

10¢ PER COPY SATURDAY MARCH 3 BY THE YEAR \$4.00

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

Complete in This Issue

The Fire Flower

by Jackson
Gregory

Author of
"The Short Cut,"
"Wolf-Breed," etc.



\$25⁰⁰ Smart Serge SUIT \$15

Pure Silk Lined made to your measure

New York Styles
Direct by Mail
At 1/3 Saving



AS an introductory demonstration of our value-giving, the Bell Tailors of New York will make you a smart \$25 serge suit of American Woolen Company's 6055 pure all-wool worsted serge—guaranteed fast color—for \$15.

We will line it with Skinner's guaranteed pure silk. In fact, we will use the best standard materials in every step of its making. We will guarantee it to be the best-fitting, best-tailored, best-styled suit you have ever had for at least a third more price than we ask.

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and 72 Samples
FREE

SEND
TODAY

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Here is the most remarkable shirt bargain ever made. Your chance to get these three rich, lustrous, striped shirts of exquisite sheen—luxuriously soft and beautiful—on the most liberal terms ever offered. Don't send a cent in advance. Send the coupon and we'll send you three shirts of any size—for your free inspection. If you are satisfied that they are the finest shirts you ever saw at anywhere near our price,

Pay Only \$1. After Examination

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Mail Coupon

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1015 Jackson Blvd., Dept. 27 Chicago, Ill.

Send me the three Shirts. I agree to examine them, and, if I decide to keep them, will pay \$1 as first payment and then pay balance in 4 monthly payments of \$1 each. Send along the combination set as a free gift. If I decide not to keep the shirts, I will return entire outfit to you at your expense. Size of collar I wear.....

Name.....

Address.....

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



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E. E.**

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the General
Electric Com-
pany; former General
Manager of company
manufacturing Jen-
new Electric Motors;
also formerly with Fair-
banks, Morse & Co.;
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gineer and Director
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Think! When you have finished my instructions you are an EXPERT ELECTRICIAN! You are right then and there ready to take a big paying job or start in for yourself. I will train you until you consider yourself competent regardless of the time it takes. I not only show you how to do expert electrical work but show you how to estimate on jobs so you can take contracts at big profits. That's what it means to be personally trained by a man of my practical experience in every phase of electricity. Decide today to take advantage of my big free 20 personal lessons offer. Don't let the question of money bother you. I make the cost so small and the payments so easy that you won't miss the money.

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81 West Randolph St., Dept. 276 Chicago, Ill.**

Send this
Coupon

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E. E., Director,
WICKS ELEC. INSTITUTE,
81 West Randolph St.,
Dept. 276 Chicago, Ill.**

Without any obligation on me whatever, please send me full description of your personal instructions in Electricity and particulars of your special offer of 20 of your lessons free.

Name.....

Street and No.....

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

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. LXVIII

NUMBER 3



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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 8 WEST FORTIETH STREET, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

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

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Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

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

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines

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

March 31st All-Story Weekly Farms Close March 10th.

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AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

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Armstrong Earned \$67.50 First Day selling our new business necessity. Retail \$5.00 to \$30.00. Agents profit 150%. Buyer satisfied or money back. No competition. Exclusive territory. Free Sample. Sayers Co., 421 Walnwright, St. Louis, Mo.

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YOU read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people could read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, All-Story Weekly, 8 West Fortieth Street, New York.

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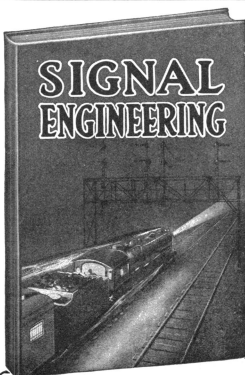


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Address.....

Age.....Occupation.....

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Dept. G-1083

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| ...Building Contractor | ...Stenographer |
| ...Building Superintendent | ...Bookkeeper |
| ...Heat & Vent. Engineer | ...Fire Ins. Inspector |
| ...Structural Engineer | ...Fire Ins. Adjuster |
| ...Structural Draftsman | ...Fire Ins. Expert |
| ...Mechanical Engineer | ...Sanitary Engineer |
| ...Mechanical Draftsman | ...Master Plumber |
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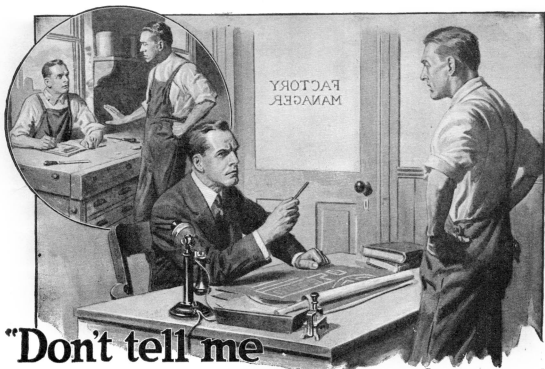
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The Fire Flower

by Jackson Gregory

Author of "The Short Cut," "Wolf Breed," "The Outlaw," etc.

ANY story that has Jackson Gregory's name attached to it is always worthy of careful consideration. All that is necessary to prove this is a reading of the first chapter of any story of his we ever published. No one who has gone that far has ever been known to stop there; and if there is any one who doubts this statement, the doubter has an excellent chance, here and now, to prove the truth of it. Everybody else—just plunge in!—THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

SOLITUDE.

SHELDON had plunged on into this new country rather recklessly, being in reckless mood. Now, five days northward of Belle Fortune, he knew that he had somewhere taken the wrong trail.

The knowledge came upon him gradually. There was the suspicion before ten o'clock that morning, when the stream he followed seemed to him to be running a little too much to the northwest. But he had pushed on, watchful of every step, seeking a blazed tree or the monument of a stone set upon a rock.

When he made camp at noon he was still undecided, inclined to believe that the wise thing would be to turn back. But he did not turn back. He was his own man now; all time was before him; the gigantic wilderness about him was grateful. At night, when he had yanked his small pack down from his horse's saddle, suspicion had grown into certainty. He smoked his good-night pipe in deep content.

If you could run a line straight from Belle Fortune to Ruminoff Shanty—and you'd want both tunnel and aeroplane to do the job nicely!—your line would measure exactly two hundred and forty

miles. It would cut almost in halves the Sasnokee-keewan, the country into which few men come, let entirely alone by the Indians who with simple emphasis term it "Bad Country."

Men have found gold on Gold River, where the Russian camp of Ruminoff Shanty made history half a century ago; they have taken out the pay-dirt at Belle Fortune. Between the two points they have made many trails during fifty years, trails which invariably turn to east or west of the Sasnokee-keewan. For here is a land of fierce, iron-boweled mountains, of tangled brush which grows thick and defies the traveler, of long reaches of lava-rock and granite, of mad, white, raging winters.

"Leave it alone," men say down in Belle Fortune and up in Ruminoff. "It's No-Luck Land. Many a poor devil's gone in that never came out. And never a man brought a show of color out of it."

Since Belle Fortune had dropped one day behind him, it had all been new country to Sheldon. Although summer was on its way, there had been few men before him since the winter had torn out the trails. Here and there, upon the north slopes and in the shaded cañons, patches and mounds of snow were thawing slowly.

More than once had he come to a forking of the ways, but he had pushed on without hesitating, content to be driving ever deeper into the wilderness. He planned vaguely on reaching French Meadows by way of the upper waters of the Little Smoky, climbing the ridge whence rumor had it you could see fifteen small lakes at once. But what mattered it, French Meadows or the very heart of the Sasnokee-keewan?

A man who took life as it came, was John Sheldon; who lived joyously, heedlessly, often enough recklessly. When other men grumbled he had been known to laugh. While these last lean, hard years had toughened both physical and mental fiber, they had not hardened his heart. And yet, a short five days ago, he had had murder in his heart.

He had just made his "pile"; he, with Charlie Ward, who, Sheldon had thought, was straight. And straight the poor devil would have been had it not been that he was weak and there was a woman. He wanted her; she wanted his money. It's an old story.

Sheldon for once was roused from his careless, good-natured acceptance of what the day might bring. He had befriended Ward, and Ward had robbed him. In the first flare of wrath he took up the man trail. He followed the two for ten days, coming up with them then at Belle Fortune.

There had been ten days of riot, wine and cards and roulette-wheel, for Charlie Ward and the woman. Sheldon, getting word here and there, had had little hope of recovering his money. But he did not expect what he did find. Charlie was dying—had shot himself in a fit of remorseful despondency. The woman was staring at him, grief-stricken, stunned, utterly human after all.

She had loved him, it seemed; that was the strange part of it. The few gold pieces which were left she hurled at Sheldon as he stood in the door, cursing him. He turned, heard Charlie's gasps through the chink of the coins, went out, tossed his revolver into the road, bought a pack outfit, shouldered a rifle, and left Belle Fortune "for a hunting trip," as he explained it to himself. He had never got a bear in his life and—

And there is nothing in all the world like the deepest solitude of the woods to take out of a man's heart the bitterness of revenge. Sheldon was a little ashamed of himself. He wanted to forget gold and the seeking thereof. And therefore, perhaps, his fate took it upon herself to hide a certain forking of the trails under a patch of snow so that he turned away from French Meadows and into the Sasnokee-keewan.

Now he was lost. Lost merely in so far as he did not know where he was; not that he need worry about being able to retrace his steps. He had provisions, am-

munition, fishing tackle, bedding; was in a corner of the world where men did not frequently come, and could stay here the whole summer if he saw fit. He had been hunting gold all the years of his life, it seemed to him. What had it brought him? What good had it done him? Never was man in better mood to be lost than was John Sheldon as he knocked out his pipe, rolled into his blankets, and went to sleep.

Now, the sixth day out he watched his way warily. If he were not already in the Sasnokee-keewan, he should to-day, or by to-morrow noon at the latest, come to the first of the Nine Lakes. He had studied the stars last night; he had watched the sun to-day. It was guess-work at best, since he had had no thought to prick his way by map.

Night came again, and he looked from a ridge down upon other ridges, some bare and granite-topped, some timbered, with here and there a tall peak looking out across the broken miles, with no hint of Lake Nopong. He made his way down a long slope in the thickening dusk, seeking a grassy spot to tether his packhorse. That night the animal crunched sunflower leaves and the tenderer shoots of the mountain bushes. With the dawn Sheldon again pushed on, seeking better pasture.

Late that afternoon he came into a delightfully green meadow, where a raging creek grew suddenly gentle and wandered through crisp herbage and little white flowers. There was a confusion of deer-tracks where a narrow trail slipped through the alders of the creek banks. Upon the rim of the meadow was a great log freshly torn into bits, as though by the great paws of a bear.

Under a tall, isolated cedar about whose base there was dry ground, Sheldon removed the canvas-rolled pack and the pack-saddle, turning his horse into an alder-surrounded arm of the meadow where the grass was thickest and tallest. While the sun was still high he cut the branches which he would throw his blan-

kets upon, fried his bacon and potatoes, boiled his coffee, and ate heartily.

Then he sat upon the log at which the bear had torn, saw the tracks and nodded over them, noting that they were only a few days old—smoked his pipe, and out of the fulness of content watched his hungry horse ripping away at the lush grass.

"Take your time, Buck, old boy," he said gently. "We'll stay right here until you get a bellyful. We don't have to move on until snow flies, if we don't want to. I think that this is one of the spots of the world we've been looking for a long time. I'd lay a man a bet, two to one and he names the stakes, that there's not another human being in three days' walk."

And a very little after sunset, with the same thought soothing him, he went to sleep.

CHAPTER II.

BONES.

THE seventh day out Sheldon began in practical manner by shaving.

His beard was beginning to turn in and itch. And, even upon trips like this, he had yet to understand why a fellow shouldn't include in his pack the razor, brush, and soap, which, altogether, occupied no more space than a pocket tin of tobacco.

He was up and about in the full glory of the morning, before the last star had gone. A grub from a fallen log went onto a hook, into the creek, and down a trout's eager throat, and the trout itself was brown in the pan almost as the coffee began to bubble over. Thirty minutes after he had waked, he was leading the full-stomached Buck northward along the stream's grassy banks.

The world seemed a good place to live in this morning, clean and sweet, blown through with the scents of green growing things. The ravine widened before him; the timber was big boled with grassy, open spaces; though there was no sign of

a trail other than the tracks left by wild things coming to feed and water, he swung on briskly.

"If I really am in the Sasnookee-keewan," he told himself early in the day, "Then men have maligned it, or else I have stumbled into a corner of it they have missed somehow. It strikes me as the nearest thing imaginable to the earthly paradise."

He had turned out to the right, following the open, coming close under a line of cliffs which stood up, sheer and formidable, along the edge of the meadow. And then, suddenly, unexpectedly, he came upon the first sign he had had for three days that a man had ever been before him in these endless woods. Upon the rocky ground at the foot of the cliffs was a man's skeleton.

Sheldon stopped and stared. The thing shocked him. It seemed inconceivable that a man could have died here, miserably as this poor fellow had done, alone, crying out aloud to the solitudes which answered him softly with gently stirring branches and murmuring water. Sheldon's mood, one of serene, ineffable peace, had had so strong a grasp upon him that this sign of tragedy and death was hard to grasp.

He stood long, staring down at the heap of bones. They were tumbled this way and that. He shuddered. And yet he stood there, fascinated, wondering, letting his suddenly awakened, overstimulated imagination have its way.

There came the query: "What killed him?"

Sheldon looked up at the cliffs. The man might have fallen. But the skull was intact; there had been no fracture there. Nor—Sheldon forgot his previous revulsion of feeling in his strong curiosity—nor was there a broken bone of arm or leg to indicate a fall. The bones were large; it had been a big man, six feet or over, and heavy. No; in spite of the position of the disordered skeleton, death had not come that way.

For half an hour Sheldon lingered here,

restrained a little by the thoughts rising naturally to the occasion, seeking to read the riddle set before him. There were no rattlesnakes here, no poisonous insects at these altitudes. The man had not fallen. To come here at all he must have been one who knew the mountains; then he had not starved, for the streams were filled with trout, and he would know the way to trap small game enough to keep life in him. And what man ever came so deep into the wild without a rifle?

It seemed to Sheldon that there was only one answer. The man must have got caught here in an early snow-storm; he must have lost his head; instead of going calmly about preparing shelter and laying up provisions for the winter, he must have raced on madly, getting more hopelessly lost at every bewildered step—and then the end had come, hideously.

At last Sheldon moved on, pondering the thoughts which centered about the white pile of bones which once, perhaps four or five or six years ago, had been a man. How the poor devil must have cursed the nights that blotted the world out, the winds which shrieked of snow, the mountains which rose like walls about a convict.

"What became of his gun?" cried Sheldon suddenly, speaking aloud. "The buckle from his belt, the metal things in his pockets, knife, coins, cartridges? The things which prowling animals can't eat! They don't carry such things off!"

He came back, walking swiftly. There was little grass so close to the cliffs; nothing but bare, rocky ground and a few bits of dry wood, two or three old cones dropped from a pine; nothing to hide the articles which Sheldon sought. But, although he made assurance doubly sure by searching carefully for more than an hour, back and forth along the cliffs, out among the trees, he found nothing. Not so much as the sole of a boot.

"And that," muttered Sheldon, taking up Buck's lead rope, "if a man asked me, is infernally strange."

As he went on he strove frowningly for an explanation and found none. The man had not been alone? He had had a companion? This companion had taken his rifle, his knife and watch, or whatever might have been in his pockets, and had gone on. Possibly. But, then, why had he not taken the time to bury the body? And how was it that there was not a single shred of clothing?

"Coyotes may be so everlastingly hungry up here that they eat a man's boots, soles, nails and all!" grunted Sheldon. "Only—I am not the kind of a tenderfoot to believe that particular brand of fairy tale. There's not even a button!"

It is the way of the human intellect to contend with locks upon doors which shut on secrets. The mind, given half of the story, demands the remainder. John Sheldon, as he trudged on, grew half angry with himself because he could not answer the questions which insisted upon having answers. But before noon he had almost forgotten the scattered bones under the cliffs, the matter thrust to one rim of his thoughts which must now be given over almost entirely to finding trail.

For no longer was there meadow-land under foot. The strip of fairly level, grassy land was gone abruptly; beyond lay boulder-strewn slopes, fringed with dense brush, all but impassable to the packhorse.

Often the man must leave the animal while he went ahead seeking a way; often must the two of them turn back for some unexpected fall of cliff, all unseen until they were close to the edge, compelling them to retrace their steps perhaps a hundred yards, or five hundred, and many a time did Sheldon begin to think that the way was shut to the plucky brute that labored on under his pack.

But always he found a way on, a way down. And always, being a man used to the woods, did he keep in mind that the time might come when he'd have to turn back for good. If he could in time win on through, come out at the north end of the Sasnookee-keewan, then he would

have had a trip which left nothing to be desired.

If, on the other hand, there came cliffs across the trail which Buck could not make his way down, around which they could not go—why, then, it was as well to have the way open this way. For Sheldon had no thought to desert the horse, without which just now he'd make far better time.

It was the hardest day he had had. That means that half a dozen times between dawn and dark the man hesitated, on the verge of turning back. Alone, he could have gone on, and with twice the speed; leading Buck, he wondered many a time if he could push on another mile without rewarding his horse with a broken leg. And yet, being a man who disliked turning back, and having to do with a horse that put all of his faith in his master unquestioningly, he put another ten miles between him and Belle Fortune that long, hard day.

In the afternoon he was forced to leave the creek which was rapidly growing into a river which shot shouting down through a rocky gorge, narrow and steep-sided. As the stream began turning off to the west Sheldon climbed out of its cañon made a wide détour to avoid a string of bare peaks lifting against the northern sky-line, and made a slow and difficult way over the ridge. In a sort of saddle he left his panting horse, while he clambered to a spire of rock lifted a score of feet above the pass.

He could look back from here and see the stream he had left. Here and there he caught a glimpse of the water, slipping away between the trees or flashing over a boulder as it sped down toward the gorge. He was glad that he had turned aside as soon as he had done; there would have been no getting out of that chasm unless a man came back here, and he had lost enough time as it was.

He turned his eyes toward the north. A true wilderness, if God ever made one to defy the taming hand of man—a wilderness of mountains, an endless stretch

of bare ridges and snow-capped peaks, a maze of steep-sided gorges like the one he had just quitted, a stern, all but trackless labyrinth in which a man, if he were not a fool, must keep his wits about him.

"Gods knows," meditated Sheldon, his spirit touched with that awe which comes to a man who stands alone as he stood, looking down upon the world where the Deity has builded in fierce, untrammelled majesty, "a man is a little thing in a place like this. I suppose, if I were wise, I would turn tail and get out while I can."

And again he pushed on, northward. There was little feed here for Buck; both horse and man wanted water. Though they had left the creek but two hours ago, the dry air and summer sun had stirred in them the thirst which sleeps so little out on the trail.

Sheldon knew that they had but to make their way down into another ravine to find water. In these mountains, especially at this early season, there was no need for one to suffer from thirst. From his vantage-point, his eyes sweeping back and forth among the peaks and ridges, he picked out the way he should go for the rest of the day, the general direction for to-morrow. And then, Buck's lead-rope again in his hand, he turned down, gradually seeking the headwaters of the next stream, hoping for one of the tiny meadows like the one in which he had camped last night.

It was four o'clock when he started downward. It was nearly dark when he came to water. It was such country as he had never seen before. He fully expected to start back to-morrow. He had seen no game all day; he didn't believe that either deer or bear came here. What the deuce would they come for? They had more brains than a man. Besides, two or three times Buck had fallen; the next thing would be a broken leg, and no excuse for it.

But, nevertheless, he must find pasturage for the night. The horse had had nothing but the tenderer twigs of young

bushes all day, with now and then a handful of sunflower leaves. The dark had fallen; the moon was up before Sheldon found what he sought. And he admitted that he was in luck to find it at all.

The rocky slope, broken into little falls of cliff, had ended abruptly. There was an open space, timbered only by a few water-loving trees, the red willow and alder, and tall grass. Sheldon yanked off pack and pack saddle, tethered his horse, and went to drink.

The beauty of the brook—it was scarcely more here near the source—with the moonlight upon it, impressed him, tired as he was. There was a sandy bed, gravel strewn, unusual here, where the thing to be expected was the water-worn rocks. The current ran placidly, widening out to a willow-fringed pool. The grass stood six inches tall everywhere, straight, untrampled.

Sheldon threw himself down to drink. What he had thought the dead white limb of a tree, lying close to the water's edge, was a bone. He found another. Then the skull, half buried in mud and grass. It was the skeleton of a man. The second in one day's travel! And, though Sheldon looked that night and again the next morning, there was nothing to hint at the cause of this man's death. Nor was there a gun, an ax, a pocket knife or watch or strip of boot leather—nothing but the bones which the seasons had whitened, here and there discolored by the soil into which they had sunk.

When a man is as hungry and tired as Sheldon was that night, he does not squander time in fruitless fancies. He made a rude meal swiftly, rolled into his blankets, and went to sleep. But he had muttered as he rolled over to keep the moonlight out of his eyes:

"We're not going back yet, Buck, old horse. If other men got this far, we can go a little farther."

And, though he was too tired to lie awake and think, he could not shut out of his dreams the fancies bred of the two discoveries. The stories which men told

of the Sasnookee-keewan, the superstition-twisted tales of the Indians, came and went through his brain, distorted into a hundred guises. This was No-Luck Land—the land into which few men came; the land from which those few did not return. What got them? What killed them?

Out of a vision of some great, hideous, ghoulish being which robbed the dead, even to stripping the bodies of their clothing, Sheldon woke with a start. The moon shone full in his eyes. Something had wakened him. He heard it moving there, softly. He sat up, grasping his rifle. It was very still again suddenly. He could not locate the sound. Maybe it had been Buck, browsing. No; Buck was tethered beyond the alders, out of sight. No sound came from there; the horse no doubt was dozing.

He even got up, vaguely uneasy. He had awakened with the decidedly uncomfortable feeling that something was above him, staring down into his face. That, on top of the sort of dream which had been with him all night, bred in him a stubborn curiosity to know what the something was.

He went quietly and cautiously back and forth; to where Buck stood, hidden beyond the trees, dozing, as he had anticipated; across the brook. He lifted his shoulders distastefully as he stepped by the little pile of bones.

There was nothing. It might have been a cat, even a night bird breaking a twig in the nearest pine. Sheldon went back to his bed. But he was wide awake now. He lighted his pipe and for an hour sat up, smoking, his blanket about his shoulders.

He experienced a strange emotion—something defying analysis—that he could catalogue only uncertainly as loneliness. It was not fear—not strong enough for that. He wanted company; it was with a frown that he checked himself from going to bring his horse close in to his camp. That would have been childish.

He moved a little, sitting so that his back was against the tree.

CHAPTER III.

FOOTPRINTS AND MONUMENTS.

IT had been in the small hours of the night that Sheldon woke. The fire he had replenished before turning in was a mere bed of coals. He threw a log across it, and at last dozed. Again he was up and about with the first streaks of dawn. The sky was pearl-pink when he threw the diamond hitch and was ready to take up the trail again.

And now, calm-thoughted with the light of day, he hesitated. Should he go on? Or should he turn back?

As though for an answer, he went to the crossing where the scattered bones lay close to the water. And the answer to his question came to him, presenting him a fresh riddle. If he had stared wonderingly when he came upon the skull at the cliffs back yonder, now did he stare stupefied. There came a vague, misty fear that he was growing fanciful, that he was seeing things which did not exist. He got down on his knees, his face not two feet from the track in the sandy margin of the creek.

Something had passed there last night; the track was very fresh. Whatever it was that had wakened him had crossed here. And what was it? He sought to be certain; he must be conservative. The track was imperfect; the lapping of the water broke down the little ridges of sand the passing foot had pushed up; the imprint would be gone entirely in a few hours. And there was no other here, for the grass came close down to the water.

He looked quickly across the stream. There there was a little strip of wet soil. The water boiling unheeded about his boots, he strode across. Despite the man's quiet nerves, his heart was beating like mad. For he saw that there was a track here, fresh, made last night. And another. Now he did not need to go

down on his knees. The imprints were clearly outlined, as definite as though drawn upon a sheet of paper.

And they were the tracks of a bare, human foot.

If it had been the big track of a big man, Sheldon's heart would not have hammered so. But it was the track that might have marked the passing here of a boy of ten or twelve—or of a girl!

"A child or a woman came last night and looked at me as I slept," muttered the man wonderingly. "Here, God knows how many miles from anywhere! Barefooted, prowling around in the middle of the night! Good God! The cursed thing is uncanny!"

As he had felt it before, but now more overwhelmingly, was his soul oppressed with the bigness of the solitude about him. He was a pygmy who had blundered into a giant's land. He was as a little boy in the inscrutable presence of majesty and mystery. For a little it seemed to him that in the still, white dawn he stood hemmed about by the supernatural.

Why should there be two white piles of unburied human bones here in a day's travel? Why should there be a fresh track in the wet soil made by a little naked foot in the night? Why should every bit of metallic substance disappear from the presence of those dead men? Why should his visitor of last night peer down at him and then slip away, with no word?

He frowned. Unconsciously he was connecting the bleached skeleton and the fresh track. The man had been dead perhaps half a dozen years; the track had not been there so many hours. He was growing fanciful with a vengeance.

It was with an effort of will that he cleared his mind of the wild tales which he had heard told of the Sasnokee-keewan. For a little he sought to believe that he had been so hopelessly confused in his sense of direction that he had made a great curve and had come back to some one of the outposts of civilization; that even now he was separated only by a ridge, or by a bend in the cañon, from a lumber-camp or

mining settlement. But he knew otherwise. One doesn't find bleaching human bones lying disinterred upon the edge of a village.

He sought to follow the tracks across the bed of the cañon and could not. They here were lost in the grass, which was not tall enough to bow to the light passing. But a hundred yards farther down the creek he came upon them again, fresh tracks of little bare feet, clearly outlined in a muddy crossing. The imprint of the heel was faint; the toes had sunk deep.

"Running," grunted Sheldon. "And going like the very devil, too, I'll bet."

He went back for Buck.

"We're going on, old horse," he informed his animal. "The Lord knows what we're getting into. But if a kid of a boy can make it, I guess we can."

For he preferred to think of it as a boy. That a barefoot woman should be running about here in the heart of the mountains, peering down at a man sleeping, scampering away as he woke—"prowling around," as he put it—well, it was simpler to think of a half-grown boy doing it.

"Or a man stunted in his growth," he thought for the first time.

And the thought remained with him. One could conceive of a man who had never got his full growth physically, who was stunted mentally as well, a half-crazed, half-wild being, who fled here, who subsisted in a state little short of savagery, who crept through the moonlit forests subtly stirred by the weird moon-madness, who hunted like the other wild things.

"Who slipped up behind a man and drove a knife into his back! Who even made way with the clothing, everything, leaving the bones to whiten through summer and winter as other animals of prey left the creatures they had killed!"

Big were the forests, limitless, seeming as vast as infinity itself, resting heavy and still upon a man's soul. The feeling of last night, the loneliness, the sort of unnamed dread came back upon John Sheldon. He shook it off with an impatient imprecation. But all day it hovered

about him. Again he was glad of his horse's companionship.

Not a nervous man, still he was not without imagination. He began to be oppressed with the stillness of the wilderness. As he pushed on down-stream, watchful for other tracks, he came into a valley which widened until it was perhaps a mile across, carpeted with grass, timbered with the biggest trees he had seen since leaving Belle Fortune, their boles five and six and seven feet through, every one a monument of majesty, planted centuries before some long-forgotten ancestor of John Sheldon learned of a land named America.

There were wide, open spaces. One looking through the giant trunks seemed always looking down the long, dimly lit aisle of the chief temple of the gods of the world. Power, and venerable age—and silence! A silence so eternal that it seemed veritably tangible and indomitable.

A man wanted at once to call out, to shatter the heavy stillness which bore upon his soul, and felt his lips grown mute. The creek gurgled, here and there a cone fell or there was the twitter of a bird; these sounds passed through the silence, accentuated it, were a part of it, a foil to it, but in no way disturbed the ancient reign of silence.

Through this world, which might have come at dawn from the hand of its Maker, Sheldon pushed on swiftly, his brain alive with a hundred questions and fancies. Where there was loose, soft dirt, where there was a likely crossing, he looked for tracks. And as hour after hour passed he found nothing to indicate that he was not, as he had imagined until this morning, alone in this part of the Sasnokee-keewan.

And yet he thought that last night's visitor was ahead of him. True, a half-demented, supercunning wild man might have hidden behind any of those big tree-trunks, might even now be watching him with feverishly bright eyes. Sheldon must chance that; he could not seek behind every tree in this forest of countless thousands. But he could feel pretty well as-

sured that the creature he sought had not fled to east or to west any considerable distance. For on either hand, seen here and there through the trees, the sides of the cañon rose to steep cliffs where a man would have to toil for hours to make his way half-way up.

Noon came. Again Sheldon was in a swiftly narrowing gorge. No longer was the world silent about him. The roar and thunder of water shouting and echoing through the rocky defile nearly deafened him. Suddenly his path seemed shut off in front. It was impossible to get a horse over the ridge here on either hand; impossible to ford the torrent where many a treacherous hole hid under boiling water. He lunched and rested here, wondering if he must turn back.

While Buck browsed, Sheldon sought the way out. He turned to his right, climbing the flank of the mountain. A man could go up readily enough at this spot, clambering from one rock to another. The boulders were not unlike easily imagined steps placed by the giant deity of the wild. But it took no second look to be sure that never was the horse foaled that could follow its master here.

Tempting the man there rose from the ridge a tall, bare, and barren peak from which he could hope to have an extended sweep of world about him. He thought that he could come to it within an hour. And if he were to retrace his steps a little, seeking an escape from the *cul de sac* into which the stream had led him, it was well to have a look at the country now from some such peak.

He had done this before, perhaps half a dozen times, always selecting carefully the peak which promised the widest expanse of view with the least brush to struggle through. But never had he had the unlimited panorama which rewarded him now. At last he was at the top, after not one but two hours' hard climb; and he felt that, in sober truth, he had found the top of the world, that he had surmounted it, that he was less in its realm than in that of the wide, blue sky.

Far below the thunder of the stream he had just left was lost, smothered in the walls of its own cañon, stifled among the forests. Here there mounted only the whisper from the imperceptibly stirring millions of branches, not unlike the vague murmur in a sea shell. The peak itself might have been the altar of the god of silence.

East, west, south, whence he had come, Sheldon saw ridge on ridge, peak after peak, No-Luck Land running away until, with other ridges and peaks, it melted into the sky-line.

Looking north, and almost at his feet, the mountainside fell away precipitously. He estimated that he was at an altitude not less than eleven thousand feet. There was snow here, plenty of it, thawing so slowly that not nearly all of it would be gone when the winter came again.

Below him, in the tumbled boulders, were pockets of snow, with bare spaces, and the hardy mountain flowers in the shallow soil. Down he looked and down, until it seemed as though the steep-sided mountains fell away many thousands of dizzy feet. And there below was the wide valley, all one edge of it meadow-land, all the other edge given over to a mighty forest, and at the jagged line lying between wood and field a little lake, calm and blue, with white rocks along the farther rim.

On all sides of the valley lay the sheer mountains, shutting it in so that a man might look down and see the beauties beneath him and yet hesitate to descend, thinking of the difficulties of getting both in and out.

Sheldon had not forgotten the imprint of the bare foot. Nor was he ready to give up the search he had begun, there being no little stubbornness in the man's nature.

But he stared long down into the valley before him, thinking of the solitude to be found there; the game to be hunted if a man sought game; thinking that some time he would make his way down yonder, joying in the thought that his foot would be

the first for years, perhaps generations or even centuries, to travel there. No, however, he would turn back to where Buck waited; seek the pass that must lead out, and learn, if it was fated that he should know, who had made the tracks at the crossing.

His eyes, sweeping now across the field of tumbled rocks which topped the ridge at the base of his peak, were arrested by a flat piece of granite resting on top of a boulder which rose conspicuously above its neighbors.

A monument!

Here, where only a second ago he had told himself that perhaps no other human foot than his own had come! The old sign of a man-made trail, the sign to be read from afar, to last on into eternity. For the shrieking winds of winter and the racing snows do not budge the flat rock laid carefully upon flat-topped stone.

Was he tricking himself? Had nature, in some one of her mad moods, done this trick? He strode over to it swiftly, sliding down the side of the slope up which he had clambered, making his way by leaps and bounds from rock to rock.

The monument was man-made.

Nature doesn't go out of her way, as some man had done, to get a block of granite, carry it a hundred yards *up-hill*, and place it upon a rock of another kind and shade where it can be the more conspicuous.

One monument calls for another in a trackless field of stone. In a moment, farther along the ridge, he found the second monument. He hurried to it. Yonder, lower on the slope, was the third; a hundred yards farther on, the fourth!

He got the trend of the trail now, for it curved only a bit, and they ran straight, straight toward the eastern rim of the valley lying far below him. And the other way, the trail ran back toward the cañon from which he had climbed. A trail here, in the very innermost heart of the Sasnookee-keewan, where men said there were no trails!

Eagerly he turned back toward the

cañon. Monument after monument he found, leading cunningly between giant boulders, under cliffs, down a little, upward a little, down again, slowly, gradually seeking the lower altitude. Again and again Sheldon lost the way, which had but rock set on rock to indicate it; but always, going back, he picked it up again.

There were a dozen monuments to show the way before he came down into the meadow a mile above the spot where he had left Buck. And here also, at the base of the slope fully two hundred yards from the willows of the creek, he found a fresh, green willow-rod. It had been dropped here not more than a few hours ago, for the white wood where the bark had been torn away was not dried out. A bit of the bark itself he could tie into a knot without breaking it. And the stick had been cut with a sharp knife, the smooth end showing how one stroke had cut evenly through the half-inch branch.

"My wild man came this way," was Sheldon's eager thought. "He knew the trail over the mountain, and has gone on ahead. And that knife of his—"

He shuddered in spite of himself, and again cursed himself for getting what he called "nerves." But he thought that it was a fair bet that same knife had been driven into the backs of at least two men.

He went back for his horse, walking swiftly. Three hours had slipped away since noon. But he told himself that he was not "burning daylight." He had found a way over the mountain, a way he believed his horse could go with him. And if luck was good, he'd camp to-night in the valley down into which he had looked from the peak.

And somewhere, far ahead of him, perhaps not a thousand feet away, watching him from behind some tree or rock, was his "wild man!" He was beginning to be certain that it was a man, a little fellow, dwarfed in body and mind and soul, and yet—

And yet the track might have been that of a boy of ten, or of a woman. Right then he swore that he was going to find out

whose track that was before he turned his back on the Sasnokee-keewan.

"I'd never be able to get it out of my head if I lived to be a thousand years old if I didn't get a look at the thing," he assured himself. "Thank God it's early in the season."

When he stopped to rest, he already had the habit of keeping his back to a tree.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHASE.

AGAIN Sheldon traveled on until after nightfall and moonrise. Even the long twilight of these latitudes had faded when finally, following the monuments of an old, old trail, he came down into the valley which he had overlooked from the peak.

Horse and man were alike tired and hungry. They found a small stream, and in the first grove where there was sufficient grass, Sheldon made his camp for the night. And the fact that he was tired was not the only reason, not even the chief reason perhaps, that he did not build his customary camp-fire.

He ate a couple of cold potatoes, a handful of dried venison, a raw onion, and was content. He even decided that he'd manage without a fire in the morning. The smoke of his fire last night had, no doubt, told of his coming; he meant now to see his wild man before the wild man saw him. So he put it to himself as he tethered Buck in the heart of the grove and made his own bed. And he slept, as a man must sleep so often out on the trail, "with one eye open."

Through the night he dozed, waking many times. He must have slept soundly just before morning. With the dawn he woke again and did not go to sleep. The uneasy sense was with him, as it had been before that something had wakened him. He sat up, listening.

Only silence and the twitterings of the birds awaking with him. And still a sound echoing in his ears which he could

not believe had been only the unreal murmur in a dream. He drew on his boots and slipped out of his blankets. He was wide awake and with no wish to go to sleep again. Turning toward the creek, he stopped suddenly.

There was a sound, far off, faint, only dimly audible. A sound which was at once like the call of some wild thing, some forest creature in distress, and yet like the cry of no animal Sheldon had ever heard. He strained his ears to hear. It was gone, sinking into the silence. And yet he had heard and his blood was tingling.

He snatched up his rifle and ran downstream, dodging behind trees as he went, pausing now and then to peer through the early light, hurrying on again.

"This time, if it is you, Mr. Wild Man," he muttered, "I'll be the one who does the creeping up on you."

Two hundred yards he went, hearing nothing. Then again it came, a faint, sobbing cry which, as before, stirred his blood strangely. It was so human, and yet not human, he thought. Less than human, more than human—which? Inarticulate, wordless, a bubbling cry of fear, or of physical suffering? The call was gone, sinking as it had sunk before, and again he ran on, his pulses bounding.

With sudden abruptness, before he was aware of it, he had shot out of the timbered land and upon the edge of the little blue lake he had looked down upon yesterday afternoon. Not a hundred paces from him the breeze-stirred ripples of the lake were lapping upon the sandy shore.

Here was one of those white rocks he had marked at the lake's side. And here upon the rock, arms tossed out toward the sun, which even as he paused breathless shot a first glimmer above the tree-tops, was "his wild man."

Clad only in the shaggy skin of a brown bear, which was caught over one shoulder, under the other, stitched at the sides with thongs; arms bare, legs, feet bare, the body a burnished copper, the hair long and blown about the shoulders, was a—girl!

He gasped as he saw, still uncertain. A dead limb cracked under his feet, and quick as a deer starts when he hears a man's step she whirled about, fronting him. He saw her face clearly, and the arm lifted raising his rifle fell lax at his side. For surely she was young, and unless the light lied she was beautiful.

About her forehead, caught into her hair, were strange, red flowers unknown to him. Her arms were round and brown and unthinkably graceful in their swift movements. She was as alert as any wild thing he had ever seen, and had in every gesture that inimitable, swift grace which belongs by birthright to the denizens of the woodlands.

Only an instant did they confront each other thus, the man stricken with a wonder which was half incredulity; the girl still under the shock of surprise. And then, with a little cry, unmistakably of fear, she had leaped from the rock, landed lightly upon the grassy sod, and was running along the lake-shore, her hair floating behind her, flowers dropping from it as she ran.

And John Sheldon, the instant of uncertainty passed, was running mightily after her, shouting.

Not until long, long afterward did the affair strike him as having in it certain of the elements of comedy. Now, God knows, it was all sober seriousness. He shouted to her in English, crying, "Stop; I won't hurt you!" He shouted in an Indian dialect of which scraps came to him at his need. And then, breathless, he gave over calling.

She had turned her face a little, and he was near enough to hazard the guess that she was frightened, and that at every shout of his the fear of him but leaped the higher in the throbbing breast under the bearskin. So he just settled down to good, hard running; he, John Sheldon, who, in all the days of his life, had never so much as run after a girl, even figuratively speaking.

Even above the surge of a score of other emotions this one stood up in his heart—

he counted himself as good a man as other men, and this girl was running away from him as an antelope runs away from a plodding plow-horse.

He saw her clear a fallen log, leaping lightly, and when he came to it he marveled at its size, and as he leaped feared for a second that he was not going to make it. Already she had gained on him; she was still gaining. She looked over her shoulder again; he fancied that the startled terror had gone, that she was less afraid, being confident that she was the fletcher.

"And yet, deuce take it," he grunted in a sort of anger, "I can't shoot her!"

The little bare, brown feet seemed to him to have wings, so light and fleet were they, so smoothly and with such amazing speed did they carry her on. Seeing that she would infallibly distance him and slip away from him into the woods where he could never hope to come upon her again, he lifted his voice once more, shouting. And then he cursed himself for a fool. For at the first sound of his voice, booming out loudly, she ran but the faster.

Then suddenly Sheldon thought that he saw his chance. Yonder, a few hundred yards ahead of her, was a wide clearing, and in it he saw that a long arm of the lake was flung far out to the right. She would have to turn there; he did not wait, but turned out now, hoping to cut her off before she could come around the head of the arm of the lake, which, no doubt, in her excitement, she had forgotten.

Straight on she ran. He saw her flash through a little clump of shrubs close to the water's edge; saw that she was going straight on, and then guessed her purpose. She was not going to turn out. She had disappeared behind the trees. He thought that he had seen her leap far out, just a glint of sun on the bronze of her outflung arms.

Still he pounded on, turning to the right, certain that he could come to the far side before she could swim it. But the arm of the lake extended farther than he had an-

ticipated; already she was far out, swimming as he had seen no man swim in all his life, and he knew that the race was hers. Panting, he stopped and watched; saw the flashing arms, the dark head with the hair floating behind her.

"It's a wonder that bearskin doesn't drown her!" was his thought.

And then, coming close to where she had disappeared behind the bushes, he saw the bearskin lying at the edge of the lake, the water lapping it. And John Sheldon, who seldom swore; never when the occasion did not demand it, said simply:

"Well, I'll be damned. I most certainly will be damned."

He picked the thing up and looked out across the lake. Just in time to catch the glint of the sun upon a pair of bronze arms thrown high up as though in triumph as his "quarry," speeding through the screen of willows, disappeared again.

"The little devil!" he muttered, a little in rage, a great deal in admiration.

Carrying the trailing bearskin, still warm from the touch of her body, he turned again to the right, trudging on stubbornly along the arm of the lake. There was no particular reason why he should carry the bearskin. But on he went with it, a trophy of the chase. And in his heart was as stubborn a determination as had ever grown up in that stubborn stronghold. He'd find her, he'd get the explanation of this madness, if it was the last thing in the world he ever did.

And then suddenly, lacking neither imagination nor chivalric delicacy, he felt his face growing red with embarrassment. The situation seemed to him to be presenting its difficulties.

CHAPTER V.

THE TOMB OF DREAMS.

SHELDON gave over asking himself unanswerable questions and hurried on around the end of the lake and into the forest beyond where the lithe rac-

ing figure had shot through the shadows like a shimmering gleam of light.

He found her trail and followed it easily, for it ran in a straight line and through a meadow where the grass stood tall and had broken before her.

Only infrequently did it swerve to right or left to avoid one of the big trees in her path. As Sheldon went on he saw many a field flower or tuft of grass which she had bent in her passing straighten up; it seemed to him almost that they were sentient little creatures seeking to tell him "She went this way!"

He was fully prepared to follow the track of her wild flight across miles if need be, his one hope being that she continued in a meadow like this which held the sign of her going. He was no longer running at the top speed with which the chase had begun, nor was he walking as he had been for a moment while she swam. His gait had settled down into a steady, hammering pace which he could keep up for an hour, his one hope being now to win with his greater endurance.

For the most part his eyes kept to the ground that he might not lose the trail and much precious time finding it again. Only now and then would he glance up, to right or left, to make certain that she had not turned out at last to double back or seek shelter in the mountain slopes.

And as he came plunging with accelerated speed down a gentle incline, swinging about a grove of young firs which stood with outflung branches interlacing so that they made a dense dark wall, his eyes were upon the ground, watchful for her trail.

For a second he lost it; then, without checking his speed he found it, turning again, a very little, this time to the left to avoid a second thickly massed group of young firs.

He ran around this, swerved again a very little as he came up out of the hollow and to a flat open space, saw the track leading straight across the level sward, entered a larger grove of firs, lost the trail for a dozen steps, ran on, shot out

of the grove and—came to a dead halt, staring in utter amazement.

If at that moment he had been asked who in all the wide world was the simon-pure king of fools, he would have answered in unqualified vehemence, "John Sheldon!"

With a bearskin which he must admit he had acquired rather in defiance of convention, in one hand, with a rifle in the other, his hat back yonder somewhere under the limb which had knocked it off, looking he was sure such a fool as never a man looked before, he was standing with both feet planted squarely in the middle of the main street of a town!

He had more than a suspicion that in some mysterious way he had gotten very drunk without knowing it. He was by no means positive that he was not a raving maniac. If he had been obliged to tell his name at that bewildering second it is a toss whether he would have said "King Sheldon," or "John Fool."

His mind was a blank to all emotions and sensations save the one that reddened his face. If a man had ever foretold that he would some day see a girl out in the woods, upon a lake shore where no doubt she was going to take a bath; that he would first scare her half out of her wits and then wildly pursue her for a quarter of a mile, shouting God knows what madness at her; that he'd grab up the morning robe which she'd worn and come waving it after as he ran; that he'd rush on so blindly that he didn't know what he was doing until he was right square in the middle of a town—well, it would be mild to say that he would have dubbed that man an incurable idiot.

And yet in front of him stood a house, builded compactly of logs and rudely squared timbers, that might have stood there half of a century. To the right stood a house. To the left a house. Straight ahead ran a narrow street, houses upon the right, houses upon the left. In that blindly groping moment he felt that he had never seen so many houses all at once in all the days of his life. And yet

he was no stranger to San Francisco or Vancouver nor yet New York!

He hardly knew what to expect first: A great shout of laughter as men and women saw him, or a shot from a double-barreled shotgun. *

"If she's got a father or a brother and he doesn't shoot me," he muttered, "he's no man."

But there came neither shout of laughter nor shot of gun. As the first wave of stupefaction surged over him and passed, leaving him a little more clear-thoughted, there came the inclination to draw back swiftly into the trees before he was seen.

But he stood stone still. For at last it was evident that there was no one to see. There was the town, unmistakably a typical, rude mining camp. But it was still, deserted, a veritable city of desolation.

Nowhere did a rock chimney send up its smoke to stain the clear sky; the street was empty, grown up with grass and weeds and even young trees; no child's voice in laughter or man or woman's voice calling; no dog's bark to vibrate through the stillness which was absolute; no sound of ax on wood or of hammer or of horses' hoofs; no stirring object upon the steps which were rotting away, nor at door or window.

No sign of life, though he turned this way and that, searching. Everywhere the wilderness was pushing in again where once man had come, vanquishing it. Before him was the most drearily desolate scene that had ever stood out before his eyes. In some strange way it was unutterably, indescribably sad.

He came on again, slowly. Obeying an impulse which he did not consciously recognize, he stepped softly as a man does in a death chamber. His soul was oppressed, his spirit drooped suddenly as the atmosphere of the abandoned camp fell upon it.

By daylight, gloom haunted the tenantless buildings; by night, here would be melancholia's own demesne. Nowhere else in the world does one find that terrible sadness which spreads its somber

wings in the abode of man long given over to the wild to be a lair for its soft-footed children.

More questions demanding answers and all unanswerable. He sought to throw off the influence which had fallen upon him and went on more swiftly, seeking the girl who had fled here. Had she stopped in one of these ruined houses? Was one of them "home" to her? Who lived here with her? And why? Were they, like himself, chance comers, newly arrived? Or did they, like the log houses, belong to this land; were they like everything of man here, being drawn back into the mighty arms of the wild?

This part of the world, the fastnesses stretching from Belle Fortune to Rumino's Shanty on the Gold River, was what he and his fellows glibly called "new country." What country on the earth is new? What nook or corner has not once known the foot of man and his conquering hand? And, given time, what bit of the world has not in the end hurled its conqueror out, trodden down his monuments, made dust of his labors, and crowned his hearths in creeping vines and forgetfulness, wresting it all back from him?

The thoughts which came to him had their own way in a mind which was half given to the search resumed. Questions came involuntarily; he did not pause or seek to answer them. Hurriedly he went up and down, turning out for fallen timbers, circling tangled growths.

At every open door and window he looked in eagerly, noting less the sagging panels and broken shutters than the dark interiors. Many roofs had fallen, many walls were down, many buildings were but rectangular heaps of ruins grown over grass. But other houses, builded solidly of great logs, with sturdy steep roofs, stood defiantly.

"There was a time when hundreds of men lived here," he thought as he hastened on. "Men and women, maybe, and perhaps children! Why did they go like this? Even a town may die like a man,

even its name be forgotten in a generation or two."

Pushing through a rear yard long ago so reclaimed by the wilderness that he must fight his way through brush shoulder high, he came out suddenly upon a path. It ran, broad and straight, toward the lake. There, upon a little knoll, until now hidden from him by the trees, was the largest building of the village, the one in a state of the best preservation. The path ran to the door. On either side of the doorstep, cleared of weeds, was a space in which grew tall red flowers. He stopped a moment, his heart beating fast.

The door was closed; the windows were covered with heavy shutters. He came on again, walking warily, his eyes everywhere at once. What should a man expect here in the dead city of the Sasnookee-keewan? A rifle ball as readily as anything else. And yet he came on steadily, his own rifle ready.

At last he stood not ten steps from the closed door, wondering. Some one lived here; so much was certain. The well-worn path told it eloquently. Then, too, there were signs of digging about the little flower garden. A woman's work—hers. And she, herself, was she in there now?

"I might go up to the door and knock," he muttered. "The regular way when you want to know if any one is at home! But I have precious little desire to become pile of bleached bones number three."

He lifted his voice and called. A startled squirrel that had been watching him curiously vanished with a sudden whisk of tail, and a big woodpecker upon a distant falling wall cocked a pair of bright eyes at him impertinently. Sheldon waited, turned this way and that, called again. Then again, louder.

"Devil take it," he grunted in sudden irritation. "There's got to be an end of this tomfoolery. If I have to do with crazy folk I might as well know it now as any time."

He went up the two steps to the door and rapped sharply. Still there came no

answer. He rapped again and then put his hand to the latch. The door was fastened from within.

"Who's in there?" he called. "Can't you answer me?"

His voice died away into silence; the woodpecker went back to his carpentering. A hush lay over the world about him.

He called again, explained that his intentions were friendly, argued with the silence, pleaded and then lost his temper.

"Open!" he shouted, "or by the Lord I'll beat your old door off its hinges!"

Then, for the first time, he thought that he heard a sound from within, the gentle fall of a foot as some one moved. His head turned a little, listening eagerly, he heard no other sound.

Lifting his rifle, he drove the butt hard against the door. It creaked, rattled, and held. He struck again, harder.

His rifle was swung back for the third blow when a voice answered him, the voice of a girl, clear but troubled, uncertain, thrilling him strangely with the note in it he had heard this morning when he awoke, suggesting as it did the wild.

"Wait," said the voice. "Wait—a—little—while."

To describe the voice, to put a name to the subtle quality of it which made it different from any other voice Sheldon had ever heard was as impossible as to describe the perfume of a violet to one who has no olfactory nerve.

But in one respect her speech was definitely distinctive, in that each word came separately, enunciated slowly, spoken with the vaguest hint of an effort, as though her tongue were not used to shaping itself to words at all.

"All right," answered Sheldon. "That's fair. How long do you want me to wait?"

"Just—little—bit," came the clear answer, the little pauses seeming to indicate that she was seeking always for the right word. "Not—damn—long."

"Oh!" said Sheldon.

"Go over by that house that is all broken," continued the voice. "Then I

will open the door." There came a pause, then the words uttered with great impressiveness: "Do what I say almighty quick or I'll cut your white liver out!"

Sheldon obeyed, wondering more than ever. As he went he dropped the bearskin close to the door.

"I'm putting your—your dress where you can reach out and get it," he said as he went.

There was no answer.

CHAPTER VI.

KING MIDAS AND NAPOLEON.

AS directed, Sheldon went back down the knoll until he stood near a tumble-down shanty there, some fifty or sixty feet from the sturdy log house, from which he did not remove his eyes. As he went the door opened a very little, just enough for a pair of alert and vigilant eyes to watch him.

When he stopped he was prepared to see a round, brown arm slip out to retrieve the fallen bearskin. But instead the door opened quickly, there stepped out what at first glance seemed to be a boy clad in man's trousers, boots, and terribly torn and patched blue shirt. But her hair lay in two loosely plaited braids across her shoulders, and hardly the second glance was needed to assure him that here was no boy, but she who had fled before him.

In coming out the door had opened just far enough for her to pass out, then had been closed so quickly that he had had no glimpse of the cabin's interior. She stood still, a hand upon the latch behind her, facing him.

Sheldon raised his hand to lift his hat, remembered and said quietly:

"Good morning."

"Good morning," she repeated after him.

He was near enough to guess something of what lay in her eyes. Certainly a strange sort of curiosity underlay her penetrating gaze which seemed in all

frankness to search deeply for all that a long look could tell her.

And, it seemed to him, under this look lay another that hinted to him that she'd whirl, jerk the door open, and disappear in a flash if he so much as stook a step forward. So he moved back another pace or two, to reassure her, leaning against a fragment of wall.

If she regarded him with fixed intentness, no less did the man stare at her. There was every sign of hasty dressing; she must have drawn on the first garments falling to her hurrying hands. The boots were unquestionably many sizes too large; trousers and shirt were monstrously ill-fitting. And, even so, the amazing thing was that she was most undeniably pretty. And, burned as she was from the sun, she was not an Indian. Her hair was a sunkissed brown; her eyes, he fancied, were gray.

"I am sorry," said Sheldon after a considerable silence, "that I frightened you just now."

Her gaze did not waver, lost nothing of its steady, searching intentness. He could see no change of expression upon her slightly parted lips. She offered no remark to his, but stood waiting.

"I think," he went on in a little, putting all of the friendliness he could manage into his voice, "that I was at first startled as much as you. I'd hardly expected to stumble upon a girl here, you know!"

If she did know she didn't take the trouble to tell him that she did. There was something positively disconcerting in the scrutiny to which she so openly subjected him.

"You see," he continued his monologue stoutly, determined to overlook any little idiosyncrasies, "it was a surprise to me to see your tracks, in the first place. And then to come upon you like that—and to find this old settlement here— Why, I had always thought that no man had ever so much as builded him a dugout in the Sasnokee-keewan."

He stopped suddenly. It struck him

as ridiculous: this was he babbling on while she stood there looking at him like that. Certainly he had given her ample opportunity to say something. Yet she seemed to have not the slightest intention of opening her mouth. Still she watched him as one might watch some new, strange animal.

"What's the matter?" he demanded sharply, her attitude beginning to irritate him. "Can't you talk?"

"Yes." Just the monosyllable, clearly enunciated. She had answered his question; he hoped she would go on. But she made no offer to do so.

"Well," cried the man, "why don't you? You're not keeping still because we haven't been introduced, are you? Good Lord, why do you look at me like I was part of a side show? Didn't you ever see a man before? I'm not trying to flirt with you! Say something!"

His nerves had been tense, and at best his temper was likely to flare out now and then. He wished for a second that she was a few years younger so that he could take her across his knee.

"Flirt?" she repeated after him, lifting her brows. She shook her head. "What must I say?"

The suspicion came upon him that she was secretly enjoying herself at his expense, and he said quickly:

"I should think you could find a number of things to say here where a stranger doesn't come every day. You might even ask me inside and strain no sense of convention. You might offer me a cup of coffee and nobody would accuse you of being forward! You might tell me where I am and what town this is—or was. You might tell me something about the rest of your party, where they are, and when I can have a talk with some one who is willing to talk."

For a moment she seemed to be pondering what he had said. Then, as bidden, she answered, speaking slowly, taking up point by point:

"You cannot come inside. I would lock the door. I would shoot you with

a big gun I have in there. It is like yours, but bigger. Coffee?" She shook her head as she had before. "I don't know what that is. This town is Johnny's Luck. I have no one else for you to talk to. You must go away."

Sheldon stared at her incredulously. The short laugh with which he meant to answer her was a bit forced, unconvincing in his own ears. The girl watched him with the same keen, speculative eyes.

"You don't mean for me to believe that you are here all alone?" he demanded.

She hesitated. Then she answered in her own words of a moment ago:

"I have no one else for you to talk to."

"That's pure nonsense, you know," he retorted bluntly. She made no reply.

"I got off my trail and blundered into this place," he went on presently. "I'm going on out presently. I'm not going to trouble you or any of your people."

"That is nice," was the first remark voluntarily given. Sheldon flushed.

"Just the same," he said a little sternly, "I'm not going out like a blind fool without finding out a thing or two. If you're up to some kind of a lark it strikes me that it's run on about long enough. There's precious little use in your pretending to be the only one in here."

By now he knew better than to expect her to speak except in reply to a direct question, and so continued:

"Will you tell me who you are?"

"I am Paula."

"Paula?" he said. "Paula *what*?"

"Just Paula," quietly.

"But your other name?"

"I have just one name. I am Paula."

For the life of him he did not know what to make of her. There was the possibility that she was playing with him. In that case she played her part amazingly well! There was the possibility that she spoke in actual as well as in seeming sincerity.

"Who is your father?" he asked abruptly.

And at her answer, calmly, quietly

spoken, he was startled into the suspicion of the third possibility—madness.

For she had answered gravely:

"He is a king. His name is Midas."

From under gathered brows his eyes probed at her like knives. Was she hoaxing him, or was she mad? Unless she was crazed why did she so cleverly seek to appear so? What maid stands out before a man, stranger though he be, and poses to him in the light of an insane woman? If she were not mad, then why was she striving to make him believe her so? Then why?

He had come to her for answers, and he but got new questions that were, as yet, unanswerable. When he spoke again it was thoughtfully.

"Why do you tell me your father is King Midas?" he asked.

"Because you said to me, 'Who is your father?'"

"And you just naturally and truthfully tell me he is a king! What's the use of this nonsense?"

She made no reply. There was a little silence before he spoke. There came to him clearly the sound as of some heavy object falling upon bare floor within the cabin.

"There is some one else in there!" he exclaimed impatiently. "Who is it? Why don't they come out and answer me sensibly if you won't!"

Positively now there was a quick look of alarm upon her face. For a second he thought that she was going to whisk back into the house. And then she cried hurriedly:

"He is in there—yes. The king! And Napoleon is there and Richard and Johnny Lee. Shall I throw open the door for them to put out their guns and shoot you?"

"Great Heavens!" gasped Sheldon. And to her, wonderingly, "Why should they shoot me? What harm am I doing any one?"

"I know!" Her voice, until now so quiet, suddenly rang out passionately. "You come from the world outside,

from over there!" she threw out her arm widely toward the south. "You come over the mountains from the world outside where all men are bad! Where they fight like beasts for what we have here, where they steal and kill and cheat and lie and snatch from one another like hungry coyotes and wolves! You come here to steal and kill. I know! Haven't others come before you, bad men creeping in from the outside?"

A strange sort of shiver ran through Sheldon's blood. But, with quick inspiration, he asked her:

"And what has happened to them?"

"They died!" was the unhesitating answer. "As you, too, will die and quick if you do not go out and leave us. I should have killed you last night while you slept. But you startled me; I had never seen a man like you. The others had beards; you had no hair upon your face and for a little I thought you were a woman, another like me, and I was glad. And then you woke—and I ran. I should have killed you—"

She broke off panting, her breast rising and falling tumultuously. Her eyes were bright and hard, her tanned cheeks flushed.

"She'd drive a knife into a man sleeping and never turn a hair!" was Sheldon's silent comment.

"I tell you to go!" she flung at him again. "Before I have you killed like the others. What do you want here? What is here that belongs to you? You are looking for gold. I know! That is what the others wanted. Do you want to die as they died?"

"Listen to me!" interrupted the man sharply. "I didn't come here to hurt you. I didn't come for gold. I came because I lost the trail."

"Liar!" she cried out at him.

Silenced, he could but stand and stare at her. And slowly all sense of anger at her words died out of him and into his heart welled a great pity. For no longer did he wonder if she but played a part or was mad.

Again, through the brief silence, there came to him faintly the sound of something stirring within the cabin. He listened eagerly, hoping to guess what it was moving beyond the door she guarded so jealously. But the sound had come and gone and it was very still again.

Was there one person in there? Or were there two? Or more? Man or woman? Surely there was some one, surely there could not be two mad people here! Then why did the one in there hold back, letting her dispute entrance to the stranger? Why was there not another face to show at a crack of the door or at a window?

Questions, questions, and questions! And no one to answer them but a mad girl who said that she was Paula, daughter of King Midas! No; not even Paula to answer. For suddenly she had jerked the door open, slipped inside, and Sheldon heard the sound as of a heavy bar dropping into wooden sockets.

He was quite alone in the empty street of a town that had lived and died and been forgotten. And never in all his life had he been more uncertain what next to do.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMPANY PAULA KEPT.

LESS for the breakfast without which he had left camp than realizing the wisdom to caching his blankets and provisions, Sheldon's first step was back toward the spot where Buck grazed.

If those within the old cabin meant to seek to escape talking with him they would not stir forth immediately but would peer forth many times, cautiously, to make certain that in reality he was not watching from shelter of the grove. He could dispose of his pack, eat hastily and be again in front of the cabin within less than an hour.

He drew back swiftly, made sure with a glance over his shoulder that the door

had remained shut, the shutters of the windows undisturbed, slipped through the fir grove and then broke into a trot, headed up the meadow.

Selecting some tinned goods hurriedly, he rolled everything else, blankets and all, in his canvas, found a hiding place which suited him in a tiny, rocky gorge, piled rocks on top of the cache, and returned for his horse. Buck he led deeper into the forest that lay upon the eastern rim of the valley and left there where there was pasture and water, hobbling him for fear of the long tie rope getting tangled about the bushes which grew under the trees.

When the pack-saddle had been tossed into a clump of these bushes he felt reasonably sure that his outfit was safe for the short time he expected to be away from it. Then, eating as he went, he turned back to the town which Paula, the daughter of Midas, called Johnny's Luck.

As he came again into the abandoned street he examined each ruined cabin as he passed it, stopping for all that still stood, making his way to the door through more than one weed-grown yard, slipping in at door or window where the buildings were still upon the rim of being habitable.

Nor were his puzzles lessened at the signs everywhere that men, when they had given over these dwellings, had gone in wild haste. They had not taken fittings and furnishings with them, at least nothing cumbersome had gone out.

He could picture the exit from the homes that had been almost a frenzied rushing out of doors flung rudely open and left to gape stupidly after their departing masters. Yes, and mistresses. For it was written in dusty signs that women, too, had walked here and had fled as though from some dread menace.

But to a man knowing the vivid tales of the western country as Sheldon knew them here was a mystery which must soon grow clear as the memory of half-forgotten stories came back to him.

He saw rude chairs and tables standing idly under dust of many, many years' accumulation; chairs which had been pushed back violently as men sprang to their feet, some overturned and left to sprawl awkwardly until, as time ran by, they fell apart and in due time came to disintegrate as all other things physical crumble in the world.

He saw pictures tacked to walls, knew that they had been cheap colored prints or newspaper illustrations; thick earthenware dishes and utensils of iron and tin upon more than one stone hearth, invariably the homes of spiders; cupboards where food had lain and rotted, discoloring the unpainted wood; a thousand little homely articles which in the ordinary course of house vacating would have been packed and taken away.

Johnny's Luck had been a mining town; for no other conceivable reason would men have made a town here at all as long ago as Johnny's Luck gave every evidence of having been builded. And its life had been that of many another village of the far-out land in the days of the early mining madness.

Rumor of gold, strong rumor of gold, had brought many men and some few women, most of the latter what the world calls bad, some few perhaps what God calls good, to answer the call and the lure.

They had been so sure that they had builded not mere shanties, but solid homes of logs; they had remained here for many months—and then, no doubt, the bottom had fallen out of Johnny's Luck. The vein had pinched out; the gold was gone.

And then, so did Sheldon reconstruct the past from the dust-covered ruin about him, word had come to Johnny's Luck of another strike out yonder somewhere, beyond the next ridge, perhaps; perhaps a hundred miles away. That word had come into camp mysteriously as word of gold always travels; men had whispered it to their "pard-

ners" and in its own fashion the word had spread.

There had been that first attempt at stealing away by stealth as some few hoped to be miles from camp before every one knew. Others had seen; men in that day attributed but the one motive to hasty, stealthy departure.

The stealing away had turned into a mad rush. Some one, a nervous man or an excitable woman, had cried out the magic word, "Gold!" And then homes had been deserted with a speed which was like frenzy; a few precious belongings had been snatched up; chairs and even tables overturned, and down the long street of Johnny's Luck they had gone, fighting for the place at the fore, the whole camp. And, for some reason, they had never come back. Perhaps they had come to learn that Johnny's Luck was unlucky.

It was simple enough after all, he told himself as he came at length to the base of the knoll upon which stood the cabin into which the girl had gone. Like everything else in the world, simple enough when once one understood.

Up and down the Pacific coast, from tidewater some mountainous hundreds of miles inland, how many towns had grown up like Johnny's Luck, almost in a night, only to be given over to the wild again, deserted and forgotten in another night. There are many, some still lifting vertical walls, some mere mounds of grass-grown earth where one may dig and find a child's tin cup or a broken whisky bottle.

Simple enough when one understood, he pondered, staring at the closed door. But what explanation lay just here; this girl could not have been born when Johnny's Luck flourished; whence had she come, and why?

It was broad morning, the sun rising clear above the last of the trees so that its light fell upon the two beds of red flowers. On the doorstep lay the bearskin as he had left it. From the rock and dirt chimney smoke rose. Coming

closer to the house he heard now and then a sound of one walking within. He fancied that he heard a voice, hardly more than a whisper.

His purpose taken, he stood watching, waiting. If he had to stay here until some one came out, if he were forced to linger here all day, camp here to-night, he was not going away until the last question was answered.

"I'd be a brute to go off and leave her alone here," he told himself stubbornly. "Or, perhaps, worse than alone. The poor little devil won't know how to take care of herself; God knows what she's up against as it is. Anyway, here I stay!"

The windows remained shuttered; the door stood unopened; the smoke from the chimney grew a faint gray line against the sky and was gone; it was death-still in the house. An hour passed and Sheldon, striding back and forth, on the watch for a possible attempt to slip away through a door which he had found at the rear, grew impatient.

Another hour, and never a sound. Such watching and waiting, with nothing discovered to reward his patience, was the death of what little patience was a part of John Sheldon's makeup.

"I've waited long enough," he muttered.

He strode straight between the beds of red flowers, up the three steps made of logs, and rapped at the door. The sounds died away as all sounds seemed to do here, swallowed by the silence, echoless, as though killed by thick walls. So he knocked again, calling out:

"I've no habit of prying into other peoples' business, but I am not used to being treated like a leper, either. Open the door or I shall batter it down."

Hurried whispers within, then silence. He waited for a moment. Then swinging back his rifle he drove the butt mightily against the door, close to the latch. There was a little cry then, Paula's voice he was sure, a cry of pure fear.

"Poor little thing," he thought. "She thinks I'm going to kill her!"

But he struck again and the thick panel of the door, dry and old, cracked. Again, and Paula's voice again, this time calling:

"Wait! Wait and I will come!"

"No," he answered in flat stubbornness. "I'll not wait. I am coming inside. Open the door."

"You cannot! You must not! What is it that you want here? What have we that you would take away from us? Go back into the world outside. Go quick—before we kill you!"

He laughed savagely.

"You are not going to kill me. And we've talked nonsense long enough. I tell you I am not going to hurt you. Who is in there with you? Why doesn't he talk?"

Whispers, quick, sharp, agitated. But no answer. Sheldon waited, grew suddenly angry and struck with all his might. The door cracked again; two long cracks showed running up and down. But the bar within held and the cracks gave no glimpse of the room's interior. He struck once more.

"Wait!" Paula's voice again, strangely quiet. "I am coming."

He stepped back a little, standing just at the side of the door, his rifle clubbed and lifted. There was so little telling what next to expect here in a land which seemed to him a land of madness. He heard her at the door.

She was taking down the bar. He was sure of it. But why was she so long about it? And it seemed to him that in the simple process she made an unnecessary amount of noise. And she kept talking, rapidly now, her voice raised, her utterances almost incoherent as though she labored under some tremendous excitement:

"Don't you see I am opening the door? But you must step back, down the steps. I'll hear you going. I am afraid. You might reach out and seize me. Just a minute now, only a minute.

I don't hear you though. You must go down the steps. Then I will come out; then you can come in. I am hurrying—hurrying as fast as I can."

It only whetted his suspicion. What was going on just ten feet from him, beyond that wall? There was no loop-hole through which an out-thrust gun barrel could menace him, he had seen to that. And, if a gun was thrust out as the door opened, he could strike first; he was ready. But if he went back down the steps—

Suddenly he knew. He heard a little scraping sound which, low as it was, rose above the sound of Paula's young voice. It was at that other door at the back. Some one was there, opening it cautiously. The forest came down close to the house at the back.

He leaped down the steps and ran around the side of the house, of no mind to have them give him the slip this way.

"Hurry!" Paula had heard him, had guessed his purpose as he theirs, and was screaming, "Hurry! He is coming!"

The rear door, little used perhaps, had caught. But as Sheldon raced around the corner of the cabin the door was flung violently open and an astonishingly, wildly uncouth figure shot out, making strange, horrible sounds in his throat as he ran.

It was a man, so tall and gaunt that it seemed rather the caricature of a man. Clad in shirt and trousers, the flying feet were bare. The head was bare, and from it the hair, long and snow white, floated out behind him. The beard, long and unkempt, was as white as the hair of his head.

His eyes—Sheldon saw them looking for one brief moment straight into his own—were the burning, brilliant eyes of a madman. Had there been doubt in the case of the girl there was room for no doubt here. The man was only too clearly a maniac.

Just the one look into the terrible eyes was given to Sheldon. The man ran as Paula had run this morning, but with a

greater, more frantic speed. Crying out strange, broken fragments of words he dashed into the trees. And Sheldon stopped.

Paula was still in the house. With little chance to overtake the man, with no wish to have them both escape him, Sheldon whirled and running with all the speed in him, came to the open door. It slammed in his face; Paula, too, had just reached it. But not yet had she had time to make it fast. He threw his weight against it; he could hear her panting and crying out in terror. The door flew open. He was in the house.

But now she was running to the other door. The bar there was still in its place. Her hands lost no time now, but whipped it out, dropped it clattering to the bare floor, jerked the door open.

She was on the steps, outside when Sheldon's arms closed about her. She screamed and tore at his arms as he swept her off of her feet. He marveled at the strength in her; he felt the muscles of her body against his and they were like iron. But he held her.

She struck at his face, beating at him with hard little fists. But he held her. And at that she had in her all the fierceness of a mountain cat. She was pantherine in her rage that flashed at him from her eyes, in the supple strength of her body, in all the fierceness which he had whipped to the surface.

Though she struggled, he brought her back into the cabin. He even managed to slam the door and, while he held her and she beat at him, to drop the bar back into place. He carried her across the room to a tumbled bunk there and threw her down upon it, standing between her and the rear door, still open.

Suddenly she was quite still. She lay there, her breast shaking to the rage and fear that shone in her eyes. She did not seek to move, but lay breathing deeply, watching him.

From somewhere far out in the woods there floated to them a strange cry billowing weirdly through the stillness.

Sheldon stepped across the room and picked up his rifle.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHN SHELDON—MAGICIAN.

SHE stirred a very little; then lay still again. Pantherine! The word described her as no other word could do. Even in the little movement there was the litheness and grace that is so characteristic of the monster wild cats. Her eyes moved swiftly with every slightest move on his part.

She was like an animal a man has trapped, watching him narrowly, understanding something of his purpose, groping to read it all. When her eyes left him at all it was to travel in a flash to the door, to come back as swiftly. He still stood in the way. He was almost over her, so that he could be upon her before she was fairly on her feet.

Now the wild rise and fall of her breasts had lessened a little. She breathed more regularly, with now and then a long, lung-filling sigh. She lay with one arm flung above her head, the other at her side. He saw the red marks of his hands upon her wrists and frowned.

He had been as gentle as he could. But only unmerciful strength, not gentleness, could have quieted her. He thought how different she was from any girl in that outside world of which she spoke as a land of wickedness.

He, too, kept his eyes upon her, her and the open door. But he glanced about the room. The interior of the cabin was just what he could have imagined it to be. A few rough chairs, a table, some dishes, a fireplace with a littered hearth, a partition across the room with a bunk on each side.

He found that he was breathing as quickly as she was. His forehead was wet. As he looked down at her, resting, she seemed merely a slender, sun-browned slip of a girl. He marveled at the strength in that trim little body.

"I am sorry if I hurt you," he said quietly when a few moments had passed in silence. "I didn't want to hurt you. I don't want to hurt you ever. Won't you believe me?"

She made no answer, but continued to stare at him, a hint of a frown gathering her brows, her eyes dark with distrust. From the depths of his heart he pitied her. Would it not be better if he turned now and went out of the house, leaving her? If he went his way back over the mountains and into the "outside world," carrying not even the tale to tell of her? Mad, born of a mad father, what hope lay in life for her?

"Little Paula," he said gently, soothingly, as he might have spoken to a very little girl, "I am sorry for you. Very sorry, little Paula. I want to be your friend. Can't you believe me?"

Troubled eyes, eyes filled with distrust and fear and emotions which blended and were too vague for him to grasp, answered him silently. He moved a step; her eyes, full of eagerness, turned to the open door.

"No," he said steadily. "You can't go yet. Pretty soon I am going to let you go; you and your father. And I will go away and not even tell that you are here. He is your father, isn't he?"

"Yes," she said dully.

"All I want now," went on Sheldon, his voice as gentle as he could make it, "is for you to rest and stay with me until your father comes back."

"He will never come back while you are here," she said listlessly. "Never."

"He'll be away a deuced long, long time then," he assured her grimly. "I'll stay all year if I have to. What makes you think he won't come back if I am here?"

"I know," she answered decidedly.

She stopped there. He questioned her still further, but she was defiantly silent, so he drew a chair up and sat down, his rifle across his knees. She watched him curiously, losing not so much as his slightest gesture.

Perplexed, he brought out his pipe, scarcely conscious that he did so. It was his way to smoke at times of uncertainty when he sought to find a way out. He swept a match across his thigh, set it to the bowl of his pipe, drew at it deeply, and sent out a great cloud of smoke.

"You are a devil!" she screamed. "A devil!"

She had leaped to her feet, seeking to stoop under his arms as he sprang in front of her, wildly endeavoring to escape through the open door. But he caught her and carried her back to the bunk. She fought as she had fought before, striking at him, scratching, even trying to sink her teeth into his forearm.

"I'm not the one who is the devil!" he panted as at last he had thrust her back and stood over her again.

His pipe had fallen to the floor. He saw that her eyes were upon it now instead of on him. And the look in them was one of pure terror. She was afraid of a man's pipe!

Suddenly he understood and his abrupt laughter, startling her, whipped her piercing look back to him. She drew away from him, crouching against the wall, ready to strike if he drew closer or to leap again toward the liberty he denied her. And Sheldon, even while he pitied her, laughed. He could not help it.

But in a little, heartily ashamed of himself, and yet grinning over his words, he said to her:

"You poor little thing, that isn't any infernal apparatus! It's just a pipe and the stuff in it isn't brimstone, but merely Virginia tobacco. Everybody smokes outside—that is, pretty nearly all the men do," he added hastily. "But I shouldn't have smoked without asking your consent, in the first place, and I shouldn't inflict that old pipe on any one if he did consent. But, honestly, Paula, there's nothing satanic about it." "Liar!" she flung at him in scornful disbelief.

He picked up the pipe, knocked out

the fire, and stuffed it back into his pocket.

"Look here," he said quietly, his good-natured grin still in evidence at the corners of his mouth and in his eyes; "you've just made up your mind to hate me and call me names. It isn't fair. Give me a chance, why don't you? I'm not half as bad as you're trying to make me out."

She looked her disbelief, offering no remark. She made no pretenses; she hated him, held him in high scorn, would have struck him down had she been able, would dodge out of the door and slip away into the forest if he gave her the chance.

But, sane or mad, there was one characteristic which she had in common with all other human beings. Even through her fear and distrust of him, always had her curiosity looked out nakedly. He sought to take advantage of this to make her listen to him, then to draw her out a little. So, speaking slowly and quietly, he began to tell her of his trip in, of having lost his trail, of many trifling incidents of the journey.

Then he spoke of Belle Fortune, of men and women there, of the sort of lives they led. And of the world beyond Belle Fortune, the world "outside." Of Seattle and San Francisco, of the ships and ferry-boats, of stores and theaters, of public gatherings, dances, picnics; of how women dressed and how men gambled—a thousand little colored bits of life with which he wished to interest her.

"Men are not bad out there," he assured her. "Some are, of course; but most of them are not. They help one another often enough; they are friends and partners, and a pretty good sort."

He talked with her thusly for an hour. Through it she sat very still, her back against the wall, her knees drawn up between her clasped hands, her eyes steady upon his. What emotions, if any, he stirred in her breast, he could not guess. Her expression altered very little—never to show what she thought of him.

He felt rather hopeless, ready to give

over in despair, when out of her calm and apparently unconcerned, uninterested quiet came the first swift, unexpected question. He was speaking carelessly of some friends in Vancouver with whom he had visited—the Grahams, who had the bulliest little team of twins you ever saw—

"Tell me about them!" she interrupted eagerly.

Sheldon, in his surprise at hearing her speak at all, lost the thread of his story.

"The Grahams?" he asked. "Why, they—"

"No, the babies," she said. "I have never seen a baby. Just little baby bears and squirrels."

She stopped as abruptly as she had begun, her lips tight shut. But Sheldon had gropingly understood a wee bit of what lay in the girl's heart, and hurried to answer, pretending not to see her return to her stubborn taciturnity.

"Well," he told her, pleased so that his good-humored smile came back into his eyes, "they're just the cutest little pair of rascals you ever saw. Bill and Bet, they call 'em. Just two years when I saw them last; walking around, you know, and looking on at life as though they knew all about it. And up to 'most anything. They are something like young bears, come to think about it! Just about as awkward, falling over everything. And rolypoly, fat as butterballs. Why, would you believe it—"

And so forth. Before he got through he made a fairly creditable story of it, combining in the Graham twins all the baby tricks he had ever seen, heard, or read of. He affected not to be watching her all the time, but none the less saw that there was at last a little sparkle of interest in her eyes.

"Poor little starved heart," he thought. "Mad as she is, she is still woman enough to suffer for the want of little children about her."

When he had done with the twins there was a long silence in the cabin. He had pretty well talked himself out, in the first

place. And in the second, he wanted time to think. He couldn't sit here and babble on this way indefinitely. Soon or late he must seek actively, rather than thus passively, for the solution to his problem.

Leaning back in his chair, his hands clasped behind his head, he smiled at her pleasantly. And he fancied that she was puzzled by him, that almost she was ready to wonder if all men were in truth the creatures of evil she so evidently had thought them. Was she almost ready to believe in him a little bit?

"Swallow some more fire," said Paula suddenly.

"Eh?" muttered Sheldon.

"Yes," she told him. "I won't run this time."

His lips twitching, he drew out his pipe and again lighted it. He saw that she was tremendously interested. The scratching of the match made her draw back as though from a threatened blow, but she caught herself and did not move again. He drew in a great mouthful of smoke and sent it out ceilingward. She watched that, too, interestedly.

"You see," he informed her with a semblance of gravity as deep as her own, "I don't swallow the fire. I just take in the smoke and send it out again."

"Why do you do it?" she wanted to know. "Is it some sort of magic?"

"Bless you, no!" he chuckled. "It's just for fun; a kind of habit, you know. A man smokes just as you'd eat ice-cream or candy, or something that was fun to eat. Just as— By glory!" He caught himself up. "I'll bet you don't know what candy is! Do you?"

She shook her head.

"Those little fire-sticks." She kept him to the subject which now held her interest. "They are magic, though."

He tossed a match to her.

"Light it," he said. "You can do it. You poor little kid!"

But she drew away from it, shaking her head violently. And, taking a chance that he read her character in one particular, he called her "Coward!"

She flashed a look at him that was full of angry defiance, and reaching out quickly took up the match. He saw that her hand shook. But her determination did not. She scratched the match upon the wall, held it while it burned. And her eyes, while the embers fell to her lap, were dancing with excitement.

"Another!" she cried, like a child, in evident forgetfulness of her hostility. "Another!"

She lighted them one after the other. Over the second she laughed delightedly. It was the first time he had heard her laugh. He laughed with her, as delighted as she. She struck a full dozen before he stopped her, saying that matches were gold-precious on the trail and must be hoarded.

"Then let me swallow smoke!" she commanded.

The vision of this splendid young girl-animal smoking his black old pipe tickled his sense of humor, and it was difficult for him to explain seriously what in most likelihood would be the result to her..

"You've missed a lot of fun, little Paula," he told her through the cloud of smoke, which seemed of far greater interest to her than were his words. "If you've actually lived here all your life, as I'm beginning to believe you have. Never saw a man smoke; never tasted ice-cream or candy; never saw a two-year-old baby toddling around from one mishap to another; never saw a street-car, or a boat, or a man who had had a shave! By golly," growing enthusiastic over it, "never ate a strawberry shortcake or had a cup of coffee! Whew!"

He put his hand into his pocket. He had seized his lunch from his pack hurriedly and at random. In his haste he had thought to pick out a can of beans and one of corn. He had eaten the beans, and had found that he had not brought the corn, but the one tin of peaches which he had brought with him from Belle Fortune.

Such things as peaches were luxuries; but Sheldon had known aforetime the

hunger for sweets which will come to a man when he's deep in the woods. He opened his knife, and under Paula's bright eyes cut out a great circle in the tin top. He speared a half of a golden-yellow peach, and tasted it to reassure her. Then he gave her the can.

"Taste that," he offered.

Paula tasted, a bit anxiously, taking out the peach with her finger-tips. There came into her expression something of utter surprise, then delight little short of ecstasy. And then—he marveled how daintily such an act could be performed—she licked the sirup from her fingers.

"Good?" he chuckled.

Paula smiled at him.

Smiled! The red lips parted prettily; the white teeth showed for a flashing instant. The smile warmed him, went dancing through his blood. It was a quick smile, quickly gone. The white teeth were busy with the second peach.

"They were nice," said Paula. She had finished, and turned to him with a great sigh of satisfaction. Sheldon's peaches were gone.

"I've got a slab of sweetened chocolate in my pack," he told her, trying not to look surprised at the empty tin. "I'll bring it to you. It's like candy."

"You are nice, too," said Paula. "Are all bad men nice?"

Again Sheldon plunged into a long argument meant to convince her that he wasn't a bad man at all. He rather overdid it, in fact, so that had Paula believed all he told her, she must have thought him an angel. But Paula didn't believe.

"You tell me too many lies," she said quietly when he had done.

He protested and went over the ground again. But in one thing he was greatly pleased; at last she talked with him. He felt that at least some little gain had been made. And he hoped that, in spite of her words, she held him in less horror than she had at first.

Once more he sought to draw her out, to get her to talk of herself, of her life, of her father.

"Have you really lived here all your life?" he asked casually.

"Yes," she answered.

"And you know absolutely nothing of the world outside?"

"I know that all men there are bad. That they kill and steal and lie."

"How do you know this?"

"My father has told me."

"What does he know about it?"

"He knows everything. He is very wise. And once he lived there. Men were so wicked that he left them and came away to live here. He brought me with him. Once," she informed him gravely, "I was a little baby like the twins. I grew up big, you know."

"Not so dreadfully big," he protested. "And you live here year in and year out?"

She nodded.

"But the winters? There must be a deuced lot of snow. How do you manage?"

"There is not too damn much snow in here," she informed him. "The mountains all around are so high they stop much of it."

"Young ladies in the world outside," he remarked soberly, though with a twinkle in his eyes, "don't say 'damn.'"

"Don't they?" asked Paula. "Why?"

"They call it a bad word," he explained. "Maybe it is you, in here, who are bad—"

"Papa says damn," she insisted. "He is not bad. He is good."

"We'll let it go, then. Don't other men ever come here?"

"Not many. They never come to Johnny's Luck."

"Why?"

"Papa kills them."

"Good Lord!" The coolness of her statement, the careless tone, shocked him.

"We see their camp-fire smoke sometimes a long way off."

"That's the way you came upon me first, on the other side of the mountain?"

She nodded.

"How was it, then, you came out, and

not your amiable father? You don't—don't do the work sometimes, do you?"

"No. I don't like to kill things."

"And your father rather enjoys it?"

"N-no." She hesitated. "But he must. For they are bad, and would hurt us and take away—"

"Take away what?" demanded Sheldon sharply.

But she shut her lips tight, and the suspicion came back into her eyes.

"Oh, well," he said hastily, "it doesn't matter. Only you can rest assured that I didn't come to take anything away. Unless," lightly, though with deep earnestness under the tone, "you will let me take you and your father back with me?"

The look of suspicion changed to sudden terror.

"No, no!" she cried. "We won't go—"

"You'd see other women, and they'd be good to you," he went on gently. "You'd see their babies, and you'd love them. You'd have girls of your own age to talk with. You've got to believe me, Paula. The world isn't filled with wicked people. That's all a mistake."

He thought that she wanted to believe him. She looked for one brief instant hungry to believe. He pressed the point. But in the end she shook her head.

"Papa has told me," she said when he had done. "Papa knows."

The picture of that gaunt, wild-eyed, terribly uncouth man with brain on fire with madness was very clear in his mind. And how she trusted in him, how she believed in his wisdom. To Sheldon, here was the most piteous case of his experience. He wondered if the whole affair would end in his taking the girl in his arms by sheer brute strength and so carrying her out of this cursed place. Or, after all, would it be better, better for her, if he went away and left them?

"I don't know what to do!" he muttered, speaking his thought.

A little sound at the door startled him. He turned swiftly, his hands tightening about his rifle.

A squirrel squatted on its haunches on the door-step, its bright, round eyes fixed on him in unwinking steadiness. With quick flirt of bushy tail a second squirrel appeared from without. He leaped by his brother, landed fairly inside, saw Sheldon, and turned, chattering, and went scampering out. From the yard he, too, looked in curiously. There came the third, drawing near cautiously until he, too, sat up on the door-step.

Paula called to them softly, so softly that Sheldon, at her side, barely heard the call. It came from low in her throat, and was strangely musical and soothing. She called again. The squirrels pricked up their ears.

At the third call one of them came through the doorway, hesitated, made a great circle around Sheldon so that the bushy tail brushed the wall, and with a quick little jump was on the bunk and under the girl's arm. His brothers, emboldened, followed him. From Paula's protecting arms they looked out at Sheldon with a suspicion not unlike that which had been so much in her own eyes.

The girl cuddled them, cooing to them, making those strange, soft sounds deep in her throat. She looked up at Sheldon with the second of her quick smiles.

"They are Napoleon and Richard and Johnny Lee!" she told him brightly. "They are my little friends. Kiss me, Napoleon!"

And Napoleon obeyed.

CHAPTER IX.

"BEARS ARE SMARTER."

IT was high noon. Sheldon needed no glance at his watch to tell him that. He was hungry.

He went to the door, which had remained open all morning—left so in hope of the return of the mad man—and closed it. Paula's eyes followed him intently. He made the door fast by putting its bar across it. A bit of wood from a pile of faggots by the fireplace he

forced down tight between the bar and the door, jamming it so that if the girl sought to jerk it loose it would take time. He treated the bar of the front door similarly.

The clip of cartridges he slipped out of his rifle, dropping it into his pocket. He had thrown no cartridge into the barrel. Then he put the gun down, turned again toward Paula, and said smilingly: "Turn about is fair play. I gave you a can of peaches; suppose that you treat me to the lunch?"

An instant ago she had been teasing Napoleon and showing no hint of distress. Suddenly now her lips were quivering; for the first time he saw the tears start into her eyes.

"Won't you go away?" she asked pleadingly. "Please, please go away!"

"Why," he said in astonishment, "what is the matter? Don't you want to give me something to eat?"

"Oh," she cried, even her voice shaking, "I'll give you anything if you'll only go away! You are bad, bad to keep me here like this; to drive papa away—"

"I didn't drive him away. I don't want him away. I am waiting for him to come back. That's all I am waiting for!"

"But he won't! While you are here he won't come back. And, out there, he will die."

"Die!" muttered Sheldon. "What's the matter with him?"

Slowly the tears welled up and spilled over, running unchecked down her cheeks. Sheldon, little used to women, shifted uneasily, not knowing what to do, feeling that he should do something. Napoleon, wiser in matters of this sort, made his way to her shoulder and rubbed his soft body sympathetically against her cheek.

"Open the door," begged Paula. "Be good to me and open the door. Let me go to him."

"You would not know where to find him," he protested.

"Oh, yes, I would! I would go to him, running."

"He is sick?" he asked.

Other tears followed the first, unnoticed by the girl. Sheldon thought of the Graham twins: they cried that way some time, only more noisily. They kept their eyes open wide and looked at you, and the tears came until you wondered where they all came from.

"Two times," she said, her voice trembling, "I have thought he was dead!" She shuddered. "I have seen dead things. Oh, it is terrible! This morning I thought he was dead! He did not answer when I talked with him. And he lay still; I could not feel him breathe. I ran out. I was frightened. I cried out aloud. You heard me and ran to kill me, and I ran here. And he was not dead! Oh, I was glad! But if you do not let me go to him now—he will die—I know he will die. And I will be all alone—and it gets so still sometimes that I can't breathe. Please let me go! Please be good to me!"

She came to him hurriedly. Napoleon sprang down and chattered in a corner. She caught up Sheldon's hand and held it, her eyes lifted to his pleadingly.

"Don't be bad to me," she murmured over and over. "Be good to me, and let me go to him."

When Bill and Bet came to him this way he knew what to do with them. He picked them up, an arm about each one, and carried them about adventuring until their mama expostulated. And, surreptitiously now and then when no one was looking, he kissed their red, little, moist mouths.

"Please," said Paula. "I shall not call you bad any more. I shall say you are good and love you. Please."

"Hang it!" muttered John Sheldon.

"Please!" said Paula.

"You see—"

"Please!" said Paula. She laid her wet cheek against his hand. "Please!"

"Now look here, young lady," he told her, flattering himself that he had achieved a remarkable dignity, and looking more awkward than John Sheldon had ever

looked before; "I'll compromise with you. You say you know where he is? All right. Sit down and we'll eat, you and I. You will then show me the way, and we'll go and find him and bring him back here. I haven't hurt you, have I? I won't hurt him. No," as her lips shaped to another "please," "I'm not going to let you go alone. We go together—or we stay right here. Which is it?"

Paula frowned. Then she wiped away the tears. Whether some deep feminine instinct had told her that they had almost served their purpose but were useless now will, perhaps, never be known. She went across the room to a rude cupboard, and brought from it a blackened pot containing a meat stew. Sheldon was hungry enough to dispense with the stew being warmed up. Merely to make conversation to divert her thoughts from her father's danger, he said carelessly:

"You must have trouble getting your meat? You can't have much ammunition." He tasted the stew, and found it, although salt was noticeably wanted, savory and palatable. "What sort of meat is it?" he asked.

"Snakes!" said Paula.

Sheldon had swallowed just before putting the last question. Paula was given the joy of seeing his tanned cheeks pale a little. A look of horror came into his eyes. Then he caught an expression of lively malice in hers, malice and mirth commingled.

"Snakes and lizards," said Paula. "We catch 'em in holes—"

"You little devil!" muttered the man under his breath. And to show her that he knew now that she was making fun of him, he went back to his stew. "Just the same, Miss Paula," he told her threateningly, "if we ever do get to the outside I'll take you to dinner some time, and I'll order oysters and shrimps for you. And crab and lobster, by glory! I wonder what you'll say at that?"

Paula didn't know, didn't have any opinion on the subject.

"They are fishes," she hazarded the

opinion with an uncertain show at certainty. "We eat fishes, too."

He ate his scanty meal, insisting upon her coming to sit across the table from him. She watched him, but refused to eat. Plainly she was still deeply distressed. Her eyes were never still, going from him to the door, to the rifle on the floor by him, to the door again. But she made no further attempt at escape.

Meanwhile he took this opportunity to examine the cabin more carefully than he had done so far. A broken bottle stood in a corner, serving as a vase for a handful of field flowers. Upon the walls were a number of pictures gleaned years ago from newspapers—one a view of the business section of a city, one a seascape, one a lady in a ball dress of about 1860 or 1870, one a couple of kittens.

Upon the wall on Paula's side of the partition was a bulge, which was evidently the young woman's wardrobe, covered over with a blanket hung from pegs. An ax with a crude handle lay on the floor. A long, heavy box served both as receptacle for odds and ends, and, covered with a plank, as a bench.

"Now," said Sheldon, "shall we go and find your father?"

Paula did not hesitate, nor did she again seek to dissuade him from his purpose.

"Yes," she said.

He went to the rear door and opened it.

"You must understand," he told her, standing in the way so that she could not pass him, his rifle in his right hand, his left extended to her, "that I am not going to take any chances of losing you too. You can run faster than I can, and I don't want you to prove it again. You must give me your hand."

For an instant she drew away from him, the old distrustful look coming back.

"I would like to kill *you*!" she said in a way which made him believe that she meant what she said. Then she came to him and slipped her hand into his.

So they went out into the sunlight, side

by side, Sheldon's hand gripping Paula's tightly.

"Which way?" he asked.

"This way." She nodded toward the forest closing in about them at the east. That way the madman had gone. She seemed to feel no uncertainty, but walked on briskly, holding as far away from him as she could manage so that her arm stretched out almost horizontally from her shoulder.

So they went on for a hundred yards or so, through the great trees that stood like living columns all about them. Every nerve tense, Sheldon sought to watch her, trusting her as little as she him, and at the same time keep a lookout for her father.

One thing he had missed from the cabin which he had expected to find there. If the madman had killed those wanderers who incurred his kingly displeasure by venturing into his realm, then he must have taken their guns with their other belongings.

There had been no rifle leaning against the wall, no pistol to be seen. What had become of them? Certainly no adventuring prospector had ever come in here without, at the least, his side-arms. It was quite possible that the madman kept them secreted somewhere in the forest; that he had run for a rifle; that even now he was crouching behind a clump of bushes, his burning eyes peering over the sights.

At every little sound Sheldon turned this way or that sharply. There was so little calculating what a madman would do! But he must take his chances if he did not mean to turn tail and run out of the whole affair. And he told himself that it had been perhaps a matter of years since a stranger had brought fresh ammunition here; that the madman would have long ago exhausted his supply hunting.

They went in silence. Paula's eyes showed a great preoccupation; Sheldon had little enough mind for talk. As the forest grew denser about them, and the

undergrowth thickened, they came into a narrow path, well trodden. Now Paula, despite her evident distaste, was forced to walk close at his side, sometimes slipping a little behind him. He judged that they had gone a full mile before they came to a distinct forking of the trails.

"We go this way," said Paula, indicating the trail leading off toward the right.

They turned as she directed. Sheldon felt a tremor run through the girl's arm and looked at her inquiringly. But the emotion, however inspired, had passed. She came on, her hand lying relaxed in his, walking close at his side, passive.

Presently she said:

"We must watch for him now. We are near the place."

On either hand were many small trees, here and there a fallen log, everywhere small shrubs which he did not recognize, thick with bright red berries. He watched Paula, watched even more for the madman. They came into a cleared space as wide as an ordinary room.

"Look yonder!" cried the girl sharply.

She had thrown up her left hand, pointing across his breast. He looked swiftly.

In an instant she was no longer passive. With all of that supple strength which he knew to lie in that beautiful body of hers, she had thrown herself against him, pushing at him. His weight was greater, so much greater than hers, that though taken unaware he was barely budged two paces.

But that was ample for the purpose of Paula. He heard a sharp crackling of dead branches and leaves, the ground gave way under his feet, and crashing through a flimsy covering of slender limbs and twigs he plunged downward, falling sheer.

He threw out his arm to save himself, his rifle was flung several feet away, Paula had jerked free, and with the breath jolted out of his body, he lay upon his back in a pit ten feet deep struggling to free himself of the branches which he had brought with him in his fall.

At last he stood up. He had strained an ankle in striking, he did not know for the moment whether or not he had broken his left arm. His hands and face were scratched, his body was sore, his face grew red to a towering rage.

Standing at the brink of the pit, stooping a little to look down at him, was Paula. He had never seen a look of greater, gladder triumph upon a human face.

"You are not very smart," said Paula contemptuously, "to get caught in a trap like that. Bears are smarter!"

John Sheldon, for the first time on record, swore violently in the presence of a young woman. She did not appear in the least shocked; perhaps she was accustomed to occasional outbursts from her father. Rather, she looked delighted. In fact, she clapped her hands, and there came down to him, to swell his rage, her tinkling laughter.

"When I get out of this I'm going to spank you," he growled, meaning every word of it. "Good and hard, too! Don't you know you might have broken my neck?"

"You are not coming out," dimpled Paula. "If you are very good I will feed you every day and bring you water."

Sheldon answered her with an angry silence. There is no wrath like that which has in it something of self accusation; he might have expected something like this. Turning his back on her he sought the way out of the bear pit. Forthwith his anger, like a tube of quicksilver carried out into the hot sun, mounted to new heights while he did not.

The trap was cunningly made, must have required weeks in the excavation. At the bottom it was some ten feet wide; at the opening above his head perhaps not over eight feet. Thus its walls sloped in at the top, and he promptly saw the futility of trying to scramble out. He would have to use his sheath-knife; hack hand holds and dig places out for his feet, and at that he saw that he would have his work cut out for him.

And his rifle lay on the ground above!

A sudden, disquieting vision was vividly outlined in his imagination. Suppose that the madman came now! He could stand above, and if he had nothing but stones to hurl down— The vision ended with a shudder as Sheldon remembered two bleached piles of bones.

Crouching, he leaped upward, seizing the pith's edge. The soil crumbled, gave way. He slipped back. He heard Paula's laughter, coolly taunting. He crouched, leaped again, furious as he found no hand hold. To try again would, but be to make a fool of himself.

Among the broken branches about him he sought one strong enough to bear his weight. He stood it upright against the wall of the pit. With his knife in one hand driven into the bank, the other hand gripping the leaning branch, he sought to climb out. And then, from across the pit, at his back, Paula called sharply:

"Stop! I am going to shoot!"

He slipped back and turned toward her. She was on her knees, his rifle in her hands, the barrel looking unnaturally large as it described nervously erratic arcs and ellipses. But Paula's eyes, looking very determined, threatened him along the sights.

With a feeling of devout thankfulness he remembered that he had taken out the clip of cartridges at the cabin. Then, with sudden sinking heart, he remembered also that before he opened the door to come out he had again slipped the clip in.

What he could not remember, to save him, was whether or not he had thrown a cartridge into the barrel!

"I've got one chance out of a thousand, and a cursed slim chance it is!" he told himself grimly. "She can't miss me at this range if she tries!"

Here lay his one chance: *If* he had not thrown a cartridge into the barrel, and *if* the girl knew nothing of an automatic rifle, he might have time to get out yet before she discovered how to operate it.

These two "ifs" struck him at that moment as the tallest pair of ifs he had ever met.

He racked his brains for the answer to that one question: "Did I throw a load into the barrel?" One moment he was certain that he remembered doing so; the next he was as certain that he had not. He was very uncomfortable.

"I've got to shoot you!" Paula was crying. "I don't want to, oh! I don't want to shoot you. But you would kill us. You would kill papa and—I'm going to shoot!"

"For God's sake shoot and get it over with, then!" muttered Sheldon. He didn't think that he was a coward, but he knew that he was white as a ghost. And he didn't even know that the gun was loaded!

The gun barrel wavered uncertainly. The girl's finger was on the trigger that a very slight pressure would set off—and it made him faint to see how that finger was shaking! Paula had one eye shut tight; the other peered wildly along the sights. One instant she was aiming at his stomach, the next at his knees.

Paula shut both eyes and pulled the trigger. After a century-long second in which there was no discharge, Sheldon laughed loudly if somewhat shakily. And, seeing his one chance now about to bring him his safety, he lost no more time in inactivity, but began again with knife and dead branch to try to make his way out.

Paula sprang to her feet, her cheeks that had been pale growing suddenly flushed, and with the gun at her shoulder, pulled again and again at the trigger. Sheldon managed to get half-way out, lifted his hand to grasp the brink—and slipped back again.

Then the girl, crying out angrily, threw down the gun, whirled, and disappeared in a flash. Sheldon struggled manfully to work his way out of his pit before she should be lost to him entirely in the woods. But when at last he was out, and had caught up his rifle, the still woods

about him hid her, giving no sign which way she had gone.

CHAPTER X.

THE GOLDEN GIANT.

IN the wilderness which is the Sasnookee-keewan a man seeking to escape a pursuer need not have the slightest difficulty. This fact Sheldon was forced to admit immediately.

There were trackless forests where a fugitive could laugh at a score of hunters, rocky slopes over which he could run, leaving no sign of his passing, thickets in which he might lie in safety while a man who was looking for him went by so close that one might easily toss a stone to the other.

But for an hour Sheldon sought for Paula and her father, hoping that through some fortunate chance he might stumble upon them. He returned to the forking of the trails where the girl had directed him to the right. Now he took the other path, leading toward the northeast. But in a little while it branched and branched again, and there were no tracks in the grassy soil to help him.

He followed one trail after another, always coming back when there had been nothing to persuade him that he was not perhaps setting his back toward those he sought. And in the end he gave over his quest as hopeless and retraced his steps to Johnny's Luck.

The back door was wide open as he had left it. He stepped inside, moving cautiously, realizing that one or both of them might have returned here before him. But there was no sign that either had done so. The other door was shut, the bar across it. The cabin's interior had been in no way disturbed since he had been there last.

It seemed that there was nothing that he could do now. To be sure he might rifle their few belongings in an endeavor to learn who they were, so that if he was forced to go back alone to the "world

outside," he could see to give word of them to any relatives they might have. But he disliked the job; certainly he would resort to no such action until it had become evident that it was the only thing to do. He went out, closed the door after him, and turned his back upon Johnny's Luck. For, while he had the opportunity, it would be well to look to Buck and to his pack.

His horse he found browsing leisurely in the grove where he had left him. The pack in the gulch had not been disturbed. Sheldon went to it for a fresh tin of tobacco; made into a little bundle enough food for a couple of meals, and with a thoughtful smile he slipped his one slab of chocolate into his pocket. Then, having moved Buck a little deeper into the grove, he turned again toward Johnny's Luck. Soon or late the madman or the girl would come back to their cabin. While his patience lasted Sheldon would wait there for them.

This time, when he came again into the cabin, where still there was no sign that its owners had been there since he had left it, he closed the back door and flung the front one wide open. For if the madman and the girl came back, Sheldon preferred to have them come this way, so that he could see them in the clearing that had once been a street of Johnny's Luck. Then, with nothing else to do, he strode back and forth in the rough room and smoked his pipe and stared about him.

So it was that at last one of the pictures upon the wall caught and held his attention. It was an old line-cut from a newspaper, held in place by little pegs through the corners. The man pictured might have been fifty or he might have been thirty; the artist had achieved a sketch of which neither he nor his subject need be proud. The thing which interested Sheldon was the printed legend under the drawing:

Charles Francis Hamilton, Professor of Entomology in Brownell University, Author of "The Lepidoptera of the Canadian Rocky

Mountains," "A Monogram upon the Basilarchia Arthemis," etc.

In ten lines was an article "of interest to the scientific world," announcing that Professor Hamilton, representing the interests of the newly endowed College of Entomology, an institution whose aims "are the pervestigation into the rarer varieties of the lepidoptera flying in the North American altitudes over 7,000 feet," was preparing for an expedition into the less known regions of the Canadian northwest.

Here was matter of interest to John Sheldon. That such a clipping should be found upon the wall of a log cabin in the Sasnokee-keewan in itself set him musing. But as he stood looking at it other thoughts, more closely connected with the matter in his mind, suggested themselves. Perhaps the madman had also been a scientist, an entomologist, hence a man of education. That would explain how it came about that Paula spoke an English which was not that of a rough miner.

But another chance discovery brought Sheldon closer to the truth. The cupboard door was open. In plain sight upon a low shelf was a thick volume. Sheldon took it up. It was an abstrusely technical treatise upon butterflies by Charles Francis Hamilton, Ph.D., and was dedicated:

TO MY DEAR WIFE PAULA

"Good Lord!" muttered Sheldon.

To be sure there might have been no end of explanations beside the one which presented itself to him first. But here was a tenable theory, one to which he clung rather more eagerly than he as yet understood.

The madman was no other than Charles Francis Hamilton, entomologist of note about 1860. Not only had the man not always been mad, but at one time had a brilliant mind. He had come into the unknown parts of the great Northwest, so much of which is still unknown to-day, even though men have

made roads through it. And there he had lost his sanity.

One could conceive of some terrible illness which had broken the man and twisted his brain hideously, or of an accident from which merely the physical part of him had recuperated, or of some terrible experience such as is no stranger in the wilderness, hardship on top of hardship, starvation, perhaps, when a man is lost and bewildered, some shock which would unseat the reason.

Somewhere he had found Paula. It might be as she herself said, that he was her father; that he had brought her, a little girl, into the mining country. Or it was quite as conceivable that he had "acquired" some little motherless, fatherless waif, no blood kin to him, and had reared her as his own daughter, naming her "Paula." In any case, it was made clear why she did not use the speech of the illiterate.

And it was equally obvious that the girl might be sane.

"Of course she is!" said Sheldon, disgusted with himself for his perfectly natural suspicions. "What girl raised in a place like this all her life by a madman wouldn't be a trifle—different?"

And with renewed interest and impatience he awaited their return. Meanwhile he turned the pages of the book slowly. Here and there he came upon a slip of paper, yellow with the years, upon which were notes set down neatly and in a small, legible hand. For the most part these notes consisted of Latin names and abbreviations which meant nothing to John Sheldon. Against each annotation there stood a date. These dates went back as far as 1868; some were as recent as 1913.

"Get an alienist and an entomologist together over this thing," thought Sheldon, "and they could figure to the day when Hamilton went mad!"

For distinctly the more recent notes were in the same hand but not inspired by the same brain as the earlier ones. In the latter there was the cold precision of

the scientist; in the others the burning enthusiasm of a madman.

A note in the body of the text awoke in Sheldon this train of thought. Under the heading *Papilioninae* (The Swallow Tail Butterflies) there was written in lead pencil:

To-day I have discovered IT! Immortal itself, it shall make me immortal! Alt. 10,000 ft. Aug. 11, '95.

Sheldon turned a couple of pages. Here were further notes under a new heading, Sub-family *Parnassiinae*. The words were:

I was misled by the osmateria in the larva. IT is a Parnassian. And the fools think there are only four upon the continent! I have found the Fifth. But I was right about its immortality. Measurement: about nine feet from tip to tip. It is found xxxxx. Its food is xxxxx. Ho! This is my secret! Alt., xxxxx. Date, xxxxx.

F. C. H.

Sheldon shook his head and sighed. To him the penciled words were strangely pathetic. So plainly was there to be seen the working of the scientific brain which sought to tabulate important facts in connection with the new Parnassian, so evident the insane cunning which compromised by putting down a string of crosses to baffle him who might come upon these notes.

"There is but the one in the world and I have found it!" was a foot-note. And then, scattered through the volume were such penciled jottings as:

I have named it. It is *Parnassius Aureus Giganticus*. The wings are of gold!

Giganticus flies at sunrise and at sunset.

I have set my trap at Alt. xxxxx. This time I shall get him!

Only one in the world! But-it will oviposit in nineteen days! I shall raise another one. There is but one egg.

A new peak for my trap. The Alt. is wrong.

The only Parnassian in the world whose wings are not white, but of gold; whose hind-wing tail prolongations are like Papilio. This is the Golden Emperor of Space, the Monarch of the Infinite, Master of Eternity and Immortality! For its diet is that elixir, rising mistlike from xxxxx!

Oh! I must not write it down! Not even little Paula must guess this.

Flight of incredible speed. I have estimated to-day that my Golden Giant travels at the rate of 1 mi. in 12 sec. *id est*, 300 mi. per hour! He might sail around the world and other eyes than mine never see him. This is why he has remained throughout the centuries for me to discover.

F. C. H.

Another fool from the world outside has tried to steal my secret from me. I killed him.

I am Midas, King of Gold; he is Parnassius Aureus Giganticus, Great Golden Monarch of Space. We are Immortals.

Sheldon stared out through the open door, his gaze going over the dead, forgotten town, and to the little lake lying languid in the sunshine. For the instant he forgot Charles Francis Hamilton and his thoughts were all for Paula.

A girl reared in the solitude, taught the weird, wild fancies of a madman, accepting insanity for infallible wisdom! How should a man deal with such as she must be? If Midas died—then what?

"Would she go with me back to the world?" he wondered. "Or is the rest of her life to be that of a wild, hunted thing? Even if I can find her, which is extremely doubtful, can I convince her that the strongest beliefs of her whole life are wrong?"

In truth he found that his perplexities were but growing. But with his jaw set he vowed to himself that if he did find her he'd take her out with him if he had to bind her with a rope, like the wild thing she was. Suddenly there came to him through the stillness a long-drawn cry of pure terror. It came from far off, back of the cabin toward the mountain-side.

Rifle in hand Sheldon ran out of the house and plunged into the forest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOLDEN EMPEROR'S FLIGHT.

THE hope which stood high in John Sheldon's breast was short lived.

There was that one cry, undoubtedly Paula's, then only the silence broken

by Sheldon's crashing through the bushes. Now and then when he stopped to listen he heard only his own heavy breathing.

But he pushed on, deeper into the woods. Her voice had floated to him clearly; she could not be very far away, and he knew the general direction. But when he came at last to the foot of the mountain where there were long lines of low cliffs he had found nothing. And, although he did not give up as the hours passed and the sun turned toward the west, his search went unrewarded.

He went back and forth along the base of the cliffs, fearing that she had fallen, that that scream had been whipped from her as she plunged over a precipice. He breathed more easily when he could be assured that this was not the case. After a while he even called out to her, crying "Paula! Where are you? I won't hurt you." But there was no answer.

Why had she cried out like that? One suspicion came early and naturally. Perhaps to draw him away from the cabin so that she or the madman could slip back to it. He had retraced his steps when the thought came to him, running. But as before there was no sign that another than himself had recently visited the house.

Late in the afternoon great black thunder clouds began to gather upon the mountain tops. They billowed up with the wind-driven swiftness of a summer storm, piling higher and higher until the sky was blotted out.

A peal of thunder, another—deep rumbles reverberating threateningly. A drop of rain splashed against his hand. He could hear the big drops pelting through the leaves of the trees; scattering drops kicked up little puffs of dust in dry, bare spaces. A forked tongue of lightning thrust into the bowels of the thick massed clouds seemed to rip them open. The rain came down in a mighty downpour. The rumble of the thunder was like the ominous growl of ten thousand hungering beasts.

The lightning stabbed again and again,

the skies bellowed mightily, the forest shivered and moaned like a frightened thing under the hissing impact of the sudden wind. The dry ground drank the water thirstily, but even so, little rivulets and pools began to form everywhere. The rain, like a thick veil blown about by the wind, hid the mountains or gave brief views of them. For fifteen minutes the storm filled sky and forest noisily. Then it passed after the way of summer showers, and Sheldon came out from the makeshift shelter of a densely foliated tree.

He was a mile or more from Johnny's Luck. The storm over, he turned back on his trail again, determined to gain the cabin before the daylight was gone, to wait there again for those for whom it was futile to search. Then the second time, unexpectedly, he heard Paula's voice calling.

"Where are you?" it cried. "Oh, where are you?"

He stepped out of the trail, slipping behind a giant pine. She could not be a hundred yards away; he thought that she was coming on toward him, that she was running.

The world was filled with a strange light from the lowering sun shining through the wet air, a light which shone warmly like gold, which seemed to throb and quiver and thrill as it lay over the forest. It gave to grass and tree a new, vivid green, a yellow flower looked like a burning flame. Out of a fringe of trees into a wide open space Paula came.

She came on, running with her own imitable, graceful swiftness, until she was not a score of paces from him. Here she stopped abruptly, looking this way and that eagerly, listening. Sheldon, his heart hammering from his own eagerness, stood still. If she came a little nearer—

"Where are you?" she called again. "Man from the world outside, where are you?"

Sheldon stared in amazement. She was calling him, she was seeking him, running to him!

Before he could answer, her quick eyes had found him out. With a strange look in them which he could not fathom, she ran to him. She was in the grip of some emotion so strong that she was no longer afraid of him, so that she laid her hand for the fraction of a second upon his arm as she cried brokenly:

"Come! Come quickly!"

"What is it?" he demanded, wondering. "What do you want? What is the matter?"

"You must help him," she answered swiftly. "He says to bring you. But you must hurry. Run!"

Again she had touched him, was tugging at his sleeve. He looked at her curiously, even suspiciously, not unmindful of the bear-pit of this morning. But her eyes were wide with alarm not inspired by him, alarm too sincere to be mistrusted. Since all things are possible, it might be that the madman had sent her to lure Sheldon into some further danger. But there was only one way to know.

"Go on," he said crisply. "I'm with you."

She turned then and sped back the way she had come, Sheldon running at her heels, she turning her head now and then, accommodating her pace to his. This way and that they wove their way through the forest. In a little they were again under the cliffs standing upon the eastern rim of the valley. In the open now, he carried his rifle in two hands, ready.

But here at least was no trap set for him. Paula, running on ahead of him, now suddenly had dropped to her knees, and for the first time Sheldon saw the prone body of the madman. The girl had taken his head into her lap and was bending over him; the gaunt, hollow, burning eyes blazed full at Sheldon. And they were filled with malice, with lurking cunning, with suspicion, and unutterable hatred. But the man made no effort to rise. Sheldon came on until he stood over him.

"He fell from the cliffs?" he asked, looking down for a second into the eyes of

Paula which, filled with anguish, were turned up to him.

She sought to answer, but her voice broke; she choked up and could only shake her head. He looked away from her to the head resting in her lap. There was reason enough for the dread in Paula's breast; the man was dying!

"Tell me," said Sheldon softly, "can I do anything for you? Is there any way I can help you?"

The burning eyes narrowed. The old man lifted a shaking hand and pushed the tangled beard away from his lips.

"Curse you!" he panted. "Why are you here?"

"Why, father!" cried Paula. "You told me to bring him!"

"Him?" It was a mutter, deep in the throat, labored and harsh. "You were to get a doctor, girl! This man is a thief, like the others. He comes to steal our fortune from us."

Both bewilderment and terror stared out of the girl's eyes. Her hand on the old man's brow drew the matted hair back, smoothed and smoothed the hot skin.

Fully realizing the futility of seeking to reason with unreason, nevertheless Sheldon said gently: "I didn't come to steal anything. I was just loafing through the country, got lost, and came here."

"Liar!" scoffed the other. "I know what you want. But you can't have it; it is my secret!"

"But, Father," pleaded Paula, her lips trembling, "why did you send me for him if he—"

"Mr. Hamilton," began Sheldon.

The old man frowned.

"Hamilton?" he muttered. "Who is Hamilton? Where is Hamilton?"

"You are," said Sheldon stoutly. "Don't you remember? Charles Francis Hamilton, professor of entomology in Brownell University?"

"Brownell University?" There came a thoughtful pause. "Yes; of course. I am Charles Francis Hamilton, Ph.D., M.D., professor of entomology. Who said that I wasn't?"

"Then, Dr. Hamilton, you ought to be able to tell by looking at me," and Sheldon grinned reassuringly, "that I am no scientist! I don't know the difference between a bug and an insect; I swear I don't! I'm just a mining engineer out of a job and down on the rocks."

"Then," querulously, "you didn't come looking for—"

"For the *Parnassius Aureus Giganticus*?" smiled Sheldon. "No. And though you may not believe it, I don't come looking for gold either!"

His words had a strange, unlooked-for effect. He had hoped that they might a little dispel suspicion. Instead, the madman jerked away from Paula's hands, sought to spring to his feet, and achieved a position half-kneeling, half-squatting, his whole body shaken, a wild fury in his eyes.

"My *Parnassius*!" he shrieked. My *Parnassius*! He comes to steal it away from me; it and my immortality with it! Curse him and curse him and curse him! He knows; he has stolen my secret. He says '*Parnassius Aureus Giganticus*!' He knows its name, the name I have given it. He says 'Gold!' He knows that the *Parnassius* is to be found only where the mother lode of the world is bared! That there is a little invisible mist, a vapory elixir, which rises from gold in the sun, and that my *Parnassius* lives upon it, drinks it in, and that that is why it is immortal! He knows; curse him, he knows, he knows!"

He was raging wildly; his words came in a tumbled fury of sound like the fall of waters down a rocky cliff; his body grew tense to the last muscle, and then shook again as with an ague. Paula, upon her feet now, her hands clasped in a mute agony of suspense, turned frightened eyes from him to Sheldon.

Slowly the wreck that was Charles Francis Hamilton, one time man of scientific note, straightened up; the tall, gaunt form, swaying dangerously, stood erect. A terribly attenuated arm was flung up, then the forearm drawn across the brow

as though with the motion which pushed back the streaming white hair he would clear the burning brain too.

Then, just as Sheldon was prepared for a mad attack of the pitifully broken figure, the pale lips parted to a cry such as he had never in all his life heard. It was a cry of pure triumph; the voice was wonderfully clear now and went ringing through the silence like a bell's tinkling notes. The eyes, too, were clear, bright as before, but now triumphant, like the voice, untroubled, filled with the sheer ecstasy of perfect gladness.

"Look!" cried the madman. "It is the Golden Emperor of Infinity! Look! He is coming—to me!"

Erect, he no longer swayed. The long right arm thrown out, pointed toward the western sky and was rigid, unshaken. For the moment the figure was dominant, masterful; the gesture demanded and received obedience. In his final moment, Charles Francis Hamilton stood clothed in conscious power, unshaken in a great faith—triumphant. There was no other word for him then.

"Look!" cried the madman.

But was he mad?

For both Paula and John Sheldon turned and looked—and saw what the old man saw. There in the strange, weird light in the west, clear against the sky, were a great pair of wings flashing like pure beaten gold, as a graceful, speeding body described a long, sweeping curve, seemed for a moment to be dropping below the mountain-tops, then rose, climbing higher and higher.

Higher and higher—until it was gone, until, as the wide wings trembled in the vault of the clearing heavens, John Sheldon saw that they were no longer beaten gold, but just the feathered wings of a great eagle, metamorphosed for an instant by a trick of sun.

But it was gone. Gone with it the soul of a madman. Without a cry, his old lips forming into a smile indescribably sweet, his eyes still bright with victory, he stooped, stooped farther, his legs weakened

under him, he settled down, rested a moment, fell backward. His Golden Emperor of the Infinite had borne away upon its golden wings the soul which craved and now won—immortality!

"He is dead!" said Paula lifelessly. "He is dead!"

More moved than he had thought to be, Sheldon knelt by the quiet body. The fretful pulse was still, the tired heart was at rest, the fever-ridden brain slept.

"Yes," he said quietly as, kneeling, he removed his hat and looked up pityingly into Paula's set face. "He is dead. Poor little Paula!"

She stared at him with her eyes widening in eloquent expression of the new emotions in her breast. She stood very still, her hands clasped as they had been when the old man rose to his feet. Her brown fingers were slowly going white from their own steady pressure. Sheldon could only wonder gropingly what this tragedy would mean to her. Other girls had lost fathers before now; but when had a girl lost every one she knew in the world as Paula had lost now?

There was nothing for Sheldon to say, so he remained a little kneeling, his head bowed in spontaneous reverence, waiting for the burst of tears from her which would slacken the tense nerves. But it did not come. Presently Paula drew nearer, knelt like Sheldon, put her two warm hands upon the cold forehead. Sheldon saw a shiver run through her. She drew back with a sharp cry.

"Dead!" she whispered. "Dead!"

"Poor little Paula," he said again in his heart. Aloud he said nothing.

After a while he got to his feet and went away from her, dabbing at his own eyes as he went, grumbling under his breath. He wanted to take her into his arms—as he did the twins, Bill and Bet—to hold her close and let her cry, and pat her shoulder and say, "There, there!" There was much of kindness and gentleness and sympathy under the rough outside shell of John Sheldon, and it went out

unintendedly to a slip of a girl who was alone as no other girl in all the world.

When he came back she was sitting very still, her hand patting softly one of the cold, lifeless hands. She looked up curiously, speaking in a quiet whisper:

"He will never wake up?"

"Not in this world," answered Sheldon gently. "But maybe the soul of him is already awake in another world."

"Where the Golden Patterfly went?" whispered Paula.

"You saw it?"

"Yes. With beautiful wings all of gold. Father knew it was like that. Has his soul gone away with it? Up and up and beyond the clouds and through the sky and to the other world?"

And John Sheldon answered simply, saying:

"Yes, my dear."

Paula was very still again, her eyes thoughtful.

"What will we do with—him?" she asked after a long silence, the first hint of tears in her eyes.

Then he told her, explaining as he would to Bill and Bet, as one talks with a credulous child, hiding those things upon which man is so prone to look as horrible, showing as best he knew that there is beauty in death. He spoke softly, very gently with her, and her eyes, lifted to him, might have been those of little Bet.

"You will get flowers for him," he said at the end. "Hundreds and hundreds of flowers. You will put them all about him; we will make him a pretty, soft bed of them; we will cover him with them. And every year, in the spring, other flowers will grow here and blossom and drop their leaves on his place. And—and, little Paula, maybe he will be watching you and smiling at you and happy—"

In spite of him his voice grew hoarse. Paula sat now with her face hidden in her crossed arms. He could see a tear splash to her knee.

When the sun rose after the long night it shone upon a great mound of field

flowers hiding a lesser mound of newly turned earth, and upon a golden-brown maiden lying face down in the grass, sobbing—and upon a new John Sheldon.

For into his life had come one of those responsibilities which make men over and, together with the responsibility, a tumult of emotions born no longer ago than the dewdrops which the morning had hung upon the grass.

CHAPTER XII.

GOLDEN EMPEROR'S BAIT.

DURING that tragic day Sheldon never lost sight of the bewildered girl—she seemed just breathless and stunned rather than grief-stricken—for more than half an hour at a time. He watched over her while seeming to be busy rifle cleaning or fishing for a trout for luncheon. Now and then he spoke, just a little homely word of no importance other than the assurance to her that she was not utterly alone. Not once did she return an answer or offer a remark.

In the late afternoon she brought great armfuls of fresh flowers, heaping them upon the wilted ones. As night came on she stood looking wistfully at them for a long time. Then she turned and, walking swiftly, went back to Johnny's Luck. John Sheldon went with her.

They had their supper together, sitting opposite each other at the crude table. Paula ate little, nibbling absent-mindedly at the slab of chocolate, pushing the fish aside untasted, drinking the water set before her. Sheldon made coffee, and she watched him curiously as he drank the black beverage; but she did not taste it.

"Look here, Paula," he said when the silence had lasted on until after he had got his pipe going. "We've got some big questions ahead of us to answer, and we can't begin too soon now. After all, death comes to us all, soon or late; it came to your father's father and mother; it has come to mine; it will come to you and me some day. While we live we've got to be doing

something. You've got to decide what you are going to do. I am going out of here in a few days, and you can't stay here all alone."

"I can," she answered steadily. "I will."

"Come now," he objected, speaking lightly; "that's all wrong, you know. It can't be done. Why in the world should a young girl like you want to live all alone here in the wilderness? Before, when your father was with you, it was different. Now what is there to stay for?"

"I shall stay," said Paula gravely, "until some day the big golden butterfly comes and takes me away, too."

"How would you live?" he asked curiously.

"As I have always lived. We have the traps father and I made. I could make others. I know how to catch fish. I know many plants with leaves and roots good to eat when you cook them in water."

"But what would you *do* all the time?"

"Why," said Paula simply, "I would wait."

"Wait?"

"Yes. For the big butterfly."

Then Sheldon set himself manfully to his task. He sought to reawaken the interest which she had shown when he spoke of the world outside; he spoke of the thousand things she could see and do; he told her of other men and women; of how they dressed, of how they spent their lives, of their aims and ambitions, of their numerous joys; of aeroplanes and submarines; of telephones and talking machines; of music and theaters and churches. But Paula only shook her head, saying quietly:

"I shall stay here."

"And never see any children?" asked Sheldon. "Little babies like Bill and Bet; little roly-poly rascals with dirty faces and bright eyes and fat, chubby hands? You'll miss all that?"

"I'll stay here," said Paula. "This is my home."

And no further answer did he get that night.

As her weary body, which had known

so little rest during the last two days, began to droop in her chair, Sheldon left her, going to spend the night out in the open in front of the cabin. Paula closed the door after him, saying listlessly, "good night," in response to his.

"You are not afraid of me any longer, are you, Paula?" he asked as he left her.

"No," she answered. "I am not afraid of you now. You have been good to me."

When, in the morning, he came to the cabin the door stood open. When he called there was no answer. When he went in the cabin was empty.

Even then he did not believe that she had again fled from him. He went hurriedly through the woods until he came to the heaped-up mound of flowers, fearing a little, hoping more that he was going to find her here. But, though he looked for her everywhere, he did not find her; though he lifted his voice, calling loudly, she did not answer.

It was a weary, empty day. At one moment he cursed himself for not having guarded against her flight; at the next he told himself that he could not always be watching her, and that there was no reason why he should have suspected that she was going to slip away now. When some little sound came to him through the still forest he looked up quickly, expecting to see her coming to him. When she did not come he wondered if he would ever see this wonderfully dainty, half-wild maid again.

All day long he did not give over seeking her, calling her. He grew to hate the sound of his own voice bringing its own echo alone for answer. He began to realize what her going meant; he began to see that he wanted not only to take her with him back into his own world, but that he wanted to give up that life to showing her the world he had told her about. He wanted Paula.

He tramped up and down until he covered many a mile that day. He ransacked his pack for any little articles of food which might be new to her, and

they remained upon the cabin table untouched.

Noon came, and afternoon and evening, and without Paula he was lonely, he who had come far from the beaten trails to be alone!

In the early night he builded a fire in the cabin's fireplace for the light and companionship of it, and sat staring into the flames and smoking his pipe, and all the time listening eagerly. A dozen times he thought that he heard her light foot-fall. But she did not come.

He got up and went to the door, standing long looking out into the quiet night, star-filled. The moon was not yet up. The night was so still, so filled with solitude, that he felt a sudden wonder that a girl, even a girl like Paula, could be far out in it, alone.

Where was she? Lying face down in the thick of the woods, crushed with the loneliness which had touched even him? Or sitting somewhere in the starlight, her lovely face upturned, her deep eyes seeking to read the eternal riddles of the stars and the night, her soul grasping at vague thoughts, her mind struggling pitifully with the problems of life and death?

All night he sat before the fire, dozing now and then, but for the most part listening, waiting. When morning came he made a hurried breakfast, and, his plan for the day formed during the hours of darkness, left the cabin.

He had come to the conclusion that there must be some hiding-place, some shelter other than the cabin, which Paula and her father had used. To that place, no doubt, the madman had fled when he had sought to avoid Sheldon; thither, perhaps, Paula had gone last night.

It might be another cabin, far out; it might be a cave in the cliffs. Sheldon inclined to the latter belief. At any rate, he told himself determinedly that he would find this retreat, and that in it he would discover those belongings of the men Hamilton had killed, their knives and rifles, their boots, perhaps. And he hoped to find Paula.

He went straightway to the cliffs near which Dr. Hamilton had died. They stretched a mile or more to both north and south. Sheldon admitted to himself at the beginning that he had his work cut out ahead of him; thorough search here for the mouth of a possible cave might consume weeks. But all the time in the world was his. He set about his task methodically.

All day he climbed in and out among the boulders and spires of rock. At night he had found nothing. He returned to the cabin and, throwing himself upon the bunk which had once been Dr. Hamilton's, slept soundly.

In the morning he went out again, beginning his search where yesterday's had ended. That day passed like the other, ended as it had done. In the forenoon he killed a young buck that had come down to the creek to drink, skinned it, and hung the meat upon the limb of a tree to dry, building a smudge under it.

"If I have to stay here until snow flies," muttered Sheldon, "well, then, I'll stay!"

A week passed. During it he had had no sign that Paula existed—no hint of the theoretical "hiding-place" which he sought. But each day he spent long hours in the quest, striving from the first glow of dawn to the coming of dusk. He had searched out every spot of the cliffs to the south, climbing high up, looking everywhere. Now, in the same systematic way, he turned toward the north. And upon the second day of the second week he came upon part of that which he sought—that and something else.

Upon a broad ledge a score of feet from the ground, hard to climb up to, grew a dense clump of bushes. Only because it was his plan to look everywhere did he go up there at all. On the ledge he saw at once what, from below, had been masked by the bushes.

There was a great hole into the cliff-side through which a man might walk standing erect. Beyond, where dim dusk brooded at midday, was the cave. A

glance, as he went in, showed that it was part nature's work and part man-made. At his feet lay a shovel with fairly fresh dirt adhering to it. Beyond was a pick. Other picks and shovels, several of them, lay at one side of the long chamber.

"Paula!" he called softly. "Are you here?"

But Paula was not there. As he moved on deeper into the cavern he saw that no one was there. There were two tumbled piles of blankets, one on each side. Against the wall by one of them were five rifles, all of old patterns, not one an automatic. He picked them up, one after the other. None was loaded; there were no unfired cartridges with them.

Several sharpened stakes had been driven into the walls which Sheldon found to be of clay almost rock-hard. From these pegs hung cured skins of both deer and bear, wildcat skins, the pelts of other animals. From one was suspended a gay little array of old, old-fashioned gowns like those in pictures of our grandmothers. Sheldon sighed, touched them lingeringly, and called again, "Paula!"

He passed on down the length of the cavern, which had been driven thirty or forty feet into the mountainside. At the far end a pick was sticking into the wall. Near the pick was a bag made of deerskin. He struck it with his foot. It was heavy, seemed filled with small stones. Wondering, he turned the contents out upon the floor.

And, at the sight disclosed there to him in the dim interior of this gloomy place, the soul of John Sheldon, mining engineer, adventurer into the far-out places, thrilled within him.

The bag was half-filled with gold nuggets.

"Bait for a madman's trap!" he said aloud, huskily. "To catch the Golden Emperor of Space!"

He went down on his knees, the gold caught up into his hands, his eyes bright with the old, forgotten, but never dying, fever. He ran back to the cave's opening, carrying his hands full, staring at

the yellow crumbling particles, light-stricken. He had never seen such gold; he had never believed gold existed like this.

He whirled and hastened back into the cavern, going to the bag which still lay on the floor. The pick, still in its place, caught his eye. He jerked it out, breaking away a dozen handfuls of the hard clay. He struck the clay with his boot-heel, breaking it apart. And from the fragments which he carried to the light there shone up at him the dull yellow of gold.

The old, old fever rode him hard, having taken him thus unaware, leaping out upon him from the dark of the unexpected. His hands shook with it. He had found gold before; he had known the wild fires it sets in a man's brain. But never had he found gold like this, never had he known so seething a tumult.

"All men look for the mother lode!" he whispered. "Why shouldn't it be waiting somewhere for the man who can find it? Why shouldn't this be it?"

He had forgotten Paula. A man forgets everything when he finds gold, much gold, pure, yellow virgin gold. Often enough he ceases for the moment to be a man, and is like a wild beast hungering, tearing at bloody meat.

He went here and there eager and breathless, driving the pick into the time-hardened clay, taking with shaking hands the earth he dug out, muttering to himself as he found again and again that there was in it the glint and gleam of gold.

"There is nowhere in the world a man so rich as I!" he whispered. And then he thought of Paula.

He went out upon the ledge outside, and sat down in the sunshine and lighted his pipe. This gold was not John Sheldon's unless John Sheldon were utterly contemptible. It was Paula's. Her birth-right. Was he the man to rob a woman? The man to cheat a girl? A girl like Paula? He shook his head.

"I was drunk on the cursed stuff!" he said half-angrily.

But if Paula did not come back? M, look as he might, days came and went, the summer passed, and Paula did not come back and he could not find her?

Then a curious fact presented itself to John Sheldon. It was this: If he were confronted with a choice in the matter, if he had to lose the wealth untold lying at his finger-tips or lose forever the golden-brown maiden—why, he could snap his fingers at the gold!

"Something has come over me!" he grunted at the thought.

He had never been more right in his life. In his own words, something had come over him.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONSUMMATION.

A MONTH passed, and John Sheldon, who might have taken the gold and left the girl, let the gold lie and sought Paula.

They were lonely days, and more than once he went to his horse for companionship. The provisions which he had brought in with him had dwindled away to nothing. His coffee was gone; he drank water for breakfast. His bacon was but a haunting memory. Beans and onions and potatoes were with the snows of yesteryear.

He missed them, but could manage upon venison and trout. But, especially after meals and before he turned in at night, when he looked into the black and empty bowl of his pipe, he shook his head and sighed.

Verily, a mighty thing is a man's love for a woman! For, even when his tobacco was a thing of the past, John Sheldon, a man who loved his smoke, stayed on and contented himself with sunflower leaves!

He had once said, "I'll stay if I have to wait until snow flies!" Now he said, "I'll find her if I have to stick on the job all winter."

There were days when he roamed for

miles into the mountains; nights when he slept far out, as Paula was perhaps sleeping. Again, there were times when he slept in the cabin or at the mouth of the cavern, on the ledge.

Many a time, at dusk, he climbed to some peak to look down over the valley and distant ridges, hoping to see somewhere the blaze of her fire. Day after day he sought some other cave, some other distant cabin where, perhaps, she was hiding; where it might be that supplies had been cached against such a time as this. But the month went and another was well on the way, and his search was fruitless.

There came a soft night, throbbing with star radiance, glowing with the promise of a full moon, just rising beyond the eastern ridge, when Sheldon, tired and spiritless, came back into Johnny's Luck from a long tramp to the north.

As he trudged back along the trail he had come to know so well he told himself that he was all kinds of a fool; that if he were not he'd put all the gold upon Buck's back that a horse could stagger under, take upon his own shoulders all that he could carry, and go back to Belle Fortune and the world beyond.

But he knew that he would not go; that he would remain there until he found Paula or knew that she was dead. Lately he had come to fear that one of the innumerable possible accidents had befallen her.

Head down, weary and hopeless, he made his slow way toward the cabin. He was within a score of paces from the house when he stopped with a sharp exclamation, standing staring.

She was there. She had heard him, was before him to the door, had come out into the night to meet him. The man stood looking at her in bewilderment. For here was no Paula whom he knew; no brown maiden of the bearskin; no boyish slip in miner's boots and clothes.

Oddly, the memory of something he had seen years ago and many miles from

here, came into his mind vividly. He had once found one of those strange plants called the fire-flower which flourish in bleak desolation, companionless; a wonderful creation with burning, blood-red heart, which upon the barren sweep of lava-beds is at once a living triumph and a mystery of loveliness.

This girl, here alone in the land of abandoned ruins and lonely, desolate isolation, was like that.

The Fire Flower!

Paula came on, taking short little steps which alone made her some new Paula. He looked down and saw a pair of incredibly small slippers, seeming brand new, flashing in the moonlight. He looked up and saw Paula smiling!

"I have come back to you," said Paula, "because you are good and I love you. Are you glad?"

She had come back to him like a great lady out of an old love-story. Her hair was in little, old-fashioned curls; her neck and throat gleamed at him modestly from the laces and ribbons which bewildered him; upon her brown fingers were dainty mitts of 1870, and the gown itself, it was an elaborate and astounding ball-gown, all wide hoops and flounces, so that she seemed to him to be riding out to him upon a monster puff-ball. That her costume should, to the last detail, be like that of the lady of the picture, she carried in her hand a fan.

Paula with a fan! Paula in hoop-skirts!

"You are not glad?" cried Paula, her lips, which had been curved to her laughter, suddenly trembling.

"Glad!" cried John Sheldon. "Glad!"

And, a hundred things clamoring for expression, that was all that he said. Paula put her head to one side, like a bird, and looked at him. He looked at her, her curls, her sleeves, her ribbons, her fan—

Then Paula, gifted with understanding, laughed.

"Are you afraid of me now?" she asked softly.

"Before God—yes!" muttered Sheldon huskily.

"Kiss me!" said Paula.

She put up her red mouth temptingly, her eyes teasing and gay. And Sheldon hesitated no longer and was afraid no longer, but took her into his arms, hoop-skirts and flounces and ribbons and laces and all, and held her tight, tight.

"Oh!" laughed Paula. "You are like a bear. You hurt, and you will ruin my dress. I have saved it always—always and always—for—"

"For what, Paula, dear?" he asked.

"For to-night—for you!" she answered, her voice an awed whisper like his own.

"But you didn't know—"

"Oh, I always knew! Some time you would come, a man tall like poor father, and strong—and young—and beautiful! I would dream of it sometimes and it would make me shiver, like cold. Like you make me shiver now!"

"Oh, my dear, my dear," said Sheldon.

"And I have been afraid you would never come back; I have walked mile after mile looking for you."

"I know!" nodded Paula brightly.

"I watched you every day."

"What!" he cried.

"Oh, yes. I will show you to-morrow where I hid. It is up there in the rocks; another cave like the one you found—but you could never find this one unless I showed you, it is so cunningly hid. And every day I watched you. And one day I saw you go into the forest and come back with a strange, terrible beast bigger than a black bear following you, and I was afraid and screamed. I thought that it would eat you and—"

"Beast?" asked Sheldon.

"Yes. But you had caught it and tied a rope around its neck and were its master. Oh, I was glad I was so far away you didn't hear me. And proud that you were so strong a man, so brave a man to capture a big beast, bigger than a bear—"

"Buck! It was my horse, child! And you don't even know what a horse is?"

"No," answered Paula, wondering. "Do they bite?"

"This one you shall ride—"

"I won't!" cried Paula. "I'll run away!"

Laughing, they turned together to the cabin, where he soon had a splendid fire going.

"Why did you wait all these days before coming back?" he asked her.

"Because," she told him, "I was afraid at first. But I saw you were good; you did not hurt things just to be bad; when you passed close enough to me I could see that your face was kind."

"Go on," grinned Sheldon. "Don't stop there!"

"And," she ended happily, "I wanted to see what you would do. Whether you would go on looking for me a long time, or whether you would forget me and go away."

"And if I had gone?"

"Then," said Paula simply, "I should have gone high up on the cliffs and thrown myself down. It would not have been much fun to live if you had gone away."

"And now," he asked her soberly, "are you afraid to go back with me, Paula? Back into the world outside?"

Paula crept closer up to him, putting her hand into his.

"Yes," she said. "I am afraid."

"But," insisted Sheldon, "you must see, Paula—"

"I am afraid," she repeated, and as he turned toward her he saw that her eyes, lifted to his, were shining softly with utter trust. "I am afraid, but I will go with you and be glad."

"God bless you!" he whispered.

"Tell me something," she said presently. "Something I have not asked you, but have wanted to know."

"Yes, Paula. What is it?"

He wondered just how far back in his life history that question was going to search. She made herself comfortable in his arms. Then she asked her question:

"Have you a name, too?"

"What!" he replied, taken aback.
 "Don't you even know my name?"

"No," sighed Paula, the sigh bespeaking a vast and somewhat sleepy content.
 "What is it?"

"It is John Sheldon," he told her.

"Then—some day—I will be Paula John Sheldon?"

"Just as soon," cried John Sheldon, "as you and I can get to the nearest priest on the Little Smoky! And we start in the morning!"

"Aha, *mes enfans*," said the Father Dufresnil to the two other old men with whom he chummed at the settlement on

the Little Smoky. (It was ten days later.) "The worl' is fonny! To me to-day there comes out of the woods a man, such a man, tall an' big an' his face like a boy, glad! An' with him a lady—oh, *mes enfans*, a lady of beauty, with eyes which dance like the eyes of him! An' this lady, she is dress' like the gran'-mother of ol' Thibault there—in a ball-gown! An' I, when I marry them! Oh, there was not to doubt the love in their four eyes! But see what that big man put in my han'!"

He dropped it to the oilcloth of the table.

It was a real golden nugget.

(The end.)

U . U U

PAN IN TOWN

BY HARRY R. LEE

WHO says that Piper Pan has fled?
 That never more he strays,
 The laughter in his wicked eyes,
 Adown the surging ways?

This very day I heard the wight
 His wistful willows blow—
 Notes keen as thoughts of love denied
 To those who yearning go.

He wore no more the shaggy skin,
 He hid the cloven hoof;
 Manhattan's towers were his walls,
 The March-blue sky his roof.

And little elfin children tripped
 In rags all gay and torn,
 As merry as the wood-nymphs were
 In beauty's golden morn.

Who says that Piper Pan has fled
 The city's surging ways,
 When, sudden, shrill, above the din
 The hurdy-gurdy plays?

The Man Who was Dead

by
Helen
Topping
Miller



A "DIFFERENT" STORY

NINE hours out from Bermuda where the green waves snarl at the blue like greedy cur dogs, Burke laid himself back in his bunk and gave himself up to the business of dying.

It was hot on the ship. The little stateroom was hazy with heat, and the electric fan beat the dead air, an ineffectual, spinning blur. The open port-hole was a mere circular glimpse of brassy sea and blinding sun, affording no relief.

It took a long time to die!

Burke, prone on his dry, restless pillow, wondered a little at the prolonged labor of it, the enduring weariness, the relentless grip of a shattered body upon a tired and sickened soul. Life had seemed to him so frail a thing—a candle flame flared into nothing by a breath. Why was it so hard to die?

He had seen men die—in fever camps among the gaunt, silent pines, in border fights, suddenly twitching—strangled by

floods or smothered by flames. And always death had seemed an easy thing, a hand which sponged out the symbols of the clay as though they were mere handwriting upon the waters.

But now the summer was nearly spent, and since the plum-trees' blossoming Burke had been dying.

Seven weeks in the bulb-farmer's house on the little inlet of glass-blue water—seven weeks which had brought to him each morning a stronger look of doom in the eyes of Henley—and now nine hours on board ship and still he could not die!

Henley was a fine fellow—a fine doctor. He had fought the strange, bursting pain which swelled and quivered in Burke's breast—fought it with morphia and with strange drugs with long names, even with cocain. But the gnawing devil who possessed Burke's body was not to be appeased with potions. Great physicians, wise, simple men, had looked at

Burke and fingered his pulse and shaken their honest heads. Queer, unwashed quacks, sought out from strange corners of the earth, had worked their blatant exorcisms in vain. But still Henley fought on doggedly.

That Henley loved Jeanne, Burke's strong, beautiful daughter, was a thing the sick man knew well, and also that the miracles which the young doctor wrought were miracles for love. But in Bermuda, Burke had seen the desperate cheerfulness burn out of Henley's face, had seen his hope conquered, heard his voice sink to the dead level of optimism which we accord to dying men and children. Burke saw these things with something of relief. Henley had given up. Now he could die. He was eager to begin it!

Lying there with the thick, warm air over him like a cloak, he experimented, wondering a little how men set about thrusting through this hindering of the flesh. He held his breath tentatively and relaxed on the hot bed, trying to wile his coward spirit forth. But the pain tore at him, beat and shook and rasped him, until his body was taut and dominant again. If only the pain would leave him in peace he could die!

He turned a little on his side and looked at the little bottle with the blue label. It held the drug which Henley had promised to try—the drug which would give Burke at least ten hours of sleep—veronal. At two he was to have it. It was twelve now—he could tell by the hot slant of the sun in the port-hole. At two perhaps he could die!

Of what use was his life? For fifty-five years it had blessed no man—not even himself! How he had wasted it, this little strand of golden thread which had been given him! How he had snarled and tangled it, dragging it into remote and evil places, tangling the feet of innocent folk in the coils of it until now it hung upon him like a loathsome web which he could not shake off.

When he was gone Jeanne would have the money which Burke's canny old

mother, looking askance upon her wandering son, had entailed upon his daughter. So long as Burke lived the income was his—a waster's penny spent before it was gotten. But at his death the whole beautiful sum, compounded and plethoric from the nourishing of quiet accumulation, was Jeanne's.

Jeanne would hoard it wisely—Jeanne and Henley. Perhaps, he thought with grim humor, they would build him a monument—he, Burke, the unstable, immured forever beneath one unchanging stone!

The sun slanted up the painted walls, glinted on the futile fan, burnished the plank ceiling. The pain in Burke's chest thrust up and gripped at his throat, wringing his tongue dry, setting every fiber of him on edge. He panted and sweated, picking frantically at the hot sheet under him.

Then Henley came in. Henley was a young man, a little stooped, with tired eyes. In the hospitals back in the States Henley had always been the first to plead for morphia when the patients sweated, gray-faced with suffering. Burke saw compassion in Henley's eyes as he lay livid, with clutching fingers. Henley would give him the veronal now. Then, perhaps, when this rending of the flesh had been subdued, he could die!

With strong, shaking fingers Burke pushed back the hot, rumpled sleeve of his pajama coat. His eyes were eager as he watched Henley finger the blue-labeled bottle hesitantly. His tongue was like sandpaper, and speech was gone from him, but his eyes and his snatching fingers commanded.

Henley pushed the hypodermic into the hot flesh. Burke could feel the tingling fibers drinking, gulping at the cool sleep which drained from the merciful needle.

The brazen disk of the port-hole had faded to a cool, blue-gray shimmer when Burke's brain quickened and pierced through the restful oblivion which had possessed him. The air in the stateroom was fresher now, and he could feel the

cool stirring of the fan. Was this death—this strange lassitude which overcame him? This weakness which turned his bones to pulp and his body to water?

He could not lift his fingers from the sheet where they lay stiffening. He could not hold his eyelids open. Of their own weight they closed. His skin felt cold and rigid upon his body. Strange-moving currents rushed in his ears.

How keen a man's mind grew at the last! How avid his ears! Burke could hear the voices of the crew on the deck outside, hear the whispering mop of a galley boy in the corridor. He could almost detect the pulse-beat of some one who sat in the room with him—Henley, undoubtedly.

Once the person came to the bunk and felt Burke's pulse. Burke could not see, but he felt the warm wave from an approaching body on his face, the pressure on his chilling wrist. Did his heart still beat, he wondered? How long it took to die!

It was night now. The light above his bunk was burning, he could feel the rays smiting his eyeballs through closed lids. Two men were whispering at the door. One was Henley.

"Practically the end," Burke heard Henley say. "You can hardly detect any heart action with a stethoscope."

Burke's lips were stiff and chill, but the vagabond soul of him grinned. What a joke—to hang about and watch his body die!

Did all men haunt their own flesh like this, he wondered? What a damn fool way to end it! He wanted to be away—to explore whatever came next! And here he floated like a silly vapor with ears agape, listening to the wash of the sea on the port-holes and the tiptoeing of solemn people overhead.

But the pain was gone. All the things of the body were gone, every sensation, every desire. A naked soul was a comfortable thing to live with. Was he dead now?

He must be dead at last!

Men were stepping softly into the room, speaking in hushed voices. They crossed his hands upon his breast. Some one laid a cold, wet cloth over his face.

At last!

But did he have to hang around this husk of his forever?

It was dark, and the heat had gone out of the air. Burke found himself thinking of Jeanne—Jeanne who had always been loyal to her scapegoat father! Would Jeanne care—now that he was dead?

He had never done much for Jeanne. He was sorry now that he was dead. Since her mother's death she had been a wide-eyed, self-confident girl, living a haphazard life with relatives who despised Burke cordially. He had brought her a red dress once from a filibustering trip to Guatemala. He was glad of that dress. It made him feel better now that he was gone!

Strange what ideas the preachers had about death! He had heard one at his wife's funeral, long ago, orating about the gates of onyx and streets of jasper and the swelling music of the spheres. He had pictured death as a sort of torchlight procession into a wealthy and melodious land. And here it was—no change at all! You simply withdrew a little way out of your body and listened to what was going on in the world. What a joke on the preachers!

It was morning now. Burke could hear the clink of crockery in the galley, the scurry of feet above on deck, the quickened purr of the engines. Men were coming down the corridor. He could hear them arguing, Henley and the captain and the ship's doctor.

They were going to bury him at sea—that was it. And Henley was protesting that they were only twenty-four hours out—that the ship carried her own ice. Henley was trying to save him for Jeanne, to be anchored forever under a memorial weight of stone. Burke was glad when the captain prevailed. The sea was free and wide, and no man knew what lay therein. Burke had always loved the sea.

There was no vision left to him, but he knew that they carried him up on deck—carried his rigid body with the soul of him somehow trailing along. He was conscious of the live stir of air outside, of the warmth of the sun, even of the smell of the sea.

They laid him down on a clean-smelling canvas with a linen sheet folded about him. Soon they would sew him in with a lead weight at his feet. They would moor no dragging weight to his spirit, he knew. He wondered where it would go when his body slid, still and stiff, into the sea!

Death was a great adventure. And men feared it!

Why didn't they finish him up? The captain, a stolid English-Lutheran, had gone below to rummage for his service book.

"We now commit his body to the deep—" Burke remembered that much of it.

They were all watching something on the port bow, something which had stolen up out of the salty dawn, something which brought a shrill quality of fear into the voices of the passengers. Burke had heard it coming. His spirit-ears were very keen. He had heard it creeping with a soft crackling, under the surface of the sea.

A submarine!

Men were running along the decks now. He could hear sharp cries, loud commands, the yelp of the megaphone, purring bells, the frightened leap of the engines!

How did a submarine happen to be on this side? And why should it attack this ship—a slow, peaceful boat, loaded with wool and onions? There were not many passengers aboard, Burke remembered—only Henley and himself and a few farmers from the islands, of polyglot nationalities.

They were making the boats ready now. He could hear the tackle rattle in the chocks. The screws leaped breathlessly, flinging the boat forward in great,

plunging jerks. But by the low, tense voices of those on deck Burke knew that the under-sea boat was gaining—that it was frankly pursuing them!

Suddenly the ship gave a quiver as though she winced from a blow. There was a sound of ripping amidships on the port side, and a sharp, sulfuric odor and a jar! Then the deck under Burke heaved up with a roar, and dust and splinters fell in his face. He could hear water rushing below.

The engines choked, roared, and stopped. Feet tore up the companionways. There was much loud shouting and the nervous rattle of boats being lowered. Burke heard Henley's voice—even, unafraid. There were plenty of boats, the young doctor was saying, and the New Jersey coast was only a night away!

Then it was still. The ship was rolling, and Burke's stiff body rolled a little way across the shattered deck. The water was washing over him now, and his feet rose foolishly as the waves smote them. "We now commit his body to the deep!"

How easily his body floated! If only they had got that lead weight fixed, the rites would have been accomplished automatically. The ship must be going down, he could feel the whirl and suck of the waters. The suction kept him spinning, but still he floated. Death had been withheld from him, and now burial was denied him. Even the sea refused his bones!

The ship was gone now. The sea quivered, but the violent heaving had ceased. The boats were gone. They would not linger near the vortex of a plunging ship to salvage him—a worthless dead man. He was alone. All the face of the moving waters was his.

Then a soft sound of washing waves came to his ears, a liquid, gurgling sound of something rising from the sea. The submarine—he had forgotten it. It was coming up now, creeping near to see what ruin it had wrought. He heard the flip of a screw—voices.

They spoke a language he knew. Burke

knew many languages. Now they were shouting. A man plunged overboard. Burke could hear his splashing progress as he wallowed nearer. Then a hand clutched him.

He felt himself towed, inert, unresisting, violently through the torn water. The hull of the under-water craft rose sleek and slippery as the belly of a fish. With a line they dragged him up, bent him double, thrust his stiff limbs through a hatch.

Men bent over him, talking in a tongue that he knew. One laid his stiff hands straight.

"Dead!" he muttered.

But another contradicted him in a tone of authority, rolling Burke's eyelids back with a practised forefinger.

"This man's not dead," he declared. "He's been drugged!"

They brought a strange steel apparatus and pressed it against his chest. They inflated his sunken ribs and sent a current rending through his spine. And all the while Burke lay and grinned in his soul. Of course he was dead! What fools to try to bring a dead man back to life!

Then suddenly something flashed through his rigid body, snatching his soul rudely out of the restful inertia where it had floated.

It was the pain!

The pain!

He was alive!

He was alive!

As the strained fibers of him vibrated with the returning current of life Burke felt a hot anger surge through him. Meddling fools! Why had they disturbed him—tortured him back to earth—thrust this diseased clay with its pangs upon his tired soul?

He opened his eyes—they came open quite easily now—and looked at the men who stood around him. Kindly men they were with tired eyes, men who looked like the fathers of sons and the sons of fathers. And yet not an hour ago they had sent a peaceful merchant ship careen-

ing to the bottom of the smothering ocean.

An old man with a white mustache bent over him. His fingers were on Burke's pulse. His straight, strong lips curved in a smile.

"He's coming out," he said in the tongue which Burke understood. "He's had a stiff dose—combined with acute angina pectoris. I have seen such suspended animation only once—in Freiburg!"

Burke closed his eyes again wearily. Now it was all to do over again—the thing he had thought well done! Again he cumbered the earth, a disgrace to his friends, a blight upon Jeanne! Why couldn't they have let him die?

They were discussing him. Two of them were arguing. He must be put ashore. There was some discussion about the boat. But Burke only lay still, very weary, hating the body with its pangs which he had been forced to reclaim.

The old man gave him something through a hypodermic and the pain lessened. He felt stronger, quieter, even a little hungry. They brought broth in a quill and dripped it between his set jaws. His lips were cracked and cold, and the salt of the broth stung them. They wrapped him in hot, dry clothes and rolled him in a heavy blanket.

Then they put him ashore. A boat came out from some little cove and crept alongside the bulging belly of the submarine. Two men went into it—two men and Burke.

He did not see where they were going. His eyes were still weary and he kept them closed. But his ears were keen as ever—as keen as when he had thought himself dead. He heard the boat grate on gravel and the voices of men speaking English. He heard the rumble of a motor and the swish of long grass beside the path.

Then the men who spoke English carried him away in the motor. He did not care. If he could not die it did not matter greatly where he went. He wondered vaguely whether Henley was saved—

Henley and the captain and the ship's doctor. Henley had given him too much veronal. But he had meant well—poor old Henley. Then, whatever it was that the white-mustached one had given him overcame him and he slept soundly. For the first time in hours his avid brain was still.

When he awoke he was in a hospital. He knew it for a free hospital by the rows of beds and the unironed, coarse garment that he wore. There was an ice cap on his head, and a cool, moist bandage lay lightly over his dry, stretched mouth. Burke lay back with a sigh. He knew hospitals for agonized places, aching with loneliness. He had lain in many from Buenos Aires to Stockholm. All alike they were!

At last they let him go. They gave him strange, cheap clothes which did not fit him. They gave him no money—hardly a civil farewell. The pain was better and he felt stronger. But he was still a sick man—sick and penniless and alone in a strange place. He could not work. He did not know how to beg. That was one scallawag's trade which he had never tried—begging!

He would go back to Jeanne.

Jeanne was loyal. She would take him in and care for him. Then, perhaps, soon he would die and she would be free.

He had a ring left yet—a little cheap ring. He pawned it for enough to land him on the Jersey side, sixteen miles from New York. He could beat his way in.

He had traveled from Bonong to Tampa on a fruit boat once, eleven thousand miles, eating at the captain's table and paying nothing. He knew how to work it. It is proof of Burke's skill that he did work it. He arrived in New York—riding in a Pullman car with money in his pocket. There are still men who ride Pullman cars who think they are clever with cards.

In the city Burke went straight to the little house on Twelfth Street. He had been gone four months. The leaves were off the vines now. The flowers were dead

in the window boxes. He could see the light of a fire through the window.

Very softly he closed the little iron gate and climbed the two steps. He could see the room through the half-closed curtains.

Jeanne was there—and Henley. She was sitting on the arm of Henley's chair and they were studying a book together. Burke could see the pictures in the book. It was an automobile catalogue!

Then he remembered. The money! Of course the money was Jeanne's. She had that—the only thing he could give her. The red dress had been so little. He was glad that Jeanne had the money. Then with a start that pained him he realized that now he was alive the money was his again—the income of it as long as he lived.

He had done so little for Jeanne!

If he had died!

He cursed the foreign crew with fervent tongue.

Then came a chilling thought. Jeanne did not know that he was alive! To Jeanne and Henley he was only an indulged memory, hidden from troubling under a sleeping sea!

To Jeanne he was dead!

He turned away.

Straight down the two steps he went and into the street. The pain surged up quickly in his breast but he fought it down.

He would miss Henley. Henley knew what to do for the pain. But he walked away and did not look back.

At the Grand Central he boarded a fast train, very magnificent. The world was under his feet again, and his face was set upon the old road.

For Jeanne's sake he was dead!

Those gentlemen, the editors, who hold their fingers continually upon the capricious public pulse, maintain that nowadays the people will have nothing but love stories.

Gentlemen, I insist that this is a love story!

His Temporary Wife

by Robert Ames Bennet

Author of "Finders Keepers," "The Missing Key," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

NAN ROSE, a pretty, red-haired hospital nurse who has not yet graduated, is assigned to nurse Howard Eliot, a dyspeptic millionaire, at his home, assisting Dr. Gould. Eliot has quarreled with his son Arthur, especially over his friendship for Verna Devore and her brother, declaring them to be a vampire and an adventurer respectively. He makes a new will, apparently concerning Nan, and gives a sealed document into her keeping, to be opened by her sixty days after his death. A visit from Verna and Devore excites Eliot very much, giving him a heart attack. Nan gives him a hypodermic, but he falls dead.

CHAPTER VII.

SCAPEGUAT.

DR. GOULD was making his afternoon round of calls. He reached the Eliot mansion a few minutes after the death.

Devore had gone in from the corridor. He stood beside the door, sternly solemn. Miss Devore sat with Arthur Eliot near the bed, her face pressed against his shoulder. Nan was making the final entry on the sick-chart.

The physician looked close into the face of the patient he had lost, and shuffled across to Nan, perplexedly shaking his bald head. She put the chart into his outstretched hand. He looked at it and then at her with a frown that failed to mask his deepened perplexity.

"You recharged the syringe this morning?" he queried.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

She handed him the empty syringe. He peered at it and then at the last entries on the chart.

"You are sure this is correct? You gave the hypodermic—there followed a few seconds of relaxation—after that a recurrence of the paroxysm?"

"Mr. Arthur Eliot was present, doctor."

"Most peculiar — unaccountable," muttered the physician. He gestured her toward the corridor and went to tap the young man on the shoulder. "Your pardon, Mr. Eliot—a word with you, please."

When all were out in the hall he held up the empty syringe.

"Mr. Eliot, did you see Miss Rose use this?"

"The hypodermic? — Yes, doctor. I must say she was very quick about it and steady."

The puzzled physician blinked, pondered, and spoke curtly to Nan: "That seems to bear you out. You are no

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for February 24.

longer needed here. Get ready and report back at the hospital without delay."

Nan turned a level glance upon Eliot, but he was bending over the mournfully drooped figure of Miss Devore. As she passed through the doorway Dr. Gould started to follow her. Devore stepped in front of him.

"Beg pardon, doctor, but this matter that seems to be troubling you—"

"How? You mean—?"

Devore twiddled his monocle. "Er—it's deuced awkward, y'know, to have to say anything, only that young woman—"

"What's that?" demanded Eliot, his grief-clouded eyes fixed upon the hesitating speaker.

"Better tell it, Lennie, now you've started," murmured Miss Devore. "We have no secrets from Arthur."

"It's about her, if you insist upon hearing," slowly admitted Devore. "Probably nothing to it, but Dr. Gould seems to think there's something wrong."

"That hypodermic, given as prescribed, should have checked the paroxysm of the heart," stated the physician.

"But what if—" Devore stopped short and pressed his lips together.

"Go on!" urged Eliot, his brows knotted in a worried frown. "Out with it, Len!"

"If I must, then. You see, I noticed an odd look in the young woman's eyes when she ran for the hypo-what-d'you-call-it-squirt. Recalled the look when she came out here and told that your father was—gone. Kind of look you'd expect if the party had made a—fatal mistake. I took the liberty to call up her hospital and inquire, in your name, if Miss Rose had a clear record regarding—mistakes."

"Well?"

"Hospital superintendent referred me to Dr. Gould."

Arthur Eliot faced the physician, his eyes stern. "You know?"

"It was only her first or second case, over a year ago," muttered Dr. Gould.

"There was no such chance here—only the one solution for the hypodermic—all the rest capsules. Unless she purposely—"

"Oh, no, doctor, no, do not say it," protested Miss Devore. "Is it not possible the nurse only made a mistake? What if, in refilling the—the hypo-thing, she had absent-mindedly used water? The great strain of nursing, you know. Can one blame her if, when dazed from a hard night, she made such an innocent slip?"

"Water?" mumbled the physician—"Water? That would explain it. I will test what is left in the needle."

"What's the use?" murmured Eliot, and his head sank forward dejectedly. "He's gone—and all my fault for angering him!"

"Carelessness is inexcusable in a nurse," declared the physician crabbedly.

He opened his medical case as the young man went out with his hand clasped between Miss Devore's tenderly sympathetic palms. Devore lingered to see the physician unscrew the needle from the barrel of the hypodermic syringe.

When Nan came down the side stairs in her street uniform she found the chauffeur waiting to take her for the usual afternoon drive. Though the news of the master's death had been whispered from attic to cellar of the mansion, no one had countermanded the chauffeur's orders, and the man was too severely trained to do anything on his own initiative.

The sight of the car brought a grateful glow into the girl's cheeks. She thought that this attention was due to the courtesy of Arthur Eliot. She had been carried half way to her favorite park before the realization of the direction to which the chauffeur was holding and the remembrance of his masked surprise over her uniform and valise combined to disillusion her. At the first trolley line she dismissed the man and boarded a trolley car that was bound toward the hospital.

Her feelings when she mounted the familiar steps were not altogether unpleasant. She had escaped the drudgery of ward work for a time, and she had done creditable service. Now she would go at the routine harder than before. She would compel every one to realize her earnestness and ability. She did not care for their liking, but their respect would gratify her pride.

At this hour the superintendent usually was on one of his rounds of inspection. She hoped to slip in and report for duty to the matron. But as she topped the steps she saw that he was at his desk and, it would appear, waiting for her. Dour as was the look with which he met her, it failed to prepare her for his words:

"So you have returned—at your leisure. Quite in keeping with your record. You are discharged. Here is the balance of your salary due you to date—sixteen dollars and forty-three cents. Pack your belongings and leave here at once."

Nan stood for a long moment dumfounded. When she forced her stiffened lips to speak, her voice was hardly more than a whisper:

"This—it is most unjust. I shall appeal to the Board."

"Do so, and welcome. Dr. Gould will prefer the charges."

"Charges—what—whatever—? Why, he said nothing—not a word!"

"Naturally. It was after you had left that he found you had filled the hypodermic syringe with water instead of the solution prescribed."

Nan's eyes dilated. "Water? Impossible!" An angry scarlet flared across her whitening face. "It's a trick—a contemptible trick! Gould is lying because Mr. Eliot insisted upon keeping me! The cur! How dare he tell such a lie?"

"Denounce him to the Board," advised the superintendent with a coldness that chilled her righteous heat. "If you wish to know the truth, Dr. Gould tested

the drop left in the needle. It contained so slight a trace of the solution that it failed to react. A Mr. Devore witnessed the test."

The office reeled before Nan. She stood swaying, her eyes so dark from the dilation of their pupils that they appeared altogether black. Her world was crashing down about her head—all her hopes, her career, her ideals.

The superintendent went on inexorably: "I warned you. The hospital cannot condone mistakes."

Nan reached out her small hands to him in anguished appeal. "I did not—it is the truth—I *did not* make any mistake! I filled it with the solution! You must believe me—you *must*!"

"There is also your first mistake," the superintendent reminded her. "I should have discharged you then. The reputation of the hospital has been endangered. Take your choice. Go quietly, without references, or appeal to the Board, and have your record made public."

Pride stiffened Nan's knees as they were beginning to bend in supplication. Her red head tilted back on her straightening shoulders. She caught up her valise and turned toward the street door.

"Wait," said the superintendent. "You have permission to pack your other belongings."

"Thanks. They're about as valuable as the reputation you are giving me after I've slaved all this time for your godly house of healing."

The man winced. He thought himself no more than sternly just.

"You know best whether the effects you leave are valueless, Miss Rose. But here is your check."

"Put it in your conscience fund. You'll need it," the girl sought to wither him.

Hardly was she through the doorway when she regretted the taunt. Pride held her from turning back for the check. Yet even in the white heat of her anger, common sense told her that she could not spare the few dollars that

she had saved from her nominal salary. There was no one from whom she could borrow, and she had with her only a few small coins.

At the corner drug-store she addressed, impersonally to the hospital, an order for her check, to be delivered to the bearer. A newsboy fetched the check to her and threw in a penny paper with the service all for a dime.

The paper gave her a list of lodgings and the advertisement of a dress sale. She walked to the store and bought herself a ten-cent hat shape, a few remnants to trim it, and a very cheap suit. The material of the dress was coarse but strong. The cut was defective, but the color harmonized with her vivid hair.

Because of her hospital uniform the store cashed her check without hesitation. She rode across town on a trolley car and looked up a number of lodgings in a poor but respectable quarter of the city.

Her final choice was a cramped cubby-hole hall-room that looked down into a clothes-line area. Yet low as was the rent, when she had paid her month in advance there was only a dollar and sixty-five cents left in her purse.

The five cents bought her two loaves of stale bread at the bakery around the corner. The thought of the rich dainties which she had listlessly nibbled at luncheon brought a smile to her depressed lips as she sat down to her bread and water.

"Anyway, it 'll be good for my complexion," she murmured.

CHAPTER VIII:

THE TEMPTER.

THAT evening and early in the morning Nan worked so hard to trim her hat and refit the dress that she had a trig, fashionable costume complete before office hours. But she did not change from her nurse's street uniform.

She was the first person in the waiting-room of the physician who had seemed kindest to her at the hospital. He listened sympathetically to her frank statement and explained with grieved softness that professional ethics would not permit him to differ from the conclusions of his esteemed colleague Dr. Gould.

Nan stoutly declined his charitable offer of a bank-note. "I am not a beggar, thank you."

The second physician, whom she tried, brusquely showed her his door the instant she mentioned her discharge from the hospital. Another one was out. Two others vaguely promised to consider her application for work. Still another furiously assailed Dr. Gould as a fool and a quack, but wound up with the statement that he had no need of a nurse. He put Nan's name on a list below the names of a dozen other nurses.

She went last to the physician she least fancied. He was a black-bearded, suave-mannered man whose non-professional reputation had been given no little whispered discussion in the hospital. He was so agreeable and deferential to Nan that she accepted his invitation out to lunch to discuss her suitability for one of his cases.

When he smiled at her across the secluded café table she knew what to expect. But she was tired and hungry and ready to repay him in kind. She toyed with her wine glass, frequently raising its brim to her lips, only to put the wine down unsipped; and she held off or eluded his advances with coy coquetry until her last spoonful of mousse had melted on her tongue.

"My dear doctor," she murmured as she dipped her childlike finger-tips in the bowl and dried them with the dainty elegance that she had practised at the Eliot mansion—"My dear doctor, this has been a most delightful little luncheon. I must compliment you on your good taste, if not your good intentions. However, the situation you suggest is,

I fear, one for which I am not suited. Good day."

She was gone before he could recover from his indignant amazement and pay the rather large check.

Refreshed by this despoiling of the Egyptian, Nan drew up a list of physicians whom she did not know. In applying to them she volunteered no statement of her discharge from the hospital. But some recognized her uniform and questioned her. Others asked for her diploma, or for references.

On the morning of the third day opportunity at last came to her in the sudden call of a physician to perform an operation. The emergency was so acute that the patient could not be moved to a hospital and there was not time to hunt up a nurse. When the call was telephoned Nan was just stating that she wished work. Without stopping to question her, the physician rushed her to his little roadster and drove to the home of his patient.

The operation was successful. But for four days, with a kitchen apron over her street uniform, Nan fought a losing fight for the life of her patient. After the end the physician found time to inquire about her past. The honest account gave him the chance to relieve his chagrin over the loss of his first surgical case. With a show of magnanimity he saw that she was paid the exact amount due for trained nursing. He then warned her he would inform all the medical fraternity of the city that she was wearing the hospital uniform to obtain employment under false pretenses.

For two days Nan lay in her tiny hall-room before she could recuperate from the strain of the surgical case and the dejection over her shattered hopes. She now had Dr. Gould, the hospital, this physician, and the one who had lunched her all actively interested in depriving her of employment as a nurse.

She must seek her living in other fields.

While overhauling her scant belongings she came upon the sealed en-

velope given her by the millionaire so shortly before his death. She stared at his written instruction that it was to be opened sixty days after the event that had come upon him and upon her with such tragic suddenness. A wave of hot resentment flared in her face, and she flung the envelope back into her valise. Out of his hogshead of wealth he could so easily have willed her the few golden drops that would have paid her way to culture and independence.

Willed. The word sent a wild thought whirling through her fancy. Though altogether improbable, was it not possible that he had put such a bequest into his will? Down under all his display of cynical selfishness he must have liked her, else he would not have made the fantastic offer to marry her. Even his half-insane animosity against his son could not have induced him to make such a proposal if she had not been pleasing to him.

Next morning when Judge Laton came puffing into his offices he found a very small and demure young lady with Titian hair, seated at the head of his waiting clients. His restless, roving glances betrayed no sign of recognition until she was brought to him in his private office.

"Miss Rose, I believe," he boomed as he waved her to a chair. "What can I do for you?"

Nan silently handed to him the sealed envelope. He read the note on it with avid interest and shot a shrewd glance at the girl.

"Appears to be the writing of my late client, the deceased Howard Eliot. The meaning of the words is clear and explicit. No need of a lawyer to interpret the clause."

"Yes, sir, but—it was so peculiar that he should give it to me to hold," replied Nan. "I do not know what to make of it. Perhaps it is of no value; yet there is the chance that it may be very precious to some one. What if I should lose it?"

"You appear to be a capable custodian."

"Yet if I should? You see, it is a kind of trust from him, so if there is anything about it in his will that you do not consider improper to tell me—"

Judge Laton's whitish eyes flickered a glance at her anxious face. He answered her with gruff regret.

"Sorry. The will has been probated. Your name is not in it. No mention of this envelope. Only thing you can do is to hold it in accordance with his instructions."

Nan drew herself to her feet. "Thank you, sir. If there is any charge for your advice I must ask you to wait until I get employment."

He darted a piercing look at her. "You have left your hospital?"

Pride goaded Nan to tell the bitter truth: "I was discharged."

The uplifting of the lawyer's shaggy eyebrows led her into giving the detailed account of the millionaire's death and all that had followed. While she talked he sent his restless gaze roving about the office and strummed on his desk with his pudgy fingers.

When she had finished he asked her to repeat what had happened immediately before the death. Afterward he inquired her address. She bit her lip, hesitated, and gave the street and number.

"That will do. Good day," he curtly dismissed her.

As she left the great office building, Arthur Eliot swung his touring car in beside the curb. With him sat the blond Miss Devore, radiantly aristocratic. Behind them Devore lolled in bored grandeur. Miss Devore stepped out—and saw Nan. She immediately diverted Eliot's attention in the other direction. They entered the building together, while Nan slipped away through the throngs of pedestrians.

Within a hundred paces some one jogged her elbow. She looked up and met the gallant smile of Devore. His bow and lifted hat brought only a cold stare of the gray eyes that betrayed no hint of recognition.

"My dear Miss Rose, surely you cannot have forgotten me so soon," he deplored.

"My dear sir," she rejoined, "I really have no remembrance of your having ever been presented to me."

"Presented!" he echoed. "Clever—deuced clever! But the same roof, y'know—that is an introduction—at Mr. Eliot's."

"I was not aware of the fact; nor am I now."

"Ah, well, what's such a little matter between mutual friends of Artie?"

Nan pointed to the policeman on the corner. "You see that nice big son of Erin with a face like a meat-ax?"

"Yes?"

"Would it not be painful, Algernon, if the nice big son of Erin should take hold of the collar of a little yellow thing called a masher?"

Devore's florid face went fiery red. He stopped short. Nan went on without a backward glance. After her contemptuous thrust she felt positive that he would never again venture within reach of her scorn.

The rest of the day she spent in a vain search for work. Everywhere she found that employers required either expert ability or references as to character, often both. This applied to all work that might be called respectable.

Day after day, from morning to night, she walked about the city in search of decent employment. But the season was slack. Hundreds of skilled girl workers in every line were seeking jobs.

After two weeks she attempted piece-work in a laundry. The quality of her work gave satisfaction; not so the quantity. She lacked strength to push the heavy iron at the speed required to earn the food that would renew her strength. She dragged on at the killing labor until, with merciful callousness, the forewoman discharged her as incompetent.

Rent day cleared her purse of all except a few pennies. Driven desperate, she started to look for a position at do-

mestic service, fortified by a story that her trunk had been stolen soon after her arrival from Oregon. This falsehood, the first that she had used, gained her a place as housemaid at three dollars a week.

The work was light, and there was plenty of plain wholesome food. She was beginning to regain her strength and plumpness when her mistress came to her with an anonymous letter. It told only the truth about her discharge from the hospital; but with her renewed strength her pride would not permit her to deny the facts or appeal for leniency.

And it would not permit her to seek another place under false representations.

A week later her search through the want columns of discarded newspapers was rewarded by an advertisement for a housemaid that ended in the unique statement: "Appearances preferred to references."

She was very tired when a long walk brought her to the suburban address named. The house set alone in the midst of a block full of shrubs and old trees, and enclosed from the poor neighborhood by high brick walls. It had the appearance of a fine old farmhouse converted into a country residence and then used as an inn.

A few feet inside the open gate of the drive she spied a bench among the bushes. She crept in to it to rest and tidy herself before applying at the house. This necessary preening had not yet been finished when she was startled by the purring rush of a big touring-car that swooped down the street and shot into the drive.

Where she sat even her vivid hair was invisible to the occupants of the car. But from her side they were easy to see through the screen of foliage. Devore was driving, and Eliot sat behind with Miss Devore. Nan stole out and away, her face flushed with shame.

Another ten days found her close upon desperation. She was weak from hunger when, for the second time, Devore accosted her on the street. He approached her

openly, with no trace of gallantry in his concerned face.

"I beg your pardon for speaking, Miss Rose," he apologized; "but I can't help noticing you look about pegged. Happens I've had a run of luck. Wouldn't know the difference if you accepted a little loan till you're out of the hole."

Nan held out her hand and gazed straight into his eyes as he drew a bill-fold from his pocket. Try as he would, he could not mask that which lurked behind his surface smile. Nan took the two yellow Treasury notes and flung them into his face.

Anger enabled her to reach her miserable hall-room. There she collapsed on the cot and lay sobbing in dry-eyed anguish. She was close to the verge. Anything except the lightest work would now be beyond her strength—and she could not even get hard work. There seemed left only the river or—men like Devore.

Piece by piece she had pawned her valise and all her clothes, except the cheap hat and dress. Her purse was empty; she had no food, and the rent was due the next day.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE VERGE.

SHE awoke at dawn, somewhat refreshed by sleep, but suffering from pangs of hunger that water seemed only to make the more poignant.

An irresistible impulse drove her to the window. She leaned far out above the littered area. To drop head first upon the cement would make a quick ending of it all, and people would think the fall an accident.

Her dilated eyes stared downward, measuring the distance and the chances of striking clear between the wall and her landlady's garbage-can. Something whitish atop the uncovered refuse of the can caught her gaze. She saw that it was a crust of bread.

All else than ravenous yearning for

that crust vanished from her famine-tortured brain. She drew back to slip on one of her worn, broken shoes and drop the other out of the window. As she twisted about to unbolt the door she vaguely noticed a wrapped newspaper lying as if it had been thrust through the wide crack at the bottom. She left it untouched and hobbled down the stairs, aquiver with haste and desire.

The odor of coffee and bacon in the landlady's kitchen almost drove the girl frantic. With a desperate effort at self-control, she managed to point to her shoeless foot and mumble an explanation. The woman grudgingly let her out into the rear area.

The shoe was lying close beside the garbage-can. As Nan bent down with her back to the door, she clutched the coveted hunk of bread. It was moldy, but so gloriously large that she had to jam it hard to get it into the shoe. At the edge of the can was a piece of gristle. She could not resist the temptation to crowd it in on top of the bread.

Greed brought its penalty. When she slipped back into the kitchen the suspicious woman noticed the bulging top of the shoe.

"Whatchu got there?" she demanded.

"It's mine—mine!" panted Nan, her eyes glittering.

The woman grasped her arm and tore the shoe from her by main force. She peered in at the gristle and moldy crust.

"My Gawd!" she gasped. "Robbin' the pigs!"

Nan made a fierce clutch for her prize. "It's mine, I tell you—mine! You threw it away! Give it to me!"

"You—you—" spluttered the woman. "My Gawd! Starvin' an' never a cheep! You spunky little devil!"

She swung Nan around bodily and forced her into a chair at the kitchen table. One big red hand continued to grip the girl's shoulder. The other hand clapped down a slab of bread before her, slopped out a cup of muddy coffee, and dosed it liberally with milk and sugar.

"That's all yuh git now, honey," she grunted. "You're too far gone to stum-mick bacon."

The girl washed down a mouthful of bread with a gulp of coffee, took another bite, and burst into a storm of weeping.

"That's it, honey; let yerself go. You've held in too long. Git it out!" urged the woman.

Hunger helped Nan's pride to moderate and check the outburst of sobbing. But her tears continued to brim over. They ran down into her cup as she gulped the hot coffee. Midway of a second big slice of bread pride began to top hunger as well as emotion. She started to rise.

"I've imposed on you enough," she said. "I can't pay you."

"Whatchu think I am, yuh little red-headed she Lucifer!" reproached her benefactress. "Ain't it no pay to know a girl what c'n starve ruther 'n go bad—a purty one like you, at that? Now take this here bread an' git. My man 'll be turnin' out soon."

Nan slipped on her shoe. The woman forced another slab of bread into her hands and, at sound of a snort in the room off the kitchen, shoved her out into the hall.

Though her legs were strangely wobbly, Nan danced up the stairs as if her feet weighed no more than feathers. The bread that she had eaten had eased her worst craving, and the hot coffee, aided by the unexpected kindness of the landlady, had stimulated her almost to intoxication.

Just inside her doorway her unsteady foot flipped the wrapped newspaper under the cot. She bolted the door, laid her precious bread on the shelf, and fished under the cot for the newspaper. It was the first article of mail to be delivered to her at the lodging-house, but her name and address were clearly typewritten on the wrapper.

She tore it open, and saw that the paper was an early edition of the previous afternoon's issue. Among the classified want-ads was a marked item in the per-

sonal column. She read the item and re-read it with widening eyes. It was brief and clear:

WANTED.—Temporary wife. Immediate separation. Liberal pay to right party.

The address was that of the suburban place where she had seen Devore drive in with Eliot and Miss Devore.

Her first thought was that he had sent her the advertisement as a lure. She examined the sheet of thin, tough writing-paper that had been used as a wrapper. The letterhead had been torn off, but the watermark, "Legal Bond," suggested a clue to her stimulated brain.

Yet if Judge Laton really was the sender, what could have been his motive? She pondered the puzzle for many minutes until the disquieting thought flashed upon her that the opportunity might already have been lost. There had been all the previous evening for others to apply.

Questionable as was the proposition, she was not in a position to stickle over conventionalities if there was no actual wrong in the affair. The chance that Judge Laton had sent the paper gave the matter sufficient face value to make it worth investigating.

After as careful a toilet as was possible with her limited facilities, she started to wrap up her slice of bread. On the shelf beside it lay the sealed envelope given into her keeping by Howard Eliot. There was a chance that she might not return to her room for some time. She slipped the letter into her bosom.

After wrapping the slice of bread in the newspaper, she went down to tell the landlady that she had heard of a possible position. The location of the address wrenched from the woman a grunt of protest and a nickel.

"Ride out. Yuh wanta look fresh when yuh strike 'em," she advised.

Nan took the nickel and rose on tiptoe to kiss what to her had been one of the most repulsive of human faces. The woman backed away from her.

"Don't try any soft-soapin' on me.

Yuh gotta pay me back with inturst if yuh git a job."

"A hundred per cent!" promised Nan as she started off, bright-eyed and light of heart.

The trolley-car brought her to her destination much stronger than when she had started. On the way she had eaten part of her bread lunch.

She went up the curving drive to the house, where a large, pasty-faced woman with yellowish eyes sat on the rustic porch, crocheting. After this guardian of the entrance had glanced at Nan and the marked item, the purring voice in which she asked Nan to be seated bore out her resemblance to a big tabby cat. She told Nan that the parties who had applied the evening before had all been unsatisfactory to the gentleman, and that his renewed ad in the morning papers set the hour of noon for callers.

"But seeing that you're here, miss, you may as well wait," she added. "Those others were different. You show class. Make yourself at home. My house is very restful and private. Sometimes I take in roomers who want to be quiet. That is why I call it a residence-inn. But my real business is arranging little entertainments for the *bon ton*."

After a half-hour of chit-chat over various members of the smart set, the proprietress took Nan for a stroll through the shrubberies and left her under an arbor. The girl ate the last of her lunch and curled up luxuriously in a hammock. Its gentle swaying, the warm, pure, leaf-scented air, and her feeling of repletion and well-being lulled her to sleep.

She was awakened by a soft stroking of her forehead that suggested furtiveness. A voice purred in her ear:

"The gentleman has arrived, miss. I told him you was a lady, and he will be pleased to see you before the others. You're class. You'll not forget I put in a word for you, if things come your way?"

"Thank you. I shall remember," said Nan.

Pride stiffened her knees as she straightened up before the blinking, yellow-eyed tabby woman. She adjusted her hair and hat and dress, and followed the proprietress with no outward sign of her inward fear and trembling.

The woman led her past a waiting limousine and into the large, old-fashioned parlor of the house. A cased stairway and a narrow upper hall brought them to the closed door of the rear up-stairs room. Nan drew back when the proprietress scratched gently on the panel.

CHAPTER X.

A MATRIMONIAL BARGAIN.

THE door was opened by an elegantly dressed, heavily veiled lady. She beckoned Nan to enter. Beyond her, on the far side of the room, the girl saw a tall young man. He was facing about from the door; but she caught a glimpse of his profile.

Her first impulse was to run away. But the lady had already recognized her.

"So it is you, Miss Rose," a muffled voice murmured through the veil. "Please to come in."

Nan no longer hesitated. The situation could be no more embarrassing to her than to him; and with him present, she lost all her dread of a trap. That the veiled lady was Miss Devore was self-evident. Nan walked in past her and across the room, to stop at the young man's elbow.

"Is the advertisement yours, Mr. Eliot?" she inquired.

He whirled about to stare at her dumfounded, a deep flush crimsoning his dark face. "You—here?"

"In response to this advertisement," she explained. "I wish to apply, if there is nothing wrong about the affair—and I am sure there is not, if you are the person who advertised."

Eliot looked at her with a pleased relaxing from his embarrassment. "It is very kind of you to say that, Miss Rose.

May we ask you to be seated? They have been overworking you, I fear."

"I need a change from what I have been doing," replied Nan.

She sat down in one of the two chairs that he drew around. Miss Devore took the other. He stood before them and drove straight at the purpose of their meeting.

"There is no need to conceal anything from you, Miss Rose. This is the situation: To comply with certain provisions of my father's will, I must marry some one else than my *fiancée*, Miss Devore. Yet from my father's last words I feel certain he wished to revoke this will. I therefore believe I am justified in holding only to the strict letter of its provisions. This may be done by entering into a marriage which shall be no more than a legal form. The other party would sign a contract immediately to separate from me and not contest a divorce."

Nan reflected on this and asked: "What would be the reason given to get the divorce?"

Eliot looked at her appreciatively. "You hear that, Verna? She puts it before the matter of compensation. My dear Miss Rose, there are two or three statutory grounds for divorce that imply no moral blame on either side. For instance, incompatibility, or refusal to live as husband or wife."

"Neither would be so very dreadful," admitted Nan.

"Not at all," remarked Miss Devore, with an almost imperceptible tremor of eagerness under the cold formality of her tone. "You need not appear in court. The case could go by default, as they say; or, if you preferred, the case could be brought in your name and defaulted by Mr. Eliot. That is the usual way, and it would enable you to ask the right to resume your own name."

"I understand," said Nan very quietly. "My own name—I would not retain even his name."

"Would that be desirable to either side?" put in Eliot. "I need not tell you

that the less publicity this matter is given and the sooner it is forgotten, the more agreeable it will be for all concerned."

"Quite true," assented Nan. "Only I was thinking of but two sides of the question, and now I see there is a third. I am sorry, but it is no use talking. I know now I cannot go on."

She started up and hurried toward the door. Behind her she heard Miss Devore speak in sharp reproof: "You see, Arthur! I warned you not to show your hand to any of them. She will go direct to that lawyer."

"Pardon me, my dear," differed Eliot. "Miss Rose understands that what has been said here was strictly confidential."

"Yes," replied Nan. "I give you my word, Mr. Eliot."

Her red head was proudly erect as she opened the door. But in the hall, with the door closed behind her, she was saved from an outburst of grief and despair only by the sight of the proprietress gliding softly away toward the stairs. Nan turned her back on the woman and stood with her hands pressed hard on her bosom to restrain the sobs that seemed determined to force their way into her throat.

As she began to regain her self-control she became aware that she was staring at a calendar hung beside the door. Each past day of the month had been crossed off. The "17th," next to be cancelled, started in her mind a swift train of associated memories. That date was the last one she had marked, two months before, on the sick-chart of Howard Eliot.

The words that she had just spoken to his son may have recalled her promise to the father, or it may have been her sub-conscious awareness of that which was in the bosom of her dress. She drew out the sealed envelope and looked at the feeble, unsteady writing upon the front. Even in her dejection she tingled with a little thrill of satisfaction and triumph over the writer of those words.

Beyond any doubt, he had sought to tempt her feminine curiosity. But Pandora had not opened the box—and the

sixty days had passed. In fact, because of the one day over thirty in July, she could have uncovered the secret the previous morning.

Yet with his explicit instructions and the calendar before her eyes, she stood hesitating, her exultance suddenly turned into an agony of suspense.

What was inside the envelope? Did her Pandora box hold a malicious imp or a light elf? Would she find inside a small gift to prove his carefully masked gratitude for her good service, or would it be only a bitter jest to mock her for refusing his incredible, preposterous offer of marriage and fortune?

Her small fingers, quivering with agitation, drew a brass pin from the coils of her vivid hair and, after two or three attempts, slit open the top of the envelope. Still more tremulously she replaced the hairpin and fumbled until she had pulled out and opened the sheet of paper folded within. That which was written on the sheet of paper was as brief as it was astounding to the girl—

I will all my property to my nurse, Nan Rose.
HOWARD ELIOT.

The tremulous writing writhed under Nan's dilating eyes as if alive. Her brain reeled from the effort to comprehend this incredible thing. Twelve words and the date—that was all. Yet it purported to bestow upon her, Nan Rose the pauper, a fortune!

After the girl's first shock of utter amazement came horror, and then a wave of righteous wrath. This subsided into profound pity and indignation.

She bent over the writing, her broad little forehead puckered with the effort of hard thinking. Suddenly her body straightened. She looked up, her eyes bright and resolute, and her lips half parted in an eager smile.

Her abrupt opening of the door surprised Eliot in the midst of a heated protest: "—woman of breeding, Verna—a lady. Otherwise we must wait until we do find one."

"Excuse me," murmured Nan. She met their questioning stares and stopped short beside the closed door, her face averted and her gaze on the floor. "I've come back. I—I changed my mind."

"What? You mean you agree?" queried Eliot.

He came striding to her, unmistakably relieved and pleased. Miss Devore drew the thick veil down over her flushed face.

"You will sign an agreement—a contract?" she demanded.

"Yes," answered Nan with sudden iciness.

"But the compensation, Miss Rose?" remarked Eliot.

Nan murmured the word in a vague tone, as if her thoughts were elsewhere: "Compensation?"

"For your part in the—undertaking," he explained. "Would five thousand dollars be satisfactory to you?"

"Five thousand— Oh, yes; whatever you wish."

Her indifference puzzled him and roused the suspicions of Miss Devore. She whispered in his ear. But he met the insinuation with the same obstinate, quixotic chivalry that had caused him to refuse to consider the charges against herself made by his father.

"I am positive, my dear, that Miss Rose can be trusted—that she has no thought other than to carry through the arrangement as agreed upon."

"I will do exactly what you wish," promised Nan.

Even Miss Devore could detect no guile in the direct, resolute gaze of the girl's gray eyes.

"Good!" said Eliot. He took out his check-book and a fountain pen. "I will write a check for five thousand dollars in your favor as Mrs. Arthur Eliot. You will cash it as soon as we are married and you have told Judge Laton you are my wife."

"Must I—go and—and tell him?" faltered Nan.

"We consider it necessary," replied the young man. "He is sole executor of the

will. Unless he is convinced of the marriage, he can prevent the estate from coming to me."

Nan looked down at her little-ringless hands. "That would be most unjust!" she murmured.

"He must do what the will directs," explained Eliot. "I cannot blame him; while as for my father—you know how it was with him. Poor old dad! They say no one dies a Christian death whose disease is located below the diaphragm. He suffered so damnably. Fact is, I can't believe he was responsible for all this. Anyway, I'm certain he wished to change his will—there at the last—else I'd not have resorted to this miserable subterfuge."

"Suffering makes angels of some people—" began Nan.

"And fiends of others," Miss Devore broke in.

"Oh, no, not that!" differed Nan. "It only makes them, as Mr. Eliot says, not responsible."

For the first time the young man's lips quirked up at the corner in their fascinating crooked smile. The girl's eyelids quivered and sank, and she drew in a deep breath.

"That settles it," he said.

He wrote a check and handed it to her. She thrust it into her bosom without looking at the amount or the names. Again he smiled his appreciation.

"Will an immediate marriage be agreeable?" he asked.

"The sooner the better," replied Nan.

"She has yet to sign the agreement, Arthur," Miss Devore reminded him.

He took a typewritten sheet of paper from an inner pocket, unfolded it, and reached a match from the old-fashioned safe of the bracket lamp beside the door.

"Arthur—wait!" shrilled the veiled lady. "You cannot intend—"

"Why not?" he asked. "Miss Rose has my check. That safeguards her. It is drawn to her as my wife. That safeguards me. For the rest I have her word and she has mine."

The match crackled on the sandpaper front of the safe. As he held it to the lower corner of the typewritten paper, he remarked with an astuteness that neither girl would have expected of his frank, artifice-disdaining nature:

"The fewer who know of this agreement the better. If kept in writing, it might have fallen into the possession of some one unscrupulous enough to attempt blackmailing—or Judge Laton might have seen it."

He waved the flaming paper to save his fingers. A whiff of the acrid smoke sickened Nan. Owing to her weakened condition she was already faint from the close air of the room. She swayed dizzily and put a hand against the door to steady herself.

His voice came to her as if from across a field of humming bees: "You're ill!"

"No—no," she sought to deny. "Only a trifle— You see, at the hospital, we usually had a cup of tea—or something—midmorning."

She was dimly conscious of supporting hands. After a time she roused to the fact that she was reclining on a sofa before an opened window. Miss Devore was energetically fanning into her face the warm but fresh air that flowed in over the window-sill. The veil that concealed the lady's expression caused Nan's gaze to shift.

The window was ornamented with an outcurving grille of copper. Through the screen that was stretched over the grille Nan looked out into the grateful dark-green of a big tree. Her gaze returned to the room, and for the first time she had attention to spare for its quiet charm. It was a big old-fashioned bed-chamber, decorated in restful tones and furnished with quaint antique pieces, with the exception of the comfortable modern brass bed.

A pleasant jingle attracted her glance to the opening door. Eliot stepped in and took a tray from a Jap, who remained outside. As Nan drew herself up to a sitting position he closed the door and

came across to her. On the tray were sugar, cream, a small pot of cocoa, and a plate of wafers. Nan lowered her dark lashes to hide the ravenous look in her eyes.

"Won't you and Miss Devore join me?" she forced herself to murmur.

"If you'll excuse us I wish to speak with Miss Devore about the arrangements," he replied.

Whether or not the act was planned out of consideration for Nan, his taking of Miss Devore from the room permitted the hungry girl to eat without restraint. When they returned, every dish on the tray was empty. The few cubes of sugar that Nan had not dissolved in her cocoa were in the pocket of her dress. She was not particularly fond of sweets, but she knew that sugar is one of the most sustaining of foods, and she needed strength to endure the ordeal of her temporary marriage.

To divert attention from the empty tray she remarked her opinion of the room: "This is so quiet and restful. Do you know, I believe I shall come here for a week's vacation while planning my college course."

"Good idea," approved Eliot. "You may consider the charges rather high, but it seems to be a very desirable place for one who wishes rest and quiet. Glad to hear you intend to go to college. You'll like it."

Miss Devore somewhat impatiently held out a large dark veil and an automobile wrap of rich-appearing silk.

"Oh, yes," said Eliot. "Miss Rose, may I ask you kindly to wear these? It's necessary for you to look the part in your dress as well as—as yourself, especially before Laton."

He held the wrap for Nan with a genial courteousness that caused Miss Devore to tap the floor with the toe of her stylish pump. Nan slipped into the wrap and took the veil to the mirror.

When she turned about, only an observant woman would have noticed anything lacking in the fashionableness of

her costume. The wrap extended an undue distance below the hem of the skirt, but it covered over the cheapness of her dress. The veil converted her home-made hat into a creation and concealed her red hair.

CHAPTER XI.

LAW AND EVIDENCE.

THERE was no one to observe the three until they came down-stairs and out on the rustic porch. Devore was waiting beside the limousine. At sight of him Nan's flushed face paled and she coldly placed herself on the far side of Miss Devore. Eliot noticed her look and frowned inquiringly at Devore.

"No call to murder me, old man," complained the mutely accused. "Met Miss Rose on the street. She looked so pegged I made the mistake of offering her a loan. Bally blunder—but well meant. Forgot I'd never been formally—er—presented to the lady. Over the pond, y'know, the roof is considered an introduction."

"Lennie always means well," interposed Miss Devore. She turned frigidly to Nan. "Miss Rose, I present my brother. It is necessary, for he is to be one of your witnesses."

Devore doffed his cap, opened the door of the limousine, and stepped aside with self-effacing deference while Eliot handed in the girls. The two men then took the front seats and Eliot drove the car towards the heart of the city.

Throughout the trip Devore chatted garrulously to his companion. Behind them Nan and Miss Devore sat silent and as far apart from one another as the width of the limousine would permit.

When the party entered the city hall the witnesses waited in the corridor while Eliot and Nan secured the marriage license. They were soon in possession of the required legal permission for Arthur Howard Eliot, age twenty-three years, and Annabelle Randolph

Rose, age twenty years, to marry one another.

At the door of the justice's courtroom Eliot, as too often happens with bridegrooms, found that he had forgotten to provide a ring.

"But is one necessary—for us?" questioned Nan, all on edge from the frightful mental strain that she was forcing herself to endure with outward composure.

"That fat old attorney will look for it," replied Miss Devore irritably, as she stripped off a glove to remove the smallest and least expensive of her rings.

Nan interposed with frigid decisiveness: "Do not trouble. It is too large, and I prefer a plain gold band."

Eliot shrugged. He was enjoying the situation no more than Nan and Miss Devore.

"My fault. We'll have to go to a jeweler's."

They returned to the limousine, and he drove to a jewelry store. A clerk brought out rings of various sizes, from which Nan selected a broad band that fitted snugly on her small finger. With her hand restored to its usual plumpness the ring would have been difficult to remove.

Within a few minutes they were back at the door of the justice. Eliot looked at Nan with sudden embarrassed diffidence in his dark eyes.

"You are still willing to—go through with it?" he asked.

She rallied her faltering courage and nodded her assent. He bowed her into the drab little courtroom with grave courtesy. Miss Devore followed at Nan's shoulder. The justice was leaving his bench for the noon recess. Devore unobtrusively slipped around the out-drifting throng of spectators and spoke in the ear of the justice.

A minute or so later Nan found herself in a dingy office back of the courtroom, with her three companions, the elderly justice of the peace, and his rat-faced young clerk.

The justice was pursy and bald and good-natured. Given a cassock, he might have posed for a Friar Tuck. The suggestion brought Nan a touch of diversion and relief from her stress. She realized that she was at least being spared the mockery of a ministerial wedding. She had escaped what she felt would have been a religious travesty. And this fusty ceremony would be no less binding. That was the one essential—a legal marriage.

Eliot stood beside her, very grave and uneasy-eyed, though his mouth was almost grimly determined. But that is the way with many bridegrooms. She was deathly pale, and her eyes looked past the justice in a wide gaze that saw nothing—after the manner of many brides. Eliot gave his response in a husky undertone. When the question was put to Nan she answered with disconcerting clearness.

She felt her bridegroom's involuntary start, and saw the twinkle in the humorous eyes of the justice. A flood of scarlet surged into her cheeks. Her eyes sank to the worn linoleum at her feet, and she did not stir until Eliot had slipped the ring on her finger and the justice had pronounced them husband and wife. Then, very quickly, she jerked the thick double veil down over her face.

There followed a seemingly interminable delay while entry was being made of the marriage and a certificate filled out. At last his voice—the voice of her husband—murmured apologetically in her ear:

"Didn't think it would be so hard. But you're plucky!—only Laton now."

She could have screamed when he took her arm. But no one saw her expression, for her face was now veiled as completely as Miss Devore's. Neither the justice nor the clerk had noticed anything unusual about the party aside from their appearance of affluence and a degree of emotional stress natural to the occasion.

From the city hall Eliot drove to the building in which Judge Laton had his offices. There was no discussion over the method of procedure. Devore and Miss Devore remained in the limousine, while Eliot silently handed out Nan and escorted her into the building.

She observed how his eyes steadied and his mouth became more resolute as they shot up the elevator toward the offices of the lawyer. It pleased her to see his uneasy concern over herself turn to grim preparedness for the meeting with Judge Laton. The scheme was on the verge of its crisis, and he was going to face the lawyer like a man.

They found the anteroom and front offices empty. The stenographer and clerks were out at lunch. Eliot tried the door of the private office. It was unlocked. He walked in without knocking.

Judge Laton sat with his portly body sprawled back in his desk chair. His far head hung forward with its heavy jowl puffed down upon his chest. His face and neck were brick red, and he was gasping and gurgling as if half choked.

Nan clutched at Eliot's arm and then darted forward. The big lawyer appeared to have suffered some kind of apoplectic stroke. But at the first touch of the girl's fingers on his bulging cheek he uttered a sound not unlike the snort of a startled horse and straightened up in his chair to dart a piercing glance at the intruders. At once his little whitish pig eyes began to twinkle, and the smile-wrinkles at their outer corners puckered.

"Huh-umm! Caught me napping, eh?" he boomed. "This hot weather a *siesta* is preferable to a lunch—for a man of my weight."

The remark gave Eliot time to step forward and place a chair for Nan almost at the lawyer's elbow. As she gratefully sank down upon the seat he stood over her and fired his bomb:

"Judge, I wish to introduce you to my wife."

The lawyer sat perfectly still, his every feature immobile except the rest-

less eyes. They flashed their glances in rapid succession up and down the veiled lady and the young man. Then, with a deep puff, the lawyer heaved himself to his feet and bowed gravely to Nan.

"My compliments to Mrs. Arthur Eliot," he rumbled, with a barely perceptible hint of incredulity in his voice and glance.

Eliot set his jaw and handed over the marriage license and certificate. Judge Laton glanced at them, pursed his lips, and sat down to read. Almost instantly his face again became immobile. He shot a roving glance at Nan.

"Rose—so!—Annabelle Randolph Rose. Have I not had the honor of meeting you before, Mrs. Eliot?"

Nan lifted her left hand in a gesture that displayed her wedding ring while she drew up her veil. As she met his momentarily fixed gaze she thought she saw in the little eyes a twinkle that was both shrewd and humorous. Eliot noticed only the continued immobility of the lawyer's gross face. He muttered half apologetically:

"During my father's last days Miss Rose—that was—eased his suffering by her kind and efficient nursing."

A bland smile wreathed about the big fat face. One of the pudgy hands thumped approval upon the desk.

"Spoken like the son of your father!—and still better done! You have broken with the lady whom he disproved, and shown your appreciation of the lady who gained his affection."

"Oh, no—I—" faltered Nan. "Surely he—"

A slow flush reddened Eliot's face.

"I have come to you on a matter of business, Judge Laton. You now have the proof that I have married another than my—than Miss Verna Devore. As I understand your interpretation of the will I am now entitled to—my property."

The smile lingered about the lawyer's eyes as he pondered the point with the wariness of an old counsellor.

"Now entitled? Yes, that, I believe, is the deduction to be drawn from your compliance with the fundamental condition. But one should be precise in such matters. That memorandum of the terms—let us see."

He bent over to open a drawer in the side of his desk next to Nan. She drew her feet farther back under her chair. But his down-stooped head brought his restless glance in under the hem of the silk automobile wrap. After turning over the papers in the drawer he straightened up, puffing and very red of face.

"The memorandum appears to have been mislaid," he rumbled, his glance flickering at and around the young couple. "As you may remember, the terms of the will are somewhat involved. However, I will make every effort to render you a precise statement of your present status at an early date. Meantime, if you require a few thousands for the—hum—honeymoon trip—"

His glance darted into Nan's whitening face before she could drop her veil. The flush that lingered in Eliot's cheeks deepened.

"Thanks, no," he declined. "Are you fully satisfied that our marriage is legal?"

"This license and certificate have every appearance of being incontrovertible," the lawyer evaded a direct answer. "With the permission of yourself and Mrs. Eliot, I shall keep them as, so to speak, vouchers. Or, if you prefer, I will secure a duplicate certificate of the marriage and a certified excerpt from the license record."

"You are welcome to keep these. And now, if you will pardon us, we will take our leave."

Judge Laton rose even more briskly than Nan. As he bowed to her his bull voice mellowed to sonorous gentleness:

"Madam, in colloquial parlance, I am the Eliot family lawyer. You are now the daughter-in-law of my late client and friend, Howard Eliot. Both as executor of his will and as the family

counsellor, I wish to place my services at your disposal. I shall feel honored to have you consult me, if at any time you feel inclined to ask my legal or friendly advice."

"You are—very—very kind to say it," murmured Nan.

For several moments after Eliot led her out the old lawyer continued to stand beside his desk, his glance flickering about and under the chair in which she had sat. When the first of his clerks came hurrying back from lunch, he clapped on his old-fashioned broad-brimmed panama and went out.

CHAPTER XII.

A CHECK ON A CHECK.

ABOUT the same time that the lawyer left his offices a limousine with drawn curtains stopped at the curb of a quiet side street, half a block short of one of the main business thoroughfares. Eliot swung from the front of the limousine to open the door for Nan.

When the girl stepped out, her cheap dress and home-trimmed hat were no longer covered by the disguising veil and wrap. Her face was very white and drawn. Eliot flushed as he lifted his cap.

"May I thank you for the great service that you have rendered me?" he murmured somewhat awkwardly. "I did not realize how hard it would be for you. Really, I'd like to double the amount of that check."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Nan, and she abruptly started to leave, so that he might not see the look in her eyes.

"The other way," he said. "My bank is at the corner. You must be identified. I'll ask Mr. Devore to—"

"No!" refused Nan. "I don't want—I'll not have him go with me!"

"But you must have some one. I'll go myself. Verna, if you'll hand out the veil and wrap."

Instead of the articles, Miss Devore thrust out her head. She looked disdainfully at Nan.

"You cannot go in with her, Arthur. There's been quite enough publicity without that."

Nan flared. "I quite agree with you! Good day, Mr. Eliot."

He started towards her as she hurried off. "Wait. I'll take the check in myself—cash it for you and—"

But Nan was already several yards away and too angry to realize what he meant. As she did not look around, she was unaware that he was following. The side entrance of a department store offered her escape from the detested gaze of Miss Devore. She darted through.

For several moments Eliot was blocked at the door by the outsurge of a party of women shoppers. When he entered, Nan had disappeared. Between the many elevators and the aisles crowded with shoppers, the chance of finding so small a girl was infinitesimal. Eliot frowned, shrugged, and turned back.

Five minutes later Nan left the front entrance of the store and peeped around the corner. The limousine was gone. She stepped back before the store window and pretended to be looking at the articles on display while she sought to regain her composure.

If only he had been cold and business-like! But he had shown himself so kind and concerned for her and so boyishly embarrassed, as if he really considered her an equal—as a lady who was breaking the conventions to do him a service. Yet she had taken his pay.

A hot blush burned her cheeks. The only persons near had just passed. She drew from the bosom of her dress the check that he had thrust upon her. The sight of it gave added poignancy to her realization of the situation.

Pay to Mrs. Arthur H. Eliot Five Thousand Dollars.

She was Mrs. Arthur H. Eliot—she was his legal wife. There was his wed-

ding ring on one of the quivering fingers that held his check. What a mockery!

The check crumpled in her clenching hand. She flung it down and stamped her foot upon it. The blow burst open one of the cracks in the upper of the worn little shoe. At sight of the break the angry color ebbed from her face. She bent over and snatched up the bit of soiled paper. Very carefully she wiped it with her handkerchief.

"I can't help it!" she murmured to the disconcertment of a dignified matron who was turning in beside her to look at the latest model corset. "I must use it. And I've paid for it—doubly!"

The matron sheered away. Quite oblivious of the startled lady Nan folded the creased soiled check and walked resolutely around the corner and along the side block. The hurriedness of her pace, together with the heat of the early afternoon sun and the stress and excitement through which she had passed brought her to the bank rather feverish and by no means as clear-headed as usual.

She thrust the check in at the paying-teller's window. He stared at it a perceptible moment, glanced at its back, and pushed it out to her, with veiled inquiry in his non-committal eyes.

"You must endorse the check, madam—write your name on the back."

"Oh, of course! How stupid of me!" exclaimed Nan, ashamed and a bit flurried over her forgetfulness.

As she turned to the nearest desk the teller made a sign to a lank, narrow-eyed man who stood lounging against a pillar. The man drifted up behind Nan when she hastened back to the window. The teller looked again at the face of the check, then at the back.

"Excuse me, madam," he said. "This check is to Mrs. Arthur H. Eliot, but you have endorsed it 'Nan R. Rose.'"

Nan's confusion and blush of shame were indistinguishable from the symptoms of guilt.

"But—but do I have to sign it that way?" she faltered. "I would much rather use my own—that is, my unmarried name."

"Unless indorsed by her to you, I cannot pay you this check in Mrs. Eliot's favor," replied the cashier.

The girl's vexation at her blunder turned to irritation against him for his obtuseness. She held up her hand with the wedding-ring.

"If necessary, I will, of course, indorse it as you wish. I am Mrs. Eliot."

The narrow-eyed man gave the teller a significant look over her head. The teller smiled apologetically.

"May I ask you to get the check initialed by the cashier? He is personally acquainted with Mr. Eliot. Mr. Grayson here will show you to the cashier's office."

Annoyed but quite unsuspicious, Nan looked around at the narrow-eyed man, and acknowledged with a slight bow the touch he gave his hat. When they came to the door of the cashier's office he opened it for her and followed her in. The cashier caught Grayson's look and coldly motioned Nan to a seat.

"What can I do for you, miss?" he asked in a guarded tone.

"I am Mrs. Arthur Eliot," replied Nan, and she handed him the check.

"Because I indorsed this with my own—that is, my unmarried name, the teller told me to have you do something to it. I forget just what."

"Probably for me to initial it—indicate that I consider it all right," explained the cashier.

His trained glance looked first at Eliot's signature and then at Nan's indorsement. The crinkled and soiled condition of the check seemed to him to offer the right clue.

"Do you consider it honest to cash a check that some one has lost?" he queried.

Nan flushed with indignation. "I told you I am Mrs. Eliot. Give me a pen and I will sign my married name."

The cashier exchanged a glance with

Grayson and handed his pen to Nan. Without the slightest trace of hesitancy, she wrote "Mrs. Arthur H. Eliot" above her maiden name.

"There," she said. "Now give me my money."

She thrust the check back at the cashier. He took it and looked at her with keen scrutiny behind his tactfully polite smile.

"If you will pardon me, madam, I am personally acquainted with Mr. Eliot, and I had reason to believe that his *fiancée* was another lady than yourself. I have yet to receive a wedding announcement—"

"We were married this noon very unexpectedly," said Nan.

"Indeed?" questioned the cashier, his eyes taking in again the girl's hat and dress and shoes. "Pardon me, but may I ask why, if you have been a bride only these few hours, Mr. Eliot did not come to the bank with you?"

Nan crimsoned and flared. "Because I would not let him! Besides, there ought to be no need. I've cashed checks here before—when I was at the hospital."

"Ah!" murmured the cashier, his eyebrows arching. There had been gossip at the club about young Eliot's father and a little red-headed nurse. Here was a probable explanation of the check. The girl held something against either father or son, and had blackmailed the latter into marrying her.

The astute official temporized. "My dear madam, I of course do not doubt what you say, but we have certain bank rules. May I ask if the superintendent of your hospital can identify you—I mean, as Mrs. Arthur Eliot?"

"I wouldn't accept the slightest favor from him, if he could give it!" flashed Nan.

"But I regret to say, madam, it is an inflexible rule—we cannot cash this check until you are identified as Mrs. Eliot. Shall I call up Mr. Eliot's residence?"

"No!" forbade the girl. She thought a moment. "Would Mr.—I mean, Judge

Laton do. He knows all about it. He has the license."

The cashier bowed and took up his telephone to call Judge Laton's office. At the answer he hung up and looked doubtfully at Nan.

"Judge Laton is not in."

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "But I must have my money—at least some of it—at once. Your bank will close soon, and then I—" She bit her lip. "I don't care—I must have it! Please call up Mr. Eliot."

At this request the grimly waiting detective stared in blank perplexity. The cashier promptly called up the Eliot mansion. The footman caretaker answered that Mr. Eliot had given all the other servants a vacation on pay, and was still occupying his apartment at the Ritz-Carlton. A call for Eliot at the hotel brought the information that he had not yet returned from a morning's motor drive with Miss Devore and her brother.

The cashier and detective exchanged glances. Nan was looking down at the worn tips of her shoes. There was no place in all the city where she could go except back to her miserable lodging, and she doubted whether she could walk so far. She was faint with the emotional reaction from her marriage and the visit to Judge Laton, her parting with Eliot, and now this cruel delay.

"If you please," she asked, "may I stay here until you reach Judge Laton or Mr. Eliot on the phone?"

"Certainly, madam, by all means!" consented the cashier, and he cast a look of relief at the detective. "The vice-president is out for the afternoon. Mr. Grayson will show you into his office, where you can rest, while I endeavor to locate—"

He did not finish the sentence. Nan had risen, only to totter and sway. She would have fallen heavily had not the alert detective clutched her lax body as she sagged down.

"Out for the count!" he muttered. "Good chance to frisk her, sir."

"No," ordered the cashier. "There is no question as to Eliot's signature, and the girl is not dishonest—though she may be mentally irresponsible. Put her on Mr. Miles's divan and have Miss McKay attend to her—call a doctor, if necessary.

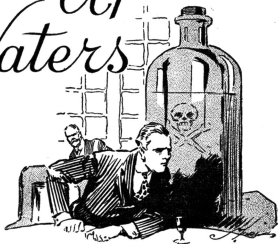
I will ask that Judge Laton and Mr. Eliot call me up as soon as they return."

He took up his telephone as Grayson went out at the side door carrying the limp, pitiful little figure of the swooning girl.

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.

Bread Upon the Waters

by
Du Vernet
Rabell



OF course at the finish I was sorry for both of them, but on the whole I was sorriest for Jim Beckwith—backing his belief cost him money. But I am sorry for Take-a-Chance Castle, too, because it's only a question of time when that theory of his is going to cost him money, too; and more than that, a lot of faith in human nature; the exceptional kind of human nature not the rule.

Take-a-Chance Castle—his right name is Senator Ebert L. Castle—is one of those men who say, "I never argue," and then goes ahead to convince you of something you don't believe and don't want to believe with the eloquence of a silver-tongued legal light trying a case before a jury of Missouri farmers.

That man had a theory on everything; the war, the ponies, politics, and poker; but the theory that was dearest to his heart was that it's always safe to take a chance on any member of the human species.

"I don't play the market," he used to say, "I don't play the ponies, and I don't play poker—not much, that is, and my true friends tell me that not much is too much—but I do play people. I play 'em to win, for place, for show—right across the board. Just let me get a good look at a man, that's all I ask, and I'll place a bet."

Oh, Take-a-Chance Castle had an advanced case of optimism all right, and there didn't seem to be any cure for him.

And that was strange, too, because his two best friends—Castle had a string of friends that stretched from Bar Harbor to the Barbary Coast in Frisco—were Keith Kenlon, owner of the Chicago *Star*, and Jim Beckwith, president of one of the largest detective agencies in the country.

Of course, what these two didn't know about human nature—the seamy side—wasn't worth knowing, and they sure did do their best to pass the results of their knowledge and experience along to Take-a-Chance Castle.

But their success was not conspicuous. It was something of a joke with Beckwith because he felt that all he had to do was to sit tight and wait for some sweet soul to land Castle and he'd have the pleasure of drawing his tried and trusty "I told you so."

In fact, he was so sure about this that he had a standing twenty-to-one bet with Castle on the subject. But his friend's failing used to worry Kenlon; Kenlon was the worrying kind, anyhow, and then, besides, he more than liked Castle, he was fond of him.

Jim picked up Chance—that's what his name was shortened up to—one night toward the middle of September in the Hotel Breville, Chicago. Chance was wooing the breeze that was drifting shyly off the lake, and dividing his attention between a tall, frosty glass at his elbow and a pair of noisy socks that he had lifted to the window-sill for a better view.

Chance hailed Jim with delight, and after trying to cool him off with a couple of the same, launched into an enthusiastic account of his latest "bread upon the waters" venture, as he always called his experiences in the so-called proof of his theory when his mood was high. Jim, however, was in a glum frame of mind, and declined to be interested or even, as was usual with him, amused with a recital of Chance's optimistic adventures.

"Go to it, Chance," he remarked sardonically, at the finish. "I'm a good waiter, and I know it's only a question

of time before—have you heard the song they are singing over at the Liberty?

"You can play it once,
And sometimes twice,
But the third time you'll get yours."

He turned and wagged an impressive finger.

"And all I hope and pray is that Keith Kenlon and I are occupying seats close to the ring-side when the event comes off."

Maybe the heat was oppressing Chance, too. Anyhow, he didn't take this with his accustomed good humor.

"Huh!" he snorted. "Don't you love to howl calamity—you and Kenlon, too! I don't blame you so much, Jim; you make your living digging up the mistakes in this world and dragging them up to the bar of justice! Of course, it's not to your interest to admit much good in the world nor the people in it. But Kenlon ought to have had his lesson."

"Don't get you," Beckwith said.

"No, you wouldn't. It's all in a day's work to you. But I thought it struck deeper with Kenlon, being it hit him so close to home. You know who I mean—Jack Kenlon. If Kenlon had been willing to take a chance in his own son, you and he wouldn't have spent the greater part of a year chasing over three continents—and at that it didn't do either of you a bit of good. You didn't find the boy and you didn't learn a thing from it."

"What was there to learn?" Jim wanted to know. "Kenlon's boy sowed some heavy crop of wild oats and—"

"How do you know they were so wild? Why couldn't Kenlon have given him a chance to explain?" Castle interrupted, as always ready to argue at the drop of the hat.

Jim recognized the familiar symptoms, and waved his hand wearily.

"Oh, let it go at that," he begged. "It's too hot for one of your fights to a finish." He rose and felt his wilted collar gingerly. "I'm going over to the

club and see if the tank will cool me off. Want to come?"

Castle shook his head and managed a grin when Jim called back warningly:

"Don't take any wooden money while I'm gone."

Once alone, Castle found himself exceedingly bored. He had scant use for his own society at all times, and to-night he felt rather injured. Jim Beckwith had started an argument, an argument he would have fully enjoyed, and then gone off without giving his friend a run for his money. Castle twisted about in his chair with the vague notion of going to hunt up somebody. As he turned some one touched him on the shoulder.

"Pardon me," a smooth voice said just at his elbow, "would you mind moving your chair a bit? I want to use this desk."

Chance rose at once and dragged his chair around, and as he did so the man behind him paused in the act of reaching for a pen to look at him closely.

"Isn't this Senator Castle?" he asked after a second.

Chance admitted his identity and began searching about in his mind, trying to locate something familiar about the man. He was tall, light, and distinguished-looking, with iron-gray hair and a pair of keen eyes to match. He was a man Castle felt he should have remembered.

"You don't remember me, I see," the other suggested, smiling. "My name is Minton; I met you in San Francisco a year ago." He paused and his smile broadened. "I'm a friend of Jim Beckwith."

Chance beamed and held out his ready hand.

"Yes, yes, indeed," he said. "Glad to meet you again, Mr. Minton. Don't place just where we met at the moment, but any friend of Jim Beckwith—" and he finished with an eloquent gesture.

"We met at a Falcon Club dinner," the other went on to explain. He had evidently abandoned all idea of attending

to his correspondence, because he rose and joined Chance in the other broad chair that faced the street.

"Sure—I'll place you and all about you in a minute," Castle promised. If he didn't he'd ask. Castle, rescued from a lonely evening, had now brightened to his usual form. "Are you from Frisco, Mr. Minton?" he went on. "Is it your home, I mean? You know how it is meeting a man from home on this side of the Rockies."

Minton said he knew how it was perfectly, and went on to give Frisco as his birthplace and quite a few facts concerning his residence there. Of course, Castle knew half the town, and those he didn't know personally he knew people who did, so in less than no time he and Minton were hard at it. They went back as far as the fire, and then from there to the huge fortunes that had been made since that disaster, the politics that had helped or hindered those fortunes, and the news of the town in general. Finally Minton rose.

"I always drift down to the café for a nightcap about this hour," he said. "How about you joining me?"

Chance accepted with alacrity, and soon the two were seated at a small table in a corner of the café. The hour was late and the place was almost empty; in fact, except for a young chap in evening clothes who sat at the next table, the place was practically deserted.

They gave their order, and as the waiter was turning away the boy at the next table called him sharply.

The waiter stopped and both men looked over. After a casual glance Minton went on with his conversation, but Chance, who always takes more than a passing interest in every soul he lays eyes on, continued to look.

After a minute or so he leaned over and touched Minton on the arm. "Take a look at that boy," he said; "he looks like the end of a misspent life, and no mistake."

Minton was plainly surprised by

Chance's interest. He interrupted himself in his story and glanced over his shoulder.

"Does look rather seedy," he agreed, with no special interest, and went back to what he was saying.

But Chance's interest somehow seemed to stick to the boy at the next table.

"I've got boys of my own about his age," he said to explain his scrutiny; "anyhow, I always take notice of young folks."

Minton nodded with what he evidently tried to make polite understanding, but couldn't seem to work up much interest in their neighbor. He was on the Californian's bugaboo, a possible Japanese invasion, and was entirely wrapped up in his subject.

When the waiter appeared with their order he brought the boy's at the same time. Minton cut short his monologue and gave his entire attention to his brandy, holding it up to the light and then carefully measuring it into his tall glass. He took some time about this, and while he waited, Chance's eyes traveled back to the next table.

The boy was slouched down in his chair staring stupidly at the glass before him. In a moment he roused himself, and began to go carefully through all of his pockets. Finally he brought out a small bottle, and after tapping it on the edge of the table, he emptied it into his glass.

"Idiot!" Minton exclaimed suddenly, pounding irritably on the table. "I distinctly ordered soda, and look what he's brought me? Where's that fool waiter?"

He pushed the carbonic siphon violently aside and twisted about in his chair.

But the waiter, after the manner of his kind, had vanished from view, and so, with a muttered apology, Minton reached across to the next table and helped himself to the soda siphon that stood there. As he did so his cuff caught on the boy's glass and it went crashing to the floor.

The boy jumped to his feet. "Say," he demanded angrily, "what do you

think you're doing—what do you mean by reaching across my table like that, anyhow? Look what you've done?"

Well, of course, Minton was sorry, and said so, but it was an accident that might have happened to anybody, and he and Chance were both utterly surprised when the boy angrily waved aside all explanations and, after raving for a moment with a violence all out of proportion to the cause for offense, threw a coin down on the table and tore out of the place.

"Now, what do you know about that?" Minton asked, staring after him.

Chance was equally nonplused and shook his head.

"Probably been drinking." Minton shrugged and then, apparently dismissing the incident from his mind, he raised his glass. "Here's luck!"

Chance raised his glass. Suddenly over the rim he noticed that the small bottle was still lying on the other table. He tilted back in his chair and picked it up.

"While you were mixing your highball," he explained to Minton, "that kid dropped some powder from this bottle into his glass. I wonder what was in it?"

Minton took the bottle in his hand. There was no label on it, so he sniffed gingerly at the few grains of powder that still remained on the bottom. "Know anything about drugs?" he asked curiously.

"Not a thing."

Minton put the bottle back on the table and smiled a bit sheepishly.

"Of course it would never have entered my head if you hadn't called my attention to how seedy this chap looked. This, in all probability, is some medicine he was taking, but still"—he laughed a little nervously. "I'm a fool, I know, but I once saw a chap in Hong-Kong—an attaché of the French legation—commit suicide under similar circumstances, and it made a lasting impression on my mind."

"Good Lord, I should think it might!" Chance said.

Minton seemed anxious to throw off

the disagreeable remembrance, and abruptly switched to an irrelevant topic, but Chance couldn't seem to listen to him. He just couldn't get his mind off that boy—his appearance, his manner, and finally his outburst over what appeared such a trifling occurrence. Suddenly he rose to his feet.

"Call me any kind of a fool you like, Minton," he said, "but that boy's got me. I simply can't sit here and let him go out to I don't know what. I have a feeling about these things, intuition, a hunch, or something, and I've got to find him."

Minton thought he was crazy; he told him that he was, and that he was overplaying his impression, but he couldn't influence Chance any. He threw off his hand and hurried to the door and looked up and down the street. Then he turned and beckoned excitedly. About a block away he had recognized the tall young figure standing in the light from a drug-store. Castle started off down the street with the still objecting Minton at his heels.

When Chance touched the boy's arm he whirled around as if he had been shot. Then he recognized the two men, and a black scowl spread over his face.

But it didn't stop Chance.

"What's the matter with you, my friend?" he asked with his big smile, still keeping his hand on the young chap's arm.

"Is that your affair or mine?" the boy snapped, jerking his arm away.

"On the face of it, it's yours," Chance conceded, "but I'm sort of making it mine; it's a way I have. I can see you're in wrong somewhere; and as I've got boys of my own, I'd like to help—if you'll let me."

"Well, I won't," and the boy closed matters by turning back to the drug-store window.

"Won't you give me a chance?" Chance persisted.

"Say, you're a regular good Samaritan, aren't you?" the boy sneered.

This brought Minton into the game.

"That's a fine way to talk when a man offers to help you," he said.

But the boy only scowled at him and made no reply. Chance seemed rather at a loss.

"Oh, come on back!" Minton urged in disgust. "You can't do anything. He's either drunk or he's a dope fiend or—"

The boy swung round savagely.

"Dope-fiend! A fine chance for a dope fiend in this town! Why, you can't get enough dope here to pass out with. You spoiled the last chance I had."

Chance was horrified, and even Minton seemed a bit shaken, and made no further objection when Chance determinedly passed his hand through the boy's arm and turned him round toward the hotel. At first the boy hung back; he was sullen and he was ugly, but Chance is some persuader, and in the end he had his way. Once back in the café, he got a stiff highball into the boy, and soon had him talking.

As the boy said, there was nothing new in his tale, but it had its points at that.

"I'm from the coast," he said—"from San Francisco," and of course, at this, both his listeners sat upright. "My name is Harris Whitmore. I suppose you know my dad, I. G. Whitmore; everybody does. I'll cut this as short as I can; God knows it's not pleasant telling! Well, about three years ago I got into a scrape with a woman; it was in all the newspapers, and that finished me with dad. He shut down the brakes, and I drifted East. I finally managed to get a position here, and I honestly think I was making good. I married a girl I met here, and have a boy a year old."

"Go on," both men urged as he paused.

"A week ago the woman from Frisco turned up. She was on her way to South America. She put a big price on her going away without telling what she knew about me, and I couldn't raise it—not all of it. Her silence meant my wife, my boy's name, my position—everything! I—I didn't know what to do."

"Why didn't you wire your father?" Minton suggested.

"He wouldn't have believed me. He's taken too many chances on me."

"There you have it!" Chance burst out. "Good Lord! If we won't take a chance on our own, where do we aim to get off, anyhow?"

The boy shrugged and gulped the remainder of his whisky.

"Well, I got the money. I helped myself to what I had to have—five hundred dollars out of the firm's cash drawer. I can't keep it dark after to-morrow—and then the quick finish for me." He hid his face in his hands, and his shoulders shook.

Minton hadn't seemed much impressed at the beginning of the boy's story, but now he fidgeted about uneasily; and as for Chance, he was all upset. Minton kept looking at him as if to intimate that their uncomfortable position was undoubtedly of his making, and it was rather up to him to do something. But Chance had nothing to suggest.

"Mr. Castle," Minton asked slowly, after a thoughtful moment, "do you ever take a chance?"

Chance started as at the mention of an old friend.

"That's my middle name," he declared.

Minton seemed to search for the exact words he wanted.

"I don't claim to be much of a judge of people," he said presently, "but this boy's story sounds straight to me. How about it?"

"Same here."

"Now, I'm not a rich man," Minton went on, "and two hundred and fifty dollars means something to me—but it means more to this boy. It means his salvation. Mr. Castle, will you take a chance?"

Would he? Chance had his check-book out before the other finished speaking, and in less than no time the whole thing was fixed up. The boy could hardly express his gratitude, and Chance went to bed all in a glow of self-glorification.

About ten the next morning, while

Chance was quietly eating his breakfast, Jim Beckwith tore into the dining-room. Jim began to talk before Chance had much more than a chance to say good morning.

"You had it coming to you," he gloated, and then suddenly he became serious. "You know, Chance," he went on to explain, evidently trying to keep the excitement out of his voice, "as I've so often told you, this town is a gold-mine for any one with a quick wit, an elastic conscience, and sense enough to go while the going is good. Chicago is the crook's paradise."

He leaned over the table and tapped Chance's arm.

"Now, there's a pair of crooks I've chased in and out of about every city in the Union. I've never caught up with them, and I've never quite got the goods on them—until now. They didn't stay long in any one place, and the class of men they get won't make a holler after they see they've been handed a gold brick."

"Why not?"

"They don't want to publicly brand themselves as good things, I suppose." Jim came to an impressive pause. "Chance, fate has overtaken you! They got you last night. What did it cost you?"

Chance protested; but when Jim went on and described the whole scene as reported by one of his detectives, he had nothing further to say. But he did renig absolutely and vigorously when Jim said he would have to come across and testify.

He pointed to his nickname almost tearfully, and said he'd never hear the last of it. But Beckwith wouldn't let him off, and finally wrung a promise from him that he would meet the detective who had the pair in charge in half an hour and do the needful.

Now Beckwith had rather taken Chance off his feet while he was with him, but once alone he came down to earth again and got to thinking the whole thing over. The thing he thought about, most was the boy. Somehow, he couldn't

bring himself to believe that his much-vaunted ability to pick people had played him false. He studied the situation from every angle, and the more he studied, the more he hated to do what he had to do.

The upshot of it was that when he was brought face to face with the boy, he took one look into the white, driven face, and then stood up and said he'd never laid eyes on him before. Then he turned and made a quick escape. The detective glared after him, and got into communication with Beckwith.

Once in his own room, Chance got on the telephone and tried to reach Jim. He was standing with the receiver in his hand when his door softly opened. Chance turned round and nearly dropped the receiver. The boy stood there regarding him with a calm, cool smile.

All of a sudden Chance's rage mounted.

"You young crook!" he exploded.

"Calm yourself," the boy admonished him. "Don't spoil the pretty picture I have painted in my grateful heart. You're the only man I ever met who could see farther than his money. Here's your check."

The check didn't calm Chance much; but after stating his opinion of last night's doings with excusable profanity, he suddenly took it upon himself to deliver a moral lecture. He quite fancied himself in this rôle, and ended by offering to give the boy a new deal.

"Any string to that?" the boy inquired with interest.

"No—that is, I should expect you to testify against Minton."

The boy grinned and shook his head.

"You'll have to excuse me. Minton picked me up out of the gutter a few years back and helped me to make a living—such as it is. I've decided on the straight and narrow for myself—you can put a feather in your cap for that—but I don't think I'll start on my way by giving Minton the double-cross."

Chance protested; but before he got fully under way, the door flew open and in rushed Jim Beckwith. He caught sight of the boy and fell back a step.

"The prodigal son!" he exclaimed.

"Hello, Beckwith!" the boy grinned.

Chance looked from one to another in manifest amazement.

"Keith Kenlon's boy," Jim explained briefly.

Chance turned to stare at the boy, and slowly his glance wavered and drifted back to Beckwith, while a beaming smile overspread his countenance.

"Take-a-Chance Castle, that's me," he said. "I've earned my name, and I'm proud of it. Don't you think something now of my system, Jim?" he demanded. "If you do, you might come across on that standing twenty-to-one bet. 'Bread upon the waters,' you know. Be a sport, Jim. The joke's on you."

LAND O' THE LEAL

BY CHART PITT

YOU will know that land when you find it

By the wealth of its trails untrod—

By the nameless lure of its unmapped miles,
And the kiss of its virgin sod.

Just the camp-fire's glow on the falling snow,
And the comradeship of God.

Bill Jenkins, Buccaneer by George Allan England

Author of "The Fatal Gift," "The Empire in the Air," "Hypnotized," etc.

Sequel to "The Brass Check"

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

BILL JENKINS, cigar clerk and adventurer, with a grudge against Malcolm Everett, millionaire, follows him on board the yacht Victory—by way of the ice chute. Discovered in the hold by "Simoon Sam" Holstrom, the first mate, he is rescued from the lazaret by Sally, a lady detective with whom he is madly in love. Sally knows Bill under the name of Ed Cole, and her arrangements for Bill's escape from the yacht miss fire at first, and succeed only when she drags Bill and has him carried ashore and placed in a room in a cheap lodging-house somewhere near Troy, New York—the yacht being bound for the Erie, and not the Panama Canal as Bill had supposed. Having quixotically thrown the fifty-dollar bill Sally had left with him out of the window of the lodging-house, Bill finally decides that he needs it, and goes down the fire-escape after it, only to see it snapped up by an unknown hand. As he is dressed in a ludicrously ill-fitting dress-suit, Bill is ordered by a policeman to come down from the fire-escape. Bill takes to the roof.

CHAPTER XII.

METAMORPHOSIS.

DESPERATE as was his predicament, and heavily as he knew the circumstances of his prowling around back windows on a fire-escape in fantastic garb would weigh against him in case of arrest, Jenkins did not despair.

He had no intention whatever of being arrested. Everything now depended on making good his escape, he realized, as he scrambled up the wet and shaking ladder, pursued by the infamous minions of the law.

With an agility that absolutely convinced all the rapidly-gathering spectators a dangerous madman was at liberty—for who but a maniac could have shown

such activity and strength?—Jenkins clambered swiftly to the very top of the building, pursued by the cries, jeers, gibes, and cat-calls of the populace.

Having reached the eaves, he hastily observed the prospect before him. Pale, sweating, and distraught, trembling and with feet already very sore from the sharp iron rungs of the ladders, he peered down at the dizzy vacancy beneath, peopled by the enemy, then up at the far more dizzy slant of the roof.

In front of him now arose a steep acclivity of slate. Several dormer-windows broke this monotonous gray expanse. To his left, the blank wall of another building rose about fifteen feet above the ridge-pole, effectually barring any escape in that direction. To his

This story began in the *All-Story Weekly* for February 17.

right he saw that the slates ended abruptly, about thirty feet away.

Beyond their steep edge several chimney-stacks projected from some other building, evidently lower. Since Jenkins couldn't possibly descend, or stay where he was—for already a rattling of the fire-escape told him the sleuths were on his trail—he made a quick choice of the roof.

Pausing only to shake his fist at the thickening crowd below, and to howl defiantly, "Go chase yourselves, you rubes!" he scrambled up over the gutter.

The slates were appallingly steep and slippery. Jenkins's hands and feet slid most alarmingly, as he crept up toward the ridge-pole like a human fly. The loss of his boots, till now considered a calamity, all at once revealed itself as a blessing in disguise; for had our hero been booted, he must infallibly have slid off the edge of the roof and catapulted in a wide, parabolic curve into the alley; that is—our story would have ended right here and now.

"As a get-away, this is some warm jumble!" Jenkins grunted, laboring up the steep acclivity, sliding back about two feet for every three he climbed, but making progress, after all. "I'll give you mutts a marathon for your coin, anyhow!"

With a supreme effort, he dragged himself far enough to lay hold on the ridge-pole, drew himself up, straddled it, and began rapidly hunching himself along in the direction of the chimney-stacks.

The tails of his dress-coat dragged behind him over the slates. A chill wetness began to permeate his trousers. A splinter that he encountered, pointed the wrong way, brought an agonized "ouch!" to his pale and trembling lips. But still he kept a hunching on, on, on, with truly commendable concentration on the one object in view—the end of the roof.

As in a kind of daze, he perceived tall, smoking factory-chimneys and far-spreading streets that told him he was in some considerable town, its very name unknown to him.

Up from the alley, behind, an increased vociferation indicated that the crowd of spectators, to whom his anguish was but a subject for sport and jest, was momentarily increasing. But now, right in front of him as he reached the termination of the slates, he perceived a flat tin roof, only about eight feet below. He paused not, neither hesitated, but leaped with boldness, came down on all fours with a shock that loosened every vertebra and most of his teeth, got up, and ran.

Panting, he fled over the tin. Right in front of him he perceived several small red structures, covering stairways that led down from the roof.

The hunted hare acquires unusual speed; the deer, pursued, shows intelligence beyond its norm in covering its spoor. Jenkins followed the laws of nature. Atavism sharpened his wits. Instead of dodging into and down the first of these little housings, which would have been the natural thing to do, he merely stopped at it long enough to open the door and drop his hat inside it.

Leaving it open, he sped on, haggard, wan, trembling, and wild of eye. I suppose a more disreputable ruffian never existed in this world than our friend William at this instant. Hatless and shoeless, with a tight, wet dress-suit now splitting at several seams where his strenuous exertions had ripped it, with disheveled hair, a bruised face, and wildly-glaring eyes—well, it was a good thing Sally couldn't see him at that exact moment!

Jenkins was on his way, true enough, but he wasn't out of the woods yet. The door of the next housing, when he tried it, resisted. Locked! So was the third. Only one more remained, at the far end of the tin.

Could he reach it in time?

A shout, not far below the eaves of the slate-roofed building, told him he hadn't more than a very few seconds of grace. And was this last housing unlocked? If not, that would mean running back to the first one again.

"S-s-s-suffering tomcats!" gulped the unhappy wretch, flinging himself at the door of the final structure.

The wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, according to *Don Quixote*, and Jenkins found the last door unlocked. He beat all world's records on getting through doors, with the lightning leap he gave into that blessed shelter.

Just as he slid the bolt, he heard the impact of heavy boots on the tin roof, followed by a sound of running feet that all at once stopped short. In spite of his exhaustion and pain, Jenkins grinned to himself. Battleships to beans, the pursuer had ducked into the blind lead.

Stopping not to gloat over having thrown pursuit off the track, even if only temporarily, Bill crept in his stockinged feet down a dusty and crooked flight of stairs. He paused on the first landing, to give ear, heard no sounds of peril, and so continued down several more stairways, cumbered with coal-hods, mops, ash-cans, garbage-pails, and other *objets d'art*.

As he went, his thoughts worked quickly. He perceived that he must not issue out into the back alley again, but must try to get into the basement. There, no doubt, he could hide himself in some coal-bin or behind some furnace until the hue-and-cry should have subsided.

It seemed to be growing quite a specialty of his, this hiding in holes and corners. Somehow or other, ever since he had begun to seek more justice, he had been cringing in lairs. It didn't seem quite right; but this was no time for analysis. Jenkins crept down and down, holding breath in trepidation.

The barking yelp of a dog, somewhere within the flats belonging to these backstairs, the fretful cry of a child, the grumble of a man's voice, even the rattle of dishes, set his nerves quivering. Suppose one of those back doors should just chance to open, and some amazed householder catch a glimpse of him?

"Gee!" thought Bill, soft-footing it down, ever down, "this frost makes a blizzard look like June!"

He reached a darker stairway—the last. Surely this communicated with the basement. Joy! His hand trembled on the knob of a door, at the bottom. The door opened, and Jenkins walked through—into a dingy kitchen.

"*Oi, Gewalt!*" he heard a thick voice exclaim. "*Gott im Himmel! Vot iss dat?*"

Jenkins's startled eye swept up the scene at a glance. He knew he had blundered into a basement tenement. Before him stood a table with a half-eaten meal thereon. At this table sat a stout, red-faced, thick-necked little man with protuberant brown eyes and with a round black cap on his cranium. This man was now staring at Jenkins with an expression of the most dumfounded surprise Jenkins had ever beheld—and our adventurer's experience with surprised persons, as you know, had not been slight.

"Hello, Unk!" said Bill, forcing a smile he tried to render casual to his pale lips. "Can the astonishments. It's all O. K., both ways from the middle. Not too early for biz, what?"

A somewhat extended acquaintance with individuals of the type now confronting him made Jenkins certain he was committing no error in addressing the little man as "uncle." He closed the door behind him, smiled again, and advanced into the kitchen, treading softly in his wet stockings. There are times and situations when a smile becomes particularly ghastly, and this was one of them.

"Pusiness!" gasped the stout little man, paling perceptibly. Not even the fact that his safe, in the little clothing-shop at the front of the tenement, was locked, could quite reconcile him to the prospect of immediately having his throat cut by this stocking-footed yegg in a dripping and unseemly dress-suit. "Pusiness? *Bolice!*"

"Forget that!" Jenkins commanded sternly, coming close to the table and laying a hand on it.

The little man began to tremble, realizing that a steel knife lay there. What wouldn't he have given, just now, to have been anywhere else?

"Forget it! Get flush with yourself, Unk, and pry off a little of the coin that good luck is trying to hand you. I've got a real joy-maker of a proposition for you. Are you on?"

"*Vot?* You get mine kitchen ouldt, or I calls der bolice, yet!"

"Shhhh! Here's a game that 'll make you weep for joy!" And Jenkins bent confidentially over the table, with rapidly returning courage. When we are properly scared, nothing will reassure us so effectually as to meet somebody more scared than we are. "Here's something that will ring the bull's-eye of quick profits—a deal that's got 'em all whipped to a low whisper. Lamp this suit, Unk!"

And Jenkins held out his arm, so that the Hebrew might observe the superfine quality of the cloth, under the faint light that seeped in from an air-shaft window close at hand.

"Suit?"

"Sure! A velvet line of goods, if any was ever basted. If you had it, you could breeze into the crib with a wad you wouldn't need any strong glasses to count. Do business?"

"*Vot* you mean?" The old gentleman was now becoming less alarmed and hostile. A gleam of human interest had begun to shine in his heavy-lidded eyes. The eloquence of possible dollars and cents had begun to get its work in.

"*Vot* iss?"

"Listen," said Jenkins. "This raiment is a cluster of O. K. stuff, and it's yours for the asking. Hand me down a street-suit, some kicks, and a bean-lid, slip me a few shekels, and cop the joyous harness. It never cost less than a hundred, Unk, and as a judge of kippy cloth you know it. Say yes?"

The expression of the little man's face assured Bill the proposal was not without attraction. But all was not yet plain sailing.

"V're you get dot?" the Hebrew inquired suspiciously. "Und how comes it dot you vear it in der morning, yet?"

"Oh, that's all right, Unk," Jenkins smiled, though inwardly his heart was performing gymnastics. "I sat in at a little poker-game last night, and got skun to the raw. I'm busted, with a great big B. Got to go to Schenectady this morning, and—"

"Schenectady!" ejaculated the little man, staring. "*Oi, Himmel!* But *dis* iss Schenectady, yust now!"

Jenkins stared at him, with drooping jaw. Then he rallied.

"See here, Unk," he explained, resolved to throw all subterfuge to the winds and speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. For once he would try the effect of the plain facts, with no embroidery. "Spread your lugs now, and I'll dope it out straight. Last night I was shanghaied ashore here. I don't know just where I am, or why. I've only got forty-seven cents. My fifty bucks were snatched from me by a fat arm in a dirty red kimono. I climbed up the fire-escape, blew over the roof, skated down your back stairs, and here I am, ready for biz. Are you on?"

A long minute the little Hebrew considered Jenkins, with pity. Then, shaking his head, he sadly inquired:

"*Vot* iss der name off der blace you got ouldt off? Und how long haf you been ouldt?"

"Can that!" retorted Jenkins, flushing with anger. "I'm getting sick of being taken for a nut off the bug-tree! That's what they called me at Hamilton Asylum. That's what the cop said just now. Forget it! All that matters is this suit, see?" He struck the table a blow with his fist, hit a saucer half-full of warm tea, and got a shower-bath up his arm. "Are you ripe for a hit-bang-and-get-away deal that will reap you a large wad of kale, or not? If so, stop rag-chewing! Get me?"

A certain glint of the little man's eye seemed to indicate that, after all—

though it were a pity to take advantage of a lunatic—business was business. He nodded decisively.

"All right," said he. "It makes me noddings, efter all, if you are *messhiggen* or not. I gif you anodder suit, hat, und shoes—und zwei tollar."

"Two beans!" shouted Jenkins, aghast. "Why, you never flashed your shiners on a finer finish in all your life! Kick in with twenty, anyhow!"

The little man, now quite recovered from his alarm, got up, took the lappel of the coat between his thumb and finger, examined the cloth, the lining and buttons, and nodded again.

"T'ree tollar," said he, with an air of finality. Jenkins knew this was top price, and submitted.

"All right, go to it," he accepted. "But it's murder in the first degree. If I wasn't down to iron and grass, you'd never cop it. Cough the duds and the three seeds, Gramp, and I'll blow."

The Hebrew shuffled through a door into what Jenkins could see was a small, dark shop. After a minute or two he returned with a couple of second-hand suits, both of which our hero rejected. His brain was at work on a bold *coup*.

Determined as he was to follow the Victory, to square accounts with Malcolm Everett, and find out the truth about Sally, he felt now that a more maritime aspect would be essential. Such a disguise, too, would help him slip through the police drag-net. Yes, he must have a sailor-suit, by all means.

"Nothing to it, Unk," said he, waving the suits away. "I side-step 'em both. Got any mariner's togs? If so, prance 'em out."

"Vot? Vot you vant?" demanded the little man, amazed.

"Sailor-suit. Ocean. Ships. 'A wet sheet and a flowing sea, and a wind that follows fast!' Get me?"

"Vot der Teufel you vant mit such nonsenses?"

"Never mind, Unk; nev-er mind! Sailor-suit for mine!"

Shaking his head, but still obeying, the little man departed again, and presently returned with an outfit that exceedingly rejoiced Jenkins's heart. Though it betrayed some signs of hard usage, yet undeniably it was the correct thing. With joy our adventurer beheld the V-necked blouse, the wide-bottomed trousers, and the round cap with a ribbon bearing the words in gold letters: SOUTH DAKOTA.

"Atta boy!" he exclaimed in delight. "Me for those, and you cop the prize-package!"

"All right, mein friend. Change dem."

Jenkins changed. The sailor-suit might have been made for him, so neatly it fitted. And becoming? Say! Now that the infernal dress-suit lay on a chair, Jenkins breathed deep with relief. Admiringly he looked himself over, set the round cap on his head, put his hands on his hips, and grinned.

"Aye, aye, sir!" exclaimed he. "Sou' by sou'west, clew up the jiggers, spank the ratline-tops'ls, split the ship's log, and carry the kindling into the galley. Avast, you lubber! Belay, there—and say, Unk, I haven't had a bite for Lord knows how long. Thanks, I *will*, since you insist."

He pulled a chair up to the table, poured a cup of tea, helped himself to rye-bread, sausage, *schmierkäse*, and onions, and made a good meal, while the little man surveyed him with eyes that showed signs of alarm, once more.

"It iss a pity," Jenkins heard him murmur regretfully. "A pity, mit him so young!"

"Never mind, Unk," mumbled Jenkins indistinctly, around a huge mouthful of bread and cheese. "I'm over seven. Come on, now, slide us the kicks and the three bones."

The little man in silence produced a pair of decent shoes and three dollars in silver. Jenkins slid this wealth into the right-hand pocket of his new trousers—the pocket seemed very oddly located, thought he—and transferred his old stand-by of forty-seven cents, his pencil,

keys, and small trifles to the other pocket.

"I'm getting the hot end of the poker, this deal, Unk," said he, surveying the dress-suit again. "Come on, now, come on! Give me—"

"I haf only two more t'ings to gif you, mein friend," the other replied, raising his hand expressively.

"What are those?" asked Bill, with sudden expectations.

"Mein blessing, und hope for your speedy recovery."

"Good *night!* I'm on my way. Slide me out through the shop, Unk. And remember, Unk, re-e-e-member, you never knew me, heard of me, or saw me. Get me?"

"Goot-by," said the Hebrew, non-committally, as he piloted him through the dingy little shop, to the front door.

This Jenkins opened, with all the boldness of a heart that feels itself guiltless. He cocked his round cap jauntily on one side, hitched up his trousers round a stomach that felt pleasantly the comfort of the hearty meal, climbed the area-steps to the street, and so departed from the premises of Morris Rosenkatz, as the sign on the window informed him.

"Ta-ta, Morris," said he, as he swung down the wet and sloppy sidewalk. "Some of these days I'll be on top, and when I am I won't forget you. Aw revaw!"

The chase of the Victory was begun.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CLOSE SHAVE OR TWO.

WITH the assumption of bravery that his situation necessitated, yet with inward qualms produced by the appalling publicity of the street, our adventurer navigated past a row of mean shops and dwellings, took the first turn at random, and kept straight before him.

The sailor togs, he now discovered, after all, caused him considerable un-

easiness. What could be more conspicuous? Jenkins fancied everybody was staring at him, and longed for wings like a dove, that he might fly away and be at peace.

In this cross-street, numbers of people were standing around, with here and there a cop or two. Some were laughing, others talking; most of them were keeping a weather eye on the eaves of a dingy, six-story building which Jenkins realized, with a pang of alarm, must be the front of the same one from the back of which he had escaped. At the end of the block he also caught sight of a Black Maria. Shivering slightly, he hastened on.

"Gee!" he reflected, turning a trifle blue around the gills, "if my dope turns out to be wormy this time, I'm cooked!"

He could not, simply could not, bring himself to tread the sidewalk in front of that building. At the door or at some window might there not be lurking some individual who had seen him the night before, when he had been brought there drugged and unconscious? Might he not on the instant be identified, arrested, haled away to durance vile? Would not the fact of his having taken a disguise surely incriminate him?

Jenkins knew that "yes" was the answer to all these questions. And who was there to testify for him, to save him? Nobody. His heart quaked within him as he shied off, crossed the street with as good an imitation of a rolling Jack-tar gait as he could assume, and came abreast of the house of dread. All at once he perceived a rotund officer who—so it seemed to him—was barring his way. Stabbed with panic, Jenkins nevertheless held game. He pulled a facetious smile, jerked a thumb toward the roof, and said:

"Well, matey, if you'd had a guy like me to shin up the spinnaker and nail him, you'd of mitted him by now!"

A look of large surprise widened the officer's optics. For a second Jenkins thought his remark was going to be taken as an offer, and with alarm foresaw him-

self compelled to swarm up shaky ladders and creep over that horrible, slippery roof of slate—this time with boots on—in pursuit of himself. But the officer only raised a repelling hand and waved him away.

"Move on, you rummy!" he growled. "By the map on ye, an' the gab o' ye, you've been scrappin', an' y're half-soused now. If you know what's healthy, you'll go an' keep goin', see? Don't lemme see ye on this beat again, or I'll pull ye. Move on!"

Gulping with terror and relief at one and the same time, Jenkins hastily departed from a neighborhood which promised to be so extremely unpleasant. Half a minute later, still a free man, he had swung round the corner into a wider and more reputable thoroughfare, and felt that safety was in sight.

They hadn't got him nailed down yet, he reflected. The all-in signal was a long way from being rung on him. Still he turned a few more corners, to shake off all danger. And it was only after some ten minutes' brisk walking that he felt secure enough to halt his stride, go into a cigar-stand, and buy a couple of ten-cent smokes.

Beatified by the taste of good tobacco, after long abstinence, he once more set out. With a mind now almost wholly free from alarm, he took stock of the situation as he trudged along in the chill drizzle through unknown streets, with a trail of cigar-smoke blowing in the September breeze. The way, he now felt, was clear for some decisive action. Though his total cash was but three dollars and twenty-seven cents, he had eaten heartily and he possessed clothing which would fit the part he meant to play to a T.

The canal, he knew, would be easily found. By following it, he would be certain to locate the yacht. After that, he counted fully on being able to handle any situation that might arise. Pursuing his way with high hopes in his soul and a good cigar in his mouth, he felt that life

was, after all, very good, and that the prizes which nature awards to the strong now lay almost within his grasp.

But where was the canal?

Jenkins didn't dare ask anybody, lest he awaken suspicion. And no matter how many streets he walked along, or how many crossways he peered down, he caught no sight of shipping. After half an hour of this fruitless search, a barber's pole reminded him he hadn't had a shave since having left New York. His sandy stubble bristled like—well, like bristles. Sally must positively not see him thus. Whether true to him or false, Jenkins knew he couldn't face her in any such condition.

"Me for the mowing," said he, and entered the tonsorial establishment.

It proved to be very small, a mere wedge-shaped little place with only two chairs, and having a door that opened on some other street at the rear.

With a free-and-easy wave of the hand, such as befitted his new character of jolly tar, he greeted the only barber in sight:

"Lay alongside, cap'n, and reef my kelp, P.D.Q.!"

The barber, a thin, nervous man, peered at him over a pair of silver-bowed spectacles. Just a bit surprised, he pointed toward one of the chairs. Jenkins hung his jaunty little cap on a hook, sat down, and relaxed.

Ah! This was comfort, this was luxury! Our adventurer congratulated himself on his escape, and gloated over the inevitable justice he intended to exact, despite all those who were conspiring against him.

Pondering on their terror and humiliation soon to come, he observed the various shaving-mugs, bottles, and so on, the posters and calendars that, for the most part, displayed abundant feminine charms, and finally began to study out two or three printed notices that he could see reflected in the mirror. The letters came backward, but Jenkins found he could read them with a little effort, and the task diverted him.

Just as he was well lathered, and the razor had swept a clean place near his right ear, the door opened. To his amazement and alarm, a sailor entered the shop. Imagine his disturbed state of mind, if you can, at seeing another nautical rig very like his own on the person of a bona-fide marine. Jenkins's heart turned sick. He shut his eyes and groaned slightly.

"Pull, sir?" inquired the barber, with anxiety.

"No, no, it's nothing," answered Jenkins weakly. "Only get a move on, professor. I've got to catch a boat."

"A—"

"Go on, reap the crop, and can all chatter," said Jenkins; "and the quicker you do it, the bigger tip I'll slide you. See?"

Nodding, the barber began again with renewed energy. Jenkins's hopes rose a very little. Maybe the shave would only take a couple of minutes now, and he might get away before any complications should ensue. But such was not written on the book of fate. Since the illustrious *Don Quixote* himself had once become entangled in misadventures at a barber's shop, how could simple Bill Jenkins hope to escape them?

Jenkins lay quiet as a mouse, praying his stars that the sailor might pay no heed to him. This, alas, was not to be. For hardly had the newcomer's eye fallen on Jenkins, when he advanced to the chair with a cheerful smile, shifted a quid in his cheek, and remarked:

"Hello, kid!"

"Hello, yourself!" stalled Jenkins.

"What's doing?"

"Heluva lot. We ain't got him yet, but he's a gone coon, sure as shootin'. Where's Leary?"

"Search me!"

"Huh?" grunted the sailor in a tone that only too clearly told Jenkins he had blundered.

"On board, I mean," Jenkins hastily corrected himself. "Why?"

The sailor stared at him a moment

with widening eyes, then spat profusely and demanded:

"On—what?"

"On board, of course," Jenkins stoutly maintained, while the barber lathered his neck.

The other's silence, as he eyed the unfortunate in the chair, shot a chill to Jenkins's marrow. Suddenly, with a suspicion by no means to be mistaken, the sailor shot out another question:

"What ship are you on, anyhow?"

A pang of wo transfixed Jenkins, as he realized in the stress of the moment he had totally forgotten the words printed on the ribbon round his cap. Desperately he tried to catch sight of it, in the mirror, but quite in vain. And to have sat up, looked directly at it and then answered would have been entirely too raw. Daring not refuse to speak, and certain only that the name was the "South Something," Jenkins grabbed desperately at a straw and said:

"South Carolina, of course."

"South—"

The sailor's tone was incomprehensibly startled. Then, suddenly, his mouth closed with a snap. Saying no more he retreated, sat down in one of the chairs behind Jenkins, and with an expression of hostility and suspicion—as Jenkins could just make out in the mirror by painfully straining his eyes—began watching him.

It was nothing less than panic that now laid hold on the soul of our hero. Ardently he longed for escape. What mattered it though his stubble was but half removed? What mattered anything, if he were now falling into some unknown and terrifying entanglement once more?

"Holy poker!" thought he in anguish.

"As a trouble-maker this suit seems to have stacked me into the real stew!" Bitterly he cursed the evil inspiration which had brought him to this pass.

Directly above the head of the sailor, as he sat there studying Jenkins, the unfortunate young man's eye fell on a poster bearing the portrait of a fellow in nau-

tical rig. And though he could make out nothing of the fine print underneath, one word stood out distinctly, backward, in the glass:

DESERTER!

Then understanding dawned on Jenkins. A sickening fear pervaded his being. Sweating and trembling, he lay there supine under the hands of the tonsorial artist, panting for some chance to escape.

His anguish became unspeakable when, standing up with suspicious suddenness, the sailor removed Jenkins's cap from its hook, glanced at the lettering there, and hung it up again. Then, stopping for nothing, he abruptly left the shop, as if with some important business calling him.

Jenkins's cosmic distress gendered a flash of inspiration.

"Don't let him go!" he cried, struggling up.

"What?" demanded the barber, amazed.

"*That's the deserter, you boob!*" ejaculated our adventurer, sitting half shaved in the chair and pointing toward the doorway. "Help me land him—I'm a marine detective—and I'll go fifty-fifty with you on the reward! I just now tumbled. Get busy!"

Swept clean off his feet by this lure, the barber ran to the door, razor still in hand. Jenkins jumped out of the chair, as though to follow him. Then, seeing him already on the sidewalk, peering down the street, he tiptoed to the rear exit.

On the way he snatched his cap from the hook. A second later, with one-half his face shaven clean and the other covered with lather and bristles, and with a towel round his neck, the figure of a fleeing seaman might have been observed making tracks down an alley. Might have, had any been there to see; but nobody was.

"Gee!" panted Jenkins, ducking into a doorway. He snatched off the towel,

wiped his face clean, stuffed the towel into his blouse, and once more resumed his hegira.

No longer, now, he sought the canal. Nothing could be more dangerous for a deserter from the United States navy than to hang around the water-front. Instinct told him to get as far away from water as possible, to strike for the country and seek safety in the rural regions. If he walked far enough, and kept on walking, he knew he certainly must reach places where nobody would ever think of looking for a sailor. Therefore he walked.

For about an hour and a half he kept his course, unmolested, though in a continual sweat of terror. Every policeman, every pedestrian, that regarded him filled him with apprehension. He suffered a thousand pangs, thinking each moment to feel the hand of the law on his shoulder and find himself face to face with arrest.

Of course, he could soon prove his innocence on the desertion charge; but what of all the other charges? Inevitably one or another would land him. And any interference with his plans would just now be fatal. So he kept on and on, under the fine, incessant drizzle, his feet wet, his spirits low, and hope fast ebbing in his heart.

The hilarious scramble that was due to begin for Sally and the coin, he cogitated, seemed to have struck a severe frost. Cross-fires of anxiety bombarded him.

Men do not usually walk at large with only one side of the face shaven, and to enter another shop and ask to have the job completed was a thing he dared not do. It would lead to observation, questionings, and difficulties. Hence, concealing his face as best he could in his hand, which he held to his jaw as if suffering the pangs of toothache, he proceeded.

After what seemed an endless tramp, the suburbs thinned out. They gave place to open fields and woods. With infinite relief, though troubled at the incongruity of his marine costume in this bucolic setting, and now beginning to

feel again the pangs of hunger, Jenkins kept his best foot forward along a muddy country road.

Solitude was grateful to his bruised and battered spirit. He no longer had to keep his hand on his jaw, except when he met an occasional farmer. The attention, he seemed to attract from all such greatly embarrassed him, but he could not avoid it.

Passing a country school, where recess had liberated a swarm of children, he had to submit to being tagged by numerous urchins, till the ringing of the school-bell haled them away from the entrancing spectacle he offered. Jenkins still said nothing, but—his only plan now being to put as much distance between himself and Schenectady as possible—plodded on, and on, and on.

Toward midday he spied a sight that gladdened his heart. Over a stone wall a farmhouse was visible, with a long ell running out to a barn. In a window of the ell stood a shaving-mug. Peering over the wall, Jenkins made perfectly sure of this fact. He could even see the handle of a brush projecting from that mug. A plan took form in his mind. Why not?

"If there's only a razor there, too," thought he, "I'll put the ripsaw to this foliage mighty sudden!"

Once rid of his extraordinary facial adornment, he felt his task would be largely simplified. He waited, therefore, spying out the land. No sign of danger threatened. From the chimney of the house not even a thread of smoke was drifting on the wet air. Jenkins figured the family must be away.

Encouraged by this conclusion, and sure nobody was visible along the road, he escalated the wall, approached the window cautiously, and peered in. Bliss! A razor lay on the sill. Half a minute later Jenkins had possessed himself of the razor and the mug, and was executing a strategic retreat to some place where he could remove the offending half-portion of spinach.

The open door of a detached shed

beckoned him invitingly. Thither Jenkins hastened, stopping only long enough at a pump to fill the mug. Under cover, he hastily withdrew the towel from his blouse, lathered himself again, and set to work by the sense of feeling alone.

There was feeling enough, all right, to have guided a dozen men.

"Suffering tripe! What is this, anyhow? A harrow?"

Some of the bristles came away, whittled through; others yielded up their roots and died game to the last. Jenkins thought of the time he had hoed up potatoes on Purington's farm. This reminded him of it. Blood began to flow, too.

"Maybe it's only a piece of the smiling-muscle I've cut out, though," he consoled himself. "I won't ever need *that* again, anyhow!"

Bow-wow-wow!

"Damn!" said Jenkins, giving a final rake and carrying away a whole plantation of whiskers. The barking of a dog just now, and so very near at hand, augured ill.

Jenkins peered through a crack, observed a loose-hung hound at the back door of the house, and felt the shivers chase themselves up his spine. The hound's hair was velveted all along its back in a most businesslike manner, and its vociferations might have waked the dead.

That the canine uproar had waked the living, anyhow, now suddenly became apparent. The house door opened, and Jenkins beheld a long, lean, gangling agricultural person in shirt-sleeves, peering intently toward the shed.

"Skitch 'em, Prince!" remarked the farmer. "What now? Skunk, or chicken-thief? I'll dum soon find out. Take 'em, Prince—skitch 'em!"

Prince proceeded toward the shed, walking on his toes and emitting continuous sounds of hostility. The plow-pusher retired into the house with purposeful haste.

"Help!" groaned Jenkins, his eye still

at the crack as he perceived the farmer reappear with a shotgun in his corded fist. The farmer, still adjuring Prince to commence skitching, also advanced shedward.

With wild eyes our adventurer agonizingly looked about him for a means of exit. The door whereby he had entered was impossible. Ah! There was another! Yes, behind him, at the rear of the shed, it offered hopes of safety. Clutching the mug as a possible weapon in case of hand-to-hand war, and with the towel still round his neck, Jenkins ran to that door. His face was white almost as the lather that still decked it here and there as he cast the door open and leaped through.

A tremendous cackling, squawking, and flapping greeted him. Hens flew, wildly battering themselves against whitewashed walls and winging their way overhead as Jenkins burst through their quiet domesticity like an elephant through an afternoon tea-party.

Slam! went another door. Now Jenkins was in the open, running through a hen-yard. The wire netting delayed him but an instant. He charged through it like a regiment of French *poilus* through wire entanglements, and fled across a turnip-field toward an orchard.

Behind, a cry of startled wonder accelerated his progress. Almost any farmer would be apt to feel surprise at seeing a sailor burst out of his hen-house, with a towel round his neck and a shaving-mug in his hand. Prince, snarling wildly, gave chase. So did the farmer. A very pretty little athletic event in the hundred-yard-dash line was pulled off right there, 'neath the shade of the old apple-tree.

But now Prince was imminently at hand. Jenkins saw slavering jaws and white fangs. Wheeling, he flung the mug. Luck sent it crashing into Prince's eye. Snarls gave place to howls of anguish, and Prince, with more than a bellyful of fight, hit the high place for home with his tail so far between his legs that it stuck out in front and almost tripped him.

Jenkins turned again and fled, weaponless.

Bang!

"Ow!"

Rock-salt in sufficiently large lumps is highly painful, even though not dangerous, when fired from a rusty shotgun at one hundred paces. Jenkins's speed increased. Whether the gun was double-barreled, and whether the ruralite was still pursuing, he stayed not to inquire. As Prince hiked one way, he hiked the other, doing a regular Barney Oldfield toward the stone wall at the foot of the orchard.

I don't know, or care, who holds the world's record for hurdling; for whoever it is, or whatever that record is, Jenkins beat it by a clean two feet as he went over the wall.

He landed in blackberry-bushes, scrambled through, reached a road, and departed with celerity. For half a mile he ran—or was it a mile? Then all at once he stopped.

Before him lay a bridge, and under that bridge passed a stream of water which, in spite of all his agitation, he recognized as nothing more or less than the Erie Canal.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE sight of this placid and untroubled waterway stretching off on either hand between fertile fields and sparsely wooded knolls brought Jenkins to himself. Panting, he regarded the canal as though it had been the greatest curiosity in the world. Sudden readjustments took place in his mind.

The immediate past, with all its pains and dangers, now dropped away. In its place the larger issue rose again. The Victory, Malcolm Everett, the reward, and Sally swung into the current of his mind. In fine, Jenkins had all at once found himself once more.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, drawing a deep

breath as he leaned against the bridge railing and peered down at the canal. "As a shave, that was some crawl-crawl shave. But forget it, kid. I'm back on the job now with both feet, and that goes!"

Enheartened by this decision, and taking as a good omen the fact that his wild flight had brought him directly back to the canal itself, Jenkins wasted no time in deliberation, but—having first determined that the rock-salt had not injured him—set out in pursuit of the elusive yacht. He clambered down the embankment at the end of the bridge, reached the tow-path, and for a moment stood, undecided which way to go.

The sight of water suggested that he wash his face, still smeared with lather. This he did by letting down his towel, wetting the end, and swabbing himself vigorously. He wrung out the towel, rolled it up and stuffed it back inside his blouse as likely to be useful, passed a satisfied hand over his now sketchily shaven chin, and at a brisk pace departed on his still-hunt for gold and his lady-love.

What seemed to him a kind of instinct impelled him to take a direction toward the left of his line of flight along the road. Far ahead, he perceived something that looked like a cloud of smoke hanging high in the heavens. This, he figured, marked the position of Schenectady; and as the Victory had now passed beyond that city toward Buffalo, of course he must go in that general direction.

Too wise, he, to venture passing through the city itself, however. No; when he should get back to the suburbs, he would make a wide détour and strike the canal again on the other side of the dangerous place. Jenkins had it all figured out very neatly, as you see.

As he walked along the path, hard-beaten by uncounted thousands of mules, his spirits began to rise once more. No danger threatened. No one was pursuing him. Far away behind, down the straight reach of the canal, a boat was

lazily moving in the opposite direction. In fields to right and left an occasional farmer was at work. A ragged boy, perched on the heel-path across the canal, fished intently.

Bill waved his hand at the urchin, who stared at him with mute amaze, and passed on, whistling. The novelty and beauty of the scene conspired with his growing hopes to raise his spirits high. He thought that, despite the lowering weather, he never had beheld a more peaceful, pleasing landscape. Here a flotilla of ducks paddling along the waterway, there a kingfisher darting over the surface, farther on a long-legged crane that flapped away into a patch of woods, all entertained him greatly. "Fine business!" thought Jenkins. As a blues-annihilator, this pursuit of justice along the picturesque canal seemed to him a roll of all-wool, unshrinkable goods.

After about an hour's walk, however, a keen and ever-growing pang of hunger began to make itself insistently felt. Also, blisters began to form on both heels, caused by the ill-fitting boots Morris Rosenkatz had given him.

Jenkins's pace slackened a little as it became something of a limp. His whistle ceased. Farmhouses, barns, and haystacks along the way now looked distinctly less interesting; Jenkins would have traded them all for his own shoes, a place to sit down, and a plate of "ham-and."

So it was that, rounding a long bend that skirted a hill, our adventurer beheld with almost rapture a little shanty perched beside the tow-path, a shanty with a man sitting before it on a bench, while from a stove-pipe at the rear drifted promising smoke.

Bench and smoke meant rest and eats. Jenkins still had three dollars and thirty-seven cents, and he knew that money talked, even though all it had ever said to him had been "good-by." He hastened his gait, in spite of blisters and weariness, for now relief was close at hand. His mouth watered at thought of meat, potatoes, pie, and coffee. The chow, he

told himself, would look pretty minus three minutes after he connected.

As he approached the shanty he became aware of a large beam projecting from the canal toward it, and also saw a white, mushroomlike object beyond. This object presently revealed itself as an unusually big cotton umbrella, with its handle stuck into the ground, on the other side of the building.

A nearer view disclosed a man seated beneath the umbrella, with an easel in front of him. Jenkins recognized that a painter was at work, delineating a view of the canal, and was well pleased. He approved of art, but had never seen any created. This opportunity was welcome.

On and on he limped, came close, and, stopping, touched his cap.

"How do?" said he to the old man on the bench. "Can I get any feed here?"

"Feed?" queried the lock-keeper—for such was his entitlement—as he removed a short T. D. With considerable curiosity his little black eyes, set in a million wrinkles, observed the strange marine figure before him. A sailor on the canal was certainly a novelty. The painter, meanwhile, poised his brush in air, wondering whether there was any possible way to work a mariner into a view of an Erie Canal lock.

"Feed, sure," repeated Jenkins, advancing.

The old man shook his head.

"We don't never feed here," said he decisively.

"What?"

"Never do," he affirmed, putting his pipe back and clamping his jaw on it. "Four mile up, though, you can git all the hay you want."

"Hay?"

"Sartin. Why not? What d'you feed your mules on, anyhow? Oysters?"

"Mules!" snorted Jenkins, reddening at sound of a chuckle from behind the canvas on the easel. "What's the idea, mules? I mean, chow for myself. Eats! I'll come across with the coin, all right, too. Get me?"

"Oh," answered the ancient one solemnly, "why didn't ye say so at fust? I don't run no caffy, young man; but fer a consideration I might perduce some-thin'. How much you willin' to pay?"

Astonished, Jenkins stared at him. Then he answered:

"A quarter?"

"Nup. Fifty's my lowest."

"Gee, you're one hospitable guy, aren't you?" commented Jenkins. "But no matter. Fifty goes." What, after all, was a little loose change, when a large fortune lay right ahead? "Chase up some lunch, and I'll go you. The quicker the sooner."

The lock-keeper eyed him with suspicion. What speech was this from a U. S. navy tar? Nevertheless he arose stiffly, for age and rheumatism had sadly lamed him, and he hobbled into the shack. Jenkins followed unbidden.

A curiously disordered place it was, with horse-collars and bits of harness, ropes, and iron-mongery in corners, a spavined table and a chair or two for its entire equipment.

With a sigh of relief, Jenkins sank into the most likely-looking chair, took off his torturing boots and relapsed into inertia. Now for the first time, as he sat there watching the old man pottering about in a broken-backed way at a rough-board little pantry, he realized how very much played-out he was. Yes, in the near future he meant to have the gold and the girl; but what a price he was paying—what a price!

The old man set dishes on the table, turned, and demanded:

"Give us the half."

"Huh? Oh—all right. Not taking any long shots, are you?" And he produced two quarters, which the lock-keeper pocketed with—

"Nup. I ain't been on this here canal fifty-three years fer nothin'. Go on, now, eat. There 'tis."

Jenkins drew up to the festive board, and with some dismay observed rye bread, onions, cheese and cold tea. The

meat, potato, pie, and coffee he had mentally reveled in now faded into vacancy.

"Suffering Moses!" he ejaculated. "Just the same as breakfast. Is that all there is in this neck o' the woods?"

"Dunno. It's all I got, anyhow. Take it er leave it. But no money refunded," replied the keeper. Groaning, Jenkins attacked the meal. The old man, meanwhile, sat down across the table from him and kept those keen, glittering little eyes on him every moment, in a most disconcerting manner. Obviously, the ancient one had no intention of losing any cutlery.

Famine stimulated Jenkins, and he managed to get away with everything but the last onion. With a suspicious air the keeper said:

"Jedgin' by your appetite, young feller, you'd ha' done better not to run away at all. It's a hungry job, runnin' away is, fer them that's used to Uncle Sam's feed."

"What do you think I am, anyhow?" demanded Jenkins angrily. "A deserter?" As well now, as later, to meet the charge and repel it.

"It's none o' my business *what* ye be. But—"

"See here," said Bill, determined that for the sake of safety he must allay all such suspicions. "I'm no more a deserter than you are. I'm on shore-leave, get me? Furlough. I've been at sea so much I thought I'd take a flash at this kind of navigation, for a change. My home's in Buffalo, and I'm hiking part of the way, that's all. Get me?"

The old one pondered all this a moment, with deliberation. Then, blowing a cloud of smoke, he questioned:

"Where did you say you was goin'?"

"Buffalo, of course."

"Do they know you're runnin' at large?"

"Who?" demanded Jenkins angrily.

"Your keepers. You *look* human, an' you can talk, but when it comes to travel you ain't there. You ain't headed fer no

Buffalo, young feller. The way you're goin', I cal'late you'll jest about make Eastport, Maine. Now—"

A long-drawn hail, down the Canal, interrupted his discourse. Open-mouthed and sore astonished to learn abruptly that every step so painfully trodden along the canal had in reality been carrying him farther and farther from his goal, the unhappy Jenkins stared in silence at the old man. Then, as the latter got up from his chair and hobbled doorward, he exclaimed:

"Hey, wait a minute! Tell me—"

"Can't wait. There's a boat comin' to be locked up."

Jenkins, too, arose. Still half-dazed he observed the aged one fumbling in his pockets. Jenkins's instinct to be helpful reasserted itself. Maybe he could assist.

"What are you trying to find?" asked he. "The key?"

"Key?" demanded the old man, turning. "What key?"

"Why, to lock the boat up with, of course. You said—"

A peculiar sound, vaguely resembling laughter, issued from the wrinkled throat. Then words became distinguishable.

"Shhh! Shhh, sonny. Don't let 'em hear ye, whatever ye do. It's a livin' death, they say."

"What is?"

"Insane asylum. Come 'long out here, now, an' I'arn somethin'."

Amazed and understanding nothing of all this, Jenkins obeyed. Out of the shack he followed the old man, who now approached the big beam that overhung the tow-path.

Some distance down the canal, a team of mules, hitched tandem, was plodding round the curve. On the foremost mule sat a youth. Far behind, at the end of a stout hawser, followed a ponderous, blunt-nosed craft blessed with the euphonious cognomen of *Lottie Peck*.

At these objects Jenkins stared with an interest that for the moment quite obliterated his resentment against the old man's unwarranted gibes.

The mules came close. Off jumped the youth. With a profanely qualified command he halted his animals. The tow-rope sagged and dropped into the water. At the bows of the boat, a man in shirt-sleeves released it. The boat moved majestically forward, deftly guided by a very ruddy individual at the long tiller.

In between the granite walls that Jenkins now saw faced the canal at this point it ran, toward a massive double gate of planks through which streams of water were dribbling. For the first time our adventurer noted that the water-level back of that gate was higher than in front of it. Just what was about to happen he knew not, but it was all very interesting. Gaping a little, he stood there near a solid iron post set into the masonry coping, as the boat slid on and on.

"Oh, I see," thought Jenkins. "That gate is the bumper. The boat butts into it and stops, and then—then they boost it up, some way—maybe with jacks. And then—"

A rope came sprangling ashore, hurled by the shirt-sleeved man at the bows.

"Hey, Jack!" he shouted at Jenkins. "Give us a hand! The old man's rheumatic. Bend that painter round the post an' slack her down!"

"Huh?" exclaimed Jenkins, dodging the rope. "What say?"

"That painter, dum it! Bend that painter round the post, an' get a move on!"

"Oh!" And Jenkins, turning, started a little uncertainly toward the easel. He took a few steps. What was it all about, he wondered? Why should anybody ask him to lay violent hands on a perfectly inoffensive painter, and bend him round a post? No telling. Still, the command had been absolutely explicit, in the plainest possible English. Moreover, it was now being violently repeated, with a hurricane of profanity.

"Where you goin', you three-starred son of a qualified canine?" howled the man in the bows. The old lock-keeper,

turning, began to hobble with the unusual celerity toward the rope on the ground. The youth came running, too.

"What's nibbling all you nuts, anyhow?" shouted Jenkins, in sudden passion, as he wheeled toward the boat once more. "You tell me to do something, and then when I get busy, you raise a roar." He flung his arm toward the man at the easel. "You told me to bend that painter—"

A composite burst of hilarity from artist, lock-keeper, youth, helmsman and bow-tender shattered the speech from his lips, as the youth snatched up the rope, took a hitch round the iron post and eased the ponderous boat to a halt. None too soon, for her stem lay not two feet from the gate.

"Sonny," remarked the aged one, coming close and peering up at Jenkins with pitying eyes. "I'm goin' to give ye a bit of advice. Will ye take it, from a man old enough to be y'r gran'sir'?"

"Advice?" repeated Jenkins, his face aflame, while both men on the boat, the youth and the artist looked their eyes full and listened in a painful silence.

"What d'you mean, advice?"

"Go back, my son. Go straight back."

"Back—where?"

"Where you broke out of. Or home, if you got one. 'Tain't safe, 'tain't right, ner wise, ner even Christian, fer you to be left wanderin' round, this way. Buffalo, you said? This here boat will take ye thar, jest as nice an' quiet an' e-e-easy as can be. Nothin' to worrit ye, nothin' to bother. You'll be fed an' looked after, an' taken all the way back. If you ain't got no money, I'll do at least one humane act afore I die, an' contribute a dollar towards—"

"Can that!" interrupted Jenkins, burning with shame. "What d'you think I am, anyhow? A pauper? I've got \$2.77, and—"

The lock-keeper turned toward the steersman.

"Hey, Jake! He's got \$2.77," said he. "Take him to Buffalo fer that?"

"Huh?" queried the ruddy man, with an expression of surprise.

"He's harmless," continued the aged one. "Do one good act fer to wipe off some o' your many sins, Jake. I've knowed men to git shot, along the canal, fer not understandin'—men not in sailor clo'es, neither. Save him, by takin' him to Buffalo, an' you'll be rewarded above."

"All right, let him come along," assented the steersman. "Only he's gotta stay in the cabin, all the way."

"Go, my boy, an' my blessin' be on ye," said the ancient one, with real feeling. "I had a son once that was kind of the same way, an' I understand. We done all we could fer him, but 'twan't no use. I understand. Good-by."

Jenkins answered nothing. He could not trust himself to speak. But rage did not obscure his reason. Here was a chance, unexpected as it was opportune, to pursue the yacht unmolested and in perfect safety, to get constant news of her, to set himself forward on his difficult way. Only a madman could have refused.

Without a word he, therefore, strode to the granite coping of the lock, gauged the distance to the deck of the canal-boat—now about two feet from the edge and perhaps four below it—and jumped aboard. The helmsman, eying him narrowly, spoke no word but merely jerked his thumb in the direction of the deck-house close in front of the long tiller.

Jenkins understood. He walked to it, trembling with indignation, entered the little door, descended a steep half-dozen steps and found himself in a square, stuffy room lighted only by a row of small windows near the top.

At a table in the center of the room, two men were sitting, deep in conversation, with a bottle between them. Both looked up, at the new arrival.

Jenkins saw that one was thin, dark, and well-dressed. At sight of the other, he started back with an exclamation he only just succeeded in turning into a cough.

Do you wonder at his astonishment and alarm? Let me tell you the reason for them. The second man, there before him, was—you'd never guess it in a thousand years—was Simoon Sam!

CHAPTER XV.

A DASH IN THE DARK.

FOR the second or third time in his entire life the urgent stress of a crisis whipped Bill Jenkins's wits to swift action.

What had happened, and why, he knew not. But the fact remained that there Simoon Sam sat, visibly in a chair before him, holding conference with a stranger over a square-face of strong waters.

Jenkins knew perfectly well that to make himself known, or even be recognized, would in all probability be absolutely fatal to all his hopes, and end his piratical career forthwith. Arrest, exposure, punishment, loss of everything that now made life worth living, would all follow in natural sequence. Therefore he must not be recognized.

For a tense moment Sam held the intruder under a powerful and angry gaze. Jenkins's heart shrank to the size of a dried mustard-seed and ceased functioning altogether. At that instant he stood upon the brink of an abyss.

But he didn't fall over. With a thrill of hope he saw in Sam's ferocious optics no sign of recognition. Sam had never beheld him save by uncertain, artificial light and in totally other clothing. Jenkins's disguise was sufficient to protect him. Nothing else mattered, not even Sam's bellow of:

"Who the blink-blank are *you*, you swab, an' what are you doin' here?"

Jenkins made no answer. Weakly, by reason of the reaction from panic to joy, he leaned against the cabin wall, stared at Sam, and shook his head. His only game, he realized, was to assume the rôle that fate and all hands seemed deter-

mined to thrust upon him. "Assume a virtue if you have it not!" floated through his brain. Since lunacy might be a virtue in this case, why, he would be a lunatic; nothing simpler.

Sam roared out his question again, this time embellished with a large variety of adjectives and qualifications. He also banged the table savagely with his glass. Jenkins, realizing that this was one of Sam's bad days, still replied nothing. He let his mouth droop open a little, half closed his eyes, and smiled a smile that would have made angels weep. Then, as though mustering all his strength, he murmured:

"I couldn't find the key to the canal lock, so they're sending me back to the Buffalo asylum."

Dead silence greeted this remark. Jenkins subsided on to a berth at the left of the cabin, rolled over, and became inert. Holding his breath, feeling his heart pound madly against his ribs, he listened keenly.

"Another one, s'help me!" he heard Simoon exclaim in a startled, almost awed voice. "Worse 'n the one that got away, damfe ain't. What is this, Mac—an omen, or somethin'?"

"Search me!" answered the other. Came a pause. "Kind of peculiar, though, I *must* say. I've been in the game eighteen years, Sam, and never saw it equalled. To be working on an asylum case and run into *this*—well—"

Another silence. Then heavy footsteps sounded on the cabin floor. Jenkins heard Sam's voice addressing somebody out through the door:

"Jake! Oh, Jake!"

"What you want now?" replied the helmsman.

"How about this? What is it, an' where did it come from?"

"Harmless, I reckon," Jake assured the irate one. "Dunno nuthin' about it. Goin' to Buffalo, to some home or 'nuther."

"Well, now, see here—" Sam began to expostulate; but Mac, with a hasty

"*Pssst Pssst!*" interrupted him. Jenkins, listening with all his might, heard this colloquy:

"What is it? What you want?"

"Shhh! Don't kick up a ruction, Sam!"

"Why not?"

"Come back here and sit down, and I'll tell you."

Sam's footfalls crossed the floor again. A chair creaked as his two hundred pounds settled into it.

"Well, what?" demanded he.

"Don't you see?"

"No, damfi do!"

Liquid gurgled from the bottle-neck. Jenkins realized with considerable joy that Sam had fallen off the water-wagon, and that his wits would therefore be more or less fogged—probably more, if what Sally had told him had been true concerning the man's habits.

"It's this way," explained Mac, lowering his tone still more, so that our adventurer could just barely make out the words and no more. "In this game, now, the possession of one *bona-fide* nut might very likely prove highly important to us. And—"

"How's that?"

"If we've got *one*, taking him back to the asylum, it would lend all kinds of color to the statement that we were taking *another* back, too. My advice is to let this bug stay right here, and take particularly good care not to let him get away, at least till we meet Harvey at the Eagle House, in Utica. Harvey 'll know what to do. His judgment is O. K. all the time." A pause, punctuated by the sipping of liquid. "With this harmless loon as a ringer, we'll stand a lot better chance of bagging the real game—that is, if you haven't got cold feet and want to quit before tackling the proposition."

"Me quit?" demanded Simoon, with a slight hiccup. "Never! When I set sail for a port, I never drop anchor till I'm there. And after the way that qualified swab handed me my walking-papers, just because I couldn't help a dod-ratted stow-

away messin' up things an' then escapin', you think I'd lay down on the proposition? Not! No, sir, I'm with you to a finish, Mac; an' here's hopin' he spends the rest of his life where he belongs—in the nut-foundry!"

The glasses clinked again. A great white light dawned over Jenkins's perturbed mind as he lay there sweating with a bad attack of nerves. He seemed at last to understand everything. So, then, Sam had been fired from the Victory on his account. Jenkins smiled with joy at this.

At any rate, he had paid up part of the score against his tormentor. The rest was equally clear. Everything seemed fitting together like the parts of a cut-out puzzle. Disgruntled, Sam had happened to meet this Mac individual, one of the men now trailing Everett to force him back into Hamilton Asylum.

Mac, taking advantage of his anger, had enlisted him in the plot. They were pursuing the Victory, traveling slowly and safely—for who would ever think of looking for passengers on a canal-boat these days?

At Utica they would join one Harvey, unknown, the other detective plotting against Everett. After that a *coup* of some kind or other was to be sprung. It all looked clear as crystal, and everything coincided with what Sally had told him in regard to the matter—all except Sam's part in the affair, which had developed since Jenkins had left the yacht.

With a joy so savage that it hurt and made his soul quiver within him, Jenkins realized he now stood on the edge of vital developments. Fortune was about to hand him a dazzling and totally unexpected prize-package. By falling in with the plotters' scheme and forwarding it, he could take a supreme revenge on Everett for having—as he now firmly believed—cheated him out of his just dues and run off with Sally. He felt like shouting, singing, dancing; but canny prudence held him motionless, listening with all his ears.

"Pipe *that*, will you?" he heard Simoon thickly exclaim with a sound as though striking a paper with his fist. "He's advertising for another mate already! See, here in the shipping colyume. *I'm* done, permanent. S'help me, I'll cut his liver out first and then berth him in Bug Harbor for life, or I'm no A.B.!"

"What's that? What you say?" asked Mac eagerly, in a low tone. "Another mate?"

Came a little tense silence. Then Jenkins heard the whispered give-and-take of questions and answers, whereof he caught nothing intelligible, listen as he might.

The boat, meanwhile, was rising steadily in the lock. The lower gate had been closed, the sluice-ways in the upper opened. Jenkins heard the rushing of waters.

From where he lay he could just sight through one of the little windows along the top of the cabin. The granite wall seemed sliding down. Now the coping appeared, the legs of a man, a view of the bottom part of the shanty. The upward motion ceased. Shouts, oaths, and commands drifted in. A hawser creaked. The wall began to slide backward. Lifted to the higher level, the boat was starting toward the west again.

"On our way," thought Jenkins. "Safe and sound, with everything falling right. From now on it's a romp, a fun-fest with a dash of everything in it but yellow!"

His thoughts raced with unusual celerity. Things heretofore hidden seemed plain. Even the now inaudible plottings of Simoon and the conspirator appeared to lie open before his mind's eye. As the boat slid gently up the canal, with a soothing murmur of waters along its side, Jenkins felt he now understood the situation clearly.

Obviously the disgruntled and vindictive mate was arranging that Mac should apply for the job now vacant aboard the yacht. Once there, he and Simoon would work with the unknown Harvey to kidnap

Everett and bear him back to Hamilton. Jenkins gloated over this idea. Could anything more fully glut his vengeance? Yes, one thing could! And that was—

"Suffering tom-cats!" decided Jenkins. "I'll do the job myself!"

Could he? Why not? What was to prevent his getting that job himself? Once installed aboard the yacht, disguised as a sailor, why could he not treat with Simoon, Mac, and Harvey as with equals? Why not hold them up for a substantial sum of money, dispose of Malcolm Everett, seize the girl, and win all tricks?

Accused of being a buccaneer for nothing, why not play the bold game in reality and win all at one supreme masterstroke? Jenkins's heroic blood leaped in his veins. Just how the thing was to be brought about he knew not; but on the instant his resolve was firmly taken. His goals were now the Victory, and after that the Eagle House, Utica. Weltering in a sea of glad excitement, he lay there in the berth, supremely thrilled with anticipation of heroic deeds now close at hand.

Thus, lifted high on waves of glory, began his journey aboard the good canal-boat Lottie Peck.

Now, while I should like to trace our hero's mental processes and draw a picture of his feigned insanity during the four-and-twenty hours that he spent there, the sweep of our story compels me to elide this portion of the narrative.

Jenkins lay low, betraying no signs of intelligence whatsoever. A few times Mac and Simoon examined him, made him sit up, questioned him, and tried to elicit information as to his personality, but Jenkins's fatuous smile and wandering answers completely baffled them. Jake, the helmsman, also individuals named Timmins, Snuffy, and Burke—all "trippers," as canal-boat freight-handlers are called—took turns interrogating him—in vain.

Jenkins lay entirely low till Schenectady and danger were far behind. He accepted food and tobacco as his due, re-

mained quiescent, and thanked his stars that every moment was bringing him nearer and nearer the consummation of his burning hopes.

He slept little that night, so feverish were his thoughts. In the morning, unmolested—though Sam and Mac kept close surveillance on him—he went on deck with a cigar that Sam had given him. There he sat for some hours, watching the landscape unroll as the mules plodded on, ever on, westward bound.

With interest he observed villages and towns pass by, locks, low bridges, feeders, waste-weirs and viaducts, and all the busy life and numerous devices along the route of the great waterway. He watched the mules, at the end of their "trick," being driven aboard the boat and stabled in the hold, forward, while a fresh team was sent ashore and harnessed to the tow-rope.

And ever he listened to the gossip of the red-faced Jake with one or other of the boatmen, picking up odd bits of canal lore and stowing them away. For, on a pinch, who could tell what chance piece of information might not pull him through some supremely vital crisis?

Let all this go with but a word of mention. Time dragged on; so did the Lottie Peck. Noon passed, and afternoon wore on toward evening. With increasing tension, Jenkins realized the time was close at hand now for some sharp, decisive action. Before Mac should get that job as mate on board the yacht, he himself must cop it. He must be ready to confront Mac and Simoon, and—master of the situation—dictate terms to them.

With this idea in mind he waited till the early twilight of autumn closed down upon the world. The two conspirators were still below-decks, as usual. They seemed entirely reluctant, in fact, to be observed at all outside the cabin of the Lottie Peck.

At the bows Snuffy was smoking cigarettes. Jake was asleep below, having given the helm to Burke. Timmins was dangling his feet overboard, moodily chewing tobacco and from time to time

giving vent to certain stanzas of an interminable song in this wise:*

"On the Erie Canal it was, all on a summer's day,
I sailed forth with my parents far away to Albanay.
From out the clouds at noon that day there came a dreadful storm
That piled the billows high about and filled us with alarm."

Timmins ruminated a bit, while Jenkins pondered escape. How could it be? To watch his chance, swing up on a low bridge, and run would fatally expose him. In no time Simoon and Mac, instituting pursuit, would hale him back. And then—

"A man came rushing from a house, saying,
'Snub up, I pray;
Snub up your boat, snub up, alas, snub up while yet you may!'
Our captain cast one glance astern, then forward glanced he,
And said, 'My wife and little ones I never more shall see!'"

"Said Dollinger, the pilot man, in noble words but few,
'Fear not, but lean on Dollinger, and he will pull you through!'
'Come 'board, come 'board!' the captain cried,
'nor tempt so wild a storm!'
But still the raging mules advanced, and still the boy strode on."

Then what? Jenkins knew he must risk nothing by premature action. All might be lost by disclosing his real intention of flight. Diplomacy must get him ashore and away, not strength or speed. He longed for the liberty that the poetic Timmins enjoyed, cast a wary eye on Burke at the helm, and, realizing that Burke had him well in view, remained quiescent. Timmins continued:

"Alas, alas, the sheeted rain, the wind and tempest's roar!
Alas, the gallant ship and crew, can nothing help them more?
She balances, she wavers! Now let her come about!"

If she misses stays and broaches to we're lost without a doubt.

Avast, belay! Take in more sail! Ho, boy, hold taut on the hind mule's tail!"

Jenkins was thinking faster now. The references to mules had wakened a line of possible action in his mind. At the next halt, if he could only get on shore with the mules and make off under cover of the darkness, all might yet be well. More confidently he drew at his cigar, and waited as best he could for night to veil his desperate escape.

"So overboard a keg of nails and anvils three we threw,
Likewise four bales of gunny-sacks, two hundred pounds of glue,
Two sacks of corn, four ditto wheat, a box of books, a cow,
A violin, Lord Byron's works, a rip-saw, and a sow."

Sadder and more sad grew Timmins's voice as he related the woes of shipwreck on the raging canal. Far ahead, in the gathering dusk, a little twinkle of light appeared. Was it another boat approaching? A farmhouse? A lock? Or a changing-station? No telling. Jenkins could do no more than wait, possessing his fevered soul in patience and hoping for the best.

"Sever the tow-line! Cripple the mules! Too late! There comes a shock!
Another length, the fated craft would have swum in the saving lock!
And some did think of their little ones they never more might see,
And others of waiting wives at home and mothers that grieved would be."

Timmins now seemed almost moved to tears. Jenkins, too, felt a great sadness, born of the evening calm, of love for his Sally, and of unsatisfied vengeance, possess his soul. Intently he listened while the Lottie Peck slid onward, ever onward in the gloom, nearer and nearer to the light upon the bank. With almost heart-

* This poem, the only classic ever inspired by the Erie Canal, is attributed to Mark Twain, and may be found in its entirety in his "Roughing It," under the title of "The Aged Pilot Man." But probably Timmins never heard of "Roughing It," or Mark Twain either.—EDITOR.

rending melancholy the poetic Timmins concluded:

"But now a farmer brought a plank, mysteriously inspired,
And laying it unto the ship, in silent awe retired.

Then every sufferer stood amazed that pilot man before;

A moment stood. Then wondering turned and speechless walked ashore."

An omen of the best! Jenkins felt it in his bones. No longer now he doubted, wondered, feared. Deliverance surely was at hand. With rising courage he saw Timmins stand up and walk forward to join Snuffy. The light was now very close. Already Jenkins could make out three or four buildings near the bank. In front of the door of one of them hung a sign with a foaming beaker thereon, dimly but certainly visible. Still higher rose his heart.

Getting up as the boat slackened with the slowing of the mules, he shambled over to Burke.

"Is that a saloon?" asked he, smiling foolishly as he pointed toward the sign.

"'Tis that," Burke grunted. "Why?"

"I want a drink," answered Jenkins simply.

"Forgot it," said Burke. "Ain't you batty enough as 'tis without pourin' bug-juice into what's left o' your brains? Besides, you ain't allowed on shore, nohow."

"Please, I want a drink," repeated Jenkins mildly. "Just one. I most always take ginger ale. I've got two dollars and thirty-seven cents, and I'll buy you a drink, too. Do we stop here long enough for me to get you a drink?"

A certain glint developed in Burke's eye as he cast a wary glance toward the short companionway leading downward in the gloom to a crack of light that outlined the cabin door.

"Whist, lad!" he cautioned. "I ain't sayin' we ain't. Though I'm a sober man mostly, an' that's no high-toned j'int. It put Timmins there to the bad, takin' too many swifsters as he went by. Tim owned a store once, but he poured it all down

his neck. 'Tis a good lad y'are, after all, even if your upper-works is a bit light. I'll go ye. Only, mind ye, never a word to *them*!" And he turned his thumb expressively toward the cabin.

"All right," smiled Jenkins foolishly.

"Please come along. I want my drink now with a piece of ice in it. Do you want ginger ale, too?"

The boat had come to a full stop now, and the tired mules were being unhooked and led aboard by the boy, while Snuffy and Timmins, vociferously urging another pair from their stalls by deft tail-twisting and a profusion of kicks, were safely out of sight.

"'Twon't take a minute; an' sure 'tis no harm at all, just one," muttered Burke, standing up.

He pointed at the bank, an easy jump from the low rail of the boat. Jenkins needed no second hint. He leaped safely, with Burke at his side. A moment later, quite unnoticed, they had slipped into the low groggery and had fronted up to the bar.

Jenkins's heart was thrashing wildly, but he managed to keep that stupid grin still on his face, under the crude light of a hanging lamp with a tin shade, as he rolled half a dollar on the sloppy bar and mumbled.

"Is that enough, mister?"

"Fer what?" demanded the blue-jawed bruiser in a dirty apron, who officiated as Hebe to the canal men. With amaze he viewed this sailor-boy, surely a new species of *genus homo*.

Burke raised an unseemly index-finger, tapped his brow, and winked. He whispered:

"Four fingers of barb-wire an' turpentine fer me, Mike, an' ginger-ale fer the kid. And keep the change. 'S all right."

"I getcha," answered the gentle dispenser, manipulating glasses and bottles. He slid the coin into a till. "What kind of a philly-loo-bird is it, an' where bound?"

"Search *me*," replied Burke, eying his

four fingers—the drink looked more like four thumbs, big ones—while Jenkins sipped warm ginger-ale from a fly-specked glass.

"By the rig of him, he might of came off that swell yacht that just went along to tie up at Canajoharie fer the night. Where d'you stack into him, anyhow?"

Burke shrugged indifferent shoulders. Plainly the matter was one of no interest to him. Jenkins, still smiling vaguely, cast about him eyes that seemed to see nothing, but that in reality very clearly perceived an open back door at the rear of the grog-shop.

"Hey, you! Burke! What the—?"

A bellowing roar, in Simoon Sam's formidable tones, echoed from the direction of the canal. Startled, Burke turned toward the door. Discovery was upon him, with what dire pains and penalties who could say?

"Come along, you whelp o' misery!" he shouted as he reached the door. "If you've got me in wrong with him—!"

Jenkins flung his glass crashing on the bar, turned and like an unleashed greyhound darted out the back door. He sprawled over a keg, fell flat, picked himself up and departed.

Heavy feet trampled the floor of the saloon. He heeded them not. Harsh voices shouted after him in the dark. He only increased his speed.

Mindful of nothing save increasing the distance instantly between himself and the canal, he whipped away into the gloom, bolted round a clump of trees, flicked into a country road and like a hunted rabbit vanished in the all-embracing shelter of the night.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DAZZLING VISION.

PURSUIT, such as there was, proved tardy and ineffectual. Jenkins heard various cries, commands, and exhortations, also vague echoes of hurrying footfalls; but all these presently died out

and ceased. The chase was over almost before it had begun, for in the darkness Jenkins had vanished like a wraith.

Still he ran on and on. He seemed to be getting quite a bit of practice lately. A child fled, screaming, up a path at the dim sight of him. At a cross-road, a motherly old lady with a basket of eggs threw up both hands, and eggs went down. To meet, so very abruptly, a sailor sprinting down a country road at night, coming from nowhere in particular and bound ditto, cannot help startling motherly old ladies. Jenkins did not stop to explain. He just kept right on hiking.

After an indeterminate period, blowing hard, he perceived a few lights that seemed to indicate a settlement. Warily, he slackened his pace. He halted and observed. No danger appeared to threaten, though inwardly he was quivering lest at any moment Simoon Sam burst upon him like an avenging demon. Forward he went again, at a walk, passed without molestation down a village street, saw a railroad station and made for it, with a new plan germinating in his intellect.

The name "Canajoharie" stuck in his mind. There, the bartender had said, the Victory was going to tie up for the night. Consequently thither he must go, instant.

Fully determined to strike for the first-mate's job on the yacht, wreak vengeance on Malcolm Everett, wring tribute from the detectives, grab the reward and Sally, and win the whole campaign by one swift *coup*, he made inquiries of a cadaverous station-agent with a wen, a cough and an insatiable curiosity.

"Next train to Canajoharie goes in an hour an' twenty minutes," said he. "Tell me, you see lots o' furrin lands, on them there ships, don't ye?"

"Sure. What's the fare?"

"Sixty-five cents. You got lots o' time. Tell me 'bout Japan, will ye?"

"Good night!" said Jenkins. He turned and walked away into the gloom, with considerable annoyance.

Why the ding-ding couldn't people let him alone? Why must he be made everybody's football, butt, and question-box? He felt his milk of human kindness rapidly turning to a cheese as he walked far down the track, sat down on the chill embankment behind a pile of ties, and resigned himself to the interminable wait for the train.

Thoughts, hopes, fears, exultations, and despairs turn by turn possessed him, as he sat there chilly, hungry, tired, and tobaccoless. Only a great soul, he assured himself, could endure such divers and distressing misadventures and still hold true to its original purpose. This made him feel better.

At the end of a few eons, a whistle sounded, far away. Soon after, Jenkins was speeding toward Canajoharie, thrilled with joy at thought of all that now surely lay before him.

"I've beaten Sam and Mac to it, anyhow," thought he, as he sank far down in the last seat of the gloomy smoker, with one of the train-butcher's Flor de Garbagios in his mouth. "Beaten 'em to a fine pulp. They'll have to do biz with me now. Do I hold the big card? Some!"

Beatified with golden visions of mazzuma, revenge, and Sally, he voyaged swiftly westward. The train was express between all pairs of bars along the line, and so was easily outdistancing the conspirators. Before morning Jenkins calculated the reins of power would lie firmly in his hands.

To make a short story shorter, the train deposited him in Canajoharie at 9.47. He supped frugally at a hot-dog cart—for before going against the Everetts he felt the need of inner sustenance—absorbed dogs, coffee, and information as to the whereabouts of the canal, all for fifteen cents, and soon thereafter was standing amid barrels beside the waterway, peering hither and yon for some glimpse of the Victory.

Nothing of the yacht was visible. Jenkins's gaze was attracted to a cheerful

little fire on the canal bank, a hundred yards away. Thither he repaired. Beside the fire sat a night-watchman, in charge of much building-material. The red glow was reflected from a shrewd, deep-wrinkled face as the watchman looked up at sound of the question:

"Hello, there. Haven't lamped a white yacht being towed through here, have you?"

"Yacht?" The old man stirred the fire with his boot. "The Victory, you mean?"

"That's it! Where's it anchored?" asked Jenkins, eagerly.

"Anchored? Why—she ain't anchored at all. Reckon you're kind of a stranger round here, ain't you? But she's snubbed up 'bout a half mile below." He nodded the direction.

"Thanks," said Jenkins, and started away. Then, struck by another thought, he returned. "You aren't wise to whether anybody's grabbed off that job they were advertising, are you?"

"Dunno. What kind of a job?"

"Mate."

The watchman regarded Jenkins a long minute, then slowly shook his head.

"Better not, sonny," said he. "Better not."

"Better not *what*?" demanded Jenkins, piqued.

"Better not try to sign articles as mate. A lad that calls a yacht 'it,' an' thinks they anchor in the Erie, would only be gettin' in trouble. Take an old-time blue-water man's advice, sonny, an' don't do it. Can you box the compass?"

"Box it?" queried Jenkins. "Sure!"

"How'd you do it?"

"Well, I'd have to have a box, and a hammer and nails, of course, to begin with. And then—"

Jenkins hesitated at sight of the watchman's startled expression. Something seemed to tell him he was on the wrong track.

"No, I don't mean just that," he amended. But the old man, still more sad, put another question:

"What's the duties of a mate, anyhow?"

"A mate? Why—a mate—a mate's a kind of companion; everybody knows that," said Jenkins. "He sort of acts as a—a companion for the captain, and—"

"And stays in the companionway? Is that it?" suggested the watchman.

"Sure!" Jenkins grasped eagerly at this saving straw. Now, for sure, he was getting some valuable tips that would stand him in good stead when he should confront the Everetts. "That's just what I was going to say."

"Sonny, can you run a hay-burner?"

The old man's question was shot out with startling abruptness. Taken aback, Jenkins found no answer save:

"Hay-burner? What's that? New kind of engine?"

"Oldest in the world, sonny. None older. Some calls 'em mules, but on the canal they're hay-burners. Can you run one, or mebbe two?"

"Why, sure. What's the idea?"

"Well, my advice to you, as a father, is to get a job runnin' hay-burners, an' not try to sign no mate's berth. You ain't got no more show fer that, my boy, than what you'd have to be a—well, a pirate on the canal. So—"

Startled, Jenkins turned a shade or two paler. The reference to piracy seemed to be striking indelicately close. What might or might not this singular old man know about him? With plots and counter-plots weaving all about, with detectives pursuing the Victory, whom could he trust? He longed to be gone. But the watchman put another question:

"When you was to home, sonny, what counter did you work at?"

"I worked in a cigar-store!" blurted Jenkins, indignantly.

"I thought so. Well," and the watchman nodded gravely, "well now, if you've set your heart on a floatin' job, you go ask fer a berth as storekeeper. You might just happen to make good. But claw off the lee shore of that mate proposition. Claw off, sonny!"

Silently Jenkins stared at him a moment, then, without further speech, departed. The old man's advice, he realized, was sound, even though it hurt. After all, what mattered his official status if only he could get aboard the yacht? Any position, even the most menial, would serve. Let the mate proposition go. Welcome and hail to the job of ship's storekeeper!

Greatly enheartened now, and with hopes fast rising in his emotional barometer, he strode along the canal in the direction indicated by the old watchman. The fire faded and disappeared, leaving only a ruddy glow from behind the piles of building-material.

At his left a row of dingy buildings faintly showed, under the light of a few scattering arc-lamps that threw wimpling serpents of illumination on the dark waters. Keenly Jenkins peered ahead for some sight of the Victory. Only an occasional scow or canal-boat was in sight, tied up to the bank or moving slowly behind its tired span of mules. Discouragement began to finger at his heart; but all of a sudden—

"Gee! There it is!" said our adventurer, more cautiously advancing.

There, indeed, she was, her trim white hull and cabins gleaming vaguely in the dim light. Aft, under the awning which still covered her deck, an incandescent was burning. Jenkins saw big wicker chairs there, and in the chairs, two men.

He caught the dull glow of cigar-tips and beheld a waft of smoke. Curses on millionaires who sat in wicker chairs aboard yachts, smoking Havanas at their ease, while their outraged victim pursued them through dire perils! Jenkins's heart beat loudly at thought of his beloved one now so near. False to him, or true, Sally was almost within his reach, at last. Reward was near, and vengeance! Ah, pregnant and fateful moment!

Gritting his teeth, clenching both fists, and simply oozing outraged dignity, Jenkins came abreast the millionaires. He

halted, gazed at them a minute with hatred and disdain. How little they knew—Malcolm Everett and his gray-mustached father—who now stood within a few feet of them; how little they dreamed of their impending fate! Then he raised his voice, and in tones not entirely steady, said:

"Good evening, gents! Can I come aboard, on business?"

Malcolm Everett peered out across the narrow strip of water at the figure of a young man in naval uniform who stood there, hand at round cap, in a salute, and queried:

"What business?"

"Private matter, sir."

"All right." He gestured toward the gang-plank—the very same up which Simon Sam, ages and ages ago, had kicked him in such a dastardly fashion. Jenkins needed no second invitation. A moment later he was confronting them both, under the gleam of the bulb.

Outwardly bold, our adventurer was inwardly quaking. Now for the first time since having left Henderson's cigar-stand, he was face to face with Malcolm Everett. Would he be recognized? Would all his plans in one second be shattered to dust, all his hopes be blighted? Nay, not so. Never a glint of recognition appeared in the eyes of the heavily built, black-browed man in the big wicker chair. Instead, with a look of casual interest, he blew smoke and demanded:

"Well, what is it?"

"I heard—saw your ad in the paper," began Jenkins. "But I'm not trying to nail that job. I'd like to connect with your storekeeping department. Wages no object. Any show?"

A little silence greeted this rapid-fire. Then the older man, removing his cigar, asked simply:

"Have you ever kept store?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"On Sixth Avenue—I mean, aboard the Henderson, sir, and—"

"Understand the duties perfectly?"

"Yes, sir. Do I cop the posish?"

"Deserter?" queried Malcolm.

"No, sir. That's the uniform I had when I expired."

"When you *what*?"

"I mean when I got through."

The two plutocrats exchanged a glance of amusement that set Jenkins's blood boiling. To be wronged, robbed, and cast off, to have one's Sally stolen away, was it not enough, without insult being added for full measure? Only a gloating inward realization of vengeance near at hand restrained Jenkins. His heart was seething in his breast, but outwardly he dissembled to perfection.

"I don't know but we might take him on," judged Malcolm. "He seems an original sort. What do you think, father?"

"All right," answered the other. "Go forward, and make arrangements with Burch. I can't be bothered with these petty details." He dismissed Jenkins with a languid wave of the hand that turned our adventurer's insides to boiling lava. "Now, Malcolm, as I was saying," he continued, totally ignoring the newly hired employee, "I figure that the surplus production of pig-iron, next year, will inevitably—"

Waiting to hear no more, but with a seething welter of mingled rage and joy struggling for mastery of his spirit, Jenkins saluted, turned on his heel—as he had seen sailors do in the movies—and departed in quest of one Burch, unidentified.

How strange, how passing strange, it seemed to be once more back on the Victory! Jenkins's heart throbbed as he passed a well-remembered place where Sally had stood with him when she had shattered his dreams of foreign travel and had told him he was really but in the Erie canal. Might he not, at any moment, come face to face with her? Might not any wild, entrancing, romantic incident occur? Might not—?

Jenkins paused, a little aft of midships. From the side of a window-shutter, al-

most but not quite drawn, a crack of light was shining. It seemed like Sally's window. *Was it not hers?*

Jenkins advanced, half-resolved to throw all caution to the winds, to tap on that shutter and, like Romeo of old, have sweet converse with his ladylove. True or false, she was still his Dulcinea, forever and a day.

A sharp metallic clink, as of coins dropping on metal, arrested his attention. What might that be? Quickly he glanced about. Nobody was visible. He was quite unobserved. Who, hearing money chinking, will not look at it?

Jenkins peered through the crack. An astonishing sight met his gaze. There, seated at a table in a commodious cabin, not four feet from him, sat Cornelius Everett, the millionaire who had first employed him!

In a flash he recognized the thin, aristocratic features, the deep-set blue eyes and aquiline nose. But—but Sally had told him Cornelius would not join the tion which bade fair to last some time. Victory till it had reached Detroit!

What fresh deception, plotting, and subterfuge was this? Jenkins knew not. He had no time, now, to ponder on the dark mystery, for right before him, almost within reach, his widening eyes beheld a profusion of wealth such as, till then, had never gladdened them.

Yes, there sat the millionaire, counting out money by the wholesale. Nothing retail about *this!* Clinking gold-pieces dropped into a strong metal box at Everett's right hand. Beside the box lay stacks of bills—yellow ones—all done up in neat parcels with paper bands around them. Oh, it was fascinating, it was dazzling, superb, divine!

"Suffering Moses!" thought Jenkins, transfixed, "the genuine elixir fun-drops, by the oceanful!"

Suddenly a voice spoke, somewhere within. The millionaire raised his head from the task and listened. Again the voice.

"All right," said Everett. He arose,

walked to a door at the side of the cabin, passed through it and disappeared.

Instantly a wild tumult burst out in Jenkins's consciousness.

"It's mine! A lot of that is mine!" was the wild chorus that rang in his ears. These people had used him, had profited by his unpaid perils, labors, and tribulations, had cast him off, cheated and abused him, robbed him of gold and love. And now, visibly there before him lay a fortune!

Who could have resisted the obvious and logical act of simple justice? Few of us, I know. Nor Jenkins, either. Ideas of vengeance faded. Let Sam and Mac handle their own case in their own way. Here was wealth! The girl? Once possessed of his rightful dues, Jenkins knew he could achieve her. Here, *here* was the one immediate and crying essential!

How much? Ah, that was the question. How much should he take? Jenkins was no thief. He didn't want a penny that didn't rightfully belong to him. But on the other hand, he didn't mean to lose a penny that did. At any rate, \$921.17 was his very own. And the reward? Oh, call that \$50,000, at a moderate estimate. Very well, Jenkins, with quivering heart, dry mouth, and shaking body, determined right then and there to take \$50,931.17. Correct to a T!

But how determine the amount? Obviously, only one way was open. He must grab it all—all that he could—quietly leave the yacht, seek out a hiding-place, count off the correct sum and return the rest. This was honest, this was fair, this was simple, plain, every-day justice. To work!

Boldly, as befitted a pirate who knew his rights and meant to uphold them with firm but honest exactitude, our buccaneer slid back the blind.

Over the sill he leaned. The table was within easy reach. Not a sound was to be heard save a muffled interchange of voice from the inner cabin in conversation which bade fair to last some time.

Farther Jenkins stretched himself. He

elongated his rather spare frame like an eel. Out went his arm, his clutching hand. Already he seemed to sense the feeling of half a dozen packets of those delicious yellowbacks stuffed into his roomy blouse. Already his fingers were about to close on them—

"Here, you! What you doing here?"

Jenkins heard a harsh, brutal shout in his ear. He felt a violent jerk. His

blouse tore wide with the tremendous pull that dragged him from the window, spun him round and sent him staggering against the rail.

Open-mouthed and wide-eyed, he stared up at a figure of black wrath towering above him.

Up into a terrible and menacing face he peered—the face of Malcolm Everett, his arch-enemy!

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.



LUCK'S everything. Sometimes it chases a man, sometimes he trips over it, sometimes it buries him.

The queerest case of all round good and bad luck I ever knew of happened to a fellow I met in Western Australia just after Bailey's reward started the big rush.

I had been prospecting some gullies about sixty miles southeast of Hannan's that summer, just making tucker and tobacco out of a few fly specks and an occasional ounce slug. I had a pack-horse, plenty of rice and dried apples, a few tins of meat, with enough salt water two feet down in the clay pan to keep my condenser going.

I didn't feel settled enough to hoist my fly, so slept in the open by the fire. I was a hatter, didn't care for mates as

a rule, and hadn't met any other prospectors on foot, horse, or camel since I had been out. Nobody seemed to want that bit of Australia.

One evening at tea a man came out of the scrub with nothing on but ragged trousers and fell down flat by the fire. His back was burned and blistered, his tongue thick, and his bare feet were bleeding. I knew at once that he'd been doing a perish, so without asking questions I poured some hot tea down his throat, and gave him a bit of damper.

He came to pretty quickly and wanted to explain. I saw he was a new chum and told him to shut up. You don't have to apologize for what the bush has done to you when you've lost your bearings and your water bag. Then I threw a couple of flour bags over him, put a log under his head and let him sleep.

He was a little pasty-faced chap, one of the thousands Bailey's find had brought over from the East. Poor devils accustomed to streets and policemen, trying where men like me had failed for twenty years. A bushy would have wanted a smoke first, no matter how parched he was. I know I always did.

Next morning he was still weak, but got up and helped me to blow up the ashes. His name was David Baird, and he had been dry-blowing at the Six Mile, near Hannan's. He had tented with some mates who were working for wages on the Perseverance, and walked to and fro every day between there and his claim—which was a duffer.

At first I couldn't make out how long he had been lost, he didn't seem to know himself, but afterward I reckoned he did a three days. Three days without water is enough for an old chunk of diorite like me, but to Baird who had never before in his life been a hundred yards away from a bar or a water tap it was hell—no, it was Westralia, which is worse than hell.

Coming home to camp he had gone astray and didn't meet sign or sight of anything living till he fell by my fire.

"Wasn't there a track?" I asked.

"Yes, but I missed it somehow," he said. "I had been used to guide myself by the sound of the Boulder battery."

I knew the Boulder battery. It was the first bit of mining machinery on that field. It was not a real battery, with stampers and mercury box and blankets—there wasn't enough water to run one of that kind—but a sort of dry mill that ground up the quartz in a round hopper. The row it made used to scare the black fellows, it spoiled the bush I thought, as it interfered with your thinking. But Baird, used to the noise and the clatter of a city, liked it, and took it as a compass to steer him home to camp.

He didn't seem able to explain why it failed him that night, as he said he heard it quite plainly. He thought he must have mistaken the direction of the sound,

but why he couldn't tell. The country was flat with low scrub and nothing to cause an echo, and besides he had been going by that battery for weeks.

"Anything wrong with your ears?" I asked.

"No, I heard it all the time nearly, but somehow I couldn't come up to it—it never got any nearer. Then the night came—and I was frightened—and began to run about in the dark and call out—you know how it is."

I did.

"My water bag tore on a branch, so I lost every drop. Of course, I had nothing to eat and had been hungry when I left the claim. I thought p'raps I was walking in a circle and going round and round that battery which kept up its 'tum-te-te-tum, tum-te-te-tum' all night. So I stopped and made up my mind for a night in the bush. I couldn't light a fire as I hadn't any matches."

The new chum again. A bushman wouldn't stir a yard from camp or mate without feeling his pockets.

"Next morning I couldn't hear the battery at all at first. I started blazing a trail on 'the trunks with my shovel. The country was different, so I knew I had wandered. It wasn't the flat patches of red soil and quartz gravel I was used to, but low hills of ironstone and thick scrub. I climbed the highest I could see—and then I heard the battery again, just as if it was near by, it was so loud.

"But I couldn't see any tents or smoke—nothing but bush and sky, bush and sky."

I never saw a chap who could talk so much and drink so little. He said all that on one cup of tea, but then he had to stop. The bush and the sky make a man hold his tongue. All you can do is bite on your pipe and go through with it, and if you say anything, make it a prayer and it's best to think that.

I got his tale straight when he told it later, as he did many times. At first he used to mix up the middle and the end—what he did with what he dreamed—and

always talked most of the things that hurt him most. Of course, he'd been out of his mind a bit, as a man will when he does a perish, but I don't think Baird ever quite came back for some time.

"I tried to steer by my shadow, but I couldn't always watch it, it made my neck stiff, and I bumped into rocks and tripped over roots. I remember once stopping and laughing, thinking how funny it would be if I found gold—and I jumped once, and the battery went harder than ever, when I picked up a piece of quartz with specks on it. —

"But it wasn't gold, it was blood, and I saw I had lost my boots and my feet were bleeding. I heard voices besides the battery, Mary's and the girls' at home. That was in the night, and I ran toward them, and that's when I fell and knocked my head against a tree in the dark—"

So he rambled on, telling his story in bits. I felt sorry for him, but he didn't have to tell me. I had done it all myself, all except the battery. I never heard of that before.

I made him rest for a day or two while I went fossicking, and gave him some flour bags to make a shirt and a hat and boots for himself. He was a willing little chap, got to cleaning up the camp, boiling the billy, and he knew how to bake johnny-cake that didn't taste of the ashes.

I liked him as much as I could like any man living in my camp, except that he took too much sugar in his tea and talked too much. He told me all about his wife and children, way back across the Bight waiting for him to find their fortunes—how he had borrowed money and the money-lender made him take out a life policy. "That nearly stopped me," he said, "for the doctor who examined me said I had a nervous heart, and Mary was afraid, but he said the open-air life would do me good."

Of course, like the rest, he thought it was a picnic. I advised him to get a storekeeper's job in Coolgardie, and offered to give him tucker and water to

go in—and a compass. I don't think he was afraid of the bush, even after what he had been through. But he wouldn't hear of taking a job. He had come to find gold, and find it he would.

That's where the luck comes in. I had seen a new chum fall down a hole an old-timer had given up as a duffer, and strike it rich with his first shovelful. So I didn't argue with him. Maybe I thought he would bring me luck. He was lucky in a way to tumble on me. If he hadn't, the crows would have got him by this, so I told him we could be mates till I had to go in for more tucker.

When I knew him better I found out that if city fellows know nothing they can learn quickly. He had picked up how to handle the dry-blowers' dishes and occasionally came back with a pennyweight or so, and always had tea ready when I got home and bush tea at that, not ladies' stuff.

He had grit, too, and actually persuaded me not to shift camp. Me, a battler of twenty years' experience, bred to the game and bound to die of it. He said if one bit of the country is as good as another as it is in the West where the rotten volcanic gold comes anyhow without run or lead, we'd stand a better chance if we worked out one claim to bed-rock before shifting to another.

P'raps I wasn't used to being talked to so much, p'raps I'd got some superstitions of my own in my build that I didn't know of, anyhow we hung on.

One evening as I turned to the clearing I heard his ax going. He used it still like a new chum, letting the handle slip through his fingers till his palms blistered. I saw him stop dead still and lift his head in the air.

"What is it, Dave?" I said.

"I thought I heard the battery again," he said.

I had a bad streak that day, the gold had been so fine the wind blew it away, so I was irritable.

"Drop that, Dave, there's no battery this side of Hannan's, and never will be.

There's not enough gold round here to stop a tooth."

He didn't answer me. The bush and me were teaching him to be quiet, but all through tea I could see he was listening, and it annoyed me, as there was nothing to listen to. I thought he had forgotten that battery dream of his, and I didn't like it coming back.

I didn't want a crazy man for a mate. It's hard enough to keep sane oneself, without company. Stronger men than this little home-bred clerk have thrown up their hands to the bush. Back East where there's water—sometimes—and the trees are big and friendly, and there's life in the scrub, I've seen men jump up from a camp-fire raving, just because they couldn't stand it.

But in the West here where everything is dead, dry, and thirsty with stunted scrub, hot sand, and bald rock, with dry lakes and salt water you have to dig for, with never a beast or insect and the only birds crows waiting for you to die, it's harder still—and I was afraid for Davie.

But he said nothing, and we rolled over in our blankets with our feet to the fire as usual and slept. Next day I made my find. I knew it before I saw it. Something tingled along my pick handle the moment the point struck the quartz. Gold and I ought to know each other. For twenty years through New Guinea chills, Queensland blacks, and Westralian thirsts I had been looking for it—and we knew each other.

I wasn't at all excited, but just stood looking at that opened outcrop of quartz—and the jeweler's shop inside. I didn't even rush round and pick up sticks to peg out my claim. There was no need for that anyway as I don't believe there was another prospector between us and the southern ocean.

"There will be batteries here all right, Creswick, old man," was what woke me.

It was Baird at my elbow. He never could get over the town habit of calling me by my last name, and he was shaking my hand.

"I'm glad of your luck," said he.

I think I was glad to get angry on purpose for a relief.

"Your luck?" I said. "Our luck, our luck."

Then I cursed him from there to Sydney for thinking I would leave him out of it. Only a town chap used to robbing his mates for a living and calling it business would have thought of it. Didn't I give him my tucker? Didn't I call him my mate? Wasn't that enough?

I believe I'd ha' hit him if he was big enough, but I talked more than I had in a year till we shook hands again. Then we pegged out our acres, and Davie made our Sunday duff that night for tea.

Well, that's how we found the Last Look Mine.

We got our reward claim, of course, in addition to the one we pegged out, and in a week ten thousand men were on the ground. Creswick and Baird were registered partners in the warden's office, Creswick on the ground in charge as resident manager with a full crew to hold it under the regulations, and Baird on his way to Adelaide to float the company, get capital, and buy machinery.

When he came back three months later with five teams tugging through the sand he waved his new straw hat at me and pointing to the wagons, yelled "The battery, Creswick, old man."

We soon had the machinery up, and as we had dug out piles of yellow-streaked quartz by this time, very soon the first "tum-te-te-tum, tum-te-te-tum" of the Last Look battery was startling the crows from the trees.

"I told Mary about my perish," said Davie, "and she was feeling very blue about that time and praying a lot, but I suppose you don't believe that had anything to do with it."

"I'll believe anything," I said, "now."

For it was Baird's luck that made him do that perish, Baird's crazy dream about his battery that brought him to me, and something p'r'aps as crazy in myself that made me agree to stick on to

that barren flat when all my prospecting sense of twenty years said "You're a damn fool, get on."

Baird, in his Assam silk suit the boys used to guy, potted round the machinery shed day and night. He knew no more about mechanics than a kitten does of geology, but in a week he had pumped Dan, the engineer, learned to run it himself, and knew every crank, valve, screw, and nut.

He did all the business, while I directed the shifts. His interest in mining stopped at the battery and what the battery crushed out. He worried if the returns dropped a pennyweight, and when the machinery was stopped to clean up—and the real old quiet came over the bush—he looked unhappy.

But the Last Look was like so many Westralian leads, and soon began to peter out. The jeweler's shop of the first few feet dwindled down to little threads dying out in the quartz, looking mighty sick to an old miner.

The reports home began to cause trouble, shares dropped, we needed capital for development, and it didn't come, and Davie began to worry, just like a town chap.

But I didn't. I knew those reefs, and had done fairly well out of this one, and if I lost, some storekeeper would go dividing mates with me and start me off again.

But Davie had never been broken in, he never had a knock-out, besides I suppose having a wife and girls does make a difference.

One day I dragged him off from where he was moping around the shaft and took him off for a prospect, like old times. We walked about six miles far away from the tents, neither saying a word, with our eyes on the ground as usual, sometimes stopping to feel the weight of a pebble with our toes, when he stopped with his old, listening look.

"It's going again," he said.

"It ain't," I answered. "It ain't worth spending the water on the steam

for that low-grade ore, and Dan wouldn't start her without orders."

I was watching him, and knew he didn't mean our battery.

"You know what I mean," he said. "It's the one I heard before, not ours."

I didn't get angry. I had learned to respect David Baird. He was a man, and I didn't know everything. But I was certain our battery had not been started, and there could be no other.

"Can't you hear it—can't you hear it?" said Davie.

There was only one thing to hear besides Davie's voice—the dead, thick silence of the bush—that silence that is so heavy that sometimes it seems to shriek. We both stood as still as the rocks, Davie listening and me watching him.

"It's stopped now. I heard it, though. I heard it."

The way he said it made me feel queer.

We walked back to camp, and I questioned Dan. The engine fires had been out and not even a hammer raised in the shed. When the men knocked off and tumbled up from the shaft, the foreman told us the quartz had died out of the diorite. We didn't even have a reef now.

Davie looked very white and troubled. I gave orders to start a drive next day to try and catch the underlay, and maybe the reef would make again. We sat down to tea. Davie had drunk one cup, when he rose to his feet.

"There it is again—can't you hear it, can't you?"

He was all wrought up, with his face flushed, and he caught hold of me and shook me as though to make me hear it. I tried to, but heard nothing. He wanted to go out, but I held him. I didn't want the men to see our manager like this. He seemed really crazy.

"Can't you hear it? It's louder than ever?—tum-te-te-tum, tum-te-te-tum—"

In a flash I understood. I was pushing him back into the tent, and I could feel his heart beating hard against my hand, and I remembered what his doctor had said.

"Davie, old man," I said, "it's the beating of your own heart you've been hearing all the time."

I should never have said it. I'll always feel I killed him, for he just slipped his hand under his shirt to feel for himself, tried to smile, and then dropped down dead at my feet.

His battery had stopped for good.

We buried him next day. I picked out the grave where we ended our last walk.

I thought it all out, the weak heart that raced with excitement or exertion, the weak heart that was the plucky heart, that hung on to what it wanted.

We made a coffin out of packing cases, and spread over it our only flag, the Australian red ensign with the Southern Cross, and six men carried him slowly through the bush.

As we came near the grave I heard voices, and saw men running and picking up sticks as they ran. The bearers began to get fidgety. A man passed saying they

had struck a new reef, richer than the Last Look.

There was an excited crowd round the grave where, a few feet below the subsoil, the diggers had struck quartz, and their shovels had scraped the gold till it shone.

"Boys," I said, "I take possession of this for the heirs of David Baird."

We didn't bury him there, of course, but on top of a big ironstone hill, with a twisted tree for his monument, where his wife and daughters came later and heard the batteries of the new mine—the Beating Heart Mine—and I fancied Davie himself was there listening, too.

Some of the boys tried to jump the claim on priority, but the warden at Coolgardie upheld me. Digging a grave was mining, and besides I swore I pegged it out first.

I showed my pegs to prove it—jamtins stuck there in the night when I crawled round like a black feller to do it, to save the Beating Heart for my old mate's family.



SIXTY DAYS AFTER CHRISTMAS

BY J. EDWARD TUFFT

THE little toy dog is without a hind leg, the excelsior sticks through his skin; the little toy soldier is shorn of his head, and the paint is rubbed off of the tin; the little toy drum has been mashed out of shape, and the little toy train is a wreck; the Teddy-bear suffers from many a wound, while the Brownie has broken his neck. The monkey that rapidly climbed up the string with all the crude pride of his race has suffered the loss of his worthy right arm and fifty per cent of his face; the new "model builder" has dwindled away till only three bolts can be found; the blades of the knife have been notched like a saw, and the whistle refuses to sound. The corners are chewed from "The Days of the Kings"; the kite has been lodged in a tree; the drawing-book, daubed from beginning to end, is truly a wonder to see. The ball has rolled off of the face of the earth; the bank is bereft of its door; the wheels have been pried from the case of the watch, and are scattered about on the floor. One handle "just dropped" off of mother's new vase when Willie was home by himself, and father's new meerschaum "just tumbled to bits" when Willie was dusting the shelf!

The Sin That Was His

by Frank L. Packard

Author of "The Miracle Man," "The Iron-Rider," "The Beloved Traitor," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

THREE-ACE ARTIE, otherwise Arthur Leroy, otherwise and really Raymond Chapelle, renegade descendant of one of the oldest families in French Canada, after cleaning out the Kid in Ton-Nugget camp in the Yukon and returning his winnings secretly—the only decent thing he could remember doing—is driven out of camp by the better element, headed by Murdock Shaw. Full of bitterness, he starts for the village of St. Marleau in Lower Canada to give the dying message of Canuck John (his only friend) to his parents. On the train he meets Father Aubert, a young priest who is to be *curé* of the village temporarily. The latter is supposedly killed by a falling branch in a storm as they approach the village. Raymond, who is going by the name of Henri Mentone, goes for help, intercepts the drunken son of excommunicated Mother Blondin in the act of robbing his mother, and in a furious battle the son is killed with his own revolver. Mother Blondin runs for help yelling "Thief!" and "Murder!" and Raymond swiftly changes clothes with the priest in order to escape. Just as he announces himself as "Father Aubert" to a girl with a lantern, he fancies he sees the real priest's body move.

The wounded priest is taken to the presbytery, where Raymond is assisted by Valérie Lafleur, the girl with the lantern, and her mother in making him comfortable. Raymond all but kills him that night to close his lips, but something holds him back. Then, three days later, as he returns from holding a burial service over Théophile Blondin, Valérie tells him that the supposed murderer has recovered his speech.

M. Dupont, assistant chief of the Tournayville police, and Dr. Arnaud examine the man, and Raymond soon discovers that his memory is completely gone. Dupont thinks that this "Henri Mentone" is shamming. After a fight with himself, Raymond decides that the real priest must escape. He goes to Mother Blondin's and fights one Jacques Bourget as the *curé*; then changing to overalls, as "Pierre Desforges," bribes Bourget to drive "Mentone" to the railroad station so he can thus get revenge on *monseigneur le curé* for beating him up.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW HENRI MENTONE RODE.

IT was eight o'clock—the clock was striking in the kitchen—as Raymond entered the *presbytère* again. He stepped briskly to the door of the front room, opened it, and paused. No, before going in there to wait it would be well first to let Mme. Lafleur know that he was back, to establish the fact that it

was *after* his return that the man had escaped, that his evening walk could in no way be connected with what would set St. Marleau by the ears in the morning.

And so he passed on to the dining-room, which Mme. Lafleur used as a sitting-room as well. She was sewing beside the table-lamp.

"Always busy, *madame!*" he called out cheerily from the threshold. "Well, and has Mlle. Valérie returned?"

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"Ah, it is you, *monsieur le curé!*" she exclaimed, dropping her work on her knees. "And did you enjoy your walk? No, Valérie has not come back here yet, though I am sure she must have got back to her uncle's by now. Did you want her for anything, *monsieur le curé*—to write letters? I can go over and tell her."

"But, no—not at all!" said Raymond hastily. He indicated the rear room with an inclination of his head. "And our *pauvre* there?"

Mme. Lafleur's sweet, motherly face grew instantly troubled.

"You can hear him tossing on the bed for yourself, *monsieur le curé*. I have just been in to see him. He has one of his bad moods. He said he wanted nothing except to be left alone. But I think he will soon be quiet. Poor man, he is so weak he will be altogether exhausted—it is only his mind that keeps him restless."

Raymond nodded.

"It is a very sad affair," he said slowly, "a very sad affair!" He lifted a finger and shook it playfully at Mme. Lafleur. "But we must think of you too—eh? Do not work too late, *madame!*"

She answered him seriously. "Only to finish this, *monsieur le curé*. See, it is an altar-cloth—for next Sunday." She held it up. "It is you who work too hard and too late."

It was a cross on a satin background. He stared at it. It had been hidden on her lap before. He had not been thinking of—a cross. For the moment, assured of Henri Mentone's escape, he had been more light of heart than at any time since he had come to St. Marleau; and, for the moment, he had forgotten that he was a meddler with holy things, that he was—a priest of God!

It seemed as though this were being flaunted suddenly now as a jeering reminder before his eyes; and with it he seemed as suddenly to see the chancel, the altar of the church where the cloth was to play its part—and himself kneeling there—and, curse the vividness of it!

he heard his own lips at their sacrilegious work: "*Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas: et circumdabo altare Tuum, Domine.*" (I will wash my hands among the innocent: and I will compass Thine altar, O Lord.)

And so he stared at this cross she held before him, fighting to bring a pleased and approving smile to the lips that fought in turn for their right to snarl a defiant mockery.

"Ah, you like it, *monsieur le curé!*" cried Mme. Lafleur happily. "I am so glad."

Raymond smiled for answer, and went from the room.

In the front room he lighted the lamp upon his desk, and stood there looking down at the two letters that still awaited the signature of—François Aubert. "I will wash my hands among the innocent"—he raised his hands, and they were clenched into hard and knotted fists.

Words! Words! They were only words. And what did their damnable insinuations matter to him? Others might listen devoutly and believe, as he mouthed them in his surplice and stole—but for himself they were no more than the mimicry of sounds issuing from a parrot's beak!

It was absurd, then, that they should affect him at all. He would better laugh and jeer at them, and all this holy entourage with which he cloaked himself, for these things were being made to serve his own ends, were being turned to his own account, and—it was Three-Ace Artie now, and he laughed hoarsely under his breath—for once they were proving of some real and tangible value! Mme. Lafleur, and her cross, and her altar cloth! He laughed again.

Well, while she was busy with her churchly task, that she no doubt fondly believed would hurry her exit through the purgatory to come, he would busy himself a little in getting as speedily as possible out of the purgatory of the present.

These letters now. While he was waiting, and there was an opportunity, he

would sign them. It would be easier to say that he had decided not to make any changes in them after all, than to have new ones written and then have to find another opportunity for signing the latter. He reached for the prayer-book to make a tracing of the signature that was on the fly-leaf—and suddenly drew back his hand, and stood motionless, listening.

From the road came the rumble of wheels. The sound grew louder. The vehicle passed by the *presbytère*, going in the direction of Tournayville. The sound died away.

Still Raymond listened even more intently than before. Jacques Bourget did not own the only horse and wagon in St. Marleau, but Bourget was to turn around a little way down the road, and return to the church.

A minute, two passed, another; and then Raymond caught the sound of a wheel-tire rasping and grinding against the body of a wagon, as though the latter were being turned in a narrow space—then presently the rattle of wheels again, coming back now toward the church. And now by the church he heard the wagon turn in from the road.

Raymond relaxed from his strained attitude of attention. Jacques Bourget, it was quite evident, intended to earn the balance of his money! Well, for a word, then, between Pierre Desforges and Jacques Bourget—pending the time that Mme. Lafleur and her altar-cloth should go to bed. The letters could wait.

He moved stealthily and slowly across the room. Mme. Lafleur must not hear him leaving the house. He would be gone only a minute—just to warn Bourget to keep very quiet, and to satisfy the man that everything was going well. He could strip off his *soutane* and leave it under the porch.

Cautiously he opened the door, an inch at a time that it might not creak, and stepped out into the hall on tiptoe—and listened. Mme. Lafleur's rocking-chair squeaked back and forth reassuringly. She had perhaps had enough of her altar-

cloth for a while. How could one do fine needlework—and rock? And why that fanciful detail to flash across his mind?

And—his face was suddenly set, his lips tight-drawn together—*what was this?* These footsteps that had made no sound in crossing the green, but were quick and heavy upon the porch outside? He drew back upon the threshold of his room.

And then the front door was thrust open, and in the doorway was M. Dupont, the assistant chief of the Tournayville police, and behind him was another man, and behind the man was—yes—it was Valérie!

"*Tiens! 'Cré nom d'un chien!*" clucked M. Dupont. "Ha, *monsieur le curé*, you heard us—eh? But you did not hear us until we were at the door—and a man posted at the back of the house by that window there, eh? No, you did not hear us. Well, we have nipped the little scheme in the bud, eh?"

Dupont *knew!* Raymond's hand tightened on the door jamb—and, as once before, his other hand crept in under his crucifix, and under the breast of his *soutane* to his revolver.

"I do not understand"—he spoke deliberately, gravely. "You speak of a scheme, M. Dupont? I do not understand."

"Ah, you do not understand!"—Dupont's face screwed up into a cryptic smile. "No, of course you do not understand! Well, you will in a moment. But first we will attend to M. Henri Mentone! Now, then, Marchant"—he addressed his companion, and pointed to the rear room—"that room in there, and handcuff him to you. You had better stay where you are, *monsieur le curé*. Come along, Marchant!"

Dupont and his companion ran into Henri Mentone's room. Raymond heard Mme. Lafleur cry out in sudden consternation. It was echoed by a cry in Henri Mentone's voice. But he was looking at Valérie, who had stepped into the hall. She was very pale.

What had she to do with this? What

did it mean? Had she discovered *him*, and—no, Dupont would not have rushed away in that case, but then—

His lips moved:

"You—Valérie?" How very pale she was—and how those dark eyes, deep with something he could not fathom, sought his face, only to be quickly veiled by their long lashes.

"Do not look like that, *monsieur le curé*—as though I had done wrong," she said in a low, hurried tone. "I am sorry for the man too; but the police were to have taken him away to-morrow morning in any case. And if I went for M. Dupont to-night, it was—"

"You went for M. Dupont?"—he repeated her words dazedly, as though he had not heard aright. "It was *you* who brought Dupont here just now—from Tournayville? But—but, I do not understand at all!"

"Valérie! Valérie!"—Mme. Lafleur, pale and excited, rushed to her daughter's side. "Valérie, speak quickly! What are they doing? What does all this mean?"

Valérie's arm stole around her mother.

"I—I was just telling Father Aubert, mother," she said, a little tremulously. "You—you must not be nervous. See, it was like this. You had just taken the man for a little walk about the green this afternoon—you remember? When I came out of the house a few minutes later to join you, I saw what I thought looked like some money sticking out from one end of a folded-up piece of paper that was lying on the grass just at the bottom of the porch steps. I was sure, of course, that it was only a trick my imagination was playing me, but I stooped down and picked it up. It was money, a great deal of money, and there was writing on the paper. I read it, and then I was afraid. It was from some friend of that man's in there, and was a plan for him to make his escape to-night."

"Escape!"—Mme. Lafleur drew closer to her daughter as she glanced apprehensively toward the rear room.

Dupont's voice floated menacingly out into the hall—came a gruff oath from his companion—the sound of a chair overturned—and Henri Mentone's cry, pitched high.

In a curiously futile way Raymond's hand dropped from the breast of his *sou-tane* to his side. Valérie and her mother seemed to be swirling around in circles in the hall before him. He forced himself to speak naturally:

"And then?"

Valérie's eyes were on her mother.

"I did not want to alarm you, mother," she went on rapidly; "and so I told you I was going for a drive. I ran to uncle's house. He was out somewhere. I could go as well as any one, and if Henri Mentone had a friend lurking somewhere in the village there would be nothing to arouse suspicion in a girl driving alone; and, besides, I did not know who this friend might be, and I did not know whom to trust. I told old Adèle that I wanted to go for a drive, and she helped me to harness the horse."

And now, as Raymond listened, those devils that had chuckled and screeched as the lumpy earth had thudded down on the lid of Théophile Blondin's coffin, were at their hell-carols again. It was not just luck, just the unfortunate turn of a card that the man had dropped the money and the note. It was more than that. It seemed to hold a grim, significant premonition—for the future.

Those devils did well to chuckle! Struggle as he would, they had woven their net too cunningly for his escape.

It was those devils who had torn his coat that night in the storm, as he had tried to force his way through the woods. It was *his* coat that Henri Mentone was wearing. He remembered now that the lining of the pocket on the inside had been ripped across. It was those devils who had seen to that—for this—knowing what was to come. A finger seemed to wag with hideous jocularly before his eyes—the finger of fate.

He looked at Valérie. It was nothing

for her to have driven to Tournayville, she had probably done it a hundred times before; but it seemed a little strange that Henri Mentone's possible escape should have been, apparently, so intimate and personal a matter to her.

"You were afraid, you said, Mlle. Valérie," he said slowly. "Afraid—that he would escape?"

She shook her head—and the color mounted suddenly in her face.

"Of what, then?" he asked.

"Of what was in the note," she said in a low voice. "I knew I had time, for nothing was to be done until the *presbytère* was quiet for the night; but the plan then was to—to put you out of the way, and—"

His voice was suddenly hoarse.

"And you were afraid—for me? It was for me that you have done this?"

She did not answer. The color was still in her cheeks—her eyes were lowered.

"The blessed saints!" cried Mme. Lafleur, crossing herself. "The devils! They would do harm to Father Aubert! Well, I am sorry for that man no longer! He—"

They were coming along the hall—Henri Mentone handcuffed to Dupont's companion, and Dupont himself in the rear.

"*Monsieur le curé!*" Henri Mentone called out wildly. "*Monsieur le curé*, do not—"

"Enough! Hold your tongue!" snapped Dupont, giving the man a push past Raymond toward the front door. "Do you appeal to *monsieur le curé* because he has been good to you—or because you intended to knock him on the head to-night? Bah! Hurry him along, Marchand!" Dupont paused before Valérie and her mother. "You will do me a favor, *mesdames*? A very great favor—yes? You will retire instantly to bed—instantly. I have my reasons. Yes, that is right—go at once." He turned to Raymond. "And you, *monsieur le curé*, you will wait for me here, eh? Yes, you will wait. I will be back on the instant."

The hall was empty. In a subconscious sort of way Raymond stepped back into his room, and reaching the desk, stood leaning heavily against it. His brain would tolerate no single coherent thought. Valérie had done this for fear of harm to him, Valérie had—there was Jacques Bourget who if he attempted now to—it was no wonder that Henri Mentone had been restless all evening, knowing that he had lost the note, and not daring to question—the day after tomorrow there was to be a trial at the criminal assizes—Valérie had not met his eyes, but there had been the crimson color in her face, and she had done this to save him—were they still laughing, those hell-devils—were they now engaged in making Valérie love him, and making her torture her soul, because she was so pure that no thought could strike her more cruelly than that love should come to her for a priest?

Ah, his brain was logical now! His hands clenched, and unclenched, and clenched again. Impotent fury was upon him.

If it were true! Damn them to the everlasting place from whence they came! But it was not true! It was but another trick of theirs to make him writhe the more—to make him believe she cared!

A footstep! He looked up. Dupont was back.

"*Tiens!*" he cried. "Well, you have had an escape, *monsieur le curé!* An escape! Yes, you have! But I do not take all the credit. No, I do not. She is a fine girl, that Valérie Lafleur. If she were a man she would have a career—with the police. I would see to it! But you do not know yet what it is all about, *monsieur le curé*, eh?"

"There was a note and money that Mlle. Valérie said she found"—Raymond's voice was steady, composed.

"Zut!" M. Dupont laid his forefinger along the side of his nose impressively. "That is the least of it! There is an accomplice—two of them in it! You would not have thought that, eh, *monsieur le*

curé? No, you would not. Very well, then—listen! I have this Mentone safe, and now I, Dupont, will give this accomplice a little surprise. There will be the two of them at the trial for the murder of Théophile Blondin! The grand jury is still sitting. You understand, *monsieur le curé*? Yes? You are listening?"

"I am listening," said Raymond gravely—and instinctively glanced toward the window. It might still have been Jacques Bourget who had turned down there on the road; or, if not, then the man would be along at any minute. In either case, he must find some way to warn Bourget. "I am listening, M. Dupont," he said again. "You propose to lay a trap for this accomplice?"

"It is already laid," announced M. Dupont complacently. "They will discover with whom they are dealing! I returned at once with Mlle. Valérie. I brought two men with me; but you will observe, *monsieur le curé*, that I did not bring two teams—nothing to arouse suspicion—nothing to indicate that I was about to remove our friend Mentone to-night. It would be a very simple matter to secure a team here when I was ready for it. You see, *monsieur le curé*? Yes, you see. Very well! My plans worked without a hitch.

"Just as we approached the church we met a man named Jacques Bourget driving alone in a buckboard. Nothing could be better. It was excellent. I stopped him. I requisitioned him and his horse and his wagon in the name of the law. I made him turn around, and told him to follow us back here after a few minutes. You see, *monsieur le curé*? Yes, you see. M. Jacques Bourget is now on his way to Tournayville with one of my officers and the prisoner."

Raymond's fingers were playing nonchalantly with the chain of his crucifix. Raymond's face was unmoved. It was really funny, was it not? No wonder those denizens of hell were shrieking with abandoned glee in his ears. This time they had a right to be amused. It was

really very funny—that Jacques Bourget should be driving Henri Mentone away from St. Marleau! Well, now—what?

"You are to be congratulated, M. Dupont," he murmured. "But the accomplice—the other one, who is still at large?"

"Ah, the other one!" said Dupont, and laid his hand confidentially on Raymond's arm. "The other—heh, *mon Dieu, monsieur le curé*, but you wear heavy clothes for the summertime!"

It was the bulk of the sacristan's old coat! There was a smile in Raymond's eyes, a curious smile, as he searched the other's face. One could never be sure of M. Dupont.

"A coat always under my *soutane* in the evenings"—Raymond's voice was tranquil, and he did not withdraw his arm.

"A coat—yes—of course!" Dupont nodded his head. "Why not? Well then, the other—listen. All has been done very quietly. No alarm raised. None at all! I have sent Mme. Lafleur and her daughter to bed. The plan was that the accomplice should come to the back window for Mentone. But they would not make the attempt until late—until all in the village was quiet. That is evident, is it not? Yes, it is evident. Very good! You sleep here in this room, *monsieur le curé*? Yes? Well, you, too, will put out your light and retire at once.

"I will go into Mentone's room, and wait there in the dark for our other friend to come to the window. I will be Henri Mentone. You see? Yes, you see. It is simple, is it not? Yes, it is simple. Before morning I will have the man in a cell alongside of Henri Mentone. Do you see any objections to the plan, *monsieur le curé*?"

"Only that it might prove very dangerous—for you," said Raymond soberly. "If the man, who is certain to be a desperate character, attacked you before you—"

"Dangerous? Bah!" exclaimed M. Dupont. "That is part of my business.

I do not consider that! I have my other officer outside there now by the shed. As soon as the man we are after approaches the window, the officer will leap upon him and overpower him. And now, *monsieur le curé*, to bed—eh? And the light out!"

"At once!" agreed Raymond. "And I wish you every success, M. Dupont! If you need help you can call; or, if you like, I will stay in there with you."

"No, no—not at all!" Dupont moved toward the door. "It is not necessary. Nothing can go wrong. We may have to wait well through the night, and there is no reason why you should remain up, too. *Tiens!* Fancy! Imagine! Did I not tell you that Mentone was a hardened rascal? Two of them! Well, we will see if the second one can remember any better than the first! The light, *monsieur le curé*—do not forget! He will not come while there is a sound or a light about the house!" Dupont waved his hand, and the door closed on him.

Raymond, still leaning against the desk, heard the other walk along the hall, and enter the rear room—and then all was quiet. He leaned over and blew out the lamp. Nothing must be allowed to frustrate M. Dupont's plans!

And then, in the darkness, for a long time Raymond stood there. And thinking of Dupont's dangerous vigil in the other room, he laughed; and thinking of Valérie, he knew a bitter joy; and thinking of Henri Mentone, his hands knotted at his sides, and his face grew strained and drawn.

And after that long time was past he fumbled with his hands outstretched before him like a blind man feeling his way, and flung himself down upon the couch.

CHAPTER XVI.

"FOR THE MURDER OF —"

THEY sat on two benches by themselves, the witnesses in the trial of Henri Mentone for the murder of Théophile Blondin. On one side of Ray-

mond was Valérie, on the other was Mother Blondin; and there was Labbée, the station-agent, and M. Dupont, and Dr. Arnaud.

On the other bench were several of the villagers, and two men Raymond did not know, and another man, a crown surveyor, who had just testified to the difference in time and distance from the station to Mme. Blondin's as between the road and the path—thus establishing for the prosecution the fact that by following the path there had been ample opportunity for the crime to have been committed by one who had left the station after the *curé* had already started toward the village and yet still be discovered by the *curé* on the road near the tavern.

The counsel appointed by the court for the defense had allowed the testimony to go unchallenged. It was obvious. It did not require a crown surveyor to announce the fact—even an urchin from St. Marleau was already aware of it. The villagers, too, had testified. They had testified that Mme. Blondin had come running into the village screaming out that her son had been murdered; and that they had gone back with her to her house and had found the dead body lying on the floor.

It was stiflingly hot in the court-room; and it was crowded to its last available inch of space. There were many there from Tournayville—but there was all of St. Marleau. It was St. Marleau's own and particular affair. Since early morning Raymond had seen and heard vehicles of all descriptions rattling past the *presbytère*, the occupants dressed in their Sunday clothes. It was a *jour de fête*. St. Marleau did not every day have a murder of its own! The fields were deserted; only the very old and the children had not come.

They were not all in the room, for there was not place for them all—those who had not been on hand at the opening of the doors had been obliged to content themselves with gathering outside to derive what satisfaction they could from

their proximity to the fateful events that were transpiring within.

They had at least seen the prisoner led handcuffed from the jail that adjoined the court-house, and had been rewarded to the extent of being able to view with bated breath and intense interest people they had known all their lives, such as Valérie, and Mother Blondin, and the more privileged of their fellows who had been chosen as witnesses, as these latter disappeared inside the building.

Raymond's eyes roved around the court-room, and rested upon the judge upon the bench. His first glance, taken at the moment the judge had entered the room, had brought a certain, quick relief. Far from severity, the white-haired man sitting there in his black gown had a kindly, genial face. He found his first impressions even strengthened now.

His eyes passed on to the crown prosecutor; and here, too, he found cause for reassurance. The man was middle-aged, shrewd-faced, and somewhat domineering. He was crisp, incisive, and had been even unnecessarily blunt and curt in his speech and manner so far—he was not one who would enlist the sympathy of a jury.

On the other hand — Raymond's eyes shifted again, to hold on the clean-cut, smiling face of the prisoner's counsel. Lemoyne, that was the lawyer's name he had been told, was young, pleasant-voiced, magnetic. Raymond experienced a sort of grim admiration, as he looked at this man. No one in the court-room knew better than Lemoyne the hopelessness of his case, and yet he sat there confident, smiling, undisturbed.

Raymond's eyes sought the floor. It was a foregone conclusion that the verdict would be "guilty." There was not a loophole for defense. But they would not hang the man. He clung to that. Lemoyne could at least fight for his life. They would not hang a man who could not remember.

They had beaten him, Raymond, night before last; and at first he had been like

a man stunned with the knowledge that his all was on the table and that the cards in his hand were worthless — and then had come a sort of philosophical calm, the gambler's optimism—the hand was still to be *played*. They would sentence Mentone for life, and—well, there was time enough in a lifetime for another chance.

Somehow — in some way — he did not know how—but in some way he would see that there was another chance. He would not desert the man.

Again he raised his eyes, but this time as though against his will, as though they were impelled and drawn in spite of himself across the room. That was Raymond Chapelle, *alias* Arthur Leroy, *alias* Three-Ace Artie, *alias* Henri Mentone, sitting there in the prisoner's box; at least, that gaunt, thin-faced, haggard man there was dressed in Raymond Chapelle's clothes—and *he*, François Aubert, the priest, the *curé*, in his *soutane*, with his crucifix around his neck, sat here among the witnesses at the trial of Raymond Chapelle, who had killed Théophile Blondin in the fight that night.

One would almost think the man *knew*! How his eyes burned into him, how they tormented and plagued him! They were sad, those eyes, pitiful—they were helpless—they seemed to seek him out as the only *friend* among all these bobbing heads, and these staring, gaping faces.

"Marcien Labbé!" the clerk's voice snapped through the court-room. He was a fussy and important little man, who puffed his cheeks in and out, and clawed at his white side-whiskers.

The station-agent rose from the bench, entered the witness box, and was sworn.

With a few crisp questions the crown prosecutor established the time of the train's arrival, and the fact that the *curé* and another man had got off at the station. The witness explained that the *curé* had started to walk toward the village before the other man appeared on the platform.

"And this other man" — the crown

prosecutor whirled sharply around, and pointed toward Henri Mentone—"do you recognize him as the prisoner at the bar?"

Labbée shook his head.

"It was very dark," he said. "I could not swear to it."

"His general appearance, then? His clothes? They correspond with what you remember of the man?"

"Yes," Labbée answered. "There is no doubt of that."

"And as I understand it, you told the man that *monsieur le curé* had just started a moment before, and that if he went at once he would have company on the walk to the village?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He said that he was not looking for that kind of company."

There was a sudden, curious, restrained movement through the court-room; and, here and there, a villager, with pursed lips, nodded his head. It was quite evident to those from St. Marleau at least that such as Henri Mentone would not care for the company of their *curé*.

"You gave the man directions as to the short cut to the village?"

"Yes."

"You may tell the court and the gentlemen of the jury what was said then."

Labbée, who had at first appeared a little nervous, now pulled down his vest, and looked around him with an air of importance.

"I told him that the path came out at the tavern. When I said 'tavern,' he was at once very interested. I thought then it was because he was glad to know there was a place to stay—it was such a terrible night, you understand? So I told him it was only a name we gave it, and that it was no place for one to go. I told him it was kept by an old woman, who was an *excommuniée*, and who made whisky on the sly, and that her son was—"

"*Misérable!*"—it was Mother Blondin, in a furious scream. Her eyes, under

her matted gray hair, glared fiercely at Labbée.

"Silence!" roared the clerk of the court, leaping to his feet.

Raymond's hand closed over the clenched, bony fist that Mother Blondin had raised, and gently lowered it to her lap.

"He will do you no harm, Mme. Blondin," he whispered reassuringly. "And see, you must be careful, or you will get into serious trouble."

Her hand trembled with passion in his, but she did not draw it away. It was strange that she did not! It was strange that he felt pity for her when so much was at stake, when pity was such a trivial and inconsequent thing! This was a murder trial, a trial for the killing of this woman's son. It was strange that he should be holding the *mother's* hand, and—it was Raymond who drew his hand away. He clasped it over his other one until the knuckles grew white.

"And then?" prompted the crown prosecutor.

"And then, I do not remember how it came about," Labbée continued, "he spoke of Mme. Blondin having money—enough to buy out any one around there. I said it was true, that it was the gossip that she had made a lot, and that she had a well-filled stocking hidden away somewhere."

"*Craçule!*" Mother Blondin's voice, if scarcely audible this time, had lost none of its fury.

The clerk contented himself with a menacing gesture toward his own side-whiskers. The crown prosecutor paid no attention to the interruption.

"Did the man give any reason for coming to St. Marleau?"

"None."

"Did you ask him how long he intended to remain?"

"Yes; he said he didn't know."

"He had a traveling bag with him?"

"Yes."

"This one?"—the crown prosecutor held up Raymond's traveling bag.

"I cannot say," Labbée replied. "It was too dark on the platform."

"Quite so! But it was of a size sufficient, in your opinion, to cause the man inconvenience in carrying it in such a storm, so you offered to have it sent over with *monsieur le curé's* trunk in the morning?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He said he could carry it all right."

"He started off, then, with the bag along the road toward St. Marleau?"

"Yes."

The crown prosecutor glanced inquiringly toward the prisoner's counsel. The latter shook his head.

"You may step down, M. Labbée," directed the crown prosecutor. "Call Mme. Blondin!"

There was a stir in the court-room now. Heads craned forward as the old woman shuffled across the floor to the witness-box. Mother Blondin was quite capable of anything—even of throwing to the ground the holy Book upon which the clerk would swear her!

Mother Blondin, however, did nothing of the sort. She gripped at the edge of the witness-box, mumbling at the clerk, and all the while straining her eyes through her steel-bowed spectacles at the prisoner across the room. And then her lips began to work curiously, her face to grow contorted—and suddenly the court-room was in an uproar. She was shaking both scrawny fists at Henri Mentone, and screaming at the top of her voice.

"That is the man! That is the man!"—her voice became ungovernable, insensate, it rose shrilly, it broke, it rose piercingly again. "That is the man! The law! The law! I demand the law on him! He killed my son! He did it! I tell you, he did it! He—"

Chairs and benches were scraping on the floor. Little cries of nervous terror came from the women; involuntarily men stood up the better to look at both Mother Blondin and the accused. It was a sensation! It was something to talk

about in St. Marleau over the stoves in the coming winter. It was something of which nothing was to be missed.

"Order! Silence! Order!" bawled the clerk.

Valérie had caught at Raymond's sleeve. He did not look at her. He was looking at Henri Mentone—at the look of dumb horror on the man's face—and then at a quite different figure in the prisoner's dock, whose head was bent down until it could scarcely be seen, and whose face was covered by his hands. He tried to force a grim complacency into his soul.

It was absolutely certain that *he* had nothing to fear from the trial. Nothing! The other Henri Mentone, the other priest, was answering for the killing of that night, and—who was this speaking? The crown prosecutor? He had not thought the man could be so suave and gentle.

"Try to calm yourself, Mme. Blondin. You have a perfect right to demand the punishment of the law upon the murderer of your son, and that is what we are here for now, and that is why I want you to tell us just as quietly as possible what happened that night."

"Everybody knows what happened!" she snarled at him. "He killed my son!"

"How did he kill your son?" inquired the crown prosecutor, with a sudden, crafty note of skepticism in his voice. "How do you know he did?"

"I saw him! I tell you I saw him! I heard my son shout '*voleur*' and cry for help"—Mother Blondin's words would not come fast enough now. "I was in the back room. When I opened the door he was fighting my son. He tried to steal my money. Some of it was on the floor. My son cried for help again. I ran and got a stick of wood. My son tried to get his revolver from the *armoire*. This man got it away from him. I struck the man on the head with the wood, then he shot my son, and I ran out for help."

"And you positively identify the prisoner as the man who shot your son?"

"Yes, yes! Have I not told you so often enough?"

"And this"—the crown prosecutor handed her a revolver—"do you identify this?"

"Yes; it was my son's."

"You kept your money in a hiding place, Mme. Blondin, I understand—in a hollow between two of the logs in the wall of the room? Is that so?"

"Yes; it is so!" Mother Blondin's voice grew shrill again. "But I will find a better place for it, if I ever get it back again. The police are as great thieves as that man! They took it from him, and now they keep it from me!"

"It is here, Mme. Blondin," said the lawyer soothingly, opening a large envelope. "It will be returned to you after the trial. How much was there?"

"I know very well how much!" she shrilled out suspiciously. "You cannot cheat me! I know! There were all my savings, years of savings—there was more than five hundred dollars."

A little gasp went around the courtroom. Five hundred dollars! It was a fortune! Gossip, then, had not lied—it had been outdone!

"Now this hiding-place, Mme. Blondin—you had never told any one about it? Not even your son?"

"No."

"It would seem, then, that this man must have known about it in some way. Had you been near it a short time previous to the fight?"

"I told you I had, didn't I? I told M. Dupont all that once." Mother Blondin was growing unmanageable again. "I went there to put some money in not five minutes before I heard my son call for help."

"Your son, then, was not in the room when you went to put this money away?"

"No; of course, he wasn't! I have told that to M. Dupont, too. I heard him coming down-stairs just as I left the room."

"That is all, Mme. Blondin, thank you, unless—" The crown prosecutor turned

again inquiringly toward the counsel for the defense.

Lemoyne rose, and, standing by his chair without approaching the witness-box, took a small penknife from his pocket and held it up.

"Mme. Blondin," he said gently, "will you tell me what I am holding in my hand?"

Mother Blondin squinted, set her glasses further on her nose, and shook her head.

"I do not know," she said.

"You do not see very well, Mme. Blondin?"—sympathetically.

"What is it you have got there—eh? What is it?" she demanded sharply.

Lemoyne restored the penknife to his pocket and smiled.

"It is a penknife, Mme. Blondin—one of my own. An object that any one would recognize—unless one did not see very well. Are you quite sure, Mme. Blondin—quite sure on second thoughts—that you see well enough to identify the prisoner so positively as the man who was fighting with your son?"

The jury, with quick, meaning glances at one another, with a new interest, leaned forward in their seats. There was a tense moment—a sort of bated silence in the courtroom. And then, as Mother Blondin answered, some one tittered audibly, the spell was broken, the point made by the defense swept away, turned even into a weapon against itself.

"If you will give me a stick of wood and come closer, close enough so that I can hit you over the head with it," said Mother Blondin, and cackled viciously, "you will see how well I can see!"

Mme. Blondin stepped down.

And then there came upon Raymond a thrill, a weakness, a quick-tightening of his muscles. The clerk had called his name. He walked mechanically to the witness-stand. It was coming now. He must be on his guard. But he had thought out everything very carefully, and—no, almost before he knew it, he was back in his seat again. He had been

asked only if he had followed the road all the way from the station, to describe how he had found the man, and to identify the prisoner as that man.

He was to be recalled. Lemoyne had not asked him a single question.

"Mlle. Valérie Lafleur!" called the clerk.

"Oh, *monsieur le curé!*" she whispered tremulously. "I—I do not want to go. It—it is such a terrible thing to have to say anything that would help to send a man to death—I—"

"Mlle. Valérie Lafleur!" snapped the clerk. "Will the witness have the goodness to—"

Raymond did not hear her testimony; he knew only that she, too, identified the man as the one she had seen lying unconscious in the road, and that the note she had found was read and placed in evidence—in his ears, like a dull, constant dirge, were those words of hers with which she had left him—"it is such a terrible thing to have to say anything that would help to send a man to death."

Who was it that was sending the man to death? Not he! He had tried to save the man. It wasn't death, anyway. The man's guilt would appear obvious, of course—Lemoyne, the lawyer, could not alter that; but he had still faith in Lemoyne. Lemoyne would make his defense on the man's condition. Lemoyne would come to that.

"My son!" croaked old Mother Blondin fiercely at his side. "My son! What I know, I know! But the law—the law on the man who killed my son!"

"Pull yourself together, you fool!" rasped that inner voice. "Do you want everybody in the court-room staring at you? Listen to the incomparable Dupont telling how clever he was!"

Yes, Dupont was on the stand now. Dupont was testifying to finding the revolver and money in the prisoner's pockets. He verified the amount. Dupont had his case at his fingers' tips, and he sketched it, with an amazing conciseness for M. Dupont, from the moment he had

been notified of the crime up to the time of the attempted escape. He was convinced that, in spite of all precautions, the prisoner's accomplice had taken alarm—since he, Dupont, had sat the night in the room waiting for the unknown's appearance, and neither he nor his deputy, who had remained until daylight hiding in the shed where he could watch the prisoner's window, had seen or heard anything.

On cross-examination he admitted that pressure had been brought to bear upon the prisoner in an effort to trip the man up in his story, but that the prisoner had unswervingly held to the statement that he could remember nothing.

The voices droned through the courtroom. It was Dr. Arnaud now, identifying the man. They were always identifying the man! Why did not he, the saintly *curé* of St. Marleau—no, it was Three-Ace Artie—why did not he, Three-Ace Artie, laugh outright in all their faces? It was not hard to identify the man. He had seen to that very thoroughly, more thoroughly than even he had imagined that night in the storm when all the devils of hell were loosed to shriek around him, and he had changed clothes with a *dead* man.

A dead man—yes, that was the way it should have been! Did he not remember how limply the man's neck and head wagged on his shoulders, and how the body kept falling over in grotesque attitudes instead of helping him to get its clothes off? Only the dead man had come to life!

That was the man over there inside that box with the little wood-turned decorations all around the railing—no, he wouldn't look—but that man there who was the color of soiled chalk, and whose eyes, with the hurt of a dumb beast in them, kept turning constantly in this direction, over here, here where the witnesses sat.

"Dr. Arnaud"—it was the counsel for the defense speaking, and suddenly Raymond was listening with strained atten-

tion—"you have attended the prisoner from the night he was found unconscious in the road until the present time?"

"Yes, *monsieur*."

"You have heard me in cross-examination ask Mlle. Lafleur and M. Dupont if at any time during this period the prisoner, by act, manner, or word, swerved from his statement that he could remember nothing, either of the events of that night, or of prior events in his life. You have heard both of these witnesses testify that he had not done so. I will ask you now if you are in a position to corroborate their testimony?"

"I am," replied Dr. Arnaud. "He has said nothing else, to my knowledge."

"Then, doctor, in your professional capacity, will you kindly tell the court and the gentlemen of the jury whether or not loss of memory could result from a blow upon the head?"

"It could—certainly," stated Dr. Arnaud. "There is no doubt of that, but it depends on the—"

"Just a moment, doctor, if you please; we will come to that"—Lemoyne, as Raymond knew well that Lemoyne himself was fully aware, was treading on thin and perilous ice, but on Lemoyne's lips, as he interrupted, was an engaging smile.

"This loss of memory, now. Will you please help us to understand just what it means? Take a hypothetical case. Could a man, for example, read and write, do arithmetic, say, appear normal in all other ways, and still have lost the memory of his name, his parents, his friends, his home, his previous state?"

"Yes," said Dr. Arnaud. "That is quite true. He might lose the memory of all those things, and still retain everything he has acquired by education."

"That is a medical fact?"

"Yes, certainly, it is a well-known medical fact."

"And is it not also a medical fact, doctor, that this condition has been known to have been caused by a blow—I will not say slight, for that would be misleading—but by a blow that did not even

cause a wound; and I mean by a wound a gash, a cut, or the tearing of the flesh?"

"Yes; that, too, is so."

Lemoyne paused. He looked at Henri Mentone, and suddenly it seemed as though a world of sympathy and pity were in his face. He turned and looked at the jury—at each one of the twelve men, but almost as though he did not see them. There was a mist in his eyes. It was silent again in the court-room. His voice was low and grave as he spoke again.

"Dr. Arnaud, are you prepared to state professionally under oath that it is impossible that the blow received by the prisoner at the bar should have caused him to lose his memory?"

"No." Dr. Arnaud shook his head. "No; I would not say that."

Lemoyne's voice was still grave.

"You admit, then, that it is possible?"

The doctor hesitated.

"Yes," he said. "It is possible, of course."

"That is, all, doctor." Lemoyne sat down.

"One moment!"—the crown prosecutor, crisp, curt, incisive, was on his feet. "Loss of memory is not insanity, doctor?"

"No."

"Is the prisoner, in your professional judgment, insane?"

"No," declared Dr. Arnaud emphatically. "Most certainly not!"

With a nod, the crown prosecutor dismissed the witness.

A buzz, whisperings, ran around the room. Raymond's eyes were fixed somberly on the floor. Relief had come with Lemoyne's climax, but now in Dr. Arnaud's reply to the crown prosecutor he sensed catastrophe.

A sentence for life was the best that could be hoped for, but, but suppose—suppose Lemoyne should fail to secure even that! No, no—they would not hang the man! Even Dr. Arnaud had been forced to admit that he might have lost his memory. That would be strong

enough for any jury, and—they were calling his name again, and he was rising, and walking a second time to the witness-stand.

Surely all these people *knew*. Was not his face set, and white, and drawn? See that ray of sunlight coming in through that far window, and how it did not deviate, but came straight toward him, and lay upon the crucifix on his breast, to draw all eyes upon it, upon that Figure on the Cross, the Man Betrayed.

God, he had not meant this! He had thought the priest already dead that night. It was a dead man he had meant should answer for the killing of that ugly, scared-faced, drunken blackguard, Théophile Blondin. That couldn't do a dead man any harm! It was a dead man, a dead man, a dead man—not this living, breathing one who—

"*Monsieur le curé*," said the crown prosecutor, "you were present in the prisoner's room with M. Dupont and Dr. Arnaud when M. Dupont made a search of the accused's clothing?"

"Yes," Raymond answered.

"Do you identify this revolver as the one taken from the prisoner's pocket?"

What was it Valérie had said—that it was such a terrible thing to have to say anything that would help to send a man to death? But the man was not going to death. It was to be a life sentence—and afterward, after the trial, there would be time to think, and plot, and plan.

"It is the same," said Raymond in a low voice.

"You also saw M. Dupont take a large number of loose bills from the prisoner's pocket?"

"Yes."

"Do you know their amount?"

"No. M. Dupont did not count them at the time."

"There were a great many, however, crumpled in the pocket, as though they had been hastily thrust there?"

"Yes."

Why did that man in the prisoner's dock look at him like that—not in ac-

cusation—it was worse than that—it was in a sorrowful sort of wonder, and a numbed despair. Those devils were laughing in his ears—he was telling the truth!

"That is all, I think, *monsieur le curé*," said the crown prosecutor abruptly.

All! There came a bitter and abysmal irony. Puppets! All were puppets upon a set stage—from the judge on the bench to that dismayed thing yonder who wrung his hands before the imposing majesty of the law. All! That was all, was it—the few words he had said? Who, then, was the author of every word that had been uttered in the room; who, then, had pulled the strings that jerked these automats about in their every movement?

Ah, here was Lemoyne this time, the prisoner's counsel. This time there was to be a cross-examination. Yes, certainly, he would like to help Lemoyne, but Lemoyne must not try to trap him. Lemoyne, too, was a puppet, and therefore Lemoyne could not be expected to know how very true it was that "Henri Mentone" was on trial for his life, and that "Henri Mentone" would fight for that life with any weapon he could grasp, and that Lemoyne would do the prisoner an ill turn to put "Henri Mentone" on the defensive!

Well—he brushed his hand across his forehead, and fixed his eyes steadily on Lemoyne—he was ready for the man.

"*Monsieur le curé*"—Lemoyne had come close to the witness-stand, and Lemoyne's voice was soberly modulated—"monsieur le curé, I have only one question to ask you. You have been with this unfortunate man since the night you found him on the road; you have nursed him night and day as a mother would a child. You have not been long in St. Marleau, but in that time, so I am told, and I can very readily see why, you have come to be called the good young Father Aubert by all your parish.

"*Monsieur le curé*, you have been constantly with this man; for days and nights you have scarcely left his side, and so I

come to the question that, it seems to me, you, of all others, are best qualified to answer."

Lemoyne paused. He had placed his two hands on the edge of the witness-box, and was looking earnestly into Raymond's face.

"*Monsieur le curé*, do you believe that when the prisoner says that he remembers nothing of the events of that night, that he has no recollection of the crime of which he is accused—do you believe, *monsieur le curé*, that he is telling the truth?"

There had been silence in the courtroom before—it was a silence now that seemed to palpitate and throb, a *living* silence. Instinctively the crown prosecutor had made as though to rise from his chair; and then, as if indifferent, had changed his mind. No one else in the room had moved.

Raymond glanced around him. They were waiting—for his answer. The word of the good young Father Aubert would go far. Lemoyne's eyes were pleading mutely—for the one ground of defense, the one chance for his client's life. But Lemoyne did not need to plead—for that! They must not hang the man! They were waiting—for his answer. Still the silence held.

And then Raymond raised his right hand solemnly.

"As God is my judge," he said, "I firmly believe that the man is telling the truth."

Benches creaked, there was the rustle of garments, a sort of unanimous and involuntary long-drawn sigh; and it seemed to Raymond that, as all eyes turned on the prisoner, they held a kindlier and more tolerant light. And then, as he walked back to the other witnesses and took his seat, he heard the crown prosecutor speak—as though disposing of the matter in blunt disdain:

"The prosecution rests."

Valérie laid her hand over his.

"I am so glad—so glad you said that," she whispered.

M. Dupont leaned forward, and clucked his tongue very softly.

"Hah, *monsieur le curé*!" He wagged his head indulgently. "Well, I suppose you could not help it—eh? No, you could not. I have told you before that you are too soft-hearted."

There were two witnesses for the defense—Dr. Arnaud's two fellow practitioners in Tournayville. Their testimony was virtually that of Dr. Arnaud in cross-examination. To each of them the crown prosecutor put the same question—and only one. Was the prisoner insane? Each answered in the negative.

And then, a moment later, Lemoyne, rising to sum up for the defense, walked soberly forward to the jury-box and halted before the twelve men.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began quietly, "you have heard the professional testimony of three doctors, one of them a witness for the prosecution, who all agree that the wound received by the prisoner might result in loss of memory.

"You have heard the testimony of that good man, the *curé* of St. Marleau, who gave his days and nights to the care and nursing of the one whose life, gentlemen, now lies in your hands; you have heard him declare in the most solemn and impressive manner that he believed the prisoner had no remembrance, no recollection, of the night on which the crime was committed. Who should be better able to form an opinion as to whether, as the prosecution pretends, the prisoner is playing a part, or as to whether he is telling the truth, than the one who has been with him from that day to this, and been with him in the most intimate way, more than any one else?"

"And I ask you, too, to weigh well and remember the character of the man, whom his people call the good young Father Aubert, who has so emphatically testified to this effect. His words were not lightly spoken, and they were pure in motive. You have heard other witnesses—all witnesses for the defense, gentlemen—assert that they have seen nothing,

heard nothing, that would indicate that the prisoner was playing a part.

"Gentlemen, every scrap of evidence that has been introduced but goes to substantiate the prisoner's story. Is it possible, do you believe for an instant, that a man could with his first conscious breath assume such a part and, sick and wounded and physically weak, play it through without a slip, or sign, or word, or act that would so much as hint at duplicity?"

"But that is not all. Gentlemen, I will ask you to come with me in thought to a scene that occurred this morning an hour before this trial began, and I would that the gift of words were mine to make you see that scene as I saw it."

He turned and swept out his hand toward the prisoner.

"That man was in his cell, on his knees beside his cot. He did not look up as I entered, and I did not disturb him. We were alone together there. After a few minutes he raised his head. There was agony in his face such as I have never seen before on a human countenance. I spoke to him then. I told him that professional confidence was sacred; I warned him of the peril in which he stood; I pleaded with him to help me save his life, to tell me all, everything, not to tie my hands.

"Gentlemen of the jury, do you know his answer? It was a simple one—and spoken as simply. 'When you came in I was asking God to give me back my memory before it was too late.' That is what he said, gentlemen."

There were tears in Lemoyne's eyes—there were tears in other eyes throughout the court-room. There was a cry in Raymond's heart that went out to Lemoyne. He had not failed! He had not failed! Lemoyne had not failed!

"Gentlemen, he did not know." Lemoyne's voice rose now in impassioned pleading—and he spoke on with that eloquence that is born only of conviction and in the soul. It was the picture of the man's helplessness he drew; the horror of

an innocent man entangled in seemingly incontrovertible evidence, and doomed to a frightful death. He played upon the emotions with a master touch—and as the minutes passed sobs echoed back from every quarter of the room—and in the jury-box men brushed their hands across their eyes.

And at the end he was very quiet again, and his words were very low.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I believe in my soul that this man is innocent. I ask you to believe that he is innocent. I ask you to believe that if he could tell of the events of that night, he would stand before you a martyr to a cruel chain of circumstance. And I ask you to remember the terrible responsibility that rests upon you of passing judgment upon a man, helpless, impotent, and alone, and who, deprived of all means of self-defense, has only you to look to—for his life."

There was buoyancy in Raymond's heart. Lemoyne had not failed! He had been magnificent—triumphant! Even the judge was fumbling awkwardly with the papers on his desk. What did it matter now what the crown prosecutor might say? No one doubted perhaps that the man was guilty, but the spell that Lemoyne had cast would remain, and there would be mercy.

A chill came, a chill like death—if it were not so, what would *he* have to face?

"Gentlemen of the jury"—the crown prosecutor was speaking now—"I should do less than justice to my learned friend if I did not admit that I was affected by his words; but I should also do less than justice to the laws of this land, to you, and to myself if I did not tell you that emotion has no place in the consideration of this case, and that fact alone must be the basis of your verdict.

"I shall not keep you long. I have only a few words to say. The court will instruct you that if the prisoner is sane he is accountable to the law for his crime. We are concerned, not with his loss of memory, though my learned friend has made much of that, but with his sanity.

The court will also instruct you on that point.

"I shall not, therefore, discuss the question of the prisoner's mental condition, except to recall to your minds that the medical testimony has been unanimous in declaring that the accused is not insane; and except to say that in so far as loss of memory is concerned, it is plainly evident that he was in full possession of all his faculties at the time the murder was committed, and that I am personally inclined to share the opinion of his accomplice in crime—a man, gentlemen, whom we may safely presume is even a better judge of the prisoner's character than is the *curé* of St. Marleau—who, from the note you have heard read, has certainly no doubt that the prisoner is not only quite capable of attempting such a deception, but is actually engaged in practising it at the present moment.

"I pass on to the facts brought out by the evidence. On the night of the crime a man answering the general description of the prisoner arrived at the St. Marleau station. It was a night when one, and especially a stranger, would naturally be glad of company on the three-mile walk to the village. The man refused the company of the *curé*.

"Why? He, as it later appears, had very good reasons of his own! It was such a night that it would be all one would care to do to battle against the wind without being hampered by a traveling bag. He refused the station-agent's offer to keep the bag until morning and send it over with the *curé's* trunk.

"Why? It is quite evident, in view of what followed, that he did not expect to be there the next morning!

"He drew from the station-agent, corroborating presumably the information previously obtained either by himself or this unknown accomplice, the statement that Mme. Blondin was believed to have a large sum of money hidden away somewhere in her house. That was the man, gentlemen, who answers the general description of the prisoner. Within ap-

proximately half an hour later Mme. Blondin's house is robbed, and, in an effort to protect his mother's property, Théophile Blondin is shot and killed.

"The question perhaps arises as to how the author of this crime knew the exact hiding-place where the money was kept. But it is not material, inasmuch as we know that he was in a position to be in possession of that knowledge. He might have been peering in through the window when Mme. Blondin, as she testified, was at the hiding-place a few minutes before he broke into her house—or his accomplice, still unapprehended, may already have discovered it.

"And now we pass entirely out of the realm of conjecture. You have heard the testimony of the murdered man's mother, who both saw and participated in the struggle. The man who murdered Théophile Blondin, who was actually seen to commit the act, is identified as the prisoner at the bar. He was struck over the head by Mme. Blondin with a stick of wood, which inflicted a serious wound.

"We can picture him running from the house, after Mme. Blondin rushed out toward the village to give the alarm. He did not, however, get very far—he was himself too badly hurt. He was found lying unconscious on the road a short distance away. Again the identification is complete—and in his pocket is found the motive for the crime, Mme. Blondin's savings—and in his pocket is found the weapon, Théophile Blondin's revolver, with which the murder was committed.

"Gentlemen, I shall not take up your time or the time of this court needlessly. No logical human being could doubt the prisoner's guilt for an instant. I ask you, gentlemen, to return a verdict in accordance with the evidence."

Raymond did not look up as the crown prosecutor sat down. "No logical human being could doubt the prisoner's guilt for an instant." That was true, wasn't it? No human being—save only *one*. Well, he had expected that—it was even a tribute to his own quick wit.

Puppets! Yes, puppets—they were all puppets—all but himself. But if there was guilt, there was ~~also~~ mercy. They would show mercy to a man who could not remember. How many times had he said that to himself! Well, he had been right, hadn't he? He had more reason to believe it now than he had had to believe it before. Lemoyne had, beyond the shadow of a doubt, convinced every one in the court-room that the man could not remember.

"Order! Attention! Silence!" rapped out the clerk pompously.

The judge had turned in his seat to face the jury.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said impassively, "it is my province to instruct you in the law as it applies to this case, and as it applies to the interpretation of the evidence before you. There must be no confusion in your minds as to the question of the prisoner's mental condition. The law does not hold accountable nor does it bring to trial any person who is insane. The law, however, does not recognize loss of memory as insanity.

"There has been no testimony to indicate that the prisoner is insane, or even that he was not in an entirely normal condition of mind at the time the crime was committed; there has been the testimony of three physicians that he is *not* insane. You have therefore but one thing to consider.

"If, from the evidence, you believe that the prisoner killed Théophile Blondin, it is your duty to bring in a verdict of guilty; on the other hand, the prisoner is entitled to the benefit of any reasonable doubt as to his guilt that may exist in your minds. You may retire, gentlemen, for your deliberations."

There was a hurried, whispered consultation among the twelve men in the jury-box. It brought Raymond no surprise that the jury did not leave the room. It brought him no surprise that the figure with the thin, pale face, who was dressed in Raymond Chapelle's clothes, should be ordered to stand and face those twelve

men, and hear the word "guilty" fall from the foreman's lips.

He had known it, every one had known it—it was the judge now, that white-haired, kindly-faced man, upon whom he riveted his attention.

A sentence for life—yes, that was terrible enough—but there was a way—there would be some way in the days to come—he had fastened this crime upon a dead man to save his own life—not on this living one whose eyes now he could not meet across the room, though he could feel them upon him, feel them staring, staring at his naked soul—he would find some way—there would be time, there was all of time in a sentence for life—he would not desert the man, he would—

"Henri Mentone"—the judge was speaking again—"you have been found guilty by a jury of your peers of the murder of one Théophile Blondin. Have you anything to say why the sentence of this court should not be passed upon you?"

There was no answer. What was the man doing? Was he crying? Trembling? Was there that old nameless horror in the face? Were his lips quivering as a child's lips quiver when it is broken-hearted?

Raymond dared not look; dared not look anywhere now save at the white-haired, kindly-faced—yes, he *was* kindly-faced—judge. And then suddenly he found himself swaying weakly, and his shoulder bumped into old Mother Blondin.

Not that—great God—not that! That kindly-faced man was putting a *black hat* on his head, and standing up! Everybody was standing up. He, too, was standing up, only he was not steady on his feet. Was Valérie's hand on his arm in nervous terror, or to support him? Some one was speaking.

The words were throbbing through his brain. Yes, throbbing—throbbing and clanging like hammer-blows—that was why he could not hear them all.

"... the sentence of this court ... place of confinement ... thence to the

place of execution . . . hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may God have mercy on your soul."

And then Raymond looked; and through the solemn silence, and through the doom that hung upon the room, there came a cry. It was Henri Mentone. The man's hands were stretched out, the tears were streaming down his cheeks. And was this mockery—or a joke of hell? Then why did not everybody howl and scream with mirth? The man was calling upon himself to save himself!

No, no—he, Raymond, was going mad to call it mockery or mirth. It was ghastly, horrible, pitiful beyond human understanding, it tore at the heart and the soul—the man was doing what that Figure upon the Cross had once been bade to do—his own name was upon his own lips, he was calling upon himself to save himself. And the voice in agony rang through the room, and people sobbed.

"Father—Father François Aubert, help me, do not leave me! I do not know—I do not understand! Father—*Father François Aubert*, help me—I do not understand!"

And Raymond, groping out behind him, flung his arm across the back of the bench, and, sinking down, his head fell forward, and his face was hidden.

"*Tiens*," said Mother Blondin sullenly, as though forced to admit it against her will, "he has a good heart, even if he is a priest."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COMMON CUP.

IT seemed as though it were an immeasurable span of time since that voice had rung through the court-room. He could hear it yet—he was hearing it always. "Father—Father François Aubert—help me—I do not know—I do not understand!" And sometimes it was pitiful beyond that of any human cry before; and sometimes it was dominant in its ghastly irony.

And yet that was only yesterday, and it was only the afternoon of the next day now.

There were wild roses and wild raspberries growing here along the side of the road, and the smoke wreathed upward from the chimneys of the whitewashed cottages, and the water lapped upon the shore—these things were unchanged, undisturbed, unaffected, untouched. It seemed curiously improper that it should be so—that the sense of values was somehow lost.

He had come from the court-room with his brain in a state of numbed shock, as it were, like a wound that has taken the nerve centers by surprise and had not yet begun to throb. It was instinct, the instinct to fight on, the instinct of self-preservation that had bade him grope his way to Lemoyne, the counsel for the defense.

"I have friends who have money," he had said. "Appeal the case—spare no effort—I will see that the expenses are met."

And after that he had driven back to St. Marleau, and after that again he had lived through a succession of blurred hours, obeying mechanically a sense of routine—he had talked to the villagers, he had eaten supper with Valérie and her mother, he had gone to bed and lain awake, he had said mass in the church that morning—*mass!*

Was it the heat of the day? His brow was feverish. He took off his hat and turned to let the breeze from the river fan his face and head. It was only this afternoon, a little while ago, that he had emerged from that numbed stupor, and now the hurt and the smarting of the wound had come. His brain was clear now—terribly clear. Better that the stupor, which was a kindly thing, had remained!

He had said mass that morning. "*Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas*" (I will wash my hands among the innocent). In the sight of holy God he had said that; at God's holy altar as he had

spoken, symbolizing his words, he had washed his fingers in water.

It had not seemed to matter so much then; he had even mocked cynically at those same words the night that Mme. Lafleur had shown him the altar-cloth—but that other voice, those other words had not been pounding at his ears then, as now. And now they were joined together, his voice and that other voice, his words and those other words: "I will wash my hands among the innocent—hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may God have mercy on your soul."

He stood by the roadside hatless. Through the open doorway of a cottage a few yards away he could see old grandmother Frenier, who was exceedingly poor and deaf and far up in the eighties, contentedly at work with her spinning-wheel; on the shore, where the tide was half out and the sand of the beach had merged into oozy mud, two barefooted children overturned the rocks of such size as were not beyond their strength, laughing gleefully as they captured the sea-worms, whose nippers could pinch with no little degree of ferocity, and with which, later, no doubt, they intended to fish for tommy-cods; also there was sunlight, and sparkling water, and some one driving along the road toward him in a buckboard; and he could hear Bouchard in the carpenter-shop alternately hammering and whistling—the whistling was out of tune, it was true, but what it lacked in melody it made up in spirit.

This was reality, this was actuality, happiness and peace, and contentment and serenity; and he, standing there on the road, was an integral part of the scene—no painter would leave out the village *curé* standing hatless on the road—the village *curé* would, indeed, stand out as the central figure, like a benediction upon all the rest.

Why, then, should he not in truth, as in semblance, enter into this scene of tranquillity? Where did they come from, those words that were so foreign to all about him, where had they found birth,

and why were they seared into his brain so that he could not banish them? Surely they were, but an hallucination—he had only to look around him to find evidence of that.

Surely they had no basis in fact, those words—"hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may God have mercy on your soul."

They seemed to fade slowly away, old grandmother Frenier and her spinning-wheel, and the children puddling in the mud, and the buckboard coming along the road; and he no longer heard the whistling from the carpenter-shop—it seemed to fade out like a picture on a moving-picture screen, while another crept there, at first intangible and undefined, to supplant the first.

It was somber and dark, and a narrow space, and a shadowy human form. Then there came a ray of light—sunlight, only the gladness and the brightness were not in the sunlight because it had first to pass through an opening where there were iron bars. But the ray of light, nevertheless, grew stronger, and the picture took form. There were bare walls, and bare floors, and a narrow cot—and it was a cell.

And the shadowy form became more distinct—it was a man, whose back was turned, who stood at the end of the cell, and whose hands were each clutched around one of the iron bars, and who seemed to be striving to thrust his head out into the sunlight, for his head, too, was pressed close against the iron bars. And there was something horribly familiar in the figure.

And then the head turned slowly, and the sunlight, that was robbed of its warmth and its freedom, slanted upon a pale cheek, and ashen lips, and eyes that were torture-burned; and the face was the face of the man who was—to be hanged by the neck until he was dead, and upon whose soul that voice had implored the mercy of God.

Raymond stared at his hat which was lying in the road. How had it got there? He did not remember that he had dropped

it. He had been holding it in his hand. This buckboard that was approaching would run over it. He stooped and picked it up, and mechanically began to brush away the dust.

That figure in the buckboard seemed to be familiar, too. Yes, of course, it was M. Dupont, the assistant chief of the Tournayville police—the man who always answered his own questions and clucked with his tongue as though he were some animal learning to talk.

But Dupont mattered little now. It was not old grandmother Frenier and her spinning-wheel that was reality—it was Father François Aubert in the condemned cell of the Tournayville jail, waiting to be hanged by the neck until he was dead for the murder of Théophile Blondin.

Raymond put on his hat with forced calmness. He must settle this with himself; he could not afford to lose his poise—either mentally or physically. He laid no claim to the heroic or to the quixotic—he did not want to die in the stead of that man, or in the stead of any other man. Neither was he a coward—no man had ever called Raymond Chapelle, or Arthur Leroy, or Three-Ace Artie, a coward. He was a gambler—and there was still a chance.

There was the appeal. He was gambling now for *both* their lives. He would lay down no hand, he would fight as he had always fought—to the end—while a chance remained.

There was still a chance—the appeal. It was long odds, he knew that—but it was a chance—and he was a gambler. He could only wait now for the turn of the final card. He would not tolerate consideration beyond that point—not if with all his might he could force his brain to leave that “afterward” alone.

It was weeks yet to the date set for the execution of Henri Mentone for the murder of Théophile Blondin, and it would be weeks yet before the appeal was acted upon. He could only wait now—*here*—here in St. Marleau, as the good young Father Aubert. He could not run

away or disappear like a pitiful coward, until that appeal had had its answer.

Afterward—no, there was no afterward—not *now*! Now it was the ubiquitous M. Dupont, the short little man with the sharp features and the roving black eyes that glanced everywhere at once, who was calling to him and clambering out of the buckboard.

“You are surprised to see me, eh, *mon-sieur le curé*?” clucked M. Dupont. “Yes, you are surprised. Very well! But what would you say if I told you that I had come to arrest *monsieur le curé* of St. Marleau? Eh—what would you say to that?”

Arrest! Curious, the cold, calculating alertness that swept upon him at that word!

What had happened? Was the game up—now? Curious how he measured appraisingly—and almost contemptuously—the physique of this man before him.

And then, under his breath, he snarled an oath at the other. Curse M. Dupont and his perverted sense of humor! It was not the first time Dupont had startled him. The man was grinning broadly—like an ape!

“I imagine,” said Raymond placidly, “that what I would say, M. Dupont, would be to inquire as to the nature of the charge against *monsieur le curé* of St. Marleau.”

“And I,” said M. Dupont, “would at once reply—assault. Assault—bodily harm and injury—assault upon the person of one Jacques Bourget.”

“Oh!” said Raymond—and smiled. “Yes, I believe there have been rumors of it in the village, M. Dupont. Several have spoken to me about it, and I even understand that the *curé* of St. Marleau pleads guilty.”

And then M. Dupont puckered up his face and burst into a guffaw.

“*Cré nom*—ah, pardon—but it is excusable, one bad little word, eh? Yes, it is excusable. But imagine—fancy! The good young Father Aubert—and Jacques Bourget! I would have liked to have seen

it. Yes, I would! *Monsieur le curé*, you do not look it, but you are magnificent. *Monsieur le curé*, I lift my hat to you. *Bon Dieu*—ah, pardon again—but you were not gentle with Jacques Bourget, whom one would think could eat you alive! And you told me nothing about it—you are modest, eh? Yes, you are modest.”

“I have had no opportunity to be modest,” Raymond laughed, “since, so I understand, Bourget encountered some of the villagers on his way home that afternoon, and gave me a reputation that, to say the least of it, left me with little to be modest about.”

“I believe you,” chuckled M. Dupont. “I believe you, *monsieur le curé*, since I, too, got the story from Jacques Bourget himself. He desired to swear out a warrant for your arrest. You have not seen Bourget for several days, eh, *monsieur le curé*? No, you have not seen him. But I know very well how to handle such as he! He will swear out no warrant. On the contrary, he would very gladly feed out of anybody’s hand just now—even yours, *monsieur le curé*. I have the brave Jacques Bourget in jail at the present moment.”

“In jail?” Raymond’s puzzled frown was genuine. “But—”

“Wait a minute, *monsieur le curé*”—Dupont’s smile was suddenly gone. He tapped Raymond impressively on the shoulder. “There is more in this than appears on the surface, *monsieur le curé*. You see? Yes, you see. Well, then, listen! He talked no longer of a warrant when I threatened him with arrest for getting whisky at Mother Blondin’s. I had him frightened.

“And that brings us to Mother Blondin, which is one of the reasons I am here this afternoon—but we will return to Mother Blondin’s case in a moment.

“You remember that I caught Bourget driving on the road the night Mentone tried to escape, and that I made him drive the prisoner to Tournayville? Yes, you remember. Very good! This morning

his wife comes to Tournayville to say that he has not been seen since that night. We make a search. He is not hard to find. He has been drunk ever since—we find him in a room over one of the saloons just beginning to get sober again. Also we find that since that night Bourget, who never has any money, has spent a great deal of money.

“Where did Bourget get that money? You begin to see, eh, *monsieur le curé*? Yes, you begin to see.”

M. Dupont laid his forefinger sagaciously along the side of his nose.

“Very good! I begin to question. I am instantly suspicious. Bourget is sullen and morose. He talks only of a warrant against you. I seize upon that story again to threaten him with if he does not tell where he got the money. I put him in jail, where I shall keep him for two or three days to teach him a lesson.

“It is another Bourget, a very lamblike Bourget, *monsieur le curé*, before I am through; though I have to promise him immunity for turning king’s evidence. Do you see what is coming, *monsieur le curé*? No, you do not. Most certainly you do not! Very well, then, listen!

“I am on the track of Mentone’s accomplice. Bourget was in the plot. It was Bourget who was to drive Mentone away that night—to the St. Eustace station—after they had throttled you. Now, *monsieur le curé*”—M. Dupont’s eyes were afire; M. Dupont assumed an attitude; M. Dupont’s arms wrapped themselves in a fold upon his breast—“now, *monsieur le curé*, what do you say to that?”

“It is amazing!”—Raymond’s hands, palms outward, were lifted in a gesture eminently clerical. “Amazing! I can hardly credit it. Bourget, then, knows who this accomplice is?”

“No—*tonnerre*—that is the bad luck of it!” scowled Dupont. “But there is also good luck in it. I am on the scent. I am on the trail. I shall succeed, shall I not? Yes, certainly, I shall succeed! Very well, then, listen!

"It was dark that night. The man went to Bourget's house and called Bourget outside. Bourget could not see what the fellow looked like. He gave Bourget fifty dollars, and promised still another fifty as soon as Bourget had Mentone in the wagon. And it was on your account, *monsieur le curé*, that he went to Bourget."

Raymond was incredulous.

"On mine?" he gasped.

"Yes, certainly—on yours. It was to offer Bourget a chance to revenge himself on you. You see, eh? Yes, you see. He said he had heard of what you had done to Bourget. Very well! We have only to analyze that a little, and instantly we have a clue. You see where that brings us, eh, *monsieur le curé*?"

Raymond shook his head.

"No; I must confess, I don't," he said.

"Hah! No? *Tiens!*" ejaculated Dupont almost pityingly. "It is easy to be seen, *monsieur le curé*, that you would make a very poor police officer, and an equally poor criminal—the law would have its fingers on you while you were wondering what to do. It is so, is it not? Yes, it is so. You are much better as a priest. As a priest—I pay you the compliment, *monsieur le curé*—you are incomparable. Very good! Listen, then! I will explain.

"The fellow said he had heard of your fight with Bourget. Splendid! Excellent! He must then have heard it from *some one*. Therefore he has been seen in the neighborhood by some one besides Bourget. Who is that 'some one' who has talked with a stranger, and who can very likely tell us what that stranger looks like, where Bourget cannot? I do not say that it is certain, but that it is likely. It may not have been so dark when he talked to this 'some one'—eh? In any case it is enough to go on.

"Now you see, *monsieur le curé*, why I am here—I shall begin to question everybody; and for your part, *monsieur le curé*, you can do a great deal in letting the parish know what we are after."

Raymond looked at Dupont with admiration. Dupont had set himself another "vigil"!

"Without doubt, M. Dupont!" he assured the other heartily. "Certainly, I will do my utmost to help you. I will have a notice posted on the church door."

"Good!" cried Dupont with a gratified smile. "And now another matter—and one that will afford you satisfaction, *monsieur le curé*. In a day or so I will see that Mother Blondin is the source of no more trouble in St. Marleau—or anywhere else?"

"Mother Blondin?" repeated Raymond—and now he was suddenly conscious that he was in some way genuinely disturbed.

"Yes," said Dupont. "Twice in the past we have searched her place. We knew she sold whisky. But she was too sharp for us—and those who bought knew how to keep their mouths shut. But with Bourget as a witness it is different, eh? You see? Yes, you see. She is a fester, a sore. We will clean up the place; we will put her in jail. The air around here will be the sweeter for it, and—"

"No," said Raymond soberly. "No, M. Dupont"—his hands reached out and clasped on the man's shoulders. He knew now what was disturbing him. It was that surge of pity for the proscribed old woman, that sense of miserable distress that he had experienced more than once before.

The scene of that morning, when she had clung to the palings of the fence outside the graveyard while they shoveled the earth upon the coffin of her son, rose vividly before him. And it was he again who was bringing more trouble upon her now through his dealings with Jacques Bourget.

Yes, it was pity—and more. It was a swiftly matured, but none the less determined, resolve to protect her.

"No, M. Dupont, I beg of you"—he shook his head gravely—"no, you will not do that."

"Heh? No? And why not?" demanded Dupont in jerky astonishment.

"I thought you would ask for nothing better. She is already an *excommuniée*, and—"

"And she has suffered enough," said Raymond earnestly. "It would seem that sorrow and misery had been the only life she had ever known. She is too old a woman now to have her home taken from her and herself sent to jail. She is none too well as it is. It would kill her. A little sympathy, a little kindness, M. Dupont—it will succeed far better."

"Bah!" sniffed Dupont. "A little sympathy, a little kindness! And will that stop the whisky-selling that the law demands—shall be stopped, *monsieur le curé*?"

"I will guarantee that," said Raymond calmly.

"You?" Dupont clucked vigorously. "You will stop that? And besides other things, do you perform miracles, *monsieur le curé*? How will you do that?"

"You must leave it to me"—Raymond's hands tightened in friendly fashion on Dupont's shoulders—"I will guarantee it. If that is a miracle, I will attempt it. If I do not succeed I will tell you so, and then you will do as you see fit. You will agree, will you not, M. Dupont? And I shall be deeply grateful to you."

Dupont shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"I have to tell you again that you are too soft-hearted, *monsieur le curé*. Yes, there is no other name for it—soft-hearted. And you will be made a fool of. I warn you! Well—very well! Try it, if you like. I give you a week. If at the end of a week—well, you understand? Yes, you understand."

"I understand," said Raymond; and, with a final clap on the other's shoulders, he dropped his hands. "And I am of the impression that *monsieur le curé* is not the only one who is soft-hearted."

"Bah! Nothing of the sort! Nothing of the sort!" snorted Dupont in a sort of pleased repudiation as he climbed back into the buckboard. "It is only to open your eyes." He picked up the reins. "I

shall spend the rest of the day around here on that other business. Do not forget about the notice, *monsieur le curé*."

"It shall be posted on the church door this afternoon," Raymond promised.

He stood for a moment looking after the man as he drove off; then, turning abruptly, he walked rapidly along in the opposite direction, and, reaching the station road that led past old Mother Blondin's door, began to climb the hill.

Yes, decidedly he would post a notice on the church door for M. Dupont! If in any way he could aid him to lay hands on this accomplice of Henri Mentone, he—the derision that had crept to his lips faded away and into the dark eyes came a sudden weariness.

There was humor doubtless in the picture of M. Dupont buttonholing every one he met, as he flitted indefatigably all over the country in pursuit of his mare's nest; but somehow he, Raymond, was not in the mood for laughter—for even grim laughter. There was a man waiting to be hanged; and, besides, there was Valérie.

There was Valérie, who, come what would, some day, near or distant, whether he escaped or not, must inevitably know him finally for the man he was. Not that it would change her life; it was only those devils of hell who tried to insinuate that she cared; but to him it was a thought pregnant with an agony so great that he could pray—he who had thought never to bow the knee in sincerity to God—yes, that he could pray without mimicry, without that hideous profanation upon his lips, that he might not stand despised, a contemptuous thing, a sacrilegious profligate, in the eyes of the woman whom he loved.

He clenched his hands. He was not logical. If he cared so much as that, why—no, here was specious argument! He was logical. His love for Valérie, great as it might be, great as it was, in the final analysis was hopeless.

If he escaped, he could never return to the village, he could never return to her—to be recognized as the good young Father

Aubert; if he did not escape, if he—no, that was the afterward, he would not consent to think of that—only if he did not escape there would be more than the hopelessness of this love to concern him; there would be—death.

Yes, he was logical. The love he knew for Valérie was but to mock him, to tantalize him with a vista of what, under other circumstances, he might have claimed by right of his manhood's franchise—if he had not, years ago, from a boy almost, bartered away that franchise to the devil.

Well, was he to whimper now, and turn, like a craven thing, from the bitter dregs that, while the cup was still full and the dregs yet afar off, he had held in bald contempt and incredulous railery? The dregs were here now. They were not bitter on his lips, but in his soul; they were bitter almost beyond endurance—but was he to whimper?

Yes, he was logical. All else might be hopeless; but it was not hopeless that he might save his life. He had a right to fight for that, and he would fight for it as any man would fight—to the last.

He had climbed the hill now, and was approaching old Mother Blondin's door. Logical! Yes, he was logical—but life was not all logic. In the abstract logic was doubtless a panacea that was all-embracing; in the presence of the actual it shrank back a futile thing from the dull gnawing of the heart and the misery of the soul.

Perhaps that was why he was standing here at Mother Blondin's door now. God knew she was miserable enough; God knew that the dregs, too, were now at her lips! They were not unlike—old Mother Blondin and himself. Theirs was a common cup.

He knocked upon the door—and, as he knocked, he caught sight of the old woman's shriveled face peering at him none too pleasantly from the window. Then her step, sullen and reluctant, crossed the floor, and she held the door open grudgingly a little way; and the

space thus open she blocked completely with her body.

"What do you want?" she demanded sourly.

"I would like to come in, Mme. Blondin," Raymond answered pleasantly. "I would like to have a little talk with you."

"Well, you can't come in!" she snarled defiantly. "I don't want to talk to you, and I don't want you coming here! It is true I may have been fool enough to say you had a good heart, but I want nothing to do with you. You are perhaps not as bad as some of them; but you are all full of tricks with your smirking mouths! No priest would come here if he were not up to something. I am an *excommuniée*—eh? Well, I am satisfied!" Her voice was beginning to rise shrilly. "I don't know what you want, and I don't want to know; but you can't wheedle around me just because Jacques Bourget knocked me down, and you—"

"It is on account of Jacques Bourget that I want to speak to you," Raymond interposed soothingly. "Bourget has been locked up in jail."

She stared at him, blinking viciously behind her glasses.

"Ah! I thought so! That is like the whole tribe of you. You had him arrested!"

"No," said Raymond. "I did not have him arrested. You remember the note that was read out at the trial, Mme. Blondin—about the attempted escape of Henri Mentone?"

"Well?" Mme. Blondin's animosity at the sight of a *soutane* was forgotten for the moment in a newly aroused interest. "Well—what of it? I remember. What of it?"

"It seems," said Raymond, "that M. Dupont has discovered that Bourget was to help in the escape."

Mme. Blondin cackled suddenly in unholy mirth.

"And so they arrested him, eh? Well, I am glad! Do you hear? I am glad! I hope they wring his neck for him! He would help the murderer of my son to

escape, would he? I hope they hang him with the other!"

"They will not hang him," Raymond replied. "He has given all the information in his possession to the police, and he is to go free. But it was because of that afternoon here that he was persuaded to help in the escape. He expected to revenge himself on me; and that story, too, Mme. Blondin, is now known to the police. Bourget has confessed to buying whisky here, and is ready to testify as a witness against you."

"*Le maudit!*" Mother Blondin's voice rose in a virulent scream. "I will tear his eyes out! Do you hear? I will show Jacques Bourget what he will get for telling on me! He has robbed me! He never pays! Well, he will pay for this! He will pay for this! I will find some one who will cut his tongue out! They are not all like Jacques Bourget; they are—"

"You do not quite understand, Mme. Blondin," Raymond interrupted gravely. "It is not with Jacques Bourget that you are concerned now; it is with the police. M. Dupont came to the village this afternoon—indeed, he is here now. He said he had evidence enough at last to close up this place and put you in jail, and that he was going to do so. You are in a very serious situation, Mme. Blondin." He made as though to step forward. "Will you not let me come in, as a friend, and talk it over with you, and see what we can do?"

Mother Blondin's hand was like a claw in its bony thinness, as it gripped hard over the edge of the door.

"No, you will not come in!" she shouted. "You, or your Dupont, or your police—you will not come in! Eh—they will take my home from me—all I've got—they will put me in jail"—she was twisting her head about in a sort of pitiful inventory of her surroundings.

"They have been trying to run me out of St. Marleau for a long time—all the good people, the saintly people—you and your hypocrites. They cross to the other

side of the road to get out of old Mother Blondin's way! And so at last, between you, you have beaten an old woman, who has no one to protect her since you have killed her son!

"It is a victory—eh? Go tell them to ring the church bells—go tell them—go tell them! And on Sunday, eh, you will have something to preach about! It will make a fine sermon!"

Somehow there came a lump into Raymond's throat. There was something fine in this wretched, tattered, unkempt figure before him—something of the indomitable, of the unconquerable in her spirit, misapplied though it was. Her voice fought bravely to hold its defiant, infuriated ring, to show no sign of the misery that had stolen into the dim old eyes, and was quivering on the wrinkled lips, but the voice had broken—once almost in a sob.

"No, no, Mme. Blondin"—he reached out his hand impulsively to lay it over the one that was clutched upon the door—"you must not—"

She snatched her hand away—and suddenly thrust her head through the partially open doorway into his face.

"It is not Bourget, it is not Jacques Bourget!" she cried fiercely. "It is you! If you had not come that afternoon when you had no business to come, this would not have happened. It is you, who—"

"That is true," said Raymond quietly. "And that is why I am here now. I have had a talk with M. Dupont, and he will give you another chance."

She still held her face close to his.

"I do not believe you!" she flung out furiously. "I do not believe you! It is some trick you are trying to play! I know Dupont! I know him! He would give no one a chance if he could help it! I have been too much for him for a long time, and if he had evidence against me now he would give me not a minute to sell any more of—of what he thinks I sell here!"

"That also is true," said Raymond as quietly as before. "He could not very well permit you to go on breaking the

law if he could prevent it. But in exchange for his promise I have given him a pledge that you will not sell any more whisky."

She straightened up—and stared at him half in amazement, half in crafty suspicion.

"Ah, then, so it is *you*, and not Dupont, who is going to stop it—eh?" she exclaimed, with a shrill laugh. "And how do you intend to do it—eh? How do you intend to do it? Tell me that!"

"I think it will be very simple," said Raymond—and his dark eyes, full of a kindly sympathy, looked into hers. "To save your home, and you, I have pledged myself to M. Dupont that this will stop, and so—well, Mme. Blondin, and so I have come to put you upon your honor to make good my pledge."

She craned her head forward again to peer into his face. She looked at him for a long minute without a word. Her lips alternately tightened and were tremulous. The fingers of her hand plucked at the door's edge. And then she threw back her head in a quavering, jeering laugh.

"Ha, ha! Old Mother Blondin upon her *honor*—think of that! You, a smooth-tongued priest—and me, an *excommuniée*! Ha, ha! Think of that! And what did Dupont say, eh—what did Dupont say?"

"He said what I know is not true," said Raymond simply. "He said you would make a fool of me."

"Ah, he said that!"—she jerked her head forward again sharply. "Well, Dupont is wrong, and you are right. I would not do that, because I could not—since you have already made one of yourself! Ha, ha! Old Mother Blondin upon her *honor*! Ha, ha! It is a long while since I have heard that—and from a priest—ha, ha! How could any one make a fool of a fool?"

Her voice was high-pitched again, fighting for its defiance; but somehow, where she strove to infuse venom, there seemed only a pathetic wistfulness instead.

"And so you would trust old Mother Blondin—eh? Well"—she slammed the

door suddenly in his face, and her voice came muffled through the panels—"well, you are a fool!"

The bolt within rasped into place—and Raymond, smiling, turned away and began to descend the hill. Mother Blondin for the moment was in the grip of a sullen pride that bade her rise in arms against this fresh outlook on life; but Mother Blondin would close and bolt yet another door, unless he was very much mistaken—the rear door, and in the faces of her erstwhile and unhallowed clientele!

Yes, he had pity for the old woman who had no kin now, and who had no friends. Pity? He owed her more than that! So then—there came a sudden thought—so then, why not? He would not long be *curé* of St. Marleau, but while he was—well, he was the *curé* of St. Marleau! He could not remove the ban of excommunication, that was beyond the authority of a mere *curé*, it would require at least *monseigneur* the bishop to do that; but he could remove the ban—of ostracism!

Yes, decidedly, the good young Father Aubert could do that! He knew that there were no degrees of excommunication, but that the rigors of the ancient punishment had been softened by custom and usage, and that the villagers of their own accord had drawn more and more aloof from Mother Blondin. It would, therefore, not be very difficult.

He quickened his step, and, reaching the bottom of the hill, made his way at once toward the carpenter shop. He could see Mme. Bouchard hoeing in the little garden patch between the road and the front of the shop. It was she that he now desired to see.

"*Tiens! Bon jour, Mme. Bouchard!*" he called out to her as he approached. "I am come a penitent! I did not deserve your bread. I am sure that you are vexed with me! But I have not seen you since to thank you."

She came forward to where Raymond now leaned upon the fence.

"Oh, *monseigneur le curé!*" she exclaimed laughingly. "How can you say such

things? Fancy! The idea! Vexed with you? It is only if you really liked it?"

"H-m!" drawled Raymond teasingly, pretending to deliberate. "When do you bake again, Mme. Bouchard?"

She laughed outright now.

"To-morrow, *monsieur le curé*—and I shall see that you are not forgotten."

"It is a long way off—to-morrow," said Raymond mournfully; and then, with a quick smile: "But only one loaf this time, Mme. Bouchard, instead of two."

"Nonsense!" she returned. "It is a great pleasure. And what are two little loaves?"

"A great deal," said Raymond, suddenly serious. "A very great deal, Mme. Bouchard; and especially so if you send one of the two loaves to some one else that I know of."

"Some one else?"

"Yes," said Raymond. "To Mother Blondin."

"To—Mother Blondin!" Mme. Bouchard stared in utter amazement. "But—but, *monsieur le curé*, you are not in earnest! She—she is an *excommuniée*, and we—we do not—"

"I think it would make her very glad," said Raymond softly. "And Mother Blondin I think has—"

It was on the tip of his tongue to say that Mother Blondin was not likely now to sell any more whisky at the tavern, but he checked himself. Mother Blondin must be left to tell of that herself. If he spread such a tale, she would be more likely than not to rebel at a situation which she would probably conceive was being thrust forcibly down her throat; and, in pure spite at what she might also conceive to be a self-preening and boastful spirit on his part for his superiority over her, sell all the more, no matter what the consequences to herself. And so he changed what he was about to say.

"And Mother Blondin, I think, has known but little gladness in her life."

"But—but, *monsieur le curé*," she gasped, "what would the neighbors say?"

"I hope," said Raymond, "that they

would say they too would send her loaves—of kindness."

Mme. Bouchard leaned heavily upon her hoe. "It is many years, *monsieur le curé*, since almost I was a little girl, that any one has willingly had anything to do with the old woman on the hill."

"Yes," said Raymond gently. "And will you think of that, Mme. Bouchard, when you bake to-morrow—the many years—and the few that are left—for the old woman on the hill?"

The tears had sprung to Mme. Bouchard's eyes. He left her standing there, leaning on the hoe.

He went on along the road toward the *presbytère*. It had been a strange afternoon—an illogical one, an imaginary one almost. It seemed to have been a jumble of complexities and incongruities and unrealities—there was the man who was to be hanged by the neck until he was dead; and a M. Dupont who, through a very natural deduction and not because he was a fool—for M. Dupont was very far from a fool—was now vainly engaged like a dog circling around in a wild effort to catch his own tail; and there was Mother Blondin, who had another window to gaze from; and Mme. Bouchard, who had still another.

Yes, it had been a strange afternoon—only now that a voice in the court-room was beginning to ring in his ears again. "*Father—Father François Aubert—help me—I do not understand!*"

And the gnawing was at his soul again, and again his hat was lifted from his head to cool his fevered brow.

As he reached the church there came to him the sound of organ notes, and instead of crossing to the *presbytère* he stepped softly inside to listen—it would be Valérie—Valérie and Gauthier Beau-lieu, the altar-boy, probably, who often pumped the organ for her when she was at practice.

But as he stepped inside the music ceased, and instead he heard them talking in the gallery. In the stillness of the church their voices came to him distinctly.

"Valérie"—yes, that was the boy's voice—"Valérie, why do they call him the good young Father Aubert?"

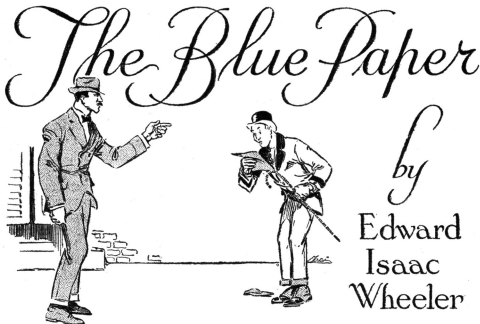
"Such a question!" Valérie laughed. "Why do you call him that yourself?"

"I don't—any more. Not after what I saw at mass this morning."

Raymond drew his breath in sharply.

What was this? What was this that Gauthier Beaulieu, the altar-boy, had seen at mass? He had fooled the boy—the boy could not have seen anything! He drew back, opening the door cautiously. They were coming down the stairs now—but he must hear—hear what it was that Gauthier Beaulieu had seen.

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.



FOR years "Skinny Jimmy" Kelly, the tout, was distinguished from others of the numerous Kelly clan by his title. In due course another Jimmy Kelly attained sufficient prominence in racing circles to entitle him also to a distinctive appellation.

"Kid" Blazer, official "monniker" inventor, hesitated not at all over the parity of names. The original "Skinny," now so chunky as to be a parody on his name, became, in the Kid's double-pointed descriptive slang, "One-time Skinny"; while the latest addition to the racing Kellys was nominated "Skinny th' Two-th," or "Tooth"; the latter being generally accepted by reason of prominent rabbit-teeth.

After the winter meeting at Emeryville, the two Skinnys, together with numerous other "hustlers," followed the ponies to The Meadows at Seattle; to Victoria, and finally to Minora Park, near Vancouver, B. C. Here the touts reaped a harvest. It was the first season of international race meets in the northern cities, and "form" cut very little ice among the patrons. Weird tips made favorites by sheer weight of moneys wagered, of horses that figured absolutely "nowhere" on their past performances.

That Vancouver meeting was a paradise for touts; something to dream about for all but one—One-time Skinny Jimmy Kelly; he could not pick a winner. Casting about for the "jinx" that worked

against him, his mind's eye lighted on Skinny th' Tooth. Not since Th' Tooth's advent had things "broke" for One-time; hence, down with Th' Tooth, obviously.

Returning from the track on an early car, One-time became aware of two men conversing in the seat ahead. It being the tout's pleasing policy to overhear any and all communications not meant for his ear, he feigned sleep in order to hear as much as possible. One of the men he recognized as Henry Carver, owner of a small "string" of horses of which Dalbro, a consistent handicap performer, was the head.

Mr. Carver was bitterly complaining to his friend, a stranger to Kelly, of a leakage in his stable crew which had started a heavy play on O'Hara a few days before. From what he heard, Kelly gathered that Carver had delayed in the paddock until post-time, in the belief that no one knew O'Hara was in form.

On finally entering the betting-ring, he discovered that O'Hara had been played down from ten to one to six to five. Carver would not back his horse at the short odds, and had had the pleasure (?) of watching the gelding win handily without a dollar of stable money on him.

"Now the tip is out on Dalbro for the handicap to-morrow," continued the owner, while One-time strained every faculty so as to miss nothing. "George Hart told me as soon as the entries were out last Monday that a certain clique intend to play him heavily. They've been told he is ready. I have been 'prepping' him on the country roads with my son 'up' to try and keep him under cover, but it's useless. Somehow, the word has gone forth, and they're ready to bet thousands.

"Mr. Adams"—he lowered his voice until ears less acute than Kelly's would have missed the rest—"unless they change their plans I'll teach those bribing sharpshooters a lesson. Dalbro is *short*! He needed one more good work-out to

put him on edge; and—he *did not get it*! If he is in front an eighth of a mile from the wire to-morrow, I'll eat that poisonous vest of yours!"

One-time Skinny had heard enough. He dropped off the car at the next corner and walked into town.

— II.

ONE-TIME sat in a booth behind the Fraser River Bar, planning a scheme whereby he could use the information he had acquired. Dalbro would be played; a bookmaker armed with the knowledge that the horse was "short" could safely "take off" all the money offered, and—why not? Quickly he considered the layers of odds with whom he was acquainted.

Humphreys? No; Johnny was square. Jones? No! Not Jones by a long shot! Jones would try to get even for that Chuckawala deal. Grant? Well, Grant might if—Morgan! That's th' guy! Of course, Morgan.

Morgan was the latest addition to the group of "States" bookmakers. Morgan would play fair—fifty-fifty. Only last Sunday, on a trip through the Inside Passage, the "bookie" had hinted he would listen to "info" of a sure nature. Kelly had Morgan's address in his note-book.

He was interrupted in his search through its pages by footsteps in the hallway leading from the rear entrance. A stockily-built man strode through to the bar, favoring One-time with a hard stare, even looking back over his shoulder as he passed through the curtained doorway.

"Huh!" grunted Skinny. "Yuh big hink! Yuh oughta know me next time yuh meet me in m' airypine," and returned to his quest of the elusive address. So engrossed was he that he did not notice a soldierly-looking man who parted the curtains and stood for a full minute sizing him up. This man hesitated as though about to speak, then swung on his heel and walked out, nodding to the bartender. A moment later One-time appeared in the bar.

"Lo, Jack," he growled. "Who was

that mark that just went out? He gunned me like I owed 'im."

"Don't yuh know him?" queried Jack White, a native son from Frisco, naturally mistaking the party referred to. "That's Donahue, sergeant of 'dicks.' From th' way he give yuh th' 'O-O' I thought he was gointa slip yuh a 'blue paper.'"

"Yeah!" jeered One-time. "Fat chanct these cockney bobbys have t' hand *me* one o' them passports! I stand purty well here, m'self. That's a fine crack fer yuh t' make."

The bartender reddened angrily.

"Don't yuh fool yuhrself, Mister Jimmy Fresh!" he shouted, as Kelly headed for the door. "Any time yuh figger these bulls as dummys yuh're way off. They—" The door slammed and he left the rest unsaid.

One-time Skinny Kelly plodded morosely on his way to the hotel where Morgan resided. In the back of his brain the words "blue paper—blue paper" adapted themselves to the rhythm of his footsteps. Suppose he should get one? It would be just his luck!

The "blue paper" is an institution peculiarly Vancouveresque. When a vagrant, parasite, or what other petty offender of public morals becomes particularly obnoxious, officers do not arrest him. Instead, notice is served on such party that his presence in the city after the departure of the first boat will be construed as a contempt of the law; and that certain punishment will follow.

That notice is always written on blue paper; hence the cognomen. The document is clearly worded and means just that. From it there is no appeal. If the one so warned remains, he "stands a pinch"; and so certain of a conviction is the officer of any British possession before an arrest is made that recipients of the "blue paper" invariably heed its warning.

III.

ONE-TIME'S route led him past the central police station. As the lights of it

hove in sight he was seized with an inspiration. A certain inspector of police was an inveterate race follower. Kelly had, in a flash of his old-time form, "sent the official in" for three winning bets. For matters of policy, he had refused a "cut" of the winnings, but now decided to avail himself of the promise to return the favor at any time possible. He turned boldly in at the door and asked for Inspector Hayden.

"Cap," he said, as he took the proffered chair, "I come t' do yuh a favor an' t' get one off yuh at th' same time. What d'yuh like in th' handicap t'-morrow?"

"Why," answered the puzzled inspector, "I rather fancied Dalbro. I've been informed that he has a good bit of a chance."

"I thought so," affirmed Kelly with deep satisfaction. "Now, cap, yuh just lay offa that hoss. He's a good hoss—when he's ready—but he's short. He won't go th' route. I know what I'm talkin' about! Keep this under yuhr hat an' save yuhrself a bet. If yuh wanta play th' race, set it in on April Maid. She'll walk in!"

"Now, I'll tell yuh what yuh can do fer me. They's a feller here by th' same name as mine—Jimmy Kelly. I've had a lot o' trouble on account o' him. He's a tout—a common hustler; don't pretend t' do nothin' but lay suckers. He's coppin' big dough offa these English Johnnies up here, but he can't light on a track in th' States—ruled off everywhere."

"Now, I ain't no snitch, cap; but this guy's got my goat. Friends o' mine in business hear o' Jimmy Kelly th' tout, an' when I meet 'em they freeze up on me. He's makin' it awful mis'able fer me, but I don't want him pinched, an' I don't want nobody t' know I hollered; but can't yuh fix it some way so's he'll get a p'lite invite t' slip back over th' border?"

"Mr. Kelly," said Inspector Hayden, smiling through his mustache, "I appreciate your tip about Dalbro, and I shall

heed it. As to the thorn in your flesh, I think I may safely promise that on the departure of the Princess Victoria tomorrow night your namesake will be listed among her passengers. If you will please excuse me now, I have some routine matters to dispose of. Good night, Mr. Kelly; and drop in any time."

Highly elated over his Machiavellian cunning in ridding himself of his jinx and making a better friend of the powerful inspector at one and the same stroke, One-time Skinny Jimmy Kelly blithely wended his way in search of Morgan, the bookmaker. Him he found in his rooms preparing to retire for the night. One-time related the conversation he had overheard.

"Now," he said in conclusion, "this hoss is gointa be played—heavy. Yuh oughta take off a *chunk* to th' race. I'll go Hen' Carver one better. If Dalbro wins, I'll agree t' eat *him*! Tack, jock, an' all!"

Morgan pondered over the proposition for a few moments.

"I intended to favor the horse," he said finally. "But if what you say is true—" He subjected Kelly to a searching scrutiny, which that worthy stood without flinching. One-time was so absolutely convinced that Carver had spoken truthfully that even his shifty eyes flashed assurance. Morgan was satisfied.

"No; yuh ain't lyin', Kell'," he decided. "I'll take a chance. With th' stallion out of it, April Maid should romp. I'll hold her out an' lay against th' horse.

"But if yuh're givin' me th' wrong steer," he added darkly, "Kelly, I'll—I'll—well, don't *do* it, that's all!

"I'll see yuh at th' track, an' if every-thing goes right, you be at th' Moosehead Billiard Hall at six o'clock. I'll send yuhrs by my outside man, Harding. Know him?"

"No. I don't know any of yuhr crew," objected One-time, who hated to trust any one. "Why can't I meet yuh here an' get it m'self?"

"Nothin' doin'!" Morgan was brutally frank. "I don't want t' make yuh sore, but I can't afford t' have yuh comin' to my room. You're rep ain't th' best, yuh know. I'll point Harding out to yuh to-morrow, an' he'll slip yuh yuhr bit in a plain envelope. An' remember, I'll give yuh an even cut of what I clear to th' race. I don't want yuh t' look me up to ask any questions. Beat it now, an' walk down-stairs. S'long."

IV.

A BEAUTIFUL day and a minor stake, the Saturday handicap brought out a record crowd for the day's racing. Bank holiday released hundreds, and betting was never brisker in the big ring.

Solid members of the nobility rubbed elbows with or were jostled by cockney clerks in the swirl of the crowded human maelstrom. Monocles were in evidence on the lawn and in the club-house; frock coats and high hats contrasted with screaming checks in the paddock and betting-ring. It was a typical holiday crowd of cosmopolitan Vancouver.

Opening odds on the fourth race disclosed April Maid as the favorite at seven to five, with Dalbro a second choice at two and a half to one. From the first there was a concerted play on the stallion that forced the odds on him down until he ruled an equal choice with the Maid at two to one. And still the Dalbro money poured in. It seemed as though every patron of the races from millionaire bank president to humblest "punter" or "piker" meant to have a monetary interest in the horse's sure win.

Morgan laid the best odds in the ring from opening until starting-bell. As the bettors struggled before his book fairly raining money upon him, he spent some anxious moments wondering if the tout had not merely taken a chance. He was a gamester, however; and when the barrier sprung in front of the grandstand for the mile dash Morgan wiped his slate of the longest odds in the betting-ring—

Dalbro, four to five. The book stood to clear over six thousand to the race if Dalbro finished second or worse.

One-time Skinny made no attempt to "lay a client" to the race. From the first posting of odds, he stood in the crowd before Morgan's book, watching every bet accepted. His rather sluggish mind soon lost track of the increasing total of moneys wagered, and although he could see that Morgan intended to fulfil his agreement, he stuck doggedly to his post. The only time he left his position was to rush across the ring and bet five dollars on April Maid at three to one.

Morgan gritted his teeth as he spotted One-time on guard.

"That guy's so crooked himself," he muttered, "that he wouldn't trust ol' Saint Peter t' pick him out a halo. He'd want th' key to th' prop-room fer fear th' ol' boy'd slip 'im a phony. It galls me t' mingle with that sport; but 'all pleasures have their pains,' as th' monkey said when he kissed th' porkypine."

True to Carver's prediction, Dalbro was short. As he began to drop behind the challenging April Maid at the eighth pole, Morgan motioned One-time to step up on the block beside him.

"Know Donohue, th' dick?" asked Morgan. "See him standin' by th' fence talkin' to a feller?"

Kelly looked in the indicated direction and discovered the man who had aroused his ire by staring so closely as he passed through the Fraser River the night before, talking to a tall, soldierly-looking party. Jimmy nodded.

"That's my outside man, Harding, talkin' to Donohue. He's th' one I'll send to-night with yuhr bit. Be near th' door in th' Moosehead at six sharp. Away now!"

V.

A GROUP of touts sat in the rear of the Moosehead billiard parlors a little before six o'clock that evening. They were listening to Skinny Jimmy Kelly, Th' Tooth, who was "making a roar."

"I don't understand this at all," complained Th' Tooth bitterly. "I've put Williams on't a dozen good things at th' meetin', an' he never fell down on me before. Course, this is th' first time he's made any such bet as two grand; but gee! I'm sure entitled to a split on *this* one. If I don't stop 'im he's bound t' lose it on Dalbro. He fell hard fer th' tip on th' stud, an' I had t' talk an arm offa m'self t' get 'im t' switch t' April Maid. I didn't give Dalbro a chance; I thought th' Maid was *in*!"

"Yuh was lucky, at that," stated Th' Salt Lake Kid. "Dalbro's th' best hoss. If he's ready, he beats April Maid."

"He didn't beat 'er, though," argued Th' Tooth. "They's a lot o' difference between losin' two grand an' winnin' six, an' I'm sure entitled t' mine! I didn't think nothin' of it when he told me t' be here at five-thirty 'cause he's dated me out like this before; but when yuh tell me, Lake, that he's framin' t' take th' Princess Vic' out, an' he ain't here yet, I'm beginnin' t' think they's somethin' fishy about it. We'll wait here a few minutes longer, an' if he don't show up by then we'll go down to th' wharf. I ain't gointa let three thousan' bucks get away without a beef! Sure yuh ain't mistook about him blowin', Lake?"

"I tell yuh," swore Th' Lake positively, "I saw him checkin' his keester at th' hotel 'desk! I was clost enough t' ring his watch if I'd wanted t'. His wiff's with 'im, too. Oh, he's *goin'* all right. Yuh're stung if yuh don't nail 'im at th' dock. Hello! Who's that grouch, One-time, pointin' out in this bunch?"

Near the door, One-time, Skinny had waited for half an hour. At five minutes to six the door opened, admitting the stockily-built man whom he believed was Donohue, the detective. The tout's heart gave a joyful bound as the man stood glancing over the players and loungers.

"I bet Donohue's lookin' fer Th' Tooth now," chortled One-time. Sure enough, the official-looking person crossed over to him and said brusquely:

"I'm looking for Jimmy Kelly. Is he about?" at the same time half-removing a blue envelope from his inside pocket.

"That's him, standin' up back there," said One-time, pointing. "Th' one with th' buck teeth." The stranger hesitated.

"Are you sure?" he asked sharply. "I don't want to make a mistake."

"Yuh ain't makin' no mistake!" growled One-time. "That's th' guy *yuh* want. If yuh don't believe me, ask *him*."

Through the door glass he saw the look of surprise on Th' Tooth's face as he separated from the group; with gloating eyes he watched the blue envelope change hands, and then—he turned at a touch on his arm. He was confronted by the tall man Morgan had pointed out.

"Your name's Jimmy Kelly," affirmed, rather than questioned, the soldierly-appearing person.

"Yuhr some good little guesser," acknowledged One-time Skinny in good humor. "Yuh're talkin' t' th' right party."

"Well, Mr. Kelly, I've got a little present for you." He produced a blue envelope which he handed to the tout.

"Yeah; I've been expectin' it." Kelly reached for the envelope. "Why, what's this; a check?" he asked in surprise as he felt its thin proportions.

The tall man smiled sardonically.

"I guess not a check, exactly," he said. "Unless it's on your activities. You know what the 'blue paper' means, don't you? It don't mean that you leave town tomorrow, or next week; but that you take the boat in less than twenty minutes. Will you take it yourself, or shall I provide an escort for you?"

"*Blue paper!*" yelled the amazed One-time. "Blue— Say! Hold on, Harding. What 're yuh tryin' to do, kid me?"

"I'm not 'kidding' you," sternly answered the other. "Also, my name's not Harding, or Smith, but Donohue, sergeant of detectives. Get along now! You've no time to waste." He shoved Kelly in the direction of the docks.

"Don't get so gay!" blustered One-time. "They's a mistake here. *I* ain't

goin' ta take no steamer; not t'-night ner no time till I get good an' ready. I-got business here. Yuh, don't chase *me*, Mr. Wisenheimer! I'll see th' cap, an'—"

"You'll see him in the States if you do," interrupted the officer. "Here, Harrigan!" he called a man standing by the curb. "Take this fellow down to the dock. *See that he takes the boat!* I won't go to the trouble of appearing in court—not for the likes of you!" He gave the protesting "hustler" a start. "I'll send your things to you when you write for them. Hurry, Harrigan!"

Back in the Mobsehead bar an hour later a group of hilarious "hustlers" were seated at a table surrounded by several buckets of ice with the red tops of plethoric bottles protruding therefrom. They were celebrating Th' Tooth's killing. Th' Tooth himself, mellowed by the wine, was swearing eternal love for Williams:

"I knewed that Williams was a right guy! I never doubted 'im fer a minute; but I wisht I'd 'a' gone down t' th' boat t' see 'im off. I *would* 'a' gone if Th' Lake 'd 'a' waited fer me."

Attention was distracted by the hurried entrance of the Salt Lake Kid.

"Hey! Fellers!" he panted as he joined the group. "Who d' yuh think gotta 'blue one'? One-time Skinny! Yessir! A big dick come draggin' 'im down just as they pulled in th' gang-plank. Holy mackinaw! But he was th' ravin' maniac! Serves th' grouchy stiff right. He's been—"

"Say, *listen!*" interrupted Frenchy. "That guy ain't such a rotten gink. That messenger Williams sent t' yuh, Tooth, tried t' slip One-time th' taller, an' he wouldn't take it. I seen it come off! He pointed *yuh* out, when he could 'a' copped th' kale hisself, an' yuh'd never 'a' been th' wiser with Williams away!"

"Blue paper!" mused Skinny th' Tooth, voicing his thoughts. "That's a hot one! D'yuh know, fellers, when that plug slipped me th' love-wrapper, I thought fer a minute I'd got one m'self!"

The Argus Pheasant

by John Charles Beecham

Author of "Leah," "That Affair of Dahjangsari," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

KOYALA, daughter of Leveque, a French trader, and a native Borneo woman, has been brought up as white at the mission school. When she learns of her birth her horror and bitterness turn to hatred of the white race, and she becomes the leader of her mother's people—pirates and head-hunters—who call her Bintang Burung, the Argus Pheasant, and on account of her white skin and education look up to her with superstitious awe. Under her leadership lawlessness has thriven until the Dutch government is desperate. His Excellency Van Schouten, by advice of his secretary, Sachsen, appoints Peter Gross, the American mate of the ship *Coryander*, resident at Bulungan. Peter, after some hesitation, decides to accept, but is warned by Sachsen that Koyala is a beauty and a siren, who has already got the acting-resident, Mynheer Muller, entirely under her influence. Peter decides to take with him only twenty-five picked men. He has little difficulty in getting these, but finds it hard to get a leader to suit him. Finally an old sea captain tells him of an ex-American army officer, Captain Carver. Gross finds Carver exactly the man he wants and hires him. They arrive in Bulungan, where Peter goes ashore alone and interviews Muller and Van Slyck, the military commander.

Peter calls a meeting of all the native chiefs, *rajas*, *et cetera*, and tries to win their confidence. Under the secret influence of Ah Sing, however, the worst element gets control, and Peter is about to be killed when Koyala interferes and turns the tide in Gross's favor, most of the chiefs swearing blood brotherhood. Captain Carver, however, is not convinced of Koyala's good faith, and that same night a poisoned arrow narrowly misses Peter. A Sea Dyak is killed and the Hill Dyaks are accused. Accompanied only by Paddy Rouse, Peter goes to make inquiry into the murder, and proves to the satisfaction of the chief that the man was killed by his own brother, who wanted his wife, and not by a Hill Dyak. A tribal war is averted, but Ah Sing with his gang of pirates turn up and claim Peter as his legitimate prey. Koyala again interferes, insisting that the resident be allowed to depart in peace. He does so, but later Ah Sing treacherously waylays his boat and captures both he and Paddy. They are taken ashore to be held for: torture, but the native Borneans seeing Paddy's red hair believe him a child of the sun, and refuse to allow him to be killed. Peter, however, they do not care about, and he is taken away by the Chinamen. In the temporary absence of Ah Sing, Captain Carver, warned through Koyala, effects a rescue of Peter, but Paddy has disappeared. They follow the tracks of his captors until a scout appears with the news that a big band of natives is just before them.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FIGHT ON THE BEACH.

CARVER gave a low-voiced command to halt, and enjoined his men to see to their weapons. As he ran his eyes over his company and saw

their dogged jaws and alert, watchful faces, devoid of any trace of nervousness and excitability, his face lit with a quiet satisfaction. These men would fight—they were veterans who knew how to fight. and they had a motive—Paddy was a universal favorite.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for February 3.

A Dyak plunged through the bush toward Jahi and jabbered excitedly. Jahi cried:

"China boy, him go proa, three-four sampun."

"Lead the way," Carver cried. Peter Gross translated.

"Double time," the captain shouted, as Jahi and his tribesmen plunged through the bush at a pace too swift for even Peter Gross.

In less than three minutes they reached the edge of the jungle, back about fifty yards from the coral beach. Four hundred yards from shore a proa was being loaded from several large sampuns. Some distance out to sea, near the horizon, was another proa.

A sharp command from Carver kept his men from rushing out on the beach in their ardor. In a moment or two every rifle in the company was covering the sampuns. But there were sharp eyes and ears on board the proa as well as on shore, and a cry of alarm was given from the deck. The Chinese in the sampuns leaped upward. At the same moment Carver gave the command to fire.

Fully twenty Chinamen on the two sampuns floating on the leeward side of the proa made the leap to her deck, and of these eleven fell back, so deadly was the fire. Only two of them dropped into the boats, the others falling into the sea. Equipped with the latest type of magazine rifle, Carver's irregulars continued pumping lead into the proa. Several Chinamen thrust rifles over the rail and attempted a reply, but when one dropped back with a bullet through his forehead and another with a creased skull, they desisted and took refuge behind the ship's steel-jacketed rail. Perceiving that the proa was armored against rifle-fire, Carver ordered all but six of his command to cease firing, the six making things sufficiently hot to keep the pirates from replying.

The sampuns were sinking. Built of skins placed around a bamboo frame, they had been badly cut by the first discharge. As one of them lowered to the gunwale,

those on shore could see a wounded Chinaman, scarce able to crawl, beg his companions to throw him a rope. A coil of hemp shot over the deck of the vessel. The pirate reached for it, but at that moment the sampun went down and left him swirling in the water. A dorsal fin cut the surface close by, there was a little flurry, and the pirate disappeared.

Peter Gross made his way through the bush toward Carver. The latter was watching the proa with an anxious frown.

"They've got a steel jacket on her," he declared in answer to the resident's question. "So long as they don't show themselves we can't touch them. We couldn't go out to them in sampuns if we had them; they'd sink us."

"Concentrate your fire on the water-line," Peter Gross suggested. "The armor doesn't probably reach very low, and some of these proas are poorly built."

"A good idea!" Carver bellowed the order.

The fire was concentrated at the stern, where the ship rode highest. That those on board became instantly aware of the maneuver was evident from the fact that a pirate, hideously attired with a belt of human hands, leaned over the bow to slash at the hempen cable with his kris. He gave two cuts when he straightened spasmodically and tumbled headlong into the sea. He did not appear above the surface again.

"Een," John Vander Esse, a member of the crew, murmured happily, refilling his magazine. "Now for *nummer twee*." (Number two.)

But the kris had been whetted to a keen edge. A gust of wind filled the proa's cumbersome triangular sail and drove her forward. The weakened cable snapped. The ship lunged and half rolled into the trough of the waves; then the steersmen, sheltered in their box, gained control and swung it about.

"Gif heem all you got," Anderson, a big Scandinavian and particularly fond of Rouse, yelled. The concentrated fire of the twenty-five rifles emptied, refilled, and

emptied as fast as human hands could perform these operations, centered on the stern of the ship. Even sturdy teak could not resist that battering. The proa had not gone a hundred yards before it was seen that the stern was settling. Suddenly it came about and headed for the shore.

There was a shrill yell from Jahi's Dyaks. Carver shouted a hoarse order to Jahi, who dashed away with his hillmen to the point where the ship was about to ground. The rifle-fire kept on undiminished while Carver led his men in short dashes along the edge of the bush to the same spot. The proa was nearing the beach when a white flag was hoisted on her deck. Carver instantly gave the order to cease firing, but kept his men hidden. The proa lunged on. A hundred feet from the shore it struck on a shelf of coral. The sound of tearing planking was distinctly audible above the roar of the waves. The water about the ship seemed to be fairly alive with fins.

"We will accept their surrender," Peter Gross said to Carver, stepping forward. "I shall tell them to send a boat ashore."

"Don't expose yourself, Mr. Gross," Carver cried anxiously. Peter Gross stepped into the shelter of a coconut-palm and shouted the Malay for "Ahoy."

A Chinaman appeared at the bow. His dress and trappings showed that he was a *juragan*.

"Lower a boat and come ashore. But leave your guns behind," Peter Gross ordered.

The *juragan* cried that there was no boat aboard. Peter Gross conferred with Jahi who had hastened toward them to find out what the conference meant. When the resident told him that there was to be no more killing, his disappointment was evident.

"They have killed my people without mercy," he objected. "They will cut my brother's throat to-morrow and hang his skull in their lodges."

It was necessary to use diplomacy to avoid mortally offending his ally, the resident saw.

"It is not the white man's way to kill when the fight is over," he said. "Moreover, we will hold them as hostages for our son, whom Djath has blessed."

Jahi nodded dubiously. "My brother's word is good," he said. "There is a creek near by. Maybe my boys find him sampun."

"Go, my brother," Peter Gross directed. "Come back as soon as possible."

Jahi vanished into the bush. A half-hour later Peter Gross made out a small sampun, paddled by two Dyaks, approaching from the south. That the Dyaks were none too confident was apparent from the anxious glances that they shot at the proa, already showing signs of breaking up.

Peter Gross shouted again to the *juragan*, and instructed him that every man leaving the proa must stand on the rail, in full sight of those on shore, and show that he was weaponless before descending into the sampun. The *juragan* consented.

It required five trips to the doomed ship before all on board were taken off. There were thirty-seven in all—eleven sailors and the rest off-scourings of the Java and Celebes seas, whose only vocation was cutting throats. They glared at their captors like tigers; it was more than evident that practically all of them except the *juragan* fully expected to meet the same fate that they meted out to every one who fell into their hands, and were prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

"A nasty crew," Carver remarked to Peter Gross as the pirates were herded on the beach under the rifles of his company. "Every man's expecting to be handed the same dose as he's handed some poor devil. I wonder why they didn't sink with their ship?"

Peter Gross did not stop to explain, although he knew the reason why—the Mohammedan's horror of having his corpse pass into the belly of a shark.

"We've got to tie them up and make a chain gang of them," Carver said thoughtfully. "I wouldn't dare go through the jungle with that crew any other way."

Peter Gross was looking at Jahi, in earnest conversation with several of his tribesmen. He perceived that the hill chief had all he could do to restrain his people from falling on the pirates, long their oppressors.

"I will speak to them," he announced quietly. He stepped forward.

"Servants of Ah Sing," he shouted in an authoritative tone. All eyes were instantly focused on him.

"Servants of Ah Sing," he repeated, "the fortunes of war have this day made you my captives. You must go with me to Bulungan. If you will not go, you shall die here."

A simultaneous movement affected the pirates. They clustered more closely together, fiercely defiant, and stared with the fatalistic indifference of Oriental peoples into the barrels of the rifles aimed at them.

"You've all heard of me," Peter Gross resumed. "You know that the voice of Peter Gross speaks truth, that lies do not come from his mouth." He glanced at a Chinaman on the outskirts of the crowd. "Speak, Wong Ling Lo, you sailed with me on the Daisy Deane, is it not so?"

Wong Ling Lo was now the center of attention. Each of the pirates awaited his reply with breathless expectancy. Peter Gross's calm assurance, his candor and simplicity was already stirring in them a hope that in other moments they would have deemed utterly fantastic, contrary to all nature—a hope that this white man might be different from other men, might possess that attribute so utterly incomprehensible to their dark minds—mercy.

"Peter Gross, him no lie," was Wong Ling Lo's unemotional admission.

"You have heard what Wong Ling Lo says," Peter Gross cried. "Now, listen to what I say. You shall go back with me to Bulungan; alive, if you are willing; dead, if you are not. At Bulungan each one of you shall have a fair trial. Every man who can prove that his hand has not taken life shall be sentenced to three years on the coffee plantations for his robberies,

then he shall be set free and provided with a farm of his own to till so that he may redeem himself. Every man who has taken human life in the service of Ah Sing shall die."

He paused to see the effect of his announcement. The owl-like faces turned toward him were wholly enigmatic, but the intensity of each man's gaze revealed to Peter Gross the measure of their interest.

"I cannot take you along the trail without binding you," he said. "Your oaths are worthless; I must use the power I have over you. Therefore you will now remember the promise I have made you, and submit yourselves to be bound. *Juragan*, you are the first."

As one of Carver's force came forward with cords salvaged from the proa, the *juragan* met him, placed his hands behind his back, and suffered them to be tied together. The next man hesitated, then submitted also, casting anxious glances at his companions. The third submitted promptly. The fourth folded his hands across his chest.

"I remain here," he announced.

"Very well," Peter Gross said impassively. He forced several Chinamen who were near to move back. They gave ground sullenly. At Carver's orders a firing-squad of three men stood in front of the Chinaman, whose back was toward the bay.

"Will you go with us?" Peter Gross asked again.

The Chinaman's face was a ghostly gray, but very firm.

"Allah wills I stay here," he replied. His lips curled with a calm contemptuousness at the white man's inability to rob him of the place in heaven that he believed his murders had made for him. With that smile on his lips he died.

A sudden silence came upon the crowd. Even Jahi's Dyaks, scarcely restrained by their powerful chief before this, ceased their mutterings and looked with new respect on the big *orang blanda* resident. There were no more refusals among the Chinese. On instructions from Peter

Gross four of them were left unbound to carry the body of their dead comrade to Bulungan. "Alive or dead," he had said. So it would be all understood.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"TO HALF OF MY KINGDOM—"

CAPTAIN CARVER selected a cigar from Peter Gross's humidor and reclined in the most comfortable chair in the room.

"A beastly hot day," he announced, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "Regular Manila weather."

"The monsoon failed us again to-day," Peter Gross observed.

Carver dropped the topic abruptly. "I dropped over," he announced, "to see if the *juragan* talked any."

Peter Gross glanced out of the window toward the jungle-crowned hills. The lines of his mouth were very firm.

"He told me a great deal," he said.

"About Paddy?" There was an anxious ring in Carver's voice.

"About Paddy—and other things."

"The lad's come to no harm?"

"He is aboard Ah Sing's proa, the proa we saw standing out to sea when we reached the beach. He is safe—for the present at least. He will be useful to Ah Sing, the natives reverence him so highly."

"Thank God!" Carver ejaculated in a relieved voice. "We'll get him back. It may take time, but we'll get him."

Peter Gross made no reply. He was staring steadfastly at the hills again.

"Odd he didn't take you, too," Carver remarked.

"The *juragan* told me that he intended to come back with a portion of his crew for me later," Peter Gross said. "They ran short of provisions, so they had to go back to the proas, and they took Paddy with them. Some one warned them you were on the march with Jahi, so they fled. Tsang Che, the *juragan*, says his crew was slow in taking on fresh water; that is how we were able to surprise him."

"That explains it," Carver remarked. "I couldn't account for their leaving you behind."

Peter Gross lapsed into silence again.

"Did you get anything else from him, any real evidence?" Carver suggested presently.

The resident roused himself with an effort.

"A great deal. Even more than I like to believe."

"He turned state's evidence?"

"You might call it that."

"You got enough to clear up this mess?"

"No," Peter Gross replied slowly. "I would not say that. What he told me deals largely with past events, things that happened before I came here. It is the present with which we have to deal."

"I'm a little curious," Carver confessed.

Peter Gross passed his hand over his eyes and leaned back.

"He told me what I have always believed. Of the confederation of pirates with Ah Sing at their head; of the agreements they have formed with those in authority; of where the ships have gone that have been reported missing from time to time and what became of their cargoes; of how my predecessor died. He made a very full and complete statement. I have it here, written in Dutch, and signed by him." Peter Gross tapped a drawer in his desk.

"It compromises Van Slyck?"

"He is a murderer."

"Of De Jonge—your predecessor?"

"It was his brain that planned."

"Muller?"

"A slaver and embezzler."

"You're going to arrest them?" Carver scanned his superior's face eagerly.

"Not yet," Peter Gross dissented quietly. "We have only the word of a pirate so far. And it covers many things that happened before we came here."

"We're waiting too long," Carver asserted dubiously. "We've been lucky so far; but luck will turn."

"We are getting the situation in hand better every day. They will strike soon, their patience is ebbing fast; and we will have the Prins with us in a week."

"The blow may fall before then."

"We must be prepared. It would be folly for us to strike now. We have no proof except this confession, and Van Slyck has powerful friends at home."

"That reminds me," Carver exclaimed. "Maybe these documents will interest you. They are the papers Jahi found on your jailers. They seem to be a set of accounts, but they're Dutch to me." He offered the papers to Peter Gross, who unfolded them and began to read.

"Are they worth anything?" Carver asked presently, as the resident carefully filed them in the same drawer in which he had placed Tsang Che's statement.

"They are Ah Sing's memoranda. They tell of the disposition of several cargoes of ships that have been reported lost recently. There are no names, but symbols. It may prove valuable some day."

"What are your plans?"

"I don't know. I must talk with Koyala before I decide. She is coming this afternoon."

Peter Gross glanced out of doors at that moment and his face brightened. "Here she comes now," he said.

Carver rose. "I think I'll be going," he declared gruffly.

"Stay, captain, by all means."

Carver shook his head. He was frowning and he cast an anxious glance at the resident.

"No; I don't trust her. I'd be in the way, anyway." He glanced swiftly at the resident to see the effect of his words. Peter Gross was looking down the lane along which Koyala was approaching. A necklace of flowers encircled her throat and bracelets of blossoms hung on her arms—gardenia, tuberose, hill daisies, and the scarlet bloom of the flame-of-the-forest tree. Her hat was of woven nipah palm-leaves, intricately fashioned together. Altogether she was a most alluring picture.

When Peter Gross looked up Carver was

gone. Koyala entered with the familiarity of an intimate friend.

"What is this I hear?" Peter Gross asked with mock severity. "You have been saving me from my enemies again."

Koyala's smile was neither assent nor denial.

"This is getting to be a really serious situation for me," he chaffed. "I am finding myself more hopelessly in your debt every day."

Koyala glanced at him swiftly, searchingly. His frankly ingenuous, almost boyish smile evoked a whimsical response from her.

"What are you going to do when I present my claim?" she demanded.

Peter Gross spread out his palms in mock dismay. "Go into bankruptcy," he replied. "It's the only thing left for me to do."

"My bill will stagger you," she warned.

"You know the Persian's answer, 'All that I have to the half of my kingdom,'" he jested.

"I might ask more," Koyala ventured daringly.

Peter Gross's face sobered. Koyala saw that, for some reason, her reply did not please him. A strange light glowed momentarily in her eyes. Instantly controlling herself, she said in carefully modulated tones:

"You sent for me, *mynheer*?"

"I did," Peter Gross admitted. "I must ask another favor of you, Koyala." The mirth was gone from his voice also.

"What is it?" she asked quietly.

"You know whom we have lost," Peter Gross said, plunging directly into the subject. "Ah Sing carried him away. His uncle, the boy's only living relative, is an old sea captain under whom I served for some time and a very dear friend. I promised him I would care for the lad. I must bring the boy back. You alone can help me."

The burning intensity of Koyala's eyes moved even Peter Gross, unskilled as he was in the art of reading a woman's heart through her eyes. He felt vaguely un-

comfortable, vaguely felt a peril he could not see or understand.

"What will be my reward if I bring him back to you?" Koyala asked. Her tone was almost flippant.

"You shall have whatever lies in my power as resident to give," Peter Gross promised gravely.

Koyala laughed. There was a strange, jarring note in her voice.

"I accept your offer, Mynheer Resident," she said. "But you should not have added those two words, 'as resident.'"

Rising like a startled pheasant, she glided out of the door and across the plain. Peter Gross stared after her until she had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A WOMAN SCORNED.

IT was Inchi who brought the news of Paddy's return. Three days after Koyala's departure the little Dyak lad burst breathlessly upon a colloquy between Peter Gross and Captain Carver and announced excitedly:

"Him, Djath boy, him, *orang blanda* Djath boy, him come."

"What the devil is he driving at?" Carver growled. The circumlocution of the south sea islander was a perennial mystery to him.

"Paddy is coming," Peter Gross cried. "Now get your breath, Inchi, and tell us where he is."

His scant vocabulary exhausted, Inchi broke into a torrent of Dyak. By requiring the lad to repeat several times, Peter Gross finally understood his message.

"Paddy, Koyala, and some of Koyala's Dyaks are coming along the mountain trail," he announced. "They will be here in an hour. She sent a runner ahead to let us know, but the runner twisted an ankle. Inchi found him and got the message."

There was a wild cheer as Paddy, dusty and matted with perspiration, several

Dyaks, and Koyala emerged from the banyan-grove and crossed the plain. Discipline was forgotten as the entire command crowded around the lad.

"I shot two Chinaman's for you," Vander Esse announced. "An' now daat vas all unnecessary."

"Ye can't keep a rid-head bottled up," Larry Malone, another member of the company, shouted exultingly.

"Aye ban tank we joost get it nice quiet van you come back again," Anderson remarked in mock melancholy. The others hooted him down.

Koyala stood apart from the crowd with her Dyaks and looked on. Glancing upward, Peter Gross noticed her, noticed, too, the childishly wistful look upon her face. He instantly guessed the reason—she felt herself apart from these people of his, unable to share their intimacy. Remorse smote him. She, to whom all their success was due, and who now rendered this crowning service, deserved better treatment. He hastened toward her.

"Koyala," he said, his voice vibrant with the gratitude he felt, "how can we repay you?"

Koyala made a weary gesture of dissent.

"Let us not speak of that now, *mynheer*," she said.

"But come to my home," he said. "We must have luncheon together—you and Captain Carver and Paddy and I." With a quick afterthought he added: "I will invite Mynheer Muller also."

The momentary gleam of pleasure that had lit Koyala's face at the invitation died at the mention of Muller's name.

"I am sorry," she said, but there was no regret in her voice. "I must go back to my people, to Djath's temple and the priests. It is a long journey; I must start at once."

"You cannot leave us now!" Peter Gross exclaimed in consternation.

"For the present I must," she said resignedly. "Perhaps when the moon is once more in the full, I shall come back to see what you have done."

"But we cannot do without you!"

"Is a woman so necessary?" she asked, and smiled sadly.

"You are necessary to Bulungan's peace," Peter Gross affirmed. "Without you we can have no peace."

"If you need me, send one of my people," she said. "I will leave him here with you. He will know where to find me."

"But that may be too late," Peter Gross objected. His tone became very grave. "The crisis is almost upon us," he declared. "Ah Sing will make the supreme test soon—how soon I cannot say—but I do not think he will let very many days pass by. He is not accustomed to being thwarted. I shall need you here at my right hand to advise me."

Koyala looked at him searchingly. The earnestness of his plea, the troubled look in his straightforward, gray eyes fixed so pleadingly upon her, seemed to impress her.

"There is a little arbor in the banyan-grove yonder where we can talk undisturbed," she said in a voice of quiet authority. "Come with me."

"We can use my office," Peter Gross offered, but Koyala shook her head.

"I must be on my journey. I will see you in the grove."

Peter Gross walked beside her. He found difficulty keeping the pace she set, she glided along like a winged thing. Koyala led him directly to the clearing and reclined with a sigh of utter weariness in the shade of a stunted Nipa palm.

"It has been a long journey," she said with a wan smile. "I am very tired."

"Forgive me," Peter Gross exclaimed in contrition. "I should not have let you go. You must come back with me to the residency and rest until to-morrow."

"A half-hour's rest will be all I need," Koyala replied.

"But this is no place for you," Peter Gross expostulated.

"The jungle is my home," Koyala said with simple pride. "The Argus Pheasant nests in the thickets."

"Surely not at night?"

"What is there to harm me?" Koyala smiled wearily at his alarm.

"But the wild beasts, the tigers, and the leopards, and the orang-utans in the hill districts, and the snakes?"

"They are all my friends. When the tiger calls, I answer. If he is hungry, I keep away. I know all the sounds of the jungle, my grandfather, Chawatangi, taught them to me. I know the warning hiss of the snake as he glides through the grasses, I know the timid hoofbeat of the antelope, I know the stealthy rustle of the wild hogs. They and the jackals are the only animals I cannot trust."

"But where do you sleep?"

"If the night is dark and there is no moon, I cut a bundle of bamboo canes. I bind these with creepers to make a platform and hang it in a tree. Then I swing between heaven and earth as securely, or more securely, than you do in your house, for I am safe from the malice of men. If it rains I make a shelter of palm-leaves on a bamboo frame. These things one learns quickly in the forest."

"You wonderful woman," Peter Gross breathed in admiration.

Koyala smiled. She lay stretched out her full length on the ground. Peter Gross squatted beside her.

"You haven't told me where you found Paddy?" he remarked after a pause.

"Oh, that was easy," she said. "Ah Sing has a station a little way this side of the Sadong country—"

Peter Gross nodded.

"I knew that he would go there. So I followed. When I got there Ah Sing was loading his proa with stores. I learned that your boy was a prisoner in one of the houses of his people. I went to Ah Sing and begged his life. I told him he was sacred to Djath, that the Dyaks of Bulungan thought him very holy indeed. Ah Sing was very angry. He stormed about the loss of his proa and refused to listen to me. He said he would hold the boy as a hostage."

"That night I went to the hut and found one of my people on guard. He let me in. I cut the cords that bound the boy, dyed his face brown, and gave him a woman's dress. I told him to wait for me in the forest until he heard my cry. The guard thought it was me when he left."

Her voice drooped pathetically.

"They brought me to Ah Sing. He was very angry, he would have killed me, I think, if he had dared. He struck me—see, here is the mark." She drew back the sleeve of her kabaya and revealed a cut in the skin with blue bruises about it. Peter Gross became very white and his teeth closed together tightly.

"That is all," she concluded.

There was a long silence. Koyala covertly studied the resident's profile, so boyish, yet so masterfully stern, as he gazed into the forest depths. She could guess his thoughts, and she half-smiled.

"When you left, I promised you that you should have a reward—anything that you might name and in my power as resident to give," Peter Gross said presently.

"Let us not speak of that—yet," Koyala dissented. "Tell me, Mynheer Gross, do you love my country?"

"It is a wonderfully beautiful country," Peter Gross replied enthusiastically, falling in with her mood. "A country of infinite possibilities. We can make it the garden spot of the world. Never have I seen such fertile soil as there is in the river bottom below us. All it needs is time and labor—and men with vision."

Koyala rose to a sitting posture and leaned on one hand. With a deft motion of the other she made an ineffectual effort to cover her nut-brown limbs, cuddled among the ferns and grasses, with the shortened kabaya. Very nymphlike she looked, a Diana of the jungle, and it was small wonder that Peter Gross, the indifferent to woman, gave her his serious attention while she glanced pensively down the forest aisles.

"Men with vision!" she sighed presently. "That is what we have always

needed. That is what we have always lacked. My unhappy people! Ignorant, and none to teach them, none to guide them into the better way. Leaders have come, have stayed a little while, and then they have gone again. Brooke helped us in Sarawak—now only his memory is left." A pause. "I suppose you will be going back to Java soon again, *mynheer*?"

"Not until my work is completed," Peter Gross assured gravely.

"But that will be soon. You will crush your enemies. You will organize the districts and lighten our burdens for a while. Then you will go. A new resident will come. Things will slip back into the old rut. Our young men are hot-headed, there will be feuds, wars, piracy. There are turns in the wheel, but no progress for us, *mynheer*. Borneo!" Her voice broke with a sob, and she stole a covert glance at him.

"By Heaven, I swear that will not happen, Koyala," Peter Gross asserted vehemently. "I shall not go away, I shall stay here. The governor owes me some reward, the least he can give me is to let me finish the work I have begun. I shall dedicate my life to Bulungan—we, Koyala, shall redeem her, we two."

Koyala shook her head. Her big, sorrowful eyes gleamed on him for a moment through tears.

"So you speak to-day when you are full of enthusiasm, *mynheer*. But when one or two years have passed, and you hear naught but the unending tales of tribal jealousies, and quarrels over buffaloes, and complaints about the tax, and falsehood upon falsehood, then your ambition will fade and you will seek a place to rest, far from Borneo."

The gentle sadness of her tear-dimmed eyes, the melancholy cadences of her voice sighing tribulation like an October wind among the maples, and her eloquent beauty, set Peter Gross's pulses on fire.

"Koyala," he cried, "do you think I could give up a cause like this—forget the work we have done together—to

spend my days on a plantation in Java like a buffalo in his wallow?"

"You would soon forget Borneo in Java, *mynheer*—and me."

The sweet melancholy of her plaintive smile drove Peter Gross to madness.

"Forget you? You, Koyala? My right hand, my savior, savior thrice over, to whom I owe every success I have had, without whom I would have failed utterly, died miserably in Wobanguli's hall? You wonderful woman! You lovely, adorable woman!"

Snatching her hands in his he stared at her with a fierce hunger that was half passion, half gratitude.

A gleam of savage exultation flashed in Koyala's eyes. The resident was hers. The fierce, insatiate craving for this moment that had filled her heart ever since she first saw Peter Gross until it tainted every drop of blood now raced through her veins like vitrol. She lowered her lids lest he read her eyes, and bit her tongue to choke utterance. Still his grasp on her hands did not relax. At last she asked in a low voice, that sounded strange and harsh even to her:

"Why do you hold me, *mynheer*?"

The madness of the moment was still on Peter. He opened his lips to speak words that flowed to them without conscious thought, phrases as utterly foreign to his vocabulary as metaphysics to a Hottentot. Then reason resumed her throne. Breathing heavily, he released her.

"Forgive me, Koyala," he said humbly.

A chill of disappointment, like an arc-tic wave, submerged Koyala. She felt the sensation of having what was dearest in life suddenly snatched from her. Her stupefaction lasted but an instant. Then the fury that goads a woman scorned possessed her and lashed on the blood-hounds of vengeance.

"Forgive you?" she spat venomously. "Forgive you for what? The words you did not say, just now, *orang blanda*, when you held these two hands?"

Peter Gross had risen quickly and she also sprang to her feet. Her face, furious with rage, was lifted toward his, and her two clenched fists were held above her fluttering bosom. Passion made her almost inarticulate.

"Forgive you for cozening me with sweet words of *our* work, and *our* mission when you despised me for the blood of my mother that is in me? Forgive you for leading me around like a pet parrot to say your words to my people and delude them? Forgive you for the ignominy you have heaped upon me, the shame you have brought to me, the loss of friendships and the laughter of my enemies?"

"Koyala—" Peter Gross attempted, but he might as well have tried to stop Niagara.

"Are these the things you seek forgiveness for?" Koyala shrieked. "Liar! Seducer! *Orang blanda*!"

She spat the word as though it were something vile. At that moment there was a rustling in the cane back of Peter Gross. Bewildered, contrite, striving to collect his scattered wits that he might calm the tempest of her wrath, he did not hear it. But Koyala did. There was a savage exultation in her voice as she cried:

"To-morrow the last white will be swept from Bulungan. But you will stay here, *mynheer*—"

Hearing the footsteps behind him, Peter Gross whirled on his heel. But he turned too late. A bag was thrust over his head. He tried to tear it away, but clinging arms, arms as strong as his, held it tightly about him. A heavy vapor ascended into his nostrils, a vapor warm with the perfume of burning sandalwood and aromatic unguents and spices. He felt a drowsiness come upon him, struggled to cast it off, and yielded. With a sigh like a tired child's he sagged into the waiting arms and was lowered to the ground.

"Very good, *Mynheer Muller*," Koyala said. "Now, if you and Cho Sing will bind his legs I will call my Dyaks and

have him carried to the house we have prepared for him."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ATTACK ON THE FORT.

WHEN Peter Gross failed to return by noon that day Captain Carver, becoming alarmed, began making inquiries. Hughes supplied the first clue.

"I saw him go into the bush with the heathen woman while we was buzzin' Paddy," he informed his commander. "I ain't seen him since."

A scouting party was instantly organized. It searched the banyan grove but found nothing. One of the members, an old plainsman, reported heelmarks on the trail, but as this was a common walk of the troops at the fort the discovery had no significance.

"Where is Inchi?" Captain Carver inquired. Search also failed to reveal the Dyak lad. As this disquieting news was reported, Lieutenant Banning was announced.

The lieutenant, a smooth-faced, clean-cut young officer who had had his commission only a few years, explained the object of his visit without indulging in preliminaries.

"One of my Java boys tells me the report is current in Bulungan that we are to be attacked to-morrow," he announced. "A holy war has been preached, and all the Sea Dyaks and Malays in the residency are now marching this way, he says. The pirate fleet is expected here to-night. I haven't seen or heard of Captain Van Slyck since he left for Padang."

He was plainly worried, and Carver correctly construed his warning as an appeal for advice and assistance. The captain took from his wallet the commission that Peter Gross had given him some time before.

"Since Captain Van Slyck is absent, I may as well inform you that I take command of the fort by order of the resi-

dent," he said, giving the document to Banning. The lieutenant scanned it quickly.

"Very good, captain," he remarked with a relieved air. His tone plainly indicated that he was glad to place responsibility in the crisis upon a more experienced commander. "I suppose you will enter the fort with your men?"

"We shall move our stores and all our effects at once," Carver declared. "Are your dispositions made?"

"We are always ready, captain," was the lieutenant's reply.

From the roof of the residency Carver studied Bulungan town through field-glasses. There was an unwonted activity in the village, he noticed. Scanning the streets he saw the unusual number of armed men hurrying about and grouped at street corners and in the marketplace. At the waterfront several small proas were hastily putting out to sea.

"It looks as if Banning was right," he muttered.

By sundown Carver's irregulars were stationed at the fort. Courtesy denominated it a fort, but in reality it was little more than a stockade made permanent by small towers of crude masonry filled between with logs set on end. The elevation, however, gave it a commanding advantage in such an attack as they might expect. Peter Gross had been careful to supply machine-guns, and these were placed where they would do the most efficient service. Putting the Javanese at work, Carver hastily threw up around the fort a series of barbed-wire entanglements and dug trench-shelters inside. These operations were watched by an ever-increasing mob of armed natives, who kept a respectful distance away, however. Banning suggested a sortie in force to intimidate the Dyaks.

"It would be time wasted," Carver declared. "We don't have to be afraid of this mob. They won't show teeth until the he-bear comes. We'll confine ourselves to getting ready, every second is precious."

A searchlight was one of Carver's contributions to the defenses. Double sentries were posted and the light played the country about all night, but there was no alarm. When dawn broke Carver and Banning, up with the sun, uttered an almost simultaneous exclamation. A fleet of nearly thirty proas laden down with fighting men, lay in the harbor.

"Ah Sing has arrived," Banning remarked. Absent-mindedly he mused: "I wonder if Captain Van Slyck is there?"

Carver had by this time mastered just enough Dutch to catch the lieutenant's meaning.

"What do you know about Captain Van Slyck's dealings with this gang," he demanded, looking at the young man fixedly.

"I can't say—that is—" Banning took refuge in an embarrassed silence.

"Never mind," Carver answered curtly. "I don't want you to inform against a superior officer. But when we get back to Batavia you'll be called upon to testify to what you know."

Banning made no reply.

Carver was at breakfast when word was brought him that Mynheer Muller, the *controlleur*, was at the gate and desired to see him. He had left orders that none should be permitted to enter or leave without special permission from the officer of the day. The immediate thought that Muller was come to propose terms of surrender occurred to him, and he flushed darkly. He directed that the *controlleur* be admitted.

"Goeden morgen, mynheer kapitein," Muller greeted as he entered. His face was very pale, but he seemed to carry himself with more dignity than customarily, Carver noticed.

"State your mission, mynheer," Carver directed bluntly, transfixing the *controlleur* with his stern gaze.

"Mynheer kapitein, you must fight for your lives to-day," Muller said. "Ah Sing is here, there are three thousand Dyaks and Malays below." His voice quavered, but he pulled himself together

quickly. "I see you are prepared. Therefore what I have told you is no news to you." He paused.

"Proceed," Carver directed curtly.

"Mynheer kapitein, I am here to fight and die with you," the *controlleur* announced.

A momentary flash of astonishment crossed Carver's face. Then his suspicions were redoubled.

"I hadn't expected this," he said, without mincing words. "I thought you would be on the other side."

Muller's face reddened, but he instantly recovered. "There was a time when I thought so too, *kapitein*," he admitted candidly. "But I now see I was in the wrong. What has been done, I cannot undo. But I can die with you. There is no escape for you to-day, they are too many, and too well armed. I have lived a Celebes islander, a robber, and a friend of robbers. I can at least die a white man and a Hollander."

Carver looked at him fixedly.

"Where is the resident?" he demanded.

"In a hut, in the jungle."

"In Ah Sing's hands?"

"He is Koyala's prisoner. Ah Sing does not know he is there."

"Um!" Carver grunted. The exclamation hid a world of meaning. It took little thought on his part to vision what had occurred.

"Why aren't you with Koyala?" he asked crisply.

Muller looked away. "She does not want me," he said in a low voice.

For the first time since coming to Bulungan, Carver felt a trace of sympathy for Muller. He, too, had been disappointed in love. His tone was a trifle less gruff as he asked: "Can you handle a gun?"

"Ja, mynheer."

"You understand you'll get a bullet through the head at the first sign of treachery?"

Muller flushed darkly. "Ja, mynheer," he affirmed with quiet dignity. It was the flush that decided Carver.

"Report to Lieutenant Banning," he said. "He'll give you a rifle."

It was less than an hour later that the investment of the fort began. The Dyaks, scurrying through the banyan groves and bamboo thickets, enclosed it on the rear and landward sides. Ah Sing's pirates and the Malays crawled up the rise to attack it from the front. Two of Ah Sing's proas moved up the bay to shut off escape from the sea.

An insolent demand from Ah Sing and Wobanguli that they surrender prefaced the hostilities.

"Tell the raja and his Chinese cut-throat that we'll have the pleasure of hanging them," was Carver's reply.

To meet the attack, Carver entrusted the defense of the rear and landward walls to the Dutch and Javanese under Banning, while he looked after the frontal attack, which he shrewdly guessed would be the most severe. Taking advantage of every bush and tree, and particularly the hedges that lined the lane leading down to Bulungan, the Malays and pirates got within six hundred yards of the fort. A desultory rifle-fire was opened. It increased rapidly, and soon a hail of bullets began sweeping over the enclosure.

"They've got magazine-rifles," Carver muttered to himself. "Latest pattern, too. That's what comes of letting traders sell promiscuously to natives."

The defenders made a vigorous reply. The magazine-rifles were used with telling effect. Banning had little difficulty keeping the Dyaks back, but the pirates and Malays were a different race of fighters, and gradually crept closer in, taking advantage of every bit of cover.

As new levies of natives arrived, the fire increased in intensity. There were at least a thousand rifles in the attacking force, Carver judged, and some of the pirates soon demonstrated that they were able marksmen. An old plainsman was the first casualty. He was sighting along his rifle at a daring Manchu who had advanced within three hundred yards of the enclosure when a bullet struck him in the

forehead and passed through his skull. He fell where he stood.

Shortly thereafter Gibson, an ex-sailor, uttered an exclamation, and clapped his right hand to his left shoulder.

"Are ye hit?" Larry Malone asked.

"They winged me, I guess," Gibson said.

The Dutch medical officer hastened forward. "The bone's broken," he pronounced. "We'll have to amputate."

"Then let me finish this fight first," Gibson retorted, picking up his rifle. The doctor was a soldier, too. He tied the useless arm in a sling, filled Gibson's magazine, and jogged away to other duties with a parting witticism about Americans who didn't know when to quit. There was plenty of work for him to do. Within the next half-hour ten men were brought into the improvised hospital, and Carver, on the walls, wondered whether he would be able to hold the day out.

The firing began to diminish. Scanning the underbrush to see what significance this might have, Carver saw heavy columns of natives forming. The first test was upon them. At his sharp command the reply fire from the fort ceased and every man filled his magazine.

With a wild whoop the Malays and Chinese rose from the bush and raced toward the stockade. There was an answering yell from the other side as the Dyaks, spears and krises waving, sprang from the jungle. On the walls, silence. The brown wave swept like an avalanche to within three hundred yards. The Javanese looked anxiously at their white leader, standing like a statue, watching the human tide roll toward him. Two hundred yards—a hundred and fifty yards. The Dutch riflemen began to fidget. A hundred yards. An uneasy murmur ran down the whole line. Fifty yards.

Carver gave the signal. Banning instantly repeated it. A sheet of flame leaped from the walls as rifles and machine-guns poured their deadly torrents of lead into the advancing horde. The

first line melted away like butter before a fire. Their wild yells of triumph changed to frantic shrieks of panic, the Dyaks broke and fled for the protecting cover of the jungle while the guns behind them decimated their ranks. The Malays and Chinese got within ten yards of the fort before they succumbed to the awful fusillade, and fled and crawled back to shelter. A mustached Manchu alone reached the gate. He waved his huge kris, but at that moment one of Carver's company emptied a rifle into his chest and he fell at the very base of the wall.

The attack was begun, checked, and ended within four minutes. Over two hundred dead and wounded natives and Chinese lay scattered about the plain. The loss within the fort had been four killed and five wounded. Two of the dead were from Carver's command, John Vander Esse and a Californian. As he counted his casualties, Carver's lips tightened. His thoughts were remarkably similar to that of the great Epirote: "Another such victory and I am undone."

Lieutenant Banning, mopping his brow, stepped forward to felicitate his commanding officer.

"They'll leave us alone for to-day, anyway," he predicted.

Carver stroked his chin in silence.

"I don't think Ah Sing's licked so soon," he replied.

For the next three hours there was only desultory firing. The great body of natives seemed to have departed, leaving only a sufficient force behind to hold the defenders in check in case they attempted to leave the fort. Speculation on the next step of the natives was soon answered. Scanning the harbor with his glasses, Carver detected an unwonted activity on the deck of one of the proas. He watched it closely for a few moments, then he uttered an exclamation.

"They're unloading artillery," he told Lieutenant Banning.

The lieutenant's lips tightened.

"We have nothing except these old guns," he replied.

"They're junk," Carver observed succinctly. "These proas carry Krupps, I'm told."

"What are you going to do?"

"We'll see whether they can handle it first. If they make it too hot for us—well, we'll die fighting."

The first shell broke over the fort an hour later and exploded in the jungle on the other side. Twenty or thirty shells were wasted in this way before the gunner secured the range. His next effort landed against one of the masonry towers on the side defended by the Dutch. When the smoke had cleared away the tower lay leveled. Nine dead and wounded men were scattered among the ruins. A yell rose from the natives, which the Dutch answered with a stinging volley.

"Hold your fire," Carver directed Banning. "We'd better take to the trenches." These had been dug the day before and deepened during the past hour. Carver issued the necessary commands and the defenders, except ten pickets, concealed themselves in their earthen shelters.

The gunnery of the Chinese artillerymen improved, and gaunt breaches were formed in the walls. One by one the towers crumbled. Each well-placed shell was signaled by cheers from the Dyaks and Malays. The shelling finally ceased abruptly. Carver and Banning surveyed the scene. A ruin of fallen stones and splintered logs was all that lay between them and the horde of over three thousand pirates and Malay and Dyak rebels. The natives were forming for a charge.

Carver took the lieutenant's hand in his own firm grip. "This is probably the end," he said. "I'm glad to die fighting in such good company."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A WOMAN'S HEART.

L YING on the bamboo floor of the jungle hut which Muller had spoken of, his hands and feet firmly bound, and a Dyak guard armed with spear and

kris at the door, Peter Gross thought over the events of his administration as resident of Bulungan. His thoughts were not pleasant. Shame filled his heart and reddened his brow as he thought of how confidently he had assumed his mission, how firmly he had believed himself to be the chosen instrument of destiny to restore order in the distracted colony and punish those guilty of heinous crimes, and how arrogantly he had rejected the sage advice of his elders.

He recollected old Sachsen's warning and his own impatient reply—the event that he deemed so preposterous at that time and old Sachsen had foreseen had actually come to pass. He had fallen victim to Koyala's wiles. And she had betrayed him. Bitterly he cursed his stupid folly, the folly that had led him to enter the jungle with her, the folly of that mad moment when temptation had assailed him where man is weakest.

In his bitter self-excoriation he had no thought of condemnation for her. The fault was his, he vehemently assured himself, lashing himself with the scorpions of self-reproach. She was what nature and the sin of her father had made her, a child of two alien, unincorporable races, a daughter of the primitive, wild, untamed, uncontrolled, loving fiercely, hating fiercely, capable of supremest sacrifice, capable, too, of the most fiendish cruelty.

He had taken this creature and used her for his own ends, he had praised her, petted her, treated her as an equal, companion, and helpmate. Then, when that moment of madness was upon them both, he had suddenly wounded her acutely sensitive, bitterly proud soul by drawing the bar sinister. How she must have suffered! He winced at the thought of the pain he had inflicted. She could not be blamed, no, the fault was his, he acknowledged. He should have considered that he was dealing with a creature of flesh and blood, a woman with youth, and beauty, and passion. If he, believing his heart was marble, could fall so quickly and so fatally, could he censure her?

Carver, too, had warned him. Not once, but many times, almost daily. He had laughed at the warnings, later almost quarreled. What should he say if he ever saw Carver again? He groaned.

There was a soft swish of skirts. Koyala stood before him. She gazed at him coldly. There was neither hate nor love in her eyes, only indifference. In her hand she held a dagger. Peter Gross returned her gaze without flinching.

"You are my prisoner, *orang blanda*," she said. "Mine only. This hut is mine. We are alone here, in the jungle, except for one of my people."

"You may do with me as you will, Koyala," Peter Gross replied wearily.

Koyala started, and looked at him keenly.

"I have come to carry you away," she announced.

Peter Gross looked at her in silence.

"But first there are many things that we must talk about," she said.

Peter Gross rose to a sitting posture. "I am listening," he announced.

Koyala did not reply at once. She was gazing fixedly into his eyes, those frank, gray eyes that had so often looked clearly and honestly into hers as he enthusiastically spoke of their joint mission in Bulungan. A half-sob broke in her throat but she restrained it fiercely.

"Do you remember, *myynheer*, when we first met?" she asked.

"It was at the mouth of the Abbas River, was it not? At Wolang's village?"

"Why did you laugh at me then?" she exclaimed fiercely.

Peter Gross looked at her in astonishment. "I laughed at you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, on the beach. When I told you you must go. You laughed. Do not deny it, you laughed!" The fierce intensity of her tone betrayed her feeling.

Peter Gross shook his head while his gaze met hers frankly. "I do not recollect," he said. "I surely did not laugh at you—I do not know what it was—" A light broke upon him. "Aye, to be sure, I remember, now. It was a Dyak

boy with a mountain goat. He was drinking milk from the teats. Don't you recall?"

"You are trying to deceive me," Koyala cried angrily. "You laughed because—because—"

"As God lives, it is the truth!"

Koyala placed the point of her dagger over Peter Gross's heart.

"*Orang blanda*," she said, "I have sworn to kill you if you lie to me in any single particular to-day. I did not see that whereof you speak. There was no boy, no goat. Quick now, the truth, if you would save your life."

Peter Gross met her glance fearlessly.

"I have told you why I laughed, Koyala," he replied. "I can tell you nothing different."

The point of the dagger pricked the resident's skin.

"Then you would rather die?"

Peter Gross merely stared at her. Koyala drew a deep breath and drew back the blade.

"First we shall talk of other things," she said.

At that moment the rattle of rifle-fire reached Peter Gross's ears.

"What is that?" he cried.

Koyala laughed, a low laugh of exultation. "That, *mynheer*, is the children of Bulungan driving the white peccaries from Borneo."

"Ah Sing has attacked?" Peter Gross could not help, in his excitement, letting a note of his dismay sound in his voice.

"Ah Sing and his pirates," Koyala cried triumphantly. "Wobanguli and the warriors of Bulungan. Lkath and his sadong Dyaks. The Malays from the coast towns. All Bulungan except the hill people. They are all there, as many as the sands of the seashore, and they have the *orang blanda* from Holland, and the Javanese, and the loud-voiced *orang blanda* that you brought with you, penned in Van Slyck's kampong. None will escape."

"Thank God Carver's in the fort," Peter Gross ejaculated.

"But they cannot escape," Koyala insisted fiercely.

"We shall see," Peter Gross replied. Great as were the odds, he felt confident of Carver's ability to hold out a few days anyway. He had yet to learn of the artillery Ah Sing commanded.

"Not one shall escape," Koyala reiterated, the tigerish light glowing in her eyes. "Ah Sing has pledged it to me, Wobanguli has pledged it to me, the last *orang blanda* shall be driven from Bulungan." She clutched the hilt of her dagger fiercely.

Amazed at her vehemence, Peter Gross watched the shifting display of emotion on her face.

"Koyala," he said, suddenly, "why do you hate us whites so?"

He shrank before the fierce glance she cast at him.

"Is there any need to ask?" she cried violently. "Did I not tell you the first day we met, when I told you I asked no favors of you, and would accept none? What have you and your race brought to my people and to me but misery, and more misery? You came with fair promises, how have you fulfilled them? In the *orang blanda* way, falsehood upon falsehood, taking all, giving none. Why don't I kill you now, when I have you in my power, when I have only to drop my hand thus—" she flashed the dagger at Peter Gross's breast—"and I will be revenged? Why? Because I was a fool, white man, because I listened to your lies and believed when all my days I have sworn I would not. So I have let you live, unless—" She did not finish the thought but stood in rigid attention, listening to the increasing volume of rifle-fire.

"They are wiping it out in blood there," she said softly to herself, "the wrongs of Bulungan, what my unhappy country has suffered from the *orang blanda*."

Peter Gross's head was bowed humbly.

"I have wronged you," he said humbly. "But, before God, I did it in ignorance. I thought you understood—I

thought you worked with me for Bulungan and Bulungan only, with no thought of self. So I worked. Yet somehow, my plans went wrong. The people did not trust me. I tried to relieve them of unjust taxes. They would not let me take the census. I tried to end raiding. There were always disorders and I could not find the guilty. I found a murderer for Lkath, among his own people, yet he drove me away. I cannot understand it."

"Do you know why?" Koyala exclaimed exultingly. "Do you know why you failed? It was I—I—I, who worked against you. The *orang kayas* sent their runners to me and said: 'Shall we give the *controlleur* the count of our people?' and I said 'No, Djath forbids.' To the rajas and gustis I said: 'Let there be wars, we must keep the ancient valor of our people lest they become like the Javanese, a nation of slaves.' You almost tricked Lkath into taking the oath. But in the night I went to him and said: 'Shall the vulture rest in the eagle's nest?' and he drove you away."

Peter Gross stared at her with eyes that saw not. The house of his faith was crumbling into ruins yet he scarcely realized it himself, the revelation of her perfidy had come so suddenly. He groped blindly for salvage from the wreck, crying:

"But you saved my life—three times!"

She saw his suffering and smiled. So she had been made to suffer, not once, but a thousand times.

"That was because I had sworn the revenge should be mine, not Ah Sing's or any one else's, *orang blanda*."

Peter Gross lowered his face in the shadow. He did not care to have her see how great had been his disillusionment, how deep was his pain.

"You may do with me as you will, *juffrouw*," he said.

Koyala looked at him strangely a moment, then rose silently and left the hut. Peter Gross never knew the reason. It was because at that moment, when she revealed her Dyak treachery and uproot-

ed his faith, he spoke to her as he would to a white woman—"juffrouw."

"They are holding out yet," Peter Gross said to himself cheerfully some time later as the sound of scattered volleys was wafted over the hills. Presently he heard the dull boom of the first shell. His face paled.

"That is artillery!" he exclaimed. "Can it be—?" He remembered the heavy guns on the proas and his face became whiter still. He began tugging at his bonds, but they were too firmly bound. His Dyak guard looked in and grinned, and he desisted. As time passed and the explosion continued uninterruptedly, his face became haggard and more haggard. It was because of his folly, he told himself, that men were dying there—brave Carver, so much abler and more foresighted than he, the ever-cheerful Paddy, all those he had brought with him, good men and true. He choked.

Presently the shell-fire ceased. Peter Gross knew what it meant, in imagination he saw the columns of natives forming, column upon column, all that vast horde of savages and worse than savages let loose on a tiny square of whites.

A figure stood in the doorway. It was Koyala. Cho Seng stood beside her.

"The walls are down," she cried triumphantly. "There is only a handful of them left. The people of Bulungan are now forming for the charge. In a few minutes you will be the only white man left in Bulungan."

"I and Captain Van Slyck," Peter Gross said scornfully.

"He is dead," Koyala replied. "Ah Sing killed him. He was of no further use to us, why should he live?"

Peter Gross's lips tightened grimly. The traitor, at least, had met the death he merited.

Cho Seng edged nearer. Peter Gross noticed the dagger hilt protruding from his blouse.

"Has my time come, too?" he asked calmly.

The Chinaman leaped on him. "Ah

Sing sends you this," he cried hoarsely—the dagger flashed.

Quick as he was, quick as a tiger striking its prey, the Argus Pheasant was quicker. As the dagger descended, Koyala caught him by the wrist. He struck her with his free hand and tried to tear the blade away. Then his legs doubled under him, for Peter Gross, although his wrists were bound, could use his arms. He fell on the point of the dagger, that buried itself to the hilt in the fleshy part of his breast. With a low groan he rolled over. His eyeballs rolled glassily upward, thick, choked sounds came from his throat—

"Ah Sing—comeee—for Koyala—plenty quick—" With a sigh, he died.

Peter Gross looked at the Argus Pheasant. She was gazing dully at a tiny scratch on her forearm, a scratch made by Cho Seng's dagger. The edges were purplish.

"The dagger was poisoned," she murmured dully. Her glance met her prisoner's, and she smiled wanly.

"I go to *Sangjang* with you, *mynheer*," she said.

Peter Gross staggered to his knees and caught her arm. Before she comprehended what he intended to do he had his lips upon the cut and was sucking the blood. A scarlet tide flooded her face, then fled, leaving her cheeks with the pallor of death.

"No, no," she cried, choking, and tried to tear her arm away. But in Peter Gross's firm grasp she was like a child. After a frantic, futile struggle she yielded. Her face was bloodless as a corpse and she stared glassily at the wall.

Presently Peter Gross released her.

"It was only a scratch," he said gently. "I think we have gotten rid of the poison."

The sound of broken sobbing was his only answer.

"Koyala," he exclaimed.

With a low moan she ran out of the hut, leaving him alone with the dead body of the Chinaman, already bloated purple.

Peter Gross listened again. Only the ominous silence from the hills, the silence that foretold the storm. He wondered where Koyala was and his heart became hot as he recollected Cho Seng's farewell message that Ah Sing was coming. Well, Ah Sing would find him, find him bound and helpless. The pirate chief would at last have his long-sought revenge. For some inexplicable reason he felt glad that Koyala was not near. The jungle was her best protection, he knew.

A heavy explosion cut short his reveries. "They are cannonading again," he exclaimed in surprise, but as another terrific crash sounded a moment later, his face became glorified. Wild cries of terror sounded over the hills, Dyak cries, mingled with the shrieking and explosion of shrapnel—

"It's the Prins," Peter Gross exclaimed jubilantly. "Thank God, Captain Enckel came on time."

He tugged at his own bonds in a frenzy of hope, exerting all his great strength to strain them sufficiently to permit him to slip one hand free. But they were too tightly bound. Presently a shadow fell over him. He looked up with a start, expecting to see the face of the Chinese arch-murderer, Ah Sing. Instead it was Koyala.

"Let me help you," she said huskily. With a stroke of her dagger she cut the cord. Another stroke cut the bonds that tied his feet. He sprang up a free man.

"Hurry, Koyala," he cried, catching her by the arm. "Ah Sing may be here any minute."

Koyala gently disengaged herself.

"Ah Sing is in the jungle, far from here," she said.

A silence fell upon them both. Her eyes, averted from his, sought the ground. He stood by, struggling for adequate expression.

"Where are you going, Koyala?" he finally asked. She had made no movement to go.

"Wherever you will, *mynheer*," she replied quietly. "I am now your prisoner."

Peter Gross stared a moment in astonishment. "My prisoner?" he repeated. "Nonsense."

"Your people have conquered, *mynheer*," she said. "Mine are in flight. Therefore I have come to surrender myself—to you."

"I do not ask your surrender," Peter Gross replied gravely, beginning to understand.

"You do not ask it, *mynheer*, but some one must suffer for what has happened. Some one must pay the victor's prize. I am responsible, I incited my people. So I offer myself in their stead. They are innocent and should not be made to suffer."

"Ah Sing is responsible," Peter Gross said firmly. "And I."

"You, *mynheer*?" The question came from Koyala's unwilling lips before she realized it.

"Yes, I, *juffrouw*. It is best that we forget what has happened—I must begin my work over again." He closed his lips firmly, there were lines of pain in his face. "That is," he added heavily, "if his excellency will permit me to remain here after this fiasco."

"You will stay here?" Koyala asked incredulously.

"Yes. And you, *juffrouw*?"

A moment's silence. "My place is with my people—if you do not want me as hostage, *mynheer*?"

Peter Gross took a step forward and placed a hand on her shoulder. She trembled violently.

"I have a better work for you, *juffrouw*," he said.

Her eyes lifted slowly to meet his. There was mute interrogation in the glance.

"To help me make Bulungan peaceful and prosperous," he said.

Koyala shook herself free and walked toward the door. Peter Gross did not molest her. She stood on the threshold, one hesitating foot on the jungle path that led to the grove of big banyans. For some minutes she remained there. Then

she slowly turned and with pale, set face, reentered the hut.

"*Mynheer* Gross," she said, in a choking voice, "before I met you I believed that all the *orang blanda* were vile. I hated the white blood that was in me, many times, I yearned to take it from me, drop by drop, many times I stood on the edge of precipices undecided whether to let it nourish my body longer or no. Only one thing kept me from death, the thought that I might avenge the wrongs, of my unhappy country, and my unhappy mother."

A stifled sob shook her. After a moment or two she resumed:

"Then you came. I prayed the Hanu Token to send a young man, a young man who would desire me, after the manner of white men. When I saw you I knew you as the man of the Abbas, the man who had laughed, and I thought the Hanu Token had answered my prayer. I saved you from Wobanguli, I saved you from Ah Sing, that you might be mine, mine only to torture." Her voice broke again.

"But you disappointed me. You were just, you were kind, righteous in all your dealings, considerate of me. You did not seek to take me in your arms, even when I came to you in your own dwelling. You did not taunt me with my mother like that pig Van Slyck—"

"He is dead," Peter Gross interrupted gently.

"I have no sorrow for him. *Sangjang* has waited over long for him. Now you come to me, after all that has happened, and say: 'Koyala, will you forget and help me make Bulungan happy?' What shall I answer, *mynheer*?"

She looked at him humbly, entreatingly. Peter Gross smiled, his familiar, confident, warming smile.

"What your conscience dictates," Koyala."

She breathed rapidly. At last came her answer, a low whisper. "If you wish it, I will help you, *mynheer*."

Peter Gross reached out his hand and

caught hers. "Then we're pard's again," he cried.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GOVERNOR'S PROMISE.

PETER GROSS had just concluded an account of his administration in Bulungan to Governor-General Van Schouten at the latter's *paleis* in Batavia. The governor-general was frowning.

"So! *mynheer*," he exclaimed gruffly. "This is not a very happy report you have brought me."

Peter Gross bent his head.

"No census, not a cent of taxes paid, piracy, murders, my *controlleurs* — God knows where they are, the whole province in revolt. This is a nice kettle of fish."

Sachsen glanced sympathetically at Peter Gross. The lad he loved so well sat with bowed head and clenched hands, lines of suffering marked his face, he had grown older, oh so much older, during those few sorry months since he had so confidently declared his policies for the regeneration of the residency in this very room. The governor was speaking again.

"You said you would find Mynheer De Jonge's murderer for me," Van Schouten rasped. "Have you done that?"

"Yes, your excellency. It was *Kapitein Van Slyck* who planned the deed, and Cho Seng who committed the act, pricked him with a upas thorn while he slept, as I told your excellency. Here are my proofs. A statement made by Mynheer Muller to Captain Carver and Lieutenant Banning before he died, and a statement made by Koyala to me." He gave the governor the documents. The latter scanned them briefly and laid them aside.

"How did Muller come to his death?" he demanded.

"Like a true servant of the state, fighting in defense of the fort," Peter Gross replied. "A splinter of a shell struck him in the body."

"H-m!" the governor grunted. "I thought he was one of these traitors too."

"He expiated his crimes two weeks ago at Fort Wilhelmina, your excellency."

"And Cho Seng?" the governor demanded. "Is he still alive?"

"He fell on his own dagger," Peter Gross described the incident. "It was not the dagger thrust that killed him," he explained. "That made only a flesh wound. But the dagger point had been dipped in a cobra's venom." Softly he added: "He always feared that he would die from a snake's poison."

"It is the judgment of God," Van Schouten pronounced solemnly. He looked at Peter Gross sharply.

"Now this Koyala," he asked, "where is she?"

"I do not know. In the hills, among her own people, I think. She will not trouble you again."

The governor stared at his resident. Gradually the stern lines of his face relaxed and a quaintly humorous glint came into his eyes.

"So, Mynheer Gross, the woman deceived you?" he asked sharply.

Peter Gross made no reply. The governor's eyes twinkled. He suddenly brought down his fist on the table with a resounding bang.

"*Donder en bliksem!*" he exclaimed, "I cannot find fault with you for that. The fault is mine. I should have known better. Why, when I was your age, a pretty woman could strip the very buttons from my dress coat—dammit, Mynheer Gross, you must have had a heart of ice to withstand her so long."

He flourished a highly colored silk handkerchief and blew his nose loudly and lustily.

"So you are forgiven on that count, Mynheer Gross. Now for the other. It appears that by your work you have created a much more favorable feeling toward us among many of the natives. The hill Dyaks did not rise against us as they have always done before, and some of the coast Dyak tribes were loyal. That buzzard, Lkath, stayed in his lair. Furthermore, you have solved the mysteries

that have puzzled us for years and the criminals have been muzzled. Lastly, you were the honey that attracted all these piratical pests into Bulungan harbor where Kapitein Enckel was able to administer them a blow that will sweep those seas clear of this vermin for years to come, I believe. You have not done so badly after all, Mynheer Gross. Of course, you and your twenty-five men might have come to grief had not Sachsen, here, heard reports that caused me to send the Prins Lodewyk post-haste to Bulungan, but we will overlook your too great confidence on the score of your youth—" He chuckled—"Now as to the future—"

He paused and looked smilingly into the eyes that looked so gratefully into his.

"What say you to two more years at Bulungan, *mynheer*, to straighten out affairs there, work out your policies, and finish what you have so ably begun?"

"Your excellency is too good," Peter Gross murmured brokenly.

"Good!" Van Schouten snapped. "*Donder en bliksem, mynheer*, it is only that I know a man when I see him. Can you go back next week?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Then see that you do. And see to it that those devils send me some rice this year when the tax falls due or I will hang them all in the good, old-fashioned way."

(The end.)

Gingering Jerry



by Olin L. Lyman

ETERNAL vigilance is the price of vogue. Old Bill Dinsley kept paying it right along. That is why, at fifty odd, he was still accounted the "Old Fox" among the track coaches of the country, and the sporting editors frequently marked his name for box-car type. Old Bill, ferret eyed and of masterly cunning, continued to deliver the goods.

Upon a day when winter retained a hammerlock on spring and the snows still fell upon the valley and hills upon which

sprawled the city of Perlham, Bill Dinsley looked over his awkward squad of recruits in the gymnasium of the university. As from time immemorial, signaling this important occasion, his lean, crinkled face looked more so as he sadly shook his head. He delivered the ancient judgment. Any of the alumni would have grinned had you repeated it to them.

"Well, I got to do the best I can with what I got, I suppose. Come on out till I get a line on ye."

And according to the traditions of Perlham from away back he led forth that squad of striplings for their initial scamper. Bundled in a heavy jersey, wearing unpulchritudinous pants and heavy shoes, and with soft, black hat drawn down over his eyes, he led the squad the storied race that always won from his "fresh" recruits their whole-some respect the very first day.

Old Bill's tryouts were invariably in the nature of obstacle races. As always, the members of the squad, trailing along in sweaters and flapping running-pants, and stepping through the snow in low shoes, grinned at the easy, Indianlike lope over smooth going which the veteran affected.

Presently Bill swerved off the comfortable highway, leading toward Fabius, and leaped a stone wall, the boys following like a flock of sheep. The way led across a frozen plowed field. A few slowed up to pick their steps, but with definite surprise resumed the lope as they noted the coach continuing across the bumpy reaches with no diminution of pace.

He came to a steep hill. He walked up it as fast as the ordinary man would walk down. Already some of the youths behind him were sounding like asthmatic automobiles. Serene, leather-lunged, his furrowed face as expressionless as a mummy's, Dinsley instantly resumed his easy, swinging lope. Of all the company which followed him all but two or three were already in difficulties.

Not only did the famous old coach require his neophytes to do no more than he did himself, but at the outset of the season's work he invariably made allowances for the stragglers—up to a certain point.

Arrived back at the gymnasium, after a grueling scamper of four miles, he nodded approvingly at the dozen lithe-limbed young athletes who had weathered the pace with him. One trio, standing together, he favored with a dry grin. Tom Ford, Tim Dyer, and Jack Litscom had beaten him out by little more than inches in the final dash to the gymnasium steps.

All the company, however, were heaving

like wind-broken horses. The big enclosure sounded as if filled with bicycle pumps in action. Old Bill stood with sinewy chest rising and falling under the tight jersey in rhythmic iteration. He had it over every one of his boys. It was a matter of pride with him to keep himself as hard as nails the year round.

"Go on and strip an' shower," he told them succinctly. "An' mind ye rub down well afterward."

Then he drew out his watch and stood waiting for the stragglers. One of the seniors who stood looking on explained to a pair of curious neophytes his reason for this.

"He'll allow the late arrivals three minutes," he said. "Any one who comes staggering in after that he won't bother with. He never does."

Surely enough, old Bill stood there, watch in hand, mentally noting the late arrivals till the time mentioned had elapsed. Then he left the gymnasium steps, passing indifferently some dejected youths who loafed in, panting, at what was practically the eleventh minute.

Suddenly, just as the coach was about to descend the hill near the end of the college campus toward his home, a red-haired youth approached him at a lagging walk. He was encased in a wonderful red and black sweater and running trunks and shoes, he was liberally freckled, he had most attractive dark-blue eyes.

Right here old Bill Dinsley violated all his established precedent. He glanced into the attractive eyes of this otherwise homely tailender of the bunch and stopped. So did the novice.

Dinsley was famous for his few words. "Spavined?" he inquired.

It was at once evident that verbal Greek had met Greek.

"Heaves," replied the youth. His mottled face was as expressionless as old Bill's.

"What's yer name?"

"Jerry Heath."

"Hm-m-m!"

Dinsley looked him over. There was apparently no reason on earth why this

gangling, slim-legged gosling should not be able to run like a scared cat.

"Where you from?"

"Homer."

"Cigarettes?"

"Some."

"Thought so."

Old Bill looked straight into blue eyes that gave him glance for glance. "Cut 'em out?" he questioned.

"Yes."

"Stick to it!" laconically encouraged old Bill, "Make the training table."

He walked down the hill. Jerry Heath ran the remainder of the way to the gymnasium.

For the next few days Dinsley appeared to pay no attention to the recruit who continued to work with the squad despite the fact that he had been last to finish the initial run. The others wondered at this departure from the usual, and some of them questioned the freshman. "He told me to keep on," was the only reply given by the youth who, in the students' estimation, was already running a "slow race" with the coach in the matter of a limited vocabulary.

Two weeks after the initial run Dinsley made a slashing cut in the squad. The survivors, ordered to the training table, included Ford, Dyer, Litscom, and the spangled Jerry Heath.

The next day Ford, standing with Dinsley at the gymnasium steps, unloaded voluble thanks and assurances of mighty deeds to come.

"Your wind is all right," acknowledged old Bill as the athlete finished. "Save it for the track work."

Ford retired, thinking it over. Dinsley's eyes twinkled across to those of a youth sitting on the steps. Little imps in the eyes of Heath wigwagged back.

The college world was watching Perlham, which had won the intercollegiates at Philadelphia the previous season by a good margin of points. A new national mark had been set by Danby, Perlham's great miler, in that event, with Featherly, his varsity mate, close up, and Danziger,

the Vale crack, third. Since then the two Perlham stars had graduated. Danziger now a senior, was generally picked by the experts to win the mile run at the coming intercollegiates in June. It was not believed that old Bill Dinsley, stellar coach though he was, could develop from raw material another man capable of securing a look-in at the mile.

Perlham's candidates for the intercollegiates would be determined by the results of its own meet early in May, the first two or three to qualify, according to event, to be eligible.

It gradually developed that Jerry Heath was Dinsley's favorite candidate for the mile, and because Jerry was as wholly unlike the average college athlete—who fizzes like summer soda—as possible, this caused much comment. He took his track work as he did his books, with seriousness. He "mixed" like a hermit and chatted like the sphinx.

He was not at all surly, however, merely silent. Science teaches us that the reverberations of the human voice, together with the *putt-putts* of motor-boats, the chuggings of flivvers, and the whole bargain sale of earthly sounds, forever echo through space. Jerry Heath contributed but little to this ghostly anvil-chorus.

Old Bill bestowed much time upon him. This brought to the stolid Heath personality no visible preening. He just plugged along. The little fiends which whispered in the ears of other athletes, emphasizing the joys of breaking training rules, took one look at the sober Jerry visage and hopped onto the others.

But with all his earnestness, his wiry legs, his "bellows" improved by the discarding of cigarettes, Jerry's work in some elements failed to satisfy Dinsley. The coach continued his laconic pointers; Jerry strove to comply. But often, in watching him, the Dinsley eyes puckered and the Dinsley brow scowled.

He thought perhaps the irritating lack might be due to physical reaction. With this reflection his thoughts naturally leaped to the item of diet. His assistant,

Dowd, always sat with the boys at the training table. But upon an afternoon Dinsley telephoned his landlady that he would not be home for supper.

He sat at the head of the board with the squad. Soon after casting a cursory glance over the satisfying of healthy appetites, his sharp gaze became riveted on one man.

Jerry was first away from the table. Old Bill, a close second, tapped him on the shoulder as they stepped out into the veranda.

"You eat too fast," alleged Bill.

"Do I?"

"Yes. You gobbled your steak like a lion. An' spinach ain't a gargle. You're supposed to inhale it slow."

Jerry looked solemn.

"Gobblin' hurts yer work," concluded Bill. "Take yer time."

"I will," promised Heath.

Thereafter he "Fletcherized" to an extent that irritated maids, waiting to clear the table.

Jerry's workouts improved. But the shrewd eyes that watched his red-haired find continued to pucker and the brows to scowl as the days passed. He had discovered that the item of too speedy eating, now corrected, had not been the *big* obstacle in the development of his prospect.

The trouble was not in the stomach. It lay at a point to the left of that organ.

When circling the stadium track alone, Jerry was a modern Mercury. When traveling with others the little imps of doubt and indecision attached to his plodding heels leaden weights.

Old Bill had run across these fellows before, equipped with everything needed by the runner except the all-important item of heart. Many such, after he had become wholly convinced, had been dropped quick.

The varsity meet, which would determine the intercollegiate contenders, was a week away. Often, under such circumstances, he had laconically dismissed some embryonic crack from the training table, and only they two had known why.

Across the table from him it seemed as if the youth with the attractive eyes sat silent, awaiting his decision.

Should he go on with what he was now convinced was a forlorn hope? Or should he adhere to his rule, hitherto inviolate, and drop the lad who lacked the great requisite of the game?

Dinsley ceased to ponder. Slow fire gathered in his eyes. His big fist thumped on the table.

"He's *got* to make good!" he muttered, and filled up his pipe.

The next afternoon, when Jerry finished in the ruck of a practise-mile scamper led by Dyer and Litscom, Dinsley took him aside.

"Tired?" he asked.

"No."

"Anything holdin' ye?"

"Not as I know."

Old Bill's eyes searched his own. "Yes, there is. It's yourself."

A moment the frank eyes, suddenly troubled, endured the piercing gaze that bared the souls of men. Then Jerry's gaze dropped.

He knew of Dinsley's custom of mercilessly weeding up to the last minute. He stood silently awaiting dismissal.

At last old Bill spoke. "You can beat 'em all. *Do it!*"

"I'll try," answered Heath.

Light work marked the remainder of the week. All Dinsley's athletes were in the pink of condition for the coming tests. In the public mind and among the student body interest centered in the mile run.

For this event Dinsley's knife had left seven contenders out of thirty original aspirants. The first three men across the tape would be Perlham's entries for the mile run at the intercollegiates a month later. There were no trial heats. A single race would determine the *personnel* of the team.

The big Saturday arrived. It was a lovely May day. The warm sun flamed; the lofty surrounding hills were robed in cool green; fleecy clouds scurried across the blue sky.

All Perlham and its environs thronged the great stadium. The students' section was ablaze with red and black. Before the collegians capered the cheer leaders, busy with megaphones and rhythmically swinging arms. The lusty chorus pealed songs and college yells.

Before the start of the program many eyes sought old Bill Dinsley. He was striding back and forth on the cinder track in front of the covered portion of the concrete enclosure. He wore a flamboyant golfing cap pulled well over his eyes, his hands thrust in the pockets of his Norfolk jacket.

The starter's pistol cracked for the opening dash. A general yelp of joy sounded as a half dozen scantily clad youths bounded away.

Event after event was reeled off. The time made, the distance of hammer hurlings and shot puts, the height achieved in the pole vaults, all these indicated that Perlham would be worthily represented at the intercollegiates.

The mile run was the last contest scheduled. Public attention was at a painful tensiety. Seven men crouched at the line, the magnets for thousands of eyes. There could be plainly heard the murmur of the light May breeze. The flaring red and black colors of the students' section lay idle. The cheer leaders faced about, megaphones in their hands, staring with the rest. The starter stood back of the entrants, his pistol raised.

In all that company not a human being was stirring in this tense instant but one. Old Bill Dinsley was walking from the finish line, in front of the covered stand, to the opposite side of the track.

He did not pause as the pistol cracked and a mighty roar ascended. He did not look back. As he reached his point of vantage the leader for the first half-lap, flashed past him.

He was Dyer. Ten feet behind him was Litscom. The others were grouped far back. Jerry Heath was sixth. He was running as smoothly as if with oiled bearings.

If he noticed his mentor, he did not evidence it. He flashed by in splendid form, with a superb mechanical action as though wound with a key.

When the runners sped by Dinsley again, Heath was fifth, but Dyer and Litscom had increased their lead on the others. They seemed determined to make a run-away race of it. The throng cheered their efforts. But many eyes watched Heath curiously. Was it not time for old Bill's rumored "find" to show?

As Jerry passed the coach for the second time—apparently still unnoting his presence—Dinsley scowled most prodigiously. He turned and walked up along the oval green that fringed the track. He was headed for the lower turn.

As he strode, he looked across the oval. Dyer flashed by the mark, half his journey completed, with Litscom at his elbow. Dinsley noticed that the gallant pair had gained a little on the others in the last half-lap. A deepening roar ascended as they sped for the lower turn.

Jerry Heath was now third, well ahead of the remaining four stragglers, who faltered in the murderous pace. But Heath was apparently hopelessly distanced by the pair of flying meteors fighting it out ahead.

The third lap was well under way, the beginning of the end on this quarter-mile track.

Old Bill Dinsley had nearly reached the turn when he whirled and stood waiting. With set teeth and gleaming eyes, arms and legs working like pistons, Dyer and Litscom shot by him, now shoulder to shoulder, going at a terrific clip. Far in their wake came Jerry Heath, running without perceptible effort, every stride leaving the four discouraged "trailers" far behind.

The coach stood with blazing eyes waiting for him. His lean jaws snapped together like those of a nutcracker. His big hands were clenched; he crouched as if he were about to hurl himself upon the advancing runner.

Instead, as Heath flashed alongside,

Dinsley whirled and ran along the strip of green beside him. The lean jaws opened. A miracle occurred. From that mouth which had for years dropped sparingly single syllables there issued a torrent of them, merging in a scourging thong, a roweling spur to action.

"You eight-day clock!" bawled old Bill, as he raced stride for stride with this fading phenomenon. "You stationary engine! You run like you was skippin' a rope! Some one ought to put a dress on you! Where's your doll and hoop? You're that yellow you hurt my eyes! Trail in, you heartless wonder, and then go die. Some one ought to tow you in! I picked out your mother in the stand. *I know 'cause she was hidin' her face!*"

For once the speckled face turned to old Bill's sneering visage with an expression of flaring hatred. Then it tensed in an expression it had never worn before. The red head bent as if to charge a whole army. There was a flash of a hurtling form and a deep-throated roar from the crowd as Jerry Heath left his racing mentor in a most discourteous hurry.

Old Bill came to a halt. A wry smile crinkled the corners of his mouth. He strolled slowly across the oval, watching his galvanized fiend tearing after those two flying leaders, at every giant stride cutting down the intervening distance.

The trio sped by the mark and squared away for the final quarter. The great stadium shook with thunderous sound. In a half-lap Jerry Heath had cut down a third of the distance toward that approaching lead.

In the center of the oval the veteran whirled slowly, his glowing, puckered eyes, like those thousands of other eyes riveted upon the long-legged whirlwind now eating up distance in prodigious strides. The coach's gaze flashed for an instant to the stop-watch in his hand, set with the shot of the starter's pistol. Then, alternately watching it and the runners, he walked swiftly over to the line as the men tore around the lower turn into the stretch.

While men shouted and women

screamed, while collegians danced as if demented, and megaphones and caps were thrown high in air, Dinsley stood stoically by the timers, stop-watch in hand. A red-haired fury came flying down the stretch, already lengths in advance of Dyer and Litscom, still close together, but blown.

Past a massed, screeching lane of humanity flew Jerry Heath, speckled features mobilized in a vengeful grin, teeth flashing like those of the carnivori, glaring eyes temporarily unattractive. Faster and faster he came, his spikes spurning the cinders, gathering force with every stride. He covered the last hundred yards as if the race had been for that distance, while the craning thousands wholly parted with the poise of sanity. With upflung arms he broke the tape as Dyer just entered the shadow of the covered section.

Old Bill, stop-watch in hand, leaned toward the timers. "What d' ye make it?" he bawled above the din.

Their watches matched his own. Not only had Jerry smashed all university records, his time was a full two-fifths of a second better than the intercollegiate record established by Danby, Heath's predecessor of Perham, the year before.

The tumult died long enough to allow the announcement of this fact. Then it was doubled, tripled, and quadrupled. Jerry, still glaring, would have liked a word with old Bill. Instead he was made the helpless center of a human vortex, and rose out of the whirlpool like a flurried nymph, perched, protesting, upon jubilant shoulders.

Jerry sat that evening in the parlor of the Hotel Five Nations. Upon the sofa next his chair sat, bolt upright and with primly folded hands, a plump, pretty little woman with brown hair softly tinged with gray. She had beautiful eyes. Jerry's eyes were like hers.

There came a hesitant step. They turned to behold old Bill Dinsley standing in the doorway.

At sight of the little woman Bill crossed to the sofa in two giant strides. His big hand eagerly sought her own, gave it one

awkward shake, and dropped it. He turned to Jerry. Their hands met hard.

"Mad?" asked Bill.

There crossed Jerry's face the most spontaneous grin that had ever visited it.

"No!" he exclaimed fervently.

He turned to the little woman. "I'm going out, ma," he said. "I'll be right back."

Old Bill took the chair Jerry had vacated. The little woman gazed at him with shining eyes. Dinsley, with an effort, leaped into conversation of limited syllables.

"It's been a long time."

"Yes," she answered. "Going on thirty years." In sparing conversation, as well as in the item of eyes, Jerry was the son of his mother.

"I saw you in the stand," he continued. "I'd known you anywhere."

"I'd known you, too. I saw you on the track."

"Did you know I was coachin' him?"

"No. He don't write much. He didn't want me to come. Afraid he wouldn't win, I find. He just told me what you said to him."

Old Bill grinned. "He's some kid. Win the intercollegiate sure."

"I hope so." Her warm smile belied her calm words.

Across his lined face a shadow drifted. "Hope he wins *all* life's races. I lost one; the *big* one."

She sat silent, with nervous, folded hands, her frank eyes a little misty.

"We never said much," Bill went on. "If we talked a little more, it might have been as well."

"It might," conceded the little woman. Her tone held a hint of reserve.

Hurriedly Bill skated off the ice. "I knew Jerry when he started training, before I knew his name. Knew him by the eyes. They're yours."

"I've been told so," she answered primly.

"Made up my mind he *couldn't* lose, with a mother like you. I made him win!"

"You certainly did!" Now her tone was as spontaneous as a girl's. Her sweet eyes glowed, while little pink banners flaunted in her soft, round cheeks.

Dinsley asked his next question with an effort. "Where's—his father? He here with you?"

"Mr. Heath?" she answered a little hesitatingly. "Oh, didn't you ever hear? He died when Jerry was five. Of course, you wouldn't know. You went out west years ago. It didn't—turn out—very well."

Old Bill's lined face was heavy with the shadow of many years that in this moment seemed irretrievably wasted. "It—didn't," he stammered, and paused.

"We bury those things with the dead," she supplied with gentle dignity. "I brought up Jerry. I took in sewing; we got along. He earned his money for college."

Suddenly Dinsley's face grew lighter. Hope once more glowed in his bachelor breast. After all, there were some years ahead.

"When you going back to Homer?" he ventured.

"To-morrow."

Bill cleared his throat. "What's the use of goin' back?"

"What do you mean?" she queried.

"I ain't never married. Will you marry me?"

He sat fidgeting with his hat, as self-conscious as a boy in his best suit. His eyes sought her face, grown pink as a young girl's. She sat with downcast gaze, her hands twisted in her lap. Together they resurrected a past which in this moment seemed as yesterday.

Finally she looked up at him. And her eyes also were like a young girl's.

"Yes," she told him.

He dropped his hat and grasped her hands.

"When?"

"Well," she replied, her voice as frank as her eyes, "I don't care if I never go back to Homer. I can send for my things."

Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



WITH every passing day the wild places of the earth grow fewer; each rising sun sees the reclamation of some great waste visibly advanced. Civilization, that for centuries crawled slowly, painfully forward, now, aided by steam, electricity—and high-power guns, strides onward, resistless, inexorable. Trolley-cars run where a few years ago savages roamed at will; cities rise in deserts that for ages had borne no greater burden than the feet of an occasional and hardy adventurer.

About Asia and Africa the bonds are tightening; the rod of the surveyor has banished the mystery of the great Amazon Valley; only the great, frozen North holds out, and even *there* the steel and wire tentacles of civilization are pushing onward. It is still unconquered, however; vast, silent, iron-hard, cruel, and remorseless; and as the country so the men—and women—it produces, for here as nowhere else the doctrine of the survival of the fittest is exemplified; only the fit—the perfectly fit—*can* survive.

So, naturally, when we want a hero—a *real* hero of epic proportions, of red blood and iron soul—we turn to the country that produces such men—the great Northwest. It is here that our new five-part serial, which begins next week, is laid. It is called—

THE GUN BRAND

BY JAMES B. HENDRYX

Author of "The Promise," "The One Big Thing," "Marquard the Silent," etc.

and certainly no one is better qualified to tell the story of such a hero—and heroine—than this author, as those of you who have read any of his other stories will testify. *Bob MacNair*—"Brute" *MacNair*, as he is called—is the hero; born at the Hudson Bay post of which his father was a factor, he becomes a free-trader upon his father's death, and the influence of his powerful personality is soon felt throughout the North. The heroine, *Chloe Elliston*, is a city and college-bred girl, but in her veins runs the blood of old "Tiger" *Elliston*, whose heroic work in the conquest and civilization of the Malay Archipelago was second only to that of Brooke the elder; and it is the drive of this restless, unconquerable blood that has sent her into the heart of the wild Athabasca country to bring education and civilization to the Indians.

I am not going to tell you a thing about this story; it would be impossible to do so without, to some extent, anticipating; but I will say that from beginning to end it is full of strongly dramatic situations, vivid pictures of life in that land of ice and iron, and some of the most splendid characters you have met in a long time—*Pierre Lapierre*, for instance, the polished, college-bred, quarter-breed free-trader; and *Big Lena*, *Chloe's* gigantic and faithful Swedish maid. Nor must we forget *Wee Johnny Tamarack*, *MacNair's* old Indian henchman, and the half-breed, *Louis Lejroy*, who— But that is enough, only do not fail to get next week's **ALL-STORY** and begin this wonderful story.

DID you read "Narcissus," by Horatio Winslow, in the October 14 number of this magazine? One enthusiastic fan wrote in to say that he had studied Latin and Greek authors in the original, but had never, in all his experience, read such an accurate and convincing picture of ancient Rome as was contained in that story. And as far as Ye Editor was concerned, he crowned the novelette forthwith as being a hundred per cent perfect, technically.

Well, we've got another "Narcissus" for you next week, but as different a story as possible in almost every way. It is—

OZER TOTI'S DAUGHTER

BY JENNIE HASKELL ROSE

You've read Longfellow's "Saga of King Olaf" in all probability, and have been thrilled through by the stirring verse—of grim vikings and the rapture of the sea-fight and the capture, and the life of slavery. "It was Einar Tamberskelver stood beside the mast, from his yew-bow tipped with silver, flew the arrows fast; aimed at Eric unavailing as he sat concealed half behind the quarter-railling, half behind his shield—" and the rest. And you've read mighty little fiction of that time and country at that, we'll venture to say.

Ozer Toti's daughter, *Gunkhilda* of Helgeland, was as real a character as Olaf himself, though she lived a hundred years before Olaf's time. She was as young as she was beautiful at the period of this story, and as deadly dangerous as she was young. Her gray-green eyes could promise all things to a man at one moment, and freeze him the next. And when her father, the bonde, sent her to Lapland to learn magic of the Lapp wizards—

But wait till next week. You won't regret it.

THE search for the unexplainable riddle of the universe goes on unceasingly. The curiosity of man is his most persistent faculty, and no problem has exercised his inquiring genius more than the problem of the why of man himself. What is the spark of life? When it sputters out and leaves the husk it occupied to become mere waxen-colored clay—what happens then?

LIBERTY OR DEATH?

BY CHARLES B. STILSON

A "Different" Story

is the amazingly fantastic conception, born in the mind of *Theron Karker*, of a soul's activity after death. The theory expounded is simply a theory, and makes no pretense to be anything more than that; but it is an astonishingly grip-

ping piece of fiction, altogether worthy of a place in our "different" department.

Than which no higher praise need be given.

"THE LATE FIGGER BUSH," by E. K. Means, is another delightful Tickfall comedy, which goes to prove what the Persian prince learned to his sorrow—that it is foolish to flee from your lion.

Figger's lion was a mighty harmless one—or so it seemed to *Figger*; in short, it was that ebony gentleman's granddad. But in view of the fact that *Figger*—about the laziest dorky in Tickfall—had trouble enough to keep his own soul and body together without working, he had no intention whatever of supporting his ancient "kinnery."

So *Figger* sought the advice and counsel of *Skeeter Butts* and *Vinegar Atts*, and among them they cooked up a scheme that you shall learn all about next week.

"CONSIDER THE OATH OF M'TAGA," by Achmed Abdullah, is another story of that remarkable firm of traders on the west coast of Africa, *Donachie and Daud*, known affectionately over half the continent as the firm of DD. Captain Abdullah certainly knows the native of Africa as few do—as no white man but an Arab can—and in this story he introduces you to a phase of native character in his relation to his white masters that is as strange as it is interesting. *Lieutenant Johnny Mortimer* was new to the coast; he did not realize—though *Mahmoud Ali Daud*, the Arab member of the firm of DD, endeavored to show him—that there is a difference between a mission-bred coast negro and a chief of the Bayaka. *Johnny* couldn't see it at all, and his blindness cost him— Well, that is the story, or part of it. The other part *Daud* himself played, and that, I think, is enough to tell you here. But do not fail to read the story next week. It is very much worth while.

"FROZEN GROUND," by Thomas Jeffries Betts, is an intimate little study of Chinese life that in its way is a little gem—a picture. There are all kinds of pictures in the world; big, splashy oils and soft water-colors; fine, clean-cut engravings, delicate etchings, and the ubiquitous photograph. But this story is neither one nor the other; in the truth and minuteness of its detail it is, perhaps, photographic, but it has also the subtle softness and charm of a perfect miniature—and that is exactly what it is. And that is all I am going to tell you about it, for it would be a shame to spoil by even a hint your enjoyment of this little masterpiece next week.

NOTICE.—Inquiries concerning stories that we have published will be answered in the Heart to Heart Talks only when the name of the author as well as the title of the story is supplied by the correspondent.

"TOO MUCH EFFICIENCY" WINS

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been a constant reader of your splendid magazine, the ALL-STORY, ever since you started it, and I have never missed a copy of it, and, what's more, I have never been disappointed in your stories.

I read the ALL-STORY from cover to cover, including the Heart to Heart Talks, and am very much pleased with the whole thing.

I was very much pleased with the stories "Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar," by Edgar Rice Burroughs, and "Too Much Efficiency," by E. J. Rath.

With my congratulations, and wishes for the best of luck,

S. SILEIN.

1002 Davenport Street,
Omaha, Nebraska.

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been a reader of the ALL-STORY since the first part of "Too Much Efficiency." It is the best story I have ever read.

Some more of E. J. Rath's stories, please!

LOUISE FEHR.

937 Eighth Avenue,
New York, New York.

NOTE: "Too Much Efficiency," by E. J. Rath, is published in book form by W. S. Watt & Co., New York, at \$1.35 net.

THROUGH COLD AND STORM FOR ALL-STORY

TO THE EDITOR:

I enclose one dollar to continue our subscription to the ALL-STORY from February 3.

My wife and I have been reading the ALL-STORY for two years. We read many periodicals, and consider the ALL-STORY the best magazine we can find on any news-stand when we are traveling. We are at home this winter, and while we are a mile and half from the post-office, it is never too cold or stormy to make the trip on Friday to get the ALL-STORY.

I wish to congratulate you on the "make-up" of your magazine and your staff of writers. I

can honestly say that I read every issue from cover to cover and enjoy it immensely. Of course, every reader of a magazine has his favorite writers—my wife and I find several among the staff of the ALL-STORY.

"The Brass Check" was intensely interesting; "The Iron Rider" kept us anxious for the next instalment; "The Black Cloud" was gripping from start to finish. Achmed Abdullah fascinates us with the mysticism of the East. James Frederick Topping must have had some experience in the show business to be able to write his *Mrs. McJimsey* stories—every trouser can sure appreciate them. But Dr. E. K. Means is my favorite, and, like Achmed Abdullah, he must have "been there," and he certainly has made a study of his subject. To me each of his articles grows more interesting.

May the ALL-STORY long continue to enjoy its well-earned success!

J. W. SIGHTS.

Moquah, Wisconsin.

O'LIGHT! WE TALKEE MISSA GLEY

TO THE EDITOR:

What's a malla you no likee Zane Gley? Me heap likee Missa Gley light um heap long story. Bym by you talkee Missa Gley light um story heap quick.

Heap likee Bulloughs. Maybe so likee E. K. Means. Too muchee like H. Footner. Bym by likee Beecham.

Me ketchum ALL-STORY three year. Me ketchum si'ty-fi' year more if me no ketchum all samee dead.

O'light! You talkee Missa Gley. Goo'-by.

D. J. DUTTON,

47 Whiting Avenue,
Detroit, Michigan.

YES! THE SAME JOHN BARNETT

TO THE EDITOR:

I desire to thank you for a really fine story that you published last fall, "Breath of the Dragon."

Are we to have any more stories by Johnston McCulley similar to "Captain Fly-By-Night"? And why not give us the last of Frank Bligh-ton's trilogy about "Mr. North of Nowhere?"

Now that I am started, anyhow, I might as well continue in the general custom and mention the stories I like: "The Huntress," by Hulbert Footner; "The Border Legion," by Zane Grey; "Nuala O'Malley," by H. Bedford-Jones, and "The Affair of Dahjangsari," by John Charles Beecham. Is the John Barnett who wrote "Posh Luker" the same one who wrote "Grana's Son"? And why not have E. K.

Means write a regular mystery serial for us?
His "Hoodoo Face" was excellent.

Yours very truly,

MARY LEWIS.

St. Louis, Missouri.

"THE BORDER LEGION" IN BOOK FORM

TO THE EDITOR:

I have never before taken the liberty of expressing my appreciation of the fine stories you have been publishing in the ALL-STORY.

The only fault I have to find with your magazine is the lack of athletic stories.

My favorite authors are E. J. Rath, Zane Grey, Gregory, E. K. Means, and George A. England.

Give us more like "Too Much Efficiency" and "The Brass Check." Can you tell me in the Heart to Heart Talks in what numbers I can secure "The Border Legion," by Zane Grey?

Very sincerely yours,

JACK KELLEY.

Anniston, Alabama.

NOTE: "The Border Legion," by Zane Grey, was published in the ALL-STORY, January 15 to February 19, 1916. We can supply the six issues for twenty cents each. It has also been published in book form by Harper & Brothers, at \$1.35 net.

TO THE LAST DOUBLE-JITNEY

TO THE EDITOR:

I am not an old reader of your fine publication, and so I cannot go very far back to tell you how much I've enjoyed your stories. It was only recently that I got hold of a copy, in fact, and what I read there convinced me that the ALL-STORY is about the best magazine going. If it keeps to its present pace, I'll read it if it takes my last double-jitney!

Not long ago you published in your Heart to Heart Talks a letter by William Rand Loescher. I want to say that this young man is a very good friend of mine, and that is the reason I stopped in his home town, Holyoke. It was through him I came in contact with ALL-STORY, for he is a great reader and a good critic. Well, to resume. He and I used to travel together, and many were the adventures we faced side by side. There were four of us, and he was the acknowledged leader. And as a leader he was about the most reckless cuss who ever crossed the Mexican Line, and got himself all shot up before he had sense enough to beat it back to where he belonged. But the best of it was that no matter what predicament he got himself into, he always managed to get out again, and neatly.

He could tell a lot about our travels together, because he happens to be there in the literary line himself and is something of a talker—when he gets started.

That story about *Tarsan* was good, and the same can be said about "Too Much Efficiency," "Nuala O'Malley," "The Black Cloud," "The Yellow Furlough," "The Golden Hope," "The Brass Check," "The God of the Invincibly Strong Arms," "Jewels and Fine Gold," the E. K. Means stories, "The Girl from Farris's," *et cetera*.

Too many people are kicking about Means, and I think it about time to say that he is one of the best writers on the staff of the ALL-STORY.

Very sincerely yours,

ERIC DREFKE.

Holyoke, Massachusetts.

LETTERETTES

Although I have been a reader of your stories for over a year, this is the first letter I have written to you to let you know how much I enjoy reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

I think that our readers ought to thank you as well as the authors for the many good stories they have given us this last year. At least I thank you, because you are responsible for the good stories.

ESTHER THURBER.

Newport, Kentucky.

Although I have only been reading the ALL-STORY for several months, I cannot but say that it is the best fiction magazine I have ever read.

Although some of the stories are highly imaginative, they are written in a way that makes one feel oneself a part of the plot. The serials are the best part of the ALL-STORY, although some of the short stories are fine.

I would like to see a story with the plot centering around wireless telegraphy. The best stories I have read so far in the ALL-STORY are "The Courtship Superlative," "Contraband," and "The Girl from Farris's." I think the last-named is a masterpiece. It sure is some story.

RONALD DeMUTH.

210 High Street,
Streator, Illinois.

I like the ALL-STORY WEEKLY best of all magazines, and the continued stories are the best I ever read. I like Zane Grey's works about the best of all, and would like to know if we are soon to have another good serial from him.

ESTHER G. JOHNSON.

89 Palisade Avenue,
Jersey City, New Jersey.

How I Raised My Earnings from \$30 to \$1000 a week

*The Story of a Young Man's
Remarkable Rise, as Told by Himself*

THREE years ago I was earning \$30 per week. With a wife and two children to support it was a constant struggle to make both ends meet. We saved very little, and that only by sacrificing things we really needed. To-day my earnings average a thousand dollars weekly. I own two automobiles. My children go to private schools. I have just purchased, for cash, a \$25,000 home. I go hunting, fishing, motoring, traveling, whenever I care to, and I do less work than ever before.

What I have done, anyone can do—for I am only an average man. I have never gone to college, my education is limited, and I am not "brilliant" by any means. I personally know at least a hundred men who are better business men than I, who are better educated, who are better informed on hundreds of subjects, and who have much better ideas than I ever had. Yet not one of them approaches my earnings. I mention this merely to show that earning capacity is not governed by the extent of a man's education and to convince my readers that there is only *one* reason for my success—a reason I will give herein.

One day, a few years ago, I began to "take stock" of myself. I found that, like most other men, I had energy, ambition, determination. Yet in spite of these assets, for some reason or other I drifted along without getting anywhere. My lack of education bothered me, and I had thought seriously of making further sacrifices in order to better equip myself to earn more. Then I read somewhere that but few *millionaires* ever went to college. Edison, Rockefeller, Hill, Schwab, Carnegie—not one of them had any more schooling than I had.

One day something happened that woke me up to what was wrong with me. It was necessary for me to make a decision on a matter which was of no great consequence. I knew in my heart what was the right thing to do, but something held me back. I said one thing, then another; I decided one way, then another. I couldn't for the life of me make the decision I knew was right.

I lay awake most of that night thinking about the matter—not because it was of any great importance in itself, but because I was beginning to discover myself. Along towards dawn I resolved to try an experiment. I decided to cultivate my will power, believing that if I did this I would not hesitate about making decisions—that when I had an idea I would have sufficient confidence in myself to put it "over"—that I would not be "afraid" of myself or of things or of others. I felt that if I could smash my ideas across I would soon make my presence felt. I knew that heretofore I had always begged for success—had always stood, hat in hand, depending on others to "give" me the things I desired. In short, I was controlled by the will of others. Henceforth, I determined to have a strong will of my own—to demand and command what I wanted.

But how shall I begin? What shall I do first? It was easy enough for me to determine to do things—I had "determined" many times before. But this was a question of will power, and I made up my mind that the first step was to muster up enough of my own will power to stick to and carry out my determination.

With this new purpose in mind I applied myself to finding out something more about will power. I was sure that other men must have studied the subject, and the results of their experience would doubtless be of great value to me in understanding the workings of my own will. So, with a directness of purpose that I had scarcely known before, I began my search.

The results at first were discouraging. While a good deal had been written about the memory and other faculties of the brain, I could find nothing that offered any help to me in acquiring the new power that I had hoped might be possible.

But a little later in my investigation I encountered the works of Prof. Frank Channing Haddock. To my amazement and delight I discovered that this eminent scientist, whose name ranks with James, Bergson and Royce, had just

completed the most thorough and constructive study of will power ever made. I was astonished to read his statement, "The will is just as susceptible of development as the muscles of the body!" My question was answered! Eagerly I read further—how Dr. Haddock had devoted twenty years to this study—how he had so completely mastered it that he was actually able to set down the very exercises by which anyone could develop the will, making it a bigger, stronger force each day, simply through an easy, progressive course of Training.

It is almost needless to say that I at once began to practice the exercises formulated by Dr. Haddock. And I need not recount the extraordinary results that I obtained almost from the first day. I have already indicated the success that my developed power of will has made for me.

But it may be thought that my case is exceptional. Let me again assure you that I am but an average man, with no super-developed powers, save that of my will. And to further prove my contention, let me cite one or two instances I have since come across, which seem to show conclusively that an indomitable will can be developed by anyone.

One case that comes to my mind is that of a young man who worked in a big factory. He was bright and willing, but seemed to get nowhere. Finally he took up the study of will training, at the suggestion of Mr. W. M. Taylor, the famous efficiency expert of the Willys-Overland Company, and in less than a year his salary was increased 800%. Then there is the case of C. D. Van Vechten, General Agent of the Northwestern Life Insurance Company, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Just a short time after receiving the methods in will development suggested by Prof. Haddock, he felt that they would be worth from \$3,000 to \$30,000 to him.

Another man, Mr. H. D. Ferguson, residing in Hot Springs, Ark., increased his earnings from \$40 a week to \$90 a week in a remarkably short space of time after he began the study of will training. These are but a few—there are many other equally amazing examples which I personally know about. And aside from the financial gain, this training has enabled thousands to overcome drink and other vices almost overnight—has helped overcome sickness and nervousness,

has transformed unhappy, envious, discontented people into dominating personalities filled with the joy of living.

Prof. Haddock's lessons, rules and exercises in will training have recently been compiled and published in book form by the Pelton Publishing Co., of Meriden, Conn. Mr. Pelton has authorized me to say that any reader who cares to examine the book may do so without sending any money in advance. In other words, if after a week's reading you do not feel that this book is worth \$3, the sum asked, return it and you will owe nothing. When you receive your copy for examination I suggest that you first read the articles on: the law of great thinking; how to develop analytical power; how to perfectly concentrate on any subject; how to guard against errors in thought; how to drive from the mind unwelcome thoughts; how to develop fearlessness; how to use the mind in sickness; how to acquire a dominating personality.

Some few doubters will scoff at the idea of will power being the fountainhead of wealth, position and everything we are striving for, and some may say that no mere book can teach the development of the will. But the great mass of intelligent men and women will at least investigate for themselves by sending for the book at the publisher's risk. I am sure that any book that has done for me—and for thousands of others—what "Power of Will" has done—is well worth investigating. It is interesting to note that among the 150,000 owners who have read, used and praised "Power of Will," are such prominent men as Supreme Court Justice Parker; Wu Ting Fang, Ex-U. S. Chinese Ambassador; Lieut.-Gov. McKelvie, of Nebraska; Assistant Postmaster-General Britt; General Manager Christeson, of Wells-Fargo Express Co.; E. St. Elmo Lewis; Governor Arthur Capper, of Kansas, and thousands of others.

As a first step in will training, I would suggest immediate action in this matter before you. It is not even necessary to write a letter. Use the form below, if you prefer, addressing it to the Pelton Publishing Company, 54-F Wilcox Block, Meriden, Conn., and the book will come by return mail. This one act may mean the turning point of your life, as it has meant to me and to so many others.

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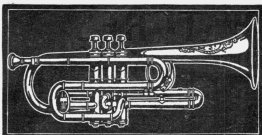
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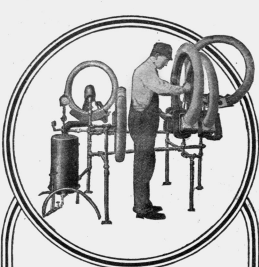
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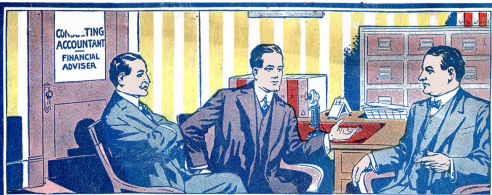
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