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ALL-STORY WEEKLY

A dramatic illustration of a pirate scene. In the foreground, a pirate with a red bandana and a large earring is shown in profile, looking down at a sword. In the background, another pirate is visible on a boat, holding a pistol. The scene is set on a body of water with a dark, stormy sky.

Cruises
of
Jonathan
Parsons, A.B.
by John R. Spears

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SATURDAY, JULY 12, 1919



Cruises of Jonathan Parsons, A. B.

by John R. Spears

A Seafaring Adventurer of the Days of Jean Lafitte

HERE is a real he-man sea story by an author who not only knows the sea and ships from practical experience, but is also one of the greatest living authorities on all things nautical, both modern and historical. Among the best known of his historical works are "A History of the American Navy"; "Our Navy in the Spanish War"; "The Story of New England Whalers"; "The Story of the American Merchant Marine"; "Master Mariners," and many others on kindred subjects. Of his fiction, probably "The Port of Missing Ships" is the best known, but it is only one of many. In the present story, against a background of history, and in a period that is perhaps one of the most romantic in American sea annals, he has woven an adventure yarn that will keep the reader at fever heat from start to finish.

CHAPTER I.

AN ANCIENT DIARY.

WHILE I was prowling around a second-hand book store, well-known to the people of New York in other days as the Literary Junk Shop, the genial proprietor of it came to me bringing a compact, leather-bound blank book about as large as a common 12mo volume and something more than an inch thick.

At first glance it was seen that the corners of the book had been carefully trimmed with a sharp knife in a way suggesting that the owner had shaped it thus

in order that it might then be easily slipped into his pocket; though of course it was possible he was merely removing dog-ears acquired in the course of long use.

It was also seen at the same time that the leather binding had been worn at the edges until the pasteboard was exposed to view while the back had been so badly broken that a length of twine such as sailors use when patching sails had been wound around it to hold it together.

"I have observed that you are interested in all sorts of books pertaining to the sea," said the dealer in literary junk, as he offered the book to me, "and so it occurred

to me that you were sure to like this, for it is a seaman's diary."

On taking the book and turning one side to the light of a near-by window the following title, though it had been written with a quill pen and was badly faded and worn, was yet legible:

Log of the Cruises
of
Jonathan Parsons, A.B.
Beginning
November 27, 1817.

The date of the title was immediately impressive, for, as the reader well knows, the period during which this sailor thus declared he was afloat was that following our War of 1812, and it included the years when the Spanish-American colonies were fighting for freedom from the rule of Spain—years, too, when many American-owned cruisers sailed, well-armed, under the flags of the revolutionists in search of Spanish galleons laden with jewels, doubloons, pieces of eight, and cochineal. Moreover, not a few of those cruisers were named by crews who, when they failed to find Spanish ships, fell upon those flying other flags.

As Parsons had used the word cruises rather than voyages to describe his peregrinations, the title of the book suggested at once that he might have had berths on some of those more or less piratical ships—and a man who loves sea stories could hope for nothing more interesting than a first-hand account of the doings of such an unscrupulous adventurer.

Accordingly I quickly removed the twine that held the book together and exposed a page, here and there, to the light. It was now seen that the leaves were a pale blue in color, that they were thin but entirely opaque, and that they were covered with writing that, though done with a quill and with small letters, was singularly clear and easily read. Manifestly, Parsons was not of the ignorant foremast hands usually found in the forecastles of that period, and the perusal of but few lines was needed to confirm the view conveyed by a first glance at the penmanship.

This is to say that he appeared to be well educated, though perhaps not as well

as were those ancient buccaneers who used to quote Latin poetry and read Greek plays to while away the tedious hours of their cruises. There were, for example, a few plain errors in his use of English. But he certainly had the knack of expressing his ideas in words that were not to be misunderstood and very often they were notably forceful.

A further inspection of the diary showed that a leaf had been cut out, here and there, and from one to two or three sheets of blue writing paper, well covered with writing, inserted to replace each excised leaf; so one felt justified in supposing that this wandering sailor had been inspired, as were a few of the old-time buccaneers, with a desire to portray to the world, by means of a printed volume the pictures of life at sea as he had seen them in those troublesome days; and that with this end in view he had rewritten and enlarged upon the original entries in the "log."

"I was out on Long Island—Hurstweir, on the Great South Bay—for three days, last week," explained the literary junk dealer, "and I there made the acquaintance of Mr. Johnson Arkwright. The Arkwrights, as you know, are among the oldest families on the island. Johnson, who is a white-haired old man, is the fifth, he said, who has borne that given name. The men as a rule have all gone to sea in their younger days, and so, as you would naturally imagine, the old Arkwright mansion is decorated with the spoils of the sea, and more especially with models and half models of vessels in which members of the family have sailed.

"And no more remarkable collection of such models can be found on the island, as I will venture to say. Fancy a hull that would carry no more than two-hundred tons of cargo rigged with two enormous masts crossing yards up to royals and every yard showing stunsail booms! You see I picked up the sea lingo talking to the old gentleman, though I may not have it quite straight.

"Now the model that attracted me most was that of a schooner said to 'measure one-hundred and seven tons, neat,' that was a regular yacht but of ancient rig.

She was sharp as a needle forward, broad in the middle, with clean-lines aft and had a heel that reached down much like the fin of one of our big single stickers. Mr. Arkwright said that she was of the old Baltimore pilot model but had been built at Northport, on the island, and then he added:

"She was named the *Nemesis* and was used as a privateer in the War of 1812 with great success. My grandfather, the third Johnson Arkwright, owned her at one time after the war and our traditions tell us that she had quite a remarkable career."

"That's very interesting," I said, and then continued: "I wonder now if you have any of her old logs kept when she was an American privateer."

"You see I was looking, with an eye to business, for an original source of information in connection with that war."

"There is no regular log of the *Nemesis* at any period of her life," he replied, "but I have the diary of a man who made several cruises in her during the period when, as I said, she had some remarkable experiences. I'll show it to you."

"Then he brought me this old blank-book and a clipping from an old Long Island newspaper which you will find folded against the inside of the back cover. He wanted to know how much I thought the old book was worth. And when, after a look through it, I offered him two dollars, he accepted the money with the air of a man who thinks he has made a good bargain. Er—I will show a similar air if you think it is worth five dollars to you."

As he talked I went on turning the leaves and I read enough to perceive that Jonathan Parsons, A.B., had made a voyage to Africa for slaves that was unique in its plan; that he had been associated with the filibusters under Sir Gregor McGregor, who had tried to establish a republic in Florida when that territory belonged to Spain; that he had narrowly escaped hanging at the hands of Jean Lafitte when that notable sea "bosse" was managing a sea "fence" on the island where Galveston now stands, and, what was still more interesting to me, he had

been a member of a crew of genuine black-flag pirates when they attacked an American merchantman, and he had there turned upon them with results that not only astounded them, but, later, him as well. Here, confessedly was a tale of the sea that made my blood jump.

So I bought the "log" forthwith and now I have in mind to carry out, as well as I can, the supposed design of the adventurous sailor—that of publishing the story in order to give the world some views of life at sea in the days when our nation was young, its seamen unafraid and, at times, unscrupulous.

CHAPTER II.

J. PARSONS, "MISSIONARY."

AS the story runs, beginning on the first page of the log, Parsons was in Baltimore when he bought the blank-book and began to write in it. He had gone there to ship on some one of the privateers then sailing out of that port under various Spanish-American flags, but before he found a berth to his liking he had the misfortune to be "recognized on the street by the boatswain of the *Philippe* galley."

"I had sooner thought to meet the devil," he continues, "but when I would have killed him for the lashes he gave me in those days, he fled down an alley and I lost him. And the worst of it was he then told everybody alongshore all he knew and all he could imagine about me, so that I have no chance for an officer's berth."

"It is not the story that I was on the galley that hurts me; other birds of the feather have held commissions on the cruisers here, but he has been telling that I am gun-shy; and he brings two of his chums to support his lie by telling that I was court-martialed for cowardice on the Macedonian. I have admitted that I was court-martialed for leaving post, and that I confessed my guilt at the trial, but that the thing I did was to climb on top the hammock nettings in order to get a better chance to use my musket.

"Did that help me any? Not a red.

For officers looking for berths are thicker than cockroaches alongshore here, and no one will take a chance on me as long as I am under suspicion. In fact, when I have told the owners, thinking to prove my courage, that I have done my best to overhaul Pierre, who always runs, I have been laughed at. For he has brought in prizes. However, I'll get him yet!"

At that time, however, Parsons was unable to take vengeance on his enemy, for the former boatswain—his name was Pierre Soult—had become an American citizen and captain of a South American cruiser named Sagacity, which sailed on a cruise, while I combed the streets to find him.

"Being now well assured that he could not get a commission, Parsons gave up trying and took passage on a sloop to New York, bound, as the diary notes, to see his "old-time friend, Deacon Johnson Arkwright of Hurstweir, Long Island."

On the way, Parsons evolved a plan for a slaving voyage to Africa on a quite novel plan, and he expresses the belief that the deacon would enter into it with enthusiasm. The result of his appeal to his old friend, as it appears, fully met his expectations, and as he was eventually—in the following March—carrying out the plan, fortune favored him in a most interesting fashion.

The plan, it may be noted, shows the audacity of the man. He was to pose as a missionary who was anxious to go to Africa to "save the lost souls of the heathen." In order to obtain funds for this purpose, he proposed preaching a series of missionary sermons on the island and then appealing to the "righteous to take shares in a missionary ship at one dollar per. If I get the funds and the ship, the rest will be easy," says the diary.

Of the first of these sermons for which the deacon soon provided the opportunity, little need be said, but one which was delivered on March 22, is of special interest.

As Parsons tells the story it was with great difficulty that he held the attention of his congregation on that day, but it was not because of any lack on his part. In fact there were many points about him and his sermon—points which he enumerates in the diary—that were likely to impress an

alongshore congregation. For one thing he had a personality that commanded attention. He was tall and gaunt, his eyes were dark and piercing, his smooth-shaven jaws "opened and shut like the jaws of a wolf trap," and his long hair "shook like a mane" when, "with deep-toned voice and slugging gestures," he quoted passage after passage of Scripture "to fasten every statement" he made regarding the faith. The quoted words were written by the man.

Observe that word "fasten." Having been a sailor, as he proclaimed at every opportunity, the stories he told to illustrate his text and many of his words were of the sea and ships. The people of Hurstweir had never listened to a speaker who was so easily comprehended as this one.

But there was one other attraction which held the interest of the people in this strange man—what Parsons calls a biographical attraction—and it was excessively annoying to him. Among the people of Hurstweir was an old sailor named Benjamin Hawkins. "Old Ben," as he was called, had sailed on many seas and had served in the ships of England and France as well as in those under the "gridiron flag"; and when he heard that "a sea-faring evangelist named Jonathan Parsons was to preach a series of missionary sermons," he abandoned his customary seat at the tavern to attend the first of them.

"He came in with others, so that I did not twig him," writes Parsons, "and he took a seat in the shadow of the fireplace where he thought I could not see him. But soon after I began my opening effort, I saw him keeping a bright lookout.

"Of all places to meet the old scalawag, this was the worst, but I soon bumped across the reef and was able to carry on all sail just as if he was not there."

When the discourse was ended, old Ben mingled with the people and "declared with a string of oaths a fathom long, for he can't talk without profanity," that when in the harbor of Marseilles, "before the war, he had seen this strange evangelist chained to an oar of a galley named the Philipine."

The people of Hurstweir could hardly believe old Ben, at first. They thought

it a case of mistaken identity. But the old sailor then strengthened his statement by saying:

"He hain't been in the galleys, hey? Well, now, hain't he? You seen him sway from one foot to t'other when he got excited, didn't you? You did. Watch him next time and see it again. He stood with his right foot forward, didn't he? He did. And he sawed his hands fore and aft breast high, now, didn't he? Well, now, I tell you he pulled a port-oar amidships and that's how come he makes them motions. The convicts all get just such motions."

Even that was not the end of old Ben's evidence in the matter. The next afternoon, as Parsons and Deacon Arkwright were passing the tavern, the old sailor snatched the whip from the hand of the stage-driver, who had just come in from Brooklyn, and unseen by his victim, he cracked it over the shoulders of Jonathan Parsons. Thereat, Parsons shrank away with an involuntary motion which convinced every spectator that the story of the galley was true.

"It was a scurvy trick," writes Parsons, "and my throat parched with thirst for his blood. I had well-nigh forgotten his lying testimony when I was court-martialed on the Macedonian; and his being a chum of Pierre Soult was escaping me, but now, when I would have strangled the devil's spawn the deacon caught my arm, saying I would spoil our broth if I spilled blood in it. So I let him go; and that was best after all. For the deacon told the crowd that while I had been convicted of a foul crime in a French court, it was done on perjured testimony.

"I do not deny he was a scalawag in his day, but he has since come to the foot of the cross," said the deacon, "and he is now a brand snatched from the burning."

The attack of old Ben, in fact, favored the nefarious plans which Parsons and Deacon Arkwright were pursuing. The people came out "in rapidly growing numbers and they listened with rapt interest," thereafter. But on this particular March day, Parsons was, nevertheless, wholly unable to hold their attention, and well he understood why. For "the line storm was

raging and the wind had a marvelous power. It was coming across the bay from the southeast, and smiting the shingles on the wall, until they screamed in voices that overwhelmed mine, though I shouted with a deep-toned power that would have carried to the foretopsail-yard in the roaring forties."

In such weather as that no south-shore audience could be expected to give full attention to any sermon in those days or now. "At every shiver and jump of the building all the men looked from window to window or turned to glance toward the door as if they were expecting to receive a message or a call."

Seeing the state of mind of the people, Parsons cut short his remarks as much as possible without losing the thread of his argument and at the end of twenty minutes began lining the closing hymn. And then as the audience showed manifest relief, a boy named Sembrick Prebbles, clothed in dripping oilskins, entered the church. For a moment he gazed over the audience as if frightened. Then he advanced on tiptoe to the front seat where Deacon Arkwright and Deacon Henry Stumbleforth were preparing to lead in the singing, and there said in what he intended for a whisper:

"Pop says there's a vessel driv' over the bar and she's high and dry on the beach already."

The words were heard by every person in the building, and as the boy ceased speaking, Parsons pronounced the benediction, and then hurriedly joined the men in their rush for the dunes beyond the Great South Bay.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEMESIS.

ON arriving at the edge of the bay, the people found a tide, such as they had rarely seen, had filled the bay. Boats that had been lying high on the sand with bows to the village, that morning, were now afloat at the ends of long mooring lines with bows toward the sea. But as they gazed across the torn waters, the people saw dimly through rifts in the driving rain, a

schooner's masts on the narrow island that fences off the Atlantic from the bay, and wading forth, more than twoscore of the men climbed into boats and were soon bending their willing backs in their efforts to make headway into the teeth of the opposing wind.

On arriving upon the island, however, few gave the stranded schooner a lengthened survey, for there was nothing about the wreck to attract more than a passing glance from the average citizen who then lived alongshore. For one thing every member of the crew had disappeared—drowned when she struck on the outer bar and was swept by the breakers. It appeared, however, that every citizen present at once recognized the vessel. For she was Northport built and owned—the *Nemesis*, a vessel that had served as a privateer in the War of 1812, and had since been engaged in bringing salt from Turk's Island.

A tidal wave had lifted her over the bar and carried her into a low depression between the sand dunes and there it had dropped her. The subsequent waves had eaten the sand away from under her until she was lying in a shoal inlet, but it was not at all difficult for any alongshoreman to reach her and mount to her deck. But the sails had been torn away and the running gear was flying loose in the gale. The deck had been swept clean, fore and aft, by the waves, and there was literally nothing about her for the people to "save" or rescue.

So the mass of the crowd hurried away to a belated dinner. But Deacon Johnson Arkwright, Deacon Stumbleforth, and Parsons remained to board the wreck.

To the admiration of the two older men, Parsons, when boarding her, put a hand on the flying-jib stay and with an easy swing leaped up astride of the bowsprit. They had climbed up laboriously. Then when they looked ruefully at the condition of the hulk, Parsons walked aft with his eyes on the deck, as far as the mainmast where he paused and beckoned to the others.

"Have a severe look at the mast coat," he exclaimed when they came to his side.

They did as told and then glanced significantly one to the other.

"You're a sailor-man all right," declared Stumbleforth, turning to Parsons. "Any one looking at her from the beach 'ud say she was hogged, but there's not one copper tack started in that coat. What do you suggest, Mr. Parsons?"

"We'll strip both coats, fore and main, so no one sees what we see. Then you'll sell the wreck where she lies, because she lies handy for burning to get the metal out of her; and the deacon here will bid her in for joint and private account. But will he burn her? He will not. He will put in sister and riding keelsons with a few new streaks in the bilges, and there you are with a schooner good for twenty years afloat yet. Put me in charge of the job. I'll work as ship carpenter by day and preach the Gospel by night until we launch her forth. What we will do next, we will consider meantime."

The diary of Jonathan Parsons, A.B., tells in minute detail how he toiled with a sailor's love for the work over the repair of the stranded *Nemesis*. Not only were the new timbers he had mentioned put in, but she was strengthened wherever the least weakness might have developed through the strain of the stranding. Then the cabin trunk, though it was not rotten or injured in any way, was rebuilt of solid oak, twice as thick as that which had been used. The hatches, too, were greatly strengthened with iron bars and iron lips that bit under angle irons on the coamings when slid into place.

The use of the iron on the hatches seemed superfluous to most of the critical spectators of the work, but Parsons replied:

"Gentlemen, I was second mate on the *Marjorie* when she sank on the Banks, six years ago, because her hatches were carried away and the sea got all mixed up with her cargo of bar iron, as some of you may have heard. Now, listen to me. What goes under hatches in the *Nemesis* is to stay there safe and sound until the master orders hatches off."

"I allow that not a one of them saw the drift of that small remark," says a note in the diary where the remark is recorded.

In the mean time, however, Parsons had had more trouble with old Ben Hawkins.

"The infernal scoundrel had the effrontery to come to me, last night, while I was serving as a lone watchman on our little shippie," says the diary, "and what did he do but tell me he needed a hundred dollars and he calculated I would get it for him out of the deacon's pile. I was struck speechless and when he saw it was so, he went on and said:

"Don't get excited, now, Jonathan, nor do nothing rash. Fighting's a heap wickedder for preachers than airybody else, and Deacon Arkwright is sartin sure you're a brand with the glim doused, at last. So don't you forget to keep it doused. Anyway, you'd better do as I say. You dassent kill me, and if I escape ashore again, and you fail to get the hard money for me, I'll tell everybody why you was sent to the galleys. I hain't said a word about that, so far. But that hain't all I'll do, for I'll tell them that when you escaped the Philippe and fled the country, you left behind in Bordeaux an honest wife, and y u have never so much as tried to write to her since. You never wrote a letter to anybody all the time you was on the Macedonian, anyhow, or tried in any way to help that poor girl, though you knew she wasn't able to support herself and your babe. Either you'll get me the good hard dollars or I'll expose you for the dirty loafer that you are."

"I let him have his say," continues the diary, "and then I answered as quiet and calm as if he'd been singing a lullaby.

"Ben," I said, "you've brought me up with a round turn. I don't want you telling anything like that about me, so as I've got a few dollars on board, I'll fetch 'em out. The deacon left them with me for use in case any man wanted an advance, but I guess I can make it all right with him when anything is said about our little bag of silver."

"With that I went down the companion-way. It was lucky I'd found a cat-o'-nine tails, in a locker that day, and I laughed to think it was a regular man-o'-war cat. I allow the boatswain of the Nemesis never felt as I did when I took it in my hands.

Then I hid it under my jacket behind my back, took the deacon's bag of dollars in my hand and went up on deck again.

"Here's all the money I've got on board," I said to Ben. "Would you like to count it?"

"I would that," says he, good and hearty, and held out both hands for the bag. So I gave it to him and then closed my hands around his lean old neck. I was aching to tear his head off but I held myself firm for Lucille's sake. I knew I was now to have a good chance to win a fortune for her, and that killing the infernal old liar would spoil all, as the deacon said.

"So all I did was to close his wizen, strip off his clothes and use the cat. I allow he won't sit down or lean back against anything for the next three weeks without flinching worse than I did when he cracked the stage driver's whip. Then I made him wash up the deck and promise he would not tell who skinned him under penalty of killing the next time I put hands on him."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOSPEL SHIP.

WHEN the repairs had been finished Parsons records that the total cost was "under two thousand dollars and we were offered three thousand dollars for her a week before I was done with her." But greatly to the astonishment of the citizens of Hurstweir, the Nemesis was not for sale at that price or any other. And when the deacon was asked why, he replied:

"Parsons will explain the whole matter next Sabbath morning."

When the appointed hour arrived the church where Parsons had been speaking was filled to the door, and the attention paid to his words was now in marked contrast with that given him on the day of the storm. The sermon was of course, what was called a missionary effort. The speaker was more eloquent than he had ever been before, so the diary declared, and the tales told to illustrate his argument were drawn from his most exciting experiences as a

wanderer. The horrors of savage life in the wilds of Africa were dwelt upon, chiefly. Finally, when describing a war between two neighboring tribes he told how the aggressive warriors crept into a village at night while its people were all asleep; how the awakened men, women, and children were mercilessly slaughtered; how a number of them were saved alive for sacrifice to the devilish spirits the conquerors worshiped as gods, and how the unhappy prisoners were then tortured to death. "And the torture was described in such detail that the shuddering listeners seemed to see the quivering flesh and the gushing blood of the dying wretches," declares the diary. Then it continues:

"At that I paused and gazed over the people until they leaned forward breathless for the moment in order not to miss a word of what I would say next, and then I went on in a voice that trembled with emotion:

"Brethren, as each soul was thus tortured from the torn bodies of those heathen, there were devils in waiting in the air round about to grasp it and carry it shrieking away to the internal torment of the pit, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

"Brethren, the vision of those writhing bodies has haunted me to this day. In that wretched hour I vowed that I would not rest until I had saved some of the lost souls found on the black coast; for I had already been brought to see the light of the Gospel. With the memory of those sufferings gnawing at my heart it has been a weary wait for the opportunity, but now the time for action has come. Brethren, the Nemesis is going as a missionary ship to that coast. Those victims of savage cruelty shall be brought to the light of the Gospel—they shall learn the ways of our Christian civilization."

So much of his talk is recorded in detail. He adds that the people were then told that the "good deacons of this church," having providentially obtained a vessel fit for the purpose, had determined to devote it to missionary work. Deacon Arkwright himself was to go out as captain of the vessel. More important still, the

big-hearted owners had provided means for the support of the ship and crew, so that no appeal for funds need be made. But as a special favor to any who loved the work, of "*lifting heathen* from their degraded lives," lawful shares in the Nemesis would be sold for one dollar each and every dollars thus invested should be used in the work in hand.

One sees a sardonic grin, so to say, in every line of the diary where these statements are recorded. He manifestly enjoyed much his truthful references—such as "*lifting heathen*"—to the actual work he was to do. And he was greatly amused by the response to his appeal for subscriptions to the shares in the Nemesis company.

"They tread on each other's toes to get alongside the deacon and subscribe," he notes, and then he adds: "I should have kept an account of the total number taken but I was so busy I overlooked it. However, I reckon the deacon knows all about it. I never knew him to miss seeing a copper that came his way."

With the money subscribed up and down the island, the Nemesis was fitted out with supplies to last for more than a year, and the diary notes that the number of water barrels taken excited not a word of comment. The quantity of rum put on board, however, caused a preacher from a neighboring hamlet to make protest.

"But I soothed him by quoting Scripture," says the diary. "I told him rum was the current coin of the coast and then I said I would be 'all things to all men' if by any means I might save some. If a drink of rum will induce a heathen to leave the darkness of ignorance to migrate to the fields of Christian civilization, I will give it to him."

When the time came for shipping a crew, Parsons was astonished and at first almost dumfounded by the number of men who wanted to join; but after considering the matter overnight he put them all off by telling them that only men seasoned to the coast—able to escape or endure the ever-present fevers—could be taken. He then brought from New York, a crew selected among the seamen who had been in various voyages to Africa.

The diary of Parson's stay at Hurstweir is so well filled that it has been possible to record here the sailing of this slaver in the guise of a Gospel ship in ample detail. In like manner the story of the passage across the Atlantic might be described minutely but only a few incidents need be given. First of all the barrels were all set up, and on reaching the Cape de Verdes, they were filled with water and placed in two tiers that covered the whole floor of the vessel, "leaving a space above them of just six feet to the beams—more than we shall need, but it is all right."

A floor of rough lumber was then laid over the barrels from stem to stern post, after which a stout bulkhead was built athwartships, close abaft the mainmast. Just forward of the mast an ornate pulpit was installed while benches for a congregation to sit on were arranged in orderly rows before the pulpit. Many candlesticks were placed around the walls of the "house of worship we thus provided, for nothing is so attractive at night as plenty of lights," to quote the diary once more. Then "because there are many visible knot holes in the bulkhead where they might excite heathen suspicions," a curtain of red cotton cloth was suspended where it would conceal the characteristics of the heavy timber wall.

As mate of the *Nemesis*, and because he was a superior ship carpenter, Parsons not only superintended but he took a leading part in the work thus done. And when it was ended he wrote:

"It is the best foul-weather meeting house ever seen. The seating capacity is small—much smaller than I could wish, perhaps, but if we can fill it or even half fill it with the influential men of the tribe they will bring all of the common sort to the foot of the altar—yea, they will."

Eight weeks from the day the *Nemesis* sailed out of the Great South Bay she entered the mouth of the Rio Bongo. With a gentle breeze to help her along she reached up the stream to a point opposite the south bank where, as African travelers remember, one sees the curious Twin Knobs, a pair of low hills or buttes thrown up no one has ever learned how. They stand in the middle of a low mesa of very

fertile land which, in those days, was occupied by people who were ruled by one Foretop Billy.

Foretop Billy's experiences in life according to a history of Liverpool, mentioned by Parsons, included a passage across the Atlantic in the slaver *Mary*, of Liverpool, Captain Hugh Crow, during which he was taught to use a musket. On the way the *Mary* had a fight with two armed French ships—it was during the French Revolution—and he carried himself so well that he was shipped later as an able seaman in the Royal Navy. There he was in time promoted to the command of the foretop, a much-coveted berth among naval seamen in the old days.

Finally this able negro returned to the Rio Bongo, where he usurped the throne of his tribe and became a slaver chieftain whose fame was surpassed only by that of Da Sousa, the ruler of the Gallinas.

Having arrived within view of the village of this noted chieftain, the *Nemesis* was brought head to wind, the anchor was dropped and two flags were run to the truck of the mainmast. The upper flag was milk white with a blood-red cross in the center. Below that fluttered the Stars and Stripes.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRAP.

WHEN First Mate Parsons, of the schooner *Nemesis*, had broken out the two flags at the masthead, as mentioned in the last chapter, he turned to look toward the Twin Knobs where Foretop Billy's village was located. Only a stout wall made of timbers set firmly in the ground was visible at the moment. But several men were soon seen running from the nearby brush to a doorway in the wall, and then the war horns began to sound, while two small cannons were protruded through ports made man-o'-war fashion in the wall.

A few minutes later a company of negroes, all of whom were armed with muskets and cutlasses, came from the enclosure marched to the bank of the river opposite

the *Nemesis*, with a bearing that showed much training. On the bank of the river they came to "parade rest," after which four of them stepped into a canoe moored to the bank. A fifth, evidently one of the head men, followed them and then the canoe was paddled off to the *Nemesis*. There the head man stood up and asked in very good English whether the *Nemesis* had come to trade for palm oil or slaves.

Thereupon, Parsons came to the rail and pointing to the two flags at the mast-head, replied:

"Your royal highness, your question is proper and right. Never has a merchant ship come to this river but for the purposes of trade. But I have to tell you that we will buy neither slaves nor palm oil. This is not a trader; it is a juju ship and I am a juju-man—you savvy—a preacher come to lead a few lost souls to the light of Christian civilization. We intend to tell you all about the white man's fetish, savvy? But come aboard, sir, and have a drink—have all you can hold of good rum, after which we will show you the dash and tell you all about things."

Parsons writes that as he concluded this invitation he "went through the motions of holding a glass of liquor to my lips and then tilting it slowly as one who drinks with relish. The sign language is universal in its use, and that black rascal climbed on board so swiftly he made the rail sizzle."

The other men in the canoe followed. All were "embraced like brothers," and then conducted down a narrow ladder leading to the foot of the pulpit in the hold. A stout table which had been placed there for the occasion was "chock-a-block with grub and liquor, and the way those boys waded in was a pleasure to see."

Before they could become intoxicated, however, they were loaded with the "dash," or presents always given to the African chiefs of that day, and Parsons notes that "we were so liberal it made the deacon flinch. But he stood the gaff bravely and sent them away hilariously happy."

"The black beggars stopped at the rail to express their thanks, which I never saw

them do before," adds the diary, and "I allow we have made a deep impression."

The next move was to bring off Foretop Billy and his favorite son for a feast. A score of leading citizens of the village wished to come along, and Billy was willing they should do so, but Parsons declared that a king of such renown should have an exclusive greeting first, after which the head men should be properly received.

"I'll wager that was a trump card," says the diary. "Old Billy was never so proud of himself as he was when we did the honors that night. And the dash he carried ashore, when he could eat no more, loaded his canoe till the gun'ales were awash."

No reference to the work of the "juju-man" was made during this feast, but the next day Foretop Billy was invited to "bring off say twenty-five of your most intelligent men to hear the story of the white man's fetish. We shall talk briefly and we shall have a quantity of good things to eat and drink. But you will tell your people, I hope, that while I am talking they are to listen quietly and sit still in their places so that my words may be heard and understood by all."

"And the old dolt said 'I shore will, and ef dey don' keep dey moufs shet, I'll break dey heads—yassuh.'"

As the sun dipped down to the mangroves that bordered the lower reaches of the river that afternoon, the captain of the *Nemesis* with First Mate Parsons went to and fro for a final inspection—to see that everything was in readiness for the reception of Foretop Billy and his head men.

First of all they examined what Parsons called the tabernacle. The pulpit and benches had been set to one side and a table, long enough to accommodate fifty men, was erected fore and aft in the center of the room. A row of benches was placed along each side of the table. At the after end a throne was built somewhat in the shape of a man-o'-war's foretop with a big arm chair in the center. At the forward end was a smaller throne of the same shape. The thrones, of course, were for Foretop Billy and his favorite son, while the benches were for the head men. On each side of the table was a row of bottles of rum,

while at the head of the table were bottles of wine as well as liquor, and the foot of the table was provided in similar fashion, save only that the number of bottles was less.

No food of any kind was served, but boxes of cigars were scattered at short intervals along the table and Foretop Billy and his son were provided not only with cigars but with Turkish pipes and quantities of loose tobacco.

Only a glance was needed to see that the arrangement of the table would be pleasing to the negro king and his head men. On deck a more careful inspection seemed needed. First of all, as Captain Arkwright and Parsons came from the hatchway they carefully examined the hatch coamings. These and the adjoining parts of the deck had been covered with lengths of red calico but under the calico it was seen that the hatch covers were lying ready to be slipped into place and toggled fast with their iron lips biting under the angle irons that had been securely bolted to the coamings.

The forward hatch was already in place and it received only a glance, but both Arkwright and Parson gave particular attention to the cable. The cable was a substantial hawser, instead of such a chain as is used in modern times. The end had been passed twice only around the bits, but it was then made fast to the part extending through the hawse pipe by means of a short piece of rope yarn. Manifestly the cable was held securely in place and yet it could be thrown off the bits in an instant, if the rope yarn were cut.

From the fasts of the cable the inspectors turned to a length of inch rope one end of which was fastened to the cable at a point just under the bow. The other end ran aft outside of all to the quarter. This rope had apparently been placed there to hold a raft alongside the vessel for the accommodation of the crew who had been standing on it and painting the side of the hull, all the afternoon.

"How do you like it?" asked Parsons, as the two gazed from the cable aft along the rope to the end made fast at the quarter.

"It's an excellent trap, Mr. Parsons,"

was the reply, "but, man, we should have brought a length of old rope and a second-hand cable for the purpose. It's a terrible waste to let all that new stuff go by the run."

"That was just like the deacon," comments the diary. "I couldn't make him see that it was better to have new lines and so make absolutely sure the trap would work rather than save a few dollars and take chances."

From the forecabin the two men went down into the hold abaft the bulkhead. By the light of the candles, they could see that several muskets, all loaded and primed, were placed handy to some of the larger knot-holes in the planks of which the bulkhead was made. Parsons picked up one of the muskets and poked it into a hole close beside the mast.

"If Foretop Billy were to get a look down here, we'd see him dive overboard so swift he'd burn the air," he said, whereat Deacon Arkwright nodded his head but said nothing. And that ended the inspection.

When night was at hand, Foretop Billy was seen coming from the palisade wall around his village. He was at the head of a procession of men, all of whom carried torches and all of whom were dressed in rude uniforms made in the shape of that worn by sailors in the British navy. The material of which they were made, however, was red calico which had been obtained on the *Nemesis* as a part of the king's dash.

The king had been invited to bring twenty-five of his "leading citizens" as a guard of honor, but the deacon counted the procession and announced that it numbered forty-eight. His voice was doleful, but Parsons jeered at him.

"Of course, they'll absorb much rum," he said, "but, captain, how much time do you calculate they will have at the table before the trap is sprung?"

"Very little, Mr. Parsons, very little. The sooner they are all secure, the better," he replied.

Then he ordered a guard of honor to the rail to receive the king with becoming ceremonies.

As the canoe bearing the king came alongside, a ladder decorated with bunting was lowered for his use. When he mounted to the deck the boatswain piped a lay as if an admiral of the Royal Navy was being received—a pipe with which Foretop Billy was well acquainted. Captain Arkwright and Parsons received him with their hats off. Then a sailor went to each corner of the main hatch and as Captain Arkwright handed his majesty down the companion-way the boatswain's whistle once more screamed its loudest. And when the black monarch saw the table and its load, with the thrones that had been placed for the use of himself and son, he stiffened his backbone and held up his head with a "dignity that nearly made me fall down the hatchway," to quote Parsons's description of the proceedings.

With a careful regard for the feelings of all the other guests, Captain Arkwright and First Mate Parsons conducted them to the hatchway and when the last had descended, the captain asked:

"I say, your majesty, are all hands ready down there for the feast?"

"Yassuh, yassuh. Dey am, suh," he replied.

"Very good, sir," continued the captain. "Then turn to and have your grog, all round while the waiters bring the grub from the galley."

Nothing loath, Foretop Billy and his men reached for the bottles that were right at hand. Some of the blacks poured the liquor into cups and pannikins that had been provided, while others placed the uncorked bottles to their lips and drank deeply.

And then, as their attention was thus fixed on the liquor, the men on deck swiftly snatched away the cotton screens, placed the hatch covers on the coamings and toggled them fast. Meantime, Parsons ran forward and threw the cable off the bits. Instantly, the *Nemesis* dropped astern with the current of the river until the line extending from the cable to the ship's quarter was stretched when she swiftly slued around until her head pointed to the sea.

At that the captain cast the end of

the line loose and the *Nemesis* went drifting with the current toward the sea while Parsons and the other members of the crew began hoisting jib and mainsail to catch the gentle breeze. By the time the vessel had reached the first bend below the village she was under full control—with Foretop Billy and all the leading men of his village helplessly raging under the fore hatch.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SAUCE AND THE GANDER.

WHEN the *Nemesis* lifted to the waves on the bar, at the mouth of the Rio Bongo, Captain Arkwright and Mate Parsons went to the after side of the bulkhead that divided her hull into two compartments. There, Parsons picked up a musket and poked the muzzle through one of the knot-holes near the mast. Although the bulkhead was covered by the curtain on the other side, he felt the muzzle strike the body of one of the negroes, and it happened to be that of Foretop Billy.

The shrieks and yells that had greeted the trapping of the company had at this time died down into low moans, but when Foretop Billy felt the end of the musket against his back he yelled at the top of his voice and was instantly joined in his demonstrations by his men. At that, Parsons shouted—according to the diary, Parsons did about everything that was done, while the captain merely stood by as a spectator:

"Shut up your yawps, you in the fore hold there. You are all bawling out before you're hurt. Lay aft to the bulkhead the whole of you and I'll tell you how you are all to go free. Do you hear?"

They heard the promise that they should go free, at any rate, and with one accord they became quiet, when Parsons continued:

"Well, well. You can listen to reason, can't you? Very good. You thought we were to shanghai a crew of old duffers like you, did you? Well, now, I guess not. We couldn't sell the whole coffle of you for the price of three likely young men. Saving your presence, your majesty, we

think you and your gang aren't worth the cost of the grub you'd eat on your way to the land of light and civilization. What we want is two hundred young bucks and girls—man-boys and women-girls, as you slavers call them. Therefore what you are to do is to send a trusty messenger ashore to bring off the coffles in longboats. For each boat load you bring, we will free one or more of your head men until our ship is loaded, and then you, with all remaining on board, shall go ashore. What do you say to that, your majesty? Speak up promptly, and keep in mind that if you don't agree we will shoot a few musket balls through the bulkhead to bring you to your senses."

"Needs must when the devil drives," runs the diary at this point, "and they at once agreed because they had to." Two of the thoroughly cowed negroes were brought on deck and sent to the village, and in the course of the next day the two hundred youths were brought off and stowed under hatches, the boys forward of the bulkhead and the girls aft.

The floor space was more ample for the number taken than was commonly allowed in the slavers of that period, but there was a special reason for this. The *Nemesis* was to run her cargo to the swamps west of the mouth of the Mississippi and there sell out to planters who would come through the swamps and inland waters to buy them. It was therefore necessary that the slaves arrive on that coast in good health; and abundant space on the floor was needed to keep them in that condition.

"I had to laugh at the deacon, after the last of the youngsters were on deck," writes Parsons. "He felt positively generous. Bringing up old Foretop and the others who had been held as hostages, he put them in their canoe and loaded it with muskets and ammunition till the gunwales were awash. They begged for a quantity of rum but there he went shy. The arms could not be sold in the land of the free but rum is legal tender everywhere the world round."

A paragraph is then devoted to telling that no man-o'-war had been seen on the

coast for a month, and none was expected, so the *Nemesis* was reasonably sure to get away off shore unmolested, after which the diary continues:

"The deacon is not the worst pal in the world, after all. For when I told him that, as I might miss stays going home, I wished he would see that my share of the profits in this adventure reached Lucille, he at once replied with emphasis that he would do so if he had to go to France to carry the gold. And when he gives his word in that way the deacon never lies.

"However," continues the diary, "I am not sweating for fear of Davy Jones's locker; I am looking forward to a return to New York. The deacon thinks we should start opposition to the Black Ball line of packets. He says those ships are paying for themselves twice a year, and that plenty of freight is to be had for another monthly line. He figures we shall land at least two hundred blacks in good health out of the two hundred and twenty-five under hatches, and that they will sell for something more than seven hundred dollars each. He certainly is conservative in his estimate, and as all expenses of the adventure, and more, too, were contributed by the good church people of Long Island, the price of our cargo will be clean profit.

"Now, one hundred and forty-thousand dollars will found a line that will wipe the eye of the Black Ball, and when the first ship takes her departure I'll send—no *I'll* go across and bring Lucille and the babe to the kind of a home they deserve."

After running clear of the coast the deacon and Parsons drove the *Nemesis*, with all the sail she could carry, across the famous, or infamous middle passage of the Atlantic—a region where the trade wind blows continuously from the north-east. With studding sails to starboard and port sheets "aft by a pull or two," the *Nemesis* "fairly danced over the waves."

It was most beautiful sailing for Parsons and the deacon. For the slaves it was not so. For they were chained, two rows on each side, on the rude, rough-plank floor that had been laid over the two tiers of barrels of food and water in the hold. They all had room enough to sit up or

lie down at will but when they stretched out on those splintery planks—when they perforce because of weariness stretched their naked bodies upon those splinters—the dancing of the Nemesis rolled and slid them about in torture. And yet that cargo of blacks was treated better than any the experienced men of the forecabin had ever seen.

"They told me so," writes Parsons, "and asked wonderingly why we did not take on one hundred and fifty more. I guess they are right, too," continues the diary. "Of course we should have lost fifty, or so, out of that extra number because of the crowding, but we should have landed at least a hundred more than what we now have. However, I shall not complain, for the deacon was so anxious to keep every bird in good condition."

On arriving north of Porto Rico, the route the Nemesis was following became "more populous. Several sails are seen every day, and the deacon shivers at sight of every one lest we meet a man-o'-war looking for slavers."

But no such vessel was encountered, nor was any of the merchantmen passed near enough at hand for a hail; and when at last the Dry Tortugas, seen as a cloudlike shadow from the foretop-gallant yard, had been passed, the Nemesis was brought closer to the wind in order to head up for an anchorage in Terrebonne Bay.

At that the deacon breathed freely and "I'm bound to say that I was feeling somewhat better myself," to quote the diary. "Even when I saw a tall brig standing up to head us off, the next morning after we sank the Tortugas, I didn't have a quiver. I thought she was likely to be one of the South American privateers in search of information only. I was right too, as to her charter-party, but wrong as to her adventure."

When the stranger had crossed the bows of the Nemesis she filled away on the same tack only a musket shot to windward. Then she brought an ugly looking long Tom to bear, ran out half a dozen carronades and her captain bawled:

"Let go all halyards and haul down your sails or I'll blow you out of water."

"It was just as I said about Foretop Billy when we trapped him," reads the diary. "'Needs must when the devil drives,' and the devil certainly was driving us in that watch."

Having brought the Nemesis to the wind with all sails down, her unhappy crew looked on stolidly while a boat from the brig came alongside. A young man in a gaudy uniform, who was in command of the boat, came on board and announced that he was "Don Daniel Utley, second officer of the Venezuelan privateer Brutus." Then he demanded the papers of the Nemesis. These were promptly produced.

As Utley read them and learned that the Nemesis was a vessel fitted out for missionary work on the coast of Africa, he looked with astonishment at Captain Arkwright, and then he asked:

"Are these papers forged?"

"You should be able to tell by the looks of them that they are entirely lawful," replied the deacon with some asperity.

"Yes, they do appear to be so," agreed Utley, "but I'll be keel-hauled if I ever see anything like them before." He glanced down the open main hatch to the slaves who were lying and sitting on their deck, and looking up at him with manifest curiosity. Then he continued:

"I see. I see. You pretended you were to use the schooner as a bethel, and when, after you arrived out, a congregation assembled to hear you preach, you clapped on hatches and made all sail. It was a cunning trap, captain. I never did see the beat of it. Where are you bound, sir? Culebre?"

"Culebre? No. I never heard of any port of that name," replied the deacon. "We're to run into Terrebonne Bay and peddle out the blacks to the planters, just as Lafitte used to do before the war. They are all young and in prime condition. I calculate we'll average at least seven hundred dollars apiece for them."

Utley grinned wide as he continued:

"Captain, you're the smartest Yankee skipper I ever did see and I've seen plenty of them, for I'm a Boston man by birth myself. You've planned and carried out an adventure that beats anything I ever

did hear of. It's so good, sir, that we will join you in it, or rather, I should say, we'll take it over and assume all the risks. We will also collect the profits. Furthermore, I'll take charge of the deck at once and give you and your officers a watch below.

"You don't need to fret for a minute about the landing of the precious souls you are bringing to the light of civilization. I'll see to that. But I must tell you that, first of all, they and you will be landed on Culebre Island, which is off the coast of Texas. Did you mention Lafitte? You did. Jean Lafitte, the *bosse*, as we call him, is in charge there. I calculate that he is going to lead the Texans to secede from Mexico and to set up a republic the same as Venezuela, with Culebre City as the capital. But in the mean time, he is buying all the unfortunate black heathens that come within reach. Let's see. Did you say you looked to get seven hundred dollars apiece? Well, that would be fine, but the *bosse* has control of the whole coast and all he's able to pay is one hundred and forty dollars—and, shippie, the Brutus, as I said, will collect that.

"Your Nemesis is a nefarious pirate, under the law, and is good prize to any legitimate man-o'-war, like the Brutus. Bosse Jean will buy your niggers of us, and somebody else will pay us something for the schooner. Um—you two get into my boat and a couple of her crew will row you over to the Brutus while the others will come on board, here as prize crew."

Pasted in the diary at this point is a clipping from a newspaper over which was written:

"This was printed in the Shipping Advertiser of New York:"

The clipping read:

"The brig Sanderson, Newry, from New Orleans, brought as a passenger, Captain Johnson Arkwright, of Hurstweir, Long Island. The captain went to the coast of Africa, some months ago, in command of the missionary schooner Nemesis. He reports that while successfully engaged in the work of saving souls his ship was captured by pirates. His crew at once joined the miscreants. Mr. Jonathan Parsons, who orig-

inated the missionary project, and who had been serving as mate of the Nemesis as well as missionary, was forcibly detained on board by the pirates and his fate is unknown. Captain Arkwright was sent adrift in a dingy without food or water, but a favoring breeze drove him ashore and he was then able to make his way to New Orleans.

"Captain Arkwright adds that the pirate was sailing under Bolivar's colors. Others have hitherto complained that these Spanish-American vessels were violating the laws of nations, but this outrage goes beyond anything that has been reported."

CHAPTER VII.

ON A LEE SHORE.

THE whole island seemed to be aflame for joy. The population, men, women and children—for there were children and the whole band is said to number near a thousand—came down to Fort Point, as soon as we were sighted. Half of the men carried muskets or pistols which they charged with powder and then fired into the air until a cloud of smoke was seen above them; and in the mean time, they flung themselves about and danced with an enthusiasm that I have never seen surpassed. Betimes some of them stopped dancing to bestow exuberant caresses upon their women folks, which the women returned with an enthusiasm that was infectious. And all of that was to celebrate the capture of the Nemesis; for when she and her cargo are sold, the whole population will have in one way or another a share in the plunder."

It is in those words that Parsons describes the scene on Culebre Island—where Galveston now stands—as the privateer Brutus with the schooner Nemesis just astern approached the inlet between the two points that bore the name of Fort and Bolivar. When taking possession of the Nemesis, Second Officer Utley, of the Brutus, had correctly if briefly described the settlement on Culebre Island.

Most of Spain's American colonies were then fighting for the freedom which they,

later obtained, but Mexico had not yet revolted. Texas was a part of Mexico, but Jean Lafitte, after winning a full pardon for previous piracies by making a good fight at the battle of New Orleans, had gone to Culebre Island on the coast of Texas to set up an independent republic.

Lafitte was not particularly interested in freeing Texas from the yoke of Spain, but he was anxious to set up and lead a new republic that would be recognized by the United States; or rather, say, that should have an admiralty court the decisions of which would receive recognition at the hands of the American officials located at New Orleans. For Lafitte was in the business of buying the vessels and cargoes that were captured by American-owned privateers, sailing under South American patriot flags. When these prizes were taken to American ports the captors were likely to have trouble even though the prizes were originally owned by Spaniards. Captured ships belonging to these nations were very much more difficult to handle, of course, and as a matter of fact they were therefore, on only a few occasions, sent anywhere by the privateers. They were looted and sunk with all hands.

If Lafitte could establish a new republic with a recognized admiralty court, however, the disposal of such prizes would thereafter be easily made. For the *bosse*,* as he was called, had original methods of handling all kinds of property in the nautical "fence" which he maintained, and it was certain that with a judge in admiralty of his own appointing, he would be able to dispose of every prize brought to him.

That he never did succeed in the matter of creating a new republic is well known, but in spite of this handicap he had little trouble when a slaver like the *Nemesis* was brought to him; for a slaver was then, under the law, a pirate. And as for the slaves, there was an eager demand for them along the Mississippi.

As Parsons tells the story of the schooner's fate he and Deacon Arkwright were at first received on board the *Brutus* by Captain Joli, her commander, with much laughter and many jeers. For the

boat's crew first related what had been said on the *Nemesis* and "her adventure seemed to him to be a huge joke." It was in fact a specially pleasing joke, because he was to sell the slaves she carried and divide the proceeds among his crew. But after he had laughed until he was exhausted over the outcome of the "missionary" venture he began to consider what manner of man it was that had conceived such a novel plan for "running" slaves from Africa to the slave-owning parts of the United States, and he soon decided that Parsons was "a good man to tie to," as the diary declares.

Thereat he asked both Parsons and Deacon Arkright to join the *Brutus*. Parsons consented to do so, but the deacon objected and he was then turned adrift at night in a dingey without food or water. But when she was thus set adrift, the *Brutus* was but a few miles off the Louisiana coast and the deacon made land without incurring any danger worth mention, as Captain Joli had foreseen, and intended.

Having sailed into the harbor, which has since become one of the most important in the United States, the *Brutus* and the *Nemesis* were brought to anchor, after which Captain Joli went ashore in a cutter, taking Parsons with him. Jean Lafitte met them at the water's edge and after he had embraced the captain, he turned to Parsons and asked:

"Who is this you bring to us?"

In reply, Captain Joli related the story of the *Nemesis*. Lafitte listened with the crinkles around his eyes deepening from time to time. Finally he held out his hand and said to Parsons:

"You are fully welcome, sir. I appoint you chaplain to our naval force. Ships that are engaged in the holy cause of liberty, as ours are, need a chaplain of your tonnage; and I shall send word to the New Orleans newspapers that we have you engaged."

"Hold fast on that, if you please, sir," replied Parsons. "I am sailing under my own name and I have relatives—at least my wife has them—in that port. I should be greatly embarrassed if they—"

* Lafitte's men gave him this appellation. The word is French, and means protuberance.

"Very well, sir," interrupted the pirate chief, "just as you say, but you shall not lack employment of some kind, at any rate, in an enterprising community like ours."

The settlement on Culebre Island, as Parsons describes it, numbered at that time nearly a thousand souls, all told, including the transient population from the privateers in the harbor. The houses with but one exception were rude shanties, like those now to be seen in the desert mine camps of the West. The one exception was built in the center of the plaza around which the other houses had been erected. It was a low structure of good material, and it boasted a wide veranda on all sides, glass in the windows, and as a final touch of civilization it was painted a bright red. Here lived Jean Lafitte, the *bosse*.

But while the other houses were all of the rudest description, they were "fine to admiration," says Parsons, for the entertainment of the sailors who came into that port. And when, during the course of the day, the crew of the *Brutus* received the price of their shares of the plunder they had captured, they were welcomed with open arms by those whose business it was to provide them with the joys the settlement afforded.

Two days later, "Don" Daniel Utley, the second mate of the *Brutus*, met Parsons while he was walking on the ocean beach. Saluting him in man-o'-war fashion, Utley said:

"I say, chaplain, I calculate from the way you've backed an' filled and stood by since I overhauled you on the *Nemesis*—I calculate, I say, that you're clipper built, copper fastened and sparred for racing. And so here I am to invite you to go on a little expedition for the recuperation of your fortune. What do you say?"

Parsons smiled on him, and replied:

"I always read over the articles before I sign on, my son. What course are you heading and how are you ballasted?"

"That's just the trouble with us, chaplain. We haven't any ballast. My mates and me have had so much wassail and wooing and dice, we haven't a *centavo* left to bless any one of us. What's worse, the

Brutus is to have her top hamper overhauled and it 'll be three weeks before she will be ready for sea. So we're all stranded on a coral reef with not a drop of red liquor to wet our whistles during all that time. But in the mean time, there are two fine long boats bobbing to the swells over across the harbor, near Pelican Islands, and the *bosse* 'll lend 'em to us for a cruise alongshore as far as the Sabine. He will also provide the needed stores.

"Well then: Three Spanish hidalgos own ranches, up that way, and they are stocked with nigh to a hundred niggers each. Now, listen to the call, chaplain. The dons are neglecting the souls of those niggers something shameful and what we're to do is to rescue as many as our barges 'll carry and bring them to the market you were heading for with the *Nemesis*, where, as you said, their souls will be looked after shipshape and Bristol fashion. How do you like the chances?"

"Perhaps, it would be better to sell them to *Bosse Lafitte*," suggested Parsons.

Utley looked around to make sure that no other than Parsons would hear him and then declared with emphasis:

"Don't you believe that, sir. You said you allowed you'd get at least seven hundred dollars apiece for your coffle, but all the *bosse* gave us was thirty thousand dollars for the whole lot. We can snake at least fifty from the dons to your market where we'll get as much for them as the *bosse* gave us for the three hundred."

"True for it," agreed Parsons. "We'll get our anchor at early candle lighting this night. But get a written order from Captain Joli empowering you to make the cruise; for if things should go wrong we would need to have our papers in proper order to save our necks."

As Parsons's diary describes this cruise, it was a prolonged "fight with mosquitoes and nothing else," until they reached the Sabine River, which was then the northern boundary of Mexico's territory. While it was true that several Mexicans owned cattle ranches along shore, they had become alarmed by the presence of Lafitte at Culebre Island and had fled into the interior with their property.

Accordingly, the expedition was turning around to head back to Culebre, when a negro appeared on the north bank of the Sabine and begged the men to take him afloat. Pulling in close to the spot where he stood, Parsons asked first what he knew about the Mexicans that had lived along-shore in the Texas country. Of this he knew no more than the questioner, but when asked where he came from and why he wanted to join the expedition, he said he had run away from a plantation on the Nementau River in Louisiana because of the harsh treatment he received.

"What's the name of your master?" asked Parsons.

"Don Manuel de Potosi," was the reply.

"Is he a Mexican?"

"Yassuh. He shore is."

"He has invaded the territory of the United States, doubtless as a spy," declared Parsons. "It is therefore our duty as seamen under the glorious flag of Bolivar, and as former citizens of the land of light and liberty to go there and run him back to his own country."

To this the crew replied with cheers. The negro was taken on board for a guide and the expedition rowed on to the Nementau. There the plantation was found as described by the runaway negro, and it was surprised and captured without difficulty. The plunder included as many slaves as the barges could conveniently carry, together with nearly two thousand dollars in gold and a large quantity of wines, cordials and other supplies pleasing to such a crew as that under Parsons and Utley.

On approaching the ranch, however, the owner was seen riding away at a gallop and when Parsons came to ask the slaves about the man's destination he learned that it was the United States war brig Lynx.

"He say she am up de coas' and he gwine board her and bring her down and hang you all lak you was pirates, suh," explained one of the captured slaves.

"Utley nearly wept when he heard that," says the diary, "for we were now obliged to forego our expected trip to a market in Louisiana, so we headed back to Culebre as fast as we could pull."

Until the south bank of the Sabine had been reached the two barges were driven at full speed. But by that time the crew had begun to think less of the market they had missed and more of the joys to be found in such plunder as they had brought away—"more especially the joys to be found in the good grub and liquors we had captured," says the diary. "Indeed nothing would do but we must go ashore on the south bank of the Sabine for a jollification. So we landed, built a fire, shot a wild steer in the woods and we were beginning to enjoy an old-fashioned barbecue when we saw a sail appear not very far off shore. The Lynx had come hunting us, as I had feared she would do."

Thereat the pirates "with the slaves in tow," ran to the woods, leaving the boats and most of the portable plunder. But Parsons, in spite of haste, carried away the bag of gold coin.

The diary now describes in minute detail the miseries of the overland journey which Parsons and his men made to the mainland shore of Culebre harbor. When there two boats came in answer to their signals, and Jean Lafitte met them when they had crossed to the settlement. They had brought in "thirty odd niggers from the coiffe captured," and Parsons began to apologize for the absence of a number, who had escaped on the way down. But before he "had got well started," Lafitte cut him short by asking coldly:

"Will you be so kind as to tell me where you captured these whom you have succeeded in bringing in?"

"Certainly," replied Parsons, "with a dim perception that trouble was brewing." "We raided a Mexican hidalgo, who had invaded the United States in order to serve as a spy."

"Did you have a warrant from the American authorities when you invaded the United States? Mayhap you had obtained a commission as a deputy marshal, no?"

Parsons was "so flabbergasted," that he could not answer at once and Lafitte, "in a most menacing tone ordered his followers to put the whole expedition under arrest."

"For what am I and my mates arrested?" Parsons now asked. "We had a

commission from Captain Joli," he continued, "and his commission is signed by the great Bolivar. Is it fit that Jean Lafitte, who has no better license than ours, should abuse us?"

"Ah! Did you have a commission, then?" asked Lafitte. "I believe you did, but did it obligate you to invade the United States, a nation with which the free republic of Texas is anxious to establish and maintain the most friendly relations? Perhaps you thought to compel, by force of arms, the recreant American authorities to extend to us the recognition we seek. Ah! That was it, most noble leader of our most valorous band of Texan patriots. But why, then, did you stop at the Nementau? Why did you not go on and capture New Orleans? I can tell you why. One of our friends has brought us word that an American man-o'-war was on that coast and you saw her. Then your hearts melted with fear; for you knew you had violated the law of nations. You had disregarded the terms of your commission, as issued by Captain Joli, and had become a band of detestable pirates. Now you shall be brought to trial on that charge."

Parsons and his men were now imprisoned and closely guarded in an empty dwelling. As night came on the cruiser Lynx appeared in the offing. A dead calm followed by a "norther" prevented her near approach until two days later, but she was continuously in view by day and "Lafitte was so much alarmed that he could neither eat nor sleep during that time."

Nevertheless, in his view there was hope of placating the captain of the Lynx, and this hope was founded upon his determination "to disavow the outrage that had been committed upon American territory and to punish the leaders of the infamous band."

Accordingly, Parsons, Utley, and all their men were placed on trial, the next morning after their arrival, charged with "making a piratical invasion of the United States, contrary to the laws of nations and the statutes (sic) of the free Republic of Texas in such case made and provided, and the peace and dignity and tranquillity thereof,"

to quote a part of the indictment as Parsons gave it.

"A complete record of the trial was made," he continues, "and so far as I know every legal form was observed, but, of course, that was done for a show to the Lynx and not for our benefit. With Lafitte as judge and a jury of his choosing, Utley and I didn't have a chance. So, when I was asked what I had to say before sentence was pronounced on me, I told the *bosse* he was sacrificing us, not from any fear of his own neck, but as a business adventure.

"'You're afraid you'll lose your very profitable chance to buy niggers at one hundred and forty dollars and sell them at seven hundred dollars each,' I said. 'You think you will be able to sell those we brought in without paying even the one hundred and forty dollars for them; and since we are to be condemned you will also salt down the bag of gold we captured from the Mexican. You pretend to be a patriot but you are a bloody thief of a fence.' And at that some of the spectators as well as my mates applauded."

"I was on a lee shore with all sails in rags," continues the diary, "but I had my say and after sentence was pronounced, I kept a bright lookout even if the case did seem desperate."

Parsons was now led with Utley to the prison to await the building of a gibbet. A flagstaff, standing on the seaward side of the island, which was ordinarily used for signaling to privateers in the offing, was prepared for this use. "First of all," says the diary, "a crosstree was spiked on the mast about twenty feet above the sand—well up so our bodies would be seen swinging clear against the western sky. A snatch block was lashed to each end of the cross-tree, and when ropes had been rove through the blocks a hangman's noose was turned into the short end of each and the tackle was ready."

In the mean time, the little American cruiser Lynx had been reaching in toward the inlet, and as she nodded over the long swells left by the gale, Jean Lafitte stood on his veranda, watching her. When she had arrived within perhaps four cable

lengths of the island, he saw her trim her sails in order to come to the wind and heave to, when he turned and waved his hand toward a sailor with a boatswain's whistle. Thereupon the man, after piping a long shrill call, bawled:

"All hands witness execution."

CHAPTER VIII.

"BEATING OFF."

WHEN the jailer who had charge of Jonathan Parsons and Daniel Utley heard the boatswain's call for the execution of the prisoners, he bound their wrists together behind them, "using lengths of hambroline at my request," says Parsons, and then started them marching toward the gibbet with two guards on each side. The whole population of the settlement "fell in behind our little procession and followed us to the beach when they formed a ring around the gibbet to which, of course, we were led. Then a dozen or more men tailed on to the hauling parts of the two ropes and stood by to hoist away at the word, while the jailer took a noose in hand to fit it to my neck and a guard prepared to perform the same service for Utley. The supreme moment for which I had looked had come."

"Bosse Jean," says I, "it is a sorry end for an able seaman, and so I have to ask you to give us opportunity to say a prayer."

"Yes, sir," he replied, "you shall have that, if you will bear a hand."

"Thank you, sir," I continued. "We'll do that, and since your sentence did not include torture of the condemned and because the fasts on our wrists are cutting through the skin, I beg you to loosen them a bit. Anyway, we should like to clasp our hands in church fashion when we address the throne of grace."

"Aye, that is reasonable, too," he agreed, "but make haste."

The pirate chief was exceedingly nervous over the coming of the man-o'-war, and as he spoke he turned his eyes to the sea. The little brig was bracing her head yards square in order to get under way quickly,

if necessary, after heaving to. The sailor instinct of Lafitte told him that the naval captain was therefore entirely alert, and this was still more disturbing. So he kept his eyes on the vessel to see what it would do next. In the mean time, the jailer had fumbled with the line in the wrists of Jonathan Parsons in an effort to "untie the tarry knot, but all in vain," as Parsons had foreseen.

"Cut it, shippie," exclaimed Parsons in a whisper, when he saw Lafitte look out to sea. "It's only for a minute at most."

The man agreed and drew his sheath knife across the line. And then, as the severed ends fell, Parsons turned on him, threw him heavily to the ground, snatched a pistol from his belt as he fell, and using this as a club to drive the others out of his way, he dashed for the harbor side of the island.

It was a flight for life and Parsons had shown that he was unafraid, even when standing under the gibbet. The islanders saw that he was desperate, and without lifting a hand to stop him, they leaped aside. Unmolested, he ran to the water's edge and not till he arrived there was ought done to retake him. Then Lafitte, who had been too much astonished at first even to speak, yelled:

"Catch him, there! What are you gawping at? It's him or us. There comes the man-o'-war cutter."

Sure enough, the Lynx had lowered a boat and it was on its way to the inlet; and on seeing this the mob ran in pursuit of Parsons.

"But by that time," says the diary, "I was in a light skiff with oars in place. First they tried to follow in a long boat and then they began to shoot, but my luck was running flood, and I made the beach to westward with colors flying. It may be, though, that they did not try very hard to hit me. I had made many friends, anyway, and it is certain they did not hit even the skiff. But they hanged Utley in a jiffy, after they saw I was clear of all."

Attached to the margin of the page where the above is written is a clipping from *Nile's Register*, a commercial periodical, then printed in Baltimore, which says that

recent New Orleans papers note the visit of the United States Cruiser Lynx to "Culebre Island, on the Mexican coast," and adds:

"The captain was in search of certain slaves and other plunder taken from a plantation in Louisiana by some of Lafitte's pirates. The plunder was found, but Lafitte seemed to be in a very penitent mood. He apologized for the assault of his men upon the territory of a power with which the 'Republic of Texas' was at peace—using almost exactly those words—and he made full reparation. As his resort is on foreign soil, the captain of the Lynx did not, of course, feel authorized to make an invasion for the punishment of the miscreants. Moreover, Lafitte had just hanged one of the leaders of the expedition complained of, and he said he should have hanged another, but the rascal got away even when standing under the gibbet.

"When I reached New Orleans," continues the diary, "I learned that Deacon Arkwright had contracted with a local firm to go to Culebre and buy in the Nemesis. So I decided to make the best of my way to Baltimore, where the Nemesis is to be taken, and see what he means to do with her. Most likely, he thinks to fit out as a privateer."

Below that entry is a line reading:

Condensed Notes of Letter to Deacon.

The letter was written from Baltimore and it ran as follows:

Arrived here four days ago. Nemesis in same day, fit and well found. A S. A. patriot from Bolivar's staff, Sir Gregor McGregor, is here preparing to organize republic of two Floridas. Says when new nation is recognized he will apply for admission to American Union. Well received in business circles, especially merchants having connection with South; for it is well known annexation of Florida is greatly desired at Washington and all the way to New Orleans. He will invade the Spanish territory at Amelia Island.

You will recall how we ran schooner load of goods across St. Mary's River during the embargo, and got away with a full cargo in return, while two hundred ships lay there at anchor waiting for embargo to lift! I suggest you fit out Nemesis for cruiser under McGregor's flag, you to take command, me as mate, as usual. He

will jump at chance of taking us in, especially as I can qualify as pilot in Amelia waters. We can hold him up for, say, ten thousand acres of choice land, and what's more, for a free roving commission on the main, where we may meet the Brutus and get even. Easy to fit out as privateer in this port.

"Especially is it easy to get a crew," continues the diary. "Water Street swarms with men. And as I was passing Dolan's tavern, this morning, I heard one of them call to a man inside:

"Hey, Captain Pierre! Here goes puncher Parsons. Belike he is looking for you."

"It was Soult inside, but the devil's spawn got away again, though I went after him on the run. This is the second time he has escaped, but the third I'll have my chance. He is still in command of the Sagacity and sailing out of this port."

As the reader knows, Florida was, previous to 1819, a lawless region, for it was then wild Spanish territory. The few Spanish settlements were far apart and contained but tiny populations. As a whole, the land was dominated by the Seminole Indians—chiefly exiled Creeks, seminoles meaning runaway—but there were a few negroes who had escaped from Georgia plantations and a not inconsiderable number of migrant white men. Some of the whites had come from Europe and some from the United States. As a whole they had sought Florida because of a love of the wild life there, but many had gone there to escape officers of the law.

More than one Spanish-American revolutionist thought of freeing the "Two Floridas"—East Florida and West Florida, in the nomenclature of the day—and two expeditions actually descended upon the coast. Their hope of success was seemingly well founded, as Jonathan Parsons intimates in his letter to Deacon Arkwright. Thus the Spanish garrisons were not only small, but they were commanded by officers who were practically exiles—men who had offended superiors and had been sent to those out-of-the-world stations as a punishment. Then it was natural to suppose that the vagrant whites of the region would flock to the standard of any invader.

But more important to the success of the revolutionist than all else was the undoubted fact that the existence of Spanish rule in Florida was a continuous menace to American peace. The American public documents of the period are well filled with tales of clashes between Americans and the Spanish officials. And there was but one way to end these troubles—the territory must be brought under the dominion of the Stars and Stripes.

Finally it is to be noted that all Americans living near the border knew that Florida soil was fertile and the climate kindly. Jonathan Parsons was fully justified in writing to the deacon that the "annexation of Florida is greatly desired in Washington and all the way to New Orleans." In fact there are documents at Washington which prove his assertion that McGregor was "well received in business circles," after announcing that the new republic would apply for admission into the American Union as soon as possible after establishing peace.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW ADVENTURE.

ON receiving the letter which is quoted above, Deacon Arkwright hastened to Baltimore where, after a talk with Sir Gregor McGregor, he and Parsons fitted out the *Nemesis* for use as a cruiser under the "two star flag of the two Floridas."

Being greatly interested in this work, Parsons describes in minute detail how the sails and rigging were overhauled; how lumber was taken on board so that the appearance of the hull could be changed if that should seem advisable at any time, how guns great and small were provided, together with other weapons and stores of ammunition, "all of which were sneaked on board without attracting the notice of the customs officials."

Of all this matter, however, the part that seems to be of greatest interest to his narrative is that relating to the "Long Tom," a huge cannon that was to be mounted just abaft the foremast after the

vessel should take her final departure for the expedition.

Parsons says the merchant from whom the arms were purchased had aplenty of carronades, but only one long gun, and when he mentioned that one, he remarked that he could "not conscientiously advise the use of it."

"It was cast to please my son Jeremiah," he explained. "The boy had an idea he could design a gun that would outrange anything afloat."

The reader who is familiar with the sizes and models of guns then in use will be interested to read that this one was an eighteen-pounder—around four and a half inch bore—it was thirteen feet long and it weighed just under seven thousand pounds, "the bulk of the iron being at the butt where it ought to be," as Parsons writes. Evidently here was a design something like the Dahlgren gun that came into use in the Civil War.

"The boy calculated," continues Parsons, "that with the use of lead for balls to give them extra weight, and with ten pounds of powder to lift 'em, that gun would knock splinters out of a galleon at a range of two miles or more; and I calculate that the boy knows more than his dad or any of the cruiser captains, who have refused the gun on account of length and weight. I'll bet my head against an old soldier, it's just what we want; and the *Nemesis* will carry it as if it were a quaker" (wooden gun).

Because it had been theretofore unsalable the merchant offered it at half the usual price and the deacon at once closed the bargain, much to the delight of Parsons.

A half dozen carronades were then purchased. The merchant said that thirty-two pounders were favored by most of the cruiser captains but Parsons insisted on eighteen pounders, saying:

"One size of shot on a ship is enough for me. I have seen excited crews try to ram six-inch balls into five-inch muzzles and never see why they failed until it was too late. And if Captain Arkwright is willing we will take a hundred lead balls for the long gun; for I believe your son had a grand idea."

In the mean time McGregor had gone to Charleston, South Carolina, because he believed that city a more convenient place for recruiting an army to invade the Spanish territory; and the Nemesis soon followed him. When she arrived, Parsons says McGregor was having "great success in his plans, partly because he has a commission signed by Bolivar, who is considered the greatest of South American patriots, and partly because of a natural desire to aid in the liberation of the oppressed in Spanish America."

It is also noted that McGregor was offering "Florida farms as a bounty to volunteers. He has a big map of the territory bordering the St. Mary's River, on which he has laid out roads and plotted the farms which are to be distributed; 'subject to definite surveys to be made by the settlers *en masse* as soon as peace is established.'"

So profit as well as adventure loomed before the recruits.

The fact that this recruiting was contrary to the treaty between the United States and Spain made it necessary for McGregor to cover his work under the guise of an emigration party to the territory in contemplation, but Parsons says every intelligent person in the port knew very well what was in hand.

When Deacon Arkwright and Mate Parsons called on McGregor, in the parlor of the old Raleigh Tavern, they found "the room full of enthusiastic recruits." McGregor at once introduced the two as "the senior captain and senior lieutenant of the navy of the two Floridas," and they "were heartily cheered by the throng." Then he conducted them to a private room where he told them about the great success he had had in recruiting. As a matter of fact, he said some of the most influential young men of the State had joined his forces.

"Now the fact is," continued McGregor, "they are taking up the best of the land near the port and along the St. Mary, so I suggest that if you two would like a few thousand more acres than what you are entitled to as a return for your services, you would better buy now. I have re-

served a plot of five thousand acres on the St. Mary's, especially for your benefit, and if you take it now you shall have it for thirty-five hundred dollars in gold."

"By gracious, I'll take it," declared the deacon.

"He didn't say, 'we'll take it,'" continues the diary. "He left me out in the cold. And he's to pay for that land with money I gathered from the brethren when we were fitting out for the coast!"

The diary shows that Parsons felt deeply that he had been shabbily treated by the deacon. For he notes that after leaving the hotel, no less than seven merchants of the city came to them "at one place and another to discuss" with the deacon the desirability of buying Florida land; and "each one talked as if he thought three dollars an acre would be a fairly low price."

"I could see that the deacon was certain to make a profit of two dollars and thirty cents on the land that was costing him only seventy cents an acre," says the diary. "He saw it, too. Trust him to see cent per cent let alone three hundred per cent. And the old miser went back to McGregor and bought ten thousand acres more at the same price per. So all the gold we have left on the Nemesis is one thousand dollars."

However, Parsons said not a word to the deacon about this ill feeling.

"It's in his blood," says the diary, "and I shall have to work him in some way to get my rights. I'll never quarrel with him till I have to."

When the expedition was ready, the Nemesis and a smaller schooner chartered for the purpose took out clearance papers for "Havana and way ports." Then McGregor and his army went on board the two vessels, "in all two hundred and seventy-eight men and the vilest band of scalawags and cutthroats I ever saw, not excepting the horde under Bosse Jean at Culebre," wrote Parsons. "I gave Sir Gregor my opinion of them," he continued, "and asked him what had become of the landed gentry who had volunteered at Charleston. At that he smilingly replied:

"I incautiously mustered the entire

force in a field above the city, one morning, and do you know, we had no sooner broken ranks than all the gentlemen present came and told me they had decided to go south overland and join us on the *St. Mary's*."

"I told him I could but commend their good judgment, whereat he laughed again and continued:

"'Why, yes, I cannot say you nay, but at worst, Mr. Parsons, our boys are all good fighters, sir; none better, I should say.'

"And that far I allow he is right, for they have been raising hell ever since they came over the rail."

The two transports arrived off Amelia Island at night and the army, with the crew of the *Nemesis* in the lead, immediately landed from boats on the swampy inshore side of the island. By the movement of lights in the fort which Spain then maintained there it was seen that the garrison were alert, "but with a roar" the filibusters charged forward, and the Spaniards soon surrendered when "they were paroled and sent away to Havana in a long boat belonging to the fort."

Of the vain efforts which McGregor then made to establish himself upon Amelia Island the diary tells much more than can be found in the public documents relating to the matter, but it is necessary to note here only that the leader was soon short of money with which to pay the people on the Georgia side of the line for necessary supplies. The keen-eyed deacon began to foresee that this trouble was likely to prove disastrous to the hopes of the filibusters; for it was certain that much time must pass before the American government could be induced to recognize the new republic, even if everything went on propitiously.

Accordingly, with many a sigh for the money he had invested in McGregor's land warrants, he decided that the only hope for a profitable ending of the adventure lay in securing a privateer's commission for the *Nemesis* over the signature of McGregor as the agent of Bolivar. That, he thought, would be recognized as legal in an American court. That it would serve in any Spanish court as evidence that he was a

pirate was certain, but that fact gave him little worry.

"We'll get away and go hunting Spanish galleons and private slavers—uhuh—like the *Nemesis* was when Joli overhauled her," he said to Parsons, and to this Parsons eagerly agreed.

But when they went to McGregor and asked for the commission, their request was flatly refused.

"Why, the fact that I have a navy of two cruisers is my trump card in the play for recognition for the new republic," he declared.

That night, however, an excited delegation of planters from the Georgia side of the river came to see McGregor. They told him his soldiers were raiding their plantations and were not only carrying away cattle, hogs, and chickens, but they were running slaves into Florida. Indeed, the delegation declared that each man of their company had lost from one to a dozen good field hands, and they "wanted to know what the *bosse* was going to do about it," as the diary says.

"The truth is," continues Parsons, "most of the slaves they were complaining about, were runaways who had been eager to escape slavery and join our army, but some had been stolen. Three of our officers, to my certain knowledge, had run small coffles across to work on the lands McGregor had given out for bounties."

McGregor knew all about the slaves, Parsons says, but to the delegation he said he could scarcely believe that his men were thieves. But, since the complainants were plainly of the most respectable citizens of the United States, "the great republic with which the Republic of the Two Floridas is most anxious to maintain friendly relations," he would order an immediate and absolutely impartial investigation, and he could promise that all who were found guilty would be shot.

This reply "seemed to roil the gentlemen all up," declares the diary. "They thought McGregor was chaffing them, and they went away swearing they would have a man-o'-war come down and clean out the 'whole pirate horde.'"

McGregor now perceived that he was

"nearing the end of his rope," as Parsons remarks. The public documents relating to the matter say that a naval cruiser, the *Saratoga*, did go to Amelia Island to clean out the whole pirate horde, but before she arrived, McGregor gave up all hope of establishing a republic there and thought only of getting away from the dangers that impended.

Having, as noted, spent most of the gold he had brought to the island he thought to replenish his store by "working" the deacon, once more; for he knew that the deacon yet retained some of the coin brought from Baltimore on the *Nemesis*. Accordingly, he sent for both the deacon and Parsons and taking them to an inner room in the house he was occupying in the Spanish fort he offered to give them the commission they desired for five thousand dollars in gold.

"That made the deacon splutter," says the diary. "He was so excited he could not say a word for a minute. Then he told the *bosse* he didn't have a thousand left, but he would give all the land warrants the *bosse* had given him instead of the coin.

"The *bosse* suavely told us the warrants were no longer valuable and that the expedition was failing because we had not used our influence to keep up the courage of the army. The deacon spluttered again but the *bosse* shut him off and asked him how much money we had in coin. The deacon again said it was less than one thousand dollars, whereupon the *bosse* offered to send a lieutenant with us to the cabin of the *Nemesis* where the coin was to be produced in the lieutenant's presence. If the sum was less than one thousand dollars, the commission should be given for seven hundred and fifty dollars.

"At that the deacon sniffed and pulled out a buckskin bag containing eight hundred dollars, which he counted on the table. So McGregor took seven hundred and fifty dollars. It was a case of needs must, once more, for if we were to go cruising we had to have a commission of some kind and his was as good as any we could get—it was the only one we could get, under the circumstances. And when the *bosse* had

written it out to our satisfaction we left the fort to go on board the *Nemesis* and made sail."

CHAPTER X.

THE PRIVATEER SAGACITY.

ON examining the sea stores in the hold of the *Nemesis*, Deacon Arkwright learned that some had spoiled and he was therefore obliged to go first of all, to St. Mary's, on the Georgia side of the river, where, by mortgaging the schooner, he was able to secure enough to load his longboat until it was almost ready to founder.

"There is enough to last us three months, but it cost me just four times the prices of such stuff in New York," he remarked to Parsons, when he came alongside. "We'll need to capture the fattest galleon afloat if we are to regain what our acquaintance with Sir Gregor has cost us. Do you know what I think? I think those merchants who came to us in Charleston and talked about buying land at three dollars an acre were decoys employed by McGregor to get me to buy his land warrants. Uhuh! He baited his trap with a prospect of more than two dollars an acre profit and I bit. But get your anchor and keep a bright lookout for Spaniards."

That is the longest quotation of the deacon's words to be found thus far in the diary, and the penmanship indicates that it was written slowly, as if Parsons enjoyed setting down the evidence of the deacon's discomfiture.

"However," the diary continues, "I was as badly fooled as the deacon. I had been mad at him for not taking me in, too."

The *Nemesis* reached off the Florida coast to sail around the Bahamas and head down to the east end of Cuba. On the way, Parsons found nothing to record in his diary but the daily routine of keeping the vessel on her way. Even when the Cuban coast was reached, no vessel that looked like a prize was seen and the *Nemesis* jogged slowly down the trade wind toward Havana, until the mountain on the

north coast called the Pan of Matanzas came into view, one morning.

The weather, that morning, was of the type always found on that coast in June. Rain squalls chased one another down wind in constant succession. At times the air about the *Nemesis* was so clear that the horizon widened away four or five miles, at which time only a gentle breeze prevailed, but from four to seven different rain squalls could then be seen around her. Soon a lowering cloud would close in, with a strong puff of wind in its heart, and "leaking like a sieve," to quote the diary.

"It was just the weather for a game of hide and seek," continues Parsons, "and so I went up on the fore yard to take a severe look around for myself soon after daybreak."

The breezes were rapidly driving the *Nemesis* toward Havana, and it was off that port, if anywhere, that she might hope to encounter a well-laden Spanish merchantman. Of course, she was also likely to find Spanish men-o'-war in these waters, but the deacon and Parsons, in their need were desperate and fully willing to take chances.

After the call to breakfast had been answered, Parsons again went to the foreyard and he had hardly settled himself comfortably when he saw a big well-armed brig come out of a rain-squall about a mile away on the port bow. She was standing to the north on the starboard tack with all plain sail set, and she was making speed that threw the water in a big, white roll from her bows.

As the *Nemesis* was also making good speed down the wind only a few minutes would elapse, if the two held their courses, until they would be within hail. But the moment the brig came into plain view, Parsons hailed the deck, shouting:

"Hard aport! Hard aport! Lee fore braces! Haul aft the fore and main sheets. Lively, boys! The Artigan brig *Sagacity* is on the lee bow. There comes the first shot to bring us to. Flat aft those sheets! She's a pirate pure and simple. She carries three times our weight of metal, and she'll make us all walk the plank, if only for the fun of seeing us splash the water."

Then he leaped to a backstay and dropped rather than slid down to the rail. Jumping thence to the deck he ran aft where the deacon was seen coming out of the companionway.

"I'll bet my immortal soul against a chew of tobacco," remarked Parsons as he gained the quarter-deck, "that Captain Sout recognized the *Nemesis* as soon as I did the *Sagacity*. See him trimming the sails flat aft? Sure you do. And there's another gun. He knows he can't reach us yet, but he's like a hound on the trail—he is just naturally obliged to bark at every jump. But we can lay at least a half point closer to the wind than his blamed old brig and we'll beat him in the next squall."

Without a word in reply the deacon gazed through a long glass at the brig for about five minutes. Then he said quietly:

"She outfoots us so fast she is more than holding her own." Then he turned upon Parsons and with "a queer little smile on his hawk-bill face," he asked:

"How does it happen, Jonathan, that you are so eager to run away from Pierre Sout, now? Why, why, why, you went chasing him away back yonder."

"His question struck me dumb," writes Parsons. "I simply could not answer, right out of hand, and while I considered it, I seemed to be a second self, wondering what kind of a blamed idiot the first self was. But in a minute I saw how it was, and I explained it to him:

"'Deacon, I'll tell you all about it,' I said. 'When I saw that brig come out of the squall and remembered that she had three times our power, with Sout in command, the sight of her made me feel just as I did when I shriveled under his lash on the galley. I was a slave once more—a whipped cur. But now, sir, if you'll let me, I'll show willing.'

"'I'll let you, fast enough,' he answered. 'I'm obliged to, whether I want to or not. The *Sagacity* is the swiftest privateer afloat and we're obliged to lick her or sink. We'll get no quarter from Pierre Sout after the humiliation you gave him in Baltimore.'"

Parsons say he "cut a pigeon wing for joy," and turning to the crew, he bawled:

"Cast loose and provide the long gun! Call all hands save ship!" Then he said to the deacon: "If our long gun will do duty we'll dismast him before he gets within range of us. I should have thought of its power in the first place. We'll win in a canter."

A score of lead balls that had been cast especially for the long gun were brought from the magazine, together with an ample supply of powder cartridges which were stowed under double tarpaulins to keep them dry.

It is interesting to note here that the regular charge of powder for an eighteen pounder, in those days, was four pounds. But the cartridges which had been provided for this long gun held five pounds each. Parsons had calculated that with such a charge and with the use of lead balls with their greater specific gravity, the striking power of the gun would be "better than that of a thirty-two," as he explained to the deacon. "But now," he continued, "we need to do still better and I think we can astonish the dog."

Going to the gun, Parsons rammed home two of the five-pound bags of powder and on top of them he drove home one of the lead balls, the weight of which was more than twenty-seven pounds where an ordinary cast iron ball weighed eighteen. That Parsons was a gunner in advance of the gunners of his day is manifest from his diary. For he notes that the length of the gun would enable it to consume all of the unusual charge of powder he was using and that the lead bullet, "under the lift of ten pounds," would "land home at a range of two miles at least."

Inspired by these thoughts, as he loaded the gun, Parsons began to sing. The gun's crew, however, did not seem to share his hopes, for he notes that they "flinched visibly" when they saw the amount of powder used. Moreover, when they manned the side tackles and hauled this way and that to point the gun "they showed they were ready to drop all and run if only some one had dared to take the lead."

Having aimed the gun to his satisfaction, Parsons yelled to his men:

"Run, you bloody cowards! Run!" At the same instant he applied the match and with a roar the lead ball was sent on its flight, while the gun jumped back till it was brought up by the straining breech-line.

But of the strain on that line no one but Parsons made note, for all were watching the flight of the projectile. The enemy was a full mile away—"perhaps a quarter more"—but that shot "flew forty feet above her main truck, and how far beyond her it landed is more than I know. I never did see a gun shoot like ours." So runs the diary.

Seeing this result the crew "flocked back to the gun with a cheer, and in a trice they had loaded the weapon as before." Then Parsons lowered the elevation of the muzzle by a half and after a careful aim he fired once more.

For a few seconds the black ball was seen flying in a true course and it struck home in the counter of the *Sagacity*. A shower of splinters was thrown up and then the brig was seen coming to the wind while her crew ran frantically to let go the spanker halyards and man the down-hauls in an effort to shorten sail quickly. For the shot had destroyed her steering gear and she had been carrying a weather helm.

As the crew of the *Nemesis* now began cheering, Parsons shouted:

"That's right, men. Whoop 'er up. But at the same time just ease off the sheets at fore and main and round in on the fore braces. We're going to run down for a closer survey, if Captain Arkwright has no objections."

"I reckon he thought I was a little brash to take charge, in that fashion, but he did not object," says the diary. "In fact he was so eager to do as I had suggested that he eased off the main sheet himself."

Just then a rain squall overtook the *Nemesis*, but with Parsons at the wheel she was driven down the little gale and finally brought to the wind just as the rain was leaving her. A moment later it was seen that she was astern of the brig and no more than a quarter of a mile away.

Once more Parsons went to the long gun and fired it at the brig. The shot threw a shower of splinters from her stern and a moment later it knocked another out of her bow just below the starboard cat-head. It had raked her spar-deck with deadly effect and a man ran hastily to haul down her ensign while three others appeared in her main rigging waving white cloths.

"When I saw that flag come down," records the diary, "I swore by all that was good and holy I would make Pierre Soult dance to the tune he used to whistle when he lashed me, but it was not to be so, for when I had gone alongside to take charge of the prize I found that he had been instantly killed by a splinter at the first shot. It certainly did give me a shock to learn that I should have no revenge. But when I came to examine the prize I felt better."

That was a memorable day in the experience of Jonathan Parsons, A.B. For not only had he ended the life of a hated enemy, but he had captured a ship well ballasted with precious metals. The Sagacity had taken a Spanish galleon and had robbed her of no less than one hundred and eighty thousand dollars in gold and silver besides a large quantity of merchandise, all of which was now in her hold.

But unhappily for Parsons, within an hour after the Sagacity had surrendered, a Spanish corvette came out of a rain squall astern, and swooped down on the little Nemesis, at a range of less than a musket shot.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIGHT OFF MORRO.

"WHEN I saw that Spanish corvette lying right alongside, so to say, with her guns out and matches burning, I gave up hope. We had been so busy with the Sagacity that not one of our crew had seen the bloody brute, though she must have been in plain sight at some time while we were at work." So runs the diary. "But while I flunked, the deacon held a stiff upper lip. 'She was out in search of our prize,' he explained, 'and

seeing we have licked the devil we are in luck.' 'How in luck?' I asked. 'Here we are well armed and fitted out with a commission signed by Bolivar's known agent.'

"At that the deacon winked one eye in a way he has, and said:

"As to the commission, I have it in an inside pocket in my shirt where they'll find it only after I am dead. As to our guns, we are carrying them because of the danger which all lawful traders run when they cross the cruising grounds of these piratical vessels sent out by the rebel chiefs of Spain's American colonies. We have a lawful clearance from an American port to Havana and I have a letter from the Spanish consul at St. Mary's to his personal friend the *capitan* of the port in Havana asking special consideration for us. I paid twenty in gold for that letter and it is worth the price.'

"But deacon,' I said, 'if all that is true they'll rob us of our prize when we take it into port, here.'

"Of course, they will rob us but not of all,' he replied. 'We stand to lose maybe as much as a third of our legal share of the precious metal and a half of the value of the ship, but that will be the limit. Leave the diplomacy to me, Mr. Parsons.'

Parsons says in his diary, he very willingly left the diplomacy to the deacon, and that it was well he did so. Within two days after the fight with the Sagacity, both the deacon and he were offered "permanent commissions" in the navy of Spain; for the captain-general had proposed that the Nemesis should be fitted out as a Spanish cruiser to search for the piratical privateers of the Spanish-American revolutionists. Both of these offers were declined with profuse thanks, however.

"I didn't have the stomach to think of hunting the Americans on those privateers, even if two of the bloody ships had played us dirty tricks," says the diary. "What's more I knew when I had enough. My share of the proceeds of the capture of the Sagacity was enough to set me up in the underwriting business—and I don't know of any business so well suited to a

gentleman adventurer as that of underwriting! But during all the time I was figuring out what I would do with the money I was to get, I had a feeling, 'way down deep, that I was yet afloat in dangerous waters."

Even when he and the deacon were summoned to the palace and invited to go out of the harbor to fight another insurgent cruiser that had suddenly appeared alongshore, Parsons's fears were not wholly allayed.

"The Spaniards are cats," he wrote, "pretty, playful and purring when they're happy, but always armed with claws under the velvet—and ready to use 'em on the instant."

However, he and the deacon volunteered for this particular fight. At the palace they now met the captain of the Spanish war brig of large size, called a corvette in those days, which had prevented their looting the Sagacity.

"There are two of the enemy," declared this naval captain after he had been introduced. "One of them is a large brig, heavily armed. The other is a schooner, but of almost equal force. I shall have the honor of bringing in the enemy's brig, while to you shall be the honor of capturing the schooner. I should take them both but for the incredible speed of the schooner. She would fly when she saw the brig surrender, but your beautiful little Nemesis can—how do you Yankees say it? You can wipe her eye! I must warn you that she is more powerful than the Nemesis, but I trust you will not sully the glorious reputation you now enjoy by refusing to meet her."

The suave deacon replied to this in florid terms of praise of the valor of the little Spanish captain and with profuse thanks for the honor of the permission to fight under his command. And then with a commission signed by the captain-general, he led the way to the Nemesis.

In due time, the Nemesis followed the Spanish corvette out of the harbor. But when the two had passed the Morro it was seen that the Nemesis was rapidly overhauling the corvette. The two privateers were now plainly seen no more than

three miles off shore and on observing that the Nemesis was overhauling the corvette the deacon declared that the enemy had given the little naval captain "a head wind."

Accordingly, when the Nemesis ranged up beside the corvette the deacon hailed her:

"I beg your pardon for crowding so close up to you," he shouted. "I shall at once shorten sail, but I wished first to express my admiration for the gallant bearing of your whole crew, sir."

"A thousand thanks," replied the captain, "but do not shorten sail. I give you my permission to go on. The wonderful little Nemesis is as eager for the fight as her brave commander. Hold your course, but I command you not to sink the enemy's brig. You will fire on her at will in passing and then go on to capture the schooner. I shall sink the brig with one broadside as soon as I lay alongside."

At that the little Spaniard turned to look back toward the harbor and then he shouted:

"Look astern, Nemesis! Look away astern! My many friends are coming out to see me win the glorious victory. I invited them to do so and here they come."

It was even so. In spite of the rain squalls that swept along at short intervals, a flotilla of harbor boats, all well laden with people from the city, could be seen coming out with all sails set and flags flying.

"We've got to sink that brute of a brig and report on shore that the corvette did it," declared the deacon, and Parsons passed the word to the crew, at the same time explaining that doing so would hasten the settlement of the Sagacity prize case in court and their own departure for an American port. The crew cheered his remarks and then one of them respectfully asked him if he had not recognized the enemy.

"I was flabbergasted by that question," says the diary, "for I had to reply no, although it was none other than the Brutus, Captain Joli. We certainly did seem to have luck coming our way. Of course, she could throw twice our weight of metal at

a broadside and Joli was no slouch of a fighter, but we were to make a good try and I calculated that with our long gun we'd drill holes fore and aft and athwartships where they'd let the briny into her in such floods she'd sink sudden like."

Soon after the *Nemesis* passed the corvette, a commotion was seen on the quarter-deck of the *Brutus* and then a number of signals rose to the end of the spanker gaff. But no one on the *Nemesis* was able to read them and when this fact was observed on the *Brutus*, she prepared for the fight.

For a time the *Nemesis* reached out as if to draw along the starboard beam of the *Brutus* at musket range. The long gun, however, was meantime held with its muzzle pointed forward, and as the enemy came within range it was loaded with three cartridges of powder and three of the lead balls were rammed down its muzzle.

"We'll fire at a range of less than ten fathoms," Parsons told his gun's crew, "and the three balls will sink her by the stern."

With this end in view the helm of the *Nemesis* was put up suddenly, just as the short gun on her bow was coming to bear on the enemy. Turning swiftly she ran down across the stern of the *Brutus* at a distance of no more than forty feet. Hastily the helm of the *Brutus* was shoved down, but before her course had been changed by a point, the long gun on the *Nemesis* was aimed at her water line directly under the counter, and then Parsons applied the match.

A jet of flame and smoke spurted up from the vent, but for an instant there was no other result, and it seemed as if a misfire had been made. Then with a roar that echoed from the hills about Havana, the huge gun burst into a thousand pieces. Every man of the gun's crew, except Parsons, was stretched on deck. The deacon, who had been standing near at hand, was also struck down with his hat off and blood flowing from a deep cut on the forehead.

For a moment, Parsons gazed at the damage that had been done. Manifestly,

four of the crew were dead and the others seriously wounded. A great hole had been torn in the foresail and the starboard fore rigging had been half cut away. Then his eyes fell on the deacon and forgetting all else he knelt to examine the wound of his old friend. He shouted:

"Starboard your helm! Wear ship! Haul aft the starboard braces and sheets. Lively all. We've got to get out of this or the *Brutus* will sink us."

The men worked with a will, but the *Brutus* was also well handled and in a few minutes, Parsons saw that it was impossible for the *Nemesis* to escape. Thereupon he called the second mate and said:

"What I am to do is to save the life of the owner, Captain Arkwright. Help me get him into a dory on the port side. The rain-squall coming will hide us before we can get it afloat and then I'll pull it away through the murk to the Spanish corvette. You and the crew can then join the *Brutus*. Without a doubt, Joli will fit out the *Nemesis* as a cruiser with you in command. I wish you all good luck."

At that the rain began, the dory was launched and the deacon was lowered into it. Then Parsons got in, shipped the oars and pulled away.

By what seemed to him to be a run of good luck, Parsons happened to pull directly toward the Spanish brig and soon after the rain-squall had passed away, he was able to reach her side. He was most cordially received and the wounded deacon was carried below in charge of the surgeon. In the mean time, the two privateers were veering around to reach in and attack the man-o'-war brig. Moreover it was seen that the *Nemesis* had not only surrendered, but had joined the privateers in their determination to fight the corvette. At that the Spanish captain said to Parsons:

"Sir, I am about to call my officers for a consultation. I have a plan for sinking the enemy brig with the starboard broadside, the uncrippled schooner with the port, and then calling away boarders to capture the *Nemesis*. As your captain is incapacitated, I have pleasure in inviting you to join in the consultation."

"After a look at the other officers as

well as him," writes Parsons, "I saw that his talk was a mere bluff. What he aimed to do was to call a consultation as a cover for a sneak back to port. So I took my departure and laid a course accordingly."

When the officers had gathered around their captain and the pompous proposals had been repeated, Parsons humbly begged permission to speak first. He said:

"That I may without offense speak freely, I beg you. Our captain wishes to go out and fight three ships. Ha! I have called him brave in the presence of the captain-general, but now I tell you he is more. He is brave to the point of rashness. He is desperate. His valor has made him insane. Answer me this: Shall such a man as he be allowed to plunge into a fight that is mere suicide when the king has so few of equal ability and none superior? The first broadside from the enemy will sweep the deck, here, and he, being as always, standing in the front of the battle, will be the first to fall. Join me, I implore you! Seize him that he be not permitted to sacrifice himself for naught in the face of such terrible odds."

"When I said he could be in the fore front 'as always—*comosiempre*—'" continues the diary, "the others shouted their approval and fell upon him. He pretended to shake them off. Then he said: 'You have robbed me of my hope to win glory. I order you not to interfere. Alas! You overpower me! You may set the studding-sails to port after wearing.'"

Having thus won the favor of the captain, Parsons started to go to the cockpit to see how the unconscious deacon was doing under the care of the surgeon. He arrived within view of the two just in time to see the surgeon draw a package of papers from the shirt pocket of the deacon and put them in an inner pocket of his own coat.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PATRON.

WHEN Jonathan Parsons saw the Spanish surgeon take the bundle of papers from the deacon's pocket and transfer them to his own, "my first im-

pulse," says the diary, "was to jump on him and take them away. The apothecary and two wardroom servants were present, but I knew I could twist the whole mess of them around my thumb. But, of course, they would have squalled like scared hens and then all hands would have come to the rescue. So I had but one thing to do, which was to keep the doctor pleasantly occupied until we had anchored in the harbor and then get the deacon to a place of safety as soon as possible; and at worst before the doc had a chance to examine those papers and discover our Bolivar commission."

By the exercise of "very great self control," Parsons was able to do this. He was helped by the revival of the deacon, whose wound, though serious, was not as dangerous as it had at first seemed to be. That Parsons should openly ascribe the deacon's recovery to the skill of the surgeon was a matter of course, and his adroit flattery was "swallowed slick," as he says.

But he had difficulty in repressing a great sigh of relief when he heard the ship's anchor drop, and it was also with difficulty that he "went slowly to the captain to beg for the use of a cutter to carry the deacon ashore."

However, he managed the business with success and in due time he and the deacon were landed. A carriage was secured and after placing the deacon in it, Parsons gave the coxswain of the cutter a couple of gold pieces, with which to buy wine for the boat's crew. Then he ordered the carriage driver to make haste to the leading hotel of the city, but when the carriage had rounded the first corner, Parsons told the deacon about the theft of the papers and then told the carriage driver to take him to a hotel that was then very popular with American seamen, because the proprietor, who was a Frenchman, was at pains to care for them when by any means they faced trouble with the authorities. Here the deacon remained in a fairly comfortable condition until nightfall when he was transferred to a small boat and rowed across the harbor to a littoral village named Regla.

The two boatmen who handled the boat

rowed it to the end of one of the Reglapiers and proposed landing the deacon there, but Parsons ordered them, in a menacing voice, to row in to the bulkhead at the head of the pier.

"What are you afraid of?" asked Parsons. "Pull! Pull."

"No, friend. It is better that we do not know where you take the wounded gentleman," replied the boatmen.

"Good," agreed Parsons, who perceived that they were right. "But you will call some one who will guide us?"

"How not?" was the reply. Then the man uttered two mournful little cries like those made by gulls and followed the cries with a yelp such as a dog would make when unexpectedly kicked. Up to that moment not a light was to be seen in any house in the row that faced the water front, save only in a public house at the head of the pier. But as the yelping sound died out, three men emerged from the shadows, a cable's length down the street from the hotel.

"I have two friends who need you," said the boatman, when the three came to the pier. "I do not know where they wish to go."

Then he helped Parsons land the deacon after which the boat was rowed swiftly away.

When the boat had disappeared, one of the three men asked:

"Where shall we hide you?"

"With the French patron," was the reply.

The diary continues:

"They led us down the littoral to the first corner and then we turned up to the left until we had passed four doors. At the fifth door they pushed in with us, and we were soon within the court of one of the larger houses of a sort found in all these Spanish-American towns. There was a row of square rooms, with a continuous veranda before them, all the way around a square court that was about fifty feet on a side.

"Everywhere under the veranda it was as black as a wolf's mouth for there was neither moonlight nor starlight nor candlelight to help the eye. But I could hear

the voices of men and women but no children at various points along the veranda, and the absence of children showed me that it was not a child's playground.

"As we came to a stop, one of our guides pretended to call a dog, and at that a door opened, after which we were led into a barren-looking room having four chairs and a table scattered around the walls with a single candle burning on the table. Beside the table stood a swarthy, hairy man of large frame and supple muscles. He was dressed in a ruffled, white silk shirt with a pair of white linen trousers supported by a red silk scarf. In the scarf he carried a pistol and a long knife. As we entered, he looked at us indifferently and then looked at the guides, who at once left the room. As they left, however, one of them pointed to the big man and said:

"This is the patron."

"I did not need the introduction, for he had been so well described to me that I recognized him at sight. Moreover, I had been told how to address him and what to expect in reply."

Speaking in a jargon that consisted chiefly of French and Spanish with a few English and Italian words mixed in—a jargon which he says was in use among the galley slaves at Marseilles—Parsons said:

"We have fled from the Havana police. The captain-general himself has given orders that we must be found. If taken we are to be shot at once. You have only to send word that we are here and they will reward you."

The patron placed his hand on the butt of his pistol.

"Hah! Dog! Do you come here to insult me?" he exclaimed. "I am in league with the police, you say? Peace! They shall not shoot you. I will do it myself, and now."

As he drew the pistol, Parsons, unabashed, continued:

"Have patience, my lord the patron, for only a moment more. You do not know us. We are now hated Yankees, but yesterday we were the guests of the captain-general and the associates of officers of the

Spanish Royal Navy, even though my brother here was but the captain of the merchantman called the *Nemesis* and I was his mate. We had conquered the Artigan privateer called the *Sagacity* upon which we found much gold and silver.

"To-day we went forth to fight the privateer *Brutus*, Captain Joli, but when the battle began, our long gun burst and my brother was wounded. He was taken to the surgeon on the Spanish corvette; and when there, after his wound was dressed, the surgeon stole a bundle of papers from his inner pocket. My lord the patron, among those papers was a commission making the *Nemesis* a privateer under the flag of Bolivar, whom the Spaniards call a rebel. Under the law of Spain, we are pirates. Now you will inform—"

"Scoundrel! Hold your tongue!" interrupted the patron. "Why do I not kill you now? Answer me that. Answer, I say. You are silent. Then I shall tell you. You say I do not know you. You lie. I saw you bring in the *Sagacity*. I saw you land. I saw the people do you honor. I saw you go to the captain-general. I heard your name and that of your brother. But what cared I for your great honors and your great wealth? Not a snap of my fingers. But what cared I for you two? Ha! I loved you even as my brothers. You are surprised to hear that? You are astounded? Yes, I think you are. Why should I love you? You are full of curiosity to learn. You eagerly await my answer. I will tell you. When they told me that you had captured the *Sagacity*, they also said that you, sir, First Officer Parsons, had aimed the long gun and had killed Pierre Soult. I then ordered my men to guard you and bring you to me when the time of need came. Do you know why I hated Pierre Soult?"

Parsons leaned forward and exclaimed:

"No. It is not true. It cannot be. You tell me this to torture me. You lead me on to believe I have a friend other than this one who is wounded here. You told the patron in Havana to send me here in order that you might laugh at me and then send me to the garrote. How can it be that I should find here a man who

hated Pierre Soult as I hated him? Have you had reason to hate him as I have had? It cannot be so."

"Peace!" exclaimed the patron. "First we will care for our deacon. Then we shall see."

He called in the three men who had brought the deacon and Parsons to the house. Under his orders they prepared an adjoining room for the use of the two guests and helped the deacon into a hammock. Then the patron took Parsons into another room on the opposite side of the reception room. There, by the light of a candle he drew up the shirt sleeve on his right forearm. At first glance, Parsons saw only a tattooed picture of an eagle standing on an anchor, but he looked closer and then perceived dimly that the tattooing covered a *fleur de lis* that had been branded there.

Silently drawing up his own right sleeve, Parsons exposed a wide scar over and around which had been tattooed a great mass of bunting.

"I, too, fled from the accursed galley," he explained, "and I was also captured and returned and branded. When next I escaped I burned out the branding, as you see."

At that the patron embraced him and kissed him on both cheeks. They had both served in the galley under Pierre Soult at Marseilles, though at different periods.

A week later a lean little picaroon came from the west and dropped her lateen sails at the Regla pier upon which Parsons and the deacon had landed. Her master came to the hiding place of Parsons and the deacon, and told the patron that the Cuban gentlemen adventurers operating at Cape San Antonio had had the good fortune to capture three rich prizes.

One was a Baltimore schooner coming from Cartagena. As General Don Pablo Morillo had proclaimed a blockade upon all that part of the South American coast, this vessel, under Spanish laws, could be brought to Havana as a lawful prize. The other two vessels, however, were English and it would not do to bring them in, no matter where they came from. Accordingly, they had been looted and sunk. The

valuable merchandise thus captured was so great in bulk that it would be necessary to send a ship repeatedly to bring it in. As to the Baltimore schooner, however, said the captain, she was so swift and well built that she could be made the most powerful cruiser in those waters if only she were armed. Then he went away.

Within an hour the leading merchant of Regla came to the patron and explained that he was looking for men to man a schooner that he was to send to Cape San Antonio for a rich cargo.

"I need men of great skill and courage," he declared, "and them I shall pay well." Then he glanced at Parsons who had been called in when the merchant appeared.

"Show him your arm," ordered the patron, addressing Parsons. "He is my friend."

The merchant after glancing at the spot where the *fleur de lis* had been branded exclaimed:

"You are a good man. You shall go as mate of the Santa Madre, the schooner I shall send first of all for the merchandise. You are a Yankee, then? It is well. The renegades of that nation are the devils of the sea."

The Santa Madre had already been cleared at the custom house for a voyage to the cape at the west end of Cuba to bring a cargo of "merchandise saved from an unknown ship stranded on a reef" in that neighborhood.

"But I am sending cannon, ammunition and stores with which to fit out the Baltimore ship so that she can cruise for prizes as she comes in for adjudication," continued the merchant, speaking to Parsons, "and I have ordered that you serve on her as first lieutenant. You need have no fear of sailing into port, here, on your return. Even if you should be recognized, you shall suffer no harm, for you will then be serving the king as well as me."

"It is so," said the patron. "And you will have opportunity to try again to capture the Brutus, for she will haunt this coast until she is taken."

With that Parsons agreed to accept the merchant's offer. After arranging that the deacon should be placed on a vessel that

was loading molasses for Newport, Rhode Island, he hastened to the Santa Madre, and as the sun was sinking that afternoon she left the harbor and squared away.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE SANTA MADRE.

WHEN the little Spanish coaster Santa Madre, laden with arms and ammunition for fitting out a captured Baltimore schooner lying at Cape San Antonio, for use as a cruiser, sailed from Havana, her motley crew looked with much curiosity and more doubt at the tall, lean, long-haired Yankee mate who stood at the heel of the bowsprit and gazed toward the shore.

They had observed, indeed, a certain verve in his work as he led them in making sail, and that was in his favor. The fact that he was a Yankee, however, was so much against him that they were yet in doubt. The Yankees whom the merchant in Regla had designated as renegades, were, in those days, ready and able fighters in all cases, but they were usually mere brutes in all other respects, and utterly lacking in the *savoir faire* to which the pirates of mixed Latin and negro blood were accustomed.

As time passed, however, Parsons showed that he was a diplomat in dealing with such sailors. Of the domineering trait he showed not a trace. He called the men brothers or addressed them as his children; and yet when one thought to presume upon this kindly manner of speech, Parsons knocked him senseless into the lee-scuppers. Then he hastened to revive the man and to explain to him that it was impolite to treat an officer with undue familiarity.

But better, in the long run, than this personal treatment of the men was the manifest ability of the Yankee mate as a sailor. It was the inclination of the crew to let the running gear lie where they dropped it and to "make a hog pen of the deck," as Parsons wrote. "But I put things to rights as if the little barkie were a man-o'-war," he continues, "and they fell into my ways with small delay."

In this matter, Parsons knew very well that he was almost sure to arouse the jealousy of the captain. Many a mate of an American ship has made trouble for himself by an ostentatious display of his seamanship, and Latin-blood captains are much more easily offended by an affectation of superiority in an under officer than Americans are. But Parsons smoothed his way by "doing everything under the advice of the captain"—advice which he sought most adroitly. And whenever anything attracted favorable comment from any member of the crew, the captain was given the credit. It was therefore, with favoring breezes of more than one variety that Parsons and the *Santa Madre* was wafted on to Cape San Antonio.

On arriving at the cape, Parsons searched the littoral with his eyes, thinking to discover the Baltimore schooner he was to fit out as a cruiser, but not a spar or a stay or a shred of canvas could he see. There were coral islands, all rimmed with mangroves, in view, and the shoal-water lagoons between them, with their backgrounds of forest trees, here and there, were very beautiful when the sun shone forth after the passing of a rain-squall; but though he gazed intently up each picturesque vista, there was not even a sign of a human habitation to be discovered.

"That she may be here, the beautiful schooner, no?" said Parsons to his captain.

"How not?" was the reply. "And there the brave crew who captured her show themselves, Señor Teniente."

He pointed up a lagoon off the port beam and then ordered the *Santa Madre* brought to the wind and anchored.

As Parsons hastened to obey the orders he looked into the lagoon indicated—a narrow strait between an island and the mainland—and saw a ship's long-boat full of men who appeared to be and were like the crew he had brought from Havana, "a slippery mixture of Spanish, Portuguese and negro bloods, the devil's own spawn beyond a doubt." But they now began to shout a welcome to the *Santa Madre* "with all hands pulling at the oars with a will," meantime, and they were soon alongside.

Parsons was especially impressed with their captain, who sat in the stern sheets with the tiller ropes in hand—one Don Rufino Diego, as Parsons soon learned. "He has the longest mustache I ever saw," says the diary, "and I never did see such shifty eyes. But he knows how to handle his men, and that is something in his favor."

With the pirate crew the boat brought "no end of fruit, as if we were just in from a voyage across the Western ocean, and the number of bottles was too great to count. The drinks came from their prizes, no doubt, but the stuff will be none the less welcome to me on that account. I thought to brew a bowl, or a barrel of punch that would make them all weep for joy, for I assumed that we should have an orgy at the call of the watch. But in that point I was mistaken. They really attended to business first, and that was something I never saw such a crew do before."

The captain of the shore gang led the way on board the *Santa Madre*, where he greeted the schooner captain most affectionately. He also embraced Parsons, while the crews intermingled and rejoiced with the utmost enthusiasm. But when this formality was ended and all hands had swallowed a few drinks of wine, the officers of the coaster were invited to inspect the captured Baltimore schooner.

"I was particularly glad to go," writes Parsons, "for I was anxious to learn what kind of a ship I was to serve on; and all the more so because I was beginning to lay a course for taking charge of her, once we were at sea. So I kept my eyes open.

"As we crossed the lagoon we passed over seven hulks that had been burned to the water's edge and they were not so old at that. I fancy the gang has had rich pickings around here within the past year or so. A little further on we saw two bodies of sailors, Englishmen, I should say, that were afloat on the lagoon. I judged they were from the last ship captured and so I asked one of the oarsmen where the other members of the crew were.

"Ah! What a pity!" he exclaimed. "Ten escaped ashore and fled into the

woods. Please God they do not reach their consuls at Havana, but who knows? How shall it compensate us that four of them joined us?"

"Mean time I was looking with all eyes for the Baltimore schooner," he continues, "but not until we had entered a little inlet where she was moored and her hull was in plain view, did I locate her. For the gang had sent down her topmasts and then had lashed saplings and branches of trees to her lower masts with such skill that I had been unable to distinguish them from the forest trees near at hand."

From the well-disguised masts, the critical eyes of Jonathan Parsons, A.B., soon turned to the hull beneath, and he writes:

"There was a ship for you! In the clear water above the coral bottom I could see her lines full well enough. She had a sheer that showed she could ride out a hurricane. Her bow was long and the sharpest I ever saw, she had a breadth of beam that would keep her up as stiff as a church under a gale of wind, and the underwater lines came aft easy and spread out on a counter that would help sustain her. And then there was her keel reaching down to a depth of at least twelve feet at the stern-post, although her draft at the stem was no more than seven. Why, it was plain that with two men in a watch she could be sailed around the world. The Baltimore clippers have always beaten all creation, but here is the choice of the whole fleet."

Until the long-boat arrived alongside the schooner the two captains as well as the men at the oars chatted and chattered continuously and in most cheerful tones. But when all hands had mounted to the deck of the schooner, the captain of the Santa Madre faced the captain from the shore and in pompous tones said:

"Sir, I have orders for you from the owner at Regla. I beg you to read them now, sir."

He handed a folded paper to Don Rufino, who flushed slightly as he took it. When he had read it he bowed low to the captain who had brought it to him.

"I congratulate you, *Señor Capitan!*" he exclaimed. "You are to command—

er—temporarily—the finest ship afloat. I am rejoiced that I am able to surrender her to one so capable!"

Then he crossed the deck, leaped ashore, turned about, "blowed a handful of kisses"—to quote Parsons—"at the man who had supplanted him and then disappeared in the forest. The exultant captain on the schooner jeered at him, but no response was made."

It was at this time that four sailors, from the American crew of this schooner, who had joined the pirates came from the schooner's forecabin. They were ordered to go with Parsons into the hold for an inspection of the cargo. Parsons says he "sized up" all four as "able marlinespike seamen, but there was one, Nathan Bracken, who especially impressed me. He had the coldest blue eyes I ever saw, and when he talked to me he looked me right in the eye. Moreover, he was a big brute in strength—able to throw a carronade over the rail without straining a hair. I could see he took to me as I did to him, too."

On going into the hold, Parsons made a careful examination of everything in sight with Bracken by his side to tell where the stuff came from. They lingered long over several kegs said to contain ores. On seeing that many pigs of lead, as Bracken described them, were laid along the keelson to serve as ballast, Parsons drew a knife and stooping down drove the point into one of them as far as he could, "which was not far." Then without a word, he went on with the inspection of the remainder of the cargo.

Later, when able to speak to Bracken alone, Parsons asked:

"Bracken, did you happen to notice me sticking my knife into that pig of lead?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any idea why I did it?"

"I made a guess, you thought it might be something else, sir."

"Right. It is something else. It is mostly silver, but it was put in the manifest as lead to reduce freight rates. I know. It is mixed with lead, but it is worth nigh to half a dollar an ounce for all that. And there are many tons of it, I believe.

Bracken, did you ever work on a farm when in God's country?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! You know, then, there is a seed time and a harvest. The harvest follows the seed time. If I were to suggest that this seems to be the seed time for us—h-m!—have you any idea what Captain Don Rufino intends to do?"

"Aye. Leastwise he'll *try* to spill the blood of our present master."

"He will," agreed Parsons. "If you think you can find him I wish you would give him my compliments and tell him to wait until we are ready to get the anchor. Then he is to come on board in disguise and stow away forward. The colored gentlemen of the crew we shall ship on this schooner for the cruise we are to make, would just as soon he would command as the other fellow, while we would rather have him because he will feel grateful to us for helping him regain command. See? We shall be able to persuade him to accept our advice and run this very beautiful schooner into some American port, say New Orleans, where we can turn her over to the authorities as a ship rescued from the damnable pirates of Cape San Antonio, and so we shall win great honor and many shekels."

Bracken shook his head.

"I'm wary of New Orleans or any port but Culebre Island, sir," he said. "Me and my mates, here, have talked it over and we'd rather chance it with Lafitte."

"That would not be too bad," remarked Parsons. "If things go well, we may not have to consult Don Rufino in the matter, anyway. There will be five of us white men on board. We should be able to lay any course we like and we'll agree to take a vote on it after we take charge, when the majority shall decide. Is it a go?"

"It is," replied Bracken.

"And he is a boy to depend on in such matters," says the diary.

Thereafter the work of fitting out the schooner for a cruise against the South American privateers to be found in the waters north of Cuba, was carried on with alacrity. The captain of the vessel very

gladly left the work in charge of Parsons because it saved him much labor and because, too, Parsons consulted him on all important moves and invariably told the crew that whatever was done was at the suggestion of "*el capitan*."

At the end of a week a long twenty-four-pounder had been mounted amidships, with a dozen carronades along the rails. Of course small arms and ammunition were also provided. A night and a day were then spent in feasting and drinking, another day in getting sober and then, late in the afternoon, the crew got the anchor.

Thereupon, with the lower sails spread, she sailed from the lagoon and stood away to the north on the starboard tack, with a view to beating her way slowly to Regla, and to attacking any South American privateer that might be found on the way.

As the schooner slipped noiselessly away from the land, her master came to Parsons and said:

"I am depressed for that I did not see Don Rufino after he fled over the rail while we lay in the lagoon."

"See Don Rufino? It is true you did not see him," replied Parsons. "How could you see a man who was hiding in the brush so that you should not see him? Sir, he is now standing on the bank of the lagoon, no doubt, shaking his fist at the stern of your little beauty of a sweetheart. Ha! He will be brave when you have sailed away."

"The captain wriggled with pleasure," says the diary, "and I talked on in that strain. But I could not help wondering what he would have done if he had known that Bracken and I had smuggled Don Rufino on board, the night before, to hide him in the forehold. I think he might have tried to knife me, but I don't feel sure about it. He might have flunked and begged for mercy."

Soon after sunset, the captain ordered a number of battle lanterns hung in the main rigging and when supper time had come he told the cook to serve his meal on the deck just abaft the companionway. This was done and the captain sat down at a small table facing aft where Parsons, who had the watch was pacing to and fro,

and pausing, now and then, beside Bracken, who stood at the wheel.

Observing that these two men were alert, and knowing that another Yankee was on the lookout on the foreyard, the heart of the captain warmed toward all the renegades of his crew and calling the steward he ordered a bowl of rum with chopped oranges, limes, and pineapple afloat in it to be served to all five of those men.

"They have done the hard work and this shall be their reward," he explained, but Parsons, who overheard what was said, interfered and begged that all hands be allowed to join in the offered treat. To this the captain readily assented and then he began eating the soup that the cook had already provided him.

"That was a weird scene," runs the diary. "As the little ship rolled to the swells, the battle lanterns swung to and fro and the moving shadows on deck made me think of ghosts and devils. I guess the devils were there, too, all right. Anyway there was one devil. I saw him come up the fore hatch, with a long knife in his hand, and come sneaking aft. At that I nudged Bracken. He merely nodded in reply, for he was already keeping a sharp lookout in that direction. Then suddenly the coming devil disappeared. He had dropped down with his hands on deck and was creeping, aft like a monkey directly behind the skipper.

"An instant later I saw him stand erect within easy reach. Then the skipper's eyes suddenly bulged, he gasped as if for breath and a thin steel blade came through his throat until it projected as far as the end of his chin. Then the blade was withdrawn and he fell quivering to the deck where the blood that gushed from his mouth flowed down to the lee scuppers.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNDER THE BLACK FLAG.

WHILE Don Rufino was creeping aft to assassinate the captain," says the diary, "the crew followed his motions in perfect silence.

"Only a few of them had known that

Rufino was on board and those few had served under him before we had come on the Santa Madre. But all hands recognized him when he came up the fore hatch and they all knew well enough what was to come. It was just as I had told Bracken. Not a man of them cared whether one man or the other commanded the ship. And when Rufino had finished his task, they all flocked aft for a look at the corpse.

"At that I noticed that our big black cook was at the head of the procession. After a swift glance at the body he sidled around until he was close to, but a little abaft Don Rufino. I saw, too, that he had his pistol in the scarf around his waist, and I noted the gun because he had laid it aside when he began to serve the captain's supper.

"Just then, however, my attention was drawn from him by a mouthy little mulatto who had served under Don Rufino before we arrived. He was stooping over to examine the wound in the dead body, and exclaiming, 'Ah! hah!' in a way to show that he was simply lost in admiration and unable to express his feelings adequately. After a minute, however, he stood up and said to one of his mates:

"Hah! The skill of Don Rufino! It was from behind he thrust the knife and yet he escaped the neck bones and cut the throat most beautifully. Then he turned to Don Rufino, who was posing like an actor with his bloody knife held up to view, and said:

"A little devil, thou!"

Don Rufino smiled graciously at the compliment and some of those near at hand began to applaud, but they were interrupted in a way that astounded them. For the big black cook suddenly drew his pistol and fired it point blank at Don Rufino's side. Don Rufino clutched at the spot where the bullet entered his body and screamed:

"Mercy, for the love of God! Is there no Christian here to help me?"

"Then he dropped dead across the body of the man he had assassinated.

"I was astounded myself at the killing of Captain Rufino," continues Parsons, "and when I glanced at the others I saw

that all except Bracken seemed to be much surprised. Bracken, however, was grinning, and I knew then that he had plotted with the cook. But when I was about to ask him what he had in mind he waved me aside and nodded his head toward the big negro, who seemed about to address the crew. The cook, however, came and took the wheel from Bracken, to whom he said:

"Speak you to us all and give us the course."

"I will," agreed Bracken, turning to the crew. "Listen to me, shipmates. There are several tons of silver in pigs down below. You have all seen them and like me you thought they were lead only. But I tell you they carry more silver than lead and are worth two *pesetas* per *onza*, at least. It is very pretty ballast. Ask Lieutenant Parsons. He knows.

"Then there is the cochineal. We all recognized that and you know as well as I do that it can be sold for at least fifteen thousand dollars. Then there are three kegs marked sample ores. Very elegant samples are they—very—for they are gold dust. Am I lying to you? Very well, tell me so, and we will open a keg and you shall see if I am trying to deceive you. Let us count up the value of our cargo. I am no scholar that I should do so, but there, as I said, is the executive officer, Lieutenant Parsons. He can tell you and he will do so. He says we carry the value of two hundred thousand dollars under hatches.

"But shipmates, who am I that I should lay down on the chart the course that we are to steer? Shall I advise you? No, for I am a fool and a man without spirit. I am a coward, for I have been helping to work the ship under two captains who were to carry all that wealth to a thief of a merchant in Regla. I did do so. During all the days we were fitting out the ship, I knew we had two hundred thousand dollars in the hold and yet I was for taking it to Regla.

"I say I was a fool. If I had been a man I would have tried to take a fair share of that property for myself. I was such a fool that I scarcely so much as thought of doing that. But Lieutenant

Parsons, there, he thought of it and so did our friend the cook. And it was the cook who took charge of the necessary details. He knew that both of those captains were bound as slaves, so you may say, to the Regla merchant, and no matter which one of them held command on this vessel, to Regla we were to go.

"So if we were to secure our proper share of the wealth on board for ourselves, it was necessary to get rid of both captains. Ha! Don Rufino did a very good job in ridding us of the one and the cook has cared for Don Rufino. He has cleared the ship for action. We have now no captain, so it is necessary that you all take charge and select one who understands navigation and business affairs to lead us. You shall select a captain, say, and he must be a man who can navigate the schooner and sell the pigs of silver and the cochineal. Then you shall say what we are to do next.

"Shipmates, look at the schooner. She is a pilot model. Look at her spars. Did you ever see taller? Where is the man-o'-war that can overhaul her, by or large? A pretty cruiser, is she not? She is. The Regla thief was to fit her out and take what cargoes she might capture. Now you shall take charge, for she is already well found for a cruise. We will sell what cargo we have and then go cruising for more. What say you to that?"

They answered him with cheers.

"It is well," continued Bracken. "Now choose first your captain."

"Parsons," shouted the negro cook. "As all of us who came from Regla in the Santa Madre know, he was in charge of a little schooner carrying only one long gun, yet he captured the big brig Sagacity that had blockaded Havana and wiped the eye of the king's navy for a week. He shall lead, no?"

They agreed once more with cheers. But when Bracken called on them to choose a lieutenant and showed that he hoped they would favor him, they promoted a little Spaniard who had been second mate of the Santa Madre. And then to Bracken's deep disgust they made another Spaniard second mate.

Thereupon, Parsons as captain of the vessel appointed Bracken, boatswain, and with that the big Yankee pretended to be satisfied.

"I saw he was boiling," wrote Parsons, "but he made a virtue of his necessity and seemed to be reconciled. However, I could see he would need watching; for disappointment was sure to make him as ugly as the devil."

Parsons's next move was to dispose of the two dead bodies, both of which were dumped overboard as soon as the crew had stripped off their clothing, and had used dice to determine who should have the different garments. Then the blood was washed from the deck, after which the property of the former captain, which was found in the cabin, was disposed of as the garments had been.

"It was a joyous occasion," writes Parsons. "The plunder was worth no more than twenty dollars, all told, but they shrieked and danced and called on all the saints as they threw the dice, until the last item was out of hand, when I made them a little speech."

"To sell the silver and the bugs," he said, "we might go to New Orleans. We could tell the customs officials we had captured the schooner from the hated pirates of Cape San Antonio, and they would reward us—er—more or less, but I think less. We should lose more than half of the value. We might go to Jean Lafitte at Culebre, but he, too, will rob us. But there is another port where I know we can do better and where we shall be entirely safe; and that is Charleston. Have any of you been there? No? So much the better. Here is the course as I would plat it, but you shall say aye or no. We will go to that coast and set a trusty man like our boatswain ashore at night. He will make his way to the office of Innes, Murdock & McPherson. I have known that firm to buy cargoes that were afloat. They will send a brig as far as the Loggerhead Keys to receive the silver and the cochineal, and the brig will bring the coin to pay for it—good gold guineas.

"But as for the gold dust, shipmates, I think we may divide it among ourselves

now. Gold is gold whether in dust or coin. I am willing you should give me my share, at any rate, in dust."

Parsons now tells in detail how he procured scales that were in the cabin and weighed out the gold, which was at once brought on deck, "even though the crew had had no supper." He was especially impressed by the "devilish suspicions" of the men as they watched him weigh out the dust.

"Each was dead sure that he would get less than his share," says the diary, "and they glared at me until I had shaken the last of the dust from the last keg into the scoop. Now that scoopful was to come to me and as the gold fell into the pan, the scales dropped well down, showing that I was getting a greater weight than had been given to the others." But as the pan sagged down, I picked a sizable nugget, worth, say, ten dollars, and that left the scales exactly on the balance. 'Good!' I cried. 'Here is a tiny nugget left over. What do you say, men? Shall I give it to the cook? Why not? Is he not the doctor who gives us the best medicine?' And with that they laughed and went forward, saying that 'the Yankee will divide fair.'"

Supper was now served. When it had been eaten the men began to gamble and they never ceased for a minute that night, to handle their cards and throw their dice. Bracken and his white mates were as eager gamblers as the other members of the crew, but they were no more skilful. In fact Bracken was "cleaned out" before midnight and "he went to his bunk in a sulk." But he turned out at daybreak, the next morning, and came aft to relieve Parsons, who had been officer of the deck and quartermaster as well as captain all night.

So Parsons had opportunity for rest. When next he came on deck, so many had lost all their gold that he was able, "with a little diplomacy," to get the crew to do all the work that was necessary to keep the vessel well under way, "which wasn't much, for we were still on the starboard tack under easy sail."

"I didn't touch a card, myself," writes Parsons, "but I kept an eye on the others

and so learned who were the cheats. It was worth while, for the cheats were the lads who could not be depended on."

During the afternoon of this day, the crew as a whole lounged around the deck at ease, watching the few, who then held the gold, gamble to see who should finally have the bulk of it. So they gave no heed to either the ship or the sea until the cook came aft to say he was starved and desired to eat.

"It is well," replied Parsons. "So am I. Go ahead and get us a feast."

The cook turned away to do so but a moment later, as he glanced ahead, he saw on the horizon the sails of a square-rigged ship come from behind a rain squall.

"Ha! It is another prize for us!" he exclaimed, turning back toward Parsons. "What fortune! What fortune, captain!"

"Wait a little," replied Parsons. "She is a Yankee, by her rig, and very likely bound from New Orleans to some eastern port. Now if we are to sell our silver in Charleston, we should not touch a ship bound to the Atlantic coast. Of course, if we take her we will sink her with all hands, but when she is posted as missing, everybody will realize what has happened to her. Then the manifest of her cargo will be published everywhere alongshore, and especially in Charleston.

"See, now, what will happen then. When we go there to sell our prize cargo, the merchants will recognize that we have on board stuff from the missing Yankee. Of course, they will be afraid to buy and likely as not they will send word to any man-o'-war that may be in the harbor. At best to take this ship is to spoil the market for what we have; at worst it is to put a rope around our necks."

"I knew I was making a pretty thin argument," comments Parsons, "but it was the best I could think of, and I was determined not to attack a ship under the grid-iron flag unless I had to do it to save my life."

To the appeal Parsons made, the negro said nothing, but "he was by no means convinced; for when he went forward he stopped beside a group who were playing cards and spoke to them in a low voice.

Thereupon, they all jumped up to look at the strange ship and then turned around and gazed at me with manifest astonishment." Again the negro spoke to them in a low voice, when they all went on with their game, save one who walked to the galley to help him prepare the meal. But while they played, they frequently glanced aft "with looks that were not very pleasant."

After a while the strange ship was seen turning to the starboard tack and when the sails began to draw the ship filled away until studding-sails could be set.

"They had recognized us, poor devils," writes Parsons, "but they had no more chance to escape than a fish hawk with an eagle in chase."

The piratical crew now became more excited, but when they observed that their schooner was still gaining they went on with their game until dinner was ready when they began to eat with much talking and "many ominous looks aft."

Accordingly, when the meal was ended, Parsons called them aft.

"You want to go in chase of her," he said, and they answered with a growl.

Parsons was now "fighting mad," he says, but he controlled his temper and continued quietly:

"My advice is that we show Venezuelan colors: She will reply by showing hers. If she is a Yankee, we should let her go."

At that Bracken stepped forth from the crew, whom he then addressed:

"I am the fool," he began, "but wait a minute to hear me. The captain thinks that if we sink her, and, later, we are seen lying to off the Carolina coast, the revenue cutters will connect us with her disappearance. The captain means well. He is a cautious man—yes, he is cautious. He means to keep us—and himself—safe.

"But I am the fool. I do not want to be kept safe when a little risk will bring me good gold. There, off the weather bow, is a ship from New Orleans, a big ship. Have we not all sailed out of New Orleans before now? We have. We know the cargo she carries. We have seen the schooners come there from Vera Cruz bringing ten thousand, twenty thousand, and

even fifty thousand silver dollars each. And those dollars were soon loaded on some Yankee ship bound to the North. The ship yonder will be carrying at least fifty thousand of those silver dollars. That would be two thousand apiece. It is a risk to attack her, but I am such a fool I am not afraid to take it. Now—"

At that point, Parsons interrupted him, saying:

"Hold fast a minute, shipmate. You shall see whether I am the coward you say I am. I did not say we must let her go. I advised you all to do so, but we are all equal here, when it comes to deciding whether we shall attack a ship or not. It is not for me to say no, when all others say yes, and by the same token it is not for Bracken or any other braggart to say we *must*. We will take a vote and if the majority of you wish to capture her, then she shall be captured, and we shall see who leads the way over her rail. Now, then, all who wish to take her raise your hands and say so."

"At that every dog of them put up his paws and howled," says the diary. "So we cleared the deck at once and made sail in chase."

As the unfortunate merchantman was overhauled it was seen that her crew were preparing to fight, and that helped to nerve Parsons to take the lead in the assault. The merchant crew gathered along the rail, each with a loaded musket in hand, and Parsons observed that some of the pirates were now careful to screen themselves by crouching behind the bulwarks and the foremast. Nevertheless, when the schooner drew up on the weather quarter of the ship they all swarmed forward, and after receiving a blast from the merchantman's muskets they threw up grapnels and then climbed into the fore-rigging, each with a knife held in his teeth, ready to spring on the ship. And at that, Parsons, with a sword buckled to his waist, put himself in the midst of the crew and was the first to jump to the ship's rail.

"I had found a right good sword in the cabin," he writes in describing the assault, "with a blade as sharp as a razor, and I carried that instead of a knife. But

when I landed on her deck I thought I should not need to use it on the poor devils; for their hearts seemed atremble at the sight of us bloody black pirates, and they all fled—a few to the fore-castle and the others, about twenty in number, I should say, jumped down to the hold through the open fore-hatch. Accordingly, my men went in chase, except Bracken and the cook, who ran into the cabin under the poop deck."

For a few moments, Parsons stood idly gazing over the deck. He noted that everything was in "prime order, with the running gear all flemished down as neat as a man-o'-war. It struck me that she had an able skipper and I was feeling astonished to think that the crew had fled with so little resistance when I heard those of our side, who had plunged down the hold shouting for help. 'More knives,' they yelled and then they screamed it with all force possible."

The same cry soon arose in the fore-castle and Parsons now perceived that the ship's crew had fled, not from fear, as he had supposed, but through a plan previously formed to get the pirates into an ambush. The pirates were surely being defeated, if the cries for help meant anything, and Parsons, aroused by the fear that the defeat would lead to his capture and execution as a pirate, was about to run to the aid of his men in the forehold when "a slip of a girl no more than fifteen years old" came screaming from the cabin.

"Wild with fear she ran to the star-board rail, jumped on a big timber-head and was about to plunge overboard, when I caught her skirt, put an arm around her waist and drew her back. And with that down she dropped in a dead faint." So runs the diary.

Supporting the limp body of the girl on his left arm, Parsons turned with the idea of taking her into the cabin, but as he did so, he saw Bracken and the cook coming from the doorway. It was now manifest that the girl had fled from them and that Bracken had come in search of her. Seeing her on Parsons's arm, the renegade advanced with both hands out, saying:

"I will take the little beauty as my share of the plunder, captain."

CHAPTER XV.

A SAILOR'S DAUGHTER.

AS Jonathan Parsons, with the "slip of a girl" on one arm, faced Bracken and the negro cook, he as well as they realized that a mortal combat was at hand, and it is likely that all three relished the prospect. But Parsons chose for the moment to assume that the two would obey him as captain of the gang. So he eased the girl to the deck, drew his sword and pointing with it toward the fore-hatch, he ordered them forward.

"Don't you hear the call for 'more knives'?" he asked. "Were you in the cabin thinking to get jewels which you were to hold out from the rest of us? Get away forward!"

"And leave the girl to you!" exclaimed Bracken with a nod of his head to the unfortunate lying on the deck. "Why aren't *you* down forward?" he continued. "I'll tell you why. It's because you are a blooming coward. But you will go now or I'll cut your white liver out of you."

Both Bracken and the negro drew their knives and, spreading apart, prepared to attack Parsons from two sides in spite of the length of the blade in his hand. At the same time, Parsons saw that some of the pirates were coming up from the fore hold.

"I allow they had been driven up by the good Yankee sailors below," says Parsons, "but when they looked aft and saw me facing Bracken and the cook they comprehended the situation and howled damnation at me for a traitor. Then they started aft to take a hand in the fight."

In this emergency, Parsons retreated two steps aft—he backed away—and Bracken, foreseeing an easy triumph over one he believed to be a coward, turned to nod his head and grin at the negro. It was a most foolish move to make—a movement which Parsons had hoped he would make—and when his eyes were turned to the negro,

Parsons leaped forward "and with a sweeping stroke of my sword I sliced the devil's head from his shoulders. And then, even before Bracken's body had struck the deck, I again swung the sword and split the black from crown to shoulders; when I saw his neck work as if he were trying to swallow the blade."

The fate of these two had an overpowering influence upon the pirates who were coming out of the hold, for when Parsons turned upon them, yelling, "back into the hold and do your duty," a part of them dropped back as ordered and the others plunged into the narrow fore-castle to escape his sword.

Parsons was once more free from enemies upon the deck of the merchant ship, and as he perceived this fact he stepped to the side of the girl, took her upon one arm, as before, and climbing over the rail, he dropped lightly with her to the deck of the schooner. There he laid her carefully down and then with quick slashes of his sword, cut the grapnel ropes that held the schooner to the ship. Instantly the two vessels dropped apart and the head sails of the schooner filled away on the starboard tack.

Swiftly and yet without haste, Parsons trimmed aft the sheets of the jibs, the foresail and the mainsail, and then went to the wheel and "brought the clean-lined vessel to a course that would drive her to the mouths of the Mississippi.

"The sun at that moment was shining undimmed by a passing cloud and its rays whitened the disordered sails of the unfortunate merchantman until they gleamed like new, and her fresh-painted sides were as glossy as a man-o'-war's. It was a blooming shame that a ship like her should have been attacked by such a band of cut-throats," runs the diary, "but I soon saw they were getting their pay."

No sooner had the schooner been headed on her course to the Mississippi, than three of the pirates were seen climbing to the rail of the merchantman.

"For the love of God, help!" shouted one, and then all three fell to cursing Parsons in three languages and a jargon of them all.

"Bah!" answered Parsons. "You would attack her; now make the best of it. Is it help you want? Shipmates, I am too busy to come. I have a pilot-model schooner, here, and she is ballasted with silver and gold and cochineal. She is worth more than two hundred thousand pieces of eight, shipmates, and she is all mine, now, for I took her from the pirates of Cape San Antonio. Adios, shipmates! That you may go well—to perdition!"

Then he saw one of the pirates fall overboard, and the sound of a musket made him believe the fellow had been shot by one of the ship's crew; for one of the other pirates then leaped into the sea and the others ran up the ratlines to the mizzentop.

And that was the last Jonathan Parsons saw or ever heard of those with whom he had been associated in his brief career as a Cape San Antonio pirate.

The diary now tells in much detail how Parsons lashed the wheel so that "the well-balanced little ship could steer herself," and then carried the girl to the cabin where he restored her to consciousness. She was terribly frightened when she opened her eyes and saw him standing over her, but he began to quote Scripture to her in order to reassure her, "for I knew a girl as sweet and pure as she was, must have been well trained.

"I had a hard time of it," continues the diary. "I went on deck, from time to time to see that the schooner was all right, and then came back with another message from the Scriptures, all of which I had learned when bamboozling the brethren on Long Island. Finally I asked her if she said her prayers every night.

"Of course, I do," she replied with some little show of indignation.

"Very good," I continued. "Now let me teach you one you never heard. Say this:

"My kind and good Father in heaven, I thank Thee for having taught me that all will be well with me because of Thine infinite love for me. Amen."

"That convinced her I meant no harm," says the diary. "It is the only prayer worth while, anyway, so far as I ever heard."

Having thus gained the girl's confidence, Parsons brought her a cup of tea with some biscuit and a pot of preserves. Next he showed her in the stateroom, to be found on all American vessels, known as the owner's room, gave her the key to it, and then went on deck to hold the schooner to her course during the night.

"I got enough sleep lying on deck with the wheel within reach; for the wind died down and she lay to, half the time," says the diary. The showers that passed seemed not to have attracted enough attention to get a line in the diary, but after sunrise he notes that he "swished a few buckets of salt water" over himself, and then, feeling much refreshed, he "put on dry clothes and had a bite to eat."

After that he sat down beside the wheel and wrote three pages of his diary, full of reminiscences and moral reflections. The voyage to the black coast for slaves; the failure of the venture; the swindling work of Sir Gregor McGregor; the capture of the Sagacity and all the misfortunes that followed, were mentioned as parts of "a life of folly after all." But now, "having saved an innocent maiden from a horrible fate," he had been rewarded by the opportunity to "rescue a most valuable ship from as low a crew of pirates as ever went afloat," and he would have the benefit of the girl's testimony in court to sustain the story he would tell.

Thereupon, he began to write out the story "in order to get it all well in hand, with no loose ends stringing over the rail." But before he had written half a page of it he happened to look ahead and there he saw "a stump-masted brig with nothing crossed above to gallant yards—a hooker from the lower Mexican coast beyond a doubt."

Parsons says he was familiar with the coast of Mexico, "from Vera Cruz to the tip of Yucatan," though how he came to be so is nowhere explained. But the diary does say that every Spaniard from that coast carried logwood, cochineal, turtle shell, and other valuables, including some gold and a few opals "obtained from the Indians."

Parsons's mind dwelt on the kind of

cargo likely to be found on the slow-sailing little brig ahead of his clean-lined schooner. There might be three or four bales of the shell and there would be at least a dozen bales of cochineal. As to the metal he could guess that she might have a thousand or two of gold, but probably less.

"It's a tidy little cargo," he wrote, "besides the logwood and mahogany. It's dollars to doughnuts she'd shell out ten thousand dollars' worth. She'll have a crew of say nine or ten, all told, and a measly, scurvy gang, at that. Huh! One man on deck with sword in hand could drive them all over the rail. No wonder the Bolivar privateers find rich pickings in these waters. If the deacon were here, now, with two or three of the crew of the *Nemesis*—well, it might be done without them. I never did hear of a lone privateer capturing an enemy's ship, but it *might* be done. Her cargo—all I should take—would mix in with what I have on board here. I wouldn't have to board her—just steer close alongside and fire one shot from the long gun into her. She'd surrender on the run, and she'd send a boat with whatever I called for. I'll just try it for a lark. My word, but the deacon's eyes will bulge when I tell him about my lone venture!"

The man was literally contemplating an attack upon the little Spaniard and after a brief consideration of the means to be adopted, he headed the schooner to cross her bows. Thereupon, the brig wore around and spread studdingsails in a futile effort to escape, while Parsons followed in her wake.

It was not a long chase, even though the schooner was under lower sails only, but when the brig was within reach of the long gun that was mounted as usual amidships he thought of the girl in the cabin, and of what she would think about his shooting the cannon.

"I was scared, at first," he writes, "but I soon considered that if she came on deck, I could tell her there was another pirate alee and that she was to go back into her room and stay there until I had run clear of it, or had dismasted it with the big guns. Then I decided to go below at once to explain the case; so I did it

and after about two words I had her in a state of mind to believe everything I told her, thus leaving me free to try my luck."

So Parsons went back on deck, steered the schooner within pistol shot of the lee side of the brig and when her crew, in response to his hail, came to the rail he fired a shot from the long gun into her hull. Then he told them to lower a boat and bring him all their gold, cochineal and turtle shell under penalty of a broadside from the short guns that would sink them.

He was standing beside one of the short guns as he spoke, but the men hesitated. They could see that he was the only person on deck and they were astounded by such a demand from one man. But Parsons at once fired the short gun, aimed so that the shot struck below the waterline, when she rolled to a swell, and with that the brig's crew surrendered and obeyed orders.

When a boat manned by two men came alongside the schooner, Parsons stood, well-armed at the rail and directed them in heaving the bales of valuable goods up to him. "The gold was in quills, which had been bunched and wrapped in thin bits of rawhide."

After the boat-load of valuable goods had been delivered to him, Parsons surmised by the looks of the two sailors that they had brought only a part of the treasure.

"Get back and bring the remainder of the goods," he ordered, and when the captain of the brig protested that all had been brought, Parsons called him a liar and trained another carronade on the brig's water-line. So another small load was brought, and with that, Parsons laughingly said he would excuse them. Then he headed away once more for the Mississippi, leaving the Spaniards at work on the holes his guns had made in their vessel.

"It was a good thing I had kept the girl below," he now wrote, "for I saw that she had some doubts about what I told her, after it was all over. However, I declared I had dismasted the enemy with the first shot and was then able to sink him and she was in time convinced. For she did not come on deck for a look.

"In the mean time, I had seen dogs coming ahead of their master," he continues, meaning that an ugly sea was developing even while the wind was dying down. A storm which was impending would be something to "try the nerve of any lone seaman," he thought, but after he had eaten a hearty meal, he went to work "to snug her down."

Bringing the schooner to the wind he lashed the mainboom amidships and then piled the sail and gaff upon it as well as possible, with "aplenty of turns of a furling line around all." The foresail was more easily handled, for it had no boom, and it was soon close reefed. The head sails, being smaller still were carefully furled and then, just as the first breath of the coming storm struck the schooner, she was headed away once more for the mouth of the Mississippi.

When the wind increased until the rigging began to moan, and a flood of rain was pouring down from the low-lying clouds, Parsons called the girl to the companionway, told her frankly that the storm was to be heavy and prolonged, and begged her to bring to the foot of the ladder where she was standing, a lot of bread and meat, which she could find in the cabin pantry, and to add to the food a pot of tea.

"When I said that to her," continues the diary, "she did not show a mite of fear and I was greatly pleased by her pluck. In fact she smiled when she looked me in the face and saw that I was concerned for her. So I told her I had never seen such a courageous young lady as she was and added, by way of sea compliment, that she must be a sailor's daughter. And at that, to my surprise she nodded and replied: 'So I am, sir.'"

So far as the record of this adventure shows, Parsons had given little if any thought, after rescuing the girl, to the manner in which he had disposed of her two pursuers. At any rate if he recalled the slaughter of Bracken and the cook, he made no note of the memory in his diary. But after describing his pleasure in her courage, he goes on to say:

"I am glad to remember, now, that she did not see the bloody work on the ship.

It is not that I think she would doubt my having been obliged to do it. Her good judgment, even though she is only a child, would commend the necessity. But when I think how such slaughter affects all who see, it is well as those who lend a hand, I am right glad she lay there unconscious. The fight made me feel like a gladiator, but she would have been sick with horror and even to know that such things occur would leave a taint on her pure soul. Huh! I was sick myself when I first saw a killing, but I soon came to regard such doings as the work of a slapdash hero!"

As it happened, the wind in the great storm came to the schooner from the southeast. It was fair for her run and she was driven along at a speed that Parsons was unable to estimate. Moreover, he had no exact knowledge of the distance from the schooner to the low mud flats where the great river flows into the gulf, nor could he tell the exact course that should be steered. He worried over his helplessness until night shut down, but after that, with the sailor's usual fatalism, he stood at the wheel and let her drive with scarcely a thought of what the storm would bring.

Meantime, however, his mind was by no means inactive. The great value of the original cargo under the hatches, the goods he had taken from the brig, and the story he was to tell when he delivered the schooner to the authorities at New Orleans—all these kept his mind busy, even though at times the weight of the gale and the onslaught of the waves tried his strength to the limit.

When day came he did, indeed, feel weary, but he had endured more in his time than he was then called upon to endure, and helped by the food the girl prepared and brought to him during the day, he remained on watch until night came once more. He then contemplated the use of the schooner's cable as a sea anchor. He was wondering if he could not make one end fast at the bitts and run the length of it overboard when the drag of it would bring the schooner's bows to the wind, when he saw through the murk on the starboard bow and recognized the light at

Balize, the pilot station near the mouth of the Mississippi.

The schooner had missed the mouth by perhaps two miles and was at that moment driving toward the mud flats southwest of the mouth. In this emergency, he decided to bring the vessel quickly around, head to the wind by means of the cable, as he had been thinking to do.

Lashing the tiller amidships, he ran forward and "with the strength of one crazy with fear," as he describes his work, he succeeded in his task.

"The little shippie came around like a log in a whirlpool, her lee rail dropped out of sight in the smother, the lashings of the main boom broke and let it go so that it carried away the starboard main rigging, but a minute later she began to right and there she was, tight as a bottle, and floating high once more."

Knowing full well that the schooner would soon strike the mud, Parsons now went to the yawl to see if he could launch it; for he imagined that if the waves swept over the wreck, after the schooner grounded, he and the girl might yet escape in the boat.

The yawl was hanging, as usual in such vessels, from davits at the stern. When Parsons hastily looked it over he found that it was not only seaworthy, but it contained some food and a small keg of wine which he had placed there while fitting the schooner for her cruise.

"My idea of what I was to do now was to lower the boat, hold it until I could put the girl in and get in myself, and then ride at the end of a long painter in the lee of the wreck until the gale broke," says a part of the diary written after his danger was over.

Accordingly, he fastened the end of the main sheet to the bow thwart and he lowered the boat into the sea. Fastening the sheet to serve as a painter to hold the boat close under the taffrail, Parsons then ran down to the cabin to get the girl. Knocking at her door, he called to her:

"Wake up my little lady. We must get into the yawl and wait there for the storm to ease a bit, for the schooner will ground on the mud in a few minutes, now, and I

am afraid she will go to smash when she does so."

As he talked the girl opened the door and he saw that she was not only awake and dressed for any event; and what was still more pleasing, she was entirely cool and unafraid.

"My little lady, you are a queen," he declared. "I could scarcely be prouder of you if you were my own daughter. You said your father was a sailor. Will you please tell what your father's name was?"

"'Deed I will," was the reply. "He was the bravest man that ever lived, for mama has often told me so. His name was Jonathan Parsons, sir, and he was an American, as you are."

CHAPTER XVI.

ECHOES FROM THE PAST.

"WHEN I heard the little sweet say that I was her father," wrote Jonathan Parsons in his diary, "I was so eager to ask her questions about Lucille that I fairly stumbled over my words, and wholly forgot that the schooner was about to be thrown on a mud bank. Indeed, I would have let her know that I, the man she had seen consorting with pirates, was her father, but that a wave suddenly hove down the schooner, until the girl was thrown back into the stateroom. Seeing her fall, brought me to my senses and with that I wrapped her in a tarpaulin I had brought for the purpose, carried her on deck and climbed into the yawl with her. A minute later I eased off the painter and soon had the boat afloat in the lee of the schooner.

"It was a godsend that I did so, and I mean just that, for God helped me in order that I might save her life. The next minute the wave that was bearing the schooner along dropped it with a most terrific crash on something hard. The whole blamed hull disappeared in the smother, but the yawl drove clear and then brought up at the end of the painter where it rode high and just out of reach of the tumble of water that broke over the schooner. That was the narrowest escape from the

sea I ever had, and I had a chance because her innocent life was at stake."

For a time, Parsons watched the wreck of the schooner, thinking that he might yet be too close to it for safety, but when several waves had passed "without throwing any water worth mention into the yawl," he sat down in the stern sheets and began to talk to the girl.

"It had occurred to me that she might be some other Jonathan Parsons's daughter, for it seemed impossible that the babe I had left in Bordeaux should have been afloat on a Yankee merchantman in the Gulf of Mexico," he wrote.

Accordingly, he began to question her.

"Was your papa on the ship where I found you?" he asked.

"No, sir. My papa is dead. He was killed in the harbor of Marseilles, a long time ago. He was on a ship. The press gang picked him up in Bordeaux, where we all lived, and carried him to Marseilles to make him serve in the French navy. Mama did not know a thing about what had become of him, when he was carried away from Bordeaux, until it was all over. But when he had been taken to the ship, he wrote her a letter as soon as ever the captain would let him and told her what had happened. Then, because he was an American, and they had no right to keep him on a French ship, he tried to escape. Mama told me he was sure to escape, and he tried to, but they killed him while he was getting away; or it may be he drowned in the harbor. Anyway an officer of the ship, M. Pierre Soult, wrote to mama and told her that papa had tried to escape and had been shot while he was swimming away."

"When I heard her say that," writes Parsons, "I could have called that hell's hound back from his grave off Havana in order to torture him. But my thoughts were yet on Lucille and I was on the point of asking eagerly 'Where is Lucille now?' But I checked myself and said instead:

"Was your mama on the ship where I got you, then?"

"No sir," was the reply. "She is dead, too. After papa was killed she soon worried herself to death. Aunty Anita said that

it was worry and nothing else that made her die. And when she was buried, Aunty Anita brought me to New Orleans where Uncle Baptiste has, oh, so wonderful a restaurant; and there we have lived ever since."

Parsons remained silent for a long time after his daughter had told him of the death of his wife.

"I could not trust myself to say a word lest I break down in a flood of tears," he wrote. "That I must not show emotion was plain to me for that would reveal my identity; and I knew I never could explain my presence among the pirates in a satisfactory way. But I understood, now, why my many letters to Lucille had never been answered, and I was near crazy thinking of the death of the poor girl. But finally I choked down my grief and started questioning my little sweet, once more, by saying:

"I fear your aunty was not very kind to you. It was a shocking thing that she should have sent you alone to sea on that ship."

"Oh, sir, but she was good to me," was the reply. "She was with me and we were going to Washington to visit Aunty Marie. Aunt Marie is the wife of Congressman Nathan Meriwether, sir."

"Was your Uncle Baptiste also on the ship?" I continued.

"No, indeed, sir. He could not leave the business."

"Was Uncle Baptiste also kind to you?"

"He certainly was, sir, always. Only my papa, if he had lived, could be so good to me."

"I now began to see how I was to lay my course," says the diary. "The yawl was floating clear and safe, and safe it remained until day broke, when I saw that the schooner had landed on an old hulk, the upright timbers of which had pierced her bottom and held her fast. It was the piercing that had made such a tremendous crash when she struck. So with such a breakwater we were safe enough, and I had time to think and plan.

"I determined first of all that I would take the little sweet to the pilot station, for she would be carried thence to New

Orleans in perfect safety. For myself, I would ship on the first outbound vessel possible and get away to Baltimore where I could communicate with the deacon. For now I needed money, still worse than ever, for the care of my orphaned daughter. For years I had striven to gain a fortune in order that I might return to search for her mother and begin life anew in some place—any place—where I might be safe from the law. But now I was awakened from that dream to face the real need of providing adequately for our little one.”

Fortunately the storm rapidly abated after Parsons had placed the girl in the yawl. The wind veered around to the west and within an hour after daylight he was able to ship an oar and scull the yawl away toward the pilot station in the river.

But as he approached the muddy bank of the river a new fear came upon Parsons. It was certain, he assumed, that the pilots would question him about the wrecked schooner and that he would be obliged to tell much more about his adventures than “would be healthy for me. The fool attack upon the Spanish brig was likely to come out because the little one would tell something about it. That they should believe the brig was a pirate and I a courageous man-o’-war’sman anxious only to rid the seas of such infamous ruffians, was more than I could hope for. And yet I could not bring myself to ask my own daughter to lie for me about that or even to omit telling any other details of her experience. I certainly was in hard straits, again, and I could see the gallows looming dead ahead. In fact I recalled the moment when I stood under the gibbet on Culebre and I could not help thinking that I was in more danger now than I was then.”

So runs the diary. However, in spite of fear he kept his “oar a wagging with the yawl’s head toward the station.” No thought of escaping the dangers he thought he foresaw there by trying to land his daughter farther up the river were considered, though the idea came to his mind. The thought was put aside because he knew that such a venture would add somewhat to the peril of the girl and much to her discomfort.

4 A-S

It is interesting to observe here that in this part of the diary there is not a single reference to the treasure he was leaving in the wrecked hull of the schooner, but one may infer that his anxiety to go to Baltimore—an anxiety that is apparent from repeated references to the matter—and communicate with Deacon Arkwright, was due to the existence of the silver and gold in her wrecked hull.

Finally, as he approached the station and two pilots were seen coming across the muddy bank of the river to help him land, he observed that a brig which was lying in the stream was preparing to make sail—“for open water, of course.”

“I knew, then,” he wrote, “that luck was still with me, for I had not the least doubt that I should get a good chance on her.”

Accordingly, when he reached land and had to tell the pilots his story he declared that he had been captured by the pirates of the cape and had saved his life by pretending to join them in their cruise. Of course, no mention of the metal on the schooner was made, but he told as briefly as possible without arousing suspicion how the ship from New Orleans had been attacked by the pirates, how he had rescued the girl and then had sailed away. Of the attack on the Spanish brig, he said not a word, of course, and the girl said nothing at all. He told the pilots, however, that he had lost all he had in the world, save the clothes he stood in, when the schooner was driven on the mud, and that he wished to ship on the brig in the river if she would take him.

“Well, sir, if that will seem like luck to you,” remarked one of the pilots, “it’s coming your way. The captain is short of men, and we’ll put you alongside.”

Having stepped from the yawl, Parsons turned to his daughter.

“My eyes were so misty, now, I could hardly see her,” he wrote, “but when I asked her not to forget me, even if I was only a foremast hand, and said that when next I came to New Orleans, I should have the temerity to call to see her, she put her arms around my neck, God bless her, and kissed me. And with that I went on

board the brig, signed articles for a passage to the Windward Islands, and was soon hauling down on the jib halyards."

CHAPTER XVII.

A "REVOLUTION IN PORTO RICO."

ALTHOUGH the diary of Jonathan Parsons contains many details of his adventures during the periods hitherto described, it is a curious fact that not a word appears in it regarding the incidents of his passage in the merchant brig from the pilot station in the Mississippi to the Windward Islands. Not even the names of the ports at which the vessel touched are given, nor can one learn from it whether he was well or ill treated.

Eventually, as it says, he landed in Porto Rico, but no date is given and what he did there does not appear until after he describes, manifestly with considerable relish, his arrival on a brig at an East River pier in New York.

"It was on a bright day in May when the Nora and Captain Pat Mahany arrived off South Street," says the diary. "I saw a gang of longshoremen standing on the pier we were to tie to and a little apart from them stood Deacon Arkwright.

"We had a lovely breeze from eastward, as we reached up past the South Street piers, and Captain Pat was feeling fine; for he was the handiest skipper sailing to the West Indies, he could make the Nora dance an Irish reel, blow high or blow low, and he was about to do that same there and then.

"As we arrived off the pier he bawled to me, 'Stand by,' and I replied 'Aye, aye, sir,' with good will. Then he went on: 'Hard alee. Let go all sheets for'ard. Ease off the port braces, and haul aft to stabbord, ye divils. Right that hellum. Now hard a stabbord. So! So! Oh, Nora! Ye're a darlint, ye are. So ye are, girly!'

"Thus he brought the little brig into the wind just above the end of the pier, whereupon, with all sails flat aback, she drifted down with the tail of the tide, and backed into the slip so close to the pier that there was not room for a knife blade

between her port quarter and the spile on the corner; and yet she never so much as rubbed a splinter until we'd thrown lines ashore and hauled her to it.

"The deacon was so enchanted with the skill of Captain Pat, all this time, that he never even once looked to the fore-castle where I was prancing around, and even when the men ran aloft to tie up the canvas, he did not see me. So I kept a corner of my eye on him until the royal and to'gallant were furled, when I bawled: 'Well done, thou good and faithful servants. Lay down and enter into the joys of furling the topsail. Slide, thou children of Gibeon!' That brought the deacon forward on the run."

It appears that during all the months through which Parsons had been cruising around the West Indies, he had been on the lookout for another venture in which, with a little aid from the deacon, it might be possible to gain, once more, some such profits as had theretofore come to the pair, but only to slip away again before "the wealth could be salted down," to use Parsons's expression in the case. It appears he had abandoned all hope of salvaging the metal in the wreck at the mouth of the Mississippi, but, finally, in Porto Rico, he came upon the opportunity he sought.

"Finding the deacon on the pier was clear luck," says the diary, "and I knew, then, that we were to have a good chance at least this one more time."

In order to carry out the adventure he had in hand, Parsons had brought a number of documents from Porto Rico together with a letter of introduction written by the American consul in San Juan to a wealthy merchant in Philadelphia, Mr. Jedediah Watson.

As people familiar with the commerce of that day know, Mr. Wattson was the owner of a schooner which had made three cruises under the flag of Buenos Aires, in each of which she had captured from the Spanish, a grand prize, the least valuable of the three yielding forty thousand dollars. The third of these prizes, and the most valuable of all, as it proved, had been brought to port only a short time before the Nora arrived in New York. When the

deacon told Parsons of that fact, the success of the venture seemed assured beyond doubt; for Wattson was sure to look favorably upon the plan Parsons was to propose.

Accordingly, Parsons and the deacon took the stage to Philadelphia and after securing quarters at the hotel most favored by the ship merchants of the time, they called at Wattson's office.

"I have come to see you, with my friend, Mr. Johnson Arkwright, of Hurstweir, Long Island, of whom you have heard, no doubt, to lay an important matter before you," explained Parsons. "As a beginning, I beg you to read this letter from Mr. John G. Searles, the American vice-consul, at San Juan de Porto Rico, with whom, as I have learned, you are very well acquainted. Please read what he has to say."

The letter which was then given to Mr. Wattson, was copied in full into the diary, as follows:

This will introduce to you Mr. Jonathan Parsons, of New York, who for some months past has been working as an overseer upon various plantations in Porto Rico. As you will soon see in your conversations with him, he is an unusually intelligent man, even if he is a mechanic; and I know that he has made a good impression among all with whom he has come in contact in this island.

Through his acquaintance with the leading people here, Mr. Parsons has been engaged in a most important business, aside from his work as an overseer. While I have no direct knowledge of this business, I have been informed by several of his most influential friends that he is now their chosen head in the matter because of his innate worth and in spite of his lack of wealth. What this business is he will, of course, tell you in full, for you are to be invited to join the company. This I learn from an inspection of some of the documents, as well as through the words of his friends here.

Now, while I am glad to testify to the probity and worth of Mr. Parsons, and to his high standing on the island here, I do not mean to say that I approve the business upon which he is going to the States. On the contrary, whatever sympathy I might have as a private individual for this work is totally put aside when I remember that I am an official. In short, as a representative of the United States, I fully disapprove the plans he has in hand. Further, I must tell you that he has aroused the suspicions of the police, and as I write this he is about to flee to the interior to escape arrest on a charge which, however, I am persuaded is but a cover for a political charge. However, he will evade them, and in a short time

sail from the island in a vessel that is bound for New York.

Upon reading this letter, Mr. Wattson looked inquiringly at Parsons and said:

"Well, sir, if you are prepared to talk business, I must beg you to be entirely frank and as concise as possible in your statements."

"It is my desire to do exactly that," replied Parsons. "My business is to prepare as far as may be needed here for the establishment of a republic in Porto Rico. The most influential citizens of Porto Rico have formed a *junta*, which is to lead the people of the island in an uprising against the Spaniards, and I must tell you that a number of native-born Spaniards are in sympathy with the movement and are members of the *junta*. In carrying out the work in hand we shall, of course, need a large quantity of arms of various kinds and a ship to carry them to the island. I have a list of our needs, of course. It is also desired to land at a port in Haiti and take on board the ship, when *en route* to the island, a considerable number of men who are now exiles from their homes in Porto Rico. As you know very well, the fact that the ship is to take these patriots from Haiti is not to be told in the charter party. These are to be carried as live stock. Neither is it to be stated in the manifest that we are to carry arms and ammunition. We are to charter a ship for a common commercial voyage to the Windward Islands and load her in the twilight zone with the needed supplies.

"The *junta* has given me a number of names of enterprising American merchants, who are known to be engaged in assisting the Spanish-American patriots in their work for freedom, and your name is at the head of the list. That is to say, I am under orders to apply to you first, and not to any other until you have declined to enter upon the adventure."

"Very good. Now as to the pay," continued the merchant.

"The *junta* means to be liberal and to allow you to set your own price. But to be frank, I must tell you that they are risking their lives as well as their private

fortunes in the game, and they beg you to deal as generously as possible with them. That they will be able, after the revolution, to reward you still further is apparent, and I am to tell you they will do so. I have brought a quantity of the bonds of the new Republic of Porto Rico and I shall sign my name, as needed, to those I deliver to you to reimburse you for your outlay."

By request of Mr. Wattson, the documents which Parsons had brought were now given to him and he made the reasonable request that he be allowed to keep them for examination until the next day, when, he said, he would be prepared to make an offer.

When Parsons and the deacon returned to Wattson's office, the next morning, they were cordially received.

"I think I can manage the business for you to your satisfaction," he declared, "but I must tell you that I shall run a great risk in shipping the arms, for it cannot be done, I fear, unknown to the authorities, who have been growing very strict, recently, on account of the complaints of Spanish officials, here. I shall have to give heavy bonds to insure that any arms carried shall not be used contrary to the laws and treaties of the nation; and, of course, you know, that I must figure in advance that the bonds will be forfeited. I shall therefore have to demand from you a sufficient amount in the bonds of the republic to reimburse me for that expense. That sum is, of course, in addition to the expenses of the charter of the ship and the price of the arms and ammunition. Do you agree that this charge is entirely legitimate?"

"We do," replied Parsons, after a consultation with the deacon. "We were in hopes," he continued, "that you would be able to secure a straw bond that would cost less, but if you are obliged to put up one that will produce the coin on demand, we most assuredly will stand the expense."

"Very well," continued the merchant. "I now have to tell you that I have recently brought from New Orleans, a vessel that I should say would just exactly suit you. She was libeled there by the au-

thorities, some time ago, as a Jean Lafitte filibuster and was in time sold at auction, when my agent bought her. It was the second time she was sold at New Orleans. Her name is the Vengeance, but my agent says she was originally the American privateer Nemesis, a vessel that made some fame during the late war. I have seen something about her since the war, but I cannot just remember what it was she did. No matter. That is of no interest to you, but you will be pleased to know that she can carry as many head of live stock as you may wish to take on board in Haiti, and that she is fitted to carry six carronades and one long gun.

"She is now at anchor down the river. But when I charter her to you, I am to send my own captain and crew with her, and it is to be plainly stated in the charter party that they are not to be required to fight unless attacked by pirates on the way to Haiti. Further than that if the live stock to be taken from that island should begin to bellow or to do anything contrary to the laws of the United States, you are to allow the crew I send to go under the hatches or do anything else which the captain may think necessary for their personal safety.

"Now for the costs. Your requisition calls for fifteen thousand dollars in coin. After consultation with other merchants, one or two of whom are to join me in this adventure, I have to say that we can supply no more than fifteen hundred dollars. All other supplies called for, however, will be provided in full. For these supplies and for our services we will accept the bonds of the new republic at a valuation of five cents on the dollar. If that seems too low I must say that the republic has not yet been openly declared, let alone established. In fact not one merchant in this city would consider your proposition at any price, but for the fact that three of the *junta* are very well known here as men of means and probity. We are risking our money upon their reputation, and we are all the more ready to do so because they pledge their private fortunes to repay actual outlays in case anything goes wrong with the revolution."

In noting these remarks of Mr. Wattson in his diary, Parsons says:

"I looked just as sober as I could while the gent was talking, and when he came to the end of it I begged to be excused from making a reply until the next day, 'for,' said I, 'the bond issue required will be so much larger and the cash advance so much smaller than the *junta* anticipated that I must do nothing hastily.' To this he agreed cordially. In fact I saw that I had made a hit in asking for time."

The offer was, in due time, accepted, of course, for the one vessel of all afloat, which Parsons would have chosen was to be fitted out and the work was to be done without any cash advances on his part. Indeed, as noted, he was to have fifteen hundred dollars in gold. Of course, he would have gladly supplied "bonds of the new republic of Porto Rico" at one cent on the dollar or at any other price which Wattson would have accepted.

When the *Nemesis*, well found for a filibustering voyage, was ready for sea, Parsons shook the deacon's hand, saying:

"Farewell, old shippie. We are to have another good chance even if our risks will be great, especially after the adventure is concluded. The capture of a Frenchy will bring three navies in our wake, but if we disguise our little *Nemesis* completely at night time, they'll never locate us later; and then this one chance shall bring our adventures to an end."

After sailing from the Delaware, Parsons wrote little in his diary. But he noted that the captain of the *Nemesis*—Parsons was sailing as a passenger—seemed to be very much afraid of violating the law and he kept asking questions about what was to be done until quieted by the remark:

"When the time comes, if it does come, for the *Nemesis* to take chances with the law, you will be freed of all responsibility in a way that will astonish you."

In peace the *Nemesis* arrived off Cape Haitien, on the north coast of Haiti. Without coming to an anchor she dropped a boat which carried Parsons ashore. When night had fully come he returned, bringing in a harbor boat, a band of twenty-five men, "gentlemen without a country and

without a care, so long as food and drink were provided," as the diary notes. "We rather surprised our skipper," continues the diary, "for he was expecting me to bring off at least two hundred Porto Rican patriots to take passage to their home island."

"Man, do you think you can make a successful revolt against the power of Spain with this handful of wharf rats to take the lead?" he asked, and when I made my reply, he almost fainted, as I had told him he would do, for I said:

"No, sir, no revolution in Porto Rico. There is to be no revolution in Porto Rico. The revolution is to take place here and now on the *Nemesis*. You and your men may get into the shore boat with your dunnage, and go in peace. I am the captain of the schooner from now on."

"For a moment, I say, he looked at me dumfounded. Then he did as I told him to do. His crew, for the most part, followed him, but when I told them that we were to go to the coast of Africa and bring a load of the unfortunate heathens to be found there to the light of civilization as it was burning in Porto Rico, three of them volunteered to go along, including the second mate, who was, as I had observed, a man fit for adventures, though overhasty in his temper."

CHAPTER XVIII.

FATE'S IRONY.

AFTER Jonathan Parsons had sent the lawful captain and crew of the schooner *Nemesis* on their way to Cape Haitien, he addressed the new crew as follows:

"Now, then, men, as I told you when I addressed you on the shore, we are to make sail for the black coast, but there is one thing more to be said about the adventure before us which I thought I would better impart after we were all safe on board. We have not got any money under hatches with which to buy our blacks when we arrive on the coast. I certainly did try to get the coin in the States, where our little schooner was fitted out, but while I bamboozled the merchants into giving us the

needed outfit, they balked when I called for coin. However, with a valorous crew such as you are we need not despair, for we may go where ships with coin under hatches are to be found, and on boarding such a treasure carrier, we may help ourselves.

"Now I do not mean to insult the men of courage among you, but we all know that in every company it is possible to find one or even more who are white-livered. Mayhap in this company of valorous seamen there is one such. If so let him step forth and he, or any other so inclined, may go ashore where no danger lurks."

After recording this little speech, Parsons wrote:

"As no one flunked, I at once appointed my mates, and divided the crew into watches. In the mean time I sent a man to the wheel and the *Nemesis* was headed north-northeast with a sweet breeze blowing."

While holding this course the crew brought up from the hold, from day to day, a sufficient number of muskets and pistols to supply each man with two, and these were carefully overhauled. Next, a cutlas each was "whetted to a razor edge." Then lumber, tools, and paint were brought up and these were used in changing the appearance of the *Nemesis*. First of all, a low false poop deck was built aft and then a similar topgallant forecabin was added forward. When this was done, the yards on the foremast were sent down and tall new topmasts were sent up on both fore and main. With overlong crosstrees, which were now placed on both masts, the appearance of the vessel was changed aloft as much as previous work had changed the appearance of the hull.

By the time all was done and she was well painted, the *Nemesis* had arrived in the track of the packet ships which then sailed between New York and Havre.

"God grant that we do not have to wait here very long," says the diary. "The crew are the devil's own spawn."

An entire page was given to this invocation. On the next page is the following:

"My prayer was answered. We took twenty thousand dollars in coin from the

Ville de Havre and it would have been the neatest job ever done afloat, but for my mate who volunteered to board her. He lost his temper, when a passenger called him a pirate, and killed the poor devil."

The next entry also has a page to itself:

"We have four hundred man boys and women girls under hatches and are clear of the coast with the trade wind coming just as I would have it."

The next page contains a still briefer note:

"Arecibo under the port bow and all is well."

Then comes a longer entry:

"I never did leave a crew in the lurch before, but this is my last adventure and I am greedy for every dollar, even though I did land three hundred and fifty and all in very good health, considering how crowded we were. I was looking to see the planters hold out half the gold, at least, but they brought on board gold *onzas* for every dollar—one hundred and five thousand dollars all told. It was then easy sending the crew ashore with their pockets full of silver for a night's spree. And in the mean time, I had picked up four lusty rascals to help me make the run to Hurstweir, and I'll let them go as soon as the mud-hook is down."

Then comes the final entry:

"The sand dunes and the inlet are fair under bows and the wind favors. I fancy the deacon will not approve my bringing the old *Nemesis* back to the great South Bay. He is sure to say that I should have accepted the offer of the Spaniards to settle down and become a planter with them. That was an alluring prospect, in some respects, but I could not endure the thought of taking my daughter—Lucille's daughter—to live among such a people. Never! Now that I have a fortune safe under the hatches it is either Long Island or New Orleans for me and her. Anyway, if he says much about bringing our little barker to the Great South Bay again, or jeers at my sentiment, I'll ask him how I was to freight his share of the gold to him if I did not bring her here. That'll end the argument instanter. And then, if he fears the people may learn how we made our

pile from her, he can put a torch to her himself, or I will do it. I have the tinder all laid and there is at least a ton of powder in the magazine."

So ends the diary. There is nothing anywhere to show that he now had any fear of trouble worse than the discussion, noted above, with his old-time friend and partner, to whom he was bringing a fortune in Spanish gold coin. This friend and his daughter alone occupied his thoughts at the time of writing the last entry in the diary. But he was sailing to a most remarkable end, as the part of a newspaper, that was in the diary, tells very well, though in somewhat flowery language, as follows:

"The quiet and law-abiding people of Hurstweir, on the Great South Bay, have enjoyed for the past few days the most remarkable sensation known to the history of rural Long Island. On Thursday afternoon, while Mr. Benjamin Hawkins, the ancient mariner of Hurstweir, was enjoying a pipeful of dog-leg and a seat in the stern sheets of a yawl lying afloat in the bay, he saw a small sail coming from the southeast and heading for the inlet. As no vessel was due to arrive in the bay, his curiosity was at once aroused, and shipping his oars, he pulled out toward the dunes in order to go alongside as soon as she should drop anchor.

"The tide was running flood, at the time, and it was reasonable to suppose that the stranger might be in charge of a man able to make her way unaided, but Ben now admits that he also had thought of earning a fee as pilot.

"However, with jibs, a square foretop-sail, and both fore and main to help her along, the schooner headed right in without hesitation, and in due time passed the inlet. It was now that Mr. Hawkins perceived that the unexpected arrival was, after all, an old acquaintance; for it was no other than the old Northport privateer *Nemesis*, later a salt drogher, which was wrecked near the inlet, a number of years ago, and was then repaired and sent as a missionary to Africa—with disastrous results, as everybody on Long Island knows.

"More remarkable still, when Hawkins made haste to go alongside, he was met at

the rail by the very minister who held the revival services here, at the time the vessel came to the beach, the Rev. Jonathan Parsons. But Hawkins declares, on his word as a seaman, that Parsons met him with anything but a saintly greeting.

"Old Ben tells the story with gusto, and this is the way it runs:

"He was mad at me because I exposed him as a convict and galley slave when he was here preaching as a missionary, and it's certain sure he had been nursing his grudge ever since he sailed away, if I can judge by the way he swore at me. Why, the first thing he did was to call me all the vile names he could think of. Then he told me to get away out of that, and row ashore and tell everybody at the tavern how the old galley slave had now turned pirate and was come back to the Great South Bay in order to loot and burn Hurstweir.

"The captain was so menacing, as Hawkins declares, that nothing could be done but sheer off according to orders; but after pulling out of range of stray belaying pins, which the captain threatened to hurl at him, old Ben rested on his oars to consider the matter. He says he was angry enough to shoot the captain, if there had been a musket handy by, but for a time he could think of no way of getting revenge.

"After a minute or so, however, he saw the schooner's yawl with four men in it leave her and with both lug sails set, it put right out of the inlet and then headed away toward New York. Old Ben had never seen such doings as that, in the great South Bay, and it made him wonder what was in hand.

"And it was while pondering over the yawl that he thought of a way to get even. As the men disappeared behind the dunes of the beach, old Ben recalled what Parsons had said about coming back as a pirate.

"That made me think about the pirate that robbed the *Ville de Havre* packet," says Hawkins, "and then it come to me like a flash how I could make him squirm. Yes, sir, I thought I'd go ashore and say he was a pirate, like he'd told me to do,

and what's more I'd say the Nemesis was the schooner and he was the pirate captain who had looted the Ville de Havre. Of course, I knew that the real pirate was a fore-and-after, while the Nemesis was a topsail schooner, and I knew that the pirate had houses forward and aft, while the Nemesis always was flush decked, but little differences like that didn't matter. What I wanted to do was to set folks to talking about him and to him and asking him what he knew about the looted packet. I calculated it would worry him more 'n a little."

"Pulling hastily ashore, old Ben went first to his friend Captain Jasper, the master of the Belle of the Bay steamer. To Captain Jasper, Hawkins proposed that they two send a messenger off to the schooner where he was to say that Deacon Arkwright had sent him—for as everybody in Hurstweir knows the deacon had often befriended the unfortunate captain of the Nemesis.

"Captain Jasper, who is a great practical joker, fell in with the scheme, and the two of them concocted a story for the messenger to carry. Then it was agreed that they would keep a watch on the messenger as he went alongside, and when he had been there a while, they were to fire up the Belle with pine knots so she would look as if she were coming off and crowding steam to get there in haste; and this was to be done because the messenger was to say that deputy United States marshals were coming to libel the Nemesis and arrest Captain Parsons as a pirate!

"The messenger chosen was Sembrick Prebble: and a better youth for the purpose could not have been found. Jumping into a handy skiff, he pulled off with all his might, and so, when he arrived alongside the schooner, he was naturally winded. Captain Parsons recognized him at once and exclaimed:

"The Lord love you, boy, whatever is the sweat?"

"Officers! Marshals!" gasped Sembrick. "It is known that it was you that pirated the packet, Ville de Havre. You was recognized by a passenger who was looking at you through a glass when you hove the

packet to. He'd seen you in Cuba, he said. He reported you in New York, sir, and then, sir, as you was coming up the beach toward the bay here, you was seen again, sir, and by the captain of the Charleston steam packet Sumter, and he reported you when he arrived in New York, yesterday—no, day before yesterday. So the officers, knowing you would be coming here, sir, came out at once, to arrest you as soon as ever you should drop the mud-hook, and the deacon he heard all about it. So as soon as ever you passed in, he seen you, and he sent me off to warn ye.

"He says you was a good friend to him, once, afore you turned pirate, and he don't want to see you hanged, sir. He says the officers will be in waiting to get you at the West Inlet, instead of here, for the reason this inlet has sanded up, some'at, in recent times, and they allowed the Nemesis couldn't pass through. But now that she has passed, sir, the deacon says they'll be latherin' of their horses to get to Hurstweir. What's worse, sir, when they make Hurstweir, they'll take our steamer, the Belle, what's been brought here since you was here, and they'll come off under full steam, so as to git ye afore you can make sail and take your departure, sir."

"He paused and looked toward shore. Then he gasped and continued:

"Captain Parsons, sir. Just lookee ashore. They're firing up the steamer, now, sir. The officers has arriv'."

"Parsons was impressed, as Hawkins had foreseen, but Sembrick says that his voice was as cool and calm as if he had never known trouble in all his life."

"Sembrick," he says, "it's a hard chance, my son, and more especially as I let my crew go the moment we had the sails snugged a bit. But I allow you have come in time, for with your help, I can wind her around and sail away with colors flying. First of all we'll run a spring line from the weather quarter to the cable, for you see the tide has turned ebb and so she's heading for Hurstweir instead of blue water."

"He passed the end of a line to the boy who carried it to the cable and made it fast, as told. Then when Parsons had

slipped the cable and the ship was winding around, Sembrick returned and, climbing on deck, he helped Parsons loose the brails on the foresail and haul aft the sheet, after which the two of them ran up the jib and staysail.

"A lovely breeze was blowing from eastward and the gallant little schooner turned around as graceful as a lady in a minuet until she pointed to the inlet and was straining on the spring to her cable, when Parsons said to Sembrick:

"Jump aloft, son, and loose the foretopsail."

"At that Sembrick hesitated. He thought the joke was going a bit too far, but how to get out of the trouble that he felt was brewing was more than he could think. So on a venture, he said:

"Please, sir. Looke there toward shore, sir. See the smoke from the Belle, sir. They're coming now and crowding steam, sir, and they'll be alongside in less 'n a jiffy, sir. And if they catch me here helping you—"

"At that Parsons interrupted him, yelling:

"Get away aloft, or I'll smash your head in!"

"With that Sembrick did as ordered and when he had cast off the gaskets, Parsons sheeted home. Then Sembrick came down, the two sweated up the halyards. And then, having dropped the spring, Parsons said:

"Now you may go if you like.

"I can handle the ship alone and don't you doubt it. I have done such a thing before. Yes, sir. I handled a schooner in the Gulf of Mexico, and single-handed took a Spanish brig, at that. Once I pass the inlet, I'll show the marshals the cleanest pair of heels they ever saw. And you may tell them that if I had arrived before the turn of the tide, so as I could be sure to pass the inlet with a fair margin of time, I'd turn the long gun on 'em. So-long, Sembrick! I'll send you a thousand from my next port for helping to make sail."

"With that Prebble shipped his oars and pulled away as if to hasten home; but he managed to drop one of the oars and so delayed his going in order to keep an eye on the schooner at close range.

"For a few minutes the clean-lined vessel held her way for the inlet and it was certain that Parsons well remembered the course. Then she began to lose speed and in a minute more had ceased to move forward. She had grounded on the mud, and although held by her heel only, all hope of her passing the inlet at that tide was gone.

"Going to the rail, Parsons stood for a moment looking at the ebbing tide. Then he turned toward the coming steamer. Heavy black smoke was pouring from her stack in clouds, the wheels were pounding the dancing waters of the bay with sounds heard beyond the gray dunes and the bright curl of water that was turned from her bow showed that she was surely driven at the top of her speed. And to Parsons, her coming no doubt seemed to mean that the end of his career would be found upon the gallows. Thereupon, he turned to look away across the shoals toward the setting sun. The clouds there were aflame and yet there seemed to be a roadway among them which led on and on to infinity. The view seemed to determine the lone sailor upon the course which he had in mind, for he stretched out his hands, as if beckoning to some far-away form, then he turned and disappeared down the hatch just forward of the mainmast. How long he was in the hold is a matter of conjecture, but it was only for a minute at most. When he again appeared a curl of smoke followed him up the hatch—smoke that was as black as that which poured from the funnel of the hastening steamer.

"And after the smoke came flames that licked their way across the deck and climbed the well-tarred fore-rigging. Parsons now stood near the wheel, gazing at the climbing flames as if fascinated by the view, but when they began scorching the wide crosstrees, he leaped upon the main boom, where he shook his fist at the little steamer and shouted:

"Come on, if you like. Come on and go to hell with me!"

"At that the men on the steamer, frightened by the terrible outcome of this practical joke, began to shout to him, telling him they were not officers, but he paid

no attention to their words. On the contrary, he once more shouted:

"Come on alongside and go to hell with me. Come on! Crowd on the steam. Crowd her! But no gibbet shall ever be built for me. No, sir. No prophet of the Lord am I, but a fiery chariot shall take my soul—"

"Then a vast volume of flame leaped up from the open hatch of the schooner, the hull was burst asunder, a thunderous sound rent the air, the mainmast was flung away like an arrow, her timbers were scattered far and near over the trembling waters, and Jonathan Parsons disappeared forever in the cloud of smoke that then rolled up and floated away down the gentle gale.

"For a long time the awed and repentant spectators gazed upon the wreck they had caused with their practical joke, not knowing what to say or do. Then, Prebble, who had narrowly escaped destruction from the flying timbers that had fallen on all sides of his boat, ventured to pull over to where the schooner had grounded. The water was foul with the mud of the bottom and it was yet boiling from the effects of the tremendous explosion, but he found there, floating high and unharmed, a seaman's chest. Taking this into his yawl, the young man pulled ashore, and when there he gave the chest to Deacon Johnson Arkwright; for the deacon seemed to be its proper custodian because he had been the friend of the unhappy sailor to whom it manifestly had belonged.

"Mr. Arkwright was well pleased to get the chest and he liberally rewarded the young man for bringing it to him. He

then said to inquiring friends that he had no idea why Parsons had brought the Nemesis here, unless it was because of the failure of the last adventure upon which he had sailed. This adventure was an effort to create a revolution in Porto Rico, and the Nemesis had been used by the filibusters to carry their outfit from the Delaware. As no revolution had since occurred in that island, it was certain that the filibusters had failed. Very likely, Parsons had come to the Great South Bay hoping that he—the deacon—would supply the capital for another and more reputable adventure.

"As to the fears which Parsons apparently showed at the supposed approach of officers of the law, Deacon Arkwright says they certainly indicated that something was wrong with the man, 'but,' he adds with emphasis, 'that trouble was not a consciousness of guilt, as charged; it was the sudden development of a vein of insanity into which he had been slowly sinking for years.'

"Perhaps Fate was kind to him in the end, after all," continues the deacon, "for at worst his death was instantaneous. And now that he is gone only kind words should be said of him. For while he was in his nature wild and lawless, he never refused to help a friend in time of need; for love of the gridiron flag, he fought all through the late war even though a great longing for his loved ones tore his heartstrings day and night; he was at all times and under all circumstances most valorous and venturesome—indeed, I must declare that he was in all respects a true son of old Neptune."

(The end.)



THE LIPS OF ROSALIE

BY SAM S. STINSON

I ENVY not the bee that sips
The honey from the fragrant lips
Of blushing roses fair.
Two honeyed lips alone I see;
The luscious lips of Rosalie
I covet in despair. ●

Lips sweet as famed ambrosial brew,
From which the very gods might woo
Eternity of blisses,
Which prohibition ne'er can bring;
Lips like red cherries garnishing
The cocktail of her kisses.

A Desert Reclamation



Thoda Cocroft

RUTH WELLS turned her horse's head down the precipitous slope of the mesa road and stared quizzically at the green ranch below.

"Ralph's handiwork," she mused. It was the first time she had seen "The Verde," and she exclaimed to herself with a crow of delight as her eye traveled over the great expanse of barley, maize, alfalfa, and abundantly green cottonwood trees. Then she pricked her bronco lightly with her spurs and started at a brisk canter for the green ranch.

Chug — chug — chug! Chug — chug — chug! came the noise of a huge pumping engine. The bronco reared and started.

"Hello, Ruth!" a hearty voice called out. "Guess that little Mexican devil of yours never saw a pump before."

A tall sunburnt man emerged from the pump shelter. His hands were black with engine grease. "Sorry I can't shake," he apologized.

"Oh, Ralph," the dusty girl cried, shaking her head emphatically, "you didn't tell me it was so *awfully* green!"

"Wait till you've seen it all," Ralph rejoined. "I'll finish up here in a minute then I'll show you around. Tie Pinto to the big cottonwood. One of the men will unsaddle him for you. Bess has been expecting you all morning."

Ruth looked with admiration at the big man before her. She had only seen him a dozen times before, yet she felt a sudden glow of warmth when he spoke to her. Immediately she decided he was "interesting." She had met Ralph Conway quite by chance on the day of her arrival in Arizona. Her brother was late in meeting her train and a thoughtless baggage man dumped her luggage in the desert sand a good mile from the station. Conway was waiting for a load of freight. He saw Ruth's predicament and with true Western chivalry jumped to her rescue. Since that time the casual acquaintance had developed rapidly. Conway introduced Ruth to his wife on one of his visits to the distant station-house. His wife found the newcomer an absorbing novelty; her cordiality was as warm as his own and she begged Ruth insistently to visit the green rancho.

"Desert giant," she mused as she tied her horse to the cottonwood, but her train of thought was interrupted.

"Howdy, Ruth?" it was Mrs. Conway's shrill voice. "Ralph and I were jest a wonderin' if you were ever going to make us that visit you promised."

Ruth turned with a shock of surprise. She had forgotten Bess Conway looked so old. Bess was not yet in her thirtieth year but her skin was a sallow yellow; it had

the appearance of being pulled too tight over her sharp nose and protruding cheekbones. Her body was lithe and small but there were no flowing lines; her shoulders make sharp curves and her hips were jutting angles.

"Come in and take off your things," the woman continued. "I'll have lunch ready in a minute."

The ranch-house was tidy inside, yet Bess immediately apologized for the dust. "You don't do housework all day?" Ruth queried incredulously.

"Sometimes I sew a little," Mrs. Conway replied.

"But don't you ever ride?"

Bess moved slowly away from the hot range and laid a cloth on the kitchen table.

"There isn't much to see in the desert after you've been looking at it all your life."

There was a pathetic note in the voice. Ruth looked up quickly. She thought she discerned an unexpressed yearning in the woman's pale eyes. But the next moment it was gone; they were shallow and empty again.

When lunch was spread on the table Ralph came clattering in over the planked flooring of the house.

"Where you going with your spurs, Ralph Conway?" Bess questioned from the stove.

"Ready for a personally conducted tour," Ralph smiled back.

"Oh, you are dressy!" Ruth gaily exclaimed. "Silver spurs! Wish I had some!"

"I'll give them to you," Ralph immediately volunteered.

Ruth burst into peals of laughter.

"I was only fooling," she said, passing off his extravagant and ready generosity as a huge joke, yet she noticed that Bess frowned and was restrained and silent as she served the luncheon.

But Ralph supplied the conversational delinquencies of his wife with a steady fire of foolishness. Ruth was convulsed with laughter. When lunch was over a vaquero rode up to the door with two horses, freshly saddled.

"All set, Ruth?"

Ralph picked up his hat, and she followed

him out to the driveway. The white horse selected for Ruth was the finest on his rancho.

"Oh, you beauty!" Ruth cried impetuously as she mounted the glossy steed.

"Faster than your lazy Pinto," Ralph observed. "I'll give him to you, Ruth," he said.

"You incorrigible person!" Ruth burst out. "Why not give me your ranch and be done with it?"

"But I want you to have him," the man insisted earnestly.

There was no longer any merriment in his eyes. He scowled as he looked down at her. Ruth felt the sudden glow of delicious tickling warmth suffuse her body again.

"I'll borrow him for a day," she finally agreed.

"For a month, for a year, as long as you like, as long as you remain in the desert."

The two idlers spent the afternoon surveying the great rancho. When they finally turned the horses' heads back to the ranch-house again Mrs. Conway's angular figure was seen patiently standing guard behind the swinging door.

"Well," she said in her high pitched voice, "you two have been gone a long time."

The remark jarred immoderately on Ruth's happy frame of mind. She resented the other woman's interference. The afternoon had been so peaceful and joyous until then; now the atmosphere was constrained again.

But Ralph battled nobly to dispel this constraint at the dinner-table. After the long meal was over he suggested the hammocks and easy chairs under the cottonwood trees. Bess showed surprise. Ralph invariably spent the evening in the house. Why shouldn't they spend this evening likewise? Besides she had sewing to do. So the lamps were lighted and the three people gathered around the reading-table. Bess picked up her mending and worked with nervous stitches. Ralph strode to his bookcase and pondered silently before the long shelves; finally he selected a slim volume of verse.

"Good!" Ruth complimented. "I love poetry. Read it to me please."

But instead of reading he recited vivid snatches. Ruth was delighted. He had a keen sense of rhythm and color and she glowed with appreciation.

"They think I'm a nut 'cause I like poetry," said Ralph, flushed with her praise. "Gee, I'm glad you like it, too." And he strode back to the bookcase for other volumes.

Bess made no effort to take part in the conversation. She sat by in rigid silence and made uneven, jerky stitches. At nine thirty she arose.

"I always turn out the lamps at nine," she informed them. Ralph's gray eyes clouded with annoyance but he made no remonstrance.

Breakfast at Rancho Verde was served at six o'clock. Ralph promised Ruth's pony at six thirty, and before breakfast was over a vaquero rode up with the big white horse. Bess looked up in astonishment.

"Pablo's made a mistake," she observed sharply. "He saddled the Big White for Ruth."

"No mistake," Ralph promptly replied. "All accordin' to orders. Ruth's ridin' the white horse for me."

"Really I can't take her," Ruth remonstrated. She felt her face growing scarlet to the roots of her hair. "I don't want the white horse," she insisted in her embarrassment.

"Too late to change now," was Ralph's brusque reply.

Bess made no further remarks, but her silence was more poignant than words. Ruth turned to bid her good-by.

"It's your turn to visit me now," she said, with forced warmth.

"I'm not much of a hand to leave Ralph alone on the ranch," Bess replied in a dull voice. Then as the girl mounted the white horse, she called out a shrill, "*adios*."

Ralph's good-by was direct and brief. "Good-by, poetry girl," he said, holding her hand in a vibrant grasp. "When will I see you again?"

Ruth evaded a specific reply.

"Very soon," she said. "I've had a heavenly time."

She jerked the reins and was off.

The ride across the hot desert on the

powerful horse was intensely exhilarating. She had never found the desert so exciting before. She was happy, wonderfully happy, but the why and wherefore she could not discern. Her brain throbbed with vague longings and turbulent joy, broken with a dreamy vision of gray eyes and a warm hand that grasped her own.

"Am I falling in love with him?" she questioned. "How absurd!" she argued to herself. "A purely impersonal admiration." But the following week she was forced to admit that personality was playing a vital and astounding part.

II.

AN individual invariably develops in the desert country according to limited formula. He gossips a little, much, or not at all.

The station agent at the desolate desert station was a gossip. He was well matched in his wife. Then there was Mrs. Parks, the wife of the section boss, and Mrs. Eggers, the night shift's wife, also gossips as well as the social arbiters of the little desert community.

Ruth's brother, Ben Wells, owned the nearest ranch, and this ranch was the main topic of conversation among the gossips at the station. Since Ruth's arrival in the desert, the possibilities of the topic were vastly enlarged. When Ruth rode in for her morning mail, the station agent or his wife never failed to tell Mrs. Parks, then the news was communicated to Mrs. Eggers.

Ruth always managed to see the humor in their gossip, but when their inspection extended to her mail she was sometimes annoyed. The letters for the Wells ranch were examined with curious fingers, the handwriting and postmarks were carefully noted and the contents of packages greedily devoured. Not even papers and packages passed without an inquisitive examination. But Ruth gradually found real amusement in their insatiable curiosity and soon laughed outright at their prying questions.

The day following her visit to Rancho Verde she rode into the station for her mail. Immediately after her departure the loquacious Mrs. Eggers sought out Mrs. Parks.

"I do declare," she burst out immediately, "if Ruth Wells ain't ridin' Conway's Big White. Now what do you make of that, Mrs. Parks?"

The spicy titbit was then imparted to the station agent and his wife in its duly enlarged proportions.

A few days later the vaquero Pablo rode in from Rancho Verde for Conway's mail; he left a package in Ruth Wells's mailbox. Instantly the gossips spread impertinent rumors about Ralph Conway. When Ruth rode in for her mail again, the station agent handed her a much-fingered package. Ruth was puzzled and amazed. It bore no postmark nor stamps. She questioned its source. "Rancho Verde," the agent informed her.

Oblivious to the inquisitive audience, Ruth impetuously tore off the wrappings. With a sudden clank a beautiful pair of silver spurs dropped out on the station floor. Forgetting all caution, Ruth pounced upon them with an exclamation of delight. She tore off her own spurs to try on the new ones; then she paraded across the floor with exaggerated steps to hear their musical clink. As she turned unexpectedly, Ruth noted the station agent's eyes intently upon her. She stopped short with a shade of visible embarrassment, pulled off the spurs and quickly replaced them in their wrappings.

"Ain't they cute?" the agent said dryly.

"Yes indeed," Ruth replied. She felt the guilty color rushing into her cheeks and quickly supplemented, "wasn't it nice of Bess to send them to me?"

After her departure the other gossips assembled. "If Bess Conway sent her them spurs I'll eat my hat."

"She blushed red as a beet when she opened them," Mrs. Parks chimed in. "Now I suspect it ain't jest right."

Gossip travels fast and wide even in desert country. Ben Wells was not a gossip, yet it was impossible for him to escape the amazing rumors that were traveling like wild-fire through the sand and sage. He was stern and serious when he called Ruth to him and demanded an explanation.

"What's this I hear about you and Conway?"

Ruth was not prepared for the sudden attack. She stammered helplessly. "Why, I—I—I can't imagine what you're talking about."

"Give an account of yourself, sis. The entire desert's talking about you."

"But Ben, really, really—there's nothing in it at all, I promise you."

"Then what's all this talk of these little two-by-four sage brush gossips? What does the white horse mean and these spurs of yours?"

"Why—why Ralph merely loaned me the Big White. That was distinctly understood at the time. As for the spurs—well I can't exactly explain them. They were left for me at the station with no word—no card—"

"Then you may return them."

There was a resentful flash in Ruth's eyes. She bit her lips nervously for a moment then in a scarcely audible voice replied, "Very well."

With a little shrug of indifference she rose and started from the room. Her brother put out a detaining hand.

"Just a moment. We haven't finished this subject yet."

"What more is there to say?"

"Have you considered every angle of this thing? There's Bess, remember."

The Desert Reclamation.

Ruth frowned but made no answer.

"Can't you play square, kid?" he persisted. "A rancher hates a cattle thief."

Thief! Cattle thief! What was Ben saying to her?

"Ben Wells, I'm ashamed of you!" she cried bursting into violent tears, and she rushed headlong from the room.

But when the storm of passion had abated, Ruth began to think long and seriously. At the high court of self-inflicted justice she absolved "Ruth Wells" of all guilt in the affair. Nevertheless, she contemplated, it wasn't fair to Bess to borrow the horse nor accept the spurs since the gossips attached so much significance to these trivialities. But she was totally innocent. There had been no deliberate flirtation on her part; nor had Ralph been the aggressor. After all there was nothing between them but a smile and a handclasp.

"Stupid rot!" she exclaimed in hot indignation. "Why can't people mind their own affairs?"

Ben forbade his sister to ride over to the green ranch alone to return the borrowed horse and he was unable to ride with her. The terrific heat of summer was approaching. Irrigating was the all important business of the hour; and it not only absorbed every moment of Ben Wells's working day, but it kept him busily toiling far into the night.

Ruth was left to her own devices. Each afternoon, after her household duties were over, she mounted the Big White and made for one of the lonely cattle trails that lead to the distant purple mountains. But as the cool evening set in she turned the Big White's head toward home and came dashing back at a highly exhilarating rate of speed.

"He's magnificent, Carlota!" Ruth exclaimed to the Mexican cook as she returned home one night, aglow from the swift ride.

But Carlota did not hear the remark.

"*Un hombre, señorita!*" she called out, pointing through the screen door to a horseman coming up the road. Ruth gave a quick look. At first glance she recognized horse and rider and her heart gave an involuntary bound.

"Anybody home?" a hearty voice rang out. Ruth did not stop to reply. In a flash she darted into her dressing-room and closed the door. She knew Ben was in the vicinity of the house, and, as desert hospitality demanded, would welcome the rider as long as he cared to remain. Her first intuitive flash had told her that her brother and not herself must welcome Ralph Conway to the Wells Rancho.

In nervous haste Ruth rearranged her hair, donned a fresh blouse, and dabbed powder on her sunburned nose and chin. Soon she heard the tramp of heavy boots, then Ben's voice calling her name.

"Ruth! Ruth! I say, Ruth!"

"I'm coming."

"Tell Carlota to rustle dinner. Conway's here."

"Who did you say?" Ruth questioned innocently.

"Conway. Ralph Conway. He's been

riding cattle west of the ranch. He'll stay with us to-night and to-morrow."

"Oh, isn't that fine!" Ruth called back cordially, and with a final reassuring glance at her hastily arranged hair, she went out to meet the guest.

Ralph Conway was still standing near the screen door. Ben had gone ahead to light the lamps. It was fast growing dark, but there was a perceptible trace of amber light in the western sky, and against the rich afterglow Conway's tall figure was silhouetted. Ruth entered the room gaily, but stopped short as she saw the big man standing in bold relief against the dim gold sky. In the dusk he was so toweringly big that for a moment it overwhelmed her. And there was something in the straight lines of his profile and square-set shoulders that sent an exuberant vibration through her entire body. She paused uncertainly in the dusk, her eyes shining with excitement. The next minute she stepped forward and offered him her hand.

Ralph grasped it silently. He was awkward and embarrassed.

"I—I—" he finally stammered, "I brought you a Yaki basket. He extracted from his coat an exquisitely woven treasure.

"For me? Is it really for me?" Ruth gasped.

"Sure it's for you. Do you remember that first day at the station you said you were crazy about the Yaki weave?"

"Yes, indeed!" She fondled the basket with a happy flutter, then exclaimed with sudden caution as she heard Ben's returning steps. "Sh! Don't tell him you gave it to me."

The next day Ben entered the room holding up a flaring lamp, but Ruth swiftly concealed the Indian basket in a dark corner before he could set the lamp down on the table.

Throughout dinner the two men talked incessantly, discussing crops, cattle, feed, and water. Ruth was silent for the most part. She was happy to listen and watch the changing lights in the gray eyes opposite her. When the meal was over Ben pushed back his chair. I got to finish that irrigating to-night," he said.

"Want any help?" Ralph volunteered.

"No. No, thanks. Carlo is all I can take care of. It won't take very long."

The screen door slammed behind him.

III.

THE room fell into sudden silence. Ruth stared at the door. She was afraid to turn her head. She wanted to talk, but could think of nothing but trivialities. She knew he was looking at her. She could feel the penetrating tenseness of his gray eyes.

"Ruth," he said simply.

The tension snapped. She turned toward him tremulously. "Yes," she replied in a low voice.

"I've been wonderin' about you," he continued. "It's bothered me a lot."

"Please don't," she broke forth hurriedly. "I know—those people at the station. They've said things, you know. I can't explain it all now. Wouldn't you like to see my library?" And she rose hastily to her feet.

"Let's save it till later," Ralph said impetuously. "The evenin's so cool and nice."

He opened the screen door and started out. Ruth followed him into the roadway.

It was a cloudless June night, a witching night that only the great desert of Arizona can produce. The warm, rich softness of the air was heavy with the fragrance of late mesquite blossoms. From the roadway near at hand came the shrill, peculiar cry of an occasional night jar, and beyond from the denser brush, a coyote's lonely intermittent wail. Then silence unbroken except for a few mysterious night sounds, and the desert interminable with its canopy of stars. There were myriads of stars. Stars that were big and near. "So near I can almost touch them!" Ruth cried out in an uncertain voice, staring up at the black sky.

"Come down the road," Ralph said. "I want to see the saguero by starlight." And he headed off to a cattle trail that led through a parched arroyo.

The sand under foot changed to a sharp, pebbly formation, but Ruth ascended the difficult slope without assistance. Once on the mesa, she looked about her with a cry of joy. There was the desert again, the

infinite expanse of desert from horizon to horizon, and the great starlit vault of the heavens overhead. But beyond her a towering black shape raised its spectral form against the starry sky; a long, lean giant, all head and body, with two short arms that protruded helplessly from the middle of his neck. This was the saguero, the giant cactus of the desert.

Ruth laughed delightedly. "He's so weird and spooky!" she cried. "They always make me think of Mexican bandits lying in wait for me!"

She ran on ahead of her guide. "There are dozens of sagueros along this trail," she exclaimed, darting swiftly beyond the lone cactus.

Ralph followed with rapid strides. "You're like a young race-horse," he said. "Better sit down and rest a bit." And he indicated a dry stump of ironwood.

"No, no," Ruth replied nervously, pushing ahead. "We must find some ajo lilies. They're lovely at night." And she raced off again.

But the underbrush was hidden in darkness. She saw no lilies. Ralph was already far behind. Then she suddenly wondered why she had not stopped at the ironwood. She wanted to be near him and yet an unreasonable impulse persisted in forcing her ahead.

She glanced back hastily. She could no longer see his form in the dark. Why had she so foolishly outstripped him? Should she stop and wait for him or should she turn back to the ironwood stump? And she wavered in helpless indecision.

At that moment the big figure loomed up in the trail. She drew a quick, excited breath. He was catching up again! Soon he would overtake her! She had a wild impulse to dart forward into the darkness, but the unreasonable force that urged her on now held her motionless.

Ralph rapidly drew near. She could see the distant outlines of his big shoulders. Her heart pounded terrifically.

Then the man halted beside her. "I stopped for lilies," he explained and held out two pale blossoms.

Ruth breathed in the heavy fragrance. "They almost stifle me," she whispered,

and she fastened the white flowers on her dress.

Ralph looked down at her in tense silence. She was not afraid and yet she quivered with a desire to turn and flee. But still she made no motion to run away. She reflected vaguely that it must be the witchery of the silver night that compelled her to remain.

Ralph's eyes were luminous in the starlight. They searched hers eagerly and held her gaze with terrifying intensity. She felt the throbbing pulses in her neck and wrists. There was a peculiar dizziness in her head and faint crashing in her ears. The atmosphere surged with sudden electric currents. And the girl trembled and waited.

The great cosmic law of physical attraction is certain and inevitable. Type responds to type, and the sex law compels type individuals to gravitate together. It was this universal power that was magnetizing her, regardless of everything. Her type response engendered his. It was inescapable. The potency of the attraction was heightened by keen mutual interest and happy companionship.

In the tense moment of silence, her aura mingled with his own. The union of the two vaporous forces unleashed the primal power in the man. He reached out and took her hand. Then with sudden violence he caught the girl up in his arms.

Ruth swayed toward him unresistingly and made no move to pull away. The vibrant physical contact stunned her with its intensity. It was dazzling and acute. It shocked every fiber of her being. She wanted to cry out in agitation, yet she threw her arms convulsively around his neck. He crushed the ajo lilies on her breast and she wondered confusedly if it was their heavy fragrance that was intoxicating her soul. She felt his warm breath on her neck. A fierce longing flooded her heart and seethed and surged from flood into flame. It was all a mad, wild dream.

Then he kissed her lips.

"No—no," she breathed. "It's not fair—you have no right—I didn't mean that we should ever—"

"But you care. You do care. And I have a right." He drew her close again.

"No." Ruth's tone was final decisive. She slipped breathlessly out of his arms. "You know it's not fair to Bess. She wants you. I know she does. Your duty—" Ruth's voice trailed off into helpless silence. She stood in the dark and waited.

Then Ralph began to speak in a quiet voice.

"Do you believe that a man owes a duty to himself? Do you believe in the law of the desert?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you've seen my ranch out there."

"Rancho Verde?"

"Yes. But there was no 'verde' about it when I first came to this country. It was just like this parched ground we're standing on. Desert—all desert. Dry as a bone."

"But the water?"

"I dug for it. Put in a modern pump and began to level the ground. The land itself cost nothing. I took it up under the Desert Claim Act and was obligated to irrigate and improve the place. That's the law of the desert—expanse. If I hadn't grubbed and sweated until I made a ranch out of it, d'ye think I'd still be here? Not on your life! When you don't make good, the government grabs it all back again. You've got to expand to keep a foothold in this country. Now with a person it's just the same way. He's got to be big like the desert. He's got to have some perspective. If he don't he shrivels up, sure as you're alive." Ralph paused a long minute in contemplation.

"When I first married Bess," he said slowly, "I thought she had the perspective. Same proposition as the desert claim. If you don't make good, you lose your rights to the land."

"But I'm sure Bess has tried."

"She tried the first year," Ralph admitted, "but after that she lost hold and began to gossip like that gang at the station. She gave up riding and reading and everything just to monkey around the house."

"Ralph, you mustn't talk that way."

"But I want you," he said violently. "It's the law of the desert."

"You don't know—" Ruth pleaded,

then stopped abruptly. There was a faint halloo in the distance. "It's Ben!" she exclaimed. "We must rush back to the house! He's been suspicious from the beginning. Those gossips at the station said things that weren't true. Oh—I can't talk and run, too," she panted as they sped back to the ranch-house.

Ben was standing in the screen door as they came up impatiently beating time with his fingers. "Finished the irrigating so soon?" Ralph spoke with an air of general unconcern.

"Yes," Ben replied shortly, "and I want to go to bed. I'm tired. Come in and I'll show you where you bunk. Good night, Ruth." And the two disappeared.

Ruth spent the night in a ferment of wakefulness. At dawn she arose and sought out the sleepy Carlota as she was starting the morning fires. Ruth gave her a smallish package that clinked suspiciously.

"Don't forget," the girl instructed, "to do everything I've told you."

"*Sí, sí,*" the Mexican woman replied, and Ruth went back to her tumbled bed.

The two men sat down to breakfast an hour later, but Ruth did not appear. The men ate in silence, then Ralph arose and started for the door.

"Off to-day?" Ben questioned. Ralph nodded and opened the screen door. He gave a glance toward the roadway and flushed quickly. Below him, instead of the little bronco, the Big White stood saddled and ready. There was a smallish package tied to the saddle-horn.

"Ruth tired of the White?" Ralph growled in an undertone.

"She's borrowed him long enough," Ben replied.

"*Adios,*" Ralph said shortly. He made a furious leap into the saddle and, giving the White full rein, he tore down the road at terrific speed and hit for the mesa trail.

IV.

Two days elapsed. Ruth was restless and irritable. She made futile attempts to banish the image of the gray-eyed man from her mind. But the more desperately she tried, the more persistently the image

recurred. At last, in an agony of unrest, she saddled the little Mexican bronco and headed for the station.

That something extraordinary had occurred was evident in the unusual reception rendered her. Before Ruth had an opportunity to water the Mexican pony she was surrounded by the entire female population of the place. Mrs. Parks was the spokeswoman. She began in a voice of ominous foreboding. "Have you heard the news?"

Ruth shook her head.

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"Don't that beat all?" Mrs. Parks ejaculated. "I thought you kept a better eye on Ralph Conway?"

"Ralph Conway?" Ruth gasped in a low voice. "Has—a—has anything happened to Ralph?"

"No, I reckon he's still alive unless some greaser's shot a hole through him."

"Why, what—what on earth—" Ruth began in a dazed voice.

Mrs. Parks didn't wait for her to finish the question. She was ready with all the details. "He up and beat it the other night," she said. "Left Rancho Verde for good, Bess says. Deeded her over the whole place. Cattle, crops, supplies, everything. Sure she's fixed for life. Why that place is worth a fortune and she's got the foreman to run it for her and all the ranch hands. All she's got to do is sit tight."

Ruth was trembling miserably. She dared not trust her voice to inquire Ralph's whereabouts. But an inquiry was quite superfluous; the station gossips soon imparted the tale in its entirety. "Mr. Parks told me this morning that Ralph was down at El Sentinel. He has a job guardin' the water-tanks. 'Nother raid down there last week. Mexicans stealin' cattle and one thing and another. Easy money, but it keeps him on the jump the whole time, pluggin' holes through the sneakin' Mexs whenever they get too flesh."

"Oh!" Ruth breathed the monosyllable and her own voice sounded queer and unnatural. "If he's guarding the water-tanks he's employed by the railroad, isn't he?"

"Sure thing," Mrs. Parks replied. "By the way, Ruth, there's a letter for you. It's

been here a whole day and a half. Post-marked El Sentinel, I think. I'll get it for you."

The quick color rose to Ruth's cheeks and forehead then departed as suddenly as it appeared. Her brain reeled. He had written to her! She bit her lip sharply in an attempt to assume unconcern. The inquisitive eyes of the scandal mongers were fastened upon her. Then Mrs. Parks returned with the letter and curiosity rose to the boiling-point.

Ruth took the letter with as much nonchalance as she could summon. "Any other mail?" she inquired with exaggerated indifference. The postmistress shook her head. "Thanks so much," Ruth added, abruptly turning her back on the inquisitive women. "*Adios.*" And the next minute she was galloping full speed down the road.

She galloped 'cross-country to the cattle trail; the trail of the giant saguaro where he had taken her that night. The Mexican pony fell into a lazy walk; finally halted entirely and began to munch the feathery leaves of the mesquite that poked themselves invitingly in front of his nose.

Ruth was alone; alone with the weird saguaro; miles away from the disgusting gossips at the station. Then with beating heart she tore open the letter.

She read the closely written pages with feverish tenseness; paused in trembling bewilderment and reread them again. She could feel her pulses throbbing wildly in her wrists and her heart pounding terrifically against her body wall. Her ears buzzed and whirled and the ungainly saguaro and scraggly mesquite swam in a sheet of blazing sunlight before her eyes. "Was the violent heat of noonday blinding her?" she vaguely wondered.

The little pony swished flies with his tail and fidgeted impatiently. Ruth jerked the reins. "*Andale,*" she ordered in stifling tones, and the horse moved down the dry arroyo.

But it was not the desert heat that was stealing away the girl's sense of reality, of the outline of objects and their accurate form. It was a force more tremendous than external power; hotter than the rays

of the noonday sun. It was the scorching realization that his love was big enough to sacrifice everything for her. He had fulfilled his obligations to Bess. His law of living was the law of the desert. He would not subject himself to any shriveled standards. His was the law of infinite expanse.

He had written in a simple straightforward fashion. On the fateful day that Ruth had come to Rancho Verde he had awakened to the realization of the dull, lifeless routine in which he was living. But he had potentialities for bigger things. He had tried to play fair and square with Bess, but she couldn't appreciate bigness; she couldn't understand; she had no outlook, no perspective; she was hopelessly submerged in the petty things of life. But he would play square; he would be honest; he would try to be the big person Ruth desired. He would start again from the beginning if she would only wait for him. He had deeded the ranch over to Bess; the land, the cattle, his vaqueros, everything. His obligation to Bess was fulfilled.

He was beginning life anew. He staked his faith on the wonderful girl with the shining hair. But he must see her. He must see her immediately; then in great detail he mapped out a prospective meeting-place. Since it was not wise to incur her brother's anger she should meet him on the road to El Sentinel three miles past a deserted adobe house. Tuesday was his first free day. He would be waiting for her. But there were raiders, stray Mexicans. The road was not safe. She must not travel unarmed. He was sending a revolver and cartridges; a little one, easy to handle. It would be waiting in her box at the station on Tuesday morning.

Still dazed and trembling, Ruth paused again. Ralph had coolly assumed that she loved him, that she would be willing to come to him. It was bold, rude, unprecedented. Yet instead of resenting his presumption, she gloried in it. On Tuesday she was going to him! She would ride out there, his pistol in her belt—three miles beyond the adobe house. She pictured him sitting erect on the Big White, his gray eyes intent upon the road, watching for her!

Ruth spent the following days in a de-

lirium of anticipation. She experienced every terror and delight, every wild joy and fear in the gamut of emotion. She dreamed through the day in a bewildered fashion unable to concentrate on anything. Her books, her garden, her household duties were all the same. She would attack each in turn with sudden ferocity, then with a helpless sigh, relinquish all mental coordination and give herself up to dreamy musings and totally irrational contemplations. She spent the nights in restless tossing and turning; and dawn was breaking over the desert before she closed her tired eyes. Then it was a fitful, troubled nap full of her restless daytime fancies flashing before her on the exaggerated scale of the nebulous and unreal.

Saturday—Sunday—Monday. The days were interminable. There was nothing she could turn to; nothing would keep her occupied for more than twenty minutes at a time. Carlota remarked on her restlessness. Ben inquired if the climate was getting on her nerves. Then, with heroic effort, she determined to relax and be quiet, but the next second she was on her feet again, moving aimlessly and impatiently about the ranch-house or wandering out on the cattle trail to gaze southward with wide, dreaming eyes toward the border town of El Sentinel.

V.

TUESDAY morning dawned.

Ruth had visualized Tuesday and its possibilities so many times in her mind's eye that when the day actually arrived and she found herself headed for the station on her Mexican mount, there was a sense of the ordinary and commonplace about it all that was keenly disappointing. She was riding along just as she might ride any other day in the week. Pinto was just as lazy; the sun was just as hot. Ben had neither stormed nor threatened; in fact, he had been entirely oblivious to her departure. Only Carlota had seen her ride away and she had called a cheerful *adios* in the most customary fashion.

Yet there was a sense of unreality about it all; this ride that she had anticipated through those days of ferment, those seeth-

ing hours of wild joy and fear and breathless anticipation. Could it be true? Would she really find him waiting for her on the road as he had promised—three miles beyond the adobe house?

Ruth had dismissed all thought of Bess and her claim when Ralph's letter came saying he had fulfilled his duty. Ralph alone filled her mind. Ralph—Ralph—Ralph! Ruth said it over and over to herself until it sounded strange and unreal; until she doubted her own ability to spell and yearned for a pencil to write it down in black and white that she might reassure herself of her own sanity.

Ralph—Ralph—Ralph! The ground insects and the sand-flies buzzed his name. The wind, the sun, the desert sand—Ruth looked up with a start. There was the station-house already before her. She must stop for the package he had sent; a toy he said it would be and easy to handle; but Ruth had practised with Ben's .44. She wasn't afraid of the toy.

"It would be wise to water the pony first," she contemplated, "so the gossips won't suspect." She dismounted at the station well and hastily began to draw water.

"If it isn't Ruth Wells!"—it was the incorrigible Mrs. Parks who gave her unwavering attention to all arrivals and departures—"We ain't seen you for an age, Ruth Wells. But we had another visitor this morning. Surprised you didn't pass her on the road. She said she was goin' over to your place."

"Visitor?" Ruth queried.

"Yes, ma'am." Mrs. Parks paused impressively. "It was Bess Conway herself."

Ruth dropped the water-bucket in sudden confusion, but the loquacious woman continued without a break.

"She rode all the way in from Rancho Verde. Poor woman. I do declare it's a shame the way that husband of hers rode off and left her. Bess is all broken up about it, she is. Lost about ten pounds in the last five days and she never had no flesh to brag on. Sad, I do declare I never seen a sadder sight. It broke my heart, it did, just to look at her."

Ruth had difficulty in finding her voice.

"What seems to be the matter with her, Mrs. Parks?"

"Just broodin' and pinin' away. Eatin' her heart out for that good-for-nothin' husband of hers. And she's fallen away to a shadow. Can't understand why you didn't pass her on the road."

Ruth shook her head a little stupidly. Could it be true? Was Bess really grieving for him? Did she care after all? The dominant thought of Ralph Conway had filled her mind so entirely in the last few days that this reminder of Mrs. Conway came as a distinct revelation to Ruth's excited brain. She walked blindly up the station steps and groped for the office door. "Any mail for me, Mrs. Badger?" she asked in a wavering voice.

"Not a thing, not a single thing," came the prompt reply.

"But—but—" Ruth expostulated weakly. "Wasn't there—a—a—there *must* be a package for me!"

"Oh, yes, I recollect now," the narrow-eyed woman broke in. "There was a package for you from El Sentinel."

"Yes, yes," Ruth said, eagerly holding out her hand for the expected package.

"I gave it to Bess Conway this morning," the older woman dryly commented.

"Gave it to Bess Conway?"

"Yes, she was ridin' over your way to pay you a visit. She said it would be no trouble. I gave it to her not less than an hour ago." The postmistress was nervous and apologetic. "Well, I do hope nothin's gone wrong."

"Gone wrong!" Ruth's eyes dilated. She felt suddenly sick with nauseating horror. Suppose something had gone wrong? Mrs. Parks's words flashed into her mind—"eatin' her heart out—fallin' away to a shadow." His pistol—the little toy—if Bess had opened the package—

Ruth turned in a frenzy and ran out of the station-house. She mounted her pony with a bound and headed for the eastern road. At the railroad crossing she stopped and asked some Mexicans working with the section gang the direction Mrs. Conway had taken. The man pointed a finger to the Rancho Verde road. Ruth dug the spurs in the pony's sides and dashed off.

She didn't pause to argue or reflect. There was one terrible possibility. Bess had the pistol, and the cartridges. The package was addressed in Ralph's handwriting.

"Grief and curiosity will compel her," Ruth argued. "If she loves him, she'll do it." And Mrs. Parks's description recurred to her again—"Broodin' and pinin' away."

Ruth clutched the reins and lashed Pinto into another hard gallop. The little horse was already lathery; specks of foam were flying from his mouth. "Hurry, hurry, Pinto! We must hurry! Don't let me be too late!" She recalled the woman's pale, restless eyes as she had seen them on the day of her first visit to the Verde.

"How miserable and mean I've been," Ruth cried out in despair. "If she'll only wait till I get there!"

Regardless of the pony's exhaustion the girl dug in her spurs again. She saw fresh tracks on the road, hurried tracks. Bess had traveled fast. "Oh, Pinto, Pinto, don't stop!" Ruth panted. "We must get there before it's too late." The pony's sides were bleeding from the vicious jabs she had given him; but she urged him on regardless.

The long road that was leisurely taken in three to four hours, she was covering in an hour and a half. Now she had reached the head of the arroyo. Below her the green rancho lay revealed. It was on that very spot she had stopped the day of her first journey there and marveled at the miracle of green below. Her first journey there! Little did she dream that morning of the consequences that would follow.

Pinto slowed up on the rocky downward slope of the arroyo, but when the sandy bottom was reached Ruth lashed him into another furious gallop. "Almost there, Pinto," she breathed. "God help us if we're too late!"

Reeking with sweat and dust and foam, the pony tore past the gate, the pump-shed, the bunk-house—now they were drawing up to the ranch-house itself. Ruth dismounted with a bound, trembling with fatigue and excitement. Even now it might be too late.

She ran across the dusty drive and up the stairs. Then, without warning, the screen door swung open and the sallow-faced woman appeared.

"Bess! Are you really there?" screamed Ruth in agitation, and she frantically clutched the woman's arm.

"You weren't expecting to see me?" Bess asked in surprise.

"No—no. I—I—" Ruth stammered.

"You were ridin' pretty fast."

"Yes, we did come fast." Ruth thought her own voice sounded queer and empty. After all, she was not too late. She brushed back her damp hair with a nervous gesture and wiped the dirt and sweat from her forehead. "Mrs. Parks said you were coming to my place. What happened? Did you change your mind?"

"No," the older woman snapped. "I wasn't counting on making you a visit."

"But my mail. They said you were bringing my mail."

"Mail?" Bess questioned hesitatingly. A guilty flush spread over the sallow face and mounted high onto the forehead.

"There was a package for me from El Sentinel." Ruth spoke sharply.

"Yes, I believe that was a package," Mrs. Conway drawled. "I forgot all about it." And she produced a package from a cabinet drawer.

"Do you know what's in it?" Ruth demanded.

The guilty color left the sallow face and a rigid pallor set in. "How should I know what's in packages you get from El Sentinel?" she sneered. "I don't open other people's packages."

Ruth thrust out her hand for the parcel. As she caught it up the wrappings fell away and a pretty pistol with a shining pearl handle lay revealed. Ruth's eyes flashed fire. "You did know!" she burst out. "You sneaked it from me and then you opened it! Oh, I know you're afraid!"

"Afraid?" Bess echoed.

"No!" Ruth broke in furiously. "You're not afraid of the pistol. If you loved him you wouldn't be afraid to use it. But you don't love him! And you're afraid of me!"

Bess tried vainly to interrupt the girl's fury, but Ruth continued without a break.

"Yes, I know you want him, but that isn't love. You just want to keep him because you think he's yours and you're afraid I'm taking him away from you!"

Ruth was still shaking from fatigue. The older woman stood white and calm.

"No, Ruth," she replied in a cool, certain voice. "I'm not afraid of you. I was just terribly blue; that's all, but I wasn't afraid. I rode into the station," she continued with increasing intensity, "because I was so miserable and lonesome out here by myself, and when Mrs. Parks showed me the package and I recognized Ralph's writing, I'm tellin' you, I went wild. I swore I'd open it before you did. I wanted to see what he was sendin' you. I wanted to get even. So I lied. I told Badger I was ridin' over your way and he gave me the package. I tore off the wrappings when I got out a couple of miles and saw the pistol and I thought of the spurs he gave you and it made me rage. I knew you were a pretty girl with wavy hair and brown eyes. I remembered the day you came out to visit us at the ranch, and your pink cheeks and your eyes shinin' like two bright stars. I was crazy mad! Merciful God, I thought, what's the use?" Her voice quivered.

"Just then the old road turned off from the mesa," she went on. "I hadn't been watching the road. I was hopeless and desperate. It was breakin' my heart. Then all of a sudden I saw the ranch down below—lying there all green and cool. And that minute a queer thing happened. A mighty queer thing. That green, growin' ranch began to talk to me. 'Don't worry, Bess,' it said, 'everything's all right.' She paused impressively. "After that I didn't worry any more."

Ruth looked up in perplexity. The anger had died down in her eyes. "I don't see—" she faltered.

"No," Bess agreed. "'Cause you don't know the ranch." She hesitated a long moment. "You see, it's this way, Ruth," she finally began. "I was a pretty girl once, just like you. I used to have nice shiny hair and bright eyes. I was skinny perhaps, but the boys liked my figure. They called me a pretty girl. Then I met Ralph and married him and we came down here. There was no Rancho Verde then; there was nothing green around like there is now, and there was no money to buy things. It was just desert, hot desert, sand everywhere

and flies—millions of flies—and Ralph and I came out here and started the ranch.

"Well, in those days I used to cook with a million flies buzzin' round my head and biting my arms and neck. There were no screens to keep 'em out. I used to clear land like a man; I worked with the sweat runnin' down my face; I worked in the sun till I fainted from the heat; an' the next day I got up and worked again. Cook and work and sweat and cook some more, but that was seven years ago. In three years we made a ranch out of it.

"Then Ralph's folks died an' he came into their money, so he started improvements. You'd never think to look at it now that it was only desert sand, and I was out there in the sun clearin' land and leveling the ground. Out there in the sun—that's where it happened. I sweated away my pink cheeks and bright eyes. It was the desert dried me up. It sucked my blood and shriveled my skin until I wasn't pretty any more. But Ralph didn't know it then. He didn't know till later, and when he knew he didn't think much about it till he saw you and talked about books and things. Then he said it was your brains. He liked you because you were so smart. But I know different. It's not because you're smart and read his poetry books with him. D'you know Ralph used to read those books to me? Why, I learned every volume of them off by heart! No, Ruth, it wasn't your brains—it was because you were a pretty girl. You've got hair and eyes and a figure, and men always like those things." Ruth stirred uneasily.

"You don't mind my telling you?" Bess questioned.

"Go on, please."

"They're mighty nice things to have," Bess continued, "but they don't count for much in the desert. It's only the work that counts and the love you put in it. When you prove your rights to desert land the government don't take it away from you. There's no reason to be afraid because it's yours. It belongs to you."

A great light dawned in Ruth's eyes. And of a sudden she knew why Bess was so confident and cool. "Hold on to your claim, Bess," she said simply, choking back

the lump that was rising in her throat. Then she turned quickly to the door.

"But you're forgetting your—your package," Bess put in.

"Oh," said Ruth carelessly, "where I'm going they don't use those things." The older woman looked at her with grateful eyes as she mounted her tired pony and rode away.

VI.

A GRAY-EYED man on a big white horse rode in from El Sentinel the following day. At the station he found a letter waiting for him. He tore it open savagely and read with contracted brows.

RALPH CONWAY:

Yesterday I discovered that my desert perspective was blurred. Somehow, I didn't grasp essentials. You're blind, too. You don't know the meaning of infinity. The dear person you consider petty and unappreciative will show you the way. Go back to her. Expand that short-sighted soul of yours. She will teach you the law of the desert. *Adios*.

RUTH WELLS.

P. S.—When you read this letter I shall be back in the world of stupid conventionalities once more. We shall not meet again.

The contracted brows relaxed a little and the gray eyes sought the purple horizon.

"Blind," he mused slowly, turning the White's head up the mesa road. And he was lost in contemplation until he reached the downward slope. Here he stopped a moment and gazed at the green wonderland below. "Oasis," he said and raced on to the ranch.

He tied his horse and strode up the stairs. Bess was waiting for him.

"Bess, honey," he burst out tremulously as he took the little woman in his arms. "I was blind and stupid. I didn't know you were so big!"

Bess looked up in astonishment. "Why, I'm not big," she protested.

Ralph caressed the faded hair tenderly. "Sure, you're only a little mite to hold in my arms. But you're big just the same. I know. You're wonderful and big like the desert."

Bess shook her head in bewilderment and nestled closer to him. She was too happy to solve the enigma.

The Mouthpiece of Zitu by J. U. Giesy

Author of "Palos of the Dog Star Pack," "Mimi," "The Blue Bomb," etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

DR. MURRAY, medical director of the State Hospital for the Insane, discovered his latest patient is an old friend in a "new" body. Jason Croft, who left his earthly body and went to Palos, in the system of Sirius, the Dog Star, and there assumed the body of Jasor Nodhur, has returned to earth in the decrepit body of a former drug-fiend.

He tells Murray his experience on Palos, taking up his story where he left off on his last visit to earth.

Murray recalls, as the reader will also recall, how Croft fought a successful war for Tamarizia after introducing firearms and electricity, and had been betrothed to Naia, Princess of Aphur, with the consent of her father, Lakkon, and her uncle, King Jadgor.

While his Palosian body lay asleep, and he had gone to earth to seek new discoveries in medicine and surgery which he might carry back to Tamarizia, Zud, the high priest, had a proclamation made to all the people that Zitu, the supreme being of the Tamarizian nation, had chosen Jasor as his mouthpiece, and in a sense had become incarnate in him.

Croft had returned to Palos, to find himself regarded as a god, and worthy of divine honors. Like the priests of Zitu, his Mouthpiece was expected to observe perpetual chastity.

But all Croft's activities had been inspired by the one controlling force of love for Maia. He sought her out in the temple of the virgins of Ga, at the top of the pyramid, and she fainted in his arms as she tried to understand his conflicting personality, man or god.

Then he found Zud, and told him the "divine honors business" must cease, and admitted the high priest to as much of his secret as he could impart. In fact he liberated the priest's spirit from his body, and led him into the council chamber, where the king, Jadgor, and his adviser, Naia's father, Lakkon, and her cousin, the Crown Prince Robur, discussed the difficulty created by the revelation of Jasor as the mouthpiece of Zitu.

Croft and Zud resumed their bodies just as the king's party entered the apartment of the high priest to ask speech with Croft.

CHAPTER XI.

FATHER AND SON.

"GREETING, priest of Zitu," Jadgor began, catching sight of the other occupant of the room, and paused briefly ere he went on:

"*Hai*, Hupor, so you are awake again at last."

"As Jadgor sees," said Croft without rising, while Lakkon stared and Robur took a quick step forward, flushed deeply and checked his instinctive motion, as one who hesitates in a decision.

Toward him Croft put out a hand, and as Robur caught it with a sudden gesture, he smiled. "Zud tells me you stand without opposition in Aphur, Rob," he resumed as he gripped the Tamarizian's fingers. "Of such tidings I am glad."

"It was to inquire of you, we have intruded upon the priest of Zitu," Jadgor spoke again before Robur could do more than return Croft's grip. "Concerning thee a proclamation has gone forth. Mouthpiece of Zitu thou art acclaimed. How then shall we salute thee in the future?" His tone was haughty, harmonizing with the

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attitude of mind Croft had sensed in the room in Tamhys's palace. But he paid it the tribute of small notice.

"Salute me," he said almost coldly, "as Zud has ordained."

"Thou art from Zitu then?" Jadgor lost a modicum of his aplomb. Man of action, accustomed to command though he was, yet, like most of his nation, he stood in awe of his nation's god—and Croft's answer gave him pause.

"All men are of Zitu, Jadgor of Aphur," Croft replied, meaning in his response to do the presidential candidate small good.

But as he paused: "Truth is being spoken," Robur cut quickly in. "All men are of Zitu through Azil and Ga, until Zitu himself sends Zilla, with his sucking lips to take his life away."

Once more Croft smiled into the eyes of his friend. "The gentle Gaya—she is happy at your popularity, Rob?" he inquired as Jadgor stood and stared.

"She waits me at Himyra," Robur returned, inclining his head. "But—there were reasons why I desired more to remain in Zitru until such time as should find you awakened from your sleep."

"Oh, aye—such reasons as Jadgor's doubt, and Lakkon's questions concerning Zud's proclamation." Croft yawned as he spoke. "But—Robur forgets not so quickly his friends."

"By Zitu! how say you?" Jadgor broke out in a roar, flicked as it seemed to dare the question by Croft's manner and words. "Are you spirit or man?"

Croft eyed him for what seemed a long time before he answered. "A man—in the way you mean it, O Jadgor—a man as thou art."

"*Hai!*" In a fashion Jadgor seemed surprised. "Then how the Mouthpiece—" he began.

Croft rose. The cross and the wings of Azil glowed yellow in a ray of sunlight on his breast. His tone was that of a teacher to a child. "Jadgor of Aphur," he spoke with deliberation, each accent falling slowly, "the Mouthpiece is that which speaks from knowledge to him who has less—hence is the teacher a mouthpiece of knowledge to the student. Those things

which are difficult to one of little knowledge may appear but simple to the mind of one who understands."

Color crept into Jadgor's dark face. One would have said Croft's speech had lashed his haughty spirit like a whip to a gnuppa's flank. His eyes came up and measured glances with the man before him. "And," said he a trifle quickly, "as Mouthpiece of Zitu, you claim the greater knowledge for yourself? Perchance it were but a short step in your belief between the greater knowledge and the greater power. But—Tamarizia is not yet within the full grasp of your hand, and Aphur still is Aphur, and with Nodhur and Milidhur, strong."

"My father!" Robur's tone was one of consternation. He took a quick step in Jadgor's direction.

"Hold, Rob!" Croft lifted a restraining hand. It came into his mind that the greater power of which Jadgor spoke was after all the main point that was troubling the Aphurian king—that he feared a loss of that prestige even as president, which all his life he had known—was alarmed lest Croft with the backing of the priesthood gain the upper hand, and Zud step into the position of sponsor for the stranger which until now he himself had held with great honor to himself and his son. He let an icy smile grow slowly on his lips. "Aye, Milidhur and Nodhur and Aphur are strong. Aphur's king, through me. Also, is Tamarizia yet an empire. Wherefore the change of government is by Tamhys's decree. Let Jadgor beware lest success and quick attainment of his wishes turn his head."

"*Hai!* You would threaten!" Jadgor exclaimed, drawing himself up to his full height.

"Hold!" commanded Zud, breaking in for the first time. "Jadgor of Himyra, you forget yourself, and the obedience all men owe to Zitu—and the victory granted Tamarizia by his grace. What is the strength of Aphur or Milidhur or Nodhur, to his designs? And think you that any or all of those states will follow you against the word of Zitu's priest?"

"Or," Croft caught up the subject, well

pleased by Zud's stand in the matter, "think you that I who gave the strength of which you boast, have not greater strength to give, or should the need arise to use against that already given? If so ask of Zud, who has seen somewhat of my plans."

But Jadgor was stubborn, and years of authority had made it hard for one of his type to yield. "Strength you may have," he retorted shortly; "yet where shall it be produced in time to avail against Aphur's strength? And if not in time, where produced at all, were Tamarizia still an empire with Jadgor on the throne?" His eyes flashed sharply and he laid a hand on the gem, studded hilt of his sword.

"Hold!" cried Zud once more, while Robur paled and Lakkon drew instinctively back from his king. "Thy words approach treason, Jadgor, should they come to Tamhys's ears. As priest of Zitu I command you to yield obedience to the Mouthpiece of Zitu—to aid, not oppose his intent."

Jadgor was heated beyond all cool judgment. He flung back his head. "Mouthpiece of Zitu—or of Zitemku, the most foul—or man as he himself alleges, Jadgor yields his authority to no one!" he roared.

"Nor hesitated to offer his sister's child to a profligate prince, turned traitor to his land in order to increase it," said Croft as the Aphurian paused.

"The point is well taken," Jadgor returned, breathing deeply inside his metal cuirass, "since the maid was almost asked by the Mouthpiece of Zitu himself as a price."

"Nay," Croft denied with a greater show of emotion than he had exhibited as yet. "I asked but your consent and that of her father to win her to wife if I could."

"He speaks truth, my father," Robur declared. "And—I myself know that Naia, my cousin, loved Jasor of Nodhur as no other."

"Jasor," Lakkon spoke for the first time. "But Naia herself has told me that Abbu of Scira said—"

"That Jasor's spirit was drawn from his lips by Zilla," Jadgor interrupted. "How say you, Robur—think you your cousin de-

sires marriage with a body whose spirit has fled?"

"Nay," said Croft, speaking before Robur could find any answer. "Naia of Aphur is free from any claim of mine, save as she herself decides when she learns the truth."

"Thou hast—seen her?" Lakkon faltered, his face beginning to work.

"Aye—and told her the truth as I meant to tell it to her, save that Abbu spoke to Zud in the time of my sleep and Zud spoke to the maid without a full understanding of all the truth embraced."

"The truth—what is it? Is it true that your spirit is not Jasor's?" Jadgor once more broke forth.

"Aye—my spirit is not Jasor's," Croft returned. "To Zud I have explained it. Yet is my spirit the spirit of a man born of a woman as any other though not on Palos nor into Jasor's flesh."

"Zitu!" Jadgor was plainly startled. "Can a man's spirit forsake his body and enter another, and yet possess mortal life?"

"Aye," said Zud, whose single experience as Croft had meant seemed to have filled him with complete conviction. "I myself have left my flesh and returned into it again, so that while I was absent it lay sleeping. Zitu has granted this to me through his Mouthpiece, that I might more fully understand."

"Thou?" Jadgor eyed him, as though in doubt as to how to take his words.

"I, Jadgor, aye," Zud said. "In the spirit was I present in the palace of Tamhys when you spoke with Lakkon and Robur concerning this same thing, and Robur defended his friend as since coming here he has done. And though I was not seen of you, yet heard I what was said. Hence I believe that the spirit Zitu hath sent to guide us to a greater knowledge is, as he says himself, the spirit of a man of earth."

"Earth?" Jadgor frowned at the unaccustomed word.

"Aye—a world ruled over by a different sun than ours," Zud rejoined.

"Jasor—since that is the name by which I have known you, and learned to love you," Robur began again, "is this the truth?"

"Aye, Robur my brother, Zud speaks truly," Croft replied.

"You came from—earth?" The crown prince stammered slightly over the planet's name.

"Aye, Robur—from earth I came."

Robur nodded. "I remember now that Sinon of Milidhur mentioned the fact that his son's appearance since his illness had changed, along with his bearing and his knowledge. Jadgor, my father, I believe this truth. Friend of the Crown Prince of Aphur, what was your name on earth?"

"Jason," said Croft.

"Zitu! 'tis well nigh the same."

"Aye," Croft regarded the crown prince smiling. "And—Robur my friend, it is the spirit, which molds the flesh. Hence Jasor's body, after I possessed it, altered in its appearance to some extent. Think back, Prince of Aphur, seems it the same to you now, as in those days when by you it first was known, or has it undergone some still further change?"

"It has changed," Robur replied quickly, his eyes lighting. "Now by Azil himself, I begin to comprehend your meaning, Jason, if I may call you by that name."

"Call me as you will, Rob," Croft returned. "Since I know you my friend."

Lakkon plucked at Jadgor's arm. "I—would see my daughter, O Jadgor," he said in a lowered voice. "And she has seen this Jason; I would speak to her of many things."

"Shortly," Jadgor replied. "Say to her that so soon as Jason is proclaimed Mouthpiece of Zitu, we return to Himyra—"

"But should she desire to remain with the Gayana," Lakkon interrupted.

"By Zitu!" Jadgor gave him a frowning glance. "I speak to you and to her through you as her king. Surely I hold place above the children of Aphur yet. Are there not Gayana in Himyra's pyramid as well as here should she decide to give herself to Ga? Repeat to her my words and see that she obeys. Or—hold! I will see the maid myself." He turned back to Croft and Zud. "These things I confess I do not understand, and in truth to me they pass all understanding. Man of Zitu, yet is it clear to my mind that an understand-

ing lies between this other and yourself. Wherefore I must ponder the matter well, and seek to determine whether the palace or the pyramid of Zittra shall rule Tamarizia in the future. To thee for the present, Zud—peace. Be pleased to direct that the maiden Naia be brought to an audience chamber for speech with her father and her king."

"Jadgor's request is granted." Zud lifted a small hammer from the table and struck against a metal gong.

The door slid back and a lay brother appeared.

To him Zud spoke, directing him to lead Jadgor and Aphur to an apartment, and command Naia's presence there.

"Peace to you, Zud," Jadgor said again as he turned away.

"And to thee peace," responded Zitu's priest.

"Rob," Croft arrested Aphur's prince as he moved to follow his father, "art party to this interview with your cousin?"

"Nay." Robur paused. "I return now to the palace."

Croft nodded. "Presently then. Come now. I would speak with you alone."

CHAPTER XII.

PALOSIAN PARTNERS.

FOR all his uncontrolled demeanor, Croft was none the less disturbed as, leaving Zud, he led Jadgor's son to the room in which for two weeks his body had lain entranced. Jadgor's stand he could understand well enough, as well as his veiled taunt that were it to come to a test of strength between them, Croft might not be able to arm the rest of the nation against Milidhur, Nodhur, and Aphur, for the simple reason that before he would create anything with which to resist the weapons he himself had placed in the hands of Jadgor's men and his allies, he must create shops. Those plants he had thus far brought into being were in Nodhur and Aphur alone—one at Himyra, Jadgor's city, and the other at Ladhra, capital of Nodhur, where lived Sinon and Mellia, the parents of that Jasor whose body Croft had made his own—that

Sinon and Mellia, whom Jadgor had raised from the merchant caste to the nobility because of the wonders worked by their supposed son.

Nor did Croft like the thought that because of him or anything he had done, Tamarizia should by any chance be torn by internal conflict, or his plans for a republic be overthrown. And yet into Jadgor's words he had read a hint of civil war, between the south and western states and the rest of the nation, where Jadgor declined to accept any authority higher than his own. As he had said to the man not half an hour before, the easy victory over Helmor of Zollaria and the acclaim resulting to himself as nominal commander of the Tamarizian army, seemed to have gone to Jadgor's head. And in addition he appeared to feel sincerely that through Croft a possible disgrace had been brought upon his family through Naia, and therefore upon himself.

Also Jadgor had thrown out an intimation that with sufficient power behind him he would be minded to curtail Croft's activities in so far as he could, once he were on the Zitran throne. Nor did Croft doubt that even were a civil war avoided, Jadgor would be elected president of the republic if let alone. Aphur would vote for him, as would Nodhur unless very quick action was taken. Milidhur could be counted on for support since Robur's wife was the daughter of that state's present king. Cathur, freed from the treason which had weakened it once, would surely favor Jadgor, who had saved it from being overrun and meeting Mazhur's fate of fifty years before. Mazhur might be expected to support the man who had freed her from the slavery she had endured for fifty years. Bithur and Hiranur alone, then were not sure. Of the two, Hiranur would almost certainly support Tammon, the emperor's son, and Bithur might well be expected to split his vote, with the odds on Jadgor again, because of that boasted strength Croft's labors in Aphur had brought—a strength Bithur might feel needed in defense, since Mazzeria adjoined her entire eastern frontier and Zollaria, beaten but not crushed, yet threatened on the north.

All in all he felt that in what he did and said he would tread on delicate ground, as he saw Robur seated and approached the golden casket Zud had opened to inspect the drawings it contained.

But he said nothing of what was seething in his brain as he took out the plans and carried them back to spread them out before Robur's eyes on his couch.

One of them was for a dynamo, water-driven, and nothing else. There were many streams in Tamarizia's mountains, and he had planned to harness their power for the generation of electric force. This then he took up first.

"Look you, Rob," he began as he held it before his companion's eyes. "Canst remember a night in Himyra when Jadgor named me Hupor, and I said the scene would have been more brilliant were light obtained from many lamps of glass inside which a luminous filament glowed?"

"Aye, I remember it well." Robur inclined his head. His face was serious and he seemed ill at ease, as well as somewhat surprised that Croft had turned to the plans rather than taking up a discussion of other things.

But Croft had a purpose in so doing; a hope that by showing Robur the things he planned to accomplish, he might reach Jadgor's ear in a less direct, though no less effective fashion, since doubtless Robur would speak concerning them to the king. "This," he said when assured that the prince recalled his former remark, "is a device to provide such light, and many other things."

For an hour thereafter he talked, displaying plan after plan, each one of which he explained, until at the end, Robur's face was flushed with excitement, his eyes glowing in anticipation of beholding undreamed-of things.

"Jasor or Jason," he exclaimed at length. "Mouthpiece of Zitu must you be indeed to devise such objects, to have knowledge of them—to draw their designs."

"Nay—" Croft considered swiftly. Robur was husband to Gaya, and Gaya had stood his friend in his effort to win Naia before. He decided to tell Robur the literal truth. "Nay, Robur—these things are

not mine own. Of Zitu they are—by him permitted for man's use—yet are they things known, and employed daily in the life of men on that star from which I come."

"Earth," said Robur quickly. "These things are known on earth, and the motors, the rifles—"

"Aye," Croft nodded slightly. "And a thousand other things." He took up a final plan. "Rob, what think you of a device which can lift a man into the air, as a bird rises on its wings?"

"Zitu! would you fly, Jason of earth!" Robur caught a slightly unsteady breath.

"Aye." Croft spread out the parchment. He had drawn it in a moment of daring impulse, and now he explained to Robur how it was driven by a "motor"—the name he had given to his engines, modified to fit the Tamarizian speech, and the action of the planes.

For a time Jadgor's son sat seemingly lost in a silent contemplation of this to him most wonderful fruit of his companion's hand and brain. And then he flung up his head and looked him full in the eyes. "Jason, tell me the truth, in Zitu's name!" he burst into an impassioned query. "Why came you from earth to Palos—what strange force led you to seek life with us?"

And Croft answered that heart-sincere appeal without visible hesitation. "The strongest force in all the sum of Zitu's forces, Robur—that force which men call—love."

"Love?" repeated Robur staring. "Of a woman, you mean?"

"Of a woman, aye," said Croft, returning his regard directly. "You know well the maid."

"Naia, by Zitu!" Robur sprang to his feet. "You have have dared all for her?"

"All," said Croft. "Listen Rob, my true friend to whom I may open my heart: To Palos and Tamarizia I came first, seeking knowledge, having learned how a man may leave his body in the spirit, even as I have proved a man may, to Zud himself. Yet knew I not why I chose Palos, until I came to Himyra and saw Naia of Aphur first. But having seen her even in

the spirit, I loved her, as a man may love but one woman, in either the spirit or flesh; and because of that love—because to me she meant all and more than any other thing in life, and because I possessed the knowledge and the power, I dared death itself in taking Jasor's body when he laid it down, in order that I might save her from the marriage to Cathur, Jadgor planned, and win her for myself. Jadgor's son knows the rest."

"Aye," Robur said. "And he knows that were the truth understood by Jadgor he would command the maid to your arms, and make sure that these strange instruments, the designs of which you have shown me, should be made in the Himyra and Ladhra shops."

"Hold!" exclaimed Jason. "Stop—once have I saved Naia of Aphur from paying the score of Jadgor's ambitions, nor will I permit it again. If the maiden comes to me at all, Rob, it must be of her own choice—from her own wish, not by the command of Jadgor or another, as my willing mate—not as a price."

Robur nodded. "*Hai*, Jason!" he cried. "Now can I understand you, and find you the man I have felt you in my heart." He approached Croft, seized his hand and placed it on his shoulder, laid his own on that of his companion in the posture of greeting used by Tamarizian friends. So for a moment the two men stood eye to eye ere Robur went on: "Thy love is a true love—of the heart as well as of the body. Claim me thy friend in this, O Jason—I and Gaya, the woman I won in similar fashion, though I journeyed no farther than to Milidhur to find her. You have seen the maid since your awakening. Tell me; said you to her so much?"

"Aye," Croft told him, "save that she came to me willingly—herself she was free."

"And what said Naia my cousin? O Jason, my heart goes out to you as ever since we have known each other. Robur may find a way to assist a friend."

Once more Croft felt his whole being warm to Aphur's prince. "'Tis the matter of Jasor's body and Jason's spirit, that disturbs her," he explained. "Concerning that I meant to tell her, as only I could

tell it, so that she might understand. That would I have done at a time of my own selecting ere she became my wife, save that Abbu of Scira to whom I confessed that my spirit was not Jasor's but one which meant to Tamarizia only good—Abbu, whom I swore to silence in Zitu's name, was by Zud absolved from his oath and spoke. And Zud gaining part of the truth only, yet carried what he had learned to Naia's ears. Zud, startled by what he had learned, named me to her a spirit sent by Zitu. Naia looks upon herself as one deceived, well nigh betrayed."

"But," said Robur quickly, "when you told her of yourself—"

"Nay," Croft replied. "Naia of Aphur is not one to weep, nor ask for explanations."

Robur nodded in comprehension of all Croft's words implied. "So that she knows not as yet of this love that drew you from another world to win her, even as with us a man might go from one kingdom to another. Yet to me it seems that a maid might marvel at a love so great."

Croft's eyes lighted at the suggestion. "As I had hoped she would when I told it in the way I meant to tell it, Rob. See you not that this title proclaimed by Zud is something thrust upon me, rather than sought by myself? For though I meant to be to Tamarizia a teacher in many things, and in so far a mouthpiece in very truth, showing to her people those things known to others, but drawn first from Zitu's mind as all things created must be; yet had I no intent, or wish to greatly exalt myself. In Himyra I sought the rank of Hupor merely because it raised me to her caste. And Zud himself will tell you that in proclaiming me to the people, I have forbidden him to name me other than a teacher—more than a man like themselves."

"*Hai!*" said Robur. "You have done this, Jason! Did Jadgor know, it would change his stand I think. My father's attitude in this matter grieves me. Let me be *your* mouthpiece in this to bring understanding to his mind."

Croft considered. In so far as he could see, it could do no possible harm for the Aphurian king to realize that he was seek-

ing no material glory beyond the life with Naia he had planned. That he felt were glory enough to pay for all he had done or might do in the future, if it could be attained. He nodded. "Speak, Rob, if you like," he made answer. "I am, I confess, more or less disturbed by your father's manner and his words, not for myself so much as for Tamarizia. I would see no split in the nation. I would see her stand proud in her strength, yet guilty of no aggression—ready to defend herself, yet not wishing to attack unless assaulted first, broadening in wisdom and knowledge rather than in lands gained by the conquest of the sword. Speak if you will, Rob, if thereby we may turn Jadgor from what seems to me a dream of personal power, back to that wish for the strength of *all* Tamarizia, which held place in his heart, when I knew him first."

Robur sighed. "Teacher you may well be called, Jason," he said in a tone of accord with Croft's remarks. "Jadgor's name on every lip has been to Jadgor's spirit like wine to a strong man's flesh—nor do I myself think Zud has any wish to interfere with the affairs of state through proclaiming you Mouthpiece of Zitu, even though my father appears to fear some such thing himself. Wherefore I shall tell him of what you have said, and I may. And of this other matter also I shall speak. In that Naia has yielded you her mouth, has felt your arms about her, who are not of her blood: to Jadgor's mind, there lies a disgrace."

Croft nodded again. "Yet would he have given her to Kyphallos, the plaything of Zollaria's unclean woman—the master of dancing girls, my friend." His tone grew heavy, as he recalled the inconsistency of Jadgor's course.

"I know—I know," Robur replied. "But that would have been in marriage."

For a moment it was in Croft's mind to retort quickly that the degradation of a loveless union could not be legalized in the sight of Zitu by any words of a priest. But he checked the impulse. "There can be no marriage between Naia and myself until it is brought about by her as well as my wish."

"Failing which she will become Gay-ana," Robur said and looked full into Jason's eyes.

"Which you like not yourself," Croft responded, recalling the words Zud and he had heard the man before him speak in the palace room. "Which, should it happen would deprive me of all I have labored in sincere purpose to gain—that which I think Zitu himself is inclined to permit—since he has permitted also that I dwell in the spirit inside Jasor of Nodhur's flesh."

"Aye, by Zitu, I see it!" Robur exclaimed. "Were it said to her, by one to whom she would scarce fail to give ear—then—perchance she would see it too. Jason—Gaya, my wife, has ere this had a hand in this affair of your love. Could she prevail upon my cousin to listen—"

"Rob!" Croft caught an almost quivering breath as he spoke the word. He rose and began a slow pacing of the floor. But presently he paused and once more faced the crown prince.

"At least," he said, "she returns by Jadgor's command to Himyra. Let Gaya speak with her, friend of my heart, to whom my heart is shown, and prevail upon her to remain outside the pyramid until she has taken time to think. Myself, I told her I could explain if the chance were mine. Rob, you and Gaya your wife will do this?"

"Aye," Robur declared, rising also. "Be not cast down in your heart. Inside fourteen suns I shall be governor in Aphur—and I shall see to it that Jadgor understands much which now he does not understand—also, that Naia goes not to the pyramid in Himyra. I shall speak with Magur himself. Do you speak of this with Zud. Have him give tablets into my hands to Magur from himself, advising against an immediate action. Then once I am in the palace, Jason, my friend, we shall reopen the Himyra shops, and set the melting furnaces flaring, and make many things for Tamarizia's welfare—even to this machine which flies without moving its wings." His face lighted, and his nostrils flared at the pictures in his brain.

"With you, my brother, and with Zitu it rests, then," Croft said, and the two men

struck palms as once on the day of their first meeting they had struck in friendship's pledge.

CHAPTER XIII.

RULERS AND RULED.

ALL Zitra was *en fête*. All morning men and women in gala attire, rich and poor and middle class, even the blue men and women of Mazzerian extraction, the serving class of Tamarizia where their parents had been slaves, had been thronging into that immense central square of the island city, whose pavement was a tessellated expanse of rock crystal white and gold.

Always Croft had marveled at the beauty of the imperial capitol since first he saw it. Himyra—the red-walled queen of Aphur, brooding on the banks of the yellow Na, he had thought a dream of Babylonian splendor when first he came to Palos. Himyra he would always love, because it was there he had first seen Naia outside its gates. But Zitra surpassed it in the point of artistic magnificence. Himyra was a city of red and white, of palaces, parks and terraces along the river, studded with shrubs and trees. Zitra was a city of white and silver and crystal and gold—a thing undreamable unless once seen—and even so more like the city of a dream.

About the square, where, on the morning of the third day after Croft had awakened from what he considered his final trip to earth, a huge platform had risen overnight, the populace ranged themselves, close packed. The scene was brilliant in a degree. From the tops of the structures facing the square, built mainly of the predominating white stone used in constructing the city, and even its walls, canopies and streamers of azure blue and scarlet had been stretched as a protection against the sun and its midday heat. They made of the square a temporary auditorium of enormous size, into which the people jostled with a babel of voices, a soft yet vast shuffling of feet. Only at one point was an opening in the billowing covering of the canopies left. There at high noon a ray of

the sun would strike through and lie on the platform in the center of the square.

Soldiers of the Imperial Guard, in metal greaves, short-skirted tunics, and breast-plates, armed as in former days, not with rifles, but with short swords, spears, and shields, since this was a formal occasion, were stationed at the end of each street which entered the square, and admitted the crowds in orderly fashion, assigning each arriving group to their proper place in the vast temporary enclosure according to their caste.

By degrees the audience came to seem a thing divided into particolored segments, each composed of the caste for which it had been set aside. There were the blue packed masses of the Mazzerians, with their almost indigo skins scantily covered, a jostling sea of swarming, whispering flesh. There were the laborers in their tawny smocks, their hair circured by a golden or copper band, supporting the draped cloth which protected their necks in labor from the sun. And beyond them were the tradesmen with their women, taking on a still more brilliant appearance according to the dictates of taste which had clad them in various shades and colors.

And again, nearest the dais was a rippling band of color marking the noble caste—men and women of station and wealth. And here gorgeous might describe the play of colors, the flash and glint of jewels and costly metals, the stately waving of plumes, the flicker of stalwart limbs, of white arms and snowy breasts and shoulders, the iridescent shimmer of diaphanous gauze scarfs. These were the select of the Zitran population. Each gnuppa-drawn carriage that whirled up to the end of the streets disgorged its recumbent passengers from the couchlike seats on which they reclined as they rode, and then retired.

By degrees the square became utterly packed save for a space about the platform maintained by more of the Imperial Guard, and an alley running toward the mouth of a single street. The hour crept on. Through the canopy the sun blazed dimly. Water-bearers with bottles made from the hide of the tabur—an animal widely raised, with the fleece of a sheep and

the general shape of a hog—passed through the square, sprinkling the pavement to cool the air, doubly heated by the outer temperature and the multitude of bodies packed into so close a space. Never had there been a greater concourse or a more brilliant in the history of the state. Indeed, in all the annals of the nation, no more auspicious date would appear.

This day marked what might be regarded as a new era in national affairs. The Zollarian war was done. Tamarizia was stronger than ever before in the memory of man, and a new and more liberal government than any they had known was to be adopted within the next few days. And as though that were not enough, it was common knowledge that Zitu had sent the nation a teacher for their welfare; to greet and acclaim him they were gathered here.

Well might the crowd be in holiday attire and humor. Well, as it waited, might its blended voices rise in a cheerful fashion, a ceaseless diapason of sound, changing as there came a blast of brazen trumpets, and Tamhys appeared in magnificent silver harness, to a cheer.

Silver studded with diamonds were the casings upon his calves; silver was the cuirass upon his breast, whereon in azure-colored stones the circle enclosing an equilateral cross, sign of Hiranur, was blazoned forth. Silver was his helmet, and white as purity itself his tossing plumes. Even the hair upon his head, mark of his years, was silver, as he came down the alley left open, between his guards, and mounted the dais and seated himself upon a silver chair.

Then from without, as the cheering subsided, there came a sound of harps, and in the mouth of the alley down which Tamhys had passed, the head of a procession appeared.

First came the harpers themselves, white clad, marching in ranks of fours. And back of them appeared a litter borne by the brown-clad lay brothers of the Zitran pyramid. Of burnished copper was the litter, inlaid with a silver filigree, and curtained with fluttering draperies of an azure, silklike fabric. From within it, as it advanced behind the harpers, Zud's old eyes peered.

At the foot of the dais it was placed, and the high priest of Zitu emerged, mounting the steps, while a sudden silence fell across the multitude assembled, a reverend figure in his azure robes with the scarlet cross ansata on his breast. He saluted Tamhys and took a second silver chair, leaving a vacant seat between the emperor and himself.

And now, as the harpers ranged themselves and struck the strings of their instruments in perfect unison, and Zud's litter was swept aside, a second litter appeared.

It was of silver, and its bearers, giant blue men of Mazzer, well-nigh staggered beneath its weight. A sigh, almost a gasp, ran through the assemblage. Zud had been borne by priests, but—the Mouthpiece of Zitu was carried by men—the serving class of the Tamarizian state. Always a people quick to recognize the involved symbolism of an occurrence, few of those present failed to understand Jason's intent in the manner of his appearance—that thereby he implied that he came to them, not as a spiritual teacher, but as a teacher of men.

And then silence came down once more as the litter was placed before the steps of the dais and Zitu's Mouthpiece appeared, and the harps died, and the figure in its azure draperies, whereon flared both the cross and the wings of Azil, mounted slowly to that vacant seat between Tamhys and Zud, the high priest.

The crowd jostled, straining forward to see the better, and then settled themselves once more to attention as Zud rose.

He lifted a hand, commanding silence. In his other he carried a long silver stave topped with the looped cross. He began speaking at once in the simple fashion which characterized most of the Tamarizian ceremonies:

"Men and women of Zitra and of all Tamarizia, give ear to Zud the high priest's voice, through which it is given to announce to you one who comes among you a teacher, endowed with a wisdom passing the knowledge of Zud or any other among you, by Zitu's grace.

"Jason, as he is named, cometh to instruct the people on whom Zitu smiles, as

a sign that his pleasure is in his people, and shall remain while they are obedient to his laws.

"Mouthpiece of Zitu is Jason, and shall be so known while he shall remain among us, and afterward, when the spirit within his body shall have been withdrawn. Exalted is he by the knowledge which Zitu hath seen fit to instil into his mind. Worthiness of honor is he from all true men. Yet is he man as thou art, and to him shall no knee bend. Obedience and respect alone are his due. I, Zud, the high priest, have said it. Let all men regard the Mouthpiece of Zitu as his brother as well as his friend."

As Zud paused a second ripple ran through the crowd, a sibilance of whispers. Croft looked down into the nearest rows of uplifted faces and encountered Jadgor's own.

The Aphurian king sat with arms folded, staring directly toward him, his dark face distorted by a frown. The glances of the two men met and held for the merest instant. Croft's was steady. Jadgor's repellent, a voiceless challenge more than anything else. Croft turned his own deliberately away, sensing that in whatever he might attempt in the near future he would meet antagonism from Aphur's king. His eyes fell on Lakkon with his countenance somber, and on Robur, just beyond. The crown prince met his regard fully and shook his head. In the gesture, and the expression of his strong face, there was all the poignancy of a groan. It came over Croft that in whatever he may have said to his father since their conversation three days before, Robur had failed.

CHAPTER XIV.

SCARLET BLOSSOMS.

BUT perforce he gave over such considerations as once more the harps rang out. He became aware of a spot of sunlight on the platform directly before the chair whereon he sat—almost, indeed, at his feet. Even as he watched it seemed creeping closer—and the harps were thrum-

ming, thrumming sweetly—and the buzz of the vast assembly was once more falling still.

Suddenly the blended voices of a female chorus rang out, rising and falling in rhythmic fashion in perfect time to the harps. Down the alley came a group of vestals bearing flowers in their hands. Clad all in white were they, save for a cincture of golden tissue that ran about the neck, down between the busts, and fastened in front like a sash with pendant ends, hanging in a golden fringe to the edge of the knee-length skirt. Their hair fell about their rosy faces and bared left arms and shoulders, wholly unrestrained save for a silver cincture about the head. Singing, they came on with a swing and flash of their bared and tinted feet and dimpled knees.

And as they came there flashed into Croft's mind a recollection of the first ceremonial of the noontide hour of contemplation and prayer he had witnessed, not in Zitru, but in Himyra, the first day he had been on Palos—the day he had seen Naia of Aphur first. In a way this was like it, save that then the vestals had sung and danced before the statue of Zitu himself—the statue of a man with a face divinely firm and strong, with purity and compassion writ large in its every line. That figure had been portrayed as seated on a throne. And the rays of the noontide sun had shone through an aperture in the roof upon it, bathing it in pure light. With an inward gasp Croft began to understand—his own position, the nearness of the spot of sunlight before him, the position of the chair in which he sat. Zitu was the God of Tamarizia—and he was Zitu's Mouthpiece—and the sunlight was over his knees now. He felt its warmth.

"Behold the Mouthpiece of Zitu!" Zud's voice.

Croft sensed rather than saw the congregation rising—the vestals deployed to right and left in front of the dais, kneeling, holding their floral sprays toward him in extended hands. He became conscious that the spot of sunlight had moved again, was bathing him from head to foot now in its golden rays, was shimmering from a thou-

sand facets of the jewels that etched the cross and the wings of Azil on his breast.

The Gayana burst into a triumphal song:

"Hail, Mouthpiece of the Omnipotent One,
Of Him from Whom nothing is hidden,
To Whom all things are known.
Hail, Mouthpiece of Zitu;
Hail, Dispenser of Knowledge;
Hail, all hail, teacher,
To whom those things permitted of
Zitu, are known!"

The chant ended. The singers rose. In a scented shower the floral sprays rained at the feet of him who sat on the silver chair with the sunlight on his face.

Croft's senses reeled. The vast concourse faded from his vision. The flowers fell about him unheeded. The graceful forms of the Gayana who showered them toward him grew into a blur. His vision seemed to narrow, contract, focus upon a single point, shutting out all else, making all else as though it were not, leaving him staring, staring at one single gold-framed face.

Naia. She was there before him—her blue eyes meeting his own in an almost angry blaze. Naia—clad as a vestal, in white, bearing a spray of flowers in her hands.

Then, as their glances met, and Croft's breath caught in his throat, she lifted the cluster of blossoms and threw it—threw it, not tossed it, so that it struck full against his breast, rather than fell at his feet—struck, not as a floral offering might strike were the distance of its throwing misjudged, but with a positive, definite force that hinted of some weighting object concealed within its crimson mass, and fell to the dais with a petal-muffled thud, leaving a tiny spot on Croft's flesh that tingled as though the scarlet flowers had been the fingers of a licking flame—as though their touch had seared him through the fabric of his robe.

By an effort he sat unmoved, unchanged in his position, giving no sign, holding his eyes on the haughty face of the white-clad woman before him, reading upon her smiling lips not the placid expression of the ceremonial that held her retreating sisters as they drew back to either side of the dais, but the curl of scorn, of contempt; so that the contact of the cluster of red blossoms came to seem to him as a slap in the face—

a deliberately planned and executed blow. Nor to his whirling senses was that the worst.

His chest heaved in a well-nigh stifled effort at control as he contemplated the full meaning of her presence in the Gayana's dress. Naia a vestal—Naia—given to Ga! The thought slowed his heart for a moment and sent it racing into a wild, ungoverned, suffocating series of madly protesting beats. Naia become Gayana—Naia forming a part of the chorus which acclaimed his new-found rank—Naia hurling these scarlet blooms, as red as her heart's blood, or his, against him as a farewell act, a sign, a tacit message that, in so far as he was concerned, it might as well be her blood which lay red on the dais at his feet; that she might as well have died; that to him, from now on, she was lost. The thought sickened him, appalled, blotted out everything save itself so that for a moment, despite the sunlight which fell upon him, he had the sensation of an enveloping darkness that threatened to rise up and engulf him. He began to tremble. Tremor after tremor of emotion seized and shook him. And then Zud touched him on the arm. The ordeal was over. A strange babble of voices assailed his ears. He realized that the vast assemblage was cheering him, and in quite automatic fashion he bowed.

The action roused him to some extent. Once more he caught Jadgor's eye, dark, piercing, filled with menace, as the Aphurian turned away in a haughty fashion and, followed by Lakkon and his son, began to edge his way through the departing crowd.

"Thy litter awaits thee." Zud's voice was in his ear.

He saw that the blue men of Mazzer had indeed brought the great silver palanquin into position opposite the dais steps. But even so he took time for one word with Zud.

"The maiden—she has become Gayana?"

"Nay?" He met Zud's eyes and found within them comprehension. "She but asked a part in their ranks, and, being virgin, it was granted."

Not Gayana—not yet—not yet. Croft's heart leaped again into freer action. But

why had she asked to be given a place in the ranks of the vestals who had hailed him Mouthpiece of Zitu? He stiffened. Why save to cast that bunch of scarlet blossoms, which had stung his flesh, against him? He recalled now that it had stung him when it struck—had stung his flesh even as Naia's expression had stung his spirit. Why had it stung when it struck? Why had it struck with such unerring certainty the wings of Azil, on his breast? What had it contained save the crimson flowers of which it seemed to consist? What was it had directed its course—weighted it until its blow was a blow indeed, delivered sure and straight?

He glanced down. The thing still lay there, a brilliant spot of color among all the floral tributes at his feet. On impulse he stooped and caught it up and carried it with him, a flame-colored thing against his blue robes, as he descended the steps.

He reached the litter, and paused again as his ear was assailed by a single, quickly caught-in-breath. His head turned. Once more his gaze encountered a pair of fixed pansy-purple eyes. The vestals waited in double ranks, one on each side of the dais. Naia of Aphur stood among them, one white hand lifted and pressed against her body, to the left of the golden cord that ran down and cinctured her garment between her breasts. And it seemed, in that instant, to Jason Croft that her eyes dwelt not so much upon himself as on the flowers in his hand. He gave no sign, however, as he entered the litter and felt it lifted into tilting, swaying motion. He betook with him that final vision of Naia, caught in a startled posture, of her parted lips, of a something like anguish in her eyes. Like the flowers in his gripping fingers, that picture was caught in his brain.

Swiftly the Mazzerians bore him out of the square and into a street toward the bulk of the pyramid. The streaming crowds gave way before them and stood waiting while they passed. Their numbers thinned by degrees as the blue men trotted down the level pavements. Presently they were passed. Then, and then only, did Croft seek to learn the mystery of the flowers Naia had thrown. Then and then only did he thrust his fingers into their blood-red

mass and grope amid their stems for something he knew was there hidden—though he knew not what.

His search was rewarded almost at once. His fingers encountered a hard object buried among the stalks of the flowers, and he drew it forth. It was a silver medallion, bearing a raised figure of Azil, the angel of life, and surrounded by blood-red stones, such as Tamarizian men gave to the women to whom they were betrothed. Croft recognized it at a glance. He took it and laid it on his palm, and sat staring at it as the litter swung along. He had ordered it specially made, and given it to Naia himself at the end of the Zollarian war. Like the maids of her nation, she had worn it on her girdle as a sign that to one man, and one alone, Azil had set his seal upon her. And to-day she had flung it from her, against the wings of Azil himself, which Croft wore on his breast.

There was no mistaking the action. It was repudiation. It was the same as though her lips had uttered the declaration that henceforth she would no longer guard for him that shrine of mortal life which was herself.

Croft's lips writhed into a strange smile. He recalled how the thing had pained when it struck above his heart.

CHAPTER XV.

ROBUR'S INVITATION.

JADGOR was elected over Tammon by an overwhelming majority. Robur became governor of Aphur as a matter of course. In Cathur, Mutlos gained the lead largely because the populace still remembered the treason intended by Kyphallos of Scythys's house, and refused to vote for the dead king's younger son. This was the major result of the elections, so far as Croft was concerned.

Before it was held, however, several things had occurred. Naia and her father, Jadgor and his son, left Zitra the day of Jason's proclaiming, in a motor-driven galley. Robur contrived an interview with Croft before he left.

Croft in the mean time had seen Zud as

soon as he returned to the pyramid, and showed him the jeweled medallion, and narrated to him the manner in which it had been returned. At the end he requested a letter to Magur such as Robur and he had discussed, asking the Himyra priest to advise delay, provided Naia sought admission to the vestal ranks.

The tablets of wax whereon Zud wrote his commands Croft gave to Robur, and the two friends gripped hands.

"Jadgor has turned his face from you," Robur said. "Always has he been of stubborn mind. But, by Zitu! once I am in Himyra's palace, there will be a place for you, my friend, wherein we will work out your strange designs."

"Aye," Croft replied, sensing readily enough that Robur's interest in the construction of new implements of commercial and industrial progress was intense, and intending fully to carry out his plans in regard to Tamarizia in so far as he might with or without Jadgor's favor. And then he changed to the subject nearest his own heart. "Your cousin goes with you, Rob."

"Aye," Robur declared. "She yields to Jadgor's command, saying one may forget herself no less in Himyra than in Zitra's pyramid. Yet strengthen your heart, man of earth. These tablets I have from Zud to Magur, and in Himyra is Gaya, to whom, as I believe, my cousin will open her heart. At present the maid is overwrought, and Jadgor's attitude toward you does not strengthen your case."

"You spoke with him concerning those things we discussed three suns ago?" Croft questioned.

"Aye, and to small avail." Robur frowned. "His stand is, you should have told them to him, rather than to Zud, at first. You will remember how Zud swayed Tamhys before the Zollarian war in your favor. Jadgor refuses to accept it other than that there is an understanding between the high priest and yourself."

"Then must our works convince him since our words fail," said Croft. "Robur, my friend, a safe and pleasant journey. May Kronhur, ruler of the oceans, provide you a peaceful path to Himyra's gate. Make my salutations to the gentle Gaya,

whom I trust I may ere long greet. In her hands and yours, Robur, is carried Jason's fate."

"It shall be carefully carried, by Zitu!" Robur promised. "Robur strikes not his hand in friendship lightly. Soon in Himyra shall he greet you, and we shall work. And"—suddenly he smiled—"see you not that Naia herself will be in Himyra—wherefore once you are come again to Aphur, the same red walls shall encircle you both."

"Hai!" Croft's eyes lighted at the mere suggestion, and he gave vent to a somewhat nervous laugh. And then he sobered. "But hold! Jadgor elected, will not Lakkon and his daughter come to Zitra?"

"Scarcely." Robur looked full into his companion's eyes. "I think not she will look with favor on life in Zitra in her present mind."

Croft nodded in comprehension. "Zitu spare you, Rob," he said, "for I need you in my work."

And Robur, always quick in his appreciation of humor, laughed.

Yet, though Croft had spoken lightly at the last, he watched the Aphurian depart with a mind which was deeply troubled, not only by Naia's attitude toward himself and her return of the betrothal jewel, but as well by the defection of Jadgor, on whose major support he had counted much for success in his future plans. Indeed, just then it seemed to Croft that those plans were of little account and his entire future happiness marred. Like many men of large mind, he suffered the pang of realization that lesser minds, because of their limitations, must fail to follow his own, that small natures must fall short of a full appreciation of a greater, simply because of an inability to measure the broader character by any standard of their own. He was meeting for the first time in a degree that thing known as the ingratitude of men, which every leader of men or nations must meet at times. And the taste was bitter in his mouth.

He took out the jewel and sat looking at it, holding it displayed or shut up in a clenched palm for hours, until the sun sank and twilight crept into the embrasure of

the room, and a lay brother, slipping in to light the oil sconces on the wall, brought word that Zud desired speech with him alone.

Whereupon Croft rose and watched the tiny wicks flare forth, and suddenly threw up his head and took a long breath. His mind went back to his talk with Robur three days before. They had spoken of electric lights. Why not? Work—work—that was the antidote for mental pain—to work—to throw one's self into a very frenzy of stubborn endeavor and drown the mental wo in a physical weariness, an actual tire of the brain. Work! He stretched forth his arms. He would work, work—he would show Tamarizia wonders such as she had never known. He would show Jadgor. He would bring the haughty Aphurian to his knees by force of sheer knowledge and what it wrought. He would compel him, force him to seek his, Croft's, favor, because he could ill afford to do anything else. And—he smiled grimly—he would do it with the aid of Jadgor's son—so soon as the elections were over and he might go to Himyra, where Robur had said there would be "a place." His eyes lighted and his lips grew firm. He made his resolve. His moment of first mental travail was past. He put the jewel away inside his robes and waited for Zud's coming with an expression of fresh resolve.

For four days thereafter he remained in almost constant company with Zud. Two things occupied his time—the instruction of the high priest in the mysteries of astral control, at first compelling the projections by his own will, later seeing Zud enabled him to gain a minor success for himself, a thing he accomplished quickly because of his great desire to learn—and taking up certain social reforms he had long had in mind.

A more general education was the first of these. At Scirain Cathur, Tamarizia had maintained a national school. This, however, was for the patronage of the rich. Among the masses little education was known. Croft decided at once to alter this. To Zud he outlined a scheme for a general system of schools. Assisted by the high priest, he drafted a provisional alphabet,

to which the hieroglyphic characters not unlike those of the Maya inscriptions in Central America lent itself with little change. Already in Himyra he had constructed a form of printing press for large character work. Now he took up the subject of perfecting and elaborating this to the wonder of Zud, whose enthusiastic approbation he instantly gained. He thought the matter of the schools might be easily arranged. The national school was under the patronage of the church. Most of the priests were educated in it. Teachers could be drawn from their ranks; and if the matter were carefully broached, both Jason and Zud felt inclined to believe that the move would meet with little opposition from Jadgor at first—especially if the suggestion came from some such one as Mutlos, governor of Cathur, whom Zud would see was properly approached by the faculty of the national school, rather than by Zud or Croft.

Late on the afternoon of the fourth day, however, Croft went to his own quarters, loosened his clothing, and laid himself down on the golden couch. There had been time for Jadgor's galley to have reached Himyra, as he knew—time for Naia to have gone either to her own home or the palace, as Jadgor and her father had elected. Closing his eyes and fixing his mind on the red-walled city of Aphur, he brought all his will to bear upon his one desire, and projected his astral entity to Himyra in a flash.

It lay beneath him as he had seen it the first day he came to Palos, a far-flung circuit of red walls—the farther lost in a heat haze until it appeared no more than a rudely shadow through a shimmering veil—spread out on either side of the river Na, inside its banks of cut stone, its quays, whereon at night the fire-urns flared red at the foot of the terraces and shone redly on the yellow waves. Magur's pyramid—red with its ringing band of white, to mark the quarters of the Gayana—with its white temple of Zitu, jutting up across the river from the vast white pile of the palace, and on either side as far as the eye could reach along the crest of the river terrace stretched the palatial homes of the noble or rich.

There was almost a sense of home-

coming in the sight, and Croft experienced a thrill as he willed himself swiftly toward a huge red palace set well back from the street—the city home of Lakkon, adviser to the king.

To-day the doors stood open, and he passed into the major court, where flowers, shrubs, and even small trees grew between the divisions of a pavement of transparent rock crystal, cut into geometrical blocks, beneath a roof of movable sections of glass.

The court itself was two stories in height in the prevailing custom, with a staircase ascending to the surrounding balcony at either end. These were of a lemon-yellow stone like onyx, save that it was not veined. The pillars of the balcony and the rest of the interior was in white. A low-growing hedge enclosed the central portion of the crystal floor, whereon Baska, the Mazzerian majordomo, who had startled Croft the first time he saw his blue skin, was once more exhibiting his magnificent form and peculiar pigmentary endowments with amazing frankness while he trimmed the hedge. Maia—Naia's own personal maid—in an equal state of unabashed nature, was sprawled, watching, on a red wood couch.

So much Croft saw at a glance ere he turned away, judging, from the very nature of the servants' careless manner, that Lakkon and his daughter had not yet arrived.

The palace, then. He willed himself toward it, entered it through the main gates between the huge carved figures of the winged doglike creatures set up on either side, their front legs supporting webbed membranes from body to paw. He passed into a vast, red-paved court, where naked Mazzerian porters passed to and fro with metal sprinkling tanks strapped to their shoulders, and gnuppas, harnessed to flashing chariots, champed on their bits and pawed.

To Croft, it was all an old story. He had lived in it once. He gave a single embracing glance to the white walls of the various government departments surrounding the huge red court, each with its guard-ian sentries at the doors, and fixed his mind on gaining the presence of Gaya, Robur's wife.

For here he felt Naia would have gone had she come to the palace, as he believed seeking the company and companionship of a woman rather than any one else.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CALL OF ZILLA.

IN this his judgment proved right, as he found so soon as he reached the wing of the palace in which he had formerly lived. Here, in the portion given over to Robur and his wife, was a court containing a private bath, set in the center, surrounded on all sides by growing shrubs and flowers, the tessellated pavements about it dotted with chairs and couches of the wine-red wood and silklike canopies to offer shade against the Palosian sun. It was a favorite resting-place of Gaya in the afternoons, when, attended by her servants, she either bathed in the limpid, sun-warmed water or received such guests as might elect to pay a social call.

On two of the red couches he found the women he had come in search of. They reclined beneath a yellow awning supported by standards, with a low table between them, holding small cakes, fruit conserves such as the women of Tamarizia affected, and crystal glasses, scarcely larger than a thimble, filled with an amber-colored wine.

But it was to Naia Croft gave his major attention once he had reached the palace. She lay pale, her eyes shadowed by darkened circles beneath their lids, her features weary, drawn with what he recognized at a glance as a dangerous tension of the nerves. Her figure was draped in a robe of exquisite green, across the upper part of which a strand of her fair hair made a sheen of gold. To Croft she had never seemed more appealing than now, in this mood of acute distress. He glanced at Gaya, and found her eyes fixed in an anxious inspection of her companion's face.

Abruptly Naia's bust swelled sharply and she spoke: "I shall become Gayana. There is nothing else."

"Nay! Nay, daughter of Lakkon—you are overwrought. Robur thinks not so, nor Jadgor, his father. To Lakkon there is

none other, since your mother died, save yourself. Would leave him to finish his life alone?"

Naia sat up upon the couch. "That was true," she returned in a tone gone bitter, "until this trouble came upon me. Now Lakkon holds me disgraced—in that I have yielded my lips to Zitu's Mouthpiece, against all the laws of custom for a woman of my caste. Yet, in Zitu's name, wherein was I to blame, who loved as never a woman loved before—who was asked in marriage by the one she loved, by one who had sworn, aye, and done many deeds to win her? In what did I wrong? How could I foresee that he was not—what—what he appeared?"

"Nay," Gaya said, while Croft's soul quivered at this confession from the lips of the woman he loved above all else. "Say not that in any way were you to blame, Naia, fairest of Aphur's maids. For have you and I not spoken concerning your love ere this, and did you not first to me confess it, when you stood pledge to Cathur's heir, from whom this man of Zitu saved you?"

"Man," Naia caught her up, interrupting quickly. "Say you that he is a man—Gaya, my friend—or is the word but used as a means of expression since you know not what to call him save as he seems?"

"Nay, I mean man, child," Gaya returned. "Man he appears, and man he claims to be, and man he is. You know Robur for his friend. Much to Robur has he explained since he wakened from the last of his strange sleeps. Yet is he such a man as never was seen on Palos before; and though of mortal birth, as we are, yet was he not born on Palos, but of a woman on earth."

"Earth?" Naia's eyes widened swiftly.

"Aye—a different star from ours," Gaya replied.

"Robur told you this?" An introspective expression crossed Naia's face.

"Aye—ere he brought you to me."

"And he told Robur?"

"Aye. He swore it by Zitu himself."

Suddenly Naia struck herself upon the breast. "He told it to Robur—to your husband—to Jadgor's son! Why not to me?" she cried.

"To Robur he swore he had meant to tell you ere you became his mate," Gaya rejoined. "Save that Zud learned these things from Abbu of Scira and spoke to you during his sleep, I feel assured he had done it at a proper time."

She paused, and Naia turned her head. She sat staring, staring across the sun-kissed surface of the sunken bath. "Now I remember that he said to me after he awakened, when he came to me in the quarters of the Gayana, that he had somewhat to explain. What said he else?"

"Strange things—things to madden the heart of a woman, as it seems to me," Gaya returned; "things to waken strange dreams in her soul, if true. To Robur he swore that to Palos he came because of you, because in you he knew the mate to whom his spirit cried out—that he remained on Palos to save you from Cathur and win you for himself, and to that end that he might claim you wholly, used Jasor's body when his spirit was drawn from his flesh."

"Zitu!" The word came from Naia's lips as a strangled exclamation. She drew herself up on the couch until she sat tense in every quivering fiber of her being. "Now you have touched on the part of the matter I may not tolerate or understand. Granting that he says truth—that a spirit may enter the body of another and possess it, and cause it to live and breathe, and move as its own—can a maid consider a lover in such guise, surrendering to his embrace?"

"Yet consider," said Gaya softly, with a widening of her eyes as though the spell of the subject were upon her fully; "try to measure if you can, my princess, a love so vast that it draws its mate across the space between the stars. Consider what this man's love must be that he forsakes that life to which he was born and comes in search of you—the one woman who fills his soul with longing; and consider, also, that after he entered Jasor's form it changed—that even Sinon declared he no longer resembled Jasor greatly. Seems it not to you that Jason's spirit has altered the elements that were Jasor's until they are as his own?"

"Jason?" Naia faltered.

"Aye. That was his name on earth.

Also says he that it is the spirit within us which dwells in and makes us of the flesh. He says, and Zud supports him in saying that to the spirit the flesh is no more than to man is a house—a something he inhabits, makes use of, and finally lays aside."

"Stop!" Naia stayed her. "Why—why were these things not said to me before—before—" She broke off, clasped her hands and crushed them together, struck them down against her sides. "Nay—it might have been," she went on, more to herself than to Gaya, "had I given the chance. He came to me, and I berated him with words. I was filled with pain; my spirit was blinded with horror and despair. I thought only that I had been led to my own undoing—I knew not the truth. Zud's words had well nigh unsettled my mind. Wherefore I prayed to Ga and Azil, and there was no answer. And then I prayed to Zilla, and even the angel of death turned away his face. Gaya, I am like one fallen into a pit from which there is no escape. Him I knew as Jasor—I loved with a glory of the spirit and a madness of the flesh. He was my master. His word was my law. My heart beat like a caged bird in his presence. My spirit faltered when he spoke to me. My flesh was as clay in the potter's hands to his touch. I was a slave, and my glory was in the slavery of my love. Save only Zitu, beyond him there was for me no god!"

Once more she paused and sat panting, her bosom rising and falling, her nostrils aquiver, her lips compressed, while Croft yearned to her and this voicing of a love no less, as it seemed to him, than his love for herself.

"Canst wonder, then," she went on after a moment, "with what gladness I gave him my pledge; with what joy in my thoughts of the future I wore upon my girdle the badge of Azil he placed within my hands as sign that I was his—that badge which, on the day of his proclaiming Mouthpiece of Zitu, I placed in a spray of flowers and hurled against his breast!"

"Naia! Child!" Gaya half started up at the climax of her companion's words. "You did that—did he—understand?"

Naia nodded slightly. "I think so. He

—from the dais he carried the flowers I flung against him to his litter in his hand. Oh, Gaya—my soul died within me at that sight — would Zitu — the rest of me had died. I am alone, Gaya—alone. Alone, alone — the word tunes my every breath. Jadgor opposes my seeking the Gayana. My father looks on his name as through me disgraced. And I am tired, Gaya—tired—so very tired. And there is no rest. If only Zilla would hear me when I call him—”

“Aye, you are tired, poor child.” Gaya rose, crossed to the other couch, and took the girl’s golden head inside her arms. “Come, talk no more at present. I shall call Bela, my own maid, who shall attend you. You shall bathe, and afterward she shall anoint your flesh with sweet-smelling oils, and you will sleep and awaken refreshed. She has a soothing touch beyond any I have ever found. She shall wait upon you.” She reached out to the table and struck a small metal gong.

“Refreshed,” said Naia slowly. Once more her eyes were fastened on the sun-kissed water. “Aye, I shall bathe, gentle Gaya. I shall find rest in your pool.”

She rose slowly. Her eyes were wide; her face was very white. Once more her nostrils were swollen. Her body swelled with a single deeply drawn breath. Turning, she walked to the edge of the sunken basin. For a moment she stood there in the attitude of one who listens.

Her lips moved. “Zilla,” she whispered and smiled.

And then her voice raised, rang out sharply: “Zilla, I hear thy answer!”

Her arms lifted, stretched upward. She plunged face downward into the pool and sank without a struggle into its transparent depths.

CHAPTER XVII.

ASTRAL UNDERSTANDING.

AND now began one of the most amazing parts of Croft’s whole tale.

He saw Naia sink. He knew the meaning of her words, her act. Her cry to Zilla, the Angel of Death, showed him

clearly that she saw in the water the way of death for herself—read a new meaning into her words to Gaya, that here in the pools she would find rest. He saw the water close about her, saw her well-loved form sink down, down, cradled in the limpid water; down, down, a slender figure, as beautiful as a Tanagra statuette in its green robe, as it sank. He knew that indeed Zilla hovered close above her—knew she was drowning—that the element in which her figure was engulfed would, like the figurative lips of Zilla, soon suffocate her breath.

And he was powerless, impotent, to do anything save watch what went on before his eyes. He could see, and know, and understand. He could suffer the most terrible agony of conscious comprehension, and—in his astral presence he could do nothing else. In his soul he writhed, cried out in a torment in which, like the despairing mind of the girl, he would have welcomed dissolution as a relief. But aside from that he was chained to a passive watching, was unable to make one single move toward the rescue of her expiring flesh.

Not so Gaya, however. Nor did Robur’s wife lose her head. Her comprehension of her companion’s act was instant, and she cried aloud to the Mazzerian girl, who now appeared in answer to the summons of the gong. Then, without waiting for even the servant to reach her side, Gaya flung her own form into the pool in a cleanly executed dive. Bela followed her mistress a moment later, her blue figure cutting the liquid surface with hardly a splash. Both women were entirely at home in the water, and by the time Gaya had reached and seized Naia, who began instantly to struggle, Bela was at her side.

The fight below the surface was brief. Croft saw Naia open her mouth. Her bosom expanded as though she gasped. And then she relaxed, and Robur’s wife and the Mazzerian maid bore her quickly upward, supporting her head between them, and swimming with her toward a submerged flight of steps by which the pool was customarily entered. Reaching it, they lifted the limp body in its trailing robe, which clung to trunk and rounded limb more like a shroud of vegetation, a crinkled kelp

born of the water itself, than a garment, and staggered with it from the pool to lay it on the pavement of the court.

"Quickly!" Gaya cried as she knelt beside it. "Seek out Jadgor's physician and command his presence." Unmindful of her own soaked condition, she seized Naia's form and rolled her upon her face. Placing her hands on either side of the body close to where the ribs joined the spine, she threw her weight forward on extended arms, held so for the space of a long breath, and lifted herself once more upon her own flexed thighs.

It was a form of artificial respiration she was practising, and Croft uttered a prayer for her success in his heart. And then—he forgot temporarily her continued efforts in the wonder of something else.

Naia of Aphur was about to die. Croft knew it as certainly as he had ever known anything in his life. Because he saw her soul come forth as he had seen Zud's astral body after he had bidden it leave its fleshy habitation on the day he awaked from his sleep. Slowly, as Gaya lifted herself and sat back, it emerged from the figure on the ground. And as wonderful as was the form of Naia, so wonderful was its astral counterpart. Like an image of her beauty in every detail, it swam and hovered above her, still chained for the span of a breath by an almost invisible bond that wavered and tensed and threatened to break.

And that breaking—the snapping of that soul cord—the counterpart of the union between the maternal substance and the body of the child in physical birth—spelled physical death. With its severance, as Croft knew, Naia would pass from the mortal plane to a wholly astral life. But more than that, he knew that now it was within his province to take definite steps to preserve once more the woman he so wholly loved—that now at last he could act.

Toward that lovely floating shape he compelled his own astral form until he floated with it face to face. "Naia—Naia—thou other part of me," he thought rather than cried to her; "Naia—my beloved—hold. Return again to thy body. Go back."

And he knew that she received the potent vibration his own soul gave out. For slowly the head of the floating figure, the dream shape which swung and glowed like an iridescent mist in the sunlight, turned its head toward him—seemed to regard him strangely with wide open, startled eyes.

"Naia!" He sent his appeal to her again. "Naia, it is that Jason whom you knew as Jasor who commands that you return again to your flesh. In Zitu's name, beloved."

The rainbow figure writhed. It seemed to quiver, to hesitate and sink slightly back toward the unconscious body beside which Gaya kept up her work, with darkly troubled eyes; so that there was some relaxing of that binding cord.

"Jason!" Croft felt the thought impinge against him.

"Jason, who loves you—who claims you—who shall claim you yet," he returned, driving each word into her perception with the full force of his will.

"What do you here?"

It was a question, a wondering interrogation. He answered it truly. "You know of my sleeps. In them my spirit leaves the body. It visits many places. Now sleeps my body in the Zitran pyramid, yet is my spirit present to watch over you and guard you. It was not Zilla called you into the pool, but your own troubled spirit, beloved. Go back into your body—in the name of the love you confessed to Gaya; go back."

"But—why—am I not myself?" a second question faltered to his perception.

"Aye, you are yourself always," he returned. "Yet this is the real you which speaks to the real me, beloved. Look beneath you, and tell me what you see."

For a moment nothing, as the form beside him turned down its eyes. And then a startled response: "Gaya—she bends and works beside a form—to—to which I seem in some way connected. It—Zitu! Azil! It is the form of one like myself."

"It is your own form, Naia," Croft told her; "the body in which all your life you have dwelt—the beautiful habitation of your spirit—which you cast into the pool in an effort to gain rest."

"But—I—I—" The diaphanous soul form began once more to tremble.

"You are you—even as I am I," said Croft. "That body over which Gaya works is but the servant which has done your bidding, which, save you obey me, you condemn to death. Return to it ere it is too late. I, Jason, who have met you midway between the body Azil gave you and Zilla's domain, command it. Between you and Zilla himself I stand as a barrier. Return to the form below you and give it breath."

"How—how shall I return?" Again a question.

"Wish it," said Croft. "Wish it as I desire to hold it in my arms and claim its love and yours."

"I—I shall return." It was a promise.

Croft thrilled at the victory he had won. "Yet hold!" He stayed her as slowly she began to sink closer to the form beneath them. "Again shall you leave it if I call you—leave it as now—to meet me as now you meet me, and return." For the thought had come to him that in this guise might he seek out her spirit and converse with it and teach it many things—seek it and hold it until such a time as events should straighten out the tangle in their affairs, and thereby watch over and guard her. "Now go, beloved. See with what a frenzy of hopeful endeavor Gaya works."

"I go."

From beside him that figure as fair as the play of sunlight through the prism of a fine mist vanished.

Into his ears there stabbed the cry of a physical voice, upraised in triumph. It was Gaya speaking. "She lives! Thanks be to Zitu, she lives!"

She bent and lifted the body, which rewarded her efforts with a gasping breath, and laid it on one of the red wood couches, caught up one of the tiny glasses of wine from the table, and forced its contents into Naia's mouth.

Naia gasped. Her throat contracted sharply. She swallowed. Again and again her full chest swelled beneath her clinging robe. Some of the waxen pallor went out of throat and cheeks. Bela appeared running, with the physician behind her. He

hurried to the couch and dropped his fingers to his patient's pulse.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SYMBOL OF AZIL.

AND now came Robur across the court toward the group beneath the yellow awning. He reached it and slipped his arm about Gaya's shaking shoulders, placing himself at her side. For now that the need of her presence of mind was lacking, she seemed completely exhausted and on the brink of tears.

"She—she cried on Zilla and cast herself into the pool," she half spoke, half sobbed. "Beloved, she—she was dead to all seeming—but—I cried on Zitu, and worked above her, and now—she lives."

The physician bowed. "The Princess Gaya has in truth done a most admirable piece of work."

Naia's lips moved. "Jason," she whispered, "I—I have obeyed."

"Hai!" Robur started. His eyes darted swiftly from the girl to his wife, and back to the physician. "What said she?" he asked.

"She dreams, doubtless," the physician made answer.

But Croft knew she did not, and Robur frowned slightly as one perplexed.

Naia opened her eyes. They stared up blankly at the yellow canopy overhead.

Gaya bent above her.

"Gaya!" she cried and lifted her slender arms and laid hold upon her. "Oh, Gaya, I—I dreamt that I—had died. I—"

And suddenly she broke—broke utterly—and clung fast to the drenched form of the woman beside her, shaken by a storm of sobs.

From the blended group Robur turned to Bela and the physician. "This is forgotten as though it had not been, man of healing," his voice came thickly. "By you and by Bela, it is as if it were not. I myself shall see that it reaches Lakkon's ears." He reached into a purse at his belt and extracted some pieces of silver, extending them to the doctor. "Your fee. What needs she else in your estimation?"

"Rest—quiet for perhaps a sun; no more." The physician accepted his payment with a second bow of respect.

"See to it." Robur turned to Bela. "Go—and return with women to bear her to her apartment without delay."

Then, as Bela ran once more from the court, he approached Naia and his wife.

"Peace, Naia, my cousin," he said gently, yet with a narrowing of the eyes. "Know you not that Robur is friend to you and—Jason?" He paused for the barest space before the final word.

The face he watched flushed slightly despite the sluggish return of the blood to her stagnant veins. For a single instant a strange expression burned in her purple eyes. "You say that you dreamed, my cousin," Robur went on. "Praise be to Zitu, it was but a dream. Yet"—and now again he watched her very closely—"in waking you spoke Jason's name."

"He—he sent me back," Naia of Aphur faltered. "In—in my dream I met him, and he showed me my body, with Gaya working beside it, and compelled me to—return. It—was all—very strange."

"Zitu!" Robur started. "A—strange dream indeed, my cousin," he said, with an equally strange expression on his face. To Croft it appeared that without fully understanding, his friend half suspected the truth.

Bela and three other Mazzerian women now reappeared. They lifted the couch upon which Naia was lying, and bore it from the court into the palace and to a sumptuous apartment on the second floor. Walls, windows, and doors were hung in yellow draperies. A huge purple rug was on the floor. A copper couch, studded with amber jewels, stood ready to receive the patients. Caskets for clothing, tables and chairs and stools completed the appointments. Plainly, it was a room designed for women, as Croft knew at a glance, since in the center of the floor was one of the mirrorlike pools of shallow water, close to which stood a pedestal of silver, bearing the figure of Azil with extended wings.

By a strange chance, as Naia was borne in, one of the Mazzerians struck against the beautifully carved figure. It tottered,

swayed drunkenly on its standard, and fell into the pool.

Naia cried out at the sight, and covered her eyes.

Robur sprang forward and lifted the statue, setting it back on its base. "Fear not!" he exclaimed. "It is wholly uninjured. 'Tis a good augury, my cousin, I think. Life fell into the pool, and life comes forth unmarred." He smiled.

Naia relaxed from her tension. Her eyes met his. "You are quick to read signs, my cousin," she faltered. "Perchance—you are right."

The bearers set down her couch, and Gaya took charge. "Disrobe her," she commanded. "Bring sweet oils and massage her body and limbs. Cover her lightly, and do you, Bela, sit beside her, to supply her wants. Yet if sleep comes, permit her to rest. When I have changed my own garments I shall return."

She left the apartment with Robur at her side. Croft followed, filled with a wonderful exaltation, since now at least he had come in contact with Naia's spirit as never before, and in a way which assured a repetition of the meeting on that plane when he desired. True, she regarded the experience now as no more than an exceedingly strange dream, but the mere fact that she remembered was proof sufficient to Croft that the effect he desired had been gained. To himself he made a promise that from now on, when conditions were suitable for the experience, she should dream again.

As for Robur, he was of the opinion that the Aphurian prince was not sure that Naia had dreamed at all. And the first words of his friend, once he was outside the door of the apartment where the serving maids ministered to his cousin, confirmed Croft's thought.

"Thus," he began to Gaya as she turned to her own room, "does Jason prove his sayings truth."

"What mean you?" Gaya paused.

"That he stood between her and Zilla, to whom she called, ere she flung herself into the pool," Robur said. "Heard you not her own words that he sent her back—that she beheld her body beside which you knelt? And do you not recall that I told

you he had explained to me that in his sleeps he left his own body even so, and gained knowledge by visiting other places in the spirit? By Zitu's grace, Jason was here when this occurred."

"Here?" Gaya turned her eyes about her in an almost ludicrous fashion, and Robur smiled.

"Aye—his spirit. In Zitra his body lies asleep. Yet here has spirit met spirit and his conversed with hers. By Zitu, but I had a fright! I had been to Magur with tablets from Zud which Jason gave me, and, returning, I heard Bela cry to another of the maidens that one had fallen into the pool. Gaya"—of a sudden he swept her into his arms—"my heart died, and I ran to find that my fears were vain."

"As you might have known," said Gaya, smiling into his down-bent eyes. "Know you not that I learned to swim as a child?"

"Aye," Robur admitted; "yet strange things happen, and never more on Palos than now. By Zitu, I must carry this to Lakkon's ears. He takes not the right stand with this troubled daughter of his. Go now and change your dress, my Gaya." He released her and went stalking off, his forehead furrowed with thought.

And he sought out Lakkon.

"My Lord," he accosted him without other introduction, "have thought of the meaning to you of Naia's loss?"

"What mean you?"

Lakkon turned in a flash. His face darkened, and a quick, instinctive expression of pain leaped into his eyes. "Would you question my love for my daughter, Prince of Aphur? Know you not that in her every glance, her every movement, I see her mother as I knew and loved her first? And"—his voice, gruff at first, grew unsteady—"know you not that I loved your aunt, my wife? What need of your question, then, Robur, son of Jadgor, since—should she go to the Gayana, shall she not to me be lost?"

"She shall go not to the Gayan, I think," said Robur slowly. "Magur will advise against it."

"How know you?" Lakkon asked.

"He himself told me." Robur met his uncle's questioning gaze with a level glance.

"You?" Plainly Lakkon was surprised. "You spoke with him about it?"

"Aye," Robur made answer. "He told me he would advise against it at the present. Listen, Lakkon, my uncle." He went on and told him what had occurred. And, as he spoke, Lakkon's face took on a twitching, his breathing became heavy.

"But she lives—she lives—Robur—she has passed this danger?" he questioned brokenly at the last.

"Aye. And were her father to appear before her—were he to smile upon her," said Robur with evident meaning, "she were less apt to cry to Zilla again in the future, I think."

"Aye." A quiver sat on Lakkon's mouth. For the moment he was wholly the father, no more the noble or the courtier. For the time his thought was of his child, her life and nothing else. "Aye, Robur—I have been remiss, and praise to Zitu that his lesson is by example and nothing worse. I—I shall go to her. I—I shall try to comfort her in this."

"As you should." Robur inclined his head. "Go, and Zitu frame the wisdom of your speech."

Lakkon went. He crept into the room where Bela sat and Naia lay relaxed on her couch. He went quite to it and sank on his knees beside it, and looked with misted eyes into her weary face.

"Child of my loins," he quavered to her. "Child of thy mother, seek not to leave me again. Be thou the spring-time to my old age, the starlight for my eyes."

"My father." Naia lifted a hand and laid it on his head. "That I sought to leave you was that it seemed to me best—that—that I was tired in body and spirit—that for me there seemed no place."

"Thy place is in my heart," said Lakkon with a heavy, rasping sob.

Slowly Naia drew the grizzled head toward her till it lay upon her shoulder. "I would go to our home in the mountains," she said, "and dwell there in quietude—and—rest."

The Necessary Impression



By
Elliott Flower

PAUL RAYLING was "let out," which is merely a polite way of saying that he was discharged. A more important man would have been "allowed to resign," and a less important one would have been "fired," but Rayling was merely let out.

It was very gently and considerably done, but it was done. Business was slack, and Ogilvie & Co. found it necessary to shorten their pay-roll. Rayling, being one of the last men taken on, would naturally be among the first to go. Ogilvie & Co., however, would be glad to testify to his industry and faithfulness as a securities salesman if he had occasion to use them as a reference.

So Paul lugubriously reported to his wife, Polly, when he returned home on the fateful day.

"But a reference is no good," he complained. "Anybody can get a reference, especially the kind of a reference they'd be. I know. I haven't hunted jobs all my life without learning that. 'Why, yes,' they'd say, if somebody called them up, 'Rayling's an honest man, and sober and industrious.' Not a word about ability or intelligence or anything else that really counts; and if pressed further: 'Well, he hasn't been very successful here, but no doubt he'll do better in some other line.' Nice kind of a chance of getting a job that gives a man!"

"But haven't you been successful with Ogilvie?" asked Polly in surprise, for there had been no previous hint of this.

"No, I haven't," replied Paul bitterly, "but that's his fault, not mine."

"Of course," agreed Polly without even a suggestion of sarcasm in her tone.

Polly had implicit faith in her husband, in spite of the fact that he had been let out of several jobs that he had found it extremely difficult to get. She believed in him so firmly that she gave him credit for her own suggestions, usually putting these suggestions in the form of questions, so that the decision seemed to rest with him. In fact, she fell so naturally into the secondary place that she wasn't really conscious of proposing anything at all. She would have told you, if questioned, that she merely supplemented his clever ideas that no one else had the wit to appreciate. He would have told you the same thing. Both of them believed it.

"I haven't been able to interest Ogilvie in my ideas," he explained. "He scoffed when he listened at all. Usually he wouldn't listen at all. I was unable to make the necessary impression, and that's what counts. I've got the ideas, but I can't make them look good to other people. Some men are that way, you know."

Polly didn't know, but neither did she doubt. Paul was right, of course; he was always right.

"I wish I could help you," she sighed.

"You do help me," he assured her generously.

"Really help, I mean," she explained;

"earn some money myself instead of just spending what you earn. You'd let me do that, if I could, wouldn't you?"

"Glad to have you," he returned with a tolerant smile of superiority, "but I'm afraid you wouldn't fit into business very well."

"I suppose not," she conceded reluctantly.

That was also true of Paul himself, but he did not see it. Nor did she. It was the blindness of others—always the blindness of others—that blocked the road to success.

"I don't make the necessary impression," he repeated, reverting to the original subject. "Why, I can't even get the attention of a man when I'm trying to sell my own services, and that's what makes being out of a job such a serious matter to me."

"Of course," agreed Polly.

"And I don't get any real chance when I do get a job," he continued gloomily. "Look at this Ogilvie business! He's a stickler for dignity—says the reputation of the house demands it—and that's primarily what let me out. You've got to look like an undertaker when you work for him, and a frock coat doesn't get you anywhere with stocks and bonds: people size you up as a charity solicitor. That handicapped me. I could have made a record if he'd let me do things my own way."

"Of course," Polly agreed again with the utmost sincerity.

"I did manage to get to him with one idea," pursued Paul, "but it took me a month to do it, and I didn't make the necessary impression then. He just referred me back to Mott, the chief clerk, and Mott wouldn't listen. You've got to interest the boss himself to accomplish anything."

"What was your idea?" asked Polly.

"Phonographs," replied Paul.

"Phonographs!" exclaimed Polly, puzzled.

"Phonographs," repeated Paul. "Nearly all big offices have dictation phonographs to save time. You understand that, of course?"

"Oh, yes, I understand that," returned Polly. "You dictate to a machine at your convenience and a girl transcribes it at hers."

"That's it," assented Paul; "saves the time of both, and my plan was to carry this time-saving idea to its logical conclusion. I'd load up a bunch of cylinders with information relating to the particular securities that we happen to be pushing at the moment and then bring these to the attention of a few of the big people that we wish to interest. The many will follow when we get the few; they always do."

"But doesn't that come back to the same old problem of getting their attention?" asked Polly doubtfully. "How would you do that?"

"Why, that's the easiest part of it," explained Paul. "The novelty of it will do that. First pick out the right people—those big enough to count and who are likely to be interested in the particular proposition you're pressing—and then send each of them a cylinder, together with a note informing him that the cylinder, if he will listen to it at his leisure, will give him the details of an investment opportunity that he will find well worth considering."

"Splendid!" approved Polly enthusiastically.

"I think so," admitted Paul with complacent pride. "It's novel enough to get the attention of anybody, and then I come along the next day and finish the business."

"You proposed that to Mr. Ogilvie?" questioned Polly.

"I did. I was a month getting the chance, but I did."

"And he wouldn't listen?"

"Well, I'd hardly say that," returned Paul. "The way he looked at me made me think I had his attention—I never saw anybody look quite so amazed—but he seemed to be grinning when he referred me to Mott. That was rather odd, too, for he's usually quite solemn. But as I went out I heard him muttering in a sort of bewildered way, 'Bonds by phonograph!' so I feel sure I made some sort of an impression."

"Of course you did," asserted Polly confidently.

"I got his attention perhaps," pursued Paul, "but I couldn't hold it. He sent me to Mott."

"And what did Mr. Mott say?"

"He said he'd likely get docked for time lost laughing if he listened to me."

"I wonder," mused Polly, "if it wouldn't have been better to try it on Mr. Ogilvie instead of telling him about it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, load up a cylinder with an explanation of your plan and mail it to him with a note telling him that the cylinder, if he would listen to it at his leisure, would give him a selling suggestion well worth considering."

"I might try that," reflected Paul.

"Too late, don't you think?" reasoned Polly. "You're already out. Besides, there'd be no novelty in it now. Why not try to get some other man's attention in some other way?"

"Make the necessary impression, you mean," returned Paul glumly; "but I can't do it. I've tried, and I can't. I can't even get a chance to try out my own idea, and I can't sell anything on the dignity basis. That's why I was let out: they wouldn't listen to me. Ogilvie wouldn't listen—"

"I wonder," pondered Polly, "if that isn't because you don't carry your ideas far enough. You have such good ideas—such really wonderful ideas—but do you always make the most of them? Suppose, now, instead of going after any old job, you watch the papers and wait for something that fits your ideas, and then you can see about getting the attention of the right man when you find it."

"But a man out of a job can't afford to be particular," contended Paul; "he must try for anything he can get."

"Perhaps it's trying for anything he can get that doesn't get him anything," argued Polly. "Why not pretend that you're independent enough to wait for a real opportunity this time? You've always wanted to do that, but you've never done it, and perhaps jobs don't hunt the men who are hunting jobs. Isn't it worth trying?"

Paul was dubious, but he acquiesced. He usually acquiesced in whatever Polly proposed, principally because Polly's proposals always conveyed the impression that she was merely amplifying ideas that originated with him. Some wives do that very cleverly. Polly did it unconsciously as well. Anyhow,

he acquiesced, and they planned some inexpensive outings to pass the time while they were waiting.

Meanwhile, the Landon Securities Company was opening a path to the very opportunity that Paul wanted.

The Landon Securities Company, in addition to doing a commission business in stocks and bonds, also occasionally undertook to find or make a market for new issues—in brief, to "promote" promising propositions—and it had just assumed the task of promoting the Novelty Picture-Frame Company, which specialized in what it called adjustable picture-frames.

Theodore Landon and Ernest Hardy, president and secretary of the securities company, were talking this over when Paul and Polly, finding nothing of interest in the newspapers, set out upon their first outing.

"It's going to be a difficult job," declared Landon, shaking his head doubtfully. "Not that the proposition isn't good enough for anybody that you can get to listen to it, but how are you going to get anybody to listen? Why, the name itself is a handicap! Novelty Picture-Frame Company! It's cheap! And an *adjustable* picture-frame, to fit pictures of any size, is a joke! Can you imagine big men, such as we've got to have to start a thing like this, taking the time to talk picture-frames with you? Can you imagine getting within ear-shot of a big man with such a proposition?"

"Picture-frames! He'd refer you to his wife if you got near enough to mention them at all. And he'd be looking for your keeper if you tried to talk to him about adjustable frames. Adjustable mouse-traps would be just about as impressive. Yet there's really a big idea in it. Henson & Co. have already demonstrated that in a small way, and now they're merely seeking money enough to do it in a big way. That's why they incorporated. But it's going to be a hard job to reach the right people with a picture-frame proposition. Who have you got to put on it?"

"Nobody who's fit for it," replied Hardy. "Beatty would be the man for it, but he's tied up in the Midland bond deal. Fact is, we sadly need another good man."

"Advertise," suggested Landon.

"You don't get good securities salesmen that way," asserted Hardy. "They're scarce. There'd be plenty of applicants, but they wouldn't be men who handle high-class securities."

"So much the more reason for advertising," insisted Landon. "You may be able to pick out a new man of undiscovered possibilities. Try it. Wanted—a man of imagination and resource who knows how to reach the right people with a big proposition. Something of that sort. It may turn up an unknown gem."

Hardy tried it in an evening paper, and the advertisement—an unusual one of its kind, emphasizing the importance of resourcefulness rather than experience—came to the attention of Paul and Polly upon their return from their first day's outing.

"There's the job for me!" exclaimed Paul enthusiastically; "if I can get it," he added with a frown.

"Why not?" asked Polly.

"Apply in person at nine o'clock tomorrow morning," quoted Paul disconsolately. "Think of the crowd that will bring! And where will I be in a roomful of people? I'll be the last one seen, as usual. If I could get next to him—"

"To whom?" queried Polly.

"The man doing the hiring, of course," replied Paul. "He wants a resourceful man, and if I could reach him—"

"Would that be the big man of the concern?" interrupted Polly.

"Probably not."

"Then why not keep out of the crowd and go to the top with a letter of introduction?" suggested Polly.

"Where would I get such a letter?" asked Paul dubiously.

"It might be arranged, don't you think, if you gave your mind to it?" urged Polly. "Anyhow, why not consult a directory and find out who is the top man. His name is probably Landon, but let's be sure of that and of his initials."

Paul acquiesced, of course, thinking he was being consulted when he was really being directed, and he arrived at the office of the Landon Securities Company the following morning with the idea that he had evolved a rather clever scheme. He was a

little doubtful as to its success, but he told himself that it was clever and worth trying.

There were many men waiting, but Paul kept clear of the crowd. It was of primary importance to his plan that he should not be identified with it. He was a man of fair physical proportions, but still he was almost the last person you would see in a crowd. He lacked individuality and aggressiveness; he just melted into the mass.

An office-boy tried to herd him with the others, but he wisely refused to be herded on this occasion.

"Mr. Hardy ain't quite ready," explained the boy.

"I'm not looking for Mr. Hardy," returned Paul. "I have a letter for Mr. Landon. Isn't he down yet?"

"Yes, he's down," admitted the boy.

"Then give him this, please," said Paul, taking a letter from his pocket, "and tell him I'm waiting."

Landon, receiving the letter, with the word that the bearer would wait, looked for some identifying mark on the envelope that would indicate its source or the nature of its contents, and he found none. There was no return card in the corner or on the flap of it, and the envelope itself suggested social engagements rather than business. Moreover, it was addressed in a feminine hand, although the address itself—Theodore Landon, Pres't—was businesslike. He slit it open, and, glancing first at the signature, found that he did not know the name. Then, with a frown, he began reading it.

"This will introduce to you Mr. Paul Rayling, whom you need," it ran. "Such a recommendation as this may be unusual, but I speak conscientiously from an intimate knowledge of the man. No one knows him better."

"Strong enough?" commented Landon.

"Mr. Rayling," it continued, "can gain attention for any proposition he wishes to present. If you doubt it, ask yourself if he hasn't gained yours."

"What!" exclaimed Landon, stopping short at this point; "what's that!" Then he grinned. "Well, he's got me reading this anyhow," he acknowledged.

"Mr. Rayling," he read on after making this concession, "has the judgment and the

resourcefulness to reach the right man, no matter how many there may be between. If you doubt it, ask yourself if he hasn't done so in this case."

"Well, he certainly picked the right man for quick action and got to him first," reflected Landon.

He went to the door leading into Hardy's room and, finding the examination of candidates just about to begin, privately cautioned Hardy to wait for further word before engaging any one. It was all right to look them over, but he must not go beyond that.

"I may fill the place myself," Landon explained.

Then he returned to his desk and finished reading the letter.

"Mr. Rayling," he learned, "has originality. If you doubt it, ask yourself if you were ever approached in a more original way."

"Never," he confessed, as his eyes again sought the signature.

"Mr. Rayling," he was informed in conclusion, "now having your attention, will tell you the rest himself."

Landon went back to the beginning and slowly read the letter a second time, again lingering a moment at the signature. Then he instructed the boy, who had been waiting, to show Mr. Rayling in.

Paul entered confidently. He had jumped over the crowd and gained the immediate attention of the right man. It was encouraging. But Landon's frown was disconcerting. It was a frown of perplexity rather than of disapproval, but Paul, not being good at classifying frowns, did not realize that. Still, he knew that he had reached the right man in a way to engage his attention, and that was the main thing. He began a voluble explanation of his phonograph idea, which Landon promptly checked.

"Who's Polly Rayling?" asked Landon.

"My wife, of course," replied Paul.

"She wrote this letter?"

"Yes."

"Under compulsion?" The question was sharply put.

"Certainly not."

"Didn't you dictate it to her?"

"No, indeed! We talked things over, and then she composed the letter while I went out to get your initials."

"You picked me out as the one to reach, then?"

"No-o, not exactly. We decided to go to the top—"

"Who decided?"

Paul was uncomfortable now and not at all sure that the scheme was as good as it had looked. He tried to take up the phonograph idea again, but Landon interrupted.

"You got her to recommend you—" Landon began.

"I didn't have to get her," objected Paul indignantly. "She wanted to do it. If anything, she got me to consent to it."

"Got you to consent?"

"Yes, that's what she did."

Landon's brow cleared. He had been studying Paul as he questioned him, and he seemed to be satisfied with the result.

"I'll send for you if I want you," he said.

That was disheartening. People who were to be sent for, if wanted, were never wanted. Paul knew that from experience, and, very much depressed, he returned home.

Polly, very much excited, was awaiting him.

"What did you tell Mr. Landon about me?" she asked.

"Nothing of consequence," replied Paul in surprise; "just answered a few fool questions. Why?"

"Because," explained Polly happily, "he just called me up on the telephone, said he had seen you, and offered me the job."

"Offered *you* the job?" repeated Paul dully.

"And I took it," added Polly. "You said you wouldn't mind, you remember. In fact, you said you'd help me get one—and you did!" she glowed gratefully. "That explains it, of course; you got the job for me. It was awfully generous of you."

Paul looked at her in bewilderment. "I wonder if I did?" he murmured; and then, habit being strong, he accepted her point of view. "Yes, of course," he assented. "Why not? Landon didn't want ideas, after all, so why not?"

The Pagan

by Frank Blighton

Author of "The Invisible Burglar," "Black Crosses," "Mr. North of Nowhere," etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

J. T. ENDRA, a financier of great power and president of the Templar Trust Company, but little known to the public, was seated in his office on an upper floor of the Templar Building with his Oriental intimate and associate, Jalsingrao, commonly called Jal Sing, a Hindu, when he was called on the telephone by a man who told him that his life was to be taken by the anarchistic Society for World Reconstruction, but who offered to insure his safety for fifty thousand dollars, to be paid within forty-eight hours. This man also told him that Bruce Scott, a wealthy manufacturer, with whose daughter, Daphne, Endra was in love, was also to be killed.

Endra made no definite answer, and shortly after a bomb exploded outside his window, but did no damage. At this moment a man, who had been gazing up at the building, darted inside, entered the barber-shop, called a man sitting at a switchboard up-stairs, said that he was "Mike," and held a conversation that seemed to establish his connection with the bomb explosion.

Endra telephoned to the Fyres Detective Agency, also to Daphne Scott, but could get neither. Two plain-clothes men, Sobieski and Lang, went to his office by a private entrance, and a messenger-boy delivered a package, which Endra filed with other material relating to the Society for World Reconstruction. Jal Sing procured fifty thousand dollars, which Endra slipped into his pocket. Meanwhile Mike had seen a description of himself in connection with the story of the bomb outrage in a paper, and had been recognized by one Sizzleback, but had escaped.

When Endra left the Templar Building, Daphne was in a limousine waiting for him. As he and Jal Sing stepped into the street a bomb exploded; the car was hurled into the air, and the girl into Endra's arms. No one was hurt.

Daphne, Endra, Tricotrin, and Jal Sing went in Endra's car to Raja Court, Tricotrin's suburban home. There they met their host's cousin, Mrs. Larned-Yost, and her daughter, Bernice, and were joined by Scott. Endra guessed that Tricotrin had paid the "insurance premium," also demanded from him over the telephone.

Fyres, the detective, and the city police, were on the trail of the bombers, and had located Sizzleback. Sobieski, near the scene of the explosion, had found the dial of a clocklike timing device, apparently used on the bomb.

At a dinner in Raja Court Jal Sing entertained the others by making various objects disappear. Then, before the eyes of the diners, he vanished into thin air.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRYING TO "PICK UP" MIKE.

SOME little time prior to the astounding disappearance of Jal Sing from where he was sitting cross-legged in front of the fireplace in Henry Tricotrin's home, to the utter discomfiture of host, guests, and servants alike, six plain-clothes police officers were facing a similar, but hardly as fantastic, a problem in the home of Susan Cahill, widow of the late Ezekiel Cahill, formerly "one of the finest."

Instead of being engrossed in a parrakeet-hued sunshade, the six young officers were

speculating on what Billy Fyres termed "the gold-pickled clothes" of Mike, the man they were looking for.

One of them spoke to Mrs. Cahill. "You say he had only the two suits?"

"That's all he ever wore around here," said the landlady.

"And you think he's wearing the blue serge outfit now?" continued her questioner.

Mrs. Cahill coughed into one corner of her apron and looked imploringly at the crayon portrait of her late husband, who was depicted in a patrolman's dress uniform, ere she replied, a bit caustically:

"I didn't see him going out, and I never

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for June 28.

saw him wearing a barrel since he stopped with me. It's likely you'll find him up-town somewhere. He eats his dinner there."

"You don't know at what restaurant?"

Mrs. Cahill didn't. All she knew was that Mike paid his rent in advance regularly; that he always seemed to be well supplied with funds; she didn't know what occupation he followed, but she did know he came in rather late every night.

The six men left. Two of them remained to "cover" the house to apprehend Mike, if he did come back; the gold-pickled clothing was sent to police headquarters with a brief report; and then the other four started up-town.

In the mean time the description of Mike had already been "flashed" to every police station in the city, with the note of changed attire; and every patrolman going out on duty was cautioned to be on watch for a man of that description.

While other detectives swarmed around the place where Bruce Scott's limousine had been blown to Avernus, and still others started out to "round up" possible suspects, the four frisked the up-town "artistic colony," a locality largely "colonized" by folk seeking "self-expression" in one form or another.

In and out and up and down they trudged, investigating the various eating-places. Their quest was a barren one until they came to the Purple Dandelion. Until now no one had ever heard of "Mike" by name, or from the description could remember ever seeing him.

At the Purple Dandelion they encountered the proprietor, one "Ikey," who, suave and smiling, met all comers personally. The four searchers delegated one of their number to casually question Ikey, which he immediately did, without mentioning that Mike was "wanted" as a suspect in connection with the now somewhat famous operations of the Bomb-Thrower's, Limited, carrying as passengers to Avernus only those who were in "Who's Who," and who did not carry invisible life insurance policies.

At the first mention of Mike's name their hopes went leaping higher than the parakeet-hued sunshade, which was sub-

sequently—and soon—to leap ceilingward under the mysterious manipulations of Jal Sing in Raja Court.

"Mike?" reiterated Ikey. "Sure I know him. He's vun of my regular customers."

"Do you expect him in to-night?"

"He comes here ebery night. He's been here alretty vunce. He vent out again, but he didn't say he vouldn't be back, undt I think he vill be back, because a young lady, Miss Maybelle Jones, vot eats dinner with him, is over dere waiting for him, right now."

He nodded toward the blond manicure girl who had fainted in the barber shop on reading Mike's description, according to the story Billy Fyres had narrated in his phone talk with J. T. Endra at Raja Court.

Miss Jones was attired in a very becoming Nile-green dress and a wide-rimmed black hat with a most bewitching droop. The four promptly took seats near her and began to "pipe off" everybody but the young lady, whose air of repressed expectancy warmed the cockles of their hearts.

The others in the place made it almost as pleasant as going up to the zoo on a sunshiny day.

The "ists" were there from the gentle and melancholy "futurist" to the aggressive and optimistic "Bolshevist." Every one seemed to be trying to inject a little of the yeast of joy into life while waiting for the world to be "reconstructed" according to his or her pet formula. In so doing they injected various vintages and food into themselves and projected assorted language at each other.

Even the clock seemed to have caught the prevailing contagion. It was a freak timepiece, with a minute-hand that wriggled across the dial until it almost seemed that Father Time, too, was "wormy." A half-hour sped by without any sign of Mike.

In the mean time the "Memshevists" came in and battled breadcrumbs and arguments over the tables with the Bolshevists. Other ists kept dribbling in—socialists and anarchists of both sexes—until the restaurant was quite full of patrons, and it seemed to the alert cops that the female of the species was more deadly than the male.

Then one of the four went out to report

to a chafing superior how they were not progressing. He was lucky. The other three had to listen to a pudgy lady in an "alphabetical gown"—showing plainly where a huge "U" had been cut out of it in front and a huge "V" cut out of it behind—while she sang in a cracked voice to an audience that seemed more so to the three intent only on interviewing Mike, who came not.

"The inspector says that he's got Mr. Sizzleback of Ramway down there waiting to identify him," said the fourth officer on his return. "He's holding him in a hundred dollars bail as a material witness, and Mr. Sizzleback is telephoning, trying to get a bondsman up from Ramway to take him back to his wife and kids. He's sore. Says he understands why people throw bombs now. The inspector says to rush this chap down the minute he shows."

"I wish he had to sit here and watch this waiter rush this logwood-and-alcohol to us," growled another. "I'm 'a red' myself—inside—I've had so much of it. But nobody will bail me out. Why don't they let him go home? Ain't they got the cab-driver locked up as a material witness, too?"

"The cab-driver got out on bail," explained the man who had phoned. "That's what makes Sizzleback so sore. Has that dame gone to the telephone-booth since I went out?"

The three shook their heads. The little blond manicure girl who had bestowed so much attention on Mike's nails was almost as restive as themselves. She glanced at the wriggling minute-hand fully as often, and her disconsolate expression grew more and more marked as the minutes dribbled into hours, and still Mike came not.

The four watchers grew more and more irritated.

So did the other patrons. Those who swore by the Purple Dandelion as a place of refreshment were now sometimes swearing at Ikey. But Ikey didn't mind.

Finally the Purple Dandelion closed its petals for the night. The crowd filtered out. Only one man had come in during the entire evening who had not remained for the session; and he wore neither a serge

suit nor a derby hat, nor were his eyes "intense"; and he was also much taller than Mike.

He was, in fact, Billy Fyres; and he also was after Mike, but using far different methods.

CHAPTER XV.

"FINESSING" WITH FYRES.

BILLY FYRES, concerning whom the little Hindu, now at Raja Court, had been told was a most capable sleuth, did not go to the Purple Dandelion idly, nor to look for Mike on his own hook.

That was not his way. Billy went there because he was "finessing." And finessing was one of the things which had made him so renowned that he was now regarded as a miracle-worker of sorts, rivaling the feats of Jal Sing in other fields of endeavor.

Billy knew that he was no miracle-worker, but he let everyone—clients and operatives alike—go on thinking he was; although the results he attained, like all alleged miracles, were merely the astonishing effects of unseen causes, all directed by his ingenious and dominating intelligence.

When the city had begun to plan its second set of subways, Billy Fyres had proceeded to stick a few of the same sort of things into his private detective methods. Business speeded up accordingly. When the third-tracking of the various Elevated systems was proposed, Billy knocked out some more "lost motion," and tightened up his sleuth-machine until every invisible cog and gear ran smoothly, as if oiled.

The ingenious and dominating intelligence that directed all of this was sometimes covered with a billycock derby hat.

Some of those times were the times when reporters stormed his office after a noted criminal had been "landed," propounding the five basic queries which underlie all crime news—how, who, why, when, where?

Billy also wore the same derby when posing for the movies, when walking with some magnate of industry, or popping in or out of some court-house where the trial of some noted criminal he had caught was in progress.

At other times he invariably wore—as he had done when coming into the Purple Dandelion—a two-dollar tweed cap, with a vizor whose slant matched that of his nose, as if it had been made to order.

That cap was Billy's fourth-dimensional telegraph, and he communicated with his aids by twitching the vizor, or by wearing it at different angles, while seeming to do nothing out of the ordinary.

Billy, when phoning to Raja Court, hadn't told the man on the other end of the wire all the facts about the blond manicure girl who had fainted and his operations in and around the Templar Trust Company building after the bomb explosion. He didn't mention the principal fact—that *he* had gone down there with his five men, wearing the billycock derby, with the tweed cap in his convenient pocket.

Nor had he told that he first sent in three of his men, Demetrius, Sam, and Jack, to finesse with the manicure lady ere she recovered from her faint. It was these three who first "soused" Miss Maybelle Jones with the iced towels, and then, according to program, started in to "rag" her about Mike until she was again almost hysterical.

They did this after flashing the "tins" of the celebrated Fyres Agency, frightening the barbers half out of their wits and quite enough to keep them at a respectful distance.

At the proper moment in came Billy, carrying in his hand the billycock derby. Then, as per program, he gave the three of them purple Hades for doing exactly what they had been told to do. Demetrius, as instructed, fought back, while Sam and Jack slunk out, like "whipped curs" in a movie, and kept traveling until they hit a "coop," which was the private down-town office of the Fyres Agency in the financial district, and bore the startling legend on the door:

LEVY & COHEN
SKINS

There Sam and Jack waited for their chief, while the two other operatives

escorted Bruce Scott and his injured chauffeur to their respective destinations, as told.

Meantime, in the barber shop, Demetrius, as instructed, tried "to put up an argument," until Billy Fyres, in the rôle of "Mr. Cohen," took a swing for the operative's jaw, which Demetrius neatly blocked ere he, too, ran out of the barber shop, and kept running for the coop, where the chief "skin" hung out when not at his more pretentious and elaborate up-town offices.

Billy Fyres, having already leaped into Mr. Cohen's fourth-dimensional personality—which was long, long before Mrs. Larned-Yost asked Jal Sing to do something of the same kind at Raja Court—next presented his card and reassured Maybelle Jones, the blond manicure lady, while telling her that she had a perfect right to think well of Mike. The constitution guaranteed it.

Maybelle, having recovered her name with her wits, assured Mr. Cohen that he was undoubtedly right; but, anyway, she "hadn't done a single thing" except minister to Mike's nails, and also go to dinner with him a few times at the Purple Dandelion and to a certain "purple play" the night before.

Mr. Cohen assured her that he would protect her against any and all persons whomsoever and *ad lib*. He begged her to keep his card. He told her to call his "private wire" and mention her first name if she was hereafter annoyed by any one, and he would get an ex-attorney-general to bring down the entire constitution and also bail her out.

He also mentioned that he sometimes had his nails manicured, and would visit her in her professional capacity ere long.

Then Billy Fyres started back to meet his aids, Demetrius, Sam, and Jack, while thinking hard, *en route* to the coop, on the *motif* of that purple play. It was a simple *motif*. Whenever the pursuers got too close to the hero of the play, the hero dissolved in a purple mist of unknown constituents. Thus he pursued the even tenor of his way and avoided giving out interviews on why he had done what he had done, except such as he chose to give out.

Thanks to the foresight of his operatives

in looking up the telephone numbers which had been called from that barber shop during the time Mike was in the place that afternoon, on his arrival at his office Billy had a very tangible clue of Mike's "crib," all his very own. He then finessed a little more over the telephone with police headquarters, promising to keep hot after the gentlemen supposed to be involved in the bomb-throwing; and, in return, he was given the information which the police had been vouchsafed, thanks to the keen eyes and honest zeal of Mr. Obadiah Sizzleback, who was then speeding homeward, only to be shot back to the city by the waiting Ramway police officer to whom headquarters had already phoned.

Then Billy Fyres did a very curious thing for a real flesh-and-blood detective. He jammed the vizor down over his eyes, cocked his feet on the desk, and, mindful of the description of Mike which had been sent out to the newspapers which had enabled Mr. Sizzleback to recognize Mike in the subway, Billy first read all the newspapers.

Here he hit a "hot sausage," and this was why he knew—or felt, for it was all one to him—that the police following Mike up toward the artistic colony were following a "cold sausage," as he told the man who soon phoned him from Raja Court.

The newspaper carrying the *exclusive* story about "J. T. Endra," and which wondered considerably about how that little-known gentleman had incurred the enmity of other "captains of industry" carried the hectic title "Blood Band" in red ink.

Also, that same newspaper, oddly enough, carried no description of Mike, as did all the rest.

Instantly Billy Fyres turned to the editorial page.

There was a very "radical" editorial on that page.

There was also a column of "signed stuff" which the same newspaper featured daily, and which was signed with the initials: "M. X. R." Billy had read that same kind of stuff in that same newspaper quite often before; and he now read this particular column very carefully, but very swiftly, finding that it contained, as usual,

the typical soft-pedal, parlor-Bolshevist article, carved out in cunning phrases, each designed to hold out in the rhetorical *hinterland* just beyond the border line of the Espionage and Sedition Act.

He laid down the newspaper and reached for the telephone book. In almost as little time as it took Jal Sing to afterward jump into the fourth dimension in Raja Court, Billy Fyres had his finger on the telephone number of that radical newspaper.

Then his keen eye roved to the numbers on the slip which lay on his desk. Those numbers had already been "sifted" by one of his able operatives. Opposite one of them was a check mark.

It signified that this number was probably the one that Mike had called from the barber shop.

Billy Fyres smiled.

It was also the same number as that of the newspaper which he had been reading. Then the telephone rang from Raja Court, and Billy proceeded to tell the speaker on the other end of the wire a few reassuring things, while not telling him how he knew them, but, instead, generously offering to "split fifty-fifty on the mystery" until they would meet at ten o'clock the following morning "in the private office of J. T. Endra."

After he hung up, Billy Fyres communed to himself for a few seconds, and a fourth-dimensional stenographic record of his unvoiced thought would have read like this:

"Why, you purple pup! A guy that will write stuff like that, when the whole world is boiling like it is to-day, and also go to a purple play and pal around with a damosel like the little blond manicure lady, would never eat anywhere except at the Purple Dandelion. That's why you're *not* eating up there to-night. And that's why she's up there eating her poor little heart out for you, right now.

"All right. That's why, my lad, I shall now go up there and buy a red lobster, and send it to you by Demetrius Pappas, instead of a red flag, since red flags are now *verboden* by aldermanic ordinance, owing to the numerous intensifiers still outside of jail in this intensified burg. But Demetrius will wave at you the reddest lot of high-

brow stuff you ever heard when he gives you that red lobster. After which I shall rope you and frame you, red-handed, to a fare-you-well!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"FOURTH-DIMENSIONAL STUFF!"

BILLY FYRES pulled down his feet from the desk.

"Demetrius, Sam!" he snapped.

The two came over and watched his hand reach down into a drawer to emerge with a pair of powerful binoculars which he handed to the Greek operative, whose dark eyes were gleaming.

Demetrius scented "action," and he lived on it.

"Demetrius, you and Sam go down to this street number. Sam, you take your station at the hallway. The number is over the door. Demetrius, you take these goggles, go over across the street, and give the watchman you'll find there my card and two dollars and flash your shield. Ask his permission to go up to the second floor to watch a man across the street. He'll give it. Then look through these goggles into a long and rather dingy second-story room which the hall-stairs lead into, in front of which Sam will mount guard on the street.

"You'll see a man in that office. He'll be wearing a blue serge suit, unless he has his coat off; and he'll be wearing a black derby hat, or else it will be on a long table, with a lot of typewriters on it. Anyhow, he'll be there, and the chances are he'll be alone thumping a typewriter. Once you see him, drop down to the hall on the ground floor. There's a telephone-booth in the hall. Call this number. Jack will be waiting near there, or I will be.

"Anyway, the minute you pick this guy up drop down and phone, and Sam—if he comes out before Demetrius gets over to rejoin you—you tail him, wherever he goes, and be sure to give Demetrius the wag as you keep tailing him. I don't think he'll come out, because I think he'll get a telephone call, which will interrupt his writing; and then he'll go on writing again. Is that clear?"

They nodded.

"Now, Demetrius, after you phone either Jack or me at this number, you go over and stall around with Sam. If that guy comes out, remember, *he's our meat*. Follow him and keep in touch with him. And keep in touch with me at this coop, if I don't get back with Jack to where you are before he leaves. I think we will, however."

They sped away.

Down on the street, as they signaled a cab, Demetrius muttered: "How does he do it?"

"You can search me," said Sam. "It's second sight, I guess. Anyway, I'll lay five to three the guy's there and that he does just what the chief says he'll do. But how he knows it—that part has got me wingin'."

Billy Fyres lost no time in speeding to the Purple Dandelion.

He left Jack on guard at a cigar-store hard-by, through the front door of which Jack could watch the entrance to the famous restaurant, while Billy Fyres, in a tan topcoat and wearing the tweed cap, vanished within it.

For Billy Fyres was still finessing.

It was not enough that he had his man "spotted." He must now "rope" and "frame" him as well, in order to jockey him into a position where the sudden dramatic realization that he had been "gaffed" would be enough to make him "come through."

Billy Fyres had done this so often that it was an old story. But each new problem required different tactics, while his general strategy remained the same. He knew Mike already, although he did not know what he looked like, in the least, save from the meager description of his "intense" eyes.

Out of the tail of his own eye as he sauntered into the Purple Dandelion, Billy Fyres caught sight of Maybelle Jones in the drooping black-brimmed hat and the Nile-green dress, while draped around various chairs near her, he also saw the four plain-clothes policemen following, as he had told the man in Raja Court, the trail of a cold sausage.

Billy paused before a large showcase

containing various crustaceans, among others live green lobsters, whose claws twitched spasmodically as if trying to keep time to the electric light "winking" now and then in the case; and other cold boiled lobsters, who had been consigned to the Purple Dandelion's kitchen while still alive and been boiled a beautiful "Bolshevik red."

No matter how the world is, or is not, to be "reconstructed," it is likely that lobsters will always be boiled alive instead of bombed alive.

Ikey stepped behind the case and began a disquisition on the superior virtues of oysters, clams, lobsters, crabs, and the other denizens inhabiting it.

Billy Fyres pointed at one of the red lobsters. Ikey whipped it out of the case. Billy pointed to one of its claws which had been broken. Ikey fervently assured him the gustatory qualities of the red lobster were in nowise impaired.

Billy let him rave on for a few sentences, for he was still finessing—this time getting every intonation and accent of the Purple Dandelion proprietor's voice so that he could presently use it himself.

Finally he paid for the lobster, walked out, crossed the street and entered the cigar store. Thanks to the topcoat and tweed cap, Maybelle Jones hadn't recognized in him the Mr. Cohen who had so generously protected her in the barber shop in the basement of the Templar Trust Company building.

"Demetrius hasn't phoned yet," said Jack, nodding toward the string of empty booths at his back.

Billy gave him the lobster. "Hold this a minute," said he, and watch the front door of the Purple Dandelion. See if that blond manicure baby comes out. She's in there now, wearing a weeping-willow hat and a spinach-colored gown. Be with you in a minute."

He darted into the booth and called the same number that Mike had called from the barber shop in the Templar Trust Company that same intensive afternoon while in the chair.

Billy Fyres had timed his *coup* well.

As the man on the other end of the wire

picked up the receiver to answer the call, Demetrius, his eyes glued to the "goggles" in the window across the street, saw Mike pick up the telephone, as foretold; and he could even discern the air of annoyance that his gestures indicated as he ceased writing.

Whereat Demetrius thrilled almost as much as Mrs. Larned-Yost up in Raja Court, who was now on the verge of watching Jal Sing send her gold-monogrammed cigarette into the fourth dimension and out of it again before her very eyes.

It also gave Mike quite a thrill to hear Ikey's voice on the wire as Billy Fyres spoke into the receiver. It would have given Ikey also quite a thrill to hear his fourth-dimensional self doing this, especially as he was just now trying to reassure Maybelle Jones inside the Purple Dandelion, telling her "Mike should be here soon now and sure."

"Lissen, Mike—diss is Ikey—Purple Dandelion."

"How'd you get my number?" blurted Mike.

"Maybelle iss here—but, Mike—don'd interrupt. I got to git dis offen my chest, *kvick*. Dere is four plain-clothes mens in here, vaiting for you and vatching Maypelle. I don'd know vot it iss dey vant, but, Mike, you know how much chance dey iss to get invormachun out of me aboutd a goot customer like Maypelle's vriendt. Dey know she *iss* your vriendt—I'm tellin' you diss.

"Now, lissen. She cand't talk mit you. So I'm sending Demetrius Pappas down to see you mit all the invormachun I got—undt mit a red lobster. Demetrius you may not know—but he iss a goot veller undt schmartd, like de dickens. Vait dere vor him, undt if he says to go out of town mit him—you go. He vill keep in touch mit me.

"Undt don'd telephone Maypelle tomorrow to—you know vere she vorks. Dese blain-clothes mens vos in there today undt dey apused her someding derrible. A Mr. Cohen, so Maypelle dells me, he helped her oudt of dropble. He iss of the firm of Levy undt Cohen, skins. I gotta ring off, Mike. Vait for Demetrius.

He is chust stardting oud now mitt the lobster."

Billy Fyres next glanced at his watch. It was eight o'clock. Next he phoned Henry Tricotrin that he was almost ready to make an arrest.

It was just five hours since some one had called J. T. Endra's office on his private wire and offered to sell the president of the Templar Trust Company an invisible life insurance policy for a fifty thousand-dollar premium; and just two hours since a "client," as promised, had practically admitted having invested in one of the same sort of policies.

Between the first incident and the second, J. T. Endra had seen with his own eyes something well-calculated to induce firm belief not only in the existence of a "Society for World Reconstruction," but also in that organization's ability to carry out the strange statement made by his would-be insurer that: "They seem to think there can be no real reconstruction without considerable advance destruction."

Also, since "Siva was all-pervading," as Billy Fyres was phoning Tricotrin from the booth, Jal Sing, up in Raja Court, happened, just then, to be bringing back Mrs. Larned-Yost's gold-monogrammed cigarette from the "fourth-dimension spacings," and Henry Tricotrin was going to the telephone to listen to some very surprising statements from the police department, owing to his having had the forethought to send back his card and residence phone number to the sergeant who had taken the names of those entering J. T. Endra's limousine after their providential escape from horrid death.

And while Henry Tricotrin was absent from the dining-room, as already narrated, Jal Sing had basely taken advantage of his absence to first borrow Mrs. Larned-Yost's parakeet-hued sunshade, after which he had vanished under the eyes of every one.

Mr. Tricotrin went out to reply to a terse call from Billy Fyres, who informed him that he was about to take into custody a man who could probably come through with a lot of things regarding the bomb hurled to kill Bruce Scott that afternoon. Billy Fyres pledged his reputation that the

man he was about to arrest not only *could* come through but he *would* come through; and he added that he would send details in the morning.

Hard on this call came a second. It came because Mr. Tricotrin had thoughtfully sent his card back to the sergeant of police who had taken the names of those who had so narrowly escaped the bomb and had driven away in J. T. Endra's machine to become his guests at Raja Court.

Only the message came from the sergeant's superior, Captain Edward Boyer, the commanding officer of the police precinct wherein the Templar Trust Company was located, and while it, too, was brief, it held almost as much verbal dynamite as the bomb they had all escaped.

CHAPTER XVII.

PHILOSOPHY VS. FACTS.

GETTING the gist of the second message delayed Mr. Tricotrin's return to the dining-room until Jal Sing had got his cousin's parasol and had started to make that sunshade do stunts that it had never dreamed of doing while dreaming the happy hours away in the as yet bombless Atlantic City, situated on wind-burnished sands, where the lady had purchased it.

His pretty cousin's cry of alarm when Jal Sing vanished out of sight of every one did not perturb Mr. Tricotrin. He merely laughed.

"Let's see how long it takes him to get in and out of the fourth dimension in person," said he reassuringly. "Don't be alarmed, Gertrude. Why should you be? Isn't Mr. Sing an old and valued friend of Mr. Endra, and he's still present with us, isn't he?"

The gentleman referred to hastened to admit that he was, and also hastened to drop Daphne Scott's tapering, warm, lovable fingers which he had been surreptitiously fondling behind her father's back, in lieu of kissing them or the lady, when Jal Sing was masking his "melt out" with the sunshade into the coldly gleaming tiles in front of the fireless fireplace.

Mr. Tricotrin promptly pulled his watch,

noted the time and watched the precise spot where he had last seen Jal Sing sitting cross-legged. The sunshade, meanwhile, persisted in hanging itself from the ceiling without visible means of support, as though suspended there by fourth-dimensional glue.

Mr. Tricotrin presently broke the rather grisly silence.

"Did he ever do anything like this before?" he queried a bit uneasily, but without taking his eyes from the fireplace.

"Oh, yes," cheerfully returned the auburn-haired man. "Why, this is nothing. I've seen him send a whole troop of spectral cavalry, marching on waves of smoke, into an otherwise impregnable native stronghold in Delantabad, India; and before the smoke faded out they turned out to be real troopers, who quelled a native uprising at the very outbreak of the late great war. That was just after I met him outside that temple of Mohammed Ghous, in Hyderabad, that he mentioned when you asked what he thought of this place."

Mr. Tricotrin did not turn his head.

"Keep watching that fireplace," said he blandly. "I think he dove under the table. The cloth is long enough to hide him easily. He's very clever. Does he ever appear professionally?"

"I believe he did once at Wellborne Hills," said the Hindu's companion, "but he had a special reason. It was at a reception given a Hindu ruler by a lady living there, whose husband had once been an official of our government at Hyderabad.

"I wasn't there, but she told me about it afterward; and from her description I judge it was a rather unique affair, for his exhibition enabled her to quite outshine her social rivals. The native ruler was a relative of the then Raja of Hyderabad. He died soon after I met Jal Sing in India."

There was a semiaudible growl from the butler, still peering in from the pantry door; a shriek of dismay from the two watching maids in the hall; a rustle between Henry Tricotrin and Bruce Scott, both, as well as Mrs. Larned-Yost, Bernice, and Daphne, peering toward the fireplace; and then Jal Sing stepped from the group and walked

calmly forward to reach up and seize the sunshade.

He drew it down, folded it and handed it to Mrs. Larned-Yost with his imperiousness: "Please to make examinings."

It was an even more astonishing *dénouement* than Billy Fyres had already planned to give Mike. On emerging from the phone-booth, Billy gave Jack the lobster and his instructions:

"Tell Demetrius to take this lobster, go up and give it to Mike, and hand him all the high-brow lobster in that wild Greek brain of his, rope that bird, and take him to the Hotel Neat, over the State line.

"You and Sam trail Demetrius and Mike. Mike will go with Demetrius without any rough-house. Go to the mezzanine floor of the Hotel Neat. Wait there for me. I'll show up with a certain party, and we'll sit right back of that Hungarian orchestra.

"Tell Demetrius that when I ask the leader to play 'The Return of Spring,' by Waldenteufel, that's his cue to run over and mitt me, and call me Mr. Cohen. I won't know him at first. Then Demetrius is to bring Mike over and introduce us all around.

"I shall sit with my back toward Demetrius, and won't even look his way until he comes over, and the party with me will sit the same way—so Mike can't see his face. You and Sam shadow Mike, and be ready for a quick grab—of somebody. I'll telegraph which party to grab."

As Jack darted away, Billy Fyres phoned the coop. His two other aids were now back from Raja Court, whither they had taken Bruce Scott. He told them to run down and tell Captain Boyer that he, Billy, would have "all the hop" on Mike in the morning; that he had gone out of town, and Billy was going after him; and also for them to get all the available information Captain Boyer wanted to give, in return, regarding how the boys were getting on with the hunt for the "bombadiers" who had tried to get Bruce Scott, and had merely succeeded in sending an *Ivanhoe* limousine hurtling into an irretrievable fourth dimension.

Simultaneously the two maids in Raja

Court fled wildly to the servant's quarters and began packing their worldly goods in three-dimension suit-cases, while the ubiquitous butler looked on impassively. He understood it as little as they, but his caste forbade that he let them know it.

Instead, after seeing what was afoot, the phlegmatic butler walked sedately up-stairs again, where mine host, Tricotrin—always a good loser—was now leading the discreet, but unfeigned, applause elicited by Jal Sing's astonishing "tricking."

"I know how you can make a million," chuckled Mr. Tricotrin. "Just teach Mr. Scott, Mr. Endra, and myself how to maneuver like that when we want to, and the million is yours—"

Just here the butler entered. "Your pardon, Mr. Tricotrin, but may I have a word with you down-stairs, sir? It's quite important."

Mr. Tricotrin excused himself and went below to face the two maids.

"We'll not sthay in the same house wit' thot little brown divvle another minute. Saints presarve us!" piously announced one.

Mr. Tricotrin endeavored to reassure them. They would have none of his explanations. He laughed at their fears. They bridled. Servants have their well-rooted beliefs and pagan behavior that savored of "black art" was most disquieting.

Finally Mr. Tricotrin paid them both their wages for his cousin, promised to send them back to the city in a car at once; told them to go to the back entrance and wait is very amusing. Did you ever know me he looked at the butler.

"Ponsonby, I hope you're not superstitious. This is most embarrassing. How shall we manage breakfast?"

The butler shrugged. "If I was afraid of that gentleman, I shouldn't be here. He is very amusing. Did you ever know me to show fear, sir?"

Mr. Tricotrin patted his shoulder. "Jerry," said he familiarly, "a man who knows the precautions we've taken at Raja Court would be crazy, indeed, to fear anything."

"I like this job better than some I've had, sir," said Jeremiah Ponsonby, with a

stolid candor that lent emphasis to his matter-of-fact statement.

Mr. Tricotrin smiled genially and went back to where Mrs. Larned-Yost was languidly thanking Jal Sing, who was bowing.

"If the ladies will excuse us," said Mr. Tricotrin suavely, "we four will drift into my den and have a little talk about business matters, while they go to the music-room. Gertrude, I'm afraid you'll have to forego your evening drive. I sent my Ivanhoe to Mr. Scott's garage to-day for an overhauling. Hired vehicles are ill-suited to one of your exacting tastes."

"You are at liberty to use ours," said Endra, glancing at Jal Sing, who bowed; "that is, if you care to."

"I'm going to use it to send two maids that have just summarily left to go back to the city, if you'll instruct your chauffeur to drive them down," said Tricotrin, who proceeded to explain.

"Why, by all means use it," said Endra.

"Henry!" exclaimed Mrs. Larned-Yost reproachfully.

"All the fault of your eccentric sunshade, Gertrude," laughed her cousin. "I'm sorry."

"But I'll have to pack to-night, then," said the lady, "for I'm leaving for Newport to-morrow. I simply *must* be there."

"As we're in for a period of more or less forcible reconstruction," said Mr. Tricotrin with a wink that Scott and Endra caught, "we'll all turn in and aid you in laying the foundations of the world-democracy as soon as we get business off our chest. Meantime, just enjoy yourselves."

"I'll phone to Jerry—that butler's a jewel—and have him pass the maids out of the main gate and pass the car back in. We'll be with you shortly in the music-room. Cut loose with anything—piano or phonograph. The former resident had a wonderful library of all sorts of music. Another evidence that he simply smeared his money on everything and everybody."

Mr. Tricotrin locked the door to the den when the four were in it.

He first explained that Billy Fyres had phoned that he was about to apprehend a man whom the newspapers said was in

some way concerned with to-day's bombing outrages. He expected details, later, from Mr. Fyres. Then:

"Gentlemen, we ought to take counsel together as to what we should do to-night. Before you discuss that, let me tell you this: In my opinion Raja Court is better guarded against any one breaking in than many a State prison is against any one breaking out.

"I don't know who lived here before I came, but he evidently had precautionary views like mine, and long before I acquired mine. He saw what was coming and he made ready for it. Here is a ground plan of the place, as Saxon Depew gave it to me."

He unfolded a paper and spread it out.

In the ensuing fifteen minutes he explained in detail the protective system of guards, electrical alarms and the like, in a way to amply confirm Billy Fyres's remark that he was "an old granny," and had "skunk traps" set all over the place.

"The guards who were here when I came I dismissed," added Mr. Tricotrin. "I didn't know the men. The ones I have here now I have investigated. They're not our caliber of men, of course, or they wouldn't follow that line of work. The point is, I can depend on them absolutely. My butler is especially devoted to me. I have also guarded my food supply.

"The milk and eggs, for instance, come from a farm back in the country, in sealed containers, and are delivered by flivver through the back gate, fresh every morning. I had to think of that, too, for a certain anarchist once tried to poison a whole banquet in Chicago, if you remember, and he played fast and loose with the police in this city as well as Chicago afterward. If he has been captured, I have no record of it, and I keep a file of these things from the papers."

He spread out a scrap-book with many clippings.

Mr. Tricotrin was genial toward people of his class, but quite evidently adamant with those who had divergent views as to how the world should be ordered.

Bruce Scott spoke first.

"Henry, this place is what the old

preacher back home used to call, when I was a kid, 'a rock in a weary land, a shelter in time of storm.' Daphne and I will stay with you for a day or two. But I'll go to business as usual. I'm no coward."

"Bruce, I wish I had your sand. I weakened once. No matter how or where. I wish I'd stood pat. Hereafter, I shall stand pat. If they get me they get me. But what did I ever do to any one? I've worked and earned money in my business. I've always been a liberal spender. You know that I've been too liberal, perhaps, at times. But I've yet to meet any man that can truly say I'm lacking in sympathy with unfortunate people.

"If it came to a show-down, I could prove that I've hired men who had been locked up. Why? Well, because no one else would. And they were entitled to a living. I never had any sympathy with the view that a man that had done wrong, paid for it in prison and come out, should be perpetually shunned by every one afterward.

"Does that make any difference to me now? If it does, why am I obliged to go to these extremes? Gentlemen, you may say what you will—this thing is only beginning. I'm no pessimist. But, I have to face facts. A bomb is a fact that a man will face only once—if he's close enough to it.

"By the way, Mr. Sing, before I forget it, I want to thank you, heartily, for diverting the minds of the ladies so much that even my cousin—who is a dear old girl, but who is as curious as a child—will think of little else from now on but that mysterious behavior of her parasol—until she gets to Newport."

"*Sahib*, these little trickings you saw are like to all else of which you make seeings—they are of the veil of Maya. They are not truly of Siva, that is to say, of Kaivalya. That word has meanings of 'light from within.' It was of that true Kaivalya I made speakings to the Sahib Scott. I think he may make understandings."

If Mr. Tricotrin saw anything disingenuous in the reply to his query he masked it effectually.

Bruce Scott, however, leaned forward.

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"*Sahib*, it is a thing for which there are no wordings."

"That is one difficulty with understanding the Oriental idea," said the maker of the *Ivanhoe* car, a little fretfully. "You think you can get it, and then it soars off into—well, it's like trying to follow a man that stepped from the earth to the moon—you can't do it, that's all."

"*Sahib*, you have made progressings. As I made speakings to the *mem-sahib*, Kaivalya in your tongue is the bugging-house. But, what if it were *true* that a man could make steppings to the moon?"

"Nonsense!" fumed the auto-manufacturer.

"The replyings," imperturbably returned the diminutive one, "is such as a savage might make to one of his own tribe who made boasts of outflying the bird. Yet, flying is done by those illuminated."

"He's got you there, Bruce," chuckled Tricotrin. "Own up, like a good sport."

"No, he hasn't. The man in the air uses natural methods. Forces."

"The *Sahib* Scott makes speaking of truth. But truth is one and not a part of one. It is the all-enfolding. As for forces—how long have men's minds been darkened that they made no perceivings of light? Light, like this?"

Jal Sing pointed upward.

"But they found it, didn't they?" persisted Scott.

"From the light within their minds," said Jal Sing. "But, I would not combat the *sahib*. What says the *Rig-Veda*? 'If one opposeth thee, make agreeings; if one would despoil thee, make yieldings—that placings may be found for greater riches to thyself!'"

"That's bad dope—if you'll pardon me for saying it," said Tricotrin firmly. "Nonresistance, eh? Why, that's what we've got to get out of people's minds. Where would the world be if men followed that? The evil men would overrun the earth, they would exterminate the good."

"*Sahibs*," said Jal Sing, "I would make no opposings to your thoughts. But, this I may say: *Siva*—which is symbol for life

and death—is all pervading. In the all-enfolding there is no evil. Nor fearings of poor that they shall not have life. Nor fearings of rich that they shall meet death.

"Doth fear of the one or the other avail? The all-enfolding hath always been, now is, and always shall be. Its light burneth for all men of thinkings. It lights the path for the change that men now make fearing of—for they call it death—and it is dark with cloudings from darkened minds."

Bruce Scott nodded. "But, what if men would kill you on the street, as they tried to kill me and my daughter to-day? How can you help fearing that sort of thing and taking precautions?"

"Your daughter lives. You live, *sahib*. Was it due to the precautionings? All things live. There is no death. The chair in which you each make sittings—this thing on the wall. It, too, lives, and hath feelings. See?"

He walked over to the thermometer that registered the temperature, took it down, cupping its bulb in his palm as he brought it over to them, that they might see the sudden rise in the mercurial column.

Tricotrin shrugged. "A scientific fact, as well known as that nitrogen is the basis of all modern explosives. Could you put out your hand to-day and ward off the death that lurked in that bomb?"

"The hand of the all-enfolding made holding of all," said Jal Sing, "else we were not here under your roof. And now, if you make permitting, I would retire, to make adorings of *Siva*."

Tricotrin rang for Ponsonby to show the Hindu to the room where he had been domiciled with J. T. Endra. It had two beds.

Tricotrin turned to Endra when he had gone.

"May I give you my full confidence?" he asked.

"I shall be very grateful for it."

Tricotrin pulled out a sheet of paper carrying a phone number.

"If you care to call this number you will get Captain Boyer, in command of the police station of the precinct wherein the Templar Trust Company is located. The

sergeant who aided us away is from that station-house.

"He gave Captain Boyer my private-wire number, and as I requested the police to keep us posted on developments of the bomb, if any, the captain called me just after Billy Fyres hung up. That was why I was a little delayed in getting back to where Mr. Sing did his last stunt."

Mr. Endra observed that he would be glad to hear the information without waiting to call up the captain. Tricotrin studied the pencil marks on the paper again, as he replied:

"They have some evidence in their office, procured by Lieutenant Sobieski, a plain-clothes man who was behind the sergeant and who told the sergeant your name, remember, as we got into your car?"

"Perfectly. I was frightened out of my wits about Miss Scott."

"Sobieski has brought Captain Boyer part of the evidence. It is a device like the face of a clock or speedometer—I didn't get that very well; but, from what I did gather, I judge that it may have been something that could have been attached to an automobile without arousing suspicion.

"Anyway—this is the point: this plain-clothes man, who is an honor man, and in line for a captaincy, says that this device was part of the bomb that blew up Mr. Scott's limousine.

"Now, with nothing but that, he and Lang, his partner, have already traced that device—or fragment of it—to a man named Kopetzsky, who has a clock-store on the East Side. They deciphered his name from the smashed dial of the thing. They're after Kopetzsky now. But, Captain Boyer told me to say to Mr. Scott that they also had proof that Kopetzsky was a member of a group of folks interested in world reconstruction; and that on some Sundays—mark this well—they went to a meeting-place to listen to foreigners discuss the topics.

"One of these foreigners, so Sobieski says, is a Hindu. He has a feeling that it may be Jal Sing, for he attended once, with some other Polish folk, *and saw him*.

"That's how close the police already are on the trail of a bunch of these East-

Side agitators. I'm very sorry to tell you this—you can confirm it in full from Captain Boyer, if you care to talk to him on the wire here and now. But, as you were here with Mr. Scott, it seemed only fair to me to say to you that maybe Jal Sing will be taken in to-morrow."

"My God!" breathed Bruce Scott, "is it as bad as that?"

J. T. Endra shook his auburn locks.

"Not on your whole stock of Ivanhoes—it isn't," said he emphatically. "Now, listen to me a minute:

"I've known Captain Edward Boyer, personally, ever since I was knee high to your chair, Mr. Tricotrin—which Jal Sing just said had 'feelings.' And Captain Boyer knows me well—for many's the time before I got to the private office on the twenty-first story of the Templar Trust Company, when, like all healthy American boys, we punched each other in the nose.

"I'll see him to-morrow, and I'll take Jal Sing right to the station with me. And if it takes the whole Templar Trust Company to bail Jal out, if Captain Boyer wants to stick him in a cell—take it from me, *in goes the whole works!*"

"That's different!" said Bruce Scott, recovering his color. "I like you, sir—although we've never met until to-night!"

"So do I," said Tricotrin. "And that's why I came 'clean,' as the police would say, to Mr. Endra. I knew that a man as close to him as Jal Sing certainly is, could never be off-color. Now, what do you say if we go in and hear some music? Gertrude has a wonderful voice, and plays divinely. Bruce, I'll make her sing 'Ben Bolt' for you!"

"What do you say, Mr. Endra?" asked Scott.

"I'm strong for the music," laughed Endra, as they left the den.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOBSTERS AND OTHER THINGS.

DEMETRIUS PAPPAS walked into a long room, filled principally by a table on which were several dejected looking typewriters, and on the floor of

which were many crumpled wads of paper. One light burned in it, and near it sat a young man who rose as Demetrius came forward, smiling with his white, even teeth.

"I have here a nice cold lobster," said Demetrius, "that you probably have heard of."

"A lobster? Oh, yes. You're—what's your name? I am rather absent-minded."

"To friends, I am Demmy. I was christened Demetrius. My last name is Pappas."

"Who sent me the lobster?"

"He calls himself Ikey, I believe."

"Yep. And the lobster?"

"It departed this life, alas, at the Purple Dandelion, an eating-place frequented by those who do not aspire to wear the purple robes of power. That is all I was told to say to you, unless you wished to discuss the lobster tribe."

Demetrius handed him the package.

Mike opened it. The red lobster was quite reassuring. Also entirely harmless, having been duly boiled alive.

"Speaking of lobsters," said Mike with a smile, "what do you know about them, anyway?"

"Four of a certain species, according to Ikey, were in or around his place when this lobster walked out the front door. But that lets me out. Ikey told me to talk nothing to you but lobsters—and I always do what Ikey says. I find it makes life pleasanter for me."

"Do that, Demetrius." Mike broke off a claw and dug out a bit of white meat, which he munched with so much composure that Demetrius almost got dizzy.

Remembering his orders he pulled himself together.

"This lobster," he began, "although no longer with us in this life, may have been vexed, ere he departed, by certain of the *Bo-pyridæ*—"

"I don't get you, bo!"

"The *Bo-pyridæ*," smiled Demetrius, "speaking scientifically, are also called *isapods*. They are minute, microscopic, and parasitic by nature. They inhabit the gill-cavities of *decapods*."

"That's two kinds of pods," said Mike, ramming a button-hook into the interior

of the lobster. "No wonder they boil lobsters. But why shoot it at me? I'm no riddle-solver."

"I will unriddle it," said Demetrius. "And then I will take my leave. A *decapod* is sometimes called by the name crustacean. There are all sorts of crustaceans. Some are oysters or clams. I am a clam."

"Oh, I begin to get you. Go on, please."

"The crustacean you are devouring is a *decapod*. So named because it has five pairs of legs. Two on each side. The front ones, as you can see, are equipped with pinchers, to pinch anything that is pinchable, that annoys the lobsters. They are too large to pinch the *isapods*, which, as I have said, are microscopic—and not capitalistic, mark you. Besides, the *isapods* that vex lobsters in life, inhabit their gills. The pinchers are too big to reach into the gills."

"Demetrius, you are some zoologist."

"From the true Bolshevik stem," grinned the Greek. "I am known among some of the brotherhood as an *intelligensia*, with a hard 'g'."

"Stick to orders, Demetrius."

"Pardon me. I had forgotten. These pinchers, as I have said, are true *decapods*. Hence the five pairs of feet. And the two pairs of pinchers. Other lobsters than these have been seen, at times, in or around the Purple Dandelion, zoologically speaking. But they were two-legged lobsters, and carried their pinchers—or twisters—in other places than on their feet, in plain view. Nevertheless, Ikey is out to hook them. Are you sufficiently enlightened?"

"Almost. But can you enlighten me any more?"

"Only with regard to colors. This lobster is red. That is a symbol. It is a sign to you, from the man calling himself Ikey, that you are not to be pinched—to-night at least—by any of the four of the other genus, unless you stick around town too long. And now, having fulfilled my errand, I must wish you a very good night."

"Whither away?"

"I have an appointment with a lovely lady at the Hotel Neat, in a certain gay city across the State line. You follow me?"

We shall try to forget all parasites. Ikey said that if you cared to go along, the plan might commend itself to you. That is a matter for you to judge—but, I'm due there quite soon."

Demetrius flashed his watch.

Mike rose. "As soon as I can change my clothes," said he. "Now can you tell me what happened to a certain lobster that tried to pinch me in the subway, to-day?"

"I understand that he only got himself pinched," said Demetrius. "He is held as a material witness. I have a friend who is also rather an *intelligensia*, and he handed me that information. But, if you will take me at Ikey's valuation—I would advise that you get rid of that serge suit. They are looking for that and the tan shoes at the Purple Dandelion. Don't ask me how I know, please. I never get too close to that kind of lobsters if I can help it."

Mike went to the end of the room and dragged out a bundle.

"Do you mind pulling down that shade?" said he. "I want to change."

"Not in the least," said Demetrius.

Mike proceeded to don a neat-fitting suit of gray, with cloth-top button shoes of like material, and he also produced a gray cap with a vizor.

Mike changed in a trice. Then he regarded the clothes dubiously.

"I wonder what I ought to do with these?" he asked.

"It might not be a bad idea to send them to the lobster-pot," grinned genial Demetrius. "They do not know my handwriting. It shall be as a symbol to them that all lobsters are not as green as they look before being cooked."

Mike clapped him on the back.

"You're a trump," said he. "What university?"

"Dartmouth. Also of the Sphinx."

"Hand me the high sign, old top—of the Sphinx!"

Demetrius did. Mike returned the signal the Sphinx code requires. That simplified things so much that before the Purple Dandelion regurgitated its assorted freaks, headquarters received a package of clothing, by messenger, who took it from

an office near the under-river tube. The clothing bore no legend, being merely inscribed: "Detective Bureau. Headquarters. Notify Captain Boyer's precinct, please."

It arrived about ten minutes after Mr. Obadiah Sizzleback was turned over to the tender mercies of a 'Mr. Cohen,' who put up a hundred-dollar bill and gave him his card, "Levy & Cohen—Skins."

Mr. Sizzleback asked for explanations on reaching the street.

"Not here," warned Mr. Cohen. "Wait until we get back into your State. They had no right to do what they did, under the constitution. I am a charter member of the League to Uphold the Constitution. There is too much oppression by the police these days.

"Why, they won't even let our society hire a hall! And who are we? Men of property! See, here is my automobile. Jump in. I will take you into your State. There you shall have supper with me, and then on to your home and babies! This is an abominable outrage!"

"It is," agreed Mr. Sizzleback. "Did they get that fellow that threw the bomb?"

"Did you see him around the cells where you were?" parried Mr. Cohen. "You did not. Will they get him? I hope so. I am not in favor of that kind of thing. I am opposed to anarchy—but I am equally opposed to despotism. The only course is a middle ground."

They were in the middle of a ferry-boat before Mr. Sizzleback could get through expressing his gratitude.

"My dear sir," protested Mr. Cohen, "I would be remiss in my obligations to my fellows if I did not use such accumulations as have come to me—financial and mental—to protect my fellow men. You have committed no crime.

"Now, let's forget it. Just keep my card. If you ever catch sight of that scoundrel that was responsible for skinning your elbow in the subway and putting you to all this trouble, call my private wire."

Mr. Sizzleback cooled off quite a bit by the time the Hotel Neat was reached. By the time he was seated on the mezzanine floor, and before a gentleman with an olive-

brown skin and flashing white teeth greeted Mr. Cohen by name, just as Mr. Cohen was asking the orchestra leader to play Waldteufel's "Return of Spring," Mr. Sizzleback was enjoying himself to the utmost.

"I don't seem to remember you," said Mr. Cohen, knitting his brows.

"Aren't you Mr. Cohen of the firm of Levy & Cohen—Skins?"

"Yes, sir. Where did I meet you?"

Demetrius turned. "Oh, Mike—come over and meet a friend of mine, Mr. Cohen!"

Mike complied. He was suave and smiling. Billy Fyres bit his lip as Mr. Sizzleback bit a large lump out of third-dimensional space ere he shrieked:

"That's him!"

Mike grinned. Then he turned to Demetrius.

"Untie Rover," said Mike to the astute young Greek. "This gentleman—indicating Mr. Fyres—wins the dog! I've already eaten the lobster."

Billy Fyres looked as if he had just "back-fired" for the first time in his career. The remark, "Untie Rover," was quite unintelligible to him—although not to Demetrius, a "Brother Sphinx"—and as Billy Fyres could only huskily mutter: "*You!*" while gazing at Mike, Demetrius took occasion to flash him a signal—in the tweed-cap code, only Demetrius used his own bottle-green fedora hat to communicate with his chief.

Billy Fyres suddenly recovered his aplomb—lost, simply and solely because his elaborate "rope" and "frame-up" of the suspect, and the dramatic confronting of Mike with Mr. Obadiah Sizzleback, had not resulted quite as the fertile and ingenious detective had planned.

Mr. Sizzleback had "rapped" to Mike—as Billy had planned he should rap—but, therein lay the rub!

For Mike, the suspect, whom Billy had framed successfully thus far, and whom he expected to force to "come through" with a lot of "stuff" regarding the other bombadiers was in reality Bruce Scott, Jr., only son of the maker of the Ivanhoe car, brother to Daphne Scott—and it was a hideously inconceivable thing to believe him

mixed up in any attempt to murder his own father!

Realizing which, Billy Fyres suddenly replaced his tweed cap on the seat of his again dominating intelligence and yanked the vizor. As per program, out of nowhere pounced Sam and Jack. They did not even give Mike "a tumble."

Instead, they seized the now sulfuric Mr. Sizzleback, hustled him out of the Hotel Neat, rushed him down to the railway station, and thrust him on an outgoing train five minutes later, much agitated and still protesting!

Jack and Sam didn't reason why things had taken such a weird turn. Theirs not to reason why—theirs always to obey orders—no matter if they were fully as perplexed as Mr. Sizzleback, who was still sizzling as the train pulled out but who didn't dare to jump. Besides, he wanted to get back to "the wife and kids."

It was all far, far different than Mr. Sizzleback had imagined it would be, when he had consented to "take a run back to the city." Then he had expected to see his name and face displayed on the first page of all the morning newspapers. Now, as he sped away, Mr. Sizzleback had his doubts about that part of it. He didn't understand it, at all.

But, then, like Bruce Scott, now out at Raja Court, Mr. Sizzleback had never, until this evening, met up with a certain lady named "Siva"; and, unlike the maker of the celebrated Ivanhoe car, Mr. Sizzleback had not the advantage of having a mentor to explain the abstruse and rather perplexing moods of the celebrated Hindu goddess.

Sam and Jack, after seeing their charge headed homeward, hurried back to the Hotel Neat, where Billy Fyres had back-fired for the first time in his long and celebrated career. But now, Billy had his celebrated sleuth machine functioning as smoothly as if it had never missed a cog.

As Sam and Jack came in, Billy was sitting looking across the table at Bruce Scott, Jr., alias Mike, alias "M. X. W."—initials for Michael X. Williams, parlor-Bolshevist and contributor to the radical newspaper.

Billy Fyres saw his two aids come in.

He signaled them to "hover around" and be ready for anything. They obeyed, noting Demetrius sitting at another table, also waiting what would happen next.

At about the same time this scene was being enacted in the Hotel Neat, Bruce Scott, still in Raja Court, was in about his most mellow mood of the evening, thus far. Mrs. Larned-Yost, despite her gold monogrammed cigarettes, had sung "Ben Bolt" in a way to make the maker of the Ivanhoe car forget most three-dimensional things, utterly. He was merely a lad again, back in the old days when America was a land of work-a-day, happy people, unvexed by even the name Bolshevik; and he was an urchin working in a bicycle repair-shop by day, and by night bending over a drafting board, studying until his eyes blurred and his head ached; but twice each week, Sunday and Wednesday, he went "calling" on a certain young lady who wore gingham dresses and taught a school in a little red schoolhouse barely bigger than an Ivanhoe limousine.

Eventually, she became Daphne's mother; for they were married, and then she always kissed him when he went back to the next day of hard and for years poorly paid toil.

But, they had been very happy, especially after Daphne and her brother had been born and began growing—very happy, indeed, while Bruce Scott battled on; and then the great change had come and Daphne's mother had gone on, leaving him stricken with grief and to battle on alone.

It all came back to him as Mrs. Larned-Yost sang "Ben Bolt." It seemed so long, long ago and yet, under the compelling charm of the song, still it was all so near, and dear—even the sorrows and discouragements, as well as the homely joys and the greater triumphs, that had "pervaded" his life until this day.

Bruce Scott wiped his eyes. He wasn't ashamed of the tears of happiness, or of those of reminiscence. He was happy. Especially that Daphne had been spared; that they were both under a roof that promised a full meed of protection from ignorant and misled folk, who, as the Hindu had said, were in darkness!

Jal Sing might be merely a little pagan; but, somehow, he seemed to have a certain kinship, even in his idolatrous faith, with the simpler occidental belief in which Bruce Scott had been reared.

He wondered how Jal Sing said his prayers. And was that what he meant when he said something about "adoring Siva"?

As he wondered, Messrs. Sobieski and Lang, both more tired than ever, kept doggedly on the meager trail of the bomb. They were seeking Kōpetzsky, the Bohemian clock-maker, whose name in faint letters was just discernible on the crushed porcelain dial. They found a woman in a teeming tenement, surrounded by progeny of all ages and sizes, who pointed out where Kopetzsky lived.

Ignace Sobiesky and Toby Lang advanced to the door indicated. Sobiesky rapped on it. Below them, like a wireless telegraph, the various overpopulated apartments began to hum, like a swarm of enraged bees.

"The cops! Poor old Kopetzsky! At his time of life! An outrage! Worse than Russia! Never mind! The revolution is near!"

Darkness!

Darkness framed the feeble old man who finally came tottering to the door, clutching a faded dressing-gown and wearing a black skull cap. He had a beard that reached below his breast. He trembled as he saw their burly forms, although Sobiesky addressed him in his native Bohemian tongue, which he spoke as well as he did Polish—for Sobiesky was not quite as "thick" as he looked.

At the same instant, while still sitting on the mezzanine floor of the Hotel Neat, Billy Fyres fingered his tweed cap. Whereat, Demetrius slipped away to a convenient phone-booth and called "the coop" over in the city.

At the same instant, also, the ubiquitous butler in Raja Court came into the master's bedroom set aside for J. T. Endra and the weired little chap with him. He was car-

rying some towels. The bed the Hindu was to occupy had not been disturbed.

Jal Sing had already disrobed, however. Wearing nothing but a loin cloth and a turban of spotless white—both improvised from pillow-slips taken from his bed—with a body otherwise so nude that it fairly glistened in the brilliant lights of the apartment, he sat with his back to the servitor facing a blank wall, staring into nothingness.

The butler coughed, discreetly. Jal Sing did not move.

"If you need anything during the night, sir, I'm always a light sleeper. And I 'ave my instructions from the master to see that you gentlemen shall lack for nothing."

The little Hindu did not seem to hear him.

He sat like a man who was completely incased in a block of transparent glass.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN SPITE OF ALL PRECAUTIONS.

"NINE o'clock," said Tricotrin, when Mrs. Larned-Yost finally finished the impromptu recital. "I suggest that we all turn to and begin to become members in good standing of the Brotherhood Bolshevik. Bernice has been packing for some time. What say, Bruce? Will you rope trunks?"

"I've been roping dollars for so long that trunks will be easy," said the maker of the Ivanhoe car. "It can't be harder than cranking the first two-cylinder I put together. Mr. Endra, you should have seen me! I was the proudest boy in the world. Just twenty-three years old. Daphne wasn't yet born! And my car just started up and rammed me and ran wild—with me hanging on behind until I could climb into it and shut off the spark. By that time, it was all ready to ram down a big stone building."

"I haven't always sat up in an office on the twenty-first floor of a building and listened to other people talk, myself," said the young man who followed him from the room. "So, I can quite understand your pride. But, if I had a daughter like yours,

at your time of life—I wouldn't envy you all the Ivanhoe cars you ever built."

"You're young yet," cryptically returned the other. "Are you married?"

"Not yet." Endra blushed until he was as flaming as any of the ruby flowers whose petals had closed for the night.

"H-m! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I was married before I was your age. How old are you?"

"Around thirty-two, sir."

"I was married at twenty-one. You haven't any excuse, have you?"

Endra grew more red. He was so red that he looked the part of the same crustacean that Billy Fyres had so painstakingly sent to Mike—all with such wierd results.

Mrs. Larned-Yost tactfully shunted him into her boudoir, and pointed to a string of gowns. Endra rushed at them as if they were all bomb-throwers, poisoning lethal missiles to hurl into his office.

Daphne ran over to rescue the flimsy finery.

"Not that way!" she laughed.

Mrs. Larned-Yost manœuvred Tricotrin and Scott to the aid of Bernice in another position of her suite, two rooms distant. Then she sauntered back, paused in the door, and lazily lighted a cigarette.

"You know, Daphne," said she, "I'm frightfully near-sighted. These fourth-dimensional 'trickings' are quite beyond me. But, when I was your age, and wanted to kiss Fairfax Yost, there was no one to stand in the door to blow cigarette smoke in the eyes of *my* father, if Fairfax was as close to me."

J. T. Endra looked at her with a face that was now the same color as the restaurant's name at which four young men still lingered, vainly waiting for Mike to appear.

"Siva," went on Mrs. Larned-Yost, "must be a very clever sort. But, my dear fellow, how do the Hindu race make love? Do they do it always with parasols?"

She deliberately turned her back.

Two young people forgot six other things that had happened that day and remembered only each other. Mrs. Larned-Yost flitted back and forth, picking up various

feminine gew-gaws, superintending, chatting, expostulating—in a word camouflaging a very pretty half-hour for the lovers.

It had to come to an end, at last.

And Mrs. Larned-Yost, with the prerogative of a pampered matron who had been in luxurious idleness, promptly threw the whole group into almost as much confusion as Mike had done to the best-laid plans of the best detective that ever started out to train a bombardier, by exclaiming: "Where is my parasol?"

Tableaux!

They looked everywhere, remembering that it had last been seen in the room where Jal Sing had done his tricking.

But, it was not there.

Nor was it in the hall, or the music-room, or anywhere else.

Endra stepped forward.

"This is embarrassing," said he. "But, I'll see if Jal took it into our bedroom. I don't think he did. Will you wait a moment for me?"

Mrs. Larned-Yost siezed his coat-tails.

"Nothing of the sort," said she. "Mr. Sing has entertained us all, vastly. I'm sure he took the parasol—for some purpose. And I'm equally sure I'll have it back again, when I next see him. It would be most rude of us to waken him. For that matter, I was thinking of asking him to keep it, as a souvenir from me, of the extreme pleasure I experienced. It was novel—I assure you."

Tricotrin did not take part in the discussion because the buzz of the phone from his den again called him to the wire.

He was back, presently, beckoning for Mr. Scott. Bernice and her mother here bade every one good night and went back to their suite.

This brought Daphne and her infatuated one face to face, and quite alone. They sat down and looked at each other, demurely. Daphne seemed to be listening.

Her slight gesture of quiescence stiffened Endra into rigidity.

She glanced uneasily toward the fireplace, in front of which Jal Sing had faded out. It was still fireless. The white tiles gleamed back in spotless sheens. The chap watching her, intently, noted each rise and fall of her breathing.

"What is it?" he whispered, at last.

"Nothing—I guess. Merely an intuition that something was—well, wasn't just as it should be. But, this place is secure, isn't it?"

"Mr. Tricotrin has taken many precautions and your father seemed pleased at them. Besides, if it wasn't secure, I fancy Jal Sing would hint something of the sort to me."

"So much has happened," said Daphne, with a little sigh, "that is most unusual. Well, father is here with me. I shall probably be asleep inside of five minutes."

Tricotrin and Mr. Scott just here returned.

"Before I forget it," said the broker, "I want to tell you folks just what I've also told Mr. Scott. In case of any alarm of any kind, while you're under my roof, if you also happen to be in bed, just reach out on the sideboard and push a switch over. That throws in the circuit to my room, and you can talk to me in your natural voice and I can talk back to you, for there is a concealed telephone on the private circuit right in the head of each bed. Just speak. The switch rings a bell. I waken, and reply. Ponsonby—I call him Jerry—the butler, is also on the same circuit."

"But," queried Daphne, "*can* anything happen?"

"I don't see how it can," said Tricotrin. "But—have a look for yourself—in my den."

They went back in there again.

He lifted the blotting pad. There was revealed a square of ground glass. At one side a clock was set in the top of the desk, flush with the surface. On the glass were various numbers. At intervals, a light flashed from these. At other intervals, other lights flashed from around the edge of the oblong glass.

"The Selenium System of keeping watchmen true to their name," chuckled Tricotrin. "Cost me a pretty penny, but I installed it. The man that recommended it to me said, among other things, that the same system was in use in the Templar Trust Company building."

"Something like it," said Endra. "And

I've found it efficacious—so far, although, of course, it's not infallible."

"Nothing is," chuckled Tricotrin, "except Siva. Pardon me—I don't mean any slur of course, on your friend. He's deuced clever. And as harmless as a kitten. But, he don't get the Occidental point of view, I take it, as you and I do.

"Now, for instance, in place anything goes wrong in the yard or grounds, why, the men on patrol, who keep registering their posts—which makes these lights flash in sequence at their various yard or wall posts—these men must note it and report."

With the words an intercommunicating telephone suddenly jangled.

Frowning, Henry Tricotrin took it down.

"Well!" he snapped.

"Pardon, sir, but one of the men just found a lady's parasol on that statue in the fountain, sir. It's a very elaborate thing of silk. Green and red colors. Fortunately, the water is turned off. Shall I have it sent in, sir?"

"At once."

Tricotrin hung up, still frowning.

"I wonder how that parasol got out there?" said he. "Well, it only proves what I was saying. By turning out the lights in here, sometimes you can see all the men on patrol on the wall. During the day they keep out of view on the ground behind the wall. At night, they patrol it.

"They carry regulation army rifles. They have instructions to stop all intruders, and to shoot any that don't stop when directed. I had them all made deputy-sheriffs and sworn in, when I hired them."

When Ponsonby appeared with the parasol, Daphne and her father bade Mr. Tricotrin and J. T. Endra good night. Then the latter also said he would retire. He thanked his host, in a few graceful words, for the splendid hospitality he was enjoying.

"Take this with you," said Tricotrin, "waving away the thanks, "and give it to Jal Sing with the compliments of my cousin, Gertrude. Tell him to stop doing stunts with it, just for to-night. It worries the guards."

"I will," said the guest. "I'll see you in the morning, sir."

He went to his room. Jal Sing was still

sitting like a man completely incased in a block of transparent glass. The other laid the parasol on the bed, disrobed, and was soon beneath the covers. The Hindu didn't like to be disturbed in his "adorings."

It was a great relief, that luxurious bed.

Seven things had happened in the seven hours since the first episode opened.

At three o'clock, a man with a malign and hateful laugh had told him he was doomed and offered him life—for fifty thousand dollars.

Next a mysterious but, as yet, harmless explosion had happened outside the office window.

Next a package had been sent to him, which he wanted to show to Billy Fyres, but didn't want to show and hadn't shown to either Sobieski or Lang.

Next the bomb had blown up Bruce Scott's limousine and he had met up with Henry Tricotrin.

Next, Billy Fyres had confirmed that the man with the invisible insurance policies had "clients"—how many Billy didn't know—but he intimated that Tricotrin was one; and while Scott had sturdily refused to be bulldozed, Tricotrin had weakly yielded—for he had hinted as much.

Next, Billy Fyres must have "missed fire," for he hadn't phoned to J. T. Endra, again, as per promise, earlier in the evening.

Next—and this seemed to more than atone for a lot of the rest—Daphne and he had been privileged to a half-hour of semi-privacy, with Mrs. Larned-Yost, shrewd and delightful, albeit languid lady that she was, chaperoning their surreptitious love affair, as if all of this had been especially to that end designed.

The big man with the sinewy frame and auburn hair yawned.

He slept.

Into that as yet unresolved mystery of human need—lesser only than the sleep that knows no waking—he was immersed. Three-dimensional things faded out. Fourth-dimensional took their places. The nebulous stuff of which dreams are made was one of them. Dreams, which have neither length, breadth nor thickness, and yet which are some times so astoundingly real.

Nor are dreams only the things aside

from the things that conscious thought perceives with the eyes of sense. The eye of sense perceives only the physical.

The oversoul of man partakes of the superphysical.

The superphysical knows absolutely no fatigue.

In slumber it mounts guard. No man may not breathe for long and wake from slumber back again to life—as life seems to be.

So, among other things, the superphysical sees to it that each inspiration and expiration that makes for breath goes on, unhampered, sleeping or waking. And, as the great scientists have proved by three-dimensional methods, the powerful array of intercostal and abdominal muscles that raise and lower *each one* of these breaths, *in so doing lift about five hundred pounds through the space of one inch!*

Siva, symbol of life and of death, was still watching over the pagans who adore her image. Watching, the same as she had watched for centuries with her inflexible eyes carved from mindless stone, while those same eyes have looked down on countless centuries of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of stupid acquiescence and inane aspirations—in a world in which Jal Sing and his kind were by no means the only pagans.

For Siva is very old.

How old no man may say. The wisdom of the Rig-Veda goes back—far back—of any other human history.

Nor death was then, nor deathlessness,

Nor change of night or day.

That One breathed calmly, self-sustained,

Naught else beyond It lay.

So opens the 129th hymn of the 10th Book of the Rig-Veda, which the little pagan had once pointed out to Endra in the account therein given of the world-creation.

The translator and no less all Occidental authorities who have read it declare that it is not to be classed with the primitive lore of a barbaric race.

It is said to indicate a very ancient but very high state of evolution.

When the big, sinewy, auburn-haired chap in the luxurious bed suddenly awakened at the sound of his name, he had no time to recall the Rig-Veda.

"Don't make a move," said a voice from the thick darkness, "or the Society for World Reconstruction, which has just taken charge of this little shanty, may be forced to use the well-known principle of 'vicarious sacrifice.' Just listen.

"You haven't got a chance. Nor has that old chuckle that calls himself Tricotrin. Not a chance! Now, are you ready to pay your premium for your life insurance and accept an invisible policy, for yourself and a certain young lady you met down in front of the Templar Trust Company building at two minutes after five this very afternoon?"

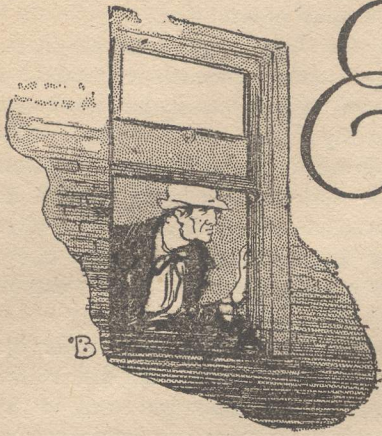
Floating to his horrified ears came the same noxious laugh that had titillated his ear-drums when in the private office of the twenty-second floor of the Templar Trust Company.

"Don't be in a hurry. Take your time and think. Then, don't talk back to me nor try to talk to any one else. If you decide to pay, take the money, open the door, walk out, take the first turn to the right, go down to the hall, and walk straight out through the French window, which you'll find open.

"It leads to a little veranda. Beyond and below it is the fountain. Throw the money as far as you can toward that fountain. I'll be there to collect it. A member of the society is conveniently waiting where your least injudicious move will spell something worse than a bomb to a certain young lady.

"I proved to you that I keep my word, several times, since I talked with you. I'll keep it now. If you pay your premium, the girl shall not be harmed. If you don't—well, bombs make a lot of noise at night—but the society has other methods. Your guards have proved themselves to be a lot of dubs."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.



Evidence

by

Murray Leinster

IT was hot. My pony jogged listlessly along, without interest or animation, while I was only concerned with the problem of getting to shade and water, but especially shade. The sun was hot enough to fry any one's brains in his skull, and my saddle burned my hand if I touched it where the sun struck it. There was a trickling stream of perspiration down either cheek, and a third stream down my nose. From time to time I smudged the dust across my face in an attempt to stop the streams, but the action merely interrupted their course.

It was in this peculiarly Texan atmosphere that I came upon Jimmy Calton. He was standing by the open hood of one of those mechanical miracles known as a "tin lizzy," holding a sooted spark-plug in a cloth in one hand and attempting to clean it with the other. He was swearing the while, dispassionately, in a curious mingling of good Anglo-Saxon and dobe Spanish.

"Hello, Jimmy," I said listlessly.

He looked up and nodded.

"Say, you look hot," he observed.

"Come on an' ride a ways with me. Lizzy heah 'll be runnin' in a minute, an' you can tie yo' pony on behind."

"Going anywhere in particular?" I asked.

"Over t' see th' coroner," he told me.

"Ol' Abe Martin got shot th' other day an' folks are sayin' Harry Temple done it. They got 'im locked up, anyways."

I dismounted stiffly and tied my pony to the rear of the machine, allowing him plenty

of lead-rope. Jimmy finished wiping the last of the spark-plugs, apostrophizing the car in the mean time.

"You creakin', growlin', spark-plug-foul-in', blasted hunka tin," he finished lyrically, and put down the hood.

He went to the crank and turned it half a dozen times. The engine caught, sputtered, and began to run with a pretentious roar. Jimmy hastily reached for the wheel and adjusted the spark and throttle, then climbed in leisurely. With a grinding and a lurch we started off, my pony following docilely behind.

"Yes, tin, tin, tin," said Jimmy, doing mysterious things with his feet:

I have scorned yuh and I've flayed yuh,
But by the guy who made yuh,
You are bettuh than a big car,
Hunka tin!

We slipped into the car's second and highest speed, and began to run more smoothly. Jimmy looked behind to see that my pony was all right and began to roll a cigarette with his left hand, while expertly guiding the car around the numerous ruts and rocks in the roadway. I watched the process of cigarette-rolling without interest.

"I can't seem to get the knack of that," I remarked, when he had finished and was licking the edge of the paper to hold it in place.

"Imitatin'," said Jimmy casually. "There ain't any way that everybody can do. Nobody else I know rolls 'em like this. It's

jus' easiest fo' me. You'll have to mess around till you find a way that fits yo' fingers."

"I'll smoke tailor-made," I said, "rather than bother with learning."

"Jus' like th' new generation," said Jimmy severely. Jimmy, it may be said, is thirty, but affects the authority of a man of eighty. "Wantin' everything done by somebody else, or else by machin'ry. They even want theh thinkin' done fo' them."

"It's too hot to think down here." I took off my hat and wiped the moisture off the sweat-band.

"Judgin' by the little bit of it people do," Jimmy remarked acridly, "most folks agree with you. Most people look at thinkin' as somethin' they was taught to do in schools, an', as such, somethin' t' forget as soon as possible. From th' folks that don't think about th' spigoty revoltosos jus' across th' border an' are pained an' surprised when th' spigoties run off some o' their cattle, down to th' folks that ud rather buy cigarettes than bother thinkin' up a way to roll 'em one-handed fo' themselves, everybody's jus' th' same. Why, 'twouldn't surprise me none at all if most folks tol' th' truth jus' because it's too much trouble t' think up a lie."

I accepted his rebuke in the matter of cigarettes meekly and said nothing.

"It's a fac'," said Jimmy, with an air of mournful pity for a race fallen so low. "I saw in a book th' other day that th' best lyin' is th' lie that's near th' truth. Ain't that ridiculous? That's jus' justifyin' laziness. Ef folks 've got th' goods on yuh, an' yuh can't get away from th' truth, then it's all right t' dilute th' truth until it's harmless, but otherwise a good lie beats th' almost-truth nine ways from Sunday.

"Only it's a lot o' trouble thinkin' up a good lie, an' fortifyin' it with accumulative evidence"—Jimmy rolled those two words off his tongue with some satisfaction—"accumulative evidence like a good lie ought t' have."

He fell silent for a while, doing marvels of steering in the avoidance of obstacles and depressions in the really horrible road.

"An' thinkin'," he said suddenly, presently. "Folks don't like thinkin'. Any-

body with any sense ud know Harry Temple wouldn't 've shot ol' Abe Martin. Harry Temple has got a bank-account in th' Farmers and Ranchers Bank, an' it ain't in reason that he'd go an' shoot anybody t' steal their roll.

"Ol' Abe sold off six hundred steers, an' got th' money fo' them. He was ol'-fashioned an' didn't believe in banks, so he took th' money home with 'im. An' somebody went an' shot him an' took th' roll. But Harry Temple, with a bank-account in th' Farmers and Ranchers Bank—it ain't reasonable that he'd go an' shoot anybody fo' to steal their money. Ef he's any like I am, he's too busy wonderin' ef somebody is goin' t' steal his money to go stealin' somebody else's."

Jimmy said this last with an air of virtue that made me smile. Jimmy is much too good a poker-player to be worried about his money. I know he owns one small ranch he never goes near, bought out of the proceeds of a colossal game still remembered along the border.

"But they think he did it?" I asked.

"Sho they do," said Jimmy scornfully. "They's goin' aroun' sayin' they know he did. That's *toro*, o' course."

One of Jimmy's individualities is his habit of translating American slang into dobe Spanish and using it in his conversation.

"What are you going to see the coroner for?"

"They's holdin' a inquest," said Jimmy. "I'm sort o' goin' t' horn in a little, I reck'n. These folks are too lazy t' do any thinkin'. Ef I see a chance, I'm goin' to do some head-work fo' them. Theah's Abe Martin's place right ahead."

We turned in the gate and swung up to the house. Half a dozen cars, most of them of the same make as Jimmy's, clustered about the front, and there were a dozen or more ponies tethered close by the porch, dozing in the baking heat. It was quite a pretentious place, built in the old-fashioned style of the days when a rancher was almost a baron in his own right. Two big barns and a huge stable behind the house almost dwarfed the dwelling proper, and quite hid it from the rear.

Jimmy eased his car in among the others, snapped the switch, and alighted. Three or four of the men about the door nodded to him and told him the inquest had not started, but that it would begin shortly. Once he found that out, Jimmy plunged into an intricate and technical discussion of patented attachments for his machine, and I drifted off into the house.

It was a very old house, and built with old-fashioned disregard for space. I gathered, however, that the housekeeping done in it was but sketchy. Half a dozen of his riders made it their headquarters, with old Abe Martin. They bunked there, and a cook prepared the meals for all of them. There was a long table with a checked, red table-cloth on it—the room was empty now except for buzzing flies—where they had their meals. On the day of the shooting, I learned, the men had all been away on their duties, and the cook had gone into town for supplies, so Abe Martin had been alone.

Presently I went out to look at the stables. They were huge, but not much used. Three or four ponies were in their stalls, and several more stalls seemed to be used from time to time, but most of them were without signs of recent use.

There had been a time when the place was the headquarters of a busy ranch, but since the time of fences the activity had lessened until only Abe Martin, his half-dozen riders, and the cook lived there. It was curious to see the dwelling-place, large in itself, dwarfed by its outbuildings.

A stir in the house called me inside. The inquest was evidently to be more or less of an informal affair, but there was none the less a determined and businesslike air behind it all. Those men meant to get at the bottom of the matter. The coroner seemed to be a conscientious individual, who took the evidence of the first witness with great exactitude, though he knew perfectly well beforehand just what the testimony would be. The whole inquiry, as a matter of fact, promised to be cut and dried in spite of Jimmy's announced intention of "horning in."

The first witness was the cook, who had discovered the body. He had come back

from town, entered the house and discovered his employer dead on the floor of the hall. He had been shot through the heart. A rider, whom the cook had hastily summoned, corroborated his testimony and added that the body was cold when he was called, proving that death had occurred some time before.

"Th' evidence shows," said the coroner casually, "that Abe was shot when there wasn't nobody else in th' house but him an' th' murderer. Th' cashier of th' Farmers and Ranchers Bank ain't heah, but he has give me th' information that Abe had over four thousan' dollars on him when he was killed.

"That's gone. Evidently he was shot fo' his money. It's part of th' duties of a coroner's jury t' uncover any evidence that will help in solvin' th' problem of who th' murderer might be. Miste' Joe Harkness will take th' stand."

There was a movement of interest in the small crowd packed into the one room. I had managed to get beside Jimmy Calton, and his face became extraordinarily mild and gentle. It hinted at some expectation of excitement, if I knew Jimmy. Every one had heard Harkness's story before, so it was simply a recapitulation.

"I ain't got a thing t' say," announced Harkness bluntly, "cept that I seen Harry Temple come out o' this here house 'bout three o'clock, jus' after Abe Martin was shot.

"I was havin' trouble with my spark-plugs down the road a ways, when I seen Harry. He come out o' th' kitchen door, looked all aroun' as ef he was lookin' t' see ef anybody seen him, an' then he went down to'd the stables. He went inside theah, then he come out o' that an' went over to th' quarters an' got a drink at th' pump by th' do'. I was wonderin' what he was doin', but it looks t' me like he was makin' sho' theh wasn't nobody aroun' that could 'a' tol' that he'd been aroun'.

"An' theh's one mo' thing. When he come out o' th' house—he come out th' kitchen do'—he was puttin' somethin' in his breas' pocket."

I glanced at Jimmy Calton. He was looking at Harkness with a gentle, placid

smile. His face did not change when Harry Temple stood up, pale beneath his tan.

"Eve'ything Harkness says is so," said Harry Temple determinedly. "Eve'y single word, only I didn't shoot ol' Abe. I come out heah t' see him 'bout sellin' him some yearlin's. He wasn't heah, so I went in th' kitchen t' see ef I couldn't leave word with th' cook.

"Th' cook was missin', too, but I thought I heard somebody movin' aroun' somewhere, an' I went jus' where Harkness said, an' jus' in th' order he said. He must 've seen me first when I come out o' the kitchen. When I couldn't find nobody, I cranked up an' lef'."

Harkness stood up.

"I hate t' contradict Harry," he said sharply, "but he's made a mistake. He didn't crank up an' leave. He was drivin' somebody else's car, an' it had a self-starter on it."

Harry Temple flushed slightly.

"That's a fac'," he acknowledged. "I'd forgotten that. I was drivin' a car they lent me at th' garage. I'd lef' my own theah t' have some repairs made."

"Of co'se," said Harkness sarcastically, "nobody suspec's that you was drivin' a strange car, with strange tires, so they couldn't prove nothin' on you by th' tracks."

Jimmy put a question in a gentle voice.

"There's another question," he said softly. "What was Harry puttin' in his pocket when Harkness saw him comin' out o' th' house?"

"I don't remember puttin' anything in my pocket," said Temple, beginning to be worried. "It was prob'ly my handkerchief."

There was a moment's silence. One or two of the men in the room stirred uneasily. Jimmy Calton smiled sweetly to himself.

"Misteh Coroner," he said slowly, "may I make an obs'vation or so? It looks like somebody ought t' point out two or three fac's."

"Go ahead, Jimmy," said the coroner. It seemed to be bothering him that so much seemed to point to the guilt of Harry Temple. Temple did seem to be quite a decent sort, and the coroner evidently hated to bring out so much to his discredit without

anything to counteract the impression thus made. Knowing Jimmy, he knew Jimmy would not interfere unless he thought things were going the wrong way, and that meant in this case that he had something to say in Temple's favor.

"Misteh Coroner an' gentlemen," said Jimmy formally, "it don't seem hardly fair t' bring out all this heah evidence against a man without any evidence th' other way. I want t' point out two things about this heah case. Th' first is that Harry Temple has got money in bank, an' th' second is that he never disputed a single thing Harkness said about him. You know, an' I know, that a man with money in bank ain't goin' aroun' doin' highway robbery an' murder. He cain't affo'd to. You jus' think about that a while.

"An' heah's somethin' else t' think about. Did you notice that Harry Temple said right off that he done jus' what Harkness said? Now ef he'd shot ol' Abe Martin, you know he'd 've tried t' make some o' that stuff soun' jus' a little less incriminatin'. He'd 've said he didn't go in th' house, jus' to th' door an' knocked, and he'd 've tried t' weaken eve'ything Harkness said, jus' that way.

"But he didn't. He's tellin' th' truth so hard he cain't seem t' see it's puttin' a rope aroun' his neck, in spite of his bein' jus' as innocent as he says. As for his puttin' somethin' in his breas'-pocket, nobody puts money theah—an' especially stolen money—but mos' everybody puts theah handkerchief theah."

"But—that ain't evidence," said the coroner disappointedly. "I tho't you had some fac's t' give us."

"I'll give you one fac'," Jimmy offered. "Harry Temple didn't shoot Abe Martin. Looka heah, Harkness himself don't believe he did. Do you?" he demanded, turning to that person.

Harkness sat stolidly in his chair.

"You heard what I said," he grunted.

"You heard what I seen him do."

"Sho I did," Jimmy admitted readily, "but you know he didn't shoot Abe."

Jimmy seemed to be making a fool of himself. I tugged at his sleeve for him to sit down, but he paid no attention.

"What do you mean?" demanded Harkness suspiciously.

"Nothin' whatever," said Jimmy with a gentleness I suddenly recognized as dangerous. "Nothin' whatever, excep' what I said. You know Harry Temple didn' shoot Abe."

"You mean t' tell me I'm lyin'," snapped Harkness angrily.

"No," said Jimmy in a cooing drawl. "Nothin' so harmless. I'm accusin' you o' somethin' a damn sight mo' dangerous than lyin'. I'm accusin' you o' tellin' th' truth—th' exact truth."

There was a puzzled pause. I noticed, however, that Harkness was watching Jimmy with a curious alertness.

"It's always mo' dangerous t' tell th' truth in a case like this, Harkness," said Jimmy, still in that gentle drawl. "You tol' th' absolute truth about what you saw Harry do, an' that's th' mos' dangerous thing you could 've told, because there ain't but one man could 've tol' that."

"Misteh Coroner, ef you'll look out o' the window, you'll see jus' wheah Harry Temple walked down th' kitchen steps, jus' wheah he went back to th' stables, jus' wheah he went into th' big barn, an' jus' wheah he got a drink. An' then, ef you

look, you'll see wheah he stopped his car, so Harkness could see that it had a self-starter on it, instead of a crank."

I saw a light break on the coroner's face, as he looked from place to place in the yard behind the house. He faced about, just as Jimmy deliberately pulled a revolver out of his pocket.

"Harkness tol' th' truth," said Jimmy softly. "He tol' th' absolute truth, but—theh ain't but one place you can see all them things from. With all them barns outside, theh ain't but one place that you c'n see th' do' of th' stables, an' th' big barn an' th' pump by th' quarters an' th' kitchen do' all at once. An' theh wasn't but one man in th' world who could 've seen Harry Temple do all them things, because theh wasn't but one man in that place."

"Th' only place you c'n see all them places from is this heah room, an' th' only man in th' house when Harry Temple did them things was th' man who'd shot Abe Martin an' hadn't had time t' get away when Harry Temple come drivin' in!"

"Harkness"—Jimmy's voice was suddenly like steel—"ef you pull that gun on me I'll blow a hole right th'ough th' place yo' brains ought t' be!"

CIVILIZATION

BY LESLIE RAMÓN

ASQUAT upon a crazy-quilt,
A wilful child.

A pile of mud and gore-bespattered bricks,
Some round, some square.

A crazy castle,
Builted there.

A thousand years or more, and then,
The castle falls.

The foolish game is o'er?
Why, no; though empires crumble to decay,
The crowing infant creeps along,
Collects each broken bit,
And brick by brick another
Castle builds.

Daughter of Lyssa

by
B. J. R. Stolper

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PROCESSION.

NOW he sat on his boulder, staring toward the left bank. His naked, upraised knee was gripped tightly between clasped hands. The sun was high, the trees swayed on the left bank, the wind moved. The river spoke. Otherwise, silence and stillness.

"Father—"

A shadow fell on the ground before him. He looked up—Mya—Lyssa.

She had never spoken to him except with shrinking, and when necessity forced. Nor had he uttered word to her. He had growled only. He had— His eyes closed. Emotions, dead and suppressed, mounted vaguely, choking in his throat, smarting under his lids. He was forty years old. What was the span of a man's life? He had suffered everything, lost everything, held nothing.

A man is only a boy, grown; a child. His years change; his feelings, under the coarseness and callous, change no whit. A caressing word, a touch of love without passion, moves time backward, erasing it, as no god has power to do. Charon—he was only a savage lad whom fate had undone. His heart broke with the kindness, the faith, the sweet words of which time had robbed him: the respect of many children: the mothering that a wife shows forth to a husband however grave.

"Father—"

Now Mya smiled at him, his daughter.

She looked very like Lyssa. There was no shrinking in her slim body, only appeal. Her wide eyes held tears.

His voice was husky as he answered:

"Daughter—Mya—"

"Since you took me to the tower—crossing the stream—many things have seemed different. Other girls—they told me—"

She paused, feeling deep uncertainty: courageous, yet afraid. He seemed strangely softened: not at all his dreadful wont.

"Mya—do not be afraid. You are my daughter. Tell me—everything."

Her breath caught as she grew aware of the tenderness in his tone: no fear, no other dim person seemed here hidden, threatening horribly as from behind a cloud. Her father—he was her father, like other men she had seen, up there in the village. She was his daughter. Mya, he called her, with only great sadness in his voice.

"Soon—they told me of the god within the tower. Of the ancient tower itself, of old custom—we are Bœotians?"

"Bœotians—"

"They have many ways that were strange to me. The women told me of the games, and how the god was honored. The Lithian games, they call them, in honor of the stone god. He fell from heaven into the village."

Charon nodded slowly.

"In the young month, when the buds break out on the trees and early flowers appear—later, in the summer, games are contested by men. But first, in the spring, the young girls go out in procession to lay

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sacrifices of fruit and flowers on the altar. It stands in a grove, they said; and first the virgins go to praise the god, making sacred the year. No young girl—no Bœotian girl—”

She choked while the tears ran down her cheeks.

“I have not—I have never—”

“Do you want to walk in procession?”

Charon's voice was gentle, with no roughness in it. Old thoughts and images, newborn, laid hold on him as with hands. What man would forget the gods who do not forget? His mother had been Bœotian of the village. His sister—long dead—had walked in procession. She had died, two years after: a wasting sickness had seized her. She had not married; no man would cast glance at her thin cheeks. But Charon remembered the tunic his mother had laid on her, the high comb she had set in her hair, when the sacred day came. He had run secretly along, through the woods on the right hand, to see the procession set out; though he had remained in the village with the men and boys, the married women and the children, not daring to follow further.

Honor the stone god in the tower—to make the opening year sacred.

Reverence of the immortals is a living faculty of earthly men, not in any way unlike their speech, their thought, the bone, blood and flesh of their bodies. There are those who say *fear* made the gods: that men of thinking mind can live justly in a world of elements, guided alone by reason and right dealing. Such philosophers speak untruth: false, poisonous, and silly. The gods live forever and hold the open sky. When the man dies his body dies: and perhaps his thought of the gods lies lifeless in ashes with him. But the gods themselves live on after, both in the heavens and in surviving men. It is not otherwise.

So now, Charon. His thought had eaten on itself for fifteen years, in madness, suspicion, hate. But now longing awoke in him for the gods whom he had shut from his mind. Fool to think that because his lids were lowered, his fingers pressed on his eyeballs, the world was in darkness.

“You shall walk in the procession when spring comes, Mya,” he said.

The harsh weather, icy-cold, had vanished as over night. Great, freezing, greenish blocks no longer clashed together on the river, fighting toward the sea; sheathing the island rocks with black, glistening, aching armor; bearding the earth with hoarfrost; driving goats and swine to huddle for warmth all day, under low roof and within close walls. Turf, cut boughs, and thick layers of corn-husks pinned fast with ponderous stones, no longer made hut and pent-house heavy against the winter.

The mouth of the dread god had turned from the world: his chill breath, deadly, blew otherwise. The good sun appeared, driving his brighter chariot: he had had long rest. The whirling flood shook off his chains, shouting in clearer voice. Green appeared in all places. Trees budded shyly. High overhead, the armies of the air, wild geese, sent down their clamorous cry, wheeling in vast phalanx north—home.

Soon earth would thaw through all her fruitful body; the wooden plow would move in furrow; the sharpened grape-stakes, piled away under shelter, would rank in slim spears thrust down in accustomed spot; the corn would point up a green scroll, unfolding.

The young month was here. This day the girls would walk in procession to the grove—Bœotian virgins—to lay sacrifices of fruit and flowers on the altar, making the opening year sacred.

Mya rose before daylight, while yet the air bit shrewdly. Her father had long been up. A fire leaped and crackled on the broad hearth-stone, filling the hut with light eddies of smoke that drifted, circling, up through the hole in the roof. The new tunic, spotless-white, the sandals, the cincture, all laid in place before bedtime the night before, waited there in heart-stirring promise for Mya, as she opened wide eyes. A Bœotian! Life thrilled with pleasant things. Much was different since she had set foot in the tower; since she had crossed the water—the wide stream, the stretching basin.

She looked about her. Her father was nowhere to be seen: he had gone to the boulder, or to an early hail for the ferry. She leaped to her feet, running quickly

toward the rivulet to wash. On the way she peeped in at the goats. The fold was empty. They had been turned loose, as had the swine, who rooted and grunted among the trees. Mya saw the goats capering and bounding in the distance among the rocks. Her father had turned them free.

The cold water tingled as she scooped it up from the run, washing her face, her throat, her hands in the icy fluid; filling her warm mouth with the god. He grew kind under her teeth.

She was setting forth the meal of bread, cheese, and new milk, when her father entered. He said no word, only looking. But he, too, was different—very different and changed. She had on the new garments, and her hair was coiled Bœotian fashion, as the women had shown her, proper to the mystery.

Charon's slow blood stirred. A little pulse-beat muffled at the hollow of his throat. So she looked. So his sister—dead long, long since—had seemed in that old day when his mother had set the high comb in her hair. Only Mya's hair was gold, and his sister's had been black: very black and heavy. But Mya's—his daughter. Lyssa. His slow blood stirred.

Lycander, Lycander.

They ate the meal in silence, then they walked together toward the jetty, and Mya stepped into the boat, seating herself at the far end. Her father pushed out powerfully, wading, holding the ferry incredibly against the stream. When the water foamed under his arm-pits, he vaulted in heavily, seized the broad-bladed oars, and made across with strong, quick strokes to the left bank.

There he drove the boat high up on the little beach, calling to his daughter to hold fast. He rose and moved forward to lift her out over the wet. But Mya stepped on land of her own accord, daintily, and stood waiting for him on the river road. She had held quite still during the passage.

Then they walked north toward the village.

The way was good, with no dust; but Mya had girded up the new tunic, which draped about her feet. It hung in folds, and was pleated at the breasts, as was

right. She had tucked the linen carefully into a clean strip about her waist.

Birds sang in the trees to their right, in the narrow valley, or hopped and rose flying from the path before their feet. The sky grew rosy. The cool air gentled into a breeze. Presently a bright rim of sun showed above the mountain.

A fair day.

In the village there was much to do. All work had been put aside in honor of the stone god in the tower whose feast it was. Then men were in from the marble-quarry, the husbandmen in from the fields, the vine-dressers from the vineyard. Even the shepherds had penned their flocks, cutting much green fodder for them the night before, and heaping it by till after the procession was over, and the holiday. The men would remain in the village till the day was ended with its night, and till early morning sent them out again with the sheep. Women ran in and out of the dwellings, chattering, laughing, and bustling; one bore a band, another a comb, or such like adornment hastily remembered at the last moment. On the road toward the grove, two long lines of virgins stood already waiting, dressed in solemn kirtle, and bearing wreaths and plaited cornucopias of early fruit. A young wife, newly married, headed the novices, while another closed the last of the column.

Charon stood back silently while some ran out of the line toward Mya, exclaiming, welcoming her in with outstretched hands.. They were girls she had met in the tower. The fat, gray-haired woman who had mothered her, and who stood now, smiling, with the same little baby daughters clinging to her kirtle, walked quickly over and spoke to the lonely newcomer. She admired her dress, her hair, the wreath she carried in her hands. She patted and pulled the white folds in place; set right the pleats; undid the temporary band; carefully rolling and putting it away to give back to Mya later.

"You are sweetest of them all," she whispered in Mya's ear. "You are beautiful—"

The girl listened with heightened color. Her eyes shone. And, indeed, she was lovely as any picture Zeuxis ever painted. In face and form she was not unlike his *Helen*:

the panel nailed with golden studs to the marble wall of the Parthenon; or like his third siren, in the group "Return of the Argo." Her bright hair, surmounted with a comb of dull gold picked with blue stones—raw turquoises they were—made her a source of wonder to the dark-haired Bœotians.

The procession started. For the distance of a hundred yards they were silent. An ancient stone, weather-beaten, marked the place. But when the last of the virgins had moved by the set mark, the young wife, newly wedded, who followed them, lifted her voice in song. Then all sang together. These are the words, very old. They are still heard in Crete, and in Syracuse, Trapezos, Olbia, and other far colonies; but in Bœotia they are no longer sung.

"We move with measured pace,
We walk toward the grove.

"There the altar stands, under the oaks,
Piled high with faded wreaths:
A god's companion laid them there;
They are his strength and cunning.
They show his valor, his skill in games.

"But they are faded, withered, and dead!
Soon his name will mount up in fire with them, to
you,
O stone god!

"But first we come,
Together with flowers and early fruits renewing
the year.

"We are virgins:
No man has touched us with hands.
We are clean.
We come to the god who fell from heaven, with
noise, by night, in a trail of fire.

"We have laid aside our girlhood for you,
We have laid aside our short tunic,
We have put on other cincture.
We wear the long kirtle, draped to the feet,
pleated at the breasts,
That wives wear, they only.
We look to you, stone god—
O look to us!
Our clean hems drag now in the dust.

"When we come back from your altar, we will
lay these things away,
Putting on the old again.
We will be virgins again.
Till we are carried across our mothers' thresholds
No young man shall touch us with hands.

Only you, stone god.

You.

We go to enter into your mystery.

"Here are new flowers to be laid on the old,
quicken them with life.

Here is young fruit.

Then will come the Lithian games

In honor of the stone god in the tower.

Then will come a new god's companion.

Then will come fresh wreaths for the god's honor,
Who fell from heaven, with noise, by night, in a
trail of fire!

"We move with measured pace.

We walk toward the grove."

The long procession disappeared toward the oaks. The cadenced voices drifted back, echoing fainter and fainter. Then they, too, vanished, while those who had remained behind in the village waited in silence for the messenger to come back. It was custom that the young wife who followed the virgins should return to give tidings that the grove had received them. Then the glad kin would prepare the feast against their return.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DREGS OF THE WINE SKIN.

THE moments passed. It grew time for the messenger to show. And, indeed, there she came. But how strangely! In these rites there must be no silly haste. All must go slowly, duly. Yet, the young wife—Ctimena, she was; newly wedded to Penor, the vine-dresser; her husband stood with the crowd, gazing eagerly—rushed headlong, beckoning, flinging up her arms. Soon her voice was heard, screaming with fright and horror. And there—behind her—came another white figure, and another and another! The girls! Fleeing home! The crowd surged to meet them, swayed, broke; men turned, cursing, to find their weapons; others ran forward unarmed. Gods! What had happened? Fools, that they had laid away their knives! The strangers! They, who had said they were Thebans! The village should have known—should have relaxed no vigilance.

And now Ctimena was here; the girls were here; most of them; all of them! No

—stay! All, all of them. What had happened? What had happened?

The men who had run back, scattering through the dwellings, had returned in hot haste with weapons, enough and more than enough, for every sound fighter. They passed them from hand to hand.

The girls were terrified, hysterical with fear, and their long, agonizing race to escape. They panted. Tears streamed down their cheeks. Their white kirtles were stained with dust: with mud and green sap where they had fallen in flight, leaping up, frantic, to rush away and on again. They screamed: horribly laughing and weeping in the same broken breath.

They had entered the grove. They had stepped forward to lay fruit and flowers. Each in turn, passing on. They had almost all—

Gods! Gods! Mya! Where was Mya!

Charon, standing at the edge of the crowd, towering above it, head and shoulders, felt a flame plunge through him. He clove the dense gathering as an otter cleaves water. He bent over Ctimenta, who watched him with wide eyes.

"What?" he cried hoarsely. "What of Mya?"

He made motion to rush toward the grove.

"Wait! Lycander! Lycander! We will go with you! Wait. Let us hear, let us be clear!"

The voices all spoke at once. Charon glared about him. There was only pity, sympathy, strong resolution to help. All friends' faces. To help him. He held tense, closing and unclosing his big hands.

"What of Mya?" he said thickly.

"Men burst out of the thicket! She stood near the end. Poias! He seized her, carrying her off!"

The girls fell to weeping bitterly. For a moment Charon stood hewn in stone.

"Poias? Who—is—Poias?"

Fifty voices enlightened him. Poias led the outcasts, up in the mountain. Enop was with him, the horse-breeder. If those were the violators—

A trembling seized upon them, men and women alike. If the outcasts—why had the village set no watchers? But those

had never come down so far! Who would have dreamed? And there were Boeotians among them. To follow up through the mountain, in broad day, was folly and self-murder. The outcasts were like wolves, living in caves! They knew the rocks; no man could find them. Hidden death waited everywhere, above, with no way to know the slayer, even glimpsing him with eyes.

And only Mya was gone. The rest were home, and safe. Shame slipped over the folk as they wildly considered these things, silently, in secret mind; for no such thought dared pass the barrier of lips to Charon. Seek? Punish? Who would pursue a pack of savage beasts, to wrest away their prey?

But Charon had raised his great shoulders, hunching them. He crouched. His long, hairy arms came out menacingly, his monstrous hands crooked and curved like talons. A moment they thought he would plunge away alone, running single-handed up into the mountain to kill Poias, to get Mya, to kill or be killed. And, indeed, a father—she was his one child! And *he*. They knew his black madness in old years, when any had but gazed on his women folk with eyes. He had slain three men with his hands: the young hill-dweller; Cynthos, the vine-dresser; one other—and perhaps many more. He would go! Pity, cruelty of the gods—but he would go! His sides panted, his breath came in hot jets. His feet moved toward the mountain.

Yet, even as they looked, a dreadful change came over his face. First his eyes sought the ground; they had grown shot with streaked blood. He stood motionless. His arms sank, his left hand began slipping stealthily up and down over the wrist and forearm of his right. He smiled—gods! What a smile! He lifted his wild head with its shaggy black hair and spoke.

"Now I will know," he said. "Now I will know for a certainty. Poias? Who is Poias?"

Quickly they told him, panting in black colors the Theban's vast strength, his leadership, the power he must have over the outcasts.

"Poias," repeated Charon. His hands gripped and clenched one another as if he held yielding flesh between them. "Punish

Poias? The gods will punish Poias. The stone god will punish Poias, perhaps. But I will know. Now I will know!"

And he turned and went slowly back toward the river road. What he had meant none could surmise—poor madman!

That night he came again, bearing food and a cloak with him. He lay down under the sycamore to sleep, under the little board that was used for drying garments. For several days and nights he was seen about the village. But after a time he went back to plying his ferry.

Up in the hut by the marble-quarry, however, Ctephar lay heavily asleep through all, sodden drunk and snoring. He sprawled on the earth floor. His gray hair was disheveled, and foul with mud and straws. His face was purple, congested with little veins. His mouth had fallen open, showing his gums. At whiles he stirred, rolling over. A lank wine skin, collapsed and sunk on its own weight, sat near him on the ground.

The hut was untidy and evil to look on: garments thrown about, vessels unwashed and scattered, dirt and broken shards lay in a litter.

A bitter contrast to the order and spotless cleanliness that had once ruled.

The prying-bar, the cutting-tools, even the body knife he had carried, as is wise, in a protecting leather sheath, were stained with rust or filmed with cobwebs, whether leaning against a post or flung in mid room. Ctephar had set no hand to his labor for weeks.

Now it was four or five days since he had even put foot outside his hut. He drank and slept, getting to his feet at long intervals, very seldom, to move unsteadily about, toward where food was laid away. Crusts and fragments no more were in the chest; but indeed he ate little, having appetite only for wine.

As he sprawled there, a face appeared in the open door. Low voices spoke without; then presently some ten villagers came into the room, with old Archöus in their midst, and stood silently looking down at him. Many others waited in the doorway. All bore weapons.

"He is drunk," said Archöus.

The magistrate thrust out a shod foot, prodding Ctephar till the Theban groaned, rolled uneasily and awoke. One kicked a knife out of his reach. Ctephar stared about him with bleared eyes, and slowly sat up. Who were these? No visitors came to his hut. None.

"Theban," began Archöus, "we have come to question you."

"Question?" Ctephar's clouded comprehension strove vainly to meet the words, to grasp them. He blinked. Suddenly his throat labored in a hiccup, his slack lips contracted and fell apart again, hanging loose and open. A flood of vomit spewed down over them—wine, broken meat, and scraps; they dripped over his wrinkled tunic and on his bare, hairy legs. He had eaten, shortly before these men came.

"Hog! Outlander!"

Ctephar gazed stupidly, turned his back, and lay down again, stretching in the filth. His swollen lids shut together at once.

"Rough waking!" cried the magistrate.

Hands grasped the Theban's shoulders, shaking him and hauling him upright. A man ran outdoors with a deep vessel snatched up from the floor, and returned presently with water from the brook. The whole icy flood poured, drenching, over Ctephar's head and body, making him shudder and scream.

"Listen, hog!" spoke Archöus. "We have come to question you about yesterday. What do you know?"

"Yesterday—" repeated Ctephar monotonously. He mumbled, wiping the water from his eyes. He was still dazed.

"Where is she? You have seen Poias. Have you seen Poias?"

"Poias?" Ctephar held still, blinking upward into the magistrate's stern old face. For a moment his expression was that of brutish wonder. His heavy brows drooped, drawing a little together. He seemed gathering his fuddled wits. Suddenly tears sprang into his mottled eyes, and coursed down his cheeks. He seized his head in both hands, tearing the hair, beating it with clenched fists.

"Poias—Poias!" he cried. Sobs shook him.

"What is this?" demanded Archöus.

The others stared at one another. The Theban wept!

"My son! My little boy! And I—to the outlaws—to Œnop—I—his father!"

Tears of drunkenness and grief streamed down, while he bruised and tore his own face, his breast, his head, with desperate passion. His great son, whom he had followed to the mountain and betrayed! Ashes and bitter, bitter sorrow!

"Here is no profit," remarked Archöus, in a low tone. But he turned again to the Theban, and continued. "Do you know aught of Mya? Of the daughter of Lyssa?"

"Daughter? No daughter! A son—my son! Poias—*hai*, gods! gods!"

And he groveled on the floor, while weeping shook him. He would return no other answer. He had sent them to the mountain! He had made an outcast of Poias! Of his great son, who was best of them all! Who had put *him* to the ground, wrestling, like a child—a child! So they went out from the hut, after a time, leaving him there alone. He was a sot, knowing nothing. He inflamed himself with wine. Poias was no fool, to make this father privy to anything.

But after they had gone, Ctephar remained long in the same posture, abasing himself in remorse. All was broken, all; fallen in ruins about his last days. No home, no country, no son. He would end here, here, like a houseless cur, alone. One day there would come folks to find him ended here, in the dirt, alone, with only vermin about him. Ctephar, who had led the young men in Thebes—*hai*, bitter, bitter sorrow!

All day he lay there; but toward evening, when the air grew chill, he raised his head and looked about him. It was cold. The room was silent, yet it spoke with many voices; only his ear—it just missed hearing articulate words—or even sounds. He was almost sober. The room was dark; but a faint light came in through the open doorway. Ctephar rose, and walked toward it. He stumbled over the wine-skin and smothered a curse. When he reached the air, he looked about him, lolling back against the door post. Black

trees on the right, dark and darker. Far in front and below him, little lights twinkled—the village. There *they* were—they. He raised his eyes overhead; a slender crescent rode in the mild sky; a cloud or two showed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PRODIGAL CTEPHAR.

WHAT were Ctephar's thoughts? He was still drunk. None the less, the human mind is a delicate instrument, however men abuse it. An odor, a color, a sound, a deeper or a lighter shadow, recall from the past whole episodes and dramas; with their actors, their passions, their settings; and the thousand and one by-plays of the vanished time, that neither eye, nose, nor ear seemed aware of on their day of happening. Ctephar stood looking into the soft night. The hut, out of which he had issued, was dark and still. The open ground before it was gentle with moonlight. Confused to his mind whispered memory, of the old hour when he had followed Poias to the mountain. For here Poias had stood in the shadow of the doorway, glancing quickly to left and right before he made across the moonlit space. Behind, in the hut, Ctephar had laid on his couch, hardly breathing; it had been dark, and very still.

So now.

He turned, straining his ears. One thing was uneasily different— Who spoke, whispering softly? Silence; nothing but silence. He was alone. Down there in the village lights twinkled, but he was alone. He would go down there, to one of the cutters; to Strophios; Strophios owned—

Go? He shook his head, muttering to himself. They looked upon him with contempt, with hatred. His chin sank on his breast. They were right, right—pity of the gods. A father, to give his own son— He remained lost in despair and loneliness, while the salt tears stung his inflamed eyes. He would end like a dog, alone— He turned to go back into the hut.

Suddenly his heart leaped. The blood flamed into his face. He would go to

Poias! He would go up into the mountain, to the outcasts! Others had gone. Poias had gone. Why not he? He would set out at once, joining them. What had he to lose? Chattels? Name? Country? He laughed aloud, bitterly. The sound rang in the still night, redoubling the silence.

But being headed for the hut, he went in, drunkenly. His foot struck the wine-skin, and he picked it up mechanically, holding it a while. Then he sat down with it on the earth floor. He put the opening to his mouth and drank, dribbling the wine over his lips, chin, and body. It was a big skin; there was still much liquor in it. When he had drunk and drunk, tilting up the bag, he rose to his feet, carrying the wine-skin with him. He started for the trees, stumbling a little at first, but otherwise moving straight enough. He would go to Poias. He would not end like a dog. He would go to his son.

The way led down by the grove, across a short plain, and up into the wooded mountain. As the pure air caught Ctephar's lungs, mixing with the foul in them, the fumes of intoxication began to mount. His head reeled and his legs grew more unsteady. The woods were dark.

Ah, yonder was the jagged rock where Ænop's face had appeared, with his cursed scar. No—not cursed—not—no. With his scar. Ctephar paused gravely in the shadow, and pursed his lips. Once, twice, three times he tried, to no purpose. At last the whistle came from him, clearly enough, that Poias had once given. Ctephar stared with drunken intentness at the rock. No face. No scar—no face. He tried again, pausing, and resuming again. A continuous whistling went up from him into the dumb woods.

At last he set out to climb up toward the rock. It was wrong—Poias had not done that, would not do it—it was wrong. But Ænop with his cursed scar—Not cursed. Ænop with his scar was lying behind there, mocking him. He was Poias's father. He had come at night, to join the outcasts. By—He began a long Theban oath. He would show them. He would show him, *with* the scar. He clambered up

to the rock, upon its surface, and dragged his body forward, over it, to peer behind in the shadows for Ænop. He would show him.

But as he lay prone, there came a tumultuous rush from the boulders about and above him; powerful hands seized him by arms, legs, and neck; a savage grip forced itself up upon his chin, choking off the scream in his throat. Blows rained, whipped, and thudded on him, of fists, bows and spear-butts. Sharper weapons began to cut and slash. Ctephar's blood began to stream.

By a violent wrench, in the agony of his struggle, he freed his throat.

"No!" he screamed. "Friends! Poias!"

Some loosed him suddenly, at that; but others still flailed, struck, and tore at him cruelly. His face was battered with a hundred wounds.

"No! no! I am his f-father! f-father! Ctephar—"

They released him instantly at that. In spite of his struggles they lifted him quickly, grasping by arms, legs, and shoulders. One thrust a gag of moss into his open mouth. A vine was tied tightly over it, knotted behind his head, cutting deeply into cheeks and neck. Then he was carried at speed up toward the caves. On the way, some were for killing him outright. Ctephar heard them with dreadful helplessness. He felt like a sheep before the butcher—Ah, gods! He was dumb, dumb!

Ctephar, they said. He had come nigh to spoiling everything. Kill and bury the carrion. None would be the wiser.

But Poias?

What, Poias! He was bitter to the slave. He would strangle him with his own hands. Do away with him now, and save sweat of carrying. The dog was not even Poias's father—what sacrilege! Kill now, tell later.

But others counseled patience. The dog could always be put to death, quietly and at leisure. Perhaps also with pleasure. But he could not be brought to life again. Perhaps—He had come alone, calling loudly. He was drunk; fumes stank from him. It may be he had only wandered into

their hands, being drunk. Poias would deal with him. It was the young man's due. Possibly Ctephar had had news to bring, and had babbled to world, sky, and ocean, being a fool. In such case, the men must know. He must be made to tell. Too much hung on the matter, to risk fault.

So Ctephar was carried alive to the caves. First he would speak; then— The Theban's blood ran cold as he listened helplessly. He had nothing to tell. Nothing. He was now sober as drought and famine. He recalled the deep wrong he had done to Poias. He remembered the merciless face, set like flint, that had bent over him that old day in the hut, when he had struck the young man's mother. Death had couched in Poias's gripping hands; in his intent stare. And this night? He shuddered. Fool! fool! to set foot in the wolf-trap.

The carriers met men all the way up to the cave. The mountain seemed alive with them. Whispers went on all about them, in the rocks and among the trees. A great army seemed to fall in behind Ctephar, following up, and up, forever.

At last came halt: Ctephar was thrown to the ground, and he struggled to his feet. His hands pulled away the gag. He looked wildly about him. He stood in a swarming circle of men, thick rank on rank, all hostile, menacing faces. Many of these seemed foreign, even Theban. Strange dressings of hair and beard, outlandish garments, appeared everywhere. The place was flat, cleared somewhat of trees. Only one way in the circle lay open; and there the great, black mouth of a cave yawned high. A bright fire leaped and crackled before it. Far above, dark crags leaned forward, seeming ready to topple down; some even swayed a little.

He shut his eyes tightly against the flame. He opened them. There! Poias! Poias! He ran forward frantically, though none sought to stay him, and threw himself headlong at his son's feet; clasping his legs; holding to him, desperately hugging him. "What is this?"

The young man bent down, unfastened Ctephar's hands, and lifted him upright.

"Ctephar!"

Surprise, nausea, wild anger lay in the tone. He reached out coldly and took the Theban by the throat.

"No! no! Poias! Ah—gods! Your mother—"

The dreadful grip relaxed.

"Do not slay him." "Time enough for that!" "He has news." "He may have news."

Many voices spoke at once. A slim, white figure stepped from the black mouth of the cave. The firelight glinted on golden hair.

"Poias," said Mya. "What—"

The young man looked at the one who had betrayed him, almost troubling his plan. No ties bound him to the slave. He saw before him a sodden, battered face, blood and filth mingled and crusted together. The lips were split. Fumes of wine escaped with every sobbing breath. A wine-skin dangled from the breast, caught in a hem of the soiled tunic; single drops still hung and dripped from the opening that shook from side to side with every motion of Ctephar's body.

And this should have been his father?

"What are you doing here? But first"—Ctephar had made movement to answer—"how came he into your hands?"

Poias addressed the men. Leiodes stepped forward.

"I was watching at the rock," he said, "when I heard the worthless signal. So I ran back and got men—they were not far to seek—and we seized him. He whistled incessantly. When we came, he had crawled, belly downward, on the rock, and was peering over it. He seemed alone, and I thought best to seize, and not kill him. We can kill him later."

"Now," replied Poias.

Ctephar threw himself again at the young man's feet.

"No!" he screamed. "No, no, no! I had come to you freely. I had meant no harm; neither then, nor now! Ah—gods! I was alone, alone. Poias! Poias! Your mother—"

He fell to weeping bitterly, clinging to Poias's feet. A moment the young man thought to spurn him away. Then recol-

lection of his mother rushed to his heart, softening him. His own eyes filled. His mother— And this man—he was bestial, a fool and a drunkard. He was broken and whipped like a rabid dog, abject, slaving for pity. But whom had he had to wife? In old days, in Thebes, this pitiful thing had been the strongest thereabout. Poias's mother had not been unmoved by him. In the quarry, at the games, on the long journeys with the marble-train— Poias remained motionless.

"I will speak to him in the cave," he said. "He may have news."

"Speak to him," assented Cēnop. "We will go. Later—" His tone was significant. Some of the men moved away, others lay down by the fire. Poias turned with Mya and walked into the cave. Ctephar followed eagerly. He limped. His feet had been wrenched and cut.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OVERTURE.

DOWN by the whirling flood, on the left bank, Charon sat in front of his hut. The two doors of the dwelling were wide open. The plane trees rustled all their leaves. Below, on the little beach, the ferry rested in the sand, drawn up half out of water.

Charon's hands were busy, though he listened often behind him, or looked north, ever north, toward the village. Green withes lay in a small heap before him. He twisted bracelets constantly, now slipping them over his right wrist and up on his arm, now tearing them off to dash on the ground. At whiles he rose and walked down to the river-edge, where he stood watching the race. Slowly he would then draw the armlets, one by one, from his right arm, toss each far out on the stream, and gaze to see it whirl away. Then he would toss another, and another.

When all were gone, he would hold very still, listening, while his huge body bent forward imperceptibly. Presently he would turn, with head still lowered, and walk slowly back to his seat and his endless plaiting of green withes.

Everything about the spot looked the same. It might have been yesterday that he brought Lyssa home to the river-edge. Fifteen years had been turned back, or had never run their course at all. Only Charon was different. White threads gleamed in his shaggy black hair and in his short beard; and many deep lines were dug in his face. His shoulders were slightly stooped; the knuckles were prominent on his big hands. Otherwise, nothing had changed. The hut rose on the same stead; back of it were the plane trees; to left was the goat-fold, in the direction of the distant, unseen sea; swine housed near it; across the flood lay the island.

On the afternoon of his last return from the village, Charon had borne hut, herd, and goods from his rock-patch, setting all things where they had once been. Now, for days and weeks, he had waited for some word, some event that must surely come. Without comment he had answered hails for the ferry. Passengers had asked explanation, curiously; but he had been dumb, with eyes unceasingly fixed on the ground.

This day, too, he sat there, plaiting mechanically. The goats were in the unpeopled wood, the swine rooted there also. He had lost several of the beasts; they had strayed; wolves had eaten two, he had come on the bones; others had disappeared; thieves likely. But the rest came home when it was time, or delayed, unsought, till late. Charon gave no regard to them, leaving the pens unshut. For a while the goats were daily heavy with milk, which they lost. Their master took no more than needed, when hunger set him faint. But at last the goats ceased giving, for their udders had dried. Charon lived on stored bread, stale, and on cheese which had remained from the winter. He ate little, and very rarely. Wine he did not touch, though there were skins of it within the hut, given by passengers in exchange for frequent ferriage.

Footsteps! A sound of running—

Charon's hands held motionless; he raised his head, looking north. Two young men ran steadily toward him along the river road, chins up, arms bent at hip, with the

free, fast, untroubled pace of athletes. They came nearer. True; from the village. He rose and went to meet them. They stopped within several yards of him. So he, too, remained motionless, waiting.

"Lycander—" they said.

Both had spoken. They drew breath from exertion, looked at one another, then one began again. His fellow only stared watchfully.

"Lycander—will you come to the village? You are— Archöus, the magistrate, has sent us for you."

Charon was silent. He looked down at the ground, then after a time, up into their faces. His fingers turned and fumbled the green withe he held.

"Why?" he said, at last.

The young men gazed again at one another, uncertain, even a little afraid. Neither would utter a word.

"Mya?" asked Charon, in a dead voice.

They nodded. He had spoken of his own accord. The matter had gone more swiftly and easily than they had calculated. But they watched his hands. His body straightened slowly; the withes dropped to earth.

"I will go with you," he said.

Without waiting for reply or explanation, he started forward. The two stepped aside to let him pass. Better to have Charon in face than at back. As he went by them, his lips moved; but he was talking to himself, not to them.

"Now I will know," he murmured.

Up in the mountain, all was set for leaving. The great moment had come. This day Mya left for the tower, toward afternoon. On the morrow, whether at early morning or midday, the attack would go forward.

The men had made a last preparation, setting every trifle in order. For days, now, arms had been cleaned, sharpened, and polished, bows strung and made pliant with fat, spear and arrow-heads looked to or replaced. Trees had been felled for light rafts and boats. Shields had been broadened and strengthened. Garments were put to rights as for a wedding; the rough fighters were at their true love. Among the outcasts and others who be-

lieved, a feeling of religious exaltation, as of a god's mystery, mingled with the lust of blood, battle, women, and treasure. There were no slovens. All made themselves fine, as for a temple.

Even Ctephar had resumed something like his old, free, rough-bearing self. Though concealed within his tunic he had a small amphora of wine, sealed with a leaf-wrapped end of sapling. The tunic was clean, and his eyes brighter than many a day. Poias had suffered him, that night in the cave, for the sake of the dead woman. He had left Ctephar alive in contempt, though secretly pitying the other, he scarcely knew why. The broken cries, the tears, and horrid images of loneliness, of yearning for a son, of hopeless longing for lost home and country, had moved Poias strongly. This man wept, who had been Ctephar, feared among the impatient marble-cutters.

So he had explained with a laugh to the men, and they had let the Theban creep about at will, so that only he kept near the cave. At the least movement to escape, he was told, he would be put to death after a fashion. The slow picture that was drawn made him shudder. Indeed, he had no single desire to depart from the place. Drink he had in excess, food enough, and a spot whereon to sleep for unmolested hours. He was always drunk; besotted, at times, like a hog. But he showed a childish pleasure at sight of Poias, and the honor in which his son was held by the outcasts.

Of the other and hidden source of Poias's authority, he knew less than the dead. He only felt, dimly, that they held the young man in awe; but what of that? Was he not the best and foremost of all? Here as there—as there in the village. Poias was the strongest, the swiftest, the surest of eye. Witness the heroic proportions of his body. Had he not put *him*, wrestling, to the ground—like a child, a child? And not only bone and sinew—mind! mind! The lad possessed divine craft of improvisation. He had made an ode, praised by the hoarse poet himself. *Let the tower be strong! Let the god in the tower be strong!* Hee, hee! He had been thrust from the village, and frowned on by the god. Very

good. He had repaid a little of the debt, down by the grove, taking from the god. Sweet lips, slim figure. But the ode had been good. The hoarse poet had said so.

Ctephar learned of the movement against the tower; he could not help but hear; plans, ways, and methods were discussed at every place, every moment, all the weeks of his sojourn. Poias would take the impregnable tower, requiting bitter pay to the god and his village. What had he to do with those? He was a Theban. It had been wrong from the beginning. Poias had been right to go secretly, at night, to the outcasts. And *he* had been wrong—No. If not for Ctephar—if Ctephar had not followed him—if Ctephar had not grown divinely drunk—Poias would have come to naught. He would have stayed a villager. He might even have become the god's companion!—a foreigner! But now—Ctephar looked about him at the busy men, hundreds of them, all set to his son's purpose, and chuckled. His father had made the boy. When Poias was rumored through Hellas and mid-Argos, *his* name, Ctephar the father, would rise with him.

So he reflected confusedly, twitching his tunic in place, looking gravely to the prying bar he had found in the cave. The other men, meanwhile, did according to their custom and the nation they had come from. The Bœotians washed their knees. The Spartans combed out their long hair. The Thebans made a careful mud image of a swollen human foot to hang about their necks as a charm; some chipped it out of soft shale. The Athenians ate a lucky olive, stone and all; laying by another for just before the moment when battle would join. The Phenicians let blood from one another's arms, catching the drops in a vessel, and burning them to Zeus, whom they called Tyrannis or Moloch. The Eleusinians made a wooden charm, fixing it to their armlets. The Corinthians set free doves, caught somehow, that they had been feeding for days. The Cretans went into the great cave and sought pardon, weeping, of the oxen.

And thus they did, together with many other rites, strange and familiar, according

to their race. Poias, however, poured a libation of the best wine to Zeus, father of gods and men. Then all the men together poured and drank to Poias, beating softly with their spear-handles on their shields, or on other hard substances near them.

Mya stepped forth from the cave. Her garment was torn and dirty, stained with earth and pitch. She had laid it on that morning, with much inward shrinking. Her clean tunic she had set away. Her hair was disheveled and tangled with burrs. One sandal was unfastened; she was to kick it off when she reached the edge of the woods, as if she had left it behind in headlong flight. But her face was beautiful, as she turned to Poias, looking at him tenderly.

"Thus?" she said.

Poias took her in his arms before all the men.

"I will take the tower!" he pronounced, in set tones.

"The tower! the tower!"

All voices, deep or shrill, answered him. They were like chorus and antichorus in a dance of immeasurable magnitude; all participants; all steadfast, every one; and repeating one certain belief.

Poias released Mya. But on the instant he bent over her again, kissing her on the lips.

"You will remember?" he murmured. "Everything?"

"I love you!" she replied, so that any might hear.

Her arms went about his neck, clasping and drawing him to her. He thrilled at their strength, so frail they seemed.

"Poias!"

And she had turned and gone straight down the mountain. Her slim form showed like a little child among the massive old trees. A moment Poias thought insanely to call her back. All things were ready; the men strained like hounds in a leash; like tense runners before the lifting signal. But she was so small and delicate; so like a child; a child, though a woman. Her clear blue eyes had been lifted in faith and trust to his. She loved him. He had held her to his heart a thousand times. She had said and shown that she loved him.

Not his mother had been so bound to him in ties of flesh. There was no man, beside, in her heart. And he had sent her forth as bait for his wolf-trap. He had molded her sincerity, her sweet passion for him and belief in him, to his own thirst for fame, for conquest of the tower.

He looked at the faces about him, uncouth, brutal with lust for nameless things; Œnop with his savage scar; the Phenicians, fork-bearded, hook-nosed, beady-eyed, rapacious; the Boeotians, traitors to their own home and kin. To what end? And she was the woman.

He drew a deep breath. Mya was the woman of his dream. He would take the tower. Whose hand had raised her in flesh and hot blood, fulfilling one dream of two? He lifted eyes to the cloudless heaven. Not only fame hung now on achievement. The anguish of his birth, his pledged word, the honor of his great mother whose pale spirit wandered now unsatisfied in the shades—all those plucked him with fingers. Everything hung on Mya. No burden had been laid on her shoulders that he could have borne himself. She had gone to do her portion. She had been impetuous to do this for him, this that Poias himself could not do. She had been proud, eager, confident.

So he watched her go.

Four weeks she had been with him in the mountain. He had knit her to him with love such as no man and woman living in songs had known. He had felt shame with every passionate caress, that she did not know his hidden intention. Her kisses had turned bitter on his mouth. After the first week, the first day, he had known her true. Even down in the grove, at the procession, she had screamed and struggled, that one might have dreamed she had never beheld him before with eyes. He had spoken shortly to Leiodes and to Œnop. But the horse-breeder had said ironically:

"Let the cure work!"

So four weeks had passed. They had been rushing, dragging weeks of delight and self-contempt. Now the day had come. He had let her go.

He rose, taking up his weapons. The men already stood divided into their three

groups, as had been arranged. One, the smallest, moved left; by and over the caves. One turned to the right, down the mountain, and round toward the marsh and the grove. And one, the most numerous, with Poias at the head, went straight down toward the village.

CHAPTER XXX.

UNDER THE WATER OF THE WALL.

POIAS lay at the edge of woods, looking toward the tower. The ground rose a little where he crouched. In ancient days, when the trees had been cleared to make broad the circling fields, the fellers had here withheld ax and fire, for here the mountain thrust forth its foot. Before him, a grim, silent challenge, reared the tower, firm-rooted in dancing silver. The basin showed like a vast half moon; or the great, wide curving blade of a cleaver, with the sharp edge toward the wood. The red sun, now descending upon the western mountains, seemed to cut the round pile in two, with a downward stroke. The right half lay in light, the left in shadow. Very smooth the walls seemed, with no crevices; old moss covered all, as Poias knew; it would be greenish and very slippery on nearer approach. The low-arched water-gate seemed a mere puncture, a tiny hole, at that distance. The tip of a little finger, extended at arm's-length, more than covered it.

Even as Poias looked, movement appeared in the gate. Presently a faint thud came to his ears. They had lowered the barrier. Mya was within the walls! Behind him sounded the heavy breathing of the men. A low murmur became audible. Poias turned, got to his feet, and raised a warning hand. Word was passed from mouth to mouth in a whisper. Silence resumed.

Now the sun dipped completely below the mountains. The sky was still flushed and vaguely blue in places. The pale curve of the young moon, like the ghost of a child's bow—a little, lonely, floating cloud-sickle—hung in the quiet sky. Poias leaned against his tree, and gazed beyond,

through blurring lashes. His eyes were half closed. Inexpressible emotions contended for mastery in his heart and mind; tenderness, fierce strength, pity, joy, firm, ruthless purpose. Thus and otherwise had he stood that afternoon in the plane trees, waiting for Mya to come. Thus and otherwise the image had risen to his mind's eye, as he walked with his mother in the cool of evening; as he lay, a little lad, chanting under the olive; as he moved about the brink of the basin questioning width and structure. The tower! He would take it!

Night fell, and all the ways grew dark. The set watchers took their posts, the men settled down for sleep or silent resting. All had gone well. On the morrow, whether at early morning or at midday, Charon would come. The hours passed.

Suddenly voices drifted out to the wood. There came a faint, distant hail. The men gripped weapons. Poias himself frowned a little, listening. But presently an answer came, from even greater distance. Call and reply were unclear; but a light showed on the tower, then another, moving. They floated in air. A streak of gray-pink leaped into view—the tower-wall. One had hailed the tower. Torches had illuminated it. Poias speculated rapidly on what might have chanced. Had there been any slip? discovery? betrayal? Toward the marsh? in the rear wood? No. Else they would not have hailed. Or the hail would not have seemed so assured. But some one had hailed the tower at night—this night. He put one conjecture with another in his mind—Charon.

They had sent to the whirling flood to fetch him. There were good runners in the village. Mya's father had come. His arrival was sooner than expected, but for some reason he had not been difficult to approach, to persuade. Very well. They would probably take the ferryman into the tower. But on no account would they raise the gate again that night, to send him forth with Mya. They would hardly do that. Measures were strict against it. Ancient custom forbade it. Who knew what might some day befall beyond the circle of darkness; slaying of the rower, returning to set betrayal,

and what not? No. They would hardly let him leave again that night. But lest they should—

Poias called two of the foreigners to him, Phenicians. His mind had worked swiftly. He hastily bade them strip themselves of their weapons, all but the essential, and cross the fields as spies. If discovered, they were merchants; night had overtaken them on the road. Poias gathered trinkets, adornments and what not from them and others of the outlanders, and heaped them into the hands of the two. These put them on; many rings to a finger, many armlets to each arm, in chains on withes about the neck, as was the custom. They quickly soiled their sandals, legs and the hems of their garments, their faces, with dust and dirt, to make them look travel-worn. Then they walked forth into the open field. If all was well, they must stay overnight in the village, joining the attackers there, when the moment came. On no account were they then to return to the woods.

But if aught was wrong; if, after a time, a huge dark man with Mya—they knew Mya—was set across by boat from the tower, they were to run toward the woods, calling loudly on Poias. No! stay. They were then to go down to the village as before. Only they were to remain but a little while, as for food. They were to explain that their road lay further that night; or any other thing that came to their mind. They were Phenicians, they were subtle, they would know subterfuge. *But they were to return to the woods.* Without Mya in the tower, the attack was useless. The plan would have to wait. For all the gathering could accomplish in such case was the destruction of the village; and that had in it not enough plunder for ten men. The tower was the aim. If fortune slipped away this night, she would return some other time soon, bringing good circumstance, with Mya again within the walls.

So the Phenicians went. Time passed; their figures disappeared. A little light moved unsteadily out from the tower; a boat, crossing the stretching water. Presently it held still. Soon voices were heard,

first murmuring, then in louder, angry expostulation. Then silence. The light moved back over its course.

An hour went by. The two Phenicians reappeared. The huge dark man, they said, had been waiting at the brink of water. The boat had come to him, with one man in it, who grumbled. He, too, had been tall and strong-looking, though not so tall as the dark man, from what they could see as he sat. He had protested that Lycander—so he had called him—should not have come by night. He would be taken into the tower; but on no account would he be sent forth again with his daughter before morning. The dark man had been silent, all through, only twisting his hands together. Then he had got into the boat. But first the oarsman had questioned the Phenicians; who they were; where they came from; what they wanted. He had said there was now no welcome for foreigners in the village. They might sleep in hell or starve to death; in the village they had better set no foot. They would fare cruelly, if they did. So after they had cried out against the injustice they had stood back, and the boat had put forth again. However, they had not trusted the young man's words alone. They had waited for a long time, but the tower had remained dark. So at last they had returned to the woods. No man would suspect them, since they had been ordered away.

The trinkets were redistributed, the Phenicians cleaned themselves as best they might—craft was craft—and the whole company lay down again to wait for morning. Word was sent to the other two divisions to be ready at dawn.

At earliest sunrise they broke from the woods, yelling, shouting, and brandishing their weapons. Those with rafts and boats rushed straight for the stretching water. When they came to the brink, others, as arranged, covered them and themselves with broad shields. Archers loosed a cloud of futile arrows toward the high tower. The din rose and echoed over the whole plain. At once a movement was seen on the walls, and a black cluster of men appeared, growing every moment thicker and

more agitated. From the village, to right, there was a second deep tumult—mingled with the shrieking of women. Only at the rear of the tower was there silence, where the third, the smallest division, had crept close to the wall under cover of darkness.

But among those who raged toward the great, round building, in the first rank and on the foremast raft, stood Poias. *Hai!* his heart danced in his body. He was on the stretching water! He had thought to storm a town; swiftly mounting the burning walls in face of raining arrows, spears, hot fire; to take the wonder of the world at the summit; to hold her against fierce attack; to feel his tense, naked arm, circling her yielding body—her warm body—silk-drenched with the cool smoothness of her hair. Now he was here. It was true! Both dreams—both!

He dropped his shield, and lifted face to the high walls.

His eyes dilated.

There, in the midst of the Bœotians, slim, white clad, her golden hair sleekly piled with jeweled comb above her sweet, oval face, stood Mya. The front water-gate was grimly shut. No din, no wild cry of attack flamed up from behind the thick building.

She stood there, looking down on him, one slender hand resting on an enormous boulder that poised on the edge of the wall. Her other hand, her curved arm, was laid lightly round the neck of *Iäsos*, the god's companion. And Iäsos was smiling down into her face. And now, smiling down at him, Poias, with something like pity.

A wave of nausea swept over him.

Was this the end of his dream, his fame, his plan, his love? On Mya hung everything. He had set his blood and his name on her. He had believed in her beyond gods. And now she? She, Mya, had betrayed him.

Mya smiled.

In that one moment Poias's intentness, that even in spasm of exultation had leaped out to Mya—to her joy, her triumph, her furious passion of glory—recoiled heavily to fasten on himself. He was undone. She

had betrayed him. This was the end. Lies, lies, lies—his birth, his life, his dream. Who had whispered dark truth to him, of evil by the whirling flood? He had blinded his own eyes. He had thrust fingers in his ears, fool! thinking that because sound was quenched, rumor was strangled in a womb that had never been.

Betrayed—with what cold venom; false, lustful, indifferent. One emotion—another. One man—another.

How could he know, Poias, the fingers that had reached out to take Mya from his will, his body; luring her with voices of strength that began to murmur, insistent, to her blood, from the moment she first crossed water, after an unending year, back to the haunted left bank. Truth is with gods; and with men—a little. Consistency is death's alone. He could not know, unhappy, for his mind had been set long ago to one only vision; neither the longing that grips a woman's heart to achieve what her sister's may; nor the call of implanted race; nor the compelling might that flows from the presence of kindred and their simple acceptance of *their* customs as the only truth; nor the dim power of the stone god, as of *any* god of the close folk; nor the swiftness of vanity of sex that would rejoice in conquest of a god's companion; nor the cruel stirrings of the strengthless dead, *cheu!* Lyssa! that will to taste, to do, to *be* again, living in the living; nor, indeed, any one of the thousand half-caught whisperings, unconscious, that had been molding Mya's desire to other form those long months on the island, in the tower, among the women, with her father, aye, even while she lay against Poias's own heart!

Who shall say here, so women are? Mya had longed for common things, this long, long while. She had been sundered all her life; different, other than most. Soon she had fallen to wishing, first vaguely, then passionately, to pass down among her folk; to be no way unlike one of those. Poias—what could he give her? Not the rites of marriage that seemed so known and treasured among girls hereabout. Not the pleasant friendship of women, their gossip, counsel, wisdom in pretty ways, that she

had twice tasted, how barely. Not an ordinary father's tenderness, that she had glimpsed, for a space, like any Boeotian maiden of the village. She yearned for the singers, the robes, the flutes and tympani of procession, the carrying across the threshold. Those old weeks in the tower, when the soldiers had come, then as now, Iäsos, the god's companion, had not been unmoved by her; she would be envied. Her heart had fluttered with expectation that hour she had walked slowly, together with the others, toward the virgins' mystery in the grove. Poias—meant the end of sweet things desirable.

She had loved him. She dreaded, she hated him now, much as she had once dreaded and hated her father. Poias! Ah! water flashed between them! What to her was a demigod, who had herself been strange and unhuman too long? Almost she had forgotten, on the day of procession, Poias, his plan, the seizing. She had screamed when he broke from the covert with his outcasts; she had struggled, had beaten with fists against his breast as he bore her away; not with pretense; with anger, with passion. And now? Poias had afterwards praised her extraordinary air of truth, laughing. If she had then mounted with him to the caves, stayed with him, smiled at him, moved eagerly into his plans—she was a woman. To a man, a sword; to a lion, strength and fierce claws; to a woman, what but duplicity?

She had won away.

But over Poias a great weariness came, as one who has sweated all day at labor of the body, and tastes dead ashes in his mouth. This was the end. It had all been a vile, filthy lie. Zeus was a lie, absent from an empty heaven. His mother—that day in the fields about Thebes—smirched, stained, cheapened, made vile. A demigod, he? Nay, a dishonored child! The Stranger, the Stranger—

He turned slowly, staring in bitter daze toward Ctephar, who stood on the brink of the basin. *This* was his father—filthy, bleared, unclean; stained with wine that dribbled down the corners of his lips. Soon one, somewhere—nameless—would know to laugh lightly; and from him the bitter

lees would flow, over Hellas and mid-Argos, till it returned for sourer laughter and leering. Done! A lie, everything, everything—and done.

He cast away his shield. The water closed over it.

"Row closer. To the wall," he said to the man at his feet.

The raft shocked gently against the building.

High above, Mya's white fingers pushed the boulder, swaying it. It toppled.

"Poias! You fool!"

Enop's voice. It sounded like his father's, Ctephar's, his father's—that afternoon in the quarry—when he had resolved to fight across the whirling flood to Mya.

His shoulders drooped. He leaned forward and bowed his head.

But high on the tower, Charon looked toward the burning village, bitter pleasure in his heart. He had received answer to his mute question, for sixteen years delayed.

"The daughter of Lyssa," he muttered, "The daughter of Lyssa."

(The end.)



"YOU great, big body-snatcher! F'r two cents I'd take a punch at you. I got half a mind t' do it anyhow, just f'r luck!"

Sunny Jim Dollom, trainer and half-owner of their little string of horses, came around the corner of the stables in Irish Row just in time to hear his partner, Mike McCarthy, make this observation. Then, backed up against a stall door, he saw a large, bulbous man, evidently frightened, before whom stood Mike, his gray eyes blazing and his chin thrust forward.

The big man was Sam Kohler, a book-maker at the Fairview track. Also he was their creditor, to the extent of holding a mortgage on their most highly prized possession, the golden-sorrel mare, Butterfly. Hence the worried frown that appeared on Sunny Jim's face at the sight.

"What seems t' be th' trouble?" he

asked, approaching the belligerent Mike, who swung on his heel, pointing a disgusted thumb at Kohler.

"This big stiff's—got it comin' to him good," he said, his voice hoarse with rage. "What d'you suppose he's been tellin' me?" He paused and gulped. "He comes snoopin' around here a while ago, an' we got talkin' about th' mare. I happen t' say we've entered her in th' Lancaster Memorial next Saturday, an' he comes back at me an' says we can't do it; says th' money's due on Monday, an' we can't race her because she might get hurt, an' his security would be gone. What d'you know about that?"

Mike whirled abruptly on the big man. "You beat it, an' beat it quick!" he said. "I want t' talk to Jim. Besides, we don't like skunks around th' barn."

Kohler, apparently glad of an opportu-

nity to get out of an unpleasant situation, stood not upon the order of his going, but went.

"You two want t' remember what I said. An' th' money's due in six days. I'll be around then," he snarled over his shoulder as he departed.

"Gosh! I'm sorry now I didn't take a hack at him! I was all set when you came along," said Mike, as their creditor disappeared.

Sunny Jim, who came by his name fairly, for once belied it. In truth the partners were in a bad way. The small and unimportant owner finds life none too easy at best. And on a track where the men with big strings and money work hand in glove with the track officials, it is hard to make ends meet.

Sunny Jim and Mike had failed to land a purse for nearly a month, and found themselves at the end of their resources, with feed-bills, entry-fees, and, most ignominious of all, a boarding-house keeper, all clamoring for money. It was then that Sunny Jim had bethought himself of Sam Kohler.

"He looks like a right decent kind of a cuss. Maybe we c'n make a deal with him," he said. "An' I don't know anybody else we c'n go to with our tale of wo. Th' friends we got here aren't more'n one jump ahead of th' sheriff themselves, an' th' rest would like t' help us with a club."

The result had been the mortgaging of Butterfly, their pride, and the queen of their stable.

"She's th' only one anybody 'd buy, an' we can't sell her," Mike had agreed.

They had counted on the mare's chances in the Lancaster Memorial to get them out of trouble, and Kohler's interference seemed to put the last spoke in their wheel.

"Looks like we've reached th' end of our rope," said Mike a few minutes later. Then, with a grin: "What're we goin' t' do about it?"

Sunny Jim said nothing and continued to do so. Mike went on:

"Looks bad. Kohler says if we try t' race th' mare he'll get out an injunction, or some damn thing. An' we don't want any lawyers in ours, thanks."

He walked over to Butterfly's stall to

find what comfort he could in her society. He ran a hand over her satin neck. "Old girl, we got t' find some way t' keep you," he said. "You'd look nice in another man's barn—I don't think."

Sunny Jim joined them. "Seems t' me we'd better be lookin' around f'r a race t' put one of th' others in," he remarked.

"Make it half a dozen races," said Mike. "Everythin' but th' mare here's sellin'-platers. What if we did win a race, 'cept a stake race, with th' rotten little purses they hand out here at th' track. Three hundred bones wouldn't help much, with us owin' Kohler a thousand. T' say nothin' of th' rest of th' bills."

"I'm goin' over th' track list an' see what we c'n find," said Sunny Jim. "We've been in th' hole before this, an' pulled out."

"Hop to it!" answered Mike. "An' while you're studyin', I'm goin' t' take th' Albatross mare f'r a canter. She needs exercise bad, an' she's about ripe f'r a race. Maybe you c'n find a soft spot she'll fit in." Then he went to saddle a rangy bay mare of that name.

Sunny Jim hoisted him to her back, for the partners' establishment did not boast an exercise-boy, and Mike did all the riding. "This skate's not such a sour one at that," said Sunny Jim, as Mike gathered up the reins. "Specially in th' mud."

"All right. Fix it up t' have some rain," answered Mike with a grin, and rode out through the track-gate to the soft dirt road that led into the country beyond.

Walking and cantering, he had covered a mile or two when he heard the patter of hoofs behind him, and Mugs Huff, a fellow jockey and a friend, pulled up alongside.

"Hello, Mike. What's th' good word?" he asked, and Mike, glad of an opportunity to unburden himself, told him of their difficulty with Kohler.

"Th' scissor-hocked dog-catcher," observed Mugs when Mike had finished. Then: "I wish you'd told me you were goin' t' do business with Kohler. He talks nice when things are breakin' right f'r him. But he's a bad actor just th' same, an' he'll knife you in a minute. He an' Sell-You Lloyd make a mean pair," he added, whereat Mike looked at him in surprise.

Lloyd, of the unlovely nickname, was trainer for Senator Clymer, one of the big owners at the Fairview track, whose influence and wealth made the stewards lenient with his racing ethics. These last were on a par with his political standards—which were low. Lloyd was a sworn enemy to Mike and Sunny Jim, and a sudden thought took Mike's breath away.

"Say, you don't suppose maybe Kohler's doin' this to us on th' chance of gettin' th' mare f'r Lloyd?" he asked.

"He might, at that, if there was anythin' in it f'r him. He's as slick as a snake, an' he don't own any horses anyhow," said Huff.

"Lloyd's been wantin' Butterfly f'r some time, too," muttered Mike to himself. Then he wheeled his mount. "S'long, Muggs. Much obliged f'r th' tip. I'm goin' t' take it back an' chew on it with Sunny Jim. If I'm guessin' right things look bad f'r fair," he said, and put Albatross into a canter.

A hundred yards from the track gate the mare stuck her toe in the ground, stumbled, recovered and pulled up with a visible limp. "Twisted ankle," said Mike, sliding off. "Damn it!" he added, and led her the rest of the way, coming around the corner of the stalls to find Sunny Jim and Kohler face to face.

"You here again?" he began angrily.

"Yep. I came back t' make it good an' clear to th' both of you about not racin' that Butterfly mare while she stands f'r my money. That goes, see?" answered Kohler; then, noticing Albatross's limp, he pointed a fat, soiled finger at her. "That's what I mean. You take 'em out, an' first thing you know you've got a cripple on your hands." His point seemed well taken.

"It's nothin' but a little twist," said Mike. "She stubbed her toe."

"Maybe it is, an' maybe it ain't. An' a little twist don't help a horse any. You remember what I said," he turned to Sunny Jim, "an' don't try any funny business."

With which pleasant remark he left, followed by a pale-blue cloud of curses sent after him by Mike as he rubbed and bandaged the mare's leg.

"It's damn bad luck, havin' him come along an' see th' mare come in with a limp.

Sort o' backs up what he says about our runnin' Butterfly in th' Lancaster." Then: "Quit it, mare!" he exclaimed, for it was fly-time, and Albatross had switched him sharply across the face with her tail. "Here, hold that tail, Jim, while I finish this," he said. "Funny how strong a horse's hair is," he added as Sunny Jim caught the offending tail and held it.

When the bandaging was done and the mare put away, Mike turned to his partner: "Bumped into Muggs Huff out on th' road to-day," he said, "an' Muggs tells me Kohler's a bad actor."

"Well, don't we know it?" asked Sunny Jim.

"We do. But there's more comin'. Muggs says Kohler an' Sell-You Lloyd are close together as a pair o' scissors."

Sunny Jim looked startled, and Mike went on: "Knowin' what we know about Lloyd, I mean him wantin' t' get th' mare ever since she pulled down th' Montpelier Memorial—" He paused. "I'm wonderin' if maybe Lloyd didn't put that big mutt up to this game, an' if maybe Kohler ain't workin' t' get th' mare f'r him?"

"Well, what of it? If we lose her, we lose her; an' if Kohler got her he could sell her t' Lloyd, couldn't he?"

"Sure he could. But Lloyd's got horses on th' track an' c'n do a lot t' keep us from winnin' anythin' t' pay Kohler back with," answered Mike. "An', besides, I'd damn near as soon shoot th' mare as have Lloyd get her," he finished.

Their supper in the Fairview boarding-house was a gloomy meal. Nor was it made any more cheerful by their landlady.

"I've got a full load o' bum luck," said Mike shortly afterward. "I'm goin' t' hit th' hay an' sleep it off. Maybe somethin' 'll turn up in th' mornin'. Good night," he said, and the wizen little jockey mounted the stairs to their room.

"I'll be along in a minute. I want t' look over th' dope-sheet awhile," answered Sunny Jim, poring over the list of coming races.

Ten minutes later he made a pencil-mark on the paper. "She'd fit in there as nice as a dollar in my pocket," he said to himself. "An' now she's gone an' lamed herself."

The two got to the stalls early the next morning, before their colored stable-boy had left his boudoir in the tiny loft over the harness-room.

"Shake a leg, Snowball," said Mike when, after repeated calls, the grinning darky climbed down the ladder. "You go take th' bandage off th' Albatross mare's leg an' bring her out here."

The rangy bay mare came out a few moments later, her head up and all four feet spurning the ground. "Trot her along," directed Sunny Jim, and Snowball led her past them at a brisk trot. Her lameness had vanished completely over night. "Guess that's good luck, f'r a change!" said Mike. "You can't tell much about a twisted ankle like that. Sometimes they hang on like th' mischief, an' sometimes they don't last at all. Looks like th' moon's changed or somethin'!"

"But that little twist didn't do us any good with Kohler," he added. "I'd like mighty well t' damage that man!" Then, to Sunny Jim: "Go ahead an' stick her in th' sellin' sprint you found. If we c'n win that an' maybe a few more, first thing you know we'll be out o' th' woods an' gettin' cream in our coffee. We've got pretty near a week t' do all those little things in, too," he finished, with a wry grin.

"An' after we enter her, think she c'n win?" asked Sunny Jim.

"Well, there won't be any world-beaters in a three-hundred-dollar sellin'-race, an' I guess me an' th' mare c'n hold up our end." Mike paused. "If Sell-You Lloyd an' th' rest of that gang don't fix it up f'r us t' be run into or bumbled over th' rail. She's plenty fast, that Albatross mare is."

"All right. We might as well go over to th' secretary's office now," said Sunny Jim. "C'm on."

The six-furlong sprint for which they entered Albatross was the third race on the card, two days away, for three-year-olds and upward. As they left the secretary's office under the big white-painted grand stand, they saw coming toward them, in earnest conversation, Kohler and Sell-You Lloyd. Sunny Jim felt a sudden jab at his ribs, and Mike spoke hurriedly.

"If there's any talkin', you let me do it,

see?" he said. "Kohler don't like me, an' he won't have as much t' say as he would t' you. There's no use tellin' that pair o' crooks anythin'."

Sunny Jim nodded in reply. When they came together, Lloyd was the first to speak. Possibly he had taken on his air of familiar jocularly from his employer, Senator Clymer.

"Hello, boys. How's things?" he began.

"'Bout th' same as usual," answered Mike, without interest.

"How's th' mare you lamed up yesterday?" put in Kohler unpleasantly.

"Not bein' any of your business, it looks like a right bad twist," said Mike, glaring at him. Then: "C'm on, Jim, let's move." And the two walked away.

Kohler winked broadly at his companion when the partners were out of ear-shot. "Guess we've got 'em by th' short hairs," he said. "That Albatross mare's th' best they've got, after Butterfly, an' if she's gone lame it don't leave 'em much t' work with."

Sell-You Lloyd smiled a thin-lipped smile. "You run 'em down an' get me Butterfly, an' you get th' five hundred over what you loaned 'em on her," he said.

"I'm not frettin' any. They've got four days t' raise a thousand dollars, an' no credit, an' their only horse worth much of anythin' is hocked t' me. Th' Butterfly mare's just as good as in your stable, seein' as they fell f'r th' bunk I handed 'em about what th' law'd do if they tried t' race her in th' Lancaster," answered Kohler.

"She'd come near winnin' that," said Lloyd. "Guess I'll go over t' th' secretary's office an' see what they were doin' there. S'long."

And the two men parted.

"Wonder what Kohler and Sell-You Lloyd were talkin' about so hard?" asked Sunny Jim as the partners returned to Irish Row.

"Dunno. But I'd like t'. An' I'd like t' put th' Indian sign on 'em both!" said Mike viciously, and stopped in his tracks on the word.

"What's th' matter?" asked Sunny Jim. "Somethin' hit you?"

"Somethin' did just that!" Mike's eyes

were bright with excitement, and he grinned widely. "Just that thing! Speakin' of th' Indian sign put a flea in my ear! By gosh, if we don't crimp Kohler an' Lloyd to a fare-you-well I'm a—a Indian."

"Well, spill it," urged Sunny Jim.

"Nope. It's my secret till we're sure of th' mare. Wait till we try her out against th' ticker, an' if she shows up right, we'll go after it," he said, and not another word of his plan did he divulge. Sunny Jim, long familiar with his partner's vagaries, forbore further questions.

Early the next morning they brought Albatross out on the track for her time-trial. "We've got t' make sure, an' then we'll bust things high an' wide," said Mike.

Gone was all sign of lameness. The bay mare walked daintily down the track, tossing her head and playing with the bit. Down past the big, empty grand stand, around the turn and up to the starting point of the six-furlong distance Mike took her, while Sunny Jim, stop-watch in hand, stood at the finish line.

When he dropped his arm Mike sent the mare away in a swift, smooth, bounding gallop. With the morning wind in his face Mike urged her on. Not a falter developed, and when she had covered the distance and Sunny Jim showed him the watch, Mike was jubilant. The dial showed one minute and thirteen seconds, flat.

"Not bad f'r a sellin'-plater, I guess," said Mike. "Now I guess we c'n lose th' hammer-headed crow-baits that 'll be runnin' with us. Wait till we get th' mare put away, an' I'll tell you what's on my mind, an' you'll like it. I'm damn glad I let Kohler an' Lloyd go on thinkin' th' mare's lame," he added irrelevantly.

While Snowball walked Albatross around the little oval in front of Irish Row to cool out, Mike watched her carefully. Then, when she was put away in her stall, he came up to where Sunny Jim was seated on a bale of hay. For perhaps five minutes Mike talked in a low voice, first amazement, then mirth and admiration showing on Sunny Jim's face as he went on.

"An' if that won't put th' skids under Kohler, I miss my guess a mile," he finished triumphantly.

"Mike, you've got th' gall of a government mule. Nobody in th' world could a' thought this up 'cept you. An' it 'll work. That's th' beauty of it—it 'll work. An' we keep Butterfly!" he said gleefully.

"Believe I'll try it," said Mike, and went to Albatross's stall. A moment later Sunny Jim heard a loud thud, the impact of shod hoofs on wood, and went to investigate.

"She slam at you?" he asked, and Mike nodded.

"Maybe I pulled her tail some," he said. "Wait till th' boy's out of th' way, an' I'll show you somethin' funny. Gosh, I wish to-morrow was here! How much cash does th' company own?" he asked.

Sunny Jim had no need to count before answering. He knew to the last thin dime what they had, for he was the treasurer and financier of the partnership. "Takin' out th' mare's entry-fee, we've got sixty-two dollars," he said.

"Wish we had a thousand, an' we'd take Kohler's hide off in strips!" said Mike, and went on: "Savin' th' twelve f'r luck, that leaves us fifty," he said.

"Yep. An' if th' mare don't come in, what's it leave?" asked Sunny Jim.

"Leave us in th' soup," answered Mike promptly, "an' we're there now. What good's fifty dollars to us, owin' Kohler a thousand? Let's shoot th' works an' get right," he argued.

Sunny Jim said nothing, there being little enough to say.

"It'll put us a jump ahead of things, f'r once. Shucks, Jim, th' mare's got th' speed, an' I c'n ride her. You're worryin' about her gettin' bumped or pocketed," he went on earnestly. "Not a chance! She's on her toes, an' I'll take her out in front where they can't get near me."

"I guess there's somethin' in what you say about fifty bones bein' no good to us," admitted Sunny Jim. "But it's a whale of a long shot."

"Sure is it! An' if we don't take it, where's th' money comin' from t' pay Kohler? You got any rich aunts t' die an' leave it t' you? An' if Kohler gets Butterfly, we might as well go out of business," said Mike, and as a final plea: "Think of th' odds he's goin' t' lay against th' mare!"

He'll right near let us make 'em for ourselves."

"Maybe you're right. Here's hopin'," answered Sunny Jim, upon whose shoulders the seriousness of the situation weighed heavily.

The betting-ring at the Fairview track was under the big grand stand, an open pavilion facing toward the track. Kohler, who knew from Sell-You Lloyd that the partners had entered the lame mare for the third race, was on the lookout, and a cruel smile twisted his face when he saw Mike and Sunny Jim, leading Albatross, come down the track from Irish Row. On her near fore-leg the mare wore a heavy bandage, and she limped perceptibly.

"Guess that pair's about down an' out," he muttered to himself, "runnin' a skate with a limp like that." And he chuckled evilly.

As they passed the stand Mike nudged Sunny Jim. "Kohler's watchin' us," he said. "Hang your head down an' look unhappy!"

Sell-You Lloyd, in the paddock, was giving directions to Campbell, his stable-jockey. He had not neglected to enter a horse in the race with Albatross as soon as he had learned of her entry from the secretary. As Mike and Sunny Jim appeared Campbell whispered:

"Look at that! Guess there won't be much bumpin' needed!"

Lloyd watched Albatross keenly as she passed. "Don't look like she's got a race in her," he said. "I didn't know they were that hard up. But you remember what I told you. It 'll be worth more t' me an' t' you t' see that McCarthy don't win than f'r you t' win yourself. Get me?"

"I do," said Campbell.

Five horses were entered in the third race. In addition to the partners' Albatross were Senator Clymer's Tamar, a big brown, to be ridden by Campbell; Moss-rose, owned by Jefferson Stewart; Blackburn, from the Chelsea Stables, and a mare called Lazy Lou. The last was owned by Sol Greenburg, a bookmaker, but was entered under a stable-name.

Kohler, having some experience with men in financial straits, was not surprised when

he saw Sunny Jim approaching his booth a few minutes later. On his board he had chalked up the odds for the race, with Tamar the favorite, at even money. Last of the five was Albatross. When he saw her come limping by he had erased a ten and made it twenty-five to one against her winning. "Might as well bait th' hook good," had been his comment. Also, it was an unimportant race, and the betting was not brisk.

"Hello. Takin' a little flier?" he asked, as Sunny Jim came up.

"Thinkin' about it," answered Sunny Jim lugubriously.

"How's th' mare?" asked Kohler, to see what Sunny Jim would say.

"She's th' first I ever led to th' paddock limpin'." Sunny Jim was plainly dejected.

"I ain't figuring her very strong myself," laughed Kohler, pointing at his blackboard.

Sunny Jim read the figures. "If I'm goin' t' make a bet, guess I'll look around an' see if I c'n find better odds," he said. "We need th' purse bad, an' I'm just bettin' f'r luck, but I might as well get on where it's softest."

Kohler had no intention of letting his victim throw any money away to another bookmaker if it could be avoided. He had himself seen the bay mare's condition as she limped down the track. As Sunny Jim turned away he said:

"Wait a minute. Tell you what I'll do, seein' it's you, an' everythin'. If you want t' make a little bet on th' mare, I'll give you thirty to one."

Sunny Jim smiled ruefully.

"Generous, ain't you?" he said. "You ought t' make it a hundred to one. But I guess I'll take your bid an' save time. I want t' get back to th' mare." Suddenly his voice changed, losing its note of discouragement. "You write me a ticket f'r fifty dollars at thirty to one," he said.

Kohler, who had expected a luck bet of five or ten dollars, was taken aback and started to speak, but Sunny Jim forestalled him.

"Never mind about not wantin' t' take my money, or bein' sorry t' see me lose. You write that ticket!"

Kohler did so, reluctantly, for the crowd

around his booth had heard what he had said, and no bookmaker can go back on an offered bet. The race track has no love for the "welcher." Jim took the pasteboard and hurried to the paddock, where Mike and the bay mare were waiting.

"Did you get on right?" asked Mike.

"Did I? We've planted th' fifty on Kohler's book at thirty to one. D'you call that right?" answered Sunny Jim. "Th' rests up to you," he said seriously.

Mike nodded as the bugle called the horses to the post. "Here's the show-down," he said, and Sell-You Lloyd, who had watched the partners from the moment of their arrival, saw the amazing sight of a jockey removing the bandage from a mare's bad leg just before the start of the race.

That it had been an ordinary bandage was obvious as Mike unwound it, and Sell-You Lloyd stared with all his eyes. The cloth removed, Mike ran his hand down the lame ankle, pressing in with his fingers as if feeling the tendons just above the joint. Then he stood up with a grin. "Guess we're fixed," he said. "Now you watch us an' see us go!"

Sunny Jim gave him a leg-up, and he followed the other horses onto the track in the parade past the stand, to the far end of the first turn, where the start was.

Kohler, unable to leave his booth in the betting-ring, was focusing a pair of field-glasses as they passed. He looked, frowned and carefully wiped the lenses before he looked again. Then his frown deepened, for he saw Albatross, Mike in the saddle, stepping jauntily along, her head high, and her springy stride showing none of the soreness of half an hour before. This was more than he could bear, and, leaving his books in charge of his clerk, he hurried to a place on the rail, to find himself almost shoulder to shoulder with Sunny Jim, who gave him a scornful grin, and turned away.

The five horses lined up at the barrier, Mike second from the rail, between Thamar, Campbell's mount, on his left, and Stewart's Mossrose on the outside. Coming to the post, Campbell had taunted him.

"A little bird's been tellin' me we're goin' t' have somethin' new in our barn," he said, "an' she's a sorrel. What about it?"

Mike had continued to give his attention to his business, which was to keep Albatross on her toes. "Maybe that little bird of yours was a cooked goose," he snarled over his shoulder, as they lined up. His eyes were on the starter, every nerve tense, his muscles held ready to throw the mare forward when the flag should fall.

Campbell, apparently, had not noticed how smoothly Albatross had walked up the track. Mossrose, on his right, suddenly reared, striking out with wild hoofs, and Mike swung the mare swiftly out of the way. "Why 'n hell don't you get a paper-weight an' hold that picture horse down?" he growled at the jockey. Mossrose's best feature was his good looks. The others grinned, and on that second the flag fell.

Both heels drumming on Albatross's ribs, Mike shot her into a half-length's lead, Campbell, on Thamar, at his left boot, and Mossrose a head farther back on his right. Down the back-stretch they swirled in a cloud of dust, the silk jackets cracking in the wind and the roar of hoofs in their ears. Albatross laid herself out along the ground, setting a dizzy pace. "Come on, lady, come on!" said Mike aloud, and in the same order they reached the turn into the stretch.

Thamar, on the rail, gained here, for Campbell was sending the big brown along for all he was worth. Mossrose bored out on the turn and lost half a length. The other two, Lazy Lou and Blackburn, were pounding after them in the dust.

It was Thamar and Campbell that he would have to deal with, Mike knew, and as they straightened out into the stretch he took a stronger hold on the bay mare and made ready for the finish. Thamar's head was at his girths when he saw, out of the corner of his eye, Campbell suddenly shift both reins to his left hand.

Mike was riding without whip or spurs, and knew what was coming. He could not swing toward the middle of the track without losing priceless distance. He lay out almost straight on Albatross's neck, and as he saw Campbell's right hand grip the butt of his heavy cutting-whip, Mike called on the mare: "You cripple, hop to it! Show 'em!" he begged, and Albatross responded,

With each stride she drew away. Campbell, his face distorted with fury, saw her slipping out of his reach, and made a wicked slash at her. By an inch he missed, the whip-shaft falling on Mike's left thigh, and cutting through the thin breeches and the skin beneath. Mike did not so much as wince at the blow, which finished Thamar's chances. For in his rage Campbell had overreached himself and lost his balance. Struggling back into the saddle, he threw the big brown out of his stride and so out of the race. Mike glanced swiftly over his shoulder. Thamar would not be able to take up his running in time, he knew, but a bare half-length behind was Mossrose, showing an unexpected burst of speed.

Again Mike called on the mare. "Lady, you got t' make it!" he plead, riding with every ounce of him to carry her over the line.

Fifty, thirty, ten yards remained, and inch by incredible inch he could see Mossrose's slender head creeping up. Then he saw the crowded stands, a blurred mass, rise before him, and swept under the wire to win by a short neck.

The race took a few seconds over the minute. To Sunny Jim on the rail, it seemed hours as he stared at the fleeting cloud of dust through his glasses, one hand gripping the rail until his knuckles showed white. He saw them come around the turn in a bunch, saw Campbell's attempt to put Albabross out of the race, and drew a great breath when he saw her pull away without swerve or falter. He helped her down the stretch, stride by stride, and when Mike came under the wire he gulped deeply and turned to see Kohler, his heavy mouth half-open, staring up the track.

Sunny Jim tapped him on the shoulder, and the bookmaker came back to himself with a jerk. Sunny Jim was grinning as he said:

"Let's see—fifty times thirty is fifteen hundred, an' th' fifty I bet with. Owin' you a thousan', that 'll leave us five hundred an' fifty on th' ticket," he began.

Kohler continued to stare at him in amazement and disbelief. At length he found words.

"That mare was lame, wasn't she?" he asked. "An' I saw her go by with her leg as outchy as a boil—"

Sunny Jim waited for his voice to trail off, then said:

"Oh, that? I don't mind tellin' about it now. An' Sell-You Lloyd 'll be glad to hear it, too. Remember th' little twist you talked about over at our barn when th' mare came in limpin'?" Kohler nodded, and Sunny Jim went on. "That was all gone th' next day, like Mike said it would be. You wouldn't believe it, an' we didn't like t' hurt your feelin's.

"Mike happens to think of a trick th' Indian medicine-men used, an' he used it. You take a tail-hair an' twist it around a horse's ankle, tight, an' it 'll bother him, an' he'll favor that leg, see? Mike had a hair tied 'round th' mare's leg to-day, under th' bandage.

"When he took that off he ran his fingers down her leg an' busted th' hair. That's all, 'cept that th' walk from th' paddock to th' post was just enough to set her right again."

Kohler had nothing to say, and Sunny Jim continued, for he was enjoying the conversation:

"I guess Butterfly 'll run in th' Lancaster now," he said as he saw Mike dismount to weigh out. "We'll be over in a few minutes for th' five hundred an' fifty, an' we'd like it in nice, clean bills. I'm goin' t' get Mike now. Don't forget t' tell Sell-You Lloyd about th' little twist," added Sunny Jim, and bored his way through the crowd toward his partner.

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Author of "Dodd—His Diary," "Ready to Occupy," "One Bright Idea," etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE THIRD.

SO Evelyn, who had been about to induct Whitmore into the New York path to prosperity and salvation, set her little bag upon a chair and turned back, and a more keenly observant soul than Miss King would have noted some slight alteration in her expression.

"Oh, do you really?" asked Mrs. Plant.

One saw that Dorothy, in her purple way, was pleased and flattered; she threw back her head and laughed.

"Well, I guess he'd let me call him a friend of mine," she said. "Ain't he grand?"

She gazed affectionately at the portrait, while Henry first thrilled and then shuddered. Mrs. Plant was not leaving just yet and Whitmore, his brow wrinkled, was cooling visibly even now.

"Yes, we all like him so much," Mrs. Plant said with ominous smoothness. "Have you known him long?"

"Well, not so long as so—so well," Miss King replied, and her eyes dropped for a moment. "You know how easy a girl gets acquainted with a fellow like Godfrey."

Her sentimental attention wandered back to the picture. She was quite unaware that Mrs. Plant's delicate hands hung at her sides as two hard little balls and that Mrs. Plant's respiration had quickened markedly.

"I think that possibly I—I am not very well acquainted with—er—Godfrey," she

said. "Tell me more about him, won't you? You know him so well?"

"Oh, he's simply grand—*grand!*" Dorothy explained with enthusiasm. "Not stuck on himself, like so many of them, you know. He's just a good fellow."

"Just a good fellow—yes!" Evelyn repeated.

"And a spender! Say, it's a shame, Mrs. Plant. He doesn't care how he spends money on a girl!"

"He does not?"

"It might be water! Why, he's taken me to a show and given up sixteen dollars for a pair of pasteboards, just because he knows how I hate to sit back of the tenth. And afterward—yes, that same night—we went to supper and Godfrey ordered till I just had to say: 'Godfrey, stop!'"

"But he wouldn't stop?"

"He wouldn't, for a fact!" mused Dorothy. "He's like that in everything. He's the sweetest thing!"

Evelyn nodded and drew nearer.

"You like him very much, don't you?"

"Godfrey always made a big hit with me," Miss King confessed and rolled her splendid eyes—and looked at Henry and stared a little and blinked as if just recalling his presence—and then smiled again. "I don't know. You can't tell. If Henry hadn't come along and stolen me away, I might be Mrs. Godfrey Ash by this time!"

"So Henry stole you?"

"Didn't you, Henny?" purred Miss King, with an arch sidelong glance at Henry

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for June 14.

Baird. "I told Henry all about it. Did you know *she* knew Godfrey, Hen?"

Pure fascination kept Henry silent. Whitmore was winking rapidly at him behind the spectacles; with the crash impending, some past animosities apparently were forgotten and Whitmore seemed frightened.

"Do tell me one thing," Evelyn said sweetly. "Did Godfrey ask you to marry him?"

"Well, I wouldn't say *that*," murmured the gentle visitor, "but from certain remarks he made—well, I don't think that's anything a girl ought to talk about."

"No, of course not," Evelyn agreed, and the hand now behind her back was opening and closing, opening and closing. "You are sure that that is Godfrey's picture?"

"That?" cried the girl. "I'd know that face among a million and—why did you ask that?"

There came to Henry the most uncanny sense of ripping and splitting, as if the atmosphere itself was tearing apart as Mrs. Plant drew still nearer to the visitor—and this, despite the fact that Mrs. Plant's voice was low and tense.

"I asked because that man is no—no Godfrey Ash!" Evelyn vibrated.

"He—"

"That is a photograph of my husband, Mr. Plant!" hissed Mr. Plant's wife.

Here, doubtless, the girl so bitterly deceived should have shrieked and fainted. She did not. Her mouth opened for an instant, widely, in a stupid stare. It closed and Dorothy stepped back suddenly and held up an unnecessarily defensive hand.

"Say, what d'you know about that?" she gasped. "I—I guess I've been saying something!"

"Thank you for saying it—*creature!*" said Evelyn with a fierce bitterness.

"Say, listen!" Miss King stammered. "I want you to understand that I'm a perfectly respectable girl and—" She paused; there was something about Evelyn, just then, that would have given pause to a tank. She gasped and hurried to Henry Baird. "Henny, we better start right now!" she said vehemently. "We better go, even if we have to walk to the station! Come on, Henny dear!"

Henry's whole attention, however, was upon Evelyn. That high-keyed nature had reached the end of a difficult day decidedly the worse for wear. There had been a terrific two seconds wherein it seemed that Evelyn was about to burst the bonds of civilization and express herself upon Miss King with all the primitive force that can be conveyed by lithe muscles and hot, primordial battle-joy. Then the generations of knife-and-fork ancestors had declared themselves and Evelyn had taken to walking, back and forth, swiftly. She was walking now. And now she stopped before Henry.

"You take her! Take her away from here!" Evelyn panted.

"Well, I think—" Henry began soothingly.

"Don't you dare touch the vile little beast!" Mrs. Plant cried, rather unreasonably, and resumed her walk. "I suppose *she* and creatures like her are what led you to think that all women—oh!"

Down the living-room went Evelyn, and then up the living-room—down again and then up again. Inborn sagacity bade Miss King retire to the far wall, where she stared numbly at the hurrying little figure. Whitmore, too, seemed unwilling to force his personality upon Evelyn just then; there was a heavy chair in the far corner and Whitmore drifted behind it and stood there, eyes perfect circles, one hand drumming nervously on the other closed fist.

And Evelyn had paused again, trembling, before Henry Baird.

"I'm ready to go!" she announced.

"Eh?"

"I'm ready!" Evelyn laughed wildly, recklessly. "I can't stay here—I'll never pass another hour under his roof!"

"But—"

"*I will not!*" Evelyn cried hysterically. "You came to get me, Henry! I thought I wasn't going. I thought that I was a happy wife with a decent husband! Well, I'm not and he isn't and there's no reason why *I* should be!" The rather blood-curdling laugh came again. "Come! Come! Come!"

"Whitty!" Henry said forcefully but very quietly. "I think that you'd better get the car and run Mrs. Plant down to

New Bingham. Better take one of the maids—"

"Oh, I'm not going anywhere with *him!*" Mrs. Plant panted. "I'm going headlong to the devil with *you*, Henry! Do you hear? I don't care where—Hong-Kong, Honolulu, Siam! Come! Why do you stand there? Didn't you come here to take me away from him? Well? I'm ready!"

"My dear child," Henry began, "you—" The need for calming words had passed; Mrs. Plant was walking again!

Up the living-room she paced—down—up—down. A moment she paused by the door, drumming on the casing. Another moment she paused and looked at Miss King, eyes flaming. Again she walked. Again she stopped before Henry.

"*I won't leave this house!*" stated Evelyn, who really did not seem to know her own mind.

"Of course not," purred Henry.

"I'll stay—do you hear? I'll stay here until he comes back and *then*—"

Breath failed her. Motion did not. Mrs. Plant whirled about and pointed straight at Miss King, possibly the most silent female of the human race just then.

"And *you'll* stay, too!" she cried! "You hear? You'll stay, too!"

"Henny—the—the flat—" Miss King faltered.

"I care nothing about Henry or your filthy flat or anything else about you except this affair with *my husband!* You'll stay until I've confronted him with you and—he always sneered at that kind of man!" Evelyn choked suddenly. "I always thought that Joe—that Joe—"

Her lips shook; her eyes closed; in general it may be said that Evelyn's features puckered most pathetically. And then, with a scream, Evelyn had cast herself upon the couch and, face buried in the cushions, bitter, awful, strangling sobs racked her gentle person.

"God bless my soul!" breathed Whitmore Terral, who was unaccustomed to that kind of scene.

Miss King laid upon Henry's hand a hand that was cold, even through her glove.

"I want to get out of this, Hen!" she said with simple honesty.

"I'm not keeping you here," Henry said brutally.

Dorothy's own features worked for a moment; then the old determination grew strong in them again.

"You take me, Hen!" she said shakily. "You promised and—you take me down to the city, quick!"

"Bosh!" snapped Henry Baird.

"You—you won't, Hen?"

"No!"

"I'll stick till you do, Henny!" the voice shook on.

"Stick!" Henry said briefly.

And now more lips were trembling. Two tears, large as peas, ran down the sides of Dorothy's pretty nose, leaving two clearly marked paths; and Dorothy's bosom rose and fell quickly; and Dorothy's handkerchief appeared. And, there being the *chaise longue* quite convenient, Dorothy suddenly turned limp and dropped to it, also burying her face in cushions.

"Oh, I think you're the limit! I think you're the limit!" was the muffled message that sobbed from them.

After that, save for two kinds of weeping, the one hard and terrible, the other rich and soundful and watery, calm brooded over the Nook for several soothing seconds. Through it Whitmore's voice came gloomily:

"I don't know what your hellish fascination for women may be, Henry, but—*two of them!* Two of them, each begging you to take her away."

Henry favored him with a dizzy smile.

"Let's be thankful there are no more than two," he breathed. "Where are you going, Stark?"

"To answer the door!"

"I'll answer it myself," Henry said with a start. "You get back!"

He waited until Stark, after one stricken glance into the living-room, had vanished. Whatever informal and friendly soul had picked this unearthly hour for a call, getting rid of him was no job for Stark. Tact and speed were necessary here, if lasting local scandal were not to settle upon Evelyn's home. Henry opened the door and smiled polite inquiry.

And his smile faded and then rushed back

again, wondering and glorified. With a hand suddenly weak, Henry closed the door behind Mabel Darrow!

CHAPTER XXX.

IN THE NIGHT.

SHE was dressed for traveling. Like Evelyn, like that other mysterious lady, she carried a grip. These things Henry noted and forgot in one second, for he was facing Mabel's steady gaze and he had never seen an expression just like that before. Surpassing love was there and faith beyond any shaking, but there was something else—a something which suggested that her soul had gone through fire and emerged finer and stronger than before.

"Henry, dear," said the cool, sweet voice, "I have come to you—forever."

In the living-room, there was a sound, as of a man choking. It came from Whitmore. They did not hear.

"It was the only way, dear," Mabel hurried on. "Father has been so terrible. He forbade me ever to see or hear from you again; he means to send me abroad and keep me there. I couldn't stand any more of it—at the last. I went to my room and just thought it all out, Henry, and I know that you're incapable of any wrong. When they had gone to bed and the house was quiet, I packed my bag and came to you."

A strange occlusion in his throat rendered Henry's voice quite husky.

"And after what you have seen and what you must have thought, you could still believe in me?"

"Was I wrong, Henry?"

"Sweetheart, you were so right that the very thought of trying to deserve a love like that frightens me," Henry whispered. "I'm in a fearful mess here and one that I can't possibly explain at present, but I give you my word that I'm as innocent as the traditional unborn babe, Mabel. If you—if you can keep on believing in me like that for just a little while longer, no evil can ever touch us."

There was a wonder moment, wherein their lips clung fast. And, it being a moment of Henry Baird's sudden, wild anxiety

must needs well up in him to cause its ruin; there was a good deal of plain terror in it, too.

"Let us go, dear!" Mabel whispered.

"But—"

"I'm willing to face the future with you, dear—whatever it may hold, poverty or struggle or anything else. I want to be your partner, Henry, all through life," Mabel went on, and laid a firm hand on his arm. "I mean that literally, so please don't be silly. I have a little money of my own, dear, and we'll make that do until you—now, Henry!"

The hot protest died on Henry's lips; a wretched smile came to them.

"It isn't that part of it," he explained hoarsely. "I've taken in some money to-day, so far as that goes. I can't leave here until Plant gets back or I can get in touch with him!"

"You can't—when I—" Mabel faltered, and drew away from him, white.

Whiter she grew and whiter still, and some of the tremors left Henry Baird and a desperate strength crept into him.

"Mabel!" said his gasped undertone. "Kill me, if you like, but don't look like that. Some day soon, I'll explain it all. Now I can't. That much you'll have to take on pure faith, dear. And you'll have to take more, too. There's a woman in there now who vows I agreed to marry her at noon to-day! I never saw her or heard of her before to-night."

"Who is she, Henry?" Mabel asked quickly.

"How can I tell you that, dear, when I don't know myself? It's an insane thing to ask, but you'll have to disregard her until we learn the truth about her. And as to Evelyn, all she wants on earth is to see the last of me; it isn't a love affair, by any means. But for you—"

"I can't go home, Henry!" Miss Darrow interrupted. "I left a note for dad, telling him that I had gone to marry you and that when he read it we would be a long way from here."

"Then you'll stay in this house overnight and to-morrow morning I'll get Plant if I have to have him taken in on a murder charge. Come!"

He slipped a strong arm about her; and however big and free may have been her nature, there was a certain justified and undeniable limpness about Miss Darrow as they entered the living-room. Two other ladies sobbed on resolutely. Miss Darrow looked amazedly at them for a moment and then turned her really frightened gaze upon Henry.

And then, into the big chair at her side, Miss Darrow wilted suddenly—gazed up at Henry Baird with wild, dazed pathos—turned away from him swiftly and, head upon her arm, wept quietly, terribly! Henry Baird's knees took to trembling; he would have taken her in his arms—and found that he dared not. He cast about the highly distressing scene for helpful hints; he found the grim, pale face of Whitmore before him.

"*Your work!*" he said, throatily, as he waved his arm. "Not one—not two—three of them!"

"Dry up!" snapped Henry.

"Are any more coming?"

"I—I hope not!" honor's victim chattered.

"You are a dangerous man, Henry!" Whitmore pursued solemnly. "Men like you—"

Henry had left him. Evelyn's head had risen, although she wept on. Evelyn herself was rising, too.

"I'm—going to my—room," she said, gaspingly. "Henry, I trust you to keep that woman here."

"There's another girl here now," Henry said quickly, and halted her staggering progress. "Miss Darrow, Evelyn. We're engaged, you know, and we—we have some hope of eloping to-morrow. Will you ask her to spend the night here?"

Streaming, red, bewildered, Evelyn's eyes looked across the room. They met those of Miss Darrow, which were likewise.

"Good — evening, Miss — Darrow!" Evelyn choked.

"Good evening, Mrs. — Mrs. — Mrs. Plant!" sobbed Mabel.

"I'd be—so pleased—if you'll just take things as—you find them—" Evelyn essayed bravely.

"Thank you—so much, I—" Mabel

choked, and covered her eyes and sobbed again.

"J-jolly to—have you with us!" wailed quiveringly from Mrs. Plant, and then she pointed: "That room—the door in the corner—I can't—oh!"

She fled! Racked by new-rising hysteria, Evelyn darted stumblingly to the stairs, sped up them and vanished. Overhead, somewhere, a door slammed; a faint shriek echoed as Evelyn found the privacy of her own room. Then there was the sobbing of only two ladies to be heard; and Henry, who could stand a good deal, but not necessarily everything, laid a soothing hand on Mabel's shoulder.

"You'd better go in there and get some sleep, if you can, dearest," he whispered. "Everything's crazy here to-night and we're none of us ourselves, but—it will all straighten out in the morning!" he concluded weakly and with no suggestion of conviction.

He raised her gently. Unresisting, Miss Darrow swayed against him and sobbed on his shoulder.

"I—don't mean to be silly, Henry," she contrived. "I want—yes, I want to be alone."

"Well, you'll be all alone in there and perfectly safe," Henry purred and led her to the door in the corner.

He purred further, as he opened the room and switched on the lights and looked around. It was a cozy little corner, all ready for occupancy, and Mabel was sobbing her way in now. In the doorway, for the very first time, Henry kissed her good night!

He found Miss Dotty sitting up as he turned away at the snap of the bolt inside. The beauty was gazing at him and still weeping, and now she rose with a queer, unsteady attempt at indignation behind which there was no heart at all.

"Say, listen!" said she. "Who's this new jane you were kissing?"

"Say, listen!" said Henry dangerously. "I've never been brutal to a woman and I don't want to begin now, but something tells me that if I see and hear much more of *you*, I'll be saying things that no gentleman should think. Do you get me?"

"No, I don't get you, Hen," the girl said in her simple, honest way and broke forth with the old theme again: "Henny, take me out of this! I'm scared to stay!"

"You'll be here a week or so unless you go alone."

"I wouldn't go out there alone in the dark, walking, for a million dollars! Anyway, I came to get you, Henny!" Miss King urged, somewhat confusedly, and wept on. "I came to get you and you've got to go back with me, Hen! It's only right and—"

"Do you want to go to bed or are you going to stay up all night?" Henry asked unfeelingly and walked to the foot of the stairs. "Come here! I think they're all bedrooms up there. Don't take that one—or that one. They're occupied. Try the one across the hall—yes, that one!"

"Henny, you *ain't* going to take me back?"

"No!" thundered Henry Baird, and snatched up her bag and thrust it upon her as he pointed up the stairway.

One last, sorely tried half-minute the strange young woman hesitated, looking at Henry, trying hard to think, weeping, glancing toward the doorway into black night and shuddering, weeping again. Then the steady quality of Henry's eye seemed to penetrate; Miss King, sobbing with an abandon that would have distressed a more sensitive ear than Henry's, mounted the stairs. He watched her totter to the floor above—watched her enter the room—saw the lights flare up and the door close.

"Henry!" said Whitmore Terral. "Be seated. I want to talk very seriously—"

"Say, if you knew the chances you were taking with a remark like that, you'd bite on a finger rather than let it get by!" Henry said between his teeth and glared wickedly at his devoted cousin. "Just about ten words from *you*, Whitty, and I'll forget—"

He broke off and turned away, to snap out the lights and finally to walk to the door and slip on the chain. "I'm going to bed!"

"Not alone!" cried Whitmore, and bounced up!

That last jangling of the distant Rock-church clock had indicated one

o'clock, Henry fancied, and still he was lying here and staring wide-eyed at the invisible ceiling, somewhere up there in the intense blackness, while Whitmore Terral, sound asleep in a suit of Henry's pajamas, gave nervous little twitches now and then, as Henry grew drowsy, and made many incoherent remarks and even occasionally hurled a thin arm through the gloom, to strike Henry's anatomy just when he had happened into a doze.

Not that sleep mattered. The rest of them seemed to have attained that happy condition, because the house had been very still, indeed, for the better part of two hours; but in the unrelieved atmospheric ink of a moonless night, Henry Baird thought on and on.

It was not so much of Evelyn. Matters would adjust themselves for Evelyn. It was not of Miss King and her strange fancy. Who she was or whence she came were of small concern; maybe Plant had sent her to harass Henry; maybe not; maybe she was here, following some deep plan of her own to blackmail Plant or—oh, she didn't matter. Henry's one heart-stopping theme of thought was down there on the floor below: Mabel!

She, wealthy, beautiful, incredibly wonderful, had definitely left home to marry him! In her pure faith she had believed Henry big enough to cast aside all other considerations in the world, and she had believed in him despite everything!

Awe crept into Henry, and cold terror. He had failed her to-night! What about to-morrow? It was very plain, indeed, that the Tilbury deal was not to go through. Months, very likely, would pass before another sale could be arranged; the five thousand dollars in his pocket was not his own as yet, in the strictest sense.

Nor was the mere money a matter of so much moment as getting out of this accursed house and the bonds which held Henry there. He groaned, and for the tenth time reverted to his newest query: when does one's word of honor cease to be one's word of honor? If ever a man had full justification for breaking his word, that justification was Henry's! He might—

"Oh—ah—ugh!" observed Whitmore

Terral with deep feeling, and reached over and slapped Henry's face with the back of his hand; and then, muttering, turned on his other side, groaned, and slept on.

A loud growl came from Henry Baird! It was too much, this thing of trying to think in that presence, even though it slept just now. One minute he devoted to deep breathing and the muttering of certain sentiments of his own; then he sat up cautiously and lowered his feet to the floor.

At least he would be violating no maniac pact by stealing out to his comfortable, lonely little room over the garage for further meditation and possibly for an hour's sleep. Yes, that was a good idea, and with proper caution it could be worked. He reached about in the impenetrable darkness for his trousers, which were over here—or no, over there. He drew them on and shuffled into his low shoes; he even found his coat, and still Whitmore was undisturbed.

So that Henry rose, and with nicest care, walked to the door, hands out before him. The hands touched something cold, which proved to be the dresser mirror; and he paused and scowled, for his sense of direction was good enough as a rule. He turned and started again—and the chair over which he did not quite stumble, and which had shifted ten or fifteen feet of its own accord, apparently, moved with a creak and Henry stopped.

Well, it was odd, indeed, that the room could so completely have rearranged itself since his retiring, but the door was bound to be somewhere. He paused and tried to get his bearings. It was over there! He started afresh, and this time he chuckled soundlessly, because the panels met his fingers.

And down here would be the key. He found it and turned it without a creak; he drew it out, too, caught by the sudden inspiration of locking in Whitmore Terral. He opened the door and stepped through, from fathomless gloom to gloom even deeper; he closed the door and turned the key and drew it out again—and it slipped from his fingers, causing a little thud on the floor that held him rigid for an instant.

However, Whitmore, the prisoner, had

not awakened. And Henry was in the big hall now, and unless the stairs had changed their location he would be out of the house in another minute. Hands outstretched again, he shuffled onward—and a light snapped into being just ahead of Henry and a voice hissed:

"Who's that? You—oh! Oh! You!"

So Henry stopped short, his jaw sagging, for this was not the corridor at all! This was Evelyn's room, entered for the second time that day, and this time with Evelyn present!

She had caught a lacy robe about her. Trembling, infuriated, she blistered Henry with her black eyes.

"You—you *dared* to do that!" the hiss continued. "You—you beast!"

"I had no idea that I was in here!" Henry whispered. "I tried to get to the hall, Evelyn, and out of the house."

"That's not true!"

"It is true! I didn't even know there was a connecting door here. I supposed that thing was a closet door!" Henry panted. "I'll go back as I came, Evelyn. Where's that infernal key?"

He turned to look for it. It was not immediately in sight. He stopped—and rather oddly, with a little gasp, Mrs. Plant snapped out the lonely incandescent. Nay, Mrs. Plant was at his side, too, and one small, hot hand was shaking his sleeve.

"Hush! Don't move! Don't speak!" she breathed terrifiedly.

Henry grew tense, as much with amazement as for any other reason. Elsewhere in the house there seemed to be a murmur—a masculine murmur that was not Whitmore's. It stopped now, and small fingernails were driven into Henry's hand.

"That's Joe's voice, and he's coming up here!" said Mrs. Plant.

CHAPTER XXXI.

VERGING ON MURDER.

WE have seen much of the Nook's interior. Let us wander briefly on the surrounding lawns, soft with whispering summer breezes, thick with night.

There were trees to the north. Through them, now and then and for a second only, flickered the white flash of an electric pocket-lamp. Through them, very softly, came steps, too—and the steps of more than one man.

To the west lay the drive. Up it, flicking out a white circle, vanishing instantly again, came the flash of an electric pocket-lamp; and if there were footsteps with this one, they were light indeed.

Off in the distance the Rockridge church clock chimed the hour of one.

Now, in a staid colony like Rockridge, this twinkling of pocket-lamps at such an hour was merely impossible. Once, five years ago, the Rockridge constable had arrested a tramp, and there had been a rumor, never verified, that certain prominent criminals had visited the place in search of Mrs. Penmore's pearls; that was really the extent of Rockridge's criminal record, but—the lights went on shooting forth their little white beams and disappearing, flashing out and disappearing, nevertheless.

Two points, each heading for a third point, are bound to find their lines of travel coming to convergence. Something of this seemed to dawn upon the invisible holders of the lamps, and that at the same second; for after a double flash, when they were some fifteen feet apart, both lights disappeared, and there followed seconds of the most intense silence. Then:

"Who's there?" a hard voice inquired from behind the lamp that had come through the trees.

"Who the devil's *there*, if it isn't asking too much?" growled the voice from the drive.

There was a momentary muttering; then the hard voice came again, deeply:

"Is that you, Plant?"

"Yes. •Who's that?"

"Darrow, your next-door neighbor, and a guest of mine, Mr. Moss."

"What the—" Joseph began in astonishment. "What's the idea? Are you going to rob my house, Darrow?"

Steps scraped softly in the darkness. Three remarkable gentlemen were very close together now.

"No, I'm not meditating burglary," said the Darrow voice, trembling a little. "But if the man I'm after is there, with your permission or without it, we're going to break every bone in his body!"

"What man?" Joseph asked.

"Henry Baird!"

"Ah!" said Mr. Plant. "Sorry to spoil your pleasure, I'm sure, but *I'm* going to kill him!"

An instant his light flared again. It rested significantly upon the blue automatic pistol in Joseph's other hand.

"I've come a long way to get that hound, and by the time I'm locked up tomorrow I shall have sacrificed a good many dollars to come back and do it; but I'll kill him just as surely as I—"

"*Psst!* Plant, I understand," said the older, richer man.

"Has it become village scandal so soon?" Joseph asked bitterly.

"No, I'm the only one who knows about that phase, I think; but—let *us* have him, Plant."

"I will not! What right have you to kill him?"

Through the gloom came a laugh.

"He has lured my daughter from home!"

"Is that possible?" Joseph gasped.

"I cannot understand it; the girl has always been so perfectly balanced," said the girl's father. "The poor kid thinks that she has gone to marry him—*him!* He must have reached her with a message; I don't know how. And she came directly to your house, several hours back, apparently, for we found her handkerchief half-way over, on the grass. I supposed that she was in bed and asleep until I went to make sure and—no, I can't understand it. He's big and good looking and all that, but to have such a grip upon women!"

"Well, his grip will be loosed forever in about five minutes if he's still here," Joseph said pleasantly. "Is he?"

"Unless he took your car he can't have left."

The darkness swallowed Joseph very briefly. Off by the garage door the light flashed again, just once. Then Joseph was back.

"He didn't take the car," he reported. "Come. There's a side window with a broken catch over here."

Without a sound steps passed farther yards of lawn and paused again at the very side of the Nook.

"For the last time, Moss, you'd better keep out of this," Mr. Darrow warned in a whisper. "It 'll be a dirty business before I've finished with him!"

"For the last time, I'll stick," said the voice of Alan Moss, which was by far the most unruffled of the three. "I—have a peculiar premonition, as I told you, that he isn't here now, and wasn't when Mabel got here. If he is, I want a whack at him! Where's the window?"

"It's here, and before we go in, let *me* say something," Mr. Plant put in, with some difficulty. "If Baird is—where I fear to find him, I'll kill him myself, and I'll kill you both if you try to stop me. If he isn't, he's your game, and I'll keep my hands off him. Is that fair?"

The invisible Darrow sighed.

"We'll call that a bargain, Plant."

With a low scrape the sash went up. Joseph Plant laid hands upon the sill—and then started sharply.

"Give me your hand, sir, and I'll help you!" Stark's voice hissed from the inner gloom!

"Were you waiting?" Joseph gasped.

"I knew you'd come back, sir! I knew it, sir! You're a Plant, Mr. Joe, and nothing like this ever happened in the Plant family before. I'd have staked my life that you'd come back, sir! It was the Peter Plant, of Virginia, that fought the duel over—"

"Hey! Shut up!" Joseph whispered ungraciously as he stepped into his living-room. "You'll wake the whole damned establishment!"

He fumbled about and turned on one of the sidelights, casting a faint and ghostly illumination upon the place. He reached down and drew Darrow after him, and young Mr. Moss vaulted lightly inward before he had straightened up.

"Is he here, Stark?" Mr. Plant choked.

"He is, indeed, sir, and—"

"Where is he?"

"In the east guest-room, sir; the one next Mrs. Plant's. And—"

"Gad!" breathed Joseph, and relaxed grimly as he looked at Mr. Darrow. "He's yours, I guess. Is he asleep, Stark?"

"This two hours, I take it, sir, but—"

"All right. Be quiet!"

"Which room is it?" Mr. Darrow inquired, and his eyes glittered.

"I want to say, Mr. Joe, that—" Stark began.

"Shut up, Stark!" snapped his courteous young master. "Here, I'll show you, Darrow! That one, up there. Yes, that one."

Mabel's father removed his coat and hung it over the banister. One saw, as he tucked up his sleeves, that his arms were astonishingly hairy and muscular; he contemplated them and flexed his large hands.

"Sorry it's happening in your home, Plant; but that's your fault for ever having allowed him here," he observed. "I'll have the room refurnished, of course—afterward."

"I beg pardon, Mr. Joe, but if I might—" Stark essayed again.

"Dammit! Dry up, you old fool!" Mr. Plant's whisper snarled savagely. "That croaking's enough to wake the dead!"

"But—"

"Get back where you belong, out of sight somewhere. We don't need any witnesses here. That's it; beat it, Stark! Yes, I'm coming up with you, Darrow; but not to interfere. I'm going to have a chat with my wife while your party's on."

CHAPTER XXXII.

JOSEPH RAMPANT.

BACK let us steal to that vibrating cube of blackness, Evelyn's room.

The nails that drove into Henry's hand drove harder, but he did not feel. For the instant, sensation had left Henry Baird; only the brain itself survived, and that spun crazily.

"It is Joe!" Mrs. Plant gasped. "Did you hear that?"

"I heard!" escaped Henry. "Where—where's that key?"

He bent suddenly and fumbled about on the black floor. The hot little hand found him again and dragged at him.

"Don't waste time looking for that!" Evelyn cried in an agonized whisper. "He's up here now!"

"Thenlemmegetoutonthatbalcony!" was hissed by Henry as one word.

"No! He'll look there first, if he's looking! Here! Here, Henry! Quick!"

The hand dragged frantically and Henry ceased resisting and followed, his heart throbbing in his very throat. Yet little Mrs. Plant seemed to know whither she was bound. Abruptly, soft, light hangings swished about Henry's countenance and he felt himself being backed against wall and window-casing, and the hangings were tugged across his body and Mrs. Plant's voice was hissing in his ear:

"Don't move one muscle! Do you hear? Not one muscle!"

On the door something harder than knuckles rapped sharply!

"Evelyn!" said Joseph Plant's unmusical voice, far sharper than usual just now. "Evelyn!"

"Who are you? What do you want?" Mrs. Plant inquired as sharply.

"Joseph! Open that door!"

There was a rustle and the audible creak of a bedspring. Mrs. Plant's small feet came to the floor with a distinct thud—and she was moving to the door, and Henry's hair stood upon end.

If ever—if ever Plant discovered him here, it was the end! Not that the mere possibility of being shot concerned Henry greatly; it occurred to him, but only as an incident. It was the consequences that Evelyn, perfectly innocent, must meet that chilled his blood during that first second; and then the blood thickened and turned to solid ice as Henry thought of Mabel Darrow, there below!

Whatever happened, should he be discovered here, Mabel would be roused. And divine though her faith in him might be, only the simple faith of a congenital idiot should survive *this*! Discovery meant utter ruin, not to one life or two, but—

Henry's teeth set, for the door had opened and a heavy tread had entered, and

now, with a sharp click, a light had come into being!

He had been placed beside the corner window. Curtains of thick, filmy stuff hung before him and through them, very mistily, he could discern objects in the lighted area. Henry's teeth set harder; it was the last place one might have been expected to hide, and about the least safe. And yet—he seemed to be invisible until some one moved the curtains, for Plant's hard eyes had swept the room just then as he stood there, automatic in hand, and they had failed to penetrate the corner shadows!

He was out for blood, too! His automatic waved irresponsibly as he strode to the closet and threw it open. Blackly he whirled about again as Evelyn cried:

"What is it? What have you got that pistol for?"

"Nobody, I hope!" said Mr. Plant, and marched to the French window that gave upon the little balcony beyond.

He threw it open and stepped out. On the railed area his light flashed, revealing the couch-hammock and the two big wicker chairs—and nothing else. Joseph strode back into Evelyn's room.

"He's not there!" he stated with a black smile.

"Who isn't?"

"Baird!"

And now Mrs. Plant was gazing at him—and now she was not, for there had come a sudden loud snap from the room beyond and a breaking of small wood. There was a tramping of feet, too, and a mumble of quick voices.

"What's that?" Evelyn gasped.

"Darrow and a friend of his! Keep quiet!" Joseph snapped.

"What are they doing there?"

"They're going to knock the life out of your friend Henry Baird—and you let out just one scream and I'll choke you!" Mr. Plant said fiercely. "You—ah!"

Jaw thrust forward, he smiled horribly at the wall, while Henry Baird just stayed the impulse to dash out to the rescue of one who, whatever his failings, was of the same blood!

Because things were happening in the

room he had deserted! There was a stifled shout and a sudden thrashing about. There were loud, growling sounds and a crack, as if a chair had given way. There was a muffled yell, undoubtedly in Whitmore's voice, and a quick series of dull thuds—and after that another queer rushing of feet and a crash of glass.

"Hell!" said Mr. Darrow's voice indistinctly. "He jumped!"

"He can't run far in his bare feet!" another voice submitted intelligently. "Come on! There's more room outdoors, anyway!"

Steps raced out of the adjoining apartment and down the stairs, with small regard for possible sleepers in the home. Below, the chain clanked and the big door swung back with a loud bump. Steps pounded across the veranda and thudded softly on lawn.

Then calm reigned again and Joseph Plant laughed wickedly.

"They'll give him what I didn't!" he observed. "The dog!"

"Henry?"

"Yes, *Henry!*" Mr. Plant sneered savagely. "And *you* know nothing about it; keep that in mind. You've got enough to give thanks for!"

"In what way, Joseph?" Evelyn inquired, and the deadly calm of her voice passed over his head—for he laughed again.

"That I didn't find him in here!"

"Do you—*dare*—"

"Cut out that nonsense!" Joseph said roughly. "You're to blame for any suspicion I've entertained! You were strong in defending him, Evelyn, remember. You brought him here to the house as soon as I was out of sight. You—"

"That's enough!" panted Mrs. Plant. "Why did you leave him here? Why did you insist on his remaining?"

"Eh?"

"Men do that sort of thing sometimes—*things* play that kind of trick, I believe. They do it when they want to concoct divorce evidence!"

"Oh! I say!" Joseph cried in astonishment. "That's all rot, of course."

"Oh, no, it isn't! They do it when

they're interested in other ladies, Joseph! They do that sort of thing when they're tired of the old love and anxious to take up with the new! Don't they?"

Joseph laughed protestingly and mirthlessly.

"Of course, that's all—"

"And you *dare* to come here with your silly pistol and your bluster—you *dare* to search my room!" Mrs. Plant pursued quiveringly, black eyes flaming so that even Joseph gave a little ground. "*You!*"

"Evelyn, I—"

"Get out of here!"

"I will presently if—"

"You leave my room, Joseph Plant, and don't you ever dare lay one finger on me again as long as you live. Do you hear? Go!"

"I'll go when I get jolly good and ready to go," Mr. Plant said coolly. "Just drop that heroic stuff, young woman. If I have made a mistake—as I have, apparently—a lot of the blame is yours and—"

"No! *I* made the mistake! Go!"

Joseph waved a soothing, impatient hand at her.

"All right. Now calm down and—"

"Will you leave this room—*Godfrey Ash?*" panted Evelyn.

Well, indeed, was it that Joseph's eyes were not toward the curtain just then. They trembled visibly as Henry Baird strove for clearer vision of the painful scene. And there was much to see. One dumfounded gasp came from Joseph Plant and he stepped backward. His thick lips parted, plainly in a struggle for speech that would not come.

"I—where—what—" said Mr. Plant at last.

Evelyn's laugh tortured the ear-drums. She pointed steadily at the door.

"We'll discuss the rest of it later! You go to your own room and stay there! Go!"

Unwaveringly the finger pointed on; the eyes flamed more terribly; and the strangest weakness seemed to overtake the lately outraged husband. He sagged suddenly, muttering irresponsibly to himself; his frightened gaze dwelt upon Evelyn and then was dragged away again. He sput-

tered a little, too, weakly—yet steadily he moved toward the door. He opened it and hesitated, looking back and evidently about to speak again. He caught Mrs. Plant's smile, which had curved her lips until her fine little teeth were bare.

Joseph tiptoed out and closed the door after him, and heavy silence fell upon the room.

A moment, Mrs. Plant swayed against the bed, breathing with difficulty. Then, unsteadily, she hurried to the door and listened; and when finally she turned away, reaction had set in and she was white and weak.

"Henry!" she hissed.

Henry appeared.

"He—has gone! Go, quickly!"

"By the door?"

"There's no other way. You can't drop from the window because they're somewhere outside, the others. And you daren't wait to find that key and go through the next room, and—oh, hurry, Henry!"

Stiffening, she opened the door and gazed up and down the hall. She beckoned to Henry Baird and stepped back—and Henry had attained the corridor with a bound. The door closed soundlessly behind him.

A moment he stood irresolute. Duty lay outdoors. If they had overthrown Whitmore, it might yet be possible to save his life! And after that—Henry started. The most ghastly situation of his life had left him nervous and jumpy; that little creak had gone through him like a knife, even now that he was safe.

He looked about keenly for its source. And across the corridor a door opened and he was face to face with Joseph Plant!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

GATHERING THE FRUITS.

WITHOUT warning, Henry Baird's heart quit work!

This, to be sure, was the end of it all. This was the glowing, crowning triumph of that hoodoo which had so thoroughly amused itself with Henry Baird. Not fifteen seconds ago, perfect safety had been his; ten of them would have taken

him down-stairs, two more, out of the house. Yet he had elected to remain here by Evelyn's door—and this was the reward of his brief indecision! Aye, he had not moved five feet from the wretched portal and even that move Plant probably had observed.

And the pistol in his pocket was loaded for Henry Baird, too. Without a word, in all probability, its bullets would go tearing through the Baird anatomy now and—the heart resumed work suddenly, setting Henry's blood ajar. Just what was the matter with Joseph Plant?

He had closed the door behind him as if fearful of waking an ailing child. He was tiptoeing across the hall to Henry now, not red and roaring for vengeance, but a white, weak-kneed Joseph who, in his great distress, seemed not even to have noted Henry's nearness to the fatal door, whose thick, mumbling lips came close to Henry with:

"B-baird! Where—were you?"

"What? In my room, of course? What's all the excitement?" Henry contrived, quite wonderfully.

"Baird! Come—come down-stairs!" Joseph choked.

He laid a cold, uncertain hand on Henry's arm and drew him shakily after; and Henry followed readily enough. Down-stairs they went and into the living-room, and there Joseph drew Henry to a far corner and choked once more:

"Baird—my Lord, Baird! Can't you take a joke?"

"Joke?"

"That's all it was, old man—a joke!" said this queer, new, piteous Joseph. "Only a joke, Henry! I had no idea of keeping it up for two weeks. Why, I told you to go away to-day, and I thought you were staying because—Lord! I had no idea you had it in you to do a thing like that!"

"Well?" said Henry, curiously.

"What are we going to do with her, Baird?" Mr. Plant demanded wildly. "She's up there now in *my* room, dressed and sound asleep across my bed! What made you put her there? How'd you ever find out about her, Baird? How did you ever get her here?"

"Baird, a joke's a joke, but—but a thing like this is a tragedy! Working a man as I worked you—taking advantage of him as I did—all that—that's funny if you're on the laughing side. But this thing of wrecking a man's home—"

He shuddered to a standstill. Henry smiled faintly.

"Oh, you're talking about Dotty!"

"Yes—Dotty!"

"Did *you* give her the idea that I wanted to marry her?"

Joseph paused in the process of mopping his damp forehead.

"What are you talking about, Baird?" he asked blankly, and then leaped back to his own apparently deep interest in the young woman. "Henry, that was a—a rotten thing to do to a man! There's absolutely nothing in it, Baird—that I swear to you. I met her in the hotel manicure-room where she works—I haven't even seen her since I was married, I tell you! She's pretty and funny enough in her way, and I took her to three shows and to supper after two of them. That's absolutely *all* there is to it, Baird!"

Joseph rushed on, and it seemed that he was bent upon giving full details.

"Morally, the girl's as straight as a string. She's got a mission in life. She'd sell her soul for a thousand dollars, she wants to start a beauty-parlor somewhere up-town. That's all there is to it—*all*! I stepped out when she got so keen about borrowing that infernal thousand, and I'd even forgotten she was alive until I saw her up there and Evelyn—Evelyn—Baird, what have you told Evelyn?"

"Nothing but the simple truth," said Henry with equally simple truth.

"I don't believe that," Joseph answered, flatteringly. "Baird, you'll have to tell Evelyn that you honestly don't know a solitary discreditable thing about Miss King and—and me!"

His unattractive features worked hard. Considering them, Henry thrilled a little. Opportunity seemed to be knocking gently, but quite distinctly.

"You'd feel inclined to release me from that word-of-honor agreement if I told Evelyn just that?" he asked.

"Release you?" gasped Joseph. "Yes! Yes! I tried to do that to-day, Baird, and—you're released now. D'ye hear? You're released, Baird, from everything connected with it! Here! Here's your fool agreement. Tear it up yourself!"

Henry tore it up. A sigh came from him as he dropped the fragments into the fireplace. Joseph had pursued him there.

"Come up-stairs now and tell Evelyn!" he urged.

"I'll tell her what I know," Henry smiled. "It isn't much. I never saw the young woman before this evening; I never even heard of her or knew that you knew her."

"But—"

"But so long as I'm a free agent again, I'll tell her," Henry grinned. "I—"

He ceased. Heavy steps were coming slowly across the veranda. Voices mumbled again. The door opened and Darrow and the younger Alan Moss, rather breathless and disheveled, were in the Nook. Mumbling still, they paused at the living-room door—and a little shout escaped Moss:

"Baird!"

"Are you back?" Darrow snarled amazedly, and started toward him.

"I never left—and, please don't walk down on me like that," Henry said quickly. "That was my cousin you were killing!"

"Your—what?"

"My cousin, Whitmore Terral. Did you finish the job?" Henry pursued with a somewhat ugly smile. "Because you'll be held accountable and—"

"I'm accountable for all I do!" Darrow snapped, and the shake of his head indicated that he was dislodging cobwebs. "As for *you*, Baird—"

"I'll do some explaining that I couldn't do before, and when you have heard it, it's just possible that we may understand one another better," Henry smiled. "I'm quite innocent, you know. Plant will back me up in that when you've heard the rest of it."

"Plant's a fool, then. Is Miss Darrow here?"

There was a rustle—and Miss Darrow was there. Nor did she fly to her father. She slipped to Henry's side and took his arm.

"I'm going to marry him, dad!" she said with the Darrow directness.

"You're coming home with me, kid, and if I ever—"

If he had abandoned the rôle of heavy father in the early evening, he had resumed it now. Hot, angry, breathless, he strode down upon his daughter, who pressed a little closer to Henry Baird—who, in turn, sought hard for words that would present the truth most quickly. Darrow was a hard and determined citizen, too, and it is entirely possible that he would have removed his daughter by main force in another minute or two, but for the steps that hurried down the stairs and the lovely presence that joined the company.

This was Dorothy's own. Her hair was rather rumpled and she was obviously in a state of some excitement once more. Indeed, her ready tears flowed again as she came to them. Yet she was there with a purpose and the purpose revealed itself as a tragic pointing at Alan Moss.

"I heard your voice!" Miss King cried.

"Eh?" said Mr. Moss.

"Say, listen! It's all off!"

"What's off?" Alan inquired.

"Everything! I don't want your thousand dollars—no, on the level, I don't! And I don't care if you wink at me like that; I'm going to tell it all!" the young woman rushed on hysterically. "It's no good, anyway, Mr. Moss. He wouldn't fall for it! He wasn't even scared, and she—*she* wouldn't put him out of the house!"

"So that was the idea, was it?" Henry gasped.

Miss Dorothy turned to him and nodded emphatically.

"Sure it was—and I've got enough!" she sobbed. "He come to me this afternoon with his old blue automobile and took me away from my work. He said he'd give me a thousand dollars if I got you out of here and back to the city, and he had it all doped out how I was to do it. I was going to—to shake you at the Grand Central, and—he said you'd never come back here and try to explain it if I made noise enough.

"He said Mrs. Plant would put you out, if you didn't leave of your own accord to

get me out of the way!" Her voice broke suddenly. "I never did a thing like this before! I wouldn't have done it this time only I wanted that thousand dollars for—well, I wanted it anyway. And this looked easy. Why, a girl could get arrested for doing a thing like this, let alone coming to—to the house of a gentleman she used to know and—he blame near killed me, racing up here the way he did!"

She recovered herself and stepped to Mr. Moss, and her voice had gained vigor. "Say, listen! You got me into this and you can get me out of it, quick! I'm done. I'll tell the whole world I never saw Mr. Baird before this day and I never want to see him again—and as for your bringing me here to—to Godfrey's house—"

Again she sobbed while Mr. Plant caught his breath audibly. Darrow smiled frigidly toward his guest.

"So this is the golf you've been playing over the State line?" he said. "I think I get the drift of it, Moss. I don't like that sort of thing. You'd better take her home."

"Possibly," mused Mr. Moss.

"And it might be as well to do the rest of your vacationing—elsewhere."

"Evidently," sighed Mr. Moss.

Darrow faced his daughter sternly.

"Come!" he said vibrantly. "Whatever Baird is or isn't, your acquaintance with him has reached its end, Mabel. That's final! Come!"

"Dad, let him—"

"I'm not interested in him. I tell *you* to come with me, Mabel!"

And the Darrow eye glinted fiercely and the hand dropped from Henry's arm. Mabel might be plentifully supplied with character. She might be, and had been, capable of leaving home forever without her interesting parent's knowledge. But Darrow, there in the flesh, was the dominant member of the family, and Mabel was drifting away from Henry. He sensed it even as he saw it!

"If you will let me tell you—" he began hoarsely.

Mr. Darrow accomplished the final jerk that took him back into his coat and nailed Henry Baird with his implacable stare.

"I will not. Your personal muddle here is your own affair. My daughter is my affair and—by gad, sir! if you ever address one more word to her, I'll shoot you on sight! That's a promise and you'll fail to heed it at your peril, Baird! Come, Mabel!"

And she was going, too! And once within her own home it was entirely possible that she and Henry Baird would never meet again, for Darrow was a very strong man in his assertions.

Henry started forward, rather blindly—and stopped, just as Darrow had stopped the fraction of a second before, at the sight of the Nook's suddenly opening door. He stepped back, too, rather nimbly, just as Darrow stepped back, before the person who entered.

It proved to be Whitmore Terral. His glasses were missing and he blinked rapidly at Darrow.

"Get away from that girl!" he snarled.

"Are you—did we—" Darrow actually stammered.

"Get away from that girl, you hulk!" Whitmore shrielled. "I don't want to hurt her, but I'm going to beat the flesh off your bones and then crack the bones to powder!"

"Whitty!" Henry gasped.

"You keep out of this—d'ye hear? I may be little and mild, but no man can jump on me while I'm asleep and throw me through a window and get away with it! I may not be able to finish him with my fists, but they chased me into the woods and I've got *this* now and I'm back! Get away from that girl!"

"Glare and be blasted!" he shrieked madly. "I'm not afraid of you—not if you're worth a billion dollars! That evil eye cuts no figure with me, you low coward! Get away from that girl! All right then. I'll knock you away from her!" cried Whitmore, and leaped!

And Henry had him!

Henry's arms were tight about him, even as Whitmore writhed and panted and struggled, and there was real affection in Henry's clasp. Whatever his method, Whitmore had ended a progress that bade fair to remove all the happiness from Henry's future, for

Darrow was back in the living-room now—staring, scowling, muttering amazedly, but back in the living-room, nevertheless, and there might still be hope.

"You know, Mr. Darrow," Henry said evenly, "I can turn him loose or I can hang on till he cools down. It ought to take about ten minutes. If you'll listen to the truth, I'd be disposed to hang on!"

"Keep your grip, Baird, until we can leave!" Darrow snapped.

"Well, I'm sorry to take an undue advantage," Henry smiled, "but when you begin to leave, I'll let go. It's the truth this time, or whatever Whitty's able to do with his little club. Well?"

He waited, while Whitmore strained and wrenched and whined quite pathetically in his primitive desire to be free. And Darrow, relaxing with a sharp grunt, sat down!

"You tell it, Plant!" Henry cried joyfully. "I'm busy."

The hour of two had struck and it was very still and calm within the lately turbulent home of Joseph Plant.

To this calm, of course, the largest contributing factor was the reduction in number of the Nook's occupants. Darrow had gone now, after hearing it all and toward the last—when Whitmore Terral had ceased his struggling and taken to listening, all wrapped in one of Plant's overcoats, and Miss King had sobbed many corroborating statements—Darrow had turned human again.

He had left at last as a quiet, astonished, somewhat amused gentleman, rather than as an outraged father seeking blood; and Mabel had gone with him, not out of Henry's life, but back to that conventional existence where engagements are announced and discussed and weddings celebrated in large churches, to the nervous detriment of all concerned.

The gentle Dorothy had gone, too, and, which was most fitting, had gone in Alan Moss's car with Mr. Moss himself. The gentle Dorothy's one earthly ambition had been to tread again the streets of New York, free, and since her tears seemed to draw from a bottomless duct and her sobs ever to grow louder and more insistent, the rest

of them had tabled other business for a little and concentrated upon Mr. Moss.

He had turned sulky and gloomy and disinclined to favor Miss King with any further motor rides; but he had been moved at last—and that quite suddenly—by Henry's happy thought, which was to threaten a conspiracy prosecution unless Miss King's wishes were met immediately. But this time, unless the aviation engine had broken down, they were some thirty miles from Rockridge.

So that only Henry and Joseph remained—ah, yes, and now Whitmore, coming down-stairs in his proper raiment.

"We're going to get out now, Henry? We're going to make a last try to get there?" he asked.

"We'll get there if we have to walk!" Henry chuckled. "Joseph, we have important business in town at noon. I'd like to borrow your car?"

"Take it!" Mr. Plant said, absently and nervously. "You're going to see Evelyn before you go and do—do what you can to put me right?"

"You don't deserve it, but I'll see her and do what I can," Henry mused. "Ah! Stark again, eh?"

"I beg pardon, Mr. Joe," Stark said sadly, "Mrs. Plant 'll be wishing to see you presently."

"Is she dressed?"

"Oh, quite fully, sir," said the aged butler. "She—she—I'm sorry, Mr. Joe. So much of it could have been avoided if you'd been kind enough to listen to me."

"What?"

"Quite so, sir. Several times I tried to tell you, Mr. Joe, that—"

"Bah!" rasped Mr. Plant.

"Very good, Mr. Joe. I'll say no more," sighed Stark, and shuffled away.

"Go up, Henry!" Joseph pleaded. "Say that—well, you'll know what to say. You're a good talker and she likes you and—just let bygones be bygones, old man, will you?"

So Henry mounted the stairs and found the doorway of Mrs. Plant's room open. More than this, he found Mrs. Plant herself, just inside the doorway; and he stopped short. For Evelyn was in a new mood now.

Her hysteria had vanished. She was cold and white, with lips drawn hard and black eyes spitting white fire.

At the sight of Henry Baird she relaxed a little—a very little.

"Oh! I thought it was my husband!" she breathed. "What are you doing here still?"

"I came—"

"I don't care why you came! Go! Leave this house, Henry Baird, if you have one shred of decency left in you. Is that female creature down there with him?"

"She's gone, too, Evelyn. I want—"

"I don't care what you've come to say. I don't want to talk to you, Henry. I—I just want to talk to *him*!" Without moving a muscle, she attained the crouching, yearning effect again. "I'm ready to talk to him now! Send him here!"

"I—yes—all right. Good night, Evelyn!" said Henry.

Softly, he stepped down-stairs again.

"I—er—said what little I could, Joe," he said almost sympathetically. "You'd better go up yourself pretty soon. You don't mind if we just hustle away?"

Speeding through the black morning, the Plant car had covered a mile or more before Whitmore Terral fully settled back, physically in the seat and mentally into his own true character.

"Now we're on the way to prosperity and happiness and everything else!" he stated. "You see, Henry, how thoroughly absurd your idea of a hoodoo—"

"It wasn't absurd, Whitty. I had him, all right enough, but I left him back there for Joe Plant to 'tend a while."

In this, too, he may have been right. Many minutes as had passed, Joseph still stood irresolute in the center of his living-room. There are many things a man finds it difficult to explain. And Joseph knew Evelyn. He listened. He even dared to hope that perhaps Evelyn had returned to bed and to sleep!

Then he started, for a door was opening, up above.

"Joseph!" called a clear, cold voice, cutting through the stillness like the swish of the executioner's knife, "*Joseph!*"

A Protected Sucker



By Claude Schaffner

A FIRST-CLASS burglar was certainly lost in Flint Seeley. Any man of ordinary worldly experience would have seen it immediately. From the soles of his flat, heavy feet to the peak of his seldom-washed bald spot, Seeley's make-up suggested a cunning meanness which might have grown, not with spectacular speed, but slowly and determinedly from childhood.

However, Pop Woodling noticed nothing out of the way, because this was his initial business contact with Seeley, but more particularly because he was a trusting old soul and had been too busy most of his life in the little Iowa town of Eagle Bend to qualify as a very keen reader of human character.

"Now, y' know, Mr. Seeley, this here thousand's every last cent I've to my name. I've been savin' it ever since I come back from the War of the Rebellion to buy the truck farm I'm on, but the savin's gone so all-fired slow it looks as if I'd never git enough raked together—unless I kin make a haul on this deal. Ain't foolin' me, he you, Mr. Seeley?" Here a pinched, tired old face turned up querulously toward Seeley's hardened gaze.

At this, Seeley brought his pulpy fist to the table so violently that the inkstand squirted its fly-mixed contents out over the dusty desk blotter and the near-by papers spun sharply around from the wind.

"Why, my dear man, you simply *can't* lose! Here are the actual photographs of the big factory covering ten acres," show-

ing several pictures in front of Pop, "see—a fine, new, modern plant, located right in the virgin country. They had to clear away hundreds of giant pine trees to make room for it, but that was cheaper than to have the factory a long distance from the natural product.

"And, see here," continued Seeley, "look at these figures," producing a long sheet of estimates which would have puzzled an expert, to say nothing of a simple old man like Pop. "Do *they* lie? You bet they don't! Why, Mr. Woodling, there's sufficient feldspar in the country around that plant to yield potash enough to fertilize the whole U. S. A. Yes, *sir!* And the American Potash Company has the only successful method of extracting it. I know what I'm talking about; I've inspected every inch of the ground!"

Pop's sagging eyelids filled with moisture from the excitement. "Well, I guess you know more 'n I do about them things. I'm no business man—jist an old truck gard'ner, and not a howlin' success at that. Same time I can't help thinkin' how turrible it 'd be if I lost this money. And yit," reflectively, "'tain't enough to live on after I git through work, unless I drop off *purty* soon. It does seem somehow, though, as if I'd ought to git the stock certificates now when I'm payin' over the money; if the company's all organized and doin' business as you say," Pop continued in his feeble, rambling way, working a very fussy-looking

document back and forth in front of his near-sighted eyes.

"Oh, you'll get your certificates all right," Seeley came back at him. "They have to be issued at the home office in Portland, Oregon. That will take a little time, possibly a month; so, as a protection, you sign this order for the stock at its present value of 55½; then if the market goes up before your certificates arrive, the price of 55½ will stand, even if latecomers are paying twice that."

Pop was not proof against this. So, with a rather wiggly hand he affixed a rather wiggly signature to the instrument that was to make him "rich beyond the dreams of avarice." Then he handed it back, with loose bills for a thousand dollars; or, to be exact, nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars, the deal covering eighteen shares.

With ill-concealed impatience Seeley watched the old man's slow movements as he painstakingly counted the money over twice, bill by bill. The instant the last bill dropped onto the others, he reached for the green and yellow mass with eager, graspy paw, and a few seconds later it was securely locked in a big safe which stood in one corner, and Pop was being edged to the door.

Thin as Seeley was Pop could not see through him. Pop's head was spinning anyhow with weird visions of the pleasures to come from "American Potash" when it should have risen to "undreamed of heights."

Oh, the luxury of it! He would own an auto and drive down-town every day and park it in front of the First National Bank, alongside of the influential Mayor Rolfe's. He would give up his truck garden, an occupation now beneath him, and build a fine residence in the select part of the town—yes, and he would erect it high up on a terrace where the cupola could be seen from all over town, and he would have a man to water the lawn, cut the grass and trim the trees.

As he mused he walked, and as he walked his face lost its careworn look. For the time, he was young again. Thus rambling on, first to one side of the street and then to the other, he was surprised to hear boisterous haw-haws from numerous throats,

and his nose was greeted with a combination of familiar scents and outright odors. A big hand was clapped onto his shoulder. He awoke with a start to find himself peering up into the waggish face of Zeke Reynolds, his close friend, the town grocer, who, after having made numerous trips taking provisions in from the sidewalk, was finishing up with the codfish.

"Hello, Pop! Where y' goin', and on foot, too? Where's yer truck cart. Gone out of business? Gosh, to-day's the first time you've missed my store with yer morning call in a couple of seasons, I guess. C'mon in. Y' kin have the pleasure of seein' Ed Magowan jump three of Joe Wolf's kings; leastwise that's the way things was lined up when I come out."

"Well, that's some inducement, sure," said Pop, "and, besides, I've got a big surprise fer the boys. I'm goin' to retire!" He paused to let the news sink in. It did. Zeke sobered immediately and, adjusting his specs so as to be sure it was Pop he was talking with, exclaimed:

"W-h-a-t! Gosh, y' don't mean yer goin' to knock off work entirely and give up yer garden? What 'n thunder y' goin' to live on? Y' ain't rich?"

"Yep—that is, I'm goin' to be. Jist bought eighteen shares of American Potash stock; that's goin' to feather my nest some!"

Immediately Zeke's face dropped its serious look. He gazed puzzledly at Pop, as if trying to recollect something; then he burst into uproarious laughter much to Pop's disgust. "*Sure thing!* I might of known it. It's just about the season fer it. Come right in, y' darned old sucker, and tell the bunch about it!" Grabbing Pop by the shoulders, he hustled him into the store.

"Listen, you checker fiends!" Zeke shouted. "Pop's bought somethin' agin. Let's find out who's got his 'thousand' this time!"

The checker game came abruptly to a pause. Eight pairs of inquiring eyes suddenly shifted from a much-worn, old checker-board to a rather confused old man. And eight pairs of ears listened intently to hear the details.

Everybody in Eagle Bend knew Pop's af-

fairs by heart, because, as Zeke loved to put it, he was a "confidin' old cuss." He had carried arms during all the Civil War, weathering numerous engagements without a scratch. When he returned it was just in time to see his faithful old wife pass away. Half crazed with grief, he had tried soon after to commit suicide, but was thwarted by some of his friends who held him up as he came out of a drug-store and wrested a bottle of carbolic acid from him. Later on he had rented a small truck farm on the edge of the town, where he had lived up to the time this story begins.

It was common knowledge that Pop had succeeded in saving about a thousand dollars, hoping to buy the farm he occupied, but had been unable to save very much more. No one knew exactly why he couldn't seem to increase his bank-account, not even he himself. Perhaps it was the steadily rising cost of living, and it may have been Pop's waning earning power—at any rate, "Pop's thousand" was a by-word on the streets of Eagle Bend.

"C'mon now," and Zeke shook him by the shoulders good-naturedly. "Tell us who grabbed it this time."

"They hain't nobody grabbed it," protested Pop indignantly, pulling himself loose and straightening out his coat collar; "I got tired keepin' it in the bank—"

"As usual!" some one of the bunch interrupted, only to be favored with a stony look from Pop, who continued:

"No matter how hard I worked, somehow or other I couldn't make it git any bigger; so I give it to Flint Seeley to invest fer me!"

"Flint Seeley!" The curiosity on the eight faces changed to scowls of anger and disgust. Ed Magowan, unmindful of the wonderful advantage he was having over a crack checker player, let loose of the board and it rattled noisily to the floor. What checkers missed the coal pail rolled under the stove and hid their crowns in the sawdust. The other loungers moved uneasily in their chairs.

Although Flint Seeley had been doing business in Eagle Bend slightly less than a year, he had at the very outset engendered the suspicion of most of the townspeople

by his shady methods. So, when his name was mentioned in connection with Pop's thousand, anger rankled in the breasts of every one in the bunch, for it looked this time as though the famous thousand had really found a last resting place.

"Y' see, it's like this," Pop plunged on, unmindful of the worried looks about him, "Seeley says what the country needs to-day more 'n anything else is *potash* fer fertilizer, and it's mighty hard to git. Before the war, we got purt' near all our potash from Germany, but; now that the Kaiser's sewed himself up, we're short, and gittin' shorter every day. They's several places to git potash, Seeley showed me, but you find most of it in feldspar. I dunno what that is, but, from what he says, I guess it's a crystal of some kind that's dug out of the ground and has to be burnt in a furnace to make it let loose of its potash.

"Why, do you know," here Pop began to warm up and extended both hands dramatically toward the bunch, "Seeley says they kin perduce 10,000,000 tons of potash a year, and that inside of a month they'll have enough sold to pay off all the company's debts, and the Lord knows what it 'll fetch the stockholders in a month or two if this war keeps up!"

Pop paused for breath—and effect. No enthusiasm; only black looks.

"Say, what's the matter of you fellows, anyway? I don't hear no college yells, nor banzais, nor nothin'. This ain't no funeral. You, Zeke, Ed, Joe, ain't y' glad to see an old man on easy street at last?"

"Pop—nobody'd be any tickleder'n us," came from big-hearted Zeke, as he gazed earnestly into Pop's disappointed face, "but we're blamed doubtful about all this good luck. Y' see, we all know what kind of a man Seeley is, 'cept you; and how in time *you* could of sold vegetables in this town 'most every day and read the newspapers all that time 'thout gettin' the correct slant on Seeley's too much fer us to figger out!"

Pop's eyes grew full and round. "Good God! Zeke, y' don't think he'd swindle an old man out of his hard-earned money, do you? Naw, y' can't mean that. Why; you fellows ought to hear him talk. Good

land, he knows the stock-market from one end to the other."

"Y' kin jist *bet* he does," spoke up Adam Whiffle. "D'you remember old widder Bleeker that drowned herself in the crick up near Boxelder Grove?"

Pop nodded remembrance.

"Well, when they drug her to shore and opened her waist they found a wet note that told the hull story. Seeley'd got her into an oil deal, jist as sound, most likely, as the mess you're tangled up in, and fleeced her out of the few hundred dollars she'd earned by takin' in sewin' to do. Wher' y' been all this time, that you hain't heard about that part of it? Huh?"

Though dumfounded Pop was not entirely convinced. There must have been some error in that story about the widow. Seeley was such a smart man, and knew such a lot about manufacturing and the promotion "Enterprises destined to revolutionize the commercial world," or something like that—Pop couldn't remember how Seeley had phrased it. Bristling up, he snorted:

"Now, you fellows, lookit here! I'll stand fer a hull lot of joshin' on some things, but this here is a serious matter, *gentlemen*," and Pop squared up oratorically, chin poised in air. "I think yer a purty darned heartless lot to go fer an old side-kick rough shod like this. But I'll say this: it 'll be a blamed long time before y' see me in this here store agin!" With this dire threat he turned and shuffled angrily out, leaving the bunch staring at him in consternation. No sooner was Pop out of hearing, however, than the verdict was given by Zeke:

"Well, boys, this is jist Scrape No. 8 fer Pop. He knows it as well as you do, but, like some others, he's proud and hates to give in makin' a mistake. Still, somehow I believe he'll crawl through with a hull hide, jist like he has before. The darned old sucker seems to be perfected!"

The following morning Pop slept late—something he had not done in years. It was eight o'clock before he was dressed, and at noon neighbor Milburn, on his way from town, noticed something strange on Pop's front porch. Adjusting his specs and coming up the dusty path, he found this

"something" was Pop, all dressed up in clean but faded khaki overalls and a mohair coat, much wrinkled from having been folded up in a trunk a long time. He was sitting on a kitchen chair tilted back against the house, trying to turn the pages of a newspaper in the wind.

"Land of goodness, Pop! What y' all dressed up fer? This hain't Sunday. Who's got yer vegetable route to-day?"

"Hain't goin' to be no more vegetable business as fer's I'm concerned," answered Pop, pretending to be too busy to look up, "I've give it up. I'm in the fertilizer business. Guess I'll jist take a squint at the market." Here Pop pushed a toil-hardened finger up and down the day's biddings, while Milburn looked furtively up the road, as though for help in case Pop got any worse. Finally the finger stopped at something.

"Here 'tis. No, hol' on a minute," mused the owner of the finger. "That can't be right. Yes, 'tis, though; that's American Potash, all right, but by hunkey it's bein' offered at 50 'stead of 55½. What 'n thunder does that mean? Why—why," and Pop's voice rose to a choking wail while Milburn stared blankly at the column of market quotations, "it must be goin' *down*!"

Pop's features suddenly registered alarm as the truth began to sink in.

"Yes, sir, it's goin' down, sure's yer born!" Pop accented this dismal admission by rocking back and forth, moaning.

"What's goin' down? Y' must be crazy!" interposed Milburn, taking the paper from Pop's trembling hands and looking for the cause of the sudden wave of grief.

"Oh, my stock, my stock! I might of known it, I might of known it! A thousand dollars, all the money I've saved, gone down a rat-hole at one throw."

And, between groans and sobs, and much mopping with his handkerchief, Pop told the whole story to Milburn. Milburn knew nothing about stock ventures, but, falling back on native reason, advised Pop to sit fast and wait for developments. The stock might go up, even yet. With that he left him in a very much upset condition, and

half an hour later was busy talking with Zeke Reynolds, the recognized "trouble shooter" among the old men of the town.

"Tain't no use," Zeke was saying. "We warned him the last time and it didn't do no good. Fer us all to go and raise blixen with Seeley won't help a mite. We did jist that very thing, you may remember, when he skinned the widder Bleeker out of her money, but we didn't git nowher's. We don't know enough about his game to tell when it's our turn to play.

"Still, a thought strikes me. Y' know the big church's goin' to have one of them up-to-the-minute preachers in a week or so. He's a smart man, from what I kin learn, and a great championer of the weak. It's noised around he was a miner once, but that don't make no difference one way or the other with me; what I thought was, why not put Pop's case up to him? He may know Seeley's game."

The following Sunday two belated figures took seats among the congregation up at the big church—a stout, rather reddish-faced man and a short one with spare, white chin whiskers and a nervous attitude which he strove to hide. Zeke had kept his word.

Suddenly the music stopped. The new minister was being introduced. Pop nudged Zeke and whispered hoarsely:

"My, ain't he a strapper? Bet he could make himself purty handy at a house movin' or something, if he had to!"

Zeke hushed his companion's noisy discourse, which was causing a ripple of smiles for several seats around, but was forced to admit that Wiard looked the part. He certainly filled his clothes out in the way his tailor intended, but whether this filling represented good living or hard work neither Pop nor Zeke could quite make out. They perceived, however, that his tone was pleasing, that he spoke with exactness—not slowly and deliberately, but as one who knew well in advance what he was going to say—and he had a kindly smile and a decisive gesture, which he used with much effect to punctuate and modulate his arguments.

His sermon, "The Strong Man's Duty" was delivered in a simple, direct way, by means of common, every-day words and

phrases that all could understand. Perhaps it was this and then it may have been the man's nearness to his subject that caused the two old men in the congregation to enjoy a sermon for the first time in years. So interested were they that it was over before they realized it, and the members of the congregation were on their feet, shaking hands with one another.

"Would you mind givin' us a few minutes of your time?" It was Zeke, who, with Pop by his side, had waited at the entrance for the minister to finish shaking hands with his flock. "We got a little matter," added Pop, fumbling the rim of his hat, "that maybe you kin help us out of, if you will."

"Why, certainly," answered Wiard with the same kindly smile that had illuminated his sermon. "Come into the vestry where we can be undisturbed." They were no sooner seated in the big leather chairs of the vestry than they began their story.

Zeke would talk a while, then Pop would break in and talk like a streak till he was winded, after which Zeke would take a hand and Pop would rest up. To Paul Wiard it was like witnessing a long motion-picture play with the scenes all out of order, but he listened attentively until the story was over, then surprised them with this remarkable information:

"Listen men. Seeley's story about sending your money to Portland for stock certificates has all the ear-marks of an out-and-out falsehood. I suspect that he contracted with you for the stock at its highest price, knowing it would decline rapidly within a month, when he would buy it at a very low price and make delivery to you, thus cleaning up a nice profit. It's simply the old scheme of 'selling short.'"

The force of this descended on Pop and Zeke like a bomb from a war plane. Stillness ruled for several seconds, broken only by the regular ticking of the vestry clock. Finally Pop managed to blurt out:

"Wh-why, it's a steal, a downright swindle! Can't we have the law on him?"

"You might, but it's a long, hard task. You see, although it's really gambling, still it's legitimate in a certain sense. Besides, you were willing to wait a month to secure your certificates."

"How in time do you know so much about these here stock-sellin' fakes?" was the first thing in the way of talk that emanated from Zeke.

"My dear man," Wiard answered with a knowing smile, "ministers are the natural prey of all stock sharks. I have been taken in so often I know the machinery by heart!" Then, not knowing Seeley as well as others in the town, Wiard suggested that they all three call on him the next day and try to get him to cancel the contract.

"Well, we could try," said Pop wearily, "but, from what the fellows over at the store think of Seeley, we might as well save our breath. Anyway, Mr. Wiard, I appreciate your kindness, and if I kin ever repay you, don't fail to let me know."

"No pay necessary," laughed Wiard. "I'm here to protect my people, and all who come to me for help are my people. I don't guarantee results with this man, but I'll do my best to reach his heart if he has one."

"All right," agreed Zeke, "let's all meet at the store at nine in the morning." The following morning the three found themselves in front of a big, gaudy sign reading:

FLINT SEELEY

Odd Lots

Pop sniffed indignantly as he noticed the second line, apparently for the first time. "Reckon I got one of his 'odd lots' all right! Well, this is the place. Let's see if he's in."

He *was* in, indeed.

"Have a seat, gentlemen," was the bland greeting.

"Mr. Seeley," faltered Pop, awed when again face to face with the cause of his wo, "this is Rev. Wiard, the new preacher up at the big church. He's purty well acquainted with stock dickerin' so I thought you might like to meet him."

Whereupon Pop, drawing a long breath of relief, retreated to the other side of the office and crumpled down into a chair near Zeke.

Seeley frowned as he acknowledged the introduction and impatiently countered: "Well, what can I do for you?" Zeke and Pop looking toward Wiard for response, who, seating himself comfortably in a chair in the middle of the floor, began:

"Mr. Seeley, an old man comes to you for mercy. He has been a citizen of Eagle Bend for well over fifty years, and all this time he has denied himself many vital necessities that he might save something for the day when he could no longer drive a vegetable wagon or handle a hoe. Up to recently he had saved a thousand dollars; then his saving ability went back on him and he got no farther.

"This thousand dollars was every cent he had in the world to cover sick lapses and crop losses. To some it would be a trifling sum. To him it meant *life*."

Seeley was growing restless. His fingers played sweatily over the corner of his desk, and the hard light in his eyes grew harder.

"In a misguided moment of enthusiasm," Wiard went on, "this old man bought American Potash through you, which, instead of going up, has rapidly declined. He comes to you to-day to appeal to your heart. Mr. Seeley—won't you release Mr. Woodling and return his thousand dollars?"

Silence ensued for several seconds. Seeley showed clearly his vexation, but answered in as natural tones as he could command:

"I'm *very* sorry for Mr. Woodling, Mr. Wiard. I do wish I could help him," pretending to shower upon Pop a look of sympathy, "but business is business. I had no way of knowing the stock would decline. I was sincere in my recommendation, and the money was sent to Portland the day Mr. Woodling paid it to me. The certificates ought to be along in a week or so."

As though that concluded the matter, Seeley looked at his watch, closed the roll-top desk behind him with a grating slam, and prepared to go. Pop and Zeke at this started to shuffle toward the door which had been left open, but Wiard, instead of being so easily elbowed out of the office, settled back aggravatingly in his chair and showed signs of a desire to camp on the spot. Seeley glared and snapped:

"Sorry, but I've an appointment in fifteen minutes that I must keep."

"You won't do anything?" asked Wiard, his usual smile departing.

"What *can* I do?"

"Refund the money and cancel the contract."

"Too late! Haven't I told you I remitted the money the same day the contract was signed?"

"By draft?"

"Why—er—yes, as I recollect. *Say*, what do you care? What are you messing into this for, anyway?" Seeley strode over in front of Wiard and scowled insolently into his face. The minister never moved a muscle but returned the gaze steadily, continuing:

"If a draft was issued the day the contract was made, it ought to be on the bank's records. Is it?"

"I suppose so, Mr. Detective of the Lord!" sneered Seeley.

"Shall we go over to the bank and make certain?"

"We *shall* not. It's none of your business. Now you get out of here d—n quick! Go on! I've had enough of your impudence!" And, by way of emphasis, Seeley made a furious sweep with his hand in the direction of the open door.

"All right," answered Wiard, rising deliberately and without a trace of nervousness, "but, before I go, I want to tell you something. I don't believe you ever sent for a single share of American Potash. The whole potash industry is yet in its infancy, except for one scientist in Canada, who holds all the existing patents for the extraction of potash from feldspar.

"You probably knew that at the time you took Mr. Woodling's order for stock, and you certainly knew the stock would soon drop. It is going down a point or two every day now, and you are waiting for a favorable time to buy up eighteen shares and deliver them to Mr. Woodling at top-market price, thus cleaning up a margin amounting to nearly a thousand dollars.

"But, don't deceive yourself," Wiard continued hotly, "Mr. Woodling will be protected in some manner. Good day—and some night when you happen to be

going by the big church on the hill, step in for a moment; it *may* do you some good!"

With this Wiard, keeping his face toward Seeley as a trainer does with a wild cat, walked out of the office and away with Pop and Zeke, leaving a very much enraged person standing in the doorway.

"Well, if that hain't a darned shame!" howled Pop, stumbling blindly along. "If I ever get out of this, it 'll be a miracle, now you bet." At this he burst into a furious fit of weeping and sank to the sidewalk. Wiard and Zeke started to lift him to his feet, but he was fast becoming unconscious; so Wiard rolled his coat up into a pillow while Zeke eased the old man's head tenderly down upon it. He was still unconscious when they lifted him from Mayor Rolfe's car and took him into his little house out on the truck farm. They put him to bed and, shortly after, the bunch at the store chipped in and sent a motherly nurse out to look after him.

Pop lay helpless for nearly two weeks, rational part of the time and delirious the rest, talking incessantly about his "thousand," and the bunch at the store, and particularly about Seeley, who, he insisted, sat perched up on the foot of the bed shaking a handful of stock certificates at him and threatening to hit him in the face with a big sack of gold money.

However, Pop hadn't weathered the Civil War for nothing. He had good stuff in him, old as he was; and one day the bunch at the store were surprised and hilariously pleased to see him walk in and shake hands all around. One might have thought that he had given up all concern for his thousand, but such was not the case; for that very night he and Zeke and Wiard met in the minister's study at the parsonage.

"Well," Pop began as soon as Wiard would let go of his hand, "that stock's still sinkin'. If it keeps on it 'll wipe itself clean of the books."

"Yes, it does look bad for you, Mr. Woodling," the minister observed, "and I don't see the least chance of your recovering a cent. But, don't worry. Keep on working while you can, and when you can't—well—you won't come to want as long as I have any influence with my church mem-

bers." Pop was about to protest against such generosity when he was interrupted by several impatient rings of the door-bell. Wiard immediately answered the door, and—Seeley walked in!

"Why *how* do you do, Mr. Woodling," exclaimed the unwelcome caller affectionately, seizing Pop's hand in his paw. "So glad you've recovered. I have good news for you; I'm going to return your money and release you from your stock contract."

Zeke tried to speak, but his tongue interfered and all he succeeded in doing was to gulp till his eyes watered. As for Pop, as soon as he was able to comprehend what Seeley had said, he jumped to his feet, wild with excitement, exclaiming:

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, Mr. Seeley. I tell you that lifts a weight off'n an old man's heart; it surely does!"

"Yes, although the stock has gone down to nearly nothing, I will wire the home office to place the certificates to my credit and I will repay you for them every cent you paid me originally, shouldering the entire loss myself. Here's the money; have you the contract with you?"

"Yep, y' bet I have," said Pop, fishing it out of an inside pocket. Seeley made an eager grab for it, but Wiard, who had been perfectly quiet thus far, stepped between the two and said calmly:

"Don't you do it for a minute, Mr. Woodling. Put it back in your pocket. I know penitence when I see it, and this man's particular brand does not seem to have the right ring." With that he walked over and pushed the contract back into Pop's inside pocket and buttoned his coat.

"What—you again?" growled Seeley, wheeling around and facing Wiard. "You must think you own that old man. A while ago you were whining around for just this kind of a favor; now you've got it and you don't want it. All right," turning again to Pop, "if you want to stand the loss, go to it!" and he started for the door.

"No, don't go, please don't!" wailed Pop, weakening as his last chance to recover his precious thousand seemed about to disappear. "Can't I give him the contract, Mr. Wiard—can't I?"

"Certainly, if you wish; but this doesn't

look straight. Something's in the wind. I'll tell you what—you just refuse for the time to negotiate with this man Seeley and keep your contract. If you don't come out all right, I'll give you my own check for a thousand dollars and take over your stock myself."

"O-ho, you will, will you?" yelled Seeley at this, making a vicious, full-arm swing at Wiard's face.

And from that second, Pop and Zeke were so busy climbing up on chairs and tables to escape flying fists and broken glass, they could not, for the lives of them, have told just what happened; but, when the storm subsided, Seeley was lying on a big leather couch and Wiard was binding up a cut on that worthy's chin with a pocket handkerchief, as composedly as though he were merely doing up a bundle of tracts.

When Seeley finally regained consciousness and opened his eyes, he was in a true state of repentance. Breathing heavily, he looked around the room and then at the people in it. As his gaze lighted on Wiard's matter-of-fact features, his recollective faculties returned and he smiled his first really genuine smile in years. Grasping Wiard's hand, he made a feeble attempt to squeeze it, laughed a little at his failure, then said:

"Wiard, you win—and you, too, old man!" turning to Pop. "Listen! American Potash went up to \$600 a share during last night." Pop and the others gasped. "But, it isn't potash stock any more. That venture was a fizzle, and, of course, I knew it would be! The company was about to close out when they received an offer from a big milling concern for timber. You see, American Potash has millions of feet of just the kind of lumber badly needed by the government to get soldiers and food to Europe. So, they at once reorganized and the stock went to the sky. Luckily for you, old man," turning to Pop, "I bought your stock just before the advance, and when I came here to-night I expected to buy it from you for what you paid for it. But, I didn't reckon on your clerical guardian, here."

"You certainly didn't!" answered Wiard dryly.

Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



SOME readers, we take it, share the limitations of the editor, who refuses to walk in strange lands without a map. Whether we are bent on finding a literary haunt in London or a Turkish garden in Constantinople, we have always refused to move a foot until we had mapped out our direction. There is something to be said, of course, for the happy-go-lucky route of starting on your way and not bothering about your destination. We have tried this, too, and we know it has its compensations in the south of France or in Sicily. But once off the frontiers of white civilization it behooves the traveler not only to watch his step, but to carry a map.

Romance scorns the beaten track, and blazons its own trail over hearts and over mountains. This is one secret of its never-fading charm. Our new serial for next week—

THE FLAME ORCHID

BY GEORGE GILBERT

has for its setting a virgin land, as far as the novelist is concerned. China and the Chinese, alike for their very ancient and honorable civilization and for their undiluted Orientalism, have a peculiar fascination. We were curious to get our topographical bearings, and wrote the author for assistance. We think Mr. Gilbert's letter will not only assist, but interest you as well. We quote from his communication:

"Properly speaking there is no modern kingdom of Shanland, so far as modern geography is concerned. From 1776 to 1122 B. C., the Shangs, Shans, or Tshans (merchant class) really ruled China. When they were overthrown they bulged south into what we now call Burma, Siam, Anam, *et cetera*. Although largely supplanted in China, they erected powerful kingdoms in their new homes, and until recent years all of eastern Burma, southern Yunnan, in a measure, northern Siam and western Anam were known as 'the Shan states,' although the Shans were not the dominant powers then. For the purpose of the tale I have called up the old name of 'Shanland,' and have started the action in 'Zimme,' on the Meh Ping River; but the journey the hero and the old Yunnan trader make up-country is here and there twisted aside from the real natural features of the river valley. They end their action among the real Shan hills, in what is really No Man's Land. In short, I've lovingly recreated a part of ancient Shanland, as Anthony Hope did his delightful Balkan kingdoms in 'The Prisoner of Zenda' and other yarns, and used the country I made to write stories about and in. It is on the old, old maps, not on the new. But it is real in the sense that it is inhabited by the kind of folks I write about." So much for your map.

For the story! What more need we say than that it is a Gilbert story, and the first, the very first, serial by the author to appear in any magazine. The subtle distinction of this author's work is its own highest commendation. One does not commend masterpieces. All the charming qualities that make his short stories stand out like Japanese lanterns in a night garden from the great desert of modern fiction are

here mixed for your delight in a five-part story, as radiant and lovely as the flower from which the tale derives its name. The fiction fields are rank with weeds. Why gather dandelions when we have put this exquisite orchid within your reach?

READERS who remember as far back as October 12, 1918, will not have to be told that Freeman Putney, Jr., can write a mystery story that will keep you thrilled and expectant to the end with as great facility as in his humorous tales—like the Wuggles stories—he can keep you laughing. "The Silver Cipher," which began on the date mentioned above, is an example. Now comes a three-part serial that for tense suspense and gripping mystery is one of the best things the author has done. Like "The Silver Cipher,"

SEALED WINDOWS

BY FREEMAN PUTNEY, Jr.

Author of the *Wuggles Stories*, "The Silver Cipher," etc.

is set on the Massachusetts coast—a coast that, in summer, is one of the most beautiful of New England's playgrounds, but that, in the winter, is quite as bleak, dismal, and gray, and almost as deserted, as when the Pilgrim Fathers first stepped upon Plymouth Rock. Here, in answer to an advertisement, goes young "John Smith," as he calls himself—to the great summer mansion of Henry Flint, of Boston, only to find the big, stone castle—known locally, so the old man who drives him from the station tells him, as the "Castle of Dead Men"—only to find the place, not only closed, but every window and door sealed with brick. He is determined to get in, however, so he— Well, that's the story, and there his adventures and the development of the amazing mystery begin, the first part of which you may read for yourself next week.

THERE is a difference in fences—some are to keep things, or people, in, and some are to keep them out. The hero of one of the novelettes in next week's issue of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY made a slight mistake—he was a railroad brakeman heading for an eating-house—and went over a fence that was meant to keep people out. Result? He tumbled down the shaft of an abandoned mine, missed his date with the biscuit-shooter at the lunch counter, and started a series of adventures which, after scaring him half to death, left him a real, honest-to-goodness hero. Be sure not to miss—

WITH A CREW OF SKELETONS

BY HORACE HOWARD HERR

Author of "The Stop This Side Eternity," "Lem and I on the Ypres War Run," "The Emblem on the Whistling Post," etc.

Mr. Herr is a writer far above the average in ability, and possesses a sense of humor that he makes full use of in his stories. In them, dull moments do not exist, and it's a rare page that carries neither a thrill nor a laugh—and some have both! If you've read his earlier tales, you wouldn't miss this one for a farm; and if this is your first chance to get acquainted—take it!

HAVING given those who like to laugh one novelette packed full of them, we feel that we should

be generous and supply another novelette for those who like the more serious phases of life. Not that there is anything sad or depressing in

THE VOICE FROM THE GULCH

BY WOLCOTT LeCLÉAR BEARD

On the contrary, it is a rapid-fire mystery-adventure story, with a charming little romance woven through it, and a tensivity of interest that will hold you from beginning to end. The setting is the desert and mesa in Arizona, where a great engineering project is in danger of collapse through the amazing intervention of—never mind what. That is largely the story, and you will be able to find out for yourself next week.

In order that a story may point a moral, it is by no means necessary that it be a moral story. Neither need it be a heavy and serious dissertation full of tedious wisdom and solemn warnings; indeed, the moral is often more sharply pointed by humor than by gravity, even as ridicule is a more potent weapon than vituperation. By which we do not mean to suggest for a moment that "JUST ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER!" by John D. Swain, is in the slightest degree immoral. Very far from it. What we are getting at is that because it points a very decided moral, you don't

have to be afraid it will be as dry as dust. But, then, any reader who knows Mr. Swain's work would never make *that* mistake. As a matter of fact there are about as many laughs packed away in its pages as a story of its length can hold, besides having the strongly dramatic elements that make for tense interest. In our more or less humble opinion it isn't a story any reader should miss.

LIKE a story full of real, unstrained human nature? Then you will like "A LADY-KILLER," by George Kerr O'Neill, in the next issue of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. It's an appealing tale of the people of the stage—real players as they are when they are off the boards and away from the spot-light. Good stories of the stage are not written every day, so we feel a glow of honest—and we hope justifiable—pride when we are able to present one to our readers. And we have no hesitation about proclaiming this to be a really good story, and one that you will enjoy reading.

Job's laurels are secure. He never had to face the ultimate test—to hold his temper in a blocked subway train or wait while his wife dressed for the theater. Otherwise there might be an empty shrine, and moralizers would be short a hero and a text. But fate is a queer bird, and there are compensations even in the most unpromising circumstances. Few men, after six months of wedded life, would be willing to state that their hours of happiness depended on the time it took their wives to dress. But it might. For detailed confirmation of this preposterous-looking theory see Jack Becholdt's bully story in next week's magazine, "THE BRIDE DRESSES."

In next week's issue of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY you will find the second story of the "TOOLE O' THE TROLLEY" series, by the ever-popular Charles Wesley Sanders. "SALVY!" is its title, and in it you will again meet the ex-railroader, Toole, and his friend and conductor, the Cap'n. There is a railroad wreck along the trolley's run, and the Cap'n sees no reason why the law of the briny deep shouldn't apply to a wreck on land. What happens after that contains some good laughs—and, as we have remarked before, laughs are a commodity greatly needed in the world. We'll guarantee that you'll like this story.

"THE RIDDLE OF ALMAROSE" A MASTERPIECE

TO THE EDITOR:

I have often thought of writing to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY when I have enjoyed some especially good story, but since I have finished "The Riddle of Almarose," by Leslie Ramón, in this issue, I just cannot keep still any longer.

I have stood before a beautiful picture, speech-

less with wonder, and felt a feeling of rest and peace steal over me, just in the beauty of it.

I have heard beautiful music, and been filled with ecstasy and peace unutterable; but I have read "The Riddle of Almarose" and I have seen beauty and heard music that my pen is powerless to describe, and I feel such a feeling of peace and love and faith that is akin to reverence.

I consider it a masterpiece. Your magazine prints only the best, and I began buying the *Cavalier* weekly about eight years ago, when the stories, "Darkness and Dawn" and "Beyond the Great Oblivion," by George Allan England were running; also "Alias the Night Wind." Then came the *Tarzan* stories. Needless to say, I enjoyed them all. I liked "The Untamed" very much, but would like to see it finished, as it seemed to me the author just stopped in the middle. "Mrs. F. N. B." says *Kate* deserves some one better than *Whistling Dan*, for, should he reform, there would always be a doubt and fear of when the geese fly south with the coming winter. *Whistling Dan* was not bad, so he had no need to reform. He was only one of nature's beautiful wild things, answering the call that to him was irresistible. But love will bring him back.

A long and successful life to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

GRACE BARKER.

215 Illinois Street,
Toledo, Ohio.

LITTLE HEART-BEATS

We have been reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for over a year, and think it the best magazine published. All your stories are good, but "The Texan" is the best. I think we should have a sequel to it, and not leave poor *Tex* standing on the desert alone. "The Untamed" needs a sequel, too. "The Brute-Breaker" and "Broadway Bab" were great. Here are some other stories I like: "The Moon Pool," "A Threefold Cord," "The Substitute Millionaire," "Twenty-Six Clues," "Diane of Star Hollow," "A Rendezvous with Death," "Who Am I?" "The Grouch," and oh, so many more. I don't care for Edgar Franklin, but of course there are others who do. I wouldn't read Tod Robbins's stories. My favorite authors are: J. B. Hendryx, Max Brand, Johnston McCulley, E. R. Burroughs, David Potter, E. J. Rath, H. Bedford-Jones, Isabel Ostrander, and Hulbert Footner. Wishing you success, I remain, an ALL-STORY WEEKLY fan,

Sacramento, California. DOROTHY TAYLOR.

I have been a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for some time, and I like the stories very much. While in the hospital the Red Cross supplied me with the ALL-STORY WEEKLYS, and now I buy them in the French stores, and at times I get them through the K. of C.; but I manage to get

it every week just the same. Best wishes to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

CORPORAL LEO J. DAPSEVICZ.

A. E. F., St. Aignon, France.

I have read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for a number of months. It beats any other magazine I have ever read. As I do not believe in too much praising, I will say that "The Conquest of the Moon Pool" is about the worst yet, and some of those Chinese stories make me sick. But "The Substitute Millionaire" about makes up what poor stories follow for the year. "Broadway Bab" is perfect. I missed the last magazine

containing "Broadway Bab." Am sending ten cents, and I would be glad if you would send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. By the way, couldn't you be kind enough to put this in Heart to Heart Talks, and tell me through that medium if the story, "The Golden Hope," published Saturday, February 26, 1916, is now in book form? I remain your well-wisher, and hope to see many more of your publications.

West Paulet, Vermont. MRS. W. O. GOUGH.

NOTE: "The Golden Hope," by Grace Sartwell Mason, has been published in book form by D. Appleton & Co., New York; price \$1.35 net.

ALL-STORY WEEKLY READERS' EXCHANGE

N. B.—THE OBJECT OF THIS DEPARTMENT IS TO GIVE READERS WHO WISH TO SECURE COPIES OF THE MAGAZINE WHICH WE CANNOT SUPPLY A CHANCE TO MAKE THEIR WANTS KNOWN. SPACE IS TOO LIMITED TO ALLOW OF OUR PUBLISHING THE LETTERS OF THOSE WHO ONLY HAVE MAGAZINES TO DISPOSE OF. THE LATTER SHOULD WATCH THIS COLUMN, AND COMMUNICATE DIRECT WITH THOSE WHO ASK FOR CERTAIN NUMBERS. LETTERS TO BE PRINTED SHOULD CONTAIN COMPLETE ADDRESS.

I am anxious to get the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for December 14, 1918. Will pay for it or exchange an ALL-STORY WEEKLY or *Argosy*.

P. O. Box 118, MRS. J. F. MORRIS,
Humbolt, Arizona.

I want to get the following magazines: *Cavalier* monthly, January, 1912; *Cavalier* weekly, January 6, 13, and 20, 1912; January 4 to February 8, 1913; and June 14 to July 5, 1913. I will either pay twenty cents each for these or will exchange two copies of *The Argosy* weekly for each *Cavalier*.

J. R. HENDERSON.
1105 Mineral Avenue,
Galena, Kansas.

I wish to get copies of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for December 21, 1918, and January 4 and 11, 1919.

R. WILSON.
Care Camp No. 7,
Ocean Falls,
British Columbia, Canada.

I will pay twenty-five cents for the December 21, 1918, number of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Dixie Hotel, MRS. G. W. HOCKENBERRY,
Main and Market Streets,
Akron, Ohio.

I would like to obtain the *All-Story Cavalier* for June 13, 1914; June 6, 1914; and May 30, 1914. I will exchange any of the following for any of the above: *All-Story*, November, 1909; *The Argosy*, September, 1917; *Cavalier*, April 26, 1913; *Railroad Man's Magazine*, November, 1918; ALL-STORY WEEKLY, September 7, 1918; January 18, 1919; January 25, 1919; and February 1, 1919. If any wish to sell or exchange, write to me first.

M. B. GARDNER.
Portland, Maine.

I would like to get the books with the stories: "Wolf Breed" (April 29 to May 20, 1916), and "This Man to This Woman" (April 15 to May 20, 1916), as I missed getting part of those books. I have ALL-STORY WEEKLY from October 1, 1918, and a few older ones. Have all *Argosys* from the book with first instalment of "Square Deal Sanderson." Will be glad to exchange the books I have for those.

RUBY WADDLE.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Was certainly glad to see your Exchange in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. I would like to get the magazine containing the last instalment of "The Substitute Millionaire" (December 14, 1918). If any of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY subscribers have this copy, I would be glad to get in touch with them.

JAS. WILEY MCGEEBEE.
Seneca, Missouri.

I have the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for the months of August, September, October, November in 1917. I would like to exchange either month for all the books in the month of September, 1918. Who will exchange? Please write first. I will pay postage.

RAYMOND LEHMAN.
Highwood, Montana.

I would like to get the October, 1912, Volume XXIV, No. 2, of the *All-Story* magazine. This number contains the first *Tarsan* story by Edgar Rice Burroughs, "Tarzan of the Apes." Am willing to pay five dollars for a copy.

South Bend, Indiana. R. OTTO PROBST.

I will pay ten cents for one copy each of ALL-STORY WEEKLY for January 13, 20, 27, and February 3, in year 1917. Any one having them, please write before forwarding them to

Waukegan, Illinois. W. GLEN RYAN.