"What in the world is that?" demanded Mr. South.

"*M'sieu—*"

There was a querulous note in the stammering attempt which Enterpe's uncle made as he started to reply. Mr. South shrewdly conjectured that the beacon was something which the older man had not anticipated—something which suggested disquieting possibilities—there could be no doubt of it, judging from his sudden trembling.

"It's nothing to me, *m'sieu*," declared Mr. South, again pressing resolutely forward. "Only, the oddity of it struck me—otherwise I should not have asked."

"My home," resumed the other, after a few more steps along the cypress-lined roadway, "is an historical place, after a fashion. You see, *m'sieu*, the great Jean Lafitte once lived here—in the days when he fought three nations—"

"Three?" incredulously echoed his companion.

"Three!" affirmed Uncle Joseph proudly. "Spain, Great Britain and the United States—he took them all on, one after the other. It was this way, *m'sieu*: In the first decade of the century beginning with the year 1800, the war with France and Spain filled the great Gulf below with French privateers. These got rich booty from the Spanish galleons. They used the islands of Guadaloupe and Martinique as their bases.

"Then, Great Britain took a hand—and the French privateers were as homeless as Noah's raven—nowhere to go on the face of the broad waters, ex-

cept America, which, also, was lined with Spaniards, save only here in Louisiana, which, in 1803, became a territory of the United States. So the French privateers had no choice but to come to Barataria—barring the coasts of France, which lay too far away.

"Hither, then, they came. And Jean Lafitte—himself a Frenchman and a gentleman, speaking English, Spanish and Italian as fluently as his own tongue—hither, as I say, *m'sieu*, came Jean. This house that is now mine was his. And here, often, in the past years, that beacon blazed to guide his boats up and down the tangled waterways leading from New Orleans out upon the broad, sparkling waters of the Gulf—and the Spanish Main beyond.

"On the isles of Barataria they built what was called the 'Temple,' and hither came those French privateers with their booty—and from there, the boats of Lafitte and the men of Lafitte crept up the bayous and the *fourches* with their goods, which were sold in New Orleans by Jean and his cross-eyed brother, Pierre. They grew very rich, *M'sieu South!*"

"So I should imagine!" muttered South. "Well, how did it all end, *M'sieu de la Chaise?*"

"Jean Lafitte, he who organized the contrabandistas, had been an officer in the French navy before he became a merchant," went on de la Chaise, proudly. "Everywhere—" he swung his arm in a wide circle to indicate the directions, "went his boats, even as far west as the Lac des Allemands. His captains, Beluche You and Dominique You, and Rigoult, and Johannes—they, too, grew rich.

"Then Spain, England and the United States fell upon them—an officer seized some contraband goods at New Orleans. This was in October, 1813. They put a price upon Jean's head—*pouf*—he laugh at them all—and still his schooners sail right up the big broad river, protected with his own scouts—as far as Donaldsonville. He fortify his island and he print his paper

—*La Lanterne Magique*—and he say, 'Come and take me!' And they do not come, *m'sieu*, for two years.

"Then they capture both Pierre and Jean—but they disappear—and then Jean is reported found again, this time, *m'sieu*, through treachery—here, in this house. And, down to the *calabosa* he goes in Vaudreil, thence to New Orleans. But, always, the prisoner he is the gentleman—not like the *canaille* Culbert and Magilbray knaves, who hide out in Cottonwood Creek. Then, Lafitte, he disappear from the prison—how, no man knows. And they offer one thousand dollars for him, thinking it it Jean—but, instead it is Pierre—and all the time Jean is on his Baratarian island.

"Then, a great expedition attack Grand Terre and Chenière Caminada, another island, also fortified. The men of Lafitte fight bravely—but they are outnumbered. They are shot down, or compelled to surrender. All buildings and stores are destroyed, his telegraph torn down, and seven vessels, including the General Bolivar, are taken, with their batteries—but of Pierre and Jean, *m'sieu*, there is no sign—they escape up Bayou La Fourche to the German Coast. They come out only to fight with General Jackson against the British—Pierre and Jean and Captain Rigoult and Captains Beluche and Dominique You—all brave men, and General Jackson, he call them 'these gentlemen.'"

"And then, *m'sieu*?" breathed Mr. South, his flaming eyes and quick breathing showing his intense interest in the story.

"Lafitte and his captains, they stand by General Jackson, when he is fined one thousand dollars for contempt of court at New Orleans. They draw his carriage through the streets. There is a great ball, one night. General Coffee, he is introduce to Jean Lafitte—and hang back. Jean, he advance, and says: 'I am Lafitte, the pirate—you not know me?' And he laugh.

"Then he go to be Governor of Gal-

veston, where General Jackson ask him, where, also, at one time before Jean has a private island. Then he fight the United States revenue cutters again. He is defeated. But they do not know Jean. He go to Cape Antonio, Cuba, and he re-fit another ship, the General Victoria, and then two more. Governor Villeré, who succeed Claiborne, the first governor under American rule, in Louisiana, he issue proclamation, in which he say: 'This Lafitte, he make the waves of the Gulf to groan!' No man knows, *m'sieu*, how or when Jean Lafitte die—some say—"

And here Joseph de la Chaise peered out at a suspicious rustle in the shrubbery, for they were now nearing the house.

Mr. South of somewhere looked in the same direction.

"I guess it is only the night wind, rustling the leaves," said he, quietly.

"That beacon," went on his mentor, in a hushed tone, "was last light up in 1822—when Jean he come back by night—with much treasure. That was the last they see of him, *m'sieu*, and of the treasure—well, there be many who would give something to know—some, *m'sieu*, here in Vaudreil."

"A wonderful story," observed Mr. South of Somewhere, as they came up the neatly graveled walk, curving as gently as a Cupid's bow, to the ornate veranda of the great mansion. "How did you come to know so much of it?"

Joseph de la Chaise drew himself up with a certain hauteur hitherto foreign to him. "He was my grand-uncle, *m'sieu*, and the great-grand-uncle of my niece, who awaits us. Come, shall we go in?"

CHAPTER XIV.

MOONLIGHT MADNESS.

ENTERPE DE LA CHAISE was waiting for them.

She was like old ivory in her gleaming black gown.

The maddening curves of her, the sweet throat which seemed rising like a graceful Grecian column on some holy temple to the tawny-eyed monster who slouched defiantly into her presence, the savage yet god-like womanhood of her flamed like the beacon on the tower—but it was the flaming up of an elemental affinity, profounder than sex, deeper than discretion, ages older than even language.

Had he been on the broad bosom of the sea, Mr. South of Somewhere would have re-christened himself Ulysses, the ship *Argo*, and bound himself to the mast to escape the wild music, trailing invisible banners of aerial bronze behind the silken tones of her simple welcome.

He nerved himself to look into her eyes—and, unlike the sodden Hippolyte Alimiere, in them he saw the waving shapes and shadows of his first overwhelming intuitions—deepening even as he gazed, half-enthralled, into an unshakable conviction that she was for him—and for him alone.

Then, something like panic seized him.

He wanted to turn and run at one instant—at the next he felt he must do something extraordinary, something weird, something utterly bizarre—even tear off the roof, if need be, to win her approval; for, no philosophy and no science was proof against the fire of those limpid eyes, just as no geometrician of the heart had ever plotted the tangent of the curve of those lips—now wreathed in a gracious smile.

"Won't you sit down, *m'sieu*?" said Enterpe, after some queer noises which Mr. South of Somewhere vaguely recognized as emanating from her uncle's throat, and which, probably, were intended to be in the nature of a formal presentation.

He staggered to a divan and dropped upon it like a man with a bullet in his heart. This apocalyptic vision utterly unnerved him. She wore no ornaments save an ancient gold coin on a golden thread around her throat.

Mr. South of Somewhere blessed Uncle Joseph for his shrill query.

"Enterpe, the beacon it is burning?"

"Is it?" she replied, as she took a chair opposite the two men. "Well, what of it?"

"Nothing," admitted Joseph de la Chaise, meekly. "Only, I was wondering how it came to happen—that's all."

The girl ignored him and turned her eyes, expectantly, upon the shriveled South. He leaped up, as if propelled by the springs of the upholstery of the divan—springs which had suddenly become white-hot would have produced much the same effect.

"*Mlle. de la Chaise*," he began, steeling himself to his repugnant obligation, "I have come to present my profound apologies for my presumption—my violence—my hateful behavior—"

He was stumbling, incoherently, until he saw her look of swift surprise.

"I do not understand, *m'sieu*!" said she.

South turned with a look of sudden fury upon the rabbit-faced little man who had lured him thither.

Enterpe's brows contracted somewhat as she divined the reason for the stranger's attitude. But Uncle Joseph, with the fatuousness of a mediocre mind who is confident, despite appearances, that his conduct has been irreproachable, beamed:

"My dear niece, you told me to bring him and I suggested that he apologize for his unseemly behavior before all of Vaud—"

She checked him with a haughty hand.

"You told him to apologize?"

"Why not, Enterpe? As your guardian, it is my duty to see that no act of another's shall lower you in public esteem. You know how people gossip around a little village like—"

"My dear uncle, you are no longer my guardian!"

Uncle Joseph shook himself like a dog who has stepped upon a live wire and who cannot understand the queer sensation which the same has imparted

to his paws. He blinked and blinked and blinked—his open mouth refusing to voice the query his rabbit's eyes contained.

"You were, you know," went on Enterpe, with a delicious drawl, "until just a few minutes ago. Can it be possible, Uncle Joseph, that you have forgotten that this is my birthday—that I am twenty-one to-day—that I am now my own mistress, under the laws of Louisiana? You asked about the beacon—I am celebrating my anniversary, uncle, and that is why I wanted the beacon lighted—lighted as it was when my brave great-grand uncle last visited his home in 1822, and to honor our guest, M'sieu South!"

She lisped the last words with such delicious languor that the heretofore abashed stranger took heart of grace. Truly, of all the fantastic phases of his experience, this was at least as celestially insane as any other.

His eyes again performed the oblation to the girl's person. A new and most becoming majesty seemed to wrap her round—she was as serene as if a Sistine votary torn from the temple of the stars, more queenly than if clothed in purple and gold-leaf.

Then, of a sudden, she turned the dazzling radiance of her smile full upon him—and before her lustrous, ivory-white face, topping the throat of alabaster, Mr. South of Somewhere now stood defiantly, although he told himself that the smile had transformed her into a Circe—and presently he might be running around on all fours, squealing like the pigs in the fable.

"Dominique You, the little Creole boy who works for M. Lussat, who lives in the house next to this one up the road," said Enterpe, "assured me when you left the Place d'Armes with Dr. Carondelet to-night that you were the spirit of Jean Lafitte, come back again to Vaudreil. Look out for that imp of a Creole lad—he'll be asking you for a commission as captain to-morrow on the strength of his name and your reputation, M'sieu South."

"Your uncle has been telling me the story of that remarkable man. I'm flattered, I'm sure," boomed the visitor.

"And that reminds me," said Enterpe swiftly, "Uncle Joseph, I wish you'd replenish the brazier on the tower with plenty of pine knots. That beacon must blaze all night—I've promised myself that luxury ever since I was a slip of a girl and afraid to meet M. Lussat after dusk, because he always gave me the same damp, mouldy feeling one gets in the tombs about here."

Uncle Joseph arose obediently and disappeared.

Before Mr. South of Somewhere could speak or move Enterpe de la Chaise rose swiftly, placed her finger on her lips mysteriously and whispered:

"Now, before he comes back we will slip away into the garden—I want to talk with you, M'sieu South."

She was gliding away before his amazed eyes. He followed, half-stupidly, until his dulled orbs caught sight of the frieze extending around the room above the wainscoting where it met the door through which she was leaving the room.

The frieze was made up of one group of Bacchus and Adriane, alternating with another troop of Satyrs and Bacchantes, which the artist who had designed the decorations had woven into a series of repetitions. Clearly Jean Lafitte, pirate and gentleman, was almost as much of a Pagan as Mr. South of Somewhere.

The door led directly into the garden, but its beauty, save as a background to the goddess tripping just ahead, was lost on the stranger who, so short a time ago, had been facing Baptiste Boisblanc Lafrénière across a sputtering fuse, leading, as both supposed, to a hooded death.

She seemed to glide along, like a wraith, one hand lifting her skirt free from the night dews, and thereby revealing a paradise of chiffons.

Then she seemed to dance, instead of glide, as the path suddenly broadened into a little circular glade, opening to the east, into which the waxing moon, just rising, poured a flood of silvery rays.

In the center of the space was a boulder, some three or four feet high, with a flat-shaped top perhaps six feet square.

As Enterpe de la Chaise led the way toward the slab Mr. South of Somewhere rushed after her. He told himself it could not be real—he had fallen to death in his aeroplane—all that had since transpired was the last mirage of his earth-consciousness—for surely now he was not following a woman of flesh and blood, but a fairy-sprite whose soundless feet were tripping over the enchanted hills of Connemara—or a houri who was practicing her first mincing steps for Mahomet in Paradise.

She was already seated on the slab as he reached her side, and turned on him her high-bred, exotic face with an invitation that maddened him, especially with her next words, preceded by her low, challenging laugh.

"See, M'sieu South—here is a ready-made stage. We have the moonbeams to light our faces, we have a nightingale over yonder in the trees who will presently be our orchestra; we have a fountain, as all who seek romance for their little hour should have—can you not distinguish its roguish dripping?"

She flung out her white arms, pointing to one side, where the patter of the discreet water came with distance-softened regularity.

"It is thus," muttered Mr. South of Somewhere, seating himself by her side, "that the fountains dance to the moon in Araby, the blest; and your arm is the white limb of a Nixie, on the haunted banks of the Rhine!"

His fierce, flaming eyes caught and held her Stygian pupils triumphantly. In that eternal moment Mr. South of Somewhere might have been the in-

trepid Lafitte himself—passing through a hastily erected arch of victory upon the Place d'Armes of the little village of Vaudreil, amid the plaudits of its adoring inhabitants, after being pelted with flowers in a place where flowers always bloom, for the face and eyes upturned to his was one with purpose and one with consummation with his own—and naught of discord permeated the time or the place.

The nightingale poured forth his throaty crescendos of joy from the neighboring arbor.

Enterpe, the unfathomable—the goddess whom he had twice fled lest he should again meet her—nestled closer.

"Kiss me again, as you did to-night when you went out to die, as you thought," breathed the savage with a soul. "I shall never for—"

Her rapt face, as he complied, was tinted with a bliss so divinely passionate and yet so pure that the moonlight which fell across her features was not whiter than the thoughts of the man whose lips pressed hers as he shut off her words—nor could any kiss, even were it such as Venus promised to the betrayer of Psyche, in the height of its fiercest delirium, be other than dross compared with the wild, white peace that wrapped their silent figures round.

Mr. South of Somewhere stroked her raven hair, and contemplated the quaint old coin hanging on a thin, golden wire around her throat.

Words, at such a time, would have been profanation.

Once again they embraced—and all the heaped-up sweetness of the whitest, freshest flowers of Eden seemed to tremble on her lips—lips so fragrant and so pure that the white moonlight beside them was like fire in his blood.

Then, with a nearness that startled them both, a magpie chattered, stormily. A long, querulous cry, high-pitched, thin, acrid followed—then a Babel of near-by sounds—two voices in strident, quarrelsome tones.

"Aha!" cried the triumphant accents of Joseph de la Chaise, "I've caught

you—you limb of Satan—in the very act of stealing Enterpe's magpie, haven't I?"

"Let me go," piped the other, "or it'll be the worse for you!"

"It's uncle and Dominique You," exclaimed Enterpe, a look of wild alarm flitting into her glorious eyes. "You must go away—quickly!"

"Why must I go away—and above all—quickly?" rumbled the imperturbable Mr. South of Somewhere. "Neither of them is likely to be mistaken by me for a seraph with a flaming sword, sent to eject me from Paradise. And, even if they were, I'd refuse to go."

Enterpe's strange apprehension increased. She thrust him from her—almost viciously.

"You do not understand—go, and go far, and do not come back!"

"And not come back?" parroted the man.

She was already fleeing toward the house.

He pursued.

"Go!" she gasped.

"But—I love you!"

"I have been mad, *M'sieu*—I had forgotten—I swear it to you by—by—"

She hesitated, desperately.

"—by this!" she added, convulsively, lifting the golden coin which hung on her neck. "Oh, forgive me!" she implored, under her breath, now coming in gasps of some unnamable terror. "Forgive me—it was but the caprice of a girl who does not know her own heart—"

"Does not know?" he repeated, in a dazed tone. "But I know—"

"It was very wicked of me—you must go, and not come back."

"Is it so very wicked then, to love me—as I have loved you, from the hour I first saw you?"

She drew into the shadows of the doorway leading into the house.

Overhead the resinous torch flamed and sputtered, sending now and again a shower of sparks from its crackling heart, sparks that recalled the sputter-

ing fuse of the bomb of the returned soldier, only now there was an added misery in the fragments that fell at his feet, one moment glowing, next instant cold, charred, lifeless—like his heart.

It was a cursed fate and no miracle, Mr. South of Somewhere told himself, that had impelled the crippled hero to negative the hidden death contained in that thrice-cursed bomb—for with its failure to explode his heart was likely to burst, instead.

That she saw his obduracy was born jointly of distress and his wild regard for her was apparent, next instant. Again she raised the coin which was held to the thin wire of gold around her throat.

"*M'sieu* South—I swear I had forgotten—on this, the only token I have of my distinguished ancestor, Jean Lafitte—the only sign of the vast treasure which we have ever found which, nevertheless, we know he concealed for his descendants—somewhere. I implore you to forgive me, *M'sieu* South. My wayward heart is not mine own to bestow—I swear it, as I swear truly that in my madness of a moment of moonlight I had forgotten the fact."

He regarded her with the steadiness of anguish absolute.

"Is it *Lafrénière*?" he demanded. "That gentleman and I have still an account to settle—remember. If it is *Lafrénière*—"

"Oh, why did you follow me here?" she sobbed softly. "Could you not see that I loved you—that I fled from you? And how did you find me out, with all the precautions I took to avoid being followed?"

"You knew me, to-night, then?" asked South.

"*M'sieu*—how can you ask? I would know you in a monk's cowl, even were your head tonsured as your face is clean-shaven—I would know you anywhere, when your eyes flame and your voice booms! Would you not know me? Ah! *M'sieu* South—what an unhappy fate is ours, is it not? To meet and love—to flee from each other—to

meet again on the brink of eternity, seemingly! Can you not understand that you *must* go? For what else, pray, was it that I turned back again to-night upon the Place d'Armes? Ah! *M'sieu*, if you love me, forgive my moonlight madness; do not stay to press me for an explanation that I cannot give you—upon my honor I swear I cannot—and upon the soul of Jean Lafitte, as courageous a gentleman as yourself—I entreat you to leave Vaudreil to-night and never to return, if you hope for my happiness."

He looked up to find himself staring at the closed door.

Around the corner of the house came the shrill tones of the lad whom Enterpe had said was Dominique You, still bitterly threatening Joseph de la Chaise, with a surly defiance that might have emanated from the lips of Jean Lafitte's own captain of that name, when he found himself in the clutches of the law he had defied.

Mr. South retraced his steps toward the village and re-entered the Cote d'Or.

Hippolyte Alimiere, Henry Fauchois, Depuis Moreau and Jean Genet were seated at a table. The quartet were not drinking—evidently the *voyageur's* story was the more intoxicating, for Jean's face wore an embarrassed look as Mr. South entered and strode unceremoniously past them and approached the stairway.

Jean breathed in a relieved fashion as his heavy foot was heard ascending the stair. Then, almost at once, Mr. South came down again.

He walked over to the group, holding in his two huge, sinewy hands a nest of twigs and moss, carefully covered with his handkerchief. Unhesitatingly he stepped over to Hippolyte Alimiere and beckoned with his head.

"A word with you, *m'sieu*—outside."

Hippolyte trembled, but followed obediently, closing the door behind them, and thus furnishing fresh gossip for the three left behind.

Their fears, however, were soon dissipated.

"*M'sieu* Alimiere," began the stranger, "you have incurred my displeasure. Tell me—do you hereafter prefer me as a friend or as a foe?"

Hippolyte stammered a protest that he would rather shed his heart's last drop than lose any opportunity to right himself in *m'sieu's* esteem.

"Then take this," replied the other, "and deliver it to the home of Mlle. Enterpe de la Chaise, and see that she obtains it herself. Give it to no one else. Tell her I have left Vaudreil, and that I send her this token of my respectful regard. And tell no one else, understand?"

Hippolyte nodded eagerly.

"Jean has told you that I am in league with the devil," went on Mr. South of Somewhere casually, but with his yellow eyes glued on the shrinking figure of the town toper. "That is as it may be—but, Hippolyte, I am a good devil to those who obey and a bad devil to those who fail to do as they promise. You have promised. Now go!"

As commanded, the other hurried down the street, pointing toward the still flaring beacon on the summit of the tower crowning the mansion once occupied by the most renowned man of his generation thereabouts—a famous man to those who know all his life-story, and an infamous one to those who know little of it.

Mr. South re-entered the inn, called for and paid his bill.

In obedience to his gesture Jean Genet followed him out.

"I have sent Hippolyte on an errand for me, *mon ami*," he remarked indifferently. "And now I have need of your services. I am going away."

"*M'sieu* is leav—"

"Yes. I want you to take me back to where you found me, Jean—to-night."

"I no un'erstan', *m'sieu*."

"You know the way?"

"*Certainement*, *m'sieu*—none better.

But from where I find *m'sieu*—then *m'sieu* he go—where?"

"Somewhere, Jean!"

CHAPTER XV.

RECOLLECTION BEGETS SUSPICION!

THE *voyageur* led the way to his home, where such supplies as would be needed for the trip were taken to the canoe on the edge of the *fourche*.

Then he turned and looked irresolutely at the beacon on the home of Enterpe de la Chaise. Apparently that beacon suggested something to Jean Genet, for his wrinkled forehead seamed yet more, and his eyes held a half-mystical, half-dubious but still almost determined look as he gazed at it.

He swerved suddenly to address the stranger.

"*M'sieu* is in haste?"

"I wish to leave at once, Jean."

"*M'sieu*, he no un'erstand *pauvre* Jean."

In stilted phrases the canoe-owner finally conveyed his meaning to be that he wanted to know if Mr. South was in haste to reach the Bayou Lafitte.

South shrugged his shoulders. "Can we do it in less than two days, Jean?"

"*M'sieu*, *beau coup d'eau*, the water that is, she is drop and with that light, maybe we find him short *traverse*—eh?"

"The light will burn until daybreak, Jean."

"*Voilà!*" Jean leaped into the canoe, with a smile. South followed, and presently they debouched from the channel down which they had arrived, and with slight difficulty unmasked another sluggish stream, up which the canoe was sent with steady strokes, once they had penetrated the tangle of vines which hid it from view.

Jean's head turned occasionally, once the stream broadened into one of the interminable and nondescript wastes of semi-stagnant water, and then the

other occupant of the craft perceived the reason for his inquiry as to the beacon.

No matter how far afield they plunged into the otherwise trackless wilderness, that guiding light held them to a course which avoided all possibility of straying, provided it was kept directly astern.

For hours they plunged on into the primeval swamp. The mosses depending from the silent, funereal cypresses or the squat but widespread and sturdy live oaks waved ghostly hands when the canoe swept past, as if greeting the reincarnated spirit of the hardy adventurer who had passed that way almost a century ago—if the tale were true that Joseph de la Chaise had told—the mesmeric, cavalier, polyhedral personage Jean Lafitte, patriot and pirate, cruising on what was probably his last voyage, and also laden with treasure-trove which no human eye had since seen.

On and on and on they sped, until suddenly the low-lying banks rose higher, closed in upon them and the water ended.

Without hesitation Jean signaled Mr. South to step ashore and he followed. A short portage, and they were over the hump-like protuberance of soil, the canoe again deposited in its element, and with another quick glance at the beacon to get his bearings, Jean Genet drove on and yet on.

His solitary companion understood that they were following one of the trackless short-cuts which enabled the Creole-contrabandistas of Lafitte's time to evade pursuit and defy the combined efforts of three great nations to apprehend them, until their base was destroyed.

Yet his morose thoughts refused to thrill to the fantastic idea that the intrepid Lafitte with his noted captains and turbulent but courageous men had here lived out their destiny of blood and booty. Instead, Mr. South of Somewhere was feeling again the yielding, responsive pressure of Enterpe's

lips which had at one moment driven him, delirious with ecstasy and at the next had driven him coldly into a despair which the dank, fetid swamp he was traversing most appropriately typified.

His own conduct was growing more and more like sheer idiocy as he reviewed the supine manner he had permitted himself to be driven—not only from her presence—but out of the village of Vaudreil—as silly and unworthy of his conception of true courage, he bitterly told himself, as her diabolical paradoxes.

Clearly, the inflamed brain of the lover had ousted the “cold-storage intellect” of the scientist, of which he had boasted on the Parnassus Roof. But, now that he was out of the thrall of her vivid, voluptuous personality, a saner, and even more mathematical trend of ideas sprang up.

They served to beguile the moody, Cimmerian hours which must yet elapse between his departure and his arrival at the Bayou Lafitte; and so, gradually, piece by piece and bit by bit, as one solves a difficult cryptogram or patches together the contents of a letter inadvertently torn to bits, Mr. South of Somewhere began to re-assemble the cryptic fragments of the surcharged day—omitting nothing from his category—recalling even the details of various conversations with Dr. Carondelet and Joseph de la Chaise—that he might search therein for some well-defined thread to the enigma.

As in all other problems, Mr. South of Somewhere first arranged the known facts; the anachronistic village, the reverence which was universal for one whom history has not niched in the Hall of Fame; the hesitancy of Uncle Joseph to reveal why M. Lussat, the borough prosecutor, refused to take official notice of Baptiste Boisblanc Lafrénière's violation of the criminal law by dueling—and just there he brought up against a stone wall; for, behind that reluctance, as Mr. South re-visualized the uneasiness of Enterpe's guar-

dian, was indubitably *something*—as indubitably as Jean Genet was behind him in the canoe, propelling it with tireless strokes against a tideless stream.

“Jean,” he asked, “do you know that M. Lussat, the borough prosecutor, permits M'sieu Lafrénière to fight duels without fear of the law?”

“Yes, *m'sieu!*”

The simplicity of the reply was like a hammer-stroke to the fermenting mind-state of the man in the bow.

“Tell me why, Jean?”

“M'sieu Lafrénière fight his last duel with brother of M. Lussat—and kill heem wit' rapier! They fight over Enterpe!”

“*Merci!*” whispered South hoarsely.

So *that* was it—M. Lussat's brother had brawled with Lefrènière over Enterpe. The tie of consanguinity, however, should have added zeal to M. Lussat's endeavors to have a murderer punished—for Lafrénière was surely a murderer, and, from Mr. South's own very recent experience, a decidedly eager one, if chance threw things his way.

The relationship, moreover, between the borough prosecutor and Lefrènière's victim was no bar at all—for M. Lussat, following legal precedents and statutory mandates, could have called in another officer of equal punitive authority to his own, stepped aside, and let the law take its course.

Then, why had not this been done? Clearly, M. Lussat must be a curiously cold-blooded man to allow his brother to go unavenged and his slayer unpunished—free, even, to vent his murderous spleen on other victims, as he had vainly tried to vent it on the stranger.

He had not seen M. Lussat. He knew nothing of him, save Enterpe's ambiguous and desultory reference to her nearest neighbor; and she had merely observed that when a slip of a girl she had always feared to meet M. Lussat “after dusk, because he gave me the same damp, moldy feeling one gets in the tombs about here.”

Mr. South of Somewhere smiled, satirically, in the unyielding and persistent gloom—the while he twisted his huge torso ever so carefully to peer back at the flaming beacon on the tower, guiding them like a pillar of fire by night—the same beacon which Enterpe had capriciously directed to be lighted on her birthday—without a thought of the purpose it would serve before her anniversary was over.

Like the beacon, her freakish reference to M. Lussat now lighted up the gloom of Mr. South of Somewhere's deductions—thanks also to Jean's equally illuminating reply to the question of M. Lussat's indolence in his official capacity as borough prosecutor.

Clearly, M. Lussat was one of those phlegmatic personages in whom the tides of life seem to flow so sluggishly that they stop just short of sheer stagnation. Clearly, also, he was a deceptive man—on the surface. All such men usually are. Their secretiveness deludes. Never apparently aroused, never losing the static quality of assumed indifference which is their greatest asset, they lie impassively waiting, waiting, waiting—like scorpions beneath an innocent leaf—until the unsuspecting object of their hatred, lulled into a false security, receives the nefariously-silent, venomously-deadly stroke, surcharged, it may be, with the accumulated virulence of the fallow years.

"He's worth watching—this M. Lussat," muttered Mr. South of Somewhere. "But, I'm not there to watch him. However, let's see what next we have on this gentleman. Enterpe told me something about a boy he had—Oh, yes, Martinique—no, that's not it—ah! Dominique You.

"Dominique, according to Enterpe, saw in me another Lafitte—and she warned me against him asking for 'a commission'—for he is named after one of Lafitte's old comrades-in-arms.

"Now, let me see—why, it was Dominique trying to steal Enterpe's magpie—ten million of my most devoted curses on his impish skull for the

emissary of the foul fiend himself! That brat broke in on our happiness—and it was not until then that Enterpe volplaned from Paradise itself into Gehenna!"

A forbidding scowl, as demoniacally black and sinister as the unrelieved blackness of their course toward the Bayou Lafitte, sat upon the brooder's brow.

"*Dominique You!*" he hissed to himself, mentally reastrophizing him for a brat without brains, a scion of Satan, a pup from the pit!

The reiterated name, coupled with his sibilant execrations, showed that the lover had, again ousted the "cold-storage brained" scientist. Something of this came to him, finally, and he was glad that both his position and the raven darkness hid his shamed look.

Then, gradually, Mr. South of Somewhere again took up the coherent thread of his conjectures. And, with it, came a renewed influx of the perihelion of his passion for Enterpe—goddess of Creoles, whose amorous eyes swam before him in the otherwise impenetrable gloom. His great heart welled with sympathy as he thought of her distress.

"She loves me—she loves me!" he chanted to himself—until the charm of the moonlit garden, in his mind's eye, had replaced the unwholesome fetid, turgid air and water around him—until again his hot heart throbbed with the purity and the divinity of her lissome figure leaning against his own—until the grisly swamp-mist was shot through with the rose-hue of his vagrant, fantastic delirium.

He shook himself and shivered.

All of that revealed and sacred hour was buried in the delicious past which had swallowed it up—the hateful, black, forbidding present was still with him—and with that he grappled, silently, ferociously, his tawny eyes lighted with such a satanic glare that a brooding owl on a dead tree hooted his alarm and flapped away into the forest before the feral flare.

Mr. South of Somewhere, however, heard and saw him not.

He was patching, patching, patching, this irregular bit and that—patiently, assiduously, with cold deliberation.

"After all," he muttered, "what right have I to judge her? She is a woman—and every woman's life revolves in certain curves of emotions—while my own, being a man's, for reasons equally cosmic, progress upon lines of intellect and sequential reasoning.

"She loves me—she not only admitted she had loved me when she first saw me but that she had fled, not through fear, but because she loved me—and feared something else—not me!

"She sobbed out that she would know me anywhere—'When your eyes flame and your voice booms'—those were her words, and she added: 'Would you not know me?'

"Then it isn't *her*—and it isn't *me* that is at fault—so much, at least is clear. What, then is it?"

Once again the cold dominance of the philosopher sat enthroned on his wide, high forehead; the yellow blaze died down in his eyes until only their dull glow showed that he had not succumbed to the fatigue of the hectic day and the lonely, dreary, torpid night which had followed his embarking.

"All Romance, like all Temptation," growled South, "is founded on the fascination of the Exception. Aha! The exception in our little hour was the sudden, alarmed cry of the magpie! Before then, Romance was—well, I may as well confess—it was almost rampant!

"It was the startled cry of that pet magpie of Enterpe's that dissolved the fabric of our little dream—a dream that held a century in the capsule of a few seconds. It couldn't have been long—for I only kissed her twice.

"Now, why was it that the magpie's cry should have been so superlatively explosive—there I go again! It *wasn't* that magpie—she's had him for a pet, so she's heard him yelp and chat-

ter before—no, by the ancient Eleusinian mysteries, it was that tadpole of Tophet—*Dominique You!*

"And Dominique lives with M. Lussat. H'm! He's only a boy—therefore, unquestionably under the influence or, shall we say, entirely in the power of M. Lussat—the man who won't prosecute his brother's murderer—but who, for the sake of my theory, at least, might send this knavish seedling of manhood with an old pirate's name, over to his neighbor's to steal her pet magpie?

"I say he might. Am I right or am I wrong? It's only a guess—but, if I've guessed wrong, how, then, does it come that Dominique was so defiantly surly when he was coming around the corner of the house—after Enterpe had shut the door in my face—and especially after her obvious terror and sorrow?

"Why shouldn't Dominique You have been crying, instead of that wonderful, enchanting and nubile creature? Why should this bairn of Beelzebub be stealing *her* magpie, anyway, when the woods are full of them? Magpies young and magpies old—one of them yelled his head off that morning I burst out of the swamp!

"But Uncle Joseph charged Dominique You with stealing Enterpe's magpie—and then, bow! The roof blows off of the Temple of Eros—Cupid flings himself into the pickerel weeds—and, I am told, practically to tell my troubles to the water moccasins.

"Dominique You, however, manifested no repentance—none of the usual symptoms of childish frenzy at being detected in an illicit act—trespass and theft are not nice things to face, especially when the offender is a mere boy.

"I'm right. Dominique You was inspired. And by whom else, pray, than the mouldy old M. Lussat—he must be old, because Enterpe remarked the reek of the tomb on him when she was a slip of a girl—instead of—"

The thread of philosophy and

shrewd deduction parted again at the memory of his little hour.

Once more, as all men must who have met up with the spirit of undying passion and romance in female form, Mr. South of Somewhere forgot the surroundings of forbidding desolation which the pale gray of the coming dawn intensified as it filtered through the chinks and crevices of the ancient, Druidical trees—he forgot all things save the poignant happiness of the moonlit garden, as he began anew to spin his top in that enchanted circle which no one else knows or sees—save he who has heard an exquisite voice break through a no less exquisite silence.

For the most potent intoxicant that can lull a soul to slumber is brewed in a still where all romance and all temptation flow from the fascination of the Exception—and when the exception becomes the rule, Romance crumbles in ruins and Love lies stark and cold—like a naked corpse upon a sodden field under a dun-colored autumn sky.

"M'sieu!"

It was Jean's voice, awed and a little hushed!

The man in the bow made no reply.

Sunrise flamed ahead, making a golden lane down which the canoe shot like a yellow argosy, with auriferous ripples in its wake.

"M'sieu!" repeated Jean Genet again, "we are arriv'."

No response.

Jean checked the craft ever so little, drew his dripping paddle from the water and prodded Mr. South of Somewhere, ever so gently, between the shoulder blades.

"Eh!" gasped the stranger. Then he stretched his long arms and yawned, prodigiously.

"My good Jean, you woke me from a very delightful dream—"

He broke off, staring around him.

"Bayou Lafitte!" said Jean, swinging the paddle back into the water, and pointing the canoe for the neck of

land, where grew the two sentinel cypresses.

Mr. South of Somewhere gazed as if he did not comprehend.

"Ah! M'sieu, that Jean Lafitte—he was ver' *tres facile*—eh? We make him here in nine hours—with beacon for lamp-post!"

"And it took us two days, before!"

"Ah, m'sieu! Jean Lafitte—he no come back with us, then, like las' night no? I mus' go back, m'sieu. The fête, it is beeg joy for Vaudreil."

Mr. South of Somewhere stepped back on the familiar point of land, and looked half-eagerly over toward the place where he had built "The Temple of Everylife" with the blocks from the lithographed box. The component portions of the disrupted edifice lay where he had left them, the cover beside them.

Then, overhead, from one of the two sentinel cypresses, a magpie chattered, stormily.

CHAPTER XVI.

"PIECES OF EIGHT."

MR. SOUTH OF SOMEWHERE gazed up into the tree where the bird was raging. Jean Genet watched him, closely. Despite the careless *camaraderie* which this mysterious stranger had permitted to arise, at times, since their meeting on this very spot, the *voyageur* felt his old doubts returning—especially as he saw the lowering expression on Mr. South's face.

It was almost what one might expect from a demon of "the pit," who, having enjoyed a short respite from the abode of the lost, now finds his features reflecting the hateful, sombre shades of the noisome place to which he must soon return.

Furthermore, Jean was almost sure that he heard a curse fall from Mr. South of Somewhere's lips.

Jean hesitated. He was between two fires. He had not yet been paid for the

return journey, yet he hesitated to intrude such a topic on this fellow, who, instead of referring to remuneration, seemed to forget him and grow more engrossed in his own reverie.

However, Jean presently mustered up courage to approach the topic obliquely—by affecting solicitude for the welfare of the indifferent stranger.

"*M'sieu*," said he, "Jean, he mus' go Vaudreil. The fête, it is to-morrow—no? The Bastile, she will smash—and *m'sieu*, he will be on Bayou Lafitte—eh?"

Mr. South of Somewhere regarded him from eyes whose heavy lids drooped insolently. His attitude was one of amusement and contemptuous superiority, as if he divined the unsatisfied curiosity back of the naive attempt to quiz him.

"Jean," he rumbled, "did you hear a bird?"

"Yes, *m'sieu*!" faltered the man in the canoe, shoving it a little further from the shore. His old fears returned with redoubled force, despite the broadening day. This was no "chauffeur," as he had mistakenly supposed. Instead, he was undoubtedly from "the pit" and was about to return thither. The devil had set him down on the shores of Bayou Lafitte for Jean to find; the devil had stood at his elbow, although invisible to mortal eyes, while the hissing bomb had prophesied frightful death to both the stranger and Lafrénière—and then the devil had seen to it that, before his subordinate was to be confronted with such peril, that Philippe Sainte Marie had taken out the detonating charge.

The devil was very old and very wise.

He might just as well have reached over in his invisible person and pinched the fuse out—but, it was much better to do as the devil had done—because no one could explode that bomb after Philippe had done what he had admitted doing.

Just here Mr. South of Somewhere happened to remember that Jean's hesitancy might have another reason. With

a shrewd smile he reached inside his jacket.

"How much do I owe you for the trip, Jean?"

"Whatever *m'sieu* pleases to give!"

"Is ten dollars enough?"

"*Merci, m'sieu*!"

"Here, then, are thirty dollars. You are going back to the fête?"

Jean bowed respectfully. His devil was not such a bad devil after all—in generosity, at least, he excelled some pious people of the canoe-owner's acquaintance. With this money, Jean Genet could not only enjoy the fête—he might win one of the prizes for costumes, as well. There was Miró, the tailor—

Mr. South of Somewhere was turning away, indifferently. The old *voyageur's* sense of fear fled—one of compunction replaced it. After all, it was a terrible thing to leave this good devil in such an evil place. This impassable swamp, teeming with reptiles and saurians, with its treacherous quagmires masked by tufts of apparently solid grass, the malignant fevers that rode on its grisly mists—all these loomed up, suddenly, in the mind of the guide.

"*M'sieu*," he began, timidly.

Mr. South of Somewhere whirled, frowning.

"Well? For what are you waiting, Jean? It's a long way back to the village—unless you take the same route we came last night. Can you find the way in the daylight?"

"No, *m'sieu*. No man lives who go the way we come, by day or by night—with no Lafitte lamp-post."

"H'm. Did you ever come that way before?"

Jean shook his head.

"How, then, did you know what to do?"

"*M'sieu*, all Creole know how Lafitte go—or Captains Beluche and Dominique You, Rigout—"

"I see—the tradition says to keep the beacon behind you—is that it?"

Jean's face broke into a smile. "*M'sieu*, he is droll devil."

Mr. South of Somewhere robbed the remark of possible offence by a hearty guffaw. Overhead the magpie angrily protested.

"Well, Jean, you have paddled hard all night. If you go back the way we came to Vaudreil, you'll have to sleep, as before, at the old hut. Don't wait around here until the sun gets too high, or you'll miss that fête."

"But, *m'sieu*—he will be los' on La-fitte Bayou?"

There was such genuine concern tincturing the observation that Mr. South of Somewhere laughed again.

"Jean, just now you referred to me as a devil. Devils, Jean, have a way of getting out of trouble—"

He grinned as the paddle hastily drove the canoe a dozen yards out on the bosom of the bayou. The old fellow was alternating between fears for his personal safety and remorse at apparently abandoning a human creature to the merciless wilderness.

"*M'sieu* will be safe?" quavered the boatman.

"I shall go back the way I came, Jean."

Involuntarily Jean blessed himself.

"The way you came, *m'sieu*?" His faint reiteration was all but inaudible.

"Jean, do you hear that bird?"

"Yes, *m'sieu*. It is a magpie."

"Did you know Enterpe de la Chaise had a magpie?"

"Yes, *m'sieu*—a pet."

"Last night, Jean, Dominique You tried to steal Mlle. de la Chaise's pet magpie and was caught by her uncle. Why should he steal her magpie?"

"I no un'erstan', *m'sieu*."

"Oh, well, it's of little consequence, anyway. Now, Jean, I'm going away. I understand your dislike at leaving me here. But, go back to Vaudreil, Jean. Don't worry. I shall leave here the way I came—the way a magpie would go away from here, or a heron."

Mr. South waved an explanatory arm upward, his hand picturing the soaring flight of a feathered creature beginning to rise above the ground.

"And I shall go through the air much swifter than either a magpie or a heron ever thought of traveling, Jean. You understand me?"

Evidently the canoeist understood only too well.

He sent his craft frantically through the narrow opening of the bayou into the river stern first—that he might not remove his terror-filled eyes from this incomprehensible creature, whatever of personal risk such an unprecedented way of navigating a canoe entailed. However, he escaped being swamped, and darted down the river like a frightened flying-fish.

Mr. South of Somewhere grinned, then walked slowly to where the cluster of blocks portrayed the ruins of the "Temple of Everylife."

As he bent over them with a whimsical smile the still storming magpie flew down and swooped past, as if determined that he should not again repossess himself of them.

"Drat that bird!" exclaimed Mr. South. "Why, he's as defiant as Dominique You was last night."

He stooped to remove the foundation stones of Caution, Prudence, Industry and Thoroughness from the clutter, preparatory to rebuilding the temple. A gleam of yellow caught his eye. His fingers closed around a coin—identical with that which he had seen on the throat of Enterpe de la Chaise the night before—an ancient, golden coin, with a hole through its unmilled edge, such as one would bore in order to hang it on a golden wire.

Again the magpie bore down upon him and Mr. South of Somewhere regarded him with malevolent eyes.

"Aha! You feathered devil! So you're in it, too, are you? You yawping thief—you've stolen her only ornament, and hid it in the ruins of the 'Temple of Everylife'—ruined because I had the keystone to the arch containing 'The True Secret of Success.'"

He slipped the coin into his pocket, thoughtfully, while his fingers groped for the odd-shaped block.

"I knew magpies were thieves, but I never knew a long-distance one like this larcenous bird," he muttered, *sotto voce*. "Where is that keystone block? I've got to rebuild the 'Temple of Everylife.'"

He fumbled for it, in vain.

"Why, I had it when I went into the garden with Enterpe," he growled, as if speaking to another person. "I must have dropped it, or lost it—"

He stood erect, with a sheepish grin.

"My talisman is lost—I must have left it in her garden. Where else? And this imp of a bird, inspired by the thieving example of Dominique You, who is inspired by the mouldy M. Lus-sat, probably, stole Enterpe's doubloon—the only relic of the fortune which Jean Lafitte hid, somewhere, the last night the beacon blazed over Vaudreuil.

"She sent me away. But I wouldn't have gone without that talisman. How is a poor devil to rebuild his temple with no keystone? Well, a fair exchange is no robbery and circumstances alter cases. These two hoary bromides shall be my excuse. I'll take back her coin and she shall give me back my keystone, containing, as it does, 'The Secret of True Success'—the which everyone must discover for himself."

He carefully gathered up all the blocks, replaced them in the box, slid the cover into position and pocketed it, disregarding the protests of the shrilling magpie.

"My feathered friend, you had better go back to your mistress. Then, after she has received this keepsake from my hands, if you can steal it again, you're welcome."

He turned his attention to the swamp.

The staff was lying where he had left it when entering the canoe with Jean Genet to go—somewhere.

Then another and a better idea flashed into his brain.

He returned to the taller of the two cypresses and gazed upward. The timorous eyes of a young raccoon peered down at him.

"Sorry, friend!" rumbled Mr. South of Somewhere, "but I've got to get up there and have a look around for Beauty's sake."

He climbed until the swaying top would no longer sustain his weight. Far out in the bosom of the swamp, huddling on a hillock that was, after all, much nearer than he had supposed, lay the aeroplane, like a tired bird resting after a long flight.

Carefully noting its relative position with reference to his own, Mr. South descended, picked up his staff, and started for the edge of the swamp.

The intense heat had one advantage. The surface of the ground was much drier than when the flooded river had inundated it. In fact, the usual course of drainage was now reversed—the waters were running away from the river, instead of into it, now that it had returned to something like normal levels.

Besides, in the daylight, his progress was much less risky than at night, although the persistent gnats attacked his unprotected face in endless swarms.

In the course of three hours, however, Mr. South of Somewhere, dripping and very tired, emerged at the foot of the hillock. It was of a longitudinal formation, with sparse grasses topping it, and the tracks of the aeroplane's wheels were visible for about a hundred yards where he had automatically descended when voyaging "somewhere."

After beating the ground carefully for hiding snakes, Mr. South lifted the fuselage just back of the tail and dragged the machine on the wheels of the landing-gear back to the far end of the hump-like plateau. With a spare cord he attached the automatic-release trip to the trunk of a tree, climbed into the fuselage and rummaged about in a locker until he came upon a thermos bottle. The water it contained relieved his thirst.

Then he drew his sleeping bag around him, covering his head with a weather-proof sheet of material which he spread from the transparent wind-

shield and back to the one affording protection to the passenger's rumble behind. Beneath this improvised tent Mr. South lighted his pipe, defying the gnats, and presently his profound reverie deepened into slumber.

"And what did he say when you left, Jean?"

M. Lussat voiced the query in all minds of the motley group sitting in the Cote d'Or Inn. The fête of the Fall of the Bastille was over. It had ended with a *bal masque*, and the participants present still wore their respective costumes.

M. Lussat was as grave and dignified as the figure of Richelieu which he portrayed; Hippolyte Alimiere was attired as a blade from Gascony; Henry Fauchois and Depuis Moreau appeared as twin Cagliostros; Miró, the tailor, was resplendent as a courtier of Louis the Fourteenth; Galvez, the mayor, as the Duc d'Anjou; while Baptiste Boisblanc Lafrénère, rapier at hip, made a particularly dashing D'Artagnan.

As for Jean Genet, much thought and not a few dollars of his munificent fee from Mr. South of Somewhere had resulted in his attiring himself as Captain Rigoult—and he had been awarded a minor prize, greatly to the delight of his childish mind.

This award and the fact that he was now a personage of no little local consequence, because of his having brought and having carried away the mysterious Mr. South of Somewhere, accounted for Jean's presence in the little group, as well as his failure to remember Dr. Carondelet's oft-repeated admonition about "putting the enemy into the mouth that stealeth away the brains."

Jean Genet, consequently, was just a trifle elated, and his previous long abstinence also inclined him to become proportionately confused. Besides, the suave—almost flattering—manner of M. Lussat, the borough prosecutor, increased the *voyageur's* sense of self-esteem.

"Why, *M. l'Advocat*," said Jean,

with a slight hiccough, "he told me he would leave Bayou Lafitte on the back of a magpie!"

His interrogator frowned.

The levity of the reply disconcerted him.

"Are you sure?" he inquired, more severely.

"Quite sure, M. Lussat—or it may have been a heron—he mentioned both birds—and waved his arm, like this."

M. Lussat shook his head at the group with an expression of quizzical disdain, tempered by ultra-respectability.

"Eh?" exclaimed Jean. "You doubt me—no? Well, *m'sieus*—all of you—if he did not leave Bayou Lafitte in the belly of an alligator, why not on the back of a magpie—eh? He is too big for a snake to swallow, when he returns to the pit!"

"Nonsense!" broke in Galvez, the mayor. "The wine has gone to your head, Jean."

Jean was about to protest that it had been intended for his stomach when Baptiste Boisblanc Lafrénère, whose coal-black eyes had been flashing fire from the moment of the first reference to the mysterious stranger, leaped to his feet.

"Bah!" he hissed. "This fellow ran away at night, like a craven, because he feared that I would call him to account for his outrageous conduct toward my fiancée! Were he here, I would run him through with a rapier. He is a boaster, a *poseur*, a charlatan, whose sleight-of-hand tricks frighten the ignorant of Vaudreil—but as for me, *m'sieus*, were he here now, instead of out in the trackless swamps about Bayou Lafitte—somewhere—I would tweak his nose!"

Lafrénère was in the very act of reaching for the red proboscis of a certain gentleman from Gascony, who, in private life, answered to the name of Hippolyte Alimiere, when a guffaw arrested his hand, in midair.

"You would—eh? Well, my Creole bantam—"

The sentence remained unfinished as the sound of a hearty blow rang dully through the room.

The gallant D'Artagnan was sprawling on the floor, his rapier twisted in his legs—while the nose of Baptiste Boishlanc Lafrénière was dripping a fluid as red, but by no means as sparkling, as Burgundy “of the comet year.”

“You should always speak kindly of the absent,” rumbled Mr. South of Somewhere, casually, as if giving advice were his sole object in life, “for they may sometimes return, *m'sieu*—as I have returned.”

Lafrénière scrambled to his feet, staunching his dripping nose.

“You are insulted,” went on Mr. South, with satirical gravity. “And, in order that you may have the fullest satisfaction for the injury, I shall not wait for your challenge. I shall, instead, challenge you, *m'sieu*, to meet me on the field of honor to wipe out—not the insult I have offered you with a blow—but the insult you have offered me by mentioning, although inferentially, a certain lady, whom,” he paused and glared around the room, ferociously, “no one else will mention, I am sure. And, as the challenged party, you have the choice of weapons.”

He paused and bent an amused look on the sorry figure of the gallant guardsman of a moment before.

“Your pleasure, *m'sieu*?” taunted South.

“Rapier!” snuffled Baptiste Boishlanc Lafrénière.

“Agreed,” returned the imperturbable Mr. South, turning indifferently away. “When, *m'sieu*?”

“Now—at once!”

“Softly, my dear *M'sieu* Lafrénière. The night is cloudy, the light on the Place d'Armes—a locality which, I am sure, *m'sieu* is somewhat familiar with in past events of this kind, notably one with a certain young gentleman by the name of Lussat—the light, I say, *M'sieu* Lafrénière, is not conducive to good dueling. You might be unable to

see clearly—you might, consequently, spit yourself on my blade, instead of my impaling myself upon yours—which would be entirely out of line with your preconceived ideas about the way such affairs of honor should result—eh?”

“Besides, *m'sieu*, that is not the only objection. I have another engagement—the one I returned to Vaudreil to fulfil. I could not anticipate that you would so far honor a poor devil of a stranger with boasts of what you would do were he here—instead of—somewhere!”

“Bah!” gasped Lafrénière. “And what, pray, can be more pressing than our affair, *M'sieu* South?”

Another figure darted into the centre of the group—a diminutive, gander-legged Creole lad, masked of face, but with a pirate's ferocious mustachios bristling from his beardless lips, a gaudy sash matching his no less gaudy turban, likewise bristling, with naked cutlass and a pair of pistols.

No one, however, took the slightest notice of Dominique You—despite his title of “Captain.”

Instead all eyes were on the burly stranger, who imperturbably leaned against the bar as he replied to the query of the proprietor of the Cote d'Or Inn.

“What else can be more pressing?” he mocked. “Why, this, *m'sieu*!”

He hurled a golden coin with unmilled edges upon the bar—an ancient coin, with a hole through its edge, as if it might be intended to be threaded on a golden wire.

“This,” reiterated Mr. South of Somewhere emphatically, “must be returned to its owner—in exchange for a trifling bit of wood which I fancy the owner of this coin has—somewhere—at least I have it not, and the last recollection I have of having it at all was night before last, when I called on a certain resident of Vaudreil, who, as I have previously intimated, *m'sieus*, shall be nameless!”

The masked pirate peered wolfishly

up at the doubloon lying on the bar. Then he darted away to twitch the sleeve of the stately figure of Richelieu, whose toe was again beating a devil's tattoo on the floor, of the Cote d'Or Inn, as the toe of M. Lussat had quivered against the stone flags of the pavement surrounding the Place d'Armes, barely two nights before, when these same two infuriated men had been facing each other across a trail of hissing sparks.

"Pieces of eight!" muttered Dominique You to his fierce mustache.

If the courtly Richelieu heard him he did not indicate the fact. Instead he hung on the next words of the stranger, who was facing Lafrénière with a contemptuous smile which Lafitte himself might have envied.

"After which, M'sieu Baptiste Bois-blanc Lafrénière," went on Mr. South softly, "I shall be entirely at your service. In fact, *m'sieu*, I shall be most happy to fight you with rapiers or cane-knives or can-openers or buttonhooks—on the Place d'Armes or in the dustiest winebin of your cellar. And in proof that I am not seeking to evade you, *m'sieu*, you yourself, if you desire, shall go with me to the home of the nameless person whom it is necessary that I shall first see; you shall await me without, and return with me here when I have concluded my errand. Come, *m'sieu*, what say you? Will you go?"

He threw open the door with the words.

The chill of the night breeze swirled in, clutching at the dancing lights of the candles as if with invisible hands, bending them over in homage to the indomitable heart of the iron-nerved figure standing there at the room's exit smiling ironically.

But there was a greater chill than that bred of the night—one bred in the heart of Lafrénière, which crept outward until it numbed his flaccid spine, and again outward until the very marrow in his quaking bones iced in its channels.

His fine feathers had been sadly soiled and rumpled with the contact with the floor of the Cote d'Or, his nose was swelling until it rivaled in size and hue the prominent feature of the dashing blade of Gascony; the pupils of his beady eyes became black blots in a sallow sea of pupils; his twitching lips, his nervous fingers, his hesitancy and his trembling limbs—all these proclaimed him for the unmasked boaster, the craven, the saffron-blooded ruffian that he was.

A reverberating, tinkling crash echoed through the room.

Lafrénière leaped sidewise.

But it was only the shattered bottle of *vin ordinaire* which Jean, the *voyageur*, had tumbled incontinently to the floor in his own excitement.

"*Sacré!*" hissed Lafrénière, wiping his streaming brow with a gloved hand, as South's grim, remorseless yet spontaneous laugh echoed the crash.

"Are you a coward, *m'sieu?*" taunted the burly figure at the door. "Are you afraid that I will seek to do you harm before we face each other on the field of honor the second time—and with the advantage all with you?"

His sneer broadened as Lafrénière did not reply.

"Well," boomed South a little impatiently, "if that idea holds you back, wear that iron plaything you have hanging from your belt, if you care to." His words were tinctured with an intolerable insolence.

Lafrénière straightened himself haughtily, however, and shot a venomous look in his direction, while something like satisfaction at the concession smoothed out the desperate lines in his forehead.

"I am without weapons of any kind save those with which Nature has endowed me," continued the stranger, as if interpreting the look and putting it into words for the benefit of the motley group of auditors. "But, *m'sieu*, allow me to inform you that if you contemplate treachery toward me because of my permitting you to wear your fa-

vorite plaything—a rapier—remember, *m'sieu*, that I have already publicly placed you on record as a potential assassin—and if it is to be *I* who do not return from the business I have in hand, instead of *you*, my public designation of you will have then been justified."

Stung into movement by the barbed words, Lafrénière moved over toward the door.

Mr. South of Somewhere waited until the Creole had crossed the threshold.

Then the yawning maw of the blackness without closed round and swallowed them up.

CHAPTER XVII.

JEAN GENET'S CURIOSITY.

JEAN GENET, more than partially sobered by the astounding reappearance of Mr. South, whom he had left on the shores of Bayou Lafitte, staggered to his feet as Henry Fauchois cautiously closed the door behind the reluctant exit of Baptiste Boisblanc Lafrénière.

Woodsmen and swamp rat that he was, and although profoundly ignorant of many things aside from the quaint lore of the wilderness and those secrets whispered by the spell of the vasty waste during the solitary hours while he followed his perilous livelihood for a precarious living, Jean Genet, nevertheless, was not without a certain quaint wisdom, in spite of his lack of erudition and ignorance of the outside world and its customs.

His first glance, therefore, was in the direction of M. Lussat and Dominique You. It was prompted by Jean's recollection that Mr. South of Somewhere had referred to both of them, while leaving Vaudreil to return to the place where Jean had first found him.

Now, the incomprehensible fellow was back again in Vaudreil—and there must be a reason.

Something, therefore, so Jean's thoughts ran on, had brought him back

as abruptly as he had left. In the absence of other reasons, what could be more likely than that something had to do with M. Lussat or Dominique You—or both?

How Mr. South had returned was more perplexing than why he had returned—at least more perplexing to Jean; for what magpie ever hatched in the broad Delta section—or what heron, either, for that matter—could have brought the big-bodied man thither, as he had himself vowed he would leave Bayou Lafitte—through the air?

Jean repressed his impulse to shudder at the uncanny power of an individual who could do what Mr. South of Somewhere had done, indubitably. He had found his way back to Vaudreil without a guide, unless his master from "the pit" had aided him.

But the reasons which the old *voyageur* secretly believed had brought him back were human beings, like Jean himself, and for M. Lussat, the self-contained, inscrutable advocate, or for the irrepressible Creole lad with the piratical name, fear was just now replaced with insatiable curiosity. Why, for instance, had Mr. South mentioned them both while leaving Vaudreil and ignored them both on his return?

It might be that Mr. South's swift offense at the manner of Lafrénière's intimate reference to Enterpe de la Chaise had caused the stranger to alter his first intention. Neither Jean, nor anyone else in the room, had failed to understand the spirit which had prompted the blow and the swift, panther-like manner in which the offender had surrendered his advantage, under the code, to give his former enemy every superiority on their second meeting.

Jean divined that it was both paradoxical and Quixotic, although he could not have recognized a paradox by name and had never heard of the humorous Don who tilted windmills to vent his chivalry.

The woodsman's former fear of this queer-acting stranger was no longer as

acute as it had been, although the superstitious awe in which he held him was, if anything, increased. Chauffeur or devil—he had been more liberal than many deeply pious folk—Jean had not been harmed, but, instead, vastly benefited through the association.

That was why he was now peering warily around the flowing Cagliostro costume which Depuis Moreau was wearing, to see what M. Lussat would now do, if anything.

Henry Fauchois broke the silence as he turned to the borough prosecutor with a question:

"*M'sieu*, was it prudent, think you, for Baptiste to follow that terrible creature out into the darkness?"

M. Lussat shrugged his shoulders.

"Why do you ask?" he countered, after an interval calculated to give his words the impressiveness which a delayed reply always conveys from one who speaks little.

"They are not friends," muttered Fauchois sheepishly. "They have only to meet and what follows is like a spark from steel on flint falling into powder."

In the ensuing pause, Dominique You whipped one of his pistols from his belt and grimaced at it, as he inspected the foundations of the twin-Cagliostro's metaphor.

"That is none of my affair," observed the pseudo-Richelieu, after another dramatic and sustained interval. "I do not know this stranger nor his antecedents. For that matter, who, in Vaudreil does? We can only judge him by his acts. They supplement his speech. You know as much about Baptiste as I know—even more—for you are more frequently in his society," he cryptically continued. "Baptiste is not a child. From what he was saying when this fellow unexpectedly came trumpeting in here, one would hardly think Baptiste feared him. Besides, he was free to go or to stay. He made his choice without compulsion or even advice. What of it?"

It was here that Jean Genet steered

unsteadily toward the rear of the Cote d'Or—more unsteadily, in fact, than his real condition warranted. He did not understand *M'sieu* South, but, being an old swamp rat, he understood some other things—among them a certain flexing of M. Lussat's fingers, as he gathered up his Richelieu's robe, signified that the advocate was about to leave.

This action, no less than the non-committal tone of the words he had uttered, savored, also, to the *voyageur's* mind of the tactics of a mother-bird simulating a broken wing to decoy away an intruder who has ventured dangerously close to her secret nesting place.

Jean's previous curiosity, born of the questions put to him by Mr. South while en route to Bayou Lafitte, was now deepening into inquisitiveness as while en route to Bayou Lafitte, was what he said—or the contrary.

For himself, he doubted the sincerity of the utterance.

And five minutes later, standing well concealed outside the front door of the inn, his doubts grew apace when M. Lussat and the grotesquely garbed Dominique emerged and hurried down the road at a pace which was hard for him to equal, provided he also remained unseen and unheard.

However, the road led straight to M. Lussat's home, and that of itself was not suspicious, nor the fact that the residence lay in the same direction as the one taken so short a time before by Lafrénière and the stranger to reach the home of Enterpe de la Chaise.

But Dominique's first observation and the manner of M. Lussat's reply rather thrilled Jean. It came when the pair were hardly well out of the misty circle of light which the Cote d'Or radiated from its small windows.

"Why did we not follow them sooner?" piped the lad. "This fellow has pieces of eight—did you not hear me when I whispered it? And my pistols are loaded and primed. Can we be on the track of—"

"Dominique," sternly exclaimed the advocate, "stop your idle chattering!"

Thus adjured, the lad growled something unintelligible and obeyed—for a time.

Two hundred yards further on his shrill, petulant voice again cut through the somber stillness of the night like a knife.

"It was you that told me of my great-grandfather!" he insisted, with characteristic defiance. "Did you not also tell me of his death in New Orleans and of his burial with honor in the middle cemetery on Claiborne Street—"

The profane imprecation that broke in on the lad's remarks was clearly discerned by Jean Genet, creeping along the fringe of the road fifty paces or so behind the pair.

"—and that on his tomb, in French, are the words: 'Here lies Captain Dominique You, the hero of a hundred battles on land and sea; who, without fear and without reproach, will one day view unmoved the destruction of the world!' did you not?"

For reply Lussat stopped short, fell upon the youngster, grasping him by the collar and shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat.

Jean also brought up suddenly, and remained there viewing this peculiar exhibition of the advocate's wrath with no little surprise. Dominique You, however, although whimpering under the reproof, behaved with that peculiar and insistent obduracy of a child who realizes that he is being unjustly treated and who resents it, while unable to resist the cause.

M. Lussat's rage passed as quickly as it had surged out and over his studied habitual phlegm. Also he seemed to regret yielding to it, for after glancing cautiously back toward the lights of Vaudreil he spoke in tones of marked kindness.

"I am not angry with you because you believe what I have told you, and which is unquestionably entirely true," said he, just before resuming his for-

mer rapid pace toward the house. "But I am angry because you cannot show yourself the worthy descendant of that illustrious man—that you disobey me at such a time—a time when, it may be, that we are nearing the end of the long quest for your portion of the hidden fortune which Jean Lafitte promised to one day share with his captains—a promise made on the isle Chénierre Caminada, when he fled with the spoils to avoid enemies who would no longer be denied."

"And there are but three heirs, eh?" insisted the Creole boy in his thin, piping tones. "Hortense, who is descended from Captain Rigoult, me, Dominique You, and Mlle. de la—"

Lussat turned upon him a look of such intense malignity that the boy spoke no more.

Presently they turned up the lane leading to the moribund old brick dwelling in the midst of the garden, where the nymph in eroded wrought-iron, by day or by night, upturned her visage in disfigured ecstasy atop the tinkling fountain.

And here, too, paused Jean Genet, with a transient wonder at his own temerity in venturing even thus far toward the same destination which M'sieu South and Baptiste must now be nearing—the destination whose brilliantly lighted windows were as clearly discernible from where he was standing as her angelic countenance and ravishing figure had been apparent during the *bal masque*, when, attired as the "Spirit of Liberty," Enterpe de la Chaise had glided to and fro in the mazy dance, wrenching the heart-strings of her hopeless admirers as violently as that ideal which she portrayed had wrenched asunder the walls of the gloomy Bastille.

Jean Genet was no coward—in the swamp.

There was something, however, so altogether eerie in the sound of the closing door, signifying that M. Lussat and his protégé had entered the house, that he hesitated. It was but an ordi-

nary sound, yet it was pregnant with ominousness.

His inquisitiveness as to why the incomprehensible M'sieu South had spoken concerning this strangely assorted pair was dying away. It was incomprehensible to Jean, however, that idle curiosity could have impelled M'sieu South to wing his fantastic flight—on heron or magpie back—to Vaudreil again, altogether contemptuous of past dangers, and to a spot where fresh danger was certainly rife, unless the old *voyageur* had misread the murderous eyes of Baptiste Bois-blanc Lafrénière, the instant before the duelist had followed Mr. South of Somewhere out into the night.

Then another sound broke in upon his reverie as he paused irresolutely in the shadow of the oleanders near the fountain.

The door to M. Lussat's house was opening again, this time so stealthily that even the old swamp rat at first thought his ears had deceived him—until he saw a gaudy turban protruding through the opening.

Dominique You had worn that turban and a sash to match at the *bal masque*, even as Jean Genet was wearing a costume hastily designed by Miró, the tailor, and by that most worthy craftsman sartorial declared to be an historically correct reproduction of the uniform that the doughty Captain Rigoult had worn in the days when the Baratarians coquetted with the Creoles; when Jean Lafitte, pirate and gentleman, ruled the Coast of Gold with the hand of steel in the glove of silk—a hand whose palm dripped bounteously to many fortunate enough to have lived when and where Lafitte lived; a hand which, according to the statements of both M. Lussat and Dominique You, although dust these many years, yet held securely in its clutch a treasure not altogether traditional, since no less than the borough prosecutor believed in it and told his protégé how it came that the descendants of Lafitte and his two valorous

captains were entitled to share and share alike.

Jean had heard of this treasure before.

So with bated breath, putting aside his sinister forebodings of the moment before, he waited in the shadow of the oleanders to see what the turbaned, besashed figure would do next—waited while he felt that somehow he was being drawn into the maw of things as devilish as his own surmises when he had first seen the figure of Mr. South of Somewhere standing so grimly on the dusky shores of Bayou Lafitte.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ROAD TO THE HOUSE OF LAFITTE.

IN the interim the men of whom the old *voyageur* was thinking were barely out of earshot of the Cote d'Or when the stranger remarked quietly:

"My Creole friend, my permission for you to take along your rapier is not based on ignorance of your possible intentions toward me, but because my foresight is better than yours at this time. One advantage in particular you will forego if you should inadvertently put that little toy to use before we return."

Baptiste, hissing like a serpent and clutching the hilt of his sword, skipped sidewise. Mr. South, however, merely chuckled like a mischievous schoolboy and continued his rapid pace unalarmed.

"I do not understand you, *m'sieu!*" exclaimed the Creole haughtily, as he lengthened his stride to overtake the other.

"Which, being interpreted," coolly retorted South, "is equivalent to your idea that it is better to kill me down among the trees, a little further along the road, eh?"

Lafrénière thanked the friendly darkness which hid his crimson face. As Hippolyte Alimiere had declared—

but for an entirely different reason—this fellow was truly diabolical. He even uttered aloud one's thoughts almost before they had time to take form.

"It is this way, my dear fellow," went on South, with an urbanity no less exasperating than his recent most savage excoriations. "If you send that rapier through my body you may kill me—yes. But what have you gained by yielding to a hot-blooded impulse, when you intend doing it anyway, and in a public manner, a little later—if you can? You have not gained; you have lost instead."

"I have lost—what?"

"Why, the double pleasure of anticipating the joy to be yours when you succeed—if you do—as well as your delight at again affording your fellow townsmen an exhibition of your superb skill. What else, pray?"

"Perhaps, *m'sieu*, I would have sufficient pleasure to gratify my present humor by foregoing the ones you mention."

"I think not. In fact, I am sure you will agree with me that you are wrong as soon as you have cooled off a little. You are wrong because to attack me now would be murder. You cannot always rely, you know, upon the apathy of the borough prosecutor. Besides the stigma of an assassin, in addition to hurting your pride, entails certain pains and penalties, to say nothing of your lack of foresight in robbing the public of a sight of the manner in which a member of the local nobility wipes out the repeated stains upon his honor! Then there is also the delayed satisfaction to be yours personally, which the failure of the bomb to explode, after I released you to save a certain young lady, caused to be denied you. No, *m'sieu*, I think on reflection you will agree with me."

"Bah!" snarled Lafrénière. "You knew that cursed contrivance was harmless, for you had it in your possession before forcing me to accept your choice of weapons!"

"Assertions are not proof," equably returned the other man. "I came to Vaudreil a stranger. I slept in your hotel. I went to Dr. Carondelet's to pay a friendly call with my guide. Never, until that instant, had I ever heard of Philippe Saint Marie or the relic of what he is pleased to call his miracle. Dr. Carondelet can bear witness that after I learned of those facts he was with me constantly. It is true I handled the bomb, but I had no tools with which to pry it apart or examine it. I slipped it in my pocket when I invited him to dine with me—at your hotel. On the way we met you. You challenged me."

Lafrénière, realizing that the simple logic was unanswerable, gave the conversation a new angle, meanwhile furtively fingering the hilt of D'Aragnan's trusty blade.

"You knew I was in Vaudreil?"

"When you stepped up to me—not before. *M'sieu*, may I not offer you a suggestion calculated to increase your peace of mind in future?"

"You may offer it," coldly returned the Creole, "but I may not adopt it."

"Suit yourself. It is this: Study the properties of numbers—for numbers, from simple addition upward, contain more real truths than all the world's philosophers have ever written. Philosophy deludes—numbers never lie. Numbers contain the only true philosophy, for, just as surely as two and two make four, so does a given cause always produce a corresponding effect. Philosophy, whether secular or religious, may delude you. Therefore it is detrimental. But if you will, hereafter try and remember that cause and effect rule this world—not hare-brained theories—you will be happier."

"Your solicitude for my happiness is most marked, it would seem," gloated the Creole.

"Prove it for yourself, *m'sieu*. Your fingers are even now itching at the hilt of that ornate but very business-like weapon you wear. The cause of that itch is the hatred in your brain toward

me. Yet you will not draw your sword nor use it, because pride in a more artistic manner of murder holds your arm stronger than a vise would hold it."

"You seem very sure of it—more sure than I, *M'sieu South!*"

"It is the mathematics of cause and effect. The effect on the public whom you expect will witness your vengeance is the cause of your present hesitancy. You are unwilling to exchange transient admiration, a few hours hence, for undying odium. Your pride, therefore, protects me. Come, *m'sieu*, be candid—at least with yourself. We are quite alone. There is no one here to watch you parade, like a peacock when spreading his tail. Even were you a peacock, and so engaged—and what could be more laudable?—it is, nevertheless, too dark for the sheen of your pride to dazzle absent eyes. No one is present save I, *m'sieu*. And you know very well that you could never deceive me."

"But you may be deceiving me!" hotly exclaimed Lafrénière. "How do I know that you really intend meeting me at all? Perhaps you are only luring me out into this darkness to murder me—possibly with accomplices."

"If that were so, why should I have first shown myself at your hotel? Until then no one knew I was back in Vaudreil. Would it not have been perfectly simple for me to have looked through the windows of the inn, waited until your guests had all departed, then set fire to the building and shot you down from the safe shadows when you emerged? No, *M'sieu Baptiste Bois-blanc Lafrénière*, you are—pardon me for stating it bluntly—wrong again. It would seem that my most disinterested efforts to get you to deal fairly, not with me but with yourself, are futile. You permit your rage to dethrone your reason—a dangerous thing for a man with your temperament, *m'sieu*."

Lafrénière gritted his teeth at the careless tone of the words. Such baiting was more exasperating to his pride

than the most terrible denunciation. His rapier, for all his boasted skill, could not protect him against the deadlier thrusts which the stranger dealt with such *sang froid*.

He was so scourged with the lash of the homely words that he again paused irresolutely, uncertain whether or not to end matters then and there, despite his inward admissions that South was entirely correct regarding his overweening vanity and thirst to publicly revenge himself on the source of his previous humiliations.

Once again, however, he was forestalled.

The burly man who had nettled him with his cruciate remarks turned and faced him with the same amazing composure which he had invariably exhibited in moments of previous peril.

His great arm suddenly shot out, with extended hand and forefinger, pointing backward, almost over the Creole's shoulder.

"Even were your present annoyance to triumph over your pleasurable anticipation, *m'sieu*, you are too late," said he.

Lafrénière turned, in spite of himself.

"You see?" went on the stranger, "Richelieu and his piratical convoy are leaving your inn and coming this way quite rapidly. Although I have never been formally introduced to the gentleman in the historic prime minister's costume, I may hazard a conjecture, may I not, that it is none other than the worthy M. Lussat—he of the funereal face and the dust-to-dust air of looking one over?"

Lafrénière sneered. "It is M. Lussat, but what of it?"

"Nothing, *m'sieu*, except that they will overtake us if we linger here, and M. Lussat, as a private citizen, of course could not very well have avoided hearing what passed between us ere I left the hotel and you followed. Surely you have no desire to embarrass that tolerant gentleman by forcing him to stumble over evidence that I

spoke truly when I recatalogued you as a potential assassin! He might be so startled that he would be forced to take official cognizance of what had tripped him, *m'sieu*—especially if it should happen to be my dead body. Think of him, I beg of you, if not of yourself or of me—a stranger in Vaudreil who has yet to complete his errand. Shall we not go on, *m'sieu*?"

He turned deliberately.

Lafrénière, his weapon already creeping noiselessly out of its sheath, gazed at its formidable bulk—at once a continual challenge to his vengeance and a perpetual menace to his pride.

One swift, silent thrust, and—

A cricket in the roadside shadows rubbed his strident legs together. At the rasp—as if it were two lithe blades singing at the instant of engaging in the hands of two desperately determined men—a sudden smile broke over Lafrénière's swollen, moody countenance.

The rapier slipped back into its snug sheath and he trotted forward until again abreast of South, who, plunged into a reverie, seemed to heed not the transition in the other's spirits.

Lafrénière, however, for some reason appeared vastly well pleased that he had not yielded to his morose and murderous impulse, for he was almost jubilant in tone when he spoke again.

They were just abreast of the lane leading up from the highway to M. Lussat's severely respectable abode when the Creole broke the silence.

"*M'sieu*," he began, jocularly, "I fail to understand—that is, if you are not deceiving me in this matter of your errand—why you have been willing to accord me satisfaction for your past insults, as well as the added injuries of this evening, with weapons of my own choosing."

"No doubt, *m'sieu*," politely returned the other. "If you care to believe that I am in earnest about my errand—and I do not see why you should question, inasmuch as you are accompanying me—you might resolve your

other doubt by attributing it to a whim. For I am whimsical, at times, *mon vieux*!"

"Whimsical?" reiterated the Creole. "In some things—yes. But this, *m'sieu*, is a matter of life or death. And you quite comprehend, do you not," he persisted, craftily, "that you may hope for nothing less from me, *m'sieu*?"

"Our respective views of life and death, I fear, will not be cleared up in the brief time that yet remains to us," said South, with something like a sigh. "There are phases of what you are pleased to term life which might be, for instance, less desirable to me than what you term death. After all, *m'sieu*, who shall say where the one ends and the other begins? Recall what I mentioned about the properties of numbers. When did numbers—or the principles they convey—begin, or when will they or their principles end? We cannot say they began when men first learned of them, because that is simply a contradiction in terms. They must have existed before men learned of their uses or properties—otherwise, how could they have been discovered at all?"

"I understand, *m'sieu*," suavely returned the Creole. "But what have these numbers, of which you prate so glibly, to do with life and death?"

"Well," South's voice boomed sonorously out over the close, fetid darkness, "after all, we know as much of numbers as of life or death—and no more. They are, therefore, both equally unknowable. Who knows what life is—or its purpose? We begin by indulging the rosy dreams of youth. We end by having done what we must do, all through life, instead of what we have promised ourselves we should do. Is it not so?"

Lafrénière mumbled something to the effect that he was more at home on the field of honor than in discussions of such topics.

He was rather pleased, however, that Mr. South's voice seemed to be more imbued with a tinge of melancholy—like the drift of their desultory

conversation—the nearer they approached the home of Enterpe de la Chaise. He was very sure, in fact, that it lacked the former sturdy defiance which he had always hitherto noted was so characteristic of this incomprehensible individual.

In proportion, therefore, the Creole's volatile spirits rose, while the attitude of Mr. South seemed to take on more of his own recent dejection.

The essential cruelty typical of his real nature, however, would not permit the Creole to tacitly witness the other's lessening confidence. He enjoyed the prospect of his coming duel, but it gave him an added zest, meanwhile, to toy with his victim.

So, with a spurious magnanimity, now that he had regained something of the aplomb which South's mysterious and utterly unexpected return to the Cote d'Or had shattered, Lafrénière, in a tone bordering between insolence and condescension, renewed the discussion on other lines.

"If I remember correctly," said he, "you have never handled a rapier."

"You have a most excellent memory," boomed South.

"It is *mos' unfortunat'*," sibilated Baptiste, unconsciously clipping his syllables and baring his teeth in his joy. "The lunge in *tierce*, for instance—if I use it, how would you guard?"

"By thrusting in turn, I suppose, as hard and as straight as I can," said South, without a tremor in his voice.

"But the *riposte*, *m'sieu*—the which may turn aside your weapon or whisk it from your hand—eh? Without a sword—"

"What is written is written. Technicalities, of this kind, are not in my line, *m'sieu*. Hence, I cannot even answer you intelligently—in words!"

"Yet, you will fight me!" smirked Baptiste, luxuriating in his pleasure at harrying the other.

"Is Vaudreil large enough for us both—or, for that matter, the world? That is why I shall fight you. You understand, I trust, to what I refer?"

"Shall I ever forget that dear Parnassus roof-garden?" genially returned the Creole, "or your cat's eyes, as you looked over the top of your wonderful beard at Enterpe? *M'sieu*, I am—shall we say?—ravished at the recollection—and the prospect!"

"It must be truly fascinating!" gibed Mr. South. "Were I you, I should roll around on the ground, I think, like a Persian feline in a forest of catnip trees!"

"*M'sieu*, you are not only a wizard, as Hippolyte avowed to me—you are enchantingly droll! Alas, that catnip should not grow hereabouts! Well, too great joy, it kills one, so says the proverb, *m'sieu*. Why, pray, could you not continue to remain where I first saw you, and play out your little game with your theories and some other enchantress—"

"*M'sieu*. If you persist in forgetting yourself, you will force me to borrow some old blade from the gentleman who lives in this house we are nearing, to measure it with the one you wear, thereby robbing the merry villagers of a glimpse of the glory so dear to your murderous heart! I shall do so, however, if you persist in mentioning the name of one so far above you that a snail might as well aspire to kiss a star!"

Baptiste laughed, happily, as they turned in among the spectral trees at the foot of the knoll, fringing the park-like approach to the mansion from which Lafitte's beacon once blazed to guide his lusty freebooters.

"What fools live in Vaudreil," jeered the Creole. "They think you a devil, with mysterious powers. I know you for what you are, *m'sieu*, a fool, like all other men! I reiterate, *m'sieu*—you are a fool—for the smile of a woman sends you to death of a surety, this time."

"Of a surety?" repeated South. "Whence this sudden spirit of prophecy, my Creole friend?"

"My rapier is no bomb denuded of its detonating charge. And, may I add

that it is thirsty, *m'sieu*? When it comes over in the lunge in *tierce*—*pardon!* I forget. You have never seen that captivating thrust, for you have never handled a rapier! It is a beautiful, curving lunge, *M'sieu* South of Somewhere. You shall, at least, have the satisfaction of dying artistically, and as bravely as you, yourself, shall say! For, look you, *M'sieu* South—I who shall kill you at daybreak, have not yet told one person in *Vaudreil* your real name or position—"

"Shall I tell you why?" sarcastically cut in the man addressed. "You have not and will not, because, while you fancy you may kill me, a poor devil of a stranger, with impunity, if it should become known afterward who I really was, *M'sieu* Baptiste Boisblanc Lafrénière, no spot on this planet could preserve you from the vengeance of the friend you saw with me that night you have just mentioned."

"Your friend—bah—"

"Softly," interpolated South. "Do not permit the scent of that missing catnip to over-intoxicate you. Remember, *he* saw *you*. Remember, also, that he would know you again if he met you, and instantly recall the smallest detail of your personality if he heard that the John North, who has since died, was killed by a Creole in a duel. Likewise, while *Vaudreil* lies buried in a swamp, *m'sieu*, science and invention are in full flower at the edges of this trackless morass. The wireless, for instance, could tick off the news of the demise of a man who died that Mr. South of Somewhere might live, in the ten-thousandth part of a second, from New Orleans or Baton Rouge—straight into the station on the Olympian Building in New York. And, in another ten-thousandth of a second, *m'sieu*, think what would befall *you!*"

"Befall *me?*"

South shook a forbidding forefinger under the other's nose.

"Who else, pray? When that answering message flies, with the speed of light, out for ten thousand miles

with a word-picture of you, *mon ami*, every wireless station on this continent—or that of South America—as well as every ship at sea, would pick it up. The reward for your apprehension would set on fire a hundred thousand gold-craving human bloodhounds and even in *Vaudreil*, the newspapers of other cities would carry the offer.

"What, then would become of you? You may slake your thirst for vengeance against a homeless poor devil of a stranger, *m'sieu*—if, as I have said, you can do it—when we meet at daybreak on the Place d'Armes. But, you had best guard well your oily tongue, both before and after that event, if it is fated to occur, for, otherwise, no nook or cranny of this wilderness will avail you! No, not even if you turned yourself into a lizard could you hope to escape the wrath of my one, true friend in all the world, *M'sieu* Baptiste Boisblanc Lafrénière. *That* is why you *have* told no one and *will* tell no one—understand?"

The Creole wiped his face.

"*Cer-certainement!*" he stammered. "And you have told—"

"I have told no one, not even you, anything they did not already know before I arrived in *Vaudreil*. Nor shall I. And now, my bloodthirsty Persian tom-cat, you will wait here, a hundred feet from the veranda steps, for me to perform my errand, but alone, mind you!"

He pulled out his watch, consulting the illuminated dial.

"Two o'clock on a fine morning for murder—eh?" he rumbled, savagely. "In thirty minutes, at the outside, I shall be with you again, and then, back to the Place d'Armes and to business!"

"Or," supplemented Lafrénière, suddenly whipping his rapier from its sheath, and bending it, lovingly, until it was almost double, "I shall enter and kill you on the floor—in there, eh?"

"If you care to risk it," silkily went on South, "rapier or no rapier, *m'sieu*. I shall not in that event, however, undertake to guarantee that you will live

to reach the Place d'Armes. Speaking for myself, I rather enjoy an occasional hazard, perhaps because I understand the properties of numbers which govern all hazards. Triple-X hazards, on others, however, are something I cannot guarantee even you protection against—the percentage is a very dangerous one, my friend. You know, I suppose—”

“That there is no other way for you to leave save through this front door? Yes, *m'sieu*. The swamp joins the garden wall on three sides in the rear. And, by the swamp you cannot escape, either! For, *m'sieu*, is it not better to die, as I have said, artistically—when die you must—like a brave man at the end of a rapier? There is little pain, I am told—far less than from the fangs of a serpent, the huge jaws of a saurian or the slow torture of suffocating in the bottomless mire!”

“Nature evidently intended you for a consoler of sick souls,” grimly returned the other, as he started toward the steps. “You have mistaken your calling by becoming a professional *matador* of men, *m'sieu*—which is the true designation of a duelist.”

The Creole gritted his teeth in fresh rage as Mr. South of Somewhere, having delivered this Parthian arrow pending his return, strode briskly up to the magnificent doorway of carved mahogany and stained glass, through which the brilliant lights within filtered out in purple and crimson frescoes across the cypress flooring of the veranda.

The stranger, despite Lafrénière's horrible hatred, was thoroughly game. No poor power of his at delineating that would undoubtedly follow, had succeeded in penetrating his victim's imperturbability. He had even remained philosophical, disarming the Creole's cruel, vicious pleasure with ideas as resolute as the heavy reverberation of the great silver knocker which was now thudding like the hammer of Thor against the main entrance to the home of Enterpe de la Chaise.

Mr. South waited the response to his

summons, waited with a stolidity which the Creole lurking in the shadows secretly envied; for the sound of that insistent summons, somehow, brought a renewal of the chill which Lafrénière had felt in the Cote d'Or, when the stranger had interrupted his boast.

It swept over him anew as the echo of the knock died away among the whispering trees—whispering as if in anticipation of some foul act which they told each other they would presently witness.

Lafrénière shuddered. Then he peered round him.

He might as well have stared at the centre of the earth for all that he could distinguish.

Death was in the very air, he told himself, for Baptiste had not worn his rapier for naught when leaving the little group at the inn to follow this fellow, who anticipated and parried his intentions with words that repelled him so easily that a new thought came to him—perhaps the skill of speech might, mysteriously, be transferred to the wrist of a novice, holding in his great paw for the first time the duelist's favorite weapon.

But Baptiste told himself that such folly would fade out before the light of dawn on the Place d'Armes. Meanwhile, he slipped nearer to the steps of the veranda, where Mr. South of Somewhere waited, gluing his insatiable eyes on the place where either Enterpe or her uncle must presently appear, if the stranger's errand were not in vain.

Hence, Lafrénière was quite unmindful of the fact that in the thickest of the shadows behind him was a gaudy sash girding the waist of a figure whose head wore a turban to match it; that a ferocious mustache sprouted like the inverted and blackened tusks of a walrus from its lips; or that in the sash were two old-fashioned pistols once fitted to the hands of a certain Captain Dominique You, whose tomb in Claiborne Street cemetery, in New Orleans, even to this day

bears an inscription proclaiming that he will, from within it, "without fear and without reproach one day view unmoved the destruction of the world."

Lafrénière could not see this figure but the figure could clearly discern the Creole, because the latter was sharply defined against light emanating from the windows of the old Lafitte mansion.

And even the dauntless captain himself, who had worn those same pistols in "a hundred battles on land and sea," from each of which he had emerged "an intrepid hero," in the hour prophesied upon his last resting place, could not hope to "view unmoved" the destruction of the world with more of phlegm than the figure creeping up in the shadows behind Lafrénière exhibited.

Then, the door opened, and the bared head of Mr. South of Somewhere was silhouetted against another figure—that of seraph, it seemed, framed in the tinted rays falling from the finely-wrought porcelain shade crowning an Etruscan lamp swaying above her—the one wrenched by pirate hands from a Spanish galleon returning from the East Indies in the long ago, the other plucked from the temple of an ancient Roman god.

Its soft beams quivered and wavered as it swung to and fro, filling the heart-hungry eyes of Mr. South of Somewhere standing in the shadows of the veranda, like the figure of a Peri who has forever lost his Paradise, but is now privileged to return to it for one final, brief but immortal, half-hour.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MEETING AND—A SHOT.

LAFRENIERE regretted that he was not near enough to distinguish the first words uttered by Enterpe de la Chaise or her expression at the sight of the presumptuous fellow who had insisted upon calling at such a late hour.

Mr. South of Somewhere was hard-

ly less advantageously situated, however, although for far different reasons, and while actually so close that the alarmed eyes of the girl sent a pang of keenest disappointment through his otherwise drugged faculties.

"You wish to see my uncle, *m'sieu?*" asked Enterpe, her fair face flooding with the emotion her cool tone denied.

"*Mademoiselle*, I have never been an artist's model, hence affectation is both foreign and fatiguing to one of my nature. I had entirely forgotten your uncle at sight of you."

"He is in the drawing room," said she, with a slightly mischievous twist to the corners of her mouth.

"If you care to preserve him, order him into the cellar until I have gone away," growled South, stepping, uninvited, into the hall. "The only reason for my behavior, *mademoiselle*—"

"Oh!" laughed the girl, as she closed the door. "How cold and formal we are growing! Pray, why, *M'sieu South?*"

The maddening way she lisped his name sent furious pulse-beats hammering at him from temples to toes. He checked his wild desire to seize her, however, choked back the incoherent terms of endearment crowding for articulate speech, and, with the ghost of his former confident smile, replied:

"My lack of time precludes long explanation. Let me say, first, that I have an engagement which must be kept thirty minutes from now; and then to add that I disobeyed your command to leave Vaudreil and remain away that I might bring you back this."

He flashed the old Spanish coin before her. She regarded it with a perplexed expression, while he went hurriedly on:

"When I first saw this trinket, it was on a golden wire around your neck. I found it on the shore of a bayou remote from here and I was more dumfounded to see it there, no doubt, than you are at my having so fortunately recovered it. However, I think I understand how it happened to come

there. A magpie was chattering overhead—"

He checked his words as the look of acute but formless terror he had once before seen mar the beauty of her face returned at the mention of the word "magpie," flashed over it and was gone.

"A magpie!" iterated Enterpe, so low that her voice was almost inaudible. "How very strange!"

South flashed his old, assured, satirical smile.

"Even mysterious!" he gibed. "Well, all natural phenomena are mysteries, until analyzed and understood, then they drop into the commonplace. It was *your* magpie that carried it there, probably."

"My magpie? Are you not mistaken?"

Her former agitation seemed to be returning.

"A plague on all magpies!" boomed South, sulphurously. "Damn them! I hate them all and yours more heartily than the rest of them. They're a noisy, disagreeable, presuming, baneful lot of feathered chatterboxes!"

He broke off before her laugh, abashed as a schoolboy caught in some ludicrous prank. She was so utterly bizarre in her moods. One moment her face had been that of a great tragedienne, the next it crumpled into soft, pouting curves that would have driven a saint to abjure his vows.

"Why, M'sieu South, it could not have been my magpie that carried the coin there—although he is always stealing trinkets."

"Could not have been?" repeated the bewildered visitor. "Well, whose was it, then? A substitute thief in feathers, trained by the versatile Dominique You?"

"Will you not come over into my morning room and sit down, while I endeavor to explain?"

She flung him a saucy smile, as, suiting the action to her invitation, she glided down the hall. Mr. South of Somewhere, clutching the coin with the unmilled edge containing a hole

through it, followed with the eyes of one in a paradisiacal dream while well knowing the hateful waking is near.

"Take this chair," directed Enterpe, drawing out a huge leather-padded rocker, whose buffed covering was so thick that it had been cleanly cut away in the back to portray a three-deck frigate with cannon peering from numerous ports, careening madly across a brownish sea in pursuit of a racing sloop in the offing, flying the "Jolly Roger" at its forepeak. "It was a favorite with my distinguished ancestor. He sat in it, so the legend runs, the last time he visited this house—the last time the beacon was lighted. You remember my mentioning reviving the custom to celebrate my birthday?"

South nodded, curtly, rejoicing that she was no longer under the spell of the nameless fear.

Standing within arm's length of him her vivid beauty was so overpowering that he reeled rather than walked to the seat she had indicated; realizing, as he reached it, that she still personified the unattainable ideal that he had set out to lose, that he had stumbled upon and held in his arms for one supernal moment—only to lose it again as inexplicably as he had found it.

"I remember," said he, thickly. "God! Can I ever forget it—until Baptiste—"

The balance of the sentence was inaudible to her. She peered over at him in fresh surprise, not unmixed with alarm.

"I did not quite understand the latter part of your remark," she observed. "Of whom were you speaking?"

"Never mind—I came here to return your keepsake," said South, sulkily, "and to ask of you in exchange for it a bit of wood shaped like a keystone which I think I lost in your garden."

"You said, a moment or so ago, that all mysteries when analyzed and understood became commonplace. This one seems to me to be growing more difficult to understand. What do you mean by 'my keepsake'?"

He tendered the coin which she graciously accepted and critically examined.

She handed it back and, with a slight flush, inserted her slender fingers beneath the high, jeweled collar which she was wearing, a part of her costume for the *bal masque*, which, until now, Mr. South of Somewhere had not noticed at all.

With mounting color she kept fingering her neck until she succeeded in withdrawing and unclasping the circlet, to show to her visitor it still held securely the same coin she had been wearing two nights before.

"I always wear it," said she, playfully, "because an old gipsy fortune-teller once told me that it would bring me luck and warned me to never let it leave my person. Several other prophecies she made have since come true," she went on, with a gleam of demure mischief wandering through her brimming, amorous eyes. "That is why the coin you have cannot be mine. As for the magpie—"

He noticed that she mentioned it with no sign of her former alarm, as she rose and led the way to a small, curtained recess, which served as a sort of a conservatory.

Within sat a wooden box, with a barred entrance, behind which dozed a duplicate of the bird which had swarmed down so angrily upon Mr. South on the shores of Bayou Lafitte.

"I locked him up the night you went away," explained Enterpe, "first, because I didn't want that imp of a Dominique You to steal him, although why he tried to do so I do not understand. Dominique wouldn't tell. So, Uncle Joseph went over to complain to M'sieu Lussat."

"And what, pray, did the borough prosecutor say to Uncle Joseph?" demanded her vis-à-vis, eagerly.

"Oh, he excused it as a boyish prank, but threatened Dominique with a thorough thrashing if he ever again tried to steal anything from our house."

Mr. South nodded and sat down.

"I might have known as much," said he quietly. "What else could he say?"

"Why," exclaimed Enterpe, leaning forward, "you speak as if you knew the gentleman quite well."

"Oh, on the contrary, I do not know him at all—and yet, perhaps, much better than he could believe," growled South. "And the other reason for locking him up—was what?"

He bored her through with eyes which no longer seemed blinded at her arch glances. On her part, Enterpe betrayed symptoms of something approaching maidenly confusion.

Her gaze sought the floor and when she raised it in an effort to look into the virile, audacious face of the visitor, her effort failed, while her diffidence grew more marked.

"Well," said she, finally, after a period of claspings and unclasping her nervous fingers, "I may as well be frank with you. My magpie behaved very badly toward—toward the birds that—that Hippolyte Alimiere brought from you," she concluded, desperately.

Mr. South was no longer smiling. A look of tenderness, deepening into positive compassion, was transforming his rugged profile, softening and refining it as he turned to scan the room.

In that moment, few of those who had seen it as he bellowed a toast to Eros and crouched, unmoved, while waiting dissolution most agonizing and frightful, would have known it for the face of the same man.

"They are here, m'sieu."

Enterpe spoke from another corner, where, in a bower of ferns by an open window, the little mother bird hovered upon the rescued nest.

He went over to it and bent low.

A spell seemed to have fallen over the morning room as he scrutinized the symbol of all motherhood, in whose tiny heart and brain glowed not the boasted instinct of "self-preservation" but the universal and all-pervading principle that seeks first the preservation of other lives who may not yet protect their own.

Mr. South of Somewhere straightened himself and walked back to his chair, whipping out his watch with an impatient gesture, as if shaking off his former mood.

He replaced the timepiece and turned to the girl, upon whom a new and odd shyness had fallen, as if for the first time she had seen and read aright the inner heart of this burly figure, whose old, proud, contemptuous, yet singularly engaging expression, had repossessed his features. He took a step nearer to her. She trembled.

"Ye gods!" cried South, excitedly. "And you sent me away! Why?"

He stepped close to her.

"Why!" he reiterated, as softly as the night breeze whispering through oleander boughs. "Enterpe, name of a goddess! As you live and as I live—why?"

She dropped, unresistingly, in his arms, her voluptuous lips framing no reply, her fathomless eyes looking straight up into his own tawny, flaming orbs for one instant—next, hiding themselves beneath their seductive lids, like a girl drawing down the silken curtains to the windows of her boudoir.

"Goddess or devil!" hoarsely whispered the man who held her in his simian grasp and slowly drew her upward until her face all but touched his own. "I will have it from your own lips, Enterpe. You, the savage with a soul for whose sake I forsook the world—not to shave my head into that tonsure you vowed would never disguise me from your eyes, nor to don a monk's cowl—but to woo death, instead of you, if I might no longer look upon without possessing you! You

asked me a question out there in the garden after that cursed magpie broke in upon us—you hear me?"

He shook her until her lips breathed a faint "yes."

"You asked me why I followed you here—remember?"

"Yes. Kiss me again!"

"No!" he roared, flinging her into the old pirate's easy chair. "Thighed although you are like Artemis and bosomed like Aphrodite—name of a goddess or a devil, Enterpe—I will never kiss you again! Instead—"

He fumbled for his watch and his face grew blacker in its malevolent intensity. She gazed at him with adoring eyes.

"I kissed you out there on the Place d'Armes—remember? I kissed you then because I thought I was about to die! Night before last I kissed you there in the garden—remember? I kissed you then because I thought I was about to live! Both times I was wrong, Enterpe. Name of a devil—not a goddess—I tell you that both times your kiss drove from me the thing I sought! This time, I swear that although you were the fabled Helen in the flesh and garbed with all the glory of the Aurora—this time I go to meet what is to come, a man, and not a love-sick, pudding—"

A sharp roar echoed outside the open window near where the sleeping mother bird hovered over her fledglings, followed by a shriek of agony.

The thin, acrid fumes of powder curving like a wraith of a serpent floated in through the aperture.

Mr. South of Somewhere leaped through it into the night.

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.

BEGINS NEXT WEEK

CAPTAIN FLY-BY-NIGHT

BY JOHNSTON McCULLEY

Author of "Thirst," "Wild Norene," "Pennington's Choice," etc.

A Stirring Romance of the Early Days of California

A Worm that Re-Turned

by Suzanne Buck



ON Bryant Avenue a row of brownstone houses of even height and even width stand tight, like soldiers on parade, and rear their brownstone façades with all the arrogance of prosperity.

Around the corner on Collier Street a row of wooden houses slump together in half-dejected but respectable poverty. Yet Collier Street is no less proud than Bryant Avenue, and no less keen for appearances.

The covered ash-can which flanks the modest entrance, the bit of curtain across the front window and the line of spotless wash which, hanging from the upper rear of the taller house, is so plain to view over the roof of the shorter—all to this bears witness.

Yet the problem of Bryant Avenue is also the problem of Collier Street, and though the treatment thereof differs, the result is nearly always the same.

In the cool of an early May morning which spread soft skies over Bryant Avenue and over Collier Street alike Mrs. Pat Egan emerged from the doorway of a two-story frame house and leaned her tall, wide and flabby self against the window of the adjacent grocery store.

Mrs. Egan was pale of hair and red of face, and her hands showed the unmistakable marks of her janitorship.

With her arms akimbo and the light of malediction burning in her eyes, she stared down the block. The strained and lipless slit of her mouth moved wordlessly until the hard, shrill voice of Mrs. Mullin cut into her silent anathema.

"Love o' Mike, Mrs. Egan, what's got your Irish up so early this morning?"

Mrs. Egan turned her head, and from the height of her fleshy five feet eight she glowered down at her next-door neighbor.

"Look!" she said, pointing dramatically, while she pressed her lips together in straight, thin line. "Look, will you?"

Mrs. Mullin looked. Down the street she saw the uneven row of houses long familiar to her, the shoe-shine parlor and the fruit-stand on the corner, and beyond that, across the car-track of Bryant Avenue, the plate-glass front of Barry's saloon with its width of sign above the door proclaiming "Balingine's," as though "Balingine" were the name of the owner and not the trademark of the beer he exploited.

"Well, I can't see nothin'!"

Mrs. Mullin's hard, shrill voice became harder and shriller. She smoothed back a wisp of her stringy black hair, squinted down the block again, then shifted her bag of rolls.

"I can't see nothin' but the guinea,

an' he's got a customer already." She squinted a little harder. "Customers from around on Bryant Avenue, I guess. The papers on the stand is all but gone, but outside of that there ain't nothin' much to look at on this block."

She turned back to the fat woman. Her curiosity was untinged by any restraint.

"What's biting you, Mrs. Egan?"

Mrs. Egan's red face turned redder. She flapped one hand toward the avenue in indicatory gesture.

"That saloon," she choked. "I'm lookin' at that man-trap thing the men-folks calls a saloon!"

"Oh!" Mrs. Mullin's intonation carried complete understanding. She looked again at the saloon, although on this day it looked not one bit different than it did on other days. Then she turned again to Mrs. Egan.

"This bein' Saturday," she began amiably, "I can understand the reason for the temper you're in. But I'm glad to say, Mrs. Egan, that it ain't my husband who'd be spendin' all of his money in a place like that!"

She shook her head complacently. "I'm the boss!" she announced with pride and unqualified certainty.

Mrs. Egan eyed the slim little figure of the bright-eyed, sharp-featured Mrs. Mullin a bit scornfully.

"You're another one of them talkin' kind," she said bitterly. "It's always them women who's got the good men can give advice to them that ain't. But lemme tell you—"

Her hand went back to her hip and the glass of the window creaked threateningly as she shifted her bulk.

"Lemme tell you, there's some men there ain't no woman born can manage, an' I got one of 'em!"

"Aw, don't say that now!" Mrs. Mullin's voice was frankly contradictory. "There ain't no man on earth a woman can't manage. The woman's size don't count, neither, but—"

She stopped and let her eyes run over the generous length and breadth of Mrs. Egan.

"If you got the figger that can stand a battle, then so much the better, says I. Look at me, will you?"

She invited inspection, as though Mrs. Egan were not already perfectly acquainted with her modest plan of architecture.

"I'm little an' I'm skinny—" She waited for her mountainous neighbor to issue a denial. "An' I ain't what you'd call good-lookin' no more, but, all the same, there ain't a woman livin's got her husband any better trained than me."

Mrs. Egan looked interested. Mrs. Mullin folded her arms and hugged the bag of rolls tight against her flat breast. In that attitude she resembled somewhat remotely a certain general once famous for his strategy.

"I ain't never yet come out second best in an argument, an' I'm married now goin' on eighteen years," she declared proudly.

The red of Mrs. Egan's face gave way to the paler shade of envy.

"How can you do it?" she inquired, interest writ large upon her florid countenance. Mrs. Mullin smirked with satisfaction.

"All you got to do is let 'em know right from the start that there ain't never gonna be no other boss but you," she asserted.

She lifted her right foot up to the doorstep and reinforced her remark with an emphatic nod of her head.

"You got to keep poundin' an' poundin' that into 'em, till they get to believe it themselves, an' you got to make 'em understand that you ain't gonna stand for no monkey-shines. See?"

She brought her left foot up to the level of her right and let the bag of rolls hang at her side. Mrs. Egan dropped her hands from her hips and fingered her large, blue-checked apron as she listened to this oracle.

"Yes, sir!" pursued the indomitable Mrs. Mullen; and now she accented her speech with little rhythmic side-wags of her head. "When I tell

Barney his work down the dock ain't nothin' compared to mine, the fight's won for me before it's even started. An' when I tell him that if he ever comes home on a Saturday night with that little square piece of paper tore where it's pasted, I'll pack my clothes an' leave 'im!"

Mrs. Mullin tossed her head to the high heaven in token of her sincerity.

"Well, you can bet that settles *him*!"

She stepped quickly down to the street level and leaned close to Mrs. Egan.

"I hear you an' your man sometimes," she confided, apologetically. "Them walls is all so thin. An' I can never understand why you do so much cryin'!" Her tones held the vacancy of utter mystification. "Don't you see that giz *him* the chanct to do all the talkin'? Now in *my* family," she stated with concious pride, "*I'm* the one that does the talkin'."

She leaned closer and her voice became pregnant with a fighting quality.

"I sez t' him: 'Who'll scrub your floors when I'm gone?' An' he sez t' me: 'I dunno!' An' I sez t' him: 'Who'll wash your clothes when I'm gone?' An' he sez t' me: 'I dunno!' An' I sez t' him: 'Who'll fix your dinner pail an' cook your supper when I'm gone?' An' he sez t' me: 'I dunno!' An' I sez t' him: 'Then if you want me to stay here, just you hand over that money, an' when you want a dime for tobacco I'll give it to you, see?'"

"Mrs. Egan—" She glanced about, then lowered her voice cautiously. "—even if my man is six foot two, I can pick up a chair and bang him one on the ear any time."

Satisfaction for her prowess was evident in her prideful voice.

"An' he knows it, too," she added in righteous conclusion.

Mrs. Egan looked at her diminutive neighbor with increased respect in every line of her heavy face. That slow-moving mind of hers was beginning to work. *Her* spleen had hitherto been directed at the unresponsive

saloon, and always from safe distance. But now when she spoke her voice held the tremolo of a courage newly born of contagion. Though Mrs. Egan had the physique of a commander, her's was the soul of a mouse.

"Could I make my man understand that I ain't gonna stand for it no more, his commin' home Saturday nights with all his money spent?" she inquired somewhat timidly.

Mrs. Mullin's head flung back with all the pride of certainty. "*Could* you!" The glance of appraisal with which she measured her neighbor's Herculean frame was a mixture of admiration and awe.

"Why, you could lick two regular size men, let alone a runt like Egan."

If Egan's wife harbored any animosity at hearing her spouse called a runt, she concealed it very successfully. As the light of anger died out of her eyes, it was replaced by one of respectful curiosity.

"Who starts them arguments in your house?" she inquired cautiously. Mrs. Egan wanted a plan of action guaranteed not to fail.

Mrs. Mullin's answer was prompt and decisive.

"I do! I get in the first wallop an' I get in the last. That's the only way to win. Now, if I was *you*," she instructed, "I'd ask him right when he comes in where he's been, an' then when he starts in givin' you back talk, you make 'im understand that you ain't gonna be no more free worker for 'im."

She paused, then observed significantly:

"If he giz you any back talk after that, just you give 'im a rap on the head with a plate so he sees you mean it. That's what *I* do. You understand me, doncha?"

Mrs. Egan nodded in silent affirmation. She followed Mrs. Mullin into the hall.

"Now you're what I call a good friend, Mrs. Mullin," she said gratefully. "An' in a neighborhood like this, what with the jealousy an' the talk

that's always goin' round, it's hard enough to find a real friend, I can tell you!"

She picked up a dust-rag which hung limply over the rail of the banister.

"I got the stairs yet to do, Mrs. Mullin. But I'm gonna remember every word you told me." With a sudden rush of the courage she had gained from contact with this domineering little woman, "Just you wait an' listen for to-night! I'm gonna show 'im!"

She compressed her lips ominously, then followed Mrs. Mullin through the semi-darkness of the hall, right up to the first landing.

"I'll never forget what a friend you are to me," she said devoutly.

"Friend! Sure! That's me!" echoed Mrs. Mullin, as she began to mount the second flight. "Just you keep your nerve an' remember! I'll be listening."

When night falls on the city, it encloses Collier Street like a pall. No soft light filters through the meshes of lace curtains because on Collier Street they close the shutters at night, and the living-room-dining-room-drawing-room-combination faces the back yard.

But if Collier Street, mid-block, is dark, Collier Street where it meets Bryant avenue is not, for there a steady blaze of light beckons the thirsty wayfarer and lures him with the irresistible lure of a mirage-of-oasis in the desert. Like the roads which once all led to Rome, so, to judge by the interior of the place, did all streets lead to Barry's.

On a table improvised for the purpose a man with wet hair most accurately parted and a white jacket of painful starchiness sliced roast-beef and constructed sandwiches with deadly earnestness and a pair of scrupulously clean hands.

Behind the bar Joe Barry himself presided with an assistant trusty on either side. In the years of his experience Barry had learned to keep his weather eye on the cash register, and to provide himself with extra help for

Saturday nights. Not that his clientele was less thirsty on other nights, but on Saturday night each had the where-withal to purchase satiety.

From his vantage point at head of the bar, a position from which through all the hours no one had been able to dislodge him, Timmy Egan voiced his opinion of the place in no uncertain terms.

Egan was short and thin, but he possessed the strength and the sinew which is so often the heritage of those who never take on flesh. He always headed the procession, and his sense of importance was right now mounting with his temperature.

"Now, this is what I call comfort!" he said emphatically, as he set down his empty glass for the uncounted-th time, and wiped his foamy lips with a handkerchief triply bordered in polka-dotted navy blue. "This is just what I call happy livin'!"

He settled his foot more securely on the brass rail near the floor and took firmer hold on the ledge of the bar.

"Gimme one more of them sandwiches, Henry!"

A motion of his finger eloquently pointed carried an order for another drink. Then he spoke, heavily but doggedly.

"There ain't no cryin' babies here, nor jawin' women, nor nothin'!"

Egan's eyes, half closed and bleary, roamed all over the ceiling, made a circuit of the highly photographed walls, then came back and rested with satisfaction on his thirsty confrères.

"A man can forget all his troubles in a place like this!"

"Listen, fellers, listen!"

Thomas Hanley, also of Collier Street, snapped the thread of his own recital and spilled half the contents of his glass in a very ecstasy of mirth.

"Egan's wife's the janitor for two houses, and Timmy never even helps her with the barrels. Just listen to him talk about his troubles, will you!"

"Ain't he the unfortunate!"

"Sure, he's got a hard life!"

But Egan paid no attention to the jibes.

"Oh, he's a hen-pecked husband right enough," announced Joe Barry with a perfectly straight face as he shunted the foam from the tops of the glasses with something which looked like an ebony paper-cutter.

The little man at the head of the bar bristled with belligerence.

"Any man that's got a wife's got troubles enough," he contended, with beer-born garrulousness. "An' any man that's got troubles can't be happy."

His logic was unanswerable.

"A woman," he observed sententiously, as he disposed of more beer, "is enough to drive a man crazy! If you come home late she wants to know why you didn't come home early, an' if you come home early she wants to know why you didn't come home earlier." He made the statement with contemptuous finality. "They all make me sick!"

The flush of drink and temper mounted to his forehead.

"They're sharks for money, too," he insisted.

His own opinion serving as a reminder, he pulled his money from his pocket, fingered lovingly the flat roll of his salary, then stripped it of two of its largest bills and tucked them carefully away.

"But I guess I got to hand in some-thing anyway," he murmured apologetically; and then out of sheer bravado and what remained in his pay envelope he bought another round of drinks.

Standing next to him Steve Fagin eyed the glass closely and spoke with a drawl of native humor.

"You're all right, Timmy! Any woman who's big enough an' strong enough to work herself like yours is, has certainly got a gall if she wants to see the color of her old man's money. I don't blame you for holdin' out on her."

"That's just what I tell her!"

Egan lurched sidewise and clung to Fagin with a lover-like embrace.

"You're the only friend I got, Fagin. The only friend! An' I know it, too!"

His voice became contemptuous again.

"There's Mullin next door to me. He can't never spend an evenin' here because he turns in every cent. An' him over six foot, an' his woman big as a ten-year-old kid!"

He drew himself up with ludicrous dignity.

"There ain't no woman can boss me," he mouthed, threateningly. "I don't care how little she is or how big she is."

His voice became faintly reminiscent.

"An' I don't care how much she cries. No, sir, there can't no woman on earth boss me! I got to spend half my money myself, ain't I? Ain't that fair enough?"

The laugh his remark elicited failed to touch his consciousness.

"I'm goin' right home an' say so," he announced, conclusively. "Barry!" The tears slipped from between his half-closed lids. "You're a good feller! You're a prince, Barry!"

He lurched back into his own place and stretched a friendly hand across the bar.

"It ain't many that giz a free lunch as good as you do, Barry! No, sir! Not many. An' it's free, too! Hear that boys? The lunch is free!"

That of his twelve-fifty, five-eighty reposed already in Barry's cash register, biased Egan's judgment not at all.

"I'm goin' home an' tell my wife she can't have *all* my money," he said again truculently.

Like a sailor who expects to feel the unsteady lurch of deck between his feet, he rolled out of his favorite haunt, and then down the length of Collier street rolled onward and homeward.

Honor and shame from no condition rise, says the poet; but the poet to the contrary notwithstanding, it is safe to assert that Egan's honor was sadly on

the wane, and that his subsequent shame arose from a condition nothing short of disgraceful.

Across the table which stood tight against the wall between the two windows of his kitchen, he faced a tearless wife without a tremor.

The absence of tears was in itself a bad sign, could Egan have known it; but he wot little of the reception in store for him. His was the courage of the night invader who expects to take his enemies unaware, but finds instead that they are fully prepared for counter-attack.

"Where you been?" Mrs. Egan demanded, her voice slightly tainted by the acidity which had all day been fermenting in her heart. "Where you been?"

Egan took off his hat and shed his coat, but disdained answer. The question was not to his liking anyway.

"Where you been? Why didn't you come home for supper? Do you think I'm a hired servant that you can come trampin' in at all hours?"

Mrs. Egan's voice, rising in a hysterical shriek, this time attested faithfully to her irate condition.

"I say, where you been an' why didn't you come home for supper?"

Perhaps Egan knew that of valor, discretion was the better part. Or it might have been because the onslaught was so unexpected; but without a word he slouched into a chair, lifted one foot and began to fumble with the laces of his shoe.

"Do you hear me talkin'?" yelled Mrs. Egan.

Her voice, loud and shrill, pierced the thin partition of wall. In her kitchen next door Mrs. Mullin listened for the sounds of further conflict with her head bent and her ears alert. Her neighbor's voice rose in a furious crescendo of sound.

"How much money you got left? Gimme every cent!"

If Egan resented that command any more than does the crew of a merchant marine when the captain of a pirate

junk calls for it to stand and deliver, no one heard him. But there smote on the watchful ears of the listening Mrs. Mullin sounds easy of translation; clink of coin and fall of silver.

"Is *that* all, you good-for-nothin' spender? Will I have to work for the likes of you forever?"

Mrs. Mullin turned from the wall and spoke to her own husband with a satisfied smile. Mr. Mullin was dozing behind his newspaper in a chair tipped back against the wash-tubs.

"Barney," she said, "listen, will you? Mrs. Egan is lacin' her old man good!"

Mr. Mullin recognized the sound. He shivered in his chair.

"If that envelope has got a cent missing next Saturday night," came again in frantic accents, "I'm gonna leave you! Do you hear me? *I'm gonna—leave—you!*"

The sound of a furious impact followed close on the words.

"*I say I'm gonna l-e-a-v-e you!*" shouted Mrs. Egan, her voice rising until it struck a demoniac register.

"An' *then* who'll scrub your floors? Who'll wash your clothes?" In one breath: "Who'll fix your dinner pail an' cook your supper?"

The house almost rocked to the sound of another shock. Mrs. Egan shrieked again, this time in wordless utterance.

Then: "*Do you hear me talkin' to you?*"

Mrs. Mullin looked at her husband with something of fright in her eyes.

"She's lammin' him somethin' terrible," she stammered with white lips. "What do you guess she hit him with that time, Barney?"

Mr. Mullin cowered behind his newspaper.

"I dunno," he said. "But Peggy, Mrs. Egan is a big, strong woman. We ain't heard *him* say nothin' yet. Maybe she's got him killed already."

Mullin paused. From the flat next door came the unmistakable crash of falling crockery, the thud of a body, the slam of a chair, a shriek only half

suppressed, and then the scrape of something inert and heavy being dragged.

A silence most profound settled over the Egan home.

"My *Lord!*" murmured Mrs. Mullin weakly. She gazed awedly at her husband. "I guess you're right, Barney. She *has* got him killed!"

With a burst of strength which was a blend of terror and insatiable feminine curiosity, "I got to see! I got to see!" she made the statement in half-wailing extenuation. "I told her to lay down the laws to 'im, but I never told her to *murder* 'im!"

She dashed for the open door. In the hallway she met Mrs. Egan, pale of hair, red of face, coarse of hands, and yet with the light of a Madonna-like benignity shining in her eyes.

"What happened? What happened?" demanded Mrs. Mullin.

Mrs. Egan smoothed down her blue-checked apron gently. She smiled, slightly at first, then more expansively. Her faded blue eyes twinkled.

"Would you believe it, Mrs. Mullin?" she said, "all the time I was talkin' Timmy never answers me back a word. He just drops into a chair an' unties his shoes, and just when I'm hollerin'—*bang!* he drops a shoe an' I thought myself the floor would cave. When I scream right out, I'm *that* nervous," she apologized, parenthetically, "he just drops his other shoe.

"Mrs. Mullin—" Mrs. Egan bent

her head in a confidential whisper. "Did you hear me drag 'im into bed? The poor, tired man leans over an' falls out of his chair, an' don't he pull the table cloth an' all the dishes right with him? He's that sleepy!"

Mrs. Mullin gazed at her big neighbor, frozen beyond all power of speech. Mrs. Egan continued her voluble monologue.

"Listen to 'im snore," she entreated gently, cocking her head toward the place whence issued sounds, to her sweeter far than any music. "Just listen to 'im snore. Slumberin' like a child. Say, Mrs. Mullin!" She took a step forward as the latter started away; then spoke with a deep-rooted pride.

"You'd hardly believe how heavy that skinny little man of mine is when he's asleep. I had an awful job draggin' him over to the bed."

She tiptoed into her own flat. "It didn't come out like you said it would, Mrs. Mullin," she whispered back over one shoulder. "But what's the difference? My Timmy ain't the worst!"

Her heart swung the scales wherein hung the balance of her justice over to the side of her erring husband.

"He brings home *half* his pay, anyway, and—" unconsciously quoting Egan—"that's fair enough, ain't it?"

She swung her door almost to.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Mullin, dear. I got to fix up somethin' so when my Timmy wakes up he can find a cold drink all waitin' an' ready for 'im."

THE PROMPTER

BY JANE BURR

BRAVE little Puppet, be gay!
They have trampled your vision to dust,
They have plundered your soul
Of its glorious goal,

But smile at the villains—you must!
Though you stagger and fall on the black-shadowed way,
Brave little Puppet, be gay!

Wolf Breed

by Jackson Gregory


Author of "Sand," "The Outlaw," "The Square Dealer," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

NO-LUCK DRENNEN creates consternation in MacLeod's Settlement by producing as stakes in a game of dice a bag of gold nuggets. Involuntarily insulted by Kootanie George, Drennen is winning in the fight that follows, when Ernestine Dumont, hating him, shoots him. Ygerne Bellaire, Captain Sefton, and Lemarc come upon the scene. Ygerne makes an impression upon Drennen. He falls in love with her, and the girl, after considerable hesitation, apparently reciprocates quite as passionately; this after Drennen, consumed with jealousy against Ygerne's companions, Lemarc and Sefton, thrashes them without reason and is in danger of his life. Marshall Sothern, of the Northwestern Mining Company, comes to his rescue, and for a month, while Drennen is delirious from fever occasioned by his wounds, Sothern and Ygerne nurse him back to strength. Recovering, Drennen discovers in Sothern a striking resemblance to some one he once knew. Ygerne tells Drennen that she is a descendant of Count Paul Bellaire, an adventurous soldier of Napoleon's day, who left the Bellaire jewels and other treasure in a distant fastness of the Northwest. The girl has come to find it, and Drennen finances the expedition to the extent of ten thousand dollars. In the offices of the Northwestern Mining Company, Drennen sells his claim to the Golden Girl—from which he had taken the nuggets referred to—and his first act is to repay forty thousand dollars which his father had embezzled. Marshall Sothern is Drennen's father, and he knows it. Receiving a note from Ygerne, who seems to have fled in the night with Lemarc and Sefton, and his (Drennen's) ten thousand dollars, Drennen becomes, in bitterness, the wolf-man again, determined to trail those who have cheated him. He follows false trails for a year, then comes upon the right one in the company of his father, Marshall Sothern. Lieutenant Max, of the Northwestern Mounted Police, and Kootanie George, are also on the same trail, Captain Sefton and Lemarc being wanted by the police. Sefton has given information that Drennen's father, who is wanted for embezzlement, is still alive, and Lieutenant Max is also looking for the embezzler, quite unconscious of the fact that Marshall Sothern is the man. Drennen, to save his father, determines to come up with Sefton before Lieutenant Max does, because Sefton, alone, can identify Sothern.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOING ON ALONE.

 **I**N the thick darkness half way between midnight and the first glimmer of the new day Drennen awoke. "I must come to Sefton first!" was the thought awaking with him. He was fully conscious of his purpose before he knew what had awakened him.

Quite close to him was the noise of breaking brush and snapping twigs. One of the pack animals had broken its tie-rope. He lifted himself upon his elbow, frowning into the darkness. The horse was not ten feet from him, and yet it was hard to distinguish that darker blot in the darkness which bespoke the brute's body.

"What is it?"

It was the voice of Kootanie George from the big Canadian's bed some fifty

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for April 29.

feet away. It was the first time George had spoken to Drennen. Drennen answered quietly:

"One of the horses has broken his rope."

Knowing that the animal might wander back along the trail and cause no little delay in the morning, Drennen slipped on his boots and went to tie him. The horse, seeing where the man could not, drew back toward the cliffs. Drennen, following the noise of breaking underbrush, at last was enabled to make out distinctly the looming form in a little clearing. Stooping swiftly, through a random clutch at the ground, he was lucky enough to seize the end of the broken rope.

"It's Black Ben," he thought. "Max's horse."

A sudden temptation came to him. Puzzling it over, he led the horse slowly toward the grassy flat under the cliffs, where the others were tethered. Suppose that he turned Max's horse loose? And Kootanie's? And that he should start them back along the trail?

Not a pretty trick to play, but was now the time for nicety? It would mean delay, not for Drennen, but for Kootanie and Max. It might also mean the opportunity he wanted, to come up with Sefton before the others.

He passed close to where George lay. George had again drawn his blanket up and was going back to sleep. The others had not awakened, but in any case, it was too dark for them to see what he was doing; too dark for him to more than make out the forms of the other horses when he came to the flat under the cliffs. And by that time he had made up his mind that he would take advantage of whatever came to his hand and ask no questions; he would find George's pack animal in a moment, and would then lead the two of them around the camp and turn them loose.

Had he come to George's horse first he would have done so. But it chanced that the first horse across whose tether he tripped was a big black animal with

the white strip from below the ears to the nostrils showing in the gloom, to which Drennen's eyes were accustomed now. This was Max's horse, Black Ben! Then the horse he was leading—

He swung about swiftly, gathering up the slackened rope, coming close to the horse that had awakened him. It was like Black Ben, easily to be mistaken even in a better light than this, but it was not George's horse nor yet Max's.

"A strange horse here!" was his swift thought. "Whose?"

He ran his hands along the big brute's back. There was no saddle. About the neck only a knotted rope. The strands were rough there, unequal, bespeaking a tether snapped. He noted now, too, that the rope was damp and a little muddy.

"He's come down the trail from the north. We are close to Sefton's camp."

From the north, because there was no place which Drennen remembered having passed during the end of the day where a horse could muddy a dragging rope. The lake shore was sand and gravel. And before he had gone to bed that night he had seen a straggling stream which a little farther on ran across the morrow's trail, making shallow ponds in the grass, the banks oozy mud.

Tying the strange horse swiftly, Drennen went back to his bed. He found his rifle and cartridge belt, filled his pockets hit or miss from his food pack, and, making no noise, returned to the flat. Again leading the new arrival, he pushed on up trail toward the muddy brook.

Too dark to see more than the black mass of trees, the blackness of the ground looking a bottomless pit under foot, the wall of cliffs standing up against the stars. But slowly he could find his way to the creek, across, and along the lake shore.

Again and again he stumbled into a boulder or tree trunk or clump of bushes. He cursed his eyes for fools,

drew back along the obstacle, and pushed on. He would make little time this way, but there might arise the situation in which every moment would be golden.

After a little an inspiration came to him, and he acted upon it swiftly. He let the rope out through his fingers, and, holding it at the broken end, drove the horse on ahead of him. The horse could see even if the man could not, and, having been over the trail once, could travel it again in the dark.

So Drennen made his way northward. Now he was making better time, perhaps a couple of miles an hour. By dawn he would be several miles ahead of the others, and by then he could travel more rapidly.

But before the dawn came he must stop. He had come under the cliffs which stood tall and bleakly forbidding at the upper end of the lake. The horse came to a dead standstill. If there were a way up here, a trail through the cliffs, the animal seemed to have no knowledge of it, and Drennen's blind groping could not discover it to him.

It was only through the mastery of a strong will, long seasoned and drilled, that Drennen could force himself at last to sit still and await the coming of the light. His soul was in turmoil. His mind was filled with broken fancies, tortured visions. In him the simplicity of a normal existence had been fantastically twisted into complication.

Before him were Sefton and Lemarc and Garcia and—Ygerne Bellaire. Behind him were George and Ernestine with their twisted lives, Sothern and Max with their souls upon the verge of convulsion.

Max, young and straightforward, his sky clear to the star of his duty, was sleeping in ignorance, while if he but knew he would be torn a thousand ways. And it seemed to Drennen that the restless thing in each of these lives, behind him and in front of him, raised its hissing head to dart venom into his own breast, to make for torment there.

At last the objects about him were slowly restored to their own individual forms from the void of the night. The trees separated, the expanse of the lake grew gray and liquid, the cliffs showed their ancient battle scars. And the trodden earth showed, fresh and plain, the trail he sought.

Leading the horse now, for there was no need of driving it ahead and there was no advantage in seeking to ride, he climbed up from the level of the lake toward the cliff tops. The trail, hazardous enough at all times, looking now and then impossible, wound and twisted among the boulders, snaked its way into a narrow gorge, mounted along a bit of benchland clinging like a shelf to the mountain side, and in an hour's time brought him to the cliff tops.

Now the day was full upon him. Behind and below lay the lake he had just quitted. He could make out a plume of smoke where the impatience of Max and George would be bestirring itself. Ahead and below lay another lake. This was Red Deer Lake.

Lying just below, a thousand dizzy feet down, it seemed impossible to come down to it from where Drennen stood. He pushed a stone over the edge with his boot. He saw it leap outward and drop, plummet wise, saw the white spray of the lake seem to leap upward to greet it as the stone plunged into the water.

Drennen had turned loose the horse. From the hogs'-back upon which he stood he could look down into a little valley lying to the eastward, and could make out in it two more pack animals tethered. He started this one down the trail and turned its eyes back toward Red Deer Lake and across it to the cliffs beyond. For he had seen a second plume of smoke.

It seemed that a man must have wings to reach that other line of cliffs on the far side of the lake, from which the second smoke was climbing upward. Everywhere the sheer precipices marched up to the rim of the blue

laughter of the water below him, so that one might believe that neither man nor four-footed denizen of the forest-land could come here to drink; that only the birds, dropping with folded wings, could visit its shore. But others had been here before him, and surely it was their smoke which curled upward from the far cliffs. If they had found a way he could find it. And he must find it quickly—before Max and George.

First he noted the location of the smoke toward which he sought to go, so that he would not miss it. Nature aided him, making the spot distinctive. Everywhere the cliffs were barren, just rock and more rock, a jumble of great boulders strewn along sheer precipices, everywhere save alone in this one spot.

But there was a scant table-land, and from it the hardy pioneers that from aloft frown their contempt of menace rose high in the blue of the brightening sky, their gnarled limbs still and sturdy. It was above the only noteworthy clump of ancient boled trees to be seen upon these inhospitable heights that the thin bluish smoke arose.

To Drennen, frowning across the gulf separating him and his quarry, there seemed but one conceivable reason why a human being should have sought to win a way to that rocky aerie. From its nature it was all but unscalable; from its position it commanded in limitless, sweeping view all possible paths of approach. If Sefton's gang had sought a hiding place where defense, even against great numbers, would be a simple matter, this nest upon the cliff tops was the ideal spot.

Thus Drennen answered the riddle. But there were other riddles which he could not answer and which he gave over. Why had the horses been left where they would be found so readily? Why that careless beacon smoke where no man could fail to see it?

Max would see it, and he would be hurrying now, swifter than Drennen had come, because it was daylight. With the need of haste crying in his

ears, Drennen experienced the slipping by of slow hours with nothing accomplished. Back and forth along the edge of the cliffs he searched eagerly, like some great, gaunt questing hound, baffled by a cold track. Sefton's gang had come here, had found the way down, had gained the far side two miles away across the lake. They had gone before, so he knew that he could come after. But he grew feverish over the delay, thinking as much of Max behind as of Sefton in front.

Again and again he thought that he had found the way down only to be driven back and up when he had made a few perilous feet downward along the beetling fall of rock. He sought tracks and found nothing; there was nothing but hard rock here which kept no impress less than that of the tread of the passing centuries. He even went down into the little valley where the horses were, hoping that through some deep cleft chasm the trail led circuitously to the lake shore, but he came back again baffled, again hurrying with the certainty upon him that Max, too, was hurrying.

The sun was three hours high when Drennen found the thing which he sought. With the keen joy at the discovery there came deep wonder. It was the thing he sought, since it was the way down to the lake; but the wonder arose from the unexpected nature of the path itself.

He had passed farther and farther north along the cliffs until a couple of miles lay between him and the spot where this latest quest had begun. No possible way down until he came now to a cleft in the rocks. On each hand the cliffs fell apart so that at the top the chasm measured perhaps ten or twelve feet.

The chasm narrowed fifty feet below until it formed a V. Below that Drennen could not see until he had made his precarious way down into the cut. And when he had come to what appeared from above to be the closed angle of the V he found the rest of

the way open to him. And the wonder arose from the obvious fact that those of the rude steps which were not Nature-made were man-made.

There were hand-holds scooped out here and there in the rock; foot-holds chiseled rudely, and all bore the mark of no little age. Grass grew scantily in the cracks; a young cedar, hardy, with crooked roots like the claws of a monster, stood in one of the deeper scooped hollows; the debris fallen into the man-made steps had accumulated through the generations. In one of these places, when he had gone downward a hundred feet, he came to a little space of soft soil which held the trampled impress of boots.

Now, his rifle slung to his back, his fingers gripping at cracks and seams and little knobs of stone, he made what speed he could. The way he followed led along a long horizontal fissure for a space, then dipped dangerously near the perpendicular, then slanted off so that the danger was less, greater speed possible. He did not look down to the lake, fearing the dizziness which might lay hold of him and whip him from the face of the cliffs like a fly caught in a rush of wind.

The thought entered his mind, "Ygerne Bellaire had gone on here before him!" He pictured her confident bearing as she climbed down, her capable hands clinging to the rocks, her fearless eyes as she looked down at the blue glint of the lake a thousand feet below, the red curve of her lips as she smiled her contempt of the danger. Be she what she might, Ygerne Bellaire was not the coward he had once thought all women.

He grew angry with himself for harboring a thought into which a tinge of admiration for her entered. He was coming up with her soon; he sneered at himself and at her, and crept on downward.

Again and again the way looked impossible; again and again he found the scooped-out hand-hold which carried him on. And yet it was another two

hours before he had dropped the last ten feet to the narrow, pebbly shore of Red Deer Lake.

Now there would be no more lost time, no hesitation in finding the path he must follow. For here, at the marge, were the tracks of those who had gone before. Far upon the left hand the cliffs came down to the water, and there was no path; upon the right there was a six-foot strip of uneven beach.

The sudden sound of a voice shouting dropped down to him. Jerking his head up, bending backward, he made out the form of Lieutenant Max at the top of this devil's stairway down which he had come. Drennen laughed shortly and turned northward along the lake shore. He had lost time, but he would lose no more. He still had two hours the best of it; it would take Max fully that long to make the descent.

"When he comes up with me," was Drennen's quick thought, "my work will have been done!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE CHATEAU BELLAIRE.

NOW Drennen, having passed around the shore of Red Deer Lake, having often dipped his body into the icy waters where there was little room to pass between the lake and the cliffs, having fought his way upward again much as he had traveled downward, but through an easier path, came at last, in the late afternoon, to the grove of giant trees upon the crest of the great ridge. And as he paused a moment a new wonder was upon him.

He had expected to come here upon a rude camp, and he found himself staring at a house under the trees! Such a house as he had never seen in all of his life, but a house none the less. It was screened from him by the tree trunks until he stood within fifty yards of it; and it was disguised now in the very manner of its building.

The corners were great stacks of high-piled, flat stones; across the rude columns lay tree trunks roughly squared with axes; the roof was a sloping shed roof, steep-pitched, made of saplings, covered a foot deep with loose soil. In this soil grew the hardy mountain grasses; even two or three young trees were seeking life here where the cones had fallen from the lofty branches of the mother trees.

Over the great, square door was a long slab of wood, carefully cut into a thick board, the marks of the ax blades still showing. And inscribed deep into this board, the letters having been burned there with a red-hot iron, were the words:

CHÂTEAU BELLAIRE

Drennen's pause was brief. From the low, awkward building there were voices floating out to him.

He had come to the end of the long trail.

One voice, low-toned and clear, drove the blood racing through his body. His hand trembled upon his rifle stock. In spite of him a strange shiver ran through him. He knew now how only a woman, one woman, can bring to a man his heaven of joy, his hell of sorrows. And that woman, the one woman, was at last only fifty yards away!

He came on slowly, making no sound, and drew near the corner of the building. The voices came more distinctly, each word clear. The other voice was the musical utterance of Ramon Garcia. Again Drennen stopped for a brief instant. Were Sefton and Lemarc in there, too?

Ygerne's laughter drove a frown into his eyes. His hand was steady now upon his rifle. Her laughter was like a child's, and a child's is like the music of God's own heaven. Drennen came on.

In a moment he stood at the wide door looking in. There was a hunger in his eyes which he could not guess would ever come into them. He did

not see Garcia just then, though the little Mexican stood out in full view, making the girl a sweeping, exaggerated bow after his manner.

He did not notice the long bare floor nor yet the rough beams across the ceiling; he registered no mental picture of the deep-throated, rock chimney, the rude, worm-eaten table and benches, the few homemade objects scattered about the long room. He saw only Ygerne Bellaire, and the picture which she made would never grow dim in the man's mind though he lived a hundred years.

She stood upon a monster bear skin. Upon the rug, strewn about her carelessly, their bright discs adance with reflected light, a thousand minted gold pieces caught the glint of the low sun. Her head was thrown back, her arms lifted. Her eyes were filled with light, her red mouth curved to the gaiety of her laughter. About her white throat was the dazzle of diamonds; upon her bared white arms was the splendor of diamonds.

"My countess!" murmured the Mexican, his eyes soft with the unhidden worship in them. "You are like a lady who is born out from the dream of a poet! See!" He dropped suddenly to his knees, caught up the hem of her short skirt and pressed it to his lips. "You are the Queen of the Worl'!"

"At last," she cried, her voice ringing triumphantly, "I have come into my own! For it is mine, mine, I tell you! You shall have your share, and Sefton and Marc! But it is mine, the heritage of Paul Bellaire!"

As Garcia had stooped something had fallen from his breast. Rising swiftly, he caught it up. It was a little faded bunch of field flowers.

"My share, *señorita*?" He laughed softly. "I am not come here for gol'. Me, I have this." He lifted the flowers, his eyes tender upon them. "With this I am more rich than the King of Spain!"

Drennen's dry laugh, the old, bitter snarl, cut through the room like a

curse. They had not seen him; they had been too busy with their own thoughts. Now, as they whirled toward the door which framed him, Garcia's hand went swiftly to his pocket.

Ygerne's face grew as white as death.

"So," said the Mexican softly. "You are come, *señor*!"

The nose of Drennen's rifle moved in a quick arc. It came to rest bearing upon Garcia's breast.

"Turn your back!" commanded Drennen sharply. He came well into the room, setting his own back to the wall, so that should Sefton and Lemarc come he should be ready for them. "Do you hear me?" for Garcia had not stirred. "By God, I'll kill you!"

Garcia shrugged, and shrugging obeyed the command which he was in no position to disobey. And, as again Drennen's curt words came crisply to him, he obeyed, tossing his revolver aside so that it fell close to the wall. Then, with Ygerne's wide eyes upon them both, Garcia backed up to Drennen and Drennen searched him swiftly, removing a cruel bladed knife.

"Your little flowers," sneered Drennen, "you can keep."

He caught a murderous gleam from Garcia's eyes.

"The man who would touch them, *señor*," the Mexican said softly, "would die if I have but my hands to kill!"

"And now, my fine Countess Ygerne," mocked Drennen, coming a step toward her. "Have you still your nice little habit—"

As though in answer her hand had sped toward her bosom. But Drennen was too close to her, too quick and too strong. His grip set heavy, like steel, upon her wrist, he whipped out her weapon and tossed it to lie beside Garcia's.

"You brute," she said coolly.

He regarded her coolly, insolently. His eyes were bright and hard and inexorable.

"So," he said in a little, having passed over her remark just as he had ignored Garcia's, "in all of your lying to me there was some grain of truth! There was a Bellaire treasure and you have found it."

"Yes," she cried passionately, her hands clenched and grown bloodlessly white. "And I'll spend every cent of it to make you suffer for the things—"

"Not so fast," he taunted her. "Do you guess what I am going to do? Do you know that I am the one who is going to deal out the suffering? There is nothing in God's world you love . . . except it be yourself . . . as you love gold! To find is one thing; to keep is another."

"You mean," she cried angrily, "that you will try to rob me?"

"I mean," he retorted grimly, "that in a little you and I are going out there to the edge of the cliffs. You shall watch me; you shall see your diamonds circle in the sun before they go down into the lake! And then the gold is going where they go!"

It seemed to him that now at last was he Lucky Drennen indeed. Never had he known how to make this woman suffer; now the way was made plain before him.

"David Drennen," she said, the beauty of her face swept across with a fiery anger, "one of these days I am going to kill you!"

He laughed. He had waited long to stand there before her as he now stood, laughing at her. He had dreamed dreams of a time like this, but always his dreamings had fallen short of the reality. He would hurt her and then, staring into her eyes, he would laugh at her. He saw the rush of blood flaming up redly in her face, saw it draw out, and the evil in him raised its head and hissed through his laughter.

"*Sangre de Dios!*" muttered the Mexican, twisting his head as he stood facing the wall. "He has gone mad!"

Suddenly Ygerne had whipped off necklace and bracelet and had thrust deep into her bosom the old famous

French jewels which the gay Count of Bellaire had won across the green topped tables. It was Drennen's time to shrug.

"Put them where you please," he told her with his old lip-lifted sneer. "I'll get them. Put them between your white breasts that are as cold and bloodless as the stones themselves. I'll get them."

"You . . . you unspeakable cur!" she panted, in a flash, scarlet-faced.

Garcia was edging slowly, noislessly along the wall toward the two revolvers, his and Ygerne's. Drennen whipped about upon him with a snapping curse.

"Stand where you are, do you hear?" You go free of this when I am through . . . if you are not a fool! It is this girl I want. Her and Sefton! Where is Sefton?"

Ygerne, biting her lips into silence, her eyes flashing at him, her insulted breasts rising and falling passionately, answered him with her mute contempt. Garcia lifted his shoulders.

"With Señor Marco he is away for the horses—"

"Liär!" said Drennen sternly. "What horses can climb these cliffs?"

"Don't answer his questions!" commanded Ygerne.

"Silence is as good as the lies I'd get," retorted Drennen.

He closed the heavy paneled door behind him, dropping into place an iron bolt which fastened staple and hasp. There was one other door at the far end of the long room; he moved toward it, at all times watching Garcia and Ygerne.

Here was a smaller room, perhaps a third the size of the first, without doors, its windows boarded up with thick slabs. The floor of this room had been wrenched loose and torn away; there were big chests still sunken in the soil beneath, the boxes rotting and evidently broken in their hasty rifling.

He came back into the larger room. Sefton and Lemarc, when they came, must enter through the front door. And

he could do nothing but wait, his heart burning with the feverish hope that they would come before Max and the others. He drew a bench close to the door and sat down, his face turned so that he could at once watch Ygerne and Garcia and not lose sight of the door. He rose again, almost immediately, picked up the two revolvers and the knife, dropped them to the floor under his bench and sat down again.

Ygerne in a little, her eyes never leaving his face, sat where she had been standing, upon the rug amidst the scattered gold. Now and then her fingers stole from her lap to the old coins about her; once or twice they travelled slowly to her breast where the diamonds lay hidden.

Garcia didn't move. As commanded, he faced the wall. Once or twice only he turned his head a little, his eyes paying no heed to Drennen but seeking Ygerne. And his eyes were not gay, but troubled.

In a deep silence through which the faint murmur of the branches above the Château Bellaire spoke like a quiet sigh they waited. To each, with his own bitter thoughts, the time writhed slowly like a wounded serpent.

Upon a little thing did many human destinies depend that summer afternoon. Man's destiny is always suspended by a mere silken thread, but not always is it given to the man to see the thread itself and know how fragile a thing it is.

Had Lieutenant Max been five minutes later in picking up Drennen's trail; had Sefton and Lemarc returned to the "château" five minutes earlier, God knows where the story would have ended.

As it was, it was Max's tread which Drennen's eager ears first heard drawing near swiftly. And a moment later Max himself, with big Kootanie George at his heels, and both Marshal Sothern and Ernestine hurrying after them, came running toward the strange building. Drennen at the door, his rifle laid across his arm, met them,

"Well?" snapped the officer. "What in hell's name have you done?"

Ygerne had leaped to her feet, a little cry upon her lips. No doubt she had thought that this was Sefton returning, Lemarc with him. She stood still, staring incredulously, as she saw who these others were. A strange man, with an air of command about him; Kootanie George, his face convulsed with rage as his eyes met her own; Marshall Sothorn and—Ernestine!

"I came to find Captain Sefton," was Drennen's slow answer to the lieutenant's challenge. "He is not here. I am waiting for him."

"You have killed him!" shouted Max, pushing through the doorway.

"I have not," said Drennen, quietly. "But I shall."

"The Mexican, Garcia!" snapped Max irritably. "And the girl. I have no warrant for them. Hell's bells! Where are the others?"

To answer his own question he strode toward the rear door. Half way down the long room he stopped with a muttered exclamation of surprise. He had seen the gold upon the old bear skin.

"Have they robbed the Bank of England?" he gasped.

From without came the rattle of shod hoofs against the rocky ground.

"It is Sefton and Marco who return," murmured Garcia, his hand at his mustache, a look of great thoughtfulness in his eyes. "Now there will be another kind of talk!"

And he looked regretfully toward the revolver lying under Drennen's bench.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SPEAKING OF GUNS.

MAX had heard, had whirled and came running back to the door.

"Stand aside!" he called to Drennen. "Those men are my prisoners."

Drennen made no answer. Mindful

of the weapons on the floor he caught them up and threw them far out into the underbrush. His rifle caught up in both hands, his purpose standing clear in his eyes, he stepped out after Max.

"Damn you!" shouted Max over his shoulder. "If you interfere now I'll shoot you like a dog!"

Sefton and Lemarc, riding and leading two other horses, came into view through the trees. Evidently Garcia had not lied, evidently there was some roundabout trail from the far side of the lake, and evidently, the treasure found, these men were losing no time in carrying it away with them.

They had not heard until they had seen; by that time they were not fifty yards away and Max's rifle bore unwaveringly upon Sefton's chest.

"Up with your hands, Sefton and Lemarc!" he called loudly. "In the name of the Law!"

"Fight it out, Sefton, if you are a man!" shouted Drennen, his own rifle at his shoulder. "I am going to kill you."

Ernestine was crying out inarticulately; no one listened to the thing she was trying to say. She had waited too long. Marshall Sothorn, a queer smile Drennen was never to forget upon his lips, strode up to his son's side.

"Dave," he said gently, "if you are doing this for me—let be! I have told Max."

"What do you mean?" muttered Drennen dully. "Told him what?"

"Who I am."

He laid his hand on the barrel of Drennen's rifle, forcing it downward. His son stared at him with wondering eyes.

"I don't understand."

Both Sefton and Lemarc, with one accord had jerked in their horses, their hands dropping the ropes of the animals they led and going the swift, certain way to the gun in the coat pocket.

"It's a hold-up, Marc!" cried Sefton, driving his heels into his horse's sides and coming on in defiance of the rifle still trained upon him. "Garcia!"

Garcia shrugged his shoulders and watched, having nothing else to do.

"Wait!" screamed Marc after Sefton. "Can't you see the uniform? He's one of the Mounted."

Sefton saw. He saw, too, that at the door was David Drennen; that at his side was Marshall Sothern; that big Kootanie George stood out a little in front. His face went white; he jerked his horse back upon its haunches; his teeth cut, gnawing, at his lip.

He saw and understood. He knew that for him the play was over; knew that within the old house was a fortune for many men and that he had had his hands on it and that it was not to be for him. His white face went whiter with the rage and despair upon him.

"It's you that did for me!" he yelled. "You, John Harper Drennen! You! Damn you! take that!"

In the first grip of the fury upon him he fired; fired so that the short barrel of his revolver, spitting out the leaden pellets, grew hot. He was too close to miss. Marshall Sothern clutched at Drennen's arm and went down, sinking slowly, not so much as a groan bursting from his pale lips. And as he dropped Kootanie George fell with him, the big man's broad chest taking the first of the flying bullets.

Drennen and Max fired almost at the same instant, the rifles snapping together, and they were too close to miss a target like that. Clutching at his horse's mane, Sefton slipped from the saddle to the ground.

"Lemarc," shouted Max sternly, "come on! Your hands up or you get the same thing."

He had not seen old Marshall Sothern fall. Drennen was on his knees now, his father's head caught up in his lap, his face horrible with the grief upon it as he bent forward. The old man was badly hurt, but conscious. His eyes went to David's, his hand sought to close about his son's. And Drennen, leaning lower as he saw the lips framing words, thought that he had not heard aright.

"Thank God!" was the thing which Marshall Sothern was saying.

There had been the one sharp fusillade and the fight was over. Three men lay upon the ground, two of them having caught their death wounds. Sefton lay where he had fallen, alone. He would lie there until the life rattled out of his body.

Ernestine, sobbing a moment, then very still, was over Kootanie George's body, her poor little hands already red with his blood as she sought to lift him a little. George was looking up at her wonderingly. He did not understand; he could not understand yet. If she didn't love him, then why did she look at him like that?

Lemarc, his dark face a study in anger and despair, lifted his two arms. Max, his eyes hard upon his prisoner, strode forward to disarm him and take him into close custody. So, even yet, since neither Marshall Sothern nor Kootanie had uttered a loud outcry, the lieutenant was unconscious of the thing that had happened so few steps behind him.

The sun was entangled in the tree tops far to the westward. The red sunset was already tingeing the sky. In a little, the cool sting of the dusk would be in the air.

Stooping still farther, Drennen slipped his arms about Marshall Sothern's body. As his father had carried him to his own dugout, so now did he bear his father into the house. He wanted no help; he was jealous of this duty. And, looking down into the white face at his shoulder, it seemed to him that the pain had gone out of it; that there was a deep joy for this wounded man to be gripped that way in the arms of his son.

Garcia, obeying two curt commands from Drennen, cleared the bearskin of its golden freight and built a fire in the rock chimney. Very tenderly Drennen laid the old man down, seeking to give him what comfort there was to give.

Ygerne, trembling visibly now, her

face white and sick, watched Drennen wordlessly. She had seen everything; she had marked how Sefton lay where Max's and Drennen's bullets had found him; she had seen Kootanie George drop; she had seen Ernestine crouching over him; she had seen and had read the writing in the old man's face. And now her eyes were upon Drennen. And he did not see her.

"Dad," he said, a queer catch in his voice. "Dad!"

The old man's stern eyes softened; a smile fought hard for its place upon his lips and in the end drove away for a little the pain there. There was just a flutter of his fingers as they sought to tighten about his son's.

"Davie," he whispered faintly.

Then he lay still, an iron will holding what little strength lay in him. David sought the wound and found—three. A harsh sob broke from him when he saw the meaning that the three bleeding wounds spelled. He had seen men with their mortal wounds before. He knew that he might stop the outward flow of blood a little; that perhaps his father might live to see the sun come up. But he knew, and his father knew, that at last John Harper Drennen, good man or bad, was going to his reckoning.

Ygerne Bellaire, while she and Marshall Sothern had nursed David Drennen, had seen hourly all of the courtly, knightly gentleness and tenderness which was one side of the old man. Now, while Garcia stood staring coolly down upon the two men, she came swiftly to the edge of the bearskin. She, too, went down upon her knees at Sothern's side, just opposite Drennen.

Her hands did not tremble as they grew red with the spurting blood. She said nothing, but she helped Drennen who, having looked at her once with terrible eyes, made no protest. Together they made bandages and sought to do what they could, Ygerne fastening the knots while Drennen lifted a little the prone body. When they had done the old man thanked them both silently, equally, with his eyes.

So Lieutenant Max found them when, driving Lemarc before him, he came into the room. The officer's face, as hard as rock, softened wonderfully as he cried out and came quickly to Marshall Sothern's side.

"Mr. Sothern!" he said harshly. "He got you!"

"It saves you a nasty job, my boy," Sothern said gently. "And me much unhappiness. I'm old, Max, and I'm tired and my work's done. I'm glad, glad to go—"

For a little he was silent, exhausted, his eyes closed. Then, the smile seeming to come more easily to the white lips, his eyes still shut, he murmured so that they leaned closer not to miss the words.

"God is good to me in the end. I have always been lonely—without your mama, Davie. And now I am going to her—with all I love in life telling me—good-by. You, Max, my boy—you, Davie, my son and—and you, Ygerne, my daughter."

A sob clutching at her breast, Ygerne rose swiftly and went out. But in a moment she was back, bringing with her a little flask of brandy. The eyes of Ramon Garcia, the only eyes to follow her, grew unutterably sad.

A little of the brandy added fuel to the flickering fire of life in Marshall Sothern. At his command they propped him up, the rug under him, his shoulders against the wall at the side of the fireplace. Drennen's face had grown again hard and impassive. Max had said no word after his first outburst, but in his eyes tears gathered, slowly spilling over upon his brown cheeks. Ygerne, as before, stood a little aloof.

"Davie," the old man said slowly, painfully, yet the words distinct through the mastery of his will. "I wanted to tell you the story while we were on the trail together—alone, out in the woods. But it is just as well now. Max, my boy, you will forgive me? I want just Davie here—and Ygerne."

Max turned swiftly, nodding, a new look in his eyes. He had said truly; this old man had been more than father to him. Like all men of strong passions, Max knew jealousy; and now he sought to hide the hurt that he should be sent away even to make place for the son.

Max and Garcia and Lemarc went out, the door closing after them. Coming to where Kootanie George lay, they saw that Ernestine's arms were about him, that George's great arms were at last flung about her shoulders.

Meantime John Harper Drennen told his story. Knowing that his time was short, his strength waning, he gave only the essential facts without comment, making no defense for himself which did not lie upon the surface of these facts themselves.

John Harper Drennen had been the second vice president of the Eastern Mines, Inc., New York. He had made his reputation as a man of clean probity, of unimpeachable honor. His influence became very great because his honesty was great. The first vice president of the company was a man named Frayne. Just now Frayne lay dead outside with Max's and Drennen's bullets through his body.

Frayne, or Sefton, while nominally first vice president was in actuality the manager of Eastern Mines. He had always been a man without principle, but John Harper Drennen had believed in him. There came a time when the Eastern Mines threw a new scheme upon the market. Frayne had engineered the plan and had made John Harper Drennen believe in it. John Harper Drennen, using his influence, had caused his friends to buy a total of one hundred thousand dollars of worthless stock.

Before the exposure came, John Harper Drennen had had his eyes opened. He went to Frayne and Frayne laughed at him. He went higher up and found that the nominal president was under Frayne's thumb.

Drennen sought the way to make

restitution to the friends who had been fleeced through his advice. He had, himself, not more than twenty-five thousand dollars available. Being in a position of trust in the company, he took from their vaults the remaining seventy-five thousand dollars. He gave the money, the whole hundred thousand, to a broker, instructing him to buy the worthless shares, then went to his friends, instructing them to unload. Restitution made and knowing that Frayne had cloaked his whole crooked deal in protective technicalities of the law, knowing that his act could be punished, he left New York.

He had sought to see his son, but David Drennen was out of town and there was no time. He went to Paris. At last, a body in the Seine gave him the opportunity to play dead. He wrote the note which later came to David. Then he came to New York to find his son. But David had left.

Through the after years the old man had sought always to do two things: to return to the Eastern Mines the money which he had taken from the company, and to find his son.

That was his story.

He lifted his eyes when it was done, studying anxiously his son's face.

"I have sinned against the laws of man," he said simply. "I have tried, Davie, not to sin against the laws of God."

Therein lay his only defense.

"Dad," whispered the son, his voice breaking now, the tears standing now in his eyes as they had stood in Max's; "it is I who have sinned, being a man of little faith! Do you know how I worshipped you when I was a boy? Do you know how I love you now?"

He bent forward swiftly and—he was the impulsive, warm hearted boy again—kissed his father. And a tear, falling, ran in the same course with a tear from the old man's eye. One a tear of heartbreaking sadness; one a tear of heartbreaking gladness.

"You will tell Max?" asked Marshall Sothorn. "Poor old Max?"

"And now—let them come in. I have lived so much alone, I want to die among my friends."

They came in and stood, heads bared, faces drawn, about the figure which had again slipped down upon the bear skin. Max knelt and took the lax hand and kissed it.

"You are the greatest man in the world," he said incoherently. "Do you think I am ungrateful? Do you think I'd remember anything like my sworn duty and forget all you've done for me, all—"

"A man is no man unless he does what he thinks is his duty, Max. I have tried to do mine. You would have done yours."

Ramon Garcia, standing a little apart, came softly forward.

"You die, *señor*?" he asked very gently.

The old man nodded while David Drennen looked up angrily at the interruption.

"You love your, son?" Garcia asked, still very gently. "This Drennen is your son and you love him much?"

"Yes."

"Then I, Ramon Garcia, who have never done a good thing in my life, I do a good thing now! I give you something filled with sweetness to carry in your heart. For why?" He shrugged gracefully. "It is so short to tell, and maybe the telling make others happy, too. See. It is like this: your son love the *Señorita* de Bellaire. She love him. *Bueno*. I, too, love her. I cannot make her happy and love me; so I make her happy anyway. And you happy while you die, *señor*. And your son happy."

They all looked at him wonderingly. He paused a moment, gathered the thing he had to say into as few words as he might say it and went on calmly.

"*Señor* David promise Miss Ygerne he stake Lemarc. He give Lemarc ten thousand dollars. Lemarc come back and say to the lady: 'He lie. He give me nothing. He say he give the money and more to the lady when she give

herself to him—for a little while.' But the lady will not believe, though she does not suspect the many other lies they tell before. What then, *amigos*? Then Ramon Garcia, loving the lady for his own, tell Sefton and Lemarc what they shall do. He say Ernestine Dumont shall play sick; she shall say she die and that George hit her; she shall make *Señor* David take her in his arms, maybe. And we take the *Señorita* de Bellaire to see!"

A gasp broke from Ygerne; a look that no man might read sweeping into her eyes. Drennen knelt still, looking stunned. A look of great happiness came into the old man's face.

"Garcia," he said, "you are a gentleman, sir! It is the truth. This is the thing which Ernestine has wanted to tell David."

Now, coming swiftly, came the time for a man to die. He died like a man, fearlessly. Having made his hell knowing the thing he did—a hell not of filth and darkness but of fierce white flames that purified—he had walked through it upright; had lived without fear; had done wrong, but had done it so that another, greater wrong might not be done; and had trodden his way manfully. He had suffered and had caused suffering, but he had not regretted. He had committed his one sin—if sin it were—but after that his life had been clean. Not so much as a lie had come after, even a lie to save his own life. And in the end, the end coming swiftly now, it was well.

With David Drennen and Ygerne and Max close about him, his last sensation the touch of their hands, his last sight the sight of their tear-wet faces, knowing that when he was gone there would be one to comfort his son, he died.

It was dawn. David Drennen and Ygerne Bellaire, standing silent, head bowed over the still form upon the bear skin, knew in their hearts that there had been no tragedy wrought here. The lips turned up to them were smiling. The man had died full of years,

honored by their hearts, loved deeply. He had grown weary at the end of a long trail and his rest had come to him as he wanted it.

They did not see Ramon Garcia, who came softly to the door. For a moment he stood looking in, seeing only the girl; slowly there welled up into his soft eyes great tears. From his breast he took a little faded bunch of field-flowers, he raised them to his lips, and, for a second holding them there, he knelt, his eyes still alone for Ygerne. Then he rose and went away.

They had not seen. But in a little they heard his voice as he rode down into the cañon. It was the old song, lilted tenderly, the voice seeming young and gay and untroubled:

"*Dios!* It is sweet to be young—and to love!"

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE OLD LOG.

AT last they passed out of the thick shadows which lay in the forest-lands and into the soft dawn light of the valley, Ygerne and David, riding side by side. Behind them lay the hard trails which separately each had traveled; before them now had the two trails merged, running pleasantly into one. Behind them, far back in the lonely solitudes of the mountains, was the old Château Bellaire wrapped about in its own history as in a cloak of sable; in front of them, dozing upon the river banks, was MacLeod's Settlement.

They were thoughtful-eyed, thoughtful-souled, their lips silent, their hearts eloquent, as they rode through the quiet street, passing Père Marquette's, Joe's, finally coming abreast of Drennen's old dugout. Drennen drew rein as Ygerne stopped her horse. Her eyes went to the rude cabin, its door open now as it used to be so often even when Drennen had lived there. Then she turned back from the house to the man, and he saw that tears had gathered in

the sweet gray depths and were spilling over.

It was the time of rich, deep mid-summer in the North Woods which had brought them back to the settlement on their way to Lebarge. It was the season of joy come again, the warm, tender joy of infinite love.

A certain thought, being framed upon Drennen's lips, was left unspoken, because to the girl the same thought had come and she had spoken swiftly after her own impulsive way.

"You asked me to meet you once—at dawn," she said softly. "Do you remember? And, instead of coming, I left you a note which I could not have written—if I had not been mad."

"That is gone by now, Ygerne," he answered gently.

"But," she whispered, "the dawn has come!"

So at last they came to the old log where Drennen had come upon her that day he had hurled his love at her like a curse.

The flash of blue across the Little MacLeod might have been the wing of the same blue bird that had called to them here so long ago. A winter had come, had wrought its changes upon the earth and had gone; now it was a deeper summertime; but, for all that, to-day might have been the day set apart for this belated lovers' meeting.

Out of the thick shadows at last into the rosy dawn. Sorrow and tragedy behind, covered deep in those shadows; Love in front of them and all that it promises to the man and the woman.

Ygerne had slipped from her horse and had gone straight to the log, perching upon it as she had sat that other day. Drennen, in a moment, followed her.

"Ygerne," he whispered.

Everything forgotten, a thrill ran through the girl. She lifted her eyes to his and smiled at him, holding out her arms. But, in spite of her, her heart was beating wildly, the blood was running into her face until her cheeks were stained, red and hot with it.

"Do you hate me . . . because I made you love me?" she asked, laughing a little, holding him back from her for the last deliciously shy second.

"Do you hate me, Ygerne, because always I was a brute to you?"

Then she no longer made play at pressing him back from her.

"We must begin all over," she said at last. "Love is not love which does not trust to the uttermost. We have both lacked faith, David, dear. No matter what we see with our own eyes, hear with our own ears, we must never doubt again. You will always believe in me—now—won't you, David?"

They were silent a little, each busied with the same thoughts; they lived over the few meetings here; they remembered the rainbow upon the mountain flank, the dinner at Joe's Lunch Counter; they were saying good-by to MacLeod's and were looking forward to Lebarge, the railroad and what lay for them beyond.

Suddenly Drennen cried out strangely, and Ygerne, startled, looked at him wondering.

"What is it?" she asked quickly.

He pointed out something lying in the grass at the side of the log; just a few bits of weather-spoiled cardboard which once upon a time had been a big box filled with candy for her. He told her what it was. Her hand shut down tight upon his arm; he could feel a lit-

tle tremor shake her; then, deeply touched by this little thing, the girl was crying softly. A tear splashed down upon his hand; he lifted the hand to his lips.

"And there was something else, Ygerne," he said gently. "Look! The winter has left it, and no man has come here to find it."

It was peeping out at him from the little hollow upon the log's uneven surface where he had dropped it, a glint of gold from under the piece of bark which he had put over it and which had not been thrust aside by the winter winds.

"I got it for you at the same time, Ygerne," he told her. "It was to be my first little present to you—"

Winter snow and spring thaw had done no harm to the gold, which could not rust, nor to the pearls, which could not tarnish. She said no word as she bared her throat that he might fasten the pendant necklace for her. His hands trembled and a strange awkwardness came upon him. But in the end it was done.

Before MacLeod's Settlement had awakened Ygerne Bellaire and David Drennen had passed on along the trail which led to Lebarge, riding side by side. And when silence fell upon them it was the rare silence of the great woods, infinitely tender, filled with the eloquence of understanding.

(The end.)

A PARADOXOLOGY

BY WILL THOMAS WITHROW

MY wife, she is the queerest bird that ever came to town;
She comes right down when she gets up; so when she's up, she's down!

She keeps me guessing all the time, my mind befogged with doubt;
She's often "out" when she is in; thus when she's in she's "out"!


And when she makes a trip by train ('twould make N. Webster scoff),
She's "off" as soon as she gets on; so when she's on, she's "off"!

Finigan

by A. deFord Pitney

A LARRY ADAMS LETTER

MISS LOLITA LE CLAIRE, care Four Le Claires, en route United Time, please forward.

 Friend Lolita, well, kid, I guess you seen by the papers I opened a physical culture academy and training farm in connection with my quarters down here on the bay shore. I would have wrote you about it, but I had so much to do in connection with the stunt I didn't have a minute to throw away. Well, I got time now to write to you, and it ain't wasting time either, because I haven't got anything else to do.

You've learned a lot about high class life since you've been engaged to me, and a little lady of your intelligence and apparent education can see easy that a physical culture farm for millionaires is a proposition that means big money.

Rich guys have special, high grade construction, kid. Look at the vacations they have to take. If you was to lay off all winter and not do a tap of work, and go to a lot of dances and dinner parties, you would think you was having it pretty soft, wouldn't you? Well, one of them society dames, so far from considering that a pipe, has to go south to rest up from it.

We must never fail to have sympathy for the rich, kid. Common people, with their coarse, low-grade tis-

sues, can do a lot of work, but the rich is different. If a millionaire thinks up a scheme, for instance, for working girls to go without candy and new shirtwaists so as to save regular to be able to spend two weeks on a farm in the summer — why, just thinking up that scheme is so exhausting that the tired out millionaire is forced to go to Egypt for two months to recover.

All the work in connection with getting the scheme in the papers is done by the millionaire's secretary at that. Just think what would happen if the work of framing up such an idea had to be done by the rich guy personally! It probably would mean death. Yet a common, ordinary office hand could frame up the whole dope on the way down to work in the L train—only he'd be ashamed to.

I had all this in mind when I made my arrangements to cater to millionaires. They can't stand what we can, and they know it, too, and yet they got beautiful natures, some of them.

It's one of the most refined and uplifting thoughts in the world, the sympathy millionaires, with their delicate tissues and tender nervous systems, has with folks that's made entirely different. Just use your bean, kid. Imagine a party with two or three town and country houses stopping eating terrapin and canvasback duck and imported truffles to dictate a plan for seven-cent

lunches for shop girls. I guess that's some abstract thought for you. And the rich guy can appreciate also that the working slob can be perfectly happy in clothes the rich guy wouldn't use to swab out the lapdog's marble bathtub.

Well, kid, nobody can say that I didn't take into consideration the delicate, high-class natures of rich guys when I fixed up the training farm for them. Everything was arranged to shelter them from anything rude. I wouldn't even expect none of them rich pupils to have their eyes assailed with a bunch of tin eared sparring partners like I had in my training camp. I hired a whole new bunch.

The physical culture academy started off with the swellest kind of prospects, as naturally it would when it had my brains and personality back of it. My first four pupils was Pelham H. Ball, Wall street king; Madison Weeks, millionaire yachtsman and bridge whist expert; Roswell Pick, proprietor of Long Island; and T. Murray Rocks, earl of Westchester county. I limited my first class to them four, just to give the joint a swell send off. It did. Of course I had Scaldy Allen's old road house all done over. I blew myself for awnings, sun porches, breakfast rooms, open fireplaces, landscape gardening and a wop chef. It cost me better than ten thousand.

You can see for yourself that only the highest class assistants could do to attend to the swells I had coming. I engaged a gymnasium professor and a flock of trainers and bath rubbers. The last guy I give a job to was named Finigan. I hired him as a gymnasium helper through sympathy because he was out of a job. He was a big guy with arms like an ape and no forehead and eyebrows like a Scotch terrier. All he had to do was to clean up the gymnasium and stand around in an athletic suit.

Finigan had experience in working for millionaires, he told me. Once he'd been showfear on Rocks' place

and had been canned because he give his own wife and kid a run up from the station in Rocks' limousine to a cottage Finigan had took. When he tried to see Rocks to plead for his job, he said, the butler called in the watchmen and they fell on him with their clubs and beat him up and threw him out but not until after the conservatory was wrecked. Also he'd been hurled out of Ball's office when he went there with a delegation of street car employees.

All right, guy, I says. Disappear now. I'm busy. You learnt your lesson, I guess, so you'll know how to act if you come in contact with any of these billionaires around the place. It was just before they come and my mind was took up with making sure that everything was ready for them.

You can't be too careful with them rich guys with their sensitive, delicate, high grade tissues. I went from one person to another on the training farm and I says to each, I says, remember now, no rough stuff. No coarse work around these lads that's coming.

The four lads showed up all right and, kid, if you'd ever seen them money kings in gymnasium suits you'd be glad you was poor. They was all shapeless with fat and had hoarse voices from ordering common people around. Ball was a big slob with four chins and a mean little white eye. I had to go out in the shower room to laugh. I left the gymnasium professor with them. Finigan was in the shower room, peeping through the glass panel with his eyes shining under them Scotch terrier eyebrows.

Bill Sweeney, my head sparring partner, went to my private office with me to warn me about Finigan. He says Finigan was always making speeches to the help about what the rich done to the poor and says he wished there was a millionaire hanging to every telegraph pole in America. Maybe I better give that lad the gate after all, I says. He'll be handing them pupils of mine a fresh comeback maybe, if they was to order him to do something. It was

about an hour later that I stepped out into the yard to see if the class was ready for a little road work.

In the yard the first thing I seen was my gymnasium professor with his clothes on. What are you doing out here, you big cheese, I says. Why ain't you in there with the class? I got dressed an hour ago, he says. Finigan gave me your orders that I was to leave the class to him. He's giving them special instructions like you said he was to.

I rushed for the shower room and as soon as I opened the door I heard the water roaring down in one of the compartments and the sound of somebody choking to death. It was Pick. He was spread out on the floor on his back under the shower with his ankles strapped to the pipes on opposite corners and one wrist strapped to another corner. He'd pulled his other hand free to hold over his mouth and that was what saved his life, because the water was coming down in his face like Niagara Falls.

It was that big devil, he moaned, when I shut off the water and carried him out. That big devil. He said he'd give me the Roman cascade. Send for my private car. I'm dying.

He was mighty near it. I busted for the gymnasium door, but it was locked and the parallel bars braced against it. I smashed one of the panels out and hollered but nobody inside paid any attention to me.

Ball and Rocks was leaning against each other. Rocks' stomach was shaking with sobs. He had on boxing gloves and was wiping his eyes with the back of one of them. Ball had one side of his face big as a cantelope and his nose was bleeding. Finigan, the big, broad shouldered roughneck, was standing in front of Weeks.

Rope climbing class, yells Finigan. He whaled Weeks over the tights with a leather strap like firing a pistol.

Ow. Wow, squalls Weeks, leaping into the air. Aw, please, please don't make me go up there again.

Up wid ye, roars Finigan.

I give you my word the guy begun to climb. I don't believe he could have done it if it hadn't been for Finigan standing under him and basting him with the strap. He got about ten feet high, trying to get out of Finigan's reach, and then fell with a squash and a howl of agony.

Boxing class next, Finigan yells, dragging out a pair of hard gloves. I'll give you five thousand dollars, weeps Rocks. Please, Mr. Finigan, stop now, please. Don't carry this any further. I beg you to let this stop now.

This is worth five million to me, says Finigan. Stand forth, oppressor of the poor.

Whack. Rocks rolls under a bench. Ball grabbed an Indian club and threw it at Finigan. It struck him on the head and bounced off.

I was afraid Finigan would hammer Ball to death before I could break through the door. He beat him like he was a rug.

I told you, kid, never hire anybody because of sympathy. It don't pay. Finigan got through a window and disappeared. We carried them millionaires in and put them to bed. I talked to them and told them to take it as a joke and forget it but all they could do was holler for their special train. They were so rotten unreasonable about it that finally one word led on to another and I told them a few things myself.

Gee whiz, they come down to get toughened up, didn't they? Shucks. They were getting it weren't they? The next bunch I have here, if the academy can ever live this down, will be plain human beings.

Well, the academy is closed up for the present and I'll do the same. When it opens again it will be at popular prices but my first idea was a swell one and you got to admit it. And I remain yours truly, always on the level.

LARRY ADAMS, light heavy weight champion and Beau Brummell of the ring.

When the Devil Was Sick

by E. J. Rath

Author of "One-Cylinder Sam," "Kismet Isle," "The Man with the 44 Chest," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

BILLY TRASK consents for fifteen hundred dollars to sail on board the Gulf Stream to Galveston in the place and under the name of his friend Spencer Trumbull, the latter wanting to go to the mountains. Trask, who is supposed to be an invalid, insists on a wheel-chair, and is put in charge of Keeler, a hard-fisted male nurse. Trask, after several escapades, meets Miss Kent on the ship and is smitten with her; then he falls for Sidney Sands, whom Keeler has managed to meet in the second-cabin quarters under the name of "Captain Ferriss." Keeler is really the Texas Tornado, an ex-prize fighter. Miss Mehetabel, Lucille Kent's strong-minded aunt, sees Trask do the high jump in the second cabin, and reports to the captain, who, after an inquiry, decides to put Trask and Keeler ashore at Key West as lunatics. Trask slips down and tells the whole story to Sidney, who is hugely delighted because it is a real adventure, and she adores them. During a fearful storm the Gulf Stream picks up a derelict, using her for a sea-anchor, and rescuing the men aboard. When the storm quiets, Sidney persuades Trask to take her to the derelict in the breeches-buoy, Keeler, aboard the Gulf Stream, furnishing the motive-power.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BREECHES BUOY.

THREE figures moved furtively toward the bow of the Gulf Stream, trying to dodge the moonlight. One of them seemed to be that of a boy clad in yellow oil-skins, the trousers of which were tucked into a pair of long rubber boots. There was a tall figure in the ordinary garb of an American citizen, yet booted as the first. The third was bulky and midway between the others in stature.

"The sea is getting smoother every minute," whispered the little figure. "Let's hurry."

"I'm still against it, you know," said Trask.

"But you are going!"

"Naturally."

"It's my own, personally conducted adventure," she said, with a low laugh. "It's the only chance I ever had. Why, even father wouldn't hesitate to go if he thought the weather out there was any different from that here."

"Your father ought to have been a pirate, or something exciting, instead of a professor."

"He's too gentle for that—but he's game!"

When they reached the breeches buoy, Keeler looked about cautiously.

"Which is the rope I haul on?" he asked.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for April 22.

"This one, I think," answered Trask. "It won't take long to find out, anyhow."

"And you'll be sure to be right on the job until we signal you to haul us back?"

"Trust me for that, sir. I—I wish I was going myself, Mr. Trask."

"Remember—five quick flashes with the light."

"I understand, sir. But if I was you I wouldn't use that light much, until you're ready to come back. They might see it from the ship."

"We'll be careful," Sidney assured him, as she made a final search of a pocket to make sure that her electric flash lamp was there. "Now, how will I ever climb into that thing?"

"This way," said Trask.

He lifted her in his arms as though she were a parcel of feathers and deposited her within the buoy. Then he climbed up on the rail and stepped in himself.

"Close quarters," he muttered. "Now, Keeler, let her go. And pull like the devil."

"I'll pull," declared Keeler, grimly. "Good-by, Mr. Trask—and Miss Sands. I'll be watching for the light."

The buoy swung clear of the rail, hung motionless for a second, and then began to swing outward over the dark sea as Keeler plied himself to the task.

"Want to go back?" Trask whispered. "It's a wild idea, you know. Just because you were able to persuade the pair of us doesn't make it any more sensible."

"I wouldn't go back for anything!" she cried, her voice half muffled in the collar of the sou'wester that was turned up about her neck.

The buoy acquired a swaying motion, swinging from side to side in a sharp arc. Trask slipped his arm around the girl and steadied her. He felt guilty—and very well satisfied.

As he glanced downward, the waters of the Gulf looked black and velvety. They seemed to reach upward for the frail object that swung only a little way

above them. Yet the sea had subsided amazingly. Trask looked back at the ship, now almost fifty yards distant. She was bright with lights and life. The faint sound of a band playing reached his ears. He had a distinct impression that he wanted to go back—at once.

"Had enough of it?" he shouted into her ear.

She looked up at him with reproachful eyes that glistened in the moonlight.

"You know better," she declared. "It's just beginning! And I don't believe *you'd* go back if you had a chance."

"Well, not alone."

"You didn't have to come, you know."

"But I did. You know it as well as I."

He gripped her more securely as the buoy took up a circular motion. She looked over the edge and down into the sea. Instinctively, she tried to draw her feet up.

"Even if I get splashed I won't mind it," she assured him, clutching his arm tightly.

Trask judged they were half way to the derelict when a roller, reaching higher than its fellow, swept upon them swiftly.

"Hold fast!" he shouted.

She shut her eyes and clung to him.

"You hold fast to *me*!" she warned.

"I feel as light as a cork and I don't want to go floating away."

But the wave barely touched their booted feet. The buoy never hesitated in its steady progress.

"There!" she exclaimed, looking up at Trask, with a laugh. "We're not wet yet."

"We can signal to go back."

"Never!"

The girl's figure, even in the bulk of her oilskins, seemed pathetically small as Trask, a minute later, bent his head close and whispered:

"Had enough yet?"

The light was dim and uncertain, but

he could see the flash of resentment in her eyes.

"Billy, I'm ashamed of you!"

"It's just on your account."

"Then please try to remember that this is my own invention, as—as the White Knight said. I'm crazy about it!"

"That's the first sensible thing you've said," he commented, as the buoy moved steadily onward.

He looked back at the ship. It seemed very far now. Minutes ago the figure of Keeler had been blotted from sight, but the regular, persistent progress of the buoy was testimony that the Tennessee Tornado, even if invisible, was laboring mightily at his post.

The derelict loomed near. The buoy was closer to the sea now, but although the water touched their feet several times, the rubber boots still served their purpose. Nearer and nearer they approached the Gulf Stream's sea anchor, yet with a perceptible slackening of speed. Keeler was probably tiring. Once they halted for half a minute; then a quiver of the line signaled the resumption of a slow and onerous journey.

Trask anxiously studied the low-hung side of the bark as they came close within the lee of it. He could see the buoy line now, sagging sharply over a bulwark.

He doubted if Keeler could manage the last few yards of the journey.

The black barrier in front of them looked anything but hospitable. Although sunken low in the water, it seemed a formidable task to mount the rail. Yet the sea was almost calm as they got within the protection of the drifting hulk.

It was but a few yards away now, but the buoy moved sluggishly as it tried to climb the steep incline. Trask could imagine the great shoulders of Keeler toiling at their labor, yet he doubted if even the power that lay within them would be equal to the task.

He reached up and began hauling on the line, cautioning the girl not to

loosen her grip upon him. The buoy crawled forward with maddening indecision, edging its way foot by foot now, halting, swinging, faltering, yet gaining a little with each heave upon the line.

It touched the black side of the bark and Trask looked with despair at the rail above him. They were at the end of their journey, yet the gate was closed against them.

"Hold fast to the buoy!" he called.

He hoisted himself out of it and balanced himself for several seconds, his feet on the edge, his hands gripping the line from which the buoy swung. Then he swung himself upward, throwing his legs forward until they reached the rail of the derelict. For a breathless instant he hung poised over the water, then squirmed his way over the rail and disappeared from sight.

The girl in the buoy looked up at the spot where he had vanished, her lips tightly compressed, her eyes anxious. He was gone for a perilous moment. Then she saw his head above the rail and heard him shout:

"Catch this!"

A rope whistled down through the half gloom and fell across her shoulders. She grasped it without need of instruction.

"Pass it under your arms and make it fast!"

She obeyed him.

"Ready?"

"Ready!" she answered.

"Let go the buoy!"

As she released her grip, Sidney felt herself lifted out of the canvas ring. She swung inboard toward the bulk as it rolled heavily to port, striking against it with an impact that nearly drove the breath from her. She closed her eyes and awaited the next shock, as the motion of the derelict sent her swinging clear again. But there was none.

A swift heave of the rope that suspended her, a scraping of her body on the bulwark and she was in Trask's arms, held in a grip that astonished her by its violence.

It was several seconds before he lowered her so that her feet could touch the deck. Her face was close to his and Trask's eyes were looking anxiously into hers.

"Hurt?" he cried.

She shook her head, then let it rest for an instant against his shoulder.

"Just a little tired," she murmured. "There—I'm better now. You're holding me so tight, Billy! Let me down."

"I—I just wanted to make sure you were safe," he said a little shakily, as he placed her on her feet.

She steadied herself against the rail.

"It *was* a little more than I bargained for," she admitted, with an apologetic laugh, as she recovered her breath. "And thank you for coming, Billy. I'd never have made it alone."

"You never had a chance of trying it alone—from the very first."

"I'd have tried it—if you hadn't come. But I knew you would come!"

He looked down at her and shook his head incredulously.

"I'd never have believed it of you," he muttered. "You've got heart enough for an Amazon."

"I suppose I ought to be one," she admitted.

"Never!" he cried with sudden vehemence. "You're as much as I can manage now."

She peered at him with a quizzical expression, the moonlight falling full on her face. Then she made him an odd little bow. She wondered if it was possible to detect a blush in that light.

"The signal!" she cried, suddenly. "We promised to give Keeler one flash when we reached here."

She fumbled in the pocket of her sou'-wester and drew forth a little electric torch. Holding it high above her head and waiting for the slow roll of the hulk to lift them, she sent forth a single ray of white light in the direction of the Gulf Stream.

"There! That's done," she said, as she returned the lamp to her pocket. "I hope Keeler saw it. He said he'd be watching."

"Never fear. He'll see it. And now what?"

"Now we're going to explore."

Trask looked about him on the deck of the derelict. It was still wet and slippery, yet surprisingly free from the litter of spars and rigging he had expected to find there. The hurricane had swept her clean, taking as its prize a deckload of mahogany logs that had been lashed into place with all human ingenuity. There was a great gap in the starboard rail where the stuff had gone over the side.

The mizzen mast, up to the main truck, was standing. It was upon this lonely spar that the crew had taken refuge from the seas that broke across the deck. The mainmast was gone at a point seven or eight feet above the deck, while there was a mere stump of the foremast. Not another spar was in sight.

The galley house was wrenched and half shattered. Forward they could see the outlines of the forecandle hatch. The main deck house seemed to be almost intact.

"She's full of water," said Trask.

"They said that she opened a lot of seams. But her hold is chock-full of lumber and she'll keep on floating until somebody makes an end of her—or until she makes an end of another ship."

"She helped to save us!" declared the girl loyally. "If there's any sense of justice in the sea, she ought to be allowed to reach a port again."

They began moving forward, cautiously yet without difficulty, for the hurricane-made sea was gone and the waterlogged condition of the hulk acted as a stabilizer. The moon gave them a spooky light, casting dark shadows wherever an object lay upon the deck.

Sidney, muffled to her ears, had thrown off her spell of fatigue and was eager in the quest of new adventures. Trask, afraid to let her out of his grip, kept an arm linked tightly within hers as they followed the rail toward the bow.

A dark object slid across the deck

in front of them, appearing suddenly out of a shadow. The girl uttered a sharp little cry, then laughed as it clattered against the bulwark and she discovered it to be a battered hencoop.

"I'm afraid I'm a little bit cowardly after all," she admitted, ruefully.

"You'll have to tell that to somebody else," declared Trask, as they kept onward.

The hatch over the forecastle was tightly battened. Trask tried to move it, at her suggestion, but was unable to achieve the feat.

"Nothing down there, anyhow," he said, as he rose from his effort. "And look, Sidney, at the steamer!"

He pointed off across the water. The Gulf Stream was a brilliant spectacle. From stem to stern her cabins were lighted, as if with an unwonted gaiety. Her two eyes, of red and green, stared steadily at the derelict, while her mast-head lights burned brightly against the sky.

"And to think," she exclaimed, "they don't even know what we've done! Oh, *won't* we have a story to tell when we get back? Do you suppose Captain Blodgett will do anything to us?"

"I know what he ought to do to both of us."

The girl laughed delightedly.

"I suppose we've broken all the rules in the catalogue, Billy. But I wouldn't have missed it for all the world. Would you?"

"Come to think of it—no. I wonder if we can get into the cabin?"

"Let's try!"

Trask and the girl found the doors of the cabin companionway swinging wide. Below it was as dark as a cave.

"Full of water, I suppose," he said. "Hand me your light."

He flashed a white beam down the stairway and saw what he expected, a sluggishly rolling pool that bore on its surface bits of broken furniture and other articles.

"It doesn't look very inviting," he observed. "Want to go down?"

"By all means."

He led the way, placing his feet carefully on the slippery steps. The water on the cabin floor was black. Sidney stepped into it without a murmur. It did not rise above her boot tops.

Trask flashed the light in several directions. The disarray of the place was complete. It was as if a separate hurricane had raged within the vessel while the one without was stripping her of everything above decks. The table remained in its place in the centre of the cabin, where it was securely bolted to the floor; but it was the only article of furniture that had not moved about. Broken chairs, an overturned couch, some dislodged shelving, books, newspapers, several articles of clothing, a wooden birdcage and a box filled with water-soaked cigars were among the collection of cabin gear that floated about the feet of the explorers.

"Sit here, and I'll see if I can find a better light," he said, lifting Sidney to the table, where she curled her feet beneath her and watched him as he began wading about the cabin.

There were some cupboards that still clung to the walls, and Trask searched them. One was a medicine chest. More than half the bottles in it were broken. Another seemed to be given over to seafaring books and charts. A third contained what appeared to be a mineral collection, perhaps a hobby of the captain's.

At last he came upon what he had been searching for—candles. Then a long hunt for matches followed. There were several boxes floating about in the wreckage, but they were past usefulness.

Finally, on a high shelf, his search was rewarded in the discovery of a dry box. It was only after several attempts that he managed to ignite a damp wick in one of the candles. Emptying a medicine bottle, he made a holder of it.

"There you are," he said triumphantly, as he handed her the result of his labors.

She lifted the candle above her head and began a careful inspection of the cabin, while Trask busied himself at the task of lighting another.

"Billy," she called suddenly, "bring me that fat green book from the cupboard over there. The one under the papers. That's it."

He sloshed his way back to her with the volume. She glanced at the cover, uttered an exclamation of delight and hugged the book against her breast.

"I knew it the minute I saw it!" she cried. "It's one of father's!"

Trask reached for it and opened it to the title-page.

"Meteorological Studies in the American Tropics," he read. "By Philemon W. Sands, Ph. D., LL. D., F. R. G. S., etc.'"

"Now I feel perfectly at home," said the girl happily. "It's just like meeting the family; almost as if father himself were here. Part of him is here, anyhow, because there's so much of him in the book. And part of *me* is in it, too."

Trask looked at her with incredulity.

"Do you mean to tell me you had a hand in writing all this solemn scientific stuff?" he demanded.

"I copied his manuscript on the typewriter," she explained. "Not that I understand it at all. Don't accuse me of that. But I always copy father's manuscripts for the publishers. This was the longest of them all."

She took the book again and cuddled it affectionately.

"It has three chapters on hurricanes," she explained. "I never paid much attention to them, but now they're tremendously interesting."

"If your father ever gets out a new edition," said Trask, "I wish he'd let me add a chapter."

"Splendid! Only—well, I'm afraid you're not quite scientific enough."

"Perhaps not; but I'd turn the book into a popular seller, just the same."

"What would you put into your chapter?"

"You, for one thing."

"Oh!" Sidney laughed. "I'm afraid it would be a very brief chapter."

"But very important."

"Thank you for another compliment. You are becoming proficient, Billy. And yet I am important—to father."

Trask was about to supplement her statement, but checked himself. It would sound rather banal, he thought. But she was important, not only to father, but to him. He realized it very clearly.

As she sat cross-legged on the table, holding her candle, Sidney looked like a statuette of "Mischief." Her oilskins hung shapelessly about her; they were far too large, despite her assertion that she was almost as big as father. Her hair was in disarray and loose strands were sweeping her cheeks. Another girl thus garbed would have fitly represented "Misery," Trask thought. But there was something different about Sidney Sands. The animation that lighted her eyes changed the whole picture.

"Isn't it thrilling?" she exclaimed as her glance roved about the wrecked cabin. "Can't you just imagine the excitement while all this was being done. Everything going topsy-turvy and crashing and smashing, and the water pouring in, and the captain bellowing orders—oh, it must have been tremendous!"

He nodded, smiling at her.

"We are lost," the captain shouted, as he staggered down the stairs,

she quoted, with a ludicrous attempt to put tragedy into her voice and a gesture toward the companionway. Her eyes instinctively followed the gesture, and her glance became fixed there.

"Billy! Look!"

On the step, just above the level of the water, crouched a miserable little object, wet, frightened and shivering.

"A kitten! Oh, bring it to me!"

Trask waded across the floor and picked up the animal, carrying it over to the table. It was not a pretty kitten,

even if it had been dried and brushed and decorated with a red ribbon. Its fur was a nondescript mottling of black and white. There was a smudge on its white nose and its tail was scrawny. But the girl seized it with a cry of delight.

"Here! Hold my bottle," she commanded as she took the little creature into her arms. "The poor thing! Just think of leaving it here! The captain ought to be ashamed of himself!"

She tucked it inside her sou'wester and began talking confidentially to it, completely ignoring the presence of Trask.

"It's purring," she announced presently. "I'm in love with it already. Of course I shall keep it and add it to my collection."

"Collection!"

"I have three cats and four kittens at home," she explained in a matter-of-fact way. "Don't you like cats?"

"Crazy about them!"

She looked at him suspiciously, and Trask, as if to make good his declaration, reached out a finger and began scratching the kitten's ear.

"Under the ear, you goose!" she ordered. "I'm beginning to doubt your fascination for cats."

"It's a sudden one," he admitted.

She smiled at the kitten, but she did not look at Trask. A desire to pick her up, tuck her inside his coat and stroke her softly under the chin, just as she stroked the kitten, almost overmastered him. She was very like a kitten herself.

"Let's explore some more," she said, uncurling her trousered legs and sliding down from the table. "Where do those doors lead to?"

He went to the nearest one, but found it locked. She held his candle while he braced his shoulder against it. At the second thrust it yielded suddenly and Trask plunged headlong through it. He scrambled to his feet and found himself in a stateroom. She followed, and glanced about with interest, the kitten still nestling inside her coat.

"The captain's room, I imagine," he said, as he noted a chronometer in its case against the wall. The instrument was still ticking faithfully.

There was less disorder in this room. Most of its fixtures were still in their places and the bed was neatly made, an incongruity in sharp contrast with the wreckage in the cabin. There were some photographs on the wall, one of them of a woman with two children at her knees.

"I'm glad he was saved," said Sidney, as she looked at it. "They're his, I suppose."

From this stateroom they wandered into an adjoining one, the door of which was unfastened. There were two berths here, one above the other. The furnishings were plain and solid and did not seem to have been damaged.

"Pull that chair over here, Billy," she said.

When he had done so, she mounted it and felt around carefully in the upper berth.

"It's quite dry," she observed with satisfaction. "Now, I'm going to put you to bed for awhile, kitty. But I'll come back for you—sure!"

She tucked the animal in under the covers, gave it a final pat and then led the way in further exploration.

There were two other apartments on the opposite side of the cabin, one used as a stateroom and the other apparently as a sort of man's den. The forward part of the cabin opened into a small pantry, where there was a chaos of broken dishes and glassware. Beyond the pantry was a kitchen. The fire in the stove was dead and the place was flooded.

For an hour they prowled about in the wreckage below decks, the girl intensely curious concerning each fresh discovery and demanding frequent explanations. Trask, being no sailor, served poorly as a guide; but when he faltered, she supplied her own conjectures.

"I wonder where they keep the ship's

papers," she said. "I've always read about ship's papers; they sound dreadfully mysterious and important. Somebody is always demanding them, or examining them, or searching them, or doing something with them every time anything happens. Let's try and find them."

But their search was unsuccessful, and Trask finally hazarded the conclusion that the captain of the bark must have carried them with him when he left the vessel. Sidney was plainly disappointed, for she regarded them as an essential part of any seafaring adventure, particularly her own.

Trask stepped again into the captain's room, looked at the chronometer and warned her that it was nearly eleven o'clock.

"Let's take a final trip around the deck," she said with a sigh. "Then I'll come back for the kitten, and after that we'll signal for Keeler."

It was easier to move about than when they came aboard, evidence that the sea was still further subsiding. Sidney reached the deck first and glanced about her. The moon was higher now and the light brighter. There was no longer a vestige of cloud. She looked in the direction where the Gulf Stream lay.

For nearly a minute she studied the steamer, a puzzled expression on her face.

"Billy!" she called sharply.

Trask emerged from the companion-way, having lingered in the cabin to light a fresh candle.

"There's something queer about the ship," she said, pointing.

Something *was* queer. The Gulf Stream no longer rode with her bow pointed toward her sea anchor. She had swung broadside, so that from stem to stern her brilliant lights were visible. Against the moonlit sky they could see a column of black smoke emerging from her funnel. She seemed to be strangely distant from them, much farther away than when they had struggled out of the breeches buoy and

made their way to the deck of the derelict!

CHAPTER XX.

KEELER'S LITTLE BEST.

ABOARD the Gulf Stream, as he leaned panting against the rail, the Tennessee Tornado felt a rough hand on his shoulder. He turned and looked into the face of a seaman.

"You been monkeying with the buoy?" demanded the sailor, as he pointed to the rope that was still in Keeler's hands.

"Just amusing myself," admitted Keeler.

"Well, I'll amuse you!"

The seaman drew back his arm and clenched his fist. Keeler saw the motion, sighed resignedly and dropped the rope.

The fist shot toward his jaw. The head of the Tennessee Tornado inclined itself three inches to one side and the fist went over his shoulder. Simultaneously an arm flashed upward from Keeler's side and the seaman, staggering back half a dozen feet, sat down abruptly.

"You *are* amusing," murmured Keeler.

The man blinked at him in the half light, then reached for a whistle that was suspended from a cord about his neck and blew a series of shrill blasts. There was a sound of hurrying feet on the deck and several dark forms appeared. One of them was an officer.

The sailor pointed up at Keeler, who was leaning back against the rail.

"Monkeying with the buoy, sir," spluttered the sailor. "He just slugged me."

The officer leaped forward with a growl and peered into Keeler's face.

"Making trouble, eh?" he snarled. "All right; here's some more!"

He did precisely as the seaman had done, and his straight-arm lead also clove the soft night air. Half a second

later the officer was sitting on the deck beside his predecessor. He spit out a tooth.

"You guys are all alike," said Keeler reprovingly, as he examined his knuckles. "You telegraph what you're going to do and then expect a fellow to wait and get it. Why don't you use the mail? It's cheaper."

The officer was on his feet again and returned stubbornly to the charge, this time not alone. Three sailors were scrambling forward, eager for a share of the fray. One of them went shooting backward out of the battle line and sagged limply to the deck. An instant later four men in close embrace were rolling about the forward planking of the Gulf Stream. There was grunting and thudding of blows and an entirely adequate quantity of profanity.

It lasted for a full minute, and reached a pause only when two more men joined the tightly locked group. Then there was a disentangling of legs and arms, and the officer rose up out of the human pile. His nose was twisted sidewise and he was nursing it tenderly.

Four men sat on the prostrate form of the Tennessee Tornado, whose eyes were half closed, but whose lips were moving grimly. There was something irregular about it, he knew in a dazed way; instinctively he was registering his protest.

"Claim a foul!" he muttered. "Hit me low. Seconds in the ring. Hey, referee, I—"

The officer made a signal and the deckhands yanked Keeler to his feet, still tightly gripping him. He wobbled a bit, shook his head and forced his mind back into full consciousness.

"Below with him!" commanded the officer.

The group surged forward, half dragging, half pushing the still resisting form of the captive.

"Wait a minute!" panted Keeler. "I—"

A sailor cuffed him heavily on the ear and Keeler's knees shook again.

"That's all right; I'm licked," gasped the Tornado. "But it took the bunch. Only I want to tell you—"

The officer planted a blow in his ribs and the heaving group moved onward toward a companionway that led below.

"You got to listen!" gasped Keeler, struggling. "You can pinch me, but first—"

A blow landed on his mouth.

"I tell you, there's other folks—"

Biff!

"You can murder me, but—"

Slam!

The swaying mass staggered down the stairway, Keeler's voice smothered in the conflict. Along a corridor they dragged him, then down another stairway. Once he broke loose, but only for an instant; yet he floored one of them before they closed in on him.

"Lemme explain!" he shouted. "There's—"

A sailor clapped a hand over his mouth.

The Tennessee Tornado heard a jingling of metal and something was snapped about his wrists. An instant more and his feet were shackled.

"Chuck him in!" growled the officer.

A door opened and Keeler was propelled into the blackness beyond. He fell forward on a rough board floor.

"Listen!" he yelled frantically. "I tell you—"

"Tell it to the captain in the morning!" answered the officer. "You big bum!"

The door slammed behind him, and Keeler was alone in pitchy darkness.

On the derelict Trask uttered a shout of dismay when he realized that the Gulf Stream was leaving them, and clutched the girl's shoulder in a rough grip.

"God! She's moving!" he cried.

Silent and fascinated, they watched for an awed moment. Beyond question the ship was moving. She had been just without the path of the

moonlight on the sea when they first glimpsed her. Now her bow cut slowly into it, and presently her whole bulk was silhouetted against the white light.

"They've left us, Sidney!"

He dashed to the rail over which they had come, the girl following.

The great hawsers which had linked the two vessels were no longer taut. They disappeared loosely into the sea, slating against the side of the bark. The breeches buoy was where they had left it, rising and falling sullenly in the waves.

The sea anchor had been cast adrift!

He raced across the deck again and stared out at the moving steamer. She had passed out of the moon path now, and seemed to be gaining speed.

In a frenzy of consternation he raised his voice in a series of shouts and halloos. The girl joined hers with it. When at last they paused, breathless, Trask shook his head in despair.

"They're over half a mile off," he gasped. "They'll never hear us!"

"Can't we make a signal? A light?"

He dashed back to the cabin, stumbled down the steps and returned with the candle. Sidney was already flashing her electric torch, having climbed to the top of the deckhouse in order that the signal might be more easily seen. A puff of air blew the candle out and Trask threw it from him angrily.

"Keep your lamp going!" he called.

She stood braced against the mizzenmast, bravely waving her pocket torch, while Trask began hunting about the deck in feverish haste. If he could only build a bonfire on the deck!

Everything that he touched was dripping wet, and he gave up the quest and rushed once more to the cabin in search of something that would burn. He remembered the dry bedding in the upper bunk, where she had put the kitten. There was an agonizing delay while he lighted another candle. Then he lurched heavily through the water that clung about his knees and entered the stateroom.

With a swift jerk he snatched the

bedding and mattress from the berth. The kitten fell out, uttering a frightened mew. He picked it out of the water, tossed it into the lower berth and charged out into the cabin with his burden. A chair floated across his path and the rungs got between his legs. He went headlong, carrying his precious load with him.

When he picked himself out of the water he was in darkness again, and the once dry bedding had joined the soggy flotilla that voyaged dismally back and forth with each movement of the vessel.

With an oath of desperation he groped his way back to the steps and ran to the deck. The girl was still at her post, waving her little white light. It was pitifully puny. There was scarcely a chance in a thousand that it would be seen, Trask knew.

The Gulf Stream steadily widened the distance between her and the hulk under their feet. She had swung about, presenting her stern to them, and every minute was carrying her farther and farther from them.

Trask joined the girl on the deckhouse.

"I can't find a thing that'll burn!" he cried. "Everything's soaked. Have they given any sign?"

She shook her head and continued to wave her torch.

Trask raged incoherently as he watched the receding ship, her lights still mocking them from across a long expanse of sea.

"But we're doing our best, Billy," she said quietly. "We can't do any more."

Presently she glanced at her torch, made a little shrug of resignation and tossed the useless thing away. The battery was exhausted.

"How far away is she now?" Sidney asked in a voice that astonished him by its steadiness.

"A mile and a half at least. They'll never see us!"

"No; I'm afraid not. How could it have happened?"

"Blodgett must have decided to move on and just cast loose his hawsers. He would not bother to send a boat out to unfasten them at this end."

"And the buoy, too?"

"Evidently just let everything go adrift. He wants to make Galveston as quickly as he can."

"But Keeler!" she exclaimed suddenly.

"God knows what happened to him," said Trask grimly.

"But he wouldn't deliberately let them go away and leave us, I'm sure!"

Trask shook his head, as if he did not understand and as if it were not worth while trying.

The image of the steamer was smaller now, her lights growing fainter. They stood beside each other, watching in silence. It was a futile vigil, both of them knew; yet there seemed nothing to do but stare so long as the Gulf Stream was in sight.

After a stillness of several minutes he caught the sound of a sob. He turned and saw that the girl was crying softly. Trask pulled himself together sharply.

"Come!" he said, patting her shoulder. "We mustn't give in to it. I behaved like a crazy man for a few minutes, and I'm sorry. There's nothing to be frightened about. We can't sink."

"I wasn't frightened," she murmured, looking up at him. "I was just crying because—because I've been wicked."

"Wicked, child?"

She nodded and stifled another sob.

"Wicked for bringing you here Billy. It's—it's all my fault. I wouldn't listen to you!"

"Why, I was really just as anxious to come as you were," he asserted stoutly. "I won't allow you to blame yourself."

"You'll—you'll forgive me?"

"There isn't a thing to forgive. But if there was I'd do it!"

She studied him narrowly, as if judging his sincerity. He smiled at

her and put his arm across her shoulders, giving her a little shake.

"But I'll never forgive myself," she said stubbornly.

"Nonsense! I'm the one who's really to blame. I shouldn't have let you come. I could have prevented it."

She was still looking at him, and to Trask it seemed that he had never seen the girl with so much of witchery in her face. She had not shrunk from his grasp; rather, she had leaned her small figure against him, as if instinctively seeking comfort. Trask's arm trembled on her shoulders. He knew why. He felt now that he had known a long time ago.

"Sidney," he said, bending his head toward her, "what's the use of thinking or bothering about forgiving each other or ourselves? I'm glad I'm here! Glad! Do you understand?"

"Glad?" she repeated wonderingly.

"But why should you—"

"Because I love you."

She looked intently at him for several seconds, then smiled wonderfully, although her lips were trembling. Slowly she raised her arms and slipped them about his neck, drawing his head down to hers.

"I'm glad you love me, boy," she whispered—"because I love you."

Far out across the water the image of the Gulf Stream was still visible. They did not see it.

CHAPTER XXI.

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE.

WHEN at last they looked again in the direction of the receding ship, her lights were but a faint glimmer on the horizon. They had exchanged scarcely a word since each told the other the greatest news in the world. She stood clinging to him, her face against his coat, his arms close around her—the sea, the derelict, the steamer forgotten.

She kissed him again and patted his cheek softly.

"Everything's all right now," she murmured happily. "Isn't it, Billy?"

"Everything!" he echoed earnestly. "Yet I'm just trying to realize what it all means."

"Why, it means that we love each other!"

"Of course. But it seems so impossible and unreal. How long is it, Sidney? Three days?"

"A century," she answered promptly, with a little laugh. "But what does time have to do with it? It takes time for some things. It takes time to grow up, and then more time to grow old; it takes time to write books, as father does; it takes time to live, and to see things, and to go to places—and to have adventures. But it doesn't take time to love!"

"It seems not," he said whimsically. "I—I wish Keeler were here."

She looked up at him with a reproving frown.

"That's ungenerous, boy. You just want him here to make him feel sorrowful. I suppose you consider yourself a conqueror."

"Something like that," he admitted.

"If I'd known that, I'd have made you fight harder. That is, I think I would. I'm not sure, though. You see, what made it so easy, dear, was that we were both fighting on the same side. There! I think I've confessed enough; I don't want to spoil you—quite. Look! I believe we've seen the last of the ship."

Although they searched the sea for a full minute, there was no answering flash of the Gulf Stream's lights.

"Do you suppose they'll come hunting for us, after they find we're not aboard?" she asked.

"It depends on how soon they know. If they get hours away, Captain Blodgett may decide it would be useless to try to find the derelict again. Beside he has a half-crippled ship. He won't want to take the chance of meeting more bad weather before he makes port."

"But will anybody search for us?"

"Oh, that's sure, as soon as they get word ashore, or to some other ship. Meanwhile, we're bosses on our own craft."

She tossed her head with a gesture of pride and her sou'wester hat slid off to the deck, revealing masses of unruly chestnut hair. Trask suddenly recollected things.

"I'm going to find some dry clothes, if there are any aboard," he said. "I fell down in the cabin."

He led the way, and once more they entered the wet, gloomy cabin. While Trask rummaged the captain's stateroom, Sidney visited the adjoining room, returning with the wet kitten.

"What happened?" she demanded, holding it up for his inspection. "It was half dry when I put it to bed, and now even the bed isn't there!"

"Oh," said Trask carelessly, "I grabbed the bedding, thinking it might burn. I forgot the kitten, and it fell into the water. I picked it up, though."

"You ought to be scolded for being so careless!"

"I was in a hurry."

"Well," she said, cuddling the kitten against her neck, "it was much more important to keep the kitten dry than it was to make a signal. I'm ashamed of you, William Hamilton Trask, or Spencer, or whatever your name really is! I'm not at all satisfied that you're what you really represent yourself to be."

He seized her and shook her gently by the shoulders.

"All I represent myself to be just now," he said, "is a person who is very happy."

"I hope so," she sighed. "But I can see that it's going to be a great responsibility to take care of you, with father on my hands, too. *You're* never absent-minded, are you? Because if you ever forget that you love me I won't forgive you!"

"I promise to remember that for at least a thousand years."

"That's long enough for a starter, I guess."

Trask found dry clothing in the captain's room, and the girl went back to the deck, where presently he found her watching the moon on the sea and telling secrets to the purring little animal in her arms. She was perched again on the deck-house, which seemed to be the driest spot on deck. He climbed up and joined her.

"It's after midnight," he said. "I'll be carrying you down and putting you to bed soon."

"Down there? Never! It's all right for exploring, but it's too spooky to sleep in. I'm going to stay up here. It's not a bit cold. Besides, I don't want to miss any of the adventure."

They sat and talked for a long time, not of their plight, nor of the Gulf Stream, nor of Keeler, but of matters far more interesting—chiefly of themselves. The moon had completed more than half its arc when Trask felt her figure sagging gently against him. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing gently. The kitten was already asleep. He drew the girl's head down against him, bent and touched his lips to her cheek and sighed contentedly.

"Night, Billy, dear," he heard her murmur drowsily.

After a while Trask also slept, although he had meant to watch the night through.

A blazing morning sun, shooting its rays directly into his eyes, awakened him. He started up suddenly, half-rousing the girl.

"Run away, mother," she said sleepily. "I don't have to get up yet."

Then some recollection called her into broad wakefulness, and she sat up, blinking at the sea.

"I forgot," she said, laughing. "I thought I was home, that I was a little girl again and mother was trying to send me to school. Kiss me good-morning, Billy—that is, if you don't mind."

He didn't. The kitten, which sat on the edge of the deck-house, washing its face, paused to look at them.

Trask jumped to the deck and lifted

the girl down. She inspected her costume with a wry face. Trask's own fit was not much better, for while the captain of the bark was no taller than he, was of infinitely greater girth.

"We're scarecrows," said Sidney. "If I look anything like you I'm a spectacle. You positively *must* find me something better than this, Billy."

"We'll make a search after breakfast," he declared.

"Breakfast! Do we get any?"

"There must be plenty of stuff aboard, if it's not all water-soaked. Let's look."

The galley was a wreck, but Trask had no mind to revisit the little kitchen that connected with the cabin, for he knew it was still awash with sea water. They found a can of coffee that was still dry and some crackers in a tightly sealed tin.

Sidney took possession of the galley and sent him for firewood. He knocked the chicken-coop to pieces and found that the wood was fairly well dried out and would probably burn. After patient effort, they got a fire started.

"Water!" she exclaimed. "Where do they keep it?"

Trask had a bad moment. He knew that water was generally kept in casks on the deck, and he wondered if it was possible that any of the vessel's supply had survived the hurricane. He did not mention his fears to Sidney as he picked up an empty pail and went out of the galley house.

The splintered remains of what had evidently been a huge cask did not give him encouragement. He soon came to a second cask that had not been torn from its lashings, but groaned to find it empty. Finally he came upon another that proved to be nearly full. He tasted its contents and found the water sweet.

"That trouble's over," he muttered, as he filled the pail.

While Sidney was setting the pot to boil, he went out on the deck again and made a careful inspection of the hori-

zon on all sides. The sea was quite smooth, the sky cloudless. Already the sun was getting hot. There was not a ship in sight. A better point of vantage was offered by the top of the deck house, but from there he had no more luck.

He looked up at the mizzenmast, which was intact as far as the truck, and then at the shrouds that ascended it. An instant later he was climbing.

This journey carried him to a point thirty-odd feet above the deck and widened his horizon measurably, but although he spent several minutes in a careful survey, he had no glimpse of anything save a level and glistening sea.

A voice from below called him, and he looked down to see Sidney beckoning in peremptory fashion. She seemed to be stamping her foot. He descended and found her regarding him with severity.

"Who told you to climb way up there?" she demanded. "It's dangerous. I don't want you to do it."

"Dangerous! Why, it's nothing to what you got me into last night."

"Perhaps not," she admitted. "But—oh, don't you see, it's different now, Billy! I didn't own you then."

"But you really did, you know."

"Truly, Billy? And how much farther back?"

"Oh, as far back as when I first saw you dancing."

"Now I know you're a fraud!" she exclaimed, catching him by the arm. "Come to breakfast."

He found more than crackers and coffee—there was bacon, sizzling in a frying pan. She pointed proudly to this addition to their stores, which she discovered after a further search of the galley. They breakfasted on the deck.

"You may as well say you like my coffee," she told him, "because we've got a long life ahead of us."

"It's great!" he assured her. "Some more, please."

The kitten joined them and was promptly supplied with some bits of the bacon. It ate ravenously.

"Were you looking for a ship, up there on that mast?" she asked.

He nodded.

"What's the matter with our own?" she asked. "I think it's perfectly splendid."

"We can't stay aboard of it forever, even at that. And it won't sail anywhere."

"Well," mused Sidney, as she nibbled a cracker, "I suppose we will be leaving it at the first chance. But I'll be a little bit sorry. It's treating us rather well, I think. We have plenty to eat and drink—and—and a kitten."

He reached for the animal and picked it up, holding it aloft for inspection.

"Let's name it 'Aunt Mchetabel,'" he suggested.

She snatched the furry creature from him in indignation.

"We will do nothing of the sort! I've already named it 'Hurricane Billy.'"

"Sounds like the Tennessee Tornado," he commented, laughing. "Has it a pugilistic disposition?"

She ignored him and poured herself another cup of coffee.

A forenoon of exploration aboard the derelict did not reveal much that they had not discovered the night before. It was too wet to go below with comfort. Trask had been hoping to discover a boat, although in what direction he would have navigated it he had not the least idea. The binnacle compass was smashed and he could find no other aboard.

But the boats had been swept away, with the exception of one that was so hopelessly stove in that it was good only for kindling wood.

He had never seen the girl so happy. She appeared delighted with everything save her costume. At times she was in a bantering mood, teasing him about the goddess of the first cabin. She played a great deal with the kitten, which had completely recovered its spirits and now followed her about the deck. She scarcely ever joined in watching the sea for ships, not seeming

to care whether they were discovered or not.

It was past mid-day when she aroused him from an abstracted study of the horizon and shouted gleefully into his ear:

"Bottles!"

"What about bottles?"

"I've found heaps of them. And corks, too. We're going to send messages!"

"Who to?"

"Why, to anybody—everybody! To ourselves. Oh, I could shake you for standing there laughing!"

For answer he seized her and swung her up to his shoulder.

"Show me your bottles," he said.

She directed him back to the galley and proudly displayed an assortment of bottles, of all shapes and sizes.

"I'm afraid the cook was a person of bad habits," she remarked as he set her down. "But his bottles are very useful now. Billy, you run down into the cabin and see if you can find some paper and pencils. We'll begin right away."

He obeyed her and returned presently with the necessary articles. Sidney sprawled face down on the deck and immediately began the composition of a message. She filled half a sheet of paper, rolled it up, slipped it into a bottle and pounded the cork into place.

"That's a message addressed to you," she announced.

He reached for the bottle.

"Indeed, no!" she exclaimed, jumping up and tossing the bottle into the sea. "It has to go through the mail first."

"But I may never get it."

"Well, you know most of what's in it, anyhow," she said, with a blush. "I told it to you last night."

She was writing again and presently despatched another missive into the ocean.

"That was to Captain Blodgett, telling him where we are," she announced.

"Well, where are we?"

"Right here, of course."

"But where is this ship?"

Sidney looked back and laughed.

"I'll have to write him another," she said, seizing a fresh sheet of paper. "What is our latitude and longitude, Billy?"

"I haven't the faintest notion."

"But we must have latitude and longitude," she insisted. "The worst of it is, I always get them mixed. Does latitude run crosswise, or up and down?"

"Crosswise, I think."

"Well, we'll have to guess at it, I expect. I'm going to put in enough, anyhow. There—Latitude 256 east—that's enough latitude. 'Longitude 10 west.' And I'll add 'Gulf of Mexico,' so they'll know where it is."

"If I might suggest, latitude is always north or south, as I remember it," observed Trask with great gravity. "And I think you've put it a bit too high. I don't think there is so much latitude."

"I'll change it in the next bottle," she said, flinging her third message to the waves.

He had a struggle to keep from laughing. She appeared to be quite serious, but plainly enthusiastic.

"Now for Keeler," she said, beginning another letter. "I'm telling him we are engaged. He'll want to know."

The Keeler letter followed its predecessors overboard. Then came a series of missives for Aunt Mehetabel, Miss Kent and the youth who won the potato race in the second cabin.

"And I'm sending one to the two old ladies in father's stateroom," remarked Sidney, as she wrote. "I'm asking them to please keep the charts up and all the instruments going. Poor dears! I'm afraid they won't know how, but father will be dreadfully disappointed if they don't get something down."

After that she wrote several "To Whom It May Concern," in which the position of the derelict bark was stated with distinct variations.

"You see," she explained, "if we're not actually at any of those places just

now, we're apt to arrive at one before we get through drifting, so if they look in every place they're almost certain to find us."

"It's a great idea, I'm sure."

One by one the bottles followed each other into the sea. When Trask went to the rail he could see a small fleet of them, drifting at a little distance from the vessel, their necks sticking out of the water like so many periscopes.

"These submarine post-cards of yours," he remarked, as he returned to her, "all seem to be sticking together pretty well."

"They'll scatter about," she assured him. "I expect some of them will turn up in China."

"By way of the canal, possibly."

She nodded and went on writing, chuckling occasionally over her work.

"There! That's the last," she announced. "No more bottles, unless you can find me some. Hasn't it been a lot of fun?"

He agreed that it had.

"And useful, too," she said with a serious face, watching her bottles with solicitous eyes.

Presently Trask went down into the cabin, in search of tobacco. When he returned he was carrying one of the ship's charts, which he spread upon the deck. For several minutes he puzzled over it, calculating something on the margin and making frequent measurements with the aid of a pencil. Then he called her.

"Sidney, what do you suppose our latitude and longitude really are? I've got a chart here and I think I can tell pretty close. Make another guess."

She thought for a moment, wrinkling her forehead.

"Well, just as a rough guess," she announced, "I'd say we were somewhere around 24 or 25 north latitude, and between 85 and 90 longitude, west from Greenwich."

Trask jumped to his feet and stared at her.

"You—you—"

She smiled at him mockingly.

"You conscienceless little rogue!" he cried. "You knew better all the time. Why, I believe you've hit it almost exactly right! Sidney, you've been joshing me!"

She turned to run, but he caught her before she had taken three steps. She laughed up in his face.

"I couldn't help it," she said. "It was such fun to watch your face. Did you really think I was quite so foolish as all that, my dear? Oh, Billy, Billy! I haven't got much sense, but I do know some things."

"It was downright cruelty," he said, kissing her.

"But really," she declared, "I was joshing myself a little, too. I like to make believe sometimes. I always did when I was little, and I'm afraid I haven't got over my play days yet. There's no doubt I'll be a great trial to you, Billy. But you won't mind, will you? There, dear; now let me go. I've got to get lunch."

CHAPTER XXII.

NATURE INTERVENES.

"A SHIP, Billy!" cried the girl.

It was almost evening, and a red sun was about to begin its dip into the sea on the western horizon.

Trask sprang to his feet and stared in the direction she indicated. There was more than a smudge of smoke; there was a distinct outline of a vessel.

He glanced up at a signal he had set at the truck of the mizzen. It was a strange signal, composed of flags unknown in the nautical book of all nations. At the top there was a red flannel shirt; below that two pairs of white duck trousers; and then, in order, a sou'wester coat, a white shirt with blue stripes, a checkered tablecloth, and a remnant of canvas which at one time might have been part of a sail.

Sidney had declared when he set it up that its meaning, according to the International Code, was: "Don't Bother; We're Happy."

As he stood looking out at the vessel in the distance Trask felt himself swaying with a dizziness that had attacked him twice before that afternoon. There was a dull pain in his head; it felt hot. Of this, however, he had said nothing to Sidney.

"A steamer," he said, nodding. "And I believe it's coming this way."

They stood together on the deck-house watching it with eager eyes. Even the kitten seemed to sense something unusual, for it, too, stared out at the sea, purring comfortably.

Sidney clasped his arm tightly and clung to him.

"You want it to find us, don't you?" she asked.

"It must!"

"I suppose so," with a sigh. "But I'm so happy here. It's almost the end of the adventure, Billy."

"The beginning," he assured her, as a dull pain throbbed across his eyes again.

The steamer drew nearer, following a course that he judged would carry her a mile or so to the northward of the hulk. They were still without means of making a flare; Trask feared to start a bonfire on the deck, for if it was not answered he realized that they might be left aboard a derelict doomed to destruction by flames.

"I'll go aloft and wave something," he said.

She shook her head and gripped him tighter.

"It's not worth it," she said. "I won't let you. I believe they'll see us anyway."

The oncoming vessel had drawn nearly abreast of them when Trask observed a change in its course. The bow headed in toward the hulk. He ran to the rail and waved his arms frantically. There was an answering blast of a siren, repeated several times.

He raced back to the deckhouse, swung the girl down and hugged her.

"They've seen us!" he cried.

She nodded, and made a little gesture that seemed to express regret.

"Of course, it has to be. But—"

She sighed and laughed at herself.

"My clothes!" she cried suddenly.

"Well, they're the best you've got, dear. And you look magnificent. Why should you care, so long as I'm pleased with them?"

"If they dare to laugh, will you—vindicate me, Billy?"

"I'll slay them," he answered, catching himself again as a dizzy spell assailed him.

The steamer stopped a quarter of a mile distant from the derelict, and Trask watched the operation of lowering a boat. It did not look like a passenger ship; it was black and dingy, and there were only a few figures at the rail.

"Our sole baggage is the kitten," observed Sidney, as the boat approached the wreck.

Trask smiled down at her and steadied himself against the rail. He felt strange and ill, but hid it from her.

"There's one thing that disappoints me," she observed, "and that is we never discovered the lazarette."

He smiled faintly.

"The lazarette is the most romantic part of a ship," she went on confidentially. "I've read about them time and again. All sea adventures have lazarettes in them. I don't know just what they are, but I always associate them with pirates and mutinies, and men in irons, and captive ladies and things like that. I did so hope we'd be able to find the lazarette, but I suppose it's too late now. Perhaps there isn't any on this ship. If there is, there ought to be a sign on it, so everybody would know."

"We might make believe the galley was the lazarette," he suggested.

"That's what we'll do! It's a lazarette! I feel better."

The boat from the steamer drew close and the men rested on their oars. A man in the stern sheets arose and hailed the pair at the rail.

"What's happened?" he called.

The salutation was a shock to Sidney. She frowned.

"He might at least say 'Ship ahoy!'" she whispered.

Trask, for answer, merely made a sweeping wave of his arm, inclusive of the derelict and everything aboard her.

"Who's aboard?" came the next question.

Trask indicated himself and the girl.

"And the kitten, Billy," she reminded him.

"Caught in the blow?" asked the man in the boat, as it drifted nearer.

Trask nodded.

It all seemed decidedly unromantic to Sidney. It was too casual and matter-of-fact, utterly devoid of ceremonious nautical salutations and other salty accessories. It was like hailing a Broadway trolley and having it take you aboard; not so exciting, in fact.

"Any cargo?"

"Mahogany."

"Where's the rest of you?"

"Took to the boats."

The man stared at Trask, evidently puzzled.

"How about salvage?" he asked next.

"Fifty-fifty," said Trask.

"You can't make port without us," said the man in the boat.

"All right; go ahead then," declared Trask.

Sidney clutched his arm and stared up at him in surprise.

The man pondered and stared at the pair who looked at him over the rail.

"You'll never work her in," he growled.

"We're expecting a tow," lied Trask.

Again the man in the boat paused to consider.

"Where are you figuring to go?" he asked.

"Galveston."

"That's my port. . . . Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm captain of that steamer. I'll split whatever salvage the court allows—that is, if you're full of mahogany."

Trask nodded and fought off another attack of vertigo.

"We'll bring a line," said the man,

as he ordered his boat turned about and headed back for his own ship.

"What does it mean, Billy?" demanded the girl.

"I'm trying to grab some money," he said wearily. "He's entitled to salvage, you know, if he tows this thing to port. I just bluffed him a little."

"You mean we're really going to rescue this dear old ship?" she cried, her eyes widening.

"We're going to try."

She hugged him in ecstasy.

"It's still an adventure!" she cried.

"Oh, I'm glad! I hated to leave it out here in the ocean, just to die by itself. Billy, you're simply wonderful!"

He nodded mechanically and tried to smile at her. He felt very ill.

She ran over to the deckhouse and seized the kitten, squeezing it joyfully.

"Hurricane Billy," she told it, "we're all going home—you and I and Billy Trask and the ship—everybody! Aren't you glad?"

The kitten cuffed the nose of its captor with a dirty little paw and purred like a six-cylinder.

The business of getting the derelict in tow took until nightfall, and Trask was heartily glad when it was completed. His head pained him, his eyes were blurred and his tongue felt as dry as a cracker. When a hawser had been made fast forward he and the girl and a sleepy kitten were transferred to a boat and rowed over to the waiting steamer.

It was a dirty tramp, bound north from Buenos Ayres, with a mixed cargo, and headed in to Galveston for a load of cotton. It was far different from the clean smartness of the Gulf Stream, yet it seemed luxurious by comparison to the hulk they left.

There was a woman aboard, the captain's wife. She surveyed Sidney without emotion or surprise, nodded understandingly, and said:

"I'll fix you out with some clothes."

All of the proceeding, so completely commonplace was it, proved a blow to

the ideals of the girl. Nobody had asked, "What ship is that?" Nobody had put forth a question concerning the circumstances of the wreck, or whither it had been bound, or the probable fate of the crew that had left it. The whole business was apparently regarded as a trifling incident of a day at sea.

Trask sat heavily in a deck chair and his head dropped forward into his hands. It was the first time he had yielded to the racking pain across his forehead and the dizziness that now assailed him almost continuously. Sidney's quick eye caught his collapse. She ran to him and threw an arm around his shoulders.

"Billy!" she cried anxiously.

"Just a bit sick," he muttered thickly.

She lifted his chin and looked into his face. Then she turned and beckoned preemptorily to the captain of the tramp.

"Get him to bed at once! He's ill. I'll attend to him. Hurry!"

"I'm all right," protested Trask weakly. "I'm not going to bed."

Sidney ignored him.

"You two men!" she commanded, motioning to a pair of deckhands who stood gaping at the rescued ones. "Take him below—into the cabin. Which stateroom, captain?"

"The first officer's," said the master of the tramp, with a nod.

"Gently now!" she ordered, as the men grasped Trask by the arms and assisted him to his feet.

His head sagged forward and he stumbled blindly as they led him toward the entrance to the deckhouse. Sidney stifled a gasp of alarm, then rallied herself, with a shake of her head, and led the way briskly.

"It's up to me now," she muttered to herself. "I mustn't give in!"

Lying in a berth, Trask stared up at the white ceiling of the stateroom with eyes that did not seem to see. His lips were mumbling, his body was tossing restlessly. As the girl's hands touched his forehead it was like laying them upon living coals.

She was issuing sharp, quick orders, with the captain's wife and a clumsy cabin boy running at her beck and call, bringing her what she demanded, waiting for her next command. Her small figure dominated the cabin. She had forgotten her clothes, even more grotesque now than they had been aboard the derelict. Nothing concerned her save the fever-stricken man in the mate's stateroom.

After a while he became quieter and appeared to sleep fitfully. She sat and watched him closely for a long time, her lips set resolutely, her jaw at a fighting angle—but her eyes filled with the same tenderness that Trask had seen there when she told him that she loved him. Presently she arose and tiptoed out of the room.

"Sit here in the doorway and watch him!" she ordered, beckoning to the boy. "If he wakes, call me at once. I am going to talk to the captain."

She made her way quickly to the deck and asked to be directed to the master. He was forward talking to his second officer when she found him.

"Captain, when do we reach Galveston?"

"It'll be about forty-eight hours, miss."

She uttered an exclamation.

"We must get there sooner. He is very sick."

"We're not doing more than half speed, towing that thing behind."

"Can't your engineer do any better?" she demanded.

The captain shook his head and grinned. He was not a stylishly dressed captain; his costume scarcely differentiated him from one of his forecastle hands.

"If you were not towing that wreck how soon would you get there?"

"Something like twenty-four hours."

"Then cut it adrift!"

The captain stared at her, grinned again and shook his head slowly.

"But you must!" she exclaimed.

"This man may die. I've got to get him ashore!"

"Sorry, miss. But this is a salvage job, and it looks like a good one. I can't let go now. He'll probably come through all right."

She bit her lip and her hands clenched tightly.

"It is our ship, I tell you! We have a right to say what shall be done with it."

"Not after I take it in tow, miss. That derelict goes to Galveston."

"Do you want to kill a man?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders, as though the question were a futile one.

"Of course not," he answered. "And I don't know that I am. I'm not to be blamed if he dies. Likely enough he'll pull through, anyway."

"But you have no right not to give him his chance!" she stormed. "I demand that you cut that thing adrift!"

"Don't make a fuss, miss," he advised her. "I've seen lots of them with fevers, and lots of them get over it."

"Will you turn it loose?"

The captain merely shook his head and turned to resume his conversation with the second officer.

Sidney stood irresolute for a minute, then turned and walked back to the cabin. She paused as she reached it and looked out into the wake of the tramp. Darkness had fallen and the moon was not yet out of the sea. The black object that dragged sluggishly astern was scarcely visible, yet even the faint image was hateful to her. She went below, her face white and grim.

For a long time she sat by Trask's side, watching him narrowly. He was drowsing through a delirium, talking sometimes in broken sentences, oftener mumbling incoherent things. Once she caught the sound of her name.

The captain came below and went into his stateroom. After a while the cabin boy turned the lights low in the dingy saloon, yawned and disappeared. The ship was quiet, save for the dull throb of her engines.

Sidney arose softly, tiptoed her way through the gloomy cabin and went on

deck again. There was despair in her heart, yet she was afire with a resolution to do something—she knew not what. Something *must* be done! She walked to the stern and looked out into the darkness. No longer was the hulk visible; yet she knew it was there by the heavy, laboring progress of the steamer and the groaning of the hawser that disappeared into the night. It was holding her sick man back from Galveston; clutching at him from behind like some sinister and giant hand.

Perhaps it was killing him!

She shuddered, turned quickly and walked forward. There was a dim figure on the bridge. She climbed the ladder without hesitation and confronted the second officer. For an instant he peered at her uncertainly, then recognized his visitor and saluted awkwardly.

Sidney talked swiftly and earnestly, her hands clasped tightly at her breast, her eyes alight with pleading and determination. The officer listened and shook his head several times.

"Sorry, miss. I'd like to help you, but I can't."

"It must be done!" she exclaimed with a sob.

"It 'd mean my job, miss. Besides, you heard the captain's orders. No, miss, I can't cut it adrift."

She pleaded again, almost hysterically. The second officer shifted uneasily on his feet, but continued to shake his head.

"No use, miss. It can't be done. And I think you'd better go below; there's a bit of weather coming."

Sidney's heart sank.

"Another cyclone?" she gasped.

"Not that, miss; but a squall. We've had lightning some time. Feel the air? It'll blow some. It ain't likely to last long, but I expect it'll be sharp. I'm real sorry for you, miss."

"And you won't—cut it adrift?"

The officer merely shook his head and turned to resume his pacing.

She crept down from the bridge to the deck and made her way slowly aft.

Everybody was against her! And another storm coming! Perhaps they would never reach Galveston; at least for days and days. And by then he might be dead!

She scarcely noted a dazzling flash of lightning that shot across the sky, nor seemed to hear the clatter of thunder that followed swiftly. Near the entrance to the cabin she paused and leaned heavily against the deckhouse. She felt that she could not go below and sit idly by the bedside of her man; there seemed to be something criminal in inaction. Yet she knew not what to do.

For several minutes she stood there, her mind trying to grapple with a problem that seemed fairly tragic.

Not until the ship shivered perceptibly did she awaken to the fact that the squall was upon them. There was a sudden shriek of wind, a whitening of the black sea, a blinding electric flash that lighted the deck as if by day, and then a torrent of rain. Instinctively she gripped the handrail and clung to it.

Full in the face the squall struck the tramp, and it came like the blow of a giant sledge. The ship staggered, paused and hung irresolute. For several seconds the screaming wind held her almost motionless, despite the steady thrashing of her screw. Then, as if rallying from the first onslaught, the vessel plunged forward again.

There was a second shock. Somewhere from out in the darkness came a sharp, ominous noise, like the bark of a quick-firing gun. An instant later a sinuous, snakelike object whizzed within a foot of the girl's head and lashed viciously at the deck. The lightning came again, and Sidney, shrinking in terror against the deckhouse, saw at her feet the thing that had leaped at her out of the darkness.

It was a broken hawser.

The ship was leaping into the squall now, gathering speed at each turn of her screw. The Nemesis astern was gone!

Even with her slight knowledge of the sea, Sidney understood in an instant. The first blast of the squall had checked the slowly moving steamer and held her motionless long enough to slacken the towing line. The derelict, not yet reached by the wind, had crawled sluggishly forward of her own momentum. Then, freed from the drag of her burden, the tramp had gathered speed.

And when the line tautened again—it snapped!

Sidney, clinging to the handrail, murmured a swift prayer of thanksgiving, then groped her way toward the entrance to the cabin.

The captain, leaping up the steps, brushed her roughly aside, scarcely seeing her. She heard him growling an oath as he passed and disappeared on deck.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WHEEL CHAIR AGAIN.

THERE was a wild hour aboard the tramp. Then the squall blew itself out as suddenly as it came, leaving as a memory only a steady downpour of soft, warm rain. The salvage job was over. Off in the darkness, miles astern, perhaps, lay a wallowing derelict. It was useless to search for it. By morning it would be hopelessly gone.

While the squall lasted it was impossible to stop the steamer's engines. And now it was too late!

At dawn the girl was sitting by the bedside of Trask, who had fallen into a stupor, his forehead still burning with fever, his lips still muttering things that her ear could not catch. She had ignored the futile storming of the captain. The derelict was gone; the ship was moving faster. She cared for nothing else save the heavily breathing form of the man who lay in the berth, his eyes closed, his cheeks scarlet with a fire that raged within.

The day passed thus, and at night-

fall land was sighted. It was as if Sidney's prayer for a quick passage had been answered. She gave a cry of thanksgiving as she looked through the grimy little porthole that lighted the cabin and realized that they were making a harbor at last.

A quarantine officer came aboard, and was directed to the stateroom where Trask lay. He examined the unconscious man almost perfunctorily.

"A hospital for him," he said shortly. "Who is he?"

"He belongs to me," said Sidney quietly. "I'll go with him."

The transferring of Trask from the tramp was a matter of routine to the port authorities of Galveston; to Sidney Sands it was a work of tense anxiety. She rode with him to a hospital; she pleaded successfully, in defiance of rules, to be allowed to remain with him; bowed her head again in a silent prayer as he was put to bed between white sheets in a little room that over-looked a green garden.

"Just a fever," said an interne. "But it's over 104. If it breaks by to-morrow he'll come through."

Trask, propped up against pillows in his iron bed, stared curiously around the little room. He looked down at his hands as though they were unfamiliar objects, then tried to lift one. The weight of it astonished him; he was unable to stir it from the sheet where it lay. His mind was working slowly and dully. He did not understand.

A small figure entered the room and closed the door softly. It was garbed all in white. He frowned in an effort at recollection; surely there was something familiar about it. Then the figure turned and he beheld a face that brought him back into the world again.

She went over to his bedside and looked down upon him. He realized now that she was beautiful—if only to him. Suddenly she loosed herself from the restraint that held her, dropped to her knees and buried her head in the pillow beside his.

"Billy!" she cried softly, as her arm crept around his neck.

He smiled, and tried to stroke her hair, but his hand would not obey. Still, he was happy.

Another day came, and he talked to her.

"You're doing wonderfully," she smiled at him. "Perhaps we can move you to-morrow, or the next day."

"We're in Galveston?"

Sidney nodded.

"Are we married yet?"

She colored, laughed and shook her head.

"Perhaps to-morrow," she said softly. "You're still sure—you want to?"

"Sidney!"

"I've done something rather terrible," she confessed, shyly. "I've already got a license."

He reached for her hand and gripped it weakly.

"The derelict?" he asked.

"Gone," she told him. "I hated it before it went. It seemed as though it were trying to drag you away from me. I hope they never find it."

She told him the story then, and he listened in wonder.

"Did the Gulf Stream get in?" he asked.

"The day ahead of us."

"What—what did they think?"

She raised her finger to her lips and looked mysterious. Then she rose from her knees and tiptoed to the door. She returned a minute later, followed by a bulky and awkward figure.

"Keeler!" cried Trask feebly.

The Tennessee Tornado was crying foolishly.

"I'll never forgive myself," he said, wiping his eyes. "Never, Mr. Trask."

"For what?"

"Letting five of them muckers lick me, sir. I did my best, Mr. Trask; but when a man's been retired from his profession for a while he loses his judgment, sir. I mean his judgment of distance. He don't time his punches just right. Two years ago, sir, they

couldn't have done it—not the whole five, Mr. Trask.”

“And that wasn't all,” broke in Sidney. “After they kept him in a dark room all night, with handcuffs on him, for hours after the ship cut loose from the derelict, they took him up before Captain Blodgett. And when the captain wouldn't turn the ship around to hunt for us, Mr. Keeler— What was it you did, please?”

“Gave him the one-two, with both hands,” said Keeler modestly. “Something had to be done. It seemed the best way. But it was no use, after all. They put irons on me again. But you ought to have seen the pair of eyes I put on him, Mr. Trask!”

There was a note of professional pride in the voice of the Tornado.

Trask laughed weakly, until the tears trickled down his cheeks.

“Now you're ashore again, sir, I'm right on the job,” said Keeler, with a return of his professional manner. “I'll take care of you from now on.”

Sidney shook her head emphatically.

“He's mine now,” she remarked simply. “I'm the nurse.”

Keeler scratched his head and assumed a mournful expression.

“I was afraid it would be that way, miss. It always has been. I'm always helping somebody else to somebody. But”—he sighed heavily once more—“but, as it had to be, I'd sooner it would be you two than anybody. I've taken a liking to you, sir, if you don't mind my saying it. I wish you happiness. When is it to be, Mr. Trask?”

“To-morrow,” said Trask promptly.

The girl blushed faintly and nodded.

“To-morrow!” repeated Keeler wonderingly. “Well, you were always doing things right off the handle, sir. I guess it's the best way. It's the surest one, anyhow.”

Sidney laughed outright.

“May—may I see it, sir?”

“You're invited to be my best man,” said Trask. “I hope you'll accept.”

“Accept! Do you think I'd miss the chance, sir?”

Then Keeler fell silent for a minute in awe and gratitude.

“What about the other folks on the Gulf Stream?” asked Trask presently.

“All well, sir; even the dragon. They've heard about it. It's been in the papers. But the papers had it wrong, sir. They said it was Mr. Trumbull.”

Sidney nodded confirmation.

“You see, they got it from Captain Blodgett, sir, and he took the name that was on the passenger list, being the only one that he had any official knowledge of. They've even had Mr. Trumbull's picture, sir; and his father's, too.”

“Have they heard from Trumbull?”

“Yes, sir; after the thing was first published. That complicated it. He denied that he'd been shipwrecked, sir. And then Miss Sands told them who you really were.”

Sidney confirmed the statement with an inclination of her head. Trask laughed until his head throbbed.

“I—I think it rather upset Miss Kent, sir,” ventured Keeler hesitatingly.

Trask glanced at Sidney.

“She told me—I met her, sir—that her faith had really been shattered. I think she's given up the idea of nursing people, sir.”

Sidney had turned away, but Trask observed that her shoulders were quivering.

“Any news of the derelict?” asked Trask hastily.

“Not yet, sir. They've sent a Coast Guard cutter out after it, so the papers say. The captain of the ship that brought you in is half crazy, sir. He's talking about bringing a suit for something or other. He says you fooled him into giving you half, and then you wouldn't even let him have his half.”

“And the Gulf Stream?”

“They're working on her now, sir. She'll be sailing back in a couple of days. It's a wonderful world, isn't it, Mr. Trask?”

“Wonderful, Keeler.”

The Tennessee Tornado glanced furtively at a small figure that stood by a window, and sighed again.

"Well, anyhow, sir," he said, "you're the real thing now, Mr. Trask."

"You mean—"

"You're not a fake invalid. You've been awful sick, sir. It was touch and go for a while, the doctor said. But they're not very expert here," added Keeler wisely. "Now, Dr. Van Norden—"

"What about that old devil?"

"Oh, nothing, sir. I've just sent him a full report; it's all right, Mr. Trask."

"A report? Of what?"

"Your temperature chart, and other things, Mr. Trask. I kept it up every day, sir, even after you left us. It was easy, you see; I put it all down normal. And what a pity I missed the real case, sir! You've had a temperature, Mr. Trask, that anybody ought to be proud to write down."

Keeler shook his head with professional wisdom and envy.

Sidney returned from the window. There was a kitten tucked under her arm.

"I think it's time for you to go, Mr. Keeler," she said pleasantly. "Mr. Trask is not supposed to talk for more than ten minutes."

Keeler rose from his chair nonplused. He—a person of professional attainments—was being ordered from a sick-room! He glanced gloomily at Trask and then at the girl.

"I was hoping to look after you," he mumbled.

Sidney smiled and shook her head.

"I'm permanently retained," she said. "I'm sorry, Mr. Keeler. It's really against the rules to have any outside nurses in this hospital. I had an awful time getting in myself. But they gave in when they saw I actually meant it."

"I bet they did, miss," declared Keeler earnestly, surveying her with admiring eyes. "Well, I'll be back, then—for the wedding."

He backed out of the room softly,

instinctively assuming the noiseless tread of a hospital attendant. Sidney laughed quietly as he disappeared. She placed the kitten on the bed and knelt by Trask.

"We're a queer lot of folks, Billy. Aren't we, dear?" she said.

He smiled happily.

"You, and Keeler, and I—all queer," she mused. "But that's what helped to make it an adventure. You must sleep again now, Billy. You're only allowed to say three words more. Say them!"

He said them, and felt her lips against his cheek.

"And I love you," she answered. "But if you don't go to sleep I won't."

He went to sleep.

As a little procession left the hospital Mrs. William Hamilton Trask received a yellow envelope from a messenger boy, glanced at the address and handed it to her husband. He opened it. The telegram was from New York. It said:

I've been caught. The game is up. In a deuce of a fix.
TRUMBULL.

Trask smiled cheerfully and asked the boy for a pencil. He wrote slowly and with a shaky hand:

I'm caught, too. Game just beginning. I'm married.
TRASK.

It was Keeler who wheeled the chair—the identical juggernaut of the first day aboard the Gulf Stream. He wheeled it very carefully and rather proudly.

"You're certainly the real thing, sir," he said, leaning over Trask's shoulder. "Couldn't walk if you tried."

"But those were gay days, Keeler," Trask reminded him with a grin.

"Gay, sir! Maybe for you, but—"

The Tennessee Tornado indulged in one of his favorite sighs.

It was not very far to the ship—the same ship. The sight of the Gulf Stream was like a tonic to Trask. He straightened up in his chair and his

eyes brightened. He glanced at Sidney. She colored and touched him gently on the shoulder.

"I can see Captain Blodgett," she whispered. "Up there—on the deck. I think he's watching us."

"He won't need to watch me very hard at this time," said Trask, as he tried to stir his feet and found them singularly heavy.

"I'm not so sure," mused Sidney. "I think you're going to need a lot of watching, young man—always. But I have pretty good eyes myself."

Keeler trundled the chair down the wharf and halted it at the gang-plank.

"Well, sir," he said, "you'll remember me to New York when you see it, I hope."

Trask and Sidney turned to him in surprise.

"You're not going?" exclaimed the invalid.

Keeler shook his head and fumbled his hat nervously.

"But your passage was all arranged for the return trip."

"Yes, sir; I know. But—but you'll not need me now, sir."

"True enough. But this is the first you've said about staying in Galveston. What's the idea?"

Keeler looked sheepishly at his late patient and hesitated.

"Is it—is it—?"

"Yes, sir; it is."

Trask grinned broadly. He would have roared, but his strength was not yet up to a demonstration of such proportions.

"What in the world are you two talking about?" demanded Sidney with a perplexed little frown.

"Out with it, Keeler!"

The Tennessee Tornado coughed and glanced timidly at the bride. Then he took courage.

"Well, it's like this, sir—and Miss—I mean, Mrs. Trask. You see, when the ship came in, there was a great time here about the hurricane and everybody was down at the wharves, waiting for news and looking for people they ex-

pected. And there was quite a lot of policemen, and two of them were there to meet me, sir."

"You!"

"Yes, sir. You see, I'd hung shutters on both of Captain Blodgett's windows—I beg your pardon, miss—I mean I'd blacked his eyes. And he'd made a charge of assault against me, so there was nothing to do but go to the lock-up. Well, that was no great matter, Mr. Trask; for they took me up to court in a little while and I got off with ten dollars. But it seems, sir, there was a man down at the wharf that had seen me get arrested, and he got to asking questions about it, and some of the people from the ship told him how it was. And he looked me up in court."

Keeler straightened himself involuntarily and shed his embarrassment.

"He's the manager of a movie company, sir," continued the Tornado. "He wanted to know if I could do a bit of rough-and-tumble fighting. I told him I could, sir, but I preferred the regular thing in a twenty-four-foot ring. He said he might use that, too; but what he wanted most was rough-and-tumble. Well, it seems the pay is pretty good, Mr. Trask, so I said I'd go around to his place and consider it. He asked me if I could act and—well, I said I could."

"You can. Don't worry," Trask assured him.

"So I went around, and there I met some of the other actors."

Sidney stifled a smile.

"It seems," continued Keeler confidentially, "that the play we're all in has something to do with a villain who tries to marry an heiress. There's a hero in it, of course. Oh, no, sir; I'm not him. And the young heiress has a lady's maid, and the lady's maid has a friend. That's what I am. In the fourth reel I have the job of licking the villain. Now, the young lady who plays the maid—"

"Ah! Now, we're coming to it," said Trask.

"Yes, sir. Well, this young lady is just a beginner. But she's a most excellent young lady, Mr. Trask; and a very pretty one, too. Well, after she saw me and the villain at the first rehearsal she sort of took an interest in me, and she wanted to know if I was a regular professional. And I said I was. In fact, sir—and this is just between the three of us—"

"Of course," nodded Trask.

"I said I was John Drew's understudy."

Trask leaned back in his chair and laughed weakly.

"Easy, sir, please!" pleaded Keeler. "You know how it is with me. It just comes out, with no planning ahead. Well, that interested her and she wanted to know all about the plays I'd been in. So I told her. I'm afraid I got one of them wrong, too. Did he ever play in 'The Two Orphans'? No? Well, I'll manage to fix it somehow. But the main point is, she's interested."

"Keeler," said Trask severely, "what is your name now?"

The Tennessee Tornado looked cautiously about him, leaned over and whispered:

"'Cyril Montgomery'."

Sidney sat on the stringpiece and hid her face.

"Well, that's about as far as it's got, sir," said Keeler, with a reproachful look at Mrs. Trask. "But she's a very attractive young lady and there's no telling what may happen, sir. I think I'm going to like the business. They're going to give me and the villain about eighty feet of film, sir. And I come in at two other places, beside."

Trask and his wife ventured to look at each other, but could not maintain the scrutiny.

"So, if you don't mind, sir," added Keeler, "I'll be leaving you now. We've a rehearsal in half an hour."

"Well, good-by, Keeler. Good luck and God bless you!"

"Thank you, sir," mumbled the Tennessee Tornado, as he took both of Trask's hands in his. "And I wish

you much happiness, Miss—Mrs. Trask."

She shook hands with him warmly.

There was a suggestion of moisture in Keeler's eyes as he turned to go. He wiped it away hastily.

"I'll never forget either of you!" he exclaimed with unwonted vehemence, as he strode down the wharf.

They watched the departing figure of "Cyril Montgomery" until it was lost in the crowd. Sidney looked at her husband, but without smiling.

"Poor Keeler!" she said softly. "I like him. And he's not really a hypocrite—at heart."

"He's a good scout," mused Trask. "Better than a lot."

A steward from the ship approached and stood behind Trask's chair.

"Ready to go aboard, sir?"

Trask nodded.

"Which cabin?"

Trask looked at his wife.

"Well, which?" she asked, watching his face.

"The second!"

Sidney confirmed it with a triumphant nod.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BUT NOT THE END.

"THE last time I saw the old statue," remarked Trask, as he gazed fondly upon the Goddess with her uplifted arm, "I was sitting in the wheel chair, on the deck above, trying to look the part."

"And now you look the part, but you're still on your feet," said Sidney, as she steadied him against the rail.

The Gulf Stream was proceeding at half speed up the bay. It had been almost a mill-pond voyage from Galveston, with a coddled convalescent, a small but very important bride and a black-and-white kitten as the chief focus of interest aboard. Even Captain Blodgett had visited them, down where the weather instruments still ticked and registered things, and

where Sidney watched vigilantly— even more vigilantly than Keeler— over the man who began as an amateur invalid and became a professional.

Trask's wife, in her whimsical and authoritative way, had taken him wholly into her charge. She would suffer no volunteering of service among the passengers of sympathetic bent. This man belonged to her, hers was the task of caring for him. She did not shirk it; she reveled in her new-found duties. She watched over him as a mother over a little child.

Sometimes he had spoken of the future. How was he to care for her, a jobless invalid, with nothing in the world but fifteen hundred dollars? Always, when he touched upon it, she would close his lips with her small palm and shake her head.

"That's another adventure," she told him. "We haven't reached it yet. Just at present, I'm taking care of *you*."

Three things happened at the wharf, after a pair of tugs had nosed the Gulf Stream into her slip. The first was the delivery of a telegram to Trask "and wife." It was dated Galveston.

O. K. this time, sir. I confessed, but I'm accepted, anyhow. Now a regular actor. California next week. Married tomorrow.

KEELER.

"Dear old Keeler!" said Sidney impulsively.

The second happening that concerned Trask and his wife was the appearance of Spencer Trumbull. He was the same old Trumbull, pale, almost anemic, with a general aspect of New York weariness about him. He bowed profoundly to Sidney when Trask introduced them, and stared with well-bred curiosity.

"Well, you got me into a fine mess of trouble, Bill," he said. "If you'd stuck to the first cabin it would have been all right. But when you began to cavort all over the ship and wound

up by being lost at sea, you finished me. I had to come out of the woods and own up to the governor, then."

"Did he say much?"

"It wasn't what he said; it was what he did. He's put me to work!"

"You!"

"There's no need to laugh about it," growled Trumbull. "I'm working, I tell you. The old man and Dr. Van Norden decided I didn't need a sea voyage, after all. They thought I'd get enough aid sitting behind a pigeon-hole in a bank."

"And the girl—up in the Adirondacks?"

"That's the only decent part of it. She promised, if I worked for a year, to give me an even break with Reddy Underwood. But think of working for a year!"

Sidney Trask looked at him with stern severity.

"You ought to be glad!" she exclaimed. "Why, Billy here is going to work for a hundred years—just for me!"

"But he's *got* you," observed Trumbull ruefully.

"Perhaps," she mused. "But sometimes I think I've got him."

The third event was the arrival aboard of a small man with weak eyes, that peered through thick lenses in a dazed sort of fashion. He appeared to be wandering aimlessly when Sidney spied him. In another instant she had darted across the deck and thrown her arms about him.

"Father!"

"Eh? Oh—yes. Why, Sidney, my dear!"

"How's mother?"

"Very well; very well, indeed. And the instruments, my dear? You kept the records going?"

"Every day but two," she assured him. "And two very nice old ladies looked after them then. We have a wonderful barometer record."

Professor Sands rubbed his hands and became animated.

"But please step over this way," said

Sidney, taking him by the arm. "I want you to meet somebody."

The professor suffered himself to be led to where Trask was standing, watching them.

"This is Billy," said Sidney.

The professor stared up into the face of the invalid, evidently nonplussed.

"Billy?" he repeated, vaguely.

"Your son-in-law, you great goose!"

"Son-in-law? Hum! Why—"

"But I telegraphed you from Galveston, father!"

Professor Sands scratched his nose and pondered.

"Bless me! So you did, my dear. I'd forgotten. You'll pardon me, Mr.—er—what's the name, Sidney?"

"Trask," she said with a sigh and a patient shake of her head.

"Certainly, of course. You'll excuse me, Mr. Travis, but I'm a bit absent-minded now and then. I'm happy to know you, sir."

"Not Travis—*Trask!*" exclaimed Sidney desperately. "It's his name and it's *mine*. Oh, please try to remember it, father!"

"Trask," repeated the professor with precision. "I'll write it down. It's apt to slip from me again; I forget my own, sometimes."

He scrutinized his son-in-law with new interest.

"You're going to be very good to my little girl, of course," he said with a sudden air of authority.

"All my life," answered Trask gravely.

"Certainly," nodded the professor confidently. "I might have known that. You see, while I know nothing whatever about you, sir, I know my daughter. If she accepted you, it means that the family accepts you. It means that you've passed a one-hundred-per-cent. examination. My daughter doesn't make mistakes."

Trask looked down at the little man and liked him. There was a sturdiness in him that commanded respect; not a physical sturdiness, but rather one of character. For all his spectacles and

his absent-minded ways, the professor was a *man*.

"Well, I think we're ready to go home and see mother," said Sidney, as she linked her arms within those of her father and Trask.

"Yes," said the professor. "Er—my wife will want to see you, Mr. Thatcher."

"Father! You must positively learn to say 'Trask.' Please remember that it belongs to me, now. Meantime, I wish you'd call him 'Billy.' You may as well begin."

"Certainly, of course. Come along, Billy."

Trask's wife was perched on the arm of his chair, her face close to his as she bent over the newspaper.

"Another bottle?" she asked in an awed voice.

"From Cuba," nodded Trask.

"Which one?"

"The message reads:

"Longitude, north, 210; latitude, west, 470. Aboard the derelict Mehetabel—"

"I gave it several names," commented Sidney. "Go on."

"—Marooned somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico with Billy Trask and a kitten. I love both of them. Don't rescue unless absolutely necessary."

Sidney clapped her hands and laughed.

"Didn't I tell you it was exciting to send bottle messages!" she exclaimed.

"Exciting? Oh, yes. I suppose this means another string of reporters at the doorbell."

"Let them come. I think it's fun!"

"But it'll be the third time," protested Trask. "And every bottle means a fresh story. You remember the first one—the one that was picked up by a fisherman off Florida? Why, they had a Coast Guard cutter out for three days before they woke up to the fact that it had been written by you, and that you were safe home."

Sidney smiled reminiscently.

"It did make a lot of trouble for them," she confessed.

"And then the second one," he went on. "The one with all that stuff about how I'd been saved from the jaws of a dragon, only to be cast away on a sort of a Flying Dutchman. Why, Sidney, we never heard the last of that for over a week!"

"Well, weren't you glad to be saved from the dragon?"

"I didn't need any saving."

"Well, then, from the goddess?"

"If you say that again I'll spank you—Mrs. Trask."

"I'll be good," she promised in a small voice.

"I refuse to see any more reporters," he declared. "After this the bottle department is in your sole charge. Every time they come for interviews, I'm going to duck. And I refuse to be photographed any more."

"I don't think you're properly enthusiastic," she said, frowning in her quaintly individual way.

"I am—over you. But think of spending the rest of your life waiting for bottles to turn up!" he said tragically.

Sidney chuckled and stroked his hair fondly.

"Why, the first thing you know, the rag and bottle men 'll be regular callers at the house," he went on.

"Well, I don't see how we're going to stop it," she mused. "Unless we hire a ship and go hunting for them. And some of them may be more than half way round the world by now. We wouldn't know where to look. And—"

She gasped and looked at him in alarm.

"Billy!" she cried.

"Well, dear?"

"There's just one—only one—bottle that I'd die if they ever found! I'd forgotten it until just now."

"What did it say?"

Sidney gazed at him speculatively and shook her head.

"I don't think I'll tell you—not now, at any rate. But, oh Billy! It simply *mustn't* be found!"

"Is—it is any worse than this one?" he asked, pointing to the paragraph in the paper.

She hid her face against his shoulder for a minute. Then she murmured in a muffled voice:

"It was addressed to our grandchildren."

Trask pulled her down into his lap and hugged her.

There was a sudden tinkling of a doorbell.

"Reporters," he said. "I'm getting to know the ring. Run along and see them. If you will cast bread upon the waters, the least you can do is to take it in at the front door when they come to deliver it."

"Coward!" she exclaimed, struggling out of his arms. "I won't let you squirm out of it. Come! This isn't a very terrible bottle. And they'll want to see the kitten, too. Where is it?"

In most stories this would be the logical end, for when young people are married and happy there is nothing more to be said. They are just happy, that's all; and happiness is everything. But in the case of this story, the real end cannot be written for years and years—perhaps centuries. There are so many bottles, you see—bottles that are afloat in almost every part of the world, bottles stranded on sandy beaches in far away lands, bottles waiting to be picked up amid the flotsam of strange seas. And, until the last bottle is recovered, why there never can be an end to Sidney Sands's Adventure.

A far-seeing young person, you may well say; for how many of us can provide an annuity of adventure for our old age?

When you read in your paper that the very last bottle has been found, then, and then only, will this be—

(The end.)

The Color of Red

by Genevieve Wimsatt



"I WANT Burke's livery stable. . . . Yes, this is Mr. Dix. . . . Burke, I want to hire a conservative, peace loving old horse, with repose of manner and no ambition. . . . All out but Blanco? Well, what's the matter with Blanco? . . . Oh, I don't mind that—in fact, his pale complexion recommends him to me, for a white horse doesn't shed dark hairs over a lady's light frock. . . . No, I don't want the run-about this time, but that new top-buggy. . . . Have it here in five minutes? Good!"

Dicky Dix beamed on his unresponsive bedroom as he snapped the receiver on the hook and turned from the telephone. In half an hour he would be far away from the Hotel Jefferson, where he had spent three of the shortest weeks on record, driving along country lanes with the sunniest, funniest, honey-est little lady-love in Maryland; and when he came to the hollow where the scent of crimson clover was sweetest he would ask Polly to put the kettle on for him through life; and she would answer, "Ye-ye-yes," and then he and Polly would build bungalows in the air, and make plans to be married immediately on his return from the ends of the earth—California—whither the business of an

unfeeling firm was calling him, and would detain him for two long months.

Dicky Dix smiled very nicely as he surveyed the prospect for the afternoon and visualized one joyous detail after another.

"I hope to Heaven she'll like these new chocolates," he ejaculated piously, slipping a begilded box into his pocket and pausing for a moment before the mirror to settle a purple tie above a sulphur-yellow shirt. Then slamming the door of his room with a jubilant bang, he took the stairs two steps at a bound and was out of the hotel before the elevator boy had left the post.

At the curb punctual Blanco and the top-buggy awaited him, and as Dicky allowed no grass to grow under the white horse's hoofs on the spurt down Main Street, it was not ten minutes later when he drew up at Polly's gate. His heart fox-trotted for joy as he saw Polly waiting for him under the rambler roses that canopied the porch.

"You can take your own time for the rest of the day, Blanco, old boy," promised Dicky, alighting and hurrying up the path to escort Polly to the buggy.

At that moment from around the corner loitered a wide-awake youngster with the bright, observant air of a robin. At sight of Blanco he bestowed a kiss on his left thumb, smote the kiss into the palm of his right hand, and

hammered it home with his fist; then his restless glance lighted on Polly, and he snickered loudly.

"Sorrel, sorrel, sorrel hair! Gingerbread!" he shrilled toward the pair coming down the path.

Dicky regarded the defamer in surprise.

"Why, kid, that's not a sorrel horse," he corrected. "And it doesn't look much like the gingerbread horses I used to know in my youth, for *they* were always represented as on the go."

"Bah! Ain't talkin' about yer old white nag—but when ye sees one ye always sees t'other!" the youth rejoined cryptically; and retreated rapidly, but in good order.

"That kid's loony," Dicky confided to Polly as he helped her into the buggy and tucked the lap-robe around her. "Too bad—he looked like a bright kid, too."

But insignificant as the incident of the loony lad had been, it seemed to Dicky to have somehow altered Polly's attitude toward him. As he guided the white horse along the fragrant country roads he thought he could catch a gleam of something like smouldering flame in Polly's eyes, and he missed the dimple in her cheek that usually came out and played for him alone. It was the last drive together for two months, and something would have to be done quickly.

Dicky thrust his hand into his coat pocket and brought out the gilded box. "They are called, 'Red Tops'," he volunteered cheerily as he lifted the lid and displayed twin rows of plump chocolates, each crowned with a luscious Maraschino cherry. "'Red Tops,' you know, Polly. I thought of you when I saw them advertised in the confectioner's window."

"Indud-deed," said Polly coldly. "I dud-dud-don't think I cuk-care for any."

Dicky was aghast; as the rattle to the rattlesnake's wrath so was Polly stuttering to her huffs. Of course she was likely to trip over at any time, but

when she stumbled on *d*, and *k*, and *b*, it portended battle, murder, and sudden death.

Dicky heeded the warning, and was silent; a rare ray of intuition admonished him to patience, and he determined to say nothing, but to wait for the magic of the spring day to melt Polly's unaccountable mood.

But Polly seemed invulnerable to the charm of the day, and gradually the silence congealed and became icy. Miserably Dicky slapped the reins over Blanco's back and goaded him to a furious amble; dolefully, in lieu of speech, he hummed softly to himself.

"Oh, my love is like a red, red rose," he finally dared aloud.

Upon Polly the effect of the words was instantaneous.

"Stop this bub-bub-buggy, and lul-let me out," she demanded. "I'd rather walk home than be the sus-subject of any more of your mid-Victorian jokes! I hate you—*huh-huh-hate* you!"

"Oh, Polly, what on earth is the matter?" pleaded Dicky. "What have I done to make you so angry? I thought you liked to drive."

"You've done enough," Polly snapped. "Stop this dud-dud-detestable white nightmare, and lul-let me out of this buggy!"

"Of course I'll let you out if you really wish it, Polly," Dicky promised soothingly. "Don't agitate yourself, dear. There must be some misunderstanding—we'll stop at the foot of this hill and talk it over."

"Stop! Stop!" screamed Polly with suddenly increased vehemence, springing to her feet, and pointing down the road. "Sus-see that flag? *Stop! Turn arur-arur-around!*"

Dicky looked where Polly's finger pointed, and saw leaning across the road at a little distance a long pole from which fluttered a gay banner, and beneath the banner a placard that had become detached from its moorings at one end and now spun merrily in the wind, making it indecipherable.

A light of understanding flashed in his eyes.

"Oh, I see! It's a Suffrage banner," he announced, "and you want to tear it down because you are an Anti! I heard the Staunton League was holding a convention in town to-day. Extensive decoration scheme to hang a flag and a 'Votes for Women' placard 'way out here! Whoa, Blanco! Did the flapping thing scare you—"

"It *isn't* a Suffrage fuf-flag!" screamed Polly in a panic. Snatching the reins she made a frantic effort to turn the buggy in the narrow road. "It isn't yu-yu-yellow, it's rur-rur—"

BOOM!

An explosion like thunder shook the road; a mist of dust obscured the view, and a shower of blasted stone descended. Blanco promptly jammed the wheels of the top-buggy between two trees by the roadside and galloped for home.

"Red!" finished Polly five minutes later when she opened her eyes in Dicky's arms. For a moment she stared bewildered at the empty buggy twenty yards away; then she struggled from Dicky's embrace, and sitting bolt upright on the dusty grass glared at him indignantly.

"Why dud-did you tut-try to kuk-kill me?" she demanded furiously.

"Oh, Polly, it was an accident!" Dicky explained. "They must have been working on the road beyond that turn, and set off a blast of dynamite just as we came up. But oh, Polly—"

"Don't 'Polly' me," raged the dusty and disheveled lady, rubbing a rising bump on her forehead and winking back the tears. "I *hate* a man who lul-loses his temper and tut-tut-tries to kuk-kill the gug-gug- the girl he pretends to—well, to lul-lul-like!"

"Polly, you are still stunned, you don't understand," Dicky urged fervently. "There was an explosion down the road; and Blanco ran away and wrecked the buggy and threw us out. But why do you think I tried to kill you? I love you."

"Yes, you love me!" derided Polly. "For hours you have done nothing but make stupid jokes about me—you tut-took me driving behind a white horse, and let fresh little boys make fun of me; and you brought me candies called 'Red Tops' and thought you were being funny, and you sang 'My love is like a red, red rose.' And then you dud-dud-drove right past that danger-signal—you dud-disregarded the rur-rur-rur-rur-red flag—"

"Was that a *red* flag?" Dicky gasped. "I thought it was the Suffragists' yellow banner! And that dangling placard must have said 'Danger!' instead of 'Votes for Women'! Why didn't you tell me it was a *red* flag, Polly?"

"Didn't I try to? And couldn't you see for yourself, *murderer*?"

"Oh, don't you know?" cried Dicky. "Why, Polly, I am totally color-blind!"

"Oh!" said Polly. "Oh!" She pondered for a long moment. Then:

"And truly, don't you know the cucumber color of my hair, Dicky?" she asked.

"Why, your hair is a glorious yellow, Polly, and your eyes are blue—blue like the sky," he answered confidently.

"My eyes are 'blue' lul-like chestnuts, Dicky; and as for my hair, it's about as yellow as that dud-danger-signal!"

"You mean it's red?" Dicky gasped. "So that's why you didn't like Blanco? And the boy who shouted 'Sorrel! Gingerbread!' meant *you*? 'When you see one you always see the other!' A white horse and a red-headed girl, of course! Why didn't I guess it? I'd like to thrash that boy! And, oh, those cursed chocolates! Why, Polly, it's a wonder you didn't kill me if you thought I was making stale old jokes like that about you!"

Before Polly had adjusted her emotions to the facts of the case as clarified by the new revelation she found herself drawn again into Dicky's arms.

"Dud-dud-dud—" said Polly.

"Yes, darling, I'll do it again," Dicky assured her readily, continuing to cover her with kisses.

"Don't!" exploded Polly, wriggling free. "Oh, just from the color of your ties and shirts I might have guessed there was something the matter with your eyes! Now I know you have been loving me under a misapprehension all the time! You thought my hair was yellow, and it's red—the reddest hair in the world! You have been deceived about me, Dicky. And now that you know about it you'll imagine I have a tut-temper, a rur-regular, rur-rur-red-haired tut-temper, and you

wuw-won't love me any more! Nobody lul-lul-loves a red-head!"

"Oh, yes, somebody does!" Dicky disputed joyously. "I love you—oh, I love you!"

"Even with this lump on my forehead?" Polly questioned, leaning her coppery head against the sulphur-yellow shirt.

"Yes; and even with that scratch on your nose," Dicky avowed.

Polly giggled into the purple tie. "Then they must be right when they say that love is blind."

"Not blind," Dicky corrected, "only color-blind!"



YE POET'S BRIDE

BY GRACE G. BOSTWICK

AN ode incased her dainty feet,
 And clung as though it liked the job.
 About her body, slim and neat,
 Three sonnets joined a suffrage sob;
 While round her neck a lyric hung
 In fond caress, and on her head
 A villanelle its changes sprung
 In convolutions wildly spread.
 Her veil, a rondel light as air;
 Crisp quatrains gently clasped her waist,
 With humor keen and beauty rare
 They sung the virtues they embraced.
 Her fingers sported jingles light,
 Her hands were thrust in songs of spring,
 While at her throat a ballad bright
 The joys of wedded bliss did sing.
 Her lingerie—but hush, that fluff
 Is not for eyes profane to view:
 'Twas lullabies and nursery stuff
 Inspired by dreams—you've had them, too;
 From head to foot that wife of mine
 Was garbed in fancy's choicest flow
 Of rhapsody, wrought with design
 To keep her happy heart aglow
 As, all dolled up, she went to call
 Upon relations, one and all—
 How did I do it? Love, the elf,
 Just calmly wove the things himself!

This Woman to This Man

by C.N. and A.M. Williamson

Authors of "A Soldier of the Legion," "The Lightning Conductor," "The Shop Girl," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

ANNESLEY GRAYLE, companion to Mrs. Ellsworth, a selfish old hypochondriac, in London, becoming desperate at her slavery, answers an advertisement in a matrimonial paper, and meets a charming young man who calls himself Nelson Smith, though he admits that it is not his own name. He marries her next day. Even at the wedding she does not learn her husband's real name. She meets the Countess de Santiago, an old-time friend of her husband's. Him she calls "Knight." At Sidmouth, where they go for their honeymoon, Knight engineers an introduction to the Annesley-Setons, poor but titled cousins of his wife's. Through them the Smiths break into society and introduce the countess, who is a remarkable clairvoyant. A number of startling and mysterious jewel robberies occur, marring the season. Ruthven Smith, agent for Van Vreck & Co., big New York jewelers, is a victim. The countess, becoming jealous of Annesley, sends an anonymous letter to Ruthven Smith, hinting that Annesley Smith has the Malindore blue diamond, stolen from the Van Vrecks; and contrives to have him invited to an Easter party given by the Nelson Smiths. Annesley, who has worn a blue diamond ring given her by Knight around her neck on a chain, becomes alarmed, and manages to throw Ruthven Smith off the scent. Then Knight confesses to her that he is really Michael Donaldson, a sort of clever masterthief, revenging himself on the world for the woes of his parents. Annesley turns from him with loathing, her love in ruins. To save appearances, he suggests that they go to America before parting; he to his ranch in Texas which he has obtained honestly, and she to Los Angeles. By force of circumstances they are obliged to travel together to Albuquerque, where they are to part. At the last moment Knight asks if she won't drift with him with a wall between them—go on to the ranch with him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ANNIVERSARY.



THE girl felt as if some great flood were sweeping her off her feet. She clutched mechanically at anything in her way to save herself. Knight was there. He stood between her and desolation; but if he had spoken then—if he had said he wanted her, and begged her to stay, she would have chosen desolation.

Instead, he was silent, his eyes not on her, but on the desert.

"You—swear you will let me live my own life?" she faltered.

"I swear I will let you live your own life."

He repeated her words, as he had repeated the words of the clergyman who had, according to the law of God, given this woman to this man.

The train was stopping.

Then Annesley knew that she could not go on alone.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for April 15.

"I will try—Texas," she said in final decision.

Las Cruces Ranch was named, not after the New Mexico town thirty or forty miles away, but in honor of the Holy Crosses which had rested on the land one night, centuries ago, while on a sacred pilgrimage.

It was a lonely ranch, as far from El Paso in Texas as it was from the namesake town in New Mexico. Even the nearest village, a huddled collection of low adobe houses and wooden shacks on the Rio Grande ("Furious River," as the Indians called it), was ten miles distant. Only the river was near, as the word "near" is used in that land of vast spaces. At night, if a great wind blew, Annesley fancied she could hear the voice of the rushing water.

When she first saw the place where she had bound herself to live, her heart sank. It seemed that she would not be able to support the desolation and the loneliness; for it would be desperately lonely to live there, lacking the companionship of some one dearly loved. But afterwards—afterwards she could no more analyze her feeling for the country than for the man who had brought her to it.

Lonely as she was, she was never homesick. Indeed, she had no home to long for, no one whose love called her heart back to the old world. And she was glad that there were no neighbors to come and see her, to ask her "Mrs. Donaldson" and perhaps ask questions about England.

She had no one except the Mexican servant-woman and the cowboys who stayed on with the new rancher when the old one went away.

Knight had suggested that she should wait in El Paso until he had seen whether the house was habitable for her, and had made it so, if it were not already. But Annesley had chosen to begin her new life without delay, for she was in a mood where hardships seemed of no importance. It was only

when she had to face them in their sordid nakedness that she shrank a little.

Yet, after all, what did it matter? If she had stepped into the most luxurious surroundings she would have been no less unhappy.

The low house was of adobe, plastered white, but stained and battered where the walls were not hidden by rank-growing creepers, convolvulus and madeira vines. If the girl had read its description in some book—the veranda, formed by the steep-sloping roof of the one-story building; the patio, walled mysteriously in with a high, flower-draped barrier; the long windows with green shutters—she would have imagined it to be picturesque.

But it was not picturesque. It was only shabby and uninviting; at least that was her impression when she arrived, toward evening, after a long, jolting drive in a hired motor-car.

The paintless wooden balustrade and flooring of the veranda were broken. So also were the faded green shutters. The patio was but a little square of dust and stringy grass. A few dilapidated chairs stood about, home-made looking chairs with concave seats of worn cowskin.

Inside the house there was little furniture, and what there was struck Annesley as hideous. Nothing was whole. Everything was falling to pieces. Illustrations cut out of newspapers were pasted on the dirty, whitewashed walls.

The slatternly servant, who could speak only "Mex," had got no supper ready. Knight would let Annesley do nothing, but he deftly helped the woman to fry some eggs and make coffee. He tried to find dishes which were not cracked or broken, and could not.

If he and Annesley had loved each other, or had even been good friends, they would have laughed and enjoyed the adventure. But Annesley had no heart for laughter. She could only smile a frozen, polite little smile, and say that it "did not matter. Every-

thing would do very well." She would soon get used to the place, and learn how to get along.

When she had to speak to Knight she called him "you." There was no other name which she could bear to use. He had had too many names in the past!

As time went on, however, the girl surprised herself by not being able to hate her home. She found mysteriously lovely colors in the yellow-gray desert; shadows blue as lupines and purple as Russian violets; high lights of shimmering, pale gold.

Spanish bayonets, straight and sharp as enchanted swords which had magically flowered, lilled the desert stretches, and there were strange red blossoms like drops of blood clinging to the points of long daggers. Bird of Paradise plants were there, too, well named for their plummy splendor of crimson, white and yellow; and as the spring advanced the China trees brought memories of English lilacs.

The air was sweet with the scent of locust blossoms, and along the clear horizon fantastically formed mountains seemed to float like changing cloud-shapes.

The cattle, which Knight had bought from the departing rancher, had their corrals and scanty pastures far from the house, but the cowboys' quarters were not far off, and Annesley never tired of seeing them mount and ride their slim, nervous horses.

This fact they got to know, and performed incredible antics to excite her admiration. They thought her beautiful, and wondered if she had lost some one whom she loved, that she should always look so cold and sad.

These men, though she seldom spoke to any, were a comfort to Annesley. Without their shouts and rough jokes and laughter the place would have been gloomy as a grave.

There was a colony of prairie dogs which she could visit by taking a long walk, and they, too, were comforting. It was Knight who told her of the crea-

tures and where to seek them; but he did not show her the way.

If things had been well between them, the man's anxiety to please her would have been adorable to Annesley. As soon as he saw the deficiencies of the house, he went himself to El Paso to choose furniture and pretty simple chintses, old-fashioned china and delicate glass, bedroom and table damask. He ordered books also, and subscribed for magazines and papers.

Returning, he said nothing of what he had done, for he hoped that the surprise might prick the girl to interest, rousing her from the lethargy which had settled over her personality like a fog. But her gratitude was only perfunctory. She was always polite, but the pretty things seemed to give her no real delight.

Knight had to realize that she was one of those people who, when inwardly unhappy, are almost incapable of feeling small joys. Such pleasures as she had were all found in getting away from him as far as possible.

She practically lived out of doors in the summer time, always taking pains to go where he would not pass on his rounds of the ranch; and even after the sitting-room had been made "livable" with the new carpet laid by Knight and the chints curtains he put up with his own hands, she fled to her room as if for sanctuary.

Knight's search for capable servants was vain until he picked up a Chinaman from over the Mexican border, illegal but valuable as a household asset. Under the new régime there was good food, and Annesley had no work save the hopeless task of finding happiness.

It was easy to see from the white, set look of her face as the monotonous months went on that she was no nearer to accomplishing that task than on the day of her arrival. Nothing that Knight could do for her made any difference. When an upright cottage piano made its appearance one day, the girl seemed distressed rather than pleased.

"You shouldn't spend so much money on me," she said in the gentle, weary way that was becoming habitual.

"It's the 'good fund' money," Knight explained, hastily and almost humbly. "It's growing, you know. I've struck some fine investments. And I'm going to do well with this ranch. We don't need to economize. I thought you'd enjoy a piano."

"Thank you. You're very kind," she answered, as if he had been a stranger. "But I'm out of practice. I hardly feel energy to take it up again."

His hopes of what Texas might do for her died slowly; and even when their fire had died under cooling ashes, his silent, unobtrusive care for her comfort never relaxed.

Only the deepest love—such love as can remake a man's whole nature—could have been strong enough to bear the strain.

But Annesley, blinded by the pain which never ceased to ache, did not see that it was possible for such a nature to change. She who had believed so passionately in her hero of romance was stripped of all belief in him, as a young tree in blossom is stripped of its delicate bloom by an icy wind. Not believing in him, neither did she believe in his love.

She thought that he was sorry for her, that he was grateful for what she had done to help him; that perhaps for the time being he intended to "turn over a new leaf," not really for her sake, but because he had been in very great danger of being found out.

Scornfully she told herself that this pretense at ranching was just one of the many adventures dotted along his career; one act in the melodrama of which he delighted to be the leading actor. His own love of luxury and charming surroundings was enough to account for the improvements he hastened to make at the ranchhouse.

Very anxiously she put away the thought that all he did was for her. She did not wish to accept it. She did not want the obligation of gratitude.

It even seemed puerile to her that he should attempt to make up for spoiling her life by giving her a few easy chairs and pictures and a Chinese cook.

"He likes the things himself and can't live without them," she insisted. And it was to show him that he could not atone in such childish ways that she lived out of doors or hid in her own room.

At first she invariably locked the door of that room when she entered, thinking of it defiantly as her fortress which must be defended against the enemy. But when weeks grew into months and the enemy never attacked the fortress her vigilance relaxed. She forgot to lock the door.

Spring and summer passed. Autumn and then winter came. Knight was a good deal away, for he had bought an interest in a newly opened copper mine in the Organ mountains, and was keenly interested in the development which might mean fortune. At night, however, he always came back in the second-hand motor car which he had got at a bargain price in El Paso and drove himself.

Annesley never failed to hear him return, though she gave no sign. And sometimes she would peep through the slats of her green shutters on one side of the patio to the windows of his bedroom and "office," which were opposite. It was seldom that his light did not burn very late, and Annesley went to bed thinking hard thoughts of him, asking herself what schemes of new adventures he might be plotting for the day when he should tire of the ranch.

Often she wondered that her life was not more hateful to her than it was, for somehow it was not hateful. Texas, with its vast spaces and blowing gusts of ozone, had begun to mean more for her than her cold reserve had let Knight guess, more than she herself could understand.

On Christmas morning, when she opened her bedroom door, she almost

stumbled over a covered Mexican basket of woven colored straws. Something inside it moved and sighed.

She stooped, lifted the cover, and saw, curled up on a bit of red blanket, a miniature Chihuahua dog. It had a body as slight and as shivering as a tendril of grapevine; a tiny pointed face, with a high forehead and immense, almost human eyes.

At sight of her a thread of tail wagged, and Annesley felt a warm impulse of affection towards the little creature. Of course it was a present from Knight, though there was no word to tell her so; and if the dog had not looked at her with an offer of all its love and self she would perhaps have refused to accept it rather than encourage him in the giving of gifts.

But after that look she could not let the little animal go. Its possession made life warmer; and it was good to see it lying in front of her open fire of mesquite roots.

She had no Christmas gift for Knight.

He had made, soon after their coming to the ranch, a cactus fence round the house enclosure; and seeing the dry ugliness of the long, straight sticks placed close together, Annesley disliked and wondered at it. At last she questioned Knight, and said impatiently that the bristly barrier was an eyesore. She wished it might be taken down.

"Wait till spring," he answered. "It isn't a barrier; it's an allegory. Maybe when you see what happens you'll understand. Maybe you won't. It all depends on your own feelings then."

Annesley said no more, but she did not forget. She thought, if her understanding of the allegory meant any change of feeling which the man might still be looking for in her, then she would never understand. She hated to look at the line of stark, naked sticks, but they, and the "allegory" they represented, constantly recurred to her mind.

One day in spring she noticed that

the sticks looked less dry. Knoblike buds had broken out upon them, the first sign she had had that they were living things. It happened to be Easter eve, and she was very restless, full of strange thoughts as the yellow-flowering greasewood bushes were full of rushing sap.

A year ago that night her love for her husband had died its sudden, tragic death. In the very act of forgiveness forgiveness had been killed.

Knight had gone off early that morning in his motor car, the poor car which was a pathetic contrast to the glories of last year in England. He had gone before she was up, and had mentioned to the Chinese cook that he might not be back until very late.

"That means after midnight," she told herself; and since she was free as air until then, she decided to take a long walk in the afternoon, as far as the river. It seemed that if she stayed in the house the thoughts of life as it might have been and life as it was would kill her, on this day of all other days.

"I wish I could die!" she said. "But not here. Somewhere a long way off from everyone—and from him."

As she passed the cactus fence the buds were very big.

Across the river, where the water flowed high and wide just then, lay Mexico. Annesley had never been there, though she could easily have gone, had she wished, from the ranch to El Paso, and from El Paso to the queer old historic town of Juarez. But she could not have gone without Knight, and there was no pleasure to be thought of any more in traveling with him.

Besides, there was trouble across the border now, and fierce fighting. There had even been some thievish raids made by Mexicans upon ranches along the river not many miles away; and that reminded her, Knight had remarked some weeks ago that she had better not go alone as far as the river bank.

"It isn't likely that anything would

happen by day," he said, "but you might be shot at from the other side."

Annesley was not afraid, and there was a faint stirring of pleasure in the thought that she was doing something against his wish on this anniversary. Deliberately, she sat alone by the river, waiting for the pageant of sunset to pass; and when she reached home the moon was up, a great white moon that turned the waving waste of pale, sparse grasses to a silver sea.

She had taken sandwiches and fruit with her, telling the cook that she would want no dinner when she came back. Far away in the cow-punchers' quarters there was music, and she flung herself into a hammock on the veranda, to rest and listen.

There was a soft, yet cool wind from the south, bringing the fragrance of creosote blossoms, and it seemed to the girl that never had she seen such white floods of moonlight, not even that night a year ago at Valley House.

Even the sky was milk-white. There were no black shadows anywhere, only dove-gray ones, except under the veranda roof. Her hammock was screened away from the light by one dark shadow, like a straight-hung curtain. Save for the music coming from far off—music of a fiddle and men's voices—the silver-white world lay silent as if in an enchanted sleep.

Then suddenly something moved. A tall, dark figure was coming toward the veranda. It paused at the cactus fence.

Could it be Knight, home already and walking? No, it was a woman.

She came straight and fast and unhesitating to the veranda, and sat down on the steps.

Annesley raised herself on her elbow, and peered out of the concealing shadow. Who could the woman be? It was on the tip of her tongue to call out, "Who are you?" when a sudden lifting of the bent face under a drooping hat brought it into the searchlight of the moon.

The woman was the Countess de

Santiago, and the moon's radiance so lit up her big dark eyes that it seemed as if she were looking straight at Annesley in her hammock. The girl's heart gave a leap of some emotion very like fear, yet not fear. She did not stop to analyze it, but she knew that she wished ardently to escape from the woman; and an instant's reflection told her that she could not be seen if she kept perfectly still.

She began to think quickly, and her thoughts, confused at first, began to straighten themselves out, like threads disentangled from a puzzling knot.

The woman had walked up to the veranda with such unfaltering certainty that it seemed she must have been there before. Perhaps she had arrived while the mistress of the house was out, and had been walking about the place, to pass away the time.

"But she hasn't come to see me," the girl in the hammock thought. "She has come to see Knight. It is for him she is waiting."

Anger stirred in Annesley's heart, anger against Knight as well as against Magdalena de Santiago.

"Has he written and told her to come?" she asked herself. "Does she think she can stay in this house? No, she shall not! I won't have her here!"

She was half-minded to rise up abruptly and surprise the countess, as the countess had surprised her; to ask her why she had come, and to show by her manner that she was not welcome. But if she was here at Knight's invitation she would stay. There would be a scene, perhaps. The thought of it was revolting. Annesley lay still; and in the distance she heard the throbbing of a motor.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ALLEGORY.

ANNESLEY knew that Knight was in the habit of coming home that way, in order not to disturb her with the noise of the motor if she had

gone to bed. If he were bringing parcels from the little mining town he drove to the house, left the packets and ran the car to the shanty he had rigged up for a garage.

A few seconds later the small open automobile came into sight, and instantly Madalena sprang up, waving a long, dark veil she had snatched off her hat. She feared, no doubt, that the man in the car might take another direction and perhaps get into the house by some door she did not know before she could intercept him. From a little distance the tall figure standing on the veranda steps must have been silhouetted black against the white wall of the house, clearly to be seen from the advancing motor.

Quick as a bird in flight the car sped along the road, wheeled onto the stiff grass and drew up close to the veranda steps.

"Good heavens, Madalena!" Annesley heard her husband exclaim. "I thought it was my wife, and that something had gone wrong."

The surprise sharpening his tone did away with the doubt in the mind of the hidden listener. She had said to herself that the woman was here by appointment, and that this hour had been chosen because the meeting was to be secret.

"I wanted you to think so, and to come straight to this place," returned the once familiar voice in its correct English and partly foreign accent. "Don, I've traveled from San Francisco on purpose to see you. Do say you are glad!"

"I can't say it," the man answered. "I'm not glad. You tried to ruin me. And you tried in a coward's way. You struck me in the back. I hoped never to see you again. How did you find me here?"

"I've known for a long time that you were in Texas," said Madalena. "Lady Annesley-Seton and I kept up a correspondence for months after you—sent me away so cruelly, in such a hurry, believing hateful things against me,

though you had no proof. She wrote that 'Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Smith' would probably never come back to England to settle down, as she'd heard from a Mrs. Waldo in New York that they'd gone to live in Texas. She asked if I knew whether 'Nelson Smith' had lost his money. I forgot to answer that question when I answered the letter. But when she said 'Texas' I felt sure you must be somewhere in this part, for I remembered your telling me about the ranch that consumptive gambler left to you, on the Mexican frontier."

"What a fool I was to tell you!" Knight exclaimed roughly.

The words and his way of flinging them at her were like a box on the ear; and Annesley, lying in her hammock, heard with a thrill of pleasure. She was ashamed of the thrill, and ashamed (because suddenly awakened to the realization) that she was eavesdropping.

But it seemed to her an impossible thing that she should break in upon this talk and reveal her presence. She felt that she could not do it; though, hastily searching her conscience, she was not sure whether she clung to silence because it was the lesser of the two evils or merely because she longed with a terrible longing to know whether these two would again patch up their old partnership.

"If you knew why I have come all these miles to find you, maybe you would not be so hard to me," Madalena pleaded.

"That I can't tell until I do hear," said Knight dryly.

"I am going to explain," she tried to soothe him. "A great thing has happened to me. I can be rich and live easily all the rest of my years if I choose. But—I wanted to see you. I wanted it more than anything! What I decide depends upon you.

"I arrived in El Paso yesterday, and went to the Paso del Norte hotel, to inquire about you. I was almost certain you would have taken back your own

name, because I knew you used to be known by it when you stayed in Texas. I soon found out that I'd guessed right. I heard that you'd stopped at that hotel last year on the way to your ranch. I hired a motor car and came out here to-day; but I didn't let the man bring me to the house. I didn't want to dash up and advertise myself.

"I questioned some of your cowmen. They said you'd gone off for the day and would be getting back at night in your automobile, not earlier than ten o'clock and maybe a good deal later. So I simply waited. The car is a covered one, and I sat in it, a long way from the house, and out of sight behind a little rising of the land. Perhaps you call it a hill."

"We do," said Knight.

"I brought some food and wine. The chauffeur's there with the car now. He has plenty of cigarettes, and doesn't mind if we stay all night."

"I mind," Knight cut her short again. "You can't stay all night. The road's good enough with such a moon as this for you to get back to El Paso, all right. You'd better start so as to reach there before she sets."

"Wait till you hear why I've come before you advise me to hurry away!" the Countess protested. "There's no danger of our being disturbed here, is there? Where is your wife?"

"In bed and asleep, I trust."

"I'm glad. Then will you sit with me on the top of these steps in this heavenly moonlight and let me tell you some things that are important to me? Perhaps you may think they are important to you as well. Who knows?"

"I know. Nothing you can have to say will be important to me. And I won't sit down, thank you. I've been sitting in my car for hours. I prefer to stand."

"Very well. But—how hard you are! Even now, you won't believe I was innocent of that thing you accused me of doing?"

"I think now exactly what I thought then. You were not innocent, but

guilty. You were just a plain, ordinary sneak, Madalena, because you were jealous and spiteful."

"It is not true! Spiteful against *you*! It was never in my heart to lie. Jealous, perhaps. But that is not to say I wrote the letter you believe I wrote. You couldn't prove it. You didn't give me time even to try and prove I did not write the letter. You came and accused me brutally. You ordered me out of England, with threats. I obeyed because I was heartbroken, not because I was afraid."

"Why trouble to excuse yourself?" he asked. "It's not worth the time it takes. If you've come here to tell me anything in particular, tell it, and let's make an end of this."

"I have an offer of marriage from a millionaire," the Countess announced in a clear triumphant tone.

"Which no doubt you accepted, not to say snapped at."

"No. Not yet. I put him off, because I wanted to see you before I answered."

"You flatter me!" Knight laughed, but not pleasantly. "If you've come from San Francisco to get my advice on that subject, I can give it while you count three. Make sure of the unfortunate wretch before he changes his mind."

"Ah, if only I could think that your harshness comes from just a little—*ever* so little jealousy!" Madalena sighed. "He won't change his mind. There is no danger. He is old, very old, and I seem like a young girl to him. He adores me. He is on his knees!"

"Bad for his rheumatism!"

"He thinks I am the most wonderful creature who ever lived. I met him through my work. He came to me through a friend of his who told him about my crystal, and perhaps a little about me, too."

"You are still working the crystal?"

"But, of course! It has always given me the path to success. If I marry this man who is so rich I shall be able to rest."

"On your laurels—such as they are!"

"On his money, which is much. He can't live many years."

"You are an affectionate fiancée!"

"I am not a fiancée at all yet. Not till I give my answer. And that depends on you. . . . Oh, Don, surely, surely you must be sick of this life—this existence, for it is not life to such a one as you! I know you are angry with me, but you can't hate me really—though you may think you do. It is not possible for a man with blood in his body to hate a woman who loves him as I love you."

"I have tried to get over it. I have tried to hate you, as you have tried to hate me. At first I thought I was succeeding. But no, when the reaction came, I found that I cared more than ever. We were born for each other. It must be so, for without you I am only half alive. I haven't come here for your advice, Don, but to make you an offer. Oh, not of myself. I should not dare as you feel now. And it is not an offer from me only; it is from a great person who has something to give which is worth your taking, even if my love is not!"

"You've got in touch with *him*, have you?" Knight broke into the rushing torrent of her words as a man might take a plunge into a cataract.

"Yes, why not?" she answered. "I didn't seek him out. It was he who sought me."

"You don't know how to speak the truth, Madalena! You said you found me through Lady Annesley-Seton hearing from Mrs. Waldo, whereas you wrote to Paul Van Vreck."

"You do me injustice—as always! I *did* hear from Constance. Then I—I merely ventured to write and ask Mr. Van Vreck if he had kept up communication with you, and—"

"You said in your letter that you knew where I was, and gave him to understand that we were in touch with each other, or he would have let out nothing."

"He has written to you and told you

this!" She spoke breathlessly, as if the accusation had given her a fright.

"Ah, you give yourself away! No. I haven't heard from Van Vreck since I saw him in New York, and thought I convinced him that my working days for him were over. I simply guessed—knowing you—what you would do."

"I may have mentioned Texas," Madalena admitted. "I supposed he knew where you were. I couldn't have told him where, because I didn't know. But he wrote at once and suggested I should use my influence with you to reconsider your decision. Those were his very words?"

"How much has he paid you for coming here?"

"Nothing. As if I would take money for coming to *you*!"

"You have taken it for some very queer things, and probably will again if you don't settle down to private life with your millionaire. . . . It's no use, Madalena. Go back to San Francisco. Send in your bill to Van Vreck. Tell him there's nothing doing. And make up your mind to marriage."

"But Don, you haven't heard what he offers. It's a wonderful offer!"

"It can't be more than he offered me himself when I saw him in New York—"

"It is more. He says that particularly. That he raises the offer from last time. It is *three times* higher! Think what that means. And, oh, Don, it means life, real life, not stagnation! I would give up safety and a million to be in it with you—just as your partner again, your humble partner. I ask no more!"

"Here, on this bleak ranch, it is like death—a death of dullness. I know what you must be suffering, because you are obstinate, because you have taken a certain resolve, and are determined not to break it. You are afraid it will be weakness to break it. There can be no other reason."

"I have asked questions. I have learned things. I know *she* is cold as ice to you. If you stay on here you will

degenerate. You will become a clod. You will be like your own cow-punchers.

"Leave this hideous gray place. Leave that woman who treats you like her dog. Let the ranch be hers. Send her money—much money, if you like. You will have it to spare. She can divorce you, and you will be freed forever from the one great mistake you ever made. As for me—"

"As for you—be silent!" The command struck like a whiplash. "You are not worthy to speak of 'that woman,' as you call her—insolently call her. If I did what you deserve to have me do, I'd send you off without another word—just turn my back on you and let you go. But—" he drew in his breath sharply, then went on as if he had taken some tonic decision—"I want you to understand thoroughly why, if Paul Van Vreck offered me *all* his money, and you offered me the love of all the women on earth with your own, I shouldn't even be tempted to accept.

"It's because of 'that woman'—who is my wife. It may be true that she treats me like a dog, for she wouldn't be cruel to the meanest of curs. But I'd rather be her dog than any other woman's master or lover.

"Do you see now. It's come to that with me. I won her love and married her for my own advantages. I lost her love because she found me out—through you. Mild justice that, perhaps! But all the same, getting her for mine has been for my advantage. In a mighty different way from what I planned, but about ten thousand times greater. Though she's taken her love away from me, she's given me back my soul. Nothing can rob me of that again, so long as I run straight.

"And I tell you, Madalena de Santiago, this ranch, where I'm working out some kind of expiation and maybe redemption, *is* God's earth for me. *Now* do you understand?"

For an instant the woman was silent. Then she broke into loud sobbing, which she did not try to check.

"You are a fool, Don!" she wept. "A fool—a fool!"

"Maybe. But I'm not the devil's fool, as I used to be. Don't cry. You might be heard. Come now. It's time to go. We've said all we have to say to each other, except good-by—if that's not a mockery."

Madalena dried her tears, still sobbing under her breath.

"At least take me to the automobile," she said. "Don't send me off alone in the night. I am afraid."

"There's nothing to be afraid of," Knight answered, the flame of fierceness burnt down. "But I'll go with you, and put you on the way back to El Paso. Come along!"

As he spoke, he started, and Madalena was forced to go with him, forced to keep up somehow with his long strides, if she would not be left behind.

When they had gone, Annesley lay motionless, as though she were under a spell. The man's words to the other woman were the spell which bound her, listening as they repeated themselves in her mind. Again and again she heard, just as they had fallen from his lips.

His expiation—perhaps his redemption—here on his bit of "God's earth."
 . . . "It may be true that she treats me like a dog . . . But I'd rather be her dog than any other woman's master or lover." . . . And this was Easter eve, a year to the night since his martyrdom began!

Something seemed to seize her by the hand, and break the spell that had held her, something very strong although invisible. She sat up with a faint cry, as of one suddenly awakened from a dream, and slipped out of the hammock. There was a dim idea in her mind that she must go along the road where they had gone, so as to meet Knight on his way back. She did not know what she would say to him, or whether she could say anything at all; but the something which had taken her hand and snatched her out of the hammock dragged her on and on.

At first she obeyed the force blindly. "I must see him! I must see him!" The words spoke themselves over and over in her head. But when she had hurried out of the enclosure walled in by the cactus hedge, the brilliant moonlight seemed to pierce her brain, and make a cold, calm appeal to her reason.

"You can't tell him what you have heard," it said. "He would be humiliated. Or—" the thought was sharp as a gimlet—"what if he *saw* you, and knew you were there listening, What if he talked as he did, just for effect? He is so clever! He is subtle enough for that. And wouldn't it be more *like* the man he is, than to say what he said *sincerely*?"

She stopped, and was thankful not to see her husband returning. There was time for her to go back, if she hurried. And she must hurry! If he had seen her, and made that theatrical attempt to play on her feelings, he would laugh at his own success if she followed him. And if he had not seen her, and were in earnest, it would be best—indeed the *only* right way—not to let him guess that the scene on the veranda steps had had a witness.

Annesley turned to fly back faster than she had come. But passing the cactus hedge again her dress caught. It was as if the hedge sentimentally took hold of her.

She bent down to free the thin white material; and suddenly color blazed up to her eyes in the rain of silver moonlight. The buds had opened since she noticed them last.

No longer was the hedge a grim barricade of stiff, dark sticks. Each stalk had turned into a tall, straight flame of lambent rose. From a dead thing of dreary ugliness it had become a thing of living beauty.

Knight's allegory!

He had said perhaps she might understand when the time came; and perhaps not.

She *did* understand. But she had not faith to believe that the miracle

could repeat itself in life—her life and Knight's. She shut her eyes to the thought, and when she had freed her dress, ran very fast to the house

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE THREE WORDS.

KNIGHT was generally out of the house and far away long before Annesley was up in the morning, and often he did not come in till towards evening. She thought that on Easter day, however, he would perhaps not go far away. She half expected that he would linger about the house, or sit reading on the veranda; and she could not resist the temptation to put on one of the dresses he had liked in England.

It was a little *passé* and old-fashioned, but he would not know that. What he might remember was that she had worn it at Valley House.

And the wish to say something, as if incidentally, about the flaming miracle of the cactus hedge was as strong and persistent in her heart as the desire of a crocus to push through the earth to the sunshine on a spring morning. She did not know whether the wish would survive the meeting with her husband. She thought that would depend as much upon him, as upon her mood when they met.

But luncheon time came, and Knight did not appear.

Annesley lunched alone, in her gray frock. Even on days when Knight was with her, and they sat through their meals together formally, it was the same as if she were alone, for they spoke little, and each was in the habit of bringing a book to the table.

But she had not meant it to be so on this Easter day. Even if she did not speak of the blossoming of the cactus, she had planned to show Knight that she was willing to begin a conversation. To talk a little at meals would be a way out of "treating him like a dog."

The pretty frock and the good intention were wasted. Late in the afternoon she heard from one of the line riders whom she happened to see, that something had gone wrong with a windmill which gave water to the pumps for the cattle, and that her husband was attending to it.

"He's a natural born engineer," said the man, whose business as "line rider" was to keep up the wire fencing from one end of the ranch to the other. "I don't know how much he *knows*, but I know what he can *do*. Queer thing, ma'am! There don't seem to be much that Mike Donaldson can't do!"

Annesley smiled to hear Knight called "Mike" by one of his employees. She knew that he was popular with them all, but never before had she felt personal pleasure in the men's tributes of affection.

To-day she felt a thrill of it. Her heart was warm with the spring, and the miracle of the cactus hedge, and memories of certain impetuous—*seemingly* impetuous—words of last night.

If she could have seen Knight she would have spoken of his allegory; and that small opening might have let in much sunlight. But he did not come even to dinner; and tired of waiting, and weary from a sleepless night, she went to bed early.

Next morning a man arrived who wished to buy a bunch of Donaldson's cattle, which were beginning to be rather famous. He stayed several days; and when he left, Knight had business at the copper mine—business that concerned the sinking of a new shaft, which took him back and forth nearly every day for a week. By and by the cactus flowers began to fade, and Annesley had never found an opportunity of mentioning them, or what they might signify.

When she met Knight, his manner was as usual: kind, unobtrusive, slightly stiff, as though he were embarrassed—though he never showed signs of embarrassment with any one

else. She could hardly believe that she had not dreamed those impassioned words overheard in the moonlight.

Week after week slipped away. The one excitement at Las Cruces Ranch was the fighting across the border; the great "scare" at El Paso, and the stories of small yet sometimes tragic raids made by bands of cattle stealers upon American ranches which touched the Rio Grande. The water was low. This made private marauding expeditions easier, and the men of Las Cruces Ranch were prepared for anything.

One night in May there was a sand-storm, which as usual played strange tricks with Annesley's nerves. She could never grow used to these storms, and the moaning of the hot wind seemed to her a voice that wailed for coming trouble. Knight had been away all day on one of his motoring expeditions to the Organ Mountains, and though he had told the Chinese boy that he would be back for dinner, he did not come. Doors and windows were closed against the blowing sand, but they could not shut out the voice of the wind.

After dinner Annesley tried to read a new book from the library at El Paso, but between her eyes and the printed page would float the picture of a small, open automobile and its driver lost in clouds of yellow sand.

Why should she care? The man was used to roughing it. He liked adventures. He was afraid of nothing, and nothing ever hurt him. But she did care. She seemed to feel the sting of the sharp grains on cheeks and eyes.

She was sitting in her own room, as she was accustomed to do in the evening if she were not out on the veranda—the pretty room which Knight had extravagantly made possible for her, with chintses and furnishings from the best shops in El Paso. On this particular evening, however, for once she set both doors wide open, one which

led into the living-room, another leading into a corridor or hall. She could not fail to hear her husband when he came, even if he left his noisy car at the garage and walked to the house.

A traveling clock on the mantelpiece—Constance Annesley-Seton's gift—struck nine. The girl looked up at the first stroke, wondering if accidents were likely to happen in sandstorms; and before the last note had sounded heard steps in the patio.

"He has come!" she thought, with a throb of relief which shamed her. But the step was not like Knight's. It was hurried and nervous; and as she told herself this there came a loud, insistent knock at the door.

There was an electric bell, which Knight had fixed up with his own hands, but it was not visible at night. No one except herself would hear this knocking, for the servants' quarters were at the far end of the bungalow. A little frightened, recalling stories of cattle thieves and things they had done, Annesley went out into the hall.

"Who is there?" she cried, her face near the closed door, which locked itself in shutting. If a man's voice—the voice of a stranger—should reply in "Mex," or with a foreign accent, the girl did not intend to open the door.

A man's voice did reply, but neither in "Mex" nor with a foreign accent. It said: "My name is Paul Van Vreck. Let me in quickly, please. I may be followed."

Annesley's heart jumped; but without hesitation she pulled back the latch, and as she opened the door a rush of sand-laden wind wrenched it from her hand. She staggered away as the door swung free, and there was just time to see a tall, thin figure slip in like a shadow before the light of the hanging-lamp blew out. The girl and the newcomer were in the dark, save for a yellow ray that filtered into the hall from her room, but she saw him stoop to place a bag or bundle on the floor, and then, pulling the door to against the wind, slam it shut with a click.

Having done this, the tall shadow bent to pick up what it had laid down.

"Thank you, Mrs. Donaldson, for letting me in so promptly," said the most charming voice Annesley had ever heard—more charming even than she had thought Knight's in the days when he was her hero of romance. "Evidently you've heard your husband mention me, or you might have kept me out there parleying, if you're alone, for these are stirring times."

"Yes, I—I've heard you mentioned by—many people," the girl answered, stammering like a nervous child. "Won't you come in—into the living-room? Not the room with the open door. That's mine. It's this other, further along the hall. I'm sorry my husband's out."

As she talked she wondered at herself. She knew this man for a super-thief. He did not steal with his own hands, but he commanded other hands to steal, and that was even worse. Or she had thought it worse in her husband's case, and for more than a year she had punished him for his sins. Yet here she was, almost welcoming this man.

She did not understand why she did it, why she felt—even without seeing him except as a shadow—that she would find herself wishing to do whatever he might ask. It must be, she thought, the influence of his marvelous voice. She had heard Paul Van Vreck spoken of as an old man, but the voice was the voice of magnetic youth.

He opened the door of the living-room before she could touch the handle, and, carrying his bundle, followed her as she entered. There was only one lamp in this room, a tall reading-lamp with a green silk shade, which stood on a table, its heavy base surrounded by books and magazines. A good light for reading was thrown from under the green shade onto the table, but the rest of the room was of a cool, green dimness; and, looking up with irresistible curiosity at the face of her night visitor, it floated pale on a

vague background, like a portrait by Whistler.

It was unnaturally white, the girl thought, and—yes, it *was* old! But it was a wonderful face, and the eyes illumined it; immense eyes, though deep-set and looking out of shadowed hollows under level brows black as ink. Annesley had never seen eyes so like strange jewels, lit from behind.

That simile came to her, and she smiled, for it was appropriate that this jewel expert should have jewels for eyes. They were dark topazes, and from them gazed out the spirit of the man with a compelling charm.

Under a rolled-back wave of iron-gray hair he had a broad forehead, high cheekbones, a pointed, prominent chin, a mouth both sweet and humorous, like that of some enchanting woman; but its sweetness was contradicted by a hawk nose. Had it not been for that nose he would have been handsome.

"I guessed by the startled tone of your voice, when you asked 'Who is there?' that your husband was out," explained the shadow, now transformed by the light into an extremely tall, extremely thin man in gray traveling clothes. "I had a moment of repentance at troubling a woman—a lady—alone; but, you see, the case was urgent, so I was selfish."

He had carelessly tossed his Panama hat onto the table, but kept the black bag, which he now held out with a smile.

"Not a big bag, is it? And so common, it wouldn't be likely to tempt a thief. But it holds what is worth—if it has a price at all—about half a million dollars."

"Oh!" exclaimed Annesley. She looked horrified; and through the green gloom the old man read her face closely.

"I see!" he said, with a laugh in his beautiful young voice. "You have heard the great secret! That makes another who knows. But I'm not afraid you'll throw me to the dogs. You wouldn't do that even if you weren't

Michael Donaldson's wife. And being his wife, you could not."

"My husband has told me no secret about you, none at all," the girl protested, defending Knight involuntarily. "I beg you to believe that, Mr. Van Vreck."

"I do believe it. If there's one thing I pride myself on, it's being a judge of character. That's why I've made a success of life. You wouldn't lie, perhaps, not even to save the one you love best. I believe that he did not tell you the secret. Yet I'm certain you know it. I suppose certain other discoveries you must have made gave you an almost supernatural intuition. You guessed."

Annesley did not answer. Yet she could not take her eyes from his.

"You needn't mind confessing. But I won't catechize you. I'll take it for granted that what Donaldson knows you know—not in detail, but in the rough. . . . In this bag are six gold images set with precious stones. They are of the time of the Incas, and they've been up till now the most precious things in Mexico. From now on they will be the most precious things in Paul Van Vreck's secret collection.

"Some weeks ago I hoped that Donaldson would go and get them for me. He refused, so I had to go myself. I couldn't trust any one else, though the only difficulty was getting to Central Mexico with Constitutionals raging on one side and Federals on the other. A man promised to deliver the goods to my messenger. I've been bargaining for them for years. But, as I said, Don wouldn't go, so I had to do the job myself. You see, Mrs. Donaldson, your husband is the only honest man I ever came across."

"Honest!" The exclamation burst from Annesley's lips.

"Yes. Honest is the word. I might add two others: 'true' and 'loyal.'" Paul Van Vreck held her with his strange, straight look, commanding, yet amused. "That is the opinion," he added after a pause, "of a very old

friend. It's worth its weight in—gold images."

The girl gave him no answer. But the effort of keeping her face under control made lips and eyelids quiver.

"May I sit down, Mrs. Donaldson?" Van Vreck asked in a tone which changed to commonplaceness—if his voice could ever be commonplace. "I'm a fugitive, and have had a run for my money, so to speak. I'm seeking sanctuary here. Also I came in the hope of trying my own eloquence on Donaldson. But now I've seen you, I will not do that. In future he's safe from me, I promise you."

"Oh!" Annesley faltered. And then "Thank you!" came out grudgingly. How astonishing that *she* should thank Paul Van Vreck, the monster of wickedness and secrecy she had pictured, for "sparing" her husband to her—her husband whom *he* called loyal, true and honest; whom she had called in her heart a thief!

"Do, please sit down," she hurried on, hypnotized. "Forgive my not asking you. I—you—"

"I understand," he soothed her. "I've taken advantage of you—'sprung' a surprise, as Don would say, and then turned on the tortures of the Inquisition. Aren't you going to sit down, too? I can't, you know, if you don't."

"I thought you might like something to eat," the girl stammered. "I could go and call our cook—"

"No, thank you," replied Van Vreck. "I'm a peculiar person in more ways than one. I never eat at night. I live mostly on milk, water, fruit and nuts. That's why I feel forty at seventy-five. I give out that I'm frail—an invalid—that I spend much time in nursing homes. This is my joke on a public which has no business to be curious about my habits. When it thinks I'm recuperating in a nursing home I—but no matter! That won't interest you."

When she had obediently sat down, her knees trembling a little, Van Vreck drew up a chair for himself, and, rest-

ing his arms on the table, leaned across it gazing at the girl with a queer, humorous benevolence.

"How soon do you think your husband will come?" he asked abruptly.

"I don't know," Annesley replied. "He told our Chinese boy he'd be early. I suppose the sandstorm has delayed him."

"No doubt. . . . And you're worried?"

"No-o," she answered, looking sideways at Van Vreck, her face half turned from him. "I don't think that I'm worried."

"May I talk to you rather frankly till Don does come?" the old man asked.

"Certainly."

"I'll take you at your word! . . . Mrs. Donaldson, when your husband called on me a year ago last spring, in New York, he said nothing about you. I knew he'd married an English girl of good connections (isn't that what you say, on your side?), and why he thought it would be wise to marry. But when he informed me that our association was to be ended, that nothing would induce him to continue it, I read between the lines. I'm sharp at that! I knew as well as if he'd told me that he'd fallen in love with the girl, that she'd unexpectedly become the most important factor in his life, and that—she'd found out a secret she'd never been meant to find out; anyhow, *his* secret, and maybe mine.

"I realized by his face—the look in the eyes, the tone of the voice, or rather, the tonelessness of the voice—just what her finding out meant for Don. I read by all the signs that she was making him suffer atrociously, and I owed that girl a grudge. She'd taken him from me. For the first time a power stronger than mine was at work with him; and yet, things being as they were, my only hope of getting him back lay in her."

"What do you mean?" The question spoke itself. Annesley's lips felt cold and stiff. Her hands, nervously

clasped in her lap, were cold too, though the shut-up room had but lately seemed hot as a furnace.

"I mean, if the girl behaved as I thought she would behave—as I think you have behaved—he might grow tired of her and the heavy cast-iron coat of virtue he'd put on to please her. He might grow tired at the same time of life on a ranch if his wife made him eat ashes and wear sackcloth. That was my hope. Well, I sent a messenger to find out how the land lay, a few weeks ago."

"The Countess de Santiago!" Annesley exclaimed.

"He told you?"

"No, I saw her. I—by accident—(it really was by accident!) I heard things. He doesn't know—I believe now that he doesn't know—I was there."

"Perhaps that's just as well. Perhaps not. But, if I were you I'd tell him, when the right time comes. The Countess wrote me she'd had her journey in vain, and why. She said—rather spitefully it struck me—that Don was bewitched by his wife, a cold, cruel creature with ice in her veins, who treated him like a dog."

"She said that to you, too?"

"Yes, she said that. She seemed to gather the impression. But the dog stuck to his kennel. Nothing she could do would tempt him to budge. So I decided to stop here myself, on the way back from Mexico. I couldn't delay that trip. The man was waiting for me. And waiting quietly is difficult in Mexico just now. I got what I wanted, and crammed the lot into this bag, which cost me at the outside, if I remember, five dollars. A good idea of mine for putting thieves off the track. They expect sane men to carry night-gowns and newspapers in such bags. I thought I'd managed so well, that I'd put the gang who follow me about generally on 'spec,' off the track."

"I speak Spanish well. I've been passing for a Mexican lawyer from Chihuahua. But to-day I caught a look

from a pair of eyes in a train. I fancied I'd seen those eyes before—and the rest of the features. Perhaps I imagined it. But I don't think so. I trust my instinct. I advise you to! It's a splendid tip."

"At El Paso I bought a ticket for Albuquerque. The eyes were behind me. I got into the train. So did Eyes, and a friend of his with a long nose. Not into my car, however, so I was able to skip out again as the train was starting. Not a bad feat for a man of my age! I hope Eyes and Nose, and any other features that may have been with them travelled on unsuspectingly. But I can't be sure. Instinct says they saw my trick and trumped it."

"I oughtn't to have come here, bringing danger to your house, Mrs. Donaldson. But I wanted to see Don, and I knew he was afraid neither of man nor devil—afraid of nothing in the world except one woman."

"As for her—well, what I'd heard hadn't prepossessed me in her favor. I sacrificed her for the safety of my golden images and my talk with Don. But the sound of your voice behind the shut door broke the picture I'd made of that young woman. And when I saw you—well, Mrs. Donaldson, I've already told you I don't intend to exert my influence over your husband, though to do so was my principal object in coming. Even if I did, I believe yours would prove stronger. But if I could count on all my old power over him, I wouldn't use it now I have seen you."

"I adore myself, and—my specialties. But there must be an unselfish streak in me, which shows itself in moments like this. I respect and admire it. You may treat Don like a dog, but he'd never be happy away from you. And I am just fool enough to want him to be happy. This kicked dog of yours, madam, happens to be the finest fellow I ever knew or expect to know."

"You say I treat him like a dog," cried Annesley, roused to anger. "But

how ought I to have treated him? He came into my life in a way I thought as romantic as a fairy tale. It was all a trick—a play got up to deceive me! I knew nothing of his life; but because of the faith he inspired, I believed in him. No one except himself could have broken that belief. I would not have listened to a word against him. But when he thought I'd discovered something, the whole story came out. If I hadn't loved him so much to begin with, and put him on such a high pedestal, the fall wouldn't have been so great—wouldn't have broken my heart in pieces."

"But Don gave up everything pleasant in his life, and came down here to this God-forsaken world—a man like Michael Donaldson, with a few hundred dollars where he'd had thousands—all for you," said Van Vreck, "and he's had no thought except for you and the ranch for more than a year. Yet apparently you haven't changed your opinion. By Jove, madam, you must somehow, through your personality and God knows what beside, have got a mighty hold on his heart, in the days when you loved him, or he wouldn't have stood this dog's life, this punishment too harsh for human nature to bear. Good Lord, how were you brought up? Evidently not as a Christian."

"My father was a clergyman," said Annesley.

"There are many clergymen who have got as far from the light as the moon from the earth. I know more about Christianity myself than some of those narrow men, with their 'cold Christ and tangled Trinities!' That is, I know on principle. I don't practice what I know, but that's my affair. Did Don ever excuse himself by mentioning the influence I brought to bear on him, when he was almost a boy?"

"No," breathed Annesley. "He didn't excuse himself at all, except to tell me about his father and mother, and a vow he'd made to revenge them on society."

"It was like him not to whine for your forgiveness."

"He would never whine," the girl agreed quickly. But she remembered that night of confession when on his knees he had begged her to forgive, to grant him another chance, and she had refused. He had never asked again. And he had struggled alone for redemption.

"I haven't forgotten some early teachings which impressed me," said Paul Van Vreck. "Christ made a remark about forgiving till seventy times seven. Did you forgive Donaldson four hundred and eighty-nine times, and draw the line at the four hundred and ninetieth?"

"No, I never had anything to forgive him—till that one thing out. But it was a very big thing. Too big!"

"Too big, eh? There was another saying of Christ's about those without sin throwing the first stone. Of course I'm sure *you* were without sin. But you look as if you might have had a heart—once."

"Oh, I had, I had!" Tears streamed down Annesley's pale face, and she did not wipe them away. "It's dead now, I think."

"Think again. Think of what the man is—what he's proved himself to be. He's twice as good now as one of your best saints of the church. He's purified by fire. You've got the face of an angel, Mrs. Donaldson, but in my opinion you're a wicked woman, unworthy of the love you've inspired."

"You speak to me cruelly," the girl said through her tears. "I've been very unhappy!"

"Not as unhappy as you've made Don by *your* cruelty. Good heavens, these tender girls can be more cruel when they set about punishing us, than the hardest man! And to punish a fellow like that by making him live in an ice-house, when you could have done anything with him by a little kindness! Don't I know that?"

"I'm the sponsor for such sins as Don's committed. He was meant to

be straight. But I got hold of him through an agent, and caught his imagination when that wild vow of his was freshly branded on his heart or brain. I have the gift of fascination, Mrs. Donaldson. I know that better than I know most things. *You* feel it to-night, or you wouldn't sit there letting me tear your heart to pieces—what's left of your heart. And I have an idea there's a good deal more than you think, if you have the sense to patch the bits together.

"I have fascination, and I've cultivated it. Napoleon himself didn't study more ardently than I the art of winning men. I won Don. I appealed to all the romance in him. I became his hero and—slowly—I was able to make him my servant. Not much of my money or anything else has ever stuck to his hands. He's too generous—too impulsive; though I taught him it was necessary to control his impulses.

"What he did, he did for love of me, till you came along and lit another sort of fire in his blood. I saw in one minute, when he called on me, what had happened to his soul. It's taken you more than a year to see, though he's lived for you and would have died for you. Great Heaven, young woman, you ought to be on your knees before a miracle of God! Instead, you've mounted a marble pedestal and worshipped your own purity!"

Annesley bowed her head under a wave of shame. *This* man, of all others, had shown her a vision of herself as she was. It seemed that she could never lift her eyes to meet his accusing gaze. But suddenly, into the crying of the wind a shot broke sharply, then another and another, till the sobbing voice was lost in a crackling fusillade.

The girl leapt to her feet.

"Raiders!" she gasped. "Or else—"

Paul Van Vreck sprang up also, his face paler, his eyes brighter than before.

"They've come after me," he said. "Clever trick—if they've bribed a lot

of ruffians from over the border to cover their ends. The real errand's here, inside this house."

Annesley's heart faltered.

"You must hide," she breathed. "I must save you—somehow."

"Why should you save *me*?" Van Vreck asked sharply. "Why not think about saving yourself?"

"Because—because I know Knight would wish to save you," she answered.

"I want to do what he would do. . . . God help us, they're coming nearer! Take your bag, and I'll hide you in the cellar. There's a corner there, behind some barrels. If they break in, I'll say—"

"Brave girl! But they won't break in."

"How do you know?"

"Your husband won't let them. Trust him, as I do."

"He's not here. Do you think I told you a lie? Thank heaven he *isn't* here, or they'd kill him, and I could never beg him to forgive—" She covered her face with her hands.

The old man looked at her gravely.

"You don't understand what's happening," he said, with a new gentleness. "Don's out there now, defending you and his home. That's what the shooting means. Do you think those brutes would advertise themselves with their guns if they hadn't been attacked?"

With a cry, the girl rushed to the long window, and began to unfasten it, but Van Vreck caught her hands.

"Stop!" he commanded. "Don't play the robbers' own game for them! *How do you know which is nearer the house, Don and his men, or the others?*"

She stared at him, panting, "Don and his men?" she echoed.

"Yes. Even if he were alone to begin with, I'll bet all I've got he roused every cowpuncher on the ranch with his first shot; and they'd be out with their guns like a streak of greased lightning. If you open that window with a light in the room, the wrong lot may get in and barricade themselves against Don

and his bunch—to say nothing of what would happen to us. But—”

Annesley waited for no more. She ran to the table and blew out the flame of the green-shaded lamp. Black darkness shut down like the lid of a box. But she knew the room as she knew her own features. Straight and unerring, she found her way back to the window.

This time Van Vreck stood still while she opened it, and began noiselessly to undo the outside wooden shutters. As she pushed them apart, against the wind, a spray of sand dashed into her face and Van Vreck's, stinging their eyelids. But disregarding the sharp pain, they passed out into the night.

Clouds of blowing sand hid the stars, yet there was a faint glimmer of light which showed moving figures on horseback. Men were shouting, and with the bark of their guns, fire spouted.

Annesley rushed onto the veranda, but Van Vreck caught her dress.

“Stay where you are!” he ordered. “Our side is getting the best of it. Don't you see—don't you hear—the fight's going further away? That means the raid's failed—the skunks have got the worst of it. They're trying to get back to the river and across to their own country. There'll be some, I bet, who'll never see Mexico again!”

“But Knight—” the girl faltered. “He may be shot—”

“He may. We've got to take the chances and hope for the best. He wouldn't leave the chase now if every door and window were open and lit for him. Wait. Watch. That's the only thing to do.”

She yielded to the detaining hand. All strength had gone out of her. She staggered a little, and fell back against Van Vreck's shoulder. He held her up strongly, as though he had been a young man.

“How can I live through it?” she moaned.

“You care for him after all, then?” she heard the beautiful, calm voice asking in her ear. And she heard her own voice answer, “I love him more than ever.” She knew that it was true, true in spite of everything. It would be joy to give her life to save Knight's, with just one moment of breath to tell him that his atonement had not been in vain.

Away out of sight the chase went, but the straining eyes that watched had time to see that not all the figures were on horseback. Some ran on foot; and some horses were riderless. As Van Vreck had said, there was nothing for him and for Annesley to do except to wait. They stood silent in the rain of sand, listening when there was nothing more to see. The shots were scattered and blurred by distance. Annesley realized how a heart may stop beating in the anguish of suspense.

But at last when the wind, purring like a tiger, was the only sound in the night, there came a sudden padding of feet. A form stumbled up the veranda steps, and before she could cry out in her surprise, the girl recognized their Chinese servant.

She had fancied him in bed. But she might have known he would be out!

He had been running so fast that his breath came chokingly.

“What is it—why is it?” Annesley implored.

The boy pointed, trying to speak, “Bling Mist' Donal back,” he gulped. “Me come tell.”

Annesley pushed past him, and springing down the steps ran blindly through the sand cloud, taking the way by which the Chinese boy must have come home. Her mind pictured a procession carrying a dead man, or one grievously wounded; but at the cactus hedge she came upon three men—one in the centre, who limped, two who supported him on either side.

“Why, Anita!” exclaimed her husband's voice.

“Knight!” she sobbed. It was the

first time since Easter a year ago that she had given him the old name. "Thank God, you're alive!"

"If you thank Him, so do I," he answered, whether lightly or gravely she could not tell. His tone was controlled, as if to hide pain. "It's all right. You mustn't worry any more. Wish I could have sent you news sooner. I hoped you'd guess we were getting the upper hand when the sound of shots died away. Coming home I spotted the sneaks fording the river, and guessed what was up. I turned the car, and stirred up the boys. Then we had a shindy, and scared the dogs cold—bagged a few, but I guess nobody croaked—anyhow none of our crowd. Half a dozen are after them now.

"As for me, I feel as if I'd got a dum-dum in my ankle, but I'll be fit as a fiddle again in a week or two. I'm afraid you had a fright."

How strange it was to hear him speak so coolly after what she had endured! But his calmness quieted her.

"Mr. Van Vreck was with me," she said.

"Van Vreck! Great Scott, then the raid was a frame-up! I see. Boys, let's get along to the house quick."

"Wait an instant!" the girl intervened. "Knight, I never had a chance to tell you—about the cactus blossoms. I understood. I understand even better now. Mr. Van Vreck has made me understand. That is all I can tell you now. Let them help you on to the house. I'll follow. Some other time I'll explain."

"No—now!" he said. "Let go a minute, boys. I can stand by myself. Three words with my wife."

As the two men moved off hastily, Annesley sprang forward, giving her shoulder for her husband's support.

"Lean on me," she said. "Oh, Knight, you don't need an explanation, for the three words are, love—love and forgiveness. Forgiveness from you to me."

He held out his arms, and she caught him to her fiercely. Neither could speak. The past was forgotten. Only the present and future counted, for both had atoned.

(The end.)

U U U U

THE LURE OF MAY


BY STOKELY S. FISHER

LIKE a romping maiden who pulls by the fingers
And coaxes to play, some sprite woos me
With wiles wherein the witchery lingers
Of river and mead and greenwood tree!
And oh to be now where the pickerel play,
And the dragon-flies dart in the pond-lilies yellow!
With rod and reel and some friendly good fellow
(To wander gipsying, just for a day!

The breath of the city withers, none sparing;
The blood grows bitter with life's thick ills;
How happy the feet that are free to go faring
As fancy is fain, where the wilding heart wills!
And oh to be one with a world that is free,
Where the waves coo soft as an infant lisper,
And trees are athrill with a happy whisper—
Oh to feel all in the heart of me!

King Boreas Life-Saver

by David A. Wasson

 If you had asked bronzed, white-haired Captain Nathaniel Chase why his shoulders were so straight and his eyes so clear at sixty-six, he would not have ascribed it, although he might have, to abstinence from liquor and tobacco. Probably he would have shrugged those same firm shoulders, looked clear through you with the honest blue eyes, and replied briefly, as was his wont:

"Dunno; keepin' a clear conscience, I guess."

Bayhaven folk declared that they wouldn't be troubled with a conscience like "Cap'n" Nat's for a large consideration; and from the Bayhaven point of view it was undeniably troublesome. Said conscience began to be obstreperous on the fish wharf one fine afternoon in mid-January, when it prompted its esteemed owner to voice a timely warning.

"You fish-killers will anchor out in the Roads just once too often," he predicted. "Some day you'll get caught down there in a south-easter. Remember the Eastern Belle breeze? Struck in a squall, didn't it? How much clawing off would you do in a case like that? You'd pile up on the rocks in windrows."

He explained that when the weather was well-behaved, the little schooners of the Bayhaven fishing fleet,

instead of anchoring in the snug berth off the town, often stopped in the lower harbor. There they lay exposed to the south and east, with only isolated Channel Island, ten miles at sea, blocking the charge of the long Atlantic rollers.

But they thus saved time in getting the morning start for the grounds, where it is a maxim that the early boat catches the fish. Wherefore, the captains gave small attention to the risk.

Stalwart young Skipper Joe Clinton of the *Gladiator* gave "Cap'n" Nat an affectionate pat on the back. He had just landed a big fare and was happy. Down in the Roads lay the green-painted *Gladiator* with a half-dozen of her sisters. The reflection of their patched mainsails streamed over a windless sea.

"You ain't goin' to give us an Eastern Belle breeze to-night, are ye, Cap'n Nat?" asked Clinton jocosely.

The old man squinted at sea and sky. One was molten silver, dotted by gull-haunted ice cakes; the other soft azure, flecked by no tuft of cloud. The setting sun blazed clear through a network of spruces over the western shore.

"No," admitted "Cap'n" Nat slowly, "looks like a good fish-day to-morrow. Be pig-headed and stay down there then. I s'pose you're safe enough in doing it to-night. But remember it's the middle of January. No time to take chances."

"All right, Uncle Nat," said Clinton, "if you say stay down there, stay it is!" "Cap'n" Nat started to protest, but Clinton and his men had gone.

Bayhaven awoke shivering next morning, but not to a vindication of the old skipper's warning. Instead it became painfully aware of a fifty-degree drop in temperature, and a shrieking northwest gale which picked up snow-banks bodily, beheaded the harbor whitecaps and blotted the sea behind driving white vapor. Indeed, so far from being cast away on the lee shore of the Roads, the schooners anchored there stood more in danger of being blown straight to sea.

With a feeble sun at the zenith the mercury rose to zero; the vapor thinned and the harbor came into view. Six of the fishermen hung fast close in the shelter of the land; but the Gladiator had dragged anchors away from the western shore and lay far out in deep water. There she had brought up again, but she was riding with desperate plunges which pelted her with freezing spray and already had armored her hull, sails and rigging with ice.

"What's that Joe's got flyin' at his masthead? Main-topsail blowed adrift, or what?" asked bushy-whiskered Jason Wallace, the fish dealer, raising his spyglass in the meager lee of the salt-house.

"Main-topsail nothing!" declared "Cap'n" Nat, who saw more with the naked eye than the average man with binoculars. "Flag flyin' union down!"

"Great Caesar, so it is!" chorused the muffled and overcoated spectators. Steam from their breath formed icicles on their mustaches and beards.

"He's awful low in the water," suggested Wallace. "He must have an almighty heavy load of ice on deck."

"There can't be enough ice on him yet to settle him down like that," croaked bowlegged old Sam Potts. "He's sprung a leak, that's what's the matter!"

"One of them big chunks of ice must

have come down across his bow," surmised "Cap'n" Nat. "Knocked his stem off, likely. He's way out in the fairway now. Drift ice gets a good shot at him."

"Then why don't he slip his cables and beach her?" demanded Jason Wallace.

Sails and gear froze up so solid he can't get 'em loose!" decided Sam Potts with a long face. "Many's the time I've seen vessels in that shape!"

"What in tarnation are we gawkin' here for?" exclaimed Wallace, suddenly coming to his senses. "Cap'n Stearns ought to be told!"

They stampeded up the dock through the eddy drifts and summoned the fat and good natured master of the Cyclops, Bayhaven's only towboat. Him they found whittling a shoe box in the warm grocery store.

"Let go your lines, Cap!" puffed Sam Potts. "The Gladiator's driftin' to sea, or sinkin', or wuss! You're needed bad!"

Captain Stearns hoisted himself to his feet and went to the frosty window to verify the startling news.

"Jehoshaphat! I can't do a thing!" he said soberly. "Struck a chunk of ice in the river yesterday and knocked three blades off my propeller! Why don't we call up the life saving station?"

"No use!" groaned Potts. "Wire's probably froze up, or blowed down!"

"Cap'n" Nat, however, had dodged into the telephone booth. Presently he came out looking grave.

"They're out of it!" he announced sorrowfully. "Been tryin' to get to the Gladiator for the last two hours. Tried to launch surf-boat. Wind fired her end over end into boat-house. Stove three planks. Power life-boat out of commission. Water in engine froze up and split water-jacket. Can't do another thing. Keeper says wind registers seventy-two miles an hour!"

"Well, let's get out of this!" said Captain Stearns. "No place for us here!"

The crowd rushed down to the wharf again, frantic in its impotence. The Gladiator's distress signal had blown itself to pieces. Through the vapor they now and then glimpsed her crew of three, still feverishly working the pumps. She seemed frightfully low in the water, and plunged wearily.

"Wouldn't ye think the fellers in them other vessels would try to reach 'em?" choked Jason Wallace, the gale forcing the words down his throat.

"They're all below! Couldn't hear the broadside of a battleship!" explained "Cap'n" Nat, and then suddenly contradicted himself. "No, by cracky, they've seen 'em! Launchin' a dory from the Wave Crest now!"

"They better save their strength, and their dory!" grunted Sam Potts.

But two big oilskinned men from one of the Galiator's sister craft got into the madly cavorting little boat and cast off. The blast caught her and swung her broadside. She blew to leeward like a puff of smoke, absolutely helpless in the clutch of the icy hurricane. One of the men promptly broke an oar, then deserted the other and began to bail.

The second man continued to go through the motions of rowing, the sea frothing white all around them. In a minute more the dory crashed into the bob-chains of the Gladiator, and the volunteer life savers evidently had had enough of small boat navigation. They leaped wildly for the schooner's deck, leaving the foundering dory to its fate.

"That's how much ye can do in this chance!" yelled Sam Potts. "Five to go now instead of three! There ain't a chance for 'em in the world!"

"Can't somebody do something?" gasped Jason Wallace. "Have we got to stand here and see her slide out from under them poor fellers before our eyes?"

"Who's Joe Clinton got with him this trip?" asked Stearns.

"Pete Carr and Bill Huckins," answered Jason sadly. "Pete's wife sick in the hospital, too!"

"It'll be all the same to Pete an hour from now!" prophesied Sam Potts. "Where you goin', Cap'n Nat?"

For with a muttered ejaculation the old skipper had abruptly jammed down his cap, turned up his collar and was working his way up the dock against the gale. Now he stopped and shouted something which a flint of the blast sent the other way. The men followed expectantly, glad to do anything that even hinted at succor. They trailed him upstream along the water-front to the little white cottage where he lived alone.

Cap'n Nat pointed to an overturned dory, hibernating in a snowbank.

"Launch her!" he roared, and went into the boat-house.

"A lot of good that'll do!" grumbled Potts. The crowd was equally dubious. It had just seen one dory's performance in the rough water around the Gladiator. Moreover, it had expected something more original from Cap'n Nat. It complied, nevertheless. There was something about Cap'n Nat that induced obedience.

The old man emerged from his shed carrying a pair of oars on one shoulder and an iron grappling-hook and a coil of strong new line on the other. He threw his load into the dory and was about to follow it when Jason Wallace took him gently by the arm. His manner showed that he didn't think Cap'n Nat quite knew what he was about.

"You ain't goin' to do nothin' rash, are ye, Cap'n Nat?" he asked kindly.

"You couldn't keep the dory afloat five minutes, Cap'n Nat, even if ye did take the fellers off!" seconded Sam Potts. "And if ye did keep her afloat you'd only blow to sea! There ain't no use makin' it wuss than it is!"

The skipper threw off Jason's detaining grasp and squared his strong shoulders. But he seemed to have grown older in the last hour.

"Stand aside!" he commanded in a stern voice that none recognized. "It's all my fault! If it hadn't been for me Joe Clinton might not be where he is! I—I told him he'd be safe to lay out

there last night! I've got to do the square thing!"

"Golly, Cap'n Nat! Nobody holds that up against you!" protested Stearns.

"It's that blamed conscience of his!" muttered Sam Potts.

"Grab his other arm, Sam! he's wild as a hawk!" said Jason Wallace.

But with one quick movement Cap'n Nat wrenched clear of the crowd, pushed off his dory and tumbled into her bows. The outwitted group on shore rushed knee-deep into the harbor in a vain attempt to check his suicidal errand. The old man waved his arm, shipped his oars and called.

"See you later!"

"Not on this side of the pearly gates!" gloomed Sam Potts.

Unlike the man of the Wave Crest's ill-fated expedition, Cap'n Nat made no attempt to row. Instead he devoted himself to keeping his dory bow to the gale, and backed before it into rapidly roughening water. The Gladiator lay a mile straight to leeward.

Along the shore followed the crowd, vainly signaling him to abandon his futile venture while he might. But "Cap'n" Nat paid them small attention. Evidently he knew of a means of rescue that was not dreamed of in their philosophy. Skilfully he worked the dory into the lee of the largest ice-cake in sight. It was a massive block, a hundred feet square, and marching steadily to sea on the strength of the ebb.

"So far so good," growled Sam Potts, "but is he trying to rescue Joe Clinton's men or the gulls on that cake of ice?"

"You leave it to Cap'n Nat! He knows what he's doing!" rebuked Stearns.

They saw the skipper take the line in his teeth and crawl out of the dory on hands and knees, crouching low against the shrilling gale. Unmindful of the choppy seas that slopped across the slippery surface of the floe, he planted his iron hook deep in the ice, then jumped into the dory once more.

"He's crazy as a loon," declared Jason Wallace again.

The hurricane forced the dory quickly to the end of her tether. She brought up with a sharp jerk, yanked around head to the blast, and bobbed safely in the haven of the ice. Cap'n Nat waved a reassuring arm.

"By golly, if he hasn't got a sea-anchor and a breakwater all in one!" ejaculated Captain Stearns in admiration.

"That's all right," objected Sam Potts, "but he can't navigate that old floe much! If it happens to drift afoul of the Gladiator, why all well and good! But if it don't—"

"Oh, dry up!" ordered Jason. "It's bad enough as it is!"

It was soon seen, however, that "Cap'n" Nat had no idea of navigating the ponderous floe. It could not miss the sinking Gladiator by many feet, anchored as she was in the strong tide of mid-channel. And, jumping in smooth water at the end of the line, the light dory was a pendulum with a long reach.

The schooner was now very deep. The five men aboard her took increasingly frequent turns at the pumps. Growing seas swashed completely over the ice barrier, but the dory lay in a comparatively calm of seething foam.

"He ain't goin' to drift anywhere near the Gladiator!" declared Potts.

"Cap'n" Nat had foreseen the possibility. He hastily got out his oars and urged the dory to the limit of her line. It reached the Gladiator easily.

"Now jump, you beggars!" Captain Stearns apostrophized the five fishermen.

The dory made a few tremendous dives as she peeped from the lee of the ice, but she was exposed only for a minute. As she swept past the Gladiator the five men leaped wildly through space, sprawling clumsily across the seats. "Cap'n" Nat tumbled his oars inboard. The little boat swung quickly back to her shelter, still buoyant as a cork in her tiny haven.

"That's all right," conceded Sam Potts, "but what's goin' to happen to 'em now? If they don't drift clean to sea they'll get ashore on Channel Island and get drowned in the breakers, sure as fate!"

"You leave it to Cap'n Nat!" replied Stearns. "Channel Island is just what he's figuring on! It's six miles long and he can't miss it! They'll drift out there before dark, and what's to prevent their making their landing in the lee of their ice breakwater? Why, it's easy as rolling off a log!"

A cheer arose from the huddled watchers on Bayhaven Head. It ended in a gasp as the abandoned *Gladiator* rolled to port and sank.

"That's all well and good," remarked Sam Potts, "but I wouldn't want to trust too much to the hospitality of them Channel Islanders!"

Three days later the little Channel Island packet steamer, escaping from

the ice-bound harbor of that primitive hamlet, brought to Bayhaven Captain Nathaniel Chase, the shipwrecked crew of the *Gladiator*, and the pair of would-be rescuers from the *Wave Crest*, whose skeptical skipper had been flying his flag at half-mast since the dory drifted out of the harbor.

Sam Potts was less surprised to learn that the frostbitten castaways had effected a landing in safety than that they had been given free passage to the mainland by the despised denizens of Channel Island. Jason Wallace frankly retracted his statement that the old skipper was as crazy as a March hare! and Captain Stearns simply said—"I told you so."

As for Captain Nathaniel Chase, he deliberately outraged the Bayhavenites' feelings by refusing pointblank to talk about his heroism.

Perhaps he felt that his conscience had earned a short vacation.

THE BROKEN VASE

BY FRANK ARTHUR FRENCH

SLENDER, with lips apart
Singing praises to its maker,
Stands, with all the sensitive grace
Of wind-blown iris on the hill,
A vase of priceless porcelain.
Loving hands have molded every curve—
Even the trace along its rim of some dream-face
Elusive, dim—almost a dream itself
Still lingering there.

But what is this? A seam, a broken lip,
A flaw of shattered surface
Marred in making?
Ah, no!
Wrenched from the pedestal where it stood serene,
Rude hands have mauled and marred its tender beauty;
Shorn the surface of its costly glaze,
Then thrust it back—a broken thing!

And still it sings pæans to its creator! . . .
Is not the song more sweet from broken lips?

Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



THERE is always a strange fascination in the thrust of a rapier. Lean, supple, sinuous, swift as a flash of light, it nevertheless seems to protract its work so that one may enjoy its devilment the longer. The modern automatic is different. Its action is appalling, its speech the speech of the speediest sort of death. In a second the show is over—or ought to be.

Probably this is why, once in a while, we like to breathe again the atmosphere of those tempestuous days when a man's life and his lady's honor depended upon the quickness of his blade and the strength of his wrist; days when the swashbuckling cavalier took breakfast with a smile, swaggered loudly forth upon the day's business, and came home to supper—if he were lucky.

The conquistadores who followed Cortez and Pizarro were men of that ilk, and their descendants in the early Mexican-California days were governed by the same impulses and conditions; swift to draw—not the belching .44, but the lean blade that came like a streak of fire from its scabbard.

And, next week, in

CAPTAIN FLY-BY-NIGHT

BY JOHNSTON McCULLEY

Author of "Thirst," "The Last Thirty Minutes," "Wild Norene," et cetera

you are introduced to as swaggering, impudent, and clever a caballero as ever stalked through the pages of this magazine.

He plays with life and love and other swordsmen indiscriminately, and what makes him so much more interesting is that he has no name. Later—but that is unfair to the author, who has probably sat up nights to present this splendid tale to you in just the proper fashion; and since he has succeeded so very well—as he has always done—we will not poach upon his preserves any further.

But we must say this.

From the moment blustering, swashbuckling *Sergeant Cassara's* snores usher in the opening paragraph, there isn't a second in which the doughty sergeant feels that he can comfortably go to sleep again. *Captain Fly-By-Night* won't let him.

And you will feel as the sergeant does.



Cowardice is always an unlovely thing. Sometimes extenuating circumstances may, in a measure, condone it; but he of the craven heart is never a popular character,

more particularly when his cringing follows a show of bravado.

Just as there have been heroes and heroes, there have been cowards and cowards.

When you come face to face with *Colin Perring* in

THAT AFFAIR OF DAHJANGSARI

BY JOHN CHARLES BEECHAM

Author of "Leah"

Which will appear complete in next week's issue, you will realize just what sort of coward you are up against. You will also meet *Lancaster*, and we wonder what you will think of him. But when you finish the story, we know that you will be thinking principally of the splendid courage of *Grace Perring*, who, in the jungles back of *Temerai*, in Java, sought to make the sacrifice that is fully detailed in the story as told by old *Peter Grosse*, pilot of the yacht *Seamew*.

The author of "Leah" has put over another remarkable story; remarkable both in theme and execution. You must not miss it!

FEVERWORM

BY EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY

A "Different" Story

What a lot of game you always see, and how thick the fish are, and what splendid views you come across when you've left your gun and rod and camera at home! Ever notice it?

Well, the same applies in the magazine business. When we started out buying "different" stories they seemed to be very numerous. Apparently almost every day a story would turn up that was too far off the beaten path to be considered, although otherwise excellent. But when we decided that we wanted them—that you would like to read them—behold, they became at once as scarce as hens' teeth. So you mustn't be disappointed if it happens sometimes that a couple or three weeks go by without one.

This is the time of the year when the voice of the circus is heard in our land. Wherefore it is fitting and proper that the next unusual yarn we give you should also be a circus story. It is—and it isn't. But it's a crackerjack, and its hero might with some justice be called "Fishhead's" brother, as you will find when you have read "FEVERWORM."

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

Larry Adams, heavy-weight champion and *Beau Brummell* of the ring, has left

his training-camp on *Staten Island*, and has gone into summer quarters. Rumour has it that he is not many thousand miles distant from the neighborhood of *Miss Lolita LeClaire*. At all events, he has ceased writing letters to her; that in this magazine being the last.

However, you needn't be afraid that *Larry Adams* has deserted us altogether. He is too forceful a character to be kept out of print for any length of time!

"GRAVES OF YESTERDAY," by *Olin L. Lyman*, is a charming little tale for *Decoration Day*. You might think that the literary possibilities of our annual festival of remembrance of the heroes of the Civil War have long been exhausted; but wait till you have read *Mr. Lyman's* touching story.

"THE LAST ARROW MAKER," by *Chief Red Eagle*, is a powerful little drama of the *Maine woods*, written by an Indian chief, and from the viewpoint of the Indians themselves. It gives you a deep insight into the heart of the Red Man, and, at the same time, Romance in a novel form.

This is the first story by *Chief Red Eagle* that you have seen in some time—but maybe it won't be the last.

The fourth and last in the remarkable series of detective stories which we have been giving you under the general title of "THE PUZZLE MASTER," by *Julien Josephson*, will be published next week. It is a forceful tale of the vengeance of a Hindu sect. And the mystery is unraveled by *Abraham Kotzl*.

It is called "THE GIRDLE OF STARS."

A "FAMILY AFFAIR"

TO THE EDITOR:

The family, including myself, are chronic *ALL-STORY* fans. Personally, I read the letters with about as much interest as I do the stories.

On examining the limited household impression of *ALL-STORY*, I find all shades of opinion, and that pretty nearly every story pleases somebody. The boy, and his school chums, consider the "Tarzan" tales wonderful and simply devour them, while another member thinks them "nutty." Recent numbers, to my mind, contained some awful bosh, yet the girls thought those

very yarns fine. As far as I can judge, you have the knack of giving everybody something they like, so keep up the good work.

As for stories that met with general family approval, I would mention "The Huntress," whose heroine everybody considered "awfully dear." Most of us know Indians first hand, and *Musgoosis* and *Bela* were real. "The Million Passing Tales" were all you claimed for them. Among your best writers of romantic and impossible fiction, which is nevertheless readable in every line, is George Allan England; we all liked his "Golden Blight" and "The Fatal Gift," about the verity of which latter the family is still arguing. "The Golden Hope" is another masterpiece of descriptive power and fine psychological portrayal, entirely apart from its real merit as a live story.

Finally, I liked "Mr. North of Nowhere" about as well as any. Besides being a smashing good mystery story, it had the merit of sound scientific possibility—was never impossible—and drove home a sociological lesson that most political bigots would have balked at had it been told in so many words. It takes a real writer to put over a story like that without any "mushy stuff."

Sincerely yours,
E. H. LIEBEL.

West Haven, Connecticut.

A BIRTHDAY PRESENT

TO THE EDITOR:

I took the ALL-STORY when it was the *Cavalier*. As I will be sixteen Sunday, the ninth, the new Mars story by Edgar Rice Burroughs comes in the nature of a birthday present. I like the negro stories by E. K. Means. Please give us more of those "Crewe" stories. They are great. "His Unknown Wife" was fine; so was "The Border Legion."

HARRY THOMPSON.

17 Chandler Avenue,
Pontiac, Michigan.

REAL STUFF

TO THE EDITOR:

Find enclosed check for \$4.00 for your ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Have been a reader from first issue, and it cannot be beaten. Edgar Rice Burroughs, Frank Condon, E. K. Means, George Allan England, Frank Packard, A. deFord Pitney, Frank Froest, Varick Vanardy, and Edwin Baird are favorites with my father and myself; but

all the stories are real stuff. They've got pep.

From two boosters,
W. T. WATERS and SON.

Route No. 2, Box 11,
Micanopy, Florida.

THEY EVEN STEAL 'EM

TO THE EDITOR:

Enclosed herewith please find 10c, which kindly send me ALL-STORY of December 25, 1915.

I buy the ALL-STORY every week from the news dealer, but the interest in "The Son of Tarzan" started such a rush for the magazine here that some one stole my copy after the dealer had put it aside.

When a person will go to the extreme of stealing a magazine it is some sure sign of its popularity.

I would rather miss a day's meals than one copy of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

T. C. WOLF.

Earle, Arkansas.

WHAT IS MAN WITHOUT IMAGINATION?

TO THE EDITOR:

I do not possibly see how any one could dislike the writings of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Very truly, his stories are imaginative, but what in the world is wrong with the person who does not like imaginative stories? He is one author among the host who write for your magazine who can give us something that is so much out of the ordinary in mystery and imagination that we must use our brains, and soar away with him in imagination, to understand it. It seems to me that he always excels himself in each new story.

Whatever became of the old captain and his three ruffian friends? Would like to hear from them again. Your magazine is getting so popular with this company of twelve that it takes half a dozen copies now where we used to pass two or three around.

OTTO F. BECK.

327 South Street,
West Litchfield, Illinois.

NOTE: *Captain Velvet*, to whom Mr. Beck refers in his last paragraph, is still living peacefully in his beautiful little South American republic of Santa Chanza, where, beloved by all, he is the power behind the president's chair. As to the "three ruffians," Pollard, Evans and Ryan, since they are pretty tough and hard to kill, it is probable they are still aboard the good ship Holmar Hansen. But as the Holmar

Hansen was bound for the South Pole with supplies for nine years, and no stop short of the South Polar ice-pack ("Captain Velvet's Farewell," by Edgar Franklin, *ALL-STORY WEEKLY*, September 18 to October 9, 1915), it is doubtful if they will disturb the serenity of the good captain for some time to come.

EXPERT EVIDENCE

TO THE EDITOR:

Different people have spoken in the controversy about *Miss Judith Lee*, the lip-reader of Mr. Marsh's stories, but not one was a lip-reader himself. I am an expert lip-reader, slightly deaf, just enough so that I am unable to understand a person speaking without looking at them. I passed through school and graduated with honors without the least trouble. Have won two gold medals in spelling matches and one in a geography match; all this I attribute to my ability to read lips, for in many instances I was unable to hear the voices.

Always when standing on a street corner waiting for my car or jitney I see "The Million Passing Tales" passing by me. I have seen lawyers and doctors discussing their cases; I have seen sad-faced and glad-faced men and women tell their sorrows and joys, so I enjoyed *Miss Lee's* experiences, for she was so much like me.

I have read your magazine for many years, and I enjoy it; and the authors—why I love them every one. Haven't a single criticism to make.

(MISS) PRIMROSE F. STANLEY.

1208 McKee Street,
Dallas, Texas.

FROM FAR HAWAII

TO THE EDITOR:

I do not think I have missed a single number from the early *Scrap-Book* up to date, and have most of the copies on hand—*Scrap-Book*, *All-Story*, *Cavalier*, *All-Story Cavalier*, and *ALL-STORY WEEKLY*—besides many of *Munsey's Magazine* and *Argosy*.

I feel that during the last year or so the *ALL-STORY* has fully lived up to its reputation in serials, and the short stories have considerably improved and show greater care in selection than they did two or three years ago. All the serials are good. I write in particular mention England, Burroughs, Zane Grey, and Oppenheim.

LEONARD CARTER.

P. O., Hilo,
Hawaii, Hawaiian Islands.

LETTERETTES

Enclosed find ten cents for which please send me the *ALL-STORY WEEKLY* of April 1, as I failed to get one.

I think "The Iron Rider" fine, also "The Golden Hope." I think most all of the continued stories lately are the best that have been published.

F. REPASS.

Box 72,
Supply, Oklahoma.

Always enjoy reading the *ALL-STORY* and also the *Argosy*, the only two magazines I get. I like best the adventurous stories, but best of all are the impossible stories. The "Tarzan" stories were fine.

The *ALL-STORY* is some "pippin." Don't care for the short stories, but most of the serials and complete stories are all to the good.

GUY A. RUTTER.

Gen. Del.,
Granite Falls, Minnesota.

Enclosed please find 30c (thirty cents) for which please send me the *ALL-STORY WEEKLY* for February 12 and 19, 1916. We are reading Zane Grey's "Border Legion," and missed getting those two books. It's such a fine story, I hate to miss it.

Zane Grey, E. K. Means, and Edgar R. Burroughs are my favorite authors.

MRS. CLEONA M. GOODMAN.

Pagosa Springs,
Colorado.

Please find enclosed P. O. money order for \$1.00 in payment of subscription to your periodical, the *ALL-STORY WEEKLY*, for the three months beginning February 19, 1916.

Let me say right here that the *ALL-STORY* has them all beaten in the line of fiction. I don't remember ever having read a dull story in it, and I don't suppose I ever will. I am,

Yours respectfully,

NEIL R. MCINNIS.

Wallace, West Virginia.

Enclosed find check for \$2.00 for which please send me the *ALL-STORY WEEKLY* for six months. It is the most readable magazine there is, and I read every single story in every issue. I am glad you avoid the so-called problem stories. They are the limit and serve no purpose, not even an amusing one.

J. L. SKINNER.
Littleton, North Carolina.

How I Jumped from \$1500 to \$50,000 Yearly



"Power of Will" Was My Guide

"Three years ago I was making \$1500 a year and working day and night. Today I make a thousand dollars a week and have time for other things as well. To the lessons in 'Power of Will' more than any other thing do I owe this sudden rise."

These are the exact words of an owner of "Power of Will." His name is not published for obvious reasons, but will be gladly given in confidence on request.

Partial Contents

The Law of Great Thinking
The Four Factors on which it Depends.
How to develop analytical power.
How to think "all around" any subject.
How to throw the mind into deliberate, controlled, productive thinking.
Detailed directions for Perfect Mind Concentration.
How to acquire the Power of Unconscious Thinking.
Reasoning, Analysis.
How to acquire the skill of Creative Writing.
How to guard against errors in thought.
How to drive from the mind all unwelcome thoughts.
How to follow any line of thought with keen, concentrated Power.
How to develop Reasoning power.
How to Handle the Mind in Creative Thinking.
The secret of Building Mind Power.
How the Will is made to act.
How to test your Will.
How a Strong Will is Master of Body.
What creates Human Power.

What Users Say

"I hand you \$3 in payment; from what I have already seen I believe I can get \$300 to \$500,000 worth of good out of it."—C. D. Van Vechten, General Agent, No. West Life Ins. Co., Cedar Rapids, Ia.

"'Will Power' is a compilation of mighty force. My first week's benefit in dollars is \$900.00—cost \$3.90; profit \$897.00."—J. W. Heistand, 916 Tribune Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

"In my judgment 'Power of Will' is wonderful."—Owen J. McLaughlin, Secy. of Corp. Securities Co., St. Louis, Mo.

"Enclosed find check; send 15 copies to our New York Office."—W. M. Taylor, Efficiency Expert, the Overland Auto Co., Toledo.

"The character of 'Power of Will' is such that he who reads and puts forth effort will soon find himself out of the common herd."—F. A. Good, Pres. of Neb. Lumber Dealers' Assn., Corvallis, Neb.

"I have carefully gone over 'Power of Will' and find it admirable."—Chas. E. Editorial Rooms, Boston Evening Transcript, Boston, Mass.

As remarkable as is his experience it might also be called typical of what this wonderful course in Will Training is doing for thousands of men and women in every walk of life who are using "Power of Will" as the stepping stone to greater accomplishment.

What is "Will Power"?

The Will is the motive power of the brain. Without a highly trained inflexible will, a man has about as much chance of obtaining success in life as a railway engine has of crossing the continent without steam. The biggest ideas have no value without Will Power to "put them over." Yet the Will, hitherto entirely neglected, can be trained into wonderful power like the brain or memory and by the very same method, by intelligent exercise and use.

If you held your arm in a sling for two years, it would become powerless to lift a feather from lack of use. The same is true of the will—it becomes useless from lack of practice. Because we don't use our wills—because we continually bow to circumstance, we become unable to assert ourselves. What our wills need is practice.

"Power of Will"

by FRANK CHANNING HADDOCK, Ph. D., a scientist whose name ranks with such leaders of thought as James, Bergson and Royce, is the first thorough course in Will Power ever conceived. It is the result of over 20 years of research and study. Yet you will find every page in the 28 lessons written so simply that anyone can understand them and put the principles, methods and rules into practice at once with noticeable results right from the very start.

Meant for You

There are over 25,000 people in all walks of life who own "Power of Will." Among them are such master men as Judge Ben R. Lindsey; Supreme Court Justice Parker; Wu Ting Fang, ex-U. S. Chinese Ambassador; Liou-Tow, McKelvie of Nebraska; Assistant Postmaster-General Britz; General Manager, Christensen of Wells-Fargo Express Company; E. St. Elmo Lewis, now Vice-Pres. Art Metal Construction Company; Gov. Ferris of Michigan, and many others of equal prominence.

Never in the history of self-help literature has there been such a record. And the owners regard it as a veritable text book. It has been instrumental in changing the entire lives of thousands—making them dominant personalities, self-confident and eager, in place of the fearful, unhappy, unsuccessful men and women they formerly were. No matter what your position—whether an errand boy or the president of a mighty corporation—no matter what your age, from 17 to 70, Power of Will can change your whole life—can make a new man of you just as it has for so many others. Whatever you want in life is yours, be it money, power, prestige or happiness, if you but master the wonderful system of will training taught in "Power of Will."

Send No Money!

Although "Power of Will" is a 100-page leather bound book containing more material than many \$25 correspondence courses, the price is only \$3. The publishers will gladly send a copy free for five days inspection.

Send no money now. Merely mail the coupon on the right, enclosing your business card, or giving a reference. If you decide to keep the book, send the money. If not, mail the book back. Tear out and fill in the coupon now, before you turn the page.

Gentlemen:—Please send me a copy of "Power of Will" on approval. I agree to remit \$3 or return the book in 5 days.

Name.....
Address.....
City.....State.....

Pelton Pub. Co. 54-J WILCOX BLOCK
MERIDEN, CONN.

Pelton Pub. Co.,
54-J Wilcox Block
Meriden, Conn.

New Ideas in Watches

The masterpiece of watch manufacture—the Burlington—19 jewels, adjusted to the second—adjusted to positions—adjusted to temperature—adjusted to isochronism. Your choice of the newest cases: Inlay Enamel Monograms, Block and Ribbon Monograms, Diamond Set, Lodge, French Art, Dragon Designs. Open face or hunting case, ladies' or gentlemen's 12 and 16 sizes. Write.

Special Offer!

The Superb Burlington Watch *now* at the *direct* rock-bottom price—the same price that *even the wholesale jeweler* must pay—and in order to encourage everybody to secure this watch at once, pay this rock-bottom price either for cash or \$2.50 a month on this great special offer. Send the coupon today.

19-Jewel \$2.50
Burlington **A Month**
(The Master Timepiece)

Yes, you may pay the rock-bottom price at the rate of only \$2.50 a month. Only \$2.50 a month for the master timepiece. 19 jewels. Adjusted to positions, adjusted to temperature, adjusted to isochronism. The newest gold strata cases are yours to choose from. Write at once.

We send the watch on approval—*prepaid*. You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing—not one cent, unless you want this *exceptional* offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch.

New Book on Watches!
Send the Coupon Now!

Learn the inside facts about watch prices and the many superior points of the Burlington. Write now for book.

Burlington Watch Co.
19th Street and Marshall Boulevard
Dept. 1085 Chicago, Illinois

Burlington Watch Co.

19th Street and Marshall Boulevard
Dept. 1085 — Chicago, Illinois

Please send me (without obligation and prepaid) your free book on watches, with full explanation of your rock-bottom *direct* offer for cash or \$2.50 a month on the Burlington Watch.

Name

Address